

RS Authorities Responsible For The Work Of Their Srebrenica Commission

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, in conversation today with RS President, Dragan Cavic, and Prime Minister, Dragan Mikerevic underlined that he “will hold them personally responsible for ensuring the RS’s Srebrenica Commission is not yet another whitewash, but that it fulfils its mandate as set out by the Human Rights Chamber.” The HRC, in its Decision of 7 March 2003, ordered the RS to investigate the fate and whereabouts of those who went missing in Srebrenica during the period of the 10 to 19 July 1995. In response to the HRC Decision, the RS Government provided a report on 8 September 2003, which sets out the plan to establish a Commission to investigate.

The High Representative has monitored the work of the Commission set up by the RS. In view of the statements made yesterday by the Commission’s Chairman, Marko Arsovic, the High Representative is concerned that the Chairman himself has misunderstood the mandate of the Commission that he is charged with leading. “I will not tolerate attempts to withhold information from this Commission; nor will I tolerate attempts to divert this Commission’s attention with tasks that are outside of its mandate,” the High Representative said today.

The High Representative again today underlined four key points with regard the Commission’s work:

- 1) The RS’s Srebrenica Commission is not a commission charged with assessing all the events that took place in and around Srebrenica between 1992 and 1995, but specifically to investigate the fate and whereabouts of those who went missing in Srebrenica during the period of the 10 to 19 July 1995.

2) The Commission was established by Decision of the RS Government and endorsed by President Cavic. The High Representative will hold both President Cavic and Prime Minister Mikerevic personally responsible if the Commission fails to fulfil its mandate. The Commission must not be abused for political purposes or to deny the reality of what happened to those who went missing in Srebrenica between 10 and 19 July 1995.

3) The Commission is working under a legal Decision laid out by the Human Rights Chamber of 7 March 2003. Any attempt to obstruct the work of the Commission will be regarded by the High Representative as a clear attempt to obstruct the rule of law. OHR will consider diversions from the mandate of the Commission in the same light as it considers obstruction to the work of the Commission.

4) NATO, in considering whether BiH has fulfilled the conditions for Partnership for Peace, at its Istanbul Summit in May, has identified cooperation with the ICTY, especially by the RS authorities, as a key requirement to be fulfilled if BiH is to be considered as an applicant for PfP. The work of this Commission is an important factor in making this judgement.

"It would be a matter of the gravest consequence if the families, whose human rights have, according to the judgement of the Human Rights Chamber, been violated because of the RS's failure to provide full and timely information about the fate of their loved ones, continue to be deprived of this most essential truth," the High Representative said today.