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An Appeal for Justice on the Occasion of the Commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide, 1995-2025: The Urgent Need to Support the Right to Memorialization and to Prevent the Glorification of War Criminals

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As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide it is important to reflect on the crucial support that the UN General Assembly's Resolution designating July 11 as an "International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica" provides for the Mothers of Srebrenica and other Srebrenica survivors. This historic UN Resolution, which was adopted due to the diplomatic leadership of Ambassador Lagumdžjia and his team in New York, provides international recognition of the Srebrenica Genocide and support for the survivors insofar as it proclaims the truth about the genocide from what is perhaps the most influential platform in the world.

In preparation for the 30th anniversary commemoration, the curatorial teams from the Srebrenica Memorial Center have been preparing important new exhibitions in cooperation with Ambassador Lagumdžjia for the United Nations Headquarters in New York, including "From Words to Violence: Lives Behind the Fields of Death" (in cooperation with BIRN), which opened June 15th, and "Legacy of Hope After Srebrenica Genocide: A New Generation's Journey," (prepared by the SMC oral history team) which opened July 7. New exhibitions are also planned for the Srebrenica Memorial Center with other international partners, exhibitions which actively resist denial and support the Mothers of Srebrenica and Srebrenica survivors by raising awareness about the truth.

The UN Srebrenica Resolution has opened a commemorative space within which new expressions of the truth about the genocide can occur, including the new exhibitions at the UN and also a series of academic seminars and public commemorations that have been taking place around the world. There have been commemorative programs in Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, Sweden, UK, and elsewhere, in May and June. Ambassador Lagumdžjia hosted a commemoration at the United Nations on July 8. Srebrenica commemorations also took place across the United States, in Boston, Massachusetts on July 10, in Hartford, Connecticut, St. Louis, Missouri, and Bowling Green, Kentucky, on July 12, and in Des Moines, Iowa, on July 13. These are just a few

of the commemorations that have been taking place around the world in memory of the victims and in support of survivors.

However, on the occasion of this impressive array of commemorative programs, and with this outpouring of love and support for the Mothers of Srebrenica and other genocide survivors, it is also important to face the realization that the Office of the High Representative and the international community have failed to implement a comprehensive program for transitional justice in BiH that would support memorialization and prevent denial and the glorification of war criminals. The High Representative has been unable, for example, to address the prohibition of a memorial at Pilica Cultural Center, where the atrocities were part of the Srebrenica Genocide, or to remove the mural for Ratko Mladić in Kalinovik.

Transitional Justice involves judicial and nonjudicial mechanisms. The ICTY proceedings led to profoundly important legal judgments and convictions, but there has also been cynicism at the small number of genocide convictions, lenient prison sentences, and early releases of those convicted of heinous crimes. Krajišnik, for example, was released early from prison and returned to a hero's welcome in Pale in 2014. Further, genocide denial and the glorification of convicted war criminals continue with almost compete impunity in Republika Srpska and Serbia. Genocide denial and the glorification of war criminals threaten a repetition of the atrocities and are re-traumatizing for survivors who deserve to be protected from such psychological harm.

In response to the limits to the judicial process it is important to implement a comprehensive policy of transitional justice mechanisms, including the human right to commemoration and memorialization. Survivors have the right to commemoration and memorialization. However it is astonishing that survivors have been prohibited from installing memorials for the victims in places where the atrocities were part of the Srebrenica genocide, including Kravica, Pilica, Petkovci, and Branjevo Farm. Survivors have also been prevented from installing memorials in Kalinovik (Barutni Magacin), Prijedor (Omarska and Trnopolje), Foča (Partizan Sports Hall), and Višegrad (Vilina Vlas). On the occasion of the 30th anniversary commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide, the High Representative should use BONN powers to create protected national memorial sites at all these locations, as well as others to be identified by survivors.

In addition to the right to memorialization, the High Representative needs to reassert the importance of the rule of law in Bosnia as a post genocide society by ensuring the prosecution of genocide denial, hate speech and the glorification of convicted war criminals. It is intolerable that as we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide, the mural glorifying Ratko Mladic stands at the entrance to Kalinovik. Transitional justice principles demand that such a mural be removed. The mural must be removed to provide support for survivors of the Srebrenica genocide.

As we honor the memory of the victims, let our commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide in 2025 provide the guiding light for the implementation of a comprehensive program for transitional justice in Bosnia. The comprehensive implementation of

transitional justice initiatives in support of memorialization and against denial and the glorification of war criminals would hold out promise for the transformation of the culture, fostering an inclusive democratic society with respect for human rights. Such transitional justice initiatives would hold out hope, finally, for a just and peaceful future in BiH, thereby honoring the victims and supporting genocide survivors.

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