

## Editorial

The savagery in Bosnia negates, indeed mocks, some deeply held, perhaps naive, values and aspirations about Europe and international law.

The distance between Florence, the seat of this Journal, and Sarajevo is a mere 577 kilometers. Less than the distance to Paris or Berlin, let alone London or Copenhagen. Whereas the distance in space helps insulate our sensibilities, time and the evocation of history gnaw at the consciousness.

Once again, in Europe, an ethnic and religious minority is being cleansed. 'Cleansed'? 'Is being'? Why succumb to the reification of jargon, to the anonymity of the passive tense. There are perpetrators and specific crimes: Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, with the complicity of the Belgrade authorities and, it has been suggested, Croatia are perpetrating on a wide scale, egregiously, war crimes and crimes against humanity. They are killing indiscriminately, burning mosques and entire cities, torturing and raping women *en masse*, as a particularly heinous policy of subjugation, fear and cultural and social decimation of the Bosnian Muslim population. Bosnia is our periodic reminder that human vileness transcends anything nature has in store for us.

The present is, of course, not the past. In the era of the Global Village there is no hiding behind ignorance, real or contrived. Europe, the world as a whole, know all there is to know. But this apparently is not hugely significant. Knowledge here is not power. Not long ago, events such as these, would assault one's sensibilities, but in those days one's expectations of the international Community and of Europe would be limited. Cold war politics would pre-determine any reaction. But today we are in the new international legal order, in the Europe of Maastricht. And yet, the paralysis of the UN, the powerlessness of its peace-keeping forces and the inaction of Europe – forever canvassing, discussing, consulting, debating, communicating, and refining while the decimation goes on – are frustrating, mind numbing, soul chilling.

Even more frustrating is the realization that there are no easy solutions. Are the alternative options, the seduction of force, of power, of bombing (provided it is

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someone else taking the real risk) less escapist, more than a palliative for our collective conscious? Who can deny the huge risks and the moral uncertainty of all those 'decisive' solutions? Would bombing reduce the toll of misery or increase it? Would ground force intervention pacify or aggravate the situation? We can all fill in the arguments, which is not to deny their seriousness.

Bosnia is despair, a lament, a haunting shame. Some Europe, some international law.

*Joseph H.H. Weiler*