

Former Police Officers Have a Right to Demonstrate

The United Nations should consider establishing a process for reviewing cases where police officers failed to secure certification by the International Police Task Force, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, argued in his weekly column, which appeared today in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Vecernji list*.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative noted that this Sunday, which is UN Human Rights Day, would be an apposite moment for the UN to institute a new policy on the issue of decertified police in BiH, and he expressed solidarity with former police officers who have announced plans to demonstrate in Sarajevo on Sunday.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling pointed out that he has publicly supported a review process since before taking up his position as High Representative and EU Special Representative, and that throughout 2006 he has lobbied for a change in the UN policy on this issue.

“In April this year during my first briefing as High Representative to the UN Security Council, I took up the case of the decertified officers, calling on the Security Council to respond positively to the calls for a review mechanism to be established. Over the summer, I dispatched members of my staff to New York to discuss the issue in detail with UN officials. Again at the start of November, I raised the matter, specifically and at length, with the Security Council,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote. He added, however, that, “My view on this matter is not the one that counts. Neither the Office of the High Representative nor the EU Police Mission can provide for a review process for individuals denied certification. We

do not have responsibility for the IPTF and its legacy. That rests with the United Nations. It is therefore for the United Nations to act.”

The High Representative and EU Special Representative emphasised that the issue at stake is not whether the IPTF process was valid; nor is it necessarily the case that a review process would result in large numbers of officers securing re-appointment.

“The IPTF succeeded in identifying a large number of individuals who were not suitable to work in law-enforcement agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina . By doing this it succeeded in raising the credibility of the police throughout the country and enhanced their capacity to do their job,” he wrote. “The issue now is whether those individuals who were denied certification by the IPTF should have the possibility of having their cases reviewed by the United Nations. I believe, and have always believed, that the United Nations should seriously consider establishing such a review mechanism. I am still hoping that the United Nations will act and consider establishing a review mechanism that is just and fair. Since Sunday’s demonstration will coincide with UN Human Rights Day, it may provide a golden opportunity for the United Nations to resolve this issue.”

The text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative’s weekly column can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.