

Westminster Abbey



A SOLEMN COMMEMORATION
FOR
SREBRENICA MEMORIAL DAY



REMEMBERING
SREBRENICA

Monday 6th July 2015
Noon

THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

Humanity has lived through the darkest of times, but few events have stained our collective soul more than the Srebrenica genocide.

It seems unbelievable that, just twenty years ago, an inhuman plan could be hatched for ethnic cleansing in Europe, with more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys systematically and industrially murdered during the Bosnian War.

Equally astounding was the Army of Republika Srpska's success in co-opting civilians to secure its brutal goals through a carefully planned process of dehumanising Bosnian Muslims, that made it easier for murderers and collaborators to hunt and kill their enemy.

Dehumanisation leading to genocide is not new. In Nazi Germany, Jews were labelled as sub-human and likened to vermin. Hutu killers in Rwanda referred to Tutsi victims as cockroaches. Stripped of possessions, livelihoods, dignity and their essential humanity, Bosnian Muslims suffered a similar fate.

Described by the United Nations as 'the worst crime on European soil since the Second World War', the massacres at Srebrenica were classed as genocide by both the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia. Yet denial of this atrocity is widespread.

The lessons learned from Srebrenica are that hatred and intolerance can flourish if left unchallenged. Even in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where people of different faiths had lived peacefully together for many years, an integrated society disintegrated.

In 2009, the European Parliament declared 11th July the official day of remembrance for the victims of Srebrenica. On this day each year, we are asked to honour the victims and survivors of the genocide, and pledge ourselves to creating a better, stronger and more cohesive society in the United Kingdom.

These must be no empty pledges. We are committed to ensuring that people understand the horror that can be unleashed should we fail in our aim. The Srebrenica genocide is truly the darkest moment of human history since the Second World War. Thousands of innocent lives were taken in the name of nationalistic pride and because of their family names.

We must all understand the consequences of leaving hatred and intolerance unchallenged. By confronting these twin evils, we give ourselves hope of illuminating the darkness and creating a better, safer and stronger society for all.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, twenty candles will be lit by the following people:

Azir Osmanovic, survivor

The Right Honourable Greg Clark MP

The Baroness Williams of Trafford

The Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

Dr Waqar Azmi OBE

The Right Honourable Sir Eric Pickles MP

The Right Honourable Hilary Benn MP

The Right Honourable The Baroness Warsi

The Right Honourable Nick Clegg MP

Sara Subašić, granddaughter of Munira Subašić

Nejira Subašić, granddaughter of Munira Subašić

His Excellency The Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Court of St James

His Excellency The Ambassador of Croatia to the Court of St James

His Excellency The Ambassador of Kuwait to the Court of St James

His Excellency The Ambassador of The United Arab Emirates to the Court of St James

Her Excellency The Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Court of St James

His Excellency The Ambassador of Turkey to the Court of St James

The Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE

Yasmin Qureshi MP

Angus Robertson MP

All sit for

A TESTIMONY

by

Munira Subašić

President, Mothers of Srebrenica Association

I ADDRESS you today on behalf of thousands of mothers whose children were brutally murdered in the Srebrenica genocide. The United Kingdom deserves recognition for its leading role in honouring the memory of our victims. We also applaud the work of Remembering Srebrenica in learning the lessons from our past to help create a better, safer, stronger society for everyone.

Although it has been twenty years since this inhuman atrocity, some mothers are still searching for the bones of their children. That is our life now—our biggest problem and our greatest mission. I doubt all of you can understand the pain and suffering we must endure, but I am certain that any mother can.

Our children were systematically murdered twenty years ago, but we still cannot bury them with dignity. In this day and age, in the country you live in, this might sound impossible. In our country, it also seemed impossible, but in 1995 genocide was committed and the pain continues.

Over the past twenty years, mass graves have been hidden from us, crimes neglected, truth denied. It will not come as a surprise if we are told in a few years from now that we have never given birth to children; that we have never been mothers. And that hurts. It hurts the same way as it did twenty years ago. It hurts and doesn't stop.

I don't want to talk about politics, ethnic divisions, and religious differences. I speak to you as a human being and a mother. I stand before you, and you look at me as free people. Often, I stand before the murderers of our children and they look at me in the same way as you do. Free!

Even though they are the most wanted criminals by The Hague, we see them every day. Murderers, their associates, executioners—we look them in the eyes and beg them to tell us where the mass graves are. They remain silent and deny everything, as if we have never been mothers. Some of them threaten us while they hide behind the police uniforms they wear. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I live in a country where those who killed our children are now police officers.

Europe and the world bear responsibility for the genocide in Srebrenica. Silence on genocide is its approval. However, I firmly believe that twenty years later, Europe and the world can make things better.

Help us find the bones of our children! Ease our suffering by protecting the mother from the murderer of her child. Take the uniforms off our children's murderers. If there was no justice and mercy for more than 10,000 innocent men, women and children systematically murdered back in 1995, then please show some mercy and justice today.

We still believe in goodness. We believe that truth and justice are on our side. We bear no hatred towards those who executed this inhuman plan, because hatred is weakness and we refuse to be weak.

I appeal to you to stand by us to protect the most important human values. Stand shoulder to shoulder with us in challenging hatred and intolerance. Together, we can create a better, safer, stronger world.

All remain seated. His Excellency Husein Kavazović, Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, reads from the Great Lectern

QUR'AN 81: 1-14 (SURAH AT-TAKWIR)

In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful,

WHEN the sun is wrapped up [in darkness] and when the stars fall, dispersing, and when the mountains are removed, and when full-term she-camels are neglected, and when the wild beasts are gathered, and when the seas are filled with flame, and when the souls are paired, and when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed, and when the pages are made public, and when the sky is stripped away, and when Hellfire is set ablaze, and when Paradise is brought near, a soul will [then] know what it has brought [with it].

QUR'AN 3: 8-9 (SURAH ALE-IMRAN)

OUR Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower. Our Lord, surely You will gather the people for a Day [of judgement] about which there is no doubt. Indeed, Allah does not fail in His promise.