

CROATIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
DEPARTMENT FOR SEVERE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

April 15, 1998

INFORMATION ON FIRES IN RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL FACILITIES
(village graveyards and other) recorded between January 1 until April 15, 1988

I. Incidents:

The Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (CHC) recorded **108 cases of arson** - in the territories reclaimed during the military operation "Storm" (former UN sectors: North and South) - during its active monitoring mission in the period since January 1 until April 15, 1988. 103 of these cases were related to the agricultural facilities and 3 to graveyards (Radonja-Vojniæ-Jošani-Udbina and Vrebaèki Pavlovac - Gospiæ). Numerous cases of arson were recorded in the fields and areas with the low shrubbery which were probably caused intentionally and led to destruction of agricultural facilities. However these cases have not been processed separately.

Most of these fires were recorded in the region of **Gvozd** municipality (former **Vrginmost**) - **47**, than in the region of the **Vojniæ municipality 21, Krnjak 14, Karlovac 10, Knin and Petrinja 4 each, Slunj and Titova Korenica 3 each, and Gospiæ and Udbina 1 each**. These figures are not final, since the CHC office still receives information regarding a series of other fires in the region of Banija and Lika, however the CHC has not been able to verify this information.

Lot of material goods were destroyed in these fires. At least 28 family houses, 2 weekend houses, 152 different agricultural facilities, 9 hay-stacks, 1 orchard. Various houses appliances, and agricultural instruments were destroyed in these fires. 70 hay-barns, 37 stables, 42 agricultural premises, 9 pigsties, 3 garages and 1 water-well. ..The field teams recorded only two or three cases of accidental fires.

In 93 cases over the total of 108 cases mentioned above the CHC field activists visited the scene of the arson, where they took pictures of all burnt houses and premises and thoroughly investigated the incidents. Rest of these cases were reported and investigated by other non-governmental organizations. All these cases, apart from being photographed, have been recorded in special reports.

II. Observations

1. All these fires happened in a short period (between February 7 and April 9, 1998) in the Serb villages completely uninhabited or sparsely inhabited by just a few people - newcomers of Croat ethnicity who are against the return of their neighbors - Serbs. Most of these fires occurred in the municipalities of Gvozd and Vojniæ. The CHC has recorded a fierce opposition to the return of the Serb refugees in these municipalities since the military operation Storm.*

2. These fire-stricken areas are unattractive for settling, the farms are poor, the land is of the very poor quality, in traffic isolation, with communal issues unresolved ...

3. The return of a larger number of Serb refugees (who are in possession of valid Croatian permissions and documents) to these villages has been announced. In certain cases the whole farms were burnt to the ground only a few days before the return of their owners. **

4. The police patrols were summoned to the scenes of the incidents. They registered the events in a routine way, and mentioned various causes for these incidents: "uncontrolled burning of weeds", although there was no one to burn it, bad electricity installations although these villages haven't had electricity since the military operation Storm, explosions of gas tanks.***In many of these cases the firemen came to the scenes of the arson. In some cases they managed to put out the fire and prevent further damage. However, in some cases firemen came to the scene of the arson without any water in their water-tanks, or with the broken water atomizers.

5. These fires, in spite of the fact that they were numerous and caused serious material damage, were hardly reported by the Croatian media. Only after the CHC put a certain amount of pressure on the media, were these incidents written about. The state-controlled media, especially Vjesnik, downplayed the importance of these incidents, stating that these fires were set by the Serbs themselves. They did not express any concern regarding the fact that the whole villages went up in flames. Great damage was done to the property and material goods, regardless of the fact to whom this property belonged.

* The HDZ protested against the return of the Serb in the municipality of Gvozd by hanging the posters on the walls. The former commissioner of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and today head of the Gvozd municipality Mirko Putria; personally forbade the Serb owners to return and to cultivate their land. A group of refugees from Banja Luka was not allowed by the police to visit their farms, although the visit was organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for B-H; C. Westedrop and UNHCR. with a permission of the Office for Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

** The serious case of Miodrag MRAOVLÆs family, from Gornja Trstenica (classified under the number. 35). He returned from the Croatian Danube region together with his mother, wife and 4 children on February 25, 1998. He left the occupied Croatian house. A few days before his return the whole farm burnt down. In was stated in his permission of return that his farm and his house are undamaged and inhabitable. The local authorities refuse to help this family.

*** The CHC has the testimony of a highly educated witness who was present when the fire was intentionally lit, by the burning of inflammable matter.

III. Survey of the (incidents) fires:

Ordinal.n o.	Place and date of incidents	Owner - content	Comment
1.	<i>Vojniæ</i> Vojišnica, February 7th	Milan VUJLÆ returnee: <i>orchard burned</i> - 10 fruit trees burned	(SDF, Vojniæ)
2.	<i>Knin:</i> Orliæ (Gojci), February 10th, about 17h	Borka i Gojko MOMËILO , bound to return: <i>house burned</i>	Firemen prevented further damage. Police claim to be on the perpetrator's trail. (SC HHO, Knin) - <i>photographed</i>
3.	<i>Knin:</i> Orliæ (Simiaä), February 10th, about 17 h	Èedo URUKALO , in exile: <i>house burned</i>	- " -
4.	<i>Vojniæ</i> Radonja, 11. February 11th 1998, about 15h	<i>Graveyard burned</i>	(SDF, Vojniæ)
5.	<i>Vojniæ</i> Vojišnica bb, February 11th-12th 1998	Zora MAZALICA , returnee: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	The prevoius day, when imnspecting the burned down house, she was threatend by a newly settled neighbour. (SDF, Vojniæ SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
6.	<i>Karlovac:</i> Prkos, February 12th 1998	Đuro DOBRLÆ in exile: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	Witness prof. S.L. claims that this and some other fires were caused by inflammable chemicals (HHO, SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
7.	<i>Karlovac:</i> Prkos, February 12th 1998	Sveto DOBRLÆ works in Germany: <i>hay-loft and stable burned</i>	- " -

8.	Karlovac: Prkos, February 12th 1998	Dušan BASTAJLÆ in exile: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
9.	Karlovac: Prkos, February 12th 1998	Miloš BASTAJLÆ in exile: <i>stable and hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
10.	Slunj: Toèak hose number 1: February 15th 1998, around 22 h	Desanka i Milan DUDUKOVIÆ , returnees: <i>house burned</i>	That day owners started to tidy up the house to be lived in (SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
11.	Slunj: Toèak house number 27: February 15th 1998	MilæDUDUKOVIÆ , returnee: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	(SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
12.	Vojniæ Krstinja: mid-February 1998	NN: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	(SC HHO, Karlovac)
13.	Vojniæ Krstinja, mid-February 1998	NN: <i>agricultural facility burned</i>	- " -
14.	Vojniæ Jurga, February 16th 1998	NN: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	(SDF, Vojniæ)
15.	Vojniæ Gaæša Selo, house number cca 13, February 17th 1998	Stevan MALOBABIÆ in exile: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	(OSCE, SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
16.	Vojniæ Gaæša Selo, house number 28, February 17th 1998	Miloš STOJAKOVIÆ in exile: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	(OSCE, SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
17.	Vojniæ Gaæša Selo, house number 26, February 17th 1998	Danica GAÆŠA , returnee (lives with her daughter in another village): <i>stable, hay-loft, dry-kiln and well-head burned</i>	OSCE, SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
18.	Vojniæ Gaæša Selo, February 17th 1998	Mileva JANJLÆ in exile (Kosovo): <i>stable with store room burned</i>	Accidental fire possible! (OSCE, SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
19.	Vojniæ Gaæša Selo, February 17th 1998	Mirko GAÆŠA , died: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	Accidental fire possible! (OSCE, SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
20.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, bb, February 17th 1998	Nenad PODKRAJAC , lives in Rijeka: <i>weekend- house burned</i>	Supposedly the fire was caused by newly settled sheperds. (SC HHO, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
21.	Krnjak: Mlakovac 25: February 17th 1998	Miloš ŽIVKOVIÆ , bound to return: <i>stable and shed burned</i>	- " -
22.	Krnjak: Mlakovac 26: February 17th 1998	Svetozar GRIJAKOVIÆ , bound to return: <i>hay-loft and additional agricultural facility burned</i>	- " -
23.	Krnjak: Mlakovac 27: February 17th 1998	Mirko BUNËLÆ in exile: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
24.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, house number 28: February 17th 1998	Miloš SIMLÆ in exile: <i>two hay.lofts burned</i>	- " -
25.	Krnjak: Mlakovac bb: February 17th 1998	Vlado PAGAË , works in Austria: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
26.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, house number 29: February 17th 1998	Stanko KNEŽEVIÆ in exile: <i>stable and hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
27.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, house number 29: February 17th 1998	Milica KNEŽEVIÆ <i>wooden house and additional agricultural facility burned</i>	- " -
28.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, house number 29: February 17th 1998	Dušan KNEŽEVIÆ : <i>house burned</i>	- " -

29.	Krnjak: Mlakovac house number 30: February 17th 1998	Milorad SIMLÆ: <i>hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
30.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, house number 31: February 17th 1998	Desanka i Mihajlo MAÆŠLÆ <i>stable and hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
31.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, number house 35: February 17th 1998	Petar KARAMARKOVIÆ in exile: 2 hay-lofts, stable, 2 additional agricultural facilities burned	- " -
32.	Krnjak: Mlakovac, house number 35, February 17th 1998	Miloš KARAMARKOVIÆ <i>hay-loft and additional facility burned</i>	- " -
33.	Krnjak: Malkovac ?: February 17th 1998	Desa KNEŽEVIÆ <i>stable and hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
34.	Karlovac: Lasinjski Sjeniëak, about February 20th 1998	Baø (?) ROKNIÆ - "Little flower", bound to return: <i>stable, hay-loft, shed burned</i>	(HHO)
35.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 151 A: about February 20th 1998	Miodrag MRAOVIÆ born 1964, returnee: <i>whole estate burned: house, hay-loft, stable, garage, dry-kiln and other..</i>	Returned from Vukovar on February 25th 1998 with 4 children. Several days prior to that, the whole estate burned down (SC HHO, Karlovac) - photographed
36.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number cca 89: about February 20th 1998	Milan BRUIÆ in exile: <i>stable and hay-stack burned</i>	(SC HHO, Karlovac) - photographed
37.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 91: cca February 20th 1998	Milka BOROTA , bound to return: <i>stable and hay-loft burned</i>	- " -
38.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 92: about February 20th 1998	Milka ARLOV , bound to return: <i>wooden house and stable burned</i>	- " -
39.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 103: about February 20th 1998	Stanko SIMLÆ <i>stable burned</i>	- " -
40.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 105, about February 20th 1998	Rade ZIMONJA , bound to return: <i>Stable, hay-loft, pig-sty and dry-kiln burned</i>	- " -
41.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 106: about February 20th 1998	Ljuban SIMLÆ bound to return: <i>pig-sty burned</i>	- " -
42.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 114: about February 20th 1998	Stojan SIMLÆ : <i>2 hay-stacks burned</i>	- " -
43.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 115: about February 20th 1998	Mirko PAVLOVIÆ <i>Stable, pig-sty, granary and 2 hay-stacks burned</i>	- " -
44.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 117: about February 20th 1998	Gojko SIMLÆ <i>hay-loft and stable burned</i>	- " -
45.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 121: about February 20th 1998	Milan SIMLÆ <i>Hay-loft, granary, garage burned</i>	- " -

46.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 125: about February 20th 1998	Pero MRAOVIÆ bound to return: 2 <i>hay-lofts, 2 stables, pig-sty burned</i>	- “ -
47.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 148: about February 20th 1998	Ilija MRAOVIÆ <i>Hay-loft, stable, pig-sty burned</i>	- “ -
48.	Gvozd: Gornja Trstenica, house number 151: about February 20th 1998	Dušan MRAOVIÆ <i>Stable, hay.loft, dry-kiln burned</i>	- “ -
49.	Gvozd: Donja Èemernica, house number 40: February 23rd 1998	Petar KAJGANIÆ returnee: <i>Whole estate burned: house, granary, hay-loft, stable, dry-kiln</i>	Estate burned during brief absence of owner away on business. (SC HHO, Karlovac) - photographed
50.	Gvozd: Donja Èemernica, house number 43: February 23rd 1998	Živko KAJGANIÆ in exile: <i>Hay-loft, stable, hay-stack burned</i>	(SC HHO, Karlovac) - photographed
51.	Gvozd: Donja Èemernica, house number 45, February 23rd 1998	Pavao DROBNJAK <i>House burned</i>	- “ -
52.	Gvozd: Donja Èemernica, house number 46: February 23rd 1998	Marija DROBNJAK , in exile: 2 <i>hay-lofts burned</i>	- “ -
53.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 49: February 23rd 1998	Nikola KAJGANIÆ <i>hay-loft and 3 other agricultural facilities burned</i>	- “ -
54.	Vojnica Kokirevo 30, about February 23rd 1998	Miloš ÈAVIÆ born 1938, returnee: 2 <i>hay-lofts burned</i>	Fire (supposedly) caused by settlers from BiH (SDF, SC HHO Karlovac) - photographed
55.	Vojnica Kokirevo 33, about February 23rd 1998	Branko ÈAVIÆ in exile: <i>Hay-loft, shed and hay-stck burned</i>	- " -
56.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 7: February 24th 1998	Miloš BEKIÆ born 1928: returnee: <i>Hay-loft burned</i>	Returned on March 1st 1998. Two days after physically assailed by neighbour settler from BiH (SC HHO, Karlovac) - snimljeno
57.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 46, about February 24th 1998	Petar RATKOVIÆ <i>Hay-loft and stable burned</i>	(SC HHO, Karlovac) - photographed
58.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica next to house number 54: about February 24th 1998	NN: <i>Whole estate burned: house and 2 facilities</i>	- “ -
59.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 54: about February 24th 1998	Mile KRAGULJAC: <i>Part of hay-loft burned</i>	- “ -
60.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house no. 55: around February 24th, 1998	Danica KRAGULJAVC: <i>Hay-loft burnt</i>	- “ -
61.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 60: about February 24th 1998	Miloš ZIMONJA: <i>Whole estate burned: house and 2 facilities</i>	- “ -
62.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 60A: about	Milorad ZIMONJA: <i>House, 2 agricultural facilities and hay-stack</i>	- “ -

	February 24th 1998	<i>burned</i>	
63.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house no. 64: around February 24, 1998	NN: <i>Stable burnt</i>	- “ -
64.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, h.no. 66: Feburary 24th,1998.	Milka RAJAK: <i>Hay-loft and hay-stack burnt</i>	- “ -
65.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 67: around February 24, 1998	Milan ZIMONJA: <i>Hay-loft burnt</i>	- “ -
66.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house no. 75: around February 24th, 1998	Adam OBRADOVIÆ <i>agricultural facility burnt down</i>	- “ -
67.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house no. 81: around Feburary 24,1998	NN: <i>agricultural facility burnt down</i>	- “ -
68.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house no, between 81 and 105, Feburary 24th, 1998.	NN: <i>a house burnt down</i>	- “ -
69.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house no.106, around Feburary 24th, 1998	Jadranka VUJAKLIJA: <i>bound to return a new house burnt</i>	- “ -
70.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, house number 112, around February 24, 1998	Pavao KORAÆ <i>hay-loft burnt</i>	- “ -
71.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, near house number 112.	NN: <i>agricultural facility burnt down</i>	- “ -
72.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, nor very far from the house no., 112, around Feburary 24th, 1998	NN: <i>house burnt down</i>	- “ -
73.	Gvozd: Gornja Èemernica, bb, Feburary 24, 1998	Milan BOROTA: <i>stable burnt</i>	- “ -
74.	Gvozd: Kozarac, kbr. 21, around February 25, 1998	Ljubica and Đuro AJDINOVIÆ returnees: <i>hay-loft, garage, sheds burnt</i>	They returned from the Croatian Danube region on March 1, 1998 (CHC RC, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
75.	Gvozd: Podgorje (Pavloviaï) 36 A, around February 25, 1998	Mile MRKALJ:	(CHC RC, Karlovac) - <i>photographed</i>
76.	Gvozd: Podgorje (Pavloviaï), house no. 37, February 25, 1998	Danica KUKULJ: <i>hay-loft burnt</i>	- “ -
77.	Gvozd: Podgorje (Pavloviaï), house no. 38: around February 25, 1998	Jovo (in Germany) and Vojo PAVLOVIÆ (in exile): <i>hay-loft burnt and stable</i>	- “ -
78.	Gvozd: Podgorje (Pavloviaï), house no. 40, around February 25, 1998	Milka (bound to return) and Rade PAVLOVIÆ (in Zagreb): <i>hay-loft burnt</i>	- “ -
79.	Gvozd: Podgorje (Pavloviaï), house no. 42: around February 25, 1998	SAMARDŽIJA family: <i>hay-loft burnt</i>	- “ -
80.	Gvozd: Podgorje (Pavloviaï), around Feburary 25, 1998	- <i>the entire village burnt</i>	There was no on eliving in the village, the weeds were not burnt down (CHC RC Karlovac)- <i>photographed</i>

81.	Titova Korenica: Mekinjar, February 1998	NN: a family house burnt down	(HOMO, Pula)
82.	Knin: Kovačica, February 25, 1998	Dara RNJAK , born in 1923, presently living in exile: a house burnt (upper part of the house burnt together with roof)	Firemen intervened (CHC RC Knin) - photographed
83.	Knin: Kovačica, February 25, 1998	Jeka and Simo ĐUJIĆ , deceased: house burnt (one room was burnt where the fire started)	Firemen stopped the fire from spreading. (CHC RC, Knin) - photographed
84.	Vojnica Biljeg, bb, at the end of February 1998.	Đuro PEKIĆ house burnt (agricultural facility)	House burnt from the roof. (CHC, CHC RC, Karlovac) - photographed
85.	Vojnica Vrelo Utinje: at the end of 1998	NN: hay-loft burnt	(OSCE, RC CHC, Karlovac)
86.	Gvozd: Pješanića, house no. 17, at the end of February 1998	Kata DANĀUO , bound to return: house, hay-loft, shed - the whole farm burnt	Relatives from Karlovac guarded the farm, (SC HHO, Karlovac) - photographed
87.	Karlovac: Gornji Sjenik, house no. 135, at the end of February 1998	Marko MANOJLOVIĆ bound to return: house, hay-loft, stable some other agricultural facilities - the whole farm was burnt	(HHO) - photographed
88.	Karlovac: Gornji Sjenik, near house no. 135, at the end of February 1998	NN: house burnt - probably a weekend house	(HHO) - photographed
89.	Vojnica Kokirevo, house no. 32, 1. March 1998	Anka ĀAVIĆ born 1937, a returnee: hay-loft burnt with cellar	(SDF, CHC RC, Karlovac) - photographed
90.	Petrinja: Donja Bačuga, 126: at the beginning of March 1998	Mihajlo GRUBJEŠIĆ bound to return; house burnt	(CHC)
91.	Petrinja: Donja Bačuga, close to the shop: March 1998	Ljubica VUJAKLIJA , bound to return: house burnt	(CHC)
92.	Petrinja: Donja Bačuga, close to the shop: at the beginning of March 1998	NN: house burnt, stable, shed,...	Because of the threats of the recently settled residents (CHC)
93.	Petrinja: Lušani, house no.36, middle of March 1998	Janko KOZIĆ presently absent: hay-loft burnt	(GOLJUP, Sisak, CHC) - photographed - film was taken by the unknown civilians
94.	Vojnica Kolarić house no. 15/16: middle of March 1998	Dragan MAJSTOROVIĆ hay-loft burnt	(RC CHC Karlovac) - photographed
95.	Vojnica Brdo Utinjsko, March 31, 1998	Family KOSIĆ in exile: Old family house burnt, stable, hay-loft, store-house where agricultural tools have been stored, dry-kiln, porch	(CHC) - photographed
96.	Vojnica Brdo Utinjsko house no. 21, 31. March 1998	Dragica IVOŠEVIĆ unknown residence: hay-loft burnt	(CHC) - photographed
97.	Vojnica Brdo Utinjsko, March 1998	Ranka PAJIĆ in exile: stable burnt, pig-sty, shed,...	(CHC) - photographed
98.	Vojnica Brdo Utinjsko, house numbers 38, 31	Family MILIĆEVIĆ in exile: hay-loft, stable, pigsty, two dry-kilns,...	(CHC) - photographed

	March 1998		
99.	Vojnica Brdo Utinjsko, March 31, 1998	Mila GVOJLÆ residents unknown: <i>hay-loft burnt</i> (a part of it was burnt)	(CHC) - photographed
100.	Udbina: Jošani, March 1998		(HOMO, Pula)
101.	Gospiaæ Vrebaèki Pavlovac, March 1998	<i>Cemetary</i>	(HOMO, Pula)
102.	Karlovac: Gornji Sjenièak, around April 1, 1998	<i>a great part of the forest Muljci burnt</i>	(CHC) - photographed
103.	Karlovac: Gornji Sjenièak, (Starèa): near April 1, 1998	<i>A great part of the private forests and and fields burnt - uninhabited village</i>	(CHC)
104.	Gvozd: Blatuša, house no 50: beginning of April 1998	Dragan MRAOVIÆ <i>Hay-loft, pigsty and old wooden house</i>	(CHC RC, Karlovac) - photographed
105.	Slunj: Šlivnjak, beginning of April 1998	NN: <i>Hay-loft burnt</i>	(CHC)
106.	Titova Korenica: Novo Selo, house no. 28, (near Lièko Petrovo Selo), near April 5, 1998	Slobodan STUDEN , (in Ljubljana): <i>Family house burnt</i>	(CHC, HOMO, Pula)
107.	Titova Korenica: Novo Selo, house number 31, (near Lièko Petrovo Selo), around April 5, 1998.	Draga KUGA , in exile: <i>family house burnt</i>	(CHC, HOMO, Pula)
108.	Karlovac: Donji Sjenièak, house burnt 96, 8/9 April 1998, during night	Mirko MRKALJ , called "Mirkan", bound to return: <i>his farm is burnt: house, stable, hay-loft and dry-kilns...</i>	(CHC) - photographed