

Beat: Miscellaneous

Netherlands held responsible for over 300 Srebrenica deaths

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USPA News - A Dutch district court on Wednesday ruled that the Netherlands is liable for the deaths of more than 300 Bosnian Muslim men who were killed at Srebrenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina in July 1995 after they had sought shelter from Dutch UN peacekeepers. On the afternoon of July 13, 1995, over 300 male refugees were deported by Bosnian Serbs from the Dutchbat compound in Potocari, after which the majority of them were killed.

The men and boys were among the more than 5,000 Bosniaks under Dutch UN peacekeepers' protection. "Given the information Dutchbat had about the fate of the male refugees at the time and because of the special position of the compound - a fenced-in area where they had full control - they should not have participated in the deportation of the more than 300 men," the Hague district Court said on Wednesday. The court said that Dutchbat should have considered the fate of the refugees and the possibility that they would become victims of genocide. "It can be said with sufficient certainty that, had Dutchbat allowed them to stay at the compound, these men would have remained alive," the court's statement said. As such, by playing a part in the deportation of these men and boys, "Dutchbat acted unlawfully." The district court said the government should pay damages to the circle of family members of the 300 male refugees who died as a result of the Dutch peacekeepers' actions. The court did not specify an amount. Despite Wednesday's verdict, the Netherlands were cleared of charges concerning the deaths of more than 7,000 other men killed in and around Srebrenica. The court ruled that many of the male refugees at the time had "fled to the woods in the vicinity of Srebrenica," not the UN compound, and therefore the Dutch state was not responsible for their deaths. During the Bosnian War, over 8,000 Muslim Bosniak men and boys were killed by the Army of Republika Srpska under the orders of General Ratko Mladic. In addition, between 25,000 and 30,000 people in the area of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffered from ethnic cleansing during the same period.

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United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com