

The 11th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica

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On the 10th of July 2006, the Women in Black Network in Serbia marked the 11th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide by having a vigil in Knez Mihajlova Street, near the Republic square. The participants had a police escort from the Women in Black office to the location of the vigil, as well as during the vigil. People from USA, Israel, Palestine and Turkey have joined activists from the Women in Black Network from Serbia. Tomorrow; on the 11th of July the activists of the Women in Black Network in Serbia are going to the commemoration in Potocari.

In solidarity,
Women in Black

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11.7.1995. - 11. 7. 2006.

A Silent Protest in Black - Trg Republike,

July 10, 2006 - 7:30 - 8:30pm Eleven years ago, on July 11, the Army of Republika Srpska, with the support of the Milosevic regime, began to kill men and boys from Srebrenica. Over 8 days, over 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed solely because they had a different name, ethnicity, and religion. The liquidation was committed in our name, even though from the beginning of state organized crime we held protests in which we publicly, clearly and vocally demanded accountability; went to the place where crimes were committed in our name and expressed solidarity and compassion with the families of the victims.

We did that and more.

After the fall of the Milošević regime in October 2000 there was no effort to confront the criminal past. There are organized denials of crimes and the criminal past. Our current leader Vojislav Koštunica has continued this campaign. Citizens and Serbia are not hostages only to Ratko Mladic and the five other unextradited Hague indictees; we are held captive by the government and the deranged value system in which criminals are celebrated as heroes and citizens who demand accountability for war and war crimes are declared traitors.

On the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, we address Bosnian Muslims and all citizens of Bosnia and Hercegovina, repeating: **FORGIVE US!** We will mark the eleventh anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica with a protest in Belgrade at Trg Republika on July 10 from 7:30 to 8:30pm. Activists from the Women in Black Network will visit the place the victims of the Srebrenica genocide are buried in order to show our respect to those killed and our solidarity with the families of the victims.

Women in Black

Belgrade, 6.7.2006 - LETTER Our dear sisters in peace:

Thank you for everything!

We do not have words to express what we experienced over the course of the funeral commemoration gathering at Potocari.

We do not have words to express how much we are touched - we, who came to do honor to the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and to ask for forgiveness from these closest they have in their hearts so much caring, kindness, and respect for those of us who came from Serbia in order to join in your pain.

From you and from this road we ask for forgiveness for all suffering, degradation, pain, and grief which was inflicted on you in our name. We feel that it is not only our moral obligation but also basic humanity. Yesterday in Potocari, with every step we felt by the expressions of people, saw in gestures, and heard words of gratitude - gratitude to us for the humble and small gesture of coming to a place of crime committed in our name. And to us, that is very, very moving.

Now, more than ever, we know that together we will continue to fight for peace and justice in the area of former Yugoslavia and in the entire world.

Now, more than ever, we know that solidarity, respect, compassion, kindness, and understanding are very important for the construction of a just and lasting peace.

Now, more than ever, we know that we women are most active in the construction of peace.

Now, more than ever, we know that no one, at any time, can tear apart the solidarity, trust, respect, and mutual support which we have created together and which we continue to create.

Your sisters in peace from the Network of Women in Black which were in Potocari: from Belgrade, Kraljevo, Leskovac,

Novi Sad, Novi Pazar, Nis, Priboj, Zajecar, Velika Plana, Vlasotinac.

Stasa Zajovic,
In the name of the Network of Women in Black

11. July, POTOARI

July 11, 2006, like every year on that day, a commemoration for the victims of genocide was held in Potocari. We, women in Black, were with our friends, with our sisters in peace, with the families of those killed in the genocide, and with the Bosnian nation. We forty-five activists of the Network of Women in Black in Serbia, laid down a wreath saying "Pardon us." We witnessed the prayers for the victims and also the burial of the remains of 505 found bodies.

Upon returning to Belgrade, we send a letter of thanks to our friends from the Association of Women Citizens of Srebrenica and the Movement for "Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa." A group of our young activists (up to 25 years old) wrote a letter of their own impressions.

THE LETTER FROM YOUTH OF WOMEN IN BLACK BELGRADE
The Young People of Women in Black Serbia

Potocari, July 11, 2006

We went to Potocari to the commemoration of the genocide in Srebrenica because we sympathize with the families of the victims and with the Bosnian nation. Eleven years ago, when the genocide began, we were children. Today, as young people who will build the future, we feel responsible for the past and for the present. Then, our state committed crimes in our name, today the government of Serbia in our name denies and obstructs the truth about these crimes. We sympathize with the suffering of the families of the victims of genocide and show respect for all the victims. It is our duty to fight for truth and justice. This feeling of pain in us because of Potocari says "Pardon us."

For many of us, this was the first visit to Srebrenica, the first immediate encounter with the families of the victims, the first opportunity to look them in the eyes and to recognize the horror they carry deep inside.

When I entered the crowd, I felt like my heart beat faster, and at the same time I felt happy that I was there, and that I could be with all of them. When the song "Where are you?" started playing, that remained deep inside me. That song, it is the truth. And the people had so much dignity, I admire them for their courage. I thank them very much for how they accepted us. They would come up to us, slowly, take one of our hands, and say: Thank you. And they didn't have to do or say anything else. There we were perfectly understood. There, their pain is our pain.

I thought: what did this place look like exactly 11 years ago? It had to be just as hot. Surely they didn't have a drop of water. Did they know exactly what was going to happen to them? Everything I knew about this genocide became more real, the images became more detailed. A presence, in the same spot, like a recreation of the same event.

Somebody asked me: how many people are here? Some came as one mother, one sister, one wife, one daughter, one granddaughter for 10,000 dead. Reading the list of the victims' names on the memorial wall, I saw the years of their birth 1985, 1953, 1908 and the year of their death 1995. Boys, grown men, and old men, killed not because they represented some threat, but because they were Muslims.

Do they hear this prayer in Serbia? Did they hear the genocide? The truth about the crime has its own sound, I know, persistent like time, something quiet like silence. I choose to be that sound, together with the dead and their living. We all must know, no one can ever forget: everything changed on July 11, 1995, and nothing will ever be the way it was before.

I started from sympathy. Simply, something human in me was set in motion. A tragedy of that weight, carried out in the name of Serbia! I am not responsible! That country signed my passport! I am responsible. But still, all those young people! Some would be my peers, and some younger. Crazy. I can't do anything, and I couldn't, but I do have a need, physical even, to stand next to the victims. All of this is very personal to me.

For me, it was essential that I go, emotionally and politically. The whole experience was moving. The hardest of all the things I experienced was the reading of the names of the 505 victims. It took hours. Afterwards, for a long time their names rang in my head. Even though I was small when it all took place, this trip was, for me, a crystallization of the meaning of responsibility and a deepening of my own responsibility, which for me creates political maturity.

I chose to go to Potocari after speaking with a friend who went last year. I wanted to try to understand what took place and why. Since I was a child that that genocide happened, I am even less familiar with everything. I wanted to see the people, to be among the victims' close ones: that I experience their attitude from up close. The hardest moment for me was the song "Where are you?" and that child's voice which sang it. I spoke with the mothers from Srebrenica. I completely opened my eyes. It all fell into place for me. After returning to Belgrade, when I had excused myself from

everyone, immediately after, I sat down in a park on my way home, and thought.Â From that moment, everything is so personal.

â€œAlthough reading the names of 505 more victims took more than two hours, I ask myself how long it would take for the murder of 8000 people.â€•

â€œI feel betrayed and sad, I didnâ€™t know how what I saw would look: the pain and sorrow of the people who were there.Â I am so angry at the people who committed these crime, at the people who excuse these crimes, and at people who do not acknowledge these crimes. Never again!â€•

Ana (Novi Sad), Aurelija (Novi Sad), Dzenana (Novi Pazar), Emina (Novi Pazar), Jasmina (Zajecar), Maja (Leskovac), Marija (Leskovac), Marko (Beograd), Milos (Velika Plana), Mima (Zajecar), Tamara (Beograd).
We are young activists from the Network of Women in Black in Serbia who are less than 25 years old.