**PRIJEDOR POLICE BANS PEACEFUL COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

08.12.2012. - Prijedor Police has banned the peaceful march commemorating the Internation
al Human Rights Day on Monday the 10th December. On the International Human Rights Day, Prijedor police is placing itself above the RS law on public gatherings and has banned the peaceful public walk, not citing a single legal basis for doing so.

Local Police did not ban members of Serbian ultranationalist “Ravnogorski Cetnicki Pokret” from marching freely in the same streets wearing their intimidating black uniforms. Prijedor police have tolerated public meetings of local Serb organizations, even when these meetings have taken place in unpermitted locations, such as high schools during the class time.

This is not the first time local police has interfered with the work of NGO’s that are of different (non-Serb) ethnic background. Earlier in May this year, Police has banned a public gathering commemorating the killings of 266 women and children in Prijedor.

Local associations that formed the commemorative committee to mark the 20th anniversary of persecution of innocent people of Prijedor have attempted to organize a peaceful march in Prijedor, and one of those associations has submitted an official request. Peaceful marches on the International Human Rights Day have been held before without any problems. This march was supposed to bring attention to discrimination and numerous violations of basic human rights in Prijedor. Local police has once again shown it operates under the directive of local politicians and is an important instrument in apartheid-like establishment.

Implementing various tactics, mostly banning the activities and summoning activists in for questioning, police is disrupting the work of local NGO’s through repression. Prijedor municipality’s assembly has passed a set of shameful conclusions, including a directive to criminally persecute human rights activist from Prijedor. It is clear that police is acting on these conclusions with vigor, while at the same time is not able to find the attackers who damaged NGO’s offices and are issuing threats to the activists.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time police has offered its services to local authorities. We wish to remind that during the early 90’s the local police force has been the main culprit in violation of human rights, under the directive of the notorious Crisis Staff led by Simo Drljaca, then the chief of police.

The Hague War Crimes Tribunal has determined that activities of the Crisis Staff were part of a joint criminal enterprise to exterminate non-Serbs from Prijedor municipality. The Prijedor police was the main implementer of the Crisis Staff’s plan.

It has been proven that Prijedor’s police officers have been guards, have committed abuses, and carried out killings in the infamous death camps of Omarska and Keraterm. Over 800 prisoners have been killed, or are missing, from those camps. Members of the Prijedor police force have committed horrific murders of around 200 innocent civilians at “Koricanske stijene,” and are responsible for many other crimes in and around Prijedor. Out of 28 processed war crimes cases from Prijedor municipality, 21 of the accused were police members. In addition, currently there are 9 other cases being processed at the courts. Two of the accused have been apprehended at work in their police uniforms.

We are asking from the Ministry of Internal Affairs in RS to ensure that the police, in their activities and duty, do not discriminate against people and organizations based on their ethnicity.

We are asking from the Ministries of security and human rights and refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina to investigate all the cases of abuse of power and human rights violations committed in Prijedor today, and in addition to prevent such cases happening in future. We are pleading to the international organizations to stand with us in defending the basic human rights and the rights of marginalized groups in Prijedor.

We are pleading to local human rights organizations to stand with us in defending the public right to peaceful assembly.

This Monday, 10th of December at 11:00am, at the time of the planned peaceful march, there will be a press conference held at the Association of Prijedor Women IZVOR. Zanatska bb, Prijedor

Commemorative committee marking the 20th anniversary of persecution of innocent people of Prijedor, “ODBOR”