

ISRMUN 2021



HSC

**Historical Security
Council**

Committee: United Nations Historic Security Council (HSC)

Topic: The Siege of Sarajevo (February 1994)

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I. Committee Background

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was founded in 1945. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN). It was established to “maintain international peace and security” and “investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction.” The UNSC is unique as it is the only body within the UN system with the power to issue binding resolutions to member states. Moreover, it also has the authority to establish peacekeeping operations and enact international sanctions (Functions and Powers, UN, 2020). The committee consists of five permanent members (China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States) and ten non-permanent members that are elected every two years (Procedures, UN, 2020). The permanent members of the committee possess a special veto power as a method of blocking decisions on all substantive matters (Charter, UN, 2020).

II. Topic Information

The committee has its start date in February 1994. The use of information following the designated date is forbidden.

A. History of the Topic

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established at the end of the Second World War. The country consisted of six socialist republics, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, as two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. For decades the country's communist leadership struggled to contain ethnic and religious divisions, which were primarily between Muslim Bosniaks, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats (HRW, 2004). Economic decline in the 1980s brought about the rise in nationalist groups across the country. In 1989, Yugoslavia's first independent political parties were formed. The following year, multi-party elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. New parties representing the three major communities gained seats in the province's legislature. A unique tripartite coalition government was formed, however, nationalist Serbs refused to recognize its legitimacy. In 1991, "Serb Autonomous Regions" were declared in areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a "Serb National Assembly" was established as a rival to the provincial government. This, and other calls for independence across Yugoslavia, led to talks about partitioning the country along ethnic and religious lines (Lampe, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). A referendum was held in early 1992 and all provinces voted overwhelmingly for independence (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1992).

Shortly after Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces (whose goal was to create a new Bosnian Serb state that would include Bosniak-majority areas) enriched the city of Sarajevo with a siege force of over 13,000 soldiers. Primarily stationed in the surrounding hills, Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces attacked the city with artillery, tanks, bombs and small arms

(Morris, The Northern Echo, 2015. Moreover, the city was blockaded from the outside world. Civilians were unable to leave and access to food and medical supplies was severely limited. Thousands of civilians were killed within the first two years of the siege, while many others died of disease, starvation or lack of medical care. The city's civilians were largely defenceless and calls from the local government for the international community to intervene were largely ignored. On February 5th, 1994, a 120-millimetre mortar shell was launched by Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces at the center of the Markale market, an open market in the center of Sarajevo. The attack killed 68 people and wounded 144. The incident was the culmination of a series of intentional attacks on civilians by the Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces. Others included an attack on civilians attending a football match and the shooting of people waiting in line for water (Lampe, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

B. International Response

The international response to the siege of Sarajevo was slow and ineffective. In May 1992, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared a state of emergency and requested international peacekeepers to help lift the siege and negotiate a lasting peace. However, none were sent to help the city of Sarajevo. It was not until the shelling of the Markale market that the international community took action. A day after the attack, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali formally requested that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) carry out a bombing campaign against Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces. Three days later, NATO forces carried out their first airstrikes against artillery and mortar positions in and around the city of Sarajevo (Lampe, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

C. UN Action

Initially, the United Nations (UN) refused to intervene in the Bosnian War and therefore did not send peacekeepers or negotiators to resolve the siege of Sarajevo. However, in May 1993, in an attempt to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was tasked with monitoring the shipments of food, water and medical supplies to Sarajevo. A month later, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 836 authorizing the use of force by UNPROFOR in the protection of civilians (Lampe, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). In early 1993, the UN supported the Vance–Owen Peace Plan to end the Bosnian War. The plan was formulated by UN Special Envoy Cyrus Vance and European Community (EC) representative Lord Owen. It proposed the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into ten semi-autonomous regions along ethnic and religious lines. The plan was overwhelmingly rejected by all sides and became the first of many UN proposals to be rejected during the conflict (Refworld, 2004).

III. Essential Questions

1. What caused the Bosnian War?
2. What were the objectives of the Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces?
3. What impact did the siege of Sarajevo have on the city's civilian population?
4. How did the United Nations respond to the siege of Sarajevo?
5. What is your country's position on the Bosnian War? Is it involved in the conflict? If so, in which way?
6. How did the Markale market shelling impact the course of the siege?

7. Did your delegation support NATO's bombing campaign around Sarajevo? Why or why not?

IV. Quorum

- Argentina
- Brazil
- China
- Czech Republic
- Djibouti
- France
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Oman
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Rwanda
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- United States

V. Resources

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