

High Representative Acts to Undermine Karadzic Support Network

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Friday launched a campaign to undermine the support network that has allowed indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic to evade arrest for the last seven years.

After enacting amendments to state and Entity banking legislation, so as to allow the banking agencies to block assets and prohibit future transactions of individuals and companies that obstruct the DPA, the High Representative designated two individuals, Momcilo Mandic and Milovan Bjelica, and two companies, Manco Oil and Privredna Bank Srpsko Sarajevo, as being obstructionist.

The banks are now legally obliged to ensure that the accounts of these individuals and companies are frozen. Possible penalties for not doing this include the removal of a bank's license to operate.

"Today, the IC has declared Momcilo Mandic and Milovan Bjelica financial outlaws for aiding and abetting Karadzic and obstructing the course of international justice," the High Representative said during a press conference. He said that Mandic, a known war profiteer, had acted as Karadzic's financier, while Bjelica, who has links with arms dealing, smuggling and extortion, has served as Karadzic's go-between with the outside world. In a separate Decision issued on Friday, the High Representative removed Bjelica from his position as Chairman of the Srpsko Sarajevo Municipal Assembly.

As of today, all bank accounts in the names of these two individuals and these two companies will be frozen and transferred to the Central Bank. Those concerned will not be

able to open new bank accounts, or carry out any financial transaction in this country. They can no longer do business in BiH in their own names. Anyone else carrying out transactions on their behalf will also be listed.

The High Representative noted that the Karadzic support network has “siphoned off money from the citizens of the RS in various ways, in particular through criminal activity, corruption in the public utilities, and tax evasion.” He said that this network has denied justice to the people of BiH and held the country hostage.

“Karadzic needs to go to The Hague for justice to be done,” the High Representative said. “And Karadzic needs to go to The Hague if Republika Srpska is to shed its international image as a safe-haven for war criminals and organized crime – a reputation that has frightened off the investment and jobs the RS needs.”

He described the people around Karadzic as “curses” on the Republika Srpska. “They have in effect robbed the people of Republika Srpska twice. First, through their criminal activities. And secondly, by denying Republika Srsпка the investment it needs to create jobs and prosperity.”

The High Representative said that Friday’s initiative was not about establishing criminal guilt. “That is a matter for the courts,” he said. “These actions are about disrupting Karadzic’s support network in very obvious and practical ways. If you want to kill this poisonous tree, you need to go after its roots. These actions are about making it harder for Karadzic to hide, harder for him to run. These actions are also a warning. A warning to all those who are also helping Karadzic evade arrest. This is the start of a process, not its end. If you are part of the network helping Karadzic, start considering your options. Get out now. Or face the consequences later.”