



25th ANNIVERSARY

REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

LETTERS FROM BOSNIA

Dear Friend,

I lived in a small village called Miholjevine. This village, is located 30 km south-east of Srebrenica, surrounded by hills and beautiful forests. My small village had twenty houses and it was home for 140 people. Life in it was like a true fairy tale. Most of us were relatives and we knew each other very well. My family was really big. My grandfather Ismet had three sons. They all got married and we all lived together in one house. We had just one budget for us all and grandfather was the one who managed the money. My father and my two uncles worked mostly as builders but they did other jobs that included physical work.

My dad was away most of the time. Sometimes he wouldn't come home for six months. He worked all over the Yugoslavia. When he was home I wouldn't leave his side for a second. The love we had for each other was immeasurable. During the winter, when he was coming home, I would sit by the window for days waiting for him to come, and the minute he would walk through the door I'd run into his arms hugged him as much as I could. Sometimes he would squeeze me so much that made me cry. I loved my father too much. I was in tears for hours every time he had to leave home looking for job.

My dad used to make me different toys from wood and paper because we had no toys as today and the shops were far away. He knew so many things and he could make anything I wished for with his hands.

When aggression on my homeland and my Srebrenica happened I was 7 years old boy.



At the beginning we could hear gun shots and detonations. When I asked my father about the noise and bangs he would answer I shouldn't be worried because someone was getting married at Osmace (one of the villages nearby) and they were celebrating by shooting in the air. He was comforting me. He didn't want me to be scared even though he was scared himself because he knew what might happen. Serb soldiers (Chetniks) were attacking from each side until they managed to take our village in March 1993. We had to run to Srebrenica. I took 35 kilometers long trip to Srebrenica by foot. We had to hide from time to time so we were forced to spend the night in the woods. It was still winter and the snow was deep. We slept on leaves my father found under the snow and I remember him making the fire all night long so that my sister and I could keep warm.

When we reached Srebrenica, we stayed at our relatives in the village Fojhari and later we managed to find some small room which we had to share with the people we knew. My dad was happy for that and he found some old tin barrel which he made into a stove to keep us all warm.

After the massacre in front of the school in Srebrenica, on April 12th 1993, my father was even more scared because he saw butchered bodies of more than 100 boys and girls and their body parts scattered on the playground fence and across the playground. He couldn't wait for something like that to happen again so he decided to send us with one of the last UNPROFOR convoys to Tuzla. That is the moment that will stay forever in my memory. Saying goodbye to my dad was the hardest thing I had to do. My mom was pregnant and I can imagine how hard it was for her. Along with her, my sister and I managed to get on a truck. My dad and uncles stayed in Srebrenica along with other relatives and grandparents. All of them. Women and children were on the way to Tuzla. After that last convoy no one could leave Srebrenica.

When truck started moving I cried so much. I hated saying goodbye to my father. This time it was forever. Dad was running after the truck for some time. He was crying and pulling his hair from his head because he had to send us somewhere unknown. Watching him like that I was pulling my hair as well saying: 'Dad I will never see you again'.

And I never did. Two years after my dad was killed in one factory in Kravica along with his two brothers. The video them being captured can still be found on the Internet and in the media. They were all killed: grandfather, uncles and my dad. My grandmother had four sisters. Four of them lost 16 sons.



Our little village was like a story. 36 men out of 140 residents were killed. The village was burnt, plundered and demolished. No one has ever returned there to live again. The only thing witnessing that there was life there is the marble board with names of those who were killed. They destroyed everything and killed most of the adult men.

To speak and listen the truth is the most important for the future generations. They need to learn that hatred, prejudice and ignorance can cause pain to one family, one nation and the entire world.

When you read my story, I would love you to understand that hatred cannot and mustn't live in the heart of a good man. If you want to be good –don't hate! Know your neighbor before you judge him. Don't let the net of disinformation lead you to forget how much evil one man can do to another.

Serbs were the ones who killed us, their army and police. They got part of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the gift for such 'actions'. Every man needs to know the character of the aggression on Bosnia. That is why it is important that war criminals don't get support, not here or anywhere in the world. Our stories from Srebrenica should serve as warning and example to all men, what hatred towards someone different than you can do.

Genocide in Srebrenica is the biggest crime since the WW2. Our testimonies are witnesses to that. We must preserve memories of our past in order to preserve the future.

Sincerely,

Ahmed Hrustanovic

Srebrenica