

Ref: CommHR/DM/sf 017-2023

Mr Slobodan JAVOR

Mayor of the municipality of Prijedor

Mr Igor KNEGINJIĆ

President of the City Assembly of the municipality of Prijedor

Ms Azra PAŠALIĆ

Vice-President of the City Assembly of the municipality of Prijedor

Strasbourg, 27 June 2023

Dear Mayor, Dear President and Vice-President of the City Assembly,

As Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, my mandate is to foster the effective observance of human rights in all 46 member states of the Council of Europe. An important part of my work is to engage in dialogue with authorities in member states, and to assist them in addressing possible shortcomings in implementing human rights obligations in their laws and practices. I am writing in relation to the initiative to build a memorial to 102 children - victims of war crimes committed in Prijedor between 1992 and 1995.

According to information at my disposal, the parents of the killed children, joined by activists, collected 1175 signatures of citizens of Prijedor in support of the initiative to build a memorial for the killed children in the city centre and submitted it to the Prijedor City Assembly on 25 November 2014. I am concerned that over the last nine years, the tireless efforts of these families and activists to have their initiative approved by the authorities have been met with systematic obstruction and/or ignorance. Conversely, during this period several memorials to fallen soldiers, including some indicted for war crimes, from the recent war have been built in the city centre without any of the hindrances facing the initiative of the families of the killed children. Furthermore, I have been informed that the parents of the killed children recently received a letter from the urban planning authorities asking them to meet certain requirements relating to their initiative which were not stipulated by law. I share the concern expressed by the parents and activists that all this appears to be aimed at discouraging the parents from pursuing this matter and ultimately giving up on their initiative.

Against this background, I would like to emphasise that without the memory of the past, there can be no right to truth, justice, and reparation, nor any guarantees of non-recurrence. Only by remembering the wrongs of the past, in a non-biased and inclusive way, by unequivocally condemning the wrongs and telling the truth about history can we help to promote commitment to a democratic society and human rights and to build a peaceful and diverse society unburdened by prejudice and ethnic hatred. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance that the city authorities uphold the rights of all citizens equally and without discrimination, especially when it comes to memorialising their suffering in a dignified way.

With these principles in mind, following up on my recent public [statement](#) in this regard, I urge you to engage as soon as possible in discussion with the parents of the killed children and activists with a view to implementing their initiative and building a memorial to the killed children of Prijedor in the city centre. I stand ready to visit Prijedor and engage with you and with other relevant actors on this and other important issues of dealing with the past.

Yours sincerely,



Dunja Mijatović