

A Prijedor Timeline: 1980 to 1995

Quotations are from the United Nations Security Council's Prijedor Report and related U.N. documents.

Prelude to war

- 4 May 1980: Tito dies; collective Yugoslav presidency is established.
- 6 December 1989: Slobodan Milosevic elected president of Serbia. He begins his push for a Greater Serbia by laying claim to all areas where Serbs live.
- April-May 1990: Elections in Slovenia and Croatia set the stage for independence in those republics.
- November 1990: the SDA (Party of Democratic Action, which had strong Muslim support) wins a plurality but not majority of seats in the Prijedor Assembly. The municipal government of Prijedor is now split between Serbs and Muslims.
- 25 March 1991: Milosevic and Franjo Tudman secretly agree to divide Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia.
- Prijedor's Serbs establish Serb shadow government in Prijedor under Milomir Stakic.
- April 1991: Serbian politicians declare the Bosanska Krajina Srpska Autonomna Oblast (the Serbian Autonomous Region of the Bosnian Krajina).
- The Prijedor Assembly votes down a proposal to join what is essentially a secessionist state.
- 25 June 1991: Croatia and Slovenia proclaim independence.

Prelude to genocide

- August 1991: War between Croatian forces and the Serb-dominated Yugoslav People's Army begins.
- At the same time, a heavily armed brigade from Serbia arrives in Prijedor. Serbian military authorities fail to persuade the Muslim population to join their war against Croatia.
- Throughout 1991: Light weaponry is brought in from Serbia and distributed to Serbs in Prijedor under the false pretext of defense against Muslim extremists.

- Fall 1991: In Prijedor, Serbs secretly begin to set up a parallel administration called the Serb Municipality of Prijedor. They set up nine new police stations and arm the police.
- September 1991: UN establishes an arms embargo against all of Yugoslavia.
- October 1991: Bosnian parliament proclaims the sovereignty of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serb deputies belonging to the SDS (Serb Nationalist Party) walk out.
- 9 January 1992: The Assembly of the Serbian People in Bosnia and Herzegovina declares a separate Serb Republic.
- February 1992: In Prijedor and elsewhere, Serbs establish "Crisis Committees" (Krizni Stab).
- March 1992: Referendum is held on independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina; most Serbs boycott referendum. Of those voting, 99 percent vote in favor of an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- March 3, 1992: Bosnian Parliament declares Bosnia-Herzegovina an independent republic.
- March 1992: In Prijedor, Serb artillery is moved into place on Mount Kozara.
- 21-28 March 1992: Serbs seize control of television transmitter near Prijedor on Mt. Kozara; transmissions from Zagreb and Sarajevo are blocked.
- 6 April 1992: EEC recognizes independence of Bosnia Herzegovina. In Sarajevo, Serb snipers attack peaceful demonstrators supporting a multiethnic Yugoslavia.
- 14 April 1992: Serbs erect roadblocks around Prijedor.
- 27 April 1992: Bosnia-Herzegovina decrees that the JNA (now a Serbian army, formerly the Yugoslav army) must leave the country.
- 28 April 1992: Due to mounting danger, UN military observers in Prijedor and nearby Banja Luka are withdrawn.
- 29 April 1992: Forged fax "surfaces"; it purports to order Bosnian territorial defense units to attack the JNA. The effect is to further agitate Serbs.
- 30 April 1992: The Serb Prijedor Crisis Staff takes over all government offices in Prijedor in order to "secure their survival."

- The seizure of government offices takes twenty-five minutes.
- What had previously been the Serb shadow government assumes control.
- Identification papers are now required of everyone.
- Massive firings of non-Serbs begin.
- Serb police are ordered to follow Serbian law, not Bosnian law.
- Serb authorities intensify pressure on non-Serbs to give up any weapons.

• Mid to late May, 1992: Serbian military personnel remaining in Bosnia convert JNA units into the Bosnian Serb Army, to be commanded by General Ratko Mladic. The Bosnian Serb Army would work jointly with a number of Serb paramilitary units.

• Mid May, 1992: Men belonging to ultra-nationalist paramilitary group under the leadership of Arkan (Zeljko Raznjatovic) move into Hotel Prijedor.

• 23 May to 1 June 1992: Due to series of ultimatums, non-Serbs in Prijedor surrender remaining weapons to Serb authorities.

Genocide in Prijedor

• 23 May 1992: Village of Hambarine (pop. 2499) shelled and stormed. Approximately 100 villagers are killed or wounded; many more flee.

• 24 May 1992: Kozarac area (non-Serb pop. 27,000) shelled and stormed. As many as 5,000 people are killed in the Kozarac area in the days that follow.

• 35 non-Serb police officers are executed in front of the primary school.

• Serb soldiers fire upon a column of non-Serb citizens leaving Kozarac, killing men, women, and children.

• “Young Muslim women” are “shepherded to Serb military positions,” where they are sexually abused.

• Eight elderly non-Serbs are “shepherded into a cellar and massacred.”

• 24-25 May 1992: Serbs open concentration camps at Trnopolje, Omarska, and Keraterm. Serbs focus efforts on imprisoning and otherwise eliminating Muslim and Croat leaders, including business leaders and intellectuals.

• 30 May 1992 and after: Stari Grad, Prijedor’s “Old Town,” is razed. Civilians who live in the area are transported to Logor Trnopolje, where they are kept without food for several days. Women and children are eventually released; men are detained.

• 30-31 May 1992: Serbs move through additional parts of the city of Prijedor, targeting and forcing out non-Serb inhabitants. Men not killed are taken to Omarska and Keraterm;

women and children who are not killed are taken to Trnopolje. Dozens of corpses of non-Serbs are observed piled throughout the city.

- Early June 1992: All non-Serbs are required to wear white armbands and hang white flags from the windows of their homes.

- July 1992: Throughout Prijedor, Serbs destroy buildings “built in a traditional Muslim style.”

- Starting 20 July 1992: The area on the left bank of the Sana River is shelled.

- “A total of more than 1500 people [are] killed on 20 July 1992 alone.”

- Women and children are separated from the men; the latter are executed or transported to concentration camps.

- When Omarska and Keraterm are filled, men on one bus destined for the camps are shot to death by Serb soldiers.

- Houses are systematically looted and destroyed.

- 23 July 1992: Serbs encircle the town of Carakovo, southwest of Prijedor. “Hundreds of people [are] killed—shot, burnt alive, beaten, or tortured to death in other ways.” At least 760 non-Serbs are killed.

- 20-25 July 1992: In Lisina, “between 70 and 100 Muslim civilians [are] killed” by Serbs.

- End of July 1992: Serbs kill between 100 and 120 Muslim civilians from Jugovci.

- 1 August 1992: In Redak, south of Ljubija, Serbs kill 200 Muslim civilians.

- Mid-August 1992: Omarska and Keraterm camps are closed; surviving prisoners divided into groups; some are executed, and others are sent to camps at Manjaca and Trnopolje.

- 21 August 1992: 228 prisoners are massacred at Koricanske Stijene on Mount Vlasic. Recounted a survivor, “they brought us to the very edge . . . facing the abyss. Then people started screaming, yelling. . . . I leaped into the abyss. . . . When I became conscious, I realized that through some incredible luck I was not injured. . . . So I took a body of a man and I covered myself. . . . And then they started shooting. . . .”

- 5 November 1992: Serbs are observed burning the remains of people killed in Lisina in July. The odor is smelled “kilometers away.”

- Early October 1992: Trnopolje camp is closed. Many prisoners remain in the camp because their homes have been destroyed or taken.

- 17 December 1992: Radovan Karadzic becomes president of a Bosnian Serb state.

Aftermath

- 1993-1995: Random and targeted killings continue. Many of the Muslims and Catholics remaining in Prijedor and the surrounding area are forcibly deported; their property is confiscated.
- 22 February 1993: The U.N. Security Council establishes the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- February 1994: A Croat-Bosniak (Catholic-Muslim) federation is established in Bosnia; joint Croat-Bosniak forces afterwards try to retake territory controlled by Bosnian Serbs.
- July 1995: U.N. “safe haven” of Srebrenica falls; Serbs massacre of more than 8,000 Bosnian men and boys.
- 29 August 1995: NATO begins Operation Deliberate Force against the Bosnian Serb insurgents.
- 16-17 September: The Bosnian army retakes extensive territories in western Bosnia, including Kljuc and Sanski Most. Bosnia forces move towards Prijedor but fail to reach the city.
- Late September-early October 1995: Serbs fleeing advancing Bosnian forces seek refuge in Prijedor; they initiate a second wave of “ethnic cleansing,” pushing out Prijedor’s remaining Muslims and Catholics.
- 12 October 1995: General ceasefire takes effect in Bosnia-Herzegovina, before Prijedor can be recaptured.
- 14 December 1995: The Dayton Peace Accords are signed by Slobodan Milosevic (Serbia), Franjo Tudman (Croatia), and Alija Izetbegovic (Bosnia-Herzegovina). The agreement leaves about half (49%) of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs. The Prijedor municipality remains in the Serb-controlled part of Bosnia.