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CROATIA COMMEMORATES 27TH ANNIVERSARY OF VUKOVAR'S FALL

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Thousands of people from all over Croatia, and Croats from abroad, gathered in Vukovar on Sunday to commemorate the 27th anniversary of its fall to Yugoslav Peoples Army troops and Serb paramilitaries.

Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic said that they come to express their respect for the sacrifice of those who defended the town and all those who gave their life for Croatia.

"Every commemoration should firstly be a reminder of the truth and respect for the victims, but also open pages about the future, pages of reconciliation, of coexistence, Plenkovic said.

A memorial column, led by war veterans organisations and victims families, walked the streets of Vukovar to the memorial graveyard at the entrance to the town from the east, where the most of Croatian soldiers and civilians who died during the siege are buried.

After a short prayer from a Catholic priest at the graveyard, various politicians paid their respects to those who died during the siege. Croatian President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, representatives of the Croatian government and parliament and the mayor of the town of Vukovar placed wreaths on the central monument at the cemetery.

After the placing of the wreaths, a religious service was to be held on the cemetery.

Commemorations will also take place across the country on Sunday evening, when lanterns will be lit in streets named after Vukovar in every Croatian city and town.

The Yugoslav Peoples Army and Serb paramilitaries besieged and shelled the town intensively between late August and mid-November 1991. Some 7,000 missiles fell daily on the city throughout a three-month siege, which destroyed about 85 per cent of its buildings.

After the towns defence fell officially on November 18 thousands of non-Serbs were expelled, thousands were transported to prison camps in Serbia, while hundreds were executed at the nearby Ovcara farm and in other places.

Over 3,000 soldiers and civilians died during the siege and its aftermath, 86 of them children. Today over 300 residents of Vukovar are still on the list of missing persons.

In the town, as well as in other parts of the country, special programmes dedicated to Vukovar are being held throughout the week: exhibitions, festival of patriotic poetry, historical symposiums and TV and radio shows.

The day before the official commemoration, Vukovar was also visited by Croatian Serb leader Milorad Pupovac, who lowered wreath into the waters of the River Danube to honour the innocent victims of Vukovar.

It is our deepest wish that we start creating, in Vukovar and the whole of the country, policies of commemoration and remembrance that will not be a source of fear and accusations and perpetuate hate, but rather provide an opportunity to come closer to one another and express respect, pay tribute and show solidarity, Pupovac said on Saturday.

http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatia-commemorates-the-27th-anniversary-of-vukovar-s-fall-11-18-2018

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