

Srebrenica

European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2009 on Srebrenica

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 7 July 2005 on Srebrenica¹,
 - having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, of the other part, signed in Luxembourg on 16 June 2008, and the prospect of EU membership held out to all the countries of the western Balkans at the EU summit in Thessaloniki in 2003,
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in July 1995 the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, which was at that time an isolated enclave proclaimed a Protected Zone by a United Nations Security Council Resolution of 16 April 1993, 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,
- B. whereas, 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, including Serbian irregular police units which had entered Bosnian territory from Serbia; whereas 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,
- C. whereas 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,
- D. whereas multiple violations of the Geneva Conventions were perpetrated by Bosnian Serb troops against Srebrenica's civilian population, including deportations of thousands of women, children and elderly people and the rape of a large number of women,
- E. whereas, 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,
- F. whereas there cannot be real peace without justice and whereas full and unrestricted cooperation with the ICTY remains a basic requirement for further continuation of the process of integration into the EU for the countries of the western Balkans,

¹ OJ C 157 E, 6.7.2006, p. 468.

- G. whereas General Radislav Krstić of the Bosnian Serb army is the first person found guilty by the ICTY of aiding and abetting the Srebrenica genocide, but whereas the most prominent indicted person, Ratko Mladić, is still at large almost fourteen years after the tragic events, and whereas it is to be welcomed that Radovan Karadžić now has been transferred to the ICTY,
- H. whereas 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,
1. Commemorates and honours all the victims of the atrocities during the wars in the former Yugoslavia; 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; recognises that this continuing pain is aggravated by the failure to bring those responsible for these acts to justice;
 2. 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;
 3. Calls for further efforts to bring the remaining fugitives to justice, expresses its full support for the valuable and difficult work of the ICTY and stresses that bringing to justice those responsible for the massacres in and around Srebrenica is an important step towards peace and stability in the region; reiterates in that regard that increased attention needs to be paid to war crimes trials at domestic level;
 4. Stresses the importance of reconciliation as part of the European integration process; 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; urges all countries to make further efforts to come to terms with a difficult and troubled past;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its entities, and the governments and parliaments of the countries of the western Balkans.