



July 20, 2009

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B-1049 Brussels

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Honorable Vice President Barrot and Commissioner Rehn:

Semir Đulić
Spokesperson

The Congress of North American Bosniaks, an umbrella organization representing the interests of 350,000 American and Canadian Bosniaks, is stunned by the EU Commission decision to discriminate against Bosniaks by denying them the same visa-free arrangements as the other ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina. CNAB reminds the EU Commission that the only people of Bosnia who will be excluded from the visa-free requirements are the victims of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Amir
Makarević

Burhan Bey
Husika

Daniel
Toljaga

The newly passed visa free regime allows the citizens of Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croats, Serbian and Croatian passport holders in Bosnia, to travel to EU countries without a visa but excludes the Bosniak population from these arrangements. CNAB is reminding esteemed EU representatives that today almost one million Bosniaks live in Europe, United States, Canada, and Australia as a direct result of ethnic cleansing committed by Serbian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main reason why Bosnia and Herzegovina reforms have failed were the obstacles posed by Bosnian Serb representatives from Republika Srpska.

Dževad
Burić

Hamdija
Čustović

Haris
Šuko

As you know Serbia has failed to arrest war criminals still hiding in Serbia, including the general of Serb forces, Ratko Mladic involved in genocide and killing of more than 8,000 Bosniaks in the town of Srebrenica, as well as the ethnic cleansing of 25,000-30,000 refugees in the area of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ratko Mladić is still walking free... and soon on January 1, 2010 will be allowed to walk free throughout Europe as well.

Kemal
Hamulić

Mirsad
Smajić

Rusmin
Topalović

It is incomprehensible that the EU Commission allows war criminals to walk freely through Europe, while denying the victims of the war crimes these same freedoms. It is incomprehensible that the EU Commission would allow Serbia to join visa-free travel, while not being punished in any way for failing to prevent genocide committed by Serb forces and failed to punish those who carried out the genocide.

Sanel
Babić

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The EU commission announced that Bosnians and Albanians were excluded because they still lacked enhanced passports containing microchips with biometric data. However, millions of European Union citizens still do not hold a biometric passport. Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently announced its decision to switch to the new Biometric passports. European Commission ignores the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are almost at the same level with regard to the introduction of biometric passports and a variety of legislative acts agreed on the visa liberalization roadmap.

The visa restriction for Bosnia will only apply to Bosniaks, not to Bosnian Serbs or Bosnian Croats. De facto, ethnic criteria will decide on whether a citizen of Bosnia is able to travel freely to the EU. It adds insult to injury to the people who suffered most during the genocides across Bosnian towns of Srebrenica, Višegrad, Prijedor, Foča, Bijeljina, Zvornik, Vlasenica and many others.

The timing of the Commission's announcement is insensitive. It is coming only three days after July 11, 2009, fourteenth annual commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide in 1995 and burial of the remains of 534 war crimes victims. At the same time, International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) has revealed the identity of 6,186 persons missing from the July 1995 fall of Srebrenica (by analyzing DNA profiles). The decision is made precisely when the European Parliament is in transition of mandate and unavailable for political consultation.

CNAB urges all 27 EU members to withhold their vote later in October on allowing Serbia and Monte Negro to obtain the visa-free travel until Ratko Mladić and other war criminal roaming freely in Serbia are caught and brought to justice for their involvement in war crimes in Bosnia and Croatia.

Sincerely,

Haris Alibašić, MPA
President of the CNAB Board of Directors