12. 08. 2021.

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

Dear Prime Minister,

The Institute for Research of Genocide Canada (IGC) appeals to you and the Government of Canada to swiftly and firmly condemn and take measures against Mr. Milorad Dodik’s (the Serbian member of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s three-member presidency) calls for secession, violation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Peace Agreement), and attacks on the broader rule of law in the country. Canada must collaborate with NATO allies, and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s government authorities to ensure the preservation and stability of the country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.

As highlighted in the recent report of Mr. Christian Schmidt, the newly appointed High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering the period from 16 April to 15 October 2021, the country is currently facing the greatest existential threat since the Bosnian War in the 1990s. The present crisis has escalated due to Mr. Dodik’s announcement and actions to withdraw Republika Srpska (RS) – the Serb entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina – from many state institutions, namely border police, judicial institutions, and the armed force – actions that the UN has called de facto “secession” and a violation of the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the Bosnian War and established the sovereign state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The appointment of Mr. Schmidt was objected to by Russia and China, both countries that are supporting Mr. Dodik’s secessionist actions to expand their influence in the region, which has led to the undermining of the political stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia has also supported the abolition of the role of the UN High Representative.

Indeed, the recent developments instigated by Mr. Dodik if continued and left unanswered are likely to lead to a security crisis and potentially massive-scale ethnic violence, in a country that already suffered the largest massacre (genocide) since World War II in Europe, with more than 100,000 dead, and displacement of over one million Bosnian Muslims, many of which are dispersed around the world, and many who are proud citizens of Canada.

In parallel, the increasingly vocal denial of the Srebrenica genocide and the constant glorification of convicted war criminals (such as the Bosnian-Serb military commander Ratko Mladić who was found guilty of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) – has further escalated the political situation in the RS entity and the Western Balkans. Mr. Dodik’s hate-fueling political rhetoric often in the form of genocide denial coupled with threats of secession has led the previous High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, to enact amendments to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina to criminalize the denial of genocide and war crimes. However, the law was entirely rejected by the RS entity. Subsequently, RS authorities were instructed to not cooperate with institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina attempting to implement the law, which constitutes a direct violation of Annexes 4 and 10 of the Dayton Agreement.

Mr. Dodik’s recent and clear threats of secession, attacks on the Dayton Peace Agreement, and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s rule of law have led the country to the verge of another conflict. In recognition of the seriousness of the present situation, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas stated that Germany “will not be able to accept the continuation of this irresponsible policy without taking action.” Realizing the urgency of escalation, the United Kingdom has already appointed a heavyweight military figure as Special Envoy to Western Balkans, at a time when British PM Boris Johnson stated the region is “experiencing the biggest threat to stability and security in over two decades.”

While December 14 marks the 26th anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Agreement that successfully prevented bloodshed but left the country politically and ethnically divided, we ought to be reminded that the silence of the international community in 1991 enabled ultra-nationalist Serb political leaders in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina such as Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić to commit ethnic cleansing and ultimately carry-out a genocide of more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica.

Therefore, the IGC is calling upon the Government of Canada to join the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, to:

Firmly condemn the actions of the Bosnian Serb member of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Presidency, Mr. Milorad Dodik

Collaborate with NATO allies to deescalate and strengthen security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Prioritize atrocity prevention in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Canada’s foreign policy

As a NATO member, and a leader in international peace and humanitarian efforts, Canada’s strong condemnation of the Serb Member of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Presidency, Mr. Dodik, is urgently needed. From its peacekeeping force to its membership in the Steering Board of the Dayton Agreement Peace Implementation Council, Canada has historically played an instrumental role in upholding human rights and peace in the Balkans. Indeed, Canada’s exceptional and exemplary commitment to peace and security the world over has been at the forefront of its foreign policy – an approach immediately needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina today to prevent another wave of violence and ethnic cleansing, and ensure that “never again” would any people face the horror of genocide.

Sincerely,

Dr. Emir Ramić

Director
The Institute for Research of Genocide Canada

Cc: The Honourable Mélanie Joly Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada