
AdvocacyNet
News Bulletin 193
March 24, 2009

SREBRENICA MEMORIAL QUILT VISITS US, PUTS A HUMAN FACE ON THE MASSACRE

Washington, DC: For the past three weeks, scores of Bosnians who died in the notorious 1995 massacre at Srebrenica, Bosnia, have reached out to Bosnians in the United States through a patchwork of colorful woven panels.

Their stories testify to the random brutality of [Srebrenica](#), often described as the worst massacre in Europe since the Second World War. Among the victims were Redzo Purdic, an 82-year-old; Remzudin Hasanovic, a teenager; and Remzija and Nijazija Dudic, a young couple and their unborn child.

The four are among the latest massacre victims to be featured in the [Srebrenica Memorial Quilt](#), produced by the Bosnian women's group [Bosnian Family \(BOSFAM\)](#). The quilt was shown in the US this month by [Beba Hadzic](#), BOSFAM's Director, who narrowly escaped death when she was expelled from Srebrenica. Many of those who wove panels lost family members in the massacre.

More than 8,000 died at Srebrenica, but Ms Hadzic used the quilt to focus on individuals: "Our relatives are not numbers," she said. "That's why we started to make this carpet, to start to bring identity to the victims. The names on the carpet are people that we know, they are fathers, sons, brothers."

Ms Hadzic's trip was organized by The Advocacy Project (AP) and the [Advisory Council For Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), with support from the [Heinrich Boll Foundation of North America](#). She returned to Bosnia Friday, after visiting diaspora communities in Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and Washington and making her case at the US Capitol. Her advocacy generated more than \$2,500 for the quilt project and for the [weavers](#).

The [Srebrenica Memorial Quilt](#) was launched in 2007 and now comprises 85 panels, each honoring a victim of the massacre. During her trip, Ms Hadzic identified sponsors for an additional 35 panels.

Ms Hadzic's trip started with a presentation at Chicago's Sultzer Public Library that was attended by many dignitaries from the Bosnian community, including the Bosnian Consul. She then headed to St. Louis, where she provided an update for families who had sponsored quilt panels in 2007. Last week, Ms Hadzic traveled to mosques in Utica and Astoria, New York, where the Bosnian community sponsored an entire new quilt (20 panels).

The trip also included outreach at the US Capitol, where Ms Hadzic presented the quilt at an

event celebrating International Women's Day (March 8). US Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas) and Dr. Bisera Turkovic, the former Bosnian Ambassador to the United States, also attended and praised the resilience of Srebrenica survivors. The US House of Representatives is currently considering a [resolution](#) expressing concern at the situation in Bosnia and calling for a renewed investment in the peace process.

Ms Hadzic's trip culminated with a fundraising lunch at Felidia, a restaurant in New York whose owner, well-known chef Lidia Bastianich, is herself from the Balkans.

Elmina Kulasic, Executive Director of BAACBH, who accompanied Ms Hadzic on much of the trip, said that the quilt had reconnected diaspora communities with their homeland in a profound and moving manner. "Not only did (it) bring the past back, but it gave them hope," she said. "The quilt is one of the only ways that we can give our victims their voice and identity back."

As part of the effort to restore the identity of massacre victims, AP and BOSFAM are creating [web pages](#) which link the quilt panels to a photo and individual story. The task is often difficult, because many who survived were expelled so quickly that they left without family photos. Four quilts are currently posted on the AP website, with profiles.

The use of quilts to memorialize massacre victims is beginning to catch on as a model. Survivors of the 1982 [Rio Negro massacre](#) in Guatemala have also made a quilt, which is currently being used at presentations in the US by a visiting delegation from the Rio Negro communities.

In the upcoming months, BOSFAM will step up its advocacy around the quilt in the Balkans, including even Serbia. BOSFAM is also hoping to open a weaving center in Srebrenica itself, where returning refugees could make more panels, support each other, and contribute a strong women's perspective to reconstruction in Srebrenica.

AP Outreach Coordinator Alison Sluiter, who has managed the project in the US and has shown the quilt at many universities and events, will volunteer with BOSFAM this summer as an AP Peace Fellow.

- View the [Srebrenica Memorial Quilt](#)
- Read [profiles](#) of Srebrenica victims
- Learn more about the [weavers of BOSFAM](#)