

High Representative Urges End to Inflammatory Rhetoric

Inflammatory rhetoric has to stop and politicians need to demonstrate that they can be leaders and healers, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly column, which appeared in the BiH press today.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling said that words matter, that inflammatory rhetoric raises tensions and that this, in turn, can escalate into violence in a society where weapons are everywhere, alcohol plentiful and the summer long and hot.

“Given this country’s recent past, anyone standing for election and all office-holders have a duty to behave responsibly in both word and deed,” the High Representative/EU Special Representative wrote in an article that was published in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*.

“Statements clearly designed to enflame tensions – including loose talk about referendums or the forcible abolition of an entity – are unacceptable.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling pointed out that the rhetoric has been intensifying for several months now and, despite last week’s shocking attack on Alija Izetbegovic’s grave, has not abated.

He recognised that initial reactions to this outrage were generally moderate and designed to cool passions, pointing, in particular, to the measured words of Bakir Izetbegovic and Dragan Cavic.

By contrast, he also expressed disappointment at the comments of Zoran Djeric to the effect that the grave attack was a Bosniac attempt to divert attention from the suffering of Serbs, and amazement at the comments of Nikola Spiric, blaming

Bosniac extremists for the attack and linking it to the 1994 Markale market massacre.

“Since none of these individuals has presented any evidence to support their statements, it is difficult not to conclude that they were deliberately seeking to fan the flames of intolerance,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote. “Such behaviour is not worthy of anyone seeking to hold public office in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

If politicians do not stop using inflammatory rhetoric, how can citizens have confidence in them managing power responsibly, the High Representative/EU Special Representative asked in conclusion.

For the full text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative’s column, see <https://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presse/presa/>