

HVIDRA Open Letter

HVIDRA, the Bosnian Croat veterans' and invalids' association, yesterday again addressed the international community, this time in the form of an open letter to the High Representative. HVIDRA sees the recent attempted murder of a Croat policeman in Travnik as justification of its position, and takes the opportunity to demand a third entity, without which, they say, there can never be security for the Croat people here.

HVIDRA accuses the High Representative of applying double standards in his treatment of the Bosniacs and the Croats, which only encourages the Bosniacs in their efforts to create a unitary BiH. HVIDRA alleges that the HR is hesitating in his response to the Travnik incident. It even sees pro-Bosniac favouritism in the HR's recent suspension of the Mayor of Bugojno, Dzevad Mlaco.

The HR understands the concerns of HVIDRA and other similar organisations. He accepts that they represent Croat people who suffered greatly in the war, and has every sympathy with that suffering. But he insists that they must be careful not to allow their emotions to be manipulated by elements of the Bosnian Croatian leadership for their own political ends.

The HR would like to make the following points. First, he deplores the recent attack in Travnik. International support for the local police who are investigating this and other crimes against Croats has been going on for some time. He is confident that the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

Second, there is no question of applying double standards to the two principal peoples of the Federation. For example, OHR is constantly harangued by Sarajevo veterans' organisations complaining they are being unfairly treated under the law on property return. Our response is the same as it is to everybody: everybody has the right to return to the property they occupied before the war, without exception.

Nor is there any hidden agenda to assist the Bosniacs in the creation of a unitary state. Our job is to implement the DPA, which specifies a nation of two entities and three peoples of equal weight and importance. The HR says it again: without the Bosnian Croats, there can be no Bosnian state. The state constitution protects and insists upon a state with two entity governments, not a unitary state. A third entity is simply anti-Dayton, an agreement that both President Tudjman and representatives of the Bosnian Croats signed up to.

The more general point is this: the HR strongly believes that the interests of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be best served by a spirit of inclusiveness, not of divisiveness. The Croats are to be commended on the way they have cooperated with the IC in some areas, particularly ICTY. The HR takes the concerns of HVIDRA and its sister organisations very seriously indeed, and is happy to enter into a dialogue on the future of the Federation within the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.