

## SREBRENICA WEAVERS MARK MASSACRE ANNIVERSARY WITH GRIEF AND A NEW SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

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Tuzla, Bosnia and Washington, DC: In a striking example of their resilience, survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre are launching an innovative program to train young women in carpet-weaving even as they mourn their lost relatives.

The program will be announced on Tuesday – the 11th anniversary of the massacre – by Bosfam, the Bosnian women’s group and a long-time partner of The Advocacy Project (AP).

Meanwhile, the International Commission of Missing Persons (ICMP) in Tuzla has announced that 505 newly-identified massacre victims will be buried on Tuesday at Potocari, scene of the 1995 massacre. They include the son of Zifa Bumbulovic, one of Bosfam’s core weavers. Fikret Bumbulovic was 19 years old when he was killed.

Bosfam has long been training refugee women to weave traditional Bosnian carpets (kilims), as a source of therapy and income. Many Bosfam weavers, like Ms. Bumbulovic, lost relatives in the 1995 massacre, which took the lives of over 8,000 men and boys.

The new program seeks sponsors for 18 Bosfam weaving teams, each comprising an experienced (“core”) weaver and two apprentices. In return for a donation of \$1,000, sponsors will receive a large carpet, a signed plaque from the weaver that tells her story, and a DVD of the AP film “Weavers for Hope.” So far, sponsors have been provisionally found for 11 teams.

Bosfam hopes the new program will enhance the reputation and confidence of its 18 core weavers, who form the nucleus of the weaving business, and encourage younger women to take up weaving. Ten percent of each donation will be invested in a training fund.

Bosfam is also hoping to find partners in the US who will identify with its weavers and through them make the case for continued American engagement in Bosnia. This has been one of the goals since 2003, when Bosfam and AP began to use carpets as a tool of outreach in the US. The two partners have organized several carpet exhibits in Baltimore, Boston and Washington that have attracted hundreds of visitors, generated over \$5,000 for the weavers, and produced articles in the mainstream media.

AP has also used networking to help Bosfam build a sustainable business. Last year, AP arranged for Bosfam to find a market for its carpets with Worldstock, the online store. AP has also connected Bosfam with the organization Aid to Artisans, which provides support for grassroots businesses.

This year AP recruited an experienced intern, Yvette Barnes from the Georgetown Business School, to help Bosfam develop its business plan and build the sponsorship program.

Tuesday's commemoration of the 1995 massacre will attract less international attention than last year's (10th) anniversary, but promises to be even more troubling for survivors. With each passing year it becomes harder for the survivors to understand why so many relatives have yet to be identified, and why the two responsible for the massacre – the former Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic – remain at liberty.

New bodies are still being discovered, and another 268 massacre victims were found last week in a mass grave at Jaz, near the eastern town of Zvornik. But the pace of identification remains slow. 3,628 massacre victims have now been positively identified, but this is still less than half the number of those who perished.

The victims are identified by matching their DNA with that of living relatives. An ICMP official told AP's Ms. Barnes last week that the Commission has received very few blood samples from families in North America, and appealed for more cooperation from the large North American diaspora.

- For details on sponsoring a weaver, visit the [Bosfam website](#)
- Read AP intern [Yvette's blogs](#)
- Provide DNA and help identify a victim by visiting the [ICMP site](#) and following the instructions