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WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATES IN BOSNIA AND SERBIA HAIL THE ARREST OF RADOVAN KARADZIC



Tuzla, Bosnia and Belgrade, Serbia: Advocates for womens' rights in Bosnia and Serbia have greeted Monday's arrest of Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb leader, with jubilation and relief.

According to news reports, Mr Karadzic, 63, was detained by the Serbian secret police in a Belgrade suburb, nearly 13 years after he was indicted for genocide and war crimes. He faces extradition to the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) in The Hague.

"Not only is this good news for the victims who need justice, but it is an important step for the future and the next generation," said Beba Hadzic, founder of the Bosnian Family (BOSFAM), a Tuzla-based women's organization and partner of the Advocacy Project (AP) that works with survivors of the Srebrenica massacre. "If you don't do something about your past, it will repeat itself."

Stasa Zajovic, founder of Women in Black-Serbia, a leading women's advocacy group and AP partner, called Monday's arrest a "victory of justice for the victims of genocide."

Mr Karadzic was one of the two architects of the Srebrenica massacre, which claimed the lives of more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men in July 1995. He was charged with genocide by the Hague tribunal shortly after the massacre, and has been mostly in hiding

ever since. Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb Army Commander, who oversaw the massacre, has also been indicted and is thought to be in Serbia.

BOSFAM and Women in Black-Serbia have long pushed for the arrest of the two indicted war criminals. Many of BOSFAM's members lost relatives in the Srebrenica massacre, while Women in Black-Serbia spoke out frequently and courageously against Serbian nationalism throughout the 1990s. Two weeks ago, the two organizations sent delegations to Potocari, to observe the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.

In addition to working with these partners, The Advocacy Project has co-sponsored two online petitions calling for the arrest of Mr. Karadzic and Mr. Mladic, in 2005 and 2006. The 2005 petition was co-sponsored by Physicians for Human Rights, the Center for Balkan Development, and the Congress of North American Bosniaks. It attracted 9,972 signatures and was handed to the Secretary-General of NATO, who shared it with the Serbian Foreign Minister.

AP has recruited two Peace Fellows, Shweta Dewan and Janet Rabin, to volunteer with BOSFAM and Women in Black-Serbia this summer.

News of Karadzic's arrest Monday was greeted with dancing in the streets of Sarajevo, and joy in the Bosnian diaspora around the world. "Words cannot describe what I felt upon hearing the news," said Elmina Kulasic, executive director of the Bosniak American Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina, a lobby group in Washington.

Ms Kulasic continued: "The man who personally ordered the extermination of innocents; the man because of whom my childhood dreams have been shattered and filled with the experience of surviving the brutal concentration camp in Kozarac will finally face the truth."

Still, advocates stress that the struggle for justice must continue. Mr Mladic remains at large in the Balkans and Ms Zajovic pointed out that Mr. Karadzic had eluded capture because of a lack of political will in Serbia. "We must continue to apply pressure to the Serbian government to arrest the other two outstanding criminals wanted at The Hague, Ratko Mladic (and) Goran Hadzic," she said.

- Read the blogs of AP Peace Fellows [Shweta Dewan](#) and [Janet Rabin](#).
- Learn more about [BOSFAM](#).
- Learn more about [Women in Black Serbia](#).