




MEMORIAL
CENTER
SREBRENICA

SREBRENICA GENOCIDE DENIAL REPORT 2021

Srebrenica - June 2021



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Sarajevo

 **HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG**
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Executive Summary

The 2021 Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report offers a detailed account of the practices of denial which permeate regional media and politics, illustrates the perspective of the international community, and highlights positive developments in the struggle against denial. Data for this report was collected between May 1, 2020, and April 30, 2021, and subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. Through the tailored methodology outlined in this report, this research identifies the major actors and rhetorical patterns of denial of the Srebrenica genocide in regional political discourse and media. The findings of this report not only furnish an in-depth understanding of genocide denial itself, but also highlight emergent trends in its persistence which demonstrate a profound need for continued monitoring.

The findings of this report indicate that genocide denial, including the glorification of war crimes and criminals, remains widespread in both Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and neighbouring countries. Over the course of the past year, quantitative analysis identified 234 instances of genocide denial in the regional public and media discourse. The vast majority of these instances occurred in Serbia (142), followed by BiH (60), and Montenegro (19). The three most common rhetorical tactics used in genocide denial remain disputing the number and identity of victims, conspiracy theories which challenge the rulings and integrity of international courts, and nationalist historical revisionism. Within these general categories, common practices include:

- Conspiracy theories and 'alternative histories' which contradict the judicially established facts of the Srebrenica genocide.
- Attempts to silence or disparage public discourse about the genocide.
- Portraying the recognition and memorialization of the genocide as an attack on the Serbian people.
- Opposition to the official recognition or condemnation of the genocide by states, local governments, and institutions.
- Obstruction of the adoption of legislation banning genocide denial.

In addition to charting the ways genocide denial is practiced in the region, this report identifies the most prolific actors engaging in acts of denial. While many of these actors work in fields such as media, education, science, and cultural arts, the vast majority are actively engaged in politics, including current and former party leaders, public officials, and right-wing activists. Most alarmingly, in 28 cases, deniers of the Srebrenica genocide were found to be holding current public offices in state and entity level governments. Many of these actors were also identified as having been active in Serbian political and military structures during the Bosnian War.

Over a quarter-century since the genocide in Srebrenica, the denial and trivialization of the horrific atrocities which the people of Srebrenica endured continues to pose a major obstacle to attaining justice, securing lasting peace, and promoting processes of both societal and individual healing. The absence of formal legislation prohibiting denial contributes to a growing culture of impunity, triumphalism, and division in the region which is propelled in politics, the media, and public life. The judicially established facts of the Srebrenica genocide are openly negated, and war criminals are glorified as national heroes.

Although the 25th commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide last year did succeed in raising both domestic and international awareness about the genocide and its aftermath, it also precipitated a dramatic surge in regional denial. The case studies in this report examine the local elections in Srebrenica as a platform for genocide denial, as well as the so-called 'Day of Liberation of Srebrenica' which was hosted on July 11th by the right-wing organization Eastern Alternative.

Since the publication of the last Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report, there have been several positive developments in global trends pertaining to genocide recognition and advocacy. For example, the European Commission's 2020 Country Report drew attention to how political leaders in BiH continue to challenge judicially established facts about war crimes and to glorify their perpetrators. Additionally, the European Commission's most recent Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for EU membership openly condemns ongoing practices of revisionism and genocide denial in the country.

These positive developments demonstrate that despite the persistence of genocide denial, efforts to counter historical revisionism and hold deniers of genocide accountable are bearing fruit. Manifested in art, political advocacy, and civil society engagement, the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide and the struggle against denial persevere, thanks to the relentless efforts of individuals, institutions, and victims' associations who share the mission of the Srebrenica Memorial Center. In order to ensure that our progress continues, direct action on the part of political, social, and cultural actors remains of dire necessity.

With this in mind, the Srebrenica Memorial Center makes the following recommendations to combat genocide denial:

- Legal and judicial institutions must ensure that the prosecution of war crimes continues, and the convictions of the ICTY are upheld and recorded in the criminal records of BiH.
- Legislators and political activists must fight for the adoption of a state-level law banning the denial, trivialisation, justification, or glorification of

genocide and atrocities. Until such legislature is adopted, existing legal provisions such as contained in Article 145a of the Criminal Law of BiH need to be implemented.

- Civil society actors must be vigilant in holding organizations and institutions responsible for genocide denial in the media accountable according to the procedures established by authorized regulatory bodies.
- Those working in the fields of education and public policy must advocate for extensive reforms, including in textbook policy and curricula.
- Members of the international community should unequivocally and forcefully condemn the denial, justification, and glorification of war crimes and criminals--including in the case of the Srebrenica genocide. Additionally, they should impose sanctions on public officials in BiH and others who publicly deny the Srebrenica genocide or glorify convicted war criminals.
- Political actors should refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, incitement to ethnic hatred, and denial or glorification of war crimes; they are likewise compelled to acknowledge the verdicts reached by both national and international courts, and to treat victims from all ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds in BiH with dignity.
- Members of the media must commit themselves to responsible and fact-based journalism, which includes respecting the suffering endured by all of those--regardless of ethnic, national, or religious background—who were impacted by the traumas of war.

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BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
CEC	Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OHR	Office of the High Representative
PDP	Party of Democratic Progress
PSC	Public Security Centre
RS	Republika Srpska
RS Mol	RepublikaSrpska Ministry of Interior
SJB/PSS	Public Security Stations
SNSD	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
SPU	Special Police Units
SRS	Serbian Radical Party
UN	United Nations
VRS	Army of Republika Srpska

SREBRENICA MEMORIAL

Established by decision of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2000, the Srebrenica Memorial is a place of remembrance for the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. The Memorial Center is dedicated to the preservation of history and to confronting the forces of ignorance and hatred which make genocide possible. Genocide denial and islamophobia remain serious obstacles to peace and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the Srebrenica Memorial, we understand the danger posed by historical revisionism to the processes of peace-building and transitional justice. We are committed to confronting the pernicious forces which seek to deny the historical experience of the Bosnian people through a facts-based approach which promotes tolerance, interethnic dialogue, and reconciliation.

PREFACE

This report aims to map individuals, media and platforms plaguing the public arena with revisionism and genocide denial, and to consolidate any information put up with the aim of covering up a scientifically established truth with a multitude of fabricated lies. The Report is further to inform the work of researchers, civil society organisations and institutions with both duty and authority to prevent the incitement of national, racial, ethnic and religious hatred.

Young people from Srebrenica were for the most part in the lead in drafting this report – and that I take pride in. Personally, I see it as an added value, for every point that is documented during the research directly concerns them, their families and friends. Every act of denial and glorification of genocide concerns us all, as it poses a threat to humanity. It is our task to put an end to it, as much as anyone can. When done by those whose life is directly affected, the greater the importance. These people are a testament that nothing can stop the truth.

I am grateful to all who took part in the drafting of this Report and to our partners for their support. Without it, this work would have been far more difficult.

Dr. Emir Suljagić

Director

Srebrenica Memorial

1. Introduction: 25 Years of Srebrenica Genocide-

A Perpetuated Crime

In July of 1995, the military and police forces of Republika Srpska executed over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys and deported about 25,000 women, children and the elderly from the formally declared UN 'safe area' of Srebrenica.¹ The scale of the crime was enormous; its impact, devastating. The permanent scars left by the genocide are still visible today, not only in Srebrenica and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but across the region. Recovery and peace building are inextricable from the pursuit of truth and justice. In the last 26 years, all of these interrelated processes have been continuously obstructed by denial of the Srebrenica genocide, and the promulgation of revisionist myths which preclude reconciliation and fuel intolerance.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) ruled that the crimes in Srebrenica were acts of genocide. All military and political activities carried out during the operation which began after the fall of Srebrenica on July 11th, 1995, and ended five days later, had a single objective: the total extermination of the Bosniak population of the Srebrenica enclave.²

The crimes committed in Srebrenica in July of 1995 were ruled a genocide by the final and binding verdicts of the world's highest international courts. In post-conflict societies, not only do legal qualifications of crimes establish the accountability of perpetrators, but they also validate the pain and suffering experienced by victims. It is precisely these same processes which Srebrenica genocide denial aims to derail. Claims that the crime never occurred and that its perpetrators are not criminals but heroes, constitute a direct assault on accountability; meanwhile, attempts to distort the identities, experiences, and number of victims only perpetuates the suffering of survivors. These claims are all part of the official Serbian narrative, crafted, peddled, and institutionalised by the Serbian political elite and their media acolytes. Within this context, victims are only viewed as a challenge and inconvenience. There is no sincere intention to acknowledge the trauma they have experienced, nor to cultivate an environment of reconciliation and trust in the local communities where they live today—together with those who committed crimes against them as well as those who likewise deny their experiences. This politicization of tragedy

1 Hanson Green, M. *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report 2020*, Srebrenica, 2020, The Srebrenica Memorial, available at: <https://www.srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/documents/41/izvjestaj-o-negiranju-genocidu-2020-bosanski-fil.pdf>.

2 Ibid.

ultimately benefits neither Serbs, Bosniaks, or their respective states. Rather, the toxic environment which it precipitates poses a direct obstacle to prosperity, stability, and peace which threatens everyone in the region.

The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in 2020 was followed by a surge in genocide denial and triumphalism, not least of which were parallel celebrations by Bosnian Serbs of the so-called "liberation of Srebrenica." As the remains of the victims identified in the course of the previous year were being laid to rest on July 11th, – as will continue to be the practice for years to come – the voices of those speaking out in denial of the Srebrenica genocide, devoid of fundamental human compassion, were louder than ever. The 2020 elections in Srebrenica offered yet another opportunity for genocide denial to rear its head, this time in the realm of local politics. These are not, of course, unrelated phenomena, but rather part of a long-established and escalating pattern in Srebrenica, which is reflected in the wider region. Based on the surreal distortion of fact and obfuscation of responsibility, these patterns play out not just in politics, but across an expansive regional media landscape. In both BiH and Serbia, federal governments have failed to put an end to this practice. In neither of these two states, where genocide denial is most prevalent, do legal provisions exist to prohibit the denial of past atrocities or the glorification of the criminals who perpetrated them. The international community has voiced their concern in no uncertain terms as to the detrimental impact of such practices on regional processes of reconciliation and peace building; and yet, these practices continue, in the complete absence of moral and political accountability.

The first annual report on Srebrenica genocide denial, published in 2020, established the underlying historical context for these events. In addition to clearly presenting the judicially established facts of the Srebrenica genocide, the report identified the most common narratives and rhetorical strategies used in its denial. This first report demonstrated an exigent need to continue the systematic monitoring of genocide denial. The production of these reports, as annual publications, reflects the perpetual and yet unrelenting nature of denial in the region. The harmful effects of genocide denial are beyond doubt. Not only does denial obstruct the processes of objective historiography and collective memory, as the invalidation of human suffering and experience, it also constitutes an enormous burden in the everyday lives of those who have been impacted by violence. Denial is not simply an isolated and abstract political practice; rather, it operates in multiple dimensions of social life, resulting in a reverberating array of negative consequences. For this reason, it is of vital importance that we continue to monitor this practice. Only through the collection and analysis of pertinent data are we able to understand and eventually counteract the patterns and emergent trends which through which the denial of genocide is perpetuated.

"Although needed, judicial dimension, in itself, does not suffice for successful post-conflict recovery processes. Further, the potential to use judicial mechanisms to understand the recent past and draw lessons from it, and to ultimately overcome it, does not lie in The Hague. Quite the contrary – it is firmly in the hands of the citizens of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Only they can implement further transitional justice processes, in order to build better, stronger and more inclusive societies", Carmel Agius, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Courts

The 2021 Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report offers a detailed account of the practices of denial which permeate regional media and politics, illustrates the perspective of the international community, and highlights positive developments in the struggle against denial. Data for this report was collected between May 1, 2020, and April 30, 2021, and subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. Through the tailored methodology outlined in this report, we identify the major actors and rhetorical patterns of denial of the Srebrenica genocide in regional political discourse and media. The findings of this report not only furnish an in-depth understanding of genocide denial itself, but also highlight emergent trends in its persistence which demonstrate a profound need for continued monitoring.

2. Narrative Framework of Denial

The ubiquity and salience of revisionism in BiH and surrounding countries today suggest, in the words of Milo Petrović, that "there is no plurality of approaches and interpretations, but a completely 'new' reading and writing of history, with little or no respect for facts that are simply pushed aside, silenced, erased, and very often constructed."³ In an environment where denial and historical revisionism has escalated to such an extent, where those who committed unspeakable atrocities and these atrocities themselves are openly celebrated, division and intolerance become the defining characteristics of the political system, to the extreme disadvantage of victims of political violence. The first edition of the Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report identified the three most common tactics used in the denial of the Srebrenica genocide: challenging the number and identity of victims, conspiracy theories which cast doubt on the rulings of international courts, triumphalist national historical revisionism. These foundational narratives have remained consistent in the course of the present reporting period, and will therefore be reiterated below as presented in the original report:⁴

Disputing the Numbers and Identities of Victims

At present, more than 6,600 Bosniak victims of the Srebrenica genocide are buried in the Srebrenica Memorial Cemetery adjacent to the former UN base in Potočari. Near the entrance to the cemetery, the names of these victims as well as those of over 1,700 more whose remains have yet to be found or identified are inscribed on the semi-circular Memorial Wall. Nearby, a stone bears the number of the victims known to have perished in the July 1995 genocide: 8,372. Despite these facts having been established through meticulous investigation underpinned by more than two decades of DNA analysis, historical revisionists often claim that the total number of victims murdered in Srebrenica is drastically lower than the judicially affirmed death toll. A common strategy for supporting this claim is by alleging that many of the names listed on the cemetery's Memorial Wall are in fact persons who have emigrated from Bosnia and are alive and well, living in Germany and elsewhere abroad. Others claim that many of the bodies buried in the Memorial Cemetery are not individuals who were killed in Srebrenica.

In the event that genocide deniers concede the number of Bosniak victims killed in Srebrenica to be closer to the international consensus, they frequently dispute the

³ Petrović, M. The Time of Revisionism in *Rethinking the Past and Historical Revisionism*, Association of Spanish Fighters 1936-1939 in cooperation with the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, 2014, available at: https://www.rosalux.rs/sites/default/files/publications/Preispitivanje_pro%C5%A1losti_i_istorijski_revizionizam.pdf.

⁴ Hanson Green, M. *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report 2020*, Srebrenica, 2020, Srebrenica Memorial, available at <https://www.srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/documents/41/izvjestaj-o-negiranju-genocidu-2020-bosanski-finalpdf>.

circumstances of the victims' deaths and their civilian identities. Common assertions are that many of the Bosniaks buried in the Memorial Cemetery died of causes such as exhaustion, and that the majority were in fact killed in combat, as soldiers or terrorists, rather than unarmed civilians. Another common discourse which negates the identity of the victims and is deeply ingrained in the historical ideology of Serbian nationalism, argues that Bosniaks are not in fact a legitimate people, and thus by definition cannot be targeted by genocide.

Theories of International Conspiracies and Disputing Courts

Another ubiquitous discourse of denial which is often used to buttress the aforementioned revisionist narratives casts the international judicial consensus on the Srebrenica genocide as part of a malign international conspiracy against the Serbian people. The standard version of this narrative contends that the events in Srebrenica in and after July 1995 were staged by pro-Muslim, anti-Serb, Western powers. Epitomized by the words of Milorad Dodik, deniers insist that the Srebrenica genocide was "a staged tragedy with an aim to satanize the Serbs." Operating under this paradigm of genocide denial, revisionists accuse meddling foreign powers of orchestrating everything from the war itself and the burial of the bodies to the annual commemoration in Potočari, which many claim Western actors pay people to attend.

Within this frame, the evidence submitted before the ICTY and ICJ is dismissed as having been staged in order to demonize Serbs, and the findings of the world's most esteemed legal institutions are conveniently rejected on the basis of an imaginary anti-Serb bias. An additional tactic used to undermine the international judicial proceedings which established, beyond a reasonable doubt, the facts of the Srebrenica genocide, attempts to exploit perceived ambiguities in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.

Triumphalism and National Historical Revisionism

Denial of the Srebrenica genocide is intricately interwoven with the broader historical revisionist enterprise in Serbia which seeks to recast the events of the latter half of the twentieth century in order to create a sustainable foundation for Serbian nationalist ideology. This grand revisionist project, dating back to at least the nineteen-eighties, revolves heavily around the rehabilitation of the Serbian Chetnik movement. During the Second World War, the term Chetnik originated to describe Serbian fighters who collaborated with Nazis against the Yugoslav Partisans and allied forces. The mantle of Chetnik was proudly reclaimed by Bosnian Serb nationalists when they began killing their Bosniak neighbours in the nineteen-nineties following the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Since that time, the rehabilitation of the Chetniks and glorification of war criminals from both the Second World War and the most recent conflict has been a mainstay of the Serbian revisionist enterprise buttressing denial of the Srebrenica genocide.

Role reversal is a central component of this revisionist discourse. In the same way that Serbian nationalist historians have recast the Chetniks as protagonists in the Second World War and the victims of the Tito regime's subsequent persecutions, they have glorified the Chetniks of the Bosnian war, constructing a narrative of Serbian victimhood in which Srebrenica is presented as a "war of liberation." The mainstream embrace of Chetnik identity and ideology and the denial of the Srebrenica genocide are mutually reciprocal discourses in both Serbia and Republika Srpska. Criminals convicted of war crimes are exalted, including Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, the men chiefly responsible for the Srebrenica genocide.

Mobilizing Narratives: The Spectre of Threat

In order to operationalize these narratives, political elites have also relied heavily on the discourse of threat. In the Serbian context, any dissent from the official narrative which denies the Srebrenica genocide—including not only explicit statements, but also court rulings against Serb perpetrators and acts of memorialization of Srebrenica's victims—are portrayed as open attacks on the Serbian people. Those in Serbia who acknowledge the genocide are declared traitors, thus institutionalizing a normative association between denial and Serbian identity. In this way, denying the genocide in Srebrenica has become a matter of defending the Serbian state, the Serbian people, and their integrity. Likewise, in the Republika Srpska, acknowledgement and commemoration of the genocide is portrayed as an assault on the RS, a challenge to its legitimacy and continued existence.⁵

⁵ Maksimović, D. *Srebrenica in Republika Srpska: No features of genocide and end of discussion*, Deutsche Welle, July 11, 2020, available at: <https://www.dw.com/hr/srebrenica-u-republici-srpskoj-nema-karakter-genocida-i-to-%C4%8Dka/a-54130040>.

3. Quantitative Analysis of Srebrenica Genocide Denial

The quantitative analysis of data utilized in this report constitutes a pilot study which ultimately aims to establish an empirical framework for monitoring denial of the Srebrenica genocide. By furnishing a comprehensive catalogue of acts, agents, and rhetorical patterns which characterize genocide denial in public discourse, this study seeks to lay the foundations for the systematic and continuous monitoring of denial in the future. Building on previous publications of the Srebrenica Memorial Center, this research combines content and statistical data analysis to empirically quantify the narrative elements of genocide denial identified in last year's genocide denial report.⁶

The monitoring of public acts of genocide denial was conducted through a systematic search of online material according to the following key terms: "11 July," "Srebrenica," "genocide," "Potočari," "crime," and "Memorial Centre." The search results were recorded during the period from May 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, and encompassed an array of online sources and media outlets from BiH and the surrounding countries.

The basic units of analysis in the resulting sample are acts of genocide denial. In the context of the present research, these acts include written and spoken language which contradicts, disparages, or offers illegitimate interpretations of the judicially established facts of the Srebrenica Genocide. By judicially established facts, this research specifically refers to the investigative findings and court proceedings adjudicated by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in trials of Krstić, Popović et al, Tolimir, Karadžić, Mladić and others.⁷

For each act of genocide denial, the database includes basic identification data (exact quote; title, link and date of the media report), as well as three basic elements: the actor engaged in genocide denial, the media platform or channel of communication by which genocide is denied, and the rhetorical strategies and tropes utilized in the act of denial. Furthermore, additional attributes are identified for each of these elements in order to provide a greater depth of insight into the patterns and practices which characterize genocide denial and triumphalism in the region.

This approach generates a unique set of data and documentation that will prove valuable to researchers of genocide denial across a number of disciplines, including law, politics, sociology, and anthropology. Additionally, those engaged in fields such as transitional justice, and the remembrance and memorialisation of political violence will also benefit from the fruits of this research.

⁶ Hanson Green, M. *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report 2020*.

⁷ Ibid.

3.1. Acts and Forms of Genocide Denial

During the reporting period from May 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, 234 acts of genocide denial were identified in the media discourse of BiH and the surrounding region. Most of these incidents were recorded in Serbia (142), followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (60, of which 57 occurred in Republika Srpska), and finally Montenegro (19). An additional fourteen instances were recorded in other countries and/or unspecified locations.

This report monitored acts of direct (factual) denial, which explicitly challenged court-established facts, as well as acts of indirect (symbolic) denial, in which the denial of the genocide itself or its immorality is implicit in specific symbolic practices. Instances of direct denial included allegations that: no war crimes had taken place in Srebrenica; while war crimes may have occurred, they did not amount to genocide; international investigations and court rulings grossly exaggerated the number of people killed in Srebrenica and/or portrayed conflict deaths as civilian casualties. Indirect (symbolic) denial on the other hand, was manifest in activities such as the glorification of convicted war criminals; the celebration of genocide as a war victory or war of liberation; protest or obstruction of the memorialisation of genocide victims; attempts to justify and/or relativize the genocide on the basis of historical grievances or other crimes committed during the conflict; disparaging or obstructing public discourse on the subject of the genocide; opposition to legislation, including the legal prohibition of genocide denial, as well as formal decrees acknowledging or commemorating the genocide. In addition to direct and indirect acts of denial, this report also recorded threats of renewed violence or genocide in the public discourse, which are occasionally expressed by extremist groups and individuals.

Most prevalent in the sample is active genocide denial, which includes explicit claims that the genocide did not occur; conspiracy theories and 'alternative histories' which contradict the judicially established facts of the Srebrenica genocide; attempts to silence or disparage public discourse about the genocide; portraying the recognition of the genocide and/or the memorialization of its victims as acts of aggression against the Serbian people; opposition to the formal recognition or condemnation of the genocide by states, local governments, and institutions; and obstruction of or opposition to the adoption of legislation banning genocide denial.⁸

⁸ No specific themes/motives for active genocide denial were recorded in this sample, but content analysis indicates that the dominant motive is to prevent recognition of genocide through legislation or official documents.

Manner of genocide denial	Number of recorded acts of genocide denial
Active denial	138
Trivialisation	42
Acknowledging crime(s), but not genocide	29
Support/Exoneration of perpetrators	13
Refusal to discuss genocide	7
Triumphalism	5
Total	234

Table 1. Frequency of Different Forms of Genocide Denial

3.2. Actors of Genocide Denial

The actor in this sample refers to an individual, legal entity, formal association, or informal group engaging in written or verbal genocide denial. In the database established by this research, entries for actors include the following attributes: name and surname (individuals) or name (organisation, group or institution); gender (individuals); occupation or vocation in which he/she is engaged and/or is known to the public; area in which he/she operates (individuals) or is established in (organisation, institution); sector (public, commercial or non-profit); location (country of residence or of primary operations); the manner of genocide denial recorded during the monitoring; information on the possible role that the actor played in the commission of genocide and/or war crimes during the war in BiH, and the platform (name of the media or publication where the actor is quoted).

This report has identified a total of 143 actors in the region who publicly engaged in genocide denial during the reporting period, including 132 individuals and 11 groups or legal entities. The majority of these actors are located in Serbia (84), followed by BiH (38, of which 35 are in Republika Srpska), and Montenegro (12). A total of nine additional actors were also recorded from other countries or unspecified locations.

Among individuals, the vast majority of genocide deniers were found to be men (103). Only ten women were identified in the sample, while the gender of nineteen additional actors was not determined.

The majority of those engaged in genocide denial are active in the political sector (50). This includes leaders and member of political parties, as well as current and former public officials. Media accounted for the second highest occupational field of individuals and organizations engaged in denial (39), followed by science and education (13), right-wing activism (9), and cultural arts (6).

Alarminglly, in 28 cases, genocide deniers were found to be holding current public office in executive (16) or legislative (12) branches of government, primarily in Serbia and Republika Srpska. Many of those using their public political platforms for genocide denial were also directly involved in the violence in BiH and Croatia during the 1990s. These include individuals who held political office (Momčilo Krajišnik, Nenad Kecmanović, Srđa Trifković), as well as commanders and other participants in war-time military and paramilitary formations (Veselin Šljivančanin, Milomir Savčić, Dragoslav Bokan, Nenad Stevandić, Rajko Vasić, Vojislav Šešelj).

The most frequent genocide denier identified in the sample is BiH Presidency Member, Milorad Dodik (8), followed by Serbian Radical Party President, Vojislav Šešelj (7), and Miodrag Linta, Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and President of the regional Association of Serbs (6). Next in line, with four recorded cases each, are Milivoje Ivanišević, once on the defence team of Radovan Karadžić and Slobodan Milošević; Milorad Kojić, Director of the Centre for Research of War, War Crimes and Search for Missing Persons of Republika Srpska; Miloš Jovanović, President of the Democratic Party of Serbia; Vojin Pavlović, president of the Eastern Alternative Association; and Goran Petronijević, counsel for Radovan Karadžić and Veselin Šljivančanin before the ICTY.

3.3. Media Outlets Engaged in Denial

Among collective actors and institutions, media organizations were the most frequently engaged in genocide denial. Not only do journalists account for a significant number (27) of genocide denial instances, but media outlets offer the most accessible platform for other genocide deniers to express their views. The most notable outlets in this respect are the Montenegrin right-wing portal IN4S and the portal of the Serbian Telegraph, Republika. Despite frequent violations of media codes,⁹ these outlets are partially financed with public funds accessed through a number of local government projects in Serbia.¹⁰ The same is true with other media outlets in the sample, including the top twenty most frequent sources of genocide denying content. Of these, most media outlets are from Serbia (14), followed by Republika Srpska (5), and Montenegro (1).

9 Milivojević, A, *Milioni sa medijskih konkursa za Srpski Telegraf i Informer*, CINS, May 29, 2018, available at: <https://www.cins.rs/milioni-sa-medijskih-konkursa-za-srpski-telegraf-i-informer/>.
10 Data for Srpski telegraf, Kesformisanje, Krik, available at: <https://www.raskrikavanje.rs/kesformisanje/data/index.php?pravna=21167312&proj=P-D21167312yxc>;

Among the twenty most frequent media sources identified in the sample, four are publicly owned: two from Republika Srpska (public broadcaster RTRS and news agency Srna), one from Serbia (Tanjug agency), and the Sputnik portal, a media owned by the Russian Federation, located in Serbia. The most common types of media on this list are the websites of printed newspapers (11), followed by web portals (4), news agencies (3), and websites of TV companies (2).

The composition of this list largely coincides with the results of 2019 survey which identified a network of interconnected media sources which continuously engage in the internal transmission political misinformation (14 of the 20 most represented media outlets are a part of this network).¹¹

Media	As a platform	As an actor	Location	Type of media	Business operations/ ownership
IN4S	25	2	Montenegro	Web portal	Commercial
Republika (Srpski telegraf)	14	8	Serbia	Web portal	Commercial
Alo	13	7	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Novosti	13	3	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Srna	9	0	BiH (RS)	News agency	Public (BiH/ RS)
ATV BL	8	0	BiH (RS)	TV/web	Commercial
Glas Srpske	8	0	BiH (RS)	Press/web	Commercial
RTRS	8	0	BiH (RS)	TV/web	Public (BiH/ RS)
Sputnik	8	0	Serbia	Web portal	Public (Russia)
Kurir	7	1	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Tanjug	5	0	Serbia	News agency	Public (Serbia)
Beta	4	0	Serbia	News agency	Commercial
Glas Javnosti	4	2	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Politika	4	1	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Pravda	4	0	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Srpska info	4	0	BiH (RS)	Press/web	Commercial

¹¹ Cvjetićanin, T. (ur.), *Dezinformacije u online sferi: Slučaj BiH*, Zašto ne, April 2019, pg. 53, available at: https://zastone.ba/app/uploads/2019/05/Dezinformacije_u_online_sferi_Slučaj%20BiH_BHS.pdf.

Standard	4	0	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Espresso	3	0	Serbia	Web portal	Commercial
Informer	3	1	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial
Pečat	3	0	Serbia	Press/web	Commercial

Table 2. Frequency of Genocide Denial by Media Outlet

The rise of the internet as the preeminent communication technology has also amplified the traditional influence of the media exponentially. This was clearly demonstrated by the present reporting period, where online portals accounted for a great deal of denial—both through the publication of original online content, and the projection of other media to a wider audience. Some examples of incendiary headlines from these online articles include:

“Historian Ivanišević: Analysis reveals numerous deceptions about Srebrenica! Muslim civilians were not killed, only hatred is being created”¹²

“The West and the Bosniak lobby are preparing a revision of the events from the 1990ies: They are pushing Dayton and Srebrenica along with Kosovo”,¹³

“Shame on you N1: Srebrenica is genocide, and Jasenovac is not even a crime!”¹⁴

“Srebrenica is a NATO and Vatican project for the destruction of Republika Srpska.”¹⁵

¹² Historian Ivanišević: *Analysis reveals numerous deceptions about Srebrenica! No Muslim civilians were killed, only hatred was created*. Kurir.rs, July 8, 2020, available at: <https://www.kurir.rs/region/bosna-i-hercegovina/3493995/istoricar-ivanisevic-analiza-otkrila-brojne-obmane-o-srebrenici-nisu-stradali-muslimanski-civili-samo-se-stvara-mrznja>.

¹³ Mijatović, V. *The West and the Bosniak lobby are preparing a revision of the events from the 1990ies: They are pushing Dayton and Srebrenica along with Kosovo*. Novosti.rs, June 20, 2020, available at: <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:871450-Zapad-i-bosnjacki-lobi-sprema-ju-reviziju-dogadjaja-iz-devedesetih-Uz-Kosovo-guraju-Dejton-i-Srebrenicu>.

¹⁴ *Shame on you N1: Srebrenica is genocide, and Jasenovac is not even a crime!* Kurir.rs, February 11, 2021, available at: <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3622845/sramota-n1-srebrenica-im-genocid-a-jasenovac-im-nije-ni-zlocin?fbclid=IwAR1EHhwNU3QA2PoBmonNbVm4y8DjyLOKD-29pyAwfdDvDBU9DT7fggzjXozs>.

¹⁵ Eraković, M. *Srebrenica is a NATO and Vatican project for the destruction of Republika Srpska*, Vidovdan, May 25, 2021, available at: <https://vidovdan.org/info/srebrenica-je-nato-i-vatikanski-projekat-za-unistenje-repub->

4. Genocide Denial in Practice

Deeply embedded in official state narratives, denial structures political action in the region, and permeates all aspects of public life. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the most prolific actors in the denial of the Srebrenica genocide are public officials in Serbia and the RS, and the media serves as the primary platform through which they engage in denial. In both contexts, the media landscape is comprised of a mixture of public agencies and private agencies which are able to access public funds through local government projects. Because of the enormous influence of the media in shaping political and social discourses in any society, this close relationship between the government and media can have many negative consequences—particularly when so many prominent political actors engage in irresponsible behaviour, such as genocide denial. Indeed, in Serbia and the RS, we can see how this relationship has led to the normalization and institutionalization of denial of the Srebrenica genocide. In an atmosphere of impunity, revisionist narratives of the Srebrenica genocide are promulgated at all levels of society and government, including in academia, journalism, popular culture, and of course politics. In BiH and the surrounding area, genocide denial manifests in a variety of forms, including through the disputation of the nature and extent of genocide, glorification of war criminals, rejection of court verdicts, justification and relativization of crimes, and symbolic expressions in public space.¹⁶

4.1. Denial in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Denial of the Srebrenica genocide remains an integral component of public life in BiH, as clearly manifest through politics and media. Most of the individuals and organizations identified in last year's report were likewise found to be participating in denial during the present reporting period, using the same tactics and platforms.

The RS remains the epicenter of denial in BiH, as is evidenced in the numerous public displays glorifying war criminals that have appeared over the last year. This includes graffiti, such as can be seen between Sapna and Teočak which celebrates Ratko Mladić with explicit reference to Srebrenica, as well as murals, such as the one recently painted of Mladić in Foča.¹⁷

[like-srpske-bata-ivanisevic-u-srpskom-svijetu/?script=lat.](http://www.dwp-balkan.org/bh/library.php?cat_id=5&text_id=35)

¹⁶ Gačanica, L. *Legal Regulation of Prohibition of Denial, Trivialisation, Justification or Approval of Genocide, Holocaust, Crimes against Humanity or War Crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, forum ZDF - TRIAL International, Sarajevo, 2020, p. 5., Available at: http://www.dwp-balkan.org/bh/library.php?cat_id=5&text_id=35.

¹⁷ In addition to the face of Ratko Mladić, the mural also contains the messages: “In the fire and storm, your name echoes in the Republika Srpska”, “Thank you to your mother”.

Genocide denial remains a chief staple of the political discourse in the RS, and politicians continue to account for the majority of instances of public denial. Common language used by nationalist politicians when discussing the Srebrenica genocide include refrains such as ‘suspicious truth,’ ‘trial of only Serbs,’¹⁸ and ‘was a crime but not genocide.’¹⁹ Trivialization as well as accusations of anti-Serb bias thus continue to constitute major elements of denial narratives.

Explicit statements of denial, the celebration of war criminals, and attempts to undermine the international courts are likewise ever-present. In April 2020, the Deputy Mayor of the City of Prijedor, Žarko Kovačević from the United Srpska party, used his personal Facebook profile as a platform for denial, posting pictures of Ratko Mladić and other proclamations such as “There was no genocide in Srebrenica”.²⁰ Opting for a more professional platform, Draško Stanivuković, the newly elected mayor of Banja Luka, declared on N1 television that the verdicts of the Hague Tribunal amounted to political demonization of the Serbs, and that the crime committed in Srebrenica was not genocide.²¹

A great deal of revisionism among the RS political establishment during the present reporting period has been centred around a publication due for release by the ‘Commission for the Investigation of Suffering of All Ethnicities in the Srebrenica Region in the Period 1992-1995’. This commission, which was one of two commissions formed in 2018 for the sole purpose of cultivating revisionist narratives, has already been the subject of ardent international criticism for the negationist intentions behind its coming report. Regarding this publication, Milorad Kojić, Director of the RS Centre for Research of War, War Crimes and Search for Missing Persons, said it was clear that this research established the falsity of the Bosniak account of Srebrenica. He added that only the facts could lead to the truth about the events in Srebrenica, as opposed to resolutions imposed by outside parties, stemming from unfounded verdicts.²²

¹⁸ Dodik: *One truth cannot be favoured, facts should be taken into account*, Srna, July 12, 2020, available at: <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Dodik-Ne-moze-se-favorizovati-jedna-istina-treba-uvaziti-cinjenice/609994>.

¹⁹ *Shameful Stanivuković denies genocide in Srebrenica and verdicts against Karadžić and Mladić*, citation.

²⁰ Šušnjar, A. *Genocide denial: How it is done by Žarko Kovačević, Deputy Mayor of Prijedor*. Inforadar, March 29, 2021, available at: <https://inforadar.ba/negiranje-genocida-kako-to-radi-zarko-kovacevic-zamjenik-gradonacelnika-prijedora/>.

²¹ *Shameful Stanivuković denies genocide in Srebrenica and verdicts against Karadžić and Mladić*, Radiosarajevo.ba, November 25, 2020, available at: <https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/sramotni-stanivukovic-u-srebrenici-nije-bilo-genocida-presude-karadzicu-i-mladicu-ne-priznajem/397702>.

²² *Get to the truth with the facts about Srebrenica, not the resolutions*, Srna, July 15, 2020, available at: <http://www.srna.rs/novosti/1/808543/do-is->

The Speaker of the Republika Srpska National Assembly, Nedeljko Čubrilović, identified the same report as responding to the necessity for Serbs to be more active in asserting their narrative of Srebrenica, adding that it would enable them “to present our vision of the overall situation.”²³

Nikola Špirić, Deputy Speaker of the House of Peoples of the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has also hailed the work of the Srebrenica Commission to establish ‘the facts.’ Unwilling himself to use the word genocide in regard to Srebrenica, he has also remarked on public television that “all Serbs in BiH who argue that genocide took place in Srebrenica could fit in this [TV] studio.”²⁴

Support for the work of the commission also came from the president of the Association of Women Victims of War of Republika Srpska, Božica Rajilić, during this reporting period. She claimed that associations from FBiH have been operating under the orders of politicians, deliberately using lies in order to portray themselves as the only victims. She states:

“There was no genocide in Srebrenica. A crime took place in Srebrenica, as it did in Vozuća, Bradina, Kazani and many other places where Serbs were victims. Bosniaks are making a myth of Srebrenica for completely different reasons out of the desire to portray the Serb people, who suffered from the Ustasha and fascist terror and survived the genocide, as genocidal. It is the most brutal lie and Kojić is fighting against those lies and he has our full support.”

Andelko Nosović, the president of the Association of Detainees of the Republika Srpska, has similarly claimed that the representatives of numerous Bosniak associations do not represent victims, but criminals.²⁵

4.2. Denial in Serbia

Although the Serbian legal code does prohibit the denial, approval, and trivialization of genocide, this legislation excludes rulings of the ICJ and ICTY. Additionally, it only applies to cases where such acts constitute incitement to violence and hatred. These limitations have made Serbia a highly conducive environment for genocide denial. Indeed, during the present reporting period, Serbia has proven the most prolific source

[tine-doci-cinjenicama-o-srebrenici--a-ne-rezolucijama.htm](https://www.glassrpske.com/cir/novosti/vijesti_dana/cubrilovic-moramo-bit-aktivniji-u-dokazivanju-svog-vidjenja-srebrenice/325107).

²³ Čubrilović: We must be more active in proving our vision of Srebrenica, Glas Srpske, July 16, 2020, available at: https://www.glassrpske.com/cir/novosti/vijesti_dana/cubrilovic-moramo-bit-aktivniji-u-dokazivanju-svog-vidjenja-srebrenice/325107.

²⁴ Špirić for N1: *Why a No to ban and punishment for genocide denial?*, N1, April 15, 2021, available at: <https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/spiric-za-n1-zasto-ne-zabrani-i-kaznjavanju-negiranja-genocida/>.

²⁵ “Kojić is fighting for the truth, which bothers Bosniaks”, RTRS, February 19, 2021, available at: <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=422194>.

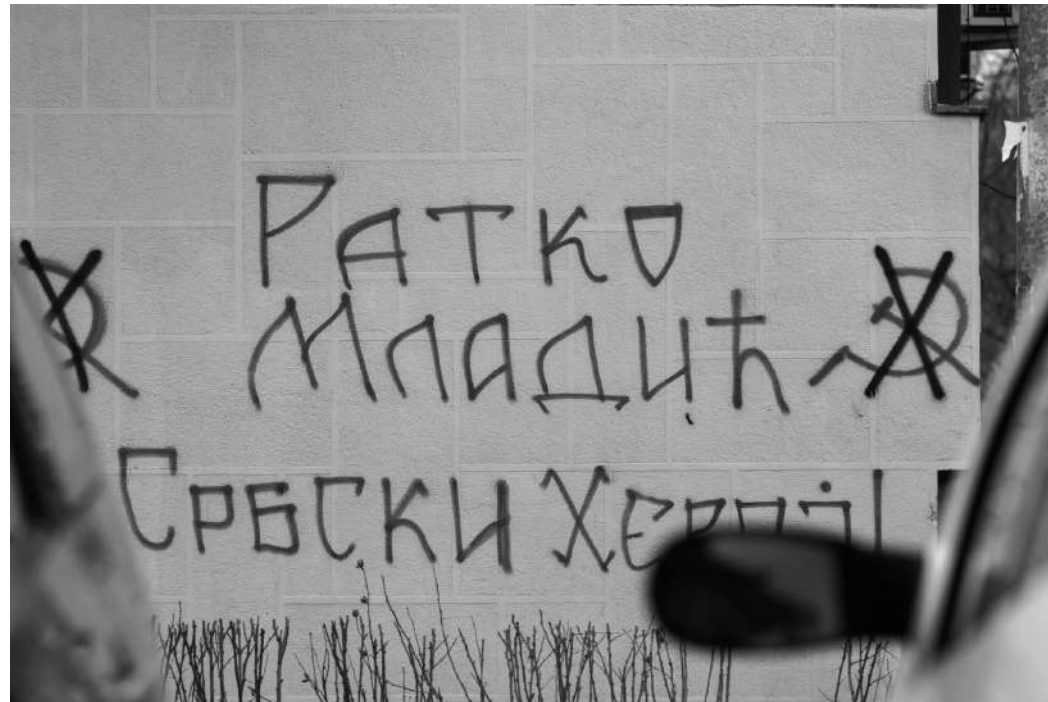
of revisionist media content pertaining to the Srebrenica genocide. Consistent with the narrative tropes of Serbs in Bosnian, common themes in genocide denial here include discrediting court convictions as ‘political,’ promulgating theories of an international anti-Serb conspiracy and Serbian victimhood, and explicit denial of the empirical facts of the genocide. Additionally, the historical violence against Serbs during the Second World War—including in places such as Jasenovac, Donja Gradina, Garavice, Jadovno, and Pag—are often used to bolster narratives of Serbia’s victimization, as well as to relativize the crimes committed in Srebrenica. In addition to the widespread circulation of these tropes in media and political discourse, common practices of denial in Serbia over the present reporting period include graffiti and iconography glorifying war criminals as well as academic events devoted to revisionism. Those who oppose the dominant denialist discourse on Srebrenica in Serbian society are also increasingly the targets of nationalist aggression.

Demonstrating the expansion of genocide denial into popular and even consumer culture, in early 2021, the Belgrade based company 011 published advertisements for sweatshirts bearing the text “Knife, Wire.” This slogan, which is popular among radical right-wing groups and certain football clubs, is well-known in the Balkans as denoting the glorification of the Srebrenica genocide. The Serbian Ministry of Trade and the Market Inspection has banned the sale and advertising of goods inscribed with this slogan, on the grounds that it constitutes incitement to national and religious hatred. Following the outcry over the product, the store posted an apology on Facebook, claiming that “the message of the disputed article had a completely different goal from the one that is presented in foreign, domestic media and social networks”²⁶ While it is difficult to imagine what other message this slogan might conceivably been intended to convey, the controversy precipitated a passionate response from genocide deniers in the country, who characterized the scandal as ‘perverse propaganda’ against the Serbian people.

Genocide denial and triumphalism in Serbia have also been widely expressed through graffiti during the present reporting period. During 2021 in Novi Sad for instance, slogans like “Ratko Mladić, a Serb hero” and “There was no genocide in Srebrenica” were painted in public spaces, as well as on across the entrance to the residential building of Dinko Gruhonjić—a journalist known for his criticism of the Serbian government, particularly in relation to their policies Kosovo, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁷

²⁶ Serbia, *War Crimes and Srebrenica: Sale of Clothing with the Inscription “Knife, Wire” banned*, BBC News, January 15, 2021, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-55675649>.

²⁷ Lalić, A. *Novi Sad tainted by hate graffiti*, Nova.rs, February 9, 2021, available at: <https://nova.rs/vesti/drustvo/foto-novi-sad-osvanuo-unakazen-grafitima-mrznje/>



Graffiti in Novi Sad

Photo: Nenad Lazić/Nova.rs – published on February 9, 2021

Humanitarians and activists who contradict the official state policy of genocide denial have also been targets of nationalist attacks during the reporting period. This includes members of the organization Women in Black, who were recognized in the previous Denial Report for their bravery in protesting denial of the Srebrenica genocide in Serbia Marinika Tepić,²⁸ a member of this organization, was recently the victim of an attack after being singled out in a right-wing press release which characterized the Women in Black as “proven traitors of Serbia and NATO lobbyists.” The release went on to state in no uncertain terms that “the Serbian Right will fight to drive them back to the political dump of Serb history as traitors of the Serbian people.”²⁹ Aleksandar Šešelj, a member of the Serb Radical Party, has also accused the group of insulting Serb national identity through their recognition and activism around the Srebrenica genocide, and has called for Serbia to stop funding NGOs on their account.³⁰

28 Marinika Tepic was one of the proponents for the Serbian Parliament to adopt a Resolution on the genocide in Srebrenica and for Serbia to declare July 11 as the Day of Remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide, and demanded that genocide and any denial of genocide be strongly condemned.

29 Available at: <https://www.pirotskevesti.rs/saopstenje-srpske-desnice/>.

30 Valentina Reković (23): *Our country is devastated; Aleksandar Šešelj (27): NGO desecrates monument to Patriarch Pavle*, Blic.rs, May 24, 2020, available at: <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/dobro-dosli-u-nasu-politicku-buducnost-valentina-rekovic-23-drzava-nam-je-devastirana/y53zttr>.

In the academic sphere, the prevalence of genocide denial during the present reporting period was demonstrated by a virtual discussion held in April 2021, called “In the Name of Justice.” This event was organized by the Centre for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development, led by Serbian politician Vuk Jeremić, together with the Faculty of Law at the University of Niš. The most prominent theme of the discussion was predictably casting doubt on the rulings and integrity of the International Courts, which participants characterizing the ruling that genocide was committed in Srebrenica as “one of the most controversial.”³¹

4.3. Denial in Montenegro

Recent developments in genocide denial in Montenegro have unfolded along similar lines. Genocide denial and intolerance have been increasingly displayed in public space in cities across the country, owing to a surge in vandalism and graffiti. At the entrance to Hadži Ismail Mosque including in Nikšić for example, vandals recently painted a number of Serbian nationalist symbols as well as insidious inscriptions including references to “Turks,” and the proclaiming that “Nikšić will be Srebrenica.”³² In January 2021, a slew of references glorifying Serbian war heroes and the slaughter of Muslims likewise appeared on an aeroclub facility in the city Berane, where Muslim homes had been vandalized with similar slogans the year prior.³³ This is hardly surprising given the fact in the same period, a proposal in Berane’s Municipal Council to rename a street after Ratko Mladić received a majority of votes.³⁴

Denial is also a prominent feature of Montenegrin political life. In December 2020, the parliamentary majority shot down an initiative to put a resolution to recognize the Srebrenica genocide and ban its denial in public schools on the agenda. During a recent government debate, MP Jovan Vučurović of the Democratic Front also explicitly stated that he did not recognize the genocide in Srebrenica.

31 Marković, T. *Denial of Srebrenica, a favourite pastime of Serbian politicians*, Al Jazeera, April 11, 2021, available at: <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2021/4/11/negiranje-srebrenice-omiljena-zabava-srpskih-politicara>.

32 Mandić, S. *Inscriptions appeared on the mosque in Nikšić: “Nikšić will be Srebrenica”, “Turks”, and four letters S drawn*, Vijesti.me, February 10, 2021, available at: <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/511083/na-dzami-ji-u-niksicu-osvanuli-natpisi-niksic-bice-srebrenica-turci-nacrtana-i-cetiri-s>.

33 *Terrifying graffiti appeared in Montenegro: Glorifying Arkan, genocide in Srebrenica*, Radiosarajevo.ba, January 24, 2021, available at: <https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/regija/zastarasujuci-grafiti-osvanuli-na-zgradi-u-crnoj-gori-velicaju-arkana-genocid-u-srebrenici/404316>.

34 *Proposal for Ratko Mladić to get a street in Berane*, Pobjeda, February 5, 2021, available at: <https://www.pobjeda.me/clanak/predlozili-da-ratko-mladic-dobije-ulicu-u-beranama>.

Other high-ranking Montenegrin elites have followed suit. In March of 2021, Minister of Justice Vladimir Leposavić stated before the parliament that he would be ready to acknowledge that genocide was committed in Srebrenica “when it was unequivocally established,” and questioned the legitimacy of the Hague Tribunal. After an international outcry at Leposavić’s remark, Montenegrin legislators were forced to consider his removal from office. This ignited a series of protests in several cities, which featured banners stating: “Because of Srebrenica, a Serb is being removed from office, remember there was no genocide”.³⁵

35 *Scandalous and shameful banner at a rally in support of Leposavić*, CDM, 5 April 202, available at: https://www.cdm.me/politika/skandalozan-i-sra-man-transparent-na-skupu-podrske-leposavicu/?fbclid=IwAR0vrrd867HF0jn-Hp-9yLA00dZa2d_LrHGC3SAQIW0M-rdQnkO7Y8Bns1MU.

5. The Year in Denial

Over a quarter of a century has passed since genocide was committed in Srebrenica in July of 1995. Yet, walking through the streets of Srebrenica today, you are more likely to see iconography glorifying the perpetrators of genocide than any memorialization of victims. In Srebrenica perhaps more than anywhere else in BiH, the practices of genocide denial and triumphalism are deeply embedded into the very fabric of social life. To live in Srebrenica today is to live simultaneously among both victims and perpetrators; to inhabit a liminal space, where neither responsibility for the past nor empathy in the present have taken hold. In this section, we examine two case studies of recent events in Srebrenica municipality and their political context, before reviewing significant developments in the use of publications for genocide denial during the present reporting period.

5.1. Case study: Eastern Alternative - Srebrenica Liberation Day

The citizens’ association Eastern Alternative, located in Bratunac, is a major force for genocide denial and triumphalism in Srebrenica. In recent years, under the direction of their president Vojin Pavlović, this organization has antagonized the local Bosniak population with numerous practices, including placing memorial plaques³⁶ and posters celebrating war criminals³⁷ and disparaging NATO³⁸ on public display in Srebrenica. Eastern Alternative was behind the initiative to award the highest accolades of the Srebrenica Municipal Assembly to Vitaly Churkin--the Russian Ambassador to the United Nations who vetoed the 2015 resolution on the recognition of the Srebrenica

36 In the run-up to the 24th anniversary commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, an activist association called Eastern Alternative installed a plaque in Srebrenica bearing the inscription “in memory of the innocently killed Serbs of the Podrinje and Birač area in the period 1992-1995, committed by Muslim hordes.” The plaque was since removed, but on July 26, 2019, a new plaque was placed by Serbian veterans’ organisations with the inscription: “Remember, Lord, in your kingdom, the Serbian martyrs, who remained in the enclave of Srebrenica, and suffered cruelly from Muslim criminals in this place and in their homes, during 1992” (available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/%C4%8Dlanovi-srpskih-udru%C5%BEen-ja-postavljena-nova-provokativna-spomen-plo%C4%8Da-u-srebrenici/1542397>)

37 The 2020 *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report* notes that the Eastern Alternative Association is responsible for putting up posters around Srebrenica featuring General Ratko Mladić with the words “There was no genocide” and “God bless you and be healthy”.

38 Members of the Eastern Alternative put up posters of hatred against NATO, with inscription, in addition to the NATO coat of arms: “Your bullets went to our children”, “Never in NATO” and “We will not forget your crime”. (Dnevni Avaz, March 21, 2019, available at: <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/468433/clanovi-is-tocne-alternative-republike-srpske-lijepe-plakate-mrznje-protiv-nato-a>).

genocide in the UN security council. They also proposed that a monument to Churkin be erected in Srebrenica,³⁹ as well as a bust of Austrian writer and genocide denier Peter Handke.⁴⁰

On April 30, 2020, Vojin Pavlović announced his plan to organize a “celebration of the Day of the Liberation of Srebrenica” that year on July 11th. In the press release, he stated:

“the celebration of the liberation of Srebrenica on July 11, 1995 is not a matter of spite towards anyone, but represents a historic day for Republika Srpska, as well as for the Serbs in Podrinje. We should not run away from that date and be ashamed of it, for had it not been for the liberation of Srebrenica, all Serbs from that area would have been killed or expelled by Naser Orić’s criminal hordes.”⁴¹

Three weeks before the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, Pavlović began advertising for his ‘celebration,’ placing a poster in downtown Srebrenica which urged residents to “mark July 11 as Srebrenica Liberation Day.” This poster featured a picture of convicted war criminal and military architect of the Srebrenica genocide, Ratko Mladić, along with a message of thanks to the Army of Republika Srpska.⁴²



Photo of a poster by Eastern Alternative, put up in Srebrenica
(Photo: Dnevni Avaz, June 24, 2020)

39 Salimović S., *Churkin wanted in Srebrenica for genocide denial*, Radio Free Europe, June 28, 2017 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srebrenica-spomenik-vitaliju-curkinu/28583672.html>.

40 E. L., *Play by a man whose idol is a criminal Mladić: Can Pavlović sue Inzko over the law on genocide denial*, Faktor.ba, November 26, 2020, available at: <https://faktor.ba/vijest/igrokaz-covjeka-ciji-je-idol-zlocinac-mladic-moze-li-pavlovic-tuziti-inzka-zbog-zakona-o-negiranju-genocida/105896>.

41 *Eastern Alternative is preparing to mark the Liberation Day of Srebrenica*, Insajder.in, April 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.insajder.in/novost/658354/istocna-alternativa-priprema-proslavu-dana-oslobodjenja-srebrenice>.

42 Ibid



President of the Eastern Alternative Association, Vojin Pavlović, putting up posters in Srebrenica

(Photo: Dnevni Avaz, June 24, 2020)

Most recently, on March 7th, 2021, Eastern Alternative put up a billboard in Bratunac which congratulated both Mladić and BiH Presidency Chairman Milorad Dodik on their shared birthday. In a statement, Pavlovic explained: “I personally set up the billboard. We have been doing this for two or three years in order to show respect to General Mladić and Milorad Dodik because they were both born on the same day.”⁴³



Billboard dedicated to Ratko Mladić and Milorad Dodik in Bratunac

(Photo: Dnevni Avaz, March 7, 2020)

43 *Condemnation of a billboard with the image of Ratko Mladić in Bratunac*, Radio Free Europe, March 7, 2021; available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/31138301.html>.

In addition to public displays glorifying genocide and war criminals, in November of 2020 Pavlović also filed a criminal complaint with the Basic Court of Srebrenica against Valentin Inzko, the High Representative of the International Community in BiH. According to Pavlović's accusation, the High Representative's intention of enacting legislation to prohibit genocide denial in the country "violates the Constitution and laws of BiH."⁴⁴

5.2. Case study: Local Elections in Srebrenica

Following the local elections in November of 2020, the Central Election Commission (CEC) of BiH found evidence of widespread violations of election rules at 26 regular and two absentee polling stations in Srebrenica. The CEC annulled the results from these polling stations, however, many Bosniaks felt that given the scale of the irregularities, the results of the election should have been annulled completely. Due to this dissatisfaction, Bosniak voters affiliated with the local coalition "My Address: Srebrenica" organized a boycott of the rescheduled elections which were held on February 21st, 2021. Despite the boycott however, the CEC certified the results of this second election, and the incumbent candidate for mayor of Srebrenica, Mladen Grujičić, maintained his political office.

Grujičić, an prolific genocide denier, was first elected mayor of Srebrenica in 2016. The first ethnic Serb to serve as mayor of the municipality in 17 years, Grujičić's election emboldened Serb nationalist elements, including fellow genocide deniers, in the community.

During his terms in office, Grujičić has publicly denied and minimized the genocide in Srebrenica on numerous occasions. On July 10th, 2020, at the Commemorative Session⁴⁵ of the Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, he stated that "the list of 8,372 people killed is not enough for him to admit genocide."⁴⁶ He went on to engage in blatant relativization, claiming: "It is not the number that matters, the suffering of every man is a tragedy. The word of Serbs should be respected. You had a chief before me who denied that a crime was committed against Serbs."

Grujičić has also attempted to undermine the international criminal courts in the Hague and to discredit their verdicts. In one such statement, Grujičić claimed: "the Hague Tribunal, which was formed to reconcile the peoples of BiH, created an even bigger gap between the peoples," and accused the court of having "openly sided with one people in order to put a stamp on another people."⁴⁷

44 Association from RS filed criminal report against Valentin Inzko, Raport.ba, November 25, 2020, available at: <https://raport.ba/udruzenje-iz-rs-podnije-lo-krivicnu-prijavu-protiv-valentina-inzka/>.

45 Decision to hold a Commemorative Session of the Srebrenica Municipal Assembly was adopted by the local parliament in 2007. The commemorative session was dedicated to all victims of the war in the Srebrenica municipality.

46 *Fascism in Action / Mladen Grujičić on Srebrenica: The list of 8372 is not enough for me*, Radio Sarajevo, July 10, 2020, available at: <https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/mladen-grujicic-o-srebrenici-nije-mi-dovoljan-spi-sak-od-8372/382922>.

47 Durmišević F., *Grujičić denies genocide: Someone should be held accountable also for all Serbs who died here*, Hayat TV, July 10, 2020, available at: <https://hayat.ba/grujicic-negira-genocid-treba-neko-odgovarati-i-za-sve-srbe-ko-ji-su-ovdje-stradali/210821/>.

These fictitious allegations are a prime example of the common narrative trope of Srebrenica genocide deniers which depicts the impartial processes of transitional justice as part of an overarching anti-Serb conspiracy.

In the run-up to the most recent elections, denial of the Srebrenica genocide became part of an official campaign strategy to mobilize support for Grujičić, not only among voters in Srebrenica, but also among registered Srebrenica voters living in Serbia. During October 2020, political representatives from Srebrenica toured Serbian cities to rally support for Grujičić's re-election. They were joined in their efforts by politicians and political parties in Serbia, who also urged voters to turn-out on election day to support the mayoral candidate. In a press statement, Grujičić described these political actors as having the singular goal "to enable the survival and arrival of people to Srebrenica, and that there are announcements that Bosniaks will return to politics seeking to separate Srebrenica from Republika Srpska, as well as accusations of genocide against the Serb people."⁴⁸

The Srebrenica-based media portal Citizens Association Despotovina also made sizeable contributions to Grujičić's re-election. Despotovina is notorious for content which denies the Srebrenica genocide, celebrates war criminals, and discredits the verdicts of international courts. On the Eve of Orthodox Christmas Eve in 2019, Despotovina published a series of photos from Srebrenica with the caption "Here we are in Srebrenica on the eve of another great Serbian holiday ..." This was a clear reference to the words of Ratko Mladić when his forces entered Srebrenica on July 11th, 1995.⁴⁹ According to information from the portal itself, Despotovina operates with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia.⁵⁰ Financial support for the portal was also provided by the Municipality of Srebrenica, which in 2019, allocated 1,500 BAM from their official budget to the organization.⁵¹

48 Serbian parties called on Srebrenica residents in Serbia to support Grujičić, Glas Srpske. October 28, 2020, available at: <https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/novosti/izbori/srpske-stranke-pozvale-srebrenicane-u-srbiji-da-podrze-grujicica/337621>.

The text "Serbian parties called on Srebrenica residents in Serbia to support Grujičić" was published by the SRNA agency, after which it was reported, among others, by Glas Srpske, Nezavisne novine, Infobirac.net

49 Vele F., *A portal supported by the Government of Serbia congratulated Christmas Eve with the words of the criminal Mladić!*, Radio Sarajevo, January 9, 2019, available at: https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/portal-podrzan-od-vlade-srbije-cestitao-badnje-vece-uz-rijeci-zlocincamladica/323651?fbclid=IwAR0Uw_8tevTTg67tESFoGGJxEGd1EioT21DEZntUQp7qpSN3Thw-Q7_uUk.

50 Ibid

51 Kuloglija N., *Echoes of ultranationalist narratives in Srebrenica 25 years after the genocide*, Srebrenica, BIRN, July 8, 2020; available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/07/08/odjeci-ultranacionalistickih-narativa-u-srebrenici-25-godina-nakon-genocida/?lang=sr&fbclid=IwAR20xjcE5Od8HdVkc9PQy-I7oY8SVjYiMGFHWrfFoxMTKaV46QyUB3MmUMFMc>.

5.3 Genocide Denial in Publications

Regarding publications used in the service of Srebrenica genocide denial, a major trend observed in the course of this reporting period was the revival of previously published works denying the Srebrenica genocide in both popular and institutional settings. One widely publicized instance centered around a work called *Srebrenica: The Official Lie of the Era*, which was first published in 2013 in an edition of the Historical Project Srebrenica and the Belgrade-based weekly, *Pečat*. This work claims that the figure of 8,000 victims in Srebrenica is fabricated, and openly challenges the rulings and investigations of the ICTY, including forensic evidence and eye-witness testimony.⁵² The recent controversy surrounding the publication arose in April 2021, when the a report in the newspaper *Vreme* entitled “Toxic Literature for the Sick,” revealed that this work was being made available to patients in a temporary Covid-19 hospital set up at a sports hall in Belgrade.⁵³



Publications in the Belgrade's Covid hospital

(Source: *Vreme*, No. 1578, April 1, 2021)

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sabljaković U., *Toxic literature for the sick*, *Vreme*, No. 1578, Belgrade, April 1, 2021, available at: <https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1930998>.

In response to this news, several human rights organisations in Serbia⁵⁴ petitioned the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defence, demanding that they identify who had facilitated the delivery of such a large number of copies of this work to the temporary Covid hospital. The also demanded its immediate removal from all other state and public institutions where it was being made available.⁵⁵ In a joint statement, these organisations emphasized that the individual criminal responsibility of a large number of members of Serbian armed formations and political institutions had been judicially established in the Srebrenica genocide, and that their participation was motivated by the ideology of ‘Greater Serbia.’ It went on to say that “if the state institutions of Serbia are silent on the propaganda aimed at denying the genocide in Srebrenica, it will be a sign that they are still siding with the policy of Slobodan Milošević’s regime.”⁵⁶

In August 2020, the three-volume set *There Was No Genocide in Srebrenica*, written by convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj became public property. This collection has previously been donated by the SRS to the Serbian Defence Minister, Aleksandar Vulin, in October 2019, as well as published in the online gift catalogue of the Anti-Corruption Agency.⁵⁷ These works, which were identified as a major example of revisionist narratives in the previous edition of the Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report, claim that the death toll of the Srebrenica genocide as well as the identities of the victims are exaggerated and falsified as part of “a perfidious and insidious political construction without a foothold in reality.”

⁵⁴ Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Belgrade Human Rights Centre, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Centre for Practical Policy, Centre for Applied History, Women in Black, Sandžak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Vojvodina Civic Centre, Civic Action Pančevo, Humanitarian Law Fund.

⁵⁵ NGO: *Where did the book denying the genocide in Srebrenica come from in Covid Hospital*, N1 Belgrade, April 7, 2021, available at: <https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/nvo-otkud-u-kovid-bolnici-knjige-u-kojim-se-negira-genocid-u-srebrenici/>.

⁵⁶ Joint statement of civil society organisations: *Determine the responsibility for delivering the publication ‘Srebrenica – the official lie of an era’ to the Covid Hospital in Stark Arena*, Belgrade Human Rights Centre, Belgrade, April 7, 2021; available at: <http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/zajednicko-saopstenje-organizacija-civilnog-drustva-utvrditi-odgovornost-za-dopremanje-publikacije-srebrenica-sluzbena-laz-jedne-epohe-u-kovid-bolnicu-u-stark-areni/>.

⁵⁷ Latković N., Šešelj’s disgraceful books on Srebrenica became state property, NOVA RS, Belgrade, August 12, 2020, available at: <https://nova.rs/vesti/politika/seseljve-sramne-knjige-o-srebrenici-postale-drzavna-svojina/>.

6. Global Trends

In the first edition of the Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report, which covered the period from May 2019 to May 2020, numerous global trends were identified not just in relation to the denial of the Srebrenica genocide, but also concerning worldwide historical revisionism and right-wing extremism. While trends such as Holocaust denial and proliferating ideologies of radical hatred and violence continue to pose a major threat to minority groups worldwide, this reporting period has witnessed some positive developments in terms of the global recognition of the Srebrenica genocide.

The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide was undoubtedly a major impetus for these positive developments. While the conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic limited the possibilities for physical attendance at the commemorative program in Potočari, the virtualization of many aspects of this program resulted in an enormous outpouring of support worldwide. In total, 45 leaders from around the world, including heads of state, prime ministers, and leading diplomats, joined together in a video address for this important commemorative event. Each offered personalized messages honouring Srebrenica's victims, condemning ongoing practices of genocide denial, and expressing their commitment to the peace, stability, and integrity of BiH.

Combined with ardent affirmations of support within the EU and increased international aware generated by other events which will be discussed in subsequent sections, this year has thus seen remarkable advancements in the global fight against denial of the Srebrenica genocide. However, the Memorial Center remains acutely aware of the plight of other communities around the world who are increasingly victimized by the rise in historical revisionism, Islamophobia, and other ideologies of prejudicial hatred and violence. Muslim minorities continue to face unprecedented levels of hatred, discrimination, and violence in numerous places across the globe. Additionally, this reporting period has witnessed a rise in anti-Semitic and anti-Asian hate crimes in many countries, as well as historical revisionism such as Holocaust denial and Neo-Confederate activism. All of these trends are fuelled by the same insidious forces which have produced both genocide and its denial in BiH. As Pope Francis expressed in his address on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide:

"Unfortunately, the hatred that contributed to this kind of bloodshed is still too often present in different parts of the world. We hope that it will be replaced by the deeds of those who strive to build a better future, a world of peace for generations to come through a dialogue of understanding and respect for others."

The Srebrenica Memorial Center stands committed to this same vision of a better future—for the people of Srebrenica, the Balkan region, and the entire world. In our efforts to promote dignity and justice for survivors of genocide, raise awareness and mobilize prevention in cases of mass atrocities, and provide a tolerant environment for dialogue and peace building, we hope to ensure that the recent advancements in Srebrenica genocide awareness are part of a broader worldwide trend in the near future.

7. Combating Genocide Denial

In light of the developments highlighted in this report, the struggle against denial of the Srebrenica genocide is of immediate and pressing importance. The fight against denial is part of our collective responsibility to the victims and survivors of genocide, as well as part of the global struggle for universal human values. In the quarter-century since the genocide, survivors themselves have led the way in the fight for truth and justice. However, they cannot and should not be left to fight alone. Through policy, journalism, art, and political activism, we are empowered to help preserve the truth of the Srebrenica genocide. In this section, we review some of the most significant developments in the fight against denial during this reporting period.

7.1 Criminal Prosecutions

More than a quarter of century after Srebrenica witnessed some of the most egregious atrocities in European history, the prosecution of these crimes is still underway in both domestic and international courts. During the reporting period, one genocide verdict was handed down before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Srećko Aćimović case), while several cases are pending (Miodrag Josipović et al., Rade Garić case, Mile Kosorić et al., Milomir Savčić).

In October 2020, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina found Srećko Aćimović, a former commander in the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS), guilty of genocide and sentenced him to nine years imprisonment.⁵⁸ As the commander of the Second Battalion of the Zvornik Brigade, Aćimović participated in the detention of Bosniak men brought from the Srebrenica area to a school in the village of Ročević in July of 1995, and their subsequent executions on the bank of the Drina River. In doing so, he “knowingly provided assistance to members of a joint criminal enterprise whose plan and goal was to imprison and summarily execute and bury able-bodied Bosniak men from the Srebrenica enclave. In addition, their plan and goal were to forcibly relocate women, children and the elderly from the enclave, thus destroying them as a group.”⁵⁹

After six years, the evidentiary procedure was completed in the criminal proceedings against five former police chiefs for their involvement in the Srebrenica genocide: Miodrag Josipović (chief of the Zvornik Public Security Station); Branimir Tešić (deputy commander of the Bratunac Police Station); Dragomir Vasić (commander of the Zvornik Police Headquarters and the head of the Zvornik Public Security Center); Danilo Zoljić (commander of the Special Police Units); and Radomir Pantić (former commander of the First Company of the Special

58 Srećko Aćimović convicted of genocide in Srebrenica, N1 BiH, Sarajevo, October 16, 2020, available at: <https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/a479066-srecko-aci-movic-osudjen-za-genocid-u-srebrenici/>.

59 Prvostepena presuda Srećku Aćimoviću dostupna na web stranici Suda Bosne i Hercegovine, predmet S1 1 K 020200 21 KRŽ, dostupno na: <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba/pretraga/odluke?odluke=1&godina=0&od-jel=0&vrsta=0&keyword=Sre%C4%87ko+A%C4%86imovi%C4%87>.

Police Units). All of these men are accused of forcible capture, relocation, transportation of Bosniaks during the Srebrenica genocide, and some have also been charged with committing executions.⁶⁰

The trial of Rade Garić, who was indicted in 2018 for crimes against Bosniaks in Vlasenica as well as for his involvement in the Srebrenica genocide, is also currently underway.⁶¹ Garić is charged with targeting Bosniaks in Vlasenica in 1992 on political, national, cultural, ethnic and religious grounds. The crimes of which he stands accused in Vlasenica include murder, detention, torture, rape, and other inhumane acts of a similar nature committed with the intent to cause great suffering and serious injury.⁶² During the Srebrenica genocide, Garić served as the commander of the Intervention Squad of the Vlasenica brigade, and according to the indictment is charged with persecuting the Bosniak population with full knowledge that his actions were part of the systematic attack waged by the VRS against the civilian population in the UN-protected ‘Safe Area.’ Garić’s defence is currently presenting evidence before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Milet Kosorić, former commander of the Vlasenica Brigade and Momčilo Tešić, a member of the brigade’s Military Police Squad, have also been on trial in Sarajevo for genocide since 2018. These men are charged with murder, rape, and looting which targeted Bosniaks in 1995,⁶³ as well as their knowing participation in a genocidal operation waged against civilians in Srebrenica as part of a joint criminal enterprise.⁶⁴ The main trial proceedings commenced on June 12th, 2018, and evidence is currently being presented by the prosecution.⁶⁵

In January 2020, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed the indictment in the Milomir Savčić case, charging

60 Taušan M., *Josipović et al. Evidentiary procedure comes to an end after six years*, Detektor.ba, 26 April 2021, available at: <https://detektor.ba/2021/04/26/josipovic-i-ostali-okonceno-sestogodisnje-izvodjenje-dokaza/>.

61 Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, case: S1 1 K 029228 18 Kri, available at: www.sudbih.gov.ba/predmet/3888/show.

62 Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, case: S1 1 K 029228 18 Kri, available at: www.sudbih.gov.ba/predmet/3888/show.

63 Dizdarević, E. *Počelo suđenje dvojici pripadnika VRS za genocid u Srebrenici*, BIRN, Sarajevo, 28.6.2018., dostupno na: <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/06/12/po%C4%8Delo-su%C4%91enje-dvojici-pripadnika-vrs-za-genocid-u-srebrenici-06-12-2018/?lang=sr>.

64 Sud Bosne i Hercegovine, predmet: S1 1 K 027404 18 Kri, dostupno na: <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba/predmet/3711/show>.

65 Rovčanin, H. *Kosorić i Tešić: Odvojen od brata u Tišći*, BIRN, Sarajevo, 26. 04. 2021., dostupno na: <https://detektor.ba/2021/04/26/kosoric-i-tesic-odvojen-od-brata-u-tisci/>.

the defendant with the criminal offence of genocide.⁶⁶ According to the indictment, Savčić is charged with “planning, commanding and supervising the activities of members of the 65th Protective Motorised Regiment of the VRS and the military police battalion that was part of it, during the capture and detention of hundreds of Bosniak men at several locations in Nova Kasaba, and their unlawful detention, ill-treatment and murder”.⁶⁷ The main trial in this case opened on June 22, 2020. Prosecution case is ongoing.

Outside of BiH, trials for crimes committed in Srebrenica are also underway in the War Crimes Chamber of the High Court in Belgrade. Because Serbia does not acknowledge that genocide occurred in Srebrenica, there is no mention of genocide in any indictments filed in Serbian courts. Currently, the trial of eight former members of the Special Brigade of the RS Ministry of the Interior who are accused of crimes in the village of Kravica where more than 1,300 Bosniaks from Srebrenica were killed in July 1995, is underway. The accused in this case are Nedeljko Milidragović, Aleksa Golijanin, Milivoje Batinica, Dragomir Parović, Aleksandar Dačević, Boro Miletić, Jovan Petrović, and Vidoslav Vasić.⁶⁸

7.2. Support of the European Union

Through its activities in BiH, the European Union has actively supported the fight against denial of the Srebrenica genocide. This year alone, the EU reaffirmed its stance on denial by supporting the construction of an extensive archive of ICTY documents at the Srebrenica Memorial Center. Additionally, the EU Special Representative in BiH, Ambassador Johann Sattler, has restated the institution’s ardent opposition to illegitimate historical revisionism in the region on many occasions. During his most recent visit to the Memorial Center for instance, the Ambassador stated:

“To prevent evil, we need to look at its core and confront it. The facts must be documented, the guilty brought to justice and all victims identified and laid to rest. Rebuilding – on a foundation of truth and justice – is a necessary and fitting tribute of the living to the dead. It is a meaningful rejection of everything those who committed the crime sought to achieve. It is also a refutation of those who tried to cover up the crime, as well as of those who – even today – try to deny that it took place.”⁶⁹

66 Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, case: S1 1 K 034456 20 Kri, available at: <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba/predmet/4058/show>.

67 Džaferagić N., *The trial of Milomir Savčić for genocide in Srebrenica commences*, Detektor.ba, Sarajevo, June 22, 2020, available at: <https://detektor.ba/2020/06/22/pocelo-sudjenje-milomiru-savcicu-za-genocid-u-srebrenici/>.

68 Rudić F., *Genocide in Srebrenica 25 years later: Who is convicted in The Hague, Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia*, BBC, Belgrade, July 10, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-53339121>.

69 Sattler, J. *Ambassador Sattler: Remembrance and Hope* Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 21, 2021, available at: <http://europa.ba/?p=72405>.

For the foreseeable future, genocide denial promises to remain one of the most salient topics in the discussion of the integration of BiH into the European framework. This was noted in the most recent opinion statement of the European Commission on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s application for membership in the Union. In his speech before the Security Council, the High Representative for BiH, Valentin Inzko, likewise declared:

“In the absence of more responsible behaviour, this again points to the need for the criminalization of the glorification of war criminals as well as genocide denial. In any case, here I would again recall the European Commission Opinion on BiH’s EU membership application, which unequivocally states, ‘Revisionism and genocide denial contradict the most fundamental European values.’”⁷⁰

The European Commission’s Report on BiH for 2020 also drew attention to the common and deleterious practices of political leaders in BiH, such as publicly challenging judicially established facts of regarding war crimes and the glorification of these crimes’ perpetrators.⁷¹ The commission emphasized the need to put an end to these attempts to undermine the independence and impartiality of both international and domestic courts and to discredit their rulings.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, many high-ranking EU officials spoke out against ongoing denial in the region. EU Enlargement Commissioner, Oliver Varhelyi, for instance described the Srebrenica genocide as “an open wound in the heart of Europe.” He went on to assert his belief that “[t]his part of European history must be sustained against any attempt at denial and revisionism.”⁷²

European Council President Charles Michel echoed this sentiment in his anniversary address, stating:

70 Address by High Representative Valentin Inzko to the United Nations Security Council, OHR, May 4, 2021, available at: <http://www.ohr.int/obracanje-visokog-predstavnika-valentina-inzka-vijecu-sigurnosti-ujedinjenih-nacija-2/>.

71 Džaferagić N., *After a decade of rejection, should a law on genocide denial be imposed?* Detektor.ba, April 16, 2021, Sarajevo, available at: <https://detektor.ba/2021/04/16/poslije-decenije-odbijanja-treba-li-nametnuti-zakon-o-negiranju-genocida/>.

72 *Srebrenica massacre, 25 years on Muslims still face Serb denial*, France 24, July 10, 2020, available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20200710-srebrenica-massacre-25-years-on-muslims-still-face-serb-denial>.

"By remembering, we renew our commitment to never let such atrocities happen again. Such despicable acts go against our deepest European values. A quarter of a century later, they are still shocking, still almost inconceivable. Yet even today, we continue to hear similar language that led to these shameful acts. Revisionists minimise, or even deny the genocide.

Others glorify war criminals. We have a unique responsibility to lead by example. Only when all leaders recognise the crimes that took place can the peoples of your country finally heal and come together."⁷³

David-Maria Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, also delivered a message of sorrow and support for the people of Srebrenica and BiH:

"The Srebrenica massacre was not only the gravest war crime in Europe since World War II, it was also an act of collective failure that we must be deeply ashamed of. The Srebrenica genocide left deep emotional scars on survivors and created long-standing obstacles to political reconciliation among ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On behalf of the European Parliament, I would like to say that we share your pain and will always stand with you, in solidarity."⁷⁴

Statements issued by the European Council during this reporting period also emphasize that the denial of war crimes and myriad forms of illegitimate historical revisionism also stand in ardent opposition the fundamental values of the European Union:

"Every country aspiring to join the EU is expected to respect and promote the EU values of democracy, human rights, tolerance and justice. That includes treating the victims of genocide with the utmost respect and dignity."⁷⁵

The fact that the European Union has upheld recognition of the Srebrenica genocide as a precondition for Serbia's accession affirms its commitment to these principles, as does the reaction

⁷³ Message of President Charles Michel for the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, European Council, June 11, 2020, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/07/11/message-of-president-charles-michel-for-the-commemoration-of-the-25th-anniversary-of-the-srebrenica-genocide/>.

⁷⁴ Commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide, June 11, 2020, available at: https://twitter.com/ep_president/status/1281950621134979076?lang=en.

⁷⁵ EU condemns Montenegro Justice Minister's denial of Srebrenica genocide, N1 Belgrade, March 29, 2021, available at: <https://rs.n1info.com/english/news/eu-condemns-montenegro-justice-ministers-denial-of-srebrenica-genocide/>.

of top European officials to the recent instance of genocide denial by Montenegrin Minister Vladimir Leposavić. The EU has been a proactive force in promoting truth and justice in the region, including through the activities of the informal parliamentary group Friends of BiH, which continues to advance the topic of the Srebrenica genocide in Brussels.

7.3. Legislating Denial

The insidious practices outlined in this report are made possible by the absence of legislation prohibiting the denial of genocide and other crimes against humanity. Given the enormous suffering which acts of denial inflict in the everyday lives of individuals, as well as the imminent threat posed by denial to peace and stability in the region, legal provisions which criminalize these practices are of the utmost necessity.

Two proposals have been submitted in BiH for the adoption of legislature outlawing the denial of genocide and other atrocities—first in 2011, and against in 2016. In both instances these proposals were obstructed by RS delegates. In FBiH, while there is a provision (Article 163 of the FBiH Criminal Code) prohibiting the denial of genocide and war crimes, it only applies to instances in which incitement to ethnic or racial hatred can be substantiated, and is not used in common practices.⁷⁶ Additional legislative efforts in BiH have passed in the House of Representatives, but failed to reach the agenda of the House of Peoples.⁷⁷ Most recently, attempts to adopt anti-denial amendments to the Criminal Code of BiH were also thwarted by Serb and Croat delegates in the BiH Parliament in 2021.⁷⁸

On July 11th, 2019, on the occasion of the 24th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, High Representative Valentin Inzko declared that a law on prohibiting genocide denial would be adopted in BiH by the following year. Despite this promise and the relentless advocacy of survivors' associations across the country, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) has failed to take any decisive action.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Džaferagić N., *How to prevent the Srebrenica genocide denial – needs vs. reality*, Detektor.ba, April 29, 2020, Sarajevo, available at: <https://detektor.ba/2020/04/29/kako-sprijeciti-negiranje-genocida-u-srebrenici-potrebe-vs-stvarnost/>.

⁷⁷ Gačanica, L. *Legal Regulation of Prohibition of Denial, Trivialisation, Justification or Approval of Genocide, Holocaust, Crimes against Humanity or War Crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, citation.

⁷⁸ In June 2019, delegate in the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, Zlatko Miletić, submitted the Proposal of Amendments to the Criminal Code of BiH into parliamentary procedure, seeking to amend the legislative framework and allow for the denial of genocide and war crimes to be recognised and sanctioned.

⁷⁹ Erjavac D. *Difficult path towards Ban on Genocide Denial*, Radio Free Europe, July

Nevertheless, survivors' associations in BiH continue to fight for legal provisions banning genocide denial, including through repeated appeals to the OHR. In July of 2020, one such petition explicitly called for the "the enactment of a law banning genocide denial and annulling the decorations of war criminals in Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina".⁸⁰

These associations are likewise engaged in informing and mobilizing the Bosnian public around the issue of legislating against denial. On the International Day of Commemoration and Prevention of Genocide in 2020, for example genocide survivors issued an urgent reminder of the need to enact such a law in order "put an end to minimising the scale of this crime that should be talked about every day so it would not happen ever again, anywhere."⁸¹

NGOs in the region are also joining the movement to increase public awareness about the need for anti-denial legislation. In February of 2020, TRIAL International and the ZFD Forum initiated a debate on the subject in an effort to engage various actors in BiH in the discussion of legal prohibitions of denial and hate speech. This initiative produced two reports ("Calling War Atrocities by their Right Name" and "Legal Regulation of the Prohibition of Denial, Minimization, Justification or Approval of Genocide, the Holocaust, Crimes Against Humanity, and War Crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina") which highlight opportunities for denial prevention not only in public policy, but in other sectors of society including activism, education, journalism, and cultural arts.⁸²

7.4. Quo Vadis, Aida?

The film *Quo Vadis, Aida?* was shot during the year of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. Inspired by genocide survivor Hasan Nuhanović's book *Under the UN Flag: The International Community and the Crime in Srebrenica*, it constitutes the first-ever attempt to tell the story of the Srebrenica genocide through a feature film. The international success of the film has had an enormous impact the fight against genocide denial and on global awareness of the Srebrenica Genocide.⁸³

16, 2020, available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srebrenica-genocid-negiranje-zabran/30730544.html>.

80 Petition of the Mothers of Srebrenica to Inzko: Stop the denial of genocide, NI, July 10, 2020, Sarajevo, available at: <https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/a446877-peticija-majki-srebrenice-inzku-zaustavite-negiranje-genocida/>.

81 Husarić A., *International Day of Remembrance for Genocide Victims: End and Punish Crime Denial*, Detektor.ba, December 9, 2020, Sarajevo, available at: <https://detektor.ba/2020/12/09/medjunarodni-dan-sjecanja-na-zrtve-genocida-zaustaviti-i-kazniti-negiranje-zlocina/>.

82 *Summaries of Denial of War Crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, available at: <https://trial.ba/?p=878>.

83 Karčić H., *ANALYSIS – Quo Vadis, Aida?: Genocide on screen in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Anadolu Agency, April 3, 2021, Sarajevo, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/analiza-vijesti/analiza-quo-vadis-aida-ekranizacija-genocida-u-bosni-i-hercegovini/2196828>.

The film centers around the fictional character of Aida Selmanagić, a UN translator working at the Dutch base in Potočari where thousands of refugees sought shelter in July 1995. It follows the events which unfolded in the compounded after the Serbian Army entered the city of Srebrenica, including Aida's fight to save her husband and two sons from becoming victims of genocide.⁸⁴

The Bosnian premiere of this film was hosted by the Srebrenica Memorial, and consisted of two showings—the first, for young people in Srebrenica and the surrounding region, and the second for survivors, supporters, and other guests. Before the premier, the film's writer and director Jasmila Žbanić told viewers: "We need to talk about difficult topics, we need to make films, but we also need to learn to love each other, live together and I hope that this film will, at least a little, contribute to understanding, empathy and mutual solidarity."⁸⁵

Quo Vadis, Aida? first premiered internationally in September 2020 at the main competition of the 77th Venice Film Festival, and in March 2021, it was nominated for an Oscar in the category of best foreign film. Although shortlisted among the top five films in the category, *Quo Vadis, Aida?* ultimately was not awarded the distinction at the Oscar ceremony the following April. Nevertheless, the significance of this film cannot be overstated as an asset to the fight against denial of the Srebrenica genocide.

The film received a great deal of attention from both the domestic and regional audiences. This was especially true in Serbia, where it was widely disparaged and characterised in the media as 'anti-Serbian propaganda'. Referring to *Dara of Jasenovac*, a Serbian film about the atrocities experienced by inmates in the Croatian concentration camp during the Second World War, one critic writing for the *Informer* remarked: "*Dara* was Serbian propaganda to them, so what is Jasmila Žbanić's film *Quo Vadis, Aida?* then?"⁸⁶

84 Barić V., 'There are strong fractions in Serbia that deny genocide, an article with Šljivančanin was published ...', Jutarnji.hr, December 13, 2020, Croatia, available at: <https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/film-i-televizija/posto-je-jake-struje-u-srbiji-koje-negiraju-genocid-objavljen-je-i-jedan-clanak-sa-sljivančaninom-15036510>.

85 Halimović, Dž. Youth on the movie *Quo vadis, Aida?* in Srebrenica: When do we say sorry?, Radio Free Europe, October 10, 2020, available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/mladi-o-filmu-quo-vadis-aida-u-srebrenici-kada-ćemo-reći-izvini-/30886222.html>.

86 *Informer*, March 7, 2021, Serbia, available at: <https://informer.rs/vesti/drustvo/591275/jasmila-zbanic-quo-vadis-aida-daraiz-jasenovca-poredjen-je-film-propaganda?fbclid=IwAR3RnXUrTBMTNoUuwmpfE8V4tdJyrTqA-7rKirLXO73IQb9MmGUSnXIMXy54>.

In April 2021, the Serbian Standard published a text entitled “On the film Quo Vadis, Aida or a story about the Srebrenica Hobbiton,” by commentator Andrej Protić, which contained a wealth of slanderous and revisionist calumny. Among other claims, Protić, denied that genocide had taken place in Srebrenica, and called the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina a “civil war” for which former Bosniak President Alija Izetbegović was chiefly to blame. Protić also criticizes the choice of Aida as the name of the leading character, sardonically claiming that the name is not sufficiently Muslim. He writes that “the authors of this propaganda film” did not allow themselves to be “seduced by emotions” or else the protagonist would proudly bear the name “Nusreta or Selma.”⁸⁷

While similar sentiments were echoed by many in Serbian media, there were also those who took the opportunity to resist the dominant national narrative denying the Srebrenica genocide. Saša Ilić, for example, writing on www.pescanik.net, stated that the “exceptional film by Jasmila Žbanić is dedicated to the women of Srebrenica and 8,372 of their murdered sons, fathers, husbands, brothers, relatives, neighbours ... Let’s watch it without a priori denial and interpretive violence.”⁸⁸ Such expressions of dissent demonstrate considerable courage, as attested to by the experiences of Serbian filmmakers who faced a slew of threats and insults for supporting Quo Vadis, Aida? in the Oscars. Serbian actress Milena Radulović and director Srđan Golubović, were accused of “asking the Americans that Serbia not have an Oscar hopeful because Bosnia and Herzegovina is sending a story about the genocide in Srebrenica.”⁸⁹ Actors who starred in the film also became target of Serbian nationalists, including Boris Isaković and Jasna Đuričić who were declared traitors to the Serbian state.⁹⁰

The same fate has befallen other artists and cultural institutions who have attempted to raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide, including the organizers of the play Srebrenica: When the Killed Ones Rise, which was performed in Belgrade in 2020. Much like Quo Vadis Aida?, the play was accused of perpetuating “the Hague myth of genocide in Srebrenica,” ascribing “collective guilt on the Serbian people,” and being promoted and financed

87 Protić A., *About the film Quo Vadis, Aida or a story about Srebrenica’s Hobbiton*, Standard.rs, April 29, 2021, Serbia, available at: <https://standard.rs/2021/04/29/a-protic-o-filmu-quo-vadis-aida-ili-pripest-o-srebrenickom-hobitonu/>.

88 Ilić S., *Quo vadis, Aida?*, Peščanik.net, December 10, 2020, Serbia, available at: <https://pescanik.net/quo-vadis-aida/>.

89 Mišić G., *Fierce controversy about a film that no one has seen yet*, Al Jazeera Balkans, February 17, 2021, Sarajevo, available at: <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2021/2/17/polemika-o-srpskom-filmu-koji-jos-niko-nije-ni-vidio>.

90 Mirić B., *Serbian actors who play in the film about Srebrenica, the Bosnian Oscar candidate, targeted by nationalists*, Noizz.rs, February 10, 2021, Serbia, available at: <https://noizz.rs/kontra/nacionalisti-napali-srpske-glumce-koji-igraju-u-bosanskom-filmu-que-vadis-aida/j7m6q44>.

by a regional anti-Serb lobby as well as “those from the West who are behind the aggression against our people during the 1990ies.”⁹¹ The play’s performance at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination was also met with fervent hostility, including slander and threats against the writers and performers, as well as signs declaring that “there was no genocide in Srebrenica.”⁹² In light of this and many similar instances in Serbian society, the courage of the Serbian artists who contribute to and support Quo Vadis, Aida? and other artistic expressions which dissent from the official narrative of genocide denial is all the more admirable.

7.5. Srebrenica Memorial Center

The Srebrenica Memorial is taking a leading role in the fight against genocide denial, which constitutes an important part of the mission of this institution. During the period covered in this report, in addition to marking the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, the Srebrenica Memorial has been engaged in numerous projects which aim not only to honour the victims and survivors of genocide, but also to preserve the historical truth of their experience against the onslaught of revisionism. One such project was Reading for Srebrenica, which involved over 150 participants from all over BiH including leading public figures reading the names of the victims of the Srebrenica Genocide.

The Srebrenica Memorial has also worked with local organizations including the Post-Conflict Research Center, the War Childhood Museum, and Balkan Investigative Research Network (BIRN) to implement a number of important projects dealing with topics ranging from the judicial verdicts of genocide perpetrators, to the first-hand testimonies of victims and survivors of violence. A number of recent projects have also been centered around arts and culture. This has included exhibitions by renowned Bosnian artists and photographers, such as Safet Zec, Šejla Kamerić, and Ziyah Gafić. The Bosnian premiere of the film Quo Vadis, Aida? which took place at the Memorial Center was also one of the most high-profile cultural events in the institution’s history. At the international level, the Srebrenica Memorial has likewise engaged with numerous institutions who share a commitment honouring the victims of political violence

91 Stojanović, H. *Disgrace: At the play about Srebrenica in Belgrade, they desecrated the flag and insulted the Serbian Orthodox Church! Inventing false genocides!* Afera, October 2, 2020, available at: http://nedeljnikafera.net/sramno-na-predstavi-o-srebrenici-u-beogradu-skrnavili-zastavu-i-vredjali-spc-izmisljali-lazni-genocid/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=sramno-na-predstavi-o-srebrenici-u-beogradu-skrnavili-zastavu-i-vredjali-spc-izmisljali-lazni-genocid.

92 Mišić, G. *Witch-hunt against the author and protagonist of the play about Srebrenica in Belgrade*, Al Jazeera, October 7, 2020, available at: <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2020/10/7/hajka-na-autora-i-protagoniste-predstave-o-srebrenici-u-beogradu>.

and the preservation of historical memory, including museums and memorials dedicated to victims of the Holocaust⁹³ and Rwandan genocide.⁹⁴ Additionally, in cooperation governments, universities, and other institutions from around the world, the Srebrenica Memorial has also hosted over 50 online workshops and lectures in English.

At the time of publishing this report, ongoing projects of the Srebrenica Memorial include the collection of oral histories from Srebrenica's survivors,⁹⁵ and the curation of an exhibition of personal items which belonged to victims and survivors during the genocide⁹⁶ as well as objects left behind by those who escaped Srebrenica in 1995.⁹⁷

93 Kavazović and Kožemjakin: *Together we remember Holocaust and Srebrenica genocide*, Fena News, May 12, 2021, available at: <https://www.fena.news/bih/kavazovic-and-kozemjakin-together-we-remember-holocaust-and-srebrenica-genocide/>.

94 Stojanovic, B. *MC Srebrenica on the Day of Remembrance of the Tut-sis Genocide: Bosnia and Rwanda should not happen again to anyone*, Anadolu Agency, April 7, 2021, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/mc-srebrenica-o-danu-sje%C4%87anja-na-genocid-nad-tutsima-da-se-nikome-ne-ponovi-bosna-i-ruanda-/2201242>.

95 *Srebrenica Memorial Center and BIRN BiH launch joint project – "Lives Behind the Field of Death"*, Detektor.ba, October 28, 2020, Sarajevo, available at: <https://detektor.ba/2020/10/28/memorijalni-centar-srebrenica-i-birn-bih-pokrecu-zajednicki-projekt-zivoti-iza-polja-smrti/>.

96 Mehmedović A., *Srebrenica Memorial collecting belongings of genocide victims*, Anadolu Agency, December 10, 2019, Sarajevo, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/mc-srebrenica-poto%C4%8Dari-prikuplja-pred-mete-%C5%Bertava-genocida/1669094>.

97 Bešić V., *Storytelling: Personal belongings of genocide victims at the Srebrenica Memorial*, Anadolu Agency, February 5, 2020, Sarajevo, available

8. Recommendations

The analysis of genocide denial in itself is not sufficient; rather, concrete measures must be devised and taken in order to effectively counteract these injurious practices in the most expedient manner possible. The elevation of fact over falsehood, empathy over intolerance, and justice over impunity must be a relentless effort in every aspect of public life, including in politics, media, and culture. In this endeavour, every member of society is empowered to take part, from international institutions to ordinary citizens. Politicians, journalist, community leaders, and civil society practitioners must join together in order to reverse the damage which deeply entrenched narratives of historical revisionism have inflicted upon the fabric of our society over the course of the last 26 years. To this end, few changes have been made to the recommendations offered in last year's Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report. Therefore, this section will include the reiteration of these points alongside recommendations which have arisen from trends observed during the current reporting period.

Recommendations for Political and Civil Society Actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Wider Region:

- Continued commitment to the prosecution of war crimes: Prosecution remains paramount in confronting genocide denial in the Western Balkans. Particularly in BiH, it is essential that domestic and regional courts remain independent, impartial, and committed to respecting the rule of law and processes of transitional justice in an independent and impartial manner.⁹⁸ According to the revised War Crimes Strategy, all war crimes cases should be completed by 2023.
- Adoption of a state-level law banning the denial, trivialisation, or glorification of genocide and crimes against humanity: The absence of legislation explicitly banning the denial, trivialization, and glorification of genocide and atrocities contributes to a permissive socio-political environment for the proliferation of these practices. In BiH, members of legislative bodies as well as activists and lobbyists should relentlessly pursue the passage of a separate law banning denial or comparable amendments to the BiH Criminal Code. Such legal provisions should ideally mandate that the names of convicted war criminals be removed from all streets and public property as well as all honorary monuments and markings. Additionally, laws governing election practices should be amended so as to preclude

at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/pri%C4%8Daju-pri%C4%8De-li%C4%8Dni-predmeti-%C5%Bertava-genocida-u-memorijalnom-centru-u-po-to%C4%8Darima/1724929>.

98 Hanson Green, M. *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report 2020*.

individuals who have been indicted and/or convicted of war crimes from campaigning for or holding public office. Together with the initiatives in education, media, and civil society, these legal measures have considerable potential to reverse trends not only in genocide denial, but also racism, xenophobia, and intolerance; as such, these measures would prove enormously beneficial to strengthening democracy, promoting regional cooperation, and integration into international structures like the EU.⁹⁹

- **Advocacy for substantive educational reform:** In many education systems in the region, the Srebrenica genocide is excluded from textbooks and school curricula, denying generations of young people access to information about crimes recently committed in their communities. This practice is especially acute in BiH, where segregation in schools and the existence of alternative historical curricula which ignores or trivializes war-time violence against Bosniaks are formidable obstacles to peace and reconciliation in BiH. Education reform, therefore, is of dire necessity.¹⁰⁰ Political actors should advocate for and enact specific policies for educational reform, including standardizing a curriculum which provides a fact-based account of the Srebrenica genocide. Civil society actors as well as those working in the field of education likewise have an important role to play in realizing these substantial changes, which should be designed to foster an academic environment conducive to learning, critical thinking, and constructive dialogue. Improving the domestic and regional educational landscape is an important priority of the Srebrenica Memorial, and we stand ready to assist policy makers, school administrations, and teachers in their efforts to educate students about Srebrenica, through both new and existing initiatives.
- **Vocal opposition to denial and historical revisionism:** All regional actors wielding any degree of social or political influence have a moral responsibility to speak out against denial of the Srebrenica genocide. This includes standing in firm opposition to denial in all its forms, including politics, media, and popular culture. Meaningful public support for institutions and civil society initiatives actively engaged in the fight against denial is an important element of this opposition. Similarly, observations made during this reporting period highlight the necessity of protecting professionals and activists who are increasingly subjected to threats, discrimination, slander, and even violence for their work in countering historical revisionism.

99 *Pravna regulacija zabrane negiranja (poricanja), minimiziranja, opravdavanja ili odobravanja genocida, holokausta, zločina protiv čovječnosti ili ratnih zločina*, Forum ZFD and Trial International, 2020, available at: http://www.dwp-balkan.org/userfiles/file/2402/new/Pravna_regulacija_Web.pdf.

100 Hanson Green, M. *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report 2020*.

- **Promotion of intergroup tolerance and constructive dialogue:** In BiH and the wider region, both governments and civil society have a critical role to play in reversing divisive trends in social and political life. In the most basic sense, these entails utterly refraining from all forms of inflammatory rhetoric, incitement to ethnic hatred, and denial or glorification of atrocities. However, this responsibility extends much further, and includes support for public initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and tolerance in both BiH and the surrounding region. Creating public space for dialogue requires the cooperation of all levels of society, including media, government, education, and civil service. The promotion of tolerance as well as lasting peace and security in the Western Balkans should be paramount in all of these endeavours.
- **Commitment to responsible and fact-based journalism:** Media organizations as well as individual journalists are uniquely empowered to counteract not only specific instances of denial, but also the normalization and institutionalization of denial in public culture. Objective, fact-based, and ethically responsible reporting is essential to creating a culture of temperance and truth-telling. Revisionist, divisive, and incendiary content not only fuels instability and intolerance, it also has no place in respectable journalism. All of those employed in the media sector must recognize the responsibility which far-reaching influence entails and commit themselves to the highest journalistic standards. It is also important that all of those who have experienced trauma, regardless of ethnic, national, or religious background, be treated with dignity, sensitivity, and respect.

Recommendations for Members of the International Community

- **Strongly condemn denial with all tools at your disposal:** Foreign states and institutions have a responsibility to use international forums to speak out against denial of the Srebrenica genocide and other revisionist practices. They should also take concrete measures to penalize present denial, deter future denial, and incentivize constructive approaches to confronting the past. Sanctions, such as travel/entry bans and property freezes, against individuals and entities who publicly engage in the denial of atrocities and glorification of war criminals are one viable option to penalize and discourage denial.¹⁰¹ Additionally, effective countering of denial and divisive political rhetoric should be upheld as a prerequisite for international cooperation and integration into structures like the EU.

101 Threats of sanctions (possible ban on entry into EU Member States for Milorad Dodik) bore fruit in the previous period, when a plaque with the name of Radovan Karadžić was finally removed from the student dormitory in Pale. In 2021, the President of the United States of America extended the scope of regulation on sanctions for individuals and organisations from the countries of the Western Balkans, who pose threat to peace and stability of the region. Sanctions are foreseen if the decisions of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Courts, the successor to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, are violated.

- Support local legislative and civil society initiatives: International actors should provide meaningful support to local initiatives in the region which are actively working to combat genocide denial on the ground. Examples of these initiatives include educational policy reform, enactment of anti-denial legislation, and any of the innumerable projects of local NGO's and institutions which aims to promote truth, justice, memorialization, and tolerance.
- Educate citizens about genocide denial and combat revisionist and extremist tendencies at home: Denial of the Srebrenica genocide is not limited to the Western Balkans, but can be found across the globe, where it contributes to fostering right-wing extremism in other countries. Furthermore, increased interaction among different elements of the global far-right have led to the melding and proliferation of ideologies of hatred. For this reason, it is important for international actors to promote aware about the genocide in Srebrenica in their home countries, including through formal declarations of acknowledgement and commemorative practices. It is also incumbent on all countries around the world to promote tolerance and inclusivity in their own societies, in order to combat the scourges of prejudicial hatred.

9. Conclusion

The facts of the Srebrenica genocide have been affirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt by the world's most esteemed legislative bodies. In July of 1995, Bosnian Serb armed forces systematically executed 8,000 Bosniak men and boys and deported more than 25,000 women and children were forcibly deported. This operation—which also included criminal practices such as detention, sexual violence, and torture—was a genocide. Any claims which contradict these facts constitute an assault not only on the norms and processes of transitional justice, but also on the dignity of the victims and survivors of these atrocities. Nevertheless, denial of the Srebrenica genocide persists locally, regionally, and around the world.

Twenty-six years since these horrific crimes were committed, denial of the Srebrenica genocide is as brazen and widespread as ever. This is especially apparent on significant occasions, such as the release of the Oscar nominated film *Quo Vadis, Aida?*, during local elections, or around the commemoration of the genocide's anniversary. More importantly however, denial of the Srebrenica genocide is systematically embedded in everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region. Not only are the facts of the genocide denied routinely in public and political discourse, the perpetrators of this crime are also actively celebrated. Streets and public buildings are named in honour of convicted war criminals, and many of those who have been indicted or convicted for war crimes are elected to public office.

This report has identified the most salient strategies, platforms, and agents involved in the ongoing denial of the Srebrenica genocide. It has also demonstrated the manner in which denial has become institutionalized in public discourse, through the collaboration of the political establishment and the media. Srebrenica genocide denial is part of an official strategy which advances a clear political agenda. In their attempts to invalidate the suffering and experiences of Bosniak victims, deniers of the genocide in Srebrenica are compounding their trauma—a continuation of violence by other means. Denial is, after all, the tenth and final stage of genocide.

The constituent narratives and rhetorical patterns of denial which have now been the subject of two annual reports, are part of broader global trends of right-wing extremism, historical revisionism, and religious and ethnic intolerance. The denial, trivialisation, and glorification of genocide and mass atrocities serve as catalysts for future violence, institutionalizing the discursive patterns which normalize the abuse of marginalized groups. For this reason, it is of urgent necessity that we intervene to stem the insidious tide of denial and historical revisionism wherever it harms and threatens the victims and survivors of political violence.

In the Western Balkans, political leaders have consummately failed in their responsibility to promote truth, accountability, and tolerance. This dereliction of duty proceeds from a culture of impunity which not only inhibits empathy but continues to pose a major obstacle to reconciliation and progress in the region. We can no longer reasonably expect these politicians to amend their ways, either as a result of moral epiphany or political responsibility. For this reason, legislation which prohibits the denial of genocide and the glorification of war crimes and criminals is a necessity. Additional measures in the fields of education, media, and international relations have also been outlined in this report, all of which would constitute substantial contributions to the ongoing fight against denial.

Of course, such measures cannot compensate survivors for the pain and loss they have already endured, nor do they offer an immediate short-cut to societal healing and reconciliation. And yet, lasting peace cannot be achieved in the absence of truth, and justice; and for the survivors of violence, even the most symbolic acts of recognition for the suffering they have experienced offer hope of a brighter future. There is much work yet to be done in order to firmly establish the judicially determined facts of the Srebrenica genocide as a matter of national and regional consensus. There is even more work to be done in the field of reconciliation, to heal the fissures, traumas, and open wounds that are conspicuous parts of daily life. However, the commitment and empathy of those presently engaged in the fight against genocide denial, particularly that of the new generation, suggests that there is sufficient room in our collective memory for facts, responsibility, and empathy alike.

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Note: Srebrenica Genocide Denial Report-2021 has been published in both English and Bosnian language editions. While these editions are identical in terms of content, analysis, and findings, minor stylistic variations are a reflection of the diverse backgrounds of the researchers and contributors involved in the writing, translation, and editing of this report.

