

## White Armband Day Commemorated at International Burch University

May 31, 2017

*Today, May 31, 2017, Burch Diplomacy Club organized a commemoration of White Armband Day. Members distributed white armbands to students, staff, and guests of International Burch University.*

White Armband Day is marked every 31<sup>st</sup> of May to honor victims of the ethnic cleansing of Prijedor in 1992. This is the fifth commemoration of White Armband Day in general and the second at International Burch University.

May 31 is commemorated as White Armband Day because in 1992, Bosnian Serb authorities in Prijedor ordered the non-Serb population of about 65,000 to identify themselves as such by wearing white armbands around their left upper arm and marking their homes with white flags.

Nearly 50,000 were then expelled and another 5,209 were murdered. Most of these men, women and children were incarcerated in one of the three infamous concentration camps near Prijedor – Keraterm, Omarska, and Trnopolje. The victims were then subject to various forms of torture for up to several hundred days before they were either transferred or released.

Later, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) characterized this as a crime against humanity but not as genocide, although it met the requirement for such an act (the Court, however, found that the act wasn't premeditated).

These white armbands are reminiscent of the yellow Star of David the Nazi German government ordered all Jews to wear prior to the Holocaust in 1939.

Members of Burch Diplomacy Club distributed hundreds of armbands to students, staff, and guests. There was also a book of condolences in which all could privately express their experiences, grief, opinions, or other sentiments regarding this day.

The primary goal of organizing this event was to raise awareness of White Armband Day and of what transpired in Prijedor in 1992.

“We cannot bring back the victims by wearing this white armband, we cannot do justice to the survivors by wearing this white armband, but what we can do and hope to do by wearing this white armband is to honor the victims of the ethnic cleansing in Prijedor and to perhaps contribute to the prevention of a similar crime elsewhere in the world. After all, everyone said ‘never again’ after the Holocaust and, yet, it happened a mere 50 years later”, said Amer Kurtovic, the president of Burch Diplomacy Club.

Burch Diplomacy Club is remarkably proud of having organized the second annual commemoration of White Armband Day and intends on continuing this tradition in the future.

