

Senate Resolution No. 1856

BY: Senator GRIFFO

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim
July 11, 2024, as Srebrenica Genocide Remembrance
Day in the State of New York

WHEREAS, This resolution arises from a sense of human decency and respect for the Srebrenica people and their history; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim July 11, 2024, as Srebrenica Genocide Remembrance Day in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Fifty years after the world said "Never Again" to the horrors of the Holocaust, genocide took place on European soil; and

WHEREAS, The name Srebrenica has become synonymous with those dark days in July 1995 when, in the first ever United Nations (UN) declared safe area, thousands of men and boys were systematically murdered and buried in mass graves; and

WHEREAS, The victims, who were Muslim, were selected for death on the basis of their identity; this was the worst atrocity on European soil since the Second World War; and

WHEREAS, During the Srebrenica massacre, more than 7,000 Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) boys and men were slain by Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica, a town in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina; in addition to these killings, more than 20,000 civilians were expelled from the area in a process known as ethnic cleansing; and

WHEREAS, The massacre helped galvanize the West to press for a cease-fire that ended three years of warfare on Bosnia's territory, however, it left deep emotional scars on survivors and created enduring obstacles to political reconciliation among Bosnia's ethnic groups; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 1992, Bosnian Serb forces targeted Srebrenica in a campaign to seize control of a block of territory in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina; their eventual goal was to annex this territory to the adjacent republic of Serbia, and to do so, they believed, required the expulsion of the territory's Bosniak inhabitants, who opposed annexation; and

WHEREAS, In March of 1995, Radovan Karadzic, president of the self-declared autonomous Republika Srpska (Bosnian Serb Republic), directed his military forces to "create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica"; and

WHEREAS, By May, a cordon of Bosnian Serb soldiers had imposed an embargo on food and other supplies that provoked most of the town's Bosniak fighters to flee the area; in late June, after some skirmishes

with the few remaining Bosniak fighters, the Bosnian Serb military command formally ordered the operation, code-named Krivaja 95, that culminated in the massacre; and

WHEREAS, The offensive commenced on July 6, 1995, with Bosnian Serb forces advancing from the south and burning Bosniak homes along the way; amid chaos and terror, thousands of civilians fled Srebrenica for the nearby village of Potocari, where a contingent of about 200 Dutch peacekeepers was stationed; some of the Dutch surrendered, while others withdrew; none fired on the advancing Bosnian Serb forces; and

WHEREAS, On July 11, 1995, Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic strolled through Srebrenica and, in a statement recorded on film by a Serb journalist, said, "We give this town to the Serb nationàThe time has come to take revenge on the Muslims"; and

WHEREAS, On the night of July 11, 1995, a column of more than 10,000 Bosniak men set off from Srebrenica through dense forest in an attempt to reach safety; beginning the following morning, Bosnian Serb officers used UN equipment and made false promises of security to encourage the men to surrender; thousands gave themselves up or were captured, and many were subsequently executed; and

WHEREAS, Other Bosniaks were forced out of Potocari that day through the use of terror; the women, children, and elderly were placed aboard buses and driven to Bosniak-held territory, while the men and boys were taken to various holding sites, mostly in Bratunac; and

WHEREAS, The total number of men and boys who were slaughtered was initially a matter of some debate; under heavy international pressure, the government of the Republika Srpska issued an apology in 2004 for the "enormous crimes" in Srebrenica and acknowledged that an estimated 7,800 had perished; and

WHEREAS, The process of locating the graves and identifying the victims was complicated by a well-organized effort undertaken by Bosnian Serb forces in September and October 1995 to hide traces of the Srebrenica crimes; soldiers used heavy tractors and backhoes to dig up mass graves and moved the disinterred remains to distant sites, many of which were later located by U.S. intelligence experts using satellite photographs; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, it required years of analysis by Western scientists to piece together exactly where the killings had occurred and how the bodies had been moved among an estimated 80 mass grave sites; by early 2010, the International Commission on Missing Persons, a nongovernmental organization established in 1996, had used DNA samples to identify more than 6,400 individual victims; and

WHEREAS, By consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities committed against these people, and honoring the survivors as well as other victims of similar heinous conduct, we guard against repetition of such acts of genocide and provide the American public with a greater understanding of history; and

WHEREAS, This resolution declares that this Legislative Body deplores the persistent, ongoing efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny the historical fact of the Srebrenica Genocide; the failure of the international community to hold responsible nations accountable for crimes against humanity results in travesty of justice, and sets a negative precedent; and

WHEREAS, The State of New York endeavors to encourage and promote a curriculum relating to human rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to prevent the recurrence of genocide; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim July 11, 2024, as Srebrenica Genocide Remembrance Day in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.