

THE MUSLIM RESOLUTIONS:
BOSNIAK RESPONSES TO WORLD WAR TWO
ATROCITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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PREFACE

The current year of 2021 has seen the 80th anniversary of the start of World War Two in Yugoslavia.

On April 6, 1941, the Axis powers attacked Yugoslavia, bombing all the major towns. Within days, the Yugoslav army had surrendered, and Yugoslavia was officially under occupation.

Serbia was ruled by a puppet government under German occupation. In Croatia, the Ustašas had established a puppet state called “The Independent State of Croatia” (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska* or NDH), led by Ante Pavelić, the *Poglavnik*.

In the NDH, the Ustašas introduced Nazi-style laws against Serbs, Jews, and Roma and established concentration camps, where they incarcerated and murdered members of those peoples. The most infamous of them was Jasenovac. The Ustašas had considerable autonomy and were brutal in their genocidal campaign, the aim of which was to exterminate those considered racially inferior.

Bosniaks (then referred to as Muslims) found themselves between a rock and a hard place. Without proper political representation or institutions, they were split as a nation on all sides. Some joined the Independent State of Croatia, others sided with the Serb royalists (Četniks), and yet others made nice with Nazi Germany, hoping for greater autonomy for Bosnia in return. In reality, large parts of the Bosniak population remained vulnerable and unprotected, subjected to persecution and murder, mainly by the Četniks, who massacred thousands in Eastern Bosnia and in the Sandžak region of Serbia and Montenegro.

While the Ustaša regime did not target Bosniaks (whom they considered to be Croats of Muslim faith) *en masse*, many members of their elites disagreed with the new regime’s policies. The persecution of Serbs, Jews, and Roma provoked public condemnation of these crimes.

Under-represented, unprotected, and generally labeled enemies or collaborators, the Bosniak elites were pragmatic in their condemnation of the regime's policies: using it as an opportunity for seeking Bosnia's autonomy, hoping in this way to improve the country's position and the security of their people.

They did so through the resolutions included in this book, which were initiated and signed by members of the Bosniak establishment, which is to say of the clergy and the judicial and economic elites, who sought to distance themselves from the Ustaša regime. In fact, most of the people to actually sign these resolutions were members of *El-Hidaje*, the Association of Muslim Clergy, and so imams.

Reading the resolutions today, it is easy to be critical and downplay their importance. The terminology used and the consistency of certain signatories can be challenged, with some justification. Alliances, loyalties, and even received ideologies shifted often.

The resolutions nonetheless played a large role, not only during the war, but in the post-war era too, as the struggle for Muslim identity and nationhood got underway. They are one of the few cases in the region, perhaps the only, of such atrocities being condemned and criticized by the elite of a "people without a state."

In recent years, interest in the Muslim Resolutions has grown. In 2019, the Bosniak intellectuals Enes Karić and Mustafa Spahić edited a Bosnian-language volume entitled *Nasuprot zlo: Muslimanske rezolucije iz 1941.; Zajednička izjava iz 2015.* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 2019), which translates as *Against Evil: The Muslim Resolutions of 1941; A Joint Statement from 2015.* It contained the full texts of the resolutions, along with a number of articles on their importance.

In October, 2021, the Bosniak Institute-Adil Zulfikarpašić Foundation in Sarajevo will hold an international conference to mark the 80th anniversary of the Sarajevo Resolution, entitled *Time and Memory: The Resolutions of the Muslims (1941)*, to explore their significance.

Given this growing interest and in recognition of their importance, this publication presents the phenomenon of the Muslim Resolutions to an English-speaking audience. It consists of unredacted translations of the El-Hidaje Resolution and the subsequent resolutions from Prijedor, Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Tuzla, Zenica, Bosanska Dubica, and Bugojno. The final two are in fact newly discovered resolutions and their texts are presented here for the first time. This indicates that archival research in future may well uncover more such examples.

To provide historical context, we have also included articles by leading historians of the topic – Adnan Jahić, Safet Bandžović, Xavier Bougarel, and Marko Attila Hoare. These authors do not necessarily share the same view of these resolutions, and their texts are offered here to promote discussion as to their significance and meaning. Of these, the articles by Bandžović and Jahić were published previously in Bosnian and translated for this volume, while the other two essays, like the other texts included, were commissioned for this volume and written in English.

Given the historical importance of these documents and discrepancies in existing published versions of the texts, the editors have made every effort to locate the originals or faithful transcripts for inclusion in this publication. It is important to note that not all the resolutions are available to us as originals, as most survive only as copies or transcripts, generally those made either by the Ustaša authorities or by the post-war Communist authorities or rather by their *Commission to Investigate the Crimes of the Occupier and the Collaborators*. These copies were not always made with care and some do not include lists of signatories or note to whom the resolutions were addressed. We have selected what seemed to us the most complete and reliable exemplars.

Finding documentation on the Muslim Resolutions has been a challenge, especially since research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. We would like to thank the staff at the Gazi Husrev-bey Library, Bosniak Institute, Historical Archives of Sarajevo, Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Croatian State Archives for their help. We are thankful to Xavier Bougarel who kindly shared his archival

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