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## Spotlight on Women for Women in Bosnia

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"Calling the Ghosts," continued from previous page

morning asked whether anyone had raped you. . . And if they had, to freely tell him.

**Jadranka:** And then, just as they had arrested us without any explanation, they told us to get ready, that we were going home. And they let us go. We didn't know why. Later we found out that the first journalists were about to break through to the Omarska Camp that day. Since the camp authorities claimed that there were no women in the camp, they quickly got us ready to leave. The seven women who

remained were locked in the bathroom so they wouldn't be seen. I went home on foot. . .

**Nusreta:** Most women are silent about what happened to them. It is very difficult to make them speak. One woman told me that her husband divorced her . . . He couldn't get past it. . . She is scared that her son will find out everything about her experience.

**Jadranka:** In the beginning the need to tell the truth was strong and I hoped we would

all speak out. Other women arrived from Omarska. I organized them and told them that we had to tell the truth, no matter how painful it was.

**Nusreta:** I always say, it's a new shock every time you talk about it. . . But I feel some kind of obligation toward all those women, friends of mine who are now gone, who were killed in the camp, toward all those people who were dear to me. . . and who are now gone. . . If the story is not told, then no one will know about it, right? ☹

## Spotlight on Women for Women in Bosnia

By Gillian Brady

Washington College of Law is fortunate to have a personal connection to Women for Women in Bosnia (WWB), a non-profit humanitarian organization that has helped hundreds of women in the war-torn regions of Bosnia and Croatia. Zainab Salbi, the founder and president of WWB, and her husband Ahmjad Attallah, a J.D. student at WCL, have inspired many at WCL with their devotion to helping the women in Bosnia. Zainab's idea was a simple one; to provide financial and emotional support to women who have lost almost everything; their homes, their families, their dignity. WWB is committed to supporting women regardless of their religion or ethnicity.

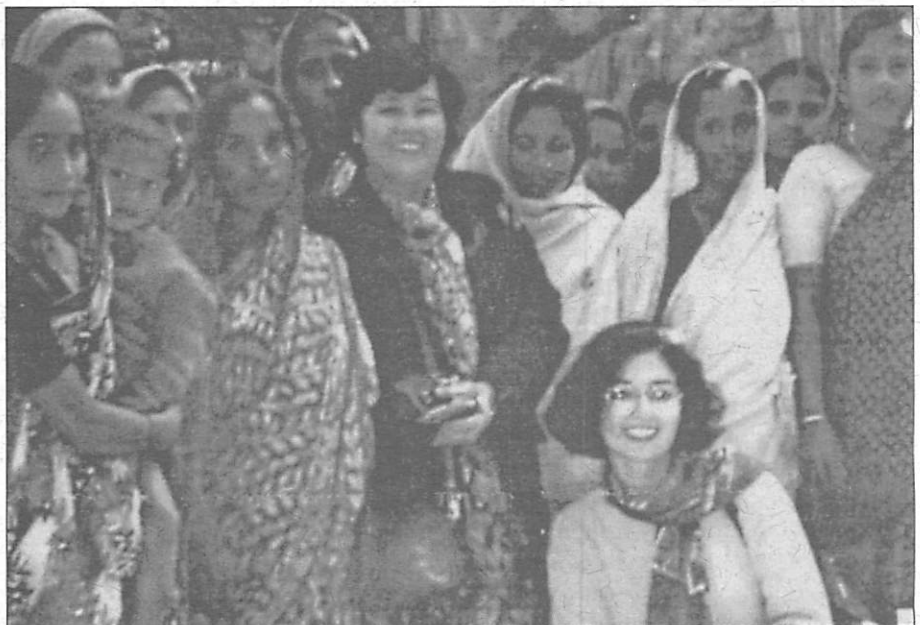
Zainab founded WWB in June 1993 to help women in Bosnia and Croatia who are especially in need of support due to the Serbian army's use of rape and torture as a war strategy. The Serbian army set up rape camps and concentration camps for Croats and Bosnian Muslims and Catholics. The rape camps targeted women exclusively, victims were as young as six years old and even women 80 years old were not spared. Women were forcibly impregnated and kept in rape camps until their eighth month of pregnancy to prevent them from attempting an abortion. Rape was also used to spread terror. According to a captured Serbian Soldier "rape is part of (ethnic cleansing); it spreads fear and terror so that the people flee and don't come back." Women were raped publicly in front of their families and neighbors, who were then ordered to leave their homes and never return. Soldiers

were also ordered to rape women as a means of increasing the men's morale.

WWB was founded to provide emotional and financial support to the women who suffered through this campaign of rape and terror. WWB matches Bosnian and Croatian women with sponsors from all over the world. Sponsors donate \$22 a month and also write letters, which are a very important part of WWB's sponsorship program. The letters are translated by WWB volunteer translators and hand-delivered to the recipients. The emotional support provided by the letters gives many women the strength to begin rebuilding their lives and their faith in humanity.

WWB is currently embarking on a micro-credit program, through which small groups of women can obtain loans using the assets of the entire group as collateral. WWB hopes that by forming these groups among women from different ethnic backgrounds, this program will help to foster cooperation and reliance on each other, and ultimately help in the rebuilding of Bosnian society.

If you would like more information, please call Women for Women in Bosnia at (202) 822-1391, or write to: Women for Women in Bosnia, 1725 K Street NW, Suite 611, Washington, DC 20006. ☹



Zainab Salbi, seated, founder and president of Women for Women in Bosnia, on a recent trip to Bangladesh for Grameen Bank's micro-credit program training.

Photo courtesy of Women for Women in Bosnia