



Ten Years after Srebrenica
Statement by the International Center for Transitional Justice

On July 11, 2005, the world will commemorate the tenth anniversary of the massacre of as many as 8,000 Bosniak men and boys in the small town of Srebrenica in Republika Srpska (RS), the Serb-dominated entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The massacre—which the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) characterized as an act of genocide in *Prosecutor v. Krstic*—was carried out by a combination of irregular Serbian and Bosnian Serb forces led by ICTY indictee Ratko Mladic. As frequently noted, the Srebrenica massacre marked the worst single massacre on the European continent since World War II.

Justice for the victims of the Srebrenica massacre is long overdue. Of the hundreds involved in carrying out the killings, the ICTY has sentenced only six people to date. The alleged masterminds of the massacre—Mladic, and Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic—remain at large. In the RS, there have been few indictments in connection with the massacre.

At the same time, the truth about the events in Srebrenica has become impossible to deny, even in the RS. Acting under pressure from the Office of the High Representative, in December 2003 the RS National Assembly established the “Commission for Investigation of the Events in and around Srebrenica between the 10th and 19th of July, 1995.” The Commission’s final report prompted unprecedented official apologies from RS authorities. More recently, horrifying video evidence related to the massacre was introduced at the Milosevic trial in The Hague, and later televised in Serbia. Nevertheless, the truth has yet to be broadly accepted by a significant part of the Serbian public.

“Remembering the genocide in Srebrenica is certainly important, but it is also insufficient. If Bosnia is to turn the page on this dark episode in its recent history, much more will need to be achieved in the realms of truth and justice,” said Mark Freeman, Senior Project Manager at the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). “Parts of Serbian society continue to deny the massacre or to justify it as revenge for prior attacks on Serbian civilians. Ten years later, such denials and justifications are an affront to the memory of the civilians killed on all sides during the conflicts of the 1990s.”

The ICTJ's main partner in the former Yugoslavia, the Belgrade-based Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), echoed the call to remember the genocide in Srebrenica. It urged the public, as well as democratic political parties in Serbia, to reflect on the importance of facing the consequences of crimes committed in the country's name during past conflicts.

"The denial of the Srebrenica massacre has continued in Serbia. Under the pressure of visual records displaying the perpetrators from Serbia and the victims from Srebrenica, the public in Serbia went silent and demonstrated its capacity for compassion and solidarity for victims of the 'other side,'" said Natasa Kandic, founder and Executive Director of the HLC.

"The statement of Serbian President Boris Tadic on the eve of his departure to the commemoration in Potocari is quite clear on the admission of Serbian responsibility and the obligation to tell the truth about the past. This was a first; no prior expression of recognition of this sort had been made," Ms. Kandic continued. "Granted, it is unrealistic to expect that the defendants of Milosevic's regime will suddenly withdraw from the political stage or assist in revealing the complete truth of the war crimes committed against others. However, the process of individual and collective reflection on the past is now definitively underway in Serbia. This process is an essential precondition for the discontinuation of the links with the Milosevic era."

The ICTJ in the former Yugoslavia

The ICTJ has been involved in transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia since 2001. The Center has provided advice to truth-seeking and regional reconciliation initiatives; conducted research on issues such as the completion strategy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, domestic trials, vetting processes, reparations programs, and efforts to document war crimes in the region; and provided support to local NGOs and victims groups.

The ICTJ's two regional reports on transitional justice, "Serbia and Montenegro: Selected Developments in Transitional Justice" and "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Selected Developments in Transitional Justice" were released in October 2004.

The Humanitarian Law Center

A regional non-governmental human rights and humanitarian law organization, the Humanitarian Law Center was founded in 1992 following the outbreak of armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The HLC is based in Belgrade and has regional offices in Pristina and Prizren in Kosovo, Novi Sad in Vojvodina (opened in 1997), and in Podgorica, Montenegro (opened in 1999). Over 70 lawyers, attorneys, researchers, analysts, and other dedicated professionals work for the HLC on a full- or part-time basis. The HLC's website is: www.hlc.org.yu.

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