Photo of the Day | Greenhouse



A volunteer worker carefully weeds and cares for the plants at the University of Connecticut greenhouse. The UConn Botanical Garden, located by Gant South, hosts a diverse plant collection for students to enjoy.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI/THE DAILY CAMPUS

MLADIC: YOUR 'HERO' IS A WAR CRIMINAL

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On August 27th, Ratko Mladic died in a prison hospital in the Hague. He had been serving a life sentence for committing war crimes and genocide in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. Even though he died alone in prison, a convicted war criminal, to some Bosnian-Serbs in the Republika Srpska statelet and ultranationalist Serbians, he is a hero. This raises the question: Are the ideas Mladic held buried with him, or do they live on?

It is a sad realization that those ideas are still entrenched within both Bosnian-Serbs and Serbs alike. When the news of Mladic's death broke, his supporters in the Republika Srpska were seen carrying photos of Mladic. In Serbia, soccer fans of Red Star Belgrade held up a banner reading "General: Eternal glory. Thank you." All this praise and support exists for the man who orchestrated one of the worst atrocities to be carried out in Europe.

It had been known since the end of the Bosnian War that Mladic was a war criminal, even before news outlets covered him. Stories of Mladic's armies committing deplorable acts such as murder, genocide and rape spread throughout Europe. In 1995 in the United States, then senator Joe Biden went as far as to compare Mladic to Joseph Gobbles and Heinrich Himmler.

So why did the Serbian Government give Mladic the funeral of a hero? The ideas that Mladic held are still present in Serbia, primarily the idea that any land that contains Serbs should only be for Serbs. This concept is also known as Greater Serbia.

The idea of Greater Serbia justifies illegal actions and morally reprehensible statements made by some Serbians. Two examples include the Srebrenica massacre, which saw over 8,000 men and boys killed for the sole reason being that they were Bosnian Muslims in "Serbian" land, and Sniper tourism on the hills surrounding Sarajevo during the siege. It is this idea that Mladic's supporters look to when pressed on his actions — that the land which Mladic and his army pillaged, committed genocide on and raped on was Serbian land. They believe that since the land "belonged" to Serbia, Bosniaks, Croats and other non-Serbian groups should be forced out or killed.



Former Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic in military uniform. Mladic was served a life sentence and became known as the 'butcher of Bosnia.

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Distraught Bosniak citizens confront Bosnian Serb soldiers. This followed the aftermath of the fall of the Srebenica in July 1995.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @AFPNEWSAGENCY ON INSTAGRAM.

Even today, over 30 years since the Dayton Agreement ended the conflict, the idea of Greater Serbia can still be seen. For example, those who run the memorial center at the mass cemetery that holds the bodies of victims of the Srebrenica massacre and people who gather there yearly still face harassment from Bosnian-Serb onlookers and police. The center released a report in August 2026 finding that Srebrenica genocide denial increased more than 50% since the last reporting period.

The recent reactions to Mladic bring it all together. The ideas of Mladic, Milosevic, Karadzic and many other Serbian war criminals still live on, and 30 years has done little to nothing to change that. Bosnian-Serbs still harass those deemed as others inside the Republika Srpska, they still chant the name Mladic and carry his picture around like it is a religious icon. Thirty years and a full tribunal later, the name Mladic is still not associated fully with the photos of mass graves, dead bodies and a country torn apart. Instead, he is the figurehead of, as the former leader of the Republika Srpska put it, "the struggle for freedom of the Serbian people here."

One must realize that the wounds that scar the Balkans might never be healed. Celebrating a war criminal should never occur, no matter their country of origin. As Ed Vulliamy, a journalist who testified against Mladic at his trial in 2017, said: "there is no closure, nor can there be as long as Serbs celebrate this creature."