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Genocide Survivor Shares Hope for Reconciliation in Bosnia's Prijedor Region

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Office of University Communications

October 7, 2011

Amir Karadzic Brings Emotional Exhibit to Gardner-Webb University



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/b6FRt2TLPF4>

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— Amir Karadzic, a survivor of the early 1990s Bosnian genocide, spoke at Gardner-Webb University in a special “Life of the Scholar” program presentation on Wednesday, and then addressed several humanities classes on Thursday. Karadzic testified to the brutality he witnessed firsthand in his hometown Prijedor, and urged Gardner-Webb students to remember the humanity of their neighbors, and to prevent such atrocities from happening in the future.

From 1992 until 1995, thousands of non-Serb Bosnians in the region of Prijedor suffered theft, displacement, rape and brutal death at the hands of Serbian ultra-nationalists who hoped to claim the region for a secessionist Serbian state. A non-Serb Prijedor native, Karadzic was forced from his job and eventually driven out of Prijedor by death threats. But as he said, thousands of his friends and neighbors suffered much worse.

“The effect of war,” Karadzic said, “is to kill all aspects of your normal life. If you survive and want to continue living, you have to find some box inside your mind to lock it all away and set it aside. I feel almost guilty talking about this, because so many others suffered so much

worse than I. But those people cannot bear to speak about it because they cannot risk opening that box.”

Karadzic explained that reconciliation has yet to occur in Prijedor because officials refuse to publically acknowledge that what took place was in fact genocide, what Karadzic called “an intentional, planned attack on civilians.” His purpose in sharing the brutal stories, he said, was not to enact revenge or dredge up painful memories, but to try to make reconciliation possible after nearly two decades of silence and tension.

“After World War II, Germany erected memorials to the Jewish victims of the holocaust. They publically apologized, and criminals were brought to justice. In Prijedor, we are not looking for more violence. We simply want to know where our friends are buried. We want to talk about what happened. Without truth and honesty, reconciliation is impossible,” Karadzic said.

Several members of the Bosnian community in Charlotte, N.C., participated in the discussions Wednesday, including a few who are also from Prijedor. As one of them said, “We are so grateful to Amir for what he is doing, and for his courage. We are grateful to be alive, and we are hopeful for peace.”

Karadzic is also the initiator of “Prijedor: Lives from the Bosnian Genocide,” a chilling panel exhibit and memorial to Bosnia’s victims that has been displayed at various locations around the United States, including the Holocaust Museum in Washington. The exhibit features stories from the genocide, including survivor interviews and mementos from the lost. It is currently on display through Oct. 25 at Gardner-Webb’s Dover Memorial Library, where a film about Prijedor also runs on a continuous loop. The exhibit and film are free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Matt Walters at 704-406-2237 or at mbwalters@gardner-webb.edu.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University was founded in 1905 and is home to over 4,300 students from 37 states and 21 foreign countries. Gardner-Webb seeks a higher ground in higher education – one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction and compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.