

Resolution on Srebrenica

2009/2502(RSP) - 15/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following a debate which took place during the sitting of 14 January 2009, the European Parliament adopted by 556 votes to 9 against with 22 abstentions a resolution on Srebrenica. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/ALE and GUE/NGL groups. It recalled that in July 1995 the Bosnian town of Srebrenica fell into the hands of the Serbian militias led by General Ratko Mladić and under the direction of the then President of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadžić. During several days of carnage after the fall of Srebrenica, more than 8 000 Muslim men and boys, who had sought safety in this area under the protection of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), were summarily executed by Bosnian Serb forces commanded by General Mladić and by paramilitary units. Nearly 25 000 women, children and elderly people were forcibly deported, making this event the biggest war crime to take place in Europe since the end of the Second World War. This tragedy, declared an act of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), took place in a UN-proclaimed safe haven, and therefore stands as a symbol of the impotence of the international community to intervene in the conflict and protect the civilian population.

The institutionalisation of a day of remembrance is the best means of paying tribute to the victims of the massacres and sending a clear message to future generations. Accordingly, the European Parliament commemorates and honours all the victims of the atrocities during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. It expresses its condolences to and solidarity with the families of the victims, many of whom are living without final confirmation of the fate of their relatives, and recognises that this continuing pain is aggravated by the failure to bring those responsible for these acts to justice. In this connection, Parliament recalls that, in spite of the enormous efforts made to date to discover and exhume mass and individual graves and identify the bodies of the victims, the searches conducted until now do not permit a complete reconstruction of the events in and around Srebrenica.

It calls on the Council and the Commission to commemorate appropriately the anniversary of the Srebrenica-Potočari act of genocide by supporting Parliament's recognition of 11 July as the day of commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide all over the EU, and to call on all the countries of the western Balkans to do the same.

Noting that there cannot be real peace without justice and that the most prominent indicted person, Ratko Mladić, is still at large almost fourteen years after the tragic events, Members call for further efforts to bring the remaining fugitives to justice. They express full support for the valuable and difficult work of the ICTY and stress that bringing to justice those responsible for the massacres in and around Srebrenica is an important step towards peace and stability in the region. Parliament reiterates in that regard that increased attention needs to be paid to war crimes trials at domestic level.

Parliament stresses the importance of reconciliation as part of the European integration process. It emphasises the important role of religious communities, the media and the education system in this process, so that civilians of all ethnicities may overcome the tensions of the past and begin a peaceful and sincere coexistence in the interests of enduring peace, stability and economic growth. All countries are urged to make further efforts to come to terms with a difficult and troubled past.