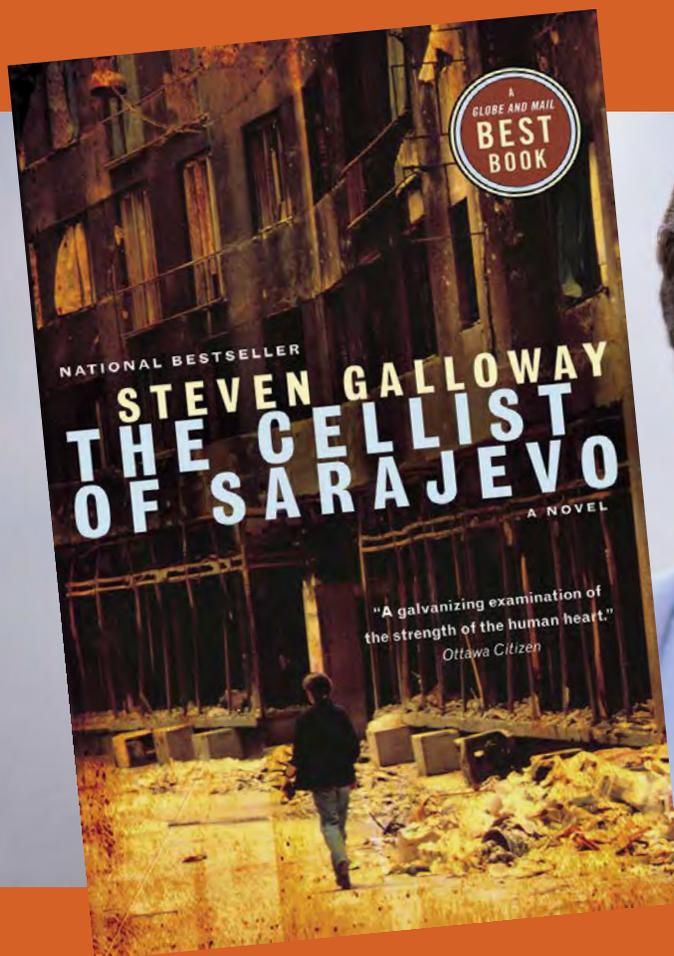


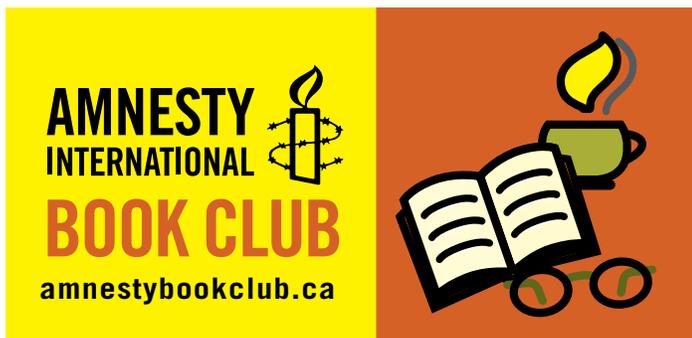
**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL** 
BOOK CLUB

APRIL 2014 BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE



Frances Reid

Guest reader Yann Martel's choice:
The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway



Welcome Book Club members!

Thank you for joining the Amnesty International Book Club! We are delighted that you have joined us in time to be receiving our third discussion guide, for *The Cellist of Sarajevo* by Steven Galloway.

This month's guest reader, author Yann Martel, has also recommended Prime Minister Stephen Harper read this book. You can find out why Yann Martel has chosen this book for you and other book club members by reading his statement on page 3, and watching his short video on our website at www.amnestybookclub.ca

We are very grateful to Yann Martel for selecting this book for April as it coincides with the Toronto Public Library's One Book campaign which is encouraging residents of our country's biggest city to read this book this month as well. We are hopeful that this will allow us to get our information out to more readers, as Toronto Public Library has said they will include a link to our book club on their One Book site.

You can check out Toronto Public Library's One Book at www.keeptorontoreading.ca. We are both using the same discussion questions, provided by the author and Random House, the book's publisher.

We are working to see if we can get a book club town hall set up for later this month, but we're also busy planning two events in May with our first two authors – Joseph Boyden and Esi Edugyan, and we hope to be able share highlights of these events with all of you via our website. We will keep you updated as our plans develop and it may be that we have to delay our first town hall. But we'll let you know.

Thank you for being a founding member of the Amnesty International Book Club in our first year!

If you have any questions or feedback to pass along, please contact us at bookclub@amnesty.ca or call toll-free at 1-800-266-3789. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Book Club Team

About this month's guest reader, Yann Martel

Yann Martel is a Canadian writer living in Saskatoon. He is the author of a collection of short stories, *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios*, three novels, *Self*, *Life of Pi*, and *Beatrice and Virgil*,



and a collection of letters to the Prime Minister of Canada, *101 Letters to a Prime Minister*. Martel was awarded the 2002 Man Booker Prize for *Life of Pi*. The novel was adapted for the screen by Ang Lee and won four Oscars.

About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for all people to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and are funded mainly by our membership.

Until everyone can enjoy all of their rights, we will continue our efforts. We will not stop until everyone can live in dignity; until every person's voice can be heard; until no one is tortured or executed.

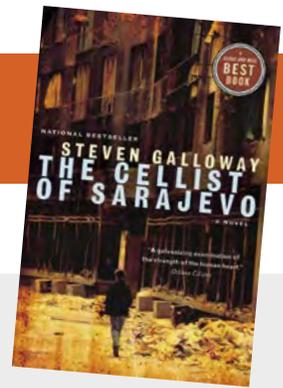
Our members are the cornerstone of these efforts. They take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and offline campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilize public pressure and show international solidarity.

Together, we make a difference.

For more information about Amnesty International visit www.amnesty.ca or write to us at: Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1H9.

APRIL BOOK: *The Cellist of Sarajevo* by Steven Galloway



Yann Martel on *The Cellist of Sarajevo*:

“*The Cellist of Sarajevo* is set during the brutal siege of the Bosnian city of Sarajevo in the early 1990s. That siege was in the news for years. I think most people’s reaction was disbelief: *how can people do that to each other?* In other words, they *distanced* themselves from the tragedy. Steven Galloway’s novel eliminates that distance and explains how people can do that to each other. It does the work of good fiction: it transports you to a situation that is alien to you, makes it familiar, and so brings understanding. While reading the novel, you’ll be there imaginatively, in Sarajevo, as the mortar shells are falling and snipers are seeking to kill you as you cross a street. Your mind’s eye will see, your moral sense will be outraged, your full humanity will be exercised, and *you will start to care*. *The Cellist of Sarajevo* is a perfect choice for the Amnesty International Book Club as it’s about how people retain or reclaim their humanity, which goes to the core of Amnesty International’s mission.” – Yann Martel

About author Steven Galloway



Steven Galloway is the author of three novels: *Finnie Walsh*, *Ascension* and *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. His work has been translated into over twenty languages and optioned for film. He teaches creative writing at

the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University, and lives with his wife and two daughters in New Westminster, British Columbia.

www.stevengalloway.com

Suggested discussion questions for *The Cellist of Sarajevo*

Questions from guest reader Yann Martel

- 1 How does the character of Arrow transform as the novel progresses? Could you relate to her choices?
- 2 What is the cellist trying to do by playing every day in public? Is it a vain effort?
- 3 Given the same circumstances as Kenan, would you fetch water for your neighbour?
- 4 What safeguards the city where you live from being like Sarajevo during the siege?
- 5 What do you think Steven Galloway means when he writes, “You don’t choose what to believe. Belief chooses you.”
- 6 Do you think you could hate as much as some of the characters in the novel hate?
- 7 Steven Galloway is from Canada. His novel takes place in Bosnia. Do you see any problems in a writer writing about a reality foreign to him?
- 8 What did you think of the structure of the novel? What did having three characters give their perspective bring to the narrative?

Discussion questions continued

Questions from author Steven Galloway and Random House

These questions are also being used in the Toronto Public Library's *Keep Toronto Reading Festival*

- 1 What effect does the constant confrontation of war and occupation have on each narrator? Does suffering, violence and loss ever become normalized for them? What is it like to live in this kind of chaos-especially when symbols of peace and power have been extinguished (the eternal flame from the Second World War, the Kosovo Olympic stadium now used as a burial ground)? And what does it mean to have the colour, beauty, and vibrancy of music and flowers (left behind for the cellist) introduced?
- 2 How has life changed in the city since the arrival of the men on the hills? What resources, both physical and mental, are the four characters in the book using to help them survive? What is involved in day-to-day living? How would you fare under these same conditions-and what would be your greatest challenges?
- 3 Each chapter in the novel is told through the lens of one of the four main characters (including the cellist) in the story. How does this strategy colour our reading? How might our experience be different if told in first person? Or, if it were told in a more journalistic way?
- 4 How do each of the narrators (Arrow, Dragan, Kenan) view their fellow citizens? How do they each look upon their struggles, choices, and their attitudes? What makes them not give up on each other? Does Kenan's classification of the "three types of people" ring true to you?
- 5 Do you think the author intends for the reader to be sympathetic to Arrow's life and work? What prevents (or encourages) us from fully engaging, trusting, or relating to her? Do you think war forces everyone to compromise something in themselves-their attitude, their moral compass?
- 6 What are the goals of "the men on the hill"? What exactly is it they are trying to destroy? What do they come to represent for the main characters-and what separates them from Arrow?
- 7 In the beginning of the novel, Dragan is said to avoid his friends and coworkers because "the destruction of the living is too much for him." Arrow assumes a new name to distance herself from her role as a sniper, and Kenan takes refuge in his new ritual of obtaining water for his family. How have the three used rituals as ways to cope with their fear of what is happening in the city? At the end of the book, do you feel that their experiences of the cellist's performances have changed how they deal with the danger around them? In what way?
- 8 What force does music have upon the war-torn state-and what powers does it have over the lives of the characters? (For Kenan, Arrow, and Dragan? For the cellist himself?) Do you find yourself relating to the power of the cellist's performances? Are there parallel moments in your life where you also experienced such a sudden awakening, or realization?



Crushed buses and the debris of war line a street of blown up buildings in Sarajevo, Bosnia, 1996.

9 “Sarajevo was a great city for walking.” How does the mapping of the landscape—the physical and psychic layout of the city—affect the narrative? How does our intimacy with this map affect our experience of the story?

10 In one of his early chapters, Kenan is particularly disturbed by the interruption and shelled state of the tram’s service (“The war will not be over until the trams run again”) and the destruction of the National Library (“the most visible manifestation of a society he was proud of”)—representing for him basic civilization. What signs, services, and signals do you consider pillars of civilization?

11 Why do you think the sniper avoids taking his shot at the cellist—especially when he has such ample opportunity?

12 Why does Dragan take such drastic measures to prevent the dead man’s body from being filmed by the journalist? What does the author suggest through this as a lesson for the living? What are we to do to prevent the horror of war from becoming commonplace, something to tune our televisions out from?

13 Were you surprised by Arrow’s final act of protest? Do you think she was ultimately able to reclaim herself, her identity? Do you think she succeeded?



A top sniper, codenamed “Arrow” loads her gun in a safe room in Sarajevo, 1992. The 20 year old Serb worked for the Bosnian forces and was a former journalism student. She said most of her targets were other snipers on the Serbian side.

Questions from Amnesty International’s campaign staff

- 1 Arrow had her own code. Was killing the sniper who had his sights on the cellist a war crime? Had Arrow shot the old man would she have committed a war crime? It is recognized that he was walking safely because he was an accomplice to those in the hills.
- 2 How does a siege compare to other forms of violence against civilians?
- 3 Do you think it is right for aid workers delivering humanitarian relief to make compromises and deals in the distribution of aid? What would you do if you were humanitarian aid worker?

Background: THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

“Civilization isn’t a thing that you build and then there it is, you have it forever. It needs to be built constantly, recreated daily. It vanishes far more quickly than he ever would have thought possible.” —Dragan, page 248

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the largest, most developed and diverse countries in the Balkans. It was a non-aligned federation comprised of six republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

As the Soviet Union collapsed and nationalism rose in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia was not immune from the political and economic fallout. Political leaders used nationalist rhetoric to erode a common Yugoslav identity and fuel fear and mistrust among different ethnic groups. By 1991, the break-up of the country loomed with Slovenia and Croatia blaming Serbia of unjustly

dominating Yugoslavia’s government, military and finances. Serbia in turn accused the two republics of separatism. Within less than a year, the bloody and brutal conflict that resulted would shock the world.

The conflict was deadliest in ethnically diverse Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the government reflected a mixed population of about 43% Bosnian Muslims, 33% Bosnian Serbs, 17% Bosnian Croats and 7% other nationalities. With both Serbia and Croatia attempting to control large chunks of Bosnian territory, the conflict became a bloody three-sided fight. Civilians of all ethnicities were caught in the crossfire and subjected to horrific atrocities. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people were killed and two million people, more than half the population, were forced to flee their homes as a result of the war that raged from April 1992 through to November 1995. United Nations (UN) peacekeeping forces deployed throughout the conflict struggled with a weak mandate that often left them unable to directly intervene to protect civilians.



Michael Estel/ATP/Getty Images

During the Bosnian War, cellist Vedran Smailovic plays Strauss inside the bombed-out National Library in Sarajevo, on September 12, 1992.

The Siege of Sarajevo

"The men on the hills made the library one of their first targets...He went there when he heard it was burning, without knowing why. He watched, helpless and useless, as this symbol of what the city was and what many still wanted it to be, gave in to the desires of the men on the hills." —Kenan, page 112

The hills surrounding Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, made the city particularly vulnerable to a continuous blockade throughout the war. Bosnian government forces were significantly "outgunned" by Bosnian Serb forces which launched artillery and mortar attacks on the city and used snipers to target civilians in breadlines and other vulnerable settings. Some 11,451 people were killed during the siege of Sarajevo, at least half of them civilians. The worst massacre took place on February 5, 1994 when 68 civilians were killed and 200 wounded in the Markale marketplace. The daily shelling also destroyed medical buildings, government offices, media outlets and even some UN facilities. Significant historical and cultural property was also lost, including the National Library – home to thousands of unique texts and collections – which was burned to the ground.

Throughout the siege, the UN forces which protected the airport tried to ensure humanitarian corridors for aid convoys. Many different aid organizations attempting to get food and other humanitarian relief through the Serb checkpoints into Sarajevo, however, faced an agonizing dilemma: commanders told relief workers that they must turn over thirty percent of the goods to the Serb forces, thus helping the siege to continue.

The Bosnian government declared an official end to siege February 29, 1996 – the day that Bosnian Serb forces finally left their position around the city.

Human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity

From the very start, the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was marked by a wide range of grave human rights violations, some of which amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Many of the tactics employed by competing armed forces were designed to terrorize and divide the civilian population, forcing them

to abandon land, communities and property. The term "ethnic cleansing" soon became synonymous with the war.

Civilians were victims of indiscriminate attacks as cities and villages were subjected to bombardment from both air and land. During forced expulsions, some civilians were forced to flee across front lines which were under fire, with threats that they would be shot if they tried to return. In other cases, civilians were directly targeted in massacres, including over 8,000 (mainly men and boys) in Srebrenica in July 1995.

Amnesty International documented testimonies of many women subjected to systematic rape, as well as sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and other crimes of sexual violence. An estimated 20,000-50,000 mass rapes took place.

Throughout the war both civilians and military personnel were unlawfully detained and tortured. Members of humanitarian aid organizations involved in the distribution of aid and the provision of medical services were arrested and detained. Civilians were taken as hostages and used as human shields. Civilian detainees were held in undeclared locations or hidden from international monitoring agencies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. The detentions often appeared to be part of a policy of clearing areas of unwanted minorities. All three sides were alleged to have forced detainees to perform work near front lines.

Out of a population of 3.4 million at the end of the conflict in 1995, an estimated 30,000 people were reported as missing. The fate of an estimated 10,500 people, most of whom are Bosnian Muslims remains unknown.

The laws of war

International humanitarian law, codified after World War II in the Geneva Conventions, establishes the rules for armed conflict. A central principle in the laws of war is that all parties must take measures to protect civilians and civilian property. Direct attacks on civilians are illegal, as are indiscriminate attacks. Warring parties must ensure that they distinguish between military and civilian targets. Hospitals are entitled to special protection, and humanitarian aid should not be blocked or appropriated. Civilians cannot be forcibly deported from an area for reasons other than their own security.

The International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia

In May 1993, the International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established by the UN Security Council following a 1992 Commission of Inquiry into mass atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was the first war crimes court created by the UN and the first international war crimes tribunal since the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals.

The ICTY's mandate is to try those individuals most responsible for grave human rights abuses such as murder, torture, rape, enslavement, and destruction of property. The Tribunal has made precedent-setting decisions on genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the first-ever recognition of "systematic rape" and "sexual enslavement" in time of war as crimes against humanity.

The Tribunal has indicted 161 people since it started in 1993:

- 23 are in custody at the UN ICTY Detention Unit
- 20 ongoing cases (4 currently on trial; 16 in Appeal Chamber)
- proceedings have concluded for 141 accused: 18 acquitted; 74 sentenced; 13 referred to national jurisdiction; 20 indictments withdrawn; 16 died before or after transfer to tribunal.

Bosnia and Herzegovina today

Almost two decades on, many issues related to the war remain unresolved in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One important step forward was the finalization in 2011 of a Strategy on Transitional Justice aimed at ensuring access to justice and reparation for all civilian victims of war, including survivors of sexual violence. However, implementation of this and other justice and reparation initiatives is stalled by political infighting. Victims have also seen little progress through the courts. Out of the tens of thousands of alleged crimes of sexual violence committed against women and girls during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, fewer than 40 cases have been prosecuted by either the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, or by state or other courts since 1995.

In early 2014, people took to the streets to protest the dire economic conditions in the country. According to the International Labour Organization, unemployment averages at almost 45 per cent, with youth unemployment running at over 60 per cent. The demonstrations reflect how successive governments have failed to guarantee basic social and economic rights over the almost twenty years following the armed conflict.

An elderly woman stands between markers of fresh graves in a Sarajevo cemetery 1993, protected from sniper fire by the dense fog.



AP Photo/Hans Krauss

SYRIA | People under siege today

ACTION ON SYRIA: *For our action this month, we have chosen to focus on the people in Syria. Many men, women and children in different parts of Syria are living under similar siege conditions as were described in The Cellist of Sarajevo. More than one third of the entire population has been displaced and hundreds of thousands are living in desperate circumstances. Please take action to help them.*

The crisis in Syria

Three years on, what started as peaceful reform demonstrations in Syria have escalated into a prolonged and brutal internal conflict, leaving some 100,000 dead, hundreds of thousands injured, and over 9 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

In early February 2011, the “Arab Spring” rebellion rocking the Middle East and North Africa spread to Syria. Small pro-reform demonstrations quickly swelled into mass protests in mid-March after a violent crackdown on the city of Dera’a. Government forces responded with brute force, deploying tanks in residential neighbourhoods and using snipers to shoot at peaceful crowds. Thousands were arrested, hundreds disappeared, and many tortured – some to death. By the end of the year an armed resistance had formed. Tens of thousands began to flee

their homes and communities in search of safety, either to other parts of Syria or in neighbouring countries.

Throughout the conflict, serious abuses – some amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity – have been committed by all parties to the conflict. In addition to arbitrary detention, torture, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances, and unfair trials, government forces regularly engaged in indiscriminate attacks including aerial bombardment. During revenge attacks on neighbourhoods believed to be sympathetic to rebel fighters, thousands of people were unlawfully killed and homes systematically burned and looted to further terrorize the civilian population. Opposition forces – made up of a burgeoning number of rebel groups – have also unlawfully killed civilians through indiscriminate attacks and reckless use of weapons in residential neighbourhoods. Some groups have tortured and killed captured members of the army and security forces, including suspected supporters of the government and suspected informers. Others have taken civilian hostages. The use of child soldiers, often in support roles, has also been reported.

Residents wait for food aid from the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) at the besieged al-Yarmouk camp, south of Damascus, 2014



Cities under siege

Around 250,000 civilians are living under siege across the country. Most live in areas besieged by Syrian government forces and have been effectively confined for a year or more in areas being bombed and shelled on a regular basis. Armed opposition forces have also created siege-like conditions in some areas by blocking the delivery of much-needed supplies. The situation for the people involved is desperate. They lack food, medical supplies and fuel. Some have resorted to killing and eating cats and dogs.

Among the worst hit are the inhabitants of Yarmouk, a refugee camp just outside Damascus and home to 20,000 Palestinian refugees and Syrian civilians. Completely cut off from food and medical supplies in July 2013, government forces and allies have repeatedly carried out attacks, including air raids and shelling with heavy weapons, on civilian buildings such as schools, hospitals and a mosque in Yarmouk. Some 128 people have starved to death.

Starving civilians as a method of warfare is a war crime.

Decades of repression

Prior to the conflict, Syria had been under a continuous national state of emergency since 1963, and has been an ongoing concern of Amnesty International for several decades. The authorities used the wide “emergency powers” to punish and silence their critics, including political activists, human rights defenders, bloggers, and Kurdish minority rights activists. Critics were arbitrarily arrested and detained for long periods without trial or imprisoned after grossly unfair trials. State forces and the police committed torture and ill-treatment with impunity, with some prisoners dying in detention or disappearing. Human rights organizations could not obtain licences to operate, exposing members who were lawyers to disciplinary action by the government-controlled Bar Association. Journalists ran the risk of imprisonment on charges of spreading “false news”. Hundreds of dissidents, including former detainees and their relatives, were either barred from travelling abroad or working in the public sector. Women faced discrimination in law and practice as well as gender-based violence, including so-called honour killings.

TAKE ACTION

As with the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international community has repeatedly struggled to find a way to effectively address the worsening situation in Syria. In times of crisis, governments look to the United Nations Security Council to take decisive action. The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Under the UN Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.

In February 2014, the United Nations Security Council finally overcame internal divisions to pass resolution 2139 calling on all parties to the conflict in Syria to put an end to all forms of violence and to stop human rights violations, including those amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It also calls on them to lift sieges of populated areas and to allow unhindered humanitarian access for UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and across borders.

Here are two actions you can take:

- 1 Add your name to Amnesty’s global call to implement UNSC resolution 2139, end the siege of Yarmouk and protect civilians in Syria:
www.amnesty.ca/syria_action
- 2 Get others involved. Share our online action through Facebook and Social media. You can also use the attached paper petition to gather additional signatures.

Please note that this month, we don’t have a sample letter you can write. The action is a worldwide Amnesty International petition to the United Nations Security Council. You can add your name to this petition on line at the link above, or you can use the sample petition sheet attached in the email that came with this discussion guide to sign your name and collect signatures from your family, friends and colleagues.

Please return any signed petition sheets by May 1 to Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 1H9.

MORE ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Amnesty International

Syria: a human rights and humanitarian crisis
www.amnesty.ca/our-work/priority-countries/syria

Squeezing the life out of Yarmouk: War crimes against besieged civilians. March 2014. www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/syriareport10march14_0.pdf

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Briefing to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: 55th Session of the Committee (8 – 26 July 2013). Highlights concerns relating to human rights violations committed during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR63/003/2013/en

Other resources from Human Rights Education Associates

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
www.icty.org

Crimes of War Education Project (explaining the laws of war) www.crimesofwar.org

Films and books

Miss Sarajevo, directed by Bill Carter (Dreamchaser Productions, 1995). This documentary chronicles an elaborate beauty contest carried out under mortar fire. The film captures the dark humor of the besieged Sarajevans and their stubborn refusal to be demoralized.

Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo, written and directed by John Zaritsky (PBS Frontline documentary, 1993). The true story of a Muslim girl and a Serbian boy who fell in love defying the hatred in their country, but died in each other's arms at the hands of snipers' bullets trying to escape.

Savrseni krug (The Perfect Circle), by Ademir Kenovic (Argus Film Produktie, 1997). During war time, the bonds forged by those struggling to survive the ravages of battle can be stronger than blood ties. An emotionally-distant Bosnian poet discovers this bond when he befriends a pair of war orphans and helps them search for their last surviving family member.

Welcome to Sarajevo by Michael Winterbottom (Channel Four Films, 1997, UK). The story of an American reporter in Sarajevo and his attempt, along with an American aid worker, to help 200 hundred orphaned children to escape their conditions.

Carter, Bill. *Fools Rush In: A True Story of Love, War, and Redemption*. New York: Wenner Books, 2005.

Filipovic, Zlata. *Zlata's Diary*. New York: Penguin, 1993.

Halilbegovich, Nadja. *My Childhood Under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd, 2006.

Hemon, Aleksandar. *The Question of Bruno*. New York: Random House, Inc., 2000.

Kubert, Joe. *Fax from Sarajevo*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse, 1996.

Nicholson, Michael. *Natasha's Story*. London: Pan Macmillan, 1996.

Richards, Roger. *Remember Sarajevo*.
http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0302/rr_intro.html

Simon, Scott. *Pretty Birds*. New York: Random House, 2005.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding The Pain Of Others*. New York: Picador, 2005.

Coming up May 2014!

What We All Long For, by Dionne Brand,
recommended by guest reader Mark Kingwell

Award-winning writer Dionne Brand powerfully delves into uncharted aspects of urban life, the bittersweetness of youth and the secrets families try to hide.



Jason Chow