



25th ANNIVERSARY

REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

LETTERS FROM BOSNIA

Dear Friend,

Before the war I lived in Voljavici in the Bratunac municipality, the Drina River separated us from Serbia. I lived in a modest family with my husband, his mother, sister and brother. His father worked in Austria and came home occasionally. I worked in a manufacturing factory in Srebrenica. We were a happy family until the 3rd of May, 1992, before the Yugoslav People's Army, the police, and paramilitary forces from Serbia entered and surrounded our town killing women, children and men - all civilians.

They rounded the majority of the civilians at the playground and in the Vuk Karadžić elementary school. They robbed and burned surrounding villages. After that followed the inhuman torture and killings of the detainees. On May 12th 1992, my home was next.

On May 7th, I was forced to give birth at home with my mother-in-law's assistance. We were surrounded and could not reach a hospital.

My village was next to be robbed and burned. We did not want to surrender because we heard what they did to those that they detained - rape, torture, beheading and killings.

Two days after giving birth, we had to leave our home through the forest towards Srebrenica. Along with my husband, mother-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, we passed through Četnik's barricades. There were constant shellings and shootings but we managed to survive the Golgotha, and after 22 days we reached Srebrenica.

We were able to find accomodation at an abandoned house. Nevertheless, a worst form of the Golgotha awaited us. The city was under constant attack, they bombarded us from the air with different artilleries; and, we did not have the basic necessities for a human life. We did not have food, water, electricity; people were dying of hunger. We were forced to eat forms of grass and grains which caused severe constipation, people were dying from it as well. There were days when we did not have anything to eat.



In 1994, I gave birth to my son with grave hunger because Četnik's were blocking humanitarian aid for Srebrenica in Bratunac. In July, 1995, along with my mother-in-law, sister-in-law, my 3 years old daughter and 14 months old son, I went to Potocari. My husband, brother-in-law, and uncle went to the forest in the mountains hoping to reach free territory. While we were saying our goodbyes, my husband kissed me and told me to take care of our children. It was the last time I saw him.

We slept at a devastated factory in Potocari. It was unbearable. We heard the screams of raped women -mothers and sisters. Some were killed in front of their loved ones. The next day, on a truck, with my family I was transported to the free territory in Kladanj and then Tuzla.

In 1996, I moved to Sarajevo with my parents into a ruined home. We went through garbage to find pieces of rugs, curtains, doors so that we could use it to make the house liveable. In 2000, I moved into a new home and, in 2003, was about to move into my permanent home when I received the call that my husband was exhumed and identified. My husband was found in a mass grave in Pilići, in the municipality of Zvornik. In 2003, at the first burial of the victims, I buried my brother-in-law. The same year, in July, I buried my husband next to his brother. My whole world fell apart and I lost any hope that he was somewhere alive.

Every action matters when it comes to tell the truth about the crimes and genocide committed in Srebrenica. The testimonies of survivors are important in order to raise awareness and to teach the younger generation so that genocide does not happen again, and that war does not bring any good to anyone except evil. It is very important for us to find our loved ones and to give them a proper burial, the one they deserve.

Sincerely,

Kadefa Rizvanović
Bratunac