

# GENOCIDE IN SANJAK: SJEVERIN, ŠTRPCE, BUKOVICA, SREBRENICA

*Speech of prof.dr. Admir Muratović, Director of Research Institute for crime and genocide, as a Keynote Speaker on the International Symposium on "Prevention of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing" organized on 09-10 July, 2013 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC), an affiliated institution to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in cooperation with the several international partners such as Azerbaijan Youth Foundation, EMISCO and TIKa.*

## **Topic:**

**What is genocide? How to preserve civilians from mass killings during conflict periods?**

## **Genocide in Sanjak: Sjeverin, Štrpce, Bukovica, Srebrenica**

Dear mothers of Srebrenica! Dear speakers and guests!

Let me at the beginning of my speech to sincerely thank the organizers of the international conference on the topic: ***"Prevention of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing"***.

Thank you for choosing Sarajevo, a city hero and victim, for the venue of the symposium and because the conference is going on in the days of the 18th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.

Talking about genocide risk to remind listeners to pain and wounds, never healed. Silence about the genocide risking oblivion and negation. Tolerating denial of genocide we share the last preparations for the implementation of a new evil.

Today, in front of you, the honorable audience, I speaking as director of the Institute for the Research of Genocide and Crimes. Institute, which

is part of the International University of Novi Pazar, whose president is the Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community in Serbia, Muammar ef. Zukorlic.

This paper is divided into 4 parts:

- Genocide - a crime against God and humanity;
- Genocide in Srebrenica in the context of constant attempts of denial;
- The crimes in Sandzak from 1992 - 1999;
- Khojalu genocide, and crimes in Štrpce and Sjeverin still waiting for international justice.

### **Genocide - a crime against God and humanity**

Since the beginning of life on Earth, people were divided into two groups. Those who were inclined to do evil to others, and those who are trying to find ways to (anticipate) the evil, answering the question of why bad happened and trying to be adequately sanctioned.

Despite progress in the consciousness of mankind, the development of institutional life in this world, there is still a distinction between individuals, systems, ideologies and regimes who seek to discriminate others, on the one hand, and advocates of good coexistence and tolerance, on the other hand, who were trying to stop them.

French revolution led to, "winning science, against spiritual idea", that advocates humanism claimed that the idea of darkness, promising that the age of positivism, the new social religion, lead to a final showdown with poverty, misery wars and atrocities suffering.

Unfortunately, we've reached the absurd situation that the discoveries scientific, but also a positive science, used as an ideological basis and excuse for colonization, apartheid, the Holocaust and genocide.

From Gobineau's: "An Essay on the ( inequality) of (races)", "Mein Kampf" by Adolf Hitler, Mussolini's party's newspaper: "Avanti" and "I

Popolo d'Italia", Njegos's: " Mountain (Range),"Garasanin's" Nacartanija "Moljoviceve" Homogeneous Serbia ", Andric "The Bridge on the Drina",Kusturica's "Stone City", "Serbian question in the twentieth century, and Bosnian War by Dobrica Cosic, "Black (Fairy) (Tales)" by Radovan Karadzic, "honey and beekeeping,"by Ratko Mladic, "Neo-Ottomanism" by Darko Tanasković, "" TERRORISM - Global Network of Islamic Fundamentalists - Part II - Modus operandi-Model Bosnia "by Darko Trifunovic, it's the long list of those who in the name of ideology, religion, "legitimate historical rights", (referring) to the destruction of others just because they were different from them, in their opinion, (unworthy)of life "progressive man".

### **What is genocide?**

Genocide, by definition is the gravest, most complex, and the most (heinous) form of crime in the history of mankind, and one of the most complex social processes and phenomena, projected in time and space as a process resulting from the collective ideology, politics and practice, has its stages, systematic and planning character, a broad context, dynamics, and intensity, carried out continuously(against unprotected, helpless, innocent, and unarmed victims, selected only because they belong to one of the protected groups, according to the international law, which is the target only because of their affiliation), in form of (mutually) functionally connected different actions, committed by a large number of organized participants in the process which characterizes the planning, preparation, organization, and execution, along with a full support, coordination, direct engagement, and control by the highest state authorities, which is also characteristic for the genocide against Bosnaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the 20th century. It is clear that this is a phenomenon which is directly produced and protected by the most powerful political subjects – state, which plans, prepares, organizes, and directs (directly and indirectly) massive involvement of people. Talking about the massive engagement() of people in genocide, only the genocide against Bosnaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the UN safe area Srebrenica in July 1995, according to the study of the Republika Srpska

Government, engaged (on various bases and ways) over 25,000 Serbs.

## **UN –stance on the crime of genocide**

After the terrible genocide and the Holocaust against the Jews and other nations during the Second World War, the international community, UN, was in december 11 1946. adopted a resolution by which genocide is a crime under international law which is (contrary) to the (spirit) and (aims) of the United Nations and (condemned) by the civilized world; recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has (inflicted) great (losses) on humanity, and are (convinced) that in order to (liberate) (mankind) from such (odious) (scourge), international cooperation is essential.

The adoption and implementation of this document, the judicial investigation and prosecution of warr criminals, and by historical gesture of the former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, who will be remembered for the fact that, in 1971. , during the official visit to Poland, he (knelt) in front of the monument, the Poles people who died in World War II as victims of Nazism led to the historic (reconciliation) between Jews and Germans. Jews after the Holocaust, (resolutely) (stood) on its “red lines”, telling to themselves and to others that they will not let to be again victims of the genocidal project. Through its JAD Wash, researching all facts regarding the crimes on them, they came to a situation where members of the German Reich, their (descendants), and those in whose name it was holocaust, to make the minimum of what is expected of them, to publicly (repent) and apologize.

## **Srebrenica - Bosnian “red line”**

On the (eve) of the third millennium, 26 years after the first man (landed) on the moon, six years after the (fall) of the Berlin (Wall, ) while waiting for the JNA, the protector of “Brotherhood and Unity”, “take matters into their own hands” and (solve) the Yugoslav crisis, committed a genocide in Srebrenica. The crime for which, Simon Wiesenthal asked whether his 40-year activities, research of Nazi war crimes, in (vain).

Therefore, at the end of 20th century, in Europe, in front of the eyes of the world public, in (accordance) with primarily Serbian great-state project – the Serbian fascist ideology and politics and genocidal criminal practice, the genocide was (committed) against the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims – Bosniacs (due) to their national, ethnic, and religious (affiliation), as well as to take over their living space. Those who had an obligation and opportunity to prevent and stop the genocide, UN, failed to protect the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina – its member, a victim of the armed aggression and genocide. Victims of aggression and genocide were punished with the arms embargo, which denied the right to self-defense. Numerous leading Western politicians, unfortunately, supported the aggressive war against Bosnia and Herzegovina and genocide against Bosniacs, while many of them, unfortunately, took part in the division and destruction of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, the biggest number of western intellectuals was ambivalent in terms of prevention and stopping of great-Serbian (and greatCroatian) aggression and genocide against innocent and barehanded civilians.

Adorno pointed to a phenomenon after the WWII, with his question “How can the poetry be possible after Auschwitz?” . Similar question was raised in the late nineties of the 20th century by scholar Tomas Kuschman: “How can the idea of Europe be possible after Bosnia”.

### **Denial of genocide**

At the trial of Ratko Mladić to the Hague Tribunal, before 7 days, a former VRS soldier of Serb Army in Bosnia, Drazen Erdemovic testified that he participated in the execution of more than 1,000 Muslims from Srebrenica. In the fields behind the house, they shot them in the back, Erdemović and other members of the 10th Sabotage Detachment: Brano Gojkovic Franc Kos, Marko Boškić, Aleksandar Cvetkovic, Vladimir Golijanin. By Erdemovic statement, execution of Muslims from “15 to 20 buses” lasted from 10 am until 15 or 15:30 pm, when the killing took other units of the VRS Bratunac. But, despite these undeniable facts, constantly on the scene attempted denial of what happened in Srebrenica.

National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska adopted, 27.06.2013., the "Declaration on the causes, nature and consequences of the tragic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1992. up in 1995. year, that the intention of ensuring, reduce the scope of the Srebrenica genocide.

Denial of genocide, according to the scholars and the authorities of Holocaust and genocide, is the last stage of genocide, which always (accompanies) that (gravest) form of crimes against humanity and international law and it can last (so) long after the genocide.

Denial of genocide is a valid and reliable indicator, which suggests that the genocide is **committed**. Denial has different motives: ideological, strategic, socio-political and others, whereas the consequences for the victims are always tragic. There cannot be silence or irrelevance on genocide. Thus, it is the duty of scholars, as Nobel prize winner Elie Wiesel writes, to speak on behalf of genocide victims, remind of their 'safa:ing suffering and tears and suppress the fear of oblivion.

## **The Crimes in Sandzak from 1992-1995**

Sandzak region has a special place in the history of the breakup of Yugoslavia, and all that is happening in this neuralgic area especially in the period 1991.-1995, and later, (violations of human rights, murder, robbery, kidnapping, , mass emigration, various forms of discrimination, political trials, mass "informative talks" preventive repression, etc.). remained in the shadow of the events in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Some parties, such as radicals, openly threatened and called for the cleansing of Bosniaks marginal parts of Serbia and Montenegro, along the border with Bosnia.

Borisav Jović, former President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia in 11 September 1990. writes in his diary: "We are planning, Serbian ethnic map, especially in Bosnia and Croatia, to clearly show the territories where Serbs are in the majority; from Sibenik to Lika, Bosanska Krajina region, near the Sava river to Bijeljina all Serb is in majority. In the center of Bosnia, Muslims. Serbs crossed the Drina and Sanjak, and Muslims can not unite. This is the future, space, of Serbia.

## **Crimes against Bosnaks in Bukovica, Kukurovića and Pljevlja**

In the context of what Jovic said, the horrible crimes committed against Bosniaks in Sandzak, who lived on the left side of the Drina River, near the border with Bosnia. In the village Ravni ( Bukovica - Pljevlja), including as a result of the beatings inflicted by armed men in military uniforms, died on 16 February in 1993. Latif Bungur. His body was buried after 15 days in 30 October in 1993., in the town cemetery in Pljevlja. On 18 February in 1993. in the village Kukurovici (Priboj) killed three Bosnak civilians, Bulut Huzeir, Husović Musan and Sarač Sadeta, and burned nine houses. Ramo Berbo, from Sjeverin, killed in august 1992., while waiting for the bus on the Priboj - Rudo way, and lugar Muzaffer Đogo from Bukovica, Plevlja, also.

### **Sjeverin massacre**

On the morning of 22 October 1992, a bus traveling from Priboj in the Sandžak area of Serbia to Rudo, Bosnia, was stopped in the Bosnian village of Mioče by four members of the Osvetnici (Avengers) paramilitary unit under the command of Milan Lukić. The other members of the group were Oliver Krsmanović, Dragutin Dragicević and Đorđe Sević. 16 Bosnak passengers from Sjeverin - 15 men and one woman, all Yugoslavian and Serbian citizens - were taken off the bus and forced onto a truck. They were taken to Višegrad, in eastern Bosnia, which was under the control of the Bosnian Serb Army. Along the way, the prisoners were forced to sing Serbian nationalist songs. The truck stopped at the Vilina Vlas hotel in Višegrad. The hostages were severely beaten and tortured inside the hotel and then taken to the edge of the Drina River where they were executed.

Yugoslav Federal Minister for Human and Minority Rights Momcilo Grubač visited the area two days after the abduction. The local member of the Federal Parliament Zoran Cirkovic called on Grubač to protest urgently to Radovan Karadžić and demand the perpetrators' extradition.

Cirkovic, a Serb, has emphasised that the abductees were ordinary

citizens, not soldiers or extremists or mujaheddin or members of Bosnian Green Beret units, just local residents. Ratko Mladic, Republika Srpska Defense Minister, was also present. He said that he knew nothing about the abduction, had come to see what was going on and say that the Army of Republika Srpska had nothing to do with it and would do everything in his power to help locate the abductees.

### **The Abduction from the train in Štrpci**

Less than five months after the abduction in Sjeverin, continued bloody implementation of the plan Borislav Jović, Slobodan Milosević and the great Serbian policy in Sanjak.

At the Štrpci station of the Belgrade-Bar railway line on 27 February 1993, the members of the Osvetnici (Avengers) paramilitary unit under the command of Milan Lukić, same unit like in Sjeverin, abducted 18 Bosnians and one Croat from train 671, took them by truck to Višegradka banja, where they were later tortured and killed. Through the decision of the Supreme Court in Bijelo Polje, Nebojša Ranisavljević was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the abduction of the passengers. At the trial, a railway worker testified that he had sent a notice to the management about the preparations for this abduction. The railway management informed the high state and army officials of Serbia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) on this, but no actions were taken to prevent the crime. The Commander of the Visegrad brigade of the Republika Srpska Army (RSA) Luka Dragičević, admitted at the trial that the "Avengers" unit belonged to these armed forces. After the war, Dragicevic was transferred to the position of an officer in the FRY Army. At the trial, he stated: "I am a professional soldier, and everything I did was to follow the orders of my superiors. Therefore, I was ordered to be a member of the Republika Srpska Army, and now I am a member of the FRY Army". Milan Lukic was sentenced with a first-degree verdict at the Hague Tribunal to a sentence of life in prison for war crimes against Bosnians in Višegrad. The crimes in Sanjak were not included in the indictment.



## **The Khojaly genocide**

At a time of intense preparation for the genocide in Bosnia, there was a terrible crime against innocent civilians in Kjojali in Azerbaidjan.

The Khojaly genocide is one of the most terrible and tragic pages of Azerbaijan history. Armenian millitary forces commited genocides in the town KHOJALY on february 26 1992. There were 3 thousand people in the town at the time of Armenian millitary forces' attack. As most part of the population had to leave town during 4 months blockade. 613 people were killed, 1000 peaceful people of different age became invalid during Khojaly genocide. 106 women, 63 children, 70 old men were killed. 8 families were completely annihilated, 130 children lost one parents, while 25 both of them. 1275 peace residents were taken hostages, the fate of 150 of them is still unknown. All these were committed by Armeninan militaries with special mercilessness and inconceivable barbarism.

### **The Institute for research of genocide and crimes**

The Khojaly genocide, Crimes in Sjeverin and Štrpci still waiting for international justice.

The massacre in Kjojali has not been officially recognized as an 'act of genocide' or a 'crime against humanity', even if international human rights organizations have acknowledged that serious violation of international laws and conventions did occur.

For the war crimes in Sanjak, the International Court in The Hague refused to prosecute them, thus making Serbia a service that supposedly was not at war, even though the same court an indictment against Vojislav Šešelj for the crimes against Croats in Vojvodina.

Of all the Genocide against Bosniacs, more than half occurred against Bosnaks from Sanjak. If you look at the break between the last and the next one genocide, we will see that this period of time necessary to perform forgetfulness.

Without the institutional memory of the genocide, stands forgotten,

as a sure guarantee that the next one, by ferocity and brutality, bepassionate.

Due to the fact that the international community has not had a hearing for crimes against Bosnaks in Sanjak, along the lines of other civilized nations, in Novi Pazar was founded the Institute for Research of Crimes of Genocide.

The IRGC is a public research institution that is modelled on other similar and reputable institutions worldwide. The Institute, under the jurisdiction of the IUNP, emphasises and imposes the concept, to all researchers, that genocide and crimes have no distinction in name and that the ethnic or religious affiliation of the perpetrator or victim.

Alongside the theoretical and empirical research concerning genocide and other forms of crimes against humanity and international law, the institute also conveys a message which should touch the moral conscience of the centres of power - the salvation of modern mankind and civilization through the maintenance of the highest human values, human freedom and human rights by defending the lives of weak and powerless groups, human communities and nations.

Eminent Professor Smail Cekic says: "The present and future generations finally must learn from all past crimes, in the interest of the future of modern world and civilization, a historical lesson about the need for strengthening, developing and uniting all the anti-fascist forces, regardless of national, ethnic, racial, religious, ideological or political affiliations and commitments, in a strategy to prevent and punish genocide.

Thank you for your attention!