

Center for Justice and Accountability

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/mehinovic-v-vuckovic/clients/>

Campaign and Advocacy

Kemal Mehinovic, a Bosniak (Bosnian citizen of Muslim Slavic ancestry), was born in 1956 in Bosanski Samac in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Prior to the break up of the former Yugoslavia in 1991, almost 33,000 Bosnian Croats (Catholics) and Bosnian Muslims lived in and around Bosanski Samac. By May 1995, as a result of the armed conflict and the Bosnian Serb militarys genocidal ethnic cleansing campaign, fewer than 300 Bosnian Croat and Muslim residents remained in the area.

On May 27, 1992, Kemal, a baker and restaurant owner, was taking a nap at home when Serb police and soldiers knocked on his door. They arrested him without a warrant, beat him in front of his wife and children, and took him to the police station to be interrogated. He was kept at the police station or at a nearby warehouse for the next six months. He was kept in squalid living conditions with little food and no medical care. He endured mock executions, extreme verbal abuse, and brutal beatings including blows to the genitals and beatings with metal pipes, wooden batons and other implements. Much of Kemals torture was at the hands of Nikola Vuckovic. The two had known each other as neighbors in the same town. In fact, Kemal had employed Vuckovics brother-in-law at his bakery before the war.

Over the next two years, Kemal was transported to a series of labor camps, detention centers and concentration camps. In early 1993, he was found guilty of killing Serb children in a Serb show-trial without witnesses or evidence. He was sentenced to death.

In October 1994, Kemal was released in Sarajevo as part of an exchange with Serb prisoners. It was two and a half years from the time he was initially arrested by the Serb police. Upon release, he walked over one hundred miles into Croatia to find his family. He and his family arrived in the United States as refugees on July 12, 1995.

Since coming to the United States, Kemal has done building maintenance and worked as a delivery driver. He has suffered permanent physical and emotional injuries as a result of the abuse he suffered by Vuckovic and others. He is currently not working due to his disabilities but remains a leader within the Bosnian community, and was responsible for helping over one hundred of his neighbors to flee Bosnia. Kemal currently resides with his family in Utah.

In early 1998, Kemal contacted CJA. He had learned that Vuckovic was living in the Atlanta area. CJA filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Atlanta on behalf of Kemal and three other Bosniaks who had also been tortured by Vuckovic in detention camps from 1992-1994.

On April 29, 2002, the trial judge issued a judgment finding Vuckovic liable for severe acts of physical and mental torture that amounted to crimes against humanity because they were committed in furtherance of the Bosnian Serb governments campaign of ethnic cleansing. The judge ordered Vuckovic to pay \$35 million to each of the four plaintiffs.

Muhamed Bicic was born and raised in Bosanski Samac. He and his brother owned a restaurant, two cafes, and a game parlor. Muhamed and Vuckovic were well acquainted before the war, the defendants wife having worked in Muhameds restaurant.

On or about April 18, 1992 Muhamed was arrested at his home by masked men who took him and his brother to the police station and then later to a detention center. After being transferred to several different centers and camps, Muhamed was held at Osnovna Skola, a primary school in Bosanski Samac that was converted into a detention center. Vuckovic personally sought out Muhamed and repeatedly beat and abused him. Vuckovic beat him and others with implements including metal pipes, a rifle butt, a wooden bat, a two-by-four board, a chair leg, boots and fists. Muhamed was released in a prisoner exchange in November 1992.

Due to the repeated injuries to his head, back and hands during the harsh beatings, Muhamed continues to suffer headaches, back pains and other injuries and remains unemployed. Muhamed and his family have been granted temporary refugee status and are currently living in Germany.

Safet Hadzialijagic was born in Bosanski Samac. Before the war, he was the manager of the areas municipal water system.

On April 20, 1992, Safet was arrested and forcibly escorted out of his apartment by Serb police. Over the next year, he was transferred to at least six different detention centers and labor camps. While being detained at the Osnovna Skola primary school, Vuckovic subjected Safet to particularly harsh treatment and torture. He was subjected to bouts of Russian roulette and often feared he would be killed. On one occasion Vuckovic branded Safet with a knife, slicing his forehead and then forcibly dunking his head into a container used as a toilet by other detainees.

Safet was released from detention in or about May 1993. He arrived in Belgium as a refugee with his family in November 1993. He continues to suffer physical and emotional injuries as a result of the torture and abuse he suffered while in detention. He currently lives near Brussels and is unemployed.

Hasan Subasic was born in Odzak, Bosnia. He moved to Bosanski Samac with his mother at the age of three and was raised there. Subasic worked as a welder in Bosnia.

On April 24, 1992, Hasan was detained by the Serb police and was sent to concentration camps at Brcko and Bijeljina. On May 13, 1992, he was returned to Bosanski Samac and held at the Osnovna Skola primary school.

At the primary school, Hasan was frequently beaten, and had four of his teeth forcibly pulled out by his torturers. Vuckovic beat Hasan on at least two occasions. His detention at the school overlapped with two other plaintiffs in the case, Muhamed Bicic and Safet Hadzialijagic. Hasan was held at the school for approximately five months before being transferred to the Batkovic concentration camp. He was detained there from November 1992 until June 1994. By the time he was reunited with his family, he had been detained for 27 months.

Hasan and his family entered the United States as refugees in September 1995. He now lives in Salt Lake City with his family, and works full time as a welder.



Center for Justice and Accountability
268 Bush St #3432
San Francisco, CA 94104

T: 415 544 0444
F: 415 544 0456



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GERALD GRAY FOUNDED CJA IN 1998 AND CONTINUES
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Tax ID# 94-3299-686
(415) 544-0444 • www.cja.org



***"We will never catch all the torturers—but we will always catch some,
and none of them will ever know who is next."***