

Remarks by High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko At the Memorial Ceremony for Victims of Genocide Srebrenica, 11 July 2009



Justice Paves the Way to Peace

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been working in Bosnia and Herzegovina for three months, and today I am in Srebrenica for the third time. It is the third time, but the feelings are always the same. Today, they are even stronger. One of these feelings is that of powerlessness.

Powerlessness, because we cannot give life back to anyone. Powerlessness, because we cannot dry a single tear of any mother. Among us today is one mother who lost, and will bury today, 13 relatives. Mother Saliha is here, mother of Nermin, and Ramo's wife. She too will bury her husband and her son. May they forever rest in peace.

We feel powerless because there are no words that could

describe this sorrow. On the other hand, with today's burial we are restoring dignity to the deceased. Dignity which, essentially, they never lost.

You know that a funeral is one of the most ancient human rights. I believe that mankind started the practice of burials more than fifty thousand years ago. That is the most ancient right. That right will be exercised today, for those who will be buried.

Our presence, however, is also a sign of solidarity. Namely, all those who died, as well as their relatives – they are not alone.

We are here with them, because we do not want to forget a single one of the deceased. If we were to forget the dead, it would be almost the same as killing them for the second time.

I am glad that people of goodwill from many countries are taking part in this solidarity of memory. I heard that many of my countrymen from Austria participated in the march from Tuzla to Srebrenica, but also one young man from Los Angeles, who is 18 years old and comes from a family with six children. Each year one child from this family spends a few weeks here in July. I want to thank all of them.

The problem of evil is as ancient as human society. Evil exists. It overwhelmed this place fourteen years ago. The task we face – citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we, friends of this country, everyone who has been bereaved – the task all of us face is to ensure that those who perpetrated this evil are brought to justice and to ensure that the terrible legacy of the Srebrenica Genocide does not imperil the lives and hopes of generations to come.

Evil exists – but it is in our power to make sure that it does not prevail.

As we remember the victims, as we think about our loved ones

here and remember all those who were killed, we must keep to the forefront of our thoughts the plain but sometimes difficult truth, that it is truth and justice, and not revenge, but truth and justice that pave the way to peace. It is justice that will staunch the hatred that was shown here. It is justice that will prevent the triumph of evil.

This is why we must do everything in our power to build in Bosnia and Herzegovina a society that can uphold the law, that can protect its citizens, that can ensure their physical safety, their freedom, their dignity and their fundamental rights. A just society. Part of that effort includes communicating clearly and accurately the nature and scale of crimes that were committed during the 1992-95 conflict.

You know that in January 2009 the European Parliament adopted a Resolution calling on all citizens, members of the European Union and Western Balkan countries to mark July 11 as a day of remembrance of the genocide committed in Srebrenica. It is important to understand the nature of this resolution – it does not call on citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to remember the genocide, but it calls on ALL Europeans to observe this day. This is not something only for those who were bereaved. Every right-thinking person will contemplate with horror and profound sorrow the terrible crime that was committed here. That is why today is a day of mourning not just for the people of Srebrenica but for all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all the people of Europe and the world.

No one must be allowed to deny or belittle the suffering of victims and their families, and no one must be allowed to misuse the memory of that suffering for their own political ends. There are still some who have failed to understand the terrible moral and human calamity that war crimes represent. In that lack of understanding are the seeds of fostering hatred in future generations. Everything must be done to prevent this hatred from perpetuating itself. It is our

commitment to educate and inform. Peace is built upon true information, on justice, and justice is built upon truth.

The most fitting memorial to those, who we have gathered here to remember and honour, is a Bosnia and Herzegovina that guarantees the dignity of its inhabitants.

Today, in this solemn place, I want to re-dedicate my own efforts to creating – as a monument to the victims of war crimes – a Bosnia and Herzegovina in which the descendants and friends and loved ones of those who died can live in dignity and peace.

That is a worthy task; I commit to it, and we all commit to it, with humility and respect.

To all the families, all relatives and bereaved ones, I extend my heartfelt condolences. To the deceased, we wish eternal peace in paradise. May they find a special place in paradise, and we are certain it is waiting for them. May they rest in peace in this cemetery.