

High Representative Says Srebrenica Working Group Must Be Reconvened Without Delay

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, has laid out the further steps that must now be taken in order to complete the work of the RS Government's Srebrenica Commission, so that all those who participated in the Srebrenica Massacre are identified and brought to justice.

In a letter to RS Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic, the High Representative has responded to the Report of the Working Group for Implementation of the Conclusions Presented in the Final Report on Srebrenica. The Working Group's Report was presented to the High Representative on 31 March.

The High Representative recognized that the report is a serious piece of work, but agreed with the Working Group's opinion that the report is incomplete and that more work needs to be done in order to fulfill the requirements set out in December.

He expressed his concern that this was primarily because its work was hindered by lack of full cooperation from the RS Interior Ministry, noting that the RS Interior Ministry failed to provide specific data on several hundred individuals deployed in Srebrenica in July 1995 under the direct or indirect auspices of the RS.

The RS Ministry of Defence also failed to cooperate fully. Rather than providing a list of RS Army participants in the Srebrenica events as was requested, it provided the Working Group with a list of 25,000 individuals deployed in the Srebrenica area in July 1995, without defining which of these individuals were attached to units involved in the massacre.

Consequently, the High Representative has informed Prime Minister Bukeylovic that the Working Group must be reconvened without delay, with the following mandate:

- To require the RS Interior Ministry to provide the missing information by 31 May
- To ensure that all materials provided to the Srebrenica Commission are forwarded to the Working Group by 31 May
- To establish the reasons for the inadequate VRS response
- To complete the list of names (currently standing at 892) of those implicated in the Massacre who are currently employed in BiH or RS institutions, and
- To forward this completed list to the BiH Prosecutor and to the ICTY.

The High Representative has instructed Prime Minister Bukeylovic to require the RS Government representative to attend future Working Group meetings and to ensure that the Working Group has the full resources it needs in order to complete its work.

In his letter, the High Representative made it clear that he expects the RS to ensure that all information is made fully available to the ICTY and to BiH's prosecutors. Any further action against those named, where appropriate, will be taken through due judicial process.

In order not to impede further investigation and action by The Hague and BiH prosecutors, the High Representative said that he had been asked by Carla del Ponte, the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, not to publish the list of names in the Report's annexes as this could impede or damage further investigations and subsequent legal action undertaken by The Hague or by the BiH prosecutors. However, the High Representative has decided that the report of the Working Group, without the list of names, will be available to the public in the coming days.

Concluding his letter, he reminded Prime Minister Bukeylovic

of the crucial importance of the Working Group's task. "The mandate of the Working Group is the mandate of the RS Government, specifically of the RS Prime Minister. I look to you and your government to participate and support it fully."