



25th ANNIVERSARY

REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

LETTERS FROM BOSNIA

Dear Friend,

I was born in Mostar in 1990. For almost three years, before the 1992 aggression against my homeland Bosnia and Herzegovina, I lived with my parents in Mostar. We lived a happy life, filled with love and care. I have no memories, but the photos and memories shared with me by my loved ones who have survived the war have confirmed it. We lived at a time when it didn't matter which side of the city one lived on. What name, religion or any other characteristics we affiliated with. It is very important to mention that we lived on the west side of Mostar and that we were Muslims. As such, Yugoslavia's brotherhood and unity was a camouflage, it did not resemble the reality of what was coming to us.

On May 9th, 1993, particularly, when the siege of Mostar began by the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) in an attempt of creating 'Greater Croatia' and ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims and other non-Croats. The entire leadership of a so-called para-state Herzeg-Bosna, declared by Croatian nationalists at that time, was sentenced to total of 111 years for a joint criminal enterprise and crimes against humanity, including murders, rape, sexual assault, the destruction of property and the deportation of Bosniaks in 1993-94. - optional to keep

We were forcefully expelled from the apartment we lived in. The apartment where my parents had just started building a home. My father was taken to a concentration camp, and my first memories are of being a refugee in Germany where I lived with my mother for several years. My first memory of Mostar is from 1997. It was the first time that we went back. As a 7 year old girl, completely unaware and absorbed in her childish play, I came across a ruined bus stop filled with bullet holes. Although the bus station has been rebuilt, it is deeply rooted in my first memories of Mostar. It does not help that many buildings are still in ruins today. And, I still have the same feeling - an eerie feeling from the thought of what my fellow citizens have endured...and those who didn't have that luck like my father. I am still searching for his remains.



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My hometown is still largely in ruins. The traces of ruthless killings and destruction of its population, especially in the eastern part of Mostar, i.e. the Muslim part, are a daily reminder of the war. As survivors, we are confronted with denial and historical revisionism where others are strategically rewriting history for us. We have been put in a political deadlock and a situation where the genocide committed is being questioned; and, it is being questioned who has systematically destroyed hundreds of years old cultural, historical and religious institutions. Our identity, Bosniak identity, has been in the forefront to be erased by known perpetrators. It is because of my father, my mother, my closest family members; but also because of every man and woman who fought bravely and fearlessly, that we can not ease to stop to fight for truth and justice. If we do, it would mean that we are betraying each and every one of them. It would mean to betray both the living and the dead, to betray the very idea of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Bosniak identity. It would, ultimately, mean betraying ourselves because the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the generations to come depends on us and on our actions against fascist ideologies that are alive and thriving more than ever. If we choose to be bystanders and hostages to our own petty interests, and if we allow others to write our history while erasing the truth about the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will consent to the falsification of our history and the relativization of the Srebrenica genocide and aggression against our homeland.

Each one of us can and must act - because every step towards spreading truth and justice is a necessary one. We need to teach our children and others the truth about what happened in Srebrenica, Prijedor, Mostar, no matter how painful it is. We need to use every opportunity because the time for truth is always right. We must not allow ourselves to say that it does not concern us. By inaction, we will allow our history to be revisioned and rewritten. It will leave new generations without the right to their homeland, religion, language and identity. We must act whether we live in BiH or not because to be a bystander is to silently support intolerance and hatred which always leads to atrocities and, as in BiH, to genocide.

Sincerely,

Edita Marić

Mostar