



**Genocide Watch**  
Alliance Against Genocide

**Country Report: Serbia**  
**August 2022**

Serbs were both victims and perpetrators of genocide during the 20th century. Serbs were victims during World War II, when the Ustaše, Croatian Nazi collaborators who wanted an ethnically pure Croatia, murdered over 500,000 Serbs, as well as most of the Jewish and Roma populations. This genocide by the Croatian [Ustaše](#) included forced deportations, mass rape, and genocidal massacres.

Following Yugoslav President Tito's death in 1980, Slobodan Milošević ignited Serbian nationalism, and Serb militias took over parts of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to create a "Greater Serbia." Croatia and Bosnia declared their independence. Serb militias supported by Serbia carried out genocide and forced deportations of Croats and Bosnians.

Among the genocidal massacres were the [Vukovar Massacre](#), in which Serbian militias murdered 264 captured civilians and prisoners of war (POWs) and buried them in a mass grave. Under Ratko Mladić's command, Serb forces perpetrated genocide in [Srebrenica](#), massacring at least 8,372 Bosnian men and boys. Over 50,000 women and girls throughout Bosnia were subjected to mass rape as a [weapon of war](#), often in camps established specifically for rape.

Similar crimes occurred during the 1998-99 Kosovo War. Serbian [war crimes](#) included the forced deportation and massacre of entire villages, including mass rape of women and girls. NATO intervention and the Kumanovo Treaty ended the war, but Serbia still does not recognize Kosovo's independence.

Slobodan Milošević was tried at the [ICTY](#) on 66 counts of war crimes and genocide but he died during his long trial while in custody. Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić were convicted of genocide and sentenced to life imprisonment along with Serbian military leaders responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Many Serbs adamantly deny the atrocities Serbs perpetrated in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. In 1995, the Serbian Army [exhumed](#) mass graves and reburied bodies multiple times to hide evidence of the genocide at Srebrenica. The government of the Republika Srpska, the majority Serbian section of Bosnia, has published [revisionist reports](#) that minimize the number of Bosnian Muslims killed and make false [claims](#) that the graves in the Srebrenica memorial cemetery are empty. Serbian political leaders, including [Milorad Dodik](#), current President of the Republika Srpska, deny the Srebrenica genocide.

The Serbian government rejects the judgment of the International Court of Justice that the massacres in Srebrenica constituted genocide. Serbia refuses to pass laws, similar to those in Bosnia, that [ban genocide denial](#). The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), an offshoot of the ultranationalist SRS, has controlled the Serbian government since 2012. Popular desecration of Muslim religious sites and graveyards, [personal attacks](#) on Bosnians, and hate speech against Muslims remain rampant. [Ratko Mladić's](#) name was recently chanted as a war hero by the crowd at Serbia's national commemoration day.

In January 2022, Milorad Dodik [threatened](#) secession of the Republika Srpska from Bosnia and the creation of a separate Serb army, in violation of the Dayton Agreement that ended the Bosnian war. These moves could reignite the civil war. Dodik [postponed](#) his plans when Russia invaded Ukraine, to keep Republika Srpska's neutrality.

Due to the threatened secession of the Republika Srpska from Bosnia and the potential for renewed civil war, political tensions with Kosovo, and official Serbian genocide denial. Genocide Watch recognizes Serbia to be at **Stage 5: Organization, Stage 6: Polarization, Stage 7: Preparation and Stage 10: Denial**.

**Genocide Watch recommends that:**

- Serbia and Republika Srpska should accept the ICJ judgment that the Srebrenica massacre was genocide.
- Dodik should withdraw his threats that Republika Srpska should secede from Bosnia.
- If Dodik begins secession or organizes a Republika Srpska army, he should be removed from office by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Dayton Agreement.
- Serbia should recognize the independence of Kosovo.