

## CHAPTER THREE

# Persecution Has a Face

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*“The history of man is the history of crimes,  
and history can repeat. So information is a defense.  
Through this we can build, we must build,  
a defense against repetition.”*

Simon Weisenthal

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The sprouting seed of prejudice makes it difficult for human beings with differences to co-exist. The way we huddle with “our kind” during the school years serves as a model for how we co-exist with others in our adult lives. That separation breaks down communication and breeds verbal conflict, which typically includes the kinds of slurs we spoke about earlier. It also moves us to intolerant behavior.

Do you know how a tree casts a wide shade around itself? You can sit on the ground quite far from the tree and still enjoy its shelter from the sun. The shade covers more ground than the tree itself.

A growing tree of intolerance does the same thing. The larger it gets, the greater the number of people who are covered by its shade. Before long, more sprouting seeds of prejudice grow into trees of intolerance, and the shades begin to connect; together they get wider and wider and wider.

As intolerance spreads, the harm that is inflicted can escalate until, eventually, the subjects of intolerance become victims of mental and physical brutality. This situation is called persecution.

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**persecution**, *n.* Treatment in a cruel or harsh way against members of a race, religion or group different from one's own.

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The end result of prejudice is intolerance and persecution. It is a conclusion that has repeated itself time and again. At some point in history, nearly every race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, political group and social class has felt the hands of intolerance and persecution.

The best way to understand this tragic reality is to spin the globe and survey intolerance and persecution among human beings worldwide, throughout history.

**PERSECUTED:  
Bosnians, Croats and  
Ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia**

**What Happened?**

In 1974, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was organized as a union of six republics, including Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. Within Serbia was an autonomous province called Kosovo. Serbians were mainly Orthodox Christians; Croats were mainly Roman Catholics; Bosnians and Kosovo's ethnic Albanians were mainly Muslim. Tension between the different ethnic and religious



**Coffins containing the bodies of slaughtered Muslims**

*Courtesy of Corbis*

groups festered for years, and escalated when Yugoslavia began to break up into independent states in the early 1990s.

Led by their president, Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia sought to gain power and territory during the break up of Yugoslavia by waging a series of battles—first against the Croats, then against the Bosnians and ethnic Albanians. Pursuing the goal of creating a larger and purely Serbian state, **intolerance** by Milosevic resulted in a campaign to “cleanse” Bosnia and Kosovo of their Muslim populations and influences. Bosnian and ethnic Albanian citizens were arrested, forced from their homes, and deported to concentration camps (where prisoners were confined under harsh circumstances) or rape camps (where women and girls were enslaved and sexually assaulted). Muslim cultural symbols such as mosques, schools and libraries were destroyed.

### **Result of Intolerance?**

Between 1992 and the overthrow of the Yugoslavian government in 1999, *250,000* Bosnians in Bosnia were murdered, and *thousands* more were displaced, tortured and raped; *10,000* ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were murdered in ninety days, and *thousands* more were displaced, tortured and raped; and *thousands* of Croats died during combat in Croatia.