



INSTITUTE FOR THE RESEARCH OF GENOCIDE  
CANADA



The United States Holocaust Memorial Council  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Dear Members of the USHMM Council:

On behalf of the survivors of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of which many now live in the United States and Canada, we are writing to express our deep concerns regarding offensive and hurtful statements by Michael Dobbs, a USHMM Fellow.

Despite not having any prior qualifications in the history of the Bosnian war or Genocide studies, Mr. Dobbs has been tasked with covering the Ratko Mladic trial and the Srebrenica Genocide as a blogger on the [Foreign Policy website](#) through the “Mladic Files” project that was sponsored by the USHMM. When the news about this project first came out, we fully supported it because of the desire to raise awareness about the genocide that occurred in Srebrenica. We continue to be extremely grateful with the work that the USHMM has done to promote genocide awareness in Bosnia and Herzegovina among which is the Srebrenica genocide exhibit in Washington, D.C.

We must, however, express our dismay with the execution of the “Mladic files” project, specifically with Mr. Dobbs who has made some serious blunders that are too offensive to ignore. While Mr. Dobbs appears well intentioned, he has made several irresponsible statements that have appeased Serbian apologists and genocide deniers, and questioned the facts regarding the genocidal intent of the Serbian nationalists to systematically wipe out the Bosniak people and completely destroy the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina which has for centuries represented a unique example of multiculturalism in Europe. We are writing to you because Mr. Dobbs has refused to apologize for these mistakes and he continues to undermine the truth regarding the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the genocide against the Bosniak people.

In November of 2011, we sent the USHMM Committee on Conscience [a letter protesting his outrageous remarks](#) in which he questioned the use of the term Genocide thus insulting the survivors and victims of genocide in the process. He said in an October 31, 2011 post titled [“Defining Genocide”](#):

“I must admit that I find it difficult to use [in relation to Srebrenica] the word genocide, which conjures up images of the Holocaust... In the popular culture, at least, when we talk about “geno-cide,” we think about the killing of an entire race or ethnic group.”



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Dr. Marko Attila Hoare, a well-known historian of the Balkans and the former Yugoslavia, [described it](#) as “incredible that a Fellow of the USHMM should somehow be guided by ‘popular culture’ when considering the meaning of genocide – instead of by expertise in the history and literature of the study of genocide”. Srebrenica genocide is one of the most documented and undeniable cases of genocide in modern history. As such, it has been recognized by the International Court of Justice, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and many other governmental and academic institutions around the world including the United States Congress as well as the parliaments of Canada and the European Union.

The second incident occurred just a couple of weeks ago, when Mr. Dobbs wrote a shocking article titled [“In Defense of the Serbs”](#) where said he tried to explain why Serb nationalist committed the atrocities by stating that the Serbs had some “legitimate concerns” to try to “protect large Serb minorities” and that the western governments were hypocritical for allowing the breakup of Yugoslavia.

*“In fact, Serbs had some perfectly legitimate concerns both prior to and during the war that are often overlooked by western commentators who have painted an excessively black-and-white picture of the conflict. Foremost among these concerns was the security and rights of some two million Serbs living in the breakaway republics of Croatia and Bosnia ...I am struck by a contradiction in western policy to the former Yugoslavia. Europe, supported by the U.S., recognized the independence of the breakaway republics... The practical effect of these decisions was that Croats and Muslims were given the right to secede from Yugoslavia, but Serbs did not have the right to secede from Croatia or Bosnia. “*

[The Congress of North American Bosniaks](#) (CNAB) and the [Institute for Research of Genocide in Canada](#) (IGC) voiced concern in letters to the Editor of Foreign Policy Magazine pointing out the breakup of Yugoslavia was caused by Slobodan Milosevic and Serbian aggression against its neighbors. We emphasized that a comparison of the right to secede was completely inaccurate since the Serb nationalists attempted to forcibly carve out territory that never existed before through campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide. All six Yugoslav republics including Serbia had the same right to secede as Bosnia or Croatia. We received a response from Mr. Dobbs who remains unapologetic and again insults the victims by saying that “it is wrong to blame one side exclusively for all the evil inflicted by the war.”

We urge you think about what Holocaust victims would feel like if Mr. Dobbs wrote an article “In defense of the Germans claiming they had legitimate concerns to attack others around them



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and kill more than 6 million Jews in the process, and then top it off with further insults that the Nazis cannot be blamed exclusively for the evil that was inflicted by their policies.

We believe the UHSMM has the responsibility to ensure the coverage of the Ratko Mladic trial and the Srebrenica Genocide is done in a manner that is consistent with the recognized scholarly work already done on the subject of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and with the judgments of the ICJ and ICTY regarding the Serbian campaigns of ethnic cleansing genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The victims of the Bosnian genocide deserve someone who will not try to justify the war crimes and atrocities committed against them. We deserve someone who will fight against genocide denial and look to promote uncompromising truth, justice, and accountability for the crimes that were committed. It is only by accepting the truth and the accountability for the ethnic cleansing and genocide committed in their name, can the Serbs achieve peace and reconciliation with the Bosniak people.

We therefore respectfully ask that you that you sanction Mr. Dobbs as your Fellow for his irresponsible and hurtful comments on the Bosnian war and genocide, and prevent any future denial of genocide and appeasements of the perpetrators by the people associated with the USHMM.

Sincerely,

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