



The Bosnian American Genocide Institute and Education Center Commemorating
the 16th Anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide

One of the most important ways to remember the genocide in Srebrenica and all of Bosnia from 1992 to 1995 is to commemorate the atrocities every July 11, and to pay deepest tribute to the innocent lives who were victims of genocide.

The anniversary raises awareness of the tragic suffering of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian people and honors and remembers those who died as a result of the genocide and aggression committed in Bosnian and Herzegovina in 1992-1995. It also calls upon all citizens to work toward ending the cycle of violence and to promote a peaceful coexistence among all people on earth.

The Srebrenica massacre, in which more than eight thousand Bosniak males and boys were executed by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995, is widely recognized as the worst single war crime committed in Europe since World War II and the first legally established case of genocide in Europe by international courts.

Srebrenica has also become synonymous with a great failure of the international community for the reason that this crime took place in a “safe area” established by the United Nations, whose peace-keeping troops were supposed to protect this area and its unarmed people. The whole world was able to watch and read what went on in Srebrenica and its enclaves in July 1995.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) condemned the crime as an act of genocide on April 19, 2004. In February 2007, another court, The International Court of Justice, confirmed ICTY’s verdict in the judgment of Bosnia vs. Serbia, finding that Serbia had violated the obligation to prevent genocide, an obligation set forth in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The United States acknowledges the importance of this event. On September 30, 2003, former US President Bill Clinton officially opened the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial to honor the victims of the genocide. "We remember this terrible crime because we dare not forget, because we must pay tribute to the innocent lives, many of them children who were snuffed out in what must be called genocidal madness," Clinton said.

On June 22, 2005, the United States Senate passed a resolution (S. Res. 134) sponsored by Senator Gordon Smith and Senator Joseph Biden, commemorating ten years of the Srebrenica genocide.

On June 27, 2005, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution (H. Res. 199) sponsored by Congressman Christopher Smith and Congressman Benjamin Cardin, also commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. The resolution states that “... the policies of aggression and ethnic cleansing as implemented by Serb forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 and 1995 with the direct support of Serbian regime of Slobodan Milošević and its followers ultimately led to the displacement of more than 2,000,000 people, an estimated 200,000 killed, tens of thousands raped or otherwise tortured and abused, and the innocent civilians of Sarajevo and other urban centers repeatedly subjected to shelling and sniper attacks.” The resolution also recognizes that these acts “meet the terms defining the crime of genocide in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, created in Paris on December 9, 1948, and entered into force on January 12, 1951.”

The European Parliament passed a resolution January 15, 2009 calling on the European Union's (EU) executive authorities to commemorate July 11 as a day of remembrance of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica and mourning for the lost lives.

The EU resolution states: “Calls on the Council and the Commission to commemorate appropriately the anniversary of the Srebrenica-Potočari act of genocide by supporting Parliament's recognition of 11 July as the day of commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide all over the EU, and to call on all the countries of the western Balkans to do the same.”

The Bosnian American Institute and Education Center (BAGI) appreciates that the State of Illinois has adopted a resolution commemorating and honoring all the victims of the Srebrenica Genocide.

On March 17, 2010, the State of Illinois 97th General Assembly passed the Srebrenica Resolution HR0712 commemorating the 15th anniversary of the genocide and recognizing “the importance of this event <commemoration>, which seeks to bring closure for the Bosnian and Herzegovinian people through justice and truth.” In the same resolution, a decision was made to dedicate the entire week surrounding the anniversary to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We at BAGI would like to express our gratitude to the sponsors of this Resolution, House Reps. Greg Harris, Harry Osterman, Mike Fortner, and the Bosnian American citizens and others in Illinois who have signed the petition for this Resolution, sponsored by the Bosnian American Library in Chicago (which is an integrated part of BAGI).

During the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, which democratically became its own independent state in April 1992 with the endorsement of the U.S., in addition to the substantial percentage of the population killed and displaced, one quarter of the total population of 4.6 million were forced to leave. Many of the heavily wounded, victims of concentration camps and rape camps, arrived in the U.S. Illinois has (along with Missouri) been the most welcoming state to our community, where more than 50,000 Bosnians (over 35,000 in the city of Chicago) found their new home.

Today we firmly stand here to confirm that we as human beings share the universal truth about the right and the wrong. The truth that we want to say, loudly and clearly, has been confirmed by many living and unfortunately many dead people as well. Experts from many renowned organizations, international courts and tribunals, survivors, witnesses, and exhumed remains from the mass graves all tell the same story. Sixteen years later, we continue to ask ourselves what could possibly motivate human beings to extinguish life in such a manner as we witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a complex question and we will not be able to answer it today, but what is also important is to consider what we can do to make it better for future generations.

The possibility for greater understanding in Bosnia and Herzegovina and throughout the world depends upon our realization that truth and justice are the first steps toward reconciliation. It is also a warning to future generation that this crime should never happen again to any group of people, anywhere or anytime.

A Srebrenica genocide survivor, Zuhra Osmanovic, works through the pain of loss and agrees that we must continue to educate others: “My husband Azem was killed and my 14-and-a-half-year-old son Mirnes was taken from my hands by one of Radovan Mladic’s soldiers on July 11, 1995. I have never seen my son since; his remains were found this year. I believe that we should dedicate July 11th to the victims of Srebrenica and commemorate that day every year, so that what happened will not be forgotten. My son is with us today. If we don’t talk or write about it, it will simply be forgotten as if it never happened.”

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