

Dear Secretary General,

Twenty-four years ago, in less than one week more than ten thousand Bosniaks were executed in and around the town of Srebrenica by military and police forces of Republika Srpska and forces from Serbia, led by General Ratko Mladić, acting under the authority of the then President of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadžić. In the days following the fall of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 nearly 30 000 women, children and elderly were forcibly expelled in a massive-scale ethnic cleansing campaign.

In 2001 the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) acknowledged that what happened in Srebrenica in 1995 was a genocide. In November 2017 and March 2019 respectively, the ICTY found that Ratko Mladić, and Radovan Karadžić, were guilty of the Srebrenica genocide, and other war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. They were both sentenced to life in prison. In its 2015 resolution on *the Srebrenica Commemoration*, the European Parliament called the Srebrenica genocide “the biggest war crime to take place in Europe since the end of the Second World War.”

These decisions have provided us a measure of justice. However, our pain and suffering has not stopped. Not only are we still searching for more than 1000 members of our families, but public campaigns of denial of genocide and glorification of war criminals coming from the highest levels of government have increased over the years, in Serbia and in the Republika Srpska in particular. War criminals have been awarded with medals by the Republika Srpska authorities, a student dormitory was named after the convicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić and numerous political initiatives and statements by the authorities of the Republika Srpska have been intended to deny or minimise the Srebrenica genocide.

Such a denial of the Srebrenica genocide and the revision of history that ensues inflict additional pain on the survivors and the families of the victims – and sow the seeds of further hate. Moreover, apart from the judgments of the ICTY and the European Parliament Resolution, little is done at international level to commemorate and reflect upon the significance of the Srebrenica genocide.

Therefore, we appeal to you, Mr Secretary General, to undertake all in your power to designate 11 July as the official Council of Europe day of the remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide. We think that the Council of Europe has a pivotal role to play in educating the next generations through the teaching of history, a crucial element for our democratic societies as underscored also by Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec (2001)15.

We believe that such a commemoration taking place within the Council of Europe would greatly benefit the reconciliation efforts which have been undertaken in the region, and would make us – mothers, sisters and daughters of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide – less alone in our fight for justice and recognition.