

Minister Mixes Politics with Policing

In a letter sent to RS Interior Minister Darko Matijasevic this weekend, Principle Deputy High Representative Lawrence Butler noted with concern that the Minister has publicly mixed politics with policing.

The letter refers to a press conference held in Pale on 9 September, at which the RS Police announced details of investigations into alleged war crimes committed against Serbs.

Ambassador Butler noted that by allowing the details of investigations into war crimes to become public knowledge the Minister had contravened one of the basic principles of policing, which is to maintain the security of the investigative process to the maximum possible extent.

“Information of this nature should have been handed over the competent prosecutors quietly and professionally in order for them to do their job in a climate conducive to applying the Rule of Law,” Ambassador Butler said, adding that this is the only way to give them the best chance of securing a conviction.

The Principal Deputy High Representative pointed out that this is by no means the first press conference of this nature to be held during Minister Matijasevic’s term in office, and reminded the Minister that it is little more than three months since the High Representative issued a similar warning to the Police Director. He noted that the Director undertook not to make such public announcements in the future. “Your Ministry has yet again organised a press conference presenting information that is deliberately designed to raise concerns with the RS and BiH public, without appropriate evidence or an

independent assessment of a Prosecutor,” he said.

This represents political interference in policing.

“By actively organizing and conducting such a press conference the RS Minister of Interior has confirmed that he is incapable of respecting the first of the EC’s three principles for police reform – the elimination of political interference from police,” he said.

Ambassador Butler asked Minister Matijasevic to provide a report explaining the actions of his ministry by Wednesday, 21 September.