

Mayor Alagic Suspended

Today, the High Representative, Carlos Westendorp, has suspended Mehmed Alagic, Mayor of Sanski Most, from office for failure to support the implementation of the Dayton Accords, respect the Rules of the Road, and promote the Rule of Law within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The suspension follows repeated calls on Mr Alagic to resign or suspend his functions pending the outcome of investigations into his alleged abuse of public office. At a time when Bosnia and Herzegovina is applying for accession to the Council of Europe, it is of utmost importance that the country's elected representatives adhere to European legal norms and practice. Under those, officials who are under investigation for abuse of public office and/or public funds, either resign or suspend their functions until the allegations against them have been fully investigated and the judicial process reached conclusion.

Further, the High Representative is disturbed by the fact that Mr Alagic tried to invoke immunity despite a very clear ruling by the Federation Supreme Court under which he is not entitled to immunity.

The High Representative also notes that Mr Alagic has co-edited a book about the events in Sanski Most during the war, which contains a list of 292 alleged war criminals. This book was published by the Sanski Most Municipality and is in use in the local schools. Under the so-called Rules of the Road adopted in Rome on 18 February 1996 as part of the Rome Agreement, only the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is authorized to determine who "may be arrested and/or detained for serious violations of international humanitarian law." A letter sent by the OHR and OSCE to the Presidency on 24 October 1997 clarified that "all police, judicial and other relevant officials must be instructed that they shall not: 1) circulate, distribute or refer to lists of war crimes suspects other than the list of persons indicted by ICTY and the list of cases in which ICTY has found sufficient evidence under the Rules of the Road." The Presidency subsequently distributed this instruction to the relevant authorities.

The High Representative has also annulled Alagic's previous appointment of a temporary replacement as mayor and authorized the Municipal Assembly to appoint a mayor pro tempore for Sanski Most.