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*“Aftermath: Bosnia’s Long Road to Peace” explores the human costs and consequences of war—not on the battlefield, but in its aftermath, which is where the painful work of true peace making begins. Even though Bosnia’s bitter war ended in 1995, the country is still deep in the throes of a struggle to rebuild a civil society – in the hope that the cycles of violence that have wreaked havoc in its past will not re-emerge to threaten the nation’s future.*

Since the summer of 2000, I have been documenting the social, political and economic upheavals that have been part of Bosnia’s struggle to deal with the aftermath of a war marked by ethnic cleansing and the worst genocide in Europe since the end of World War II. Although photojournalists provided remarkable images for the world of that war, I believe they did not tell the whole story – that the media must also be responsible for documenting what happens after the guns and bombs and the madness of violence have finally been stilled. War is only half the story. It does not teach us about peace. That part of the tale unfolds only in its aftermath, and I believe that it is as newsworthy as war itself.

The photos sent with this application are taken from work I’ve already done on this project, exploring areas where Bosnians deal daily with repercussions from the war. This work includes documenting the exhumation and identification of some of the approximately 20,000 victims of ethnic cleansing; the widows of Srebrenica, who lost some 8,000 sons, husbands, fathers and brothers, in a massacre by Serbs in July 1995; returning refugee families who want to rebuild homes and villages destroyed in the war; and Bosnians who bear the emotional and physical scars of war, such as the 3K Sarajevo wheelchair basketball team.

But there is more work to be done to create a truly complete portrait of the aftermath of war. These are among the areas in which I plan to work:

1. The growing numbers of Bosnians who have turned to a conservative practice of Islam. Before the war, Bosnian Muslims were notoriously lax in their religious observances, but when the West failed to help Bosnia during the war, mujahideen fighters came to the rescue and brought with them a highly conservative form of Islam. In addition, many young people, shaken by the events of the war, turned to religion for answers. The Arab world has built highly visible mosques and religious centers in Sarajevo, and there is an increasing alienation from the West among part of the population.
2. The eviction of refugee families from homes they squatted in during the war. In the past year or two, strict property laws have been passed, which guarantee that any citizen – Serb, Muslim or Croat – who wants to return home will be able to do so. Because the vast majority of the country’s housing stock was destroyed during the war, evictions are part of a vast chess game. Many families have no other place to go, and several thousand people still live in “collective centers,” which were meant to be used as short-term emergency housing during and immediately after the war.
3. Hardline Serb communities. In the Republika Srpska (RS) half of Bosnia, many Serbs remain bitter about the war and are hostile towards Muslims who try to return home. The RS has extremely high rates of poverty and unemployment. Many Serbs remain in denial about what happened during the war, and resist any identification with the rest of Bosnia.

I believe that this project can help illumine the fact that war doesn’t necessarily change anything for the better, and may in fact make many things worse. I think it has particular relevance today, as the U.S. pursues a path that seems destined to lead to war with Iraq. I believe that documenting the consequences of war – and the long-term struggle involved in restoring the most basic living conditions and standards of human decency – can help lead to a greater public awareness of the actual cost of war, and perhaps, to a more passionate commitment to avoid it.