

## **Srebrenica Special Status Demands Stepped Up**

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By Lisa Clifford in The Hague (TU No 498, 21-Apr-07)

The controversy over the proposed special status for Srebrenica continued this week when some 50 Bosnian Muslims from the town set up a protest camp in Sarajevo to drive home their demands.

One man told the Reuters news agency that the protest – in an abandoned parking lot near the capital's Kosevo stadium – was a symbolic one “to tell everyone we will not give up”.

Hundreds of Muslims who returned to Srebrenica after the war have long been unhappy with living conditions there and want the eastern Bosnian town classed as a district and run by the Bosnian state instead of the Bosnian Serb entity of Republika Srpska, RS, as it is now.

They say their community will leave Srebrenica for good if the demand is not met.

While Bosnian Muslim and Croat politicians support the returnees' demand, the RS government sees it as another attempt to undermine the Serb statelet. The Banja Luka authorities said they would do everything in their power to prevent Srebrenica from breaking away.

Raffi Gregorian, from the Office of the High Representative, this week told the Bosnian Serb newspaper *Nezavisne Novine* that high representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling would meet with all relevant parties in the coming weeks to work out a solution for the “sustainable return” of former residents.

Gregorian said the returnees need jobs, security and social benefits and talked about a solution for Srebrenica similar to the one for Vukovar which has special economic status in Croatia.

But he told the newspaper that changing the constitution is not possible in the current political climate and described the demand for self-rule as a “cry for help”.

“The people in Srebrenica started to fear, following the International Court of Justice's ruling, that the meaning of genocide had not been recognised sufficiently and that nobody was paying attention to them,” Gregorian told *Nezavisne Novine*.

The ICJ found genocide was committed in Srebrenica but said it lacked proof that the Bosnian Serb forces acted under Belgrade's instruction.

Lisa Clifford is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.

**Location:** [Croatia](#)

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