

HR Urges BiH Parliament Leadership to Ensure Holding Elections in Mostar this Year

High Representative Valentin Inzko and PDHR Tamir Waser yesterday wrote to the leadership of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to urge adoption of a legal framework to ensure elections can be held in Mostar this year. The letter proposes changes to the election law, based on the framework document agreed by six parties last year, to create three cross-river city area electoral constituencies based on the existing city areas. These changes would be specifically for the purpose of holding elections this year and the city council elected would serve until 2016.

“The citizens of Mostar have been denied their basic democratic rights for too long,” said Inzko. “And the Parliamentary Assembly has an obligation to implement the ruling of the Constitutional Court, which it has failed to do for four years. Given the parties’ inability to put forward a credible plan in parliament, we have offered a concrete proposal for them to consider.”

The Central Election Commission has confirmed that if an election framework is in place by August 12, elections for the Mostar City Council can be held at the same time as the general elections on October 12. Therefore there is still time for elections to take place in Mostar together with the general elections. What is needed now is the political will to deliver what citizens deserve.

In its 2010 ruling, the BiH Constitutional Court tasked that the Election Law be changed first and that the Statute of Mostar then be amended to conform to it. There is therefore an opportunity for the City Council to put forward a new vision for the city.

“From the start, the City Council has had the authority to amend the Statute if it had a better idea on how to organize the city. But rather than suggest ways to improve things for all, political leaders blamed the international community for the city’s troubles while taking very good care of themselves. While citizens of Mostar have struggled to rebuild from the devastation of the war, political leaders have kept citizens hostages of ethnic agendas as a way to perpetuate a status quo which only serves at keeping them in power. This is especially true of SDA and HDZ BiH. Neither party has put forward a positive vision for Mostar, of how the city can grow and prosper and serve as an engine of growth for Herzegovina. They have only focused on what model will ensure that they control the largest sources of patronage, rather than which one will build a better Mostar for future generations,” said Waser.

Inzko added: “The lack of a City Council has real consequences – adopting a budget is much harder, over 5 million KM sitting in the city area accounts cannot be spent, and public companies are not able to function properly. In all three areas, city leaders have tried to work around the law but we’ve held a consistent view; the political failure to address the problem is not an excuse to ignore the law. Instead, they must implement the Constitutional Court verdict.”