

News Bulletin 236

July 13, 2012

Grief Unites Srebrenica Massacre Survivors Across Two Continents

Seventeen years after the Srebrenica massacre, the wounds have still not healed for Nihad Sinanovic and <u>Beba Hadzic</u> - two friends of The Advocacy Project (AP) who escaped from the Bosnian town before it fell to the Bosnian Serbs on July 11, 1995, triggering one of Europe's worst-ever massacres.



Potocari, July 11, 2012 (photo Claire Noone)

The Serbs killed 8,375 men and boys at Srebrenica, and two of the victims were remembered by Beba and Nihad this past week on two continents.

In Bosnia, Beba joined over 40,000 mourners who gathered at the site of the massacre to rebury the remains of 520 victims, including those of her 17 year-old nephew Alem. Beba ran the primary school at Srebrenica

before she was forced to flee in 1992. She went on to form the women's group <u>Bosfam</u>, a longtime partner of AP which has given succor to hundreds of Srebrenica survivors.



Nihad Sinanovic in 1995

On the other side of the Atlantic, in the American city of St Louis, Nihad remembered Srebrenica at an emotional ceremony in a mosque alongside 500 Bosnian-Americans. Nihad was 12 when he was evacuated from Srebrenica in 1993 (photo left) leaving his father, uncle and grandfather behind. The three were killed and are commemorated in a quilt (photo below) that was made by Beba's group in Bosnia and displayed last week in St Louis.

Meanwhile, the fall of Srebrenica is also being replayed in the Hague, where Ratko Mladic - the architect of the massacre - is on

trial. After the town's defenses collapsed, Mladic's men separated the men and boys and sent the women and children away on buses. Mladic <u>was filmed</u> entering a bus and addressing panic-stricken refugees.

The Advocacy Project started work with Srebrenica refugees in 1999 and has sent 13

Peace Fellows to Bosfam. This year's Fellow, <u>Claire Noone</u> from Denver University, was at Beba's side in Bosnia on Wednesday and has posted <u>powerful photos</u> online. A video will follow shortly.

The huge crowds at Potocari on Wednesday contrasted with the years after the war, when the Serbs in Srebrenica rebuffed attempts by relatives to visit the site. The massacre has since become an international symbol of cruelty, thanks to the perseverance of advocates like Bosfam - and this is comforting to Nihad. "We survivors will always carry this with us," he said. "But it's



amazing that the general public is so aware victims, including 5 members of the Sinanovic family and interested."



Nihad's father, Resid Sinanovic, far left, in Srebrenica during the siege

Wednesday's reburials bring the total number of Srebrenica victims identified to 5,657 and leave another 2,718 still missing. While reburying a relative can bring closure it is also highly stressful, and after burying his own father in 2010 Nihad said he understood what Beba and her family went through on Wednesday. "You've seen it on TV, but once you're there it's impossible to describe," he said. "All those caskets. They just kept coming and coming."

Even after a reburial, new details can emerge to throw relatives into turmoil. Following <u>an investigation by the Hague tribunal</u>, Nihad learned recently that his father, Resid, was taken to the local town of Bratunac for questioning after his capture by the Serbs before being driven to an execution site at Zvornik. Resid (photo,

left) escaped with a leg wound and swam across the river to Serbia, where he was treated in a hospital before being sent back to the Bosnian Serbs. His remains were scattered among secondary graves and reburied on July 11, 2010. "His casket was very light," recalled Nihad sadly.

Now that the trauma of reburying Alem is over, Beba Hadzic and her friends from Bosfam will return to reconciliation in Srebrenica, where they have opened a center for returning refugees. The center offers a sanctuary for women of all nationalities.

- See <u>Claire's photos</u> of the July 11 commemoration at Potocari
- Watch Claire's video of the Bosfam memorial quilts in Sarajevo
- Read the tribunal transcript about Resid Sinanovic's capture, escape and death.