



HR Inzko: Authorities need to honour their pledge and implement Sejdić-Finci ruling

The end of the year is usually a time for reflection, looking back at our successes and our failures in the past year, and making plans for the future. For BiH politicians, there is cause for celebration, but also for disappointment. We have witnessed Bosnia and Herzegovina making ground-breaking progress on its path towards the EU, but we have also been faced by serious challenges to the constitutional order and institutions of the country.

Yet there is one issue that has been left unresolved for seven years, and that is the European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) ruling in the case of *Sejdić and Finci v. BiH*. On 22nd of December 2009, the ECHR ruled that Bosnia and Herzegovina has failed to uphold the right to equal participation in decision-making bodies for all its citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

For the past seven years, the political leadership has been claiming that they want to build an inclusive, tolerant, modern, European society, while at the same time treating some citizens as less equal than others. This cannot go on any longer. Let me remind you that the Council of the EU has asked the European Commission to pay special attention to the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling when preparing its opinion on BiH's EU membership application. The Sejdić-Finci ruling is based on the principles of equality of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, beliefs or gender, and its implementation will contribute to the establishing of a democratic and well-functioning society. This obligation will not go away.

There have been some encouraging signs. The BiH Presidency has unanimously adopted the Master Plan for the EU integration process, which includes a pledge to implement the ruling by the end of January 2017. Presidency member Dragan Čović has repeated this pledge in his letter to EU officials. The OHR welcomes this commitment, and we urge the authorities on all levels not to let this momentum and commitment go to waste. All BiH citizens have waited far too long. Do not disappoint them again.