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Bosnia and Herzegovina: Families of the victims of genocide committed in Srebrenica 16 years ago are still waiting for truth, justice and reparation

Amnesty International is concerned that victims of crimes committed during the 1992-1995 war and their relatives are still being denied access to truth, justice and reparation.

While some authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to engage in attacks on the justice system, the fate of an estimated 10, 000 of forcibly disappeared in Srebrenica and other places in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains unknown.

Families of more than 7, 000 killed in the Srebrenica genocide are still waiting for justice and reparation as the majority of those responsible enjoy impunity. Many alleged perpetrators continue to live in the same communities as their victims and their families.

On 10 July 1995, during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serb forces advanced on the Srebrenica enclave, which was a designated UN "safe area", and where thousands of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) had taken refuge. After Srebrenica fell to Bosnian Serb forces, despite the presence of the UN, more than 7, 000 Bosniak men and boys were separated from the rest of the population and deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Some women were raped. The July 1995 events in Srebrenica have been described as the biggest atrocity in Europe since the end of the Second World War and have been recognized by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal) and by the International Court of Justice as an act of genocide.

Amnesty International welcomes some progress made towards justice in recent years. Most high ranking political and military leaders allegedly responsible for crimes committed in Srebrenica, including, among others, Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, have appeared before the Tribunal. However, with the closure of the Tribunal approaching, the domestic authorities have to take responsibility for bringing the remaining perpetrators to justice and ensure access to truth and reparation for the victims and their families.

Amnesty International notes with regret that the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have done very little to increase the capacity of the domestic judiciary to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law. Several high-level politicians of the semi-autonomous entity of Republika Srpska have made repeated statements glorifying the perpetrators of genocide in Srebrenica and other people accused of being responsible for it, including Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. Verbal attacks on the justice system and denial of crimes under international law – including of the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995 – by high-ranking politicians further undermines the country's efforts to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law cases as well as continues to violate victims' rights to justice, truth and reparation.

The organization is further concerned about the backlog of more than 1,300 unresolved cases of crimes committed during the war. The implementation of the State Strategy for the Work on War Crimes, adopted in 2008 with an aim to improve the functioning of the judiciary, has been repeatedly obstructed by the local authorities. As no effective investigations take place, the families of the missing are unable to obtain information about the fate and whereabouts of

their loved ones. The Law on Missing Persons, providing for the creation of the Missing Persons Institute, the Fund for Providing Assistance to the Families of Missing Persons and the Central Records of Missing Persons, fails to be fully implemented leaving the families of the missing with no access to reparation, including compensation.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to undertake urgent steps to ensure the right to truth, justice and reparation for the victims and their families.

Amnesty International also urges the authorities to act in accordance with the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as a body of principles for all states, to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and implement it in national law.

Amnesty International calls the international community to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in dealing with improving the functioning of the justice system and guarantying human rights.

More information

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KARADŽIĆ TRIAL MUST BRING JUSTICE TO VICTIMS FROM BOSNIA WAR

DOCUMENT - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: TEN YEARS ON AND NO JUSTICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF SREBRENICA

KOSOVO AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: THE APPARENT LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN KOSOVO AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

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