Srebrenica is a small city located in eastern Bosnia. In July 1995, the Serbian military of the Republic of Srpska sieged the city. A mass murder of over 8,300 deaths took place that included the torture and slaughtering of young boys, men, elderly, and some women and babies.

On March 5, the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center; European Union Center; Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide and Memory Studies; Center for Global Studies; Programs in Arms, Control, Disarmament, and International Security; and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures co-sponsored a lecture from Bosnian war crimes investigative journalist Salih Brkic.

Salih Brkic has been in his profession for 45 years. However, he became most intrigued by Srebrenica and that region of Bosnia during the war. He describes Srebrenica as his “wound” and will continue working on seeking justice while he is alive.

Brkic has spent most of his own time investigating war crimes and bringing justice to those that have lost loved ones in the war. As a journalist and filmmaker, he has made over 50 documentaries. In the past two decades, he has created numerous documentaries on the Srebrenica genocide.

Brkic is very unique in what he does. During his talk, he shared two short documentaries. The first was called “Nermin,” which is a Bosnian-Muslim name. In this documentary, Brkic follows Nermin’s wife, the only living member of the family, for years, recording the toughest moments of her life. Brkic shows footage from the war of Nermin calling out to his son repeatedly, telling him to come by his father. Nermin tells his son that he is “safe” with the Serbs, while the Serbs demand Nermin to call for his son in order to capture them both. Nermin calls out to his son so that both of them could be executed together; he is left with no choice but to do as the Serbs command. In “Nermin,” Brkic conducted several interviews of Nermin’s wife, showing the phases she went through, starting with her finding this footage of her own husband, to the discovery of her family members’ remains, to attending their funeral in Potocari, where the mass grave site and memorial is in Srebrenica.

The second short documentary that Mr. Brkic showed was “Flashlight in the Caves,” which highlight the process of identifying the missing bodies that were often dumped into mass caves. In the majority of the instances, fields were dug out and dozens of bodies were dumped on top of each other. After the war, locating most of these caves in order to identify the bodies was difficult. Today, many are still looking for their family members’ remains; they cannot properly bury their relatives without the remains.

Mr. Brkic spoke about the Srebrenica massacre in great depth and also discussed his job as a journalist at that time. Salih Brkic rediscovered much evidence which exposed the truth behind the genocide in Srebrenica. In addition, he exposed the events which led to the fall of Srebrenica in early July 1995.

He has dedicated much time to a special organization called “The Mothers of Srebrenica,” which is composed of the women in Srebrenica who lost children, siblings, and husbands in the war.
He was with them when they buried their children, when they buried their husbands, and when they watched the court proceedings in the Hague of the major war criminals. He continues to stand with the “Mothers of Srebrenica” and dedicate his time to seeking justice.

Mr. Brkic’s purpose as a journalist is to achieve justice for all of those that have lost family members in the war. He wants every individual that was murdered in the war to receive a proper burial. In addition, he fights for exposing the war criminals that caused this genocide to happen. His recordings and evidence on the Srebrenica massacre has greatly assisted in working towards justice.

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