

MSF AND SREBRENICA

1993 - 2003



MSF SPEAKS OUT

In the same collection, “MSF Speaking Out”:

- “Salvadoran refugee camps in Honduras 1988”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [October 2003 - April 2004 - December 2013]

- “Genocide of Rwandan Tutsis 1994”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [October 2003 - April 2004 - April 2014]

- “Rwandan refugee camps Zaire and Tanzania 1994-1995”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [October 2003 - April 2004 - April 2014]

- “The violence of the new Rwandan regime 1994-1995”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [October 2003 - April 2004 - April 2014]

- “Hunting and killings of Rwandan Refugee in Zaire-Congo 1996-1997”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [August 2004 - April 2014]

- “Famine and forced relocations in Ethiopia 1984-1986”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [January 2005 - November 2013]

- “Violence against Kosovar Albanians, NATO’s Intervention 1998-1999”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [September 2006]

- “War crimes and politics of terror in Chechnya 1994-2004”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [June 2010-September 2014]

- “Somalia 1991-1993: Civil war, famine alert and UN ‘military-humanitarian’ intervention”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [October 2013]

- “MSF and North Korea 1995-1998”

Laurence Binet - Médecins Sans Frontières [November 2014]

Editorial Committee: Laurence Binet, Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Marine Buissonnière, Rebecca Golden, Michiel Hofman, Paul Mac Phun, Jerome Oberreit, Darin Portnoy - **Director of Studies (project coordination-research-interview-editing):** Laurence Binet - **Assistant:** Martin Saulnier - **Translation into English:** Mark Ayton, Leah Brumer, Kristin Cairns, Amanda Dehaye, Nina Friedman, Justin Hillier, Derek Scoins, Caroline Serraf (coordination), Ros Smith-Thomas, Karen Stokes, Karen Tucker, Riccardo Walker - **Editing/Proof Reading:** Liz Barling, Rebecca Golden - **Design and Layout:** tcgraphite - **Video research:** Martin Saulnier - **Website Designer and Administrator:** Sean Brokenshire.

Thanks to Wouter Kok for research and translation from the Dutch press, to Juliette Estival for part of Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier’s interview.

Thanks to MSF Australia team for their support.

Produced by the Médecins Sans Frontières International Movement

MSF Australia is in charge of the design, running, update, and promotion strategy of the website <http://speakingout.msf.org>

FOREWORD

This publication is part of the “Médecins Sans Frontières Speaking Out” case studies series prepared in response to the MSF International Council’s wish to provide the movement with literature on MSF *témoignage* (advocacy).

The idea was to create a reference document that would be straightforward and accessible to all and help volunteers understand and adopt the organization’s culture of speaking out.

It was not to be an ideological manual or a set of guidelines. *Témoignage* cannot be reduced to a mechanical application of rules and procedures as it involves an understanding of the dilemmas inherent in every instance of humanitarian action.

The International Council assigned the project to a director of studies, who in turn works with an editorial committee composed of MSF representatives chosen by the International Board for their experience and expertise. They serve in their capacity as individuals and do not represent their national sections.

Faced with the difficulty of defining the term *témoignage*, the editorial committee decided to focus the series on case studies in which speaking out posed a dilemma for MSF and thus meant taking a risk.

Key information sources -MSF volunteers’ written and oral recollections — are reconstructed by highlighting documents from the period concerned and interviewing the main actors.

The individuals interviewed are chosen from lists prepared by the operational sections involved in each case. Speaking in the language they choose, these individuals offer both their account of events and their assessment of MSF’s response. The interviews are recorded and transcribed.

Document searches are conducted in the operational sections’ archives and, as far as possible, press archives.

The research is constrained by practical and financial issues, including locating interviewees and securing their agreement and determining the existence, quality and quantity of archived materials.

The methodology aims at establishing the facts and setting out a chronological presentation of the positions adopted at the time. It enables the reconstruction of debates and dilemmas without pre-judging the quality of the decisions made.

The main text describes events in chronological order. It includes excerpts from documents and interviews, linked by brief introductions and transitional passages. We rely on document extracts to establish the facts as MSF described and perceived them at the time. When documentation is missing, interviews sometimes fill the gaps. These accounts also provide a human perspective on the events and insight into the key players’ analyses.

Preceding the main texts collected, the reader will find a map, a list of abbreviations and an introduction that lays out the context of MSF’s public statements and the key dilemmas they sought to address.

In addition, a detailed chronology reconstructs MSF’s actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period.

Each case study was written in French and translated into English and is available in both languages.¹

These case studies were essentially designed as an educational tool for associative members of the organisation. With the hope of broadening their educational scope the studies are now being made available to the public for free, on the website www.speakingout.msf.org, the various English and French-language websites of individual sections of Médecins Sans Frontières, and on Google Book.

We hope you find them useful.

The Editorial Committee.

September 2013

1. Document excerpts and interviews have been translated into both languages.

CONTENTS

People interviewed and their position at the time of the events	6
Personalities in Political and Military Positions at the Time of the Srebrenica Events	7
Acronyms	9
Map	10
Introduction	12
MSF and Srebrenica 1993-2003	15
Enter the enclave and open a mission.....	16
Working like prison doctors	28
Witnessing the fall of the “safe area”	45
Witnessing the fall of the enclave	47
Denouncing the surrender of the ‘safe area’	68
No peace agreement without justice.....	83
Toward an appeal to establish the french responsibilities.....	91
Critical support to the French parliamentary fact-finding commission	102
Reaction to the reports on Dutch responsibilities	124
Epilogue	131

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED AND THEIR POSITION AT THE TIME OF THE EVENTS

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier	MSF Legal Advisor
Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol	MSF France President, 2000-2007
Dr Rony Brauman	MSF France President, 1982-1994, MSF Foundation Research Director from 1994
Dr Georges Dallemagne	MSF Belgium Director of Operations
Dr Graciela Diap	MSF Medical Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia, October 1993 to April 1995
Fabien Dubuet	MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005
Dr Marc Gastellu-Etchegorry	MSF France Deputy Director of Operations, 1992-1997
Graziella Godain	MSF France/Belgium Field Coordinator in Srebrenica, October 1993 to April 1994
Dr Eric Goemaere	MSF Belgium General Director, 1994-1997
Wouter Kok	MSF Holland Medical Coordinator in Sarajevo, Bosnia, December 1991 - September 1992, then various positions in MSF-Holland Bosnia desk September 1992 - 1996
Dr Jacques de Milliano	Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland General Director 1984-1996
Stephan Oberreit	MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May-November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015
Pierre Salignon	MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015
Eric Stobbaerts	MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, December 1993 to April 1995
Dr Renaud Tockert	MSF Belgium Programme Manager for the former Yugoslavia 1993-1995
Wilna van Aartzen	MSF Holland Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, 1991-1993, then Head of the Emergency Desk, then Director of Operations

Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, the MSF volunteers present in Srebrenica during the fall declined to be interviewed

PERSONALITIES IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY POSITIONS AT THE TIME OF THE SREBRENICA EVENTS

Madeleine Albright	US Ambassador to the United Nations
Kofi Annan	Deputy UN Secretary-General in charge of Peace Keeping Operations from March 1993 to December 1996, UN Secretary General from January 1997 to December 2006
Yasushi Akashi	UN Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the war in the former Yugoslavia
Boutros Boutros-Ghali	UN Secretary General from January 1992 to December 1996
Hervé de Charrette	French Minister of Foreign Affairs from May 1995 to June 1997
Jacques Chirac	President of the French Republic from May 1995 to June 2007
Warren Christopher	US Secretary of State from January 1993 to January 1997
Bill Clinton	President of the United States from January 1993 to January 2001
General Jean Cot	French Commander of UNPROFOR from March 1993 to March 1994
Major Robert Franken	Deputy Commander of the UNPROFOR Dutch battalion in Srebrenica
General Jean Heinrich	Director of French Military Intelligence from 1992 to 1995
Alija Izetbegović	President of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina from October 1990 to October 1996
General Bernard Janvier	French Commander of UNPROFOR from March 1995 to January 1996
Alain Juppé	French Minister of Foreign Affairs from March 1993 to May 1995, Prime Minister from May 1995 to June 1997
Radovan Karadžić	President of Republika Srpska (Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina) from December 1992 to July 1996
Wim Kok	Prime Minister of The Netherlands from August 1994 to July 2002
Nikola Koljević	Vice-president of Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina
Radislav Krstić	Chief of Staff of the Republika Srpska's army in Bosnia-Herzegovina
Lieutenant Colonel Tom Karremans	Commander of the UNPROFOR Dutch battalion in Srebrenica
Admiral Jacques Lanxade	Chief of Staff of the French army from 1991 to 1995
François Léotard	French Minister of Defence from March 1993 to May 1995
Jean-David Levitte	Diplomatic Advisor to French President Jacques Chirac from 1995 to 2000
François Loncle	President of the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica
John Major	Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from November 1990 to May 1997
Hans van Mierlo	Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs from August 1994 to May 1998
Slobodan Milosevic	President of the Republika Srpska in in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1989 to 2000
François Mitterrand	President of the French Republic from May 1981 to May 1995
David Owen	Co-president of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia
General Ratko Mladic	Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Republika Srpska in in Bosnia-Herzegovina

General Philippe Morillon	French Commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina from September 1992 to July 1993
Naser Oric	Commander of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina armed forces in the Srebrenica enclave
Jan Pronk	Dutch Minister of Cooperation for Development from November 1989 to May 1998
Paul Quilès	President of the National Defence and armed forces Commission of the National Assembly from 1997 to 2002
Lieutenant General Rupert Smith	British Commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina from January 1995 to 1996
Franjo Tudjman	President of the Republic of Croatia from May 1990 to December 1999
Cyrus Vance	Co-president of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia
Joris Voorhoeve	Dutch Minister of Defence from August 1994 to May 1998

ACRONYMS

AFP	Agence France Presse
AP	Associated Press
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DAS	Delegation for Strategic Affairs (French Ministry of Defence)
DGSE	General Directorate for External Security (French Ministry of Defence)
DPKO	Department for Peacekeeping Operations (United Nations)
DRM	Department of Military Intelligence (French Ministry of Defence)
Dutchbat	Dutch battalion, UNPROFOR
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFOR	Implementation Force (NATO Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina)
MDM	Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)
MSF B	Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium
MSF F	Médecins Sans Frontières France
MSF H	Médecins Sans Frontières Holland
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBC	National Broadcasting Company (US)
NIOD	Dutch Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies
WHO	World Health Organisation (UN)
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PSF	Pharmaciens Sans Frontières (Pharmacists Without Borders)
SAS	Special Air Service (UK army)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMO	United Nations Military Observer
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force for the Former Yugoslavia



Extract from MSF archives or press clippings.



Extract from interviews conducted in 2000 and 2015 MSF people who participated and/or witnessed the events.

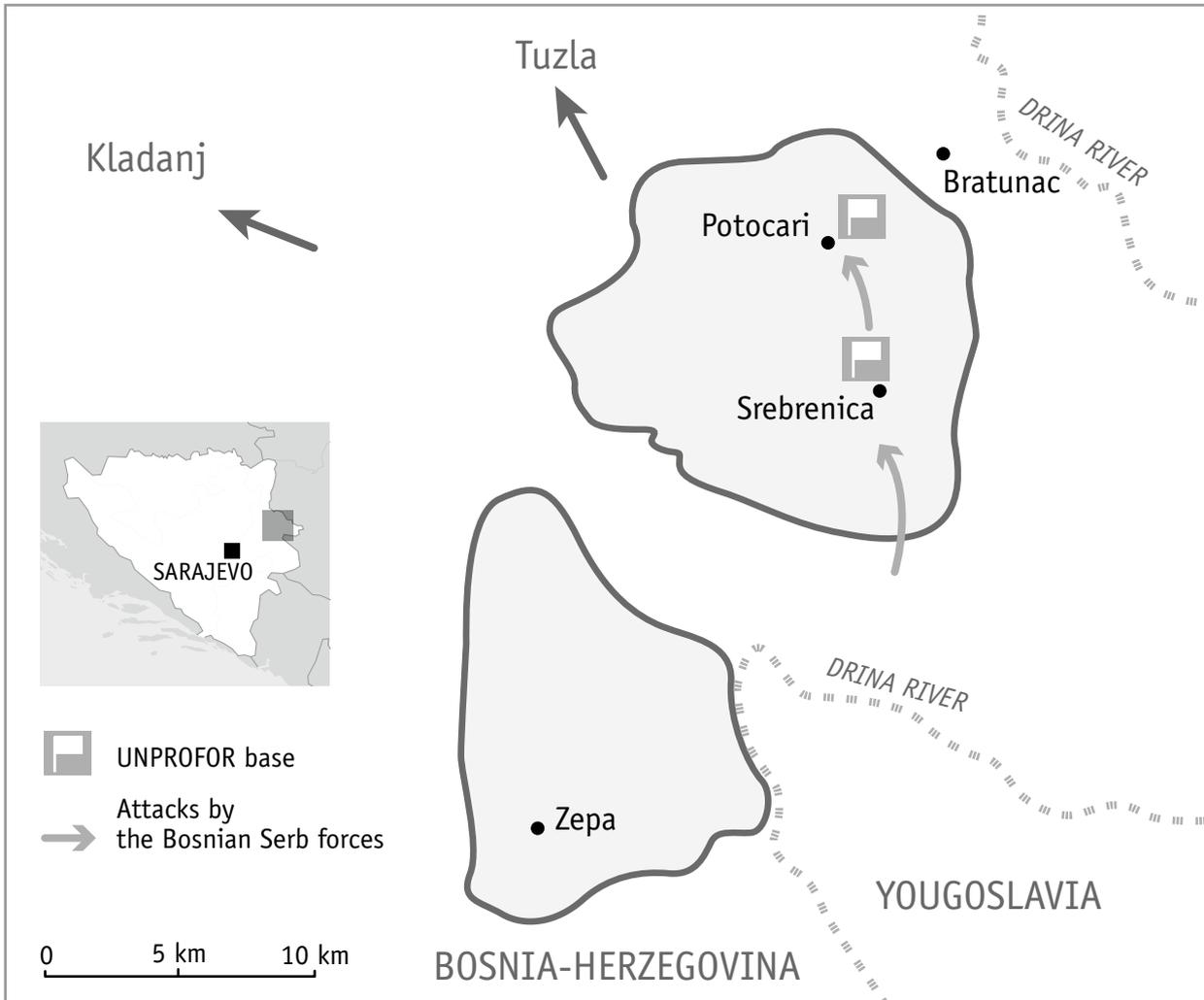


Click to access the reference material list. Then click on the referring number to access the video.



 Médecins Sans Frontières Missions

 'Safe Areas' under UN protection



INTRODUCTION

In 1992, after the former Yugoslavia disintegrated, the Bosnian Serb forces took control of most of eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina and tried to forcibly bring all non-Serbs under its rule. The city of Srebrenica became a besieged and overcrowded enclave, serving as a refuge for the region's Muslim population. The Muslim population only received erratic supplies and was subject to the good will of the Serbian troops that regularly bombed the city.

In March 1993, General Morillon, Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, finally managed to enter the enclave with a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) convoy after months of a blockade. He promised the population that they would not be abandoned. Srebrenica, as well as Zepa, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Gorazde, and Bihac, became demilitarised "safe areas" under the protection of UNPROFOR.

A Médecins Sans Frontières team also entered Srebrenica in General Morillon's wake and informed the media about conditions there. During the following weeks, MSF opened a medical and health programme in the enclave. For two years, its volunteers worked in, what some considered an open-air prison. MSF provided relief that kept a population suffering a suffocating siege, alive. On a number of occasions, MSF informed the media about the difficulties it was having obtaining permission to deliver supplies, medicine, and even volunteers.

On 6 July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces attacked Srebrenica. In the days that followed, the two MSF volunteers, who were helping the wounded, witnessed the military offensive by Bosnian Serb forces. The Serbs took control of the enclave, forcibly evacuated the population, while separating and detaining men over the age of sixteen. Srebrenica was taken on 11 July 1995; UNPROFOR and NATO soldiers did not provide any military resistance to the capture of the "safe area" or make any effort to protect the population. The UNPROFOR Dutch peacekeeping contingent, of which certain members were being held hostage, did not offer any resistance. NATO's air strikes were too little and too late. They had no impact on the situation on the ground.

Twenty-two MSF staff members and Srebrenica hospital employees were reported dead or missing.

Throughout this period, MSF provided detailed accounts to the media about everything its team was witnessing in the enclave and issued frequent appeals urging protection for the population.

Another MSF team provided relief to tens of thousands of refugees who had fled Srebrenica for Tuzla. They recorded their eyewitness accounts.

During the weeks following the enclave's fall, it was discovered that Serbian forces had massacred more than 8,000 male adults and adolescents over the age of 16. Charges and arrest warrants were issued against Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic.

The media revealed that General Mladic and General Janvier, the UNPROFOR Commander, had apparently entered into an agreement that conditioned the release of the captive peacekeepers on the suspension of air strikes.

MSF published its Srebrenica team's logbook as well as the eyewitness accounts recorded in Tuzla. The team responded to media queries about its relations with the Dutch peacekeepers, whose passive behaviour was questioned.

After the Dayton Peace Accords¹ on the former Yugoslavia were signed in December 1995, MSF publicly urged the parties not to let the desire for peace impede justice or the establishment of responsibility for the events that occurred in Srebrenica.

On 19 November 1999, the UN report on the Srebrenica events acknowledged the organisation's "errors in judgment" and asked the member states involved in the conflict to investigate their own responsibility.

In July 2000, based on this report and encouraged by the creation of an Investigative Parliamentary Commission on Rwanda in 1998, MSF's French section called for the establishment of a French Parliamentary Commission to look into France's responsibility for the events leading up to the Srebrenica massacre. Its goal would be to understand how political, military, and humanitarian strategies and failures led to the abandonment and massacre of part of the "safe area" population even though the zone was supposed to be protected – then learn the necessary lessons based on the results. It was essential to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of international military operations that were designed to protect civilian populations and that have been growing in number in recent years.

In November 2000, a Fact-finding Parliamentary Commission was finally set up, and MSF contributed critical active support by providing the legislators with key facts. This information could help them ask questions likely to elicit answers that could shed light on the events. All of this information, as well as MSF's comments, were sent to the media and posted on a dedicated website.

When the commission's report was published in November 2001, MSF publicly stressed that while the report did acknowledge the responsibility of the armed forces, it gave a free pass to political leaders.

In 2002 and 2003, the Dutch section of MSF issued a public statement about the various reports published at the request of the Dutch authorities. These reports spread responsibility for the tragedy among all players in the international community. MSF's message focused on the need to draw the necessary conclusions from the Srebrenica crisis in terms of protecting civilians from the violence of war.

MSF publicly urged the United States and United Kingdom to launch investigations into their own responsibilities for the Srebrenica events.

Throughout this period, MSF faced a host of questions and dilemmas:

- By agreeing to provide a minimally acceptable level of relief to a besieged population, wasn't MSF contributing, like prison doctors, to the strategy of the besieging troops while concurrently softening their image?
- Contrarily, wouldn't calling for the evacuation of civilians who wished to leave have been equivalent to abetting the ethnic cleansing policy of the besieging army?
- Having trusted the UN Protection Force's commitment to protect the enclave and its population, must MSF accept partial culpability for or complicity in the UN's abandonment of the enclave and the ensuing massacre of the population? Didn't MSF give the population the false impression that it would be safe as long as the team was present?

1. The Dayton Peace Accords provided the general framework agreement for peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This peace agreement was reached at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio, USA in November 1995 and formally signed in Paris, France on 14 December 1995.

- Is it the role of a humanitarian medical organisation to issue an appeal for an investigative parliamentary commission then, once it is established, to actively monitor it with a critical eye?
- Contrarily, how can MSF not try to understand the circumstances and responsibilities, which, at the global level, led to the abandonment and massacre of a population to which its teams had provided relief? Can MSF be content with calling for a parliamentary investigation without ensuring that it asks the types of questions likely to elicit answers that shed light on the events?
- By failing to also explore the shadowy areas of the agreements signed between the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnians, doesn't MSF risk acting as a prosecutor of only UN and Member State practices and not other actors?
- Should Srebrenica be viewed as an accident of history or as a clear-cut example of the impossibility of protecting populations under international mandates established by the UN?

MSF AND SREBRENICA 1993-2003

After the former Yugoslavia was dismantled in 1991, Bosnia's Serbian forces took control of most of Western Bosnia-Herzegovina. They led military operations there to expel Bosnian Muslims from the region.

The cities of Sarajevo, Bihac, Gorazde, Zepa, Tuzla, and Srebrenica, whose majority populations were Muslim, were transformed into enclaves, under siege, and subject to frequent attack by Bosnian-Serbian forces. Thousands of Bosnian Muslims from the surrounding villages were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in the enclaves.

The population of Srebrenica rose from 8,000 to 40,000. They were living in extremely squalid conditions, wholly dependent on the supplies that the besieging forces deigned to allow through. Indeed, an international relief convoy, which entered on 18 November 1992 after several months of hardship in the enclave, was the only one to bring supplies during the four-month winter period.



'Bosnia: Srebrenica Gets Fresh Supplies,' *Le Monde* (France)/*Reuters* (UK), 1 December 1992 (in French)

Extract:

An aid convoy sent by the United Nations successfully reached the besieged Muslim town of Srebrenica (population 70,000) in Bosnia on Saturday 28 November 1992 after being blocked for three days by Serbian forces. The UN had already made two vain attempts to bring new supplies to the town, which had been cut off from the rest of the world since the civil war started in April. According to heads at the UNHCR, the people were living in conditions verging on famine; the hospitals had to treat the injured without the use of drugs or anaesthesia.



'Ethnic Cleansing' in Western Bosnia. For the Serbs, the Transfer of People is Inevitable and Represents 'One of the Necessities of War.' *Le Monde* (France), 7 March 1993 (in French)

Extract:

On the crest of the surrounding mountains, Serbian forces are

waiting in ambush above one of the last remaining Muslim enclaves in Western Bosnia, Srebrenica, which they have decided to seize to ensure territorial continuity for their people. [...]

On Thursday, Major Pandurevic publicly declared that politicians and diplomats were only "prolonging the agony" in discussing a peace plan which would return these regions to Muslim populations. "Sooner or later," he said, "the international community will be forced to recognise the situation on the ground." For him, this means the possession and control of ethnically homogeneous territories. Under these conditions, the Muslims will have no choice but to leave and move to other regions where they are in the majority. The transfer of populations is, in his eyes, "one of the necessities of war." "We want to show," he stressed, "that we are more humane than the humanitarians," explaining that the evacuation of civilians and the injured could definitely be done without the UNHCR, which would be satisfied with merely escorting the convoys.

From 18 to 21 February 1993, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, admitting its ineffectiveness in getting relief aid into Bosnia-Herzegovina, suspended all operations in the region.

For its part, MSF Belgium managed to supply essential equipment to displaced people in Zenica, but was unable to send supplies into Tuzla and Srebrenica. MSF informed the media.



'International Aid Suspended in Bosnia. Decision Made by the High Commissioner for Refugees,' *Le Monde* (France), 19 February 1993 (in French)

Extract:

At the UNHCR headquarters, they have been forced to lay down arms. The High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, announced on Wednesday 17 July that she had taken, albeit reluctantly, a series of measures that would result in depriving Bosnia-Herzegovina of essential international humanitarian aid. The measures are as follows: the recall to base of relief convoys

sent by the UNHCR and blocked in Eastern Bosnia, and the immediate suspension of all aid in regions under Serbian control; the suspension of all UNHCR operations in Sarajevo and the withdrawal of the majority of its personnel, maintaining a minimal presence in this besieged town of 380,000 inhabitants; the suspension of humanitarian convoys and airlifts to Sarajevo; and UNHCR operations in Bosnian regions maintained at a reduced level where activity is still possible. [...] "While we were focusing all our efforts on helping victims, the parties were confusing humanitarian aid and political interests," Ogata announced, adding, "Our humanitarian efforts have become the laughingstock of political leaders, and I deeply regret that their management has forced me to take such a decision."



'Médecins Sans Frontières Continues its Distribution Programmes in Bosnia,' **Press Release**, MSF Belgium, 19 February 1993 (in French)

Médecins Sans Frontières will continue to distribute emergency aid in Bosnia from its logistical bases in the former Yugoslavia. In doing so, MSF is ignoring the call, declared on Wednesday by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to stop all humanitarian operations in Bosnia. Although not deliberately distancing itself from the best intentions of the UNHCR's announcement, which was made in recognition of the total disregard for human rights by the various parties to the conflict, Médecins Sans Frontières believes that mass efforts to aid the Bosnian civilian population are more necessary than ever. Above all, it is the inhabitants of the sealed-off towns in northern and central Bosnia that are suffering from the blockade forced upon them by Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim forces. The towns of Tuzla and Srebrenica in particular, have been deprived of regular supplies of food, basic drugs, and fuel for the past several months. For the last fortnight, MSF's Belgian section has managed to supply 400 tonnes of essential items (food, blankets, etc.) to warehouses in Zenica (Central Bosnia). From Zenica the supplies are distributed among Bosnian refugees and the displaced. Even today, an 80,000-tonne convoy carrying emergency relief will reach the population of Tuzla, a Bosnian town surrounded by Serbian forces.

ENTER THE ENCLAVE AND OPEN A MISSION

In late February 1993, while the Bosnian-Serbian forces were launching an attack, an exploratory team from MSF Belgium made another attempt to obtain authorisation from Serbian authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to enter

Srebrenica. On several occasions, it was blocked by Bosnian-Serbian forces, which confiscated its medical supplies.

General Morillon, commander of the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, tasked in particular with protecting the UNHCR's humanitarian aid convoys, traveled to the enclave at the head of a convoy that was also blocked by Bosnian-Serbian forces on several occasions. Following a short visit to the enclave of Cerska, he said that he had not seen "any trace of massacres."



'While General Morillon Declares That He Has Not Seen 'Any Trace of Massacres,' The Humanitarian Organisations Take Stock of the Dramatic Situation in Western Bosnia,' **Le Monde** (France), 9 March 1993 (in French)

Extract:

As of Tuesday 9 March, the UN was meant to be undertaking a relief mission in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, which is under attack from Serbian forces, in an attempt to evacuate hundreds of wounded people and to bring in vital supplies. General Philippe Morillon, Commander of the UN Protection Forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, confirmed his announcements on Saturday that he had not seen "any trace of massacres" during his short visit to Cerska, where no inhabitants remained. These statements were contradicted by information from the UNHCR and ham [amateur] radio stations, which described the dramatic situation in western Bosnia.

After a dozen days of negotiations and waiting, the MSF team finally decided to join the UNPROFOR convoy. On 11 March, it was authorised by Bosnian-Serbian forces to enter Srebrenica. MSF Belgium announced the news in a press release.



'Former Yugoslavia – Convoys Finally Make it Through,' **Press Release**, **MSF Belgium**, 11 March 1993 (in French)

According to the most recent information collected on the ground, relief convoys sent by the UNHCR and the UNPROFOR, accompanied by MSF-B teams, have finally received authorisation to move into the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica and the town of Konjevic Polje in northeast Bosnia. An MSF team has been present in Srebrenica since 13:00 GMT to administer first aid to the besieged inhabitants and the town's refugee population. At the Serb checkpoints, the team was allowed to bring in most of the medical equipment and drugs intended for the relief operation. Indeed, at midday today, two MSF-B [volunteers] reached the town of Konjevic Polje, where they attempted to set up an aid operation.

 We were under full attack from Serb and pro-Serbian forces in the region. We had tried to get back into Srebrenica for 10 days or so. We were blockaded in a small town, on the other side of the bridges that stretch over the Drina [river]. Every morning, we went to try and negotiate with the Serbs and see how we could get in, among other things. And, then Morillon arrived and said, 'Okay, I'm going to get into Srebrenica whatever it takes.' We were in a hotel and the atmosphere was pretty unusual. Every evening the European observers, UN forces, UNHCR personnel, and humanitarian agencies would come for dinner and there were Serb soldiers, too. All these people were mixing in our hotel. So every evening we'd try to make friends with them and to negotiate our entry into Srebrenica the next day. At the end of 10 days or so, we were allowed in, taking considerable risks. In fact, the Serbs sent us down tiny snowy mountain tracks, claiming that the bridges over the normal road were mined. We ended up arriving in no man's land between the pro-Serbian forces and the Bosnian forces at around five in the evening. It was already really dark. In the convoy, there was a small tank transporting Morillon, an MSF car, a UNHCR car, a car carrying soldiers from the UN, which included Americans with satellite equipment, and a Belgian truck from the UNPROFOR carrying sugar and drugs. Several vehicles got stuck in the snow. I had to get out and push the MSF car on foot and was overtaken by the Belgian truck. They drove without stopping so they didn't get stuck and I jumped onto the footboard as they passed. However, I was too heavy because I was wearing my bulletproof vest. So, I had to jump off. Ten metres further, the truck exploded on an anti-tank mine, and the footboard I had been standing on had completely disappeared. The wheel closest to the footboard had rolled over the anti-tank mine! Eric Dachy, who was in the vehicle that had already gone past, came back with the emergency kit, thinking he was going to find me in bits and pieces! The Belgian soldiers didn't have a scratch on them, because it was the only UNPROFOR truck covered in Kevlar sheets. We carried on by foot and caught up with Morillon's tank, which had calmly carried on without waiting for us. They let us get on board. Then, in the middle of the night, we met some Bosnian supporters. The whole journey was quite unforgettable.

Dr Georges Dallemagne, Director of Operations,
MSF Belgium, Interviewed in July 2000 (in French)

 We thought it was great when Georges Dallemagne got in with Morillon's convoy. Then, when the general left, the MSF teams stayed behind and that was the start of a mission. That wasn't merely a coup, but a real starting point, so we were 100% behind them. We were actually a bit envious of them, because it was something we would have liked to do ourselves. It played out well and we were proud of our Belgian friends.

Dr Rony Brauman, MSF France President 1982- 1994,
MSF Foundation Research Director from 1994

Arriving at the enclave on the night of 11 March, the MSF team discovered that dozens of inhabitants were dying every day from starvation and lack of medical attention. Many of the people injured during the bombings of the Bosnian-Serbian forces flooded into the hospital.



'The First Humanitarian Aid for the Srebrenica Enclave,'
Le Soir (Belgium), 12 March 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Yesterday, a team from Médecins Sans Frontières was successful in entering the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, but had to abandon most of the drugs and medical equipment they were transporting at Serb checkpoints, according to a press release issued by the organisation in Brussels.

The MSF team's arrival gives some hope that a UN convoy traveling to this same enclave could cross Serb lines. This would make it the first one to make it there since 10 December, although the besieged town did receive supplies from American airdrops.

The convoy transporting 80 tonnes of relief left Belgrade in the morning and crossed the border in the afternoon. It was General Morillon himself, commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia, who obtained authorisation from the Serb authorities for two light convoys to pass through, the first led by himself to the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, and the second destined to evacuate injured people from the neighbouring besieged enclave of Konjevic Polje.

 I'll always have horrible memories of that town. It essentially was comprised women and children who arrived in the night, fleeing bombing of neighbouring villages. They came in their pajamas, in jumpers, some barefoot. They only had time to get out of the house to save themselves. You could hear people shouting, crying. The wounded were being carried in wheelbarrows. It was dreadfully cold and for fuel they were burning Coke [Coca Cola] boxes on street corners. There were small fires like that all through the night, and thousands and thousands of people crowded the town. We went to the hospital. The situation was like something out of Dante's Inferno; an absolute nightmare with people bleeding everywhere. The staff members were completely overwhelmed. There were two little girls with broken legs on the floor, moaning, and I went to find Morillon, saying to him, 'come and see the war.' I'll always remember that Morillon came to the hospital, gave a little speech, and then turned away. He was incapable of going to see these children bathed in their own blood. At the end of the day, he was incapable of 'seeing the war.' Most of these people died from lack of treatment, because there was nothing to treat them with. Eric and I are doctors, not surgeons, but we still tried to operate, treat, give transfusions (using our own blood), and more. We might have saved one or two people. It was an exploratory mission and we didn't know what was going to happen or what we were going to find.

Dr Georges Dallemagne, Director of Operations,
MSF Belgium, Interviewed in July 2000 (in French)

On 12 March, the inhabitants of Srebrenica refused to let the MSF team leave the enclave. They felt that their presence would act as a potential guarantee against further violence. Clinging to the same hope, they also stopped General Morillon and his team. On 13 March, from the balcony of the post office building, the General addressed them: "Don't worry. I'll stay with you." He demanded the end of the Serb offensive, the application of ceasefires, the establishment of relief corridors to Srebrenica, and the deployment of observers from the UN. V1 



'U.N. Commander Denies Being Held in Bosnian Town,' *Reuters* (UK), Sarajevo, 13 March 1993 (in English).

Extract:

In a radio broadcast from Srebrenica, a town in east Bosnia under Serb siege for 11 months, General Philippe Morillon denied an earlier report by a spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that he had been prevented from leaving. Morillon demanded an immediate end to a Serb offensive in the region and the opening of relief corridors to trapped Moslem towns. He spoke in a ham-radio [amateur] transmission from Srebrenica, where he went on Thursday. It was picked up by amateur radio operators in Sarajevo, and re-broadcast by Bosnian radio. [...]

The UNHCR spokesman reported earlier that Moslem forces in Srebrenica were refusing to allow Morillon to leave until a U.N. convoy for the town was allowed to enter. The convoy is presently blocked on the Serbian border by Bosnian Serbs who are refusing to allow it to cross into Bosnia.



'Text of U.N. General's Speech From Besieged Srebrenica,' *Reuters* (UK) Sarajevo, 13 March 1993 (in English).

Extract:

General Morillon speaking from Srebrenica. "When I was appointed Commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina Command I decided to place myself in Sarajevo because that was the place where the population was most at risk. I placed myself there for symbolic reasons to reduce their danger. [...]"

Last week it became clear the Serbs were not stopping their offensive in eastern Bosnia Herzegovina, not so much because they needed to capture territory, but because they had become outraged at the discovery of the mass graves at Kamenica. I have tried to make them understand that justice for all war crimes should be dispensed once the fighting has ceased and peace has been established. But they did not want to listen. They had decided to take justice into their own hands. Fully conscious that a major tragedy was about to take place in Srebrenica, I deliberately came here and I have now decided to stay here in Srebrenica in order to calm the anguish of the population and in order to save them, or try to save them.

I demand, first, an immediate halt to the Serb offensive as was promised me in Pale. Two, the immediate and complete implementation of all ceasefires agreed. Three, the immediate and permanent deployment of the necessary U.N. military observers. Four, the opening of a road corridor from Srebrenica to Bratunac to Konjevic Polje to Zvornik. UNPROFOR engineers will repair the small bridge blown up between Srebrenica and Bratunac. Five, the opening of an air corridor to Srebrenica to evacuate the hundreds of seriously injured. Six, the immediate release of the convoys, this time for Srebrenica, which is at present stuck in Zvornik. To the population in Srebrenica, I say: (a long pause and then the same voice in faltering Serbo-Croat, which translated says) don't be afraid, I will stay with you.



We said to the Serbs that we were coming back the next day, but then when we wanted to leave the next day, the people told us, 'No, you're staying with us.' As doctors, we were moving quite easily around the enclave; we were warmly welcomed, and people were sharing what little they had to eat with us. The soldiers who'd accompanied us stayed with them. They were very scared of being taken hostage. At around two or three in the morning, Morillon woke us up and told us, 'I'm leaving. My camp leader will take care of the rest of the operation.' He hung about in the enclave the whole night and then, when he clearly wasn't able to get out, he came back. The next day, when he woke up around midday after his attempt to abscond, he'd changed his mind and his strategy, announcing, 'I'll stay in Srebrenica, set up my headquarters and protect this enclave.' It was at that moment that official UN protection was established, and thus this immense responsibility from the international community as regards the future and destiny of the enclave. We all stayed another day to help in the hospital, and then we left. At any rate, we weren't the right people. They needed a surgical team with supplies, a large MSF team to get the hospital back in order.

Dr Georges Dallemagne, Director of Operations, MSF Belgium, Interviewed in July 2000 (in French)

The MSF exploratory team left Srebrenica on 14 March. On their return to Brussels, they spoke to the media about the dramatic situation in the enclave and the challenge posed by General Morillon's strategy. A press conference was held on 16 March.



'Morillon Playing Last Card in Stakes for Moslem Enclave,' *Agence France Presse*, Banja Koviljaca, 15 March 1993 (in English).

Extract:

The U.N. flag is at last flying over the besieged Moslem enclave of Srebrenica, thanks to a courageous stand by the

commander of U.N. peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Philippe Morillon. But many locally believe that Morillon's act, in pledging to remain in the town to stop continuing Serbian attempts to take it, may still not be enough to prevent its fall. "General Morillon is playing one of his last cards, perhaps his strongest, to save the town," said Georges Dallemagne, a doctor for the aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, or Doctors Without Borders) who left Srebrenica Sunday.



'A Terrifying Testimonial on the Bosnian Ordeal,' Edouard Van Velthem, *Le Soir* (Belgium), 16 March 1993 (in French)

Extract:

His voice is low, tired. Back from a four-day trip to the besieged enclave of Srebrenica, in eastern Bosnia Herzegovina, via Belgrade, Dr Georges Dallemagne, Director of Operations at Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium, remains in shock at the harsh realities. And his testimonial is edifying: the town that a mixed UN and MSF delegation entered last Friday is half destroyed and deliberately starved. In the convoy, in addition to the vehicle of the UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia, General Philippe Morillon, who is still there, is a car from the High Commissioner of Refugees, a truck full of medical equipment and a light-armoured vehicle. There are still some 30,000 people there, of which half are refugees from Konjevic Polje. Many of them hadn't eaten for five or six days; others are eating berries or acorns picked off the ground. Many are homeless, so they are forced to stay outside in the glacial wind. Children die from the cold like this every night, but the influx of the desperate and displaced shows no sign of slowing down: more and more arrive each day, through the neighbouring mountains, after walking for seven or eight hours in the snow. They don't have anything but the clothes on their backs. When they aren't bare-foot [...]

With a maximum capacity of 96 beds, the hospital has taken in 150 injured, three-quarters of whom are men, and 80% of all injuries are from bombings - pieces of shrapnel above all. And this doesn't include the victims crammed together in neighbouring homes. The five doctors working there are exhausted and out of supplies and equipment. Operations are performed under torchlight, sterilisations without electricity. The hospitals I've visited in Africa are often in better shape. In this context of precarious survival, the American airdrops are, of course, an inadequate stopgap [measure]: contrary to what was said at the start, the drops are now extremely precise. The parcels land two or three kilometres maximum from the town, but only the sturdiest from among the populace can manage to fetch them [...] There are riots; people fighting each other for a ration. [...]

Heading off with all the authorisations required to force their way through the various roadblocks, the expedition that Dr Dallemagne was accompanying also had to deal with additional difficulties: multiple thorough checks by Serb soldiers;

a bridge in tatters over the main road; being forced to take narrow, icy mountain roads; and the subdued welcome from the Muslim population. [...] As we attempted to depart, they prevented us from leaving, in dread of being killed the moment our backs were turned. There was one moment of high tension and, if truth be told, we were held against our will. Yet, General Morillon turned things around: he made a speech, raised the UN flag, and promised to stay there until all of the injured, and not just the women and children - since men aged 16 to 60 were considered potential war criminals by the Serbs - could be evacuated. [...] The people were comforted, and we ourselves were able to go without any trouble the following day. Hats off to General Morillon: he accomplished the only humanly possible action.

Today, the emergency issue for MSF's "frontline brigade" involves getting a surgical team in place in Srebrenica with all the necessary equipment. [...] However, authorisations are being delayed, promises are being broken and the situation is at a standstill. [...] A fragile hope for the injured and refugees in Srebrenica appeared yesterday evening with the Serb and Bosnian Chiefs of Staff, General Mladic and Commander Halilevic, yielding to the entreaties of Philippe Morillon, authorised the passage of the UN relief convoy on Tuesday, and agreed to respect the temporary ceasefire. However, what is intolerable is that the local military leaders misled us for weeks. The green light that we received from Belgrade switched immediately to red in Pale, the Bosnian Serb stronghold.



When we got back to Brussels, we organised a press conference that had a huge impact, because very few people had come back from Srebrenica and very few of them had given first-hand accounts. My testimonial was quite brutal because I told them everything I'd seen. I had been extremely shocked and I think my account brought what was happening in Srebrenica to public attention - and maybe temporarily stopped the offensive that was underway and stabilised the front lines at that moment; for how long, I have no idea.

Dr Georges Dallemagne, Director of Operations at MSF Belgium, Interviewed in July 2000 (in French)

On 19 March, General Morillon obtained authorisation to bring a new convoy of supplies from the United Nations into Srebrenica. He announced to French TV channel France 3 that he would remain in the enclave until a sufficient number of observers were deployed there. The next day, the UN evacuated one hundred wounded from the enclave.



'Morillon Pledges to Stay in Srebrenica Until U.N. Monitors Arrive,' *Agence France Presse*, Paris, 19 March 1993 (in French).

Extract:

"I shall not leave until there are sufficient numbers of observers deployed here," he said in a radio interview with France 3 television. Morillon, who earlier succeeded in bringing the first U.N. relief convoy in three months to Srebrenica. After a nine-day standoff with Serbian forces, he said the trucks would leave again on Saturday "to evacuate the first wounded" along with women and children. [...]

"We have unloaded all the humanitarian aid into warehouses and we began distribution," he told the French television channel. He said he had gone Friday morning to Mali Zvornik, where the convoy was waiting, to get the trucks moving, adding: "It was a good thing as otherwise I don't think anything would have happened." He earlier told AFP on a radio link with Zagreb that upon his return to the enclave, he was met with jubilation at the head of the convoy Friday afternoon. "They were deliriously happy, people were crying for joy," he said. Ham radio operators from Sarajevo quoted Morillon further as saying: "After bringing them hope we have brought them life. It was quite moving. For anyone who saw it, they were unforgettable scenes." Morillon added that a further relief convoy would arrive in Srebrenica in the coming week and that he hoped to establish a series of convoys at the rate of one a week.

The media and western public opinion commended General Morillon's action. The President of MSF France, Rony Brauman, was one of the few to publicly point out the limits and the harmful consequences.



'Delayed Photos,' *Le Monde* (France), 19 March 1993, (in French)

Extract:

We found the general at the beginning of the "march of the century." Cavada [Jean Marie, journalist]: "Hold on, general, I'll pass you over to Bernard Kouchner,¹ and also Mr Mendiluce, Correspondent for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the former Yugoslavia." "We're ready to join you," said Kouchner, admiringly. In return, surrounded by snow, mud, and death, the general doled out a few kind words to Bernard Kouchner.

Should we be sorry that the general is with us in this almost permanent link-up, at the end of this ham radio set that connects him to the rest of the world? That he poked his nose into the mill that transforms everything, from the sub-

lime to the tragic, into vague, indifferent entertainment? Included is the soap opera of the convoy destined for Srebrenica: Will it get through or not? Answer, tomorrow, maybe.

The President of Médecins Sans Frontières, Rony Brauman, with Mr Cavada, showed honourable reluctance in the face of the humanitarian spectacle. "It's when children die that it's obscene," Kouchner replied to him, with, for him, the brutal force of evidence. If we didn't hear General Morillon every evening, wouldn't we already have forgotten about him? Wouldn't he have been buried beneath the daily media flotsam, the terrorism in Algeria, Rocard's most recent gaffe? The mother in the snow with her baby, wouldn't she have been chased off by another mother, a sailor's wife, marching through the streets of a French town? Two days of attention in a row - that's a lot to ask for!



'A General on the Balcony,' Rony Brauman, *Le Monde* (France), 3 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

General Morillon, in charge of a so-called protection force, has never gone out of his way to condemn the violence done to those trying to defend themselves, and yet he has always shown great understanding for the attackers. During a trip to Sarajevo, I heard him giving the Bosnian army a stern rebuke to arouse anger amongst the Serbs by fighting artillery fire with more fire. In short, he is the type of person who has the gall to claim to resist while we know better. We are ready, if their enemies give us the green light, to bring them something to eat from the communal graves to the far interior of the detention camps.

As for 'Doctor [Radovan] Karadzic,' one of the most visible war criminals in this region, he is credited here for letting a relief convoy through, with a desire for peace recognised by everyone and serving as an accessible representative. While words once carried meaning, the United Nations Protection Force should be rechristened Ethnic Cleaning Observation Force. Daladier never hid his shame over Munich, or Blum his fury for being unable to intervene in Spain.

We exhibit the undeniable physical courage of a soldier -- that is, after all the job -- to cover-up the incessant powerlessness and the cowardice of our behaviour. Yet, with a single gesture of bravura, provided it is shown on TV, our pitiful resignations are wiped away. My reluctance in the face of the humanitarian spectacle comes from this, and my conviction that the 'indecent death of a child' does not warrant any other indecent act. When are we going to notice that, once again most of the carnage took place when the allied troops landed, and similarly, in Mogadishu? When are we going to remember that, even when they are dying of hunger, Somalis are not animals to whom we can throw, without any qualms, a few life-saving but measly scraps under the burning sun? What I dread deeply with regard to the growth of the humanitarian spectacle in Bosnia and in Somalia is that

1. Co-founder of MSF, Bernard Kouchner left the organisation in 1979. In 1993, he was Minister for Health and Humanitarian Action in France.

mechanised, mediatised, and sterilised humanitarian action makes us insidiously inhuman.



It was a response to Daniel Schneidermann who in his 'media' column in Le Monde, launched into a diatribe on Morillon. Me, I thought that Morillon was a doer and that Schneidermann's enthusiasm about him was completely misplaced. So I wrote this letter, which he published, quite elegantly. I didn't want to do it in an 'I protest and I have a right to respond' way, because I have no standing to do so. However, MSF was on the ground, so in the best position to speak with him. And then, there was this heroic general aspect. Dallemagne and the others were ten times more inflated than him, who wasn't risking anything, since the Serbs weren't going to bring down a French general. Our Belgian and Dutch colleagues found it quite funny that I was digging into Morillon. He wasn't held in great esteem. I was the only one to say it, but there weren't any reactions.

Dr Rony Brauman, MSF France President 1982- 1994,
MSF Foundation Research Director from 1994,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 20 March, a surgeon from MSF Belgium entered Srebrenica. A week later, an anaesthetist, a doctor, and a health logistician joined him. On 24 March, an UNPROFOR mission to evacuate the wounded was interrupted by bombing from Bosnian-Serbian forces.

The team was working with a terrorised population in utter destitution, despite the arrival of two convoys of supplies on 28 and 30 March, which in turn, evacuated over 5,000 women and children.

The MSF surgeon, who stayed 10 days in the bombarded enclave, gave his first-hand account in the French daily *Le Monde*.



'Srebrenica, State of Play as of 21 April 1993,'
Memo, MSF Belgium (in French)

Extract:

The first surgeon, Thierry Ponthus, had left, but was able to return to the town on 21 March with General Morillon (who had also left again in the meantime), after having been on standby for several days. He performed the first surgeries in the hospital, which completely lacked the most basic resources (no electricity or water; equipment destroyed or in poor condition). The drugs brought in by a previous convoy proved absolutely vital. For several days, he worked and lived there in deplorable conditions and without any direct contact with the outside world. His planned departure was pushed back several times due to a lack of means to leave Srebrenica. On the one

hand, the Serbs were preventing the UNHCR convoys carrying relief goods from passing through, while on the other hand, the Muslims in Srebrenica didn't want the UNPROFOR, UNHCR, and our MSF representative to leave out of fear that the Serbs would then begin a massive attack on the town. For the whole time, firing never stopped over the town.

Thierry Pontus was able to get out of Srebrenica on 29 March and his account left no room for doubt: the inhabitants' need for help inside the town was still huge. A new team, comprised of Martin De Smet (GP), Norbert Scholtzen (anaesthetist), Piet Willems (surgeon) and Hans Ullens (health logistics), was moved into Srebrenica at the start of April. The ceasefire was being more or less respected at that time. For three weeks, the team laboured to put the hospital back into some kind of working order, the water supply was put back on and the five local doctors were motivated to continue working. The security conditions forced the team to leave the town during the first week of April with what then seemed like one of the last convoys to still get back into Srebrenica. Hans Ullens decided to stay to help evacuate the wounded by helicopter to Tuzla and to continue improving sanitary conditions. [...]

Now, a team composed of Johannes Van Der Bijl (surgeon), Eric Kamp (GP) and Jos Vrancken (logistics) is on stand-by in Belgrade to head to Srebrenica with the first convoy. Despite the evacuations, needs remain enormous. MSF has also assumed the role of symbolic representative, and will remain present for as long as possible for a population that has lost all hope of seeing its present conditions improved.



'Bosnia-Herzegovina,' Testimonial on the Ordeal of the Inhabitants of Srebrenica from a Member of Médecins Sans Frontières. **Le Monde** (France)
1 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Thierry Pontus is in shock. He's looking for the right words. He's having trouble expressing what he's just lived through. A member of MSF (Doctors Without Borders), the Belgian surgeon, who made it back to Belgrade on Tuesday 30 March, is the first foreign doctor to have spent 10 days in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. He did his best during these days to bring aid to the people of this town in Western Bosnia, which has been cut off from the world for 11 months of war. Thierry Pontus entered Srebrenica in General Philippe Morillon's jeep, without his two assistants an anaesthetist and a nurse who were denied safe passage by Serb besiegers. He was forced to confront a true humanitarian crisis alone.

At the hospital in Srebrenica, where he spent the majority of his stay, five general practitioners, without any surgical experience, battled day and night for months to save the injured and sick, whom they operated on by torchlight in an operating theatre that "doesn't deserve the name." While Dr Pontus took it upon himself to teach them the rudiments of surgery at the start, "even for amputations, when they'd already performed

almost 400; he explains that the most serious problem was infection due to the lack of sterilisation equipment and washing facilities, since Srebrenica's water is not safe.

The town, which had a population of 9,000 before the war, has seen an influx of tens of thousands of refugees [displaced] from neighbouring Muslim pockets that have fallen into Serb hands. In Srebrenica's school, "as big as a secondary school back at home," the refugees are piled in, 80-100 per classroom, in catastrophic health conditions. One of the most tragic images that the doctor can't forget is a baby with its stomach torn open by a shell; it died in the arms of one of the Canadian "blue berets." The infant was injured on Wednesday 24 March at the time when the blue berets were carrying out an evacuation of inhabitants by helicopter, an operation that had to be cancelled since the Serbs were targeting the landing strip.

MSF, which over the next few days is sending out a new surgeon, an anaesthetist, and a logistician, intends to continue its activities in Srebrenica, even if those in charge of organising the relief mission are under no illusions. The UN observers that have been moved into the enclave have, in fact, admitted in front of Dr Pontus that, "with the support of the regular army units (Yugoslav) deployed on the Bosnian side, the Serbs can cross the line whenever they want." While the situation has just deteriorated, "we're worried that the MSF and UNPROFOR teams will be kept as safeguards by the Muslims," stresses the doctor, concluding that, "the relief workers are very uneasy because if the women and children are evacuated, only the men remain, and then we won't be able to do anything more to save the town."

On 28 March, a new ceasefire was signed. A relief convoy entered Srebrenica and evacuated 2,400 people to Tuzla. Military observers from the UN were deployed in the enclave. General Morillon ensured that Srebrenica was saved, while Bosnian-Serb military leaders accused him of going to Srebrenica to arm and feed Muslims.



'Despite the Truce in Bosnia, General Morillon's gamble is far from having paid off,' *Le Monde* (France), 31 March 1993 (translated from the French)

Extract:

The convoy that arrived Sunday evening in the besieged town left again on Monday for Tuzla, in the Muslim area, evacuating nearly 2,400 people, of which several hundred required medical attention. This convoy was originally only meant to evacuate 900 inhabitants from Srebrenica, but it was literally assaulted by desperate woman and children the moment it left. [...] If the Bosnian Serbs finally seem to be honouring their promises at a time when, as General Mladic observed on Friday, "the media have turned Srebrenica into the centre of the world." The humanitarian operation to help the Muslim enclave still seems to profoundly infuriate the Serbs - as does the attitude of

General Morillon, UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who forced their hand. After snatching assurances during the difficult negotiations, General Morillon announced this weekend that, "Srebrenica is saved; it's irrevocable.' And yet his gamble seems far from having paid off. [...]

While the French general managed to bring some 20 military observers from the UN (Canadians, to be precise), the Serbian forces are strongly opposed to the deployment of more observers in the Muslim pocket with an UNPROFOR infantry company. The leader of the Serb separatist government in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vladimir Lukic, whom General Morillon met Sunday evening in Pale, let it be known that he had never given his consent, but nevertheless promised an answer within three days. "This question, which is part of the overall plan for the deployment of observers across the territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina, remained open," he specified. Lukic also insisted on the fact that the relief convoys should only be "accompanied by a minimal armed escort.' As for demilitarising the enclave, announced as impending by General Morillon on Sunday, Lukic denied that consent was given. The obstacles to the progress of relief operations in Srebrenica and other sensitive points in Bosnia-Herzegovina have clearly not all been overcome. [...]

In an article published this weekend in *Vojska*, the official journal of the Yugoslav army, Bosnian Serbs attacked General Morillon's action in support of Srebrenica to feed the idea that the UNPROFOR is biased in the Bosnian crisis. According to them, the French officer has not only "abused" his position, but also misled the Serb people and the Bosnian-Serb army. They claim that General Morillon went to Srebrenica "to feed and arm the Muslims" In order to help them restart their initiative on the ground and perhaps even "win the war in Western Bosnia.'

On 31 March, the United Nations Security Council extended the UNPROFOR's mandate to 30 June. On 6 April, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees announced they wanted to evacuate 10-15,000 civilians from Srebrenica. Many observers perceived this move as a risk that could encourage the ethnic cleansing practised by the Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Meanwhile, the United States wavered around the threat of removing the embargo on arms deliveries to Muslim Bosnians.



'The UNHCR Wants to Attempt a Massive Operation in Srebrenica, Bosnia: To Evacuate Thousands of Civilians?,' Agnès Gorissen, *Agence France Presse/Le Soir*, 6 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

This accounts for nearly one-third of the current population of Srebrenica. Originally, the town only had a population of

6,500 people that grew with the arrival of 20,000 to 30,000 refugees [displaced], coming principally from Kamenica, Cerska and Konjevic Polje pockets that fell into Serb hands -- the first in February and the others in March. These refugees are to be evacuated as a priority for the UNHCR. Some 5,500 people have already left the enclave thanks to the UNHCR. Significantly, the first convoy of 18 trucks was blocked midday on Tuesday by the Serbs in Zvornik, but has finally been allowed to set off again. [...]

Furthermore, the High Commissioner Sadako Ogata specified that another option was still under consideration: to make this enclave a zone under UN protection in order to bring in further aid. The UNPROFOR has been negotiating for the past two weeks to send 150 soldiers and some military observers into Srebrenica. [...] Seeming to put pressure on the Serbs, the American Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, once again raised the possibility of lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnians if the Serbs do not respect the UN's peace plan. The WEU (Western European Union) also made a move in deciding to strengthen checks on the embargo against Serbia along the Danube. [...]



'Besieged by the Serbs in Western Bosnia, the Muslim Enclave of Srebrenica Will Be Partially Evacuated. Rescue or Purge?' *Le Monde* (France), 7 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Indeed, an HR [Human Rights] representative in Sarajevo, John McMillan, strongly denied that the UN's specialised organisation was participating in "ethnic cleansing." Yet each departure of white trucks from Srebrenica has led to bloody scrambles causing several deaths and giving some idea of the terror under which these people are living and the terrible fate that awaits them if they remain exposed to Serb attack. To be sure, the Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegovic, gave the green light for this mass evacuation.

Many Muslims remain in opposition to a practice that, in the name of humanism is at most, basic and risks offering a further victory on a silver platter to the Serbian forces while clearing a new region of its original population. For it's certainly not by chance that the Serbs have, until now, opposed the sending in of additional "blue berets" to Srebrenica. It is, in fact, one further sign that Belgrade and its local allies still have the firm intention of reducing [the population of] this enclave, which represents a breach, a sort of "anomaly," in the territories they have conquered. However, once those who are clearly not fighters – the injured, the sick, women, children, and the elderly – are evacuated, the only ones remaining in the town will be fit males of an age to bear arms that will therefore be quickly assimilated into the fighting forces. And the war, in which the international community does not want to get involved, will take its course. Given the imbalance of power, it's easy to imagine the fate of Srebrenica.

And even if John McMillan were right, if the UN has not engaged in condemnable practices, this evacuation is one further act of failure to put on the UN's slate. The organisa-

tion is acting, in this case, as if it had given up defending Srebrenica, as if it had decided once and for all not to obstruct the Serb advance. In this case, it does have the duty to save as many human lives as possible.

On 7 April, MSF publicly asked for reinforcements for the various United Nations international relief teams in besieged Srebrenica in order to meet the needs of the population as well as to avoid large-scale abuses, should the town be taken.



'Médecins Sans Frontières Requests Reinforcement of International Presence in Besieged Srebrenica,' **Press Release**, MSF, 7 April 1993 (in French)

Médecins Sans Frontières has launched an appeal to reinforce international presence in an effort to bring relief to the population of Srebrenica. The number of personnel from international organisations is presently insufficient, and they lack the necessary resources to meet the needs of the population. Only one representative from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, five United Nations observers, seven members of the UNPROFOR and two members of Médecins Sans Frontières are present in the besieged enclave, which is on the point of collapse.

Wholly effective action is only possible if the relief teams are reinforced. This greater presence might have a dissuasive effect and prevent wide-scale abuse if the town does fall. Even if evacuation missions are moving forward, 30,000 defenseless civilians will remain at the mercy of the aggressors. International humanitarian law, as defined by the Geneva Conventions, provides for the protection of civilians in war zones, but also engages the signatory States to respect, and to ensure that others respect, its application, regardless of the circumstances.

Médecins Sans Frontières is assembling additional medical teams to deal with any new emergency interventions in Srebrenica.

On 12 April, bombardments over Srebrenica intensified. Some 100 seriously injured people arrived at the hospital and were treated by local staff, supported by the MSF team. On 15 April, due to intensified bombardments, some of the team left the enclave with an UNHCR convoy, which was leaving empty. The Bosnian Muslim authorities refused to allow any refugees to leave until their soldiers, who were seriously injured in combat against Bosnian-Serbian forces to hold onto the enclave, were evacuated. The MSF volunteers spoke to the media about the population's desperate situation.



'Médecins Sans Frontières' Testimonial on the Besieged Town – The Refugees in Srebrenica are Terrorised,' *Agence France Presse /Le Soir* (Belgium), 16 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

The refugees in Srebrenica are terrorised, Hans Ullens explains soberly. He heads up the Médecins Sans Frontières Holland humanitarian organisation's team. Contacted Thursday evening by radio in Tuzla, his voice crackles through the speakers of the amateur radio, which endeavours to improve the sound quality of this link with the Muslim enclave in Western Bosnia, besieged for weeks by Bosnian-Serbian forces. Ullens had his three medical colleagues, two surgeons, and one anaesthetist, leave on Thursday. For the time being, the situation is difficult. "It's too dangerous," he explains in French. A specialist in drinking water, he decided to stay.

His colleagues took advantage of the [outbound] convoy from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), of which five trucks were given permission by the Bosnian Serbian forces to pass. The convoy left empty-handed, with the local authorities refusing to allow any refugees to depart, while 500 seriously wounded were unable to be evacuated by helicopter. Only five elderly people were allowed to mount a truck with the five doctors. They arrived on Thursday evening in Tuzla, and from there the MSF doctors traveled to Belgrade.

Since Monday's bombardments, explains Hans Ullens, "we've spent most of the time in our building. We can't go out unless we have an armoured vehicle, and even then only for a short while. Before these bombardments, which the UN reported 57 deaths and 100 injured, all the refugees were sleeping in the streets. Since then, everyone has been trying to find shelter wherever they can, most often in the basements of houses. The population is terrorised," he underscored. [...] The bombings are less intense than last Monday, but continue. "The Bosnian Serbian forces are some two kilometres from the town and, in theory, nothing stands in their way of capturing the town," adds Ullens, whose voice occasionally trails off on the radio. On his arrival to Srebrenica three weeks ago, he noted the refugees' deteriorating situation. While the food supplied by the UNHCR is just about sufficient, albeit not very varied, stocks are diminishing. Before Monday's bombardments, there were enough drugs, to the extent that the team asked on Friday for a stop on sending more. Since then, stocks have significantly depleted.

On 16 April 1993, UN Resolution 819 demanded that Srebrenica be treated as a safe area and called for an immediate increase in UNPROFOR forces in the enclave. A ceasefire and demilitarisation agreement was signed between the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Muslim forces, stipulating that any paramilitary units, with the exception of UNPROFOR forces, must leave the town at the end of the operation. For many analysts, this was interpreted

as an organised surrender of the Muslim forces. On 17 April, Resolution 820 reinforced the embargo against Serbia. V2 



'Have the Blue Berets Arrived Too Late? Srebrenica's Ordeal Has the UN's Back to the Wall and is Somewhat Isolating Belgrade,' Edouard Van Velthem, *Agence France Presse/Belga/Le Soir* (Belgium), 19 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

A race against time. Although the fundamentals were already achieved through arms, yesterday in Srebrenica, the international community started to put in place emergency relief with the "blessing" of satiated Serb soldiers. This included: evacuation to Tuzla by helicopter for the first seriously wounded; a food convoy of some 20 trucks from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, planned to arrive in the enclave today; and the deployment of 150 Canadian blue berets to achieve, in three days, demilitarisation of the town and its placement under UN protection [...] Anything can still happen in a situation as confused as this, where often uncontrolled combatant leaders only half-listen to the orders of their superiors. Then, and above all, the Serbs, even without actually entering the centre of the city, will have already achieved most of their objectives: to extend their "safe corridor" and complete their ethnic cleansing. Did not Radovan Karadzic himself wish for the intervention of UNPROFOR forces along all the front lines? In Srebrenica, it's a done deal. And the military leader of the Bosnian Serbs, General Mladic, has every reason to be satisfied as well: owing to the ceasefire concluded under the aegis of General Morillon, the blue berets have to collect all the arms from the Muslim fighters, defeated by the powerful enemy fire. [...]

At any rate, one thing is certain: Srebrenica's ordeal marks a turning point in the Bosnia-Herzegovina war, for the warring parties as much as the international community. The Security Council's emergency meeting this weekend and the adoption of a resolution with regard to increasing the embargo against Belgrade, which has led to greater isolation of Serbia than that declared on Iraq, should not leave any illusions. We'll need far, far more if we hope to influence the war.

Reaping the benefits of media coverage of the flash visit of a UN delegation to the enclave, On 25 April, MSF reminded the press that Srebrenica is in the process of becoming a "health bomb."



'U.N. Delegation Visits Srebrenica, 161 Wounded Flown Out,' *Agence France Presse*, 25 April 1993 (in English).

Extract:

The U.N. mission spent the day Sunday inspecting and talking to residents of Srebrenica, a mostly Moslem town, which has swollen by at least 30,000 refugees [displaced] since Serb fighters mounted an offensive here last year. But a year of fighting and living in overcrowded conditions has taken its toll, international doctors are reporting that the health of Srebrenica's swarming population is deteriorating rapidly. Water is dirty, scarce, and barely safe to drink. Each person is rationed to three litres (6 pints) of water a day, instead of the minimum 20 litres needed daily to avoid an epidemic, doctors said. "Srebrenica has become a health bomb," said Jacques de Milliano, an official with the Dutch branch of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, or Doctors without Borders). The lack of water is a factor behind the spread of diarrhoea, especially among children, he said. The illness can become fatal within 48 hours if not treated, de Milliano warned. However, to his knowledge no one had yet died of the sickness, he said.

Despite the threat of international military intervention, on 5 May the members of the Bosnian Serb 'parliament' rejected the Vance-Owen Peace Plan², despite it being signed by their leader, Radovan Karadzic, three days earlier.



'After Fresh Rejection of the Peace Plan and the Announcement of a Referendum, Washington Recommended Tougher Actions Against the Serbs in Bosnia,' *Le Monde* (France), 7 May 1993 (in French)

Extract:

After 17 hours of dramatic negotiations, the Bosnian Serb 'parliament,' meeting on Wednesday 5 May in Pale, refused to ratify the peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. [...] Karadzic justified the decision made by his 'parliament' by accusing the international community of "putting Bosnian Serbs in a desperate situation to which the only response was desperate decisions." He warned of the risks of general chaos in the event of a foreign military intervention. [...] Explaining in turn, that the Serbs could not enter into a war against the international community, Yugoslavia's President Dobrica Cosic declared that "the conditions offered are not ideal, even painful, but they make it possible to achieve in peacetime what could not be achieved in the trenches." He asked the Serbs of Bosnia not "to continue a war at any cost, up to the point of suicide."

2. The 'Vance-Owen peace plan' was negotiated by the UN Special Envoy Cyrus Vance and EC representative Lord Owen from January 1993 on. This plan involved the division of Bosnia into ten semi-autonomous regions and received the backing of the UN.

On 6 May, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) declared an economic embargo against the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to force them to accept the peace plan. The same day, Resolution 824, adopted by the United Nations Security Council, added the enclaves of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, and Bihac to the list of "safe zones under UNPROFOR protection." On 8 May, a ceasefire agreement allowed for the deployment of UN forces in the place of soldiers. In Srebrenica, the demilitarised zone was enlarged.



'The Security Council Declares Five More Bosnian Towns as Safe Areas,' *Le Monde* (France), 8 May 1993 (in French)

Extract:

This resolution authorises the reinforcement of the UNPROFOR in Bosnia by 50 military observers, i.e. five observers in each safe area. "This presence will be purely symbolic," explains a diplomat. The goal is in fact to increase the political cost of the aggression, the message being that any attacks on protected areas are tantamount to attacks on the UN. "The western members of the council who opposed adopting this text believe that declaring 'safe areas' without really protecting the populations living there is 'quite a cynical approach.'" And to cite the example of Srebrenica, declared a protected area three weeks ago, the town is facing particularly huge problems with its water supply. All that remains is the threat of resolution 824 to take "any additional measures" in the event that none of the parties comply.



'The War in former Yugoslavia – Under the Auspices of the UNPROFOR, a General Ceasefire Agreement was Concluded Between Serb and Muslim Soldiers in Bosnia,' *Le Monde* (France), 11 May 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Signed Saturday in Sarajevo after 30 hours of negotiations under the supervision of the UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia, General Morillon, between the military leaders of the Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, the new "general ceasefire" agreement came into force midday Sunday and seemed to be "generally" respected by Monday morning. Following Resolution 824, adopted by the Security Council that declared five Muslim towns as "safe areas," another agreement aims for the "bilateral" demilitarisation of the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, in Western Bosnia, and the deployment of UN forces instead of soldiers. In Srebrenica, already partially "demilitarised" and where 340 Canadian blue berets are stationed, the demilitarised zone only needs to be extended. The final agreement authorises Muslim forces to leave demilitarised zones with their arms and 'orders' Serbian forces to retreat a substantial distance from the front lines.

On 18 May 1993, during a referendum held to show that it was the choice of the people and not just of the parliamentar-

ians, 96% of Bosnian Serbs rejected the Vance-Owen Peace Plan and voted for the independence of the 'Serb Republic of Bosnia--Herzegovina.'



'After Rejecting the Vance-Owen Plan in Doves, Bosnian Serbs Declared Themselves Open to 'Any New Initiative' *Le Monde* (France), 21 May 1993 (in French)

Extract:

This peace plan, which intended to split Bosnia-Herzegovina into 10 autonomous provinces, was rejected by 96% of Bosnian Serb voters. And 96% of them also voted in favour of an independent "Serb Republic," 70% of which would be in Bosnian territory. The rate of participation was calculated at 92%. "The first step in our struggle is over. [...] The Serbian people have taken their destiny in their hands by deciding that it will never surrender its nationhood."

On 4 June, Resolution 836, adopted by the UN Security Council, allowed the UNPROFOR to retaliate in the event of aggression against any of the six Muslim enclaves declared 'protected areas' and the Member states, acting nationally or through regional organizations to use air power to support UNPROFOR.



UN Resolution 836 (1993) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3228th Meeting, on 4 June 1993.

Extract:

The Security Council. [...]

4. Decides to ensure full respect for the safe areas referred to in resolution 824 (1993);

5. Decides to extend to that end the mandate of UNPROFOR in order to enable it, in the safe areas referred to in resolution 824 (1993), to deter attacks against the safe areas, to monitor the cease-fire, to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to occupy some key points on the ground, in addition to participating in the delivery of humanitarian relief to the population as provided for in resolution 776 (1992) of 14 September 1992;

[...]

9. Authorizes UNPROFOR, in addition to the mandate defined in resolutions 770 (1992) of 13 August 1992 and 776 (1992), in carrying out the mandate defined in paragraph 5 above, acting in self-defense, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas by any of the parties or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian

convoys;

10. Decides that [...] Member States, acting nationally or through regional organisations or arrangements, may take, under the authority of the Security Council and subject to close coordination with the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR, all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around the safe areas in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate [...]

In late June, Franjo Trudjman and Radovan Karadzic, the Croat and Bosnian-Serb leaders, agreed on a plan to partition Bosnia--Herzegovina into three ethnic entities (Serb, Croat, Muslim), which the Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic refused to ratify. The opinion of observers is that this plan sanctions the ethnic cleansing policy led by the Bosnian Serb authorities.

Over the following months, the negotiations evolved at the rhythm of military advances on the ground and repeated delays regarding the application of UN decisions: the deployment of blue berets in the 'safe areas;' NATO air strikes; reinforcement of the embargo; etc.



'The UN Missions in Yugoslavia: Evasions,' *Le Monde* (France), 25 September 1993 (in French)

Extract:

The UN has become a place where failing political action is a substitute for humanitarian action. The guiding rule of this humanitarian intervention was to operate only when the consent of all the warring parties was obtained. The resolution of the Security Council authorising the use of force to guarantee the safe passage of relief to the people went practically unheeded, and time and time again, we have seen soldiers obstructing convoys despite their UN armoured vehicle protection. Moreover, this humanitarian action was not politically neutral. The most striking episode in this respect was Srebrenica, in April 1993, where we saw General Morillon, commander of the 'blue berets' in Bosnia, save the small Muslim enclave besieged by the Serbs in return for its surrender and the disarmament of Muslim fighters by the UNPROFOR forces themselves. The permanent members of the Security Council have also been discredited, notably in the eyes of non-aligned and Muslim countries, by adopting a series of resolutions intended to show their firmness but which were never applied, or applied much later. In May 1992, Resolution 757 declared an embargo against Serbia, which everyone knew would be nothing more than a sieve, which it was until April 1993. At this time, the council transformed the pseudo-embargo into a far more impenetrable blockade, the effect of which would be very quickly gauged on the regime in Belgrade: they had lost a year.

In October 1992, the council declared Bosnia a no-fly zone for the Serb air force, but without reprisals. It was violated

hundreds of times with impunity until, in March 1993, under pressure from the Americans, the Council put NATO in charge of ensuring the ban was respected. This first point of conflict between the Americans and Europeans had highlighted another ambiguity regarding the presence of 'blue berets' in Bosnia: hostages, the designated target of reprisals, obstructed any military air intervention. Not wishing to engage in a showdown in former Yugoslavia, Europeans and Americans (whatever they say) each benefited. The "international community" lost all credibility over it.

While on the subject of resolutions without any repercussions, we might also mention the safe areas intended to protect Sarajevo and five Muslim enclaves, which never came into being, due to lack of 'blue beret' reinforcements, and the international court intended to try war criminals who nobody arrested and with whom the UNPROFOR is continuing to negotiate on the ground. Lastly, the other UN intervention in the former Yugoslavia – the drafting of peace plans – is perplexing to say the least. The Cyrus Vance plan for Croatia, adopted in February 1992 and which 14,000 'blue berets' are supposed to enforce has still not been applied: the Serb militia in Krajina are still armed to the teeth and less prepared than ever to give up their secessionist warfare.

In Bosnia, the UN first supported a Vance-Owen plan which didn't have, far from it, only strengths and which, above all, played a role in starting the second Bosnian war: the one that pitted Croats and Muslims against each other. Then, this was abandoned before it was even rejected by Bosnian Serbs. It now supports an Owen-Stoltenberg plan that, if accepted, will establish the splitting of Bosnia. Bowing to force, the United Nations, breaking one of the fundamental precepts of its charter, will thus accept the disintegration of a state that it had recognised as a member in May 1993.

In April, the French section of MSF decided to invite the Belgian section to set up a joint mission in former Yugoslavia and to seek joint medical personnel to provide reinforcements to the team in Srebrenica.

On 15 May, in his annual report to the general assembly, the president of MSF France spoke of the organisation's malaise in the face of the use of humanitarian aid as an alibi for political inertia in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He nevertheless underscored that MSF had fulfilled its role in Srebrenica. A debate ensued on the necessity for the French section to develop programmes in former Yugoslavia. In the press release published following the general assembly meeting, MSF France reiterated its concerns about the use of humanitarian aid in Bosnia-Herzegovina to compensate for political inertia.



Minutes of MSF France's Operations Meeting, 27 April 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Yugoslavia [...]

- Srebrenica: MSF Belgium has found one nurse and one logistician. MSF France needs to find one doctor, one surgeon, and one anaesthetist.

Decision:

- 1) To offer Georges Dallemagne [MSF Belgium Director of Operations] a joint Belgian/French mission in Tuzla, coordinated from Belgrade.
- 2) To quickly find experienced human resources.



Annual Report from the President of MSF France at the 22nd General Assembly of MSF France, 15 May 1993 (in French)

Extract:

All through the year, we have dilly dallied regarding our engagement in Bosnia. Such dithering is due both to the significant, effective presence of MSF's Dutch and Belgian sections, in both Croatia and Serbia, as well as, and we mustn't hide it, to the malaise that we have experienced with regard to the use of humanitarian action in Bosnia. [...] I simply want to mention that, at this very moment, a Belgian team of five MSF workers is knuckling down to work in Srebrenica, and we hope that other missions are underway. If MSF is in Srebrenica, regardless of the judgment we cast on the use of humanitarian action in Bosnia, it is indisputable that MSF fulfils its role, that this is our mission and that we need to accomplish it.



'Médecins Sans Frontières' General Assembly is Concerned About the Growing Problems of Intervening in Certain Populations in Distress, and Takes Exception to the Use of Humanitarian Action in Bosnia,' MSF France **Press Release**, 18 May 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Debates at the General Assembly on the relationship between humanitarian action and politics have highlighted the indignation of all regarding the use of humanitarian action in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Refusing to outlaw ethnic cleansing and its attendant woes when there was still time, the European nations have merely contented themselves with accompanying relief convoys. While reiterating how essential the aid is due to the deteriorating situation on the ground, the MSF General Assembly firmly condemned the humanitarian reasons given for the political renunciation in Bosnia.

In June, an agreement was made between the Belgian and French sections to now jointly manage the programmes in the enclaves of Srebrenica and Gorazde.



Minutes from MSF France's Board Meeting on June 1993 (in French)

Extract:

Former Yugoslavia - Marc Gastellu (Deputy Director of Operations)

At the last General Assembly, there were discussions on the question of whether interventions in the former Yugoslavia were necessary or not. Marc Gastellu hence visited the region to observe the actions of the Belgian and Dutch sections, comprehend the difficulties encountered, and identify areas for further reflection. [...] In the enclaves of Gorazde and Srebrenica, where the town was experiencing considerable problems with hygiene, a supply of drinking water was established and a surgical programme was developed. In addition to medical support, these actions are hugely positive in terms of presence and solidarity. To compensate for the problems in recruiting personnel for these missions, MSF France will team up with the Belgians. [...]

Marc Gastellu noted the difficulties the teams had in differentiating themselves from the UNPROFOR, their only contacts. This lack of perspective prevents them, in his opinion, from being able to [objectively] assess the local position. He also saw the continual wearing of bulletproof vests as an escalation of the usual forms of protection adopted by MSF. The presence of MSF in Karlovac has helped to show how the situation has evolved. MSF France often has a bad reputation there, and is frequently confused with MDM [Médecins Du Monde] and its poster campaign.³ Plus there is huge operational complexity and real danger resulting from the eyewitness accounts being rendered public.⁴ All these reasons led Marc Gastellu to conclude that MSF France should not work this region. Its intervention in the field should be restricted to giving support to the other sections in the Gorazde and Srebrenica enclaves. A disclosure by any interested section whatsoever could put teams on the ground at risk, so any public pronouncements should be given as a joint message from all three sections.



The Belgians were clearly keen for us to go, no doubt due to the question of resources, but also to give us a piece of the action. They opened the door for us. In Serbia, we didn't have much to do, I knew it. In Croatia, there would have been things to do but it wasn't where a humanitarian positioning had reason to be. In Bosnia, the Dutch had the ground covered and there was no point duplicating their efforts. My conclusion was

3. In its ad campaign, Médecins du Monde compared the president of Serbia, Milosevic, to Hitler.

4. In particular, the report *Nettoyage ethnique dans la région de Kozarac* (Ethnic cleansing in Kozarac), published in December 1992.

therefore that the position we needed was in the enclaves, i.e. Srebrenica, Gorazde, and Zepa. Everyone agreed on this. It was typically the kind of place we should have been in, because it was a situation where we finally had the chance to do what we knew how to do: medical activities and witnessing.

Dr. Marc Gastellu-Etchegorry, MSF France Deputy, Director of Operations, 1992 to 1997, Interviewed in 2015

In June 1993, MSF opened an office in Pale, the headquarters of the Bosnian Serb authorities, hoping to facilitate relations with them.



'Message from MSF B General Coordinator in Belgrade to MSF H General Coordinator in Zagreb, 15 June 1993 (in English), (edited.)

Extract:

I know that the MSF team in Sarajevo has contacts with Pale for negotiations and distributions. So the idea is the presence of a liaison officer (which is absolutely necessary) for the work that is done from Belgrade, for Serbian Bosnia and Muslim enclaves in Pale, and also for traveling to other parts of Bosnia. This liaison officer would be accompanied by a medical person for assessments [...] Basically it will not make a big difference since we are already in permanent contact with Pale for more than a year.

WORKING LIKE PRISON DOCTORS

In Srebrenica, the MSF team focused on water supply and sanitation, and on rehabilitating buildings in preparation for winter. However, the Bosnian Serb forces maintaining the siege, only allowed inadequate amounts of aid through, and only erratically. The long waits for UN Sanctions Committee approval exacerbated the situation. The team wondered about the reality of the protection supposedly ensured by the peacekeepers' presence.



'Blockade of MSF Programmes in the Enclaves; Letter from MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia to the UNHCR Special Envoy, 6 September 1993 (in English).

Extract:

After one year of war, the fear of another long and harsh winter

further stresses the already weakened population. Despite many promises, only wheat flour is arriving. Essentials for the winter such as salt, repair materials, cement for the water system, clothing, and shoes, are still just promises. The tension and anxiety of the population are growing. Their survival is entirely dependent on the timely arrival of international aid. This aid is dependent on the good will of the Serbian authorities in Pale, and the Sanctions Committee in New York.

After two weeks of negotiations with the Pale authorities, MSF is facing a complete refusal to bring any material other than medical supplies into the enclaves. Because of this continuing series of delays and refusals from the Pale authorities, the MSF program in Srebrenica, as well as in Gorazde, is blocked. The necessary materials for the first phase of our rehabilitation project for 2,000 refugees in Srebrenica have been purchased and are currently stored in Belgrade. The Pale authorities (MOH as well as the Commission Board for Humanitarian Aid) request an equivalent MSF program on the Serbian side, in the so-called "Serbian enclaves." MSF is pursuing a balanced program based on needs. We are distributing basic drugs and surgical materials to the Serbian hospitals in Eastern Bosnia, and we are conducting exploratory missions in Trnovo, Sokolac, and Petrovac as the Pale authorities have requested.

However, we do not envision a large shelter program in the Serb areas. As the single implementing partner of UNHCR that is active in the enclaves, I urgently request your support in our negotiations in Pale. [...] Because promises of shelters were expressed, because convoys are not bringing an adequate food ration to the refugees, because children did not receive shoes or clothes in sufficient quantity before the winter, because new shipments of medical supplies have yet not arrived, the Srebrenica population is doubtful the international aid community will fulfill their mandate. Security of our representatives, MSF as well as UNHCR and ICRC, may be threatened, if progress is not made soon.



'Report on the Deteriorating Situation of the Population of Srebrenica,' Hans Ullens, MSF Field Coordinator in Srebrenica to MSF Paris, 16 September 1993 (in English).

Extract:

5. Conclusion.

The population of Srebrenica is completely isolated from the outside world and is forced into self-sufficiency. However it is impossible to provide the structure for self-sufficiency in the short-term and even in the long-term as long as the Bosnian Serbs are ruling the area. There are no local resources and there is no energy source, there are no institutions, and there are no people and material to start up these institutions: e.g. the hospital, the first institution which was organized, (before it was only a dispensary) is completely depending on drugs and high qualified medical staff from Médecins Sans Frontières. There are no local people to replace the surgeon, the anaesthetist, and the stomatologist. None of them are able or has the power to get drugs from outside into the area. The hospital is only one example of the numerous social, and

legal institutions, which need to be created. They all face the same problems. There are no qualified persons available to run these institutions and they will not come from Sarajevo or Tuzla. The idea of a self-sufficient enclave surrounded by a hostile population is a complete illusion.

The UN declared Srebrenica as a safe haven but in fact sold it to the Bosnian Serbs who are turning it slowly into a legal extermination camp. They are deciding on [which] materials to come in so they are the managers of all relief programmes. The UN and the humanitarian organisations only function as a cheap labour force for them. They run a farm of 45,000 people with a Serbian manager who is only interested in getting rid of his animals. [...]

When UNPROFOR arrived in March, people thought it was the end of the nightmare and there was a general optimism. This optimism turns into bitterness now. Everybody realizes that the tragedy is not far off. The only solution is an immediate corridor for material to Srebrenica controlled by UN without any control or interference from the Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale and a massive aid programme. [...] The nightmare from early this year is coming back with one little difference: it is still orchestrated by the Bosnian Serbs but completely implemented by the UN and the humanitarian organisations. To die of mortar shells is finally more humane than to die of cold and misery. If the free passage of relief material is not possible, we prefer the retreat of all protection and assistance than to witness the latter.



'MSF calls for help for Bosnia,' Edouard van Elthem, *Le Soir* (Belgium) 25 September 1993 (in French).

Extract:

So far, the so-called UN safe areas are practically unprotected. [...] At the other end of the phone line, Geneviève Bekoyan catches her breath. Head of Mission at Médecins Sans Frontières, she coordinates three different activity programmes from Belgrade: for the Serbian Serbs and Kosovar Albanians; for the eastern Bosnian Serbs from Trebinje in the south to Brcko in the north; and lastly, for the Muslims in besieged enclaves. [...]

The slowness and complexity of the negotiations, the conditions imposed by the Serbian military authorities, which demand the equivalent of each convoy to the Muslim population for their own community, and the especially the bureaucracy of the Sanctions Committee all hamper the activities of the humanitarian organisations. The situation at the infamous Serbian checkpoints seems to have improved since last Wednesday's discussion with the Pale authorities on access to the besieged regions. On the other hand, everything has been brought to a halt by the UN Sanctions Committee's inertia and nitpicking. Not just for us, an NGO, which sometimes has to wait two months for the green light to import drugs, but even for UN agencies like the HCR, have to wait up to three weeks for equipment orders. [...]



MSF was the only source of care in Srebrenica, there was no one else. We managed to bring in a large supply of drugs in 1993, and we survived on that. Then the supply ran out. In eight months, we managed to bring in only one order of drugs in March 1994, just a month before I left. We were living on leftovers, on what the Canadian peacekeepers were giving us. The ICRC also managed to get us some drugs despite the fact that officially they provided only non-medical aid. We could only get absurdly small quantities via official channels. At that point, we took whatever we could get! We had to negotiate constantly with the Bosnian Serb military. I would go talk to the captain at the entrance to the enclave about every two or three days. He would say to us, 'what are you doing here, anyway? What good does it do? We're going to get this place back, in any case!' Then he would add, 'the Muslims stink!' We would negotiate a pass. Then the next day, when we'd get to the checkpoint, they would fire at us. The captain would say, 'there's nothing I can do about it, I don't control the snipers up there.' It was a constant showdown. We had the sense that those guys were determined, that they'd do anything, they'd never let go. They were like bulldogs holding onto a piece of meat. You could hurt them, do anything to them, but they'd never open their jaws.

Graziella Godain, MSF France/Belgium Field Coordinator in Srebrenica, October 1993 to April 1994

In December 1993, the MSF coordinator in Srebrenica complained to UNHCR about the obstacles being created to any humanitarian activity that the Bosnian Muslim authorities running the enclave did not control.



'Message from Hans Ullens, Médecins Sans Frontières Coordinator in Srebrenica to UNHCR Representative in Belgrade,' 17 December 1993 (in English).

Extract:

Before, the cooperation between the local authorities and humanitarian organisations was more or less good. Now, this cooperation has been exchanged for a continuous sabotage of all relief activity, which is not completely under their control. The local authorities do not seem to accept that humanitarian organisations are recruiting their own personnel. They want to force them always to pass through their channels. They want all relief material that arrives in Srebrenica to be exclusively distributed by people they appoint. Although a lot of things went wrong in their own distributions, every person involved in these distributions organised by the humanitarian organisations is the victim of a continuous disinformation campaign from the local authorities.

We have the impression that the humanitarian aid is becoming more and more the subject of an internal political power struggle and its real objectives are of secondary importance to it. Médecins sans Frontières is a humanitarian relief organisa-

tion, which provides assistance to all people in distress. However, we are a non-political organisation and therefore cannot accept any political manipulation of any of our actions.



The enclave phenomenon crystallised the danger to the population held hostage not just by the Serbs, but also by its own extremists, the Bosniak militias. They symbolised a certain unacceptable resistance to the Serbs. There were radicals on both sides. There weren't only nice Bosniaks inside. I spent eight months around them, and they weren't joking. They were organising commando operations. They would all shoot morphine before heading up to the mountains in the middle of the night to kill Serbs. You really had to be a bit high to do that. You could call it self-defence, but only to a point. The Serbs took advantage of that to say, 'you said it was a demilitarised zone, and they're shooting at us.' And they used that as an excuse to fire on civilians. It automatically entitled them to that type of reprisal. I talked about it with the Bosniak commander. I told him, 'every time you have one of those operations, the next day there's shooting from all sides and a child gets shot.'

Graziella Godain, MSF France/Belgium Field Coordinator in Srebrenica, October 1993 to April 1994

In late 1993, under pressure from the Serbs, UNPROFOR temporarily decided not to deploy the Dutch contingent (Dutchbat) scheduled to replace the Canadian battalion in the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves. The Canadians had been a great help to the populations by helping MSF teams as much as possible.

The handover did not happen until March 1994. The Dutch peacekeepers set up their base at Potocari near the Podgorica factory within the enclave, but outside the town of Srebrenica. The means they were deploying there suggested to the MSF team that security was getting beefed up.



'UNPROFOR Decides not to Deploy Blue Helmets in Two Muslim Enclaves,' *Le Monde* (France), 25 December 1993 (in French).

Extract:

Under pressure from Serbian forces in Bosnia, UNPROFOR has temporarily decided not to protect the Muslim-populated 'safe areas' of Zepa and Srebrenica, in the eastern part of the country. The mission was to have fallen to the Dutch Air Mobile Brigade, whose commander confirmed in a radio interview on Wednesday, 22 December that its departure had been postponed indefinitely.

The decision came down from UNPROFOR headquarters, following the recent refusal by the Serbian military to allow a reconnaissance patrol brigade into the two protection areas.

The 1,100 Dutch soldiers who were supposed to be deployed there starting 18 January belong to a combat unit that was to have been heavily equipped, and whose involvement would have displeased Ratko Mladic, Commander-in-Chief of the Bosnian Serb army. Though Dutch Foreign Minister Pieter Kooijmans considered it “unacceptable” that the Serbs dictate the placement of UN forces, the Defence Secretary had already announced that the Dutch detachment would be given a new assignment, most likely protecting humanitarian transports in central Bosnia.



‘The Threat of NATO Air Strikes – Westerners Want to Attempt an Action on Tuzla and Srebrenica,’ *Le Monde* (France), 25 December 1993 (in French).

Extract:

That same day, Allied leaders announced that they were asking UNPROFOR officials to establish emergency plans to reopen Tuzla, and to allow the replacement of a Canadian peacekeeping contingent in the Srebrenica enclave, which the Serbs oppose. With regard to Srebrenica, a UNPROFOR spokesperson announced Tuesday in Sarajevo that the problem was due not just to the Serb blockade, but also to the difficulty in finding Blue Helmets to take over from the 180 Canadian soldiers. At his press conference, British Prime Minister John Major called UNPROFOR’s situation in the eastern Bosnian Muslim enclave “intolerable.” “It is very clear,” he said, “that should the use of air power turn out to be necessary to allow the rotation of Blue Helmets in Srebrenica, we will be ready to do so.”⁵



The Canadian peacekeepers were making an enormous effort. They were taking care of the population. The Canadian doctor was doing mobile consultations with us on the weekends in the clinics scattered around the town. Via their base, Visoko, they were getting drug supplies in and then giving us donations because we couldn’t get anything in. A lot of things came through the Canadians; they were a huge help to us. There was a renewed feeling of security in March 1994, because the Dutch arrived with many more resources than the Canadians. They moved the peacekeepers’ base into the Podgorica factory. There weren’t a lot more of them, but they retooled everything. It was impressive. By way of medical equipment, the Canadians had only one tiny, very sparsely equipped room. The Dutch came with an ultrasound unit and cutting edge equipment. They set up two operating rooms, while the Canadians had none. We got the impression that there was a determination to reinforce, to provide resources, and to stay for a while.

Graziella Godain, MSF France/Belgium Field Coordinator in Srebrenica, October 1993 to April 1994, Interviewed in 2000, (in French)

Opinions within MSF varied as to what position to take regarding the haggling by the Bosnian Serb authorities, which demanded that the organisation provide the same level of aid in Serbian parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina in exchange for letting MSF teams and equipment into the enclaves. In the field, the teams were helping the most vulnerable populations of Serbia and Serbian-held Bosnia-Herzegovina. The MSF teams sometimes relayed outlandish, unacceptable demands from the authorities, for example, expatriate surgeons should work by themselves in several of the region’s hospitals.



‘Minutes from the 12 January 1994 MSF France Board of Directors Meeting,’ (in French).

Extract:

A joint programme is being conducted in Belgrade under Belgian coordination in Gorazde, Srebrenica, and Zepa enclaves, and priority is given to the ‘enclave’ mission, where the work is necessary but faces multiple obstacles. These include the lack of goodwill of the Serbian militias and Pale authorities, the difficulty getting access to the victims, and the confiscation of material. MSF should distance itself from the UN to get access to the enclaves.

Rony Brauman raises the problem of political orientation and finding a balance. Considering the size of the budgets and what we have to pay to get where we’re needed and that the teams have to deal with security problems, people are getting tired in a difficult context. Without MSF, the Srebrenica hospital couldn’t function. Rehabilitation and sanitation are also done mainly by MSF teams. MSF’s presence is essential in Gorazde, as well. We would have to provide humanitarian assistance in Serbian Bosnia (an evaluation is in progress), knowing that that represents a real danger. We are also keeping a close eye on the budgetary surge, given as Karim pointed out, the fact that MSF France got involved in Yugoslavia very late and had to devise coordination schemes with the Brussels/Belgrade programme, onto which MSF grafted itself, and which had been running for a year.



‘Letter,’ from Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor to the MSF Coordination Team in the former Yugoslavia, 15 January 1994 (in French).

Extract:

You submitted, in particular, requests to us for three general surgeon positions in the Orvar, Brcko, and Nevesinje hospitals from the Health Minister, Mr Kalinic. Let me remind you that MSF’s humanitarian action policy in the former Yugoslavia obeys precise rules. MSF’s general security policy for countries in conflict opposes individuals working alone. MSF deploys teams. This makes the action more effective, and each individual knows his mission [role] very well. It enables MSF to ensure the safety of individuals. As there are already sufficient numbers of very competent doctors and other med-

5. Back translation

ical personnel (nationals) in the former Yugoslavia, MSF's policy since the start of the conflict has been primarily focused on supply. Regarding your question to me, please note the following:

1/ Humanitarian law ties freedom of movement for humanitarian relief in conflicts to the impartiality of humanitarian organisations (Article 18 of Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions). MSF gives its guarantee as an impartial humanitarian organisation for the distribution of aid to civilian populations throughout the former Yugoslavia.

2/ In relief activities, humanitarian law always distinguishes between what must be undertaken by the national authorities, on one hand, and what can only be implemented via an impartial humanitarian organisation, on the other (Articles 7, 9, 10, 11, 14 and 18 of that same protocol). Hence, MSF has also offered its impartiality, in order to have the right to enter and leave the enclaves, in accordance with humanitarian law. The decision to deploy surgical teams in these sites is based on two specific factors:

- The lack of any local surgical capacity, despite the need for a large number of operations each day;
- The inability of the health and civil authorities concerned to provide for those needs, due to the military blockade of those areas.

3/ MSF endeavours to assure the international community that the only criterion for distributing aid is the urgency of the needs. Hence, MSF is always obligated to assess the needs as accurately as possible, adapting its operational constraints to the greatest possible extent.



The programmes in Serbia began well before we began working in the enclaves. It was obvious that there were difficulties in Serbia because of the war. But those difficulties were due mainly to the war effort. I don't think the drugs we supplied really covered the basic needs. We had no direct presence in the field. We might suppose that the material aid we were providing could be converted fairly quickly into financial and political means, since Serbia could also take advantage of that façade. In 1993, some people were justifying that activity by saying that it would enable us to get access elsewhere. But we still had to negotiate access to the enclaves afterward. I participate, to a very limited extent, in discussions on how best to approach those negotiations. One might wonder whether we would have had access to the enclaves even without those programmes in Serbia. I think the answer is yes.

Dr. Marc Gastellu-Etchegorry, MSF France Deputy,
Director of Operations, 1992 to 1997,
Interviewed in 2015, (in French)



All we knew was that in order to get medicines into the enclaves we had to do a distribution in Republika Srpska. But there are ways, and then there are ways. There was an in-depth discussion on the project, which everyone considered a pretext project. When I got there, I said, 'we shouldn't do an

alibi project. I'm going to conduct a visit.' Sometimes we do projects simply because it is very important that we be there with the population. But that wasn't the case there. After a year of doing the project, we found shampoo bottles and packages of compresses with MSF labels in the shops in Serbian hospitals. I was shocked. In the Republika Srpska hospitals, near the border, the Serbs wouldn't let us treat civilians because it was a military zone. Those hospitals, for military only, were very well stocked, not just by MSF, but also by other organisations, funded by the European Union. And, it seemed unforgivable to me that MSF didn't decide to stop sooner, knowing that the Ministry of Defence had enough money to supply those hospitals. Then we did evaluations in the small health care facilities that no one had ever taken the time to visit. It was as clear as day that those facilities had been completely overlooked because the people that used them, the elderly and women, were absolutely not the authorities' priority. So we reprogrammed the project to target those health care facilities. Our impact was nothing special, but we were able to go see what was happening in the villages far from the front line. The consultations enabled us to see that the treatment of the civilian population, especially the old people and the patients in the mental health care facilities, was truly shameful. Life was extremely difficult for the people living in Republika Srpska, though the situation wasn't as serious as it was in the enclaves. Information was being manipulated, and the soldiers were given priority. It was important to MSF to know all that, even if it wasn't so much from a witness account perspective.

Dr Graciela Diap, MSF Belgium/France Medical
Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia, October 1993
to April 1995, Interviewed in 2000 (in French)



It was obvious that the Serbs were deriving some political benefit from our presence in Srebrenica. There was some disagreement about the situation analysis with MSF Belgium, who thought they should buy their presence in Srebrenica, in a sense, with distributions to the Serbs. We [MSF France], on the other hand, felt that our presence in Srebrenica suited the Serbs because there was a deal that wasn't exactly clear with the Bosniaks, and concern about their public image. That's why UNPROFOR was there, as well as UNHCR and ICRC, but it was more matter of form, since they only visited once a week, whereas we had a substantial and ongoing presence. That formality was not immaterial; it was important to everyone, and had political significance. In the spring of 1994, I went with an MSF Belgium delegation to negotiate continuous access to the enclaves in exchange for the distribution of hygiene and cleaning products in Serb villages. The problem was that some of the Serb villages were Serbianised Bosniak villages. We arrived in Pale, where – since it was a ski resort – the Republika Srpska government had taken up residence in a hotel. Instead of being taken to an office, we were taken to the hotel dining room, where we were surprised to find twenty or so people sitting around a big square table and Republika Srpska TV cameras. We realised that it was all a propaganda set-up, but it wasn't a big deal. Seated on my left was Mrs Karadzic, who introduced herself to me as 'Madame Karadzic, Freudian psychoanalyst.'

That was the little cherry on top that I still get a kick out of today! The discussion began before dinner, with some clear and slightly heavy, but very diplomatic, allusions to ‘people who took positions hostile to Serbian rights.’ None of us reacted. Everyone played his or her cards fairly discreetly, fairly elegantly.

Next came the information about the plan to exterminate Bosnian Serb children, the UN-organised genocide. We had never heard of it! Several people – well-trained public health doctors from the Ministry, including the former head of the epidemiology department at the Yugoslav Ministry of Health and the head of the surgery department, sounding not very convinced – repeated the crazy accusation that the measles vaccinations sent by UNICEF were poisoned. So they were basically being invited to inject their children with lethal doses. As a precaution, they had one of the samples tested for verification at an English laboratory, which gave the thing some credibility. They couldn’t believe their eyes when they saw the result saying that the vial contained poison, and had it checked in Germany. At the time, the Serbs considered Germany Satan’s helper, their enemy’s ally, along with the Vatican and Al-Azhar University. The Germano-Christian-Islamic plot – that was their big story! In Germany, they received sad confirmation that the poisoning was real, and halted the vaccination campaign at the last minute; otherwise, the 300,000 children they were about to immunise would have been assassinated. Because it was directed against children, it had jeopardised the future of the Bosnian Serbs, and hence was genocide. In any case it was part of a global conspiracy to get rid of the Serbian people, and so perfectly consistent with the rest.

It was fairly disconcerting. There was also a disconnect between the enormity of the accusation and their apparent calm, the slightly mechanical aspect of what they were saying. When your children are threatened in that way, wouldn’t you normally tend to dramatise things a bit, be a bit more emotional with your words? I told them we had been unaware of the whole story, but that it was good they told us about it because such an important matter that it could not just stop there. I assured them that all MSF means would be placed at their disposal, provided the information was verified. All they had to do was give us the vials so that we could analyze them, and we would conduct a campaign against the people responsible and sound the alarm. That seemed to completely satisfy everyone, and almost immediately the subject changed from the genocide to their order for toilet paper, cotton wool, and sanitary napkins. It was a household shopping list, having absolutely nothing to do with the war, population displacement, or accusations of genocide. There were almost no drugs on the list of needs they gave us. Since we never received the samples to analyze, the story ended there. It remains, however, a great moment of victim kitsch!

Dr Rony Brauman, MSF France President 1982- 1994,
MSF Foundation Research Director from 1994,
Interviewed in 2015, (in French)



There was an MSF base in Pale, in a house, with an administrator and nurse who managed a small stock that supplied eastern Republika Srpska. There was an agreement: we had no permanent staff on-site but did distributions in health centres. We also tried to work in a psychiatric facility where the patients were living in appalling conditions. We did minor health centre rehabilitation, a standard activity, to justify our presence in Republika Srpska. We did much less of it than the Dutch were doing in the west.

Stephan Oberreit, MSF Belgium/France General
Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November
1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006,
Interviewed in 2015, (in French)

On the 1 April 1994, UNPROFOR’s mandate in the former Yugoslavia was extended by six months. The size of the force was increased by 3,500 troops, rather than the 10,000 troops that the UN requested, which the United States rejected for financial reasons.



‘United Nations Authorises Sending 3,500 Additional Blue Helmets,’ **Le Monde** (France), 2 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

On Thursday, 31 March, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for the former Yugoslavia by an additional six months. Because of the United States, however, reinforcement of the mission was limited to 3,500 troops, rather than the 10,000 requested by the Secretary-General. France and Great Britain did succeed in getting the Security Council to declare that this was only a “first step,” and that it would consider the question of reinforcements again one month later “with a view to providing UNPROFOR with the means necessary for implementation of its mandate.” [...] On Wednesday, the United States refused to agree to the total number of troops requested by UNPROFOR commanders in the field and by Mr. Boutros-Ghali, for “financial reasons.”

From late March to late April 1994, Gorazde, the other enclave where there was an MSF team, was targeted in a Bosnian Serb offensive. MSF which had two volunteers in the enclave condemned the constant bombardment of the enclave and described the disastrous situation of its population.

Several weeks after the offensive began, NATO launched air strikes on Gorazde. To dissuade them from doing it again, the Bosnian Serb forces took some UN peacekeepers hostage. That dynamic, with the Bosnian Serb forces pres-

uring UNPROFOR, would repeat itself on a regular basis thereafter. V3



'Bitterness Tinged with Satisfaction in Sarajevo after NATO Air Raid on Serbian Forces Surrounding Gorazde,' *Le Monde* (France), 12 April 1984 (in French).

Extract:

During a mid-afternoon radio link on Sunday, Olivier van Bull, a Belgian doctor with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), confirmed the alarming information from Bosniak authorities. By his account, the right bank of the Drina – where the hospital is located – could come under Serbian control “within the next few hours.” “The population is in state of panic; thousands are fleeing to the western bank. The situation is critical, and we have no way to evacuate the hospital, which shelters 250 wounded,” he said, adding that since morning, the town had been under “constant bombardment.” [...] At 16:30 hours on Sunday, General Rose was informed of the worsening situation by his observers on the ground and finally asked his Commander-in-Chief, General Lapresle, for “close air support” as “civilians, UN military observers, and humanitarian personnel are in danger.” General Lapresle referred the matter to Japanese diplomat Yasushi Akashi, the Secretary-General’s Representative, who decided to request NATO action.

It took the North Atlantic Alliance only 25 minutes to approve the UN’s request and set the air strike procedure in motion. At 18:22 hours, two American F-16 fighters began bombing positions on Bosnian soil for the first time. General Ratko Mladic, Commander of the Serbian Forces, had received two express warnings of the danger his troops would face should they not halt the offensive. His Chief-of-Staff, General Manojlo Milovanovic, merely replied that “no Serbian artillery shells fell [Sunday] on Gorazde.”



'In Response to the NATO Air Strikes, Bosnian Serbs Use Intimidation Against UN Peacekeepers,' *Le Monde* (France), 14 April 1994 (in French).

Extract:

After air strikes against their positions in Gorazde on Sunday and Monday, Bosnian Serb forces announced that they were breaking off all relations with UNPROFOR, and ordered that no UN personnel be allowed past Serbian checkpoints. Result: several thousand UN peacekeepers deployed in Sarajevo found themselves practically confined to the besieged city, where the only way out that did not cross Serbian lines was a back door route leading to the capital’s airport, a route upon which snipers quickly trained their sights on Tuesday.

However, a more serious situation faced the peacekeepers deployed in Serbian-held territory: they became hostages, trapped in hostile territory, separated from their command post and in most cases, denied freedom of movement. [...]

According to Major Roy Thomas, Head of the UN Military Observers (UNMOs), forty observers had been placed under house arrest in Serbian-controlled areas of Bosnia, and another one had simply disappeared, with his interpreter, after leaving the Muslim enclave of Zepa (in eastern Bosnia, northwest of Gorazde) while entering Serbian territory. As Serbian forces had broken off relations with UNPROFOR, efforts to locate the Dutch observer were futile. The forty military observers confined since Monday had been threatened with arrest if they left their homes, which had been under surveillance by Serbian soldiers and police patrols ever since. [...]

Elsewhere, a number of Blue Helmets remained trapped on Tuesday in the hangars being used to store Serbian heavy weapons removed from the hills around Sarajevo since a 20-kilometer exclusion zone was created around the Bosnian capital in February. To deter them from leaving, the Serbian militiamen had placed strings of mines in front of the buildings’ entrances. Serbian forces also used mines to block several companies of Blue Helmets deployed on the hills overlooking Sarajevo. Those men were charged with monitoring the ceasefire, which was for the most part, respected since being signed in February, but was weakened in recent days by mounting tensions. Similarly, elements from the Scandinavian UNPROFOR battalion have been held with their convoy since Sunday afternoon at the Serbs’ Kobiljaca checkpoints, between Kiseljak and Sarajevo. Blocked by mines, the Swedish peacekeepers were forced to sleep in their lorries and survive on nothing but the bottled water brought them by their “captors.” [...]

Humanitarian personnel, for their part, were barred on Tuesday from leaving Serbian territory without authorisation. That was confirmed, during the day, by the UNHCR spokesman in Sarajevo, Chris Janowski, who explained that shipments of humanitarian aid to Banja-Luka, Tuzla, Gorazde, Zepa, and Srebrenica had been suspended due to the closure of Serbian checkpoints. He added that if the shipment of supplies to populations in need did not resume within ten days, the situation would become “critical.”

On 1 March 1994, the Bosnian Muslim and Croatian authorities decided to create a Bosniak-Croat Federation, which would be put in place in the following months. On 26 April 1994, the Contact Group on Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the United States, Russia, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, was created to obtain a ceasefire and revive diplomatic efforts toward a sustainable peace. On 5 July 1994, the Contact Group proposed a new division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, giving 51% of the territory to the Bosniak-Croatian Federation and 49% to the Bosnian Serbs, who rejected it.

In mid-September 1994, the Bosnian Serb forces tightened the siege of Srebrenica, letting through only a quarter of the humanitarian convoys. UN Resolution 943 compli-

cated the situation by leaving logistical and sanitation materials on the list of embargoed goods, despite the fact that these were vital to preparing the enclaves for winter. MSF expressed its concerns to the UN Security Council and prepared a statement for the press.



Message from Eric Stobbaerts, MSF Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia at the MSF Belgrade Desk, 29 September 1994 (in French).

Extract:

- a) Prepare a text in Brussels with the following content:
- 1) MSF condemns the lack of access to Serbian-held Bosnia and the Muslim enclaves for more than two weeks (date of the last convoy). MSF is asking the competent authorities for the right of access and free movement for these humanitarian convoys for the civilian populations of Bosnia, as defined in the Geneva Conventions.
 - b) In the field, the sanitary and medical situation remains urgent in the Muslim enclaves of Gorazde and Srebrenica. These populations have been imprisoned for more than two years. MSF is concerned about this new blockade, which is worsening what is already an extremely precarious situation for these civilian populations. MSF underlines the lack of essential medicines in these places [...], as well as deliveries of food, hygiene products and supplies needed to prepare for winter, jeopardising the survival of these populations left to their own devices. [...]
 - c) In the morning, wait to see whether there is any movement in Pale toward a meeting during the day; contact the ICRC and UNHCR to get their assessment of the situation. Then:
 - if nothing concrete by noon, send the press release
 - if the meeting takes place but little or no satisfactory content, send a press release in the same style but with new information added (something like "again in a week" or "with absurd conditions").



Message from Eric Stobbaerts, MSF Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, to Pierre Salignon, Deputy Programme Manager at MSF France, 8 October 1993 (in French).

Extract:

1) No MSF convoys in the eastern Bosnian enclaves for more than a month. For the past two weeks, systematic refusal by the military authorities to allow MSF convoys through, not to mention the ban on delivery of logistical materials needed to prepare for winter. No movement of our volunteers for the past two weeks, though that seems to have improved in the last few days. Permission was given to travel this weekend of October 10, 1994, and the beginning of next week. But we still have no authorisation for the medicines, which are now running out. No more oxygen in Srebrenica. [...] Winter is here early. It snowed this weekend in Gorazde and Srebrenica. There are still families without shelter since no more logistical mate-

rials are getting into these pockets.

2) [...] Security Council Resolution number 943 [...] addresses the issue of the embargo imposed on Serbian-held Bosnia by the government of Serbia, in the context of acceptance of the latest Bosnia peace plan. [...] It approved the Belgrade government's measures against its neighbour, which consist of a ban on all commercial and military transit, except goods essential for all humanitarian needs: clothing, food, and medicines. Those definitions cannot be adequate, given the rehabilitation and sanitation programmes and the winterisation programmes in Muslim enclaves (and in Republika Srpska). That's where there's a problem. By approving the measures already instituted by Belgrade, it upholds the Belgrade government's limits on international humanitarian action. The resolution is even consistent with the restrictions that the Pale authorities imposed two months ago on humanitarian agencies (MSF, ICRC and UNHCR) convoys of logistical materials headed for eastern Bosnia's Muslim enclaves. We need to ask that the resolution be revised.

3) That ban affects only MSF convoys. Indeed, there was an agreement in Sarajevo last week between the Bosnian Serb and Muslim authorities regarding a prisoner of war exchange (ICRC and unofficial UNHCR presence in Sarajevo). The exchange took place on 6 October. The agreement provides for the exchange of Serbian prisoners [...] in exchange for a delivery of humanitarian aid to the enclaves (mainly food) by UNHCR convoys! Since then, twenty-seven lorries have entered, but none from MSF. [...]

My suggested action strategy for this week:

- Audience with the vice-president of the Serbian Republic to get authorisation for our convoys.
- If refused or impossible or promised in a few days, then an MSF media response (press conference) along the lines of the draft sent a week ago. Also, at the same time, go to the Security Council to get the resolution revised.



Letter from MSF to Sir David Hannay, President of the United Nations Security Council, 13 October 1994 (in English).

Extract:

I would like to draw your attention to the difficulties our organisation is facing in getting relief aid to the civilian populations in eastern Bosnia's Muslim enclaves (Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa) following resolution 943 adopted by the Security Council on September 2nd 1994. As you are aware, this resolution details measures intended to ease international sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). It approves the decision of Belgrade to close the border between the FRY and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It restricts the transit of commercial or military material through the FRY destined for Serbian-held Bosnia, with the exception of "clothes, food, and medication" necessary to cover the humanitarian needs essential for the survival of the civilian population.

However, it must be noted that the list of materials, drawn up by the Security Council, that are exempt from the embargo does not include “logistical and sanitation material”. With the oncoming of a third winter under siege, this type of material is of the utmost necessity for the shelter-repair programmes carried out by our teams in the enclaves of Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa. For this reason we request that, as is in your power, the list of humanitarian materials exempt from the embargo be extended to include the materials necessary to give shelter to the populations in need. These materials are essential for the survival of the enclaves’ civilian populations who are currently living in war-torn shelters. These programs are of an exclusively humanitarian nature, seeking to help 2,000 families who are still living in precarious shelter in Gorazde as well as 1,000 others in Srebrenica. Our Belgrade-based team is unable to transport the logistical material that it has stocked in hangars there (see annexed list). As a result of the inadequate arrival of supplies, our programs in the enclaves have been at a standstill for weeks. Awaiting the vote of a new resolution detailing a more appropriate definition of the humanitarian materials exempt from the embargo and considering the urgency to resume this program before winter, directives could be addressed to the United Nations’ monitors in Ex-Yugoslavia. They could authorise a more flexible application of resolution 943 in the field with regards to logistical material destined for eastern Bosnia’s Muslim enclaves. The future of the enclaves’ 100,000 inhabitants is uncertain and depends on the help of the international community for survival.



Once we managed to get a lorry or team in, the position would gradually begin to harden. It could take one or two or three months, and then it would escalate again. We defended access to the enclaves in several steps, ending with public statements. We did that several times, either from Belgrade, or from Brussels, or Paris. First we would appeal to the UN peacekeepers, then to the government, then to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and then we would take a position in the press. We put out press releases on a regular basis – sometimes just from Belgrade – simply to remind the authorities that we were there.

Dr Renaud Tockert, MSF Belgium Programme Manager in the former Yugoslavia, 1993 and 1995, Interviewed in 2000, (in French)



There were public statements, especially from Belgrade, but no press releases. It was more a response to journalists’ questions. We were extremely cautious. We were really doing everything in little steps: getting access, negotiating to get a foothold from the Belgrade side. And then we were getting to Srebrenica via Belgrade and the border at the edge of Macedonia and the Serbian area, and so everything had to be negotiated. We had to be in the enclaves, so we were trying to stay there. We were backed into a corner, but we weren’t giving up. We tried to be creative, to get medicines through, to maintain ties with the

ICRC and the UNHCR. But we were very frustrated, very worried, by the deteriorating situation. And then there were bombings, wounded – in a word, life in a captive territory.

Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

In December 1994, the situation continued to deteriorate in Srebrenica, where the MSF team was kept at a virtual standstill for over two months, without any supplies. On 12 December, MSF’s general coordinator in the former Yugoslavia who had expressed his concerns to the Agence France Presse a few weeks earlier, asked headquarters to consider a communication campaign. In a press release sent to the western correspondents in Belgrade on 16 December, he reported that another wave of Muslims, victims of ethnic cleansing, had arrived in Tuzla. In retaliation, Bosnian Serb forces refused to let any convoys carrying medicines enter the enclaves for four months, until March 1995.



‘Moslem Enclaves are “Prisons,” Say Charity Doctors,’ *Agence France Presse*, 24 November 1994, (in English).

Extract:

Eric Stobbaerts, who worked for a year in the enclaves of Gorazde and Srebrenica said the estimated 100,000 people living in the enclaves “have been cut off from the outside world for three years.” Speaking to journalists Thursday, Stobbaerts who is the MSF coordinator in ex-Yugoslavia, said that in addition to economic hardship, the population was under enormous psychological pressure to stay put in what he called “prisons open to the sky. The pressure comes from the Serbian army on the outside and from the inside to discourage people from leaving the Bosnian enclaves,” Stobbaerts said. “If the enclaves were opened, the people would leave the region,” Stobbaerts said adding: “there is a risk people will give up and go despite having a right to live in this region. What is more, to leave the region everyone has to pay about 2,000 German marks to the Serbian army.” With the approach of winter, Stobbaerts said the situation of the enclave inhabitants had become critical.

Before the war, Srebrenica housed 6,000 people. There were now 23,000 people trying to survive in the enclave -- 80 percent of them refugees from other villages taken over by the Serbs, he said. In the towns, the people depend entirely on food handouts and MSF medical aid.

But the Serbs have allowed only a minimum of supplies to get through. Stobbaerts said Serb forces only let the odd supply lorry into the enclave when the situation became really desperate.

He said the only foods available in the Moslem enclaves were

flour, oil, tinned meat, and powdered milk. The diet has caused nutrition deficiencies and left the population with lower resistance to disease. Stobbaerts said the number one problem in Srebrenica and Gorazde was access to humanitarian aid. He said MSF was the only non-governmental organisation to be allowed to go into the enclaves. "The people living in the enclaves are in an impossible situation of having to wait for a highly unlikely solution to the crisis. MSF workers there witness the underlying desperation of these people every day," he said.



Message from Eric Stobbaerts, MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, to the MSF Belgium Operations Director, 12 December 1994 (in French).

Extract:

There needs to be a media campaign; a cry of alarm for the civilian populations of the enclaves in eastern Bosnia. The situation is becoming ever more tragic. As you know, we've been at a total standstill for almost two months, with no possibility of a convoy or even expatriate movement. This is longest I've seen since I got here. Again, today the authorisations for the week were refused with no explanation. On Saturday, an MSF Jeep was confiscated as it left Srebrenica. We are still trying to get it back. The teams are like hostages, since they can no longer leave or enter, with no fuel for continuing our programmes and soon no more food. Soon we'll have to think about surviving and perhaps abandoning these populations in danger. For MSF, no logistics convoys since August. What can be done for the people who still don't have shelter for the winter? So the pressure is enormous.

I should add the general insecurity; the sporadic shelling and sniper fire are getting worse each day, and confiscations. [...] Pale's objective is obvious: to push MSF to leave. The ICRC is in the same boat. Only the UNHCR can still manage to get a few pathetic tons of food in, to prevent a famine. This morning, UNPROFOR announced that it doesn't want to escort any more UN humanitarian convoys in eastern Bosnia, because there are too many risks. What underhanded game is in the process of playing out? At what level? We resent an obvious abandonment by these people [UNPROFOR] and little possible recourse from the international community. Can you check with communications in Brussels and Paris to see what can be done? (NB: thanks for coordinating with the field for the security of the teams).



'16 December 1994: Ethnic Cleansing Continues,' **Press Release** from the MSF Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia sent to **Agence France Presse, Reuters, BBC** and **Le Figaro** correspondents in Belgrade, 16 December 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Once again, on Friday 16 December, a hundred people (to be

exact: 39 women, 40 men, and 17 children, added to the 17 other people who have arrived since the beginning of the week) washed up, survivors from an unexpected shipwreck in the Tuzla region. Lost and abandoned by those who were once their neighbours and brothers. We expect another wave this week. They all come from the Bijeljina region, some of the men from a detention camp. After threats and evictions from their own people, they were finally forced to leave. The system is organised and methodical; they pay and then are stripped of their possessions. From the front line, where they are taken and dropped, it is a long walk to the first Muslim village; it can take up to twelve hours. There, the international agencies await them and give them shelter. Many find relatives or friends who take them in under very meagre conditions. Terrified by their new lot and the unknown fate that awaits them, they are apathetic, in shock. They need comfort.



'MSF is Extremely Preoccupied About the Humanitarian Situation in the Enclaves of Eastern Bosnia, Which is Gradually Deteriorating as the Winter Advances,' **Press Release**, MSF Belgrade, 19 December 1994 (in English).

In the month of November, the amount of food allowed to enter the enclaves was equivalent to 905 kg/calories per person per day in Srebrenica and 875 kg/cal in Gorazde (regular amount of calories necessary for a person every day should be roughly 2,500 Kg/cal per person per day). The very few fertile fields are now totally sterile, especially in this season. There is no other input from the outside world. This situation may turn dramatic very soon. MSF is extremely worried and requests access for the humanitarian convoys in order to reach an acceptable standard of life for the enclave population of Eastern Bosnia. MSF also requests access for the winter and rehabilitation materials for the enclaves as a few hundred families are still with no proper shelter and are therefore risking sickness and possible death by cold.



Bijeljina was a Serbian stronghold in Republika Srpska. They forced Bosnian Muslims still living in the area to take in displaced Bosnian Serbs. The Serbs literally took control of the house, preventing the Muslims from burning the furniture for heat or picking vegetables from the garden. Living together was so difficult that eventually the Muslims would want to leave. At that point, they were told, 'if you want to leave, you have to pay.' I think at the time it was 200 Deutsche Marks. They were told, 'there is a charter that will facilitate your transport to the border.' On the other side of the border was Tuzla. Once they had paid they were told, "you can't take all your belongings with you, but you can take your valuables and cross the border.' As they crossed, not the border, but the front line, there was a checkpoint where all their property was taken from them. Some people even arrived without shoes. Eric Stobbaerts, the General Coordinator, happened to be in Tuzla. He saw the wave of deportees arrive, and we put out a press release, not

realising what the consequences would be. For the next four months, we couldn't get a single authorisation to get medicines into the enclaves.

Dr Graciela Diap, MSF Belgium/France Medical Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia, October 1993 to April 1995, Interviewed in 2000 (in French)

In January and February 1995, the Bosnian Serb authorities further increased their demands in terms of what MSF had to provide in Bosnian Serb territory in exchange for being allowed to get relief supplies into the enclaves. MSF continued to refuse to dispense aid without assessing the needs beforehand. Every international leader, who might possibly put pressure on the Bosnian Serb authorities, was informed of these difficulties.



Letter from Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France President and Dr Eric Goemaere, MSF Belgium General Director to the UN and European Officials in Charge of the former Yugoslavia, 12 February 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Today, we would like to draw your attention to the impossibility our organization has been facing for several months in getting relief aid into besieged territories of Srebrenica, Gorazde, and Zepa. This situation is the result of the continuous blockade imposed by the Bosnian Serb authorities on the humanitarian convoys of Médecins sans Frontières in violation of the general right of humanitarian initiative provided for by the Geneva Convention to impartial organizations (art. 9 GC 1,2,3, art. 10 GC 4). Accessibility to the areas has always been difficult, but has become totally impossible over the last few months. The humanitarian situation is now critical:

- For more than 3 months (since early November 1994), our organisation has been refused access to supply the enclaves with medicine and medical material. Given that Médecins sans Frontières is the main supplier of medicines in these enclaves, there are now major shortages of basic medicines (see annex: list of medicines in shortage sent by our medical teams in Gorazde and Srebrenica). As a result, the health of these besieged populations is at high risk, especially that of children and the elderly.
- Concerning winterization programs, since August 1994, all the programs have been greatly limited by the systematic refusal of the Bosnian Serb authorities to allow convoys with logistical, sanitation, and rehabilitation items into the enclaves. This increases the precarious situation and misery in which these civilian populations live.
- Médecins sans Frontières has also been following the general food supply coming into the enclaves in order to monitor possible risks of malnutrition or other health related problems. The figures for the end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995 are low considering international standards of 2,000

kg/cal per person, per day. In fact, UN food convoys were allowed in only in strict and insufficient quantity in the last months, creating a general weakening of the civilian population (see figures in annex).

In 1994, on our way to the enclaves, Médecins sans Frontières teams have also been victims of several instances of totally arbitrary confiscation of humanitarian supplies considered by Bosnian Serb authorities as strategic elements (6 bottles of oxygen, 68 boxes of drugs, communication and protection materials, boxes of food for the Médecins sans Frontières team, 1 Toyota vehicle). This has hampered the impact of our relief operations. The Pale authorities have been 'investigating' the situation for several months now and have promised to give back the confiscated items.

The problems mentioned above clearly indicate the denial of humanitarian principles as stated in the Geneva Convention, and the various UN resolutions on the protection of the so-called 'safe areas.' Because our supplies and our humanitarian activities remain substantial for the sake of these besieged populations of eastern Bosnia and because the situation may soon be dramatic, we request your support in helping us to solve the present problem with regard to the Bosnian Serb authorities.



Letters from UN and European Officials in Charge of the former Yugoslavia to Dr Philippe Biberson, MSF France President and Dr Eric Goemaere, MSF Belgium General Director (in English).

Extract:

From the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, 24 February 1995

Thank you for your letter [...] conveying information [...]. This information is most useful with regard to our evaluation of the situation in Bosnia for our work in the Security Council.

From the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN, 28 February 1995

The Russian Federation is deeply concerned [...]. The Security Council has been made aware of this matter and issued a number of Presidential Statements. The Council is going to keep the situation under review on a constant basis.

From the UN International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, 28 February 1995

However, the Contact Group of five nations has been the main political vehicle for dealing with Bosnian Serbs for nearly a year now. [...] Your information would, therefore, best be made directly to the five governments' ministers dealing with foreign affairs.

From National Security Council of the USA, 9 March 1995

I share your concern and frustrations and hold in very high regard all your organisation has done to ease the suffering of so many in Bosnia. [...] We have little leverage over the Bosnian Serbs. We will, however, continue to call for the unhindered flow of humanitarian aid throughout Bosnia.



Letter from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Welfare of the Republika Srpska to UNICEF, PSF⁶, MDM, MSF Sarajevo, 22 February 1995 (in English).

Extract:

We are not at all satisfied with your explanation that this aid, in principle, is planned according to needs and your assessments in the field, respectively, and not according to the real ratio of the number of inhabitants and the number of health institutions which are under the control of the authorities in Sarajevo and those under the control of the authorities in the Republika Srpska. My colleagues have tried at several meetings to call your attention to these facts and to the, according to our opinion, unequal treatment of the Serbian side with regard to the aid division provided by you. Unfortunately, except for UN WHO and UNHCR, other organisations have not shown enough understanding for our arguments and we will very soon be in the position to check [stop] completely our cooperation with them.



Message from MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia to MSF Brussels & Paris, 24 February 1995 (in English).

Extract:

To summarize - Now it is clear for me: this issue is not MSF. All the negotiation about a document, political aspect of our declaration, the plan of distribution for the middle of March is just a trick to gain time; the only tool that the civilian authorities can officially use.

This issue is military. The real threat of a BiH [Bosnia and Herzegovina] offensive before the end of the ceasefire is the reason. Militarily speaking, you better cut the supply of medical items rather than food to weaken an army. Medicines will therefore be refused for all agencies. This is why for example, UNHCR refused unlabelled MSF medicines, and why the Dutchbat convoy with PSF/MSF-H from Tuzla was refused, and ICRC clearance refused. [...] So let's stop being paranoid and let's prepare for an emergency.

We discussed the need of airdrops, maybe (because BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] hates airdrops) just as a tool to force some convoys in. It is the only solution left. I will be in contact with Karen to forward necessary information. Movements of expatriate staff will be a tough part too (because it is medical staff) but should be solved. I have put all efforts to get this matter solved for tomorrow. Let's see the results.



The Mission, n° 198, Satirical MSF France Newsletter, 26 June 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Ex-Yugo. That's it, we finally got authorisation from the

Bosnian Serbs for teams to leave and enter Srebrenica and Gorazde. The rotation happened this weekend in Srebrenica, not yet for Gorazde; we'll believe it when we see it (like Saint Whatchamacallit). The Srebrenica guys, led by Pierre Onion Soup-with-Croutons (Salignon), who is in Pale for the event, obviously didn't waste any time toasting the end of their military service [...] As a reminder, we have two people in Gorazde and three in Srebrenica. For them, it's like getting out of prison. Just as well. But, sad for the people they're leaving behind bars. On a totally unrelated note, we have also donated a small number of supplies to not just the military, but also to the Serbian military hospitals in the Sarajevo region. Those very polite Bosnian Serb military authorities sent us their heartfelt thanks. Yuck!



Message from Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager to the MSF France Communications Department, 27 June 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Greetings from Pale

We just read the latest issue of *The Mission*, and one can say that we were at the very least surprised by the ex-Yugo section. While we're familiar with *The Mission's* provocative tone, that doesn't give you permission to say anything and everything. [...] You made reference to a donation to military – and moreover, Serbian military hospitals??? If it makes you happy, write stupidities by all means. But allow us to respond. [...]

There is a war for the past three years. That the Serbs are responsible for it, that's one thing. That the populations are suffering is another thing, and what difference does it make which community they belong to? In case you didn't already know, MSF has a programme in eastern Bosnia (the Serbian-held part) to distribute medicines to thirty health care facilities (private hospitals, clinics, and five pharmacies for refugees). That programme is currently working better and has real medical value/impact for the civilian population, whether you believe it or not. The ICRC deals with the hospitals and war-wounded, in particular, that is their mandate.

It's also important to know that for the past several weeks, the nature of the war here has been changing. Not to forget the Serbs' responsibilities in this conflict and the massacres committed in 1992 and '93. [...] Now there are two armies fighting each other and willing to do anything to win. It's a dirty war and each side uses unsavoury methods. There have been many victims on both sides these past few weeks – civilian and military. Which clearly explains why we may make emergency donations, even if some people don't like seeing MSF treat Serbian civilians or soldiers. [...] You have read the Charter, haven't you???



We brought the list of medicines we wanted to distribute to the Bosnian Serb leaders, and they told us, 'OK, we're going to do it 70/30 – 70% for the Serbs and 30% for the Bosniaks.' We replied that we didn't talk about percentages but about needs. We told them what situation we found in Republika Srpska and what supplies we planned on providing. Then we told them what the situation was on the other side, and gave them the list of medicines we felt we needed to deliver. Then began the 'clearance' procedure – total bureaucracy! We needed a 'clearance' for the lorry, and one for the driver, and one for the person accompanying the delivery, one for the medicines we were transporting and one for the date. Most of the time, we would have everything ready and the 'clearances' would be denied. Once, the person in charge was in the process of signing the infamous 'clearance' when I saw a mushroom cloud erupt, through the window behind him. It was the first NATO air strike. The guy turned around, picked up the paper, and ripped it to shreds. I felt like crying. One fine morning we would receive the authorisation and take off. Then we might find ourselves waiting at a checkpoint, sometimes until the next day. And sometimes there were anti-tank mines along the way, and the soldiers would taunt us saying, 'we can't move them, but you're welcome to get out and remove them yourselves.' The situation in the enclaves was so critical that when we came alone, we would just leave the drugs from our own emergency kits.

Dr Graciela Diap, MSF Belgium/France Medical Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia, October 1993 to April 1995, Interviewed in 2000 (in French)

While fighting broke out pretty much everywhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina, questions were again being raised at MSF about the organisation's role in the enclaves. For months, MSF's General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia observed that most of the foreign military leaders, diplomats, and journalists in the former Yugoslavia resigned themselves to the idea that the enclaves were obstacles to the peace process.

In the April issue of *Contact*, MSF Belgium's in-house newsletter, he wondered whether MSF wasn't acting as doctor-jailer in the enclaves, and shouldn't speak out on behalf of those who wanted to leave.



Minutes MSF-France Board of Directors Meeting, 24 February 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The situation in the enclaves is becoming increasingly difficult. The teams have been running out of medical supplies (for two months) and logistical supplies (for five months). We've stepped up every possible type of pressure for getting supplies in, and are thinking that if we don't succeed, we may have to pull the teams out, because once they have nothing left, it will become extremely dangerous for them. That is a painful possibility.

The new teams arrived, and found themselves ill prepared for the situation. They have nevertheless, found enough to do medical work, and the morale is a bit better. Generally speaking, the situation is getting worse, and we have been very tough in insisting on not paying the Serbs compensation in exchange for what goes into the enclaves. Other humanitarian actors are less demanding. As an example, we estimate that 30% of what the UN WHO sends goes to the Serbs. There is supposedly an evacuation programme for the wounded that has never functioned, except in exchange for prisoners or convoys going to the Serbian-held areas. We pulled out of that system and took a lot of grief for it from the UNHCR and the ICRC (and from NGOs in general). We are very isolated, because there's haggling going on everywhere. The enclaves are now a strategic – rather than military – issue. We have no good solution for now.



Infomatin, MSF Belgium's in-house morning update, 22 March 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The war context is felt everywhere; the US has rearmed the Bosnian Muslims. In the enclaves, the situation is desperate. The people really are imprisoned, and have lost all hope; dying means nothing to them anymore. They themselves say they are condemned to death. Though there is still enough (but limited) food and medicine, the Serbian strategy is to let supplies dribble in slowly, the better to paralyze the population.

MSF should change its strategy, and do more to give the lives of these confined, desperate people some meaning. In Pale (Bosnian Serb HQ), eight MSFers spent five days negotiating with the authorities. They reached an agreement for transporting aid to the enclaves; it requires the NGOs to report, month by month, the materials to be brought in. A first convoy made it into Srebrenica and Gorazde, which allowed a rotation in teams and a few tons of provisions and medicines to enter. In conclusion, we absolutely must start talking about the enclaves again, and be more aggressive in our public statements (a meeting on Bosnia will be scheduled very soon).



'On MSF's Role in the Eastern Bosnian Enclaves,' Eric Stobbaerts, MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, Sarajevo, Pale, February 1995, published in **Contact**, MSF Belgium's in-house newsletter, April 1995 (in French).

The tone and the author may surprise some of you. It is the result of enormous frustration while awaiting the outcome of endless negotiations to resume our activities in eastern Bosnia at a more sustained pace. It is certainly not a cry of surrender; after all, our paper's motto is "A luta continua!" Having come to the end of a more than fifteen-month mission that grabbed me and tore my insides out, into which I threw myself, body and soul, an unexpected thought suddenly came

to me from somewhere deep inside: what role are we led to play in our intervention in eastern Bosnia? [...]

What does the future hold?

Ultimately, as everyone knows, these enclaves have no future. Everyone has surrendered, even that hypocrite, the international community, which was so strongly opposed to dividing the communities at the start of the conflict. Now it is the one proposing the division, and in very meticulous fashions. The besieged population does not believe in it either. Roughly 70% wanted to leave. The fact is that while these populations are under siege by the Serbian Army, they are now also under siege by the authorities in the enclaves. So it is a double-siege. Should we continue to remain silent about the fact that this summer, for example, the Gorazde enclave authorities killed a grandmother and granddaughter as they tried to cross the Serbian frontline? The political and diplomatic stakes that these enclaves represent are obvious both for Pale and Sarajevo.

What part are we playing?

On one hand, we are serving Pale's interests by ensuring the stability of (not improving) the health status of the populations-cum-bargaining chips, thus sparing the torturer a humanitarian scandal that would attract too much attention. On the other hand, we are a part of Sarajevo's (yet unclear) political designs, by complying with their expeditious methods and neglecting the essential: above all, this population wants its freedom.

Should MSF play the role of jailer/prison doctor, in the service of two parties in conflict? Shouldn't we speak out on behalf of those who want to leave, those who want to be free again, those who are being imprisoned against their will for an ideal they no longer believe in? What has happened to Bosnia, that multi-ethnic ideal that is being gradually chipped away at by ethnic cleansing on both sides – an ideal now reduced to the shape and size of downtown Sarajevo, and in such a state?! Isn't it time to start thinking differently, thinking objectively, by going back to the principles that brought us here, and by grasping the suffering of these populations?

Shouldn't we think that the fate of 100,000 refugees on peaceful, unified soil is more beneficial (in human terms) – soil where they can enjoy their freedom and their right to be human? What is the fate of 100,000 people doomed to live in a half-human, half-animal state, drained of their substance, that is, their wholeness? Shouldn't we be appalled at the comment from a 19-year-old woman, a refugee [displaced] in Srebrenica who said, "having to wait another one year or ten years, what does it matter?" Maybe it's premature to go deeper into that thought or make it our own, but on the eve of the new offensive everyone is 'expecting' this spring, it is justified. What is the price for defending an ideal? Will History thank us for it? We owe it to ourselves to think about that, at any rate, if only to reaffirm the basis of our involvement in these end-of-millennium ghettos.

 Since 1994, the people have understood that given its encirclement, its geographic location, too close to and too anchored in the Republika Srpska, and close to the Yugoslav border, Srebrenica was going to be an issue, a bargaining chip, and would fall into Serbian hands in a political deal for a peace agreement. The people understood that if they could not stay, that they would leave. When I left the enclave [in April 1994], I was convinced that it wouldn't hold, that they wouldn't keep Srebrenica and the region for themselves. However, like the people themselves, we were naïve enough to think that they would ensure the population's safety and protection.

Graziella Godain, MSF France/Belgium Field Coordinator in Srebrenica, October 1993 to April 1994, Interviewed in 2000 (in French)

 I was in regular contact with the United Nations, journalists, UNPROFOR leaders, diplomats, etc. To all those people, as the months went by (and it became very clear in the winter of '94 and early '95), Srebrenica and the other enclaves had become an obstacle to the peace process. Obviously they never said it in writing or at an official meeting, but everyone had given up on the possibility of a multi-ethnic Bosnia. In that sense, the Serbs had won. In January 1995, no convoys were getting in. We reached the point of thinking that there would have to be airdrops. MSF had always criticised that, but we were in such a predicament – we didn't even have any aspirin in the pharmacy – we decided to ask the United Nations to parachute medicines into Srebrenica. I went to see General Smith, the Head of UNPROFOR, who basically told me that the international community wasn't ready to risk a third world war to get aspirin into Srebrenica.

In 1993, the population in Srebrenica was made up of rural IDPs [internally displaced people]. They had the strength, the will to be there. Beyond suffering the inhumane situation they were in, they understood the reason for the enclave's existence, and that being there was a way to fight for recognition of a multi-ethnic Bosnia. However, as month after terrible month of dreadful life went by, the situation changed. During my last visit to Srebrenica before I left (in April 1995), things were a bit more formal because I was leaving, people were saying to me, 'thank you MSF for everything you are doing, but what we really want is to leave, we want to go back to our people.' In the meantime, a state was created in Bosnia-Herzegovina, based on an agreement between the Croats and the Muslims. There was a kind of stabilisation in central Bosnia, and the people of Srebrenica were talking differently.

I made a kind of empirical synthesis between what the diplomats were saying and what the people of Srebrenica were saying, and I told myself that ultimately, at MSF, we were becoming doctors for Serbian prisons. I don't think we realised that in time. To me, MSF's job was to be attuned to the population, and in the case of Srebrenica we were not attuned enough. During my debriefing at headquarters, I suggested that we recommend moving the population and that we ask that the people of Srebrenica be allowed to rejoin their people, since that's what they were asking for. I was met with a chorus of

disapproval. I was told, "That is not MSF's mandate, and it would be playing into the Serbs' hands."

I'm angry at myself for having left at that moment. The person who was supposed to replace me wasn't available, so they split my position in two. They temporarily put one coordinator in Belgrade and another in Split, and beefed up their job description. So Srebrenica was being coordinated from Belgrade. Yet, a lot of the contacts for Srebrenica were in Sarajevo and Zagreb, not Belgrade. Aside from the managers at headquarters, no one had a good overall view of the situation anymore. They didn't travel to the field every week to gather information. That reorganisation lost us information.

Eric Stobbaerts, MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, December 1993 to April 1995, Interviewed in 2000, (in French).



"It's a good thing that MSF went to the enclave with Morillon, stayed there, developed all these medical activities, fought to bring in doctors and live there, close to the people. I really think the most important factor was our presence there. But I think our presence may also have had a negative effect by giving the impression that everything was going well. The people of Srebrenica didn't want to stay; they wanted to go to Tuzla. MSF was aware of this but didn't share the information. Why not? Because we felt it was important for the population to be respected and maybe also because of MSF's arrogance, i.e. it was pleased with itself for being in the enclave, 'the place where it should be', without really analysing the people's suffering. And it's important to acknowledge that."

Dr Graciela Diap, MSF Belgium/France Medical Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia, October 1993 to April 1995, Interviewed in 2000, (in French)



"The enclave issue came up many times during meetings of the MSF board of directors, of which I was a member. The vice president at the time raised the question, 'Isn't MSF like the condemned person's last meal?' That's exactly how he put it. We talked about requesting the evacuation of the population, but we ruled out that idea because we realised it was completely unrealistic and impractical. There was no political agreement on the matter and discussing it publicly would prevent us from entering the enclaves in the short term and result in a loss of contact."

Dr Renaud Tockert, Programme Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia for MSF Belgium, 1993-1995 interviewed in 2000, (in French)



"I don't remember discussing evacuations. It wasn't something the national political leaders involved in this issue were even willing to consider."

I often saw the [UN]HCR representative. We discussed the situation of the people stuck in these enclaves. They were completely dependent and living in a sort of little Warsaw Ghetto reminiscent of the worst period and wondering what was going to happen next. But everyone was blocked by the political deal and balance of power, which was evolving along with military operations, such as airstrikes and troop deployments that froze certain positions. And no one talked about the political deal even though everyone knew it was a real disgrace and a solution had to be found.

Pierre Salignon, Deputy Programme Manager, MSF France, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

At the same time, the relationship between the MSF Srebrenica's team and Opstina, the Bosnian Muslim civil authority that governed the city, was put under the spotlight over the selection of local staff employed by MSF. The Bosnian municipal authorities were demanding the resignation of the logistician, an employee who was essential for organising operations and who had resisted corruption. He was summoned to join the Bosnian army under threat of imprisonment. This dispute had gradually extended to other members of the MSF staff.



Message from the MSF Coordinator in Srebrenica to the MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, 9 March 1995 (in English)

Extract:

CC MEETING

They want:

1/ [to] remove our logistician; he received a letter saying that he has to be present on [9/3 at 08:00 at the school otherwise prison; He is the one with the most responsibilities in the MSF mission

2 / rotation of all MSF staff; a list of our staff with the quantity and qualifications of the staff we need in the future has to be given to them. Deadline: in 2 to 3 days; in 15 days all staff will be changed

3/ it is not an attack against MSF but it is cc]'d to] local staff of all organisations.

WHY? (Our conclusion)

- They want to show their power;
- They want to have their persons on the key positions of the organisations, and so controlling everything;
- Ask [for] some taxes on the salaries



Letter from the MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia to the Ministry of Defence representative in Srebrenica, 24 April 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Practically, the confusing situation I exposed and the ongoing drafting of our staff obliged us to cancel some of our activities, due to lack of logistic support.

- rehabilitation program
- hospital maintenance
- all activities cannot not depend on pharmacy, as the main warehouse has no storekeeper anymore. 12 clinics are out of hygiene products, 6 of them are more or less not accessible as one of our vehicles is broken, and [there is] nobody for repairs.

The doctors have, in addition to their medical duties, to fill and maintain the hospital generator, as the vehicles as well. [...] [As we are] Unable to render some essential help to the population, I estimate that the situation cannot [...] [continue]...without consequences for our general relief operation.

Believing in a common willingness to bring up all the necessary conditions to restart our programs, we keep on expecting a positive answer for an open discussion.



Minutes of the MSF Operations Meeting, 6 June 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Srebrenica: Our staff will be drafted into the Bosnian army. [There is] a problem concerning the team on the one hand and the 'replacement' staff that will be imposed on us on the other. We plan to change the job descriptions to reduce the local employees' responsibilities.



Monthly Report June 1995, MSF Srebrenica, 8 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Not only the fact that lack of human resources and medicines and medical material are blocking the activities, also the ongoing problem with the Opstina makes it difficult to offer sufficient assistance to the population.

There seems to be no compromise possibility from their side and Meho and Mohamed (two very important log workers) are not allowed anymore in our house, discussions are being held on the level of Sarajevo. 30% of the workers in civil structures will be withdrawn from their jobs.

What is the relation between civilian administration and military?



"We had serious problems with the Opstina, or municipality, which was very vindictive. The majority of the

population was depressed while Bosnian soldiers were on edge. The Opstina started to forcibly conscript men and we began to have trouble keeping our male staff. We had to resist when they wanted to enlist our employees to carry out their commando raids on Serbian positions. Most of them didn't want to participate in these operations and we also needed them for our work. Providing medical care for 45,000 people was a huge undertaking and there were only four to six expatriates."

Graziella Godain, MSF France/Belgium Field Coordinator in Srebrenica, October 1993 to April 1994, Interviewed in 2000 (in French)

From 15 April, the Bosnian Serb authorities again began to reject any rotation of MSF expatriate teams working in the enclaves of Gorazde and Srebrenica. In Belgrade in early June, MSF released information to the press on the deteriorating situation in the enclave, which was again under bombardment.

The Pale authorities tried to make staff rotation contingent on the organisation putting them in touch with French political leaders. MSF refused.



"The Humanitarian Situation is Worsening in the Enclaves" **Agence France Presse**, Belgrade, 5 June 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Bosnian Serb intransigence coupled with increased fighting in eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina have led to a sharp deterioration in the humanitarian situation of Bosnian Moslem "safe havens" there, an aid official said here Monday. The last food convoy to reach the Srebrenica enclave did so six weeks ago, and stocks are running out also in Gorazde, Stephane Oberreit the chief aid coordinator in Belgrade of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, Doctors without Borders) said. Oberreit said fighting in eastern Bosnia was playing havoc with MSF's programme, while the Bosnian Serbs were making it increasingly difficult for MSF to coordinate an effective staff rotation plan.

The Bosnian Serb authorities "are not delivering the necessary authorisations to enable the planned personnel replacements," Oberreit said adding that this was making it "impossible at the moment to rotate (MSF) teams."



Message from MSF Pale to MSF Srebrenica, 20 June 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Their proposition was that MSF B/F asks the French government to contact [...] Pale to [exert] pressure [...] to have the rotation. This contact will give him the opportunity to have

contact with the representatives of French diplomats. They hope that it will open new channels of negotiation and contacts.

Imagine our surprise to hear this speech even if we understand that there is a crisis between civilian and military authorities in RS [Republika Srpska]. To be clear, they are trying to involve us in political matter[s] out[side] of our [jurisdiction]. The whole thing is touchy as you can imagine. We must have new meetings with them tomorrow. After discussions with HQs, we are thinking that this blackmail is hardly acceptable. [...]

There are two ways of solving this.

First, the unacceptable one, which is to put our team in the enclaves, that's you, as a kind of merchandise between Serbs negotiators and French "occidental" diplomatic intervention over which we have no control at all, knowing that the Serbs will play this game very professionally – as they did with the blue helmets – and even more, putting an additional constraint on all future activities in the enclaves, as they can use this manipulation every time they want... for any event they want.

Second, a difficult one, which is to refuse this burglar type of bargain and say that we stick to our position: ask for access, a normal team rotation and continuation of all humanitarian activities knowing that... this could very quickly have a boomerang effect on different levels: in and out clearance for enclave and Pale teams, not probable but possible security constraints, maybe [staff would be] taken as temporary hostages, maybe even expulsion from the enclaves and Serb Republic, you just name it.

If there followed an unacceptable Serb reaction to this proposal, then we might have to take other measures, which we will not discuss here and now, but which we are already preparing.

We want to defend the second proposal tomorrow and keep you updated on any new development which follows during the day.

This implies that we would also ask you to play this business though, as we are doing here, and that there is no [deviation from] the official message. We know this is quite a hard bottom line for you all, we know that you are tired, fed up [...], but can you still hold on for a week or more?

We will do everything that lies in our power to back you up as much as possible.



"When MSF entered the enclaves in 1993, there must have been five staff members in Srebrenica and three in Gorazde. In May 1995, we were only allowed three staff positions in Srebrenica and two in Gorazde. And we had to wait for volunteers to receive authorisation to enter so that the others could leave. After a while, those in the enclave under bombardment began to fall apart. They were in tears when we spoke to them by radio. I sang them songs to keep their spirits up and make them laugh..."

I spent three weeks trying to receive the authorisations necessary for rotating personnel and bringing in supplies. These negotiations were a bit surreal. We met Serbs living in chalets surrounded by huge bodyguards. Our contact person was Nikola Kolievic, Vice President of Republika Srpska and a professor of English literature. He asked us to put him in contact with French President Jacques Chirac and give him his phone number. I refused, explaining that MSF was a non-governmental organisation.

After a while, I realised that I had to give something up so I told him that we couldn't go below two volunteers in Srebrenica. He answered "Very good, that's an argument that will help me." Once the rotation took place, I called him to let him know and thank him and he told me he was very happy and was coming to celebrate with us! He came carrying bottles of alcohol even though he was already completely drunk. I asked his armed bodyguard to stay outside. So we spent the evening with Kolievic, who sang French songs to us and told us his life story. It was completely surreal."

Stephan Oberreit, MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015 (in French).



When Stephan and I were in Pale in June 1995, we saw a great number of things. We saw UN cars and we heard that a certain UN official had visited the White House, the small chalet that housed the Bosnian Serb parliament. We had no idea what they discussed because we weren't there. But Kolievic told us that 'they were negotiating. The war is almost over and we're going to get practically everything we want... Yes, there's a deal on Srebrenica'. He didn't tell us, 'we signed this in exchange for that' but he did give us phone and fax numbers while saying, 'here, give this to Mr Chirac'. It was completely muddle-headed and very manipulative – just to see how far we were willing to go."

Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

In late March, the United Nations Secretary-General asked the Security Council to replace UNPROFOR with three peacekeeping forces, one of them responsible for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which would remain under a general command.

In mid-April, two soldiers from UNPROFOR's French contingent were killed by snipers.



'Three Separate Peacekeeping Forces to Replace UNPROFOR' *Agence France Presse/Reuters*, 27 March 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Moreover, the UN Secretary-general asked the Security Council to replace UNPROFOR with three separate peacekeeping forces in Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia as of 31 March. A headquarters serving as a liaison between the three operations in Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia will nevertheless be maintained in Zagreb under the general command and control of Japanese diplomat [and UN secretary-general's personal representative on the war in the former Yugoslavia] Yasushi Akashi and French General Bernard Janvier. [...]

The headquarters will also act as liaison with the Belgrade government and the other governments involved in the conflict as well as NATO, which conducts air operations in the region. [...] In the field, a week of intense fighting has allowed Bosnian government forces to seize several strategic positions while Bosnian Serb forces retaliated by bombing several cities, including safe areas.

WITNESSING THE FALL OF THE "SAFE AREA"

On 24 May, Bosnian Serbs bombed Sarajevo again. Disagreement and indecision held sway at the UN about whether to retaliate with air strikes. The United States which did not have troops on the ground, pushed for air operations. The Member States with contingents in UNPROFOR feared for their soldiers' lives.

On 25 May, NATO finally conducted air strikes. Bosnian Serb forces responded by bombing the safe areas of Tuzla, Srebrenica, Gorazde and Bihac and by taking hundreds of UN peacekeepers hostage, whom they used as human shields to discourage further strikes.



'Where and Who are the Hostages?' *Le Monde* (France), 28 May 1995 (in French).

Extract:

To stop the NATO air raids, which struck targets near their Pale stronghold on Thursday and Friday 25-26 May, the Bosnian Serbs have turned UN soldiers into human shields. According to the UN, 145 peacekeepers, including 103 French soldiers and 22 UN military observers, were still held captive by Bosnian Serb militias on Saturday morning, totalling 167

hostages. They were held at weapons collection points located at 12 different sites around Sarajevo, but some were taken to an "unknown destination".

The last group of peacekeepers held hostage by the Bosnian Serb forces were freed on 18 June. In its 23 June edition, The New York Times reported that, according to western officials, France secretly negotiated their release in return for four of their prisoners and for assurances to the Bosnian Serbs that NATO would not carry out further air strikes.



'Pale Releases UN troops' *Agence France Presse*, 19 June 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The case involving the UN peacekeepers and observers taken hostage by Bosnian Serbs is now over. A final group of 26 soldiers arrived early yesterday evening in Serbia. The group, made up of 15 observers from different countries, including one from Belgium (Commander Guy Schandeler), and 11 Canadian peacekeepers, were handed over in Pale to Jovica Stanisic, Serbian President Milosevic's special envoy. [...] The first group of 120 prisoners had been released on 2 June and 111 others five days later. In Sarajevo, UNPROFOR announced that most of the peacekeepers that had been surrounded since 25 May in several positions located in Serbian-controlled areas had left these positions.



'France Held Secret Talks with Serbs' Roger Cohen, *The New York Times* (USA) 23 June 1995 (in English).

Extract:

France negotiated for the release of United Nations soldiers taken hostage by the Bosnian Serbs even as the United Nations and Western governments were insisting that their release must be unconditional, Western officials said today. In return for the release of the United Nations soldiers, which included many French troops, the Bosnian Serbs apparently received assurances that NATO warplanes would not make further air strikes on Serb positions. Another part of the deal seems to have opened the way for long-stalled deliveries of food to besieged Muslim enclaves, the officials said. The officials said Gen. Bernard Janvier, the French commander of United Nations forces in the former Yugoslavia, twice met secretly with Gen. Ratko Mladic, the commander of the Bosnian Serbs, during the hostage crisis. The meetings took place on June 4 in Zvornik, on Bosnia's border with Serbia, and on June 17 in the Bosnian Serbs' headquarters at Pale, near Sarajevo.

In addition, the officials said, Gen. Bertrand de Lapresle, the former commander of United Nations forces, was sent from

Paris to Bosnia, where he held a meeting with Bosnian Serb leaders about the release of the hostages. The troops had been seized by the Bosnian Serbs after NATO air raids on a Serbian ammunition depot.

Throughout this period, France was among the governments publicly insisting that no private deals would be made with the Serbs.

"The French took the leading role in securing the hostages' release," one official said. "The deal that freed them was done in the meetings with General Janvier and General de Lapresle." The idea of holding secret talks with the Bosnian Serbs was firmly resisted by Lieut. Gen. Rupert Smith, the British commander of United Nations forces in Bosnia. The officials said the British officer was invited to the meeting on June 4 in Zvornik but refused to go. Tensions have been growing between General Smith's headquarters in Sarajevo and those of General Janvier in Zagreb, Croatia.

The terms of the deal hammered out by the French generals are now clear. The meeting on June 4 in Zvornik, which took place just over a week after the hostages were seized, was followed by a statement on June 9 in which the United Nations abruptly declared it would strictly abide by peacekeeping principles – a firm signal that no more NATO air strikes would occur.

This was the first demand of General Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs.

The officials said the French role in negotiating this guarantee was underscored this week when President Boris N. Yeltsin of Russia said he had been assured by President Jacques Chirac of France that air strikes in Bosnia were over. The officials said the meeting on June 17 in Pale between General Janvier and General Mladic established the final details. It allowed the last hostages to be released the next day in exchange for four Serbs captured by French soldiers during a battle for a United Nations position in Sarajevo on May 27. Two French soldiers were killed in that battle.

The officials said that in exchange for his flexible attitude, General Janvier received a promise from General Mladic that he would allow United Nations food convoys to travel into Muslim enclaves.



'French Deny Seeking 'Bargain' with Serbs *The New York Times* (USA) 24 June 1995 (in English).

Extract:

France said today that it had met with all warring sides in Bosnia to press for the release of United Nations peacekeepers held hostage by Serbs but that it had not negotiated or bargained for their freedom.

The comments were made in response to an article on Friday in *The New York Times* that said French officials had negotiated with Bosnian Serbs to free more than 320 peacekeepers seized in May. [...]

Yves Doutriaux, a Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman, said today in Paris that Gen. Bernard Janvier, the United Nations commander for the former Yugoslavia, and Gen. Bertrand de Lapresle, his predecessor, "transmitted by various means

France's message of firmness: the immediate and unconditional liberation of all the hostages."

"There were neither negotiations, nor bargaining," Mr. Doutriaux added.

In early June, at France's initiative, a 1,000-troop Rapid Reaction Force independent of UNPROFOR was created. Its mission was to defend UN peacekeepers.



'West Takes Action in Bosnia' *Le Monde* (France), 6 June 1995 (in French).

Extract:

In view of UNPROFOR's paralysis, the West, mainly the European countries, had little choice. Either they accepted the defeatism of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who was willing to appease the Serbs by limiting UNPROFOR to a miniscule humanitarian role while ignoring its mission to protect the Bosnian civilian population, or they would work outside the UN framework to create an independent armed force, similar to the United States' effort in Haiti, to make the Serbs see reason, without being bound by the cumbersome UN system. Meeting on Saturday 3 June in Paris at France's initiative, defence ministers of the countries participating in UNPROFOR chose an intermediate solution.

They set up a respectable force of several thousand troops that they called a 'Rapid Reaction Force' (RRF). Its objectives are to defend the UN peacekeepers, prevent them from being humiliated or taken hostage again, and allow them to carry out their mission.

These troops will not operate under the banner of the United Nations but will be wearing the uniforms of their own country's armed forces. The RRF will continue to work with the UN, however. Technically, the RRF is at the disposal of French General Bernard Janvier, head of UN peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia, and the UK's Rupert Smith, UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia.

On 3 June, Bosnian Serb forces seized the peacekeepers' Slapovici observation point, located in the Srebrenica enclave. On 24 June, Bosnian Serb paramilitary troops attacked the village.

The population's situation began to deteriorate; the few relief convoys that arrived only met 30% of the enclave's food needs.



Monthly report June 1995, MSF Srebrenica, 8 July 1995 (in English).(edited)

Extract:

It has been clearly seen this month that Srebrenica is not demilitarized, many young men show up in new uniforms and from the beginning the presence of armed fighters made it clear that they are prepared to defend the enclave, which of course raises the tension.

Single incidents like shelling of a certain place, exchanges of shooting, some detonations take place every day, but it is more of a kind of terrorism than obvious targeting.

One observation point ...of the blue helmets in Slapovici was taken by BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] on 3 June by force. They promised not to take more...

The UN opened two new OP's [Observation post] close to the taken one.

On 24 June some paramilitary entered in the enclave through ...[an] ...old 5Km long tunnel and attacked the village.

Emergency preparedness seems to be the [current priority]: we should be prepared for any kind of scenario (i.e Dutchbat [Dutch UN peacekeepers] leaving)

1. Population condition

a. Food

During the whole month of June, four convoys of food could enter the enclave. The fact that this is 30% of the amount needed speaks for itself.

WITNESSING THE FALL OF THE ENCLAVE

On 24 June, a two-person medical team comprising nurse and field manager Christina Schmitz and doctor Daniel O'Brien were finally authorised to enter Srebrenica to replace their three colleagues, who left the enclave. Another team entered Gorazde on 2 July.



Message from MSF Belgrade to the MSF Desks in Paris and Brussels, 24 June 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Information from Srebrenica about shelling in the pocket during the night (15 in all), 3 near the hospital and the MSF house, 1 dead and 2 wounded ... BSA entered the pocket and went back afterwards to the initial position ...

08:30: We just received the clearance for India ... YIPPEE!!![...]

... we have a good feeling [about the road] because one UNHCR convoy is on the way in, and 3 UNMOs [United Nations

Military Observers] left the pocket this morning without problems...

10:25: Our team (Christine and Daniel) just left BGD [Belgrade].. Now we have to wait. Good luck to them [...]

14:45: they succeed in entering in the pocket... YIPPEE!!!!

They have now only one hour and a half to be briefed by Edwin, Catherine and Igor. After that, those 3 have to leave for BGD [...]

UNHCR has not [been given] the same chance. Today, their convoy for Srebrenica is blocked by BSA [...]

17:00: We are sure now; Edwin, Catherine and Igor are on their way back to BGD



"The team was stopped at each roadblock. I spotted Kolievic at an [UN]HCR meeting and called him each time there was a roadblock; he said he would take care of it. One of the last times I called him, he told me he was going to come and bring his own M16 to shoot the soldiers who were blocking our way! I told him it was probably not necessary to go that far, that he just had to tell them to let the team pass."

Stephan Oberreit, MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



"We were worried. Karadzic had stated that 'in any case, the Muslims are attacking us; they're burning the villages around the enclave'. So all the elements were in place for the Serbs to attack. But we told ourselves that UNPROFOR was there to protect them. We were dependent on people's ability to enter and leave. We had come to the point of sending three out while only bringing in two. We didn't even have a surgeon. But I take responsibility for this decision. We told ourselves, 'We know that's going to happen. We want to be inside because our presence will limit the effects of the violence, because they wouldn't dare'. Did we really put it like that? That's at least how I remember it now."

Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

In early July, movements by the armed forces in and around the enclave gave the MSF team the impression that fighting was about to resume.



Sitrep Srebrenica 1 to 7 July 1995, MSF Srebrenica, 9 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

During the first half of the week, it became obvious that both warring sides were preparing for the present scenario. BIH [Bosnia-Herzegovina army] were occupying all their posts, BSA deployed soldiers all around the enclave, movements of tanks and heavy artillery have been observed. On the 2nd one woman got killed at OP Quebec (Northeast).

On 6 July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces attacked Bosnian army positions to the southeast and north of Srebrenica. The enclave was under constant bombardment and the MSF team took shelter. Thirteen wounded patients arrived at the hospital.



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995
The MSF Srebrenica team logbook, 24 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

00:30 6 rockets fall in the UN compound, of which 2 explode. Between 04:30 and- 07:00 heavy shelling in and around Slapovici.

We wake up from the noise, dismantle the HF radio and move to the shelter. From today on we are on dark orange/red alert and it doesn't change until the 12th.

[...] UNMO counted 150 tank bombs, artillery and mortar bombs.

Between 08:30 and 09:00 AM 10 shells fall in town.

[...] Shelling continues during the day.

Final toll of the day is 13 wounded and 4 killed, although the number of dead people will be most probably much higher since they don't arrive at the hospital.

One collective centre (Containers) half way to Potocari got shelled - the inhabitants fled.



'Intense Fighting Breaks Out in the Srebrenica Enclave' **Agence France Presse**, 6 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Violent clashes between the Serbian forces and the Bosnian government army broke out on Thursday morning in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, according to the spokesperson of the United Nation Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Sarajevo.

Six rockets were fired at the city at 00:35 am, according to the same source. Less than one hour later, the city came under attack by mortar rounds, heavy artillery, light arms and tank shelling.

UNPROFOR's Dutch battalion stationed in Srebrenica was put on red alert, the highest level in the force's alert system.

On 7 July 1995, four Bosnian Serb tank divisions bombed the streets of Srebrenica. The MSF team transported the wounded to the hospital.



Sitrep Srebrenica 1 to 7 July 1995, MSF Srebrenica, 9 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Wednesday 7 July: MSF B/F activities: the drastic change of the security situation made us change our objectives. During the week we had decided to start again with the clinics in the villages, with family planning, with the consultations in the social centre, [...] but all these activities have to be postponed ...

Hospital: The last two days of this week the hospital was overwhelmed with war injured patients. The staff have been working almost around the clock and are functioning very well in these difficult circumstances. But it is also very obvious that the workload especially for the local surgeon is too much.

Soon we will have to open the shelter in the hospital, if we have to deal with more than three severely wounded in the same time. [...]

UNPROFOR:

Their new medical team has come in. In the last few days medical help for the population was refused by Dutchbat.

Since the red alert stops all their activities, this opportunity should allow us to start a new more distanced involvement with them if necessary.

All of a sudden the medical team of Bravo Company [The Dutchbat base] showed up and wanted to work in our program.

We should take care to remain neutral.

The liaison team of Dutchbat is not giving any information regarding security to anybody, even not to UNMO.

On 8 July 1995, the Bosnian Serb forces continued to seize UNPROFOR observation posts, killing a UN peacekeeper and taking 20 others prisoner. They also continued to bomb the enclave. During the night of 8 July, they entered the city of Srebrenica.



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team logbook, 24 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Saturday 8 July: Few shells during the night. [...], the surgeon [we trained] is on the edge of a breakdown so we urgently need our new [expat] surgeon.

The morning was quiet; heavy shelling again since lunchtime (sometimes more than one shell per minute).

BSA has taken OP [Observation post] Foxtrot (near the former

OP Echo) and blew it up. One Dutch blue helmet [...] got killed. [...]

APCs [Armoured Personal Carriers] are moving hectically up and down the road.

2 Bih with minor wounds come walking from the frontline.

We hear planes flying - NATO?

ICRC has been waiting [...] at Yellow Bridge and had finally to return. [...]

Local authorities have given interviews for Radio Tuzla and Sarajevo and are stating that they are happy with MSF in Srebrenica.

On 9 July 1995, peacekeepers based at UN observation posts were trapped between Bosnian Serb forces and the Bosnian army. Those based in the city centre withdrew to the UNPROFOR base in Potocari without informing the MSF team. Due to the bombing the team had to cancel a visit to Slapovici school which was sheltering 4,000 refugees. The municipal authorities still had no plans to evacuate them.

General Janvier, the UNPROFOR commander requested air support from NATO.



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team logbook, 24 July 1995 (in English)

Extract:

Sunday 9 July: A meeting with UNMO, UNPROFOR and the president takes place in the PTT [Post Office] building. The president requests assistance for the 4,000 refugees from Slapovici, who are mostly sheltered in the primary school. Together with the UN liaison team we schedule a visit in the afternoon. I offer logistical supplies [...]

The visit to the school never takes place due to the shelling. [...]

According to the UN, BSA occupied a piece of the southern part of the enclave and the [front] line is 1 kilometre south of Srebrenica [...]

Throughout the day we hear heavy shelling. All together nine wounded over the day, young men with shrapnel wounds. One shell fell into a room full of people.

We hear rumours that villages get burned down.

Today we are still trying to go back to normal; discussing medical issues in the capsat [mobile satellite phone], Daniel is doing his round between the shelling etc.



'Srebrenica: Serbs Humiliate the UN' *Le Soir/AP/Agence France Presse/Reuters*, 10 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Bosnian Serbs once again defied and humiliated the UN

peacekeepers this weekend. Continuing their ground offensive against the eastern Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, one of the UN's designated "safe areas", they seized three observation posts as well as a UNPROFOR tank on Sunday [9 July] and took 32 Dutch soldiers prisoner. [...]

Late in the day, Radovan Karadzic's fighters came within 1 km of Srebrenica and fired on the city. [...]

Around 11 pm yesterday, we learned that UNPROFOR had just threatened the Serbs, saying it would call in air strikes if they attacked Srebrenica. Bosnian Serb television reported yesterday evening that its army's operations in the enclave were only meant to defend its positions against Muslim attack.



'UNPROFOR Requests Air Support After Serbian Offensive in eastern Bosnia', *Le Monde* (France), 11 July 1995 (in French)

Extract:

General Janvier, commander of UN forces in the former Yugoslavia requested NATO air support on Sunday 9 July in response to the offensive by Bosnian Serbs against the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in the eastern part of the country. This support could lead to air strikes if the Serbian forces resume their advance, which they seem to have ended Monday morning.

In addition, UNPROFOR is hoping to gain the release of some 30 Dutch UN peacekeepers, who were taken hostage in the enclave Saturday and Sunday by Bosnian Serbs; some of the hostages were taken to the neighbouring town of Bratunac, located near the border with Serbia. They were taken prisoner while manning observation posts on the perimeter of the safe area. [...]

According to French government sources, if the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) had been operational, it would have intervened in Srebrenica to stop the offensive against this region, which is one of the six "safe areas" designated by the United Nations, with the same status as Sarajevo, Zepa, Gorazde, Tuzla and Bihac. But the RRF cannot yet be used due to delays in bringing in its equipment. The unit should be partially operational by mid-July and fully operational a month later.

On 10 July, Bosnian Serb forces delivered an ultimatum to the peacekeepers, ordering them to start evacuating the population from the enclave the following morning.

The United Nations and Dutch officials threatened them with a NATO air strike.

Several shells fell near the hospital, which had been receiving an influx of injured patients. The surgeons were overwhelmed. The commander of the UNPROFOR Dutch battalion turned down MSF's request for a surgeon but did offer to provide an armoured vehicle for transporting patients.

MSF issued a press release calling for medical facilities and personnel to be spared during the fighting.



'Voorhoeve: "NATO Air Support in Bosnia is Inevitable' *NRC Handelsblad* (The Netherlands) The Hague, 11 July 1995 (in Dutch).

Extract:

NATO air support for the Dutch military in Srebrenica is inevitable, according to the Minister of Defence Voorhoeve. Yesterday evening he called the deployment of NATO warplanes "risky for the Dutch troops and the 30 hostages", but he is of the opinion that with the use of aerial attacks, the advancing Bosnian Serb tanks can be stopped. Also Bosnian Serb artillery positions could be target of attacks by NATO warplanes.

"The attack on Monday evening gives reason for concern as to what the Bosnian Serbs are up to in the coming days" said Voorhoeve. Colonel Dedden of the Ministry of Defence's crisis committee in The Hague yesterday declared that the situation in Srebrenica had returned to "within control". The Bosnian Serbs had achieved their objective to gain control over a strategic road towards two mines. In the event of the Bosnian Serbs attempting to capture the enclave, NATO air support would be called in, and in any case the Bosnian government troops would not allow such an attempt (by the Serbs) according to Dedden.

There has been contact between the commander of the Dutch troops in Srebrenica and the 30 hostages on Monday, and under the circumstances, they are OK, declared Dedden.



'Bosnian Serbs Demand Withdrawal of Peacekeepers from Srebrenica' *Le Monde* (France), 12 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The local Serbian commander delivered an ultimatum to the commander of 450 Dutch peacekeepers deployed in Srebrenica, strongly urging him to begin evacuating the enclave at dawn on Tuesday [11 July]. The Serbian forces not only demand that the 44,000 residents leave but that the peacekeepers do so as well. They want them to evacuate within 48 hours and abandon their weapons. [...]

During a trip to Athens on Monday [10 July], UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that "the United Nations will, if necessary, call in NATO air strikes to protect the Muslim enclaves if the Serbs attack". [...] Yesterday evening, Dutch Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve said that NATO raids were "inevitable" after the Serbian attack against the Dutch peacekeepers and that a NATO operation was "under discussion".



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team logbook, 24 July 1995 (in English). (edited)

Monday 10 July: The surgeon and the hospital team have worked the whole night.

At 7:00 the hospital is again totally overcrowded. Everywhere screaming and crying people between the wounded and bleeding.

Our car and the garbage truck are going back into the centre, hopefully not returning with more wounded. [...]

On the BBC we hear that BSA denies the offensive. How cynical to hear this [...]

Around 10:30 a shell falls opposite the hospital's road.

Fortunately we are both in the bunker, but we are horrified by the noise and the fact that now the hospital is a target as well.

Briefly afterwards another shell, a bit further away.

Windows are broken in the pharmacy and in the hospital.

UN logistics offer help for fixing the windows. What a sign of helplessness. Another UN informs us that despite some shelling the situation in the enclave is stable. Well, difficult to believe! Meeting with the president [local authorities] in order to get more information about the newly displaced in town and their living conditions.

Around 16:00 the shelling intensifies again in the centre [...]; we also hear heavy machine guns and assume that the front-line is moving closer. Ten minutes later the hospital receives nine wounded, most of them civilians, extremities blown up, shrapnel wounds everywhere in the bodies etc.

[...] the surgeon requests assistance from Dutchbat. I send a telex, but knowing already that it will not be possible⁷.

And indeed the refusal comes quickly back by telex. My first contact with the DCO [Deputy Commandant] Franken - he offers us an APC [Armoured Personal Carrier] to transport the wounded from the centre.

Ten minutes later the APC arrives at our house. It will be stationed at Bravo Company and we can always ask their assistance.

We request confirmation from the UN that they are ready to pick us up with an APC if we demand it.

Our headquarter gets in contact with Mr. Bijweld [UNHCR special envoy], who is in contact with Dutchbat and with Akashi. MSF Belgrade is in contact with ICRC and BSA.

In the evening people start to leave the centre gathering around the hospital compound. All medical staff with family enters our shelter. [...]

Eventually BiH pushes the population back to their homes in the centre. The medical staff in our bunker however...want to have a solution and refuse to leave our shelter until then. They express their despair, their tiredness and their wish to leave their prison and to live in freedom. All our sympathy is with them and we don't much mind their blackmailing.

It takes a long time and much energy to convince them that it is not possible to sleep with approximately eighty people in our small shelter. Finally they move into the hospital.

7. Christina is aware that according to military regulations, when a battalion is conducting operations, its medical unit must devote all its resources to its wounded soldiers and cannot provide them to other patients.



“Srebrenica Hospital Overwhelmed with Casualties”
MSF B/F/H/UK Press release, 10 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières calls for respect of vulnerable civilian and medical installations

The heavy shelling which began last Thursday resumed this morning, once again targeting the town centre of Srebrenica. In the local hospital, 50 wounded have been checked in over the past few days, 10 of whom have since died of their wounds.

‘The hospital is particularly vulnerable to shelling because it was never given the protection to resist an attack of this kind; after all, Srebrenica is a safe area.’ Dr Stefan Oberreit, MSF’s Belgrade-based Coordinator.

The MSF team (one doctor and one nurse) went to the hospital early this morning where they are working with the local medical team (two doctors, a surgeon and a gynaecologist). In one hour, from 2.30 - 3.30 pm (BST) today, seven further wounded patients were brought into the hospital, five of whom were seriously wounded – three needed urgent amputations. Said Dr Oberreit: ‘The local staff is working ceaselessly and efficiently with the patients, most of whom have shrapnel wounds, and are coping tremendously well in this difficult situation.’

The 100-bed hospital is completely full, while the shelling gets nearer. Already, several windows of the hospital have been hit.

Despite its status as a ‘safe zone’, the Srebrenica enclave, which has a population of 40,000, is once again the target of a deadly offensive. The shelling is indiscriminate, and civilian as well as military installations are being hit.

After three years of war, the long-suffering inhabitants of Srebrenica find themselves under attack once again.

Médecins Sans Frontières today called for all civilian and medical installations to be spared.

For security and availability reasons, the MSF Srebrenica team was not in direct contact with the press. Instead, it debriefed the Belgrade team, which was handling relations with journalists. It was arranged that the French daily newspaper *Libération* would publish extracts of radio messages sent by the team to the coordination staff in Belgrade.



‘Bosnia: UN Threatens Serbs with Air Strikes. Offensive Continues in Srebrenica Enclave.’ ***Libération*** (France), 11 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

According to a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) official in Belgrade, which has a team in Srebrenica, the hospital took in 30 wounded patients yesterday, equivalent to the number

admitted over the previous three days. About 10 patients admitted to the hospital over the past four days died from their injuries. MSF declined to give an overall death toll, providing it only for patients brought to the hospital.



‘The World Here Has Collapsed.’ Médecins Sans Frontières Staff Bear Witness from Srebrenica”
Libération (France), 14 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Here are extracts of radio messages sent by the MSF team in Srebrenica to its Belgrade central office, providing an account of the situation in a city that the Serbs had almost emptied of its population.



The press took an interest from the time the attack began. We decided that Christina would not deal directly with reporters. She had to be protected and continue working. She already had a full plate, so she’d never manage if she had to do interviews as well. She debriefed me so I was the one who dealt with them from the Belgrade office. The other option would’ve been to bring the reporters into our radio room to interview her.

But that wasn’t a good idea because it would’ve put her in greater danger and taken up her time. But I kept asking myself, ‘If she had been able to directly describe the situation from the inside, would that have changed anything?’ It would certainly have been more effective and had more of an impact. I kept wondering if we had made a mistake. But we decided we hadn’t.”

Stephan Oberreit, MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

In the early afternoon of 11 July 1995, NATO warplanes conducted two air operations that struck Bosnian Serb tanks. Authorisation was requested for a third strike.

The population fled towards the north of the enclave, and the MSF team decided to follow and evacuate the patients. The patients were transferred to a field hospital on the UNPROFOR base located in the abandoned Podgorica factory in Potocari. Some 20,000 people set up a makeshift camp around the base under extremely precarious hygiene and security conditions. UNPROFOR agreed to shelter 5,000 displaced persons inside the base, which enjoyed better conditions. The MSF team worked well with the Dutch peacekeepers.

In Belgrade, the MSF coordination team considered two

options: call for the establishment of a humanitarian corridor in order to evacuate patients or request access to the enclave by additional medical staff and supplies.



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team **logbook**, 24 July 1995 (in English). (edited)

Extract:

Tuesday 11 July: We again experience people fleeing in small numbers to Potocari.

The UNPROFOR liaison team and the three British soldiers who are directing the air strikes are coming out of the PTT [Post Office] building and people start to run fearing air-strikes. [...] The local doctors insist on evacuating [the 80 patients] to Potocari this morning in trucks. They mention ...[what happened in]... Vukovar and are fearing the same - BSA entering the hospital and killing everybody.

We prefer to keep the patients in the hospital due to its neutrality, but we accept the determination of the local doctors. They will organise it with two trucks.

The town is very busy and tense, high presence of armed soldiers in the hospital compound. Our constant appeal to keep the hospital neutral by not allowing uniforms and arms on the compound doesn't have any impact.

Until noon it is relatively quiet. [...] Then the shelling in the centre starts again.

There are no casualties so we can stay in the shelter.

We hear planes flying and can only guess about the bombs falling briefly after.

We are informed that the patients have left to [go to] Bravo Company (the Dutchbat compound approximately 500m further away), but then a shell falls in this compound.[...]

Around 3.00 PM, we hear planes and see them performing airstrikes.

Shortly after we run to the hospital [...]. We see a long stream of people fleeing towards the north (Potocari).

After a quick discussion with the capital [the MSF team in Belgrade] we decide to follow the population.

[...] Daniel leaves for Bravo company with one car, the local staff and the luggage, while we try to fit the patients in the [other] two cars. There are about 20[patients] left.

We drive down to Bravo company, dropping the patients, and I go back with a pick-up. In the meantime more patients show up and I have to leave six old people behind since the UN APC has already passed the hospital.

What a mess and chaos!

People run in panic, carrying screaming children and their small bags, blue helmets walk with the fleeing population, shelling continues from the mountains, it is very hot, the road very overcrowded and dusty. A truck in front of us is stuck in the mud; blue helmets move it manually. Then a truck stops and people are allowed to climb on it. We are just behind the truck and witness how the people almost kill each other in order to get a lift for the 4 km ahead.

Finally we arrive in the UNPROFOR compound. The blue helmets have already set up a makeshift hospital in a dark corridor.

fifty five patients have arrived here, mostly war wounded. We have no medical supplies with us.

Daniel makes a list for Dutchbat of the most needed drugs. In the meantime we request medical supplies from Belgrade, knowing that they will not arrive.

After having had contact with Belgrade on the car radio, I visit the camp outside with [local staff].

Approx. 20,000 people are seeking shelter around some destroyed buildings, trying to escape from the continuing shelling, [they are] shivering from the noise.

DCO Franken [Deputy Head of Dutchbat] is trying to arrange a trip into town with BSA in order to pick up medical supplies from our stock however [General Ratko] Mladic tells us that everything is empty.

Mladic requests UN buses for the evacuation of the displaced, and offers food and medicine.

UNPROFOR accepts more than 5,000 women and children inside the compound in the factory.

There the water and food situation is a bit better - UNPROFOR can provide 7000L water per day and can offer a daily food ration. Also the shelter makes a difference; they are inside, protected from the sun and the shells and they are out of the view of BSA.

We are distributing towels, blankets, soap and buckets from our store in Potocari to the patients, and plastic sheeting for the DP [displaced population] inside.

UNPROFOR is trying to declare Potocari as safe haven again. MSF Belgrade gets ready for two scenarios: a humanitarian corridor into central Bosnia-Herzegovina which we follow, or request [...] clearance for expatriates to come and assist with medical and logistical material.

Shelling continues until approximately 2200 PM.



'Peacekeepers Withdraw, Thousands of Civilians Flee North. Besieged Enclave of Srebrenica Falls to Serbian Troops' H el ene Despic-Popovic, **Lib eration** (France), 12 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

'A mass departure of the population had already begun during the air strikes', reports Stephan Oberreit, a Belgrade-based official of M edecins Sans Fronti eres (MSF). Speaking by telephone, Oberreit relayed information he received from an MSF doctor and nurse working in Srebrenica. "At 3:30 pm, the time of our last radio contact, the team had just evacuated the hospital with the last 15 patients. The others had left earlier with local doctors. The staff had to make several trips because they only have two cars. When telling us they had just made their last trip, they said the Serbs had just entered the city. The city is in a state of panic and has been emptying out since early morning. A crowd of frightened and exhausted people started walking to Potocari, which has a UN base, in search of safety."

Two new press releases issued by MSF Belgium/France described the situation in the enclave, condemned the UN's inability to protect the civilians of Srebrenica and called for a cease-fire. The organisation also denounced the violation of the safe area by Bosnian Serb troops.

The MSF Holland programme manager for the former Yugoslavia criticised the fact that he was not informed prior to publication of the press release, arguing that it could compromise team security and the continuation of projects elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, according to him, because the UNPROFOR battalion was Dutch, involving MSF Holland in the statements might have created more of an impact on the United Nations through its influence on public opinion and Dutch politicians. In the event, MSF Holland ended up publishing its own version of the press release.

MSF Holland's relief operations were based in Tuzla and Zenica, towns close to Srebrenica that were likely to be the destination for the 15,000 people who fled the enclave on foot through the forest and mountains.



'Entire Population of Srebrenica Flees 'Safe Haven' - MSF Condemns Inability of UN to Protect Civilians, Relief Team Witnesses Srebrenica Population's Panic' MSF USA **Press release**, 11 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

With the population of Srebrenica fleeing northwards to the United Nations UNPROFOR compound, Médecins Sans Frontières (also known as Doctors Without Borders) today denounced the violation of the safe haven by the Bosnian Serbs and the obvious inability of the United Nations to protect the 40,000 civilians of the enclave.

The entire population is fleeing the advance of the Serbian troops and the heavy shelling in the town center. Many are heading towards the UNPROFOR base in the village of Potocari, in the North-East of the enclave. Tens of thousands of refugees, terrified of an imminent massacre, are now heading out of town while others are taking shelter in the woods surrounding the enclave.

The Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) team of one doctor and one nurse works with the local medical team treating the wounded at the local hospital and organizing their evacuation.

Doctors Without Borders' Belgrade-based coordinator, Stephan Oberreit, who has been in constant contact with the team at the heart of the enclave, explained this afternoon:

"With heavy shelling very close to the hospital early this morning, both patients and staff were increasingly worried for their safety. The Doctors Without Borders team organized for the patients' evacuation at 1:00 pm, the relief team remaining behind to treat the wounded who continue to arrive."

65 patients left the hospital by truck. 10 more were evacuated during the afternoon. All patients are now in the UNPROFOR compound. According to latest reports, the Doctors Without Borders team finally managed to join them

there and it is hoped that radio contact can be re-established with them later on this evening.



'Médecins sans Frontières Calls for Immediate Cease-Fire to Protect Srebrenica Population' **Press release**, MSF Belgium/France, 11 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

As the Serb forces enter the city of Srebrenica, all personnel and huge numbers of civilians and hospital patients are taking refuge in the vicinity of UNPROFOR camps in the northern part of the enclave. Tens of thousands of people are demanding to leave the enclave out of fear of being massacred. Gripped with panic, small groups of people are also heading toward the outskirts of the city and the surrounding woods. The city centre has been emptied of its population.

At 13:00, lorries left the hospital with 65 patients accompanied by medical staff, heading toward the northern section of the enclave. The evacuation of the hospital continued in the afternoon with the transfer of the last 10 patients. The MSF team had to make several return trips to continue evacuating patients to UNPROFOR camps.

As of today, the Srebrenica safe area no longer exists and some 40,000 people are trapped. Médecins Sans Frontières condemns the Bosnian Serb troops' non-compliance with the safe area as well as the United Nations' inability to protect the civilian population. MSF calls for an immediate cease-fire and guaranteed protection for the Srebrenica population.



Message from the MSF Holland project manager for Bosnia-Herzegovina to MSF Belgium and MSF France project managers, 11 July 1995 (in English).(edited)

Extract:

Yesterday afternoon MSF-Holland received your press statement about Srebrenica. We regret you have done it in this way. We could have given you much more support in this. Moreover this statement is not in line with previous agreements about cooperation between the sections [...]

A few months ago it was confirmed (again!) between MSF-Belgium (Renaud Tockert), MSF-France (Pierre Salignon) and MSF-Holland (Hans van Oort) that any section wanting to make any public statements about the situation in the former Yugoslavia would consult the other section desks before doing so.

The reason for this is that all sections have staff working in high tension and high security risk areas, on all sides of the frontlines and with all parties involved. Making statements/advocacy could risk the security of expatriates. Also the continuation of the projects is at risk, because clearance from the Serbs is needed for many transportations of staff and material (to the enclaves, Bihac, Sarajevo) [...]

I am very sorry that you did not consider this agreement and released a press statement not even informing us beforehand.

Again MSF-Holland had to take precautions on behalf of its staff present in Serb areas now [...]

The other consideration is that MSF could take advantage of the fact that Dutchbat is present in Srebrenica. The Dutchbat presence has a very great impact on the Dutch public, as does the Dutch involvement in the RRF. Involving MSF-H in making statements about the situation in the enclave could have more impact as MSF-H has some influence on the opinion of the Dutch public, and could therefore influence politicians to put more pressure on the UN etc. By merely informing us about your statement without involving us in the question of...[your desired impact]..., an opportunity is missed to increase public awareness in the Netherlands and as a consequence put pressure on the UN.



Message from the MSF Holland project manager for Bosnia-Herzegovina to MSF Belgium and MSF France project managers, 12 July 1995 (in English).(edited)

Yesterday evening MSF had very good media coverage in newspapers and television, following the press release we wrote, based on the one you wrote. Barbara in Belgrade was interviewed live and I was quoted a few times in the news this morning. A Dutch minister will ask for withdrawal of Dutchbat but insists on continuing to protect civilians.

We expect many more press inquiries today.

Can you keep us informed as much as possible, also by sending us the sitreps from the field?

Our teams in Zenica and Tuzla are preparing contingency plans.

During the evening of 11 July, a third air strike was cancelled at the request of the Dutch defence minister to protect the lives of the peacekeepers being held hostage. In the Netherlands, public opinion was concerned for the soldiers' safety.



'Netherlands Opposes a Third NATO Air Strike' **Le Monde** (France), 13 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Netherlands supplies 2,400 troops to UN forces in the former Yugoslavia. About 30 of them are being held hostage by the Serbs while 410 others tried Wednesday to negotiate their release as well as the evacuation of thousands of civilians from the Srebrenica enclave. The Hague, with the support of France in particular, called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council.

On Tuesday evening [11 July], Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve called the violation of the safe haven a "large-scale disaster" while his colleague, Foreign Affairs Minister Hans Van Mierlo, said that the UN peacekeepers in the former

Yugoslavia were reaching a "major turning point" with significant political consequences. Voorhoeve also said that he had asked NATO to suspend its third air strike "following terrorist threats" made by Bosnian Serbs against their hostages.

The two ministers, however, rejected calling for a complete withdrawal of UN forces, which is not on the cards for the time being, according to their advisers. "Despite everything, the peacekeepers have saved lives and will continue to do so and that in itself justifies their mission." However, public opinion could eventually turn against the peacekeeping mission despite all its sympathy for the Bosnian side. The army's Crisis Centre is being inundated with calls from Dutch citizens worried about the safety of the troops on the ground.

According to recent polls, the population is increasingly questioning the need for a Dutch presence in Bosnia. On Tuesday evening, Voorhoeve recalled the acts of violence recently committed against the Bosnian Muslims and added a note of concern about Srebrenica, "Forty thousand Muslims are vulnerable to ethnic cleansing. I fear a recurrence of the types of events we have previously observed in similar situations."



Voorhoeve, the Minister of Defence, is a very decent man. But he was also impotent in the sense that he couldn't do anything. I remember him coming up for the press conference directly on the day after the fall and he said literally "something gruesome happened today". So at least he was not in the "our guys did well" camp. His focus was on the population. I still remember him standing there, obviously suffering and making that statement.

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Medical Coordinator in Sarajevo, Bosnia, from December 1991 to September 1992, then various positions in MSF-Holland Bosnia desk from September 1992 to 1996

On the morning of 12 July, Bosnian Serb forces threatened to bomb civilians fleeing the enclave if NATO conducted further air strikes, and demanded that Bosnian forces turn in all their weapons.



"Serbs Threaten to Bomb Refugees Fleeing Srebrenica 'Safe Area' **Le Monde** (France), 13 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Serbs threatened on Wednesday morning to bomb the columns of fleeing refugees if NATO conducted further air raids, a threat that UN peacekeeping officials say they are "taking seriously". Humanitarian organisations report a lack of water, food and medical supplies. The Srebrenica hospital has been evacuated.

On Wednesday 12 July in New York, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling for Secretary-General Boutros

Boutros-Ghali to use “every means available” to “restore the status of the safe haven” of Srebrenica. Western leaders, however, had little to say about a military operation, with the exception of Jacques Chirac, who said on Tuesday evening that he was ready to intervene and urged the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities. France cannot act on its own, explained the French president while attending the French-German summit in Strasbourg.

During the day of 12 July, the Potocari base was captured without any resistance from the UNPROFOR contingent. Thousands of women, children and elderly people were piled into buses and dropped off near the front line, where they were forced to walk nearly eight kilometres to reach the village of Kladanj. Others were transported to Tuzla.

General Mladic, the Bosnian Serb commander, told Bosnian Serb television that civilians were being well treated, while political leader Radovan Karadzic said the safe area would not be re-established.

Most of the men were held separately in a building guarded by soldiers and dogs.

The MSF team opposed, in vain, the evacuation of some of the patients to the village neighbouring Bratunac. In the field hospital, the Dutch peacekeeping contingent provided access to all of its drugs and medical supplies. V4  V5  V6 



‘Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995; The MSF Srebrenica team logbook, 24 July 1995 (in English). (edited)

Extract:

Wednesday 12 July: BSA announces a ceasefire until 10:00. They demand all BiH weapons in exchange for the security of the displaced people.

UN has no contact with BiH. We use the lull to ask some blue helmets to set up our three tents outside for either a small clinic, performing triage or as kind of rehydration tent.

The displaced are very weak and apathetic after their night outside.

However I am not able to offer assistance because at 09:45 shelling starts again. 3 - 4 fall in the next 15 minutes.

BSA tries to enter the enclave with tanks at Yellow Bridge.

UNPROFOR tries to set up a human blockade.

Situation in Daniel’s hospital remains fragile in terms of necessary medicines; fluids, antibiotics, analgesics and dressing material are scarce.

It is not until later in the morning that Dutchbat decides to switch to the non-combat situation and offer all medical facilities and drugs they have.

From that moment we no longer lack any necessary drugs.

The medical local staff is very difficult to motivate because their families are still outside.[...]

Then we are informed that BSA/Mladic will start the evacuation of the wounded to Bratunac Football station, followed by the civilians. I try to talk to Mladic and to protest against the planned evacuation, but he just tells me to do my job and walks away.

The MSF convoy of 30 tonnes of medical and logistical material and Barbara, Guy and Eric is on its way from Belgrade in order to join us in this crisis.[...]

The headquarters has spoken to Boutros-Boutros Ghali’s deputy, who said that the UN wants the assurance that the whole population – including the men – will be taken to Tuzla.

This is easy to say since no figures exist that would let us monitor it.

At approximately 15:00 BSA starts to evacuate the displaced people by buses and trucks with incredible speed.

Most of the men are being separated and taken to a house being guarded by many BSA with German dogs. Around this house we hear a lot of small arms fire.

A few hours later, at 18:00 the UN starts up its first medical convoy. It is very chaotic; everybody wants to take their chance. People just jump on the trucks. Relatives have to leave their family members.

After that I am able to return to the camp outside. Mladic accepts that I want to pick up wounded and sick people.

There are two water trucks offering drinking water for the displaced population, who are forced to spend their second night outside.



‘Serbs Start Moving Muslims Out Of Captured Territory’ Chris Hedges, *The New York Times* (USA) 13 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

The air was filled with anguished cries as the Bosnian Serbs loaded the first 3,000 women, children and elderly refugees onto buses at Potocari, the United Nations base overrun today outside Srebrenica, which was captured on Tuesday.

The refugees were dropped off outside Kladanj, about 25 miles away, where they were forced to walk the last six miles across the front lines to the Government-held town and aid.

“It was quite a horrifying scene,” said Stephan Oberreit of Doctors Without Borders, who spoke by radio from Belgrade with colleagues in Srebrenica. “There was screaming and crying and panic. They didn’t know where they were being taken to.”

The Associated Press reported that the first 1,500 refugees arrived in Bosnian Government buses late tonight at a United Nations base outside Tuzla, where they were expected to end their journey. One refugee said she had seen the Bosnian Serbs kill a woman and child, but there was no independent confirmation of her account.

Today, 1,500 Bosnian Serb troops backed by tanks advanced at midday into Potocari. They overran the United Nations base with no resistance after they threatened to shell the refugees and kill some Dutch peacekeepers they are holding hostage if NATO warplanes intervened.

The Dutch peacekeepers had allowed dozens of wounded

people into their compound at Potocari on Tuesday night, but most of the 40,000 refugees “spent the night with nothing, on the field surrounding the camp,” said Ron Redmond, a spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva.[...]

Bosnian Serb television today showed tens of thousands of refugees milling around the camp and women and children being escorted onto buses. The television footage showed no scenes of panic, but many of the refugees looked tired, dazed and frightened.

Gen. Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb commander, was there, surrounded by bodyguards, to supervise the herding of the refugees onto buses and trucks.

“You don’t have to be afraid of anything,” he told the refugees in the brief broadcast. “Slowly, please let the women and children in front of you.”

The general said, “In this first round we will evacuate women, children and elderly and all those who want to leave this combat area, without forcing them.”

He told the television, “Srebrenica is free now,” but added, “There are still small groups trying to put up resistance.”

The Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, was even more confident. Although he promised that the captured civilians and peacekeepers were “completely safe and secure,” he said there was no chance that the safe area would be reconstituted, something the Security Council demanded today. “Srebrenica is our country,” he said from Pale, the Bosnian Serb headquarters near Sarajevo.



“We immediately suspected they were going to attack military-age men. The first alert came from Christina, who wondered if executions were taking place around Potocari. And then Potocari emptied very quickly, with the Serbs deporting people. The central Bosnian teams started seeing buses arrive. I asked them if there were men on the buses and they said there were. But there weren’t very many because they had been killed in Potocari or had fled through the fields. This [system] didn’t work very well. In retrospect, I think we could’ve sounded the alert more widely.”

Stephan Oberreit, MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

The commander of the Dutch peacekeeping contingent negotiated a cease-fire with General Mladic, commander of the Bosnian Serb forces.



‘Bosnia: UN in a State of Shock After Fall of Srebrenica’ *Le Soir* (Belgium), 12 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The several hundred Dutch peacekeepers, outnumbered 20 to 1 according to UNPROFOR officers in Sarajevo, could not hold out very long and had to retreat to their headquarters at Potocari, with thousands of terrified refugees following in their wake. The contingent’s commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Karremans, negotiated a temporary cease-fire this morning [12 July] with the Bosnian Serbs, whose political leader, Radovan Karadzic, has already ruled out withdrawing from the enclave.

Lacking any means of defence, Srebrenica quickly emptied of its 40,000 residents, signalling yet another mass displacement with tragic humanitarian consequences. No one remains in the city; the entire population is on the road fleeing the Serbian advance, said Stephan Oberreit, Belgrade representative for the Médecins Sans Frontières organisation.

During a press conference in Brussels, MSF Belgium provided a first-hand account of the capture of Potocari by the Bosnian Serb forces and the dramatic situation prevailing there.



‘Potocari Enclave Collapses – Srebrenica Population in Hands of Bosnian Serb Forces – MSF Belgium **Press conference**’, 12 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Bosnian Serb forces have just taken complete control of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. They infiltrated the UNPROFOR peacekeeping compound and captured the population of Srebrenica that had taken refuge there.

The Serbs plan to evacuate the population through Bratunac, beginning with women and children.

MSF is deeply shocked by the fall of Srebrenica and is currently trying to protect and care for those we can help.

During the press conference, MSF will describe the situation as it now stands.



‘MSF Calls for Immediate Access of Humanitarian Aid to Srebrenica Population’. **Press release**, MSF Belgium, 12 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Part of the population remained outside the camp, finding shelter in partially destroyed buildings or forming groups along the side of the road.

Within the camp itself, more than 7,000 people, mainly women and children, have access to less than one litre [of

water] per day per person. The most urgent needs are for food and water.

The Médecins Sans Frontières team set up shelters for the displaced persons and distributed blankets and containers. Tents were set up in the camp to shelter women and children, to protect them from the heat and to prevent dehydration problems among this vulnerable population. Some of the wounded have already been treated, but we need to identify those who still need medical care. Stocks of drugs are extremely limited and we are beginning to have shortages of essential medicines.

Médecins sans Frontières teams in Belgrade are standing ready to respond with all the supplies necessary. They are only waiting for the required authorisations.

A decision must be taken during the day regarding the delivery of emergency material assistance to tens of thousands of displaced persons. The presence of international agencies, such as [UN]HCR and ICRC, is absolutely necessary to protect the population.

In Resolution 1004, the UN Security Council called for the Bosnian Serb forces to end their offensive and for all parties to give aid organisations free access to the safe area. It also urged the secretary-general to use all available resources for re-establishing the Srebrenica safe haven. Comments by UN observers and political leaders of the various States involved, however, suggested that the fate of the enclave was no longer under consideration. Some were even talking about withdrawing UNPROFOR troops.



'UN 'Demands' Serb Withdrawal Without any Intention of Using Force' **Le Monde** (France), 14 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

On Wednesday 12 July, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution calling for the secretary-general to use all available resources to re-establish the status of the Srebrenica safe area in compliance with the UNPROFOR mandate" and demanding that the Serbs "immediately withdraw" from the city. But in reality, the terms of this resolution, adopted unanimously, have no real significance: nothing will happen in Srebrenica. On Wednesday the Security Council resumed a cherished practice that has become all too common during the war in Bosnia: passing resolutions they have no intention of applying. [...]

In their formal statements during the Security Council meeting, no country other than France made any reference to the use of force, reports our New York correspondent, Afsané Bassir Pour. French UN Ambassador Jean-Bernard Mérimée, while stating that France cannot "accept any challenge whatsoever to the status of the enclaves," nevertheless added that Paris "is not, of course, imposing any obligation to use one particular means over another". "We are simply saying", he

said, "that we are prepared, if deemed possible by the UN civilian and military authorities, to make our forces available for such operations as they consider useful and feasible."

Diplomats at the UN do not rule out the fall of other enclaves. "There's nothing we can do if the Serbs decide to take Zepa", says a diplomat. Going even further, he adds, "Abandoning the eastern enclaves near Serbia to the Bosnian Serbs could be the long-term solution for stability in the country. The alternative would be a war between the UN and the Serbs. Who's going to fight it?"

Even though no officials will openly acknowledge it, the United Nations has abandoned the idea of a "safe area" for Srebrenica and possibly for the other enclaves as well. On Wednesday, Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey rejected the proposal made by the British to seek a Serb withdrawal in exchange for demilitarising Srebrenica. "We have to stop talking nonsense", said Sacirbey, asking who, in such a scenario, would guarantee the enclave's security.

In the Senate on Wednesday, French President Jacques Chirac again said that UNPROFOR should leave Bosnia if it proved incapable of fulfilling its mission. "If the international community does not respond, we have to ask what UNPROFOR is doing in Bosnia and draw the necessary conclusions", he said. "If the enclaves are violated and the Srebrenica safe area is not re-established, the entire UNPROFOR mission is in question." The statement released Wednesday by the French prime minister's office following a small ministerial meeting on the Bosnia issue makes no mention, however, of a troop withdrawal.

UK Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said he believes it will take "several days" before determining whether the Srebrenica events will have "serious repercussions for the UN's presence in Bosnia". [...] In Washington, a White House spokesperson reiterated that Bill Clinton considers it "desirable and important" for the UN to remain in Bosnia.

In the Netherlands, Jacques de Milliano, general director of MSF Holland, had been trying in vain to convince members of parliament, obsessed with the fate of the Dutch contingent, to take an interest in the protection of Srebrenica's civilian population.



On Wednesday 12 July, I received a phone call from Bernard Pécoul and Eric Goemaere [general directors of MSF France and MSF Belgium], who told me that MSF volunteers on site had seen people being put in buses and that they had a bad feeling about it. I wondered what we could do. It was 10:00 and I knew that a small parliamentary meeting on the fall of Srebrenica was scheduled for noon in The Hague. I called The Hague to speak to members of parliament and asked them to put the protection of civilians on their agenda. It was 11:00 and the legislators had already gone to the chamber. I took a taxi and reached The Hague 45 minutes later. When I arrived, the minister had already finished his briefing. It hadn't even lasted half an hour. I asked the MP's what they

had talked about and they said, 'We talked about the situation of the Dutch troops'. I then asked, 'Did you discuss the protection of the civilian population?' They told me, 'We didn't want to mention that problem because there were family members of soldiers in the room. That may have given the impression that we didn't care about the Dutch soldiers over there'. At that time in the Netherlands, it was impossible to talk about it. It was a total blackout, complete paralysis."

Dr Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland General Director from 1984 to 1997, Interviewed in 2000, (in French)

On 13 and 14 July, UNPROFOR's camp and base were gradually being emptied of most of the refugees, who were piled violently into buses by Bosnian Serb soldiers. The patients who could walk and the nursing staff were also being evacuated. The men continued to be held separately. The MSF team heard gunshots coming from the building where they were being held and a rumour went around that there were dead bodies nearby. A man gave his child to an MSF nurse before being taken away by the soldiers. V7

The MSF team learned that certain patients from the 12 July convoy to Bratunac were separated when Bosnian Serb soldiers noticed they were not wounded. For the next evacuation convoy, they planned to keep the male medical staff with them

UN officials condemned what they called "odious acts" and "ethnic cleansing".



Capsat message from MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 13 July 1995 -11h41 UTC Time (in English) (edited)

Extract:

I am just copying the info of UNMO [...]

The UN medical convoy with our patients is moving now to Tuzla with a special escort of BSA personnel with personal instructions from Mladic for security [...]

I had one horrible experience – one BSA came with a man and his baby. The man had nobody to take care of the baby. So I had to separate the baby from the crying father while the BSA took the father with him.

There are rumours that at the back of the camp there are dead bodies. BSA...[is happy for me to]... go with UNMO, but they don't want to give [me] any guarantee of security.

Anyway I don't think I should go – too risky, not confirmed, not clear where the dead bodies are. What is your opinion?



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team **logbook**, 24 July 1995 (in English). (edited)

Extract:

Thursday 13 July: [...]

At 7.00 AM the evacuation of the displaced people is continuing from the camp outside. Blue helmets are controlling the desperate crowd. Everybody who could have stopped this mass exodus should be forced to feel the panic and desperation of the people, leaving even their belongings behind [that] they managed to bring to Potocari.

Everybody should see the violence on the faces of BSA, directing the people like animals to the buses. Children are screaming in the arms of their mothers, everybody runs for his/her life into an uncertain future.

BSA refuses [to allow] our convoy in because they argue that BiH is still in the area and might shoot at the convoy [...]

In the morning I mainly move between the makeshift camp outside and the UN compound, transporting sick, old and hysterical people to our hospital, where Daniel takes them, together with the local nurses in charge.

In the afternoon the number of patients gets too much and the UN assists with a truck for transport.

UN doctors are doing a kind of triage in the camp outside.

A sun shelter with our plastic sheeting is being set up. The UN is bringing a water truck, which is later looted by BSA.

Rumours arise that behind the factory (where many people are seeking shelter) there are dead bodies. MSF is asked if we would go there, but we refuse due to the touchy situation [...]

Breastfeeding mothers develop problems with their milk production due to the stress.

One old man dies during the evening; 7 deliveries (one still-birth) happened in the last 24 hours, most of them in these incredible conditions, without any privacy, everybody watching, without hygiene on a dirty stretcher, in a dark, muddy and wet corridor.

All in all 22 new patients got admitted today.

Today the conditions for the displaced inside the UN compound deteriorate in terms of sanitation - not enough latrines, the sewage of the existing toilets is overflowing. [...]

At approximately 16:00 the camp is empty and after 30 minutes BSA starts to evacuate the displaced people from the UN compound until 19:00. The blue helmets assist them to the gate and there they are put on the waiting buses/trucks.

All nursing staff and most patients who were able to walk also left with this convoy. Rumours say that some of the males were separated.

Having emptied both places from human beings, BSA wanted to inspect the UN compound. They spent 10 minutes in the camp, being disgusted by the living conditions and the smell, asked the patients and our female translator some questions, received a list of the patients and left again.[...]

I take [advantage of] the occasion and request a BSA escort in order to go back into Srebrenica. Together with an UNMO and the escort we drive quickly to the hospital, where we find 3 elderly patients sitting at the same place where I left them two days ago.

They are in good condition. Passing by our social centre I see one person sitting outside so we stop there as well and discover three more elderly inhabitants.

BSA is quite nervous, expecting BiH in the rooms of the hospital or social centre. So we hurry up, but of course Joseph and I have to carry the patients alone to the pick-up.

What a strange feeling, going back into a town – which I had started to love – now empty. Many BSA present, looting is starting. [...]

The UNHCR convoy with food etc arrives in the evening in Bratunac and is allowed to come in. How cynical – just in time for all the people who have left. [...]



Capsat message from MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 13 July 1995 -16:57 UTC Time (in English) (edited)

Extract:

Meeting with Franken: we agreed first on having all people evacuated. No medical convoy today. Together with him I will negotiate with BSA for a bus for the old people who are not able to walk, but who don't need a medical convoy from the UN. Medical staff are free to choose whether they want to go today with the crowd or tomorrow. Men should stay with us. MSF Staff – again women can choose but I insist on men staying with us. Now for yourself in case Barbara doesn't arrive today: should we leave with the last patients?

I expect that the men will be taken away. According to Franken, BSA is not touching the men who are not BiH. The others, you know [about].

Here comes Franken's final version of the medical convoy from last night: before entering Bratunac BSA checked the dressings of a few men and they had [no injuries]. So of course BSA was furious and took all 30 men away. They have disappeared. Franken informed ICRC and other high level [channels]. He is not blaming us for that. I asked Daniel but he could not control who got in the truck. [...]

Here comes a second version from Daniel [...] who received it from a Dutchbat nurse travelling with the convoy: when it reached the border all patients who could walk were taken off and left to walk the 37 km remaining. They were very worried about the safety of the men. Seven local nurses accompanied them. He told me that this afternoon he received confirmation from UNPROFOR at their destination that they had all arrived safely, including the men.

I have decided with Franken that the male part [of the convoy] tomorrow will have to be checked by BSA here in order to avoid their anger.



'Serbs Continue Ethnic Cleansing of Enclave' *Le Monde* (France), 13 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Colonel Karremans, commander of the Dutch peacekeepers operating in the 'safe area', "decided to remain until the last refugee leaves, thus "acting like the captain of a sinking

ship", said the Netherlands' defence minister. According to corroborating sources, Dutch peacekeepers still present in the area were pressured by Serbian forces to leave their base at Potocari. Moreover, 55 Dutch soldiers were still being detained by the Serbs as of Friday morning. [...]

Loaded on buses and lorries without any supervision by the peacekeepers, the 14,000 women, children and elderly people expelled from the city were driven to the front lines, which they had to walk across alone for several kilometres without any assistance. Thirty-three seriously injured people who could not cross the no man's land on foot were taken away by the Serbian forces, said UNPROFOR spokesman Alexander Ivanko. Their fate is unknown.

Only a few men of fighting age were released, on Thursday, by Serbian militias. The others were taken to Bratunac, a Serb-controlled town north of Srebrenica, where they are apparently herded onto football fields. "The international community is justifiably disgusted by the odious attack and ethnic cleansing committed against a UN safe area", said Yasushi Akashi, UN special envoy to the former Yugoslavia. Sadaka Ogata, UN high commissioner for refugees, condemned "in the most vigorous terms" what she called a "striking example of ethnic cleansing". [...]

According to a statement released by the Pale authorities, Serbian forces continued on Thursday to 'neutralise' Bosnian soldiers in Srebrenica because they "refused to lay down their arms". Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, threatened on Thursday to inflict the same treatment on five other UN-designated safe areas. According to the UN, Serbian forces bombed the Zepa enclave on Thursday morning.

MSF and the UN were openly expressing concern in the media about the fate of the enclave's men. With its convoy still blocked at the border, MSF renewed its plea to be allowed to bring in additional staff and medical supplies. The organisation also issued an appeal for food and water for the 20,000 refugees who had arrived in Tuzla, where its teams were doing everything possible to provide relief. It also called for authorisation for the ICRC to monitor the transfer of refugees.



'Conditions Deteriorating by the Hour' for Srebrenica Refugees - MSF Repeats its Plea for Access to the Enclave" MSF Press Release, 13 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Thousands of terrified civilians still remain around the UN compound in Potocari, north of Srebrenica, while the expulsions of women and children to central Bosnia continue. The sanitary conditions for those who remain in the vicinity of Potocari are deplorable and MSF fears for an outbreak of epidemics. MSF renewed its plea to the Bosnian Serb authorities to allow access to the enclave for humanitarian agencies.

According to the MSF team in Potocari, food and medical

stocks are running out. From Srebrenica, MSF's Dr. Daniel O'Brien described the situation as deteriorating by the hour". Dr. O'Brien said that many wounded remained inside the enclave in urgent need of assistance.

It will take several days for all the refugees to be moved out of Srebrenica. The MSF medical convoy, with two doctors and two logisticians on board, needs to be allowed in to care for the thousands of refugees remaining. However, the convoy remains at the border post of Zvrnik, a few kilometres from Srebrenica. About 4,000 refugees have already been taken by bus to Kladanj, to the west of the enclave, 2,500 of these have already crossed into Tuzla. The MSF team of five in Tuzla, which set up a makeshift refugee camp for the refugees throughout the night, described the conditions there as alarming. The refugees are gathered on a stretch of road near the airport, with no access to sanitary facilities.

MSF is concerned about the absence of international monitoring of the current forced population movements. The agency renewed its call for the International Committee of the Red Cross to be allowed to monitor the transfer of refugees.



'Srebrenica Becomes Latest Victim of Ethnic Cleansing' *Le Monde* (France), 14 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

A number of witnesses report that the Serbs subjected the population to a "selection process" before expelling them. Médecins Sans Frontières, for example, explains that the men were taken separately to offices, where they had to identify themselves. Some of them have already been transported by truck to unknown destinations. "The scenes of them being loaded on the buses were terrifying. People were screaming and panicking", report the on-site MSF representatives. The UN says that General Mladic ordered a "selection" of all men over the age of 16, who were then assembled in the football stadium in the small town of Bratunac along the border with Serbia. [...]

According to Alexander Ivanko, a United Nations spokesman, the Serbs were apparently planning to interrogate the men to determine whether these civilians were guilty of war crimes". In the minds of Serbs, who view all Muslims as "terrorists", anyone who had carried a weapon is considered a "war criminal". Zena Hasanovic, a young resident of Srebrenica expelled Wednesday and sent to Tuzla, says she saw Serbian soldiers kill a woman and 10-year-old boy. [...]

The mass exodus of refugees continued on Wednesday. More than 1,500 people arrived in Tuzla in the evening, where they were taken under the wing of United Nations staff. [...]

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) believes that "nearly the entire population of Srebrenica [which had a population of 44,000 before the offensive] has probably fled the city". [...]

According to Médecins sans Frontières, which has a team on site, the most urgent needs are food and water. "It's an extremely vulnerable population; many people have had practically nothing to eat for weeks and have been living in

deplorable hygienic conditions", says an MSF representative. The humanitarian organisation and UNHCR were trying on Wednesday to obtain approval from the Serbian authorities to bring supplies and medicine into the enclave. Two convoys were blocked by General Mladic's forces.



'MSF: Women Refugees in Potocari Bear 'Visible Signs of Abuse' *Agence France Presse* (France), 14 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) has "grave concerns" about the fate of displaced persons in Bosnia. "Muslim women have been arriving in Potocari with visible signs of abuse", reports the humanitarian organisation, which was interviewed by AFP on Friday.

Three hundred refugees, 650 of whom have injuries, are still in Potocari, 2 km north of Srebrenica, with two members of an MSF team; they came from the former UN safe area in Srebrenica, which the Bosnian Serb army now controls. On Thursday, an MSF nurse and a UN observer were able to go to the Srebrenica hospital, where they found three elderly patients; they managed to bring them back to Potocari, which serves as the base for the UNPROFOR Dutch battalion. According to MSF, 700 refugees, mostly men and just a few women are in Bratunac, a Serb-controlled town east of Srebrenica. Their fate is unknown. As a result, MSF has not received any news regarding an initial convoy of 33 wounded that was supposed to leave the Bratunac stadium. Bosnian Serb soldiers are not allowing entry to the site by either MSF or six observers from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), who are responsible for supervising aid distribution in the field. MSF and UNHCR officials have been negotiating since Thursday evening for authorisation to enter the stadium.

The humanitarian organisation stresses that most of the refugee population in Potocari comes from south of the Srebrenica enclaves. Nothing is known about the populations from the neighbouring villages, who fled to unknown destinations, says MSF.



"20,000 Refugees from Srebrenica in Makeshift Shelters at Tuzla Airport" *MSF Press Release*, 13 July 1995 (in English).

Extract:

20,000 newly arrived refugees from the Srebrenica enclave are grouped together on an airstrip at Tuzla airport. The UN, MSF and other organisations are taking care of medical needs, shelter, food and water. An MSF cargo flight with 12 tons of relief goods including tents, blankets and plastic sheeting is being flown into Tuzla and Kladanj, via Split, with two extra staff members on board. MSF presently has five volunteers in Kladanj and three in Tuzla.



Message from MSF Belgium/France project managers to the MSF team in Srebrenica, 13 July 1995 (in English). (edited)

Extract:

We just want to say that we are proud of you both. We are thinking of you all the time and each word you write stays in our minds for a long time. As you asked us to, we are telling the tragedy to the 'outside world'. It's our way to be with you and the population.

What you are doing in Srebrenica is really fantastic. Sometimes it's difficult to believe that there's only Christina and Daniel in the place. We really want to be with you. All the pressure we have applied, saying that international aid is urgently requested in Potocari, is... [so that we can] ... send you a new MSF team and at least support you physically.

Thanks for all that you are able to do.

We love you and do know that you will be soon with us.

Take care.

Lots of kisses

Pierre, Pierre Pascal, and all your fan club



Update on Bosnia-Herzegovina, from MSF International to MSF Press Departments, 13 July 1995 - 12:00 (in English).

Extract:

Interviews and briefings from Belgrade

Our team in Belgrade is unable to cope with the present interest from your national journalists. We would suggest that from now on you allow either Anouk or Michel at MSF Belgium and Anne Guibert at MSF France to organise interviews for you. Stéphan and Barbara will still do the interviews. It is just that we need to find a more organised system. There will certainly be a press release later stressing the fact that there are needs to be met both in central Bosnia and in Srebrenica itself.

On 14 July, the French president urged the international community to take military action to ensure the protection of the other enclaves. It was, he claimed, no longer a question of retaking Srebrenica but of protecting Zepa and Gorazde. His European and US counterparts remain skeptical.



'Chirac's Plea Faces UK and US Scepticism' Daniel Vernet, *Le Monde* (France), 15 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Western capitals, of course, welcomed the strong words of the French president and said they agreed in principle with his unvarnished analysis of the humiliating situation in which the international community finds itself. But they implicitly

suspect France of wanting to play the hero by taking credit for the idea if action is taken or blame others if nothing is done.

With highly undiplomatic candour, Chirac said on Friday that his proposal to liberate Srebrenica by force after it was seized by the Bosnian Serbs met with blunt refusal by France's allies. The head of state also noted that the first reactions to the new, minimal French proposals, i.e. providing protection for Gorazde and guaranteeing access to Sarajevo, are hardly more encouraging.

No one has actually said no, but the Americans, asked to provide logistical support, and especially the British, who created the Rapid Reaction Force with France, have been delaying their response by highlighting the technical obstacles and the lack of a specific plan.

On the same day, MSF's medical coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, stuck in Zvornik with the convoy, ran into French officers who had come to meet with General Mladic, commander of Bosnian Serb forces. What they told her confirmed the general impression that an operation was underway to take over all of the enclaves.



Message from the MSF medical coordinator in the former Yugoslavia to the programme managers, 15 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Yesterday evening in the hotel we ran into three soldiers, one of them French. He told us that "they were coming to see the Serbs". I ran into them again today in another hotel (5 km from Srebrenica as a bird flies). It's a delegation comprising two special envoys (a French colonel and a Russian colonel) sent by Janvier [the French Commander of UN troops in the former Yugoslavia] and a Serb liaison officer. The two envoys have been trying since yesterday to meet with Mladic.

The [Serb] liaison officer told me that:

- He would be returning to Belgrade that day, probably with the two envoys, without having seen Mladic who could not be reached since 03:00 because he was involved in military operations. (Let's just say there was a certain lack of will on the part of the Serbs to make the meeting happen)
- He had been in Bratunac the previous week, had been thrilled about the coming victory and had asked them why they were in such a hurry.
- He answered "yes" when I asked him if the same thing was happening in Zepa as had happened in Srebrenica.
- Concerning my question about the route for Alesandra [an MSF nurse] to Pale via Bratunac, he answered that this area would remain inaccessible for two to three days.

If you had any doubts about the amount of planning for this operation, you won't have any now.

The MSF team in Potocari was busy organising a proper evacuation of the last remaining patients as well as its own departure from the enclave. The operation was complicated due to the involvement of a wide range of players and the Bosnian Serbs' insistence on checking for Bosnian fighters among the patients.



Capsat message from MSF Srebrenica to MSF Belgrade, 14 July 1995 -09:17 UTC Time (in English). (edited)

Extract:

Patients will not be evacuated by helicopter. Franken wants ICRC to do it, because the UN might not be able to reach Kladanj with their vehicles.

Franken has been in contact with ICRC. No finalisation yet, but it seems that we cannot leave today.

Stephan, should MSF at this stage not be more involved in the whole procedure of evacuation?

[Sh]ould it not be MSF who requests ICRC together in cooperation with UN? Please advise.

Please keep in mind the 30 trucks of UNHCR. Could they not do it?

I think the priority is to get the patients out soon. If it takes too long BSA might take the job over.

We have seen how fast they have deported the whole population and nobody was able to stop it. They want to empty the enclave.

It is not clear what will happen with Dutchbat afterwards. Hostages?



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari – 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team **logbook**, 24 July 1995 (edited) (in English).

Extract:

Friday 14:

[...]The patients are being moved into the medical bunker of Dutchbat, which offers more light and space and hygienic conditions.[...]

ICRC informs us in the evening that they plan to evacuate the patients to Kladanj, but don't yet have the clearance. Our own evacuation and [that of] the local staff would be a separate issue.

UNHCR is trying to evacuate all the patients by helicopter to Sarajevo.

UNHCR Tuzla also plays the game and is planning to evacuate the patients by convoy to Tuzla.[...]

A convoy of UNPROFOR arrives in the evening with new drugs, food and 35,000L diesel (BSA confiscates the 30,000L!). [...]

Question of the day: Why is the evacuation of the patients being blocked? [...]

We think along the same lines as Franken, that it is most likely due to the fact that there are among the patients in Bratunac a few BiH soldiers with a "good" record from their past. Of course, BSA could just remove them, but since the whole world is informed about the figures, they might like to avoid negative press statements. Difficult to believe though...

Saturday 15: Early in the morning the [whole] UN medical team (20) is able to leave the enclave...[...]

Mr Pronk, Dutch minister for humanitarian business, is in Tuzla, trying to organise the evacuation (who isn't?).

Medical situation is well under control. Together with the nurses and paramedics of the UN, assistance is being offered to the patients.[...]

We get the information that four of the patients in Bratunac require urgent surgery otherwise they will have to be included in the mortality rate. [...]

Finally Franken organises a UN ambulance with a BSA escort and a UN nurse, but they return without patients since apparently they were all young men (BiH?)[...]

According to Franken some men do arrive in Kladanj, but of course nobody can follow up any figures.

Rumour of today is that a group of men (700-1000) are in the stadium of Bratunac [having been] captured on their way to Tuzla. [...]

This is the day of lists [...]

Together with UNHCR we are preparing a list of all patients with diagnosis. We are making a list of all local staff and of their family members and will distribute it to UN, BSA etc.

Sunday 16/7/95

NORMED, the medical department of NORBATT [UN Norwegian battalion], who seems to specialise in medevacs, takes responsibility for the evacuation of the patients and leaves [Tuzla] at 13:30.

Then two different [sets of] information and you can guess which one was right: the [MSF] convoy has passed Zvornik and is on its way to Bratunac. (Info from authorities in Bratunac)

The convoy has been shot at in the surroundings of Zvornik and had to return (Info from the UN in Tuzla). [...]

Another meeting takes place with BSA concerning the evacuation of the patients. Very cynical to have to discuss culture and art while outside a stream of Serbs is looting Srebrenica. [...]

ICRC is also trying again to organise the evacuation and will ask only for the clearance for patients. Today they were with a small delegation in Bratunac to check the POW's [prisoners of war]. According to Franken there are 7,000, but we cannot confirm it.

MSF Belgrade is asking for our clearances in order to be able to leave with the convoy tomorrow.

On 16 July, several thousand people who had fled Srebrenica on foot through the woods and had been reported dead, arrived in Tuzla where an MSF Holland team was working with the refugees.

MSF programme managers expressed concern about the safety of MSF staff in the Srebrenica enclave, particularly the safety of local personnel, if the Dutch contingent had to withdraw quickly. The MSF Holland team openly expressed this concern to the Dutch minister visiting Tuzla.

In Potocari, the last patients for whom MSF and the Dutch battalion were responsible were finally evacuated by the ICRC during the evening of 17 July. MSF announced the evacuation in a press release.

Reporters tried to reach the MSF team directly on the UNPROFOR battalion's phone line.



Message by MSF Belgrade to MSF Belgium and France programme managers, 16 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Breaking news: a large influx (said to be around 4,000) of refugees (quite a few with light injuries) is en route via Kalesia. Apparently BiH opened a corridor allowing some of the "disappeared" to enter the Tuzla area. We will confirm tomorrow morning. For the time being, we have no access to this region; the local medical team is providing care and transport.



'Médecins Sans Frontières Conducts Relief Operation' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 15 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

A Médecins Sans Frontières team made up of 13 expatriates is currently at work in the displaced persons camps in and around Tuzla airport to provide aid to 20,000 refugees from Srebrenica.

All efforts are focused on supplying food and drinking water as well as setting up several clinics.

MSF also opened a reception centre for refugees still arriving in Kladanj.

MSF has already sent 24 tonnes of relief supplies to the camps, mainly consisting of tents, blankets, water containers and powdered milk.



Message from Pierre-Pascal Vandini, MSF France programme manager, to the MSF coordination team in Belgrade, 16 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Our entire staff (six men and one female translator) is theoretically protected by conventions safeguarding relief personnel in conflict situations. For identification purposes, they must wear either the MSF emblem or the good old Red Cross. We must keep in mind that both drivers and logisticians play a role in monitoring and caring for patients. They carry

stretchers, drive ambulances and serve as hospital workers and nursing aids – you name it.

For that reason, we suggest that they accompany the wounded and families (the staff's children and wives, in particular).

While we cannot negotiate the actual evacuation conditions, we can convey our position regarding their role in accompanying patients and families [...].

I believe that our fears have been passed on to Franken, which is essential. It's not good for morale to keep ruminating about what's going to happen because nobody can predict the future.

Is there anything we can do from Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam?

We reiterated our concerns about the populations of Potocari and Bratunac.

In our message, do we have to specifically mention the presence of local staff and request immunity for them? We're not sure that journalists will cover this issue. And could it also make them a little too visible? [...]

The Dutch government is insisting on a rapid withdrawal of Dutchbat.

Major pressure from the Dutch population. The fear is that it [the Dutch government] will accept an evacuation with minimal guarantees of protection on condition that it is quickly carried out. Second fear: will they [the Dutchbat] remain after the wounded leave and the ICRC pulls out?

The Dutch team in Tuzla made contact with their minister, who is visiting the area. They [expressed strong concerns about the fate of the refugees remaining in Potocari and Bratunac and stressed that their protection relies on Dutchbat's presence.

The minister said he completely understood their concerns but questioned whether he would have much influence in view of other national and international political factors.



Message from Pierre-Pascal Vandini, MSF France programme manager, to the MSF coordination team in Belgrade, 16 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

1) MSF staff in Srebrenica. We cannot do any more than we have already done to protect the MSF personnel in Srebrenica. If the wounded are evacuated and the Serbian army refuses to allow some or all of the Bosnian MSF staff to accompany them, Daniel and Christina will still have to leave.

Remaining would only delay their departure without providing any more likelihood of success. The ICRC, rather than MSF, would be responsible for protecting all male prisoners remaining in Potocari and Bratunac.

If Daniel and Christina wish to remain after the wounded leave, the capital or head offices could reject this proposal.

2) Communications

- We must ask Christina for her opinion when we give the press information about her personal reactions. We made a mistake regarding the *Libération*⁸ article.

8. In its 14 July edition, the French daily *Libération* published extracts from radio messages sent by Christina Schmitz, the MSF field manager in Srebrenica, which had been sent to the newspaper by MSF without her permission.

- The information provided to the press by Paris is screened on the basis of potential risks for the field team.
- I don't think that communications about Srebrenica currently have any impact whatsoever on the Gorazde team's safety or influence our requests to the Pale authorities. The Serbs are determined to do as they wish.
- Communications after the departure of Christina and Daniel: Christina and Daniel should not be expected to participate in any communications efforts in Paris unless they wish to do so of their own volition.



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari, 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team **logbook**, 24 July 1995 (edited) (in English).

Extract:

Monday 17 July: Somehow some journalists managed to get the telephone number of the UN compound and start to harass us with requests for interviews. Since we don't have our own appropriate communication means and since interviews might endanger our evacuation we refer everybody to Belgrade.[...] Early in the morning we hear that NORBATT tried to leave Tuzla again in order to [carry out] the evacuation, but they got in trouble at the confrontation line, thus they returned. At 08:30 the ICRC convoy left their location (Bijelina) and are expected in Bratunac around noon. We are delighted about this news and get everything ready.

During the morning we (UNMO, UNPROFOR, MSF) have a meeting with several BSA commanders. The agenda includes the medevac, the local staff plus MSF expats and the evacuation of Dutchbat. We hear that all local staff has an amnesty, being free to evacuate with us. It is very difficult to believe ... BSA insists on an inquiry [into] all the patients before ICRC can evacuate them. Of course ICRC has to be present for that. They however have put a deadline of noon for UNPROFOR to bring all patients to Bratunac. [...]

Meanwhile Daniel has distributed [...] tranquilizers to [...] vulnerable patients.[...]

At 18:15 all patients are in the ICRC's cars and leave Potocari except 7 men, who were separated by BSA and who were transported by the UN to Bratunac, and then handed to ICRC [...]. The rest of the patients in Bratunac got also on the convoy apart from 11. Andrei, the UN anaesthetist was there to monitor the treatment of the patients and Andrei from UNMO joined him that evening.



MSF press release, 17 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The medical evacuation of 59 wounded and patients from Bratunac and 43 from Potocari, requested since last Thursday, is now underway. The ICRC arrived in Potocari late in the morning.

MSF insists that the evacuation must include all wounded and patients as well as local relief staff and their families. MSF

personnel still present in Potocari are likely to accompany the wounded. MSF is calling for ICRC access to prisoners remaining in Potocari and Bratunac to ensure their treatment complies with the Geneva Conventions.

Organising the evacuation of the MSF team, and the 15 people it was responsible for, took four additional days because of multiple administrative, political, and security obstacles, particularly involving the fate of the evacuated Bosnian Muslims. MSF issued a press release in an effort to break the deadlock.

On July 21, the MSF team, composed of two expatriates and eight local staff members, their families, and two elderly people were finally evacuated from the enclave with the last convoy of UN Blue Helmets.



'MSF asks Pale and Belgrade Authorities to Issue the authorisations for the Evacuation of its Team and 15 Civilians from Potocari,' MSF Belgium/France **press release**, 19 July, 1995 (in French).

Extract:

One week after the fall of Srebrenica, the Médecins Sans Frontières team is still unable to leave Potocari. According to the organisation's doctor and nurse, the group also includes 15 civilians, including three children, two elderly people, and MSF's Bosnian staff members.

However, MSF has not been able to obtain all the authorisations required for their evacuation.

We ask that all necessary steps are taken to allow them to be evacuated quickly and under proper security conditions.



'A fourth Plane for Tuzla,' MSF **press release**, 19 July, 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Médecins Sans Frontières team in Potocari hopes to be able to evacuate this afternoon, taking with them 13 local staff members and the last two wounded patients, a woman of 80 and a man of 81. Two MSF staff members remain in Kladanj and are ready to treat other refugees from Srebrenica.



Sitrep Srebrenica-Potocari 6 to 22 July 1995, The MSF Srebrenica team **logbook**, 24 July 1995 (in English) (edited.)

Extract:

Tuesday 18 July: Although having the clearance for Tuzla, we are hesitating, mostly due to the fact that security cannot be guaranteed, that we don't know the road at all, that we cannot have a UN escort, or an escort from BSA further than

Lubovija and that we fear getting into trouble [over] our local male staff.

[...]MSF Beo [Belgrade] is taking care of our new visa for Belgrade, the transit visa for the locals for Croatia, the plane seats from Belgrade to Zagreb and from Zagreb to Split, the shuttle from Split to Tuzla, accommodation for locals.[...]

Then during the morning Franken receives the information that all our local passengers will be arrested in Serbia and/or Croatia if they try to enter.

Finally UNPROFOR in Sarajevo [...] issues a letter to Renaud [Tokert, MSF Project manager] stating that UNPROFOR will take responsibility to move the 13 Muslim civilians from Serbia back to BiH territory.

However we don't achieve anything today and there is still the last surprise of the day: BSA finds two old people in the south of Srebrenica and brings them to us.

It is clear that every time a solution seems to be found there develops a new problem. We will have to take them [under our]... charge since UNPROFOR is not able to take them under their responsibility and the local staff of UNHCR is out of order [unable to help].

Wednesday 19/7/95: [...]

At 09:30 I go with a member of the UN liaison team to Yellow Bridge for discussions with BSA. We request local permission to take the two old people and to travel on the west side of the Drina because ...[they]... are not on our present clearance.

The latter is refused. [It was agreed that] The two old people could eventually be taken after a local agreement between BSA and FRY.

However a new problem comes up – all of a sudden a military clearance is necessary and the BSA at Yellow Bridge hasn't been informed by the military at Pale about our civilian clearance.[...]

In a meeting at 22:00 with UNHCR and DCO Franken we are informed that, as result of the meeting between Rupert Smith and Mladic, everybody living in the UN compound will be able to leave with the Dutch convoy on Friday 21 July at 12:00.

However until tomorrow night we are not allowed to inform Belgrade or others in order not to endanger the convoy. All telephones have been removed already. This is not very easy – how to get the message to Belgrade, that they can stop the requests for our independent clearance in Pale, without them thinking that we are not mentally well any more.

Friday 21 July: At eleven o'clock we are getting ready to leave; the eight local staff members plus their 5 family members plus the two old lucky refugees find their place in the cars, the radios are on stand-by and the tanks are full.

Two minutes past twelve the convoy starts to leave Potocari. Our three cars together with UNMO and UNHCR are within the first part of the convoy, which altogether consists to 163 vehicles.

[...] Mladic together with a big delegation including Serbian press and Commander Karramans, Head of UNPROFOR in Srebrenica, are awaiting us at the Bosnian side of Iron Bridge. Guy, the technical coordinator for MSF Belgrade is finally able to hand us our passports at the Serbian side of the bridge and joins the convoy until the Croatian border.

The convoy goes very smoothly until the Croatian border. After long discussions we are not able to continue with UNPROFOR, but we have to go on our own with a Croatian

police escort; however we manage to negotiate an UNCRO military police escort.[...]

The two and half hours spent at this border are very unpleasant; the immigration officer interviews our local staff about events that happened in Srebrenica including military information, dares to shout at me and blames UNPROFOR for not having protected the civilians. They are threatening that we will be transported to the Bosnian border and then to Tuzla.



'MSF Team Evacuates Potocari,' **MSF press release**, 21 July, 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Médecins Sans Frontières doctor and nurse left Potocari this morning along with 15 civilians, including the group's Bosnian employees, three children and two elderly people. After transiting through the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, they arrived in Zagreb, Croatia.

MSF was the only humanitarian organisation to maintain a foreign presence in the enclave from April 1993, providing medical, surgical, and logistical assistance to nearly 40,000 people.

Throughout the offensive, the doctor and nurse, along with the Bosnian staff, treated several dozen people who were wounded during the bombing and aided the civilians who took refuge in Potocari.

An MSF team (a nurse and an anesthetist) is still working in Gorazde. Some 20 volunteers are treating the displaced persons from Srebrenica in Tuzla, Zenica, and Kladanj.



The Serbians told us that our team could leave, but the group around them also includes 17 other people – staff members with their families and acquaintances. I explained to Christina that she and Daniel could leave. She said that she wanted to leave with all the others. So we resumed the hellish negotiations until the Serbians agreed. Seventeen people crammed into three MSF vehicles as part of the evacuation of the Dutch battalion. It was an epic undertaking. When they arrived in Croatia, the MSF Holland team had a hard time convincing the Croatians to let them enter. Then they took the highway to Zagreb. I went to see the [UN]HCR guy in Zagreb right away to tell him that I would have work for him when they arrived. They were supposed to get to the hotel around midnight. Those three vehicles were like something out of The Raft of the Medusa, the painting of desperate survivors clinging to a barely seaworthy structure. One man who was evacuated told me that he was requesting refugee status. So I called the [UN]HCR guy again to tell him that he needed to come to a meeting the next morning. Cars came to pick up the people who were ready to return to central Bosnia. Others asked for protection and some obtained it.

Stephan Oberreit, MSF Belgium/France General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

The MSF teams increased their assistance to the thousands of displaced persons from Srebrenica who had settled at and around the Tuzla airport.



'A Fourth Plane for Tuzla,' **MSF press release**, 19 July, 1995 (in French).

Extract:

At 06:00 this morning, a fourth cargo plane chartered by Médecins Sans Frontières took off from Amsterdam heading to Split. It was loaded with 11 tons of supplies (medical kits, sanitation supplies, and water). [...]

The MSF teams in the Tuzla region, composed of 22 expatriates and local staff members, distributed food and water. In coordination with local authorities and other NGOs, MSF is also providing medical care to the 200,000 refugees in the region, who have taken refuge in the camp at Tuzla airport and at various community centres and schools in the area. The latter facilities are located in the towns of Zivinice, Srebrenik, Banovici, Gracanica, and Lukavac. [...]

On 18 July, 1995, Jacques de Milliano, Executive Director of MSF Holland, who had returned from Tuzla, gave a press conference in The Hague, at which he criticised the lack of protection for Srebrenica's population. His comments were not well-received by the public, which strongly supported the Dutch contingent, as did most of MSF's donors. Only Jan Pronk, the Minister for Development Cooperation, shared MSF's view.



'Dutch Support was too Limited' **NRC Handelsblad** (The Netherlands), 19 July 1996 (in Dutch).

Extract:

The question of whether or not the Dutch blue helmets did everything within their capacity to protect the 25,000 refugees is obviously a difficult one to answer for J. De Milliano. Having just returned from a visit to Tuzla and the surrounding areas in Eastern Bosnia, he chooses his words very carefully. "After all that I have seen and heard over there, I see no reason for an investigation into the attitude of the Dutch blue helmets. But in terms of countering the rumours that they haven't done enough, it would be good if the Government would come up with a very coherent narrative about what exactly did happen regarding relations between Serbs, refugees and the Dutch blue helmets". An "investigation" is not the right word according to de Milliano. "That has negative connotations, as if someone is accused of something." In consultation with his staff, he would label it as a "reconstruction of facts".

The "facts", de Milliano refers to are the multiple testimonials from refugees about rapes of women and executions of Muslim men by Bosnian Serbs in the immediate vicinity of Dutch

military staff in the Muslim-enclave of Srebrenica. Or, as de Milliano put it earlier during a short press conference at the airport: "horrendous cruel acts have been committed: Children have been taken away from their mothers, women were raped, and young men were shot in front of their mothers. These are authentic accounts, too precise and detailed to be just stories. It was not a mass psychosis. There are enough victims who are able to tell their stories with a convincing level of detail."

These cruelties would, according multiple sources, have taken place "within eye-sight of the Dutch blue helmets".

"Yes, but what does that mean? That the blue helmets saw these things with their own eyes? That they were present in the area?; Or perhaps something else. The margins of interpretation of these types of observations and declarations should be investigated before a judgment about the behaviour of the blue helmets can be made".

"The fact is that the refugees who arrive in Tuzla say that many of the cruelties happened in Potocari, where they (the refugees) expected to be protected by the Dutch blue helmets. It is also a fact that the protection by the blue helmets of the buses that transported the Muslims from the area, but from which many people were subsequently taken by the Serbs, was extremely limited."

"You can look at the same situation from two different perspectives: that of the (Dutch) Minister of Defence Voorhoeve who claims 'The Serbs were in full control, the UN staff was powerless' and that of the refugees: 'the Dutch protected us insufficiently'.

Which of those two perspectives is yours?

"Mine is mostly that the UN as an instrument for humanitarian protection has failed. Not only the cruelties committed by the Serbs need to be investigated, but also the decisions taken within the UN that have led to the Dutch military ending up in such tricky situation. Who decided at such a late – a too late – stage to allow two airstrikes by NATO to be carried out over Srebrenica? These types of questions need answering".

You freely use, like Minister Pronk, the words of genocide and cruelties by the Serbs, while the returning military is instructed to avoid such terminology in order not to endanger the soldiers that remain in the area. Why do you do that?

"For me, genocide is the destruction of a people, and that is exactly what is happening at this moment in Bosnia. We use these words to show that humanitarian assistance fails completely in the absence of military protection against systemic and brutal violations of human rights, be it in Rwanda or in Bosnia.



'De Milliano: "Dutchbat did not Fulfill its Promise Sufficiently' **Trouw** (The Netherlands) 21 July 1995 (in Dutch).

Extract:

The Dutch UN staff in Srebrenica insufficiently fulfilled their promise to accompany the Muslims from the enclave. MSF Director Jacques de Milliano blames the Dutchbat leadership for this. "If you cannot fulfill your promise of protection, then you have to be open about this" he said yesterday. "I do

not doubt the good intentions, but they did give the refugees a false sense of protection”.

De Milliano says that he is frustrated by the events. After the fall of the enclave, the Ministry of Defence claimed that the Dutch would only depart at the moment that all wounded and refugees of Srebrenica had been brought into safety. “Dutchbat Commander Karremans gave the impression that his troops would accompany the civilians into safety during the transport to Tuzla” stated de Milliano. “This was stated in a robust and solid manner. I am under the impression that this robustness was only words, not deeds. Karremans and the Bosnian Serbs agreed that Dutchbat staff would travel along with the buses in which the Muslims were transported. De Milliano, however, says that he heard this Dutch presence had been very limited.

 There was nothing in the media on Thursday. My vacation started on Friday. I was supposed to go to the south with my wife and children and I said to myself, It's not possible. I woke up in the middle of the night and made a plane reservation. On Saturday morning, I left for Brussels to take a plane to Split, where I got on a UN helicopter heading from Split to Tuzla. When I got there, I spoke with the women who were arriving. Their stories completely confirmed each other. I went back to Holland and held a press conference, saying that the situation was a catastrophe and the response was, “You are accusing the Dutch soldiers, you're saying that they're cowards.” And I said, “No, it's that the people did not receive the protection they should have had. The Minister of Defence is saying that everything is OK, but there is a serious problem.” People tried to get me to say that I was against Dutchbat, but that wasn't true. I gave a long interview on another topic and I said to the reporter, “Let's talk about Tuzla now because it was impossible to have that conversation with the other reporters.” I spoke at length about my views on what was going on there. It was as if I had set off a bomb inside MSF and with the donors. I was the only person in Holland who held those views. Everyone thought I had lost it. It was a difficult week for me because I held fast against everyone else. Some people at MSF understood – particularly the desks – but others were really anxious because 90% of the donors supported what Dutchbat was doing.

Dr Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland General Director from 1984 to 1996, Interviewed in 2000, (in French)

 We had a press release on our ‘Dutch boys’, as the newspapers which were defending them would say. We gave a counter voice and everybody fell over on MSF. The Dutch felt that ‘our boys’ were doing a good job, they had good intentions. Everybody has good intentions, but good intentions are not enough. They felt that our boys were going there to take care. The Dutch society was not prepared to consider that Dutchbat could have done more. It was difficult because by thinking that, you seem to disrespect the nation. But in Srebrenica where the Dutchbat had its HQ, the Dutch soldiers at certain moments were fed up with the war, fed up with Muslims. That was shocking. The Dutch were not used to what they consider as underdeveloped people, to women with scarves etc. It was not an

urban population and they really looked down on them. That's not of course the reason everything went wrong in Srebrenica, but it didn't help that they did not look at the population from the point of view of humanitarians. These people are in real danger and one cannot disregard their beliefs, their background: we have to medically and non-medically assist them.

Wilna van Aartzen, MSF Holland Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia 1991-1993 then Emergency Desk, then Director of Operations, Interviewed in 2015 (in English)

 For the Dutch population the issue was that “our poor boys were there, and those bad Serbs are making their lives difficult”. The story was about the Dutch soldiers and not the population. Once they were allowed out, they arrived in Zagreb and the crown prince and the Prime Minister went over. They had a sort of a party with beer and they were cheering, celebrating at the same time a population was massacred. Only Jan Pronk, the Minister of Development and Cooperation said “there is no reason to celebrate; people are being massacred as we speak, we don't know where the male population is, and we have to assume that terrible things are happening.” Jacques de Milliano went to Tuzla, and also tried to advocate on “we have to go there, we have to send international representation to escort them to safety”. It was Pronk and de Milliano, a sort of tandem, who were trying to reverse the public opinion. This public opinion was still saying: “Oh it is beautiful, our heroes are now safe” and nobody was talking about the population of the enclave.

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Medical Coordinator in Sarajevo, Bosnia, from December 1991 to September 1992, then various positions in MSF-Holland Bosnia desk from September 1992 to 1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in English)

On 20 July, 1995, French intelligence sources told the press that if the NATO strikes on 11 July had not achieved their objectives, it was because of the absence of guidance on the ground as the British officers responsible for that job had left their positions. Later on that version of events was challenged.



‘NATO's Missed Opportunity in Srebrenica,’ **Le Monde** (France), 20 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Contrary to information provided by Allied headquarters after the July 11 attack, NATO planes failed to achieve their objectives because officers were not present to conduct on-the-ground guidance to identify targets during the fighting that led to the fall of Srebrenica. This is according to French intelligence sources following an analysis of the conditions during

the NATO airstrikes carried out to halt the Serbian offensive against the Muslim enclave. NATO was to perform three strikes on that day, but only the first two were carried out as Holland called off the third. A Serbian T-55 tank was neutralised and several trucks were destroyed.

In Srebrenica, the UN safe area was held by 780 Dutch UN Blue Helmets. According to information gathered by the French staff headquarters, on July 11, when the NATO planes arrived, the officers responsible for ground guidance had left their positions. "The planes were in the air," a French general said. "Their pilots had good visual command of the situation, but they did not have designated targets for the mission because the controllers on the ground who were supposed to guide them had left."

The pilots – who took considerable risks by flying at low altitude – saw their targets, including Serbian tanks, but NATO's rules of engagement are absolute. They state that targets must be identified, specifically and by name, from the ground. That did not happen in this case because there were no officers to guide the firing. The rule was adopted to limit 'collateral damage' on the ground – that is, needless destruction of property and loss of human life – as much as possible.

On 21 July, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence and defence chiefs from the 16 countries involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia (including the US and Russia), together with representatives of the UN, NATO, and the European Union, issued a warning to the Bosnian Serb leaders, threatening a "substantial and decisive" response to any attack on the besieged enclave of Gorazde. However, observers raised questions regarding how these threats would be carried out.



'Conference on Bosnia Issues the Serbians a Limited Warning,' Patrice de Beer, *Le Monde* (France), London, 23 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The French wanted to send troops into the field, the British dithered, and the White House – anxious to avoid losses and facing a threat by Congress to lift the embargo on supplying weapons to the Bosnians – offered only aerial bombing as an alternative. After a day of heated discussions at Lancaster House, on an equally hot day, the participants reached a compromise that, although it seems to have offended only the Russians, who oppose any "escalation," has already led to various interpretations. [...]

Based on the documents, the West's warning to Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Serbian militias, appears to be no stronger than the one issued on February 28, 1992, during a prior conference that was also held in London. And it is not nearly as forceful as the French wanted. The British text is written in general terms that require, at the very least, some critical explanation. However, the group says that it will be delivered, in the firmest of terms, to the men in Pale, the Bosnian Serb stronghold. [...]

The French government says that the three key protagonists – the US, Great Britain, and France – have agreed to try the American approach (the threat of air strikes). If that fails, they will fall back on the French proposal (ground intervention).

But the document is very vague. Implementation has not been defined and will require further agreement. [...] Who will decide whether to launch air strikes? NATO, at the request of the local UNPROFOR commander? Or will the decision still fall to the creaky UN machine (the 'double key'), headed up by its representative, Asushi Akashi of Japan, who tends to keep the brakes on? And where will the strikes take place?

DENOUNCING THE SURRENDER OF THE 'SAFE AREA'

The same day, Dutch Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve said that he "feared that serious war crimes were committed when Srebrenica was taken." On 23 July, he reported that the Dutch Blue Helmets saw Bosnian Serbs shooting a dozen men. Some of the UN peacekeepers reported scenes of extreme violence.

In Tuzla, a survivor told two reporters how he had escaped a massacre.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, also interviewed survivors in Tuzla but was unable to travel to the Srebrenica region. On 24 July, he announced that he lacked information regarding 7,000 people, confirmed by the Red Cross, and that acts of barbarism had been committed in Srebrenica.



'Serious War Crimes in Srebrenica?' *Le Monde* (France), 23 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

On Friday, July 21, Dutch Minister of Defense Joris Voorhoeve said that he feared that "serious war crimes were committed" when the Serbians took the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica on July 11 and that "hundreds, if not thousands, of people were killed." "An investigation must be launched on behalf of the international tribunal responsible for trying those responsible for crimes in the former Yugoslavia," he said, quoted by Agence France Presse. The minister's statements corroborate those of the refugees, who have said that they saw many bodies after the Serbians captured thousands of men in Srebrenica.



'A Sea of Bodies in Srebrenica,' *Le Monde* (France), 25 July, 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Ten days after the fall of Srebrenica on July 11, the statement of a Bosnian survivor from the Muslim enclave substantiated the theory that the Serbians carried out massacres when this enclave in eastern Bosnia fell. Still suffering from shock, M.O., aged 24, who escaped from Srebrenica with two other Bosnians, told two French reporters from AFP and *Libération* how he survived the massacre. "I owe my life to my cousin," he said. "I was holding his hand and when he was hit by the first round of gunfire, I fell along with him before a single bullet hit me." As the slaughter continued, he remained on the ground without moving, lying in the victims' blood. When he got up around midnight, he began to scream when he saw "a sea of bodies." Before leaving, M.O. saw a pit near the execution site. [...] In Zagreb on Sunday, July 23, Dutch Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve also said that Dutch Blue Helmets saw Bosnian Serbs beating a dozen men in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. "But what they saw does not address the disappearance of thousands of people," the Minister said. General Hans Couzy, commander-in-chief of the Dutch Army, reported summary executions in Srebrenica, while other Dutch soldiers said they saw beatings and mutilations.



'Tadeusz Mazowiecki: We Can Apply the Word 'Barbarity' to Srebrenica,' *Le Monde* (France), 26 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

According to the former Polish prime minister, "We do not have any information about the status of 7,000 residents of the enclave. We are sure that some were summarily executed by the Serbians. We fear the worst for the others. The problem is that our delegation was not authorised to go on site to conduct an investigation. Neither was the International Committee of the Red Cross. The tragedy is clearly not over. Speaking unequivocally, he said, "We can apply the word 'barbarity' here. The witnesses we spoke to were clearly believable. One refugee told us that he saw a Serbian militiaman walking through a village in the enclave carrying a woman's head and limbs. There are many other horrible statements. We will send all of them to the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague."

On 23 July, during a press conference in Zagreb, Colonel Karremans, the commander of the Dutch UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica went so far as to compliment General Mladic, commander of the Bosnian Serb forces. The Dutch Prime Minister and Crown Prince feted the efforts of the Dutch contingent, congratulating them on "doing everything possible to protect the population."

The reporters then turned to MSF Holland's executive direc-

tor, expecting him to lay the blame at the door of the Dutch contingent.



'When the Dutch 'Blue Helmets' Clinked Glasses with the Serbians in Srebrenica...' *Le Monde* (France), 2 September 1995 (in French).

Extract:

During a press conference in Zagreb, also on July 23, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans declared, despite the information in his possession, that there are "neither good guys nor bad guys" in Bosnia. One of the highest-ranking officers serving in Srebrenica also complimented the behaviour of General Mladic, with whom he had clinked glasses in front of Serbian cameras several days earlier. The Lieutenant Colonel even peddled the story – which all observers consider to be Serbian propaganda – of 192 Serbian villages around the enclave that had been levelled by Bosnian Muslims. According to Lieutenant Colonel Everts, the battalion was driven by anti-Muslim sentiment. "No one could stand the people on whose behalf we were there any longer – the enclave's Bosnian Muslims."



On Saturday, I went back to Zagreb, where the Prime Minister had come, with the Prince, to celebrate Dutchbat. I saw it live on TV. I watched Karremans, who started saying outrageous things, like "The Serbians did everything properly," and so on. At that point I said to myself, 'he is going to be unmasked, he didn't understand anything.' And all of a sudden, waves of reporters came to talk to me. I said to them, "It's too late, I don't have anything to say anymore." I was disgusted. Suddenly they were all against Karremans. But my point was not to be for or against. It was to protect the population – and now they had all been slaughtered!

Dr Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland General Director from 1984 to 1997, Interviewed in 2000, (in French)

On 25 July, Gorazde was still under siege by Bosnian Serb forces who were also in the process of taking Zepa. MSF teams in Kladanj and Zenica were treating the refugees who had fled the enclave. The organisation announced publicly that 3,200 of the people who had left Zepa were missing. Yasushi Akashi, the UN representative in Bosnia, hailed the agreement with the Bosnian Serbs to "evacuate this population."



'MSF Treats the First Refugees from Zepa,' **MSF press release**, 26 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Early this morning, 1,400 people arrived in Kladanj from the enclave of Zepa. They included, women, children, and elderly people, who were unable to bring anything with them. Based on our teams' initial observations, they appear to be in satisfactory health.

Three health posts are open in Kladanj, including one managed by MSF. Our teams treated 50 people this morning. Around midday, Bosnian refugees were taken in some 20 buses to Zenica, where they are expected to arrive during the night. MSF teams have organised a system there to provide medical and health care in the refugee reception centres. Another 2,000 refugees are expected to arrive in Kladanj from Zepa early in the evening, taking the same route.



'3,200 People Unaccounted for,' **MSF press release**, 31 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

MSF is concerned about the status of approximately 3,200 people from Zepa who have not yet reached the Kladanj transit centre. They include 1,700 women, men, and elderly people who have been on the road since July 25, the day that Zepa fell, and 1,500 men of combat age, who were either arrested by Serbian forces or have taken refuge in the nearby hills.

However, MSF is ready to receive these refugees as soon as they arrive in Kladanj. A medical team is on site to provide assistance if needed. In addition to a coordination team, four expatriates and several dozen local staff members in Zenica are treating 4,050 people who have come from Zepa (officially-registered women, children, and elderly people) and are divided among 22 transit camps and community centres. MSF is focusing on sanitation, distribution of basic supplies, and medical consultations. Our teams are working closely with the Ministry of Health and other NGOs.

In Tuzla, we continue to provide assistance to 7,500 refugees from Srebrenica. MSF provides mobile medical consultations and operates collective hygiene and distribution programmes in the two reception centres in Srebrenica and Banovici that its teams are managing.

Note: MSF teams are also working in Maglaj and Mostar. An aid programme for Serbian refugees from Banja Luka has been set up.



'Serbians Conquer the Bosnian Enclave of Zepa,' **Le Monde** (France), 26 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Muslim enclave of Zepa, one of eastern Bosnia's 'safe areas' – meaning that it was to receive UN protection – fell to Serbian secessionists on Tuesday morning, July 25. After Srebrenica, which was besieged on July 11, Zepa, home to 12,000 people,

is the second Muslim enclave in eastern Bosnia to be taken by Radovan Karadzic's forces. Just as when they took Srebrenica, the Serbian plan is to empty Zepa of its Muslim population in order to achieve an 'ethnically pure' region.

Zepa's surrender has been anticipated for several weeks but there was no response from the West as of late Tuesday afternoon. Considerable confusion remains regarding Western intentions, particularly in terms of what they considered a 'red line', which the Serbians could not cross without exposing themselves to a response from NATO.

[...] As if the UN's only remaining job was to ensure that the "ethnic cleansing" took place peacefully, Asushi Akashi of Japan, the world body's representative in Bosnia, hailed Zepa's surrender as complying with an agreement on the evacuation of the town's civilians, which the UN helped to mediate. "We reached an agreement on the evacuation of Zepa's civilians," Mr. Akashi noted. "This is a very significant agreement." However, the Bosnian government immediately denied that information, stating, "There was no agreement. There was an ultimatum by Serbian forces."

The same day, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia issued indictments against the Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic.



'Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic Prosecuted for Genocide,' **Le Monde** (France), 27 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Tribunal's 18-page document sets out the charges against Karadzic and Mladic: genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes, serious violations of the Geneva Convention, organisation of a sniper campaign to kill civilians (in Sarajevo), hostage taking, and the use of human shields. "Since April 1992, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic have committed genocide through their actions and failures to act in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina," the prosecutor wrote.

On 26 July, MSF held a press conference in Brussels, together with Amnesty International and two other Belgian organisations. They issued an appeal to save Gorazde, the last enclave under attack by Bosnian Serb forces. A symbolic refugee camp was erected at the Place de la Monnaie.



'Remember Srebrenica – Save Gorazde and Sarajevo – Indignation is No Longer Enough' **Press release** issued by Amnesty International, MSF, Causes Communes, and Balkaneactie on 20 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Yesterday Srebrenica, today Zepa, tomorrow Gorazde. Indignation is no longer enough. It has become an admission of our helplessness. That is why our organisations strongly urge that all necessary steps be taken to save Gorazde, the next challenge, and Sarajevo.

To lose Gorazde would mean losing Europe.

In remembrance of the thousands of refugees from Srebrenica, we will erect a symbolic refugee camp at the Place de la Monnaie in Brussels from Wednesday, 26 July to Sunday, 30 July. We hope that it will become a gathering place for everyone who believes that we must save Gorazde.

Statements, conferences, discussions, and other concrete actions will be organised over the five days.

A press conference will be held on Wednesday, 26 July at 11:00, Place de la Monnaie, 1000 Brussels.



'Four Days' of Solidarity in the Centre of Brussels, **Le Soir** (Belgium), Agnès Gorissen and Jean Wouters, 27 July 1995 (in French). **V8**

Extract:

A refugee camp stands in the Place de la Monnaie, at the very centre of Brussels. Five tents will remain there for four days, until Saturday. The public may visit to share stories and concerns and reject Europe's shameful failure to respond to the conflict in Bosnia, as Dr. Dallemagne, from Médecins Sans Frontières of Belgium, stated.

Under the banner, "Remember Srebrenica, Save Gorazde and Sarajevo," MSF, Amnesty International, Causes Communes and Balkanactie der Gemeenten have launched this solidarity and organising action.

[...] The situation became particularly real to the audience when Christina Schmitz, an MSF nurse who has returned from Srebrenica, described, choking back tears, the civilians' suffering when the city fell – including little girls being raped, babies snatched from their mothers, and deaths from bombing.

On 27 July, Christina Schmitz, MSF's field officer in Srebrenica during the fall, told the Dutch daily Trouw that she was not critical of the Dutch contingent which she believed had been given a weak mandate. According to her, the failure was a political one.



'MSF Nurse Does Not Share Criticism Towards Dutchbat' **Trouw** (The Netherlands) 27 July 1995 (in Dutch).

Extract:

The criticism by MSF-Director Jacques de Milliano of the performance of Dutchbat in Srebrenica is not shared by the very MSF team that worked in the enclave till the last moment. According to nurse Christina Schmitz, the Dutchbats did not fail in any sense. "I have no criticism towards them whatsoever" according to Schmitz.

De Milliano stated last week that the Dutch provided insufficient protection to the Muslims during their escape to Kladanj and Tuzla. His colleague Schmitz does not object to this statement, but she claims that she can only comment on the events in Srebrenica itself. "Till the moment that we had to leave together with the first group of Blue Helmets, the cooperation between AZG (MSF) and Dutchbat was excellent".

Together with an Australian doctor, the German nurse was sent by the Belgium section of the aid organisation to Srebrenica. On 12 July, they had to flee alongside the population when the Serbs took control of the city. In the UN camp of Potocari, the MSF team assisted the Dutch Blue Helmets in the delivery of medical support to the tens of thousands around the camp. Apart from MSF there were no other aid organisations present during the dramatic end to the existence of the enclave.

Yesterday, the nurse returned to Brussels. She is severely shocked by the events of the past weeks. "I have also been to Chechnya, but this was much worse to live through. It was only by working hard and not reflecting on what happened around us that we were able to keep our composure"

"In the end there was only so much we could do for these tens of thousands of refugees. But we ourselves would never have been able to get out alive if it had not been for Dutchbat. In our escape from the city we took over 80 (hospital) patients with us. During this episode, Dutchbat supported us in an exemplary manner".

The German nurse returned on the evening after the fall of Srebrenica to the deserted city to collect a group of patients who had remained behind. From the hospital, three people were saved; in another location, another three elderly people were located.

"Srebrenica is a ghost town, deserted and destroyed. The Bosnian Serbs were busy taking washing machines and TVs from houses. There was looting going on. It was horrible to see the city in such state and to know that we would never be able to return. We only had a little time. We were not able to look for more people who may have been left behind". Three other patients that had also stayed in the hospital during the initial flight could not be found. Schmitz does not know what happened to them.

She concludes that Dutchbat was not able to protect the civilian population. "Their mandate proved insufficiently strong. Mostly it was a political failure"



Christina did it quite well. She tried to separate the individuals from the institutional performance.

MSF Holland Medical Coordinator in Sarajevo, Bosnia, from December 1991 to September 1992, then various positions, MSF-Holland Bosnia desk from September 1992 to 1996

On 27 July, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the special rapporteur for the UN Commission on Human Rights, resigned to protest the fact that the international community had effectively ratified Srebrenica's fall at the London conference and had done nothing to save Zepa. [V9](#)



'Tadeusz Mazowiecki Leaves his Position in the Former Yugoslavia,' *Le Monde* (France), 29 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

In his letter, Mr. Mazowiecki explained that he decided to take this step after the events of recent days and, particularly, after the fall of the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, which led him to "conclude that he could no longer continue to carry out [his] mandate." In that regard, he noted that the recommendation to create 'safe areas' was essential to protect civilians.

He referred to two factors that had played an essential role in his decision to leave: first, the 21 July London conference and, second, his own observations during a trip to Tuzla to investigate what happened to the Srebrenica refugees. "I consider the decisions made in London, which noted the fall of Srebrenica and did not prevent the fall of Zepa, to be unacceptable." He also described his shock when, upon entering a tent in Tuzla, a group of refugees refused to speak to him because he was represented the UN – "because they felt so abandoned."

On 10 August, 1995, the US presented photographs to the UN Security Council proving that Bosnian Serb forces had executed several hundred men near Srebrenica in July. It called on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to conduct an inquiry there, where other mass graves were located.

The UN Security Council called for a report on human rights violations committed in Srebrenica and Zepa.



'Security Council Calls for an Investigation into Serb Violence in Eastern Bosnia,' Afsané Bassir for *Le Monde* (France), 12 August 1995 (in French).

Extract:

On Thursday, 10 August, the UN Security Council stated that it received, "with great emotion" and "without a trace of

scepticism," the "evidence" presented by the US delegation of atrocities allegedly committed by Bosnian Serbs against the Muslims of Srebrenica (eastern Bosnia). Madeleine Albright, the US Ambassador to the UN, offered seven satellite photos taken between 12 and 14 July near the town of Nova Kasaba and the testimony of a single survivor. This evidence convinced the Council members that the Serbs had used "machine guns" to execute "people in groups of 25," killing a total of between 2,000 and 2,700 unarmed men.

Two of the photos show a football field crammed with more than 600 people. Two others were close-ups of a series of nearby fields where the land was undisturbed. According to Ambassador Albright, the three other photos, taken several days apart, show "freshly moved" earth in the same fields. Traces of heavy machinery were also visible on the photos, despite the "lack of any agricultural or industrial activity."

John Shattuck, US Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, took the statement of the Bosnian survivor, Smail Hodzic, 63. The Security Council diplomats found his testimony to be "particularly convincing." Mr. Hodzic, who managed to escape death by dropping to the ground after the first machine gun round was fired, directly challenged General Ratko Mladic, the Serbian military leader. According to Hodzic, General Mladic ordered the executions in reprisal for the Bosnian attack against Visnive, the town where he was born. A US diplomat confirmed to the press that General Mladic had played a "particularly cruel" role in the killings.

The US delegation sought "further investigation" by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The Security Council [...] unanimously adopted two new resolutions, one calling for a report by the Secretary-General, by 1 September, on violations of humanitarian law in Srebrenica and Zepa; the other focusing on the Croatian offensive in Krajina, focusing on compliance with Serbian civilians' human rights.

In August, MSF gave the press access to the logbook that its volunteers in the enclave had kept during the fall of Srebrenica. Excerpts were also published in *Messages*, the internal publication of MSF France, which was distributed to some 100 journalists.

A filmmaker hired by MSF gathered statements in Tuzla from survivors of a group of 12,000 people, primarily men and a few women and children, who had fled into the forest when Bosnian Serb forces arrived in the enclave.

The documentary, "Srebrenica in Memoriam," was shown on the French public television network, *France 2*, and on the French-German network, *ARTE*, in the following months. [V10](#)

Some of the statements that the filmmaker gathered were also printed in the French daily, *Le Monde*, in mid-October.

The members of MSF France's Board of Directors agreed to

use the film to continue to provoke public discussion about the people who had disappeared, and the negotiations that were reportedly underway on the Srebrenica enclave at the time it fell. [V11](#) [V12](#)



Minutes from MSF France's Board of Directors meeting, 28 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA by Stephan Oberreit
Stephan reviewed the chronology of events of recent days [...]

We can state the following:

- ethnic cleansing occurred,
- promises were not kept,
- many things were not seen, unfortunately: the Bosnian Serbs' high level of technical ability (for example, the buses were ready),
- UN representatives were denied access to the buses and little is known about the crimes;
- the process moved forward like a steamroller. [...]

We need to think about what MSF is going to do in terms of communications.

Bernard [Pécoul, Executive Director] explained that we are going to try to communicate what people saw in Srebrenica via an article or interview. This is very difficult in France right now and we've been told that it isn't newsworthy! We plan to issue a publication on life in Srebrenica. The assembled accounts constitute critical testimony.

We also organised a 3 – 4 day event in Brussels that included a history of the war and statements from Srebrenica.

Hans [Ullens, former MSF coordinator in Srebrenica] said that the Dutch UN battalion did not take an anti-Serbian position. Rather, they seemed to admire the Serbs' level of organisation. They said they didn't see anything ... Few atrocities... He asked if MSF will testify at The Hague on the crimes against humanity that MSF members report having seen. Brigitte [Vasset, Director of Operations] replied that the choice will be left to the individuals.



'Srebrenica in Death Throes - a Nurse Recounts What Happened,' *Télérama* (France), 16 August 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The magnitude of the ordeal. We present the unadorned account of Christina Schmidt, a Médecins Sans Frontières nurse, who was there for Srebrenica's last days, from 6 to 22 July. More than 40,000 people were forced to abandon everything and flee, under a hail of shelling to Potocari, north of the enclave, where UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) peacekeepers are based.



'The former Yugoslavia – Fall of Srebrenica – Mission Diary,' *Messages*, MSF France internal publication, September/October 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Srebrenica's death throes began on 6 July, 1995 and ended on 21 July, when the last wounded patients, local medical staff, and humanitarian volunteers left the enclave. Christina, an MSF nurse, describes the disappearance of a 'safe area'.

Everything happened so quickly and so tragically. The terrible fall of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica began suddenly on Thursday, 6 July. On 11 July, the entire population, panicked, had to flee under a rain of shelling. In Potocari (north of the enclave), families were separated before Bosnian Serb militias deported them.

What happened to the men who were then separated from the rest of the population taken by bus to central Bosnia? We learned that approximately 4,000 people, including the Bosnian doctors with whom we worked, had managed to get to Tuzla by travelling through the forest.

However, we were also told that many committed suicide along the way or were killed.



Minutes from MSF France's Board of Directors meeting, 1 September 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Film on Srebrenica: A transcript/translation of interviews with Bosnians on Srebrenica's last days was distributed to the Board members.

Bernard [Pécoul] noted that a film (duration 25' 40") is being edited and will be ready in approximately 10 days.

Contacts have been made with TV networks and Télérama and we will also try to produce one minute clips from the film. A report will be issued in about one month.

Frédéric [Laffont] emphasised that there was already a film on Chechnya and, now, one on Srebrenica, thanks to Christophe's [Picard] work, so testimony to the events does exist.

This film is an MSF tool that expands on the work in Srebrenica because it reports on an historic situation characterised by horrific events, but it is not the work of a human rights organisation. We have no way to distinguish between verifiable reality and fantasy. This is not a 'scientific' document, but evidence that we can provide to the tribunal in The Hague.



Minutes from MSF France's Board of Directors meeting, 29 September 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Film on Srebrenica (Frédéric Laffont)

It is interesting to see that, coming after everyone else Christophe [Picard] presented something new. This is not a promotion piece for MSF, but is based solely on individuals' testimony. It shows that you can communicate effectively in a different way.

ARTE responded very enthusiastically and has bought the film

...

Discussion:

... One issue must be returned to the top of the agenda in the discussion about the Srebrenica film: the 10,000 people (12-75 years) who disappeared. If Srebrenica fell, it's because everyone agreed. Were there negotiations about the fall of Srebrenica? (Renaud)



'Bosnia's Column from Hell,' Florence Hartmann, *Le Monde* (France), 17 October, 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Most of the men from Srebrenica nonetheless understood that the 'Blue Helmets' would not protect them. When General Mladic's troops arrived, 12,000 to 15,000 men between 15 and 50, followed by women and children, gathered to form a column that fled through the forest and the mountains. They hoped to reach Tuzla, a town in government-held territory. Several survivors of that column from hell told their stories to a filmmaker, an MSF member who came to Tuzla to investigate the fate of the people of Srebrenica. [...] Doctor Eliaz, who worked in the Srebrenica clinic-turned-war hospital during the three-year-long siege, recounted the following. "All along the column, there was one rifle for every 300, 400 or 500 people. We couldn't defend ourselves. But we couldn't turn back, either. At daybreak on 12 July, the Serbs attacked the rear of the column and took many prisoners. At the end of the day, around 18:00 or 19:00., just as we had gathered to set off again, 3,000 or 4,000 Serbs surrounded us. They showered us with shells. Everyone panicked. There were bodies everywhere – maybe 1,000. Many people were taken prisoner. Some managed to flee into the mountains and reached Tuzla after making the long trek into free territory. The second night of our journey, we had to cross a very busy road between Zvornik and Vlasenica. As we approached, we heard the sound of Serb tanks and megaphones ordering us to surrender. When we crossed the road, at daybreak, they attacked us. The column was split up. Many people died or were taken prisoner.

On 28 August, 1995, the Bosnian Serb forces' bombing of Sarajevo led to the first large-scale artillery and airbourne offensive by NATO and the Rapid Reaction Force.



'Overwhelming Western Response to the Carnage in Sarajevo,' *Agence France Presse*, 30 August 1995 (in French).

Extract:

NATO fighter planes, which had coordinated with the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) artillery from the start, continued their raids on Serb positions throughout the day.

Willy Claes, Secretary General of the Atlantic Alliance, acknowledged that the shelling constituted "more than a

counter-attack" to the Bosnian Serb carnage in Sarajevo, which left 37 people dead and 87 wounded.

"If the Bosnian Serbs do not show that they are ready to comply with the rules of the game this time and, thus, accept the decisions of the UN Security Council, we are ready to continue and even strengthen military action," he threatened.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic called for the bombing to "stop immediately," otherwise the "escalation of the war will be inevitable and the bombs will destroy the peace process."

Previously, he had said, "We are prepared to do whatever is necessary to defend ourselves," but also, "to participate in the [peace] negotiations."

Despite the Western operation, US negotiator Richard Holbrooke also went to Belgrade to pursue his peace mission. As he was meeting with Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav government condemned the operations against the Bosnian Serbs.

Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic stated that "the situation has fundamentally changed" and that "the road to peace is open," thanks to the bombing.

The NATO and RRF cooperation was a first and made use of the complementary relationship of aircraft and artillery.

In early September, following revelations regarding the actions of the Dutch contingent in Srebrenica and several blunders by the country's Ministry of Defence, tense discussions were held at meetings of the Dutch parliamentary committees on defence and foreign affairs. On 14 September, the Dutch newspaper, *De Volkskrant*, reported that an agreement on the fate of Srebrenica's civilians had been reached on 19 July between British general Rupert Smith, UNPROFOR's deputy commander-in-chief, and General Mladic and that the Dutch Minister of Defence, who was aware of the agreement, had kept it secret in order not to anger the Bosnian Serb commander.

The Dutch Ministry of Defence launched an internal inquiry into the behaviour of Holland's Blue Helmets during the fall of Srebrenica based on a debriefing of those forces.



'A Series of Dutch Blunders in Srebrenica,' Barbara Smith, *Le Soir* (Belgium), The Hague, 2 September 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Last month, Dutch Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve was acclaimed as a glorious leader of his country and a calm, lucid, and involved war leader. From a bunker in a crisis unit in The Hague, where he remained night and day, he followed the setbacks that beset the Dutch peacekeepers who had been taken hostage, from the fall of Srebrenica until they were released and returned to Dutch territory.

But today, that same Minister Voorhoeve is in the hot seat. Evidence has mounted of summary executions carried out by

Bosnian Serbs after they conquered the enclave of Srebrenica and the Dutch Blue Helmets' role in this tragedy has become increasingly confused. In addition, Voorhoeve admitted that the Department of Defence had committed a series of errors, verging on the farcical. For example, one of the two rolls of film on which the Blue Helmets had captured evidence of the atrocities around Srebrenica was 'washed' – destroyed – by a clumsy Ministry laboratory assistant. And a list of the names of the civilians placed in solitary confinement by the Bosnian Serbs, which could have been very useful in an inquiry into the actions of General Mladic's troops, simply disappeared. Minister Voorhoeve's credibility took a serious hit. He had to change his version of the facts several times following revelations in the media. In most cases, Mr. Voorhoeve appeared to lack current information and had to retract his own denials after consulting with military leaders. These blunders seem to be so obvious that it is hard for us to believe them ourselves. A spokesman explained that "in most of the cases, [we] think that this involves a communication problem between the army and the Minister's coordinating group". At the end of the day, the position of the Minister, who is supported by groups within the three government parties, does not appear to be threatened. Most of those involved have emphasised the errors committed by the military leaders. On several occasions, they are said to have simply "neglected" to inform the Minister.



'When Holland's Blue Helmets Clinked Glasses with the Serbs in Srebrenica...' *Le Monde* (France), 2 September 1995 (in French).

Extract:

According to Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve, the Blue Helmets witnessed the summary execution of nine or 10 people near the Dutch sector of Potocari. The Minister also reported the testimony of a soldier who saw "shoes and knapsacks lined up that appeared to belong to approximately 100 people" in the Nova Kasaba enclave. The same soldier saw "a dump truck filled with bodies," and a bulldozer transporting corpses. Despite that, the Dutch staff officer in Srebrenica signed an official document noting that "the evacuation" of the Muslims was carried out "properly," in any event with regard to the "convoys under the Blue Helmets' surveillance." [...]

On 23 July, Dutch Blue Helmets were given the green light to return home, even as the Srebrenica tragedy continued. When they arrived back in Holland, they were greeted by Crown Prince Willem Alexander, Prime Minister Wim Kok, and his defence counterpart, who came to congratulate them for as the latter wrote, "having done everything possible to protect the population." Everything? However, according to the *NRC Handelsblad* daily newspaper – whose report was not challenged – the Dutch embassy in Belgrade had strongly urged, in The Hague, that the Red Cross be granted access to the enclave before beating the retreat. [...]

Other events raised questions. [...] a video was burned at the moment the Bosnian Serbs were taking Srebrenica. These documents contained "images of people who had been exe-

cuted, the same as those photographed near the sector", confirmed Ministry of Defence spokesperson Bert Kreemers.



'The Netherlands: the Srebrenica Malaise,' Barbara Smith, *Le Soir* (Belgium), The Hague, 14 September 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Now it is an agreement between General Rupert Smith, of the UN, and Serbian General Mladic over the fate of Srebrenica's civilians that is creating a disturbance at The Hague.

According to the daily *De Volkskrant* newspaper, Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve was aware of the agreement but felt that he had to remain silent (even to Parliament) to improve relationships with Mladic, in keeping with UN instructions.

By entering into the 19 July agreement with Mladic, General Smith accepted what Thom Karremans, commander of the Dutch Blue Helmets, had granted a week earlier under threat of violence: the detention and 'evacuation' of several thousand Muslim civilians by the Bosnian Serbs. Initially, Smith was reported to have insisted that the detainees be considered prisoners of war, but Mladic had refused to discuss this point.

A UN source quoted by *De Volkskrant* said that the agreement's publication could have saved the Dutch from any accusations regarding the civilians. Indeed, the document was reportedly signed by a top UN official, not the Dutch military.

However, on several past occasions, Voorhoeve has firmly denied that negotiations were underway between the UN and General Mladic. Janvier and Rupert Smith did not negotiate with Mladic after the fall of Srebrenica, he said, and on several occasions, he (Mladic) flatly refused to talk with the UN. The Blue Helmets must now participate in an in-depth debriefing. But it already seems clear that their behaviour was not always exemplary. As the mother of one of the peacekeepers said, the soldiers felt a deep aversion towards the Muslim population and their often rough and hostile response to the Blue Helmets, who had risked their lives to protect them. Our soldiers clearly reacted harshly on occasion.

In the following weeks, the MSF team that had been in Srebrenica during its fall was asked to testify in connection with the internal inquiry conducted by the Dutch Ministry of Defence and, then, before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Discussions were held on the appropriateness of participating in these proceedings. A specific question arose about a list of patients to be evacuated that MSF gave the Dutch contingent and to which the Bosnian Serbs had access.

In the end, it was decided that the volunteers could choose whether to testify before the various entities. However, they would receive all the support they felt they needed.

While the Dutch press tried to convince the volunteers to

take a position in the campaign against the Blue Helmets, the organisation decided to issue a clarification to the reporters who contacted MSF on this issue. The document specifically criticised the fact that the UN forces in the enclave were unable to carry out their protection mandate.



Message from Pierre-Pascal Vandini, MSF France Programme Manager to MSF Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels and Belgrade, 28 September 1995 (in English) (edited.)

Extract:

2) One of, but not the only, argument in the investigation is the statement [delivery] of several lists of Bosnians from Srebrenica. One of those list concerns wounded people and here is the link with MSF, as MSF had had to establish a nominative list to evacuate those wounded with safe guarantees hoping to save them from a certain death.[...]

4) Because of the irresponsible behaviour of headquarters, Christina and Daniel were under pressure from journalists asking for a lot of detail. Under this pressure Christina and Daniel's ...[behaviour]...could be misinterpreted during the fall of Srebrenica. ... we, in Belgrade, Brussels and Paris, definitely know they acted in the very most human and exemplary way.[...]

5) MSF headquarters in Paris had been informed of the media broadcasting about the "list of wounded" through MSF Holland's "Flash News", at least one week after the beginning of this campaign. The telephone numbers of Christina and Daniel were given to the journalist without limits, through MSF Amsterdam headquarters and the German office.

The recommendations (...[which have] to be the rules)

1) As the Netherland press affairs are strictly internal [governance] affairs, MSF ...[must not]...be involved with it. Information to the media has to be stopped ...[at]... that point. You have to notice that ICRC [is] never ...[mentioned]... in the press articles, even if they [also] had a complete list of the wounded in Potocari.

2) All media (national or international) contacting MSF about events linked with Srebrenica have to be guided directly to both Pierre Pascal Vandini (MSF Paris) and Renaud Tockert (MSF Brussels), desk officers in charge of Srebrenica, and exclusively to them.

3) Both Headquarters, Brussels and Paris, must be informed at first about any kind of demand from the media going through other sections or MSF Offices before answering – as long as there is no precise agreement with Brussels and Paris – - on any subject concerning the MSF Brussels/France programme in former Yugoslavia.

4) We have to repeat that Christina and Daniel are free to refuse interview or testimony even if MSF agree to participate.

Both of them have participated enough in ...[their condemnation]... of the inhuman acts committed in Srebrenica during July 1995. MSF can now clearly express this point and let them rest.



Message from Daniel O Brien, MSF member of Srebrenica team to MSF Belgium, 28 September 1995 (in English).

Extract:

On the evening of Thursday, 13 July, after all the refugees except for my hospital patients had been transported out the UN compound at Potocari, now late in the evening at approximately 19:00, I was informed that a list of the patients in the hospital was required by the Serbian authorities. I cannot remember exactly who told me this but I think it was one of the UN soldiers.

The list was to contain the patients': Name, age, place of birth, sex and father's name.

This list was compiled by my female MSF translator [...].

Before the list was completed the BSA commanders arrived, accompanied by some UNPROFOR soldiers, and inspected the hospital and its patients. They stopped and asked some of the patients' questions but at no stage interviewed me. At the end of the inspection the head of the BSA delegation took the list off [the translator] and read it. He became quite annoyed when he found that she hadn't taken down the patients' fathers' names, and instructed her to start again and get this information. He also told her to hurry. The whole inspection lasted about 10 minutes and then they left.

Once the list was completed it was given to a young UN soldier who had been waiting for it. I do not know what happened to it after that, and therefore cannot confirm whether the Serbs ever received the list.



Message from the MSF Belgium Press officer to MSF Belgium and MSF France programme managers and communication officers, 2 October 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Last Friday during a meeting held in Brussels, it became clear that all sections needed to agree on a statement concerning the fall of Srebrenica in view of the renewed media attention, especially in the Netherlands. Well here it is, the statement. I hope you can all agree with it. If not, send your remarks and suggestions asap. I would also like to emphasise what has been agreed on as regard to media contacts: the statement (see hereafter) can be used by all sections in response to journalists' inquiries, e.g. not actively.

Journalists who want more information or who want to interview Daniel or Christina will be sent through to me. I will then screen the requests and check who is the most appropriate person to deal with them (Renaud, Pierre-Pascal, Georges, Christina). I believe that Christina can still do interviews if she wants to, but only in a very selective way, let's say for journalists of which we know they are a guarantee for high-quality news. This supposes an exchange of information on these journalists between sections and even delegate offices in some cases.

[Statement] After the various communications issued on the fall of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, in eastern Bosnia, and the questions posed to MSF staff who witnessed the

events, Médecins Sans Frontières would like to clarify the following points:

1 Médecins Sans Frontières calls on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague to ensure that justice is served with regard to the crimes committed by Bosnian Serb forces during and after the fall of Srebrenica. This must be done in order to uncover information on the status of the thousands of people who disappeared from the enclave and whose fate remains unknown.

For the international community, this is the most damning episode of the war in the former Yugoslavia. In Srebrenica, as in Zepa, it did not fulfil its role. Despite their status as 'demilitarised safe areas', granted by the UN Security Council, and despite the diplomatic activity of the members of the Contact Group, no arrangements were made to defend the enclaves and their residents properly. They were all simply struck from the map.

The behaviour of the Dutch Blue Helmets in this crisis was not the determining factor. However, MSF criticises UNPROFOR's inability to carry out its mandate and its abandonment of the enclave's 30,000 residents without any significant effort to oppose the Serb invaders.

2) After the two enclaves fell, the withdrawal of the UN Blue Helmets from the enclave of Gorazde was justified by the inadequate protection offered by UNPROFOR troops. The withdrawal took place in June, without any valid option offered that could ensure the security of the civilian population. Today, more than a month later, the future of that last 'safety area' in eastern Bosnia remains uncertain.

In the meantime, sporadic bombings and sniper attacks continue to claim victims. We have learned from our teams on site that Gorazde's residents (approximately 56,000 people) are wondering what their fate will be. Some interpret the latest developments – specifically, efforts to lift the siege of Sarajevo – as a positive sign. However, it appears that the issue of Gorazde was not on the table during recent diplomatic negotiations.

As a humanitarian organisation, MSF calls on the international negotiators to place Gorazde at the top of the agenda and to guarantee the population's security.

MSF also calls on UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to take the steps necessary to lift the siege of Sarajevo.

MSF volunteers decline to be questioned 'live' by Dutch Ministry of Defence investigators but agree to respond, in writing, to specific questions.



'Q&A Dutch Inquiry' **Message** from Christina Schmitz, MSF ex-coordinator in Srebrenica to Peter Caesar, MSF Belgium, 11 October 1995 (in English) (edited.)

Extract:

Question 17: Sorry, did we decide to leave it or to say: MSF did

not record or film, anything due to the lack of camera/video. We don't know if any violations of human rights were recorded by UNPROFOR.

Questions of the Dutch Ministry of Defence

Introduction

1. *[During what period and in what capacity were you in the enclave? What were your responsibilities? What was the geographical scope of your work? Did you report on a regular basis to your superiors on the situation in the enclave? If so, on what issues did you report?]*

Period of stay 24.06.95 – 21.07.95

Responsibility of Christine Schmitz: Field coordination

Responsibility of Daniel O'Brien: Medical Doctor (work in district hospital involving running male internal medical ward, casualty, adults outpatient clinics, night cover of hospital, surgery)

Project: Supervision and support of the district hospital (approx. 80 beds – internal ward, gynaecology, surgery)

Family planning

Tuberculosis programme

Six primary health care posts in the outskirts

Hygienic Outpatient department

Water and sanitation

E.P.I (expanded programme of immunisation)

Supply of medicines and medical material for approx. 40.000 inhabitants

Surveillance system (data collection)

Monitoring on calorie intake and general food situation

Social centre with 96 handicapped and/or elderly inhabitants

Geographical scope: During the time of our stay we personally were not able to visit the surroundings, but stayed only in the centre, the project however was extended to all surrounding villages of the enclave.

Reporting: We were in daily contact by HF radio and satellite telex with MSFB/F coordination in Belgrade, Brussels and Paris and reported any changes of the medical, humanitarian and security situation concerning the programme.

2. *[Could you describe in factual terms your contacts with the Dutch Un-battalion, during and after the crisis? With who were you usually in contact, how frequent, and on what issues?]* I (CS) had daily contact with the UN-liaison team in the security meeting at 09:30 in the PTT building before the crisis.

We introduced ourselves once to Commandant Karremans in Potocari.

The medical team of Dutchbat continued its activities in the hospital.

On 5 [July] the new medical team was introduced to us. During the bombardments between 6 – 11 [July]. I (CS) had sporadic contact by telex, requesting information about security, informing about the situation in the hospital, requesting medical assistance.

From 11[July] on we were living in the Dutch compound in Potocari until 21 [July]. In these ten days, I (CS) had continuous contact, mostly with Deputy Commander Robert Franken, but also with the medical team [and other] Dutch soldiers who assisted.

Main issues were the situation of the displaced persons, the care of the patients, the evacuation of the patients, the evacuation of local staff, the evacuation of ourselves. [...]

6. [...] *[Did Doctors Without Borders give the list to the ICRC? to the Bosnian Serbs? In case Doctors Without Borders give a list with names of wounded persons to the Bosnian Serbs, did the ICRC do so? Does your organisation usually draw up lists of wounded persons? [...]]*

MSF did not give the list to the BSA.

If ICRC gave the list to anybody [it] is beyond my knowledge.

In case of an anticipated evacuation a list of patients is usually drawn up by MSF in order to facilitate the transport and to guarantee the security of the patients.[...]

8. *[What was the role of Doctors without Borders with regard to the transportation of the wounded persons from the enclave? From Bratunac?]*

MSF handed the patients over to ICRC in Potocari. MSF did not have any role in the transportation of patients from Potocari or from Bratunac.

9. *[Were you able to visit the wounded in the hospital of Bratunac? What do you know of their treatments?]*

Due to limited access and capacity, MSF did not visit the patients in Bratunac and therefore did not have concrete information about their treatments.

As mentioned in answer 5, a member of the medical team of UNPROFOR was present in Bratunac.

10. *[Were you actually involved in meetings with the Bosnian Serb military? If so, who was present at these meetings and what was discussed? With what results?]*

Only when the agenda of the meetings concerned the patients or matters concerning our presence including local staff and their family members, I (CS) was present in the meetings between BSA and UN.

Many meetings in the period between 12 July and 20 July took place, but due to the chaotic and hectic circumstances, I (CS) don't have any written minutes.

Therefore it is impossible to recall all results of the different meetings.

11. *[Did you coordinate your own position with Dutch UN-officers prior to or following meetings with the Bosnian Serbs?]*

Meetings were jointly prepared and exchanges of views were held. MSF coordinated its activities with the headquarters in Belgrade, Brussels and Paris.

12. *[Are you aware of any documents signed by Dutch UN-personnel on the request of the Bosnian Serbs or any agreements between the UN and the Bosnian Serbs? If so, could you describe the contents of these documents or agreements and the circumstances under which they were signed/concluded?]*

No.

13. *[Can you confirm that there were relatively few men among the refugees in or around the Dutch UN-compound in Potocari from July 11th to July 14th? What is your explanation for this? In your estimation, how many men were there?]*

No concrete answer possible. I cannot confirm nor estimate the figures of men in the Dutch compound in Potocari, because the refugees in the compound were taken in charge by UNPROFOR.

14. *[Can you confirm that the men were separated from the other refugees in Potocari? If so, how many? Do you know what happened to them?]*

We had reports from different members of UNPROFOR about

separation of men. It is impossible to give an exact figure. We don't know what happened to them.

On 12 July, a young, male Muslim with his daughter on his arm came to me, guarded by a Serbian soldier. The man requested me to take care of his child since he had to go with the Serbs and had nobody to take care for the one year old child.

15. *[What can you tell us about the refugee convoys between Potocari and Kladanj? To what extent was the Dutch UN-battalion allowed to escort these convoys?]*

The refugees were transported away from Potocari by buses and trucks of the BSA. If escorts of the UN were allowed [it] is beyond my knowledge.

16. *[Were you a witness to any serious violation of human rights in or around the enclave? If so, have you reported these violations and to whom?]*

From 6 July, the whole enclave was heavily bombarded, also targeting civilians. Several civilians died due to the bombardment, many civilians got injured.

On 10 July a bomb fell approx. 30 meter away from the hospital.

When most of the population fled to Potocari, heavy bombardment continued, also when the refugees gathered at Potocari. From 12 July on, armed Serbian soldiers were present in Potocari, but not in the UNPROFOR compound.

On 12 July I (CS) heard many single shots around one house, also in the late evening, but from another direction.

On 13 July, I (CS) went back into Srebrenica, witnessing the widespread looting of the livestock and the houses of the population of Srebrenica by Serbian soldiers and civilians.

I (CS) reported everything always to MSF Headquarters in Belgrade, Brussels and Paris. During the period from 6 until 10 July I reported also to the UNPROFOR in meetings or via telex.

17. *[Were any violation of human rights recorded on photo or video? If so, by whom and with regard to what violation(s)?]*

Beyond my knowledge.

18. *[Do you have any other relevant information about events during and after the fall of Srebrenica?]*

Question not specific.



Message from MSF Belgium's programme manager to MSF Brussels/France/Holland desks and directors of operations, 3 October 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Context – Investigations in Holland concerning the role of Dutchbat in the fall of Srebrenica. Dutch press campaign involving Christina and Daniel about use of list of patients to be evacuated and the use of such a list by Dutchbat and BSA. Christina interviewed several times in an aggressive way to justify the make-up of such a list. The list has thus become a "hot topic" in Holland as Dutch Press lets understand that it has led to the [disappearance] of 7 male patients.

Necessity to clarify:

- 1) MSF - and thus Christina - position towards the Dutch press and the 'list' issue.
- 2) Participation of Christina in the special 'inquiry commis-

sion' asked for by D[utch] members of Parliament but created under the Ministry of Defence.

3) Participation of Christina in the Hague International Court as official invitation to testimony has been sent to her. [...] Following [last Friday's] meeting, following propositions are made:

1) A Public statement has been prepared by MSF Brussels [communications department] together with Malou (MSF Holland) and Christina. This statement is aimed at reasserting the international community's responsibility and the total collapse of the UN-UNPROFOR system to protect the civilian population, letting understand that details such as the question of the list (which is anyway normal practice in these circumstances) is totally irrelevant to explain the lack of protection of the population of Srebrenica.

This statement will be distributed to all journalists still wanting to enquire. All contacts will first pass through Anouk who will screen them and decide who is most appropriate to answer (Renaud, P-P, Georges or Christina).

2) Ministry of Defence special commission: Although asked for by ... [members of Parliament]..., this commission is under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence.

This 'commission' has thus no value as such and there is a risk to try to use Christina to 'bleach' the Dutch army. Also questions might be somewhat brutal and there is a fear that questions might be too much "oriented".

However, to refuse to [give] testimony in front of this commission would result in feeding up new questions about MSF position during the fall of Srebrenica ("What do they fear?") and raises the issue of MSF testimony role. We thus have to be sure that we have done everything possible, whatever the results of the investigation.

Consequently, we propose to ask the commission to provide Christina with relevant questions so that a written answer could be done. Further personal contacts with the commission will be discussed if needed afterwards.

3) International court of Justice: Christina expressed her wish to participate and testify but asked for an MSF back-up. It is clear that Christina was present in Srebrenica in the context of her mission with MSF and therefore the organisation's presence in one way or another is necessary.

We propose thus:

1. To investigate further which kind of interface can exist between MSF and the international court which is a totally new structure.

The 'permanence' of this court should ensure an adequate appraisal and use of the testimonies.

Peter Casaer will be in charge, in collaboration with Fr. Saulnier, to check the issue and bring comments about the way "testimonies" should be organised.

2. To organise direct contacts with the court to further understand its way of functioning. P Casaer and F Saulnier will try to pay them a first visit soon.

3. To accompany Christina to her first audience to the court after points 1 has been clarified. For ultimate contacts with the court, it will be decided afterwards if further accompaniment of Christina is necessary or not.

In mid-November, as the Dutch press continued to reveal information about the behaviour of the Dutch contingent in Srebrenica, MSF's managers discussed whether to hand over to Ministry of Defence investigators the fax exchanges about patient treatment between its team and the Dutch contingent when the attack on the enclave began. In the end, they decided to forward them.



Message from the MSF France programme manager to MSF Belgium programme managers, 13 November 1995 (in French).

Extract:

I discussed this issue of testifying on the events in Srebrenica. I sought the opinion of Bernard Pécoul [Executive Director of MSF France] and Marc Gastellu [MSF France Deputy Director of Operations], in their capacity as decision makers, in the absence of Philippe Biberson [MSF France President], and of Brigitte Vasset [Director of Operations] and Françoise Saulnier [legal advisor] on technical matters. [...]

Conclusion: Bernard and Marc agree to turn over the information we have.

Note: reporters are not as rigorous and careful as judicial committees.

Françoise believes that the telex is exculpatory evidence; it shows that the UN forces' command in Potocari considered our request, even if we were not satisfied with the answer. It does not prove that there were health consequences for the patients. On the other hand, the 11-12 July, 1995, situation in Srebrenica and Potocari shows that nothing else could have been done, medically speaking.

Note: MSF's intervention will only strengthen the UN's non-intervention position.

You know my view: this is a step in the wrong direction because MSF is becoming involved in investigations that are either internal to the UN, journalistic, or national (Holland). They have nothing to do with obtaining reparations for the wrongs suffered by Srebrenica's population. There is a real risk that our words will be used for purposes contrary to our intentions.

Of course, I will follow Marc's and Bernard's opinions in this case, but I'm afraid that this issue will come up again.



Message from the MSF Belgium programme manager to MSF Holland operation and communication departments, 8 December 1995 (in English).

Extract:

Here is the small summary of events as reconstructed after we found back some of the telexes.

Unfortunately we cannot find the telex of 10 [July] requesting assistance for the 2 patients. The telex might still be on the hard disk of the standard now in Pale but up to now the team has not succeeded to find it. Anyway, the answer is sufficiently clear I believe.

I send you also the other telexes, less relevant for the present

explanation but of interest to understand the state of relationships between MSF and Dutchbat.

'Update Srebrenica' Message from the MSF Belgium programme manager to the Cabinet of the Minister of Defence of the Netherlands [...]

1. On 5 July, Daniel O'Brien got in touch with the two surgeons of Dutchbat and other members of the new medical team. The new medical team of Dutchbat including the surgeon [M. H] had just arrived in the enclave and they came to visit us and the hospital in order to see the situation. Dr O'Brien asked assistance for a patient with leukaemia in terminal stage.

He requested some specific blood transfusion material not available at the hospital but available in Potocari. He asked also for the Dutch lab technician to come up to the hospital.

The surgeon answered positively to this request. On 6 July, Christina Schmitz went down to Potocari to ask again for immediate assistance. At that time, she has however been answered that material was not available and that anyway the lab technician would have to come to the hospital, which was – due to the security situation – not possible.

2. Also on 6 July in the evening Christina Schmitz sent a telex, typed 18:47, to the Dutchbat medical team (see telex 1 annexed) att [MrT] asking for medical assistance for a young lady of 15 years old as the hospital had not the facilities to take care of her.

She thus proposed to bring the patient down to Potocari. The telex from Dutchbat that you have been sent by P. Casaer (telex 2) signed by H.G.J. [H] is in fact an answer to this new request and not to the one mentioned under 1. This telex declines the request because of lack of IC [Intensive care] capacity and material. The reason for the confusion last week was that Christina Schmitz only remembered this second request when she found back the diskette with the telexes. Daniel O'Brien joined by telephone since last week confirms formally these facts.

3. As for the day 10 July, you will find hereafter a telex sent at 14:00 updating Dutchbat about the situation in the hospital (telex 3). This telex [was] sent before the request for assistance was sent after the new attack with a Multiple Rocket Launcher which took place after 15:00. When replying to the request for medical assistance for two heavily wounded patients (telex 4), Maj. Franken had thus perfectly been updated about the global medical situation in the hospital.

4. Although relations between MSF and Dutchbat were sometimes difficult due to different reasons before the fall of the enclave (Telex 5), we want to stress the fact that MSF and Dutchbat had most of the time a good field collaboration especially in the period of 12-21 July.

Hoping that this update will eventually clarify the course of events,

6 July 18:47 pm

From MSF Srebrenica

To Medical team attention [...]

Urgent message

Dear [...]

Sorry to bother you again, but we would like to ask you, if we can bring a critical patient now down to your facilities.

She is one of the victims from the late afternoon bombing in town.

Our facilities cannot offer sufficient intensive medical care. She is 15 years old. Diagnosis: haemopneump'thorax, right side flial anterior segment lost large amount of blood, but is well resuscitated , no intercostal drainage performed yet because of risk of increasing bleeding into the lung, well oxygenated at present;

Please send us a reply in any case

6 July 1995 20:49 UTC time [18:49]

From: Ops Dutchbat

To: MSF Srebrenica

Ref: your message concerning patient time 20:17

With our sincerest apologies we are not able to treat your patient, because of lack of I.C [Intensive Care] capacity and material

Greetings [...]

From: MSF Srebrenica

To: UNPROFOR Dutchbat

To whom it may concern Srebrenica 10 July 14:00

Thank you very much for your three telexes.

Herewith I would like to give you some additional information: until now the hospital received 22 war wounded, most of them with minor shrapnel wounds all of them young men. According to the President six people got killed. The hospital is overwhelmed with patients and relatives.

The medical staff in the hospital is doing an excellent job and can until now cope with the workload.

The windows in the pharmacy and hospital we have repaired with plastic sheeting.

I appreciate very much your offering of help [...] and will certainly come back to it in a bit more quiet time. The windows in the OT are still intact and fortunately it is summertime.

In the afternoon the number of shells falling has decreased however I cannot declare yet the situation as stable. Unfortunately we also don't have much information on the status of the civilians besides medical. However I have requested a meeting with the responsible person for the refugees in the school building.

Many greetings and with the hope for good cooperation
Christina Schmitz, coordinator MSF B/F, Srebrenica

10 July 1995 14:48

From: Maj Franken

To: MSF Christina

- Again with a troubled mind I must state that we are not able to support you in giving actual medical aid

- Although really very willing I have a responsibility in securing medcare for my soldiers

- My medstocks are at the minimum

- In spite of the fuel situation the only help I can offer is an APC ambulance to help evacuating casualties

- I have to make one restriction ad that is that the vehicle can only be used in town, due to the fact that in case of an emergency I need it for my own soldiers which have priority

- Please inform me if you want this(little) help

10 July 1995 UTC time 19:27 [17:27]

From: MSF Srebrenica

To: Major Karremans and everybody who is concerned

The situation has not changed here in front of the hospital.

Approx more than ten thousand people are waiting in front

We urge you to take some immediate action

The population and the hospital are without protection and shelling is going on

The mayor of Srebrenica is requesting you to come immediately to the PTT building

On behalf of MSF I request assistance for the population

This is a non-acceptable situation

Please inform us about your steps

Christina Schmitz, coordinator MSF B/F, Srebrenica

On 21 and 30 October, 1995, *Le Monde* and *The Independent* (respectively, French and British daily newspapers) reported that during a 24 May closed-door briefing at the United Nations, UNPROFOR commander General Janvier recommended abandoning the enclaves because he considered them indefensible.



'Days of Crisis at the UN,' Afsané Bassir for *Le Monde* (France), 21 October 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Wednesday, 24 May, 10 a.m.: A closed session is underway on the third floor. In the Security Council meeting room, General Bernard Janvier, head of the Blue Helmets in the former Yugoslavia, confronted 15 diplomats and did not mince words. He demanded "clear, immediate, and precise" instructions on the role of the units placed under his command. He explained that in the field, the attitude of each was making his work "impossible." He called for assembling his soldiers and withdrawing them from the Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia. The Council passed the buck to the Secretary-General's representative, the Indian Chinmaya Gharakhan, and asked him for a report on the situation before the end of the month.

Another closed session during the afternoon; this time, in the basement. Here, General Janvier appeared as the accused, facing the representatives of the 40 countries contributing to the "peacekeeping forces." Turkey's ambassador fired the first shot. "The lack of a forceful reaction on the part of the UN feeds Serbian aggression in Bosnia and that is unacceptable," said Inal Batu. The officer did not hide his irritation. "Since I arrived in New York, I keep hearing the word 'forceful.' I still don't know what it means."

New Zealand's representative, Colin Keating, took up the attack. He said it was "totally unacceptable" that Yasushi Akashi, the Secretary-General's representative, had "once again" refused the use of force when British General Rupert Smith, head of the Blue Helmets in Bosnia, had called for it. General Janvier interrupted him to clarify. "There is a widespread misunderstanding. I also oppose air strikes so it is not

accurate to say that Mr. Akashi is the only one responsible." A little later, General Janvier was the target of the American ambassador's fire in her office. Madame Albright spoke in English and the officer answered in French. "We in Washington are extremely frustrated because we have missed opportunities to use air power yet again." The general reminded her that Bosnian forces had broken the most recent ceasefire. "It's true that the Bosnians do not always behave like angels, but as soon as a rape victim counter-attacks, you accuse her of creating problems," she responded. [...]

Madame Albright continued to insist on air strikes and General Janvier said, "You are asking us to go to war against the Serbs. Is Washington ready for that?" [...]

Thursday, 25 May. The 07:00 ultimatum issued to the Serbians – that they return the four heavy weapons that they had taken from the UN "assembly centres" in the Sarajevo region – expired. General Janvier was on the telephone with General Smith. In the end, despite his reluctance, Janvier agreed to air strikes.

[...] [Boutros Boutros-Ghali] learned that the Serbians had taken Blue Helmets hostage. A press conference was organised. The answer to the question that would certainly be asked was drafted quickly: The Blue Helmets were vulnerable because UN Member States ignored the Secretary-General's call for the peacekeepers to assemble. But the participants didn't even raise Bosnia.

[...] At the same time, Kofi Annan [UN under-secretary general responsible for operations and peacekeeping] was participating in a Security Council emergency meeting to inform Council members of the second air strike against the Serbians, which had been carried out that morning. The first Serbian reprisals – the bombing of the town of Tuzla – left 71 dead and more than 150 wounded. The number of Blue Helmets captured by the Serbians now stood at 10. Some 80 UN observers were chained to poles.

[...] The Security Council met at 7 p.m. Boutros Boutros-Ghali opened the discussion.

"[...] I am here to ask your advice. This is the question: Should we carry out a third air strike against the Serbians?"

[...] French Ambassador Jean-Bernard Merimée, very upset, recalled the US insistence that the UN strike the Serbians. But once the hostages were taken, everyone slipped away.

The Secretary-General concluded by saying, "I came to ask your counsel but despite all the public criticism against my policy, you have asked me to decide. I will assume that responsibility. I will make the final decision."

[...] In the end, there was no third air strike.



'UN Left 8,000 to Die in Bosnia,' Robert Block, 30 October 1995 *The Independent* (UK) (in English).

Extract:

Lieutenant-General Bernard Janvier, the commander of all UN forces in Bosnia and Croatia, made the call in a closed-door briefing in New York on 24 May. A copy of the general's confidential statement was obtained by the Independent.

His openly expressed desire to ditch the enclaves, and the

way he handled the crisis in July when the Serbs launched their offensive, have led senior UN officials to conclude that the French officer, supported by leaders in Paris, London and Washington, deliberately allowed Srebrenica and later Zepa, a nearby "safe area", to fall to the Bosnian Serbs.

"Looking back on it now, there is no doubt that the general was signalling his intention, and the intention of those whose views he represented, to wash his hands of the safe areas," said a senior UN diplomat who attended General Janvier's briefing in May. "There is no doubt about it. Srebrenica was allowed to fall on purpose."

Between 6 July and 11 July, when the enclave was overrun, General Janvier repeatedly refused to heed desperate pleas for support from UN forces in the enclave, often over the objections of his own staff. According to UN documents and officials, General Janvier rejected at least five requests for air support from the Dutch battalion commander in Srebrenica. By the time he had approved the use of Nato air power, hours before the enclave fell, it was widely considered too little, too late. After the town fell, some 8,000 people are thought to have been murdered by the Bosnian Serbs – effectively left to their fate by the international community.

Six weeks earlier, he had told ambassadors and representatives of the UN Security Council and 35 troop-contributing nations that the UN forces stationed in the enclaves, including Dutch UN troops in Srebrenica, were "of no great use": they were isolated, poorly armed and vulnerable to being taken hostage. Limited reinforcements and other gestures, including Nato air attacks, also were of little use, he contended. The best option available was to pull out. "We have little time ahead of us. We must take measures which allow us to limit the risks incurred by our forces," he concluded.

"Let us be pragmatic and honest especially towards those whose security we hold in our hands: without lightning rods, stay out of the storm!" In saying that, the general added, "I do not feel I am betraying the spirit of the mission. That mission is based on the consent of the parties ... In the absence of the consent of the parties, leave them to face their responsibilities in the zones where we are scapegoats." [...]

"No one had ever said what Janvier said so clearly or so coldly before," said one diplomat from a Muslim country with troops in the former Yugoslavia. "They [UN peacekeeping officials] were always complaining they did not have the resources to implement their mandate, and that was true. However, no one ever said what Janvier said, that the areas are indefensible, that we cannot defend them, should not defend them and must leave them to their fate. That was completely new."

On 31 October 1995, the Dutch Ministry of Defence published the report of the internal investigation procedure that had begun in September. The report cleared the Blue Helmets of any responsibility in the fall of Srebrenica and the massacres that accompanied it. Rather, it pointed to problems in the implementation of rules governing the intervention of UN peacekeeping forces.



'Report Based on the Debriefing on Srebrenica' 4 October 1995 (embargoed 31 October 1995) (in English).

Extract:

Dutchbat was operating within the UN concept of the Safe Area. On the basis of this concept, in Srebrenica Dutchbat was committed to help create sufficiently stable circumstances (including disarming the BIH) to enable the provision of humanitarian aid, the evacuation of wounded and the improvement of the living conditions of the population.

Observation posts were set up to that end, patrols took place along and within the boundaries of the safe area, medical care was provided, the infrastructure improved and contact was established with the civil and military authorities of the various parties in the region. In this way, an attempt was made to relieve the most urgent humanitarian needs and wherever possible to prevent hostilities by promoting contacts with and between the parties. The manner in which the concept of the safe area was ultimately implemented by the UN did not allow for its enforcement by UNPROFOR, and thus by Dutchbat, using military force. The UN's threat to deploy NATO air power if necessary was in fact the only means of deterrence. As a consequence of a total blockade by the BSA (Bosnian-Serb forces), Dutchbat was faced with vast shortages and therefore ultimately could scarcely be regarded as operationally deployable.



'Dutch Deny they Betrayed Srebrenica,' Tony Barber, *The Independent* (UK) 31 October 1995 (in English).

Extract:

The Dutch government said yesterday its United Nations peace-keeping troops bore no responsibility for the fall last July of the Bosnian Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, an episode in which Bosnian Serb forces are suspected of having slaughtered up to 8,000 unarmed Muslims.

Presenting an official report into the disaster, the Dutch Defence Minister, Joris Voorhoeve, said Srebrenica's collapse had been primarily a consequence of Bosnian Serb aggression and badly implemented UN policies. "The fall of Srebrenica was caused by Bosnian Serb aggression, not by the way in which Dutchbat [the Dutch UN battalion in the enclave] operated. The opposing forces were far superior in number and firepower. The small Dutch UN unit faced them alone," Mr Voorhoeve said.

He blamed UN member-states for doing too little to protect Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, the three UN-declared Muslim "safe areas" of eastern Bosnia, although it was clear they were vulnerable to Bosnian Serb military pressure.

"The way in which the UN and its member-states implemented the concept of the so-called safe areas failed dismally," he said. [...] Mr Voorhoeve confirmed that after the Bosnian Serbs attacked Srebrenica in July, UN commanders refused repeated requests from Dutch forces in the enclave for air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs.

Describing the lightly armed and poorly supplied Dutch unit in Srebrenica as a “largely symbolic” UN presence, Mr Voorhoeve said it had been powerless to resist the tanks and heavy guns of the Bosnian Serb forces led by General Ratko Mladic. “Had attempts been made to repel the Bosnian Serbs by force, this would have resulted in a bloodbath among the tens of thousands of [Muslim] refugees and among the Dutch Blue-Helmets,” he said.

The report was commissioned partly to defend Dutch UN forces against claims that they did too little to protect Srebrenica’s people against an orgy of Bosnian Serb violence.

Based on interviews with 460 Dutch military personnel who served in the enclave and with UN staff elsewhere in former Yugoslavia, the report argues that the Dutch soldiers did their best to perform their military and humanitarian duties.

Belgrade assisted the Bosnian Serbs during the assault on the Muslim enclave, which fell on 11 July, but did not necessarily participate in the massacres that followed, it added. According to the newspaper, satellite photographs and other documents from the US intelligence services prove the existence of half a dozen mass graves, in addition to those already discovered.

The US authorities submitted the documents to the ICTY in The Hague, which was set up by the UN to examine the crimes committed during the war in the former Yugoslavia; according to the newspaper, they were afraid that the Bosnian Serbs would clear the mass graves to vindicate themselves.



‘The International Tribunal Charges Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic With the Genocide in Srebrenica,’ Alain Franco, *Le Monde* (France) 18 November 1995 (in French).

NO PEACE AGREEMENT WITHOUT JUSTICE

At the end of October 1995, the United States presented new satellite photographs and documents proving the existence of another dozen mass graves around Srebrenica. These were handed over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

On 16 November 1995, the tribunal indicted the Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic for direct and personal responsibility for the atrocities perpetrated during the fall of Srebrenica.

Talks between the Republica Srpska (RS) and the Croat Muslim Federation, led by the United States, were held in Dayton (Ohio) from 1 to 21 November. The so-called Dayton Accords would be signed in Paris on 14 December. They provided for UNPROFOR to be replaced by IFOR, a peacekeeping force under NATO command.



‘New Evidence of Serbian Massacres in Bosnia,’ *Agence France Presse*, 30 October 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The United States has provided the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) with new evidence of massacres of Muslims allegedly perpetrated by Bosnian Serbs during the capture of Srebrenica (in eastern Bosnia), according to Sunday’s Washington Post.

The Americans also have evidence that the regular army in

Extract:

The charge of genocide and crimes against humanity, made on Thursday 16 November against the Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Ratko Mladic, for their participation in the “genocide that followed the capture of Srebrenica” on 11 July, relates to “one of the bloodiest actions in the Yugoslav conflict”. The indictment comes in addition to the one on 25 July, when the ICTY accused the two Bosnian Serb leaders of genocide and crimes against humanity for their policy of assassinating civilians in Sarajevo and for “taking hostages and creating human shields”. [...]

The file, based on “witness statements from refugees and survivors of summary executions, confirmed and corroborated by other sources,” in particular the Dutch “Blue Helmets” deployed in Srebrenica, describes three places where the atrocities took place.

The first was the column of escapees on the road to Tuzla, which was bombarded by Serbian artillery. “Hundreds of Muslims were killed, and more wounded. Many lost their minds under the repeated attacks. Witness statements describe how dozens of people committed suicide to avoid being captured.” Those who were captured, even the wounded, were executed immediately. Hundreds were buried in mass graves, some of them while they were still alive.” [...] Mass executions also took place around 14 July in the area around Karakaj on the way out of Zvornik. [...]

Other scenes of horror took place in Potocari, close to the Dutch Blue Helmets camp: “Numerous people were killed in the nearby fields and rivers. Witnesses describe such a state of terror that many people committed suicide. Women were raped and killed.”

In a few days, during an unprecedented ethnic cleansing operation in which Serbian soldiers acted with as much speed as savagery, “the Muslim population in Srebrenica was virtually eliminated,” concluded Judge Riad.

The indictment states that General Mladic was present at the sites of summary and mass executions, at the time they took place. It also states that Radovan Karadzic “also exercised effective military control over Bosnian Serb forces, as both

commander and political leader". Over 30 direct witness statements make it reasonable to believe that "Ratko Mladic personally supervised the capture of Srebrenica, paying particular attention to detail", states the file. "Thousands of Muslims surrendered to the forces commanded by Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, after receiving assurances that they would be safe. Some Serbian soldiers even put on uniforms stolen from the Blue Helmets [...]. Ratko Mladic was seen at the sites of mass executions by several survivors." Witnesses also report how the Bosnian Serb officer supervised the separation of men and women in Potocari, just before the executions. Finally, remarked Judge Riad, "on arriving in Potocari, Mladic ordered that no man or boy should be evacuated from the enclave. Most of them were transported to Bratunac and ended their fateful journey in the "killing fields" described previously.



'Main Points and Military Steps,' *Le Monde* (France) 23 November 1995 (in French).

Extract:

A peacekeeping force (IFOR, or Implementation Force), under NATO command and led by a US general, will be deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina to replace the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

IFOR will monitor compliance with the ceasefire and separation of forces. It will be equipped to defend itself vigorously in all circumstances [...]. IFOR will have complete freedom of movement throughout the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Dayton Accords, signed on 14 December, also provided for lifting the economic embargo imposed on Serbia. Richard Goldstone, prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, threatened to resign if a deal was struck that traded peace for the impunity of the Serb leaders.

MSF France's Board of Directors had the same fears, and was concerned that lifting the economic embargo could threaten the deliverance of criminals to the court. It was suggested that the signature of the peace agreements in Paris could be used as an opportunity to air the issue in public.

In a column published in the French daily *Le Monde* on 16 December, MSF's Legal Advisor Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier asked that European governments commit to a guarantee that concluding the peace agreements would not take precedence over justice.



'The Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague Threatens to Resign,' Alain Franco, *Le Monde* (France) The Hague, 17 November 1995 (in French).

Extract:

Mr Goldstone also allowed uncertainty to persist over his threat to resign in the eventuality, often referred to during the discussions between the warring parties in Dayton, of a deal between the United States and Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, trading peace for the impunity of the Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, who have been indicted for genocide by the ICTY: "If a member of the Security Council or the international community were to be part of such a deal, I truly believe that all members of the tribunal would seriously ask themselves the question: is it worth continuing under these conditions?"



Minutes of MSF France's Board Meeting, 24 November 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The international tribunal threatened by the Dayton Accords on the former Yugoslavia – Frédéric Laffont [...] The peace agreements signed in Dayton represent a threat to the fate of the tribunal, insofar as there is a risk that the criminals in the former Yugoslavia will not be prosecuted. Delivery of the criminals was linked to the lifting of the embargo. Now that the Dayton agreement has lifted the embargo, the criminals are no longer a bargaining chip.

Is MSF going to request that what the Security Council achieved by creating the International Tribunal should not be withdrawn?

Dayton indicates that states can become criminals with impunity. Are we going to stand back and watch it happen? Are we going to ask the Security Council not to dismiss the International Tribunal at the stroke of a pen?

Pierre Salignon: peace guarantees the ethnic division of Bosnia. But peace cannot exist unless justice is done. As a witness, MSF must ask for explanations and keep on asking for them. We must not fail to grasp the opportunity represented by the signature of the peace agreement in Paris. It is just as important as the actions we take in the field.

In response to a remark by Odile on the projects proposed by other groups in this area, Pierre recalled that we are generally seen as distinct from other organisations, and their activities would not prevent separate action by MSF.

We could also meet with Goldstone to discuss how to react. If states wanted it, the Tribunal would be disbanded, not only for the former Yugoslavia but also for Rwanda.



'Let's Not Sacrifice the Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia,' Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Legal Advisor of MSF, *Le Monde* (France) 16 December 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The peace agreement on the former Yugoslavia signed in Dayton marks a new period of significant risk in the history of a conflict that is very close to home. The invention of the new expression 'ethnic cleansing' has made the atrocities committed on the ground intellectually tolerable but without enhancing our understanding.

The war, which was started in the name of defending racial purity and conquering territory, was racist. "Serbia is where the Serbs are": this political slogan pinpointed the entire logic of the war within the former Yugoslav Federation. Subsequently, this same contagious logic led each of the parties in the conflict to define itself by reference to its race. The war was not a political accident, but the result of a deliberate determination by the state to impose a racial doctrine.

The European community has not been able to face up to the danger because it has neither a common foreign policy nor a common defence policy. Various European governments have therefore concentrated on open competition between small ideas and symbolic gestures. Only humanitarian action has been integrated within a European framework. Brussels has had to rely on humanitarian relief to manage a war that specifically denies the equal dignity of human beings.

Incapable of waging war on the racial policy of negating human beings, the European community promised to impose justice on the crimes against humanity committed in the former Yugoslavia. The international tribunal was established first without material resources and then with no certainty that it would still exist in the future, and be able to keep the promise that had been made. Remember Vukovar, Gorazde and Srebrenica. The capture of civilians, the massacre of the sick, the selections and extermination. Then silence.

The peace will perhaps be American.

Justice may still be European.

But justice does not stop the war. Three years after the start of the conflict, the persistent threat at the heart of Europe has led the Americans to once again exercise their role as protectors of our continent. A peace agreement has finally been signed under their leadership. But it does not lay claim to the use of force to impose justice. In practice, it enshrines a new application of the doctrine already used in the Balkans in 1918, by US president Woodrow Wilson. At that time, the policy of "one nation = one state" had led to the first great ethnic cleansing in the region, with several million people displaced across new borders. An international tribunal was supposed to counterbalance the potential racial drift by punishing the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide. But in 1923, the final peace agreement granted an amnesty for all the crimes committed. If war has a price, so do some kinds of peace.

Today, the international tribunal for the former Yugoslavia finds itself in the same dilemma. States have not gone to war to obtain a just peace. Will they endanger a peace agreement for justice to prevail?

What is happening on the ground, as our volunteers have

witnessed, does not answer even the simplest questions: where will people live if they do not consider themselves ethnically pure? On what basis and where will the two million refugees and people displaced by the war be relocated? What role will the war criminals play in the future?

This American peace concerns us as both human beings and European citizens. Who is now setting the price of our lives and our humanity?

The peace will perhaps be American; justice may still be European. Governments within the European Union need to take a stand to ensure that the international tribunal will not disappear with the signature of the peace agreement, and that justice has not been traded for the release of the French pilots⁹.

On 1 December 1995, the Secretary General of the United Nations presented an initial report on the fall of Srebrenica, which set out "indisputable evidence" of a consistent method of summary executions and General Mladic's presence at the sites where they took place.

On 21 December, the United Nations Security Council demanded a more detailed investigation into the atrocities committed by the Serbs in Srebrenica.



'The UN Wants the Truth About Srebrenica,' *Agence France Presse*, 22 December 1995 (in French).

Extract:

The Security Council is demanding an investigation into the atrocities committed by Bosnian Serbs in the city last July. In addition to immediate access for international investigators to the Muslim enclave in eastern Bosnia, the UN Security Council also demanded, in a resolution adopted on Thursday evening, that Bosnian Serbs should refrain from any action intended to destroy, alter, conceal or damage any items of evidence in Srebrenica. [...]

In a report to the Security Council, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had indicated that according to the best available estimates, between 3,500 and 5,500 people were still reported as missing since the fall of Srebrenica.

The Security Council noted that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) had indicted the Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic for their direct and individual responsibility for the atrocities committed in July against the Bosnian Muslim population in Srebrenica.

The Security Council also took note of the "solid evidence" referred to in Mr Boutros-Ghali's report, according to which an unknown but significant number of men in the Srebrenica area were summarily executed by the Bosnian Serb forces and paramilitary elements.

9. Two French pilots were detained after their aircraft was downed by Bosnian Serb forces on 30 August 1995. They were released on 12 December 1995.

In February 1996, MSF published a report containing witness statements on the evacuation of Srebrenica and the fate of members of the local team. A request for information was issued on the fate of the staff reported missing.



'Srebrenica Hospital personnel and local MSF staff. Eye-witness accounts of the evacuation from Srebrenica and the fate of missing colleagues,' **MSF report**, February 1996 (in English)

The object of this report is to draw the attention to the fate of the hospital personnel and the local MSF staff and pay homage to their work during the difficult years of war and suffering in the enclave.

It is also intended as an appeal to the organisations and institutions trying to implement the civilian side of the peace agreement to continue their search for evidence and provide justice for those thousands of people who are missing or killed. MSF urges any individuals or organisation holding information on the staff members reported missing to provide us with this information.

There were 13 local MSF staff in Srebrenica and the hospital had a staff of 128.

This report is based on the eye-witness accounts of 37 hospital staff and six local MSF staff collected between 27 November and 14 December 1995.

Of the 128 hospital staff, 21 are reported missing; three were killed in the period prior to the fall of Srebrenica.

Of the 13 MSF national staff, 1 is reported missing.

Furthermore, MSF is still trying to obtain more information on the actual situation of 50 other hospital staff members.



In this report on the fall [of Srebrenica] and on the members of hospital staff and MSF staff killed or reported missing, we make particular reference to the person responsible for civil protection, who was also part of the MSF team and who was to be found several years later, in a mass grave. This particular report is central. It is an account that is important to everyone, and which goes beyond the act of publishing a report. It is a way of saying "We were not only witnesses to a massacre, but also directly involved, because our patients were killed and colleagues from the hospital and even MSF staff went missing."

Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 22 March 1996, the MSF team in Zenica asked the organisation to consider the possibility of an intervention in Srebrenica, with the displaced Bosnian Serbs from Sarajevo who had settled there. In the end, the idea was abandoned, the tragedy of July 1995 still in everyone's minds.



'MSF France: a Return to Srebrenica?' **Messages** from MSF France programme managers to the president and director general of MSF France and members of the MSF France Foundation, 22 March 1996 (in French).

Extract:

Please find attached a fax received from Bosnia, concerning the numerous questions being asked by some MSF expatriates in Bosnia, over our absence from Srebrenica since the fall of the enclave, while Serbian refugees from Sarajevo are resettling there.

We would be grateful if you would read it and would then suggest we discuss it face-to-face (either at a special meeting or as part of one of the meetings organised with the Foundation on some Fridays).

Why are we asking you for this? Because we think it is important to open up a debate with you on a subject we feel strongly about, and on the operational approach MSF should be taking following the tragic events that took place in Srebrenica and Zepa last July (I would remind you that we still have no news of 6,000 to 8,000 people, including medical personnel, and that there is a risk of justice never being done in relation to this).

For the sake of completeness, you should be aware that for a month following the fall of Srebrenica, entry to the region around the enclave was prohibited... It is easy to understand why. Later, with Serbian refugees arriving to settle in the area, MSF teams returned to the business of distributing medicines in Bratunac (the town on the way out of the enclave), where men, including people who were wounded, were rounded up before they disappeared. Research on the refugee centres is currently being carried out.



Message from MSF Zenica to MSF Belgium project managers, 20 March 1996 (in English).

Extract:

2. There is a new group of refugees that is now in Srebrenica. They are Bosnian Serb and they are from Sarajevo. They did not flee from conventional fighting or war situations. However from numerous reports we know that they did not leave because they wanted to suddenly, after 4 years of living through heavy fighting, give up their homes. [...]

The interviews that we have seen from the displaced now in Srebrenica are quite strong. They realize that they have been manipulated by their government (I think this group realizes more than the others due to the delicate situation in Srebrenica) and they "are now paying for the sins of our boys". For these reasons, I cannot justify that MSF does not assist these people, both by providing them with the necessary items (as in other collective centers) in order to have a basic and safe living environment, and also to let them tell the international community (which includes their leaders) how they feel about their situation, and what the exodus from Sarajevo has meant (and do they want to go back now?). This however may not be the role of MSF (as we risk to be kicked out of R.S. after that – but it may be a risk that we can

decide to take) or MSF could introduce international reporters to the situation.

If it is decided that MSF will not work in Srebrenica (which means not even go, because I cannot justify going when it is decided already beforehand that we will not respond to the needs) then I insist that Brussels makes an international statement about why we will not work there, because it is not a policy that I can defend.

I would be happy to discuss this with any of you. I know that most of you do not agree that we work there again, but after all MSF is trying to make the point with the people who were responsible for the fall of the enclave and the subsequent murders (which includes the Bosnian Croats authorities also if we are to be really fair about placing the guilt) do you really think that they will care if we avoid these people ??? After all they are using them like chess pieces just to put PEOPLE in their empty areas. The only way to make the point is to either help these people and make public their feelings and situation, or to avoid them and make an international press statement explaining why. If this is done, we must be sure that the people now in Srebrenica are aware of the reasons as well. But my big question is, if MSF makes a distinction of refugees on a political basis, then can we still retain our non-political and neutral mandate? I do not see how this is possible.



Nine months later, I visit with the Belgian teams who want to return to Srebrenica because there are displaced people from Sarajevo there. On the way, I say, "Do you know what happened here, [to] the people [that] came through here?" I don't want to go into the enclave. We go to Dovitdrana, the clinic in Bratunac, where we get a warm welcome. We have a discussion with a Muslim doctor about needs inside the enclave, the hospital, etc. At one point his colleague, a Bosnian Serb, leaves the room and I ask the one who is left, "What happened to the people who were wounded?" There is silence. The other doctor comes back in. We look at each other with the team and we leave. Things were very quiet in the car on the way back. I think people understood that it was no longer a matter of doing just anything, that something fundamentally abnormal had taken place there, that people who had been wounded had been executed. The doctor's silence told us what had happened to them. In fact I said to myself that I'd been allowed to go because perhaps it suited everyone for the visit to go ahead and calm things down to some extent.

Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

MSF was concerned about the restrictions placed on seeking out the truth about what happened to the victims and arresting the perpetrators. Indeed the international investigators examining the mass graves around Srebrenica had come up against various attempts

to conceal evidence. Although they had been indicted by the ICTY, Mladic and Karadzic had not yet been arrested.



Minutes of the MSF France Board Meeting, 23 February 1996 (in French).

Extract:

We are now certain that 5,000 to 8,000 people were massacred during the fall of Srebrenica. The International Tribunal (created by the United Nations) depends on the willingness of states and its limitations are therefore obvious. It is an alibi more than anything else, and we are seeing examples of manipulation and attempts to mislead around the issue of mass graves. Some places used as decoys are cited by the international community and you have to ask yourself what the real investigation will consist of. We know that the Serbs are doing things to remove the traces of mass graves and we cannot do anything to prevent them; no doubt the peace would be at stake if we did.



'International Investigators Have Inspected the Sites of Massacres in Bosnian Territory,' Rémy Ourdan, **Le Monde** (France) 16 April 1996 (in French).

Extract:

On Saturday 13 April, investigators from the International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) in The Hague completed their inspection of around 15 sites in the Srebrenica region of eastern Bosnia, where the Serbian army executed and buried Bosnian Muslims captured when the enclave was taken in July 1995. The results of the investigation will be sent to the ICTY, which has already indicted Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serbs, for "genocide" and "war crimes" for the massacres committed around Srebrenica [...] The investigators also need to establish whether the Serbs are seeking to conceal evidence of crimes committed last year. According to observations made by the journalists who accompanied them, at least one mass grave site appeared to have been "cleaned up" before their visit last week, but the investigators found pieces of skeleton mixed in with the freshly dug earth [...]. Increasingly, investigators are questioning the attitude of the multinational force (IFOR), which resolutely refuses to guard the presumed sites of mass graves. IFOR commander Admiral Leighton Smith had announced that the sites would be monitored by NATO aircraft, which would detect immediately any attempts to dig up bodies that had been buried. Nonetheless, no NATO report has referred to the case of the mass grave inspected by ICTY inspectors where, according to perfectly visible traces at the edge of the field, bodies were dug up using earthmoving equipment. "IFOR's position has not changed," according to a spokesperson. "Our troops are not providing security for mass graves. They are, however, ensuring the safety of the investigators."



'Who Wants Justice?' Nicole du Roy, *Télérama* (France) 24 April 1996 (in French).

Extract:

Why, when Serbia has been declared a "criminal state" should charges not be laid against its president, Slobodan Milosevic? [...]

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, the Médecins Sans Frontières lawyer who works with the tribunal on a regular basis, offers the following response: "If the international community has to choose between peace and justice, obviously peace will win out. Otherwise, how can we explain the fact that Karadzic and Mladic are still free? Karadzic is one of the people whose liberty is currently maintaining the peace agreement. Arresting and above all, judging him would mean revealing his relationship with President Milosevic, the main signatory of the Dayton Accords. Economic sanctions against Serbia, the only way for the tribunal to exert pressure on the country to deliver its criminals, were lifted the very day after Dayton. It's obviously essential that the court continues to exist, but above all, that its working conditions and independence are secure."

On 29 May 1996, the British television channel *Channel 4* broadcast the documentary "Srebrenica, a Bosnian Betrayal". Based on UN and NATO documents and witness statements, a group of US, British, French and Dutch journalists showed that the population of Srebrenica was knowingly left by the international community to face the violence of the Bosnian Serbs. The documentary was also to be shown on the French channel France 2 on 22 September 1996. [V13](#) [V14](#)



'The Abandonment of Srebrenica,' Florence Hartmann, *Le Monde* (France), 22 September 1996 (in French).

Extract:

It is now time to answer a crucial question: has the international community, which two years earlier sent armed Blue Helmets to monitor the security of a population under siege, been prevented from honouring its commitments? Or did it simply decide to do nothing?

That's the question a group of French, US, British and Dutch journalists decided to answer. They spent six months investigating in the United States, Europe and Bosnia. The results of their investigations will be presented in "Envoyé spécial". This makes the document an event not to be missed, as the implacable demonstration of a cynical failure. The team of journalists has found evidence showing that the international community had long been aware of the preparations for the Serbian offensive against the enclave. And that the United Nations left the victims to their executioners, later ignoring information concerning the massacre of thousands of civilians in the hours that followed the fall of the enclave

into the hands of Ratko Mladic's Serbian militias. The authors relied mainly on confidential UN and NATO documents to trace the line of the events and identify the tragic series of non-decisions. They also gathered witness statements from people who were directly involved in the drama, in particular officers in Western intelligence services and members of the United Nations. The documentary has already been shown in the same version on the British television channel *Channel 4* on 29 May; no attempts have been made to deny the serious accusations made.

On 4 July 1996, the results of the investigation were presented to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, providing it with tangible evidence of premeditated crimes and direct participation by General Mladic.

Witness statements made to the court by the Dutch Blue Helmets again showed their passive attitude in the face of the Bosnian-Serb atrocities.

During his hearing, the former Dutch Chief of Staff accused the French authorities of having forced General Janvier to cancel planned air strikes before the enclave was captured.

Although no photographs of the Srebrenica area between 5 and 17 July 1995 have been published, the French daily *La Croix* has revealed that the CIA – which is in possession of satellite photos taken during this period – had informed the West of the massacres taking place there.

On 9 July 1996, the Tribunal issued international arrest warrants for Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic.



'The Appalling Massacre in Srebrenica is Retold to the Tribunal in The Hague,' Alain Franco, *Le Monde* (France) 5 July 1996 (in French).

Extract:

Based on many similar accounts, the ICTY investigator demonstrated on Wednesday that the crimes perpetrated in Srebrenica were premeditated and planned, that Mladic was directly involved in them and that there were subsequent attempts to "destroy evidence". The documents he produced also raise a question: were no other photographs produced between the aerial shots taken in various places in the region on 5 July, and those taken on the 17th? The source of the documents was not revealed, but people may recall that the Americans had shown similar shots to the UN Security Council in August 1995. Was nothing observed between these two dates? Were the major powers unaware of the nature and scale of the crime being committed in the Srebrenica region, which is now estimated to have caused ten thousand deaths?



'The International Tribunal in The Hague Issues an Arrest Warrant but Unease Remains,' *Le Soir* (Belgium) The Hague, 9 July 1996 (in French).

Extract:

In his concluding statement, prosecutor Mark Harmon asked that an international arrest warrant be issued for the two Bosnian-Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, accused, amongst other things, of genocide and crimes against humanity. As soon as the warrant is issued, which should take place on Thursday, the two men can be sought by Interpol and arrested by any police force in the world. [...] Subsequently, the prosecutor asked the Court to report to the Security Council the fact that Belgrade was refusing to cooperate with international justice by not referring the two men, who periodically entered its territory, to the ICTY.

In the meantime, the hearings of the last few days leave a persistent sense of unease and shady areas. The unease comes from the witness statements made to the ICTY by the Dutch Blue Helmets, which again shed a stark light on the international community's refusal to accept its responsibilities. The fact that Colonel Karremans, the United Nations Supreme Commander in the enclave, "did not think" to ask General Mladic about the fate of refugees, to the extent of "not mentioning" the reports of executions produced by his own subordinates, speaks volumes about the UN's behaviour. The accusations made in recent days by the former Dutch Chief of Staff, who has accused Paris of having ordered General Janvier to cancel the air strikes scheduled for 10 July, i.e. less than 24 hours before the Bosnian-Serb forces conquered the enclave, changes nothing: during these weeks in July 1995, neither France nor any other permanent member of the Security Council wanted to intervene.

Such passivity towards the crime no doubt explains why the prosecutor showed the aerial photographs taken before the massacres and just afterwards, but not during the bloody days of July 1995. Is it possible to believe that there are no images of men being executed one after another? From a diplomatic point of view, it would fall at just the right time. Such photographs probably do exist, but disseminating them would go one step further towards demonstrating the attitude of the major powers, who have preferred to turn a blind eye. According to the French newspaper "La Croix", the CIA had warned the west about the massacres in Srebrenica, which was invaded by the Serbs on 11 July 1995. The newspaper, whose statements no-one in Washington has attempted to deny, asserts that the US intelligence services had photographs taken by satellites and spy planes from 13 July 1995 onwards, showing men standing up, surrounded by other men with weapons. The following image shows them lying on the ground, dead, according to "La Croix".

On 11 July 1996, a year after the fall of Srebrenica, several leading figures in MSF published columns in the Belgian and French media, emphasising in particular, the fact that political responsibilities in the UN's failure to protect the population had still not been established.



'Srebrenica One Year On,' Dr Renaud Tockert and Luc Nicolas, MSF Belgium, La Libre Belgique, 11 July 1996 / 'Srebrenica one year on: questions of cowardice' Pierre Salignon and Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France, *La Croix* (France), July 1996 (in French)¹⁰.

Extract:

Do you remember one of the most terrible episodes of the war in Bosnia: the massacre of the people of Srebrenica?

People all over the world saw images on their televisions that night that predicted the worst. The Serbian soldiers split the civilians into two columns. To the right, women, babies and old people. To the left, teenagers and men.

Working to a carefully prepared plan, General Mladic's soldiers then deported over 30,000 civilians in a few hours, while several thousand others tried to flee through the forest, alone, helpless and hunted. Some 8,000 of them, mainly men, were left to their killers, executed in cold blood and thrown into mass graves.

MSF volunteers entered the enclave for the first time in March 1993, following in the footsteps of General Morillon. They immediately took the decision to stay, in order to improve the day-to-day lives of a population that was subject to an inhuman blockade, and to bear witness to what happened to it.

Srebrenica was the first of the enclaves in eastern Bosnia to be declared a 'safe area' by the UN in 1993 and protected since by a battalion of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

Abandoned by Western states, it was also the first to disappear in early July 1995 (followed a few weeks later by the enclave in Zepa).

The United Nations allowed the crimes to be committed without intervening, the Dutch Blue Helmets (who were in the enclave at the time) having simply become auxiliaries for the ethnic cleansing practised by the Serbian militiamen.

A year on, the circumstances in which the population in the 'safe area' of Srebrenica was betrayed and abandoned are still not completely clear.

The Netherlands launched an investigation into the behaviour of their battalion during the massacres in Srebrenica and has published its report.

Conversely, there has still been no response from the UN hierarchy on the fact that General Janvier, commander of the Blue Helmets in Bosnia, and the representative of the UN Secretary General in the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, opposed repeated requests from the commander of the Blue Helmets in Srebrenica for NATO to launch strikes on the Serbian forces who were attacking the enclave.

Why?

France, through General Janvier, held the high command of the United Nations forces in Bosnia. It was therefore responsible for the promise of protection made to the civilian population in Srebrenica.

- To date, no French parliamentary commission has investigated the way in which the highest civilian and military authorities in France responded to this blackmail and defended

10. The extract provided here is the section common to both articles.

the interest of the civilian populations in the enclaves. President Jacques Chirac himself is currently under the spotlight in an investigation led by the Dutch television channel IKON-Kenmerk and the British *Channel 4*. Could the circumstances that led to the massacre of several thousand people be part of the 'secret defence' establishment in our country?

- How is it possible to explain that, to date, the two main political and military leaders of the Serbs in Bosnia, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are the only people 'responsible' for the massacres in Srebrenica to be taken to court and that they have still not been arrested, in spite of the accusations of crimes against humanity and genocide levied against them? The only person accused in this affair, currently detained in The Hague, is a repentant militiaman who took part in the massacres of several hundred Muslims.

- How is it possible to explain that no other names of criminals have been cited? Are they therefore also necessary to ensure peace, to reconstruct the ruins of Srebrenica on the basis of forgetting and disregarding the dead? Yet Lieutenant-Colonel Karremans, commander of the battalion of Blue Helmets in Srebrenica, knew the Serbian soldiers with whom he was forced to negotiate well.

The final unanswered question: the responsibility of Slobodan Milosevic, the man in charge in Belgrade, of whom increasingly detailed allegations record deliveries of arms to the Bosnian Serbs before the attack on Srebrenica, and the participation of troops in the massacres that followed.

For the victims of Srebrenica, justice is not a luxury. Nor is it a form of vengeance, but an essential step before reconstruction can take place and people can turn to the future. It is also the only way of repairing a society that has been broken and torn apart. Finally, asking the international community for justice is the only way to prevent states from building peace in Bosnia on the basis of criminals going unpunished.

On 30 November, 1998, resolution 53/35 at the United Nations General Assembly called for a "detailed report including an evaluation of events in the Srebrenica security zone in ex-Yugoslavia".

On 19 November, 1999, Kofi Annan, the new United Nations Secretary General and under-Secretary General charged with the UN's peace keeping operations during the events of July 1995, made the UN's report on the fall of Srebrenica public. The report recognised the "errors of judgement" made by the United Nations. It called for the member States involved to conduct inquiries at national level into their own responsibilities.



'Kofi Annan's "Mea Maxima Culpa" for the Srebrenica Massacre,' *Le Monde* (France) 17 November 1999 (in French).

Extract:

An "inappropriate" principled position of "impartiality" from UN leaders in New York, their "inability" to recognise the war

in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a "moral cause", their "erroneous" evaluation of Serbian objectives, their refusal of aerial bombardments against the Serbs, their "appeasing" of Serbs in Bosnia, but also the lack of political will from the major powers to curtail the exactions by force, all led to the Srebrenica "tragedy" in July 1995, its fall to the Serbs and the massacre of the thousands of civilians refuged there. These are the terms used by the United Nations Secretary General in a report that explains the events which led to the fall of Srebrenica, where 2,500 bodies were found in a mass grave and where, according to the Red Cross, over 7,000 people are reported missing. The Srebrenica tragedy is horrifying for two reasons, writes Kofi Annan: the scale of the crimes and the fact that civilians thought they were safe due to the presence of the UN's Blue Helmets.

Too little too late, some will say. Nonetheless, the joint *mea maxima culpa* expressed by Mr. Annan is unprecedented in the United Nations' history: "Through our serious errors of judgement and our inability to recognise the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to save the people of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of mass murder" wrote the Ghanaian diplomat.

Drawn up from interviews with international leaders, civil and military observers, journalists and the UN's confidential archives, this 150 page report should be presented to the Security Council early in the week. The "failings" committed by the Secretariat, and so by Mr. Annan who was charged with peace keeping operations at the time, we read, "were rooted in our [UN] philosophy of neutrality and nonviolence wholly unsuited to the conflict in Bosnia." Mr. Annan specified that this should not let other "more fundamental" errors be overlooked, such as the Security Council's creation of "security zones" without the military means to protect them, and the international community's decision to respond to Bosnia-Herzegovina "not by decisive military action", but by "an embargo on arms, with humanitarian aid and the deployment of Blue Helmets." This attitude, he considers, "stripped the Bosnians of their right to legitimate defence." [...]

In a country where the Serbs had decided to create ethnically cleansed zones and the international community did not use force to oppose them, "humanitarian action could never have been the answer". Thus he admits that to end the war in Bosnia, the international community should have lifted the arms embargo for Muslims and used aerial bombardments against the Serbs. [...]

"We were wrong to declare publicly and often our refusal to bomb the Serbs and accept the daily bombing of security zones by the Serbian forces." As for the 150 Dutch Blue Helmets, who could not have opposed "2000 Serbs with armoured vehicles," they should have reported the atrocities they were witnessing much faster.

In the Netherlands, the UN report, seen as letting the Dutch contingent off the hook, was welcomed with relief by politicians and the tabloid press. Other media outlets called on the government not to leave the matter there.



'Srebrenica's Dutch Battalion,' Alain Franco, *Le Monde* (France) The Hague, 24 November 1999 (in French).

Extract:

The Dutch minister of defence insisted on the "nuanced" character of the report, notably regarding the roles of the Dutchbat Blue Helmets. His alacrity in this regard (he had not even read the report) speaks volumes about the trauma Srebrenica represents for the Netherlands. [...]

Since then, most of the press and politicians want the country to turn the page. Unsurprisingly, *De Telegraaf*, a widely read and deeply nationalist daily newspaper ran its headline on "Dutchbat honour re-established". The paper printed in bold "The Blue Helmets had no power to stop the massacres". A few lines down, the *Telegraaf* does concede that the "Dutch soldiers could have been more dynamic in their reporting of the systematic atrocities committed by the Serbs".

The daily paper *Amsterdam Het Parool* dedicates its second insert to the event with "Mission Impossible" as a headline. It stresses the politicians' "relief" at the report's publication and reminds us that Wim Kok's social democrats and the liberals (the minister of defence's party at the time) oppose the creation of a Parliamentary inquiry commission. Conversely, the editorial in *NRC Handelsblad* bears the title "Nostra Culpa". Before concluding that "international peace restoring operations are far more complicated than foreseen", the Dutch daily paper reminds us of the cynicism of Mladic who offered a departure gift "for your spouse" to Lieutenant-colonel Karremans, the head of Dutchbat and a man renowned for his feeble attitude and lack of interest in the Muslims' plight. The centre-left paper *De Volkskrant* scratches at the Netherlands' "open wound": "If they hide behind this UN report, the government and politicians will demonstrate how extremely small-minded they are. But if they follow the UN's example and clean up their own backyard, they will be doing the honourable thing".

TOWARD AN APPEAL TO ESTABLISH THE FRENCH RESPONSIBILITIES

On 19 November 1999, MSF France's Board of Directors decided to push for a parliamentary inquiry commission on France's role during Srebrenica's fall.



Minutes of MSF France's Board of Directors Meeting, 19 November 1999 (in French).

Extract:

Françoise [Bouchet-] Saulnier relayed a call to the Board from the Citizens Group for Bosnia. This group wants to call for the creation of a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (along the lines of Rwanda's) to throw light on the management of the Srebrenica enclave by politico-governmental bodies.

The Group is asking for MSF's support and participation so as to bolster this call. Françoise Saulnier considers that MSF can become involved as a matter of principle and above all, for the future (and not only to remember what happened). She reminded the Board that MSF had already testified before the ICC (International Criminal Court) and the Dutch commission. The board members asked questions so as to evaluate and understand.

Virginie Raison: Do you see any reason why we shouldn't do this?

Françoise Saulnier: No, but the main point is that this would be a joint undertaking so as to avoid the call coming uniquely from people scarred for life by their experiences over there.

Christian Losson: Could you specify what this Group aims to achieve?

Françoise Saulnier: First of all it is rejecting the policy of 'fait accompli' before any effort towards transparency has been made. The Rwandan commission did end up concluding that Parliamentary control was needed over military decisions and I think we can focus on this critical point for Srebrenica.

Marc Le Pape: But France didn't have the United Nations command, so can the creation of an inquiry commission be justified?

Karim [Laouabdia]: A BBC documentary clearly showed how Srebrenica fell and pinpointed General Janvier's responsibilities (a Frenchman). What's the chain of command in this set up?

Françoise Saulnier: We have to bear in mind that a French soldier, even when under UN command, always keeps his national reference points. This collusion is reinforced by a – two-pronged secrecy over defence – one at the French level, the other at the UN's.

Philippe Biberson: Holding an inquiry on Srebrenica means bringing to light all the mechanisms that paradoxically claim to protect populations while actually diluting responsibility and dispersing power. If we want to support this group, it seems to me primordial to ensure the call is valid, formulating it properly so it doesn't get dismissed.

Françoise Saulnier: We're just asking a question... We're writing a letter, we don't need to provide proof... that will be Parliament's job. We just need agreement from 25 or 40 parliamentary figures to get the commission put together, and we've already got some support...

Karim [Laouabdia]: It's legitimate that we ask the question because we were in Srebrenica from start to finish.

Bruno Corbé: You could even say that we were fooled by the enclaves set up. We were told "Go ahead, we're protecting them" and then they were massacred.

Christian Losson: It's a political gesture in the broad sense of the term, a logical follow up to steps taken for Rwanda, and it's about demanding explanations.

Decision

The board decided to engage with the Group of Citizens for Bosnia in its call for the creation of a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Srebrenica.



The most important moment was when the United Nations Secretary General's report came out on Srebrenica. There was a whole context around it. So Françoise proposed launching an appeal. It happened very quickly and naturally. I don't remember there being long discussions about doing it.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 10 December, MSF raised the Srebrenica events in its Nobel peace prize reception speech, emphasising the need to reform United Nations peace keeping operations.



'MSF Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech,' by Dr. James Orbinski, MSF International President, 10 December 1999 (in English).

Extract:

If UN military operations are to protect civilian populations in the future, they must go beyond the mea culpa excuses of the Secretary General over Srebrenica and Rwanda. There must be a reform of peace keeping operations in the UN. Member States of the Security Council should be held publicly accountable for the decisions that they do or do not vote for.

On 21 December, 1999, the Dutch minister of defence published a more detailed report on the Blue Helmet debriefing. It was only passed over to the court in 1998, thus obstructing legal proceedings against the Dutch battalion soldiers. The press accused him of retaining information and obstructing justice. Parliament set up a provisional commission charged with investigating the political responsibilities in play during the Dutch peace keeping operations.



'Strong Criticisms of the Minister of Defence in the Srebrenica Affair,' *Agence France Presse*, The Hague, 22 December 1999 (in French).

Extract:

The Dutch press multiplied its criticisms of the Minister of Defence at The Hague on Wednesday, the day after the late

publication of a 'debriefing' report on the Blue Helmets protecting the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in July 1995 in Bosnia.

"The judicial inquiries into the crimes committed by the Dutch Blue Helmets were obstructed by the Minister of Defence who retained the information", states the daily paper *Trouw* (protestant) in its lead story.

On Tuesday the Public Prosecutor dropped the charges against the seven Dutch soldiers accused of crushing a group of Muslims and non-assistance to persons in danger due to a lack of witnesses.

"If the Defence Minister had communicated the debriefing report of 1995 to us before 1998, we could have found witnesses more easily", declared the Public Prosecutor's spokesperson.

The Defence Minister Frank de Grave, who passed the debriefing report directly to the Court upon his nomination in 1998, recognised that his predecessor had not been "sufficiently transparent" in this affair.

Due to the Defence Minister's "negligence", "Srebrenica will continue to haunt the Netherlands", states the daily paper *Algemeen Dagblad* (right) in an editorial, stating that the debriefing report made public on Tuesday is a "catalogue of reprehensible attitudes".

According to the witness accounts published in this report, several Dutch soldiers threatened Muslim children with their weapons, demonstrated racist and extreme right attitudes, had sexual relationships with Srebrenica women "for a jar of jam or peanut butter", refused to provide medical aid or worked the black market.

"The Blue Helmets had a negative take on the Muslims compared to their high opinions of the Bosnian Serbs" who took the enclave on 11th July 1995, according to the conclusion of this debriefing report.

On 20 March, 2000, MSF's legal director presented an internal context memo to the Association's management concerning the latter's call for a parliamentary inquiry commission on Srebrenica.

This initiative was aligned with MSF's call in 1998 for the creation of a parliamentary information mission on Rwanda and the hearings of one its members therein.

It was part of a drive to evaluate the level of protection actually provided to populations by peace keeping operations.



'An Inquiry Commission on France's Role During the Srebrenica Enclave's Fall,' Françoise Saulnier and Fabien Dubuet, Legal Advisors of MSF France, **Context memo**, 20 March, 2000 (in French).

Extract:

The calls for an inquiry commission on Rwanda and today on

Srebrenica demonstrate the coherent application of MSF's policy on evaluating the level of protection these operations can offer to populations (or not), thereby better positioning our field work and public speaking out.

It bears noting that after the fall of Srebrenica, some people in MSF denounced the fact that our presence in the enclave and the impression of security this presence gave to those living there at the time ratified the international community's lie regarding the protection of this security zone.

MSF's call for an inquiry is important because of its interface with a particular international and national context concerning external operations (peace keeping or imposition operations).

1) A relative transparency on military and military-humanitarian interventions which reflect specific policy objectives

a. At international level

i. United Nations reports on the Rwandan genocide and the fall of Srebrenica [...]

ii. The OAU [Organisation of African Unity] report on the Rwandan genocide (to be issued in March)

b. At national level

i. In France the report on the Rwandan information mission and the National Assembly defence commission's report on the NATO intervention in Kosovo [...]

ii. In the Netherlands, the debriefing report on the Blue Helmets deployed in Srebrenica published in November 1999 and the inquiry entrusted by the Dutch government to the National Institute of War Research (NIOD) [...]

2) An adaptation of the military tool designed to respond to the transition from a confrontation strategy associated with the Cold War era to crisis management strategies specific to cold war contexts [...] In summary this movement could be considered as a return of military-humanitarianism and/or a new wave of manipulation of humanitarian action [...] Given the possible reinforcement of a military presence in conflicts, a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of each party would seem essential so that confusion between the different players does not prejudice populations or independent humanitarian action.[...]

Two pitfalls to avoid [...]

1. Presenting the call for an inquiry as an anti-military, anti-Bernard Janvier crusade. On the contrary, we should explain the positive points [...] the commission must draw out lessons to be learnt so as to avoid the future deployment of military forces whose hands and feet are tied in the face of criminal policies.
2. Presenting the call as a step towards a judgement against French political and military figures for complicity in crimes against humanity. [...]

 We saw it as being consistent with what had been done for Rwanda. And then there was the increase in military and humanitarian-military interventions. France had a special role in the UN machine [with its permanent seat on the Security

Council], but the country's role in creating the security zone and the promise of protection that had been given was even bigger. France constantly raised these issues at the Security Council. General Morillon was on the ground, UNPROFOR was commanded by a French general and the DPKO by another. So we were aware that France had special responsibilities. And, at that time, there was extensive re-organisation of the military in Europe, within NATO, and a shift towards external peacekeeping operations. So the context and the way things were going made us think that this was something that needed to be done.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

 We had had experience with France's parliamentary inquiry into Rwanda. So we had some confidence in our ability to participate in this kind of process, to contribute to it and challenge it. Well, the word confidence might be putting it bit strongly! But we didn't feel it was insurmountable. We'd already had experience with it, so it wasn't totally weird and it wasn't outside our comfort zone.

Dr. Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France President, 2000-2007, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

 The fall of Srebrenica hit us extremely hard. There were several responsibilities at issue, and we found it absolutely appalling that the UN (as a community of nations,) had abandoned these people. I think that even if we didn't view the organisation as a miracle solution for the world, after the UN abandoned them, it was even worse. We wanted to put the spotlight on the chasm between a certain narrative that said the UN was going to sort everything out and what actually happened. These commissions of inquiry, whether Srebrenica or Rwanda, were our way of saying: "You didn't deliver on your promises."

Dr. Marc Gastellu-Etchegorry, MSF France Deputy Director of Operations, 1992 to 1997, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 12 April 2000 MSF testified at the Security Council on the protection of populations in conflict situations for the first report by the UN Secretary-General on this issue. Drawing on, among others, the example of the events in Srebrenica, the organisation challenged the UN's decision-making processes, which had led to the abandoning of Srebrenica and other places and leaving people without protection.



MSF Briefing to the UN Security Council, by Dr James Orbinsky, President of MSF International and Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor, 12 April 2000 (in English).

Extract:

The Security Council made clear that adequate security would require 34,000 troops to effectively deter attacks on the safe areas. Instead, the Security Council authorized only a light option of 7,600 troops for Bosnia. In the end, the fall of Srebrenica and the massacres of civilians resulted.[...] In the case of Srebrenica, the fate of civilians was effectively sealed with the decision to deploy a light option of some 7,000 troops.[...]

In each of these cases, the hazard lies at the decision-making level where states can act at the same time on behalf of their own national interests and in the name of the international community interest without any possibility of clarifying or distinguishing the two. The lesson learned shows that the right solution was available in a timely manner within the UN structure.

The question remains about the ability of the Security Council to commit to results and not simply to good intentions.

The Sunday Times, a UK weekly newspaper, reported on 9 July 2000 that the Ministry of Defence had blocked the publication of a book by one of the British officers tasked with supervising airstrikes from the ground in Srebrenica.



'SAS Book on Bosnia Blocked,' Tom Walker, *The Sunday Times*, (UK) 9 July 2000 (in English).

Extract:

The Ministry of Defence has blocked a former SAS soldier from publishing a book detailing the secret role of British intelligence inside the doomed Srebrenica enclave in Bosnia in 1995.

The book tells the story of a two-man SAS team sent in as the Serb stranglehold on the so-called "safe haven" for Muslim refugees tightened.

The pair helped to call in a Nato airstrike as the Serbs attacked the enclave in July, and then had to blend in with Dutch United Nations peace keepers as they abandoned Srebrenica and the Serbs took control, massacring about 7,000 Muslim men.

Dutch sources familiar with the mission believe the book would have revealed that British soldiers were dismayed when Nato abandoned its airstrikes, and probably knew about the slaughter.

"It was a black day for the UN," said one former peacekeeper. "The British don't want to be seen to have been there."

There has never been any official acknowledgment that the SAS was in Srebrenica, and the Dutch peacekeepers have

taken the blame for a chapter regarded as the low point in the UN's history.

Dutch investigators of the catastrophe have also been barred by the MoD [Ministry of Defence] from speaking to the author, despite Nato clearance.

[...] other sources have described how the SAS team worked alongside the Dutch, and kept in touch with Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, the British commander of UN forces in Bosnia.

[...] After Muslim forces raided two Serb villages on the edge of the enclave, the attack on Srebrenica town began on July 6.

The day before the fifth anniversary of the fall of Srebrenica, 10 July 2000, Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, expressed his regret and remorse for the attitude of the United Nations during the Srebrenica crisis.



'Kofi Annan Expresses His Regret and Remorse,' *Agence France Presse*, 10 July 2000 (in French).

"The tragedy of Srebrenica will forever haunt the history of the United Nations," declared Kofi Annan in a message on the occasion of the anniversary of the massacre [...]. He made an implicit call to bring to justice "the architects" of the killings, former military and political leaders of the Bosnian Serbs Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, who, "although indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, are still at large," added M. Annan. "The most important lesson from Srebrenica is that we must recognise evil for what it is, and confront it not with expediency and compromise, but with implacable resistance," he said.

The next day a group of Dutch intellectuals published an open letter calling on their government to make a public apology for abandoning Srebrenica.



'A Parliamentary Inquiry into the Events in Srebrenica May Be Possible,' Says Mr Quilès,' *Le Monde* (France) 13 July 2000 (in French).

Extract:

The Netherlands is the other country that is directly involved, as one of its battalions was part of UNPROFOR in Srebrenica at the time of the Serb offensive. This means that the government in The Hague had particular weight in the decision to oppose or not the offensive and whether or not to involve NATO air forces. The calls for transparency made in The Netherlands during the past five years have also fallen on

deaf ears — in spite of several official inquiries. Just last Tuesday, some forty Dutch intellectuals and writers addressed an open letter to the government, accusing it of ‘avoiding the subject’ and demanding ‘a public apology’ for ‘abandoning Srebrenica’.

During a press conference on 13 July 1995, and in an opinion piece by its president in French daily newspaper *Le Monde*, MSF France launched a public appeal calling for the setting up of a French parliamentary inquiry into the events in Srebrenica.

In addition to the appeal, a kit distributed to the press included extracts from the UN report, the logbook of the MSF team present in Srebrenica during the events, witness statements taken from survivors in Tuzla, and MSF’s call for reform of peacekeeping operations made during the December 1999 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony.



Message from Deputy Legal Director, MSF, to the President and Communications Department of MSF France, 11 July 1995 (in French).

Extract:

1) To go back to the question we raised yesterday, I can confirm that Parliament has been in recess since 30 June and will re-convene on 2 October.

2) Therefore, Françoise and I will send a copy of the appeal to Pierre Brana (who attempted to set up a parliamentary inquiry commission into Srebrenica in December 1999) and to the two presidents of the relevant commissions (Paul Quilès for Defence and François Loncle for Foreign Affairs) with a short accompanying note saying something like, ‘hoping to be able to discuss this matter with you in the autumn’. They should receive it at about the same time as the appeal is published in *Le Monde*.



‘Points To Be Addressed During the Press Conference,’ **Memo**, MSF France, 13 July 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Introduction

- Demand a parliamentary inquiry into France’s role in the tragedy of Srebrenica. Objective: to establish France’s political and military responsibilities that resulted in the paralysis of the United Nations and NATO during the Bosnian-Serb offensive on Srebrenica.
- Reiterate MSF’s legitimacy: presence in the ‘security zone’ from 1993 to 1995, witness to the fall of the enclave, MSF personnel, the wounded, and sick were executed or reported missing.
- Reiterate France’s considerable responsibility. France com-

manded all UN peacekeeping forces (UNPF) in the former Yugoslavia, the security zone was set up on the initiative of a French general (Morillon) and Security Council Resolution 836 (4 June 1993) authorising the use of force to protect security zones was adopted at France’s instigation.

- 1) The UN report on the fall of Srebrenica is inadequate [...]
- 2) MSF’s demands are all the more important as they come at a time of increased military-humanitarian operations.[...]
- 3) France is obliged to strive for transparency, in light of:
 - Its peacekeeping responsibilities. France runs the United Nations’ peacekeeping operations department and is one of the main troop contributing countries;
 - The strategic nature of external operations in France’s defence policy [...].

4) France must participate in the drive for transparency in the peacekeeping operations conducted over the past few months, at the national as well as the international level. Refusal to do so would result in its isolation. [...]

5) In-depth investigations by Dutch and British journalists (Frank Westerman, Bart Rijs, and Channel Four) accused France of paralysing the United Nations and NATO.

Very strangely, these journalists were never questioned during the preparation of the UN report on Srebrenica.

The journalists provided accurate details, giving credence to two suppositions:

- First supposition: Sidelining the United Nations, France negotiated an unauthorised deal whereby the hostages would be freed in exchange for a permanent cessation of the air-strikes. [...]
- Second supposition: France wanted to delay and minimise NATO airstrikes during the Serbian offensive on Srebrenica. [...]

The French authorities have described these suppositions as speculation. This is precisely why a parliamentary inquiry is necessary – to move from speculation to establishing the facts in order to shed light on France’s political and military responsibilities in the Srebrenica tragedy.



‘Call for a Commission of Inquiry on Srebrenica!’ Jean-Hervé Bradol, President of MSF France, *Le Monde* (France), 13 July 2000 (in French) / ‘Médecins sans Frontières Calls for the Creation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into France’s Responsibility in the Fall of Srebrenica,’ **Press release issued by MSF France**, 13 July 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Five years on, the Srebrenica massacre remains a dark moment in European history. Today, MSF is requesting the establishment of a parliamentary investigation to shed light on France’s role in this tragedy.

On 11 July 1995, Srebrenica fell to the Bosnian Serb forces. The Dutch UN contingent stationed in the area failed to defend the population gathered together in the so-called ‘safe area.’ The fall of Srebrenica resulted in the deportation of 40,000 people and the killing of some 7,000 others.

Médecins Sans Frontières entered the Srebrenica enclave in

1993, at the same time as General Morillon. For two years, the organisation provided medical and logistical support to the besieged population, officially under the protection of the UN peacekeepers. The population had been assured that it would not be abandoned. This 'guarantee' was among the reasons the population remained in the enclave rather than fleeing from the threat posed by the Bosnian Serb forces.

The continuous presence of MSF among these people helped maintain the illusion of international protection in the area. However, the MSF team could only stand by powerless and watch as the population was separated into groups, including the sick and the wounded, as the men were separated from the women, and as groups in convoys departed to unknown destinations. They also witnessed the inertia of the Dutch UNPROFOR battalion.

Several dozen wounded and sick people under MSF's care were at first 'evacuated' from the enclave by the Bosnian Serbs 'under Dutch escort', then forced off the buses and killed by Serb forces. At least three Bosnian nurses from MSF, who were escorting the patients, were also made to get off the bus and have never been seen since.

In command of UNPROFOR at the time, France played a major decision-making role. For this reason, we are calling for the creation of a parliamentary Commission of inquiry to establish France's political and military responsibility for the paralysis of the UN and NATO in response to requests for air strikes from the Dutch contingent.

The conclusions of the UN report on the Srebrenica massacre explicitly request that each Member State involved conduct a national inquiry into the events. In the Netherlands, the debriefing report on the UN peacekeepers deployed in Srebrenica was published in November 1999 and the Dutch government has ordered an investigation by the National Institute for War Documentation (RIOD).

In France, although parliamentary oversight of military operations has already been carried out for Rwanda and Kosovo, there has been paralysis over Srebrenica. Given the visible intensification of peacekeeping operations, in which France plays a key role, greater transparency is required regarding the effectiveness of the systems that purport to protect victims.

We hope that the work of this parliamentary inquiry will enable us to learn lessons from the past so that in the future, the military are not deceptively deployed with their hands tied in the face of iniquitous policies.



We wanted to understand how – in an area that was internationally protected, and that France, to a large extent, was involved in protecting – the massacre of the population, our colleagues and our patients, was allowed to happen. There was also a second motive among some at MSF, which I did not share simply because I wasn't involved at the time the enclave fell. But people who were involved, such as Pierre, Françoise and others, they wanted to make sure the politicians and members of the military were brought to testify (and this was implicit throughout the undertaking), and to admit that a cynical deal had been struck to abandon the enclaves, and that no efforts were ever made to rescue the population. And so, if

my memory serves me, there was a dual agenda: a fairly straightforward agenda demanding accountability because we had lost members of our team, and a second agenda focusing on the abandonment of the population. This political dimension – “they abandoned the population to strike a deal” – seemed legitimate to us, since this issue of ‘humanitarian safe areas’ had already come up in Rwanda with Kibeho¹¹.

I don't recall any difficulties with Brussels. What I do remember is that in Amsterdam, the Dutch fluctuated, depending on the year and their leaders, in terms of their willingness to place blame on the Dutch soldiers. As early as July 1995, there was Jacques de Milliano [MSF Holland General Director], who has always been in favour of speaking out publicly, and then the rest of the desk, whose line of thinking was more like: “This is less important to us, it isn't really our business, let's stand back, no loud incriminations by MSF of the Dutch Army”.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France President, 2000-2007, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



The call for the creation of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry is not a political or militant act. It's a decision that is solely and intimately linked to our reflections on our operational responsibility. It is directly related to what MSF experienced as a humanitarian actor in ex-Yugoslavia. I believe that we are accountable, as a humanitarian organisation, to understand how our own responsibility is interconnected with the responsibilities of the other actors involved in the situation. The purpose is not to condemn, but rather to understand how humanitarian and military responsibilities became intertwined, leading to this massacre, and also based on what rationales and failings. In what ways did the UN military system for protecting safe areas succeed and in what ways did it fail? What should we have understood about the international military system and what should we or could we have done differently in terms of our own operations and communications?

1993-94 marks the beginning of the so-called international military-humanitarian operations and of UN mandates to protect civilian populations. And for 10 years now, regarding Srebrenica, we still don't know what actually happened along the different international chains of command: UN, NATO, France, Netherlands, contact groups, etc.

It was not until 2002, after nearly 10 years of efforts, that we were able to obtain an inquiry into the system. During all of that time, it was impossible to clearly delineate the responsibilities of the UN soldiers, those of the national contingents, or our own responsibilities as a humanitarian organisation.

We find ourselves in this completely nonsensical political and legal situation that started off with a denial of the number of deaths, after which everybody provided technical explanations that didn't hold water, that placed the blame on others and that were contradictory, under the notion that nobody would be capable of lining up all the facts. The UN speaks with the UN, the Dutch with the Dutch, the French with the French, the Brits

11. See MSF Speaking Out - The Violence of the New Rwandan Regime, by Laurence Binet /MSF International - <http://speakingout.msf.org/en/the-violence-of-the-new-rwandan-regime>

with the Brits, and it all ends with: “7,000 deaths! Are you sure? Really? I didn’t know that I was supposed to... Someone used the wrong form, the fax machine was down, I did everything I could but the others didn’t...”

In short, everyone supports the theory of a major historical misunderstanding, using technical arguments and affirmations of political good faith. But at the end of the day, 7,000 people are dead, ‘protected’ by UN forces, and nobody knows why it happened!

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



Our angle of approach for this undertaking was always a humanitarian angle. One cannot simply accept the sacrifice of thousands of human lives, regardless of the reason. We hoped that this would help determine the political and military responsibilities, and especially that it would be perceived as useful for clarifying the systems in place for protecting civilian populations. Nothing else. And so we distanced ourselves from other organisations and individuals using an accusatory angle aimed at finding the culprits, so that those accountable could be punished and disciplined. That’s why we didn’t partner up with those organisations.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor,
1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

At the July 13 press conference, MSF’s leaders condemned the blocking of any inquiry into France’s responsibilities in the Srebrenica tragedy.

On that same day, Paul Quilès, Chairman of the French Parliament’s Defence Commission, stated that, after the summer recess, he would be willing to examine the possibility of extending the type of parliamentary oversight performed by the mission on France’s responsibilities in Rwanda. However, he criticised MSF’s appeal as containing accusatory biases.



‘MSF Condemns the Blocking in France of Any Inquiry into Srebrenica,’ **Agence France Presse**, 15 July 2000 (in French).

Extract:

The French authorities are blocking any inquiry into their role in the tragedy of Srebrenica, an enclave under UN protection overrun by Bosnian Serbs on 11 July 1995, deplored the leaders of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on Thursday.

The humanitarian organisation is asking the French National Assembly to create a parliamentary investigation Commission, but the likelihood of success “is zero”, acknowledged Françoise Saulnier, head of MSF’s legal department, at a press conference with the President of MSF, Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol.

“There’s a lot of political resistance”, she explained. “The MPs we contacted told us it was a very sensitive matter”, she added.

In 1995, a French officer, General Bernard Janvier, commanded the entire UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and had the authority to request air strikes from NATO, which he failed to do. [...] “Perhaps this blocking of action is due to the relationship between General Janvier and President Chirac”, emphasised Jean-Hervé Bradol.

“We are asking for accountability”, he explained as justification for MSF’s approach. At the time, the organisation had a team in Srebrenica, declared a ‘safe area’ by the UN. [...] “The gravity of the situation is known, but the series of abdications of responsibilities has never been completely examined”, he commented. [...]

“Who told Janvier not to give the order? What arguments were put forward?” asks Dr Bradol.

“An investigation is underway in the Netherlands. The United Nations has published a report. Yet nothing has been done in France”, bemoans Françoise Saulnier.

“The United Nations doesn’t keep archives on anything that could be damaging to its Member States. Any traces of telegrams or requests for air strikes are kept in the national archives. In France, only Parliament has the ability to conduct an inquiry into these matters”, she explained.

“We hope that the parliamentary investigation will help us learn lessons from the past so that in the future, the military are not deceptively deployed with their hands tied in the face of iniquitous policies”, emphasised Jean-Hervé Bradol.



‘A Parliamentary Inquiry into the Events at Srebrenica Seems Possible, According to Mr Quilès,’ **Le Monde** (France), 13 July 2000 (in French).

Extract:

For Jean-Hervé Bradol, President of MSF, anniversaries and the ‘duty of remembrance’ are not enough, and neither are the cries of *mea culpa*, such as the one made on behalf of the UN by its current Secretary General, Kofi Annan in his 1999 report into this tragedy.

With “an increase in the number of situations in which nation states and the UN are claiming to protect civilian populations, as was the case in Srebrenica”, and with France intending to play a leading role in peace-keeping operations, it is imperative that the dysfunctions, resignations and decisions that led to passivity from the international community in July 1995 are brought to light, said MSF.

“We are appalled by the levity with which the victims of Srebrenica have been overlooked in favour of profit and loss”, said Françoise Boucher-Saulnier, a lawyer at MSF, lamenting the fact that after this drama the State and the army did not “assess the efficiency of their actions in terms of protecting civilians in conflict situations”. Kofi Annan’s report left many questions unanswered, and MSF’s leaders criticise it for being written in terms that are too ‘diplomatic’. Incidentally, the UN Secretary General had invited the nation states themselves to work on bringing these dysfunctions to light.

In 1995, the UN force in Bosnia (UNPROFOR) was commanded by a Frenchman, General Bernard Janvier, which is the reason why France has since been the target of 'rumours' imputing it for the refusal to deploy NATO air power against Serbian forces to halt their offensive in Srebrenica. Albeit rejected at state level, these insinuations have never been the subject of systematic public denial.

The idea of a parliamentary investigation similar to that held by the French National Assembly into France's 1994 role in Rwanda has never found favour, despite the efforts in recent years of various organisations. "The message we're hearing from members of parliament we contacted is that this is a delicate matter", said Françoise Boucher-Saulnier on Thursday.

In November 1999, after publication of Kofi Annan's report, Pierre Brana, socialist Member of Parliament and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, tried to mobilise parliament. He drew up a motion for a resolution requesting the establishment of a Commission of inquiry and tried to have it endorsed by the socialist group in the Assembly. It was blocked at this stage by socialist members. Paul Quilès, Chairman of the Assembly's Defence Committee, and previously chair the inquiry Commission on Rwanda, is now saying, however, that when parliament resumes he is 'ready to discuss' the possibility of organising a similar investigation on Srebrenica. "But on condition that we make no mistake about what we are looking for", he said. He reproaches MSF for expressing certain accusatory prejudices, and takes issue with the tendency to blame France purely for releasing troops for UN peace-keeping operations. Mr Quilès, who, incidentally, chairs a focus group on UN reform, recognises that a detailed examination of the way in which the international community reacted to the events of Srebrenica would indeed be useful: "I'm not against it, but if we do it there will be no preconditions", he said.



At the time, parliamentary control over external operations was practically zero in France. The Rwanda exercise was revolutionary for the 5th Republic – a large mouthful for the Quai d'Orsay, the Elysée Palace and the ministry of Defence to swallow. There had been a report on Kosovo, but with no investigation whatsoever by members of parliament. And there was certainly no parliamentary initiative on Srebrenica. It is because MSF asked for one and made its request public that something has been done.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 4 September 2000, in an interview published on MSF International's website, Eric Stobbaerts, MSF's General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia from December 1993 to April 1995, again questioned MSF's stance on the enclaves at the time.



'Srebrenica, Five Years On' Interview with Eric Stobbaerts, Former MSF General Coordinator in Ex-Yugoslavia, **MSF International website**, 4 September 2000 (in English) (edited.)

Extract:

Q. The population that at first called for resistance, little by little started changing their minds.

A. Yes, and the international community as well. During 1994, the population desperately started to wonder how long they would have to stay in the enclave. In fact, they wanted to move to central Bosnia and join their people. In the meantime, the international community continued negotiating and began to draw a map over Bosnia. The truth is that the Srebrenica and Gorazde enclaves made that drawing difficult...The politicians, in the end, decided that, as long as the enclaves existed, a peace agreement would not be feasible.

Q. What position did MSF take when finding out what the population really wanted?

A. At that moment making a decision was extremely difficult. As a General Coordinator, I advocated for moving the population. However there were two reasons against this choice. On the one hand, MSF itself could not carry out such an action – it is not in its mandate. On the other hand, moving the population meant making concessions to the Serbs who wanted to take the enclave. Finally, the population was not moved, although I think that MSF should have brought some pressure or launch a lobbying campaign so that the institutions and other bodies concerned could have taken solving the situation into their own hands.

This is still an on-going debate within MSF. Personally, I believe our neutrality, in a way, means we bear part of the blame for what happened in Srebrenica.

Obviously, MSF did not know what was to happen in July 1995, but we lacked an overview of the situation. We should have exerted more pressure. Being neutral in Srebrenica made us close our eyes to what was really going on. Although MSF was not guilty, we failed to have insight. We can blame ourselves, notwithstanding, for our passivity, for our failure to question the future, for our lack of understanding of the population's needs. MSF's neutrality was perverse, negative. We were too dogmatic.

Q. Yet the presence of MSF over those two years provided protection to the population; one of the pillars of humanitarian action.

Yes, indeed. MSF brought Srebrenica in to the limelight. We constantly denounced the lack of access to the enclave, the lack of medicines...we explained the situation as it was, whatever was happening in that prison. : It was a way of putting pressure on the international community to challenge their acceptance of Morillon's declarations, and his assurances over the security of the area.

Thanks to our statements, the public got to know that Srebrenica existed.

In spite of being a safe haven, the enclave was captured by the Serbs in July 1995. Five years after the event who should take responsibility for that? Above all the Serbian Army in Bosnia, Mladic and Karadzic. Yet also the political leaders, all those responsible for keeping the enclave secure. MSF has requested that a parliamentary Commission should be set up

to investigate France's responsibility. During the conflict, the political leaders showed no interest whatsoever in Srebrenica. In a meeting with the person in charge of UNPROFOR, I was told that the international community "was not willing to have a Third World War because of Srebrenica". The diplomatic game was very complex.

Q. Safe havens, peacekeeping forces...do you think they give false assurances to the people who believe that these things are protecting them?

A. In theory, safe havens and peacekeeping forces are a good omen. Whether they work or not depends on their mandate. In Yugoslavia they were not allowed to use their weapons and their mandate was very ambiguous, not clear enough. In fact, it reflected the international community's stand. By sending troops, they acted in a politically correct way, presenting a clean image to the court of public opinion but never in the interests of the population.... By way of proof, take the revulsion the population in Bosnia felt against the UNPROFOR troops.

Q. What has MSF learnt from Srebrenica?

A. There are still lessons to learn. I have a feeling of deep bitterness for what happened in Srebrenica... The debate within MSF is ongoing...the lesson of Srebrenica will be a hard one to learn.

When parliament resumed, MSF France renewed its efforts to convince that institution of the need for a French parliamentary Commission of inquiry on Srebrenica. A series of documents was prepared, ready to be sent to MSF contacts in parliament and the media.



Message From the Deputy Legal Advisor to the President and Communications Department of MSF France, 8 November 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Attached are five (very short, you will be pleased to hear!) documents relating to the launch of a lobby campaign for the establishment of a CE (Commission of enquiry) on Srebrenica.

- a list of people we are to meet, including their official status and, where appropriate, their stance on our request, according to the parliamentary and media sources consulted. I will contact you all again regarding the meetings that we are now starting to arrange.
- four documents for distribution to other parties in a folder with the MSF logo:
 - o a paper entitled 'Why is MSF asking for a CE on Srebrenica?' Please read this document carefully and use it in meetings.
 - o a document entitled 'MSF's requests for a CE on Srebrenica' – this document will also act as the basis for a parliamentary Commission in the event of (and obviously after) validation by the inquiry.
 - o a document highlighting the shortcomings of the UN report.

- o a list of MSF's local staff who disappeared during the Srebrenica tragedy.

We still have to discuss the following with the Commission:

- the final format of the parliamentary Commission;
- the means of channelling information to a select group of journalists.



'Why Has Médecins sans Frontières Demanded a Parliamentary Inquiry on Srebrenica?' **Memo** from MSF France, November 2000 (in French).

Extract:

MSF's request does not reflect an anti-military or anti-Bernard Janvier crusade. On the contrary, we want the Commission to learn from what happened, in order to ensure that France never again deploys a military force that is powerless to act in the face of criminal policies implemented against a civilian population.

- Nor is our request the first step towards a judgement of France's political and military leaders for complicity in crimes against humanity. Our sole purpose is to establish political and military responsibility. The International Criminal Court in the Hague is charged with establishing the criminal responsibilities of those who planned and implemented ethnic cleansing, and with punishing them.
- The call for a Commission of inquiry on Rwanda in 1998 and today's call for an inquiry on Srebrenica reflect a coherent MSF policy designed to evaluate the degree of civilian protection provided by peacekeeping operations. The goal of that policy is to position our ground operations as effectively as possible. ...



'Médecins Sans Frontière's Demands with Respect to a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Srebrenica' MSF France **Memo**, 8 November 2000 (in French).

Extract:

The parliamentary Commission of inquiry must answer the following questions; in particular:

- Did France know that the Bosnian Serb army was preparing to attack Srebrenica? If so, why was this information not passed on to the United Nations, so that the protection or evacuation of the inhabitants of Srebrenica could be assured? While there is a great deal of debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a joint strategy of ground deployment and air support, it is important that members of parliament succeed in uncovering the problems that physically led to this human tragedy.
- Why did General Janvier not authorise NATO air strikes against Srebrenica, in July 1995 [see document above]...
- Did France attempt, independently of the United Nations chain of command, to delay and minimise NATO air strikes during the Serb attack on Srebrenica? If so, did it do so together with the other members of the Contact Group (USA, Russia, Britain and Germany)?

- In June 1995, did France, independently of the United Nations, strike an unauthorised deal for the liberation of UN peacekeeping troops, in return for a definitive halt to the air strikes? If so, did this deal also involve the other members of the Contact Group?
- What guarantees were negotiated, at each stage, and in each case, to ensure the protection or evacuation, under conditions of full security, of the inhabitants of the protected enclave of Srebrenica?...

On 10 November 2000, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly announced that it had decided to appoint François Léotard (Defence Minister, 1993-1995) to prepare a parliamentary report on the fall of Srebrenica. MSF publicly expressed its opposition to the choice of Léotard on the grounds that the former Minister of Defence should not be appointed to evaluate measures that he himself implemented. MSF insisted that a proper Commission of inquiry be established.



'Investigation or Diversion? Médecins Sans Frontières Questions the Conditions of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Srebrenica' MSF France **Press release**, 10 November 2000 (in French).

The Office of the Foreign Affairs Committee announced yesterday that it had appointed François Léotard to prepare a parliamentary report on the fall of Srebrenica. The Office added that Mr Léotard would be working together with a member of the Defence Committee. MSF rejects the conditions and methods that led up to this appointment, and reiterates its call for a genuine Commission of inquiry that is independent, politically diverse, and dedicated to establishing the real cause of the tragedy of Srebrenica.

The appointment of an investigation team of just two people, with no debate and no parliamentary vote, represents a failure to guarantee the independence and transparency requisite of such an inquiry. Furthermore, the decision to entrust this parliamentary investigation to Mr. Léotard represents a flagrant breach of the requirement for such an inquiry to be independent and impartial.

As Defence Minister, Mr. Léotard was responsible for installing and administering France's military presence in Bosnia between 1993 and 1995. How can he now play the dual roles of judge and judged, as part of a procedure seeking to evaluate that very military presence?

MSF teams worked in the enclave from 1993 to 1995. In July 1995, the attack by Serb forces at Srebrenica, and the inability of UN troops to protect the civilian population, ended in the massacre of 7,000 people and the deportation of 45,000 others.

After being evacuated from this 'protected zone,' several dozen injured and sick people receiving care from MSF teams were forced to leave the MSF buses and executed by Serb forces. Twenty-two Bosnian members of MSF were also killed.

On 13 July 2000, MSF requested that a Commission of inquiry be set up to examine the circumstances surrounding the fall of Srebrenica. Mr. Paul Quilès, Chairman of the Defence Committee, indicated that he would set up the same kind of parliamentary evaluation mechanism that he himself had introduced, as head of the Fact-Finding Commission on France's role in Rwanda. However, the present initiative is nothing like the previous one.

As the number of peacekeeping operations around the world increases, and as the debate continues to rage concerning the various military strategies that should be used to protect civilian populations, it is vital that Parliament uncovers the military and political problems that led to the tragedy of Srebrenica.

The introduction of a mechanism for ensuring parliamentary control over France's operations abroad is all the more necessary and legitimate today, because of the prominent role played by France in peacekeeping operations. Indeed, this inquiry and evaluation mechanism was requested by the United Nations Secretary-General of those countries that had participated in the UN operations at Srebrenica. In view of the central role played by France in commanding the UN presence in Bosnia, and in view of the extent of the slaughter at Srebrenica, MSF reiterates its call for a Commission of inquiry able to guarantee the quality and transparency that only a genuine investigation can provide.

The Commission should:

- be composed of all those members of parliament on the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committees who express the wish to participate;
- be given unconditional access to all documents essential to its work, including any documents deemed secret on the grounds of national defence or foreign affairs;
- hold public hearings involving any and all actors and witnesses who may be needed in order to establish exactly what role was played by France's political and military leaders.
- confine the use of in camera proceedings to exceptional cases, and state clearly why such proceedings are necessary. Publish accounts of all its proceedings and its working documents.

MSF calls on the Defence Committee, which is due to meet next Wednesday, to reject the current process and open a genuine debate on this issue, with a view to removing all ambiguities surrounding the intentions of the present procedure.



'Mr Léotard Challenged as Head of the Inquiry on Srebrenica,' **Le Monde** (France), 12 November 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Appointed on Thursday by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly to prepare a report on the fall of the Muslim enclave in Bosnia in 1995, Mr Léotard was Minister of Defence at the time the events occurred. MSF feels that his appointment "represents a complete failure in the duty to guarantee the independence and impartiality of such an

inquiry". "As Minister of Defence, Mr Léotard installed and administered France's military presence in Bosnia in 1993 and 1995. How can he now play the dual roles of judge and judged, as part of a procedure seeking to evaluate that very military presence?"...

For MSF, appointing Mr Léotard as rapporteur (he was still Minister a few months before the fall of the enclave) proves that "there is no readiness for an independent inquiry" and that "there is no desire to investigate that which inconveniences us".



I knew we wouldn't get a Commission of inquiry, because we hadn't managed to get one in 1998 for Rwanda. But our demand was above all our way of making it clear that we wanted a real inquiry, with members of parliament willing to challenge the government, rather than just a semblance of democratic oversight. French democracy had never had a tradition of parliamentary oversight of external operations. While the French parliament does oversee the use of the military in conflict situations, this does not extend to UN international interventions.

Back then, member of parliament and former minister Paul Quilès presided over a think-tank on UN reform. His concern for parliamentary oversight of external operations was partially in line with MSF's, but it was crucial that we keep our distance and not let ourselves be manipulated by France's political agendas.

In 1998, MSF succeeded in obtaining the setting up of an inquiry Commission on Rwanda but made no critical review of its findings, which had concluded with a press conference. In short, the message was: "France does not need to feel shame about what happened in Rwanda". We didn't want a repeat experience with Srebrenica, nor did we want to look like the useful idiots who, after a long struggle, had managed to get the inquiry and then let it be taken away from them by people who, up until then, had shown no real interest and had their own agendas.

It was our credibility and humanitarian professionalism that were at stake. I remember the threats made by a member of parliament who told me that, if we went on that way, countries would no longer be willing to participate in international military operations. He also tried to drive us apart as he said that a man's word and honour are better guarantees than due process and the law. It was an obviously populist and cunning way to oppose MSF's 'political' and 'legal' teams. Fortunately, we stuck together.

Everything happens behind closed doors during a Commission of inquiry and people testify under oath. Internal to the National Assembly, it's a quasi-legal process that confronts parliament and the Executive. If a Commission of inquiry had been chosen, Members of Parliament could have ordered the declassification and transmission of documents – which the Fact-Finding Commission never actually had access to. But neither the government nor parliament really wanted to challenge external operations that involved the army, the government and the President, particularly at a time when two opposing political parties were governing in coalition. So it would have been pointless. But I pressed for it anyway, to show

that we weren't concerned with the politics but that we wanted answers to the facts – a large-scale massacre right at the heart of Europe – that went way beyond politics.

Well, in the end, what we got was a Fact-Finding Commission, which enabled us, MSF, to attend the proceedings in real-time and have a major role in monitoring them.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



Commission of inquiry... Fact-Finding Commission. I find this kind of inflation to be a useless exercise. In the case of the Rwanda Fact-Finding Commission, while some people criticised the downgrading of our demand for a Commission of Inquiry to a Fact-Finding Commission – with its much weaker legal scope and reduced powers – I didn't consider it decisive because I considered that the level at which we were to intervene, in spite of everything, had been accomplished.

Dr Rony Brauman, MSF France President 1982- 1994,
MSF Foundation Research Director from 1994,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 15 November 2000, the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs and Defence committee at last decided to set up a Fact-Finding Commission to investigate the July 1995 events in Srebrenica. The group tasked with the mission comprised ten members of parliament who appointed two rapporteurs, François Léotard, former Minister of Defence, and member of the opposition, François Lamy.



'A Fact-Finding Commission on the Srebrenica Massacres,' *Le Monde* (France), 17 November 2000 (in French).

Extract:

The National Assembly's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee decided on Wednesday 15 November to set up a Fact-Finding Commission to investigate the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica (Bosnia). The Commission includes ten members of parliament and two rapporteurs, François Léotard (UDF), Minister of Defence from March 1993 to May 1995, and François Lamy (PS), vice-president of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Friendship Group. The various political groups will appoint the ten members who will represent all the Assembly's parties. [...] After Médecins Sans Frontières issued a press release criticising the appointment of Mr Léotard, who they view as both 'judge and jury' (*Le Monde*, 12 and 13 November), president of the Defence Commission, Paul Quilès, said, "Members of Parliament appoint their rapporteurs, not NGOs".

CRITICAL SUPPORT TO THE FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY FACT-FINDING COMMISSION

The same day, MSF France publicly called for the President of France and the government to facilitate the members of parliament's investigation into the fall of Srebrenica by affording them access to documents and interviewing all those involved, in order to shed light on the responsibilities. The organisation also called for the results of the investigation to be published.



'Médecins Sans Frontières Calls on the President and the Government to Facilitate Members' of Parliament Investigation into the Fall of Srebrenica,' MSF France **Press release**, 15 November 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières welcomes today's decision by the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee to set up a parliamentary inquiry Commission into the Srebrenica tragedy. The mission has been extended to include ten members of parliament.

MSF has until now contested the decision to entrust to François Léotard, former minister of defence during the Bosnian emergency, and another member of parliament, the drafting of a simple information report. In the light of today's decision, MSF no longer has issue with the participation of François Léotard in a Fact-Finding Commission that is now to include ten Members of Parliament.

MSF will, however, remain vigilant regarding the final choice of these members.

The decision to set up a Fact-Finding Commission rather than a Commission of inquiry limits the members of parliament's investigative capacities and their investigation is contingent on the goodwill of the Executive.

This is why MSF is calling on the President and the government to facilitate as far as possible the Commission's task, by enabling them to:

- Access all documents relative to their investigation, including those classified as National Defence and Foreign Affairs secret information.
- Interview all those involved and all relevant witnesses to shed light on France's political and military responsibilities.
- Publish their findings and working documents.

The MSF France team, led by the deputy legal director put together a critical review of the Fact-Finding Commission's investigations. The aim was to provide members of parliament with relevant information that would allow them to ask the questions that need to be answered to shed light on the events in Srebrenica.

Verbatim reports and all information and elements of analysis were made available on a dedicated website to help in the formulation of the questions whose answers may help to elucidate where responsibilities lie.



Message from the Deputy Legal Adviser to the President and Communication Department of MSF France, December 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Hello everyone,

Here is some (good) news from the parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica.

The first inaugural meeting took place this morning. The meeting was not public, but this is what happened, according to "reliable and friendly" parliamentary sources.

Composition

The Chair is François Loncle (this is a tradition because he is the current Chair of the foreign affairs Commission in the National assembly), the Vice-Chair is Marie-Hélène Aubert (Green). The two rapporteurs are, as expected, François Léotard (UDF) and François Lamy (PS). The other members are: René André (RPR), René Galy-Dejean (RPR), Roland Blum (DL), Pierre Brana (PS), Jean-Noël Kerdraon (PS) and François Liberti (PC).

According to parliamentary and journalist sources, the composition is a relatively good one. Four MPs are considered to be "active or very active" (i.e. transparent) on international issues. ...

For many, François Léotard is also sincere in his desire for transparency ...

Working methods

The Commission will make its report public before the summer; a trip to Bosnia has already been booked for January. There will be other trips to different places. The hearings will take place at a rate of two per week, starting at 10 a.m. on Thursday. All hearings will be public, unless the person concerned asks to be heard behind closed doors. The first hearings will take place next Thursday and will concern Admiral Lanxade, the former chief of staff of the armed forces and French ambassador to Sarajevo at the time the city fell.

This morning, Loncle, Léotard and Lamy proposed a first list of people to be heard. This list is not exhaustive and we will be able to indirectly propose names and questions to be asked of each of these people. [...]

Access to archives

With regard to access to archives in France, François Loncle this morning stated that he had submitted a written request for access to the defence and foreign affairs archives. We will receive confirmation that this letter has indeed been sent and that the archives of the Elysée are also mentioned (very,

very important). I would remind you on this point that the Elysée refused to meet us. [...]

As with Rwanda, each ministry appointed a high-ranking official in charge of acting as the point of contact with the Commission on these questions.

The question of the UN and NATO archives was not mentioned this morning. I would remind you that these archives are covered by the diplomatic immunity specific to international organisations. It will only therefore be possible to transmit these documents to the Commission if the UN Secretary General and the NATO Secretary General lift immunity for each individual case. Once again, they can appoint a high-ranking official to act as the point of contact should they so desire.

MSF and the Commission

We have three working meetings next week; media coverage of Srebrenica will begin with the start of the hearings. The major newspapers have all appointed someone to follow the work of the Commission.

Le Monde: Claire Tréan

Libé: Marc Sema

Le Figaro: Isabelle Lasserre

La Croix: Alain Guillemoles

Paris-Match: Frédéric Gerschel

All these journalists have received a complete MSF file about Srebrenica. However, I have absolutely no idea what is happening with the main radio stations such as Europe 1, France inter, France info, RTL. Will someone be on the case full-time or not? Cécile had already identified and contacted some names at these stations. Will these same names be following the work of the Parliamentary Commission? Help!!

The challenge for next week is for us to find somewhere to make our voice heard, so that we can 1) immediately and publicly reposition MSF as a keen eye keeping a close watch on the work of Parliament and 2) publicly submit precise questions to which we want precise answers and in the light of which we will assess the work done.

The risk of the Commission is that the MPs use Srebrenica to promote a certain number of political objectives (however worthy) such as UN reform or parliamentary oversight of foreign operations and that they fail to address or only partially answer outstanding questions about Srebrenica. We will therefore have to organise the media push: when do we start, who will be doing it and what will we say?

Monitoring of the work of the Commission

Alongside Françoise, we have two interns at our disposal with backgrounds in political science and law. They already have field and lobbying experience and we know them personally. [...] They will be working for us one or two days a week. We will ask them:

- 1) to follow and produce transcripts of the hearings, which could be transferred to our website (to be discussed together);
- 2) to work on technical questions which could arise during the Parliamentary work and to which we may need to react;
- 3) to select the MSF documents that could be sent to the Commission.

The idea is that these interns will enable us all to remain calm and focused on the 'political' control of the lobbying and public speaking by MSF, while acquiring solid knowledge of the technical aspects.

MSF hearing

According to our friendly sources, what is important is that our hearing will enable the most active and transparent MPs to oblige the Commission to get to the bottom of things or point it in the right direction. In concrete terms, during our hearing, we must ask the questions we believe the Commission has to answer, and subtly and indirectly mention the names of those who could be called before the hearings [...]

Position of the UN Secretary General

In New York, Catherine Harper tried to obtain a meeting with Kofi [Annan, UN Secretary General]'s office and with that of Guéhenno [the new Deputy Secretary General in charge of peacekeeping operations]. The idea is to present the basis of our approach and ask the UN SG [Secretary General] to facilitate the work of the French MPs.

Polite refusal by Guéhenno and a very diplomatic reply from Kofi's office: 'we have nothing more to add to the content of the UN report on Srebrenica; we have no opinion concerning the procedure under way in France; the NGOs are better placed than the UN SG to try to hold the member States to account.'

Interface with the Netherlands

Two organisations are asking us to "cooperate" (define what this actually means):

1) our Dutch cousins at MSF [Holland]: JHB [Jean-Hervé Bradol, President of MSF France] sent a note asking that points of contact be designated for Srebrenica before anything else.

2) IKV: an independent NGO which wrote to us and with whom we have had lengthy telephone discussions. They are doing good work on Srebrenica and have been for some time. They suggest that we meet next Thursday at MSF in Paris, at 9 a.m., with the former Bosnian interpreter for Dutchbat in Srebrenica, Hasan Nuhanovic. For years, this man – who lost his parents and children in the tragedy in Srebrenica – has been fighting in Holland to gain recognition of the Dutch State's responsibility. They will explain the procedure in the Netherlands and are expecting us to propose areas for cooperation....

We could post the transcripts on the MSF Holland and IKV websites. This is an example of the possible areas for cooperation. IKV in principle agrees. As regards MSF Holland, I don't know. [...]



'France to Investigate its Srebrenica Role,' Marlise Simons, *The New York Times* (USA), 11 December 2000 (in English).

Extract:

This week, after more than two years of lobbying by the organization Doctors Without Borders, the French Parliament will begin hearings on whether, if only indirectly, France blocked airstrikes on Bosnian Serb troops as they moved on Srebrenica [...]

"We are horrified by the off-hand way in which the victims of Srebrenica have been dismissed," said Françoise Saulnier, legal director of the doctors' organization. "The failure of the peacekeepers has to be properly clarified, and the government and the military must be accountable to our democratic institutions."

She noted that it had taken years to get this week's started. "We were told all the time that the issue was very sensitive," she said. [...]

Doctors Without Borders, which was created by the French but is now an international group, has a special stake in the inquiry. The group went to work in Srebrenica in 1993, soon after it was declared a United Nations safe area following a visit by another French general, Philippe Morillon, who bowed to demands from the Muslim inhabitants to save them from besieging Serbian forces.

The doctors' group cared for refugees and war wounded in Srebrenica for two years. After the fall of the town, the group said, several dozen sick or wounded people under its care were at first evacuated under escort of the Dutch peacekeepers, then forced off buses and killed.

Twenty-two people who worked for the doctors were presumably killed. The bodies of only two have been found.

The medical group and others supporting the inquiry say they want answers to a number of questions and assertions raised in newspapers and film documentaries outside France about meetings that General Janvier held in the late spring and early summer of 1995 with the Bosnian Serb commander Gen. Ratko Mladic, who has been indicted for war crimes, and about suggestions that President Jacques Chirac of France ordered General Janvier to hold off on airstrikes.[...]

Members of the medical group insist that they are not on any kind of crusade against the French military or General Janvier. "We need to learn the lessons from this bloody failure so that in future the military are not sent out to protect people with their hands tied," said Dr. Jean-Herve Bradol, the director of the group.



I went to all of the sessions, along with the two interns and my deputy. We transcribed the debates from the entire session in real time. Everything was put online, on the special website we'd created, by the next morning. So everyone could read what was said, the questions and responses of each person who appeared, and get an idea of the quality of the witnesses and the effectiveness of the questions by the deputies involved. In a way, MSF was taking the minutes for the sessions. From that we could analyse, from week to week, what had been said, whether it confirmed or contradicted what other witnesses had said, and fine-tune the content of the questions that the next witnesses would then have to be asked. It was of no use questioning someone about generalities, and a hearing could very quickly turn into a long, hazy monologue. The deputies know the life of their regions and their constituencies very well, but for an eastern Bosnian enclave...it took a collective effort to get from generalities to precise facts about what really happened in Srebrenica.

I found the journalists and deputies very receptive to MSF's efforts to spur the Commission's work on. A public mirror was needed to help prevent the Commission from being used as just a platform for witnesses to come tell their story for an hour-and-a-half, without anyone being able to challenge anything.

With the Rwanda Commission, we trusted them and let things take their course and the result was disappointing. So for the

Srebrenica Commission, MSF had to get involved in monitoring the process and mobilising the press throughout the entire Commission process. Otherwise, it would have served no purpose again...other than to clear the French government.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor,
interviewed in 2015 (in French)



We got the idea to do our own investigation, and so we organised almost like a campaign. It was covered by the major media outlets. The hearings were being held at a steady clip, and we had lots of contact with the media. The journalists liked MSF, because they understood our process. Many of those who covered the Commission had been war correspondents posted in Bosnia. They had seen the horrors and had the same questions and doubts about the reasons for the fall of the enclaves and the failure to keep the promise to protect them. They too were determined to get a clearer picture.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor,
1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



For Rwanda, we went in full of naïve enthusiasm, because we weren't familiar with the inner workings. That's not our area. But the experience was useful for toughening us up. Françoise, who had been through it before with the Rwanda Commission, had a bit more methodology. She was better prepared. For Srebrenica, we did a real investigation, and we had good hunches. We put a lot of energy into it. We were able to react fairly quickly. The website didn't get a lot of traffic. It was mostly a tool for us.

Stephan Oberreit, MSF General Coordinator
in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995,
MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 14 December 2000, as the parliamentary Fact-Findings Commission on Srebrenica began its work, MSF issued a series of questions it felt essential the Commission should answer.



'Médecins Sans Frontières Expects the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica to Answer Several Important Questions,' MSF France Press release, 14 December 2000 (in French).

On 11 July 1995, Srebrenica fell into the hands of Bosnian Serb forces. The fall of Srebrenica led to the deportation of 40,000 people and the execution of some 7,000 others. Several dozen of the wounded and sick being treated by MSF

were executed by Serb forces. Twenty-two members of MSF's local staff were also executed.

As the parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica begins its first hearings today, Médecins Sans Frontières hopes that the deputies get answers to several important questions, to shed light on the political and military dysfunctions that led to this tragedy:

- Was France aware of the fact that the Bosnian Serb army was getting ready to leave Srebrenica? If so, why wasn't that information transmitted to the United Nations, so that arrangements could be made to protect or evacuate the residents of Srebrenica?
- Why didn't General Janvier authorise NATO air strikes on Srebrenica in July 1995, even though:
 - o There were no legal obstacles to using force?
 - o The battalion of Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica had requested them multiple times, even though they understood the physical risk that such an action would mean for them?
 - o Air strikes had been launched on several occasions in 1994 to defend the Gorazde and Bihac safe areas, despite a much more complex decision chain than during the Srebrenica tragedy? At the time of the attack on Srebrenica, General Janvier had held the authority since 9 July 1995 to single-handedly authorise the use of air power.
- Did France try – as part of or outside the UN chain of command – to delay or minimise NATO air strikes during the Serbian offensive against Srebrenica? If so, was the initiative taken in concert with other members of the Contact Group (United States, Russia, Great Britain and Germany)?
- In June 1995, did France negotiate – as part of or outside the United Nations – the release of UN peacekeeper hostages in exchange for a definitive halt to air strikes? If so, was the initiative taken in concert with other members of the Contact Group?
- At each stage and in all scenarios, what guarantees were negotiated to protect or safely evacuate residents of the protected Srebrenica enclave ...?

That same day, at the hearing, Admiral Lanxade, Chief of Staff for the French armed forces from 1991 to 1995, denied having negotiated the release of hostages in exchange for ending the air strikes. On its "Srebrenica" website and in the press, MSF France deemed his answers inadequate.



'France Examines its Conscience on the Srebrenica Massacre,' Isabelle Lasserre, *Le Figaro* (France), 16 December 2000 (in French).

Extract:

For the first time this week, after unrelenting pressure from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the responsibility of the French government and of General Bernard Janvier, commander of the UN forces in the region at the time, were dis-

cussed. [...] Testifying Thursday, Admiral Lanxade denied having negotiated the release of hostages. In his words, "there was a serious lack of international political will." "There is," he said, "a certain inconsistency in voting for resolutions and then leaving commanders in the field without the means. Could the massacre have been avoided? If you asked that question in early July 1995, the answer would have been no, but if you had asked it a year earlier, the answer would have been yes." MSF considered those answers inadequate. The organisation, which would have preferred a Commission of enquiry to a simple, less binding, fact-finding Commission, is calling for "precise answers to precise questions" at subsequent hearings.



'False Start,' Fabien Dubuet, posted MSF France **Srebrenica website**, 21 December 2000 (in French).

Extract:

The Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica got off to a very false start. The first session – with Admiral Lanxade, who was Chief of Staff of the French armed forces during almost the entire Yugoslavian crisis, including the Srebrenica tragedy – was like a bad joke. A chief of staff knows everything, or almost everything. Yet Admiral Lanxade knew nothing, or almost nothing.

Did General Janvier, head of all UN troops in the former Yugoslavia, come to Paris on 4 8 July 1995 – that is, just a few days before the fall of Srebrenica – and if so, did he meet with him? "I confess that I am not able to answer that question." He doesn't remember.

Was the French Chief of Staff in telephone contact with his Dutch colleague during the Srebrenica tragedy? "I don't have a very clear memory of those exchanges with my Dutch counterpart, but obviously we shared our assessments of the situation, except perhaps in the very last days of the fall of Srebrenica, because that was the Franco-German summit and we weren't in Paris.

The only interesting detail in his answers, which were vague at best, was when Lanxade let slip a really worrying piece of news: the Chief of Staff of the armed forces – the top military officer in charge of defending the nation – cannot be reached when he isn't in Paris.

During his meeting in Mali Zvornik on 4 June 1995, did General Janvier make an unauthorised deal, outside the United Nations, for the release of the UN peacekeepers taken hostage in late May 1995 (many of them French), in exchange for a permanent end to the air strikes? "It is inconceivable to me that there would have been any kind of trade, as has been suggested. Naturally, I wasn't at that discussion, but all of the information I got afterwards suggests that this is all totally false, and casts completely unjustified suspicion on General Janvier." He even insisted on adding that the hostage negotiation was conducted by the United Nations, and that the French Staff did not participate.

That detail is problematic, for the following two reasons. First, because a little earlier in his testimony the Admiral stressed the existence of direct ties between the French Staff

and French troops on the ground, outside the UN chain of command, particularly when the safety of soldiers was at stake. And second, because according to a very serious investigation by journalists Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs, Paris had sent two French officers, one of them General de La Presle, to negotiate the release of the French hostages.

The deputies forgot to ask Admiral Lanxade to clarify the nature and sources of that “information he got afterwards”. Would they ask him to bring proof, supporting documentation, of what he said?

They also forgot to ask him to explain the fact that the current UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan – at the time in charge of peacekeeping – asked the UN Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia (Yasushi Akashi) for an investigation into the nature of the agreement between General Janvier and Ratko Mladic, in Code Cable no. 1981 on 15 June 1995. And they forgot to ask him to explain the fact that, in a letter dated 21 June 1995, the Secretary General of NATO himself asked the Secretary General of the UN for explanations about that. Nor do we know why Russian president Boris Yeltsin had announced, during that same period, that French president Jacques Chirac had assured him that the use of air strikes in Bosnia had ended.

Given the number of officials who mentioned a deal that had been reached, or wondered about that deal, the deputies need to take their investigation a lot further. At least, that is, if they want to get precise answers to precise questions.

On 20 December 2000, MSF France sent the Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica a copy of a confidential cable from the UN, confirming the hypothesis that an agreement had been reached between President Chirac and President Milosevic, linking the release of the French Blue Helmets who had been taken hostage to the suspension of air strikes. The cable was published on the MSF France website on Srebrenica.



Message from Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor to François Loncle, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly, 20 December 2000 (in French).

Extract:

We are honoured to send you a copy of a cable from the United Nations number Z-1020 dated 19 June 1995, between the special representative of the UN Secretary General for the former Yugoslavia, Mr Yasushi Akashi, and Mr Kofi Annan, then deputy Secretary General with responsibility for peacekeeping. The information contained in this document appears to be of prime importance in light of the work being done by the Fact-Finding Commission you are chairing on the circumstances of the fall of Srebrenica.



'A Document Confirming Negotiations Between Mr Milosevic and Mr Chirac on Air Strikes,' posted on the **MSF France "Srebrenica" website** on 21 December 2000 (in French and English).

Extract:

Médecins sans Frontières is today publishing the confidential cable number Z-1020 dated 19 June 1995, between the special representative of the UN Secretary General for the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, and Kofi Annan, then deputy Secretary General with responsibility for peacekeeping.

The document appears to confirm the conclusion of the rigorous investigation carried out by journalists Frank Westerman and Bart Rijs.

According to the investigation, General Janvier initially had no intention of reporting his meeting with General Mladic in Mali Zvornik on 4 June 1995, to the United Nations. It was at the UN's request, and only 11 days later, on 15 June 1995, that he sent them his report, in a message coded Z995.

The current UN Secretary General, who was responsible for peacekeeping at the time, asked the special representative for Yugoslavia (Akashi) to carry out an enquiry into the matter, in a message coded no. 1981 of 15 June 1995.

It was during an interview in Belgrade with Slobodan Milosevic on 17 June 1995, that Yasushi Akashi learned of the nature of the agreement made between General Janvier and General Mladic: Slobodan Milosevic explained that he had received a guarantee from French President Jacques Chirac that there would be no more air strikes, based on an agreement between him and Bill Clinton.

The document published by MSF today is the record of that interview in Belgrade.



'A Look at the World' Dominique Bromberger, *France Inter* 22 December 2000 (in French).

Extract:

Yesterday, Médecins Sans Frontières published a confidential document from the United Nations, in which the UN Secretary General's special envoy, the Japanese [diplomat] Akashi relates that Milosevic allegedly shared the following assurances from President Chirac with him: no bombardment would take place without the explicit agreement of the French head of state.

Milosevic, as we know, is a master of misinformation, and perhaps he viewed this as an opportunity to drive a wedge between the allies. Moreover, Jacques Chirac showed a great deal of determination in creating the rapid reaction force, but it was a chaotic time and the Blue Helmets were no longer being commanded by a struggling UN but by London and Paris.

The story of Srebrenica is so tragic that, five years later, the UN, the Netherlands, France and Great Britain are accusing each other of responsibility for the massacre. Perhaps Srebrenica was simply indefensible, or perhaps the confusion and dissension are laying responsibility on men of good faith and goodwill.

In any event, one man – General Janvier – knows the whole

truth: a respectable man, who has had an irreproachable military career, but who still obstinately refuses to talk about the situation. He will be called to give evidence; his silence would be terrible for all of us and would raise suspicions about an inadmissible secret. There are still, in the third millennium, truths we do not know about the most serious of matters.



'Srebrenica: Accusations Against Chirac – Médecins Sans Frontières Publishes a Confidential UN Document' Jean-Dominique Merchet, *Libération* (France) 22 December 2000 (in French).

Extract:

According to MSF, the document "seems to confirm the hypothesis that an agreement on air strikes was reached between President Chirac and Slobodan Milosevic". A few weeks later, the city of Srebrenica, which was theoretically under UN protection, fell into Serbian hands without any military reaction from the West. Around 7,000 Muslims were killed in a few days.

Cable "Z-1020", published by MSF, was sent by Yasushi Akashi, the UN special representative in former Yugoslavia, to Kofi Annan, then deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, two days after his meeting with the Serbian president in Belgrade, on 17 June 1995. Among other things, it states: "Milosevic confirmed that he had been informed by President Chirac about President Clinton's agreement that there would be no air strikes if they were unacceptable to Chirac. Milosevic added that Chirac had stated that he did not expect the rapid reaction force to be used, but that its creation would help to restart negotiations."

At this point, the Serbians released the final Blue Helmets they had taken hostage following an initial NATO air strike on 26 May. Did France trade its soldiers for a promise that there would not be any further strikes? MSF's hypothesis is based on a meeting on 4 June, between General Bernard Janvier, head of UNPROFOR, and General Mladic. Under direct orders from Paris, Janvier allegedly did not report the meeting to the UN hierarchy until he was forced to do so nine days later. The Serbs besieged Srebrenica on 7 July, without General Janvier requesting air support. It was not until the massacres and then the bombardment of the market in Sarajevo, that NATO decided to take action, on 30 August. The letter from Akashi was sent by MSF to the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica, which will report next June.



Throughout the years following the fall of Srebrenica, we have asked ourselves constantly why things turned out as they did. There was an enquiry in the Netherlands on the operation of the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica, at which MSF gave evidence. There was also a United Nations investigation. Journalists from various countries had also published the results of their own investigations.

I was also in contact with the investigators at the ICTY, since MSF had sent the Tribunal the list of the wounded, patients and

staff who had disappeared. From time to time they would contact us, to tell us they had identified corpses who matched our wounded or our staff. When you work diligently over time, you compare pieces of information and find that some elements confirm and some contradict each other. Some people among the victims but also people in the United Nations and others sent us information or documents because they trusted MSF. That's how we obtained copies of internal United Nations documents. Amongst others, there were messages exchanged between UNPROFOR command in the former Yugoslavia and the United Nations in New York.

Each time, we gain a better understanding of the context and see that it's monotonous but persistent work. Prosecutors often state the well-known warning "anything you say from now on may be used against you". And indeed, over the course of all the "inquiries" and interviews, the main international protagonists justify their position by offering explanations and information that will gradually be denied by others and sometimes by themselves. So we knew the arguments used by the United Nations to defend itself. Then, the United Nations and the French accused the Dutch Blue Helmets, and they in turn defended themselves.

So it is our legitimacy in the field that has allowed us to continue to ask questions and gain access to this information. It is because we had a copy of certain UN communications that we have been able to show that such documents existed. When we had a fax that was an "incoming" one it meant there was a "return" fax somewhere, and vice versa. This is what allowed us to submit documents and questions to the inquiry Commission, so that it could ask for certain clearly identified documents to be declassified. But it did not get access to them.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Legal Advisor,
interviewed in 2015 (in French)



A few weeks after the start of the mission, Jean-Hervé (Bradol, president of MSF France) said he had received a call from Bianca Jagger¹², in London. She said she had confidential documents and cables from the UN, which she was willing to share with us. We had no idea if any of it was serious but we told ourselves it would cost nothing to go and check. We went to her home in London, where we found her sitting on the floor going through all these documents spread out around her. There were a few interesting documents she had had access to.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor,
1995-2005, interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 10 January 2001, in a letter to the president of the mission, the president of MSF France set out a list of around 20 people whose testimony it considered critical. Another letter, sent to the UN Secretary General and

12. British human rights activist.

NATO Secretary General and published on 11 January 2001, asked them to authorise a hearing for some of their members by the Fact-Finding Commission and send it the relevant documents.

On 31 January 2001, NATO told MSF that it had not received any request to attend a hearing from the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission.

MSF published the NATO response on 15 February 2001.



'Some Twenty People Whose Testimony is Critical to Shed Full Light on the Tragedy in Srebrenica Must be Heard and Released From Their Obligation to Maintain Professional Confidentiality,' MSF France **Press release** from, 11 January 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières yesterday sent the president of the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission, François Loncle, a list of people whose testimony is critical to shed full light on the tragedy in Srebrenica.

The list, which is attached to this press release, consists of the names of some twenty senior French civilian and military officials who, at the time of the tragedy in Srebrenica, were working at the Elysée, Matignon, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The list also includes French and foreign senior and other officials who were in post at the United Nations and NATO when the events occurred.

Médecins Sans Frontières also wrote to the UN Secretary General and NATO Secretary General yesterday, asking them to:

- authorise and facilitate the attendance at a hearing of people working for both international organisations;
- communicate any documents that would facilitate the work of the French Fact-Finding Commission.



Letter From the NATO Secretary General to the President of MSF France, 31 January 2001 (in French).

Extract:

To date I have not received a request for any current or former NATO officials to attend a hearing on their actions at the time of the fall of Srebrenica from the French parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission. Nonetheless, I must inform you that NATO member states have adopted the principle by which the Organisation's senior officials should not be called on to give evidence before the parliaments of other member states.



'No Request for NATO Officials to Attend a Hearing For the Srebrenica Commission,' **Agence France Presse**, 15 February 2001 (in French).

Extract:

No request for NATO officials to attend a hearing has been made by the French National Assembly's Fact-Finding Commission on the tragedy in Srebrenica, according to the Alliance's Secretary General, George Robertson, in a letter to the humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières [...] MSF President Jean-Hervé Bradol had asked him on 10 January to authorise and facilitate attendance at the hearing by senior officials in the Alliance, whose testimony is considered crucial to shed light on the tragedy. A similar request has been sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, on 24 January 2001, the French Ministry of Defence requested that the testimony of Generals Bernard Janvier and Philippe Morillon be heard behind closed doors. In a press release, the Ministry of Defence justified the request on the grounds that it was under the obligation to respect the procedures applied by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Subsequently, the Tribunal's spokesperson responded that the ICTY's procedures were unrelated to those of the French government and that the Tribunal had never expressed any reservation regarding the testimony of individuals it intended to question. MSF publicly challenged the decision to hold the hearings behind closed doors and questioned the validity of the arguments put forward by the Ministry of Defence. [V15](#) 



Press Release Issued by the French Ministry of Defence, 24 January 2001 (in French).

The National Assembly's Committees on Foreign Affairs and on National Defence and the Armed Forces have decided to establish a Parliamentary Fact Finding Commission on the events that took place in Srebrenica in July 1995. The French Government has pledged its full support for the work of the parliamentary commission. All officials, both civilian and military, whose testimony is requested, will thus testify before the parliamentary commission. Some have already appeared before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. France is fully cooperating with the Tribunal so that the ICTY can gather all the information required to perform its mandate and judge the perpetrators of various horrific crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. To that end, some 30 French soldiers, including several general officers, have already testified, many at the request of the ICTY's prosecution teams. Their testimony was heard in closed session according to procedures defined with the prosecutor. The objective is to provide any information that can

be used against alleged criminals who have already been arrested or against individuals facing secret accusations.

In this framework, it is necessary that all public agents who are to be heard by the parliamentary commission and whose cooperation is required by the ICTY testify based on the same procedures as those defined by the Tribunal. Accordingly, the Ministry of Defence asked the chairman of the Fact-Finding commission that the testimony of Generals Janvier and Morillon be conducted behind closed doors. The reason for such procedures is to permit the Fact-Finding commission to pursue its work while enabling the ICTY to fulfill its mandate. The French government is determined to give each of these bodies the means by which to achieve the determination of the truth and an understanding of the events that occurred in Srebrenica.



'Srebrenica: The ICTY Has Nothing to Do With the Closed Testimony in France,' *Agence France Presse*, The Hague, 26 January 2001 (in French).

Extract:

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has nothing to do with the French Ministry of Defence's request for a testimony behind closed doors during the questioning of Generals Janvier and Morillon by the parliamentary inquiry on the tragedy in Srebrenica, the ICTY announced on Friday. "The French Ministry of Defence has argued that its decision was based on the procedures in effect at the ICTY. The ICTY's procedures are well known, and have no relation with those of the parliamentary commission," ICTY spokesperson Christian Chartier told AFP. The two French generals testified on Thursday in the context of the Fact-Finding commission conducted by the French Parliament on the circumstances of the tragedy that occurred in Srebrenica (and in Bosnia) in July 1995. [...]

Initially intended to be open to the public, the testimony ultimately took place behind closed doors at the request of the French Ministry of Defence. The latter specified that it had requested a closed testimony since the two men had been heard earlier behind closed doors by the ICTY. The head of the Fact-Finding commission, deputy François Loncle, deplored the decision but expressed understanding of the French government's desire to "respect its obligations towards the ICTY." "To my knowledge, there is no agreement" between the Tribunal and the French government, stated Mr. Chartier.



'Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on the Tragedy in Srebrenica: Testimony Behind Closed Doors on 7,000 deaths.' MSF France **Press Release**, 24 January 2001 (in French).

"Has the parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica come under the control of the Ministry of Defence?" asks Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, [Legal Director] for Médecins

Sans Frontières. In a communiqué issued last night, the French Ministry of Defence requested that the testimony of Generals Janvier and Morillon, scheduled for today, be presented behind closed doors. Although the Ministry of Defence has not put forward military secrecy, it has invoked the need to cooperate with the ICTY in order to impose this testimony behind closed doors, likely applicable to all future testimony presented by high-ranking French civilian and military officials before the parliamentary mission. Such arguments, however, are unsubstantiated from a legal standpoint. "It amounts to using a pretext instead of a reason," comments Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, "since the Criminal Tribunal in The Hague has expressed no reservation regarding the testimony."

More importantly, Médecins Sans Frontières is astonished that the Fact-Finding commission did not ascertain the validity of the arguments put forward by the Ministry of Defence before acquiescing to this demand. Such a light attitude regarding a straightforward procedural issue raises serious concerns regarding the consideration of substantive issues. This decision could call into question the credibility and relevance of the investigatory work conducted by the MPs. It also leaves unanswered key questions that were to be asked today, in particular to General Janvier, such as:

- According to the UN report on the fall of Srebrenica, General Janvier met with General Mladic on three separate occasions to negotiate the release of the hostages. What instructions did he receive for conducting the negotiations? Who gave him these instructions and how much leeway did the general have in the context of these negotiations?
- The UN report describes the agreement proposed by General Mladic at his first meeting with General Janvier. What did General Mladic propose at the next two meetings?
- Ultimately, what type of agreement was reached with General Mladic to obtain the release of the hostages?
- Did France, with the largest number of hostages held captive, set up a special national committee to negotiate the release of the hostages? Was the French general in contact with the individuals composing this committee? Was he aware of the negotiations conducted by the French government?
- Can General Janvier confirm the information published in the press stating that his predecessor, General de Lapresle, was potentially involved in such negotiations on behalf of the French government and had even traveled to Bosnia? Was General Janvier ever in contact with General de Lapresle?
- Is it conceivable that France short-circuited the negotiations conducted within the framework of the United Nations, in order to free the hostages by making the following deal: the release of the hostages in exchange for the definitive cessation of air strikes?
- Can General Janvier provide the precise timeline of the requests for air strikes that he received from Srebrenica once the enclave was under attack? For each request that he denied, can he specify the exact reasons for his refusal? Who are the individuals he consulted on this matter and what was their opinion?

On 13 July 2000, Médecins Sans Frontières requested the creation of a parliamentary investigative commission on France's responsibility in the fall of Srebrenica.

On 30 January 2001, Jean-David Levitte, former Diplomatic advisor to French President Jacques Chirac, asserted to the Parliamentary Fact-Finding commission that no deal was made with the Serbs regarding Srebrenica.



'No Deal Between France and the Serbs on Srebrenica,' Claire Tréan, *Le Monde* (France), 31 January 2001 (in French).

Extract:

On Tuesday, 30 January, Jean-David Levitte, former Diplomatic Advisor to Jacques Chirac and France's current Ambassador to the UN, testified before the information mission at the French National Assembly regarding the events in Srebrenica in July 1995. He endeavoured to 'lay to rest' any suspicions expressed by certain people regarding France's attitude, in particular Jacques Chirac's, by providing a detailed account of several key episodes that he had witnessed first hand. [...] "Eighteen NATO aircraft were already en route towards Srebrenica: six had received the order to attack, and two would drop two bombs early that afternoon," added Mr. Levitte. At this point in his narrative, he refuted the allegations from the previous month, "using [these] facts," that Jacques Chirac had promised to block any air intervention by the west in exchange for the release of the UN peacekeepers held hostage by the Serbs. A preliminary air intervention had been launched, followed by a full one the following month. "This proves," Mr. Levitte emphasized, "that no deal of the sort was made."

At his testimony on 7 February before the Fact-Finding commission, General Jean Heinrich, France's Head of Military Intelligence from 1992 to 1995, then the Implementation Force (IFOR, NATO-led peace enforcement force for Bosnia-Herzegovina) Commander in 1996, alleged that Srebrenica was not defended because of a secret agreement between the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosniaks. He said the Bosniak leader had escaped from the enclave a few weeks prior to the city's fall. He also reported that, in 1996, IFOR could have arrested Mladic and Karadzic on several occasions without any opposition from US officials.



'U.S. Not Keen to Nab Bosnian Serb Leaders in 1996,' *Agence France Presse*, 8 February 2001 (in English).

Extract:

NATO forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina could have arrested the Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic on several occasions in 1996 but U.S. officials were not interested, a French general alleged here Thursday. General Jean Heinrich told a French Parliamentary Committee that the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) deployed in Bosnia

"could have intercepted them at certain times" in 1996 "but the Americans simply didn't want to arrest them." [...]

The French general also denounced the "ridiculous" mandate given to IFOR by the international tribunal, saying it was far too weak to allow the effective pursuit of people suspected of war crimes [...]. He acknowledged that Srebrenica, one of three Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia that was besieged by Serb forces in early 1995, had fallen "because it wasn't defended. If it had been defended, the Serbs wouldn't have gone in," he said. Heinrich said he believed there had been a secret agreement between the Serb and Muslim leaderships under which the Muslims would pull out of the three enclaves. The other two were Zepa and Gorazde. He said the Commander of the Muslim forces at Srebrenica, Nasser Oric, had slipped away from the town before it fell to Serb forces in July 1995, a fact that had been attested to in the Bosnian daily *Oslobodenje*. Heinrich said he did not know why the Muslim commander had left, but once he had done so, the enclave was wide open to attack by Bosnian forces.

From 16 to 20 March 2001, the President and the Communications Director for MSF France, as well as the Programme Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia at the time the enclave fell, traveled to Srebrenica to explain the organisation's attitude towards the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission. [V16](#)



'While the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission Pursues its Work, a Team from Médecins Sans Frontières Travels to Bosnia.' MSF France **Press Release**, 16 March 2001 (in French).

A delegation from the Paris head office of Médecins Sans Frontières comprised of Jean-Hervé Bradol, the organisation's President, Pierre Salignon, Programme Coordinator in 1995, and Stephan Oberreit, Communications Director, visited Bosnia in order to report to those concerned on the initiative launched by the Paris organisation to monitor the Fact-Finding commission appointed last September and tasked with shedding light on France's responsibility in this tragedy. Médecins Sans Frontières entered the enclave in 1993, and for two years provided medical and logistical support to the besieged population, officially under the protection of the UN peacekeepers. They promised the population they would not be abandoned. Because of this 'guarantee,' and other promises, the population remained in the enclave, rather than fleeing from the threat. And yet, despite its designation as a 'safe area,' the fall of Srebrenica was followed by the deportation of 40,000 people and the execution of some 7,000 others. The MSF team could only stand by and watch, powerless, as the population was separated into groups, including the sick and the wounded, as the men were separated from the women, and as groups in convoys departed to unknown destinations. Dozens of wounded and sick people under MSF's care, 'evacuated' from the enclave by the Bosnian

Serbs and ‘under Dutch escort,’ were forced off the buses and executed by Serb forces. Twenty-two members of MSF’s local staff were likewise executed.

In memory of these colleagues and patients, and deeming that its presence helped maintain the illusion of international protection in the area, Médecins Sans Frontières has requested clarification on France’s level of responsibility, both political and military, that resulted in the paralysis of the United Nations and NATO. Indeed, France played a major decision-making role in the crisis, as the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) was under French command. In fact, the ‘safe areas’ were created by Security Council Resolution 819 of 16 April 1993 under the initiative of French General Morillon and at the suggestion of the French government (Alain Juppé [Minister of Foreign Affairs]). Security Council Resolution 836 (4 June 1993), which authorizes the use of force to protect the safe areas, was also adopted on the initiative of France. For MSF, this call for inquiry reflects a coherent policy aimed at assessing the level of civilian protection that can be provided (or not) by peacekeeping operations, for the purpose of positioning our operations on the ground as effectively as possible.



It was one of the most moving moments of my professional life. A process was set up, so both Serbs and Muslims were on the Municipal Council, but they never brought up the issue of the massacres between themselves. It was a bank holiday, just a small group of people. The Serbs started off by saying, ‘you know, you can talk about all of this. We recognize that massacres occurred, we are extremely sorry this happened, we don’t defend the massacres.’ It was the first time the two Muslims who were there had ever heard this from their Serb counterparts. From a human and political standpoint, it was very moving to witness people learning how to reconnect through language, to converse via our mediation after such tragic events. We were a bit apprehensive because we viewed ourselves as inconsequential victims compared to them. But they were very interested in the approach we had initiated regarding the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission and they understood what we were trying to do. They did, however, express deep frustration regarding the Bosnian authorities and the European powers. Even though they hadn’t voiced it officially yet, they were already focused on condemning the Dutch UN peacekeepers. So for them, the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission was a minor episode in a much bigger battle that they had already realized would take many years.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France President, 2000-2007, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On 29 March 2001, Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, the two MSF volunteers present in Srebrenica when the city fell testified before the French Parliamentary Fact-

Finding Commission. It was decided that they would focus on narrating what they saw on the ground, while the analysis would be provided at the upcoming testimony of the Programme Coordinator.

A standoff of sorts took place regarding the foreseeable vs. unforeseeable nature of the attack and massacres. Christina and Daniel emphasized that, while the attack was foreseeable, the lack of intervention by UNPROFOR to protect the population wasn’t. The information mission eventually concluded that nothing had been foreseeable.

Furthermore, none of the MPs paid attention to the testimony of the two volunteers regarding the presence in the enclave, on the day of the NATO air attack, of an advance team of NATO military air controllers. Yet this piece of information contradicts the official justification given by the French authorities for the lack of timely air strikes, according to which, the absence of such a team prevented the continuation of the air strikes.



Testimony of Christina Schmitz and Daniel O’Brien, SF Volunteers in Srebrenica, Before the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Events in Srebrenica, 29 March 2001 (in English). [V17](#)

Extract:

F. Loncle: [...] Since you stated several times that the attack and massacres were foreseeable, why then didn’t MSF evacuate or attempt to evacuate its Bosnian staff?

C. Schmitz: That is, first and foremost, a question for everybody here today. Were these massacres foreseeable? Did anybody know about them? Did you know that this was happening? We didn’t know at the time, even though, looking back, it may have seemed foreseeable. As to why we didn’t evacuate our local staff, we wanted to remain with the population, despite the events unfolding. Had we evacuated our local and international staff prior to or during the fall of the enclave, who would have stayed with the population at that moment? We didn’t know, I assure you, we didn’t know that the enclave would fall. And on 11 July, as I’ve already stated, we thought that we would be able to go back in. That it was just a temporary displacement of the population. [...]

C. Schmitz: We had a vague notion that the men had been separated, we knew there were problems. But I could never say, today, that we were aware of what was going on exactly. Not at all. Otherwise, had we known, we would have been much firmer in terms of the information we relayed to the outside world via our team in Belgrade. But all we had were vague notions. For example, the house where the men were held captive. You must understand that everything happened very quickly. There were only two of us. Things happened very fast. One event followed the other. It isn’t as though we were somewhere, watching the events unfold from afar, without having anything to do whatsoever. Not at all. We were very much engaged. So, I must say that we were not aware of the breadth of the events occurring, nor were we on 22 July when

we arrived in Zagreb. The awareness that something bad had happened didn't come until later, very gradually. [...]

D. O'Brien: [...] I believe there were certainly concerns regarding this matter because the local population and staff spoke with us. People knew that the men were being separated and that they were being killed. There is no doubt about that. So specific concerns were emerging around us. But at times like that, you need to decide for yourself what to think and, personally, I couldn't conceive, and I still can't conceive, that when you have thousands of people, individuals who know, who are surrounded by UN soldiers, the world knows what's going on. I couldn't imagine that these people, who lived together, would be separated from the others and executed. No, I couldn't believe it at the time, despite the fears expressed by the local population. I suppose my faith in humanity was strong enough to believe that it simply couldn't happen. Sadly, such was not the case. In hindsight, we were naïve, but the locals, they knew. [...]

F. Lonclé: [...] Your responses denote the entire issue of the foreseeable vs. unforeseeable nature of the situation. It's difficult to confirm anything, although you have attempted to during your narrative on this particular point. This is one of the issues we have been struggling with throughout the hearings. Your conclusion, however, is a tough indictment of what you initially referred to as "the responsibility of the international community." [...] For my part, I would ask you to be more specific, and you have been, to a certain extent, but please go further, regarding the responsibilities, people, countries, soldiers, civilians, political leaders, responsibilities that you wish to evoke, with greater precision, in this tragic case. If I may, the expression 'international community' is not specific enough.

C. Schmitz: [...] The question you are asking is the same one we have been asking ourselves and that's ultimately the reason we are here today. We would like you to tell us, for the international community to tell us, who was actually accountable and for what. It is not the role of NGOs to say: "It was this person, it was that country, it was this nationality." We ask the same question and it is the same one asked by the population of Srebrenica: who was responsible? Because even today, we still don't know. [...]

Jean-Hervé Bradol: I would just like to specify the context in which this testimony is taking place. The people here are Médecins Sans Frontières staff who were on the ground, that is to say, people trapped inside a situation, people who had arrived there very recently, in June. [...] The advice we gave them, [was] to limit their testimony to what they saw. Regarding the other elements of information in our possession, as well as our organisation's stand on this issue, as Christina has told you on several occasions, these will be provided by Pierre Salignon in the testimony presented on 17 May.



'Srebrenica: The Members of MSF Denounce Events and Provide Eyewitness Testimony,' *Agence France Presse*, 29 March 2001 (in French).

Extract:

"The international community has failed by not protecting

the population of Srebrenica," declared Christina Schmitz. "The international community was represented by UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia), initially under the command of General Philippe Morillon at the time when the safe area of Srebrenica was established (in 1993), then under the command of General Bernard Janvier when the city was brutally conquered," she stated. "Thousands of women and children were deported and lost their homes, their fathers, their brothers, their husbands. Over 7,000 men were killed. This all took place in the presence of the peace-keeping forces. As a result, nobody can claim they didn't know about the attack," she added. "We would like to know who is responsible. It's not the role of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to say who is responsible. That's the question we're asking," responded Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien to questions from the French MPs.

The tragedy has become an international controversy, particularly between France, in command of UNPROFOR, and the Netherlands, whose UN peacekeepers were stationed in Srebrenica. MSF has conducted its own investigation into the tragedy and the NGO's head officers will present the conclusions of the organisation's investigation to the parliamentary commission on 17 May. Christina Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien were on the ground in Srebrenica from 24 June to 21 July 1995.

On 24 January 2001, in response to accusations made by Alain Juppé, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the fall of Srebrenica, during his testimony before the commission, Hans de Mierlo, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, claimed that General Janvier denied air support for the Dutch UN peacekeepers. On 12 April, at his request, Hans de Mierlo testified before the mission, as did Joris Voorhoeve, the Dutch Minister of Defence. MSF conveyed its interest in the testimony in the French press.



'The French Army May get a Dressing Down,' Karen Lajon, *Le Journal du Dimanche* (France), 8 April 2001 (in French).

Extract:

"We expect a lot from the testimony of the Dutch Ministers," explains Fabien Dubuet, a lawyer at MSF specialising in international humanitarian law, "because they may well bring crashing down entire sections of France's political and military line of defence." [...] In Fabien Dubuet's opinion, it's clear that French leaders have "memory lapses" concerning the period 6 to 11 July. One might legitimately ask whether the French army may, in fact, have known that the Bosnian Serb forces were about to attack Srebrenica. This, especially since, based on the testimony of Henri Jacolin, former French Ambassador to Sarajevo, and Jean-René Ruez, Chief Investigator for Srebrenica at the International Criminal

Tribunal in The Hague, it would appear that the French authorities had been forewarned.”



‘Risky Testimony for France?’, Fabien Dubuet, posted on MSF *Website on Srebrenica*, 12 April 2001 (in French).

The next four testimonies presented before the parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica may well bring crashing down entire sections of the French authorities’ line of defence on the issue of the air strikes. On Thursday, 12 April, Joris Voorhoeve, former Dutch Minister of Defence, and Hans Van Mierlo, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, will testify and present their version of events. The following Thursday (19 April), Colonel Karremans, Commander of the Dutch Battalion in Srebrenica, and General Nicolai, UNPROFOR Chief of Staff in Sarajevo, will also testify. Even prior to his testimony, Hans Van Mierlo had already explained that French leaders “were mixing everything up” on the issue of the air strikes. He was reacting to comments made by former French Prime Minister Alain Juppé, who had declared during his testimony that the idea of an air offensive was rejected at the express request of the Dutch authorities.

It must be said that France’s line of argument, based on placing the burden of responsibility on the Netherlands for the non-use of air strikes, is inconsistent with reality. It appears that France’s leaders all suffer from odd memory lapses for the period 6 to 11 July 1995. In fact, the Dutch Battalion in Srebrenica had requested air strikes on the very first day of the attack (6 July) and again on five or six other occasions, according to the UN report on the fall of Srebrenica. The Dutch Battalion was prepared to assume the physical risks that such a request posed for the UN Peacekeepers, even though some thirty soldiers had been taken hostage by the Serb forces. In addition, the intervention of the Dutch Minister of Defence requesting the cessation of the air offensive did not occur until 11 July, after the fall of Srebrenica, at a time when the Serb forces, the civilian population, and the UN peacekeepers were so closely intertwined that it had become impossible to drop bombs. However, this intertwining was the direct result of the delayed response to repeated requests for air strikes made by the Dutch contingent in Srebrenica.

Regarding the technical arguments put forward by French political and military leaders to explain the difficulty of launching air strikes, such as the complexity of the chain of command for air strikes and the need for forward air controllers to direct operations, these arguments can again be swept aside by the reality on the ground. First of all, because air strikes were in fact carried out in 1994 using the same chain of command, and on several occasions, to defend the safe areas of Gorazde, Sarajevo, and Bihac. General de Lapresle, who led the UN Forces from March 1994 to February 1995, stated that he had never encountered any technical issues along the chain of command for air strikes. He also acknowledged that recourse to air strikes had stopped the Bosnian Serb forces in their tracks. General Quesnot, former Chief of Staff for Presidents

François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac, also considered that the air strikes had proved effective when they were used in April 1994 to halt the Serb offensive against Gorazde. He added that such air strikes could have been used in Srebrenica. Furthermore, advance teams of air controllers were present in Srebrenica. The UN report on the fall of Srebrenica mentions (on pages 28, 56, 69 and 70) the presence of two teams of advance air controllers and states that they were fully operational, even several days after the beginning of the attack. Since the UN and NATO did not defend the safe area so once the Serbs took over Srebrenica, the advance air controller teams were forced to withdraw with the Dutch UN Peacekeepers. The two members of Médecins Sans Frontières present in the enclave when the tragedy unfolded also confirmed the presence of advance air controller teams in their testimony. They specified that some of the controllers were British, a piece of information that should inform the debate in the U.K., where the Minister of Defence has always sought to conceal the presence of British military personnel in Srebrenica, when the safe area fell.



‘Srebrenica: Two Dutch Ministers Explain Themselves in Paris,’ *Le Monde*, (France), 14 April 2001 (in French).

Extract:

On 10 July 1995 (with the Serb offensive underway since 6 July) the Dutch government was consulted – “for the first time,” it emphasized, in response to an appeal from the UN on behalf of General Janvier, Commander of UNPROFOR, asking if the Dutch government was opposed to western air strikes. Forty Dutch soldiers were being held hostage by the Serb forces in the enclave, yet the Dutch government unanimously agreed to launch the air operation, despite the risk for Dutch troops. The operation wasn’t launched that night. “I thought that on 11 July, around 06:00 or 07:00, numerous NATO planes would launch an attack on the Serb artillery units. But that morning, we saw nothing,” states Joris Voorhoeve. It was only at 14:40 that eight NATO aircraft flew over the enclave, and only two of them dropped two bombs that destroyed a tank – hardly a large-scale operation. Two hours later, the UN and The Hague were informed that the city of Srebrenica had fallen and that General Mladic was threatening to kill the hostages and bomb thousands of civilians who had sought refuge at the UN peacekeeping base if the air strikes continued. The Hague then asked the UN to halt the operation. An officer of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, General Gobillard, “had issued the same request ten minutes earlier,” claims Joris Voorhoeve. [...] Hearing both ministers repeat that the UN had consulted them “for the first time” on 10 July, we wanted to ask them why they had not voiced their discontent earlier and relayed the calls from their contingent on the ground. And also, since they finally had the courage to expose their troops to retaliation, why didn’t it cross their minds earlier to instruct their soldiers to resist? “We are a small country without much influence,” stated Mr. Van Mierlo. Was this modesty or deference towards a failed UN system fraught with serious consequences? Whatever it may be, on

that Thursday, none of the French MPs noticed anything worth questioning. Absolutely astounding.

On 26 April 2001, MSF published two confidential documents on its Srebrenica site that purportedly proved the existence of a non-intervention agreement between General Mladic and UNPROFOR as well as disagreements within UNPROFOR regarding the air strikes.



'Srebrenica: MSF Publishes Confidential Documents Challenging General Janvier, *Agence France Presse*, 26 April 2001 (in French).

Extract:

According to the humanitarian organisation, whose main office is in Paris, General Janvier's report on his first meeting with Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic on June 4, 1995 - this meeting was the subject of a June 15, 1995 confidential fax between UN Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi and the Chief of Peacekeeping Operations at that time, Kofi Annan - "confirms the information stating that General Mladic had prepared an agreement that tied the freeing of the hostages to the non-use of air force against the Serbs." On 1 June, the Bosnian Serbs had taken 377 UN hostages, whom they were freeing in small groups. The last hostages - at least 26 people - were only freed on June 18, before the July 11 Srebrenica offensive. The UN fax stated that General Janvier did not notify the Secretary-General about this meeting until 11 days after it took place and only after "the Secretariat's express request."

A second confidential document revealed by MSF, a 9 June 1995 report from a meeting between General Janvier, British General Rupert Smith, Commander of the UN forces in Bosnia (UNPROFOR), and Mr. Akashi confirmed the issues on which French General Janvier was challenged by General Cees Nicolai, the Dutch UNPROFOR Chief in Bosnia, and Thom Karremans, Commander of the Dutch Blue Helmets deployed in Srebrenica, when they testified last Thursday before the French National Assembly's Fact-Finding Commission investigating the disappearance of 7,000 people from Srebrenica. The two Dutch officers maintained that "if massive air support had been implemented quickly, as of the first day of the Serbian offensive in Bosnia, this tragedy might have been avoided." General Nicolai emphasised the disagreement between General Janvier and General Smith on the use of air force. Two strikes were launched on the afternoon of July 11, but it was too late. The Bosnian Serbs then carried out a massive deportation of the Muslim population and approximately 7,000 people - most men - disappeared.

On May 16, MSF issued a press release announcing that Pierre Salignon, MSF Deputy Programme Manager in charge

of programmes the former Yugoslavia in 1995, would testify the next day. To provide additional background on the political context for this hearing, MSF uploaded extracts from an 30 October 1995 article published by *The Independent* (see page 84), stating that on May 24, 1995, during a closed-door briefing at the UN, UNPROFOR commander General Janvier had advised abandoning the enclaves, which he considered indefensible.



'Médecins Sans Frontières Testifies Before French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on the fall of Srebrenica: Was the Commitment to Protect Srebrenica's Residents Abandoned in Favor of Larger Political Objectives?' MSF France **Press Release**, May 16, 2001 (in French)

MSF Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, in 1995, will testify on Thursday, 17 May 09:30 before the National Assembly in connection with the parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on the tragedy in Srebrenica. He will present information suggesting that the commitment to protect Srebrenica's residents was abandoned in favor of larger political objectives, that is, the peace accords. He will also emphasise that the fall and the killings carried out by Serbian forces were foreseeable, that UN Member States failed to act to protect the residents of the 'safe area', and that France exploited humanitarian action during the Bosnian conflict. During his testimony, he will review the omissions and contradictions in the official arguments of French political and military leaders regarding their responsibility in the fall of the enclave and the killing of 7,000 people under UN protection.



Article Posted on the MSF Srebrenica Website, 17 May 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Today, Médecins Sans Frontières is publishing extracts from an article by Robert Block in the 30 October 1995 issue of *The Independent*. This article shows that the Contact Group (US, France, Great Britain, and Russia) sacrificed the protection of the Srebrenica enclave residents for the peace accords. The decision to abandon the Srebrenica 'safe area' was reportedly made by certain members of the Contact Group at a 24 May 1995 closed-door Security Council briefing by General Janvier. He also reportedly requested to be "relieved" of the enclaves in northeastern Bosnia (Srebrenica and Zepa).

On 17 May 2000, Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia at the time of the events, gave testimony raising specific questions and highlighting the contradictions in the existing information.



Testimony Presented by [Pierre Salignon] MSF During the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission Hearings on the Srebrenica Tragedy, 16 May 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Conclusion: In order to reply to your questions I feel it important to underline my convictions once again on the tragedy of Srebrenica.

- The fall as well as the massacres of Srebrenica was foreseeable.
- The promise of protection made to the inhabitants of Srebrenica was not kept and the lack of political will to defend them contributed to leading them to the massacre. They were abandoned.

This is why all possible light should be shed on French responsibility in this tragedy.



'Deputies' Timid Inquiry into Srebrenica,' Claire Tréan, *Le Monde* (France), 20 May 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Hasn't everything already been said in multiple settings, particularly before the French deputies who have been taking weekly testimony since autumn from witnesses, and political and military leaders from that period? "No," says Médecins Sans Frontières, which was behind the creation of this Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission and which strongly emphasised its expectations for the process when Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia in 1995, testified on Thursday 17 May. He had visited Srebrenica several times before July 1995 and tried to obtain access to the enclaves from Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale for MSF's new teams. On Thursday, he asserted - contrary to most of the individuals who testified previously, that "the killings were foreseeable." In June, "the volunteers in the field knew that there would be an attack on the enclave, "which should have been even clearer to western military observers," he said, referring to the military preparations of the Bosnian Serbs and the threats made to him, by their Vice-President, Nicola Koljevic. However, beyond his testimony, the MSF representative clearly sought to refocus the investigation conducted by the French deputies on the very subject of this proceeding: How could the international community have failed so grievously in its duty to protect civilians, which it had promised to take on? He also sought to focus attention on several questions that the deputies have not yet addressed. "I do not have the expertise to determine whether it was possible to carry out NATO strikes to defend Srebrenica," he told the deputies, "but what leaps out is that the arguments presented to you justifying the lack of strikes contradict the facts. Because in Bosnia, when they wanted to strike, they did." He said that the testimony the mission had gathered to date had not yet vanquished the "rumor" according to which French authorities had promised General Mladic that they would oppose any air intervention in exchange for freeing the Blue Helmets

taken hostage in May. "I hope your work will enable you to determine what actually happened."

Another question, with Srebrenica having fallen, in military terms, how was it that, afterwards, "the UN leadership, then in the hands of two French generals, General Janvier in Zagreb and General Gobillard in Sarajevo, did not appear to have a concrete action plan to protect the civilian population?" Salignon also asked whether "the interest in facilitating the peace negotiations among Serbians, Muslims, and Croats contributed to a decision, by the Contact Group, to abandon the Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves." He offered his own answer. "The facts are there. They show that the disappearance of the two enclaves indeed facilitated the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords" two months later. [...]

One may well challenge that answer, along with some of his analyses, his indiscriminate accusations of "cynicism" on the part of western governments, or his criticism of "the" policy of France, deliberately overlooking the fact that there were two, radically opposed policies, Mitterand's and Chirac's. The offhand manner with which he referred to the earlier abuses committed in the region's Serbian villages by Srebrenica's Bosnian forces led by Nasser Oric, was also unjustified. But, while many of the points in MSF's assertions may be questionable, the organisation at least raises questions, seeks documents, and needles the deputies, who are not little concerned with accuracy. Thursday's hearing was a signal, if it goes no further, the French Parliament's commission on Srebrenica will have been a waste of time.



The Le Monde reporter said that my testimony was unbalanced in terms of the Bosnian resistance. I reread it recently and I would not change my point of view. The balance of power was not equal. It's time to stop thinking that resistance existed within the enclave. It did not. The Blue Helmets arrived, they stabilised a piece of territory, and that's it. In these cases, you evacuate, you organise, you don't stabilise. But at the time, the warring parties were incapable of doing so. It was also a political choice.

Pierre Salignon, MSF France Deputy Programme Manager, in charge of programmes in the former Yugoslavia, 1992-1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



The most cautious will say that we remained completely impartial. I think that in the context of Bosnia and the enclaves, we took the side of Bosnia's Muslim populations. We defended them because the context was not that of a traditional war. We were in a war of ethnic cleansing.

Dr. Renaud Tockert, MSF Belgium Programme Coordinator for the former Yugoslavia in 1993 and 1995, Interviewed in 2000 (in French)

In early June 2001, with the help of the British section of MSF, the organisation tried, without success, to convince the British authorities to allow General Rupert Smith, UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina acting under General Janvier's orders during the events in Srebrenica, to testify as part of the French Fact-Finding mission.



Email from the MSF Deputy Legal Advisor to MSF France Managers, dated 5 June 2001 (in French).

Extract:

A letter [will be sent] to the next British Minister of Defense asking him to authorise General Smith to testify before the committee. General Smith wrote a letter to the commission explaining that British political authorities will not allow him to testify. A copy of MSF's letter will be sent to the chairs of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committees of the House of Commons and to several members of parliament. The idea is, obviously, to help the minister understand that the British Parliament (much more powerful than ours, including on international matters) is part of this story. The letter will be sent after the 7 June legislative elections because of the possible ministerial reorganisation and the appointment of the chairs of all the House of Commons committees. We intend to keep the British authorities from shirking their responsibilities by responding that the letter was lost because we sent it at 'the wrong time' or to 'the wrong person.'

A copy of this letter will also be sent 'off the record' to a specific list of British journalists, but if we do not receive a positive response from the minister, we will make it public. We will ask members of the House of Commons to raise a question about this issue around the anniversary of Srebrenica's fall in July. Jean-Hervé, tell us if you agree with the form and content of this letter because it would be preferable, in protocol terms, for you to sign it. Bianca Jagger, who has been itching to work on this issue for years on the other side of the Atlantic and the Channel, will also sign. The London office has been in the loop for two weeks, fully informed and very cooperative on these initiatives.



Email from MSF UK Press Officer to MSF Deputy Legal Advisor, 10 July 2001 (in French).

Extract:

I just called the Ministry of Defense regarding the Srebrenica letter we gave them last week. I explained to the secretary at the office that we expected a prompt response to it, that we would of course give them a couple more days, but then they should expect us to start talking to "other people" about it. He told me (in a slightly surprised tone) that they had received a letter from Bianca Jagger yesterday on the same subject, that they were looking into it, and that he appreciated what I was saying. I reminded him that the anniversary of the fall of Srebrenica is tomorrow.



It was an open secret, but we learned about it through this work on the French parliamentary commission. The British and the French disagreed strongly about the strategy. The UNPROFOR Second-in-Command, Rupert Smith, was a British General, who had been annoyed, several times, by General Janvier's failure to make decisions. We sensed that he was an extremely strong supporter of more firmness. The French did not adopt this stronger strategy until later, at the instigation of Jacques Chirac, who had changed the military balance of power.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On June 5, MSF France sent the documents that the programme coordinator referred to in his testimony, to the chair of the French fact-finding commission, which did not have prior access to. MSF also included a list of other key documents that the organisation had been unable to obtain but considered important for facilitation of the commission.



MSF Letter to François Loncle, Chair of the French Parliament's Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica, 5 June 2001 (in French).

Mr President,

I have the honor to transmit several Médecins Sans Frontières documents that Pierre Salignon referred to during his 17 May testimony before your committee. In the interest of facilitating the work of your mission, MSF is forwarding all the United Nations documents that we obtained and that may contribute to your investigation (list attached). We are also sending you copies of:

- The 30 October 1995 article by Robert Block from *The Independent* newspaper. This article notes that the decision to abandon Srebrenica was reportedly made in May 1995, at the time of General Janvier's closed-door briefing before the Security Council. The testimony of Jean-Bernard MÉRIMÉE, France's Ambassador to the UN in 1995, and that of his close collaborators to the committee, is of the greatest importance in that regard. You may also contact the journalist who wrote this article. Robert Block now works for the *Wall Street Journal* in Rome.
- The 10 July 1996 *La Croix* article, which notes that the French and US intelligence services intercepted telephone conversations between General Mladic and General Perisic starting on 17 June 1995 (one month before the fall of Srebrenica). The two men were reportedly organising the attack on the enclave.

Your mission should obtain the transcripts of these recorded conversations from the Ministry of Defense. I have also attached a list of documents that MSF has not been able to

obtain but that are critical to your parliamentary oversight efforts. Your mission should request the documents from UN headquarters in New York and from the French Ministry of Defence (Strategic Affairs Division) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These documents include the following:

- 4 June 1995 report of the military observers in Srebrenica, informing the UN civilian and military hierarchy that Serb forces, particularly Arkan's troops, were concentrated around Srebrenica and warning of the need to provide guarantees to protect or evacuate Srebrenica's residents to avoid mass killings;
- 15 June 1995 fax from Kofi Annan (no. 1981) asking Yasushi Akashi to inquire into the nature of the discussions between General Mladic and General Janvier during the Blue Helmet hostage-taking;
- 29 May 1995 French memo on the UNPROFOR reorganisation (gathering of the troops) and the revival of efforts to reach a political resolution of the conflict (proposal for a "more realistic" peace agreement) sent to the Contact Group during the Blue Helmet hostage-taking;
- General Janvier's briefing document prepared for his 24 May 1995 closed-door session before the Security Council. In this document, the Commander of the UN troops asks to be "relieved" of the enclaves in north-eastern Bosnia. This document is entitled "Meeting of the Countries Contributing Troops, 24 May 1995, Report of General Janvier, Commander of UN Peacekeeping Forces"
- Minutes of the 6, 17, and 29 June 1995 discussions between General Janvier, General de Lapresle, and General Mladic.

In addition, when the committee began its work, we sent you a list of individuals whose testimony we believed would be important. Given the contradictory and piecemeal nature of the information that was made public during these hearings, we believe it is critical for your mission to hear, or hear again, the individuals listed below. The mission should seek to obtain clarification on the possibility that an unauthorised deal was made by France that involved freeing the Blue Helmet hostages in exchange for halting the air strikes. Clarification on the foreseeable nature of the fall the mass killings; the 'dysfunctions' surrounding the launch of air strikes between July 6 and 11, 1995; and the Contact Group's possible abandonment of the enclaves in northeastern Bosnia in May 1995 at the initiative of France, the US, and Great Britain.

United Nations:

- General Rupert Smith, UNPROFOR Commander in Bosnia
- Kofi Annan, Assistant Secretary-General in Charge of Peacekeeping Operations
- Kenneth Biser, Director of the Civilian Branch of the UN for the Srebrenica area

NATO:

- Sergio Balanzino, Assistant Secretary-General of NATO in 1995
- Admiral Leighton Smith, Commander-in-Chief of NATO's south sector

-Director of the Private Office at the NATO General Secretariat in 1995

France:

- General Bernard Janvier, UNPROFOR Commander
- Jean-Bernard Mériemée, French Ambassador to the UN (New York)
- Charles Million, Minister of Defence
- Hervé de Charrette, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Jean-Claude Mallet, Director of Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Defence
- Jacques Dewattre, Director of the French External Intelligence Service (DGSE) in 1995
- General Heinrich, Director of Military Intelligence (DRM)
- Mr Dillais, Director of the Private Office within the Cabinet of the Minister of Defence and his Deputy, Xavier de Margnac (currently Director of the DGSE Action Division) in 1995

In this regard, I would like to inform you that MSF will send a written request to the British Ministry of Defence to authorise General Rupert Smith to testify before your committee. We will forward a copy of that letter to the two chairs of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the House of Commons. We wish you great success in your efforts to establish transparency and look forward to cooperating fully with you.

Following these initiatives, MSF decided to limit its public statements on Srebrenica until the commission published its report, scheduled for the fall of 2001.



'Demonstration in The Hague,' **Email exchange** between MSF France Managers, 5 June 2001 (in French).

Extract:

I would really like us to be very careful about our public statements regarding Srebrenica until the [French Parliamentary Commission] report is published in September (France) and December (Holland).

I think that all our statements should address:

- the nature of our approach;
- the weakness and the contradictions in the line of defence that the French leaders have taken on the foreseeability, air strikes, and the issue of the hostages;
- the limitations on the work of the fact-finding commission [...].

Fabien Dubuet

On June 9, 2001, the President of MSF France noted, in his annual report to the General Assembly, that MSF was not optimistic about the work of the French parliament's fact-finding commission on Srebrenica. V18



Annual **Report** of the President of MSF France to the 9 June 2001 General Assembly (in French).

Extract:Safe areas [...]

We are not optimistic about the work of the French parliament's Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica. Although the work is not yet complete, it shows that the legislators, the government, the political class, and the military have only a very limited interest in shedding light on this matter, as indicated by:

- The closed-door hearing of the military leaders and the role played by François Léotard within this mission. He is, simultaneously, the Minister of Defence (at the time of the events), a witness heard by the committee, and the commission's rapporteur.
- The fact that not a single survivor was invited to testify before the members of Parliament.
- That the military and political leaders who testified apparently felt they could claim any excuse for abdicating their responsibility; they benefited from the complacent attitude of some members of Parliament. Excuses included: the unforeseeability of the killings, refuted by the events that occurred during four years of war; the complexity of the operation of the UN mission (with General de la Presle ultimately stating that this had never prevented him from using air force); the attitude of the Bosnian Army; a so-called Dutch veto of air strikes (refuted by the Dutch Minister of Defence); bad weather; and lack of ground guidance for the strikes (refuted by the MSF team's testimony).

On 2 July, General Janvier testified again in a closed-door session of the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission. He told the press that the minutes of the 24 May 1995 meeting, revealed by The Independent in October 1995 and republished on 17 May 2001 by MSF, were incomplete. He added that he had also recommended keeping observers on site and developing strategic air forces.



'General Janvier Explains During his Second Closed-door Hearing,' *Agence France Presse*, 3 July 2001 (in French).

Extract:

General Bernard Janvier stated Tuesday that his second hearing before the Fact-Find Commission on the tragedy in Srebrenica (Bosnia) in July 1994 "was planned" and that the closed-door session "made it possible to provide information that could not have been released in an open hearing. [...]" The general said that he "strongly countered the rumors, speculation, and specious comparisons that have been thrown around." The commission's chair, Socialist Deputy François Loncle, had said that the committee wanted to hear General Janvier again to "confront him with his contradictions" by asking him to respond to a very specific set of questions [...]

The general also asserted that the report, that MSF notified the commission about, where he described his support for abandoning the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa was incomplete at his 24 May 1995 closed-door hearing before the UN Security Council in NY. "I asked for directives and instructions and recommended that we withdraw from the enclaves, leave observers on site, and develop strategic air forces."

On November 20, 2001, François Loncle, chair of the French Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica, told Dutch television that General Janvier had under-estimated General Mladic and that he should have responded favorably to requests for air strikes.



Email from the MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor to MSF France Managers, 21 November 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Just a brief article by a Dutch reporter that appeared today. François Loncle spoke yesterday on Dutch TV and said that General Janvier had under-estimated General Mladic. He added that General Janvier should have responded favorably to the requests for air strikes from the Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica. It has not yet been confirmed whether this acknowledgement of responsibility will appear in the report that might be published next week if the deputies manage to reach an agreement at Thursday's meeting.

In late November 2001, before the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission's report was made public, MSF published an analysis presenting the questions it believed the commission should address. The report also included the list of documents critical for the commission to perform its work. The goal was to avoid the situation in which journalists received a three-volume document and a glowing report, drafted in advance, by the commission – as happened during the Rwandan fact-finding commission. This analysis was also distributed to the British and Dutch media.



'Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica: Arguments, Gaps, and Contradictions in the Hearings,' Médecins Sans Frontières' France **Briefing Document**, November 2001, (in French).

Extract:Srebrenica - Pending questions

On the eve of the publication of the report of the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission, and without prejudging the conclusions of that work, Médecins Sans Frontières decided to

prepare a summary document restating the questions and information that will help readers study and understand the Commission's work. This document is not a counter-investigation. It notes the main questions - still unanswered after six years - regarding the political and military responsibilities of the main actors involved in the Srebrenica tragedy. The 1999 UN investigative report on this tragedy acknowledges that the organisation could not determine the specific responsibilities of the Member States, which remained diluted within the UN's overall responsibility. Consequently, the report asked the States to conduct their own investigations at the national level. Thus, the main purpose of the fact-finding mission must be, above all, to explain why the UN did not honor its commitment, made at France's instigation, to protect the population of Srebrenica. The report must avoid the twin traps of technical arguments and general responsibility and indicate clearly whether leaving the fate and evacuation of Srebrenica's population to General Mladic, whose war methods were clearly known to all, constitutes misconduct by the political and military leaders concerned. In the interest of improving the protection of populations in future peacekeeping missions, MSF has listed and provided the parliamentary commission with a set of questions addressing the major 'gray' areas of this tragedy.

Médecins Sans Frontières' questions

1) Was Srebrenica's fall and the killings of its residents foreseeable? Did France know that the Bosnian Serb Army was preparing to attack Srebrenica?

2) In June 1995, did France enter into an unauthorised agreement, outside the auspices of the United Nations, to free the Blue Helmets held hostage in exchange for the permanent cessation of air strikes?

3) Why didn't General Janvier authorise air strikes in July 1995 to defend Srebrenica and protect its population?

4) Did France and the Contract Group decide to abandon the Srebrenica 'safe area' to facilitate the political settlement of the crisis?

5) Why didn't these countries organise the safe evacuation of Srebrenica's residents, in accordance with the promise of protection in Security Council Resolutions 819, 824, and 836? This summary document presents the following for each of these five critical questions:

- The arguments made by the political and military leaders who testified
- the contradictions and gaps in these arguments, which became visible over the course of the testimony and a review of the available documents.

The parliamentary commission's report should provide specific, documented answers to these questions. MSF hopes that the commission was able to obtain certain key documents and that they will be listed in the report's appendix.



'Médecins Sans Frontières' Five Key Questions,' *Le Monde* (France), 29 November 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) played a significant role in the creation of the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission. The group lobbied for that outcome "in the interest of improving the protection of populations in future peacekeeping operations." It followed the hearings closely (and filmed them in their entirety), sent the committee its suggestions regarding the investigation, and testified twice. Indeed, MSF was the only western non-governmental organisation (NGO) working in Srebrenica for two years when the Serb offensive occurred. Twenty-two members of its local staff died in the enclave in July 1995 or disappeared. "The MSF team was an impotent witness to the screening of the population [by Serb forces] and the sick and wounded, the separation of men and women, and the departure of groups in convoys to unknown destinations, as well as to the lack of action on the part of the Dutch UNPROFOR battalion. Several dozen of MSF's wounded and ill patients who were 'evacuated' by the Bosnian Serbs and 'under Dutch escort' were also taken off buses and executed by Serb forces," the organisation notes today [...]"



"French Inquiry Report on Srebrenica,' **Email** from MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor to MSF Holland, 26 November 2001 (in English).

Dear Wilna,

Please find enclosed the French and English version of the MSF [France] briefing document that was transmitted to French, Dutch, and British media two weeks ago. A lot of Dutch journalists called me this week after François Lonclé's declarations on the Dutch TV, but I said that we will speak publicly only after the publication of the report and on the basis of an official document. The [commission's] report was adopted last Thursday and will indeed be published next Thursday. Kindest regards and see you soon.



'Srebrenica,' **Email** from MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor to BBC, The Sunday Times, USA.net, 26 November 2001 (in English).

Extract:

Please find the enclosed Médecins Sans Frontières briefing document before the publication of the French Fact-Finding commission report on Srebrenica. As you all know, MSF asked for and obtained last year, the creation of a parliamentary investigation to establish the political and military responsibilities of France in the tragedy of Srebrenica. The report of the mission was adopted last Thursday and will be published next Thursday after a press conference by the investigation team (exact location and hour still to be named). I remind you that in spite of several demands of the Fact-Finding commission and a letter from MSF to Mr Hoon [Secretary of State for Defence], the British authorities refused to authorise

General Smith's hearing before the French Parliament. His testimony was nevertheless crucial.



The goal was to make sure that the journalists already had a question when the report came out in order to get things going again. We recalled that at the final press conference of the Rwandan fact-finding commission, Paul Quilès [Chair of the Commission] simply placed the report on the table and the journalists simply summarised what he had told them: 'France has nothing to be ashamed of in terms of its actions in Rwanda.' Obviously no one had time to read that 3,000-page report! The Srebrenica investigative commission did not try to 'manage' the key media message so closely when the report came out. We used the passing lane to overtake them. But that's how communication works. We aren't required to be unprofessional idiots.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

The French parliament's investigative report on Srebrenica was published 29 November 2001. It found that the responsibility for the tragedy was shared by the entire international community and specifically criticised the Dutch Blue Helmet battalion for failing to put up any resistance to the Serbs. It acknowledged General Janvier's "errors of assessment," but stated that his claims that he entered into an agreement with General Mladic were false. Two deputies refused to support the final conclusions, believing that no proof had been provided allowing any conclusion to be reached. [V19](#)



'Srebrenica Massacres: Deputies Find that France Failed,' Claire Tréan, *Le Monde* (France), 29 November 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Established through the efforts of MSF, the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission on Srebrenica published its report on Thursday, November 29. [...] The members found that the Srebrenica tragedy "was also a failure on the part of France." They point to "the lack of clear political will in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Bosnian authorities in Sarajevo themselves to intervene in Srebrenica." They moderate only slightly the criticism often directed at General Janvier, then-Commander of UN forces in the former Yugoslavia, for having opposed NATO air intervention when there was still time to act. The report describes him, among others, as "a link in the UN chain." It challenges the accusation against General Janvier made by journalists and NGOs of having promised Serb military leader Ratko Mladic to halt air strikes in Bosnia in exchange for freeing the Blue Helmets held hostage. "Most of the commission's members are con-

vinced that General Janvier did not agree to Mladic's demands," the report states.

The commission unanimously adopted the document. However, the members had to work on the conclusions twice. Some of the ten deputies challenged the first version of the conclusions, which totaled only one page out of a 1,000-page report. The new version did not produce a consensus, either. Two deputies, François Léotard and René André, expressed their reservations in a letter published in an appendix to the report. They challenged the following statements incriminating France: "France is no less responsible than others for the tragic fall of Srebrenica, France lacked all the resources necessary to carry out its mission in the field," etc. They also challenged, as François Léotard writes, "the constant mention in the conclusion of General Janvier's responsibility, which fails to convey a much more complex reality." Green Deputy Marie-Hélène Aubert and Socialist Deputy Pierre Brana also took a different position from their colleagues on rumors of a deal between France and the Serbs to free the hostages, stating that suspicions remained [...]

The publication of the transcript of General Janvier's two hearings is the newest piece of information in the report. The former UNPROFOR Commander is one of the officers who had always been prohibited, by the Ministry of Defence, from speaking publicly and whom the deputies were able to question only in a closed-door session. The general mounted a vigorous defence against those accusations in the hearing. He referred to disagreements both with Yakushi Akashi, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, who supported a minimalist approach to the Blue Helmets' mission in Bosnia, and Rupert Smith, the British General who commanded UNPROFOR in Sarajevo. The latter supported engaging militarily against Serb forces (he refused to testify). General Janvier stated that he received only one request for air support in Srebrenica, on July 9, and the commission's report does not explain how the previous demands were lost. The former UNPROFOR head appeared as both a strict enforcer of the UN's limited mandate to the Blue Helmets, and as a frustrated soldier, who roundly blamed the Dutch battalion in Srebrenica. He ended by asserting, as a heartfelt cry, that if the French had been in their place, they would have fought "and everything would have been different." A diplomatic incident with The Hague placed in perspective [...]



'Conclusions that Skirt Several Critical Moments,' *Le Monde* (France), 29 November 2001 (in French).

Extract:

You must be willing to overlook a lot if you want to subscribe to the conclusions that the deputies produced today. We will spare them any specific reference to the ignorance of the facts, which became glaring during the hearings, their absence, or their pathetic efforts in dealing with MSF to determine the questions to ask at the next hearing [...]

In the following days, MSF France's officials emphasised publicly that while the report acknowledges the military responsibilities, it ignores the political ones and treats General Janvier as a scapegoat. They pointed to the lack of specificity in the responses to the five key questions the organisation raised and called for investigations in the United Kingdom and Holland, which also incurred responsibility.



'MSF and the Srebrenica Report: Political Responsibilities Overlooked,' *Agence France Presse*, 29 November 2001 (in French).

Extract:

"One piece is very strong – the acknowledgement of the military's responsibility, in the person of French General Bernard Janvier, Commander of UN Forces in the former Yugoslavia," Pierre Salignon, MSF programme manager, specifically in Bosnia between 1993 and 1995, told AFP. "My impression is that he was assigned the easy role of the scapegoat, who hides responsibilities that are much more political in nature." [...] "The report touches on some responsibilities in France, which is very good, but I think that we can go much further. After all, these are ministers who made decisions," he added, interviewed in connection with this investigation. "While the process is courageous and interesting in terms of democracy and transparency, I am disappointed by the lack of clear answers to the five key questions we listed and, particularly, the political will to protect the population," he continued. MSF, which won the 1999 Nobel Peace prize, was working in the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica during the Serb offensive that left 7,000 people dead and had advocated strongly for a parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission into the massacre. The organisation lost staff members in the offensive.



'France Asks Questions About its Role in Srebrenica,' Isabelle Lasserre, *Le Figaro* (France), 30 November 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Most of the questions raised by Médecins Sans Frontières, which lobbied to establish the parliamentary commission, have not yet been answered in clear and definitive fashion. Why did General Janvier refuse to launch air strikes? Did France and the Contact Group abandon Srebrenica to facilitate the political settlement of the crisis? Why weren't the populations evacuated after the enclave fell? "It seems like there is a double standard at work here," says Jean-Hervé Bradol, President of MSF. "One might wonder whether you are using Janvier to exonerate yourselves and avoid determining political responsibility."



'Soldiers – Scapegoats,' Marc Semo, *Libération* (France), 30 November, 2001 (in French).

Extract:

This report, which follows the UN's and while awaiting the results of the investigation by a committee of Dutch historians, nonetheless represents a new phase in the search for truth. "The questions we asked about France's responsibilities seemed like blasphemy then," says Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Legal Advisor at Médecins Sans Frontières, which was on the front lines of the struggle to hold such an inquiry. The result satisfies her only partially, particularly "because it overlooks political responsibilities." Still, the debate has now been joined. "Unlike what happened with the fact-finding missions on the Rwandan genocide, it won't be enough to say that France has nothing to be ashamed of in terms of its actions."



'Three Questions for Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Médecins Sans Frontières' Legal Advisor,' *Le Point* (France), 7 December 2001 (in French).

Extract:

Le Point: The report challenges the "errors of assessment" of General Janvier, Commander of the Blue Helmets. Does that satisfy you?

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier: The official French version, which attributes the entire responsibility to the Dutch contingent has now been dismantled. We know that the Dutch indeed called for air strikes, which General Janvier ignored. The lie has retreated but we are still far from the truth.

Le Point: Why?

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier: Because the mission was careful not to seek out those who had the political responsibility. Many unanswered questions remain. Was Srebrenica traded for the freedom of the Blue Helmets held hostage at the time? Why weren't Srebrenica residents evacuated after the enclave fell? The commission could not answer those questions because the government, which did not provide key documents, did not cooperate.



'French Inquiry report on Srebrenica,' **Email** from MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor to MSF UK, 13 December 2001 (in English).

Dear all,

Please find enclosed, FYI, an English translation of the French inquiry report conclusions on Srebrenica. The report was published last 29th of November under heavy media coverage in France (front page of *Le Monde* for instance and several TVs and radios) and in the Netherlands. As for Britain, FYI, I [did] made an interview with BBC radio. Basically, MSF reaction was as follows:

- We recognise that it is an important step to establish that it was a mistake from general Janvier not to have authorised the air strikes to protect Srebrenica;
- While the military responsibilities have been established, it

is not the case for political responsibilities and we think that general Janvier is used as a scapegoat;

- We were asking for precise and documented answers to 5 crucial questions. We have obtained undocumented answers (none of the key documents mentioned by MSF have been obtained and published) and very ambiguous answers on the hostage issue and on the possible deliberate abandonment of Srebrenica by the Contact Group. The only precise answer given by the Fact-Finding commission is that the fall and massacres of Srebrenica were unpredictable. We said that this was an unacceptable answer as in 1995, the methods of war of Mladic were clearly known by all the political and military leaders.

- We ask for the same kind of enquiries in Britain and in the USA since those two countries were key actors in the management of the Bosnian crisis as the UN (report in 99), France (report this year) and the Netherlands (report to be published next April 2002) noted.



We are satisfied because there was still a kind of official parliamentary recognition that mistakes were made and that populations were sacrificed. But we are frustrated, too, because despite the incisive questioning during the hearings, people like Léotard continue to deny that there was a deal. The military has acknowledged that it did not come to the aid of Srebrenica's population. We finally understand how they abandoned Srebrenica, that's been established – but we don't know why. The question that remains unanswered is this, were their operations inadequate or was this calculated? From that perspective, the parliamentary fact-finding commission brought out additional information, in an official context, showing that people were, indeed, abandoned. The soldiers who defended themselves raised the restrictions on their operations, in which 'they could not do everything.' But we learned nothing about why they abandoned them – aside from incompetence, lack of resources or planes.

This has led us to an a priori hostility towards this policy, which involves creating humanitarian areas close to conflict areas so that people do not cross borders and conflicts do not extend beyond their national framework. The crisis in the former Yugoslavia seemed to us to be the apogee of this strategy of containment, which did not work. Between Kibeho and Srebrenica, the protected areas fell each time and several thousand people were killed. This further convinced us that when political or military leaders want to conduct humanitarian activities outside the traditional system that involves refuge in another country, it was difficult to believe that they would keep their word. For us, it was a very practical question. Under these circumstances, do we say to people, 'yes, you should go to that area, we're going there, too?' In the years that followed, this strengthened our mistrust of military-humanitarian operations. MSF's leaders had an almost automatic reaction, right, 'humanitarian area,' 'humanitarian corridor' – it always ends with people who thought they were protected being killed and States that shirk their responsibilities.'

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France President, 2000-2007, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

On December 15, 2001, MSF France and the International Federation for Human Rights organised a conference in Paris titled "The Tragedy of Srebrenica." It addressed issues of France's military and political responsibilities and responsibilities under international law.



Conference Programme - The Tragedy of Srebrenica, 15 December 2001 (in French).

Part I: What are the responsibilities of military and political leaders? The French Example: Analysis of the Report of the French Parliament's Fact-Finding Commission.

Part II: What are the responsibilities under international law?

- Responsibilities incurred for acts committed by Serb forces
- Role of international forces in protecting the safe areas

While no one within MSF France was formally opposed to monitoring the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission, questions arose later about the legitimacy of involving the organisation in such a process: where would it lead and how would it operate? Shouldn't MSF have been satisfied simply that the mission was created? Does a non-elected, non-profit organisation have the legitimacy to play a role in the work of the Members of Parliament? Was MSF positioning itself as a prosecutor of only the UN and Member States' practices by failing to examine the gray areas of the agreements entered into between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnians?



There was an element of revenge behind this. We were accusing certain actors, saying, 'you lied, and here's what actually happened.' We hoped that something would come to light as a result of all these investigations. That was the vision of some individuals. Then, at the collective level, you obviously have to ask questions about MSF's role and its limits in a process that remains highly political.

Dr. Marc Gastellu-Etchegorry, MSF France Deputy, Director of Operations, 1992 to 1997, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



I don't remember if we were questioned or challenged during the time of the Fact-Finding commission. Maybe Rony, once or twice, but ultimately we had carte blanche. Maybe that wasn't such a good idea. We should have been challenged more, with greater accountability. I was really involved in the heart of this work and I have no regrets about what we did. In France, I think we participated in a movement, a small democratic and institutional revolution that made it possible for the parliament to assert itself in terms of the oversight of external operations, diplomacy and defense. That's quite an achievement. Yet, over time, it raises a problem for me. Is it an NGO's role to

contribute to that kind of institutional change? We have no democratic legitimacy; we're not elected. In a democracy, legitimacy comes from elections. So there are limits to the role of counter-power that an NGO can play. Others say that that's the natural role of NGOs. So you can say anything – and the contrary!

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French).

 I was a little uncomfortable because this moved into the political realm, slightly removed from humanitarian action. It is hard to assess if the methods states want to use to end wars, and their need to sometimes rely on secret agreements, are valid. Some of the military aspects were completely outside our area of expertise. Could the planes [air strikes] have done it or not? Did they have the right planes and the right bombs? We were pushing the boundaries of our knowledge and our legitimacy. I was a little defensive. There were times when I thought that Pierre and Françoise were going a bit too far. But, there was that argument about the safe humanitarian areas, which they had on their side. It was a solid argument and a real one for the future, because proposals for corridors and safe areas kept coming up all the time.

Dr Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France President, 2000-2007, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

 I thought there was what I described then, and still describe, as certain relentlessness. There was a level of legal sophistication and investigation of France's role that went too far. We didn't have to pursue the legal investigation to the very end, but simply speak out as to what we believed we had seen, testifying in the visual sense of the word. This role of mentor and moral conscience is problematic. It's good that we put all our weight behind obtaining an investigation that, without it, might not have been conducted. Given our involvement in these events, it makes sense. However, insisting on the 'right' questions that should be asked, the way in which certain points of the report be highlighted, accusing France or another government, to me that seemed to cross the line of legitimacy, both as a humanitarian organisation and as an organisation involved in the matter. I remember discussing this with Pierre and Françoise because they were pushing hard on that. And it's not as if we are the UN's inspectors. I think it's an unhealthy position. Overall, our positions vis-à-vis the UN are based on a sort of ideal vision that we have about it, but I don't share that, personally. That vision leads to critiques that I think are unfounded or, at least, unfair.

Last, it involved working in hidden areas, the shadowy areas of deals among the parties. There are hidden areas that aren't necessarily France's responsibility; for example, the deal between Izetbegovic and Karadzic to abandon Srebrenica. We can't entirely eliminate UNPROFOR in Bosnia from the deals that the Bosnians made among themselves. The Janvier/Milosevic deal intersected the Izetbegovic/Mladic and Karadzic/Izetbegovic deals. Izetbegovic abandoned Srebrenica just as the others did,

in the name of a 'realpolitik' that tried to make everything seem religiously homogenised because it can never be stressed enough that what was happening in eastern Bosnia was a war of religion. If you start to work in the gray areas, you can't stop half way.

Dr Rony Brauman, MSF France President 1982-1994, MSF Foundation Research Director from 1994, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

 Some people said, 'our role was to be in Srebrenica. But now that we've succeeded in creating this fact-finding mission, we can move on. It's for others to take care of that. It's not MSF's role.' There really wasn't a discussion within MSF at the time, but it bothered me later on. To say, 'this isn't our responsibility, we can move on,' shocked me for two reasons. From the moment when you ask for something, you've got to follow through – otherwise, why ask? The United Nations report acknowledged the limits of its fact-finding abilities and expressly called on troop-contributing states to carry out their own investigation in their own country because the United Nations does not have that power and does not have access to the countries' internal archives. The French investigation was critical because the diplomats and the French army played a leading role in the former Yugoslavia. We didn't call for this investigation for moral or political reasons. We wanted to understand and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the international response in the face of mass crimes and the protection of populations in danger.

We can't forget that this was the start of the international interventions intended to restore peace, facilitate humanitarian action, and protect populations. The militarisation of humanitarian aid was underway in the name of protecting populations. We knew that states have multiple agendas and that the international community is only a disparate collection of state interests. Yet, we had to try to understand whether the taking of the enclave was the result of a military accident or a political agreement and, in that case, why the agreement did not include guarantees to evacuate and protect the population. It's normal to have to negotiate in conflict situations, including in order to achieve a peace agreement, but it is important for humanitarian organisations to know how much emphasis is given to protecting populations under all of these agendas. I found the answer to that question when the UN High Representative in the Former Yugoslavia acknowledged, before the French Parliament, that he had not ordered the air strikes because that would have endangered the peace process. Our work on the parliamentary Fact-Finding commission on Srebrenica then contributed to MSF's operational positions in other crises because we continue to face international operations that include mandates to protect populations. These mandates have changed, as in the examples of the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Central African Republic show. They have made it possible to avoid certain mass killings. They must continue to lead us to question our role and our interactions with the international system, as we were required to do – too late – in Srebrenica.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



Some, like Pierre, Françoise, and I, were enthusiastic. Some of us really wanted to push forward. We were all so involved with somewhat vengeful attitudes, that at certain moments I did wonder, 'is this really intellectually sound? Or was there an element of the 'old Bosnia hands' at MSF who were trying to settle scores? In any event, the president was for and the executive director was for. As for the director of operations, it wasn't particularly his thing. But I don't remember having to fight. There was not a strong opposition. There were discussions and, indeed, groaning in the corridors, 'what's the point of this?' 'This isn't MSF's role,' and so on. In the end, there were tensions between Jean-Hervé and Françoise about an interview that she gave. He didn't know about it. He learned about it after it was published. He was quibbling over wording. He thought that Françoise was pointing the needle towards the law, while he wanted to move it in the other direction [more political]. I didn't have any problem talking about international humanitarian law. However, some doctors had a different perspective. For example, the executive director said that there were 'too many lawyers here.' This was the start of an atmosphere in which the 'not-100%-medical' approach was challenged. It was a critique of methods, 'that's not what we do,' or a critique of legitimacy, 'that could endanger operations and blur our image.' In the end, I thought it made sense to do that. It wasn't enough for us to make a fuss about the last epidemic. We showed that we could also work on an in-depth issue several years later. Our presence at the hearings and Christina's and Daniel's testimony gave meaning to all that. So, to all those people who interpreted this as things spiraling out of control, 'we're going too far, this isn't our responsibility,' I say that it was done intelligently.

Stephan Oberreit, MSF General Coordinator in the former Yugoslavia May- November 1995, MSF France Communications Director 2000 - 2006, Interviewed in 2015 (in French).



We certainly can't criticise ourselves for not talking about Srebrenica enough. We held several press conferences and we made a lot of noise. Afterwards, to establish the chain of military command and political decisions, via the deputies, it's true, that raises questions. These are matters of 'defence secrets.' Good luck getting access to all that! It took courage to do it.

Dr Eric Gomaere, MSF Belgium Executive Director, 1994-1997, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

REACTION TO THE REPORTS ON DUTCH RESPONSIBILITIES

In March 2002, MSF Holland set up a working group to prepare a document analysing the Srebrenica report that the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) was about to publish, an investigation requested by the Dutch Parliament in 1996.

On April 9, 2002, on the eve of the official publication of the report, MSF Holland issued a press release and a document titled, "Questions for the Future," that raised three questions about the foreseeability of the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica, which the organisation believed the report should have answered. An op-ed piece was also published in the Dutch daily newspaper, Trouw.



'Srebrenica, Questions for the Future,' Memo MSF Holland, 4 April 2002 (in Dutch, in English).

Extract:

Open and honest debate needed for survivors and Dutch society

The NIOD enquiry was not the first enquiry that was carried out; a number of reports have been written about Srebrenica. The discussions have revolved around the role and mandate of the UN, but the specific role and mandate of the Netherlands remains a sensitive issue and a taboo until now. MSF Holland applauds the release of the NIOD report and looks forward to an open and honest debate about the lessons that can be learned from the Srebrenica massacre and the international failure to prevent such horrors. However, MSF Holland is disheartened that it has taken more than five years to produce this independent report. The lessons learned from Srebrenica would have been useful for the Netherlands and the international community that have been involved in various military interventions since Srebrenica. Moreover, the survivors of Srebrenica are still struggling to piece together their lives and their country. It is essential to gather all info about the events preceding the fall of the enclave so that the survivors can cope with the aftermath. In the interest of the survivors, MSF-Holland would like to know if the NIOD has had access to all relevant sources of information and if these sources have been used in the investigation. Was everyone who played a role in this tragedy questioned, including members of the Bosnian society and survivors of the mass murder! [...]

Why is MSF speaking out now?

In March 1993, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) started working in the enclave of Srebrenica. In July 1995, two international staff workers, Christine Schmitz and Daniel O'Brien, were present with national staff in the enclave at the time of the fall, the deportations, and the executions. As the only

international aid organisation with international staff in Srebrenica at that time, MSF witnessed the panic and fear of death amongst the population during the fall of the enclave and the days that followed. MSF witnessed the international community's failure to act, which resulted in the deaths of many thousands of people. The fact of our presence, bearing witness to events provides us with the responsibility to demand total disclosure of the facts. This openness is required to ensure that no population is ever left to face such a destiny, to guarantee that our soldiers never face such unfeasible responsibilities and failure, and to ensure that civilians are never again lulled into believing they are safe -- a belief that may have influenced their decision not to flee while they still could. That is why the NIOD report and the subsequent parliamentary debate are crucial. And, even if the Serb forces are ultimately responsible for the massacres, the survivors of Srebrenica deserve an open and honest explanation of the failure of the UN forces in Bosnia to meet their promise of protection.

Prior to the publication of the NIOD report, MSF would like to raise a few important questions for which responsibility now needs to be taken. MSF is in part, so involved because the organisation worked closely with the hospital staff in Srebrenica. Of the 128 employees, 22 never arrived in Tuzla. MSF succeeded in evacuating 13 of its Bosnian colleagues. Meho Bosnjakovic chose to stay with his family and is one of the many thousands that were murdered. The Dutch involvement in the Srebrenica tragedy can be divided into four stages:

1. The first stage was the run-up, the decision-making process that led to the dispatch of a battalion of the Air-Mobile Brigade to the enclave of Srebrenica.
2. The second stage was the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica from February 1994 to the beginning of July 1995.
3. The third stage was the seizure of Srebrenica and the subsequent reactions of Dutchbat and the United Nations.
4. The final stage was the period after the fall in which the mass murders were carried out.

There is one question that is central to all four stages: Was the population offered protection and if so, how was this protection realised in practice? [...]

The questions - The NIOD report must provide an answer to the following questions:

Question 1

Was the concept of 'safe area' credible and tenable?

Question 2

Could the fall of the enclave have been foreseen?

Question 3

Could it have been foreseen that so many people would be killed after the enclave had fallen?



'Srebrenica,' Email from MSF Holland Press Officer to MSF Communication Departments, 5 April 2002 (in English). (edited)

Please find attached a report that we produced. You can use it for web/or other purposes. As you may recall in 1996, the Dutch government assigned the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) to do a comprehensive study about the fall of Srebrenica and the Dutch involvement. In fact, the research assignment was rather broad: the decision making process, the context in Bosnia, the fall of the enclave and the killings. The government assigned the [enquiry to] NIOD, after several attempts to 'close' this black chapter in Dutch history. The attempts failed, as new facts and information kept popping up, which then challenged the previously presented picture of the events. There was a great sense of suspicion in the public in Holland, that the government was covering up all sorts of details, and that they didn't face their responsibility. The NIOD research has proven to be an effective way to avoid a political confrontation about Srebrenica. Referring repeatedly to the NIOD report blocked debates: we are waiting for the report [...] As you know, the French parliament has conducted an inquiry in the fall and massacres of Srebrenica last year. MSF France had been pushing for this inquiry and has influenced through lobbying and posing specific questions. One of the strong foci of the investigation was the role of General Janvier, who had allegedly blocked air strikes. These air strikes might have prevented the fall of the enclave. It was stated that he did so, in return for a deal with Mladic to release the UN hostages. The outcome of the French report was disappointing, as no clear political responsibilities were identified. The story about General Janvier was not resolved (no proof, but also no proof against it.)

The French commission criticised the attitude of Dutchbat, the Dutch UN battalion in Srebrenica, as they had not done anything to resist the Serb attack. Had a French battalion been in Srebrenica [...] Dutch politicians reacted furiously on these statements. This is where MSF Holland came in. We sent out a statement to call for a serious, open, and honest discussion in Holland and dismissed the defensive responses on the French report. Next Wednesday, 10 April, the NIOD report will be presented: 3,000 pages, + 2,000 pages annexes. MSF Holland has been preparing itself and see how we could contribute to the debate, more specifically: how we could push for clarity regarding the issue of failed protection in Srebrenica and protection in future international interventions.

We have produced a 'brochure,' or report if you want, in which we present some questions, which we hope the NIOD report will answer and clarify satisfactorily and which should be leading questions in the political debate that will follow the presentation of the report. Next Tuesday, we will publish an opinion article in the newspaper that will underline our concerns that Holland and the international community in general will only draw a cynical conclusion from Srebrenica: we can't and don't want anymore responsibility for the protection of civilians in war zones. [...] We had a discussion yesterday evening with some journalists, a peace organisation here, and someone from a Research Institute for International

Affairs about the NIOD report and strategies to try and get a sensible discussion ongoing in Holland, and we will engage in interviews and public debates.



'The Lessons of Srebrenica: Take Protection of Local Populations Seriously,' MSF Holland **Press Release**, 9 April 2002 (in English).

Extract:

Médecins sans Frontières warns the Netherlands and the international community against drawing the wrong conclusions from the failure of Dutchbat in Srebrenica. The fact that a mass murder could be perpetrated on Bosnian males, despite the presence of UN troops must lead to a profound analysis of the mistakes that were made. These mistakes must be avoided in future missions. The basic question is how to offer real protection to populations threatened with war violence? Médecins sans Frontières is however, afraid that the Dutch government and the international community may already have drawn a cynical conclusion, namely, that it is best to remain uninvolved. Since Srebrenica, they have clearly avoided protecting populations threatened with war violence. For example, protection was explicitly ruled out during the peace mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea. The primary focus of attention was the safety of the troops. If violence erupted, the Dutch UNMEE [UN Mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea] troops would be evacuated.

The pending publication of the NIOD investigative report has rekindled the debate on Srebrenica in the Netherlands and on the international stage. Up to now, this debate has been scarcely possible due to political sensitivity in the Netherlands, and has been characterised mainly by shifting the responsibility. It is shocking that seven years after the mass murders - which took place in the presence of a UN force - so little is known about what actually happened in Srebrenica. The NIOD report will have to make a significant contribution towards satisfying this need for clarity. We therefore call upon the Dutch government to hold an open debate unhampered by persona! or political sensitivity. This debate must lead to a clear statement on how and under which conditions the Dutch government intends to realise the actual protection of threatened civilians in crisis zones.



'Draw the Right Conclusions from Srebrenica,' MSF Holland **Letter to the Editor, Trouw** (The Netherlands), 9 April 2002 (in Dutch).

Even before the long-awaited publication of the NIOD report on Srebrenica, revelations are coming thick and fast. The expectations for the report are extremely high and will probably be followed by a tough political fight. However, hardly any attention has been paid to the cardinal question surrounding Srebrenica, what lessons are being learned from the

fall of the enclave regarding the protection of civilians threatened by the violence of war? Since Srebrenica, the Netherlands has adopted a highly restrained position with regard to peace missions. This is understandable in view of the traumatic experiences. But the lessons learned by the Netherlands are clearly reflected in its most important mission since Srebrenica, the UNMEE mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea. The Netherlands is now taking part in low-risk peace missions whereby its own safety comes first. UNMEE explicitly had no responsibility for the protection of the local population. The agreement was that UNMEE would leave immediately as soon as violence broke out between the warring parties. However, one lesson of Srebrenica is that when the UN and the Netherlands have troops stationed in an area, they assume a moral responsibility towards the population. The local civilians count on the UN troops for protection. After all, who else can they turn to?

More and more often civilians in war zones are being deliberately threatened and murdered. Médecins sans Frontières works in many of these regions. Our team in Srebrenica witnessed the tragedy that unfolded there. Our personnel tended to the wounded and saw the mortal fear that took control of the people when the Bosnian Serbs advanced. No matter how essential humanitarian aid is to survival in these areas, as a humanitarian organisation, we can only shield the civilian population from violence to a very limited degree. If we are not to turn our backs in total indifference, then the international community will have to assume responsibility and act. It will then also have to accept the inevitable obligation to actually protect the people. The true circumstances of the fall of Srebrenica and the mass murders that followed must come to light. Inevitably, we must recognise the mistakes that were made. This is crucial in order to ensure that people are never again left to fate in such a way. Moreover, no troops must ever again be confronted with such impossible responsibilities and such tragic failure. Finally, never again must a civilian population be given an illusion of safety, which leads them to mistakenly decide not to flee on time. It is only through meticulous analysis and an open debate on the events that the right conclusions can be drawn for the future.

It would be too cynical if the conclusion from Srebrenica were that we should never again protect civilians. The lessons of Srebrenica must address the question of why the mission failed so tragically and how real protection should be provided. We hope that the NIOD report will offer a clear analysis of the failure of the Srebrenica mission and we call upon the Dutch Government to institute an open debate. The results of this debate ought to be that the Netherlands makes clear how and under which circumstances it intends to provide real protection for threatened civilians in crisis zones.



We managed to get some insight, through a report from a Dutch organisation, Pax Christi that came out before the NIOD report. I coordinated the group working on the MSF report, trying to get it out. This was not easy. It was so hard to

get an agreement here. Emotions were still around. And I think this report didn't have much resonance.

Wilna van Aartzen, MSF Holland in the former Yugoslavia, 1991-1993, then Head of the Emergency Desk, then Director of Operations, Interviewed in 2015 (in English)



That is a political trick: if you don't know, you install a commission. They will be busy for two years, and by then something else will be more important. To be honest, we at MSF do the same. The choice of the NIOD that was politics. The NIOD was appointed because the NIOD is about history and had nothing to do with politics. This choice was already a de-politisation of the issue. We put it in the hands of historians that are known for being very slow and then it ran to 2002 and they could take responsibilities with no consequences. It was like a balloon that was empty. And by that time, there was recognition of the fact that the Dutchbat had failed. But in 1995, 1996 it was not possible. That is why I think it was courageous from Pronk, De Milliano, Christina, and MSF to say that the king was naked.

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Medical Coordinator in Sarajevo, Bosnia, December 1991 – September 1992, then various positions in the MSF-Holland Bosnia desk September 1992 – 1996, interviewed in 2015 (in English)

On April 10, 2002, the Dutch NIOD report on the fall of the Srebrenica enclave was published. It found that all the actors in the international community, particularly the UN, shared responsibility. While it accused General Janvier of not authorising air strikes in time, it rejected the notion of a hostage deal with Bosnian-Serb forces.



'Srebrenica: A Report Diffuses the Responsibility of the Dutch Soldiers,' *Agence France Presse*, 10 April 2001 (in French).

Extract:

The report titled, 'Srebrenica, a Safe Area - Reconstruction, Background, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a Safe Area,' details the events that led to the mass killings and analyses the responsibilities and sources of the tragedy. Written by the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) at the request of the country's government, it concludes after five years of research that, "humanitarian considerations and political ambitions led the Netherlands to participate in an ill-considered and, in practical terms, unachievable peace-keeping mission. Many who supported this policy bear a heavy responsibility" out of negligence, the report states, referring to Dutch political leaders and the military hierarchy. NIOD also points the finger at the media, which it criticises

for suggesting that the Dutch soldiers were indifferent to the fate of the Muslim population.

It specifically blames the soldiers' UN mandate, which contributed to the mission becoming trapped in a "quagmire" and indirectly caused the mass killings. The authors conclude that by virtue of their limited number – 200 - poorly-armed men - caught in the crossfire, were required to remain impartial and prohibited from responding unless targeted directly. Their vision was blurred by the "illusion of the safe area," the Dutch soldiers could not maneuver freely. They reject any accusation of "collaboration" (according to a term used by a Dutch Blue Helmet) with the Serb assailants. Acknowledging that General Ratko Mladic, military leader of the Bosnian Serbs, had decided to take the entire enclave "given the lack of armed resistance" offered by the Dutch Blue Helmets, the writers believe, however, that the Dutch could not have taken any action to defend Srebrenica because that would have been "contrary to UN instructions." To counter the Serbs, the battalion was counting on air intervention, which the UNPROFOR leaders had rejected. NIOD rejects the notion that General Bernard Janvier, head of UNPROFOR, had entered into an agreement with General Mladic to refrain from air strikes in exchange for the freeing of Dutch hostages held by the Bosnian Serbs. NIOD finds that General Mladic's forces bear primary responsibility for the massacre. It notes that it did not find information suggesting that Belgrade ordered or supported the killings.

With regard to the "screening" of the population in which the Dutch soldiers participated, the NIOD describes it as "taken for granted," even if it constituted participation in "ethnic cleansing," given the "threat of epidemic and the Muslims' own desire to leave as quickly as possible." In addition, "the battalion commander could not have realised that this would lead to mass killings, even if he was aware that these men's future was uncertain," the authors state. The Hague's lack of political initiative at the time of the mass killing is attributed to poor communication with the Dutch military hierarchy. According to the authors, Dutch headquarters minimised the seriousness of the events so as not to tarnish the army's image.



'First Reactions Srebrenica Report in Holland,' **Email** from MSF Holland Information Officer to MSF Communication Departments, 10 April 2002 (in English). (edited)

Extract:

What is remarkable in the summary given today is that the judgment about Dutchbat is quite mild. They have acted within their mandate, have followed instructions. It is only suggested, that there is a question as to what would have happened when Dutchbat had taken a stronger stand against the Serbs – would this have resulted in a different course of the events ??? According to today's presentation, Dutchbat chose to facilitate a quick evacuation of the population, as they feared a big humanitarian disaster in and around the compound as there was shortages of food and water and very poor sanitary conditions. In fact, NIOD says, they have given

priority to the evacuation of the women and children and, in a way, accepted that they couldn't really help the men. At this point in the presentation of the women of Srebrenica, the ex-UN translator, Hassan Nuhanovic stood up and left the room, he found this an appalling statement. As for responses to the media:

- We unfortunately must insist that we need some time to really digest the report and judge in light of our questions. These questions in short: was the mission at all feasible, was the fall of the enclave foreseeable, and was the genocide foreseeable?

After these questions, follows the crucial question, what was done to ensure proper protection of the population? Given the very tragic events in Srebrenica, it is clear that the protection failed. Now it is important to see why it failed. We will read the report to see if it provides a full and credible analysis to answer these questions. Next step is that the politicians discuss these issues and come up with a clear position about Srebrenica, and very important for MSF, draw clear conclusions with respect to protection of populations in future crises.

We can reiterate our position as presented in the opinion letter of yesterday, in which we focus on that issue of protection. We fear that only cynical lessons will be learned from Srebrenica, meaning that we won't even assume responsibility anymore for protection of populations in crises. The line of the presentation today even reinforced this worry, it focused so much on the circumstances, as if the events were unavoidable. So again, we will particularly try and find the lessons that can be learned from Srebrenica. Was everything considered that could be done to really protect the population, even if the mandate was poor, even if the circumstances were complex? Here in Holland we might be asked whether we want a parliamentary enquiry. We are not going to actively advocate for this, but we might come to that conclusion. The importance of such an enquiry can be that:

- it is public, so those responsible will have to account for their actions and decisions publicly - accountability
- an enquiry should focus on conclusions towards future interventions: how can we provide protection to population?



'Minutes of MSF Belgium Board Meeting, 29 April 2002 (in English).

Extract:

NIOD report on Srebrenica

Lisette [Luykx, MSF Holland President] reports from the working group [WG]. The, NIOD report is substantial and the team members are still working through it. The report has led to intense public debate and political steps by the government. MSF Holland's role to date has been minimal.

1. MSF-H's press release before the report was released was only published in the Trouw.
2. The debate organised by IKV [Dutch Interchurch Peace Council] went well but was not well attended, probably because media interest is already huge.

3. MSF is organising an internal event on 31 May with two of the NIOD investigators and relevant MSF members to debate the MSF-related issues (medical, security, protection).

The WG is currently brainstorming about MSF's conclusions. Does the report answer our questions adequately? Do we want to raise specific questions during the parliamentary inquiry? What further steps should MSF take? The WG is preparing a document for internal use to explain MSF's role in Srebrenica as in the NIOD report and a formal comment for external use in response to the earlier document. The WG lost its coordinator, Wilna. Members of the working group often have other priorities and there is a vacuum of leadership and opinion building. The WG will soon conclude what MSF's role should be and draw up an action plan.

On 16 April 2002, the entire Dutch government and the Army Chief-of-Staff resigned following the publication of the NIOD report.



'Wim Kok's Government Resigns in Holland,' *Le Monde* (France), 18 April 2002 (in French).

Extract:

On Tuesday 16 April 16, after meeting with his ministers for three hours, Wim Kok offered the resignation of his team, acknowledging that the conclusions of the Srebrenica inquiry were "serious" and "had to have a political conclusion." The prime minister's remarks, establishing his country's "co-responsibility" for the atrocities committed by Serb troops led by General Mladic, caught Dutch public opinion by surprise. He was unanimously hailed by the political parties, including the opposition CDA (Christian Democrats), whose leader spoke of his "respect" for Mr. Kok's decision. [...] Will this affair have an impact on the 15 May election? "Mr Kok has unquestionably made a fine gesture, but in the minds of most voters, he left a long time ago," a Dutch diplomat said.



So Wim Kok resigned. I personally think that he meant it, that he intended it as accepting the consequences. But the government was already at the end of its term that was due one month later. So, the authenticity of his gesture was questioned, because it was known that he would not stand for re-election. And in the end the whole government fell because he was the Prime Minister. It was a hollow gesture because it had no consequences, it did not affect his pension scheme, and there were to be elections anyway. If they had resigned in August 1995, there it would have been a real taking of responsibilities.

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Medical Coordinator in Sarajevo, Bosnia, December 1991 – September 1992, then various positions in the MSF-Holland Bosnia desk, September 1992 – 1996, Interviewed in 2015 (in English)

On 8 May 2002, a detailed document analysing the NIOD report was distributed within MSF Holland but was not made public. On 31 May, MSF Holland tried to draw lessons from the Srebrenica events, with one of the members of NIOD present.



'MSF H Internal Report: Médecins Sans Frontières and the NIOD Report on Srebrenica,' Malou Nozeman, MSF Holland, 8 May 2002 (in Dutch, in English).

Extract:

Introduction

Shortly after the publication of the NIOD Report, I was asked to describe the key questions that it raised. This 6000-page document, comprising a main report of 3,400 pages, four appendices and a CD-Rom, could not possibly be read by everyone, but it was important for MSF to gain insight into the most relevant questions. It was also important that these questions be recorded for our institutional memory. The NIOD investigation, which aimed to provide a reconstruction of the tragic events, is highly detailed, the analyses are not always entirely clear and the conclusions are scattered. An MSF working group distributed the reading of the 6,000 pages among its members. I concentrated on the fall of the enclave and the aftermath until the end of 1995, which is addressed in **Part IV of the main report**. At the same time, I studied the appendix to the report: **Dutchbat III and the Population: Medical Aspects**, which describes the medical help provided to the population by MSF and Dutchbat. *It was in this domain that serious tension emerged between the two organisations, which would arouse the emotions of the Dutch public.*

Main conclusions of the report and the Appendix

- The mass murder of 7,500 Muslim men was planned only after the fall of the enclave (i.e. after 11 June). The NIOD found no evidence that the mass murder was planned well in advance (p. 2573).
- The attempt by thousands of Muslim men to escape the enclave was the unintended trigger for the mass executions (p. 3154). The researchers claim that this came as a complete surprise to Mladic. The response to this flight was exceptionally violent, fuelled by hatred and revenge.
- No evidence was found of "political or military cooperation" between the Bosnian-Serb army and the Milosevic regime in Belgrade with regard to the mass murder (p. 2575).
- It is "unclear" whether Karadzic was involved in the order for the executions.
- The NIOD report points to General Mladic of the Bosnian-Serb army as the main perpetrator of the mass murder.
- The report contests repeated assertions since 1995 that the murder of Muslim men from Srebrenica took place in front of Dutchbat.



'Srebrenica, Lessons to Learn,' Report on the MSF Holland Association Evening, 31 May 2002 (in English). (edited)

Extract:

To sum up some lessons:

For Dutchbat: there were enough signs things were going wrong but no one knew how to deal with it. There was no worst-case scenario to focus the mission. There were too many decision-making layers, the information flow was far from optimal and led to wrong decisions in the field. For MSF, MSF should always do its utmost to be and remain 'tuned in to the context,' to always remain vigilant, and to respond swiftly to new developments. MSF always has to challenge the problems it encounters, even when it means going against the flow of mass media and hypes.

How to get our message through in such circumstances is a subject for ongoing discussion?

Arpad Gerecsey: About the information flow: were there possibilities for MSF to get its message across?

Dick Schoonoord: I saw one possibility on 11 July the enclave had fallen; there was a conference in which the UNHCR was very worried. At that very moment first-hand information from MSF could have played an important role in the information published by the mass media.

Jacques de Milliano: The role of MSF in such situations is always difficult. How to get our information 'on the air' without having all the proofs and facts is always a problem. In Gorazde, MSF also provided information and the UN used this MSF information. Akashi did not use all the information we provided him with but just specific parts. We realised he was a liar. We provided information and the UN put planes in the air and it helped. Afterwards the UN admitted that our information triggered the action. Talking about Srebrenica, it is clear how a short period of two or three days can be crucial for MSF to play its role. Conclusion is that, in our work, we have to stay vigilant all the time.

Participant: But what about when we spread information and nothing happens with it?

Kenny Gluck: The failure of the Dutch was their initial commitment, the incongruence between the official mandate and the perception of the people. In this field there is also a role for MSF, to make people aware of these crucial differences in interpretations. [...]

Dick Schoonoord: Speaking out is good but should not let yourself be used for political purposes. Do not spread messages without being aware of the source, or you are being used. I know of at least one case where this happened.

Maarten te Kulve: Data collection, understanding and recognising what you see, and understanding the context is developing within MSF but swimming against the current is very difficult.

Participant: MSF is not out there to collect data but to speak out for the people. When all doors are closed, the people we work with still need to know what is going on.

Paul Koedijk: Political authorities make use of the media. The media is controlled by all sorts of mechanisms. It is difficult to prepare journalists and influence what is published in the media.

Kenny Gluck: When the political will is not there we have to go straight to the public.

On 5 June 2002, the Dutch Parliament created a Enquiry Commission to investigate the fall of Srebrenica. The commission's report was published on January 27, 2003. The next day, MSF Holland issued a press release noting that the commission had failed to answer the key questions regarding responsibility for the mass killings. The organisation again called on the US and Great Britain to conduct an investigation on their own responsibility for the events in Srebrenica.



'Introduction by the Chairman/Summary [of the] Most Important Conclusions,' **Email** from Wouter Kok, MSF Holland to MSF Communication Directors, 28 January 2003 (in English).

Extract:

1. The report was received with a feeling that it is a meager duplication of the much more thorough NIOD report (that led to the fall of the cabinet last year). That little or no new facts are found. The whole enquiry is seen more as a tool for all (Dutch) players in the drama to come forward with sort of public show of accountability. To express in front of the public who did what, what went wrong. The two facts that stand out (compared to NIOD):

- Janvier still does not want to testify, therefore, we still do not know why close air support was refused, why the enclave was not defended. But it is clear that this was a UN decision, and that "our boys" were not guilty, they couldn't do a thing (I am talking about the perception here, not my opinion).

- General Couzy is straightforwardly accused of deliberately withholding crucial information from the political leadership. Knowledge of the massacre he undoubtedly had, was not shared with the minister. He is pensioned already, so I do not know what follow up it will get.

2. Internal MSF Holland: We think that the maximum attention for the Srebrenica situation was raised through the NIOD and the parliamentary enquiry. Neither within the Dutch society, nor within MSF Holland do we have the feeling that much more can be achieved. I am afraid the major importance of the Srebrenica situation will be looking at the future: we expect it will be used mainly for future reference to get a maximum mandate for other missions, in which protection of civilians will be the cornerstone to judge these mandates. It will, as such, probably have a positive effect on the Dutch contributions toward peace missions. One would hope for less naiveté and more realism, during the design of missions. I realise that it is the population of Srebrenica that had to pay the price, nobody else. What's the attention in France aiming at? We will check what sort and if translations are foreseen, and let you know.

Thanks, Wouter Kok



'Vital Questions Unanswered by Dutch Inquiry into Srebrenica Massacre- Médecins Sans Frontières Calls for the United States and Britain to Carry Out Their Own Investigations,' **MSF B/F/H Press Release**, 29 January 2003 (in English, in French).

Reacting to the report published by the Dutch Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the fall of Srebrenica, Médecins Sans Frontières calls for the remaining, unanswered questions to be taken up in further, national inquiries in Britain and the United States. Eight years after the fall of the enclave and the massacre of more than 7,000 people, who were supposedly protected by the UN, crucial issues have still not been resolved in inquiries by the UN, France, and now the Netherlands. MSF, who had a medical team working in the enclave, believes that the UN's failure has not been adequately explained. Most significantly, the reasons, which led General Janvier, UNPROFOR's Commander, to refuse NATO air strikes, remain obscure. These strikes were requested by the Dutch UN battalion in July 1995, in order to halt the Serb offensive against the Srebrenica enclave and to protect the civilian population.

The Dutch report does clear up some of the ambiguities which remained after the French Parliamentary Fact-Finding Commission. Notably, the report reaffirms that all the conditions were met for an air strike and concludes that the decision to not use air power is the responsibility of General Janvier. However, the report does not furnish any explanation of what led to the decision. The Dutch parliamentarians restricted themselves to commenting that "uncertainty remains concerning the motivations of General Janvier" and that "his decision was met with incomprehension from his team." MSF also regrets that General Janvier was not allowed by the French authorities to be interviewed by the Dutch parliamentary commission.

Questions remain about what negotiations could have led to the decision by the UN to abandon Srebrenica. Was there an agreement on the liberation of UN soldiers held hostage, or was it part of a deal in the peace negotiations being conducted by the Contact Group? In accordance with the UN report on the fall of Srebrenica, which requested that all concerned member states carry out national inquiries, MSF calls on the United States and Great Britain, who played a major role in the military and diplomatic management of the Bosnian conflict, carry out open, public investigations. MSF states that these inquiries must lead to increased protection for civilians. The failure in Srebrenica, where the deployment of military forces with a purely humanitarian mandate made them incapable of opposing criminal policies against civilians, must never be repeated.



With this question, we reached a new level in the decision chain and an epilogue to the history of these events. Why did NATO planes conduct sorties over the site but not drop bombs? Yasushi Akashi [UN Special Representative for Yugoslavia] had already revealed it: 'An agreement is worth

more than lives.' And everyone should know this from experience. The most dangerous time in war is when peace is announced. That's when all the 'dirty tricks' are played. Every actor should know that at the moment when it enters into a peace process, it must watch for the vulnerable populations, those who are minorities in majority areas, and who will be the subject of trade-offs. I strongly believe that if there had been something specific at Dayton about protecting and evacuating the enclaves, this would not have happened. People who work on these issues professionally have enough information today to know what to watch out for – and distrust - in peacekeeping operations and peace processes.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF France Legal Advisor,
Interviewed in 2015 (in French)



In terms of protecting civilian populations, this had a much greater impact than anyone let on. It factored into certain discussions, decisions, and thinking later on the part of the UN and its Peacekeeping Department. These tragedies also had considerable consequences for the UN in terms of peacekeeping. First, is the fact that western states no longer want to send their soldiers as Blue Helmets. There is no longer any western contribution to peacekeeping operations today – or it is only symbolic. Now there is a real reticence on the part of the UN and the Security Council to create areas where victims can be moved to or 'safe areas.'

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor,
1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

EPILOGUE

In an appeal verdict on 19 April 2004, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia sentenced General Radislav Krstic, one of the leading Bosnian Serb perpetrators of the Srebrenica massacres, to 35 years imprisonment for genocide, aiding and abetting genocide, and war crimes. The Tribunal definitively ruled that the Bosnian Serb forces committed genocide in Srebrenica.



'ICT: Srebrenica Massacre was "Genocide,' *Le Monde* (France), 21 April 2004 (in French).

Extract:

The appeal chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) confirmed on Monday 19 April that "the Bosnian Serb forces committed genocide

against the Muslims of Srebrenica," concluding the debate on whether the events effectively constituted "genocide." "Elderly, female, and very young Bosnian Muslims were driven out of the enclave, and between seven and eight thousand male Bosnian Muslims were killed in systematic fashion" in July 1995, the five judges declare in their summing-up of the Krstic case. General Radislav Krstic, Commander of the Drina Corps, whose soldiers carried out the executions, was initially sentenced to 46 years imprisonment. On Monday, his sentence was commuted to 35 years, as, in the view of the magistrates, he was not the direct author of the genocide but merely an accomplice. In their estimation, the moral authority lays elsewhere, with the military chief of the Bosnian Serbs, Ratko Mladic, who has been on the run for the last nine years.

On 11 July 2005, ten years after the events at Srebrenica, Pierre Salignon, in charge of MSF France's programmes in the former Yugoslavia in 1995, declared to the French daily newspaper *Libération* that MSF remained wary regarding the discourse of the international community on the protection of populations.



'We Received a Nice Lesson in Cynicism,' Interview with Pierre Salignon, Formerly in Charge of Médecins Sans Frontières' Operations in the Former Yugoslavia,' *Libération* (France), 10 July 2005 (French).

Extract:

Ten years on, what lessons have you drawn from the fall of Srebrenica?

It's a wound that still hasn't healed. We deceived ourselves into thinking that we would avoid the worst, in other words the massacres and the absence of assistance and humanity, as we were present on the ground [MSF was in fact the only organization present in the enclave at that time]. In the end, we had to re-examine our view of the action of the international community. We received a nice lesson in cynicism.

What do you mean by that?

Quite simply, if there is no political will on the part of nation states, the worst things are possible. Nowadays, we're much warier with regard to the discourse of the international community on the protection of populations. Questions are still being asked about the deployment of UN troops amid the fine intentions declared and the real aid delivered.

Will you be participating in the commemorations of the tenth anniversary?

"There's no will to do so in terms of MSF as an organization. Some of our members will probably be present, as they have been since 1995 at the Potocari memorial. We extend our solidarity to the families who are at the core of this tragedy and are now directly affected by the commemoration process.

We are merely providers of aid, and that's how we want to remain. This is not a time for controversy."

On 26 February 2007, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that Serbia was not responsible for the genocide of Srebrenica.



'For the International Court of Justice, Serbia Was Not Responsible for the Genocide in Srebrenica,' *Le Monde* (France), 27 February 2007 (in French).

Extract:

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) confirmed that genocide took place in Srebrenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but exonerated the Serbian State from responsibility. [...] The Bosnians took Srebrenica in March 1993, at the height of the war. [...] The magistrates of the ICJ, the UN court in charge of settling disputes between states, ruled that the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica did constitute genocide. The fall of the enclave, a 'safe zone' under UN protection, was followed by the systematic murder, over the course of three days, of nearly 8,000 men, all of them Muslims. [...]

But Belgrade was not responsible for the genocide, in the view of the ICJ judges, who place the blame with the forces of the Bosnian Serb separatists, whose principal leaders, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, have been on the run for over eleven years. While Belgrade was found to have given "considerable support to Republika Srpska (a constituent member, along with the Croatian-Muslim Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina)," permitting payments to the soldiers of the separatist army and providing it with officers, it was found neither to have planned nor ordered the genocide.

On 3 July 2008, Naser Oric, Commander of the Bosnian Muslim forces in the east of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Srebrenica in particular, was acquitted on an appeal hearing at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. He had been accused and found guilty in a first trial for failing to stop his men from committing atrocities against the Serbian population and of torturing prisoners.



'Srebrenica Muslim Chief Cleared,' *BBC*, 3 July 2008 (in English).

Extract:

He was convicted of failing to prevent men under his command killing and mistreating six Bosnian Serb prisoners. His alleged crimes took place well before the 1995 Bosnian Serb massacre of nearly 8,000 Srebrenica Muslims. Between 1992 and 1993 he commanded troops who allegedly destroyed 50 Serb villages, causing thousands to flee. But judges at The Hague ruled the first trial had failed to prove he had control over the men. "The appeals chamber [...] reverses Naser Oric's

conviction," said Judge Wolfgang Schomburg of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The 41-year-old ex-bodyguard to former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was convicted two years ago but given a two-year sentence - much less than that demanded by the prosecution. He was ordered to be immediately released, because of time he had already spent in custody. Many Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) regard him as a hero, and believe the decision to prosecute him was made to counter complaints by Serbs that the tribunal was biased against them, correspondents say. Mr Oric was commander of the Bosnian Muslim forces in the town of Srebrenica from May 1992 onwards, while the city was under siege from Bosnian Serb forces. Mr Oric's lawyers said the attacks on Serb villages were legitimate actions against military and strategic targets, or operations to obtain food for the starving population of Srebrenica.

On 22 July 2008, the Serbian authorities arrested the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and handed him over to international justice.



'The Serbian Authorities Put an End to the Long Escape of Radovan Karadzic,' *Agence France Presse*, 22 July 2008 (in French).

Extract:

Radovan Karadzic, the former political leader of the Bosnian Serbs, indicted for war crimes and genocide by the international justice authorities, was arrested by Serbian secret services on Monday, after a 13-year manhunt. Radovan Karadzic was wanted by the international justice authorities as the instigator, together with the former chief of the Bosnian Serb army, General Ratko Mladic, of the genocide of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, where nearly 8,000 Muslim men were killed in July 1995 - the worst massacre in Europe since the Second World War.

On 31 March 2010, the Serbian parliament passed a resolution for a public apology for the massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. [V20](#) 



'Serbian Parliament Apologizes for the Srebrenica Massacre,' *Le Monde* (France), 31 March 2010 (in French).

Extract:

On Wednesday 31 March, the Serbian Parliament passed a resolution offering a public apology for the massacre of eight thousand Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. The country remains profoundly divided concerning this chapter in its his-

tory. The resolution is part of an attempt by Belgrade to move closer to the European Union and exorcise the demons of the wars of the 1990s. The text of the resolution, which was adopted after thirteen hours of televised debate, expresses sympathy for the victims and regret for not taking sufficient action to prevent the massacre, committed by the Bosnian Serb forces and the Serbian paramilitary militias. It does not describe the events as 'genocide.' *"We have passed a civilized measure by politically-responsible people, founded on political conviction on the war crimes committed in Srebrenica,"* declared Branko Ruzik, whose socialist party was led by Slobodan Milosevic in the 1990s.

On 26 May 2011, Ratko Mladic, Commander of the Bosnian Serb forces was arrested and handed over to international justice.



'Serbia Says Jailed Mladic Will Face War Crimes Trial,' Dan Bilefsky and Doreen Carvajal, *The New York Times* (USA), 26 May 2011 (in English).

Extract:

Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb general held responsible for the massacre of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica in 1995, was arrested on Thursday, signalling Serbia's intention of finally escaping the isolation it brought on itself during the Balkan wars, the bloodiest in Europe since World War II. The capture of the former general removes a major obstacle to Serbia's becoming a member of the European Union, which had insisted that Mr. Mladic be apprehended and turned over for trial in an international court before the country could get on track to join the 27-nation union.

On 16 July 2014, a court in The Hague found the Netherlands liable for the deaths of 300 Muslims among the 8,000 victims of the Srebrenica massacre.



'Srebrenica Massacre: Court Blames Dutch Army,' Stéphanie Maupas, *Le Monde* (France), 17 July 2014 (in French).

Extract:

After nineteen years, a Dutch court ruled on Wednesday 16 July that the Netherlands is liable for the deaths of over 300 Bosnian Muslims who were turned over to the Serbian army while seeking refuge in a base occupied by a Dutch battalion of UN peacekeepers (Dutchbat), at the height of the Srebrenica massacre. In the view of the court at The Hague, the Dutch troops "should not have participated in the depor-

tation of over 300 men" who had sought refuge in the Potocari base, just north of Srebrenica. [...]

In the view of the judges, *"We can affirm with sufficient certainty that had Dutchbat allowed these men to remain where they were, they would not have been killed."* For the Mothers of Srebrenica, the association that brought the case before the courts, the decision marks a major victory. The association is nevertheless considering appealing the verdict because the judges exonerated the Netherlands from any responsibility in the fall of the enclave. The duty to protect was at the heart of the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force.



Last year, at a certain moment, the Prime minister went to Srebrenica. We thought he was going to say that Holland was responsible, maybe partially, but he didn't. We asked ourselves if we should do something, say something, in any case go at it again. And we decided not to.

Wilna van Aartzen, MSF Holland coordinator in the former Yugoslavia, 1991-1993, then Head of the Emergency Desk, then Director of Operations, Interviewed in 2015 (in English).

Twenty years later, the memory of the abandonment of the population of Srebrenica by those who were supposed to protect it continues to fuel a certain MSF reluctance to over-commit itself in proposals for actions designed to improve the protection of populations in danger.



MSF can exercise considerable influence on the political decisions concerning the protection of civilians. This is an important role, which falls clearly within the remit of a humanitarian medical organization, but we have a tendency to underestimate it. It's a fight we have to make but I feel we aren't ready for it, that we're still traumatized by our experiences in the 90s in Rwanda and Bosnia. There's still suspicion and lack of confidence on our part, as well as a degree of lucidity on the reality of civilian protection mechanisms. That's the lesson we drew from the 1990s, but we're going to have to re-engage on this subject. That would involve making concrete proposals, as we did in the 1990s. However, we do less and less since then, sometimes for good reasons, but sometimes for bad reasons.

Fabien Dubuet, MSF France Deputy Legal Advisor, 1995-2005, Interviewed in 2015 (in French)

