

March 15, 2012

Mr. Peter N. Berkowitz
Chairman
Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission
Houston, Texas

Dear Mr. Berkowitz,

I am sending this letter to you as the Director of the Bosnian American Genocide Institute and Education Center, a branch of the Institute for Research of Crimes Against Humanity and International Law at the University of Sarajevo and as a member of the Illinois Holocaust and Genocide Commission. In preparation for the “Genocide Prevention Month” in April, it was brought to my attention that the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas passed Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 39 in 2011 and declared the month of April each year from 2011 through 2020 to be “Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month.” It states that “Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month” serves as a way to remember all of those who were touched by genocide and it serves as the reminder of the need for the protection of human rights and vigilance against forces of intolerance. The resolution states that the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission was the state agency responsible for promoting this important mission.

Unfortunately, within the Resolution, the explanation of the Bosnian genocide is grossly incorrect. The interpretation of the events regarding the Bosnian genocide is not only historically inaccurate, but contrary to the findings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague. Lines 19 and 20 of page 1 of the Resolution state that “in April of 1992, the siege of Sarajevo began, leading to the deaths of more than 2,000 Bosnian Serbs.” This statement declares Bosnian Serbs as the victims of genocide however no one was ever indicted for an alleged genocide of the Serbs in Sarajevo. The statement in the Resolution regarding BiH is an insult to Bosniaks who were the victims of genocide committed by Serbian and Bosnian Serb forces during the aggression on BiH. The brutal and long siege on the city of Sarajevo resulted in 10,000 killed, 1,500 of them being children and 56,000 wounded civilians. Prior to the war of aggression, BiH was an example of a harmonious coexistence of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures. The aggression against it was a purposeful act of destruction of not just one group of people, but also of the idea of multiculturalism in an attempt to create an ethnically pure country of “Greater Serbia”.

On the website of the Holocaust Museum Houston I found a very accurate statement regarding the siege of Sarajevo: “Starting in April 1992, Serbia set out to ‘ethnically cleanse’ Bosnian territory by systematically removing all Bosnian Muslims, known

as Bosniaks. Serbia, together with ethnic Bosnian Serbs, attacked Bosniaks with former Yugoslavian military equipment and surrounded Sarajevo, the capital city. Many Bosniaks were driven into concentration camps, where women and girls were systematically gang-raped and other civilians were tortured, starved and murdered.”

I respectfully ask that the committee to provide an explanation upon what information this new statement is based on. It would be very informative for my colleagues and I to understand the process undertaken which resulted in such a grossly incorrect rendering of facts and history. My understanding is that the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission is dedicated to obtaining, organizing, and distributing information on genocides and ensuring that schools, organizations, and committees have access to such information, factual data, and history therefore I would like to know where such incorrect information about BiH was gathered from.

I have already signed a letter that was sent to Governor Rick Perry, which you can see in the attachment. The Bosnian organizations in the United States and Canada respectfully requested that Governor Perry act swiftly in amending the resolution and fully acknowledge the historical facts of the Bosnian genocide. We petitioned the Governor to rescind the SCR 39 of 2011 in the interest of promoting the full truth and correcting a serious insult to the victims of genocide in BiH. I respectfully ask for your assistance in this process as I have known your Commission to be honorable and one that strives to bring truth to the people of Texas.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you in response to the above inquiries.

Sincerely,

Sanja Seferovic Drnovsek, J.D, MEd,
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Haris Alibašić, MPA
President, Congress of North American Bosniaks (CNAB)

Dr. Emir Ramić
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