

Srebrenica 'not genocide' - Serbia's President Nikolic



The Srebrenica victims' remains were found in mass graves years after the war

Serbia's new president, Tomislav Nikolic, has said the Srebrenica massacre of 1995 was not genocide.

"There was no genocide in Srebrenica," he told Montenegrin state television, but said that "grave war crimes" were committed.

He took office in Serbia on Thursday.

The massacre of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys by Bosnian Serb forces in 1995 has been recognised as genocide by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague and the International Court of Justice.

"In Srebrenica, grave war crimes were committed by some Serbs, who should be found, prosecuted and punished," said Mr Nikolic, widely seen as a nationalist.

The Srebrenica crime figures in the genocide charges levelled against Gen Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb wartime commander, and his wartime political chief Radovan Karadzic, both on trial at the war crimes court in The Hague.

"It is very difficult to indict someone and to prove before a court that an event qualifies as a genocide," Mr Nikolic said, without referring to the international court rulings.

The massacre happened just days after Bosnian Serb troops led by Gen Mladic overran the UN-protected enclave of Srebrenica.

Mr Nikolic's predecessor as president, Boris Tadic, apologised to relatives of Srebrenica's victims in 2005 and attended memorial ceremonies there.