

# LEFT FOR DEAD BY MLADIC, ONE MAN'S COURAGE

**EXCLUSIVE**  
BY TOM PARRY  
Special Correspondent in Srebrenica

On a hot July day in 1995, Ratko Mladic's executioners shot teenager Nedžad Avdic three times and crumpled his body into a mass grave with hundreds of other men and boys.

The killers left Nedžad for dead and reported back to Mladic, who had carefully planned the genocidal massacre of thousands of Bosniak Muslims in Srebrenica as part of a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign across Bosnia.

As Mladic was this week jailed for life for war crimes, Nedžad, 39, stood defiantly at the memorial site for the victims of the merciless slaughter.

It has taken 22 years, but this courageous survivor has miraculously stayed strong to see justice served against the perpetrator of the worst act of genocide in Europe since the Holocaust.

At the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague on Wednesday, Mladic, 74 – dubbed the Butcher of Bosnia – was found guilty on 10 counts, including genocide and crimes against humanity.

The world was reminded how the Serb military chief – described as the "epitome of evil" – played the pivotal role in the brutal civil war in the 1990s which claimed more than 100,000 lives and forced two million from their homes.

## ATROCITIES

After evading an international arrest warrant for 15 years while hidden by friends and family in Serbia, Mladic was also sentenced for his commanding role in the devastating siege of Sarajevo.

Witnesses told the court how he ordered his troops to blockade Bosnia's biggest city and kill its citizens with indiscriminate shelling and sniper fire.

Alongside wife Elvina and daughters, Nadza, seven, Dzejlana, five, and Umihana, two, Nedžad said: "My revenge against General Mladic is to be standing here today with my wife and children."

"The organisation of the mass killing was systematic but they made a mistake and left me to survive and talk about it."

"Although it is very late, this verdict is very important, especially for the next generation. It is also important for children in Serb families who have been raised by parents who deny that genocide happened. If there is to be reconciliation it has to be based on the truth."

"Mladic was the person in the chain of command most responsible for all of the atrocities that led up to Srebrenica. He left catastrophic consequences."

"Today we have a destroyed and divided country."

"After suffering such horror here it was difficult to come back, but in a way living here again is a therapy. I'm proud because there is no shame for me any more. I was silent for many years but then forced to talk about the massacre because people were denying it."

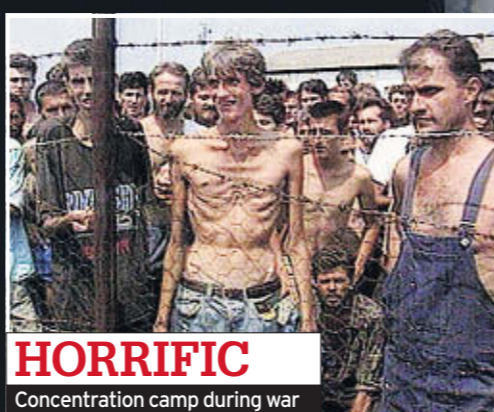
Nedžad shows me where the names of his father Alija and four of his uncles are inscribed on the memorial.

There are dozens of Bosniaks with the same surname as Nedžad on the roll-call. Just 17 when he was lined up and shot in the back by the Bosnian Serb paramilitaries, he played dead.

Despite intense pain, he saved a man by cutting through his rope binds with



**MONSTER**  
General Ratko Mladic in 1994



**HORRIFIC**  
Concentration camp during war



**FAMILY**  
Nedžad with wife and daughters



**EPITOME OF EVIL**  
"Butcher of Bosnia" Ratko Mladic, jailed for life over '90s war genocide  
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a sharp stone. The man reciprocated by gnawing through Nedžad's binds with his teeth. "I had to crawl over the dead bodies with him to get to the safety of the bushes," Nedžad told me. "And right then they started killing again."

"The man ripped up a T-shirt and wrapped it around my wounds. I wrapped my underwear around the bullet wound on my foot. I was so exhausted that I slept on his knees."

"Afterwards we saw the bulldozers they were using to bury the dead."

Somehow Nedžad and his companion crawled to safety in Tuzla about 45 miles away. Very few others survived.

Mladic's conviction is one of just a handful handed down by the war crimes

tribunal. Another victim who watched on TV in Srebrenica as Mladic was put behind bars for the rest of his days was widow Saliha Osmanovic, whose family was ripped apart by Mladic's henchmen.

She told how youngest son Edin was killed by a grenade in 1995. Within days her husband Ramo and son Nermin were executed after trying to flee.

The Serbs had forced Ramo to call out on a loudhailer to Nermin and others hiding in the forest that it was safe to return, a despicable trick that lured the younger man to his death.

Saliha and thousands of other women waited in vain for their men to arrive at the refugee camp they had been bussed to by the Serbs. All males

**CHILLING MEMORIES** Hasan & Saliha's families were killed

from age 12 to 77 were separated out for "interrogation for suspected war crimes" and held in trucks and warehouses before the massacres.

Over four days, Bosniak men and boys were murdered by Serbs at sites around Srebrenica. There are 8,372 graves at the Srebrenica mausoleum today, and skeletons are

still being recovered. Many Serbs in Bosnia deny the genocide, including Srebrenica's mayor Mladen Grujicic.

Speaking on a street that was once the frontline in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, another survivor Hasan Nuhanovic explains how Mladic has left behind a country torn in two.

Hasan lost his dad, mum and younger brother in the massacre. He watched as Bosniak refugees including his family members were handed over to the Serbs by UN peacekeepers.

He says Mladic's ethnic cleansing means Serbs and Bosniak Muslims rarely live together now.

After indicating the bullet holes in the outer walls of the apartment complex where he lives, Hasan adds: "We are still afraid of another war. The

messages from politicians are not promising. The leader of the Serb part of Bosnia says Bosnia Herzegovina should not exist. He says it's his dream that it will join Serbia one day.

"On a daily basis we are exposed to statements saying the genocide did not happen. Many Serbs consider Mladic a victim of an international plot against them. International troops are still present near the airport in Sarajevo."

"What Mladic wanted to do by killing all of these people has been achieved. "There are whole regions that people left because Mladic burned down the villages. Very few places are a multi-ethnic mix of Serbs and Bosniaks."

"I fear this judgement will not change anything. We should not be euphoric; it is not a victory. The only victory is I am still alive and I have a wife and child. My daughter has my mother's name and is now doing well at law school in Sarajevo."

"It is 22 years later and I am still trying to recover from the trauma. The whole community remains shaken."

Hasan is still angry at the international community for failing to intervene as the ethnic cleansing unfolded. "Until two years ago I was still looking for my mother's remains. That's why I've never been able to leave Bosnia like so many have. I would urge Europe not to forget about us, not to allow the fire to spread all over again. This is a place where religions can live together in peace. There should be good stories too."

Mladic may have left an appalling legacy but the mothers of Srebrenica know the monster who ruined their lives will finish his own behind bars.

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**“**  
After suffering such horror here it was difficult to come back  
**”**  
NEDZAD AVDIC WHO SURVIVED MASSACRE

# My revenge against the Butcher of Bosnia is that I survived to stand here today with my wife and kids



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