

REMEMBERING  
**SREBRENICA**

From the 11th to 22nd July 1995,  
Serbs committed the largest  
massacre in Europe since World  
War II, Srebrenica.

The death toll was

**8,372**



Although many different ethnic and religious groups had resided together for 40 years under Yugoslavia's repressive communist government, this changed when the country began to collapse during the fall of communism in the early 1990s. The provinces of Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, and war quickly followed between Serbia and these breakaway republics. Ethnic tensions were brought to the forefront, and people who had lived peacefully for years as neighbours turned against each other and took up arms. When Bosnia attempted to secede, Serbia – under Slobodan Milošević's leadership – invaded with the claim that it was there to "free" fellow Serbian Orthodox Christians living in Bosnia.



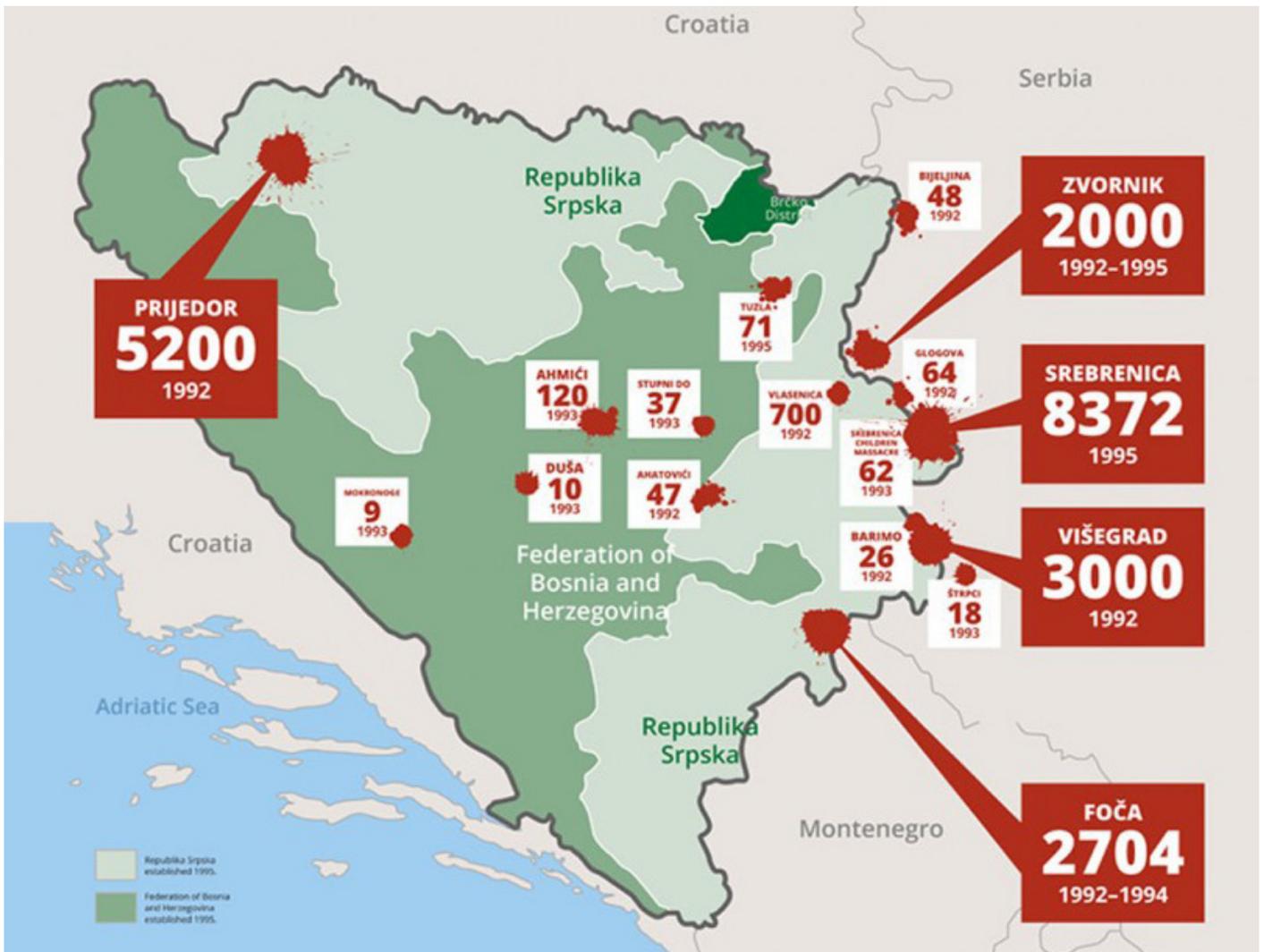
Starting in April 1992, Serbia set out to “ethnically cleanse” Bosnian territory by systematically removing all Bosnian Muslims, known as Bosniaks. Serbia, together with ethnic Bosnian Serbs, attacked Bosniaks with former Yugoslavian military equipment and surrounded Sarajevo, the capital city. Many Bosniaks were driven into concentration camps, where women and girls were systematically gang-raped and other civilians were tortured, starved and murdered.



In 1993, the United Nations (UN) Security Council declared that Sarajevo, Goradze, Srebrenica and other Muslim enclaves were to be safe areas, protected by a contingent of UN peacekeepers. But in July 1995, Serbs committed the largest massacre in Europe since World War II in one such area, Srebrenica.

An estimated 23,000 women, children and elderly people were put on buses and driven to Muslim-controlled territory, while 8,000 “battle-age” men were detained and slaughtered. The so-called safe area of Srebrenica fell without a single shot fired by the UN.





“Screams, gunshots and other frightening noises were audible throughout the night and no one could sleep. Soldiers were picking people out of the crowd and taking them away: some returned; others did not. A witness recounted how three brothers—one merely a child and the others in their teens—were taken out in the night. When the boys’ mother went looking for them, she found them with their throats slit.”



The bodies were buried in mass graves, in the following months attempts were made to cover up the mass murders with a reburial effort. The removal and reburial of the bodies have caused them to become dismembered and co-mingled, making it difficult for forensic investigators to positively identify the remains. In one specific case, the remains of one person were found in two different locations, 30 km apart.





## Wall of names at the Srebrenica Genocide memorial

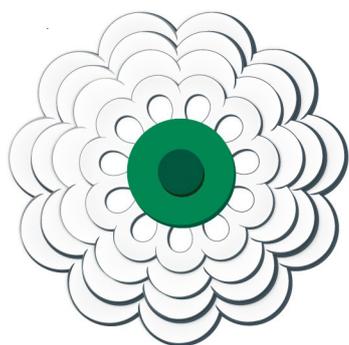
On 30 September 2003, former US President Bill Clinton officially opened the Srebrenica Genocide memorial to honour the victims of the genocide.



Blame lay first and foremost with those who planned and carried out the massacre, assisted them, or harboured and continue to harbour them. However the UN also bore its share of responsibility, having made serious errors of judgement, rooted in a philosophy of impartiality and non-violence which, however admirable, was unsuited to the conflict in Bosnia; because of that the tragedy of Srebrenica would haunt the UN's history forever.

Rebuilding trust among the peoples of the region could only be done by persisting in the struggle for justice, without which there could be no reconciliation, and no peace for the families of the victims, nor for society as a whole.





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