

Should we hold trials for war crimes

I live in a country where everyone judges others. Friends judge friends, neighbours are judged, or complete strangers. Each person in Bosnia and Herzegovina has this characteristic which makes him judge others, even for a most harmless thing. We look for blame in others, we argue and quarrel, especially about nonsense. But when it comes to important matters, all of that somehow disappears, people lose their opinions; it no longer matters to them. This society should direct its condemnation at the war crimes that occurred in this country, but people are trying to forget them.

People often say that you should “forget but not forgive”, but why should it be forgotten that someone assumed the right to kill innocent people?! The war that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not last four years, it is still going on. As an 18-year-old girl living in post-war Sarajevo, I still feel the consequences of that attempt to destroy a nation. Every day on the news I see people talking about reconciliation, mutual cooperation, but I know that it is not possible when those responsible for their crimes are still walking freely, or waiting for their sentences for years, and in the end receiving sentences of only a couple of years. Nobody will understand the gravity of what happened between 1992 and 1995 unless the most severe of sentences are imposed for crimes.

We no longer need to divide ourselves into this or

that group, but we should be human for once, be honest, and admit that those responsible for this situation should answer for it. The war brought a lot of evil, but I can describe today’s situation as one of mistrust. People, at least those who understand what happened, have lost faith in their state, in its institutions, because they are incapable of doing the only right thing – bringing justice to light. That is why my friends are leaving the country. They do not want to live in this country, to go to school in it,

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to give themselves to it. This war took many lives, but it also took our youth and spirit. People have no will to fight, because few have fought to resolve the situation of intolerance that has been around for 20 years now. If it is clear to me, and I am still a child, why is it then not clear to my neighbour, who will keep saying that there was no genocide until the day he dies? He would not say that if those criminals were sentenced to a hundred years, if Mujo, Ratko

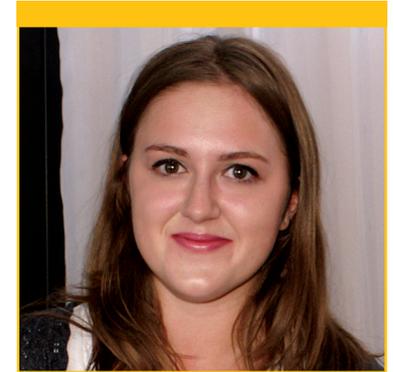
committed during an armed conflict?

and Pero did their best to hand over all the evidence they have to the relevant institutions, if everyone felt it was their responsibility and duty to tell what they know about what happened. We cannot take a new and better step into the future until a loud and clear condemnation is heard from every part of this poor country.

I condemn everywhere, I use every opportunity to say what and how people should react, especially my generation. There is a lot that we do not know because, thank God, we were not born when people were being slaughtered and killed here; but we know what it is like now, we feel the energy between us now and we should not ignore it, especially if we know its cause. If we all tell the truth, there is little chance that it will go unnoticed. The worst is to keep quiet and nod our heads while somebody from the leadership is telling us that everything is all right. Sometimes I have a feeling that people from outside laugh at us, that we appear quite incapable of resolving our own situation. Sometimes I wonder if we, Bosnians and Herzegovinians, are still on the level of those primitive communities that cannot communicate and understand each other, though I have learned in school that we all speak the same language. We have a country with inexhaustible natural resources, with beautiful people, the best food, the funniest jokes, the most emotional songs, yet we have no desire to help ourselves. I think that we do not have much time left. This will soon turn into general agony and dissatisfaction. We all

have access to all kinds of information, so we know that the people in these areas need very little to succeed, but also that a new conflict can break out in a second. The longer we wait the closer we are to new unrest, and I am sure that nobody will tolerate that any more. The fact is that there was a war, it caused many changes, but we are still here, there is still diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina and it should stay like that forever. We should make a little effort not to condemn love, uniqueness, life, or a smile, but rather we should condemn war and lock it up in a cell and be proud of ourselves for succeeding in that together.

I do not know how much time needs to pass, how many hundreds of years before everybody understands that it would be a great relief for them if they admitted that people were killed and that it was done with clear intent. I do now know who needs to come and shout and order us to stop doing trivial things and ensure an easier life for ourselves. Then I realise that no foreigner can prove anything to us until we convince ourselves. Everybody went on with their lives after the war: some with scars, others with a conviction that they succeeded in destroying the state. It is true that we are standing on wobbly legs, but we still have strength and we can survive. New generations will be born who can revive something that has already been written off, but it can only be done with the truth. That is why each and every crime should be punished in order for us to move forward.



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