﻿

February 23, 2024

To His Excellency Mr. Alexander Van der Bellen

Federal President of the Republic of Austria

Österreichische Präsidentschaftskanzlei

Hofburg, Ballhausplatz

1010 Wien

Dear President van der Bellen:

Your move is deeply antithetical to civilization, dehumanizing, inhumane, dangerous to peace and stability in the world, and detrimental to international justice and law. Your action degrades the United Nations and international legal and judicial authorities and documents. Peter Handke, a denier of the genocide in Srebrenica, deserves condemnation from you, not Austria's highest recognition.

We are appalled that as the president of Austria, a significant world power, you would award the highest Austrian recognition to a man who denies the genocide in Srebrenica adjudicated by both international courts, openly aligns with the separatist leaders of the Bosnian Serb entity, leaders who increasingly and seriously attack the European state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, calling for its ethnic division. By doing so, you have sent a message of support to criminals, genocide deniers, revisionists of historical, scientific, and judicial facts about the only legally proven genocide in Europe after the Holocaust, and a message of glorification to convicted war criminals, as well as those who seek to destroy the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We call on the public of Austria and its political and academic elites at this moment, in this place, and on the occasion of your shameful decision, to pause and reflect on where Austria, by awarding its highest recognition to a genocide denier in Srebrenica, is heading.

Rewarding a genocide denier is a crime and incites new genocide, which is a crime in itself. The Holocaust did not begin in gas chambers. It started with words. This Austrian award is a warning sign of a new genocide.

We protest against this uncivilized decision and demand that you unconditionally withdraw it. Because it's like giving an award to someone who denies the Holocaust.

Awarding the highest Austrian recognition to a genocide denier is the biggest Austrian blow to truth, justice, culture of remembrance, the UN and international courts, and the international legal order to date. It is particularly a blow to the victims not only of the genocide in Srebrenica but also to the victims of all terrible crimes in human history, including the victims of the Holocaust.

Let us be aware of the position we are in, let us seek ways out, let us be brave, united, educated, and professional in our search for truth and justice. Your proposal has humiliated the victims, but the victims will never be defeated because truth and justice are on their side, not yours.

Those who deny the decisions of international courts, who violate international law, justice, and truth, who try to revise history, judicial and scientific arguments, and those who recently dangerously jeopardize the territorial integrity, sovereignty, independence, and political subjectivity of the European state of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the name of extremism belong to dustbin of history against which unfortunately we still need to fight today. We continue the fight for a better future for our civilization, for a world without war and genocide where peace and respect for others and differences will prevail, where truth will overcome falsehood, justice will overcome guilt, and the culture of remembrance will overcome the culture of oblivion. Join this great human mission and revoke your decision to award recognition to one of the greatest deniers of genocide in Srebrenica in the world.

With kind regards,

Dr. Emir Ramic

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