

**THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE BOOK `BOSNIA - BEYOND WORDS,
BEYOND TEARS**

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For almost four years, Malaysia and the world read and witnessed the daily accounts and stark images of the indiscriminate destruction and atrocities inflicted by the Serbs on the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose only fault is to profess different faiths from the Christian Orthodoxy of the Serbs. It is now just slightly over two months that a peace agreement was finally signed by the Presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. The process of peace implementation is underway. Though still uncertain, there is hope of gradual restoration and rebuilding of war-ravaged cities and homes, and the healing of a deeply traumatised society and nation.

2. We are gathered here this morning to launch a global humanitarian appeal for Bosnia-Herzegovina and to mark the first release of a pictorial documentation sponsored by the Malaysian private sector, entitled `Bosnia - Beyond Words, Beyond Tears'. This event is heartening because it is yet another welcome expression of co-operation between the public and private sectors in Malaysia. The willingness of the private sector to mobilise their resources in support not only of the country's economic policies and growth, but also its diplomatic initiatives and international role is commendable. I congratulate Limkokwing Integrated Sdn. Bhd. and other corporate bodies for their positive contributions and their caring attitude.

3. War is always cruel but it is not inevitable. The carnage, ethnic strife, destruction and sufferings in Bosnia-Herzegovina should not have taken place, at least not to the extent it has, in a world and an age where barbaric cruelty is universally condemned. This horror could have been stopped earlier. Certainly it must never be allowed to happen again. This is the underlying message of `Bosnia-Beyond Words, Beyond Tears'.

4. Europe had witnessed many cruel wars where massacres and indiscriminate killings were generally featured. Prevention was difficult because the perpetrators were great military powers, quite capable of doing great harm to others who may want to be gallant and rush to the rescue. But the tragedy of Bosnia-Herzegovina is different. Serbia is not a great power and certainly the Bosnian Serbs did not even constitute a nation. The great powers of the world, the so-called champions of human rights, are very many times more powerful and capable than the puny rump Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serb terrorists.

5. Yet we see the Great Powers and their vaunted European Alliance not merely hesitate but actually permitted the Serbs to kill and destroy with impunity. Having prevented the Bosnian Muslims and Croats from arming to defend themselves and assuring them that they would be protected in the safe havens, the forces of Nato actually handed over Bosnian Muslims to the Serbs knowing full well the Serbs would kill them. And so today we hear and we see on the television screens mass graves filled with hundreds and thousands of Bosnian Muslims and some Croats. The scale of these atrocities is frightening in an age when the slightest breach of democracy results in sanctions and threats and visitations by powerful fleets.

6. Democracy is based on popular support. Because the leaders of powerful democracies fear their people may not elect them if their soldiers are harmed while defending others, they dared not make the decision to act in accordance with their vaunted humanitarian principles. Rather a thousand foreigners die than an election lost. This is the beauty of democracy.

7. And so the carnage went on. Yet in the end it took only a minimal of military action, a few rockets fired from safe heights to force the Serbs to come to the negotiating table. One cannot but regret that this was not done earlier. So many thousands of men, women and children would have been saved from untold horrors, from being ravaged and savaged, if only someone had the guts to stand up for the humanitarian principles they loudly profess.

8. The peace is still fragile. Fear of the Serbs is still evident among the leaders of the First World, the World of Justice and Human Rights. How weak is the resolve was demonstrated when the abduction of Bosnians by Serbs was declared by a local commander as not his responsibility because he was not there to police but to enforce the Peace Agreement.

9. At the same time the rehabilitation of the Serbs has begun. Those of them who have been evicted from Krajina are said to suffer because they have to live in Serbia in temporary homes. Therefore the Serbs too must be pitied. In the end Serbian crimes will be glossed over and the genocide they committed overlooked. Such is the justice and humanitarianism of our day and age.

10. This book "Bosnia-Beyond Words, Beyond Tears" should serve to remind us of the enormity of the crimes committed by the Serbs and the hypocrisy of the so-called civilised world.

11. This book is a non-profit effort by the Malaysian private sector in support of the global humanitarian appeal for Bosnia- Herzegovina.

12. I launch this book with the hope and the prayer that people all over the world will rise to the aid of the unfortunate peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina in rebuilding their ravaged country. On that note I launch this book.