**Grim anniversary marks UN's failings**

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Fifteen years ago this week, the terrible news of a massacre of men and boys, Bosnian Muslims, trickled out of the town of Srebrenica where UN forces under Dutch command had established safe haven for civilians seeking refuge from the horrors of the Balkan war.

Some 30,000 Bosnian Muslims had gathered in early July 1995 at the UN military base in Potocari — a suburb of the Srebrenica enclave on the frontier between Bosnia-Herzegovina and former Serb-controlled Yugoslavia — for protection from advancing Serbian forces under the command of Gen. Ratko Mladic.

But Mladic and his soldiers entered the protected area and demanded the UN Dutch commander Col. Ton Karremans hand over Bosnian men to his charge. On that fateful day, July 11, some 23,000 women and children were separated from their male relatives under the watchful eyes of the UN commander and his troops, and deported.

Then the massacre began. It is estimated 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed, with their bodies thrown into mass graves.

It was the worst mass murder on European soil since the end of the Second World War — and in the full media glare of events leading up to it. It also exposed what many knew — how utterly impotent the UN is when needed most, and in Srebrenica, the UN was complicit with the worst of human rights violators.

Earlier this year, in March, Serbian parliament voted to condemn and apologize for the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica. It was an admission of responsibility and guilt of the Serbian regime under the strongman Slobodan Milosevic — he died in March 2006 while being held captive as an indicted war criminal at The Hague — for the crimes committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Balkan conflict.

Mladic remains missing. Gen. Radislav Krstic, Mladic’s military colleague involved in the Srebrenica massacre, was brought before the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, and in August 2001 was sentenced to 46 years in prison. The indicted civilian Serb leader and longtime fugitive from justice, Radovan Karadzic, was eventually arrested in 2008 and is held at The Hague awaiting completion of his trial.

Though the UN’s responsibility in the Srebrenica massacre was glossed over, its repeated failure to check despots and prevent crimes against humanity too numerable to list under craven leadership of secretaries-general Kurt Waldheim, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan and now Ban Ki-Moon testify to its reality as a gathering place for the world’s sordid regimes.

The plain truth is an organization packed with the worst human rights offenders — China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan, Cuba, Myanmar, North Korea, Zimbabwe — and rogue or failed states — Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Nigeria — doesn’t have the political or moral authority to protect human rights and secure peace.

And given the extent to which the advanced liberal democracies are invested in the UN charade, it is unlikely there will be any meaningful reform of the organization.

Yet if we are to insist on UN reform, it should begin at the top with Kofi Annan and the rest made answerable for their ineptness, corruptions and failures in meeting the demands of their offices.