

The hospital was the leading educational, diagnostic and therapeutic institution in the country, with 41 clinics and institutes, 2,100 beds, modern diagnostics and therapy. Only 600 metres from the enemy lines, it continued to work under impossible conditions. There was no electricity, water or gas and only minimal amounts of medical materials and medicines. Staff of the hospital worked and treated thousands and thousands of wounded and sick in the besieged city. The hospital was under constant artillery barrage, receiving 1,470 hits, of which 687 landed directly on clinics and institutes. Dozens of patients and staff were killed or wounded in hospital beds, in the hospital compound, or while on duty .

Dr. Mirza Dilic wrote in 1995 of their experience:

How did we, exposed to the blockade and enemy attacks, maintain the universal principle of the Hippocratic oath and offer to help everyone, including enemy soldiers?

Simply put, Kosevo hospital had to succeed. If we had not succeeded in organizing the work and showing that one can work even under impossible conditions, what would have happened to the thousands of wounded civilians and the sick? We were simply doomed to success.

We have succeeded thanks to the engagement of our people, thanks to a wish to help, thanks to the courage and devotion of the medical staff, thanks to respect for human rights, thanks to our efforts to preserve a multi-ethnic, and multi-religious community, thanks to the unselfish aid of many humanitarian and other organizations from the whole world.

Unfortunately, the war in Bosnia continues. Sarajevo is still under a blockade, it has been encircled for 40 months. Already 1,300,000 (yes, you read correctly, one million and three hundred thousand) shells have hit the city. Civilians are still dying on its streets and squares. We are still struggling to help and save the wounded and sick. But fortunately, we know we are not alone. We have friends all over the world and we know that all those who help us now will one day be proud of the help they have given us.

When the doctors were asked to draw lessons from their experience, they emphasized solidarity in the face of adversity, the importance of altruism and a selfless call to help others. "The path we take," they said, "is always a choice to live according to our ideals or to join with the forces of violence and oppression."

Two other factors were deeply significant. One was that the surgeon who led the hospital inspired his staff with his moral courage and persistence, and the other was that they received international support in the form of letters and occasional supplies from outside.

There are other stubborn, nonviolent communities within countries where violence is erupting today despite significant movement toward peace. In Israel, for example, there are more than 1,000 peace organizations, most with memberships of both Jews and Arabs. There is an international community founded by Fr. Bruno Hussar as an oasis of peace, called Neve Shalom/Wahat a1-salaam.<sup>5</sup> The community began slowly in the 1970s and continues today with active support from outside Israel. Fr. Bruno wrote of his vision: