

AMICA Schweiz

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To
Chief Prosecutor of the ICTY
Mr. Serge Brammertz
FAX 0031 703649928

Dear Mister Brammertz,

We welcome the arrest of Radovan Karadžić. We consider him as one of the persons chiefly responsible for mass murder, systematic terror including rape and other forms of sexualized violence against the non-Serb population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time we are deeply concerned that Karadžić will not be held responsible for the gender specific crimes committed against women. This would be a denial of justice for the thousands of women who suffered and endured mass rapes and sexual torture during war.

As Chief Prosecutor you have the power to decide whether these women are denied justice or not.

We therefore urge you most strongly to include sexual violence as a single charge in the amended indictment against Karadžić. This will send a clear and strong signal that sexualized violence is a component of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

After the experiences of AMICA Schweiz as a well-known NGO working with traumatized women and children in Tuzla for 15 years there is known that these symptoms are long lasting - especially in the field of trauma caused by sexualized war violence and its social consequences. The life of many victims is conditioned by daily flashbacks and nightmares – no chance to build up a new future. Many of the survivors are not capable of fulfilling their daily work because of serious somatic diseases as part of the trauma consequences. Sexualized war violence has destroyed not only their individual lives but also those of their families and their children. As a result the untreated trauma causes further traumas for the next generations – new sources for violence and sorrow are created.

The individual trauma of rape is perpetuated by the social stigma of rape evidenced through social exclusion. The refusal to fully recognize the gravity and dimension of war rape condemns the victims of these crimes to dealing with the consequences individually. A clear, consistent, visible and determined prosecution of the perpetrators plays a decisive role in the acknowledgement of these crimes and is a prerequisite for any healing process. These women have a right to restitution.

Just like my organization, women residing in many other countries will be carefully watching the proceedings of this trial. For many it will be a litmus test that goes beyond ICTY. Hopes were raised again that women would be accorded justice through justice tools. Experience has shown us unfortunately that this has only seldom been the case. Should Karadžić go unpunished for crimes specifically committed against women and girls still more hopes will be shattered and it will be a very bitter pill for women.

Sincerely

Andrea von Bidder