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Welcome

Remembering Srebrenica has a wide selection of resources that you can use for organising an act of commemoration safely from your home or place of work. From holding an event with members of your family and lighting a candle, to reading survivor testimonies or considering some of the points for discussion, there are a number of resources contained within this pack that can be used for your activity.

Our theme for this year is **Every Action Matters** and seeks to show that the action of one individual does matter, however small their action may initially appear. Therefore, whatever you decide to do, and however you choose to commemorate, your contribution will play an enormous part in raising awareness and helping to create a safer, more cohesive community.



History

Humanity has lived through the darkest of times, but few events have stained our collective history more than the Srebrenica genocide.

On 11 July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces, led by General Ratko Mladić overran and captured the town of Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia which had been declared a UN Safe Area. In the days following, more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were systematically murdered and buried in mass graves. Thousands of women, children and the elderly were forcibly deported.

Srebrenica was a culmination of a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' used by Bosnian Serb forces during the conflict. This was implemented to achieve the aim of a 'Greater Serbia', free from non-Serbs. Throughout Bosnia, between 20,000-50,000 women and girls suffered sexual violence, a weapon of war used to systematically ethnically cleanse the region and terrorise the populace. Concentration camps were established in the Prijedor area, and many Bosnian Muslims were forced from their homes to be internally displaced or become refugees.

Described by the United Nations as:

***'the worst crime on European soil since the
Second World War'***

the genocide at Srebrenica was officially recognised by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at the Hague. Yet denial of this atrocity remains widespread.

Many in Bosnia-Herzegovina are still struggling for justice. Among these are organisations such as the Mothers of Srebrenica, who campaigned for the recognition of the deaths of their loved ones and the Association of Women Victims of War who campaigned for justice for survivors of sexual violence who still fight stigma within Bosnia.

On the 11th July, the official date of remembrance each year, we honour the victims and survivors of genocide, and pledge ourselves to creating a better, stronger, and more cohesive society in the United Kingdom.

The lessons we learn from Srebrenica are that hatred and intolerance can flourish if left unchallenged. Even in Bosnia, where people of many faiths lived as neighbours for centuries, an integrated society disintegrated. We must all understand the consequences of not taking action against hate. By doing this we give ourselves hope of illuminating the darkness and creating a safer community for all.





EVERY ACTION MATTERS: A MOTHER'S LEGACY

HATIDŽA MEHMEDOVIĆ

Hatidža Mehmedović was born in the area surrounding Srebrenica in 1952. Before the genocide, she lived her entire life in Srebrenica, where she had married her childhood friend, Abdullah, and had two sons, Azmir and Almir. Hatidža and Abdullah built their home in Srebrenica and lived a simple life as a family before the war broke out and Srebrenica was declared a UN safe area.

One day on the 11th July 1995 changed all that. The town of Srebrenica was overtaken

by Bosnian Serb forces led by Ratko Mladić. Hatidža was separated from her husband and sons when they joined the Column, the name given to the long convoy through the

“Who sincerely comes to Srebrenica on the 11th, he is truly a friend of ours and of these white gravestones.”

woods and mountains surrounding Srebrenica towards the nearest safe area of Tuzla.

Hatidža describes the moment of their separation, “...My youngest’s hands were wrapped around me whilst he said “Mother, please go, I beg of you!” whilst he said this he clutched me tighter to him with his hands and that is something that I cannot forget.”

Hatidža was encouraged to go to the UN base at Potočari. When she first saw the large gathering of people who had sought refuge with the Dutchbat at the UN base, she regretted not bringing her family with her. That all changed, however, when Mladić and the Bosnian Serb forces arrived at Potočari and began dividing the men and boys from the women and elderly. Hatidža did not yet know how deadly the journey

from Srebrenica to Tuzla would be for the men who had formed the Column. All she knew was that survival at Potočari for the men and boys there was unlikely.

On her third attempt to board a bus to escape Srebrenica, Hatidža succeeded. She arrived at Kladanj and awaited news of her family. She believed that the men of the Column would only be two or three more days, that they would arrive tired and hungry, but alive. She was not aware that Bosnian Serb forces had already routed out most of the men who undertook the dangerous journey, disguising themselves as UN soldiers with uniforms taken from Potočari or capturing men from the Column





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and ordering them to shout to their parents, sons and grandparents to lure them out of the forest.

Hatidža had to wait longer than two or three more days to discover what happened to her family. On 13th November 1996, almost a year after the war's end, Hatidža received a phone call informing her that a body believed to be one of her children had been found in a mass grave. The body was that of her youngest son, Almir, whose body was found mostly complete.

However, Abdullah and Azmir were not found alongside Almir's remains. It wouldn't be until 1998 that Hatidža would know what happened to the rest of her family. Of Abdullah, only a few bones were found. Of Azmir, only two leg bones.

Due to Bosnian Serb forces moving bodies from the primary mass graves into secondary and tertiary mass graves using mechanical diggers, Hatidža's family was scattered across kilometres, often with only partial remains in different locations.

Hatidža waited almost 12 years in the hope that more of her husband and eldest son's remains would be found. The wait was in vain. In 2010, Hatidža decided to lay Abdullah, Almir and Azmir to rest at the Potočari Memorial Complex.

At the hands of the Bosnian Serb army, Hatidža lost more than just her husband and sons.

“I haven’t just had my children killed, my whole family were killed. My two brothers were killed, my brother’s two sons, my sisters’ sons were killed, my cousins and their children. There wasn’t anyone left to kill.”

Even after facing such suffering, Hatidža returned to Srebrenica in 2003, one of the first to do so. She returned to the home she had built with Abdullah, having to fight to remove the Bosnian Serb family who had claimed it as ‘spoils of war’. But for Hatidža, the place was more than just bricks and mortar:

“I could never live in any other place other than Srebrenica. I say that Srebrenica is the symbol of suffering, the memorial place is our holy place, our pilgrimage, our sorrow... I returned to live from the memories of my house. I have three trees which my youngest son planted. He was young then; the trees are big now. I live where my children once walked, I always imagine them coming, whenever I am alone I always imagine.”



Hatidža founded the Mothers of Srebrenica Association, which supports the women who lost their families during the Srebrenica genocide. She led the women in numerous projects and campaigns, including the establishment of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Complex and Cemetery and the civil lawsuits against the UN and the Dutch government for failing to protect those in Srebrenica in 1995.

Hatidža continued to campaign tirelessly throughout her life for justice for Abdullah, Almir and Azmir. Her powerful story challenges those who would deny that genocide occurred in Srebrenica. Even though she witnessed the worst of humanity, Hatidža never gave in to feelings of revenge, and discouraged others from doing so.

“If they were to give me a whole world of Serbians to kill and told me to seek revenge for my children, I couldn’t imagine it - let alone carry the weight of the guilt because sadness and grief have remained my only friends. I have nothing more.”



After a long battle with breast cancer, Hatidža passed away on the 22nd of July 2018 in a Sarajevo hospital aged 65. Throughout her illness, she continued to campaign for the justice of the victims and survivors.

1000+

events and activities held during
Srebrenica Memorial Week 2019

*thank
you*

CANDLE LIGHTING



*We come together today to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide.
We light these candles in remembrance of the lives lost and destroyed by hatred:*

- We remember the 8,372 mostly Muslim men and boys who were murdered in Srebrenica on 11th July 1995.
- We remember the survivors of the Death March, and the men who survived the mass executions, and honour their courage in telling their stories.
- We remember the Mothers of Srebrenica, who grieve every day for their missing and murdered relatives and who fight tirelessly for truth and justice.
- We remember the elderly, the sick and the children murdered during the fall of Srebrenica.
- We remember those murdered in concentration camps throughout the Bosnian conflict, and those who survived torture and starvation within the camps.
- We remember over 11,000 people killed in the siege of Sarajevo, of which 1601 were children.
- We remember the women and girls that were violated during the Bosnian War, those who took their own lives, and those who live on with physical and emotional scars.
- We remember the children who grew up during a time of conflict, and the loss of their childhood to war.
- We remember the innocent civilians killed in all regions of Bosnia during the conflict.
- We remember those who defended their neighbours in a war not of their making.
- We remember the 2 million Bosnians who were forcibly displaced from their homes and communities through ethnic cleansing, and especially those who remain internally displaced today.



Living the Lessons Pledge

As an act of commemoration, we suggest 11 candles to be lit for each pledge made to honour Srebrenica Memorial Day which takes place on 11 July each year.

- We pledge that when we hear the language of “us and them”, we will reach out and find common ground with our neighbour.
- We pledge that, when we hear stereotyping and scapegoating, we will find and share alternative positive stories.
- We pledge that, when we see discrimination in our schools or workplaces, we will challenge this and promote equal opportunities for all.
- We pledge that, when we hear dehumanising language, we will remind the speaker of our common humanity.
- We pledge that, when we see members of our community becoming disenfranchised, we will make a concerted effort to engage and include them.
- We pledge that, when we hear divisive propaganda, we will challenge this effectively.
- We pledge that we will protect those who speak out against human rights abuses.
- We pledge that, where we see persecution, we will do everything in our power to protect those who are suffering.
- We pledge that, where we believe that extermination is taking place, we will call on our governments and the international community to take immediate action.
- We pledge that we will always challenge denial by believing the victims and sharing their stories.
- We pledge that we will always choose the side of those who are suffering over the side of the oppressor.



Discussion Points

Why is it important for people in the UK to learn about and discuss what happened in Bosnia?

Why is it important to educate ourselves and our community about the importance of tackling hatred and intolerance?

Why is it important to take action against hatred and intolerance wherever we see it in our communities?

Why is it important to hear the testimony of survivors of genocide?

How can people best raise awareness of Srebrenica?



@SrebrenicaUK

Draft Twitter Posts

Example 1:

Today marks 25 years since the Bosnian genocide in Srebrenica, where over 8,000 people were murdered on the basis of their ethnicity and religion. We join @SrebrenicaUK in remembering those whose lives were taken due to hate. #Srebrenica25

Example 2:

This week will mark 25 years since the genocide in Srebrenica where over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim people were murdered due to hate. We remember the innocent lives taken and join @SrebrenicaUK in commemorating these atrocities so that Never Again becomes Never again.

Example 3:

In July of 1995, over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim people were killed in Srebrenica. The Bosnian genocide is the worst atrocity to occur in Europe since WW2. This week, we remember all of those who perished due to hatred. Together, we can ensure that these horrific acts never again repeat.”



Remembering Srebrenica

Draft Facebook Posts

Example 1:

This week will mark 25 years since the genocide in Srebrenica where over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim people were murdered because of hate. We remember the innocent lives taken and join Remembering Srebrenica in commemorating these atrocities so that Never Again becomes Never again. We must unite against hatred and learn the lessons of the Bosnian genocide.

#Srebrenica25

Example 2:

In July of 1995, over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim people, mainly men and boys, were brutally murdered in the name of ethno-nationalism. After the Holocaust, the world said 'Never Again' but these horrific acts continued to repeat. This week we remember all of those who lost their lives in the Bosnian genocide and come together in combatting hatred in all its forms in hopes that we can ensure Never Again will become a reality all of us abide by.

#Srebrenica25



STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, in which over 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered in the worst atrocity on European soil since the Second World War, simply because of their religious identity. As an organisation that works to/with *(insert details of the organisation)*, we believe that we must ensure that we never forget about the genocide and reaffirm our commitment to standing up against all forms of hatred and prejudice that targets groups based on their religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or any type of difference.

The theme “Every Action Matters” seeks to encourage every person to reflect upon their own behaviour and choices that they make, and demonstrate that however insignificant it may seem, every action matters, whether positive or negative. It aims to show that those who stand up and unite against hatred can make a difference. It sets out to dispel the notion that one person cannot make a difference and show that the action of one individual does matter and that they can achieve a great deal, however small their action may appear initially.

It is now more important than ever for us to come together as people in the UK, no matter what our background, to celebrate diversity and to stand together in solidarity against hatred and discrimination. We hope you will join us in mourning the loss of those who died at Srebrenica and reflecting on how we as individuals, groups and communities can come together to build a better future without hatred.

THE SREBRENICA PRAYER



We pray to almighty God,
May grievance become hope
May revenge become justice
May mothers' tears become prayers
That Srebrenica never happens again
To no one, no where.



Remembering Srebrenica is the UK charity which aims to teach current and future generations about the consequences of hatred and intolerance in all communities through learning the lessons of Srebrenica. We are calling on all communities to Remember the victims and survivors of the Srebrenica genocide; Learn the lessons from Srebrenica, particularly that we must always be vigilant against hatred and intolerance in our communities and Pledge to take action now to build better and safer communities for all.

SREBRENICA.ORG.UK



**Remembering
Srebrenica**



@SrebrenicaUK



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srebrenica**