

Illinois: July 11 declared a day of mourning for the victims of Srebrenica Genocide

February 13, 2010

Resolution invites all citizens of Illinois to jointly advocate to stop the cycle of violence.

The State of Illinois General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution HR712, which declared July 11th as Srebrenica Remembrance Day and the week of July 11th as Bosnia and Herzegovina Tribute Week in the State of Illinois.

As stated, the resolution also called upon all citizens of the State of Illinois to jointly advocate to stop the cycle of violence and promote peaceful coexistence among all people on Earth.

State representatives Greg Harris and Harry Osterman jointly sponsored the Resolution.

The passing of the resolution by the state authorities was made possible by efforts of following Bosnian Americans:

- Sanja Drnovsek-Seferovic - Director of the Bosnian-American Institute for Genocide
- Ferid Sefer - member of the Board of Directors of the Bosnian-American Institute for Genocide and education who also serves as the Secretary of the **Congress of North American Bosniaks** and the creator of the web magazine "Chicagoraja".
- Ivica Jurišić, President of the BiH Club
- Samija Hajdarevic Diab, who was forced to leave Bosnia with two her two young sons,
- Emin Drnovsek-Seferovic - an 8th grade student of the "Taft" school

Below is the speech given by Sanja Seferovic Drnovsek to the Illinois Legislature on February 3, 2010.

Honorable Members of the State Government Administrative Committee,

A Resolution has been placed before you to set aside July 11 as the annual day to remember the Srebrenica Genocide and the week of July 11 as the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Tribute week in State of Illinois .

Be it further, we call upon all the citizens of the State of Illinois to work toward ending the cycle of violence and to promote peaceful coexistence among all people on earth.

This is an historical moment and I am honored to have an opportunity to speak for Bosnian American citizens in Illinois that have signed the petition for this Resolution in April last year which is the month that is dedicated to the prevention of genocide that has taken place, and still occurs, in whole world.

This Resolution is in compliance with; the U.S. House Resolution 134 (in 2005) and the U.S. Senate Resolution 199 (in 2005), as well as the International Criminal Court Tribunal established for the former Yugoslavia, the European Parliament Resolution from 2009, and similar Resolutions in the States of Michigan and Missouri. All these Resolutions and their court decisions state that the Srebrenica massacre in which 8, 372 Bosniaks, who were innocent civilians representing three generations of men, were executed by Bosnian Serb forces, as the worst single war crime committed in Europe since World War II.

During the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina , which democratically become its own independent state in April 1992 with the endorsement of the U.S. , 200, 000 persons were killed, 40% of 4,600,000 Bosnians were displaced, and one quarter of the total population were forced to leave. Many of the heavily wounded, victims of concentration camps and of rape camps, arrived in the U.S. Among them are my friends, Mrs. Samija Hajdarevic Diab who came with two sons, and Mr. Ferid Sefer, who came with his family. Both are with us in this room.

Illinois is 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. Illinois opened its hospitals, Illinois open its schools, and Illinois opened its businesses and community centers for them. Today Bosnians are everywhere in Illinois ; they are factory workers, construction workers, teacher, doctors, lawyers and scientists. They are successful and loyal citizens of the State of Illinois . The state made a difference to thousands and represented hope for a new world view for millions.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Greg Harris and Mr. Harry Osterman, and all of you for your participation in this Resolution that will continue the selfless voice for fairness and justice. I would like to thank you on behalf of my friend, Zuhra Osmanovic, a survivor of Srebrenica genocide. Her husband was killed and her son was taken from her hands that day, on July 11 1995. She has never seen her son since. He was my son's age. My son is with us today in this room. She will never forget that moment, but she told me that this Resolution will give her hope that justice and truth will prevail and will prevent future genocide, here or there, or everywhere in the world.

I personally believe that 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.

Thank you again.

Sanja Seferovic Drnovsek

Director of the Bosnian-American Genocide Institute and Education Center