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The UN Srebrenica Genocide Resolution Is a Beacon of Hope for the Human Right to Memorialization and Transitional Justice

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When word reached Serbia that a UN General Assembly Resolution would designate July 11 as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide, Nemanja Stevanović, Permanent Representative to the UN from the Republic of Serbia, wrote a letter to the UN Secretary General to warn against the "dangerous consequences" of such a Resolution. Serbia's representative warned, moreover, that the adoption of the Resolution could "provoke action" against the peace and stability of Bosnia and the region.

It must be noted that the UN General Assembly Resolution designating July 11 as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide is part of a UN tradition to affirm the truth, raise awareness about the atrocities, and to honor the memory of the victims of genocide. In November 2005, the UN General Assembly established January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and in January 2018, the General Assembly established April 7 as an International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda. These Resolutions affirmed the truth and honored the memory of the victims.

The Srebrenica Genocide Resolution references the ICTY and the ICJ judgements that ruled the atrocity crimes committed at Srebrenica to be genocide. The Resolution emphasizes that the prosecution of persons responsible for genocide and other international crimes is crucial for transitional justice and reconciliation. In this way, the Resolution reminds us that the restoration of respect for the rule of law is imperative for the achievement of justice and lasting peace in a post-genocide society.

By establishing an international day of remembrance, the Resolution makes a profoundly important contribution to a culture of memory that seeks to prevent a repetition of the atrocities. Indeed, a report of the Special UN Rapporteur to the UN Human Rights Council in October 2020 emphasized that "*Without memory*, the rights to truth and justice cannot be fully realized and *there can be no guarantees of non-recurrence*". The report insisted moreover that a commitment to memorialization is crucial for the promotion of the "development of a culture of democracy and respect

for human rights."

Yet as Permanent Representative Stevanovic's menacing letter to the UN Secretary General and the President of the UN General Assembly demonstrates, those who deny the genocide are afraid of the truth, democracy, and the rule of law; ideals that are affirmed by the UN Srebrenica Genocide Resolution. Reactions in Republika Srpska and Serbia show that denialism leads to threats of "dangerous consequences," and actions against peace and stability . It has been said that denial is the surest sign that the atrocities will be repeated. The UN Resolution precipitated a new threat of secession from Mr. Dodik, a clear threat to the peace.

The only fitting response to such threats would be for the UN General Assembly to support the passage of the Srebrenica Genocide Resolution–which condemns genocide denial and the glorification of convicted war criminals–by the largest possible majority. The UN Resolution recognizing the Srebrenica Genocide would uphold democratic ideals and become a beacon of hope for those defending the truth and seeking the right to install memorials for the victims at atrocity sites such as Barutni magacin in Kalinovik, or Partizan Sports Hall in Foča. Finally, the Resolution should be a catalyst for the removal, once and for all, of the mural glorifying Ratko Mladić at the entrance to Kalinovik. As we remember the victims of the Srebrenica Genocide, with this UN Resolution there is a renewed hope for such transitional justice initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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