

Commission's Work Yet To Be Completed

Speaking during a visit today to the primary mass gravesite in Sandici, near Bratunac, where the FBiH Missing Persons Commission is conducting exhumations, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, said, "It is terrible to think of the suffering of those who died here. Nothing can diminish this loss and horror, but perhaps, at last, there is a change in consciousness emerging from this evil. This is the first exhumation of a mass grave identified by the authorities of the Republika Srpska."

This mass grave in Sandici is thought to contain the mortal remains of some 20 people killed in Srebrenica between 10 and 19 July 1995. This is the first exhumation of a mass grave based on information provided by the RS authorities to the Srebrenica Commission during the Commission's investigation. This site is one of 32 contained in the first part of the Report released last Friday and one of 11 previously unknown to the FBiH Missing Persons Commission.

Noting that sixteen boxes, which could contain more information, had been released only today by the RS Ministry of Interior the High Representative said, "the Srebrenica Commission continues its work, there is more information that must be revealed by the time the Commission finishes its work in mid-July". The Human Rights Commission within the BiH Constitutional Court will review the Report in mid July making a final judgement on it. "Any attempt to hide any information in this last phase of the Commission's work will be a matter of the gravest consequences", warned the High Representative.

"Without a full revelation and appropriate apology for these events, only if individual guilt is acknowledged and established, can the sense of collective responsibility that

hangs over Republika Srpska be absolved,” said the High Representative.

There are eight similar Decisions regarding the fate and whereabouts of victims in areas including Glamoc, Travnik, Foca and Visegrad, issued by the BiH Human Rights Chamber. Looking to the future the High Representative said, “I hope the experience of the Srebrenica Commission can point the way – there is a model here for the future. You cannot build a future without coming to terms with the past.” He stressed that “if the Srebrenica Commission ultimately proves a success – and we are not there yet – then, we may be building a wider path towards justice and reconciliation”.

The RS Government established the Commission to meet the BiH Human Rights Chamber’s Decision of 7 March 2003, which requires the RS authorities to release all information with respect to the fate and whereabouts of those who went missing in Srebrenica between 10 and 19 July 1995.