



COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



Ref: CommHR/NS/sf 054-2015

Mr Aleksandar VUČIĆ
Prime Minister of Serbia

Strasbourg, 18 May 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

Further to our meeting during my visit to Serbia last March, I take this opportunity to continue our dialogue concerning the need to ensure adequate conditions for the effective work of Serbia's national ombudsman. As you know, under the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Resolution (99)50 that established my Office, I am mandated to "facilitate the activities of national ombudsmen or similar institutions in the field of human rights". Over many years the work of these structures has proved to be of the utmost significance for the promotion and effective protection of human rights in Europe.

As my predecessor and I have underlined on several occasions, Serbia has a well-respected Ombudsman whose work, along with that of the Equality Commissioner, has contributed immensely to Serbia's efforts to enhance and deepen democracy, human rights protection and the rule of law. Ombudsman Janković's expertise and assistance have been highly appreciated since the beginning of my mandate.

I am seriously concerned at reports indicating that there have been concerted efforts by certain politicians and some media in the country aimed at casting shadows over Ombudsman Janković's independence and moral stature. Public verbal attacks by some members of the government following the Ombudsman's call for the de-institutionalisation of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities were also brought to my attention. Finally, I have noted reports that on 6 May the Ombudsman and his advisers were prevented by the Minister of Defence from completing their *in situ* inspection of the Military Security Service, which was being carried out within the framework of the Ombudsman's mandate.

In view of the above, I urge you and your government to take all necessary measures to fully safeguard the Serbian Ombudsman's integrity and that of his Office. Serbia and your government cannot but benefit from protecting and promoting this national institution that has acquired an international reputation for the quality of its work.

I will continue to monitor the developments closely and spare no effort, in accordance with my mandate, in order to facilitate the activities of your national ombudsman and to enhance its independence and effectiveness.

Looking forward to receiving your reply and continuing a constructive dialogue with you and your government, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Nils Muižnieks