

The Fundamental Obligation of a Civilised Society



It is “the fundamental obligation of a civilised society to identify and lay to rest the mortal remains of war victims,” High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko said during a ceremony in Mostar today.

“There is a universe of loss in a single death,” the HR/EUSR said. “By identifying victims and documenting the circumstances in which they died, we can begin to make that universe less bleak, through respect and compassion.”

The HR/EUSR was speaking at the opening of an exhibition of photographs, entitled “Missing Lives”, sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the BiH Missing Persons Institute, and the International Commission on Missing Persons. He commended these organisations for their contribution to the search for missing persons and he said that they have the full support of the International Community and “the complete support of every decent citizen in this and in neighbouring countries.”

“The work of identifying victims and documenting the circumstances in which they died is central to the long and often painful process of recovery from conflict,” the HR/EUSR said.

He added that, “those who attempt to manipulate numbers of victims or who seek to turn the suffering of others to their own political advantage deserve contempt. Any effort to politicise the search for missing persons must be resolutely

resisted. One hundred thousand of our neighbours died. The suffering of those people and their families can only be addressed through constructive action – if, on the other hand, it is turned into a political issue, it will only be exploited.”

The HR/EUSR called on the BiH authorities to “do what you are legally and morally obliged to do, support those who are working to establish the truth about what happened to the disappeared; support those who are working to locate and recover their mortal remains.”

He said the pursuit of truth and justice “are the best tools with which to confront those who took part in violence and those who incited violence. By supporting the search for truth and justice we can help to diminish the likelihood that such violence will ever be repeated.”

The full text of the HR/EUSR’s speech can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.eu