

Presidents and Prime Ministers Join Grieving Relatives to Rebury 775 Srebrenica Victims

Potocari, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July 13: Several world leaders joined more than 50,000 mourners at the site of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre here on Sunday to mark the 15th anniversary of the atrocity and rebury the remains of 775 newly-identified massacre victims.



The ceremony also featured [memorial quilts](#) bearing the names of victims, which were displayed on the building where the bodies were kept before being reburied (left). The quilts were woven by the women's group [Bosfam](#) in partnership with The Advocacy Project (AP). The 14th quilt commemorates [20 children under the age of 16](#) and is woven in white to symbolize innocence. The 15th quilt carries the names of [20 women who were killed in the massacre](#) after they refused to leave their husbands.

"The relatives of the victims are concerned that their loved ones will soon be forgotten because they are dead. By writing the victims' names on carpets, we make sure that the world does not forget them," says [Munira Beba Hadzić](#), the director of Bosfam. "These memorial quilts are our hope for lasting memory." Bosfam's quilts are also helping to keep the memory of Srebrenica alive in the US, where two quilts are on display in San Francisco and St Louis, home to the largest Bosniak diaspora community in the US. In Washington, the [Advisory Council For Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), an AP partner, is using Bosfam quilts to build support for a new Bill ([House Resolution 1423](#)) that would designate a Srebrenica Remembrance Day in the US. Several carpets were displayed on Monday at the Bosnian Embassy in Washington and will be shown Tuesday on Capitol Hill.

Sunday's ceremony at Potocari was the largest single reburial in Europe in recent years, and brings the total number of graves at the site to 4,524. Those reburied included one of the few Catholic victims, Rudolf Hren ([commemorated on the ninth quilt](#)), and the family members of Hasan Nuhanovic, who was serving as an interpreter for the UN Dutch Battalion when the massacre occurred. Mr Nuhanovic's story was translated by Peter Lippman, an AP associate, and published in [Sunday's Washington Post](#). The Nuhanovic

family is commemorated in the first memorial quilt.

Identification has long been an important goal for Bosfam and other advocates, but much still remains to be done: 8,373 people died at Srebrenica and 3,700 bags with body bags still await identification at the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) in Tuzla. Meanwhile, the ICMP and local authorities have started exhuming a newly-discovered mass grave under a garbage dump near the village of Zalazje.



As a result, advocates were gratified that interest in Srebrenica continues to grow and that several world leaders attended Sunday's ceremony. They included five presidents of former Yugoslav republics (Bosnia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia); the Prime Ministers of Belgium and Turkey; the French Foreign Minister; the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe; the US Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina; and the US Ambassador for War Crimes.

The participation of so many dignitaries suggests that lobbying by civil society has paid off, and that Srebrenica is unlikely to be forgotten. Whether the revulsion and remorse can also translate into justice and reconciliation remains to be seen. But many were reassured by the presence of Boris Tadic, President of Serbia, and his decision to meet with a group of mothers who lost relatives at Srebrenica. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister of Turkey, described the meeting as "a message of peace."

This release was written by Laila Zulkaphil, who is volunteering as a Peace Fellow at Bosfam this summer, and attended the Sunday commemoration. [Read Laila's blog.](#)

- Visit AP's site for [background on the Srebrenica massacre.](#)
- [View the 15 quilts](#) and read the information about victims.
- View AP's film, [Weavers for Hope.](#)