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SREBRENICA SURVIVORS CONDEMN COURT RULINGS AND INSIST ON SERBIA'S ROLE IN 1995 MASSACRE

April 12, 2007, Tuzla, Bosnia, and Washington DC: Survivors from the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica, Bosnia, have reacted with dismay to two recent rulings in Serbia and the Hague that cleared the Serbian government of involvement in the massacre.

On Tuesday, a Serbian court sentenced four members of a war-time Serbian paramilitary unit, known as the Scorpions, to jail terms ranging from 5 to 20 years for summarily executing six Muslims from Srebrenica in July 1995, days before the massacre. But at the same time, the judge refused to link the killers directly to the massacre and freed a fifth defendant.

The verdict followed a recent decision in February by the International Court of Justice in the Hague, which concluded that genocide had taken place in Bosnia during the war but that Serbia had not been responsible.

Many survivors of the massacre see the two cases as part of an unwillingness to accept that Srebrenica was the culmination of a systematic attempt by Serbs to destroy the Muslims of Eastern Bosnia, and of a larger pattern of impunity. They also note that Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leaders who masterminded the Srebrenica massacre, remain at large. Until the massacre is truly understood and addressed, they feel the region will never recover and rebuild.

Beba Hadzic, the director of Bosfam, a Bosnian women's organization in Tuzla, described the recent verdict as "very bad," and said she worries about the possibility of future crimes. "I always think, who will be next after Bosnia?" said Ms. Hadzic.

The case against the five "Scorpions" was based on video footage of the 1995 killing that was taken by one of the death squad members. The footage caused an international outcry and shock in Serbia itself after it surfaced in 2005. It showed four Muslims being taken to a clearing, abused, and then shot. Two older captives were told to drag the bodies into a building, before they too were shot.

Ms. Hadzic, who was herself expelled from Srebrenica at the start of the war in 1992, said that the crime was clearly linked to the larger massacre and that she had known one of the victims, Azmir Alistahic who was just 16 at the time he was killed. "He was a young boy, and not in the army. His crime was to be a Muslim."

Azmir's sister Magbula was working at the Bosfam center in Tuzla when the film was shown on Bosnian television without warning. She fainted when she saw her brother murdered on screen.

Ms. Hadzic also recalled being expelled from her home in Srebrenica by Serbian soldiers from the Serbian city of Novi Sad and driven through Serbia in a truck before returning to Bosnia. Her brother in law was among those killed at Srebrenica, and his remains will be reburied on the twelfth anniversary of the massacre, on July 11.

The Advocacy Project (AP) has sent five graduate students to volunteer with [Bosfam](#) since 2003. A sixth, Alison Morse from Tufts University, will join Bosfam this summer and help to promote the work of Bosfam's carpet-weavers - the "Weavers of Hope."

- To contact Bosfam, visit office@bosfam.ba
- To sponsor a Bosfam carpet weaver contact the dcoffice@advocacynet.org.

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