

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - A Netherlands-based law firm is preparing to file a suit against the Dutch government and the United Nations seeking damages for almost 8,000 Bosnians who lost relatives in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

"We think we have strong case," lawyer Axel Hagedorn told Reuters. He and Marco Gerritsen head a 14-strong team from the firm Van Diepen Van der Kroef, which has spent two years preparing the suit, Hagedorn said.

Hagedorn accuses the Dutch armed forces and the United Nations of failing to protect the people in Srebrenica and of collaborating with the Bosnian Serb forces.

During the Bosnian war, Srebrenica became a supposed safe area guarded by a Dutch army unit operating under a U.N. mandate but the town was overrun by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995.

Some 8,000 Muslim men and boys were executed in the worst mass killing in Europe since World War Two.

The lawsuit will be filed within three to four months in front of a Dutch court, Hagedorn said.

"Attempts to talk to the Dutch government about a compensation for the relatives were not answered. We see a lawsuit as the only option," Gerritsen said.

He plans to set up a foundation for the relatives which would be funded by the Netherlands and the United Nations.

Six former Bosnian Serb officers are due to go on trial on July 14 at the U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague on charges of genocide related to the Srebrenica massacre.