

## Mladic Arrest Brings Little Comfort to Srebrenica Massacre Survivors

*Reporting by Peace Fellows Quinn Van Valer-Campbell and Julia Dowling in Bosnia*



Peace Fellow Quinn at Rally: Photo by Julia Dowling

mourners are expected, including members of the Bosnian Family Association (BOSFAM), AP's partner in Bosnia.

Srebrenica, Bosnia: Relatives of the 1995 [Srebrenica massacre](#) victims are relieved that Ratko Mladic, the architect of the killings, is finally facing justice in The Hague. But his trial has not calmed their sense of dread as they prepare for next week's anniversary of the massacre.

More than 550 more victims have been identified over the past year by the International Commission of Missing Persons, and they will be reburied on July 11 in the cemetery at Potocari where the massacre took place. Thousands of

BOSFAM works directly with women survivors, and each year one or more Bosfam members rebury a loved one at Potocari. This year Zifa Bumbulovic, who lost several family members in the massacre including her 21 year-old son, will rebury her father-in-law.

"[Mladic] can never experience the [same] pain that he has caused. I lost my child, and nothing can repair that loss," said Zifa, in a conversation with AP Peace fellows Julia Dowling and Quinn Van Valer-Campbell.

The anguish of relatives like Zifa has been movingly captured in blogs by [Julia](#) and [Quinn](#), who are volunteering at BOSFAM this summer. AP has sent 12 Fellows to BOSFAM since 2003, and all have been deeply affected by the grief felt by their hosts at this time.

In a [new blog](#), Julia describes how Srebrenica survivors march in Tuzla on the eleventh day of every month [photo above], carrying photos of family members who were killed or disappeared. Many welcome the chance to meet up with other survivors. But many - like Zifa - also find it emotionally draining. "Zifa has an understandably difficult time seeing

her son's photo," writes Julia.

Nonetheless, Zifa took part in a recent march to help Julia and Quinn better understand what the relatives face. "She took a tablet to calm her nerves and laid down, scarf over her face," writes Julia. "At this moment, I felt a need to protect Zifa from any more pain life might bring her. Never before had I so fiercely wanted to rewind history and change its course - my own personal losses seemed bearable if I could only go back and tell Zifa's son to get out of Srebrenica a week or a month earlier."

Zifa's struggle shows that while survivors will benefit from learning the truth, they will never recover from their loss. "No matter how much you may think you want to, looking at the bones of your son will not bring you closure," said ICMP forensic anthropologist Laura Yazedjian.

Mladic's arrest has, however, brought some closure for human rights advocates, who were disgusted by Mladic's cruelty and Serbia's determination to shield him from justice. Mladic became the face of the Srebrenica massacre after he was shown on television toying with terrified Muslims after the fall of the town in 1995. He appeared on Monday before the Hague tribunal, where he has been indicted on 15 counts, in a combative mood to argue that he had been "defending his country."

Mladic's arrest capped a persistent campaign by advocates, including AP. In 2005, AP joined with five other groups to [raise 9,900 signatures](#) demanding the arrest of Radovan Karadzic and Mladic. The petitions were sent to the Secretary-General of NATO, who shared them with the Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic. AP re-launched the petition after Karadzic was arrested in 2008.

The concern now is that with Mladic and Karadzic in jail, the push for justice in Bosnia will stall. The Tribunal is scheduled to close by 2014. After that, war crimes will be prosecuted through the Bosnian National Court, which has been accused of bias against Serbs by the Bosnian Serb Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik. Future trials could prove politically divisive.

In the meantime, the survivors will rely on their own initiatives. Helped by Peace Fellows, the weavers of BOSFAM have produced [15 memorial quilts](#) bearing the names of relatives who died at Srebrenica. BOSFAM is displaying several quilts at a Tuzla gallery (July 6 - 13). Another quilt was recently shown at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

BOSFAM has also opened a women's center in Srebrenica itself, to help returning refugees rebuild their lives in the town that they left under such terrible circumstances. Peace Fellows Julia



"We are looking for our missing!"  
Photo by Laila Zulkhaphil

and Quinn are working with BOSFAM to develop projects at the center, and AP will use future exhibitions of the quilts to generate support for the center in the United States.

- Read about the [1995 Srebrenica massacre](#)
- See video coverage of the [Srebrenica massacre](#)
- Read about [BOSFAM](#)'s extraordinary journey
- See the [memorial quilts](#) and [meet the weavers \(click on profiles\)](#)
- Read more blogs on BOSFAM by [Quinn](#) and [Julia](#).