

January 27, 2020

**An Open Letter Regarding Dr. Jessica Stern's Book Titled
"My War Criminal: Personal Encounters with an Architect of Genocide"**

On behalf of the Bosnian-American community, friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and organizations and individuals who firmly believe that genocide, and the war criminals who orchestrated such heinous acts should not be romanticized in any way, we are writing with grave concern over the latest book by Dr. Jessica Stern titled "My War Criminal: Personal Encounters with an Architect of Genocide." We, the signatories of this open letter, call on institutions to reconsider any plans to promote Dr. Stern's hagiography of the convicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić, who is currently serving a life sentence at The Hague for committing genocide in Srebrenica against the Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) population.

Throughout the book, Dr. Stern bestows upon Karadžić otherworldly-like qualities such as that of a mythical healer and hero, often writing about his good looks and height – "tall and handsome, with flowing brown hair. A Byronic figure." By presenting the convicted mastermind behind the Bosnian Serb policy of genocide, ethnic cleansing, torture, and rape in an Adonis-like manner, Dr. Stern empowers Karadžić and gives him a platform to once again deny established facts about his crimes. This in turn empowers genocide denial in the Serb communities, and continues to embolden all those that deny proven historical facts and embrace historical revisionism.

In her book she writes, "I am relieved to hear his authoritative voice. The voice of a doctor, in charge of this mental hospital, used to getting his way. The voice of a president!" Dr. Stern completely loses herself in her subject and even sends him a gift stating, "It was a book I had given to a lot of people as a gift. I could not resist. I offered to send it to him. And when I got back to Cambridge, I did. That was the first time I fell in. It lasted for a while." She goes as far as to allow Karadžić to perform his "healing" on her - an utterly unethical decision of a supposedly unbiased "researcher."

The book reveals far more about Dr. Stern than the alleged subject of her study, and seriously questions the academic nature of her work. Her work reveals an author grossly uninterested in the horror that Karadžić unleashed on Bosniaks and BiH. Because innocent men, women, and children were raped and murdered by Karadžić's underlings, the author makes her readers believe that somehow this exonerates him of his crimes.

What is not mystical or romantic about Karadžić is the unimaginable pain and suffering that he perpetrated on hundreds of thousands of Bosnians. Dr. Stern decided to relativize court-proven facts by presenting his false interpretation of history, even negating the collaborationist Chetnik movement – a terrorist group

responsible for genocidal crimes against the Muslim and non-Serb population during the Holocaust. By doing so, her book only glorifies Karadžić's evil deeds and lessens the gravity of the crime of genocide. Her portrayal of the war itself is disconcerting as she tries to sloppily tie terrorism into the narrative, only to conclude that Karadžić's claims to that end were proven to be incorrect. She purposefully confuses the reader, almost leading one to believe that *the genocide was justified*. She presents Serb propaganda as facts by stating that during the Siege of Sarajevo, "it would become clear that Sarajevo's Muslims were being shot at – not only by Serbian snipers, but also occasionally by their own leadership."

We live in a world of consequences. Twenty-five years after the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are still searching for the remains of Karadžić's victims. That is the only thing for which Karadžić should be remembered: the invention of a tertiary mass grave. His evil deeds are the only thing that should matter about him.

Instead of unequivocally standing with the victims of Karadžić's crimes, Dr. Jessica Stern decided to stand in the ranks of genocide skeptics and deniers, and individuals who spread dangerous Islamophobic hatred – the very hatred that Karadžić used to mobilize the perpetrators of genocide. Today, Karadžić continues to inspire white supremacists and acts of terrorism from Pittsburg to Poway, from Utoya to Christchurch.

Today, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we are reminded of what evildoers such as Hitler, Karadžić, and those alike were capable of. To our detriment, their vile legacy continues to live and inspire, thanks in part to the likes of Dr. Stern. Romanticizing war criminals does nothing good for the world; instead, it serves as a platform for hatred of the "other" and an excuse to ignore the pain and suffering caused by it. Today and always, we stand with all victims of genocide, and against hatred promoted by the likes of Karadžić.

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