

Statement by the High Representative/EU Special Representative On the Occasion of International Human Rights Day



Respect for human rights is the cornerstone of a functioning and just society. In Bosnia and Herzegovina real progress has been made in changing practices and attitudes that undermine or violate citizens' rights. But this is a huge task, and it is essential that work continues with determination and energy.

Human rights protection is a fundamental element in Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration. The European Union is founded on respect for the liberty and integrity of citizens.

The constitutional dialogue that must be carried forward in order to bring Bosnia and Herzegovina into line with the December 2009 ruling of the European Court for Human Rights is clearly an immediate political priority. The rights of large numbers of BiH citizens are being violated by their exclusion from aspects of public life and from appointment to certain public positions.

Freedom of expression is also cornerstone of democratic rights and freedoms. It is a basic right of every BiH citizen to live in a country where the media is free and where all can express their views without fear of political retribution. Attempts to

misuse publicly funded media for party political ends or harassment of journalists cannot be tolerated in a modern and democratic State.

In the same way, the foundation of any democratic State is the Rule of Law. Political pressure on independent judicial institutions undermines the rule of law as it is a direct attack on the independence of tribunals, an essential aspect to a fair trial.

Corruption and economic mismanagement violate the right of BiH citizens to live and work in a functioning society.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative call on the BiH political leadership to respect and protect citizens' human rights by accepting and encouraging free and fair public debate and by fostering a political consensus that will return this country to the path of growth and end the scourge of unemployment and poverty.