



## Srebrenica Memorial

# Key Messages Marking the 30th Anniversary of the Genocide Against Bosniaks in the UN Safe Area of Srebrenica (1995–2025)

**Term:** The 1995 genocide against Bosniaks of the United Nations-declared safe area of Srebrenica – Always use this precise legal and historical term. Avoid vague or misleading alternatives such as “tragedy”, “massacre”, or “incident”, as they diminish the legally established fact that this was an act of genocide.

**Number of victims: At least 8,372 killed or missing** – Includes a significant number of women, children, and elderly. Avoid limiting the framing to “men and boys only”.

**Political context:** Following the breakup of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina legally held an independence referendum in 1992, recognised internationally. Serb political leadership rejected the result and declared a breakaway entity, supported by Serbia and the Yugoslav People’s Army.

**Perpetrators:** The genocide was systematically planned and carried out by the political and military leadership of the self-declared Republika Srpska, under Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, with critical political, military, and logistical support from the regime in Belgrade, led by Slobodan Milošević. Despite the fact that many perpetrators have evaded justice, the large-scale genocidal operation is evident through the number of convictions related to Srebrenica with a total of 54 individuals being sentenced to a total of 781 years in prison and five life sentences.

**Not an isolated incident:** The Srebrenica genocide was the final act of a broader, coordinated campaign of ethnic cleansing against Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Legally recognised genocide:** The 1995 genocide against Bosniaks of the UN-declared safe area of Srebrenica has been legally established by multiple

courts. It was confirmed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its 2007 judgment, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) through numerous final verdicts, and by its successor, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). In addition, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina has issued binding domestic rulings recognising the Srebrenica genocide. It is notable, that despite the Serbian officials denial of genocide, members of the Scorpions paramilitary unit were convicted in Belgrade for war crimes against Bosniaks in 1995.

**Key facts:** In July 1995, following the fall of the UN-declared safe area of Srebrenica to Bosnian Serb forces, a systematic and planned operation of mass murder and persecution was carried out against the Bosniak population. Thousands of Bosniaks attempted to escape through the forests toward Tuzla in a column estimated at over 10,000 people; the column was repeatedly ambushed, shelled, captured, and executed. Simultaneously, more than 20,000 civilians—primarily women, children, and the elderly—sought protection at or around the UN base in Potočari. Despite the UN’s mandate to protect the safe area, peacekeepers failed to intervene, and thousands of individuals who were inside or trying to reach the base were ultimately handed over to Bosnian Serb forces. Over the following days, systematic executions took place at multiple locations, alongside the forced deportation of women and children. Following the mass executions, a coordinated effort took place to hide the crime, and bodies were moved to secondary and tertiary sites. To this day, thousands of victims remain missing. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of forensic experts, survivors, and relevant institutions, mass graves have been discovered across Bosnia and Herzegovina, and DNA

identification has enabled thousands of victims to be named and buried with dignity.

**Symbolism, message, and digital presence of the 30th anniversary:** The 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide is marked by the message “**Our story, our promise**”, underscoring the central role of survivors and victims’ families as the primary custodians of memory, truth, and moral responsibility. The commemoration is also represented by the **Srebrenica flower**, an unofficial symbol of the genocide known as the “*Flower of Remembrance*”. Across digital platforms, the official hashtag **#Srebrenica30** is used to amplify remembrance, raise global awareness, and support survivor-led storytelling around the world.

**Organising Committee for the 30th Anniversary of the Genocide Against Bosniaks of the UN Safe Area of Srebrenica:** Coordination body comprising institutions, survivor associations, civil society actors, and religious organisations. It is responsible for organising the central commemoration and the collective funeral on 11 July each year.

**Srebrenica Memorial Centre – Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide:** State-established institution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, mandated to research the genocide and manage the memorial complex in Potočari. Despite operating under difficult political and financial conditions, the Memorial conducts year-round activities including archival development, oral history projects, educational programmes for youth, exhibitions, artistic residencies, film festivals, and architectural workshops. Situated in Srebrenica municipality, now under the administration of Republika Srpska, whose leadership denies the genocide and discriminates against Bosniak returnees.

**Contemporary context and systemic discrimination against Bosniaks in Republika Srpska** Thirty years after the genocide, Bosniaks who returned to Republika Srpska face persistent systemic and institutional discrimination. Access to education in the Bosnian language is denied, opportunities for employment in public institutions such as the police and civil service remain severely limited, and budgetary allocations for Bosniak communities account for less than 1% of targeted public funding. Administrative measures frequently jeopardise property rights and residency status, directly affecting civil and electoral participation. Bosniak political representation is confined to legal minimums, while public holidays,

symbols, and institutional narratives in the entity reflect an exclusively Serb Orthodox identity. Simultaneously, genocide denial, historical revisionism, and the glorification of convicted war criminals remain widespread among political elites in Republika Srpska and Serbia, threatening the rights, dignity, and security of survivors. Despite this environment, civil society organisations, survivor associations, and the Srebrenica Memorial Centre continue to safeguard memory, promote education, and uphold the truth.

**Global observance of the 30th anniversary:** The 30th anniversary of the genocide is being marked across the world, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Bosnian-Herzegovinian communities abroad and civil society organisations who continue to honour the memory of the victims and advocate for truth and justice. In 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a historic resolution proclaiming **11 July as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica**.

---

For contacts regarding accreditation, protocol, direct communication related to the 11 July commemoration, and media coordination, please reach out to:

**Adem Mehmedović**, Organising Committee Media Contact

For questions or information regarding the work of the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, including exhibitions, educational programmes, and other activities, please contact:

**Almasa Salihović-Huseinović**, Srebrenica Memorial PR Officer

For direct contact details, please email [info@srebrenicamemorial.org](mailto:info@srebrenicamemorial.org) upon request.