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From: Ellis, Alex
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Attachments: 2023 11 09 Amb Djuric with Nat Ramonda pin.jpg

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Serbians Mark Armistice Day with Symbol of Resilience Championed by Serbia's Ambassador to the U.S.

While the poppy is widely recognized as the symbol of Armistice Day, did you know that Serbia has its own distinct symbol, setting it apart from the others?



Washington, D.C. - November 11, 2023 - Armistice Day, observed on November 11, commemorates the signing of the armistice between the Allied powers and Germany on November 11, 1918, marking the end of World War I. Since 2012, Serbia has observed "Armistice Day in World War I" as a national holiday, paying homage to the brave soldiers of the Kingdom of Serbia and the many innocent Serbian victims of the Great War.

Armistice Day is a solemn occasion that in Serbia not only commemorates the signing of the armistice in 1918 but also reflects on the immense sacrifices Serbia endured during World War I. The Great War was a time of profound suffering for Serbia, resulting in significant losses among its soldiers and civilian population. More than 1,300,000 Serbians were tragically lost in the line of fire and as a result of the harsh conditions, enemy attacks, and hardships. With almost a third of the then population, (including almost 60% of the male population) lost, Serbia remains the country that suffered the greatest loss in World War I per capita. These devastating losses underscore the gravity of the conflict and the enduring resilience of the Serbian people.

While the remembrance poppy is widely recognized for commemorating Armistice Day, Serbia has its own distinctive symbol for this occasion. The Serbian symbol of Armistice Day is the Natalie's Ramonda (Ramonda nathaliae) flower. A scarce species, endemic to the Balkans, including Serbia, North Macedonia, and parts of Greece, Natalie's Ramonda has distinct purple leaves and is known as a phoenix flower, because of its ability to be revived with just a few drops of water. The flower is named after Queen Natalija Obrenović, the queen of Serbia from 1882 to 1888.

The idea of using Natalie's Ramonda pin and the concept of this emblem as the official symbol of observing the Armistice Day in Serbia was developed by the current Serbian Ambassador to the U.S. Marko Djuric and Ambassador Aleksandar Ristic, Serbia's former Ambassador to Ethiopia and the Seychelles. This badge, officially in use since 2013, gracefully combines the image of the resilient flower with the iconic Commemorative Medal of the Great Serbian Retreat, awarded in recognition of extraordinary bravery to those Serbian soldiers who survived the retreat through Albania. Also referred to as the Albanian Commemorative Medal, the medal is a symbol that represents the suffering and hardships faced by the Serbian people during the retreat, often referred to as Albania's Golgotha. The medal also serves as a poignant reminder of the arduous journey and sacrifices made by Serbian soldiers and civilians as they retreated through challenging terrain, further underlining Serbia's resurgence and unwavering spirit in the face of adversity.

Natalie's Ramonda plays a central role in Armistice Day in Serbia. A badge, adorned with this symbol, is worn with reverence during the week leading up to the holiday and on the day itself. In commemorating Armistice Day in Serbia, Serbians honor the historical significance of November 11, 1918, and celebrate the resilience, valor, and the ability to rise and reinvigorate the entire nation after the harshest war adversities, personified by Natalie's Ramonda. The vibrant purple petals of this exceptional flower encapsulate not only the suffering endured during the Great War but also the triumph of the Serbian people and their nation's revival. Natalie's Ramonda stands as a living emblem of Serbia's strength, resilience, and its unwavering commitment to honoring the sacrifices of the past.

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