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Memorial Quilts Take Center Stage at Srebrenica Anniversary

POTOCARI, BOSNIA: Nine years of advocacy quilting by the [weavers of BOSFAM](#) reached a climax here on Saturday when former US president Bill Clinton stood at the scene of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in front of eleven spectacular BOSFAM quilts and urged the world to never forget or repeat the Srebrenica genocide.



Speaking at a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the massacre, Mr Clinton said he was "thrilled" that Bosnia was still at peace after 20 years. "I love this place," he said. "I'd never want to see a killing field like this within a thousand miles of here."

But, he added, Bosnia is not yet a unified and democratic country, and he appealed to leaders from Serbia and Croatia, who were also

present, to help.

As if to underscore the challenge, the Serbian Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vucic, was chased from the cemetery by outraged mourners shortly after Mr Clinton spoke. Mr

Vucic has described Srebrenica as a "horrible crime," but he was an outspoken Serbian nationalist during the war and many Bosnians blame him for contributing to the ideology that led to the 1995 Srebrenica genocide.

Unfortunately, the incident diverted attention from the real message of the ceremony - the voice of the relatives. This was given powerful expression by Advija Ibrahimovic, who lost both parents at Srebrenica and barely escaped death herself. Ms Ibrahimovic said her parents would have been proud that she has just graduated from college.

The [11 BOSFAM quilts](#) carry the names of some 250 victims and cap a project that was [launched in 2006](#) by BOSFAM, with help from The Advocacy Project (AP). BOSFAM has offered the quilts to the exhibition that hangs in the former battery factory where UN peacekeepers were based during the massacre. Meanwhile, a BOSFAM quilt that commemorates relatives of Bosnians in the US will be exhibited soon in New Jersey.



In this video: Zifa Bumbulovic, a BOSFAM weaver, prepares to bury her son in law

As well as a personal expression of loss, the quilts are BOSFAM's contribution to a campaign that has helped the International Criminal Tribunal indict 20 Bosnian Serbs. Survivors displayed BOSFAM quilts at the trial of Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb leader, in 2008.

Serge Brammertz, chief prosecutor at the Hague tribunal, also spoke at Saturday's ceremony and praised the persistence of the relatives. "Without (the families of) victims, justice would not have been possible," he said. "Your courage is an example to us all." Some 1,000 Bosnians have testified about Srebrenica before the tribunal.



Private moment at the graveside

As in past years, the funeral on Saturday was a combination of public spectacle and private grief, heightened by the presence of an estimated 800 journalists. Ignoring the intrusions, family groups gathered to rebury the remains of 136 victims identified in the past year.

They included the son-in-law of Zifa Bumbulovic, a BOSFAM weaver who shared her thoughts with Peace Fellow Sarah Reichenbach [in this video](#). Sarah attended the ceremony, along with [Alison Avdagic](#)

[Sluiter](#) a former Peace fellow at BOSFAM, and Iain Guest from AP.

Fascinated but subdued, Bosnians moved through the cavernous battery factory and filed past the quilts long after the celebrities had departed. Arjana Mujagic, 26, (photo) was only six when the massacre occurred in 1995, but she made the long journey from Bihac in northwest Bosnia with a friend and stood for a photo in front of the quilts.



Arjana and Almedina traveled 420 kilometers to view the quilts and attend the ceremony

"The quilts are beautiful but sad," she said. "I came for the first time last year and plan to come every year for the rest of my life. Every Bosnian who survived should come and see this. You can't explain Srebrenica. You have to experience it and cry."

- * Watch Sarah's [video of Zifa Bumblovic](#)
- * Read AP's [dispatches from Srebrenica](#) (2003-2008)
- * View [photos by Iain Guest](#) of the July 11, 2015 ceremony.

[Read past AP news bulletins, including reports from Srebrenica dating to 2003](#)

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