

October 8, 2013

Mayor Marko Pavic
Trg oslobođenja 1
Prijedor
Bosnia and Herzegovina

**PRIJEDOR ADMINISTRATION MUST ACKNOWLEDGE AND MEMORIALIZE
THE CITY'S NON-SERB VICTIMS**

Mayor Pavic,

More than twenty years after the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the soil is still revealing the fate of those who disappeared in the midst of widespread violence in the early 1990s. Recent reports indicate that a mass grave uncovered in Tomasica, in the municipality of Prijedor, in which you serve as the mayor, is likely to contain tens, if not hundreds, of civilian victims disappeared in 1992, during the campaign of "ethnic cleansing" directed by Bosnian Serb authorities against their Bosniak and Croat neighbors.

More than 3,000 citizens of Prijedor were killed or disappeared during a systematic, well-organized campaign of persecution that has been amply documented by international and Bosnian courts. The images of emaciated detainees behind the barbed wire in camps like Omarska, Trnopolje, and Keraterm are still a mark of horror remembered by the world. More than 1200 of those taken to the camps are still listed as disappeared. After all of these years, their families do not have the closure of knowing what happened to them, nor the basic consolation of a gravestone where they can mourn them.

In your role as mayor, you have so far refused to allow a memorial for these victims to be built in Prijedor and you, personally, have stopped an initiative to build a memorial at the site of the Omarska detention camp. Further, while serving in this public capacity, you have targeted victims' families and survivors for organizing public events and using the word "genocide" to describe what they experienced. Yet, your administration does not oppose all forms of memorialization: under your mayorship, the municipal government has built numerous memorials to Serb combatants from Prijedor who died in the

conflict. In fact, your administration is actively suppressing the memory of non-Serb victims. Where yesterday bodies were imprisoned, today memories are forbidden.

We, the undersigned, call on you, Mr Mayor, and the administration under your leadership, to uphold victims' universally recognized right to the truth, which encompasses the basic right to grieve and honor their dead. We ask you to work with your administration to take immediate and effective steps to:

- Initiate the building of a memorial to non-Serb victims in Prijedor, designed and built in consultation with victims and survivors
- Allow the construction of a memorial to the victims of the Omarska detention camp, designed and built in consultation with victims and survivors, and in cooperation with Arcelor Mittal, the corporation that currently owns the site
- Publicly encourage accurate, constructive, and comprehensive public education about the events of 1992–1995, and to withdraw any measure that targets victims' associations and human rights activists in Prijedor for exercising their freedom of expression

The discovery of the mass grave in Tomasica once again illustrates the dimensions of suffering endured by the citizens of Prijedor in the 1990s. The remains exhumed from its mass graves speak the difficult truth about atrocities and leave no room for denial. We invite you, as Mayor of Prijedor, to rise above narrow ethnic and political agendas and reach out to your city's most vulnerable citizens – victims' families.

It is only through the acknowledgment of past oppression and suffering that progress toward building civic trust and lasting reconciliation can be achieved. Twenty years after the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, truth about the crimes and memory must be the foundation of equality for all citizens and the rule of law.

Signatories:

David Tolbert, President of the International Center for Transitional Justice

Juan Mendez, UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Elizabeth Silkes, Executive Director, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

Sahr Muhammedally, Center for Civilians in Conflict

Gaston Chillier, Executive Director, Center for Legal and Social Studies, Argentina

Ricardo Brodsky Baudet, Executive Director, Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Chile

Youk Chhang, Director, Documentation Center of Cambodia

Wadad Halwani , President of the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared, Lebanon

Camilo González Posso, Director, Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación, Colombia

José Pablo Baraybar, Director, Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team, Peru

Shirley Gunn, Khulumani Support Group and Human Rights Media Centre, South Africa

Kate Turner, Director, Healing Through Remembering, Northern Ireland

Freddy Peczerelli, Director, Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation, Guatemala

Copied to:

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations

Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Damir Ljubic, Minister of Human Rights and Refugees, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Samantha Power, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin, Russian Federation Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Valentin Inzko, High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Peter Sorensen, Special Representative of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Fletcher M. Burton, Head of OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mary Ann Hennessey, Head of Council of Europe Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina