

High Representative Removes Donji Vakuf Mayor from Office

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Monday issued a Decision removing Kemal Terzic from his position as Mayor of Donji Vakuf. The Decision, which takes immediate effect, bars Mr Terzic from holding any official, elective or appointive public office and from running in elections or for office within political parties.

The High Representative issued this Decision because Mr Terzic has consistently worked to prevent the return of refugees to their homes in the Donji Vakuf municipality.

“This Decision is first and foremost a warning to anyone who stands in the way of refugees returning to their homes, that this will not be tolerated,” the High Representative said. “The right of refugees and DPs to return to their homes is fundamental to everything we are doing in this country.”

The High Representative said the Decision would help the Muslims of Srebrenica to return to their homes, as it will enable Serbs temporarily occupying accommodation in Srebrenica, Bratunac and Gradiska, to return to their homes in Donji Vakuf, which they have been unable to do because of obstruction by Mr Terzic’s administration.

“Kemal Terzic claims to be defending the interests of the local Bosniak population,” the High Representative said, “but in fact he is harming the interests of some of the most vulnerable Bosniaks, including the people who have lost most in the war.”

The High Representative said that Mr Terzic had issued statements calculated to intimidate minorities, that he had discouraged the allocation of municipal and cantonal resources for rebuilding returnees’ property, that he had protected

double occupants from eviction, and that he had opposed the allocation of municipal funds for alternative accommodation for DPs. He added that Mr Terzic had personally purchased and occupied a claimed apartment, "a completely irresponsible act from someone in his position."

"This removal is a warning to any mayor or public official who stands in the way of the return process," the High Representative concluded.