

## No more Bosnia-Herzegovinas

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Article

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THE Students Parliament of the University of Sarajevo hosted the International Humans Right Conference last week and there were more than 150 participants.

There was a large representation from Universiti Sains Malaysia and this was part of the university's Global Leadership Programme.

The Sarajevo conference was all the more relevant because it was just 13 years ago this month that genocide was committed in Srebrenica.

The conference is of particular importance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in helping to create awareness among the younger generation of the senseless war launched against it between 1992 and 1995.

During this short period, there was much killing and destruction. The unearthing of mass graves, and the bullet-riddled buildings and houses bear testimony to this savage war.

The bloody lessons of World War 2 of the 1940s, with all the atrocities committed by Hitler's Nazis, seem to have been forgotten.

But alas, after so much breast beating, pledges and proclamation that the atrocities of the world war would not be repeated, Bosnia-Hezegovina happened, and civilised Europe allowed it to happen.

In trying to gauge what actually took place and why, every so often some familiar names cropped up in our conversations. A number are closely associated to the massacres of the period.

Foremost is the then Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, who died in The Hague, while on trial for the atrocities he committed.

Radovan Karadzic, who was arrested last week in Belgrade was the second of the infamous Serbs arrested.

The third of the infamous Serbs, Ratko Mladic, another Serbian military leader who was jointly indicted in 1995 along with Karadzic, is still on the run.

Their crime? Crimes against humanity, the systematic killing, rape, torture, persecution and terrorising of countless thousands of mainly Muslim Bosnians and also Roman Catholic Croatians.

Karadzic, said to be mastermind behind many of the crimes against humanity, remained free for 13 years.

It has been said that it was due to a lack of political will, despite intense international pressure to arrest him.

He stands accused of leading the slaughter of thousands of Bosniaks (Muslims) and Croats (mainly Catholics), and has twice been indicted by the United Nations' war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

He was also charged with the shelling of Sarajevo, and the use of 284 UN peacekeepers as human shields in May and June 1995.

According to the UN, his forces killed at least 7,500 Muslim men and boys from Srebrenica in July 1995 as part of a campaign to "terrorise and demoralise the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat population".

Many would still recall vividly the savagery shown in a video recording of Bosnian Serb soldiers shooting captives from Srebrenica when it was televised around the world some years back.

The participants of the conference had a chance to visit Srebrenica, about a three-hour drive from Sarajevo.

With the backing of Milosevic, Karadzic's forces besieged Sarajevo for 43 months. The civilians had to face the horrors of the daily shelling and sniper fire.

The brutal members of the Serbian paramilitary were always at hand to terrorise when the Serbian guns were silent.

Hundreds of thousands were forced to flee their homes and many of those remaining were subjected to torture and rape.

There is no denying that there were numerous untold atrocities, including the widespread rape of Bosniak women and girls, and torture of innocent civilians. Thousands were brutally killed and more than 1,200 mosques destroyed.

Still, for the most part, the international community did nothing to stop the inhuman campaign of rampant "ethnic cleansing" until very much later.

So on the day I left Sarajevo, there could never have been any better news than that confirming the arrest of Karadzic in Belgrade. He had evaded capture by cleverly masquerading as a bearded health "guru".

Justice must be served, no matter how long it takes, for it will send a powerful message to all tyrants and tinpot dictators that they cannot get away with genocide, murder and all the atrocities that their ilk are wont to commit.

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