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**TRIAL AGAINST BOSNIAN SERB ALLEGED WAR CRIMINAL AND
TORTURER BEGINS OCTOBER 22 IN ATLANTA**

San Francisco, October 16, 2001 - On October 22nd, four Bosnian Muslims who were tortured in Bosnia in 1992 will have their day in court - in a federal courtroom in Atlanta, Georgia. The man they are suing, Nikola Vukovic, has lived in the Atlanta area since 1997. According to his lawyer, Vukovic will not be at his trial. His family says he is now in Bosnia.

The lawsuit is based on U.S. laws that authorize federal courts to hear tort claims, brought by citizens and non-citizens alike, against perpetrators of egregious human rights violations who have come to the United States.

"This case comes at a particularly important time," said Sandra Coliver, Executive Director of the Center for Justice and Accountability, a human rights law group that represents the four torture survivors. "Our country and the world are focused on the urgent need to ensure justice and accountability for terrorists who have committed crimes against humanity. This case highlights the capacity of U.S. courts to hold such perpetrators accountable under international and U.S. law. The case also underscores the U.S. legal system's commitment to justice for victims of crimes against humanity, whoever they are, be they Muslims from any part of the world, or our own citizens." Coliver continued, "If Vukovic did indeed flee the country, that is in itself a small victory. One reason for bringing this case was to send a clear message to perpetrators of such crimes, and would-be perpetrators, that they will not find a safe haven in the U.S. Moreover, we will seek a judgment that makes clear that the plaintiffs are entitled to any money Vukovic has or will earn during the rest of his life, beyond what he needs for the basic support of his family."

The lawsuit charges Vukovic, a Bosnian Serb, with beating and torturing the four plaintiffs and others following the April 1992 Bosnian Serb military takeover of Bosanski Samac in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina. All four plaintiffs are Bosniaks (Bosnian citizens of Muslim Slavic ancestry). Each of them was seized, held for several months, and subjected to repeated abuses in converted schools and warehouses in Bosanski Samac. Three of the four spent additional periods of up to two years in concentration and labor camps, all part of the Serbian campaign of "ethnic cleansing." Their assets were seized, including their homes and businesses, and their families were forced to flee. Two of them received political asylum in the U.S. with their families, one lives in Belgium, and the other in Germany.

The plaintiffs and other witnesses will present evidence at trial that Vukovic, acting in concert with other soldiers: beat them and others with metal pipes, baseball bats and chairs while taunting them with ethnic slurs; "branded" one of the plaintiffs by slicing his forehead with a knife while riding him like a horse and shouting abusive and degrading

ethnic slurs, and then forced plaintiff's bleeding head into a receptacle used as a toilet; repeatedly subjected plaintiffs and others to mock executions and rounds of "Russian Roulette"; forced them to witness killings, torture, rapes and other atrocities.

U.S. judges and juries have found several modern day perpetrators liable for grave human rights abuses, including former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. After Marcos was voted out of office, he moved to Hawaii; eventually his estate was ordered to pay nearly \$2 billion in damages.

CJA is joined in the case by the ACLU of Georgia. Lead counsel is volunteer CJA Attorney Paul Hoffman of the Venice-based law firm of Schonbrun, DeSimone, Seplow, Harris & Hoffman. Joshua Sondheimer, CJA's Litigation Director, Gerald Weber, the Legal Director of the ACLU of Georgia, and ACLU staff attorney, Robert Tsai, are co-counsel in the trial. The San Francisco law firm Brobeck, Phleger and Harrison is assisting on the case.

CJA was established in 1998 to provide redress to victims of human rights abuses and to pursue human rights violators found in the United States. CJA represents victims of human rights abuses in actions against perpetrators who live in or visit the U.S. In addition to the Bosnian case, CJA has cases pending against perpetrators from El Salvador and Chile. CJA, together with other human rights groups, recently won a \$66 million judgment against an Indonesian general for atrocities committed in East Timor. Trial is scheduled to commence on October 22, 2001, in U.S. District Court in Atlanta, before Senior Judge Marvin H. Shoob. The case is captioned Mehinovic, et al. v. Vukovic, N.D. Georgia No. 1:98-CV-2470 WHS.

For more information on the case, to obtain a press kit, to receive email updates regarding the trial or to arrange interviews with any of the principals, please contact: Sylvia Romo at Tel: 415-544-0444, x302, Fax: 415-544-0456, Email: sromo@cja.org .