

We will not be vanquished by evil

2015 marks 20 years since the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was finally brought to an end.

It also marks the anniversary of Srebrenica, the largest-scale atrocity committed in Europe since World War II, which two international tribunals have characterized as genocide.

In the twenty years since the Srebrenica genocide was committed, families of innocent victims throughout the country have undergone a long, slow and painful journey to pursue justice and reconciliation.

The innocent lives that were taken in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be restored. Each of the victims was unique and irreplaceable. The grief of those who loved them will never be assuaged.

What we can do is to try and preserve and nurture what was positive and precious in the lives that were lost and in the communities that were destroyed. If we succeed in doing this we will ensure that the killers and those who wanted to divide the country and its people have not triumphed.

This means that we need to engage, in earnest, to support the citizens of all ethnic backgrounds throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are tired of hearing about what divides them, and want to work together on the reforms needed to ensure a more prosperous future for themselves and their children.

Twenty years after the war, the job has not been completed and progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often slow, not because the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not want reconciliation but rather because it is undermined and prevented by some of the country's leading politicians.

Where politicians have failed to lead by example, others have shown us the way. For example, some years ago, the Women in Black, an association of citizens in Serbia opposed to the wars waged by Slobodan Milosevic, visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and met with the Mothers of Srebrenica. This was an occasion of great courage and grace.

It was a meeting of human beings determined to overcome evil and to ensure that the tragedy of the past has not the smallest chance of being repeated in the future. We must share and renew their determination today, the determination to ensure that the proliferation of ideologies that promote conflict and hatred are defeated so innocent lives are saved.

At Srebrenica on Saturday July 11th tens of thousands of BiH citizens will gather to mourn those who were murdered twenty years ago. Twenty years after the crime at Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina has come a long way, but it has not yet completed its journey to reconciliation and lasting peace. For this reason we must see the job through to the end. Decent citizens want a society based on justice and equality – and I have not a shadow of doubt in my mind that decent citizens constitute an overwhelming majority.

We do not stand mute in the face of evil. We are not powerless. We are resolved to continue building a society where the values that were attacked 20 years ago are upheld, a society in which justice prevails.

Shepherding Bosnia and Herzegovina back into the European family, where it belongs, is a way of delivering justice and equality. It is also a meaningful tribute to those who died and we must see the job completed so that the lives were not lost in vain and so future generations can live in peace and dignity in a truly re-integrated Bosnia and Herzegovina.