

Eleventh Anniversary of the Genocide in Srebrenica, 11 July 2006

SEE, KNOW, REMEMBER

On Tuesday, July 11th, at the Memorial Center in Potočari, 505 Bosniaks who had been exhumed from several secondary mass graves were buried. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights marked the 11th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica by carrying out activities in nine towns across Serbia in order to pay respect to the Srebrenica victims and emphasize the necessity for society to accept the truth about this crime.

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Members of the YIHR met with members of the Association of the Movement of Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves in Potočari – Munira Subašić, Kada Hotić, Zumra Šehomerović, and Sabrom Kolenović.

Chief ICTY Prosecutor, Carla del Ponte, was also at the commemoration, where she expressed her dissatisfaction at Belgrade's decade-long refusal to extradite indictees Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić to the Hague Tribunal. "Koštunica can extradite Mladić immediately – but only if he wishes to do so", said Del Ponte on Tuesday to the Srebrenica victims, with whom she spent the day.

"War criminals are entitled to punishment", said the Reis ul-Ulema Mustafa Cerić at the funeral.

At the ICTY, Srebrenica is described as "the triumph of evil", "scenes from Hell written on the darkest pages of human history". As of this Tuesday (11 July, 2006), of 10,000 Bosniaks from Srebrenica registered as "missing", 1,937 have been buried at the Memorial Center in Potočari.

DON'T TOUCH OUR NATIONAL HERO

The YIHR office in Niš coordinated a street action to condemn the crime in Srebrenica and to prevent further misconceptions about this event. Once again, an appeal was addressed to the government to arrest ICTY indictee Ratko Mladić, certainly the most responsible person for the Srebrenica genocide. Besides the YIHR activists, members of the Center for Civil Resources Development, the Lambada, the Media Center, the Human Rights Council, the Civic Youth Alliance, the LDP Youth, the Law School Student Union, the Science Faculty Student Union and the Youth House also took part in this action.

The street activity, which included a press conference and a screening of the documentary *Smoke Rings*, by Nemanja Stjepanovića, was held in downtown Niš. T-shirts and buttons depicting Ratko Mladić followed by the words "Wanted for Genocide" were handed out. In one hour, some 50 T-shirts were handed out.

The entire event was brimming with incident. Citizens shouted: "Are you Muslims? Get out from our country then. This is no place for you. We should send you to Kosovo to be raped! You are not Serbs. How can you touch our national hero? He is our father!" Some of the action participants and volunteers were physically assaulted and some were spat on. The police interfered and prevented any further, perhaps more severe, incident. The angry citizens asked the police to remove the protesters from the square, surprised that the gathering had been permitted in the first place. After the event, one of the gathered citizens, supported and cheered on by others, burned one of the t-shirts which depicted a broken gun followed by this accompanying text: *If my name was Edin and I was born in 1977 in Srebrenica, I would be dead.*

Misdemeanor charges were filed against two persons who took part in yesterday's incident during the commemoration of the 11th anniversary of Srebrenica.

"Two persons were detained in downtown Niš, against whom misdemeanor charges were filed for violation of public order and peace. According to the policemen's assessment, no graver incidents occurred and much of the turmoil ended with warnings", said spokeswoman of the Niš police, Lidija Pavlović.

CITIZENS OF VOJVODINA OPT FOR RESTORATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY

In Knjaževac, leaflets were handed out to local citizens, some of which found them on the windshields of their cars. One man threw the leaflet away "because it was written in Latin alphabet": "I'm a Serb- my alphabet is Cyrillic", he explained.

The volunteers noted that the younger citizens of Knjaževac - mainly those born around 1988 or even after - are not familiar with the events that took place in Srebrenica in 1995. Some even asked "What is that?" Another part of the activity included the painting over of three pieces of nationalistic graffiti; an action which was covered by local television.

In downtown Sombor, promotional material with the slogan "Restore dignity to ourselves and to the victims" was handed out. None of the passers-by refused the leaflet; in fact the majority took it with an approving smile. When they read what the flyer was about, however, the smiles swiftly vanished from their faces. Here, too, graffiti that read "Greater Serbia" and "Serbia for Serbs" was painted over. The citizens who gathered around did not cause any disruption. Members of the Sombor Youth Boom took part in this action.

At around 11am, a group of Zrenjanin citizens gathered to paint over graffiti in a park near the Cultural Center. The activity was carried out by activists from YIHR-Zrenjanin, the Vojvodina Peace Group "REACT", the Social-Democratic Union as well as the Civic Alliance of Serbia. Leaflets that read "Don't Forget" and "Let's Restore Dignity to Ourselves and to Victims" were handed out without incident. Some 1,000 leaflets were handed out, only 3 of which were thrown away. To a girl who wore a t-shirt with the face of Ratko Mladić, next to which was written "Wanted for Genocide" (made by YIHR-Niš activists), another girl said: "You better take it off".

A press conference in the Zrenjanin Cultural Center followed the street action, where representatives of the GSS, LDP, SDU, SVM, LSV and the Zrenjanin Defense spoke of the genocide in Srebrenica and issued a joint message stating that now is probably the last opportunity to establish full cooperation with the ICTY. The conference organizer was a Zrenjanin high-school teacher, Edi Daruši. The press conference was followed by a screening of the documentary *Smoke Rings*.

Commemoration of the 11th anniversary of Srebrenica has been going on for several days in Pančevo. Leaflets have been handed out, and graffiti which read "Death to the Roma", which included a swastika, was painted over. By the end of the week, more tasteful graffiti will be sprayed over such nationalistic statements. YIHR activists received assistance and support from residents of the building on whose wall the "Roma" graffiti had been sprayed.

A group of seven young people painted over Nazi graffiti, which also included a swastika, near downtown Novi Bečej, and then split into two smaller groups on both sides of the main street in Bečej and handed out leaflets. Two more pieces of nationalistic graffiti which glorified Serbs and offended other nations were then painted over.

The anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide was marked in Kragujevac by a screening of the documentary *Smoke Rings* on RTV Kragujevac, followed by a press conference organized by YIHR-Kragujevac in cooperation with the Coalition of the Youth of Serbia and the Youth Group of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Kragujevac. NGO activists brought to mind the most horrid crimes in Europe after WWII, and emphasized that the most responsible perpetrators of this crime remain at large and are often qualified as national heroes.