

FACTSHEET

MASS GRAVE IN KALINOVIK, 2021

The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) assisted the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) authorities in identifying human remains exhumed from the Dobro Polje site near Kalinovik in June 2021. Biological samples were taken from the exhumed remains and matched with reference samples provided to ICMP by relatives of the missing who last saw them alive in Srebrenica in July 1995. In December 2021, ICMP submitted DNA match reports on ten Srebrenica victims to the BIH Missing Persons Institute (MPI).

The Kalinovik site was the first mass grave linked to the Srebrenica genocide to be exhumed since the exhumation at Kozluk in April 2016. It is, to date, the most geographically distant from Srebrenica of all the sites related to the events of July 1995. Its location is only a few kilometers from the village of Godinjska Bara, near Trnovo, where members of the “Scorpions” paramilitary unit executed six Bosniak prisoners from Srebrenica in mid-July 1995.

On 6 May 2021, as a result of joint work by the BIH Prosecutor’s Office Special Department for War Crimes and SIPA, human remains were found in the Kalinovik area. The location, in Dobro Polje, is in inaccessible terrain covered with stones in the valley of the River Bistrica, along the M18 road.

The BIH authorities, with the assistance of forensic experts from ICMP, started the excavation on 31 May 2021. The human remains that were exhumed were highly commingled, scattered over a wide surface area, and covered with dirt and construction debris. The remains showed signs of summary execution. Ligatures were also found at the site.

On 22 June 2021 the exhumation process was completed. Based on the number of right tibia bones recovered at the site, ICMP forensic anthropologists estimated the minimum number of individuals exhumed at the location to be ten. As the bodies were so disarticulated, the court-appointed local medical-legal specialist, took 64 post-mortem (bone and tooth) samples for DNA testing.

Genetic profiles obtained from the samples and compared these profiles to the genetic reference profiles of more than 100,000 relatives of the missing from the conflicts of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia held in its database. Ten DNA matches were made of different individuals and these DNA match reports were submitted to the MPI for formal identification of the remains by domestic medical-legal experts. The domestic authorities will lead the process of seeking to determine the cause and manner of death. Additional match reports may facilitate the reassociation of the heavily disarticulated skeletal remains to the 10 individuals already DNA-matched.

ABOUT ICMP

ICMP is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization with Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. Its mandate is to secure the cooperation of governments and others in locating missing persons from conflict, human rights abuses, disasters, organized crime and other causes and to assist them in doing so.

As a result of armed conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1999, more than 40,000 people went missing. To date, more than 70 percent of these missing persons have been located through the combined and continuous efforts of the authorities with support provided by ICMP and with the broad participation of families of the missing. In November 2018 at ICMP's Headquarters, representatives of BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia signed a Framework Plan formally undertaking to work together as the regional Missing Persons Group (MPG). With ICMP support, the MPG has developed into an effective regional mechanism which is assisting efforts to account for the 11,000 persons still missing from the conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Since 1996, ICMP has helped the authorities in BiH to account for more than 75 percent of the 30,000 who went missing, including almost 90 percent of the 8,000 persons who were missing following the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. In addition, ICMP assisted in drafting the 2004 Law on Missing Persons and helped establish the MPI, which was inaugurated in 2005.

BACKGROUND

In July 1995, the United Nations (UN) Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa fell to Bosnian Serb armed forces. A column of thousands of men left Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 and made their way towards Tuzla. In the following days they were repeatedly ambushed, separated into groups and captured. Hundreds were killed and left in the forested area of Western Bratunac Municipality, many more died trying to reach territory controlled by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and thousands were captured and executed. Men and older boys who stayed behind in Srebrenica were detained by Serb forces at the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) "Dutchbat" base in Potocari and many were subsequently executed.

Through DNA-based identifications, ICMP was able to reveal the extent to which perpetrators attempted to conceal their crimes. Bodies were buried in numerous mass graves in eastern Bosnia and the perpetrators later used heavy machinery to remove bodies from primary mass graves to secondary sites, sometimes 50 kilometers from the original execution sites. This orchestrated effort to conceal evidence of the crimes resulted in bodies being disarticulated, with the remains of one person often deposited in several different graves.

In 2007, the International Court of Justice concurred with the earlier determination of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) that these crimes amounted to genocide. These judgments were supported by ICMP's use of advanced DNA methods to identify the remains of missing persons from Srebrenica. ICMP's use of DNA was the first time that DNA-based identification methods were applied to largescale missing persons scenarios.

To date, a total of 20 individuals have been tried at the ICTY for crimes related to Srebrenica over the course of 12 cases. Of these, 16 individuals were convicted and 3 were acquitted. Slobodan Milosevic, the former President of Serbia, died before the conclusion of his trial.

In BiH to date, a total of 57 individuals have been put on trial at the BiH State Court for crimes committed in and around Srebrenica in July 1995. Forty-three have been accused of the crime of genocide under Article 171 of the BiH Criminal Code; 12 have been charged with crimes against humanity under Article 172; and two have been accused of war crimes against civilians under Article 173.

In Serbia in 2007, five paramilitaries of the "Scorpions" unit were tried by the War Crimes Chamber of the Belgrade District Court for taking part in the execution of six Bosniak prisoners from

Srebrenica in mid-July 1995 in the village of Godinjska Bara, near Trnovo, which together with Kalinovik was the area of operations of the Scorpions in July 1995. Four of the group were found guilty. Two were sentenced to 20 years in prison; one was sentenced to 13 years and one to five years. A fifth was acquitted.

In Croatia, in 2016, the Supreme Court upheld the conviction sentencing Miodrag Momic, a former member of the Scorpions, to 15 years in prison for war crimes committed by the murder of six prisoners from Srebrenica at Godinjska Bara, near Trnovo.

For more background information see: Infographics on [Srebrenica](#) and the [BIH stocktaking](#).