

Two Bosniak Muslims in Sarajevo who risked their own lives to hide a Jewish friend during the Holocaust.

Zeyneba Hardaga

Josef and Rivka Kabilo, Sephardic Jews, were longtime residents of Sarajevo who lived next door to their Muslim neighbors, Zeyneba and Mustafa Hardaga. Josef rented land from Mustafa where he built a successful pipe manufacturing company.

When war came in April 1941, the Kabilo's home was destroyed, and Zeyneba brought them to her home, where they and their children were welcomed by the Hardaga family, as well as Zeyneba's brother, Izet, and his wife, Bachriya.

As soon as he could, Josef Kabilo traveled with his family to the Italian zone of occupation, but he was arrested, put into forced labor, and brought back to Sarajevo. Escaping his captors, Josef knocked on the door of the Hardaga family once again. There he stayed until he could make good his escape, rejoined his family in Mostar, and together they found refuge with the partisans.

The Kabilo family later immigrated to Israel and, for years, Josef championed the story of the Hardagas with Yad Vashem. In January 1984, Yad Vashem recognized Mustafa Hardaga, Zeyneba Hardaga-Sušić, and Izet and Bachriya Hardaga as Righteous Among the Nations. They were the first Muslims to be given the award.

Postscript: A few years later, in 1992, the city of Sarajevo was besieged, and now it was the hero who needed rescuing. Although the rest of her family had passed on, in February 1994, Zeyneba, her son-in-law, daughter, and granddaughter, were invited to come to Israel and left Sarajevo on a Jewish community/Joint Distribution Committee rescue convoy. A few weeks after her arrival, Zeyneba was welcomed to Israel by Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin.

Dervis Korkut

Dervis Korkut was a scholar and librarian in Sarajevo. Born in the Bosnian city of Travnik in 1888, he graduated with a degree in Islamic theology in 1914 from a university in Istanbul.

Dervis Korkut worked in various academic fields in Bosnia, and from 1937 until 1944 he was a researcher in Sarajevo's National Museum. That is where he not only came into contact with the legendary Sarajevo Hagaddah, he managed to spirit the legendary book away while a German general, Johann Hanns Fortner, was searching the museum for it.

Korkut's wife, Serveta, remembers that, aside from bringing home the famous book, he also brought a Jewish friend, Mira Papo. Dervis and Serveta hid Mira for five months until they could secure false travel papers for her. Mira then made her way to the partisans and remained in the Yugoslav Army until she emigrated to Israel in 1972, where she joined her son Davor.

Mira approached Yad Vashem to tell them about how she was saved by the Korkut family. Dervet and Serveta were awarded the prestigious Righteous Gentile award in December 1994.

Postscript: In March 1999, Serbian forces began ethnically cleansing the province of Kosovo. Lamija Jaha, an economist, and her husband, Vllaznim, an engineer, were among them. Lamija made sure she brought one precious document with her, and when they reached safety in the Macedonian city of Skopje, she went to the Jewish community and showed the document to its president, Victor Mizrahi. Victor picked up the phone, called his friends in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and told them he had with him the daughter of Dervis and Serveta Korkut, who had saved a Jewish life—and the Sarajevo Hagaddah. A few days later, Lamija and Vllaznim were on their way to Israel, and the Israeli government also flew their two daughters from Budapest to join them. When Lamija arrived at the airport in Tel Aviv, Davor, Mira's son, was waiting for them.

