

Amnesty International Srebrenica: Still Waiting for the Truth



Women from Srebrenica, whose relatives are among the “disappeared”, living in a Collective Centre at Banovići, October 2001. ©AI

Ten years ago, at least 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were massacred in massive human rights violations in Srebrenica. This has been recognized as amounting to genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal). But although some perpetrators have been prosecuted at the Tribunal, indicted suspects including Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić and Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladić are still free.

Ten years after their husbands and sons were massacred, the women of Srebrenica are still waiting for the men who killed their husbands and sons to be brought to justice. They are still waiting for the Bosnian Serb authorities (Republika Srpska – RS) to tell them exactly what happened to their family members. The majority are still waiting for the bodies of their relatives to be returned to them for burial. They are still waiting to move on with their lives.

On 7 March 2003, in a case brought by 49 relatives of the "disappeared", the Human Rights Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Chamber) ordered the RS to immediately disclose all information which could establish the fate and whereabouts of the men and boys of Srebrenica, and on the location of mass graves containing the bodies of Srebrenica victims. They were also ordered to conduct an investigation into the events at Srebrenica and to publish their findings by the beginning of September 2003.

The RS authorities took no action until January 2004, when the “Srebrenica Commission” was established. In June and October 2004, the commission issued reports which included information about the participation of the RS police and armed forces in the massive human rights violations which took place in Srebrenica. Importantly the June report also acknowledged for the first time that 7,800 Bosnian Muslims were executed after the fall of Srebrenica. The report identified the location of 32 mass grave sites: 11 were previously unknown, and exhumation of these graves began at the end of June 2004.

In November 2004, the RS government for the first time apologized for human rights violations committed in and around Srebrenica between 10 and 19 July 1995. At the end of March 2005 the RS authorities subsequently forwarded a list of some 892 persons suspected

of involvement in Srebrenica to the State Prosecutor of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the list included many still employed by the RS government.

Act Now!

Please e-mail or write to the Bosnian Serb Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior:

Welcome the progress made in response to the decision of the Human Rights Chamber of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the publication of reports on the events at Srebrenica, and in particular the apology by the RS, in November 2004, for the massive human rights violations committed in and around Srebrenica between 10 and 19 July 1995. Welcome their forwarding of a list of some 892 suspects to the State Prosecutor of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 31 March 2005.

Urge them in this 10th anniversary year to honour all their obligations to the Human Rights Chamber and to the relatives of those who were killed at Srebrenica, by:

- immediately making available to their relatives all information on the fate of the men and boys who were massacred at Srebrenica;
- working in close cooperation with the State Prosecutor in any criminal investigations that may be opened into the events at Srebrenica, including by making further information available, so that all suspects may be brought to justice;
- arresting Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić, and other suspects indicted by the Tribunal for Srebrenica, and transferring them to the custody of the Tribunal.

Prime Minister

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Further Background Information

On 7 March 2003, the Human Rights Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina found that the human rights of family members of those who "disappeared" after the fall of the Srebrenica "safe area" in July 1995, had been violated by the continuing refusal of the RS authorities to inform them of what had happened to their loved ones.

The Chamber recognized the continuing pain and suffering of the relatives, and concluded that the RS had done "almost nothing to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the presumed victims of the Srebrenica events, or to take other action to relieve the suffering of their surviving family members, or to contribute to the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina." It further noted that the violations "reflect a total indifference by the authorities of the RS to the suffering of the Bosniak community".

The RS was also ordered to pay compensation for the collective benefit of all applicants and families of Srebrenica victims, in the form of a lump sum of four million Konvertible Marks (KM) - approximately two million Euros - to the Foundation of the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery (where the first burials of Srebrenica victims took place on 31 March 2003). The first two million KM have already been paid.

Some 8,000 boys and men of Bosniak origin were estimated to have been killed in the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica. However, the increasing number of human remains still being recovered from newly revealed mass graves in the area suggests that the number may rise to as many as 10,000 victims.