September 27, 2023

H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani

Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia

Your excellency,

We are reaching out to you to address a deeply troubling situation in Europe. The President of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, has issued a dire threat to another sovereign nation. Specifically, Mr. Milanović has threatened Bosnia and Herzegovina with the prospect of war if it dares to alter its existing constitution in order to implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

In a verdict delivered on August 29, 2023, the ECHR declared Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution discriminatory. The ECHR emphasized that restricting political roles based on residence or ethnicity violates human rights. Essentially, the ECHR found Bosnia's constitution in violation of human rights.

The President of the Republic of Croatia Mr. Milanović called the the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) idiotic and is publicly threatening Bosnia and Herzegovina with war in order to preserve a political system grounded in discrimination, which has its roots in genocide, thus perpetuating the status of minorities as second-class citizens.

This represents a clear example of interference in another country's affairs and a threat to peace. Furthermore, it is an attack on the fundamental principles of Europe.

The European values are based on core principles that encompass the reverence for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, adherence to the rule of law, and the safeguarding of human rights, including the rights of individuals belonging to minority groups. Currently, Jews, Roma, Sinti, and other minority communities face unjust treatment and are barred from holding significant political positions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The discriminatory political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a direct product of the Bosnian Genocide.

Mr. Milanović has a history of making racist statements against citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2020, he described equality and the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina as distant dreams, likening them to perfume. He said, "The civil state is a distant, distant dream, and that's a beautiful thing, but first soap, then perfume." These remarks suggest that Mr. Milanovic regards the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina with disdain, portraying them as unclean and unworthy of equal rights. Furthermore, he is issuing threats of war should they dare to pursue the dream of achieving equality before the law.

Growing concern is taking root across Europe as we bear witness to the resurgence of war on the European continent and the reemergence of ideas that were once thought to have been left behind in history, echoing the sentiment encapsulated by the phrase "never again."  This revival is particularly alarming for the various minority groups residing in Europe, including Muslims, Roma and Sinti, Jews, and others, as it reopens the possibility of unthinkable atrocities. These developments stir deep-seated fears that the specter of genocide, long considered an historical anomaly, could once again cast its shadow over the European Union, of which Croatia is a member. This is a profoundly disconcerting prospect.

Moreover, the escalating concern in Europe is further underscored by a troubling incident involving the University of Vienna. This institution, tainted by its historical ties to the Holocaust, has declined to extend an apology to the Mothers of Srebrenica and other genocide victims for the denial of the Srebrenica Genocide by one of its own professors.

Furthermore, Mr. Radman Grlić, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, not only supports a discriminatory system that relegates Jews to second-class citizenship in Bosnia but also used derogatory terms similar to those used by Nazis to describe Mr. Željko Komšić, the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a usurper, vermin, and parasite. This occurred following Mr. Komšić's speech at the UN General Assembly on September 20, 2023, where he called for an end to the persistent discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina stemming from the Bosnian Genocide. Mr. Komšić champions equal rights for Jews in Bosnia, yet he is met with the very terminology once employed by Nazis to describe Jews, courtesy of Mr. Radman Grlić, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia.

In this context, it is extremely important that you unequivocally condemn the war-mongering rhetoric of the President of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Milanović. This call for condemnation holds profound significance for several compelling reasons.:

1. Promoting Peace and Stability: Condemning war-mongering aligns with the core principles of international peace and stability. When influential individuals engage in or endorse aggressive and hostile rhetoric, it can exacerbate tensions between nations, elevating the risk of conflicts, including armed conflicts. Your condemnation underscores your commitment to peaceful resolutions and diplomatic solutions.

2. Acting as a Deterrent: Public condemnation serves as a powerful deterrent against the continuation of warmongering actions and words. It sends a resolute message that such behavior is intolerable and will not be tolerated on the global stage. This can play a pivotal role in de-escalating tensions and fostering an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and cooperation.

3. Upholding International Norms: Condemnation reinforces the paramount importance of international norms and agreements. In the modern world, diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution are indispensable tools for addressing global challenges. Warmongering rhetoric undermines these mechanisms, making it imperative for responsible leaders and nations to stand together firmly against such actions.

4. Protecting Affected Regions: By condemning warmongering, you demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding the well-being of people in regions plagued by conflict. Wars and armed conflicts result in profound human suffering, including loss of life, displacement, and severe economic hardships. Taking a stand against warmongering is a decisive step towards preventing or alleviating these dire consequences.

In summary, advocating for the condemnation of Mr. Milanović's warmongering is not a mere symbolic gesture; it is a pivotal and principled act that upholds the cherished values of peace, diplomacy, and the welfare of all people. It conveys a resounding message of unity in the face of aggression and reiterates the imperative of resolving conflicts through peaceful means.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Emir Ramic

President of the Institute for Research of Genocide Canada