



INSTITUTE FOR THE RESEARCH OF GENOCIDE
CANADA

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IGC's Response to Petition

In response to Petition e-1837 initiated by the Institute for Research of Genocide Canada (IGC), another petition has been posted online on change.org by Boris Mistic, titled **FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND SCHOLARLY RESEARCH THREATENED IN CANADA**. The text of this petition contains many inaccuracies and distortions of the truth which need to be addressed.

The author of this petition refers to the IGC as an “obscure” organization which makes “spurious claims about what happened in Srebrenica in 1995 during the Bosnian civil war....”. In fact, the IGC is a prestigious, volunteer-run organization which has achieved recognition locally and internationally.

At no time has the IGC ever made any “spurious” claims with respect to the Srebrenica Genocide. All statements made by the IGC in this regard or any other are based on solid scientific and internationally-recognized facts and analysis. In addition, it is necessary to point out that the conflict which took place on Bosnian soil between 1992 and 1995 was not a “civil war”, but rather an international armed aggression, with the major players involved being the governments of Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia.

The author of this petition claims that Canadian lawmakers ought not to get involved in this issue “at the behest of lobbying groups that they probably know little or nothing about....”. In fact, the Canadian government is quite familiar with the IGC and its members, especially with its director, Emir Ramic. The IGC has achieved much success in collaborating with members of the Canadian government at all levels.

With his petition, Mistic claims that IGC's request is controversial and amounts to an infringement of the right of free expression in Canada, as guaranteed by Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He also claims that Petition e-1837 would be discriminatory to “...several hundred thousand Canadians of Serbian descent....”

Firstly, his purported statistical figure for Canadians of Serbian origin is grossly exaggerated. In truth, the Census Profile of the 2016 Census of Statistics Canada puts the number at 96,530.

Second, the criminal sanctioning of genocide deniers does not jeopardize freedom of speech. Instead, it contributes to the protection of human rights and freedom, especially the rights of the victims of genocide. It also contributes to truth and justice, and sets the stage for greater peace and security in the world. In addition, international legal experts have outlined the need for the existence of a law in Canada that would prohibit genocide denial, as a means by which to end the dehumanization of genocide victims.

People like Misis fail to understand that the right to freedom of expression is not limitless. For example, if Misis were to stand in front of a large crowd and proclaim a desire to kill his neighbour, he would find himself facing arrest and criminal charges. In other words, Misis's right to freedom of speech ends where his neighbour's right to safety and security begins.

Another argument brought forth is that currently, there is no law criminalizing the denial of the Holocaust, and that therefore, a law prohibiting the denial of the Srebrenica Genocide would minimize the former. On the contrary, the IGC believes that an enactment of a law prohibiting the denial of the Srebrenica Genocide would help pave the way for laws that would prohibit the denial of other genocides, including the Holocaust.

The author claims that "among the experts there is no consensus on what happened in Srebrenica and that credible authorities hold divergent views on the subject." This is categorically false: the only individuals who disagree with what happened in Srebrenica in July of 1995 are the ones brought up in this petition (and those of their ilk). Their motives for minimizing this genocide and denigrating its victims are self-serving. They attempt to white-wash the facts in order to rid Serbia (and Serbs) of all responsibility for this atrocity.

The author questions the figure of 8,372 Bosniaks murdered in Srebrenica, claiming that it is "... significantly higher than was found to be the case by judges at International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague and by other international officials."

This isn't so. The final judgments of both international tribunals, several United Nations agencies, the Commission for Missing Persons in Bosnia and other relevant world scientific research institutions speak of at least 8372 civilians killed in the genocide in Srebrenica. Currently, 6,610 victims are buried at Potocari. More people will be buried there this July 11th. In addition, the search continues for the remains of at least another 1,000 victims.

In this petition, Misis brings up the "Dutch-based NGO" Srebrenica Historical Project as a reliable source of information on the subject. In theory and on paper, it may sound like a wonderful resource – namely for those who know little or nothing about Bosnia or the Balkans. But the Srebrenica Historical Project is a phantom organization – in reality a website - run by Stefan (Stephen) Karganovic.

Karganovic is a U.S.-based lobbyist. He was hired by Milorad Dodik, president of the Republika Srpska entity, to improve the world's image of Serbs and do everything possible to deny or minimize Serbian wartime atrocities – including the Srebrenica Genocide. In recent years, Karganovic faced charges for alleged tax fraud and embezzlement.

Misis brings up Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and his views disputing

Srebrenica's classification as a genocide. Years ago, when IGC first got word of Zuroff's stance, it was disappointing and perplexing. On the other hand, we also remember that the Simon Wiesenthal Center was on the side of Bosnians during the war, and actually urged President Clinton to prosecute the Bosnian Serb leaders responsible for the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. The belated Simon Wiesenthal himself showed his support for Bosnians during the war. It is IGC's belief that these statements made by Zuroff do not reflect the fine intentions of this organization or the man who established it, but indicate instead Zuroff's own personal agenda.

We also fondly remember the late Elie Wiesel, survivor of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald death camps. At a ceremony at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. in April, 1993, this man implored President Clinton to do something to end the bloodshed in Bosnia.

During his lifetime, Elie Wiesel was also an honorary member of IGC's International Team of Experts.

Misic brings up Lewis MacKenzie, the Canadian general who served as the first commander of the UNPROFOR mission in Sarajevo, and this man's doubts as to whether what happened in Srebrenica was genocide.

MacKenzie's mission in Sarajevo was short-lived. He was relieved of his peace-keeping duties and back in Canada before the end of the summer of 1992. His exit from the scene was marked with controversy and disgrace.

Two important facts emerged regarding this man in the period that followed. First, he was accused of being staunchly pro-Serb during his mission to Bosnia, to the point where he accused Bosnian forces of targeting their own people whenever Serb forces launched attacks on civilians (ie. the Breadline Massacre in Sarajevo). Second, MacKenzie has been accused of allegedly raping at least two Bosniak women during his time in Bosnia. The Bosnian court of justice issued an indictment for his arrest a long time ago. MacKenzie has never had to answer to these charges because of his diplomatic immunity.

Since his return from Bosnia, MacKenzie has held numerous speaking engagements and PR events where he discusses his shameless pro-Serb stance. He has even given pro-Serb speeches at Serbian picnics at Niagara Falls. Not surprisingly, it has long since been discovered that MacKenzie has been receiving payment from Serbian lobby groups all along for these public-speaking events.

Bosnians everywhere think of MacKenzie as a rapist of Bosnian women and a chetnik (Serbian fascist extremist) supporter. This is his legacy.

James Byron Bissett, Canada's former ambassador to Yugoslavia, is also listed in this petition as another Srebrenica doubter. What the author fails to mention is the fact that Bissett has always been staunchly pro-Serb. He was a good friend to the belated Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, a man who died in The Hague while on trial for war crimes. Milosevic is considered to be the person who carries the most responsibility for all of the Balkan wars of the 1990's and is reviled by people the world over.

This petition claims that the evidence regarding Srebrenica is far from being “settled” and brings up the opinion of dissenting Judge Prisca Matimba Nyambe at the Zdravko Tolimir trial. But Misis fails to accept that final ICTY rulings have recognized the events in Srebrenica in July of 1995 as genocide. The International Court of Justice has upheld these rulings. In an address at the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Complex and Cemetery in 2004, Judge Theodor Meron (who is the former president of the ICTY, a presiding judge for the Radislav Krstic appeals trial, and a Polish-American Jew and Holocaust survivor), paid a special tribute to the victims and mentioned his yearning to speak at that location, especially owing to the court’s judgement earlier that year which finally declared the event as a genocide.

These legal judgements are final and binding. The Srebrenica Genocide is not a matter of opinion, or a topic open for debate.

Essentially, the petition brought forward by Boris Misis reeks of the worst sort of genocide denial conceivable. His contempt for the victims of Srebrenica and the people of Bosnia shines through with his recent petition update: “Muslim petition e-1837 has been tabled in Canadian Parliament” (spelling error included). His xenophobic comments in the update section continue with these words: “The Muslim push forward to achieve their agenda...”, and “Go to the link to see how Muslims presented their case.”

When the IGC first created Petition e-1837 (an official Canadian government petition, sponsored by MP Brian Masse), certain members of the Serbian community were outraged and planned on creating a counter-petition. Not surprisingly, they had no success in finding an MP willing to sponsor this rubbish. Their only alternative was to post the petition on change.org.

It was surprising to see this vehicle for significant social activism being used for such hateful and harmful activity. No doubt, administrators in charge of change.org may not be aware of the nefarious activities of the group behind this petition.

Out of a population of close to 100,000 Canadians of Serbian origin, a little over 3,000 signed this petition. This makes us hopeful that surely, many of these people would never want to have their names associated with such an odious document. And ultimately, it would be impossible to determine the veracity of these 3,000 signatures.

The IGC remains optimistic that its efforts to make Srebrenica Genocide denial illegal in Canada will prevail. In the end, justice will win.