

Tape 1 Diego Arria after visiting Srebrenica

Diego Arria with Serbian journalists:

We would have been able to fulfill our mission better having the possibility that the international press had been admitted. We had agreed with the Serb authorities here this morning and we believed them. We agreed that we would go ahead first and that they would be allowed to enter Srebrenica. They were not allowed and we were extremely displeased that was not allowed to take place.

In Srebrenica we saw terrible devastation. We think that Srebrenica is a symbol of resistance and a symbol of defiance. Defiance because there's non-compliance with the UN resolution. They are defying the resolution that asked for the withdrawal of the Serbian forces outside the city. The Serb forces are compelled by the UN resolution to withdraw and also to allow humanitarian help to enter. Water is the most important element in a city. Water has been prevented from arriving by the Serbs. The doctor has not been allowed to enter.

(Journalist says the Serbs were also without water supplies) That was terrible then and now.

Diego Arria at press conference:

We have been held hostage here.

(Unidentified woman: No we have not. I do not think we have been in any way and I have been held hostage before.)

But we are. We want to leave and we are prevented from leaving. I do not know who you represent but this is very clear. It matters very much to us when we want to leave and we are being held against our will.

No we did not achieve our mission in Srebrenica. We believe a fundamental part of our mission was to bring the international press, but I understand after seeing what was happening there, there are reasons not to take the international press because when you see the devastation in the city and around it, you see that Srebrenica has become a symbol not only of suffering but a sign of defiance of the international community. When you see that not even a doctor is allowed to come into the city, when you see that even *Medicins sans frontieres*, an extraordinary organization, was not allowed to bring its doctors, when water is cut to the city, when electricity is cut, it is a slow process of killing people. I believe very sincerely that Srebrenica is like an open jail where we may be watching, if the situation continues like this, a slow motion genocide. Genocide is a most terrible crime whether to kill people by bullets or by shelling or by sickness. We saw the children in a school that was shelled two weeks ago where fifteen or sixteen of them died and were dismembered and we saw today children in that school who were not dismembered but developing all kinds of sickness and they were dying. Not one doctor was there. The tents were sequestered by Serb authorities. It's an open jail surrounded and under effective control of the Serbs.

No these conditions have not been known. This is the first time. I am a member of the Security Council. My colleagues never knew this. That we have to ask permission for a doctor to enter Srebrenica was something we never even imagined was the case. We are really shocked. I do not know if you are trying to underline the importance of what I am trying to tell you, but this is a very serious matter. We were shocked to see the conditions

especially on the humanitarian side that continue to be in open defiance of international resolutions. Now this is a test to the will and the capacity of the international community to react or not. I repeat the situation not to allow the doctor, not to allow the water, not to allow the electricity and to be like an open jail is a major, major and a slow motion genocide.

What the UN authorities have done there is extraordinary, extraordinary. When you see what the Canadian battalion has done. There are also civilian policemen from Bangladesh, from Russia, from Denmark. The UNPROFOR forces are the most admirable forces, but it's not within the mandate to do all the things that would be required and they're doing their best to do it. I am just trying to relate factual information that has taken place.

We haven't finished. We have to analyze many other things that we have heard today. Actually, even the Serb officers walked with us in the school that was shelled by them where the children died last week. So it was an unusual meeting and we had the opportunity to talk with both sides. We said it was a pity that the international press was tricked into thinking that they would come with us. Well this is my opinion, if you want to take into consideration my opinion: We were fooled yes by the Serbs without any doubt. We were completely tricked. Had we followed our intuition, had we persisted on intuition, but we do not control the logistics, we would have taken the international press. I understand why they did not want us to take them because when you fly over there you will see the devastation. You will not see one dead chicken but you'll see all the houses destroyed with bombs individually. Yes bombs. They put explosive elements on the floor, and you don't see anything destroyed except homes, mostly homes. All over you see the Serbs houses intact. And when you fly overhead you'll see the terrible devastation amid such a beautiful country, so much hate, so much crime.

(Have you thought about reevaluating the mandate?)

I will not anticipate what the Security Council will do. That's up to the SC. Six ambassadors are here. Our duty is to relate what we have seen. We have spoken to many people and we are still shocked at what we have seen.

(What was the reaction of the locals when they knew that you were members of the SC?)

Well you know a lot of people are at the limit of despair. You see people are surrounded in an open jail. It must be a horrible, horrible feeling. What we see is the visible part of suffering. What's gone on inside people is something that we do not apprehend properly because we haven't lived that. But I think that it was a terrible experience for us to see it and to speak with the people who are suffering there.

(Terms of the agreement negotiated by the UN)

I never expressed our disagreement but we do not know the terms and how they were applied on the terrain. What the UNPROFOR forces are doing on the terrain is unobjectionable. They're doing what they can. I had a long chat and briefing with the Canadian commander in Srebrenica and it is an extraordinary achievement what they are doing. The failings are not the failings of UNPROFOR but of the international community. It's something different. They are peacekeepers and they are trying to do things that go beyond their own mandate, trying to solve problems and find solutions. They are in a very difficult and delicate situation to ask permission for everything. If you want to bring a camera you have to ask permission. If you want to bring a journalist, you

have to ask permission. That you are offered a safe area of the UN where you cannot bring a journalist is something to think about.

(Withdrawal of the Serbs)

No on the contrary, they are digging in in the mountains. Tanks and mortars are being deployed in the mountains. So the situation seems to be consolidating on that side and they do not seem to be withdrawing.

There were many people who are not from there, who are refugees from neighboring villages and of course they would like to go back to their homes. The UN refugee program brought tents, tents that they gave the Serbs before, and the Serbs sequestered them. Even tents to give these people the possibility to be evacuated. This is a monstrosity. UNHCR is doing a wonderful job. We absolutely should help those who are not residents and want to leave. Yet today I saw Serb doctors checking those who are to be evacuated to see if they are really wounded or not. So it's going to be a difficult process to help in that direction.

We met with the Muslim government and they did not express that they did not wish their people to leave. No one in the streets approaches us to ask if they want to leave. We spoke with many, many of them and no one said anything. Food is alright.

Unidentified ambassador, British accent:

I think they misled us by suggesting certain things would happen and letting other things happen, like letting in only three Serbs.

(Journalist asks if people can leave.)

I do not think the refugees the non-locals, that is, I am not sure whether they're being stopped or not; it was not absolutely clear. There are certainly a lot of them there and they are being fed so there is enough food, but water is a very bad problem. The reservoir is now in Serbian held territory and the Serbs are refusing to allow the town to be supplied. Apparently the Serbs claim that the reservoir was previously in Muslim territory and when the Muslims had it the town next up the valley, which was a Serbian town, was deprived of water, so that this is a sort of tit for tat. The problem is that the town normally has 8-10000 and now has up to 30000 and it's very overwhelming. We drove up and down the streets and it's very overcrowded. They get water down from the hills.

(Journalist asks about getting doctors in.)

We asked the Serb commander whose forces took the town and he said that he would intervene with his authorities following the visit of the mission, but...

(Journalists asks his impression.)

It's another one of those hell-like pictures. The crowds and crowds of people on the street unsmiling except for the children. It was a very very depressing experience, I can assure you. Parts of the town are very badly damaged. The shells were landing at the rate of one every seven seconds which is a sign of the heaviness of the bombardment.

(Journalist asks if the agreement has restored some confidence.)

Definitely. The Canadian troops have an extremely high reputation.

Unidentified UNHCR representative, African accent.

(Journalist asks what more he would like to see done.)

I think today we have confirmed what my colleagues have been telling me for the last month that the situation in Srebrenica has improved thanks to the Canadian battalion. I'm

sure the people are more reassured. But the town is so overcrowded, it's impossible to assist all the population that is there and we have enormous problems to bring shelter materials, medicine and doctors. We have to request authorization from the Serbian side and we are stopped every day when we try to bring items other than food.

(Journalist asks were you prohibited)

Yes. Two days ago 95 attempts to try to help the people have some shelter were confiscated and I sent a very strong protest to the Serbian leadership about this. The main question for us is the following: Srebrenica is not yet for us a safe haven. It is a sort of big refugee camp without adequate shelter and without portable water. The water has been kept by the Serbs since the 15th of April and this is completely inhuman and intolerable and unacceptable. Either we are able to progress in negotiations with the Serbian side to allow us to bring all the materials that are needed, first, and second, to use the portable water system. We need to bring some shelter materials to the people or the situation will become desperate because epidemics will start spreading among the population. The other element that has been in our minds all the time is what to do with 35-40000 people that are now living in Srebrenica that had before only 5000 people. We have been talking about evacuating or about other possibilities. I think today we should not evacuate. I think today we need the support of the international community to expand what is now a very very small safe area and have full access for assistance for all the items. We need to provide adequate assistance to the people and we would like to fight for the return of the people to their areas of origin. This implies most of the refugees that are now in Srebrenica should be allowed to go back to their houses. Most of the villages from which they have come from are either destroyed or taken by the Serbian side. If the villages are destroyed, we will help them to rebuild their houses. But the main question is should we fight for the right of the people to be evacuated from Srebrenica or for the right to stay in dignity and safety? UNHCR here will do whatever we can and I hope that the politicians and the ambassadors on the SC and UNPROFOR will help us in negotiating expansion of the safe area and to have full and free access to the people of Srebrenica with all the required assistance items including doctors, all types of medical supplies, shelter materials and the main point is the reestablishment of the portable water system. This is a criminal thing. People will start dying in days as I mentioned.

Diego Arria

We were asking for the withdrawal of the Serbian forces around the area that have terrorized the population. That as we saw today has not occurred. In a way it still a city like a jail. We believe that thanks to the resolution and the work of UNPROFOR people's lives were saved. Had it not been for UNPROFOR forces, the British battalion, the Canadian battalion and all the other countries, this would have been a major slaughter and the world must acknowledge that at the same time it is becoming an open jail. We visited a school, for example, where about 30 children were bombed. Today we did not see the same thing. We went to the same school and there were hundreds of children with all kinds of sicknesses. In a way if we do not watch out, this could become a slow motion genocide being committed in that place. When you fly over the area you will understand what ethnic cleansing is. It is the destruction of homes only of homes; the animals are alive. They only destroy houses. No where else in the world has there been the destruction only of houses and houses belonging only to the Muslims. The rest of the

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houses remain intact. And the devastation in the middle of such a beautiful land is something incredible.

(Recommendations now)

Tomorrow we are going to meet with Mr. Karadjic. We have found things that are incredible which have taken place. A physician has not been allowed to enter. *Medicins sans frontieres* has also not been allowed to enter. Water has been cut off. So those aspects that have nothing to do with warfare, have nothing to do with heavy weapons, can be utilized in a more effective way to devastate the population. These are the kinds of elements and impressions that my colleagues and I will have to take to the SC.