

# Speech by High Representative Valentin Inzko on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide (longer version)

Dear mothers, dear survivors, and relatives of the victims of Srebrenica!

Today, like every day and year, we remember Srebrenica, but we also remember one of the oldest human rights, the right to a dignified burial. In my view, humankind started only with the first burial of humans. Accordingly, since ancient times, burials and the subsequent finding of peace have been described on numerous occasions, including in the Sophocles' *Antigone*. In ancient Greece, as in any culture, it was one of the harshest punishments when a body was not sanctified and buried through holy rites.

Yet, two thousand years later, we are witnessing that many victims of the Srebrenica genocide have not been put to rest, victims from all over the country, because the murderers are hiding mass graves, thus preventing further dignified burials.

Regretfully, things are even worse.

Some are trying to re-write history, others are relativizing the crimes. But worst of all, some are denying that genocide has happened and are even glorifying convicted war criminals. The negation of genocide and glorification of genocide is the final stage of genocide, as Judge Aegius said once.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is simply unacceptable that a student dormitory, where future generations are being educated, is

named after a convicted war criminal. I appeal to the politician who placed the plaque to remove it in a gesture of regret. I also appeal to all politicians to make another, serious effort, to adopt a law on prohibition of genocide denial.

The events in the Srebrenica area in 1995 have been well documented and researched. Domestic and international courts have determined that genocide was committed. Several prominent European politicians, among them the late German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, have also admitted the co-responsibility of the International Community for Srebrenica.

None of them have accused any people, as there are no bad peoples. There are only bad individuals. All these statements were made in the spirit of reconciliation.

And no one has done more for the truth to be universally spread than the heroic Mothers of Srebrenica. They deserve our admiration and respect. We admire and support their pursuit of truth and justice.

Among them was the late Hatidža Mehmedović, who lost two sons, her husband, her brother, and another 37 members of her family. She spoke of Srebrenica as a potential place of forgiveness, because according to her, "through forgiveness, humanity wins!"

She also used to say: "If they just dared to say it out loud, so that I could hear them say they were sorry for what they have done, or, at least, if I were able to see just the slightest glimpse of repentance on their faces or in their eyes, my heart would feel much better and would find its solace and peace." Without forgiveness, she did not see a future for the coming generations. Therefore she appealed and invited also those who participated in the genocide, her neighbours and others, to visit the Srebrenica memorial. She said: "We have to live with them!" How wise and prophetic!

So Srebrenica will always be a planetary place of remembrance, of “never again.” Forgetting the victims would, in a way, be like killing them a second time. At the same time, Srebrenica could also be a place demonstrating the power of forgiveness, a place demonstrating that, through forgiveness, the whole humanity wins!

I appeal to the politicians to bury their hatchets, to find wisdom and courage, to lead the people of BiH on their path toward reconciliation. The Presidency could start, visiting symbolically three places of atrocities, or joint places of reconciliation, like the Germans and the French. Why not? After 25 years, it is time to move on, to leave the past to historians to deal with respectfully, and to focus on the present and the future.

The people of BiH demand and deserve a peaceful, stable and blossoming country, tolerant to differences, a country of love and free of divisions. That is what I wish to the citizens!

And to the dead, I wish them eternal peace!

[VIDEO: Statement by High Representative Valentin Inzko on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide \(shorter version\)](#)