

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE PROSECUTION OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERIOUS
VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW COMMITTED IN THE TERRITORY OF THE
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1991

WITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS DATA:

Last name: Šabić

Name: Vejiz

Father's name: Velija

Nickname: none

Sex: male

Date of Birth: 25th July 1966

Place of Birth: Urkovići

Nationality: Bosniak

Religion: Muslim

Language(s) the witness speaks: Bosnian and Russian

Language(s) the witness can write (if different from the abovementioned):

Languages used during the examination: Bosnian and English

Current occupation: unemployed

Previous: Construction Technician

Dates of the conversation: 8th and 9th April and 16th May 2002

Examination conducted by: Jean Gagnon

Interpreter: Alma Omeragić

Names of persons present at witness examination: Jean Gagnon, Alma
Omeragić and Vejiz Šabić

Signature/initials:/signed/

WITNESS STATEMENT

My name is Vejiz Šabić, I am married and I have two daughters. I graduated from High School in Bratunac. I can read and speak Bosnian. I served military in the former Yugoslavia from 1986 to 1987. I was a field radio operator in the JNA¹ in Priština. I held the rank of junior sergeant. I was a member of the ABiH² from 15th April 1992 to 4th April 1996.

On 31st March 1992, I returned to the country from Saint Petersburg, Russia, where I had been working. On 2nd April 1992, I moved to my house in Sandići, the municipality of Bratunac. I had been living in my house until 17th April 1992, when paramilitary units such as Arkan's Men, Šešelj's Men and other Chetniks'³ units occupied Bratunac and took over the municipality and police buildings, as well as other public places. At that time, Muslim citizens' freedom of movement had already been limited. Citizens of the village of Sandići decided to move their families to areas with majority of Muslim citizens. We all went to the region of Konjević Polje. We moved our families to the village of Pobuđe, while all men stayed in Sandići to defend the village – we had stayed there until 27th April 1992. Around 6 AM, a column of armoured vehicles and tanks arrived from the direction of Kravica. They were looking for people and, when they saw there was nobody there, they started shooting and breaking into houses. A part of the column stopped in Sandići, while the other part kept moving on. They completely blocked the area. They took over positions on higher ground and encircled us. They wanted to show us that they were present in all parts of the region. There were tri-coloured flags on soldiers' caps and sleeves. Most of them were wearing green JNA uniforms. There were no special markings on the tanks. Those were green JNA tanks. At that time, I noticed helicopters and planes in the area. All aircraft were military.

In 1993, Chetniks started narrowing down the area which we could live in. Even if we were living in a safe area, they were taking over territories all the time. At the end of 1994 and beginning of 1995, Chetniks were working/the same as in the original/ on different roads throughout the enclave. They were working on those roads so that they could deploy their artillery weapons. In June 1995, the VRS⁴ took over an observing post of Dutch Army in the area of Zeleni Jadar. After that, we all knew that this safe place was no longer safe. From that moment, it became clear to us that Muslims should leave the area. People started panicking, but actually nothing had happened until the fall of the enclave which happened on 11th July 1995.

10th and 11th July 1995

On 10th July 1995 at around 11 PM, we went to the post office in Srebrenica where I met commandants of the headquarters and commandants of units of the 28th Division: Ibro Dudić; commandants of the 282nd Brigade; Hazim Džananović, acting Chief of Staff of the 28th Division; Amir Kulagić, assistant commander for morale from the 283rd Brigade; Ramiz Bećirović, Chief of Staff of the 28th Division; Ekrem Salihović, the assistant commander for intelligence; Nedžad Bektić, assistant security commandant; Ibrahim Bećirović, Head of Communications and Colonel Karresman who arrived on 11th July at around 00:30 midnight. Karresman wanted us to withdraw our soldiers from the area in his zone of responsibility because Serbs were given an ultimatum to withdraw their

Sabic Vejiz-16-05-02.doc/md

¹ Translator's note: abbreviation for Yugoslav People's Army

² t/n: abbreviation for the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina

³ t/n: a derogatory nickname for Serbs originating from the Serbian guerrilla forces in the WW2

⁴ t/n: abbreviation for the Army of the Republic of Srpska

forces until 6 AM, otherwise they were threatened with the NATO strikes.

We acted according to the instructions of Colonel Karresman and withdrew our forces. I was in Viogor with most of members of my unit. We started looking for food. I deployed my unit all along the line which was invisible, by the way, since we were expecting enemy to come there. We did not dig in. I also want to mention that, two days prior to the attack, I personally saw vehicles of the VRS Headquarters Liaison Department in Kiprov. As I was serving as a field radio operator, I knew exactly which vehicles they were using. The main logistics support of the VRS in the operation in Srebrenica was located in Bajina Bašta, Serbia. I know this because, in an intercepted conversation, I heard them using the name "Bašta". At that time, it was a known fact that the VRS were using Bajina Bašta. At that time, chief of communications of the 284th East Bosnian Light Infantry Brigade was Fadil Muminović. We were equipped for intercepting conversation using RUP 12 radio and Motorolas.

I was communicating with the Headquarters using Motorola. We were still in reserve in Viogor and we were waiting for further instructions. Chetniks were trying to break through from Sućeska, which was in the 281st Brigade's zone of responsibility. Sound of battles was coming from the area of Lipovac to the area of Viogor. We could see an equipped column of the VRS soldiers moving towards Srebrenica. The shelling of Srebrenica started and we could no longer see the town through the smoke. On 11th July at around noon, Serbs started entering Srebrenica.

I want to explain briefly to you now about what was happening with the rest of my family. While I was on the Viogor hill, my wife was at our home in Srebrenica with our daughters who were 6 and 12 at the time. On 11th July, I sent her a messenger from Viogor. The message was that she should leave the house and join women and children who gathered in Potočari. At that time, I firmly believed that Chetniks did not have any intentions to hurt women and children. Using the messenger, I advised her to leave with the first groups, which she did. Together with other women and children, she safely arrived in Kladanj with the convoy. Then, together with all the other refugees from Srebrenica, she left to the Dubrave air base. My brother picked her and the children up in Dubrave and took them to Tuzla where he was living.

At around 1:30 PM, two NATO planes flew over us. They dropped two signal flares and Serbs kept on pushing forward. I could see Serbs were not afraid. Ten minutes later, a plane returned and dropped two bombs, but it did not have any effect.

At that moment, I knew that Srebrenica would fall and that we had to find solutions for ourselves. At that moment, Zulfo Tursunović was with me. He was the Commandant of the 281st Light Infantry Brigade. Hakija Meholjić, Commandant of the Srebrenica MUP⁵ /as in the original/. The messenger approached us and told us that Srebrenica fell and that we should move towards Šušnjari. The messenger told us it was an order from the Division's headquarters. I sent the messenger to tell this to members of my unit who were deployed on the line towards Šušnjari. At the same time, another messenger came and passed an order that we should stay in that position and wait for Ramiz Bećirović there. I stayed there to wait for him with a small group of people. Bećirović arrived at around 4 PM and told me that he never issued an order for withdrawing our forces from the line. We set down with Hakija Meholjić, Ramiz and Ibrahim Bećirović and Nedžad Bektić and we all decided to join the majority of civilians and army in Šušnjari since, at that moment, it was the most logical thing to do. When we arrived in Šušnjari, we would decide on our next steps.

Sabic Vejiz-16-05-02.doc/md

⁵ t/n: abbreviation for the Ministry of Interior

We arrived in Šušnjari between 5 and 6 PM and found many civilians and soldiers there. Since people had already been there, we were told that some of the commandants had been waiting in one house. We went to that house and found Ibro Dudić, Amir Kulagić, Ibrahim Mandžić and some municipal leaders there. The meeting was held in Sidik Ademović's house. He was an assistant security commandant in the 280th Brigade. He also attended the meeting. Bećirović tried to establish connection with Tuzla. Then, we decided our only option was to head off towards Tuzla on foot. It was decided that we leave at around midnight, 11th/12th July. Since almost all of the members of my unit were from the area of Sandići, Konjević-Polje, Cerska, Kamenica and other places located towards Tuzla, we assumed that we were the ones who knew that area the best, so I was in charge of leading the column towards Tuzla. During the meeting, Ejup Golić, the Commandant of the Independent Battalion from the 28th Division arrived. I also learned that Tursunović was with us at the time.

12th July 1995

Around 00:30 after midnight on 12th July, I headed off with my unit towards the free territory. I explained our responsibilities to our unit. There were around 3.000 people in my unit, so we divided it into several smaller units. I issued an order to Ejup Dedić, my Head of the Headquarters, so he was in charge of communication between different units. I myself took a reconnaissance group for scouting, detection and breakthrough operations on enemy lines. My unit was a reconnaissance unit with around 15 people. They were walking a few hundred metres in front of the unit. On some occasions, they were much farther – a few kilometres away from the unit. At the moment we left Šušnjari, there were around 150 of us. Our unit consisted of the best soldiers from different units.

Although it was very dark, the guides were able to lead us and so we reached a small forest. Next, we decided to bypass this area since it was very likely that Chetniks would attack us from an ambush in the area of Bar – the then terrain was like that. We were walking for a long time and, around 6 in the morning we arrived in the nearby village of Kamenica. As we were walking, Serbs started shooting towards the front of the column but, when they realised how big the column was, they stopped shooting. They were probably afraid that we would most likely shoot back. When we arrived in Kamenica, Bećirović issued an order for me to stop there and wait for the Division's Command. When I reached Kamenica, the end of the column was still in Šušnjari. While I was waiting, I rearranged my unit in order to prevent Serb's attack and I sent 15 of my people to scout. The group's task was to check the area. Around 12:00 noon, I met Bećirović, Tursunović, Meholjić and all the other commandants. The only person absent was Ejub Golić, since he was in charge of protecting the rear of the column. The shelling started and the first wounded soldiers were somewhere in the middle of the column. We talked about which direction we should take and how we should deploy our forces. I suggested we started moving immediately, but we decided after all that we stay there for a while.

In the meantime, the scouts had already crossed over the road (Nova Kasaba – Konjević-Polje) and reached the village of Tumače. At the same time, I learned that the road was still clear and that it was safe for the column to cross over. The reconnaissance group also informed us that they walked through the open fire in Jelah before they reached Tumači.

Since I was monitoring the situation development, I noticed that Serbian forces were deployed along the Kravica – Konjević-Polje road. They were deploying soldiers who were arriving in buses and trucks and they were deploying them along the road. I saw they were deploying “Pragas” and other anti-aircraft cannons on the trucks. Heavy artillery was deployed in Rogač and Milića hill. It was an elevated spot in the area. I could not make out the units and individuals deployed along the road since I was far from them.

The column had stayed in Kamenica until 6 PM when I decided to insist on leaving right away. I told them that they would shell us if we do not move. At that moment, there were around 12.000 people and it was dangerous for us to stay there. Ultimately, I told them that, if we had to stay, I would still leave with my unit. That is exactly what I said to Ramiz Bećirović. So, after our conversation, we decided that the column should leave. Several minutes past 6 PM, the column headed off. We went through Pobuđe towards the asphalt road. We intended to cross over the Nova Kasaba - Konjević-Polje road. As we were passing through the village of Krajnovići, Chetniks started attacking the front of the column. We kept walking as they were yelling at us from all sides and using different kinds of weapons. We kept walking and finally arrived in the area above Burnice, more precisely we arrived in the village of Jukići. It was getting dark and the noise lowered. Bećirović ordered me to stop and wait for another order. We arrived in Jukići at around 9 PM and I deployed my unit in order to secure the area. I was communicating with the scouts who had already arrived in Cerska and they told me that the road was still safe. Several hours later, Bećirović arrived and told me that many people were murdered and wounded in Chetniks’ shelling. The purpose of the meeting was to check if we were still with the group. They were afraid that I would leave without them. The meeting was also held to inform the others on our next meeting that was supposed to be held in Udrč.

13th July 1995

So, I headed with my unit towards the Nova Kasaba – Konjević-Polje road. It was very dark, but I remember that we passed through the villages of Krhke and Bačići. We were getting closer to the road and we turned left towards Nova Kasaba as we wanted to avoid the bridge – we were afraid of the ambush. We got to a small stream. There, I sent my people to the left and to the right to cover the road. I was personally walking down the road for 10-15 seconds. When people saw that the road was safe, they ran in a stampede to the other side. Just as a part of the column ran through the field, we saw a convoy of vehicles (two trucks, one bus, two or three small automobiles – this is what I saw). I ordered my people not to shoot and to take cover. The convoy passed by. At that moment, I was around 30 m away from the road, while a part of the group was just besides the road. It is possible that they noticed us at that moment. None of the two sides was shooting as we crossed over the asphalt road. We crossed at around 2 or 3 in the morning. We came to the Jadar River and crossed it. The river was wild. We kept walking until we reached the Udrč Mountain. I reached the Udrč Mountain at around 7 AM. A lot of people caught up with me during night because I was exhausted, so they arrived before me. On my way to the Udrč Mountain, I heard rumours about many people being killed. When I reached Udrč, we all took a break there and we noticed how the newly-arrived people were acting strange. People told me about different rumours, and later it

turned out that many of those rumours were true. For example, I was told that Ibro Dudić got killed. Much later, it turned out this was true. People were talking about a big explosion that happened in one of the groups, and everyone was talking about a big tree that fell down right in front of them and how hundreds of people died in the explosion. I rested in Udrč on 13th July until 3 or 4 PM.

A meeting with Bećirović and all the commandants was scheduled. We were expecting Ibro Dudić to arrive soon and we were trying to sort out the rumours in order to determine which of them were true. We had to make a decision on whether we should go back and help people who were cut off, or keep walking towards Tuzla. We took into consideration everything we could; namely, we were not trained or mentally prepared for such an operation. I suggested someone replace me so I could go back and help people who stayed behind. Just at that time, I was informed that a part of the convoy that was cut off managed to cross over with Dudić and that they were moving towards us. Later, this turned out to be a lie. Between 3 and 4 PM, Serbs started shelling the Udrč Mountain from the area of Liješanj, so we quickly made a decision to keep walking towards Tuzla and I led the column with my unit. Part of soldiers in my unit was wearing uniforms. I was also wearing a uniform, but most people did not wear it. Only around 30 members of my unit were wearing uniforms.

At that moment, the shelling became heavy and then stopped. After a mutual decision was made, Ejub Golić stayed on the Udrč Mountain to wait for Ibro Dudić and the rest of the column. Later, I was told that only small group arrived, whereas Dudić and the rest of the column never showed up.

After we left Udrč, we arrived in Glodi and a reconnaissance group had already arrived in Velja Glava. On our way from Udrč to Glodi, I was informed through a radio device that there was a large obstacle in Velja Glava. In our dictionary, obstacle means an ambush. The reconnaissance group asked us to move faster and to provide support if something happened. I forgot to say that, all along the way as we were walking, I was intercepting Chetniks' conversations. After I spoke to the reconnaissance group, I heard some Chetniks from Liješanj saying on the radio: "Prey passed by – get ready!" and, just as Chetniks said that, I was passing through Glodi. Since I knew where the ambush was, we decided to keep moving towards Velja Glava. We made a deal to meet the reconnaissance unit at the Glođansko Hill, just after the village of Glodi. I was informed that there is a large number of Serbian soldiers in the ambush and that the ambush could not be broken through. We decided to pass round Velja Glava and turn right towards the Drina River. It was around 9 PM and we were moving towards the village of Ravne. From there, we continued walking towards Liplje until we arrived in the area above Liplje on 14th July between 4 and 5 in the morning.

14th July 1995

It was very difficult to move through that area, but we did not have any choice if we wanted to pass round Velja Glava. As far as I could see, around 2.000 of us arrived in the area above the village of Liplje. However, some people estimated there were around 5.000 to 6.000 people there. We stayed there until the sunset. At that moment, we were in the background of Chetniks. Everything was going on well until 7 AM, when Chetniks carried out an attack on us.

They started shooting at us and, when we started shooting back, they withdrew. I cannot remember which unit they belonged to because they were too far – 150 to 100 metres away from us. We had major problems with our own men at that time because they were exhausted and starving. Some of them were hallucinating, some were jumping and singing and some started moving towards Chetniks to surrender. That was when people started taking their own lives. From that place, we were able to clearly see the village of Kula Grad. We saw movements of soldiers and their equipment. We knew that they could see us from there, as well. At the same time, weather started changing and it got very cloudy. Between 2 and 3 PM, the Command of the 28th Division, commandants and I made a common decision that the smartest thing to do was to leave the area because we were completely sure that Chetniks saw us. I asked Ramiz Bećirović to let us leave before the rest of the column does. The reconnaissance unit was in Marčiči. Just as I was leaving, the group that left before us informed us that there is an ambush in Marčiči.

On this occasion, I want to mention that, in my estimation, 1.500 people had been armed before we left Šušnjari. During all these events in the course of several days, a large number of armed people surrendered. So, in my estimation, 500 to 600 people were still armed when we arrived in Marčiči. Those were mostly automatic rifles; there were only few M84 machine guns and two “Zolja” launchers which turned out to be out of order later when they tried to use them.

After Bećirović approved our request, we headed off towards Lipalj. I remember we walked across a school yard. It was around 3:30 PM then. We went to a small forest located between the villages of Lipalj and Maričiči. There, I found members of my reconnaissance unit who told me that Chetniks had set up an ambush so, I sent a messenger to inform the rest of the column about the ambush and to tell them that as many of them should gather in the forest so we could break through the enemy's line. According to my estimation, 5.000-6.000 people were with me in the column at that moment. In the beginning, we had no idea what was waiting for us, but the next moment we saw enemy soldiers in heavy armoured vehicles coming from different directions. They were around two to three metres away from each other. We saw tanks, armoured vehicles and “Pragas” approaching us. At that moment, I decided to send an offensive group to carry out an attack just in front of us. Serbs opened artillery fire from all directions and people started panicking. I started commanding in the attack and many people jumped and started an attack shouting “Tekbir”, “Allahu ekber” and similar things. The shouts sounded more like cries for survival than attacking shouts or anything else. We managed to break through the enemy lines and I was in front of the column. Then, I guess it was between 5 and 6 PM when I received a telephone call saying that I should go back to the woods where I had been before the attack since one enemy officer was captured and I should see him. I came back to the woods and saw the captured officer. We used his Motorola to contact his superior officer who was using a code name “Gavro”. I learned that the captured officer's name was Zoran Janković alias Zoka. He told us that he was a nephew of Ostojić who had worked at the Ministry of Interior in Sarajevo before the war. I think that he was on a high position in the RS. Janković told us that he was a commandant of the special police unit with the rank of a Major. Janković was captured by a soldier from my reconnaissance unit. I forgot his name, but I remember his nickname was Trule and that he still lives in Tuzla.

We used Janković to ask Chetniks to cease fire and Gavro promised he would see what he could do. During the negotiations, he told us that the column should stop. We still kept asking them to let the column go and we told them it was not our intention to carry out any kind of attack; we just wanted to pass. In the meantime, I issued an order to my reconnaissance unit to go to the area above Marčići. When I realised the negotiations failed, I ordered the column to keep moving and I went towards Marčići. Chetniks were shooting at us from all directions with different kinds of weapons. I was in the front of the column and we arrived at the area above Marčići, more precisely in the village of Panduri. There, I regrouped my men and we took a short rest. We arrived there at around 9 PM.

It was getting dark and visibility was poor, and I was informed that all groups from the column passed the ambush and arrived safely, but I did not see if people were actually arriving or how many of them there were. I was told that six or seven men from my unit got killed, along with approximately 20 more other people from the column. At that moment, number of wounded people was high. Since I was at the front of the column, I could not estimate precisely number of wounded and killed people.

Around 9 PM, I decided to send my reconnaissance unit to check the Caparde – Zvornik road. The area was new to me; I had never been there before so, from that moment, I was only following instructions of my guides. After a break, at around 11 PM, we received an order from the Command and Ramiz Bećirović; so I ordered the column to start moving towards the main road Caparde – Zvornik. The front of the column crossed over the road without any problems. Since it was dark, I was not able to see and I could not estimate how many people crossed the road. I was exhausted and fell asleep on the road. I think it was around midnight, on 14th/15th July.

15th July 1995

My men woke me up between 3 and 4 AM and I kept moving with the column. I managed to catch up with the front of the column. When the rest of the column crossed over the road, I was attacked from the direction of Zvornik. It was around dawn. We were shot at with infantry weapons for about ten minutes. After the attack, the rest of the column crossed over the road successfully.

Our guides did an excellent job from the very beginning. However, when we crossed over the road and entered the woods, the guides informed me they did not know how to get to Tuzla since they did not know the way. They were extremely exhausted and hungry. I tried to find new guides among those who had previously attempted to go through that area, but they informed that they were not sure about those roads. We decided to use two hills that were ahead of us as landmarks. We split our three groups into half so we could offer better resistance in case of an ambush. I do not remember the name of the leader of a group that consisted of members of the Support Company from the headquarters of the 28th Division; but I do remember that Ejub Golić was the leader of the third group. I was on the right wing, Ejub Golić was on the left one, and Support Company from the Headquarters was in the middle.

We left the woods and headed off towards the hills that we had previously chosen to be our landmarks. We departed between 7 and 8 AM and walked for about an hour when we reached an obliterated village. They told us the village was called Gušteri. All that time, I was using a Motorola to communicate with leaders of the second group. Since I was on the right wing, I could see Karakaj

and surrounding area from that village. Based on what I saw, I realised we were moving in the wrong direction. I issued an order to the leaders of the second group to stay still until we find better landmarks. At that moment, I realised I had a map of the area and from that moment we moved much more easily. I signed the map and put the date on it, and I enclosed it with the statement.

I want to add that, after the event in Marčići, radio communication between the enemy and us was ended. We tried to establish contact a few times, but they did not respond pretending they could not hear us. However, they did not use radio device as much as they did since they knew that we were listening their conversations and that we had a Motorola. I think they changed frequencies.

We decided to turn left towards Križevići and Potočari. We went back to the woods and took over the others. It was around noon. During all that time, captured Janković was walking with us, somewhere in the middle of the column. The last time I saw him was when we were in Križevačke Njive. The column went through Križevačke Njive without any problems and we all gathered in a forest. I think it was about 3 PM. I was using my map and decided to send my reconnaissance unit to the area in front of us. I think it was in the area above Seferovići, it could have been at around 4 PM. When they returned, they informed that the area was clear, but there were signs that someone had recently been there before us. I concluded we were near an enemy line. Together with Ejub Golić and a small group of members (around 60 of them) of my unit, we climbed a small hillside and reached one bend to scout the area around us. When I reached the bend, I could not my eyes – I saw the free territory in front of us. From that spot, I was able to see a mosque in the village of Nezuk. I had been in that village before the war and I knew what the village looked like. The mosque was only slightly damaged so I used it as a landmark as the column was moving.

My Motorola was with me all the time and I was constantly trying to find a frequency everyone else was using for communication. I wanted to establish a contact, too. We reached a forest sometime after 4 PM. I managed to find one frequency that was used by Chetniks. I can clearly recall a conversation that was, I assume, led between an officer and his subordinate officer. The conversation went something like this:

“Is everything going according to plan?”

“It is okay”.

Then, they were talking about regrouping some units for a bit, but they used code names so I was not able to understand everything. After that, the superior officer told to his subordinate:

“Drown them all,” (meaning: kill them all). “Do not let anyone pass”.

I was searching for channels all the time in order to see if I could hear anyone. At one moment, I heard my brother Velid Šabić's voice. At the time, my brother was in a remote command post of the 24th Division, in the Zvornik Brigade's zone of responsibility. The Zvornik Brigade was commanded by Šemso Muminović.

Šemso Muminović and Naser Orić interfered in a conversation with my brother. I did not know where they were and I was trying to explain where we were. We had to be careful and we had to know exactly where they were so we would not attack them. Using my map, I explained to them that the village of Motovo was two kilometres to the right. I assumed their plan was to break through the line in Tisova Kosa, towards Potočari.

I ordered my reconnaissance unit to move and check the area on our right. A guide was with a group; he knew the position of our forces in the free territory. Šemso Muminović, Naser Orić and my brother insisted on talking to the guide, so I left the place where our reconnaissance unit was and went to get him. When I arrived there, I tried to remind the guide where we actually were, since he was completely distracted and lost. At that moment, I remember that I saw some flashes and I realised that a tank attacked us. I was shot in the back. Seven to ten of my men got killed. Ejub Golić was among them. 15 – 20 people were wounded. After that, heavy artillery fire was commenced; they were shooting with all kinds of weapons. The attack lasted for about 20 minutes. After that, we heard heavy gunfire from the direction of where we believed was the 24th Division. Soldiers who were not wounded were carrying us, the wounded ones, back to the bend where we had been before. I guess it was around 5 PM. The rest of the column was in the woods so I sent the messenger there to ask for help. Around 50 people came to help us. When they saw what had happened, the remaining group started panicking. It was then when they told me that the rest of the column hiding in the woods is in complete chaos. People in the column could not be controlled anymore. In panic, they started taking their own lives. Ekrem Salihović alias Eka told me this. I concluded it was a matter of minutes before people in the column completely lost their minds, while Chetniks' attack was not ending. My suggestion was to break through the enemy lines as soon as possible and I told them help was coming from the other side (the Army of BiH), but that we did not have any more time to wait for them. We had no other choice but to carry out an attack in order to join our army on the other side. I tried to establish connection with the 24th Division, but Chetniks blocked all our attempts.

At the moment of the attack, I did not notice that the weather was changing. Suddenly, a great hailstorm started. The hail was size of a walnut and fog set in. It all lasted for 15 – 20 minutes and it weakened Chetniks' artillery's attack. We started carrying out our attack when the storm started. It turned out to be good for us.

Since I was wounded, Ekrem Salihović alias Eka was commanding 50 people in the first-wave attack. It happened on 15th July at around 6 PM, I think. I stayed on the bend. After the attack, Ekrem Salihović alias Eka informed me that they took over one artillery position from Chetniks and that they captured two tanks, one Praga and two broken trucks in the attack. The tanks were broken in the sense that we could not drive them, but we did use them to shoot on the enemy. In the meantime, Chetniks saw us and damaged the tank. The battle on the frontline lasted for a whole evening and night. In the meantime, the rest of the column who was resting there arrived and tried to help all the wounded ones.

16th July 1995

Around 4 or 5 AM, Eka visited all the wounded people. He told us that the line was about to be broken through any minute. He told us that all the wounded ones should be taken to the front of the column, so that we could be evacuated to Nežuk with the first group. We were walking for about 200 metres when a huge explosion happened and I felt I was flying. I was fighting for my own life. I was not able to breathe and I could not feel my legs. After that, I lost consciousness. I regained

consciousness approximately an hour before the corridor opened. I was not able to walk, so my men carried me over to the free territory. I know nothing about the negotiations regarding the opening of the corridor.

On the 15th of July. I heard a conversation between Šemso Muminović and Vinko Pandurević because a reporter that was in the remote command post in Nežuk made an audio tape of the conversation. The reporter's name was Ćamil, but I do not remember his last name (He was the first mayor of the municipality of Sapna). I am enclosing the tape with the statement. My brother Velid Šabić gave me the tape. Ćamil gave it to him.

Now, I wish to point out to the fact that I mentioned time intervals as I could remember them.

WITNESS CONFIRMATION

The statement was loudly read to me in Bosnian language and it contains everything I said as I knew it and remembered it. I voluntarily gave the statement and I am aware of the fact it can be used in judicial proceedings before the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, and that I may be subpoenaed to publicly testify before the Court.

Signature: /signature/

Date: 16th may 2002

INTERPRETER CONFIRMATION

I, Alma Omeragić, an interpreter, confirm the following:

1) I am adequately qualified and empowered by the Secretariat of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 to translate from Bosnian to English language and from English to Bosnian language.

2) Vejiz Šabić informed me that he speaks and understands Bosnian language.

3) I orally translated the aforementioned statement from English to Bosnian language in the presence of Vejiz Šabić who, evidently, heard and understood translation of this statement.

4) Vejuz Šabić confirmed that, according to his knowledge and memory, the facts and other things stated in the statement are true as I translated them. He confirmed this by signing the document in the designated space.

Date: 16th May 2002

Signature: /signature/