

## **BOSNIA CONFLICT**

Bosnia is a beautiful country that sits in the Western Balkan Peninsula of Europe.

This country contains bitter cold winters, however, don't let the winters take away from the beautiful landscapes of which Bosnia possesses. Bosnia has been blessed with elegance and charm, with much of the country being greatly forested with pine, beech, and oak trees. Bosnia's wildlife also contains a prosperous amount of bears, wolves, foxes and plenty more. This is a country with rich and diverse characteristics, along with a huge mixing of ethnicities as well as religions. The biggest portion of Bosnia's population comes from the inhabitants of the Bosniaks, Serbians as well as Croatians.

Bosnia's ancient history can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire. This strong and powerful empire ruled the nation during the 15th century, until Austria-Hungary took control in 1878. However, in 1918 Bosnia became a part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but during this time, Bosnia had no voice of its own. After the catastrophe of World War II hit Europe, Bosnia became a republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1991, the state voted, with majority, to gain independence in a 1992 referendum. But during this vote of 1991, the country's Serbian population greatly opposed this state of independence and attempted to boycott the referendum.

From 1991 to 1992, ethnic conflict broke out between Serbians, Muslims, and Croatians. The fighting only grew worse with the declaration of independence coming from Bosnia. This developed into an extremely complex war, where shifts in ownership

of territory lead to ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, assistance from the U.S. became less reliable. The United States gridlock slowed down progress, towards having a more active role in the Balkans.

In July of 1995, in the city of Srebrenica, Bosnian Serbian forces advanced to cause destruction. While they stormed the city, they overthrew the battalion of Dutch peacekeepers that were stationed there to protect the city and promote peace. The Forces forcefully separated the Bosniak civilians that lived inside of the city. During this separation period, they divided the women and girls on buses, while the men and boys remained behind. The women were either sent off to Bosnian-held territory for safety, or were raped or sexually assaulted. The men and younger boys were then put to death immediately after the busses left, put on other means of transportation to far off mass killing sites, or put into work labor camps.

However, Americans were aware of the rampant violence going on, from widespread media reports on the conflict. More than 200,000 people were killed and over 2,000,000 were displaced. During this time the United States Congress, later declared what happened in Bosnia to be a genocide. This ethnic cleansing began during the invasion of Croatia by the Yugoslav army. After Croatia came the invasion of Bosnia in April of 1992. After independence, Serbian forces coupled with b]Bosnian Serbs attempted to cleanse the land of Bosnians. They surrounded the capital, Sarajevo, using snipers to kill citizens as they went out for food and water. The United Nations became involved on a very minimal basis, and the European Union was unsuccessful in its attempt to aid

Bosnia. Later the U.N. tried to establish safe areas but they were ineffective because peacekeepers were unable to fully protect the people. All, but Sarajevo, become under Serbian control.

In November of 1995, there was a peace agreement following the Sarajevo bombings in Dayton, Ohio. The Serbian government was crippled by the U.N. trade sanctions and years of warfare throughout the countries. Milosevic, (president of Serbia), agreed to enter this negotiation for peace in October. This peace agreement involved the Bosnia-Herzegovina which includes: Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats, and the Republika Srpska (Srebrenica). The peace agreement ended in the development of Bosnia division between the Croat-Bosniak federation and Serbian republic. After the peace agreement settlement, refugees were guaranteed their right to return to their pre-war homes. While this seemed like a great idea, only a small handful of people returned to their war-torn homes in their respective countries.

While all of this was going on throughout Bosnia, there was a big push of Bosnian Migration due to the civil war. More than two million people left their original homes to find a safer place to live, and more than one million people left Bosnia-Herzegovina altogether. Most these refugees ended up permanently settling in nearby countries of Britain, United States, Italy, and many others. Erie has experienced a wide range of refugees from other parts of the world, but one of the biggest comes from the Bosnia resettlements. During the 1980's and 1990's, Erie saw a large population boom within

the Bosnia and Kosovo refugees. The city of Erie has around 3,500 Bosnians, but a high portion of these residents have now become US citizens within Erie County.

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### **Videos**

[http://video-cdn.abcnews.com/abc\\_archive\\_WNBB4086A\\_005.mp4](http://video-cdn.abcnews.com/abc_archive_WNBB4086A_005.mp4)

<http://abcnews.go.com/Archives/video/bosnia-war-serbs-yugoslavia-986645>