

A Statement by the Bosnian American Genocide Institute and Education Center on the Arrest of Ratko Mladic

The significance of the Serbian government's arrest of General Ratko Mladic as ordered by President Boris Tadic is enormous, as it enables the courts to start criminal proceedings against one of the worst war criminals. The indictment includes war crimes against humanity and international law during the aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995, as well as the genocide of Bosniaks in Srebrenica, where more than 8000 unarmed men and boys were killed and more than 25000 women, children, and elderly were expelled from their homes, all under direct orders from Mladic.

The Bosniak genocide victims will definitely feel some form of relief with the chance of seeking redress for both moral and material damages. The arrest and rightful convictions of Karadzic and Mladic will serve as a message to future generations that crimes cannot be swept under the rug and hidden from and that justice will prevail. Through the legal process of reaching the truth and through the admissions by those who committed the crimes and those political regimes that directed them, there is a chance for the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the whole ex-Yugoslavian region, to be given a healthier foundation, one of truth and justice.

One especially important goal in the criminal proceedings against Mladic and Karadzic in The Hague should be to prove the role of Serbia in the aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the genocide of Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The memory of the war on and for the Bosnian and Herzegovinian land should not be permitted to be one of a "civil" war nor that was the genocide of Bosniaks in Srebrenica and other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina committed by only Bosnian Serbs. The causes of the war can be found in the genocidal politics of the Belgrade regime of 1992-1995, with Slobodan Milosevic at the helm, which gave orders to Karadzic and Mladic, as well as financial and military support.

Now is the chance to prove that link. Unfortunately, Slobodan Milosevic died before the court's verdict, but now his puppets, his right hand as well as his left stand before the court.

It is also of importance to note that the work of courts must not be influenced by the politics of the countries from which the judges originate nor should it be influenced by the relationships of political powers in the world. The active role of Bosniaks, the victims of aggression and genocide, as well as their political, national, humanitarian, and media structures, and also the political willingness of Europe, the U.S., and the whole world, are all necessities in the process of the legal path to prove and publish the truth about the aggression of its neighboring countries against the internationally recognized, independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the truth about the genocidal politics and role of Serbia in the execution of genocide of Bosniaks, politics of which general Ratko Mladic was an extension and executor.

Director,

Sanja Seferovic Drnovsek

We hope that the arrest of Ratko Mladic proves to be a key moment and a catalyst for progress in the Balkans, and specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the arrest is long overdue, it may provide the victims of Srebrenica, and all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, some closure to the horrible crimes against humanity (including genocide) that were committed under the command of Mladic. We hope that justice will be served and the truth prevail in the Hague.

Lejla Ovcina,

Board Member

I must tell you how much of a relief it was to see that Mr. Mladic had finally been captured. I almost couldn't believe it when the first news broke here. The capture, however, has been bittersweet. While it is good for justice to know that he will stand trial, it is a horrible reminder of not only the heinous acts that he perpetrated on the Croatian and especially the Bosniak people, but it is also a reminder of how inept or unwilling the Serbian government was to arrest him for all these years. Justice will never be completely served but at least he will likely never have another taste of freedom in his natural life.

Edin Seferovic

Board Member