

Respect for the victims is prerequisite for successful reconciliation

Today we remember the truly historic gesture of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, who on this date, 7 December 1970, kneeled before the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw to ask forgiveness for the crimes of the Nazi era. In doing so, he opened a new chapter of reconciliation between the peoples of Germany and Poland. At the same time, he opened a new chapter of Germany's future.

"The historic gesture of Chancellor Brandt reminds us of the importance of acknowledging the crimes and respecting all victims if a society is to heal and move forward. For a successful reconciliation process, victims deserve the utmost respect, while perpetrators deserve due judicial process. Leaders who aspire to be recognized as respecting and embracing European values must put truth, justice and reconciliation first, and under no circumstances can afford to find themselves on the wrong side of history by negating crimes or glorifying war criminals. This is especially important for a country like Bosnia and Herzegovina that aims to leave the consequences of a terrible war behind and turn towards a European future. For this purpose, I would like to recall the recent message from German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who, honouring the legacy of Willy Brandt, said that if a country wants to join the EU, there is no place for the denial of war crimes or the glorification of war criminals," said the High Representative, Valentin Inzko. He also added that we should be grateful to Willy Brandt and Germany for demonstrating that there are alternatives, better ways how to move forward for individuals and states.