



## Middle East Studies Association of North America

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January 27, 1993

Slobodan Milosevic  
Predsednik Republike Srbije  
Marsala Tita 14  
11000 Beograd  
Yugoslavia

Dear President Milosevic:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America is deeply dismayed by reports of the destruction of Muslim educational institutions and cultural monuments in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Serbian regular and irregular forces.

The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2300 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

We are particularly distressed by news of the attack on the Institute for Oriental Studies in Sarajevo on May 17, 1992. During this attack by incendiary rockets, the Institute's invaluable collections on historic documents, collected from all over Yugoslavia, were burned. Destroyed were over 5000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Bosnian, some dating back to the eleventh century C.E. Also destroyed were over 7000 Ottoman firmans, edicts, documents of the Bosnian governor, and court documents, along with approximately 200,000 documents dealing with provincial administration. This act has deprived the world of valuable historical and cultural records that can, in most cases, never be replaced.

We abhor the targeting of, and possible destruction of, the Gazi Husrev Bey library, which is part of the Tzar's Mosque in Sarajevo built in 1537, and the repository of another rich collection of manuscripts and documents of historic and cultural importance.

We also condemn the damaging or destruction of such educational facilities as the Islamic Faculty of Theology in Sarajevo, and the Islamic Law School, as well as the intentional targeting of artistic and cultural monuments constituting part of the Muslim heritage of Bosnia, including dozens of mosques, medreses, tekkes, and other buildings dating from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Many of these monuments were architectural gems of major significance.

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We deplore the destruction of records of Balkan history and of precious cultural monuments that form part of the common civilizational heritage of humankind. We urge you to condemn publicly and unequivocally the use of military force to wipe out historical records and to destroy cultural treasures. We also call on you to take immediate steps to ensure that persons guilty of such assaults on civilization be brought to justice and appropriately punished.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Anne H. Betteridge  
Executive Director

cc: Radoman Bozovic, President of the Serbian Government  
Zoran Sokolovic, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia  
Secretary for Internal Affairs for Kosovo Province  
Minister of Defence of the Republic of Serbia  
Milan Panic, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia  
Tibor Varadi, Federal Minister of Justice  
Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, Pristina, Yugoslavia