

# THE IMPACT OF WAR



Ranka  
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Young people are often the forgotten victims of war. Seventeen-year old **RANKA TOSANOVIC** writes of her experiences during the war in Bosnia.

The war is a destroyer and people are the sufferers. People are very complicated - they will make problems even if there aren't any. People are so full of hate for one another that they make stupid reasons to have a war even if they are very well aware of what war is. It will cause damage to both sides and ruin the lives of people.

Today there are many civil wars around the world but for very stupid reasons, you could actually say for nothing. But once it starts it is too late to stop it. Many people die, or become invalids, or have to find new places to live, the cities become destroyed and there are many other complications.

If people are lucky enough to have money, or someone who can help them, they can find a better and safer place for them to live. But people who have moved away from their country of birth will suffer a need to return. Usually the older people suffer more than young people. No place is the same as your country of birth and it never will be.

This is what happened in Bosnia during the long period of war. Before the war started there was not only one nationality of people but three, which all lived on the same land. They are Serbian, Croatian and Muslim. Now there are mainly Muslims living in Bosnia, and there are some Serbs and Croats. Croats have their own little country.

My own life was ruined during the war in Bosnia in 1992. Because people knew that the war would start the

students' education was interrupted and we had to skip about half of the school year or grade. I was in grade two at that time and I was eight and a half years old.

Most of the people didn't take this matter seriously, they all thought it would only be for a little while, a few months maybe, and then it would stop. But that is where they were wrong. It lasted much longer than a few months - it lasted for about six years. Even when it stopped it was not much different. People were trying to survive in every way they could, to make their lives as good as they could be in every possible way.

My family also thought the war would only last for a short time. We didn't bring many things with us, we didn't bring photos that were very valuable to us and I didn't bring my favourite doll with me. The rule was that only women and little children could exit the country so my father couldn't come with us. Like many others, he had to stay to protect our country. Children over 12 years of age had to stay and old people could go.

From that moment on nothing was ever the same as before. The situation was really bad. We escaped on time, we were headed towards Belgrade, Serbia, to a certain place. It was a big house - the owner was from Bosnia so he felt that he could help some people. He had many mattresses in the house so everyone would have a place to sleep. He had been given food and other valuables from the Red Cross to be able to feed



us all. He had about 40 people living there. After some time he was on television in Serbia because of all the people he had helped.

We stayed in the house for only two nights. My grandfather escaped about a month before us because he knew something would happen and he wanted to be safe. He is familiar with wars because he has lived through World War 2. He was in the same suburb or village as us, so we went to find him and we stayed together after this. My grandfather was a brick-layer so he knew lots of people.

Then we traveled on to another place where we rested and talked to a Serbian family who were very nice. They had a weekend house so we asked them if we could stay there, they said yes, only until the war stops. So this is where we lived in Serbia for about three and a half years.

It wasn't great but we were sort of happy and accepted it, because nobody had a good life during this time, except some who took advan-

tage of the war and were stealing. We received help from the Red Cross and sometimes we would get some money from our cousins in Australia. We made a few small gardens and we were not hungry. We lived in a village, which was an advantage to us because we could get food more easily than if we lived in the city.

The neighbors were very nice and friendly people, but not everyone was nice. Even though we spoke the same language, with a few different words and a different accent, many people in Serbia didn't like us. They always called us refugees, which wouldn't make you feel so good. We had to start a new life from the beginning, from nothing. We had to make new friends and to get used to a new life. We actually had to forget our past life and the people we knew.

We went to school and the children there were the same towards us. They all liked to look good and wore expensive clothes. Not everyone was able to but still it was a big deal to

kids. I finished grade five and started grade six and then we all came to Australia.

We again started a new life, we had to learn a new language, and we realized that Australia is a multicultural country, which makes it special. We only have a few cousins here. Others are trying to come to Australia now but because they didn't come earlier it's very difficult know if they will be accepted – so far they always get rejected. Life is not perfect here, it can't always be anyway, but we are happy and that is the most important thing.

We are grateful to countries like Australia because they have helped lots of people to escape from their ruined lives caused by war. Australia is very peaceful and it's war free. I hope that Australians realize, through the stories of others, how dangerous war is and that they should never have one. ■

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