



REMEMBERING
SREBRENICA

INTERFAITH PROGRAMME
SREBRENICA MEMORIAL WEEK
4-11 JULY 2021

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History

Humanity has lived through the darkest of times, but few events have stained our collective history more than the Srebrenica genocide.

On 11 July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces, led by General Ratko Mladić overran and captured the town of Srebrenica in Eastern Bosnia which had been declared a UN Safe Area. In the days following, more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were systematically murdered and buried in mass graves. Thousands of women, children and the elderly were forcibly deported.

Srebrenica was a culmination of a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' used by Bosnian Serb forces during the conflict. This was implemented to achieve the aim of a 'Greater Serbia', free from non-Serbs. Throughout Bosnia, between 20,000-50,000 women and girls suffered sexual violence, a weapon of war used to systematically ethnically cleanse the region and terrorise the populace. Concentration camps were established in the Prijedor area, and many Bosnian Muslims were forced from their homes to be internally displaced or become refugees.

Described by the United Nations as:

***'the worst crime on European soil since the
Second World War'***

the genocide at Srebrenica was officially recognised by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at the Hague. Yet denial of this atrocity remains widespread.

Many in Bosnia-Herzegovina are still struggling for justice. Among these are organisations such as the Mothers of Srebrenica, who campaigned for the recognition of the deaths of their loved ones and the Association of Women Victims of War who campaigned for justice for survivors of sexual violence who still fight stigma within Bosnia.

On the 11th July, the official date of remembrance each year, we honour the victims and survivors of genocide, and pledge ourselves to creating a better, stronger, and more cohesive society in the United Kingdom.

The lessons we learn from Srebrenica are that hatred and intolerance can flourish if left unchallenged. Even in Bosnia, where people of many faiths lived as neighbours for centuries, an integrated society disintegrated. We must all understand the consequences of not taking action against hate. By doing this we give ourselves hope of illuminating the darkness and creating a safer community for all.





REBUILDING LIVES

SAFET VUKALIĆ BEM

Prior to the war, we all lived peacefully together. At school, my class was roughly half Muslim and half Serb and other religions, but most of us didn't pay attention to religious differences. When we had a break, the boys would grab a ball and play football—two teams against each other, not divided by religion. We shared everything—the same school, the same entrance, unlike some parts of Bosnia today. Then came 1992. When the local government in Prijedor was overthrown by the Serbian 'Democratic' Party led by Karadžić everything went downhill.

Local propaganda on public TV and radio was working nonstop to ensure the Serb population would fear Muslims, or at least be confused. All sorts of stories were going around. My favourite was when 'Prijedor Radio' said that all the Muslims had received a list of Serbs to kill. I joked that our list must have gotten lost in the post. The post was rather unreliable in those days.

"One of the instructions given to all non-Serbs was to put a white flag outside our houses and to wear white armbands, which is why we wear white armbands each year on 31 May as a reminder, like Jews wearing yellow stars in WWII."



1991: Safet (Second from the right, bottom row) in his 2nd year of high school, studying Electrical Engineering

Eventually, they started gathering the local population, mainly men. Sometime in June 1992, it was the turn of my part of the town, Donja Puharska. Armed soldiers with armoured vehicles were going through the streets shouting "All men go to the main road!" They kept saying: "Don't worry—if you haven't done anything you will be sent home after questioning." No one mentioned concentration camps. My father and brother went. I started walking behind them—at 16, I was taller than most men. My mother shouted 'You are not going anywhere, you are just a child! Go inside'.

Luckily, I obeyed her and wasn't picked up later. If I hadn't, I would have been taken to the camps and I'm not sure I would have survived all the suffering and torture.

As the men were waiting on the main road some soldiers started beating my father and brother. My father used to be part of the local Joint Territorial Army, so he was next to be beaten, but a soldier from Serbia asked them to stop, as the men had done nothing wrong. My father always says that he would like to find that Serbian soldier and thank him. In that moment, he behaved like a soldier and saved my dad.



1983: Safet with his father and younger sister



1992: Safet's father (left) and brother (right) upon arrival to the UK

At first we didn't know what had happened to my father and brother, but eventually we found out they were being held locally at Keraterm concentration camp. Some guards would let food be brought in to the camp for family members, and my sister went whenever she could, taking food to my father and brother. Sometimes she would be threatened.

"One of our family friends, who was a Serb, didn't want to join the Bosnian Serb Army. He was told not to come to work, threatened and called a traitor by his own friends, just because he didn't feel like imprisoning innocent people. He stood up for what was right. If only more did."

When we heard that my father had been taken to Omarska, it was the worst day of my life. I went into the bathroom and cried. I thought he would be killed there for sure, as we had heard people only went to Omarska "on request", which usually meant torture and death. He was extremely lucky to survive. Later, he was taken to Manjača and eventually to Croatia. In December 1992 he came to the UK with the Red Cross. In December 1993 I finally saw my dad again for the first time since that terrible June of 1992. When my older sister and I arrived at the hostel in Balham where my father was staying, none of us could speak for some time. We were both happy and sad, we were with dad again, and alive, but mum was still in Prijedor with my younger sister.

We weren't finally reunited as a family until June 1994. We all live here now. All of us 'kids' have got jobs and have had jobs for years. It wasn't easy. It was difficult for me to get back into education. I was told I was too old to continue normal education, and it was a problem that I didn't speak English. If it wasn't for my dad meeting a Bosnian family from Zenica, who helped me get into college, who knows what would have happened. College was hard at first. I started in a part-time group to pick up some English before starting my full-time education. I remember sometimes when I would try and speak, some of the students would laugh. But that was one group. When I started my BTEC National Diploma in Engineering in September 1994, things were totally different. There were no issues—we would all play football together and help each other with studies. It probably helped with making friends that maths was my favourite subject and others mostly hated it and needed help!

I first started properly talking about my experience through the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in 2010, and I'm now also working with Remembering Srebrenica. It wasn't easy to speak out in the beginning as emotions were always taking over. If it wasn't for these two organisations, would I be talking about it at all? Probably not.



June 1994: Safet's mother (Top Right) and younger sister (Bottom) upon arrival to the UK. Greeted by Safet's father (Top Left) and his older sister (Top Centre).

"For me it is important to talk about what has happened in Bosnia because of what happened, how it happened and the fact that much of it is still happening. In Bosnia war criminals are celebrated as heroes by certain Bosnian politicians. I would like to think people praising Hitler would not be treated so kindly."

Bosnia is still divided, and many are working to ensure division stays in place. Not long ago we had children protesting in Bosnia because adults want to build them a school with separate entrances, dependent on religion. Then we act surprised when we hear acts of hatred. It's our fault. We are not talking enough about hate. Many think if you ignore it, it will go away. It won't. Hate is a virus. If you don't treat it, it will spread. The past is there to show us—let's learn from it.

"I want my daughters to be proud of what their father did, however small, to help educate people of the consequences of hate, ignorance and inaction."

I often ask myself—am I a survivor? It's difficult to answer, as I always compare myself to those who have lost family. I was lucky and am lucky. However, I guess I am a survivor. It hurts me seeing those things repeat again and again. When will the world say no more and mean it? Hopefully one day soon.

"No one should go through what I did."



Safet with his wife and daughters

1700+

events and activities held during
Srebrenica Memorial Week 2020

*thank
you*

THE SREBRENICA PRAYER



We pray to almighty God,
May grievance become hope
May revenge become justice
May mothers' tears become prayers
That Srebrenica never happens again
To no one, no where.

CANDLE LIGHTING



*We come together today to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide.
We light these candles in remembrance of the lives lost and destroyed by hatred:*

- We remember the 8,372 mostly Muslim men and boys who were murdered in Srebrenica on 11th July 1995.
- We remember the survivors of the Death March, and the men who survived the mass executions, and honour their courage in telling their stories.
- We remember the Mothers of Srebrenica, who grieve every day for their missing and murdered relatives and who fight tirelessly for truth and justice.
- We remember the elderly, the sick and the children murdered during the fall of Srebrenica.
- We remember those murdered in concentration camps throughout the Bosnian conflict, and those who survived torture and starvation within the camps.
- We remember over 11,000 people killed in the siege of Sarajevo, of which 1601 were children.
- We remember the women and girls that were violated during the Bosnian War, those who took their own lives, and those who live on with physical and emotional scars.
- We remember the children who grew up during a time of conflict, and the loss of their childhood to war.
- We remember the innocent civilians killed in all regions of Bosnia during the conflict.
- We remember those who defended their neighbours in a war not of their making.
- We remember the 2 million Bosnians who were forcibly displaced from their homes and communities through ethnic cleansing, and especially those who remain internally displaced today.



Living the Lessons Pledge

As an act of commemoration, we suggest 11 candles to be lit for each pledge made to honour Srebrenica Memorial Day which takes place on 11 July each year.

- We pledge that when we hear the language of “us and them”, we will reach out and find common ground with our neighbour.
- We pledge that, when we hear stereotyping and scapegoating, we will find and share alternative positive stories.
- We pledge that, when we see discrimination in our schools or workplaces, we will challenge this and promote equal opportunities for all.
- We pledge that, when we hear dehumanising language, we will remind the speaker of our common humanity.
- We pledge that, when we see members of our community becoming disenfranchised, we will make a concerted effort to engage and include them.
- We pledge that, when we hear divisive propaganda, we will challenge this effectively.
- We pledge that we will protect those who speak out against human rights abuses.
- We pledge that, where we see persecution, we will do everything in our power to protect those who are suffering.
- We pledge that, where we believe that extermination is taking place, we will call on our governments and the international community to take immediate action.
- We pledge that we will always challenge denial by believing the victims and sharing their stories.
- We pledge that we will always choose the side of those who are suffering over the side of the oppressor.

PRAYER FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE



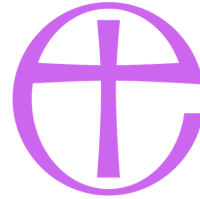
The Joseph Interfaith Foundation

United in a Vision for Truth



*Master of the universe
You created all human beings in your own image.
We remember the victims of Srebrenica genocide whose murderers
refused to see Your light in their faces.
God of mercy
We remember with sorrow the thousands of young and old men,
Innocent lives destroyed brutally because of hatred and vengeance;
The young dreams that never came to fruition,
The old age that was not spent with family and friends.
We remember with sorrow their loss to their grieving mothers,
family and friends.
God of generations
Help us in our fight against vengeance, prejudice and hatred,
Strengthen us in our efforts to open benighted eyes, distorted
visions through mistrust and misunderstanding,
Enlighten us so there shall never be destruction of your creation
again.
My God
May it be your will that the souls of the victims of Srebrenica
genocide live in your eternal peace,
May their families and friends be comforted in their sorrow,
May it be your will that we learn to live together without prejudice
and violence but respect one another as human beings.
Amen*

CHRISTIAN PRAYER FOR SREBRENICA



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

*O God of truth and justice,
we remember today the consequences of hatred
in lives brutally extinguished
in hearts torn apart
in memories scarred with pain.*

*As we remember and honour the victims of hatred,
lead us to sorrow over the sins of humanity.*

*Draw close, we pray,
to mothers and sisters,
wives and grandmothers
and all relatives and loved ones left behind,
and heal the pain in their souls.*

*And teach us, O Lord,
to learn how to live for a world
where differences are respected and valued,
and where fear and mistrust
can never overwhelm us
nor vengeance be stirred in our hearts.*

*Give peace we pray, to the people of Srebrenica;
that their lives may be restored
through your grace.*

Amen

ISLAMIC PRAYER FOR SREBRENICA



*In the Name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful
My Lord, do not let success deceive me, or defeat drive me to
despair.*

*Keep reminding me that failure is temptation that precedes
success.*

*My Lord, teach me that tolerance is the highest degree of
strength,*

And the desire for revenge the first sign of weakness.

My Lord, If You deprive me of my property, leave me hope.

*If you grant me no success, grant me the willpower to
overcome the defeat.*

*And if You take away the blessing of health, grant me the
blessing of faith.*

*My Lord, when I sin against people, grant me the power to
ask for forgiveness,*

And when people harm me, grant me the power to forgive.

My Lord, If I forget You, do not forget me. Amen!

BAHAI PRAYER FOR SREBRENICA



O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace.

Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB (SIKH SCRIPTURES), P.1103 VERSES BY BHAGAT KABIR

ਉਦਕ ਸਮੁੰਦ ਸਲਲ ਕੀ ਸਾਖਿਆ ਨਦੀ ਤਰੁੰ ਗ ਸਮਾਵਖਿਗੇ॥

Uḍak samund salal kī sākhīā nadī tarang samāvhighē.

*Like drops of water in the water of the ocean,
and like waves in the stream, I merge in the Lord.*

ਸੁੰਨਿ ਸੁੰਨ ਮਿਲੀਆ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ ਪਵਨ ਰੂਪ ਹੋਇ ਜਾਵਖਿਗੇ॥੧॥

Sunnēh sunn miliā samadrasī pavan rūp hoe jāvhighē.

*Merging my being into the Absolute Being of God,
I have become impartial and transparent, like the air.*

ਬਿਖਰਿ ਮਿ ਕੀਆਵਖਿਗੇ॥

Bahur ham kāhe āvhighē.

Why should I come into the world again?

ਆਵਨ ਜਾਨਾ ਮਿ ਕਮ ਖਤਸੈਕਾ ਮਿ ਕਮੈਬ ਖਿ ਸਮਾਵਖਿਗੇ॥੧॥ ਰਿਉ॥

Āvan jānā hukam tisai kā hukmai bujh samāvhighē rahāo.

*Coming and going is by the Lord's command;
realising the Lord's command, I shall merge with the Lord.*

ਜਬ ਚੁਕੈਪੁੰ ਚ ਧਾਤ ਕੀ ਰਚਨਾ ਐਸੇਭਰਮ ਚ ਕਾਵਖਿਗੇ॥

Jab chūkai panch dhāt kī rachnā aise bharam chukāvhighē.

*When the body, formed of the five elements, perishes,
then any such doubt shall end.*

ਦਰਸਨ ਛੇਖਿ ਭਏ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ ਏਕੋਨਾਮ ਖਧਆਵਖਿਗੇ॥੨॥

Darsan chhod bhāe samadrasī eko nām dhiāvhighē.

Giving up the different schools of philosophy, I look upon all equally;

I meditate only on the One Name.

ਖਜਤ ਮਿ ਲਾਏ ਖਤਤ ਮਿ ਲਾਗੇਤੈਸੇਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਵਖਿਗੇ

Jit ham lāe tit hī lāge taise karam kamāvhighē.

*Whatever I am attached to, to that I am attached;
such are the deeds I do.*

ਖਿਰ ਜੀ ਖਕਿਪਾ ਕਰੇਜਉ ਅਪਨੀ ਤੋਗ ਰ ਕੇਸਬਖਦ ਸਮਾਵਖਿਗੇ॥੩॥

Har jī kirpā kare jao apnī tou gur ke sabad samāvhighē.

*When the Dear Lord grants His Grace,
then I am merged in the Divine Words of the Guru.*



Interfaith Speech

SREBRENICA MEMORIAL DAY 2021

On 11 July 1995, towards the end of the Bosnian War, a small town called Srebrenica (Sreh-breh-neet-sah) was overrun by Bosnian Serb forces, commanded by General Ratko Mladić (Mla-ditch). In the days following, in the first ever UN declared Safe Area, Mladić's men systematically murdered more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys and buried them in mass graves. The United Nations called this:

"the greatest atrocity on European soil since the Second World War".

The International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former-Yugoslavia ruled that the mass executions in Srebrenica constituted genocide. Judge Fouad Riad of the ICTY spoke of:

"scenes of unimaginable savagery: ... These are truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history".

Genocide does not happen overnight.

Srebrenica marked a terrible conclusion of a brutal campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against Bosnian Muslims and non-Serbs, which had begun three years prior in 1992.

In Prijedor (Pree-yeh-door) region of North Western Bosnia, Muslims were rounded up into concentration camps where they were tortured, starved, beaten, and subjected to sexual violence on an unprecedented scale. Thousands were murdered. Sarajevo (Sah-rah-yay-voh), the multi-ethnic capital of the country, became a subject to the longest siege in modern military history. Over 11,000 people were killed, of which more than 1,000 were children.

Underpinning this strategy of ethnic cleansing was a violent Serbian nationalist rhetoric that used propaganda to falsely paint Bosnian Muslims as "Islamic fundamentalists" and Croats as "fascists". The international community failed to take heed of these early warning signs, and once war had started, fundamentally misinterpreted the conflict as a "civil war" based on "ancient ethnic hatreds".

Over 100,000 people died, over two-thirds of them Bosnian Muslim, before the war was finally brought to a close with the Dayton Peace Agreement. Many of these deaths

including the 8,372 victims of Srebrenica, could have been prevented.

The most powerful way to understand what happened in Srebrenica is to hear the testimony of survivors of that tragedy.

(At this point, we recommend showing this year's theme video or alternatively reading the survivor testimony provided for the attendees. After this, you may wish to give your own personal reflections on the testimony and this year's theme).

Even in the midst of war, it was clear that Every Action Mattered. It was often those of different groups who gave help and sanctuary to those who were most vulnerable in the heavy fighting. I'd like to share these two stories with you to emphasise this:

In 1943, while German forces occupied Bosnia, the Muslim Hardaga (Haar-da-gah) family provided shelter for the Jewish Kavilo (Ka-vee-lyo) family, at significant risk to themselves. Fifty years later, the Kavilo family saw what was happening to their Muslim friends and offered their homes to them. This action meant that the Hardaga's were able to get safe passage out of Sarajevo.



Another story tells us of Jakob Finci (Yah-kob Fin-chi), who was born in Rab concentration camp in 1943. He used his Jewish identity to create safe spaces of neutrality in Sarajevo and established the humanitarian society *La Benevolencija*. He spearheaded early efforts to get supplies into the city, and became one of the only local organisations that delivered humanitarian belief on a non-sectarian basis. *La Benevolencija* organised mixed convoys of Muslim, Serb and Croat families to get people beyond Serb checkpoints around the city.

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity or faith is not a thing of the past. There are many reasons we must come together and take action - to commemorate and pledge to prevent unchecked hatred be allowed to run rampant. Our work is not done.

Around the 11 July each year, the charity Remembering Srebrenica works with over a thousand Community Champions across all regions of the United Kingdom to organise local acts of commemoration.

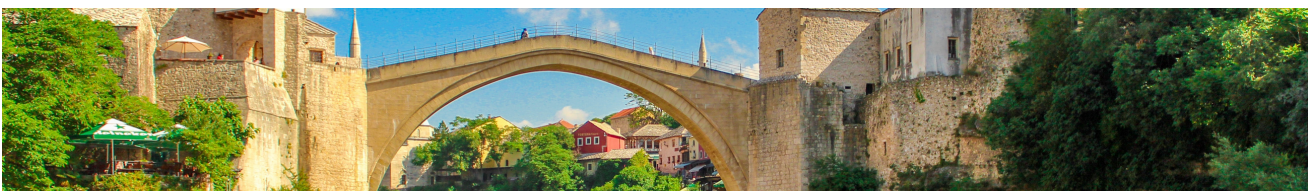
In commemorating the EU dedicated Srebrenica Memorial Day, we do not only respect and honour those who died in Srebrenica, but also remind ourselves to

follow through on the promise of 'never again' after the Holocaust. We acknowledge that hatred of the 'other' is prevalent in our society. The deadly attacks across the world, and closer to home, are stark reminders that hatred is everywhere.

However, by coming together today, we remind ourselves that the responsibility to challenge prejudice, stand up to hatred, and to build strong and positive connections to those of different backgrounds to us is not something that we can do just once or twice a year. It is an ongoing responsibility - to pay attention to the world around us, to take action when we see prejudice in our communities, and to extend a hand of friendship to those who do not share our life experiences.

Religious, political and community leaders have spoken in support of Remembering Srebrenica, and the messages of support remind us of the importance of tackling hatred, and preventing future genocides.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev Justin Welby, reminds us of the special role of leaders in using their influence and position to publicly challenge hatred:





"That [the genocide] was committed on the basis of ethnic cleansing and religious identity requires all, especially religious leaders, to be vigilant in the language we use and confront the discrimination and hate promoted in the name of religion".

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis emphasises the role that each and every one of us must take, in taking action against hatred:

"Each one of us can take up the responsibility to honour the victims of this and other genocides by working harder than ever to challenge the ideologies of fear and hatred, wherever they manifest, all over the world."

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, says of the importance of commemorating:

"... it is imperative that the public are aware of the events that took place in Srebrenica, and of the 8,000+ Bosnian Muslims who lost their lives... we must all take the time to remind ourselves of the duty we hold as citizens, to prevent such atrocities from occurring ever again."

Our coming together today sends a strong message to our communities that we understand that atrocities carried out in the name of religion affect us all. We demonstrate our solidarity with the victims and survivors in the face of hatred. We show respect for our dead, and those who mourn them. These are powerful things, and I thank you for joining me here today.

But it is worth asking: what actions can I take?

Can we educate our future generations on what happened at Srebrenica, and on the importance of cherishing diversity and respecting freedom of belief? Can we collaborate with other organisations working to tackle hatred or build community cohesion? How can we better support each other in times of division? How do we create safe spaces for those of faith, or no faith, for them to discuss the most difficult questions that face our society?

I ask each and every one of you to reflect on this, and to make a pledge to take action.

(Invite speakers to read the prayers and finish with the pledge.)



REMEMBERING SREBRENICA IS THE UK CHARITY WHICH AIMS TO TEACH CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF HATRED AND INTOLERANCE IN ALL COMMUNITIES THROUGH LEARNING THE LESSONS OF SREBRENICA. WE ARE CALLING ON ALL COMMUNITIES TO REMEMBER THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE; LEARN THE LESSONS FROM SREBRENICA, PARTICULARLY THAT WE MUST ALWAYS BE VIGILANT AGAINST HATRED AND INTOLERANCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND PLEDGE TO TAKE ACTION NOW TO BUILD BETTER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR ALL.
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