

Cynicism over Kravice



The commemoration planned in Kravice on 15 July is “a first-rate example of cynical manipulation by both RS authorities and certain individual representatives of the families,” said Principal Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian today. “The victims’ families deserve better: from the local police, from the RS Authorities, and from those who claim to represent them”.

The event planned on 15 July was to commemorate the heinous murder on 13 July 1995 against some 1,500 men and boys removed from Srebrenica.

On 15 July the District Court in Bijeljina rejected a request from the Bratunac Police to ban the gathering of Bosniaks in Kravice village that day, but the Court’s decision came too late to prevent local police turning away busses bound for Kravice.

The RS Prime Minister, after calling the proposed event ‘provocative’, publically announced the RS Ministry of Interior’s intention to stop the commemoration. Local police had it within their power to ban the event, but for unknown reasons sought endorsement of this decision from the Bijeljina District Court instead.

Despite receiving the request to hold the Kravice gathering days earlier, local police presented their request to the Bijeljina court less than 24 hours before the planned event. This has raised suspicions that the police delayed

intentionally their request so that the Court would not have time to react but the Police could avoid responsibility for banning the event themselves.

The Court's Decision, after the Police had already turned busses away, was that there was no basis to prevent the gathering and indicates that the goal was not to incite religious or ethnic hatred.

The organizers of the event unfortunately made it easy for the RS Police and the Bratunac Municipal Assembly to act in such a cynical manner. This was the first time a formal commemoration had been planned at this site and Serbs in the Kravice community expressed concern about it as did the owners of the warehouse where the murders occurred.

Despite the best efforts of the International Community, local elected officials and Islamic community leaders to address concerns, find ways to avoid confrontation and ensure the commemoration passed in a dignified manner, one group chose to proceed in the knowledge that they would be turned away.

That decision has set back the prospect for finding a solution. "This is all the more regrettable because it was avoidable," said PDHR Gregorian. "It is clear that in sensitive areas such as Srebrenica, Bratunac, and Kravice, careful, long-term planning and dialogue are the only way to succeed. Regrettably, none of those elements was evident with regard to the proposed event at Kravice. What is needed besides good will is a comprehensive program for observances, and planning should begin now to avoid future problems."