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Serbian leader attacked at Srebrenica ceremonies

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SREBRENICA, Bosnia-Herzegovina — A crowd of furious Bosnian Muslims jumped over fences and attacked Serbia's prime minister with stones and water bottles on Saturday, marring the 20th anniversary commemorations of the Srebrenica massacre.

Aleksandar Vucic, a former ultranationalist during the Balkan wars who is now a moderate with a pro-Western stance, escaped serious injury. He said he was hit in the face with a rock as the crowds chanted "Kill, kill" and "Allahu akbar," the Arabic phrase meaning "God is great."

The scenes overshadowed what was supposed to be a day of reflection and remembrance for the 8,000 Muslim men and boys slaughtered at the hands of Serb forces in the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica. Two UN courts ruled that the killings constituted genocide.

Vucic is among the most hated individuals for Bosnian Muslims, with some viewing him in worse terms than late strongman Slobodan Milosevic. During the 1992-95 Bosnian war, Vucic was an ultranationalist politician, criticizing the Serb leader of leniency toward Bosnian Muslims.

Many Bosnian Muslims also still remember Vucic's incendiary statement during the Balkan wars that for every dead Serb, 100 Muslims should be killed. Some in the crowd held a banner with the quote to remind him of his past.

Vucic's security detail rushed him away, trying to protect him with bags, umbrellas and their raised arms from the projectiles raining down. His guards shoved through the angry crowd before pushing the prime minister inside an armored vehicle.

"We were attacked from all sides. It was well-organized and prepared," a visibly shaken Vucic said upon his quick return to Serbia.

He added: "Except for my glasses, I'm missing nothing else."

Vucic, who came to represent Serbia at the commemoration in an apparent gesture of reconciliation, said after the attack that, "Today we are talking more about a bunch of fools rather than about the innocent victims of Srebrenica." He added that his "arms of reconciliation remain stretched toward the Bosniaks."



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