

Srebrenica Survivors Mark 15th Anniversary of the Massacre with a 15th Memorial Quilt

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July 7: A group of grieving Bosnian women who survived the notorious 1995 massacre at Srebrenica will mark the fifteen year anniversary of the massacre on Sunday with a work of art - a large quilt that carries the names of women who were murdered in 1995.

The quilt is the fifteenth to have been woven by members of the Bosnian women's group [Bosfam](#) in an effort to ensure that those who died at Srebrenica are never forgotten. So far Bosfam weavers have commemorated about three hundred victims through quilts.

Two of the 15 quilts are in the US, where they will be exhibited at events in San Francisco and Washington. The other 13 quilts will be displayed in Bosnia on Sunday at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center, located in the valley where the killing began on July 11, 1995.



Over 40,000 visitors are expected to visit Potočari on Sunday for the mass reburial of 772 victims. Those being reburied include several close relatives of Bosfam weavers: the husband of Fadila Omerović, the brother of [Sajma Avdić](#), and two nephews of [Zifa Bumbulović](#). The massacre began on July 11, 1995 when the Bosnian Serb army overran the town of Srebrenica after [a 3-year siege](#). Over 8,000 men and boys were separated and methodically murdered. Women and children were put on buses and expelled to the Muslim part of Bosnia. The full story can be found [on the AP website](#).

The traumatized women turned to weaving as a form of therapy, but quickly became skilled practitioners of a traditional art. In 2003, Bosfam and the Advocacy Project (AP) joined forces to use their carpets for advocacy. AP brought several to the US and exhibited them in Washington, Baltimore and Boston, where they drew crowds and media coverage. In 2006, the weavers decided to use quilts to memorialize the victims.



AP has posted [online maps of the quilts](#) using photographs where available. Most of the Srebrenica women had no chance to collect family mementos before they were expelled, but the occasional photo provides a haunting glimpse of life in Srebrenica before the catastrophe. One photo (left) shows [Beba Hadzić](#), the director of Bosfam when she was principal of the Srebrenica High

School, with two young Muslim colleagues, [Redzep Bektić and Mevludin Smajić](#). Both would be murdered in 1995.

Over the past three years, AP has shown Bosfam's quilts at [events across North America](#). They have proved particularly popular with Bosniak diaspora groups, which have used quilts to [commemorate their own lost relatives](#), and with universities. The [Advisory Council For Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) has also used the quilts at events at the US Capitol, to lobby for a tougher US policy on Bosnia.

The quilt project owes much of its success to ten [AP Peace Fellows](#) who have volunteered with Bosfam since 2003 and provided friendship for the weavers during the difficult days around the July anniversary of the massacre. This year's Peace Fellow, Laila Zulkaphil, a Mongolian student at Georgetown University, has managed the online content and is producing [powerful blogs](#).

Since 2003, the partnership between Bosfam and AP has generated \$83,374.43 for the weavers, although the larger goals have always been to keep the memory of Srebrenica alive, identify victims, and secure justice. Eight years later, all three goals are closer to being realized. When AP staff-writer Peter Lippman [first visited Srebrenica for AP in 2002](#), Potočari was an empty field that was barred to returning Muslim refugees. The first memorial stone to be erected was smashed to pieces by angry Serbs.

Today, Srebrenica is universally recognized as a symbol of genocide and even Serbia may be feeling remorse, to judge from reports that the President of Serbia will be among the visitors to Potočari on Sunday. The quilts have also helped survivors campaign for justice, and helped to unify the survivor movement. Mothers of Srebrenica used a quilt to publicize their demands at the opening of the trial of [Radovan Karadžić](#) in The Hague last October.

Elsewhere in the world, quilting is starting to catch on as a tool for advocacy. Three other AP partners have either made a quilt, or plan to make quilts, in Guatemala, Nepal and the Congo. While they will all carry a powerful message, each panel will remain a deeply

personal expression of grief and determination.

- Learn about the [Srebrenica massacre](#).
- Read [profiles of the victims commemorated in the 15 quilts](#).
- [Watch video profiles of the weavers](#).
- [Follow the quilts](#) on their journey through North America and Europe.
- Read [ten years of blogs by AP Peace Fellows](#) in Eastern Bosnia.
- To organize an event around a quilt contact the [AP office](#)