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## **BOSNIA'S MOSTAR COMMEMORATES WAR-BLASTED BRIDGE'S RECONSTRUCTION**

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Flowers were lowered from Mostars Old Bridge on Tuesday night at a commemoration for the victims of the 1990s wars in the Balkans held as part of an event to mark the 15th anniversary of the bridges reconstruction.

I believe that the reconstruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar is one of the most important symbols of the renewal of multi-ethnicity and communal life, not only in Mostar but in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, Denis Zvizdic, chair of Bosnian Council of Ministers, said at the ceremony.

The bridges function is to connect people and therefore its significance is enormous, invaluable, and therefore it is important to continually celebrate its reconstruction as a means for the renewal of the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional life of Bosnia, Zvizdic added.

The Old Bridge, built in the 16th century under Ottoman rule, was destroyed in November 1993 during fighting between the Bosniak-led Bosnian Army and the Bosnian Croat-led Croatian Defence Council.

It was rebuilt at a cost of around 12 million euros and reopened in July 2004. It is now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The anniversary event, organised by the Centre for Peace and Multiethnic Cooperation under the banner Mostar Does Not Forget Friends, also included an award ceremony.

This year, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was given the Mostar Peace Connection award for his efforts in the field of peace and multi-ethnic cooperation.

No one has been convicted of the destruction of the Old Bridge.

In the Hague trial of six wartime Bosnian Croat political and military officials, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia found in November 2017 that the bridge was a military target at the time of the attack, and therefore its destruction cannot be considered, in and of itself, as wanton destruction not justified by military necessity.

Since the war, Mostar has remained divided between its Bosniak and Croat populations, who mainly live on opposite sides of the River Neretva.

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