

Butcher of Bosnia Sentenced to Life in Prison

Summary: Ratko Mladic was convicted of war crimes on Wednesday.

Ratko Mladi who earned the nickname "The Butcher of Bosnia" was sentenced to life imprisonment for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, *The Guardian* reported.

"The crimes committed rank among the most heinous known to humankind," Judge Alphons Orie said at Mladic's sentencing on Wednesday.

From 1992 to 1996, Mladi, 74, was chief of staff of the Bosnian Serb forces. During this time, the country was torn apart by ferocious civil wars and ethnic cleansing that followed the decimation of the Yugoslav state.

More than 20 years after the wars, Mladi was found guilty of 10 offenses involving the murder and extermination of civilian populations. He was tried by a criminal tribunal backed by the United Nations.

During the trial, Mladi infuriated his victims' families by smiling and giving the thumbs up to cameras, according to *The Guardian*. His flippant mood, however, changed during the proceeding when the mass murderer stood up and shouted "This is all lies" and "I'll f-ck your mother!" He was forcibly removed and the verdict was read in his absence.

NPR journalist Tom Gjelten said that he remembered when Mladic ruled Bosnia with "the intent on terrorizing and dividing the city and killing or expelling all non-Serbs" and that his actions were a sobering reminder to mankind that evil exists.

"The conviction of Mladic by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes may not bring much solace to those Bosnians who survived his murderous campaigns, but it serves as a reminder of the evil one man can do with an army at his command," Gjelten wrote.

Mladic was ruled to be responsible for the death of 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica, a massacre that *Slate* said was "Europe's worst mass killing since World War II," as well as the siege of Sarajevo that killed 10,000.

"The prosecution of Mladic is the epitome of what international justice is all about," U.N. human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini said. "Today's verdict is a warning to the perpetrators of such crimes that they will not escape justice, no matter how powerful they may be nor how long it may take."

Family members of Mladic's victims had mixed reactions to the verdict, according to *The Daily Mail*. Some felt that the punishment came too late while others felt justice was served.

"I try to count my dead all the time. I count to 50 and then I'm not able to count anymore," Vasva Smajlovic, 74, said. "No words can describe how I feel. I am angry. All this comes too late."

What do you think of Mladic's sentence? Let us know in the comments below.