

Comprehensive measures needed to eradicate gender-based violence in BiH



With a minute of silence, High Representative Christian Schmidt and the staff of the Office of the High Representative expressed their deep condolences to the families and friends of those killed and injured on 11 August in Gradačac.

On this day of mourning, the High Representative stated that BiH on all levels must do more on the prevention of all forms of violence, and, as the current state of society shows, especially violence against women and girls, and domestic violence. Home should be a place for people to feel the most secure, and when that is not the case, public institutions need to step up and do their maximum. Special attention needs to be invested with regard to the standards of services provided to the victims of domestic violence, from their first contact with the police to the availability and quality of shelters. Protective measures against gender-based violence must be easily and equally accessible and effective in all parts of the country.

Greater focus also needs to be put on the spreading of knowledge, training and accountability of the judiciary, including prosecutors, and police officers, especially in regard to BiH's international obligations when it comes to the prevention of gender-based violence.

The entire society should stand up for making offensive acts against women unacceptable. Downplaying of violence or disregarding the consequences for the victims seriously increases the risk of more such incidents. The prevention of violence starts with education and the awareness of the principle of peaceful conflict resolution.

“What happened in Gradačac is yet another indication that the victim protection system in BiH is seriously flawed. I urge relevant authorities on all levels to take immediate action and develop a comprehensive set of measures to better protect women and girls, as well as everyone else, against gender-based and other forms of violence,” said the High Representative. Violence is unacceptable and must be condemned by both women and men.

“Protection of life and integrity, human rights, are embedded in the BiH Constitution and the Dayton Peace Agreement. These are not merely words on paper. It is a responsibility for everyone in BiH. I too share the commitment to contribute to a coordinated effort to work on developing the most effective measures to protect all BiH citizens from violence,” said the High Representative.