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Mr. José Mujica
President of Uruguay (2010-2015)
Presidencia de la República
Torre Ejecutiva
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Montevideo 11.000
Uruguay

17 August 2016

Dear Mr. Mujica:

Those of us who have been inspired by your Presidency in Uruguay, including your generous welcome of refugees from Syria, and who have supported struggles for democracy and social justice in Latin America, were quite concerned to learn that you had accepted the "Order of Republika Srpska" in Višegrad. With all due respect Mr. Mujica, we would like to share our grave concern in this matter with you.

Other reported recipients of this award have included former Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadžić and Momčilo Krajišnik, both who were found guilty of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Mr. Karadžić was found guilty of Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, and other war crimes, and Mr. Krajišnik was found guilty of Crimes Against Humanity. We are not sure why you would allow yourself to be associated with such convicted war criminals.

Mr. Karadžić, for example, was convicted of the objective to permanently remove non-Serbs from Bosnian Serb claimed territory. The Chamber's verdict reads:

Having weighed the evidence discussed above in light of the systematic and organised manner in which crimes were committed in each of the Municipalities, *the Chamber finds beyond reasonable doubt* that between October 1991 and 30 November 1995 there existed a common plan *to permanently remove Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats from Bosnian Serb claimed territory through the crimes as set out in more detail below*. The Chamber finds that starting in October 1991, the Accused and the Bosnian Serb leadership agreed on how they would respond to the declaration of sovereignty in BiH and the measures they would take to create their own ethnically homogeneous state. (ICTY/Karadžić, 2016, §3447, my emphasis)

In other words, *Republika Srpska* was declared in January 1992 (within the boundary of the sovereign State of Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the leaders of Republika Srpska began to remove non-Serbs from the territory through acts of violence that have subsequently been ruled to be Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity and other War Crimes.

As part of the above referenced eliminationist "objective," innocent civilians were murdered and forcibly displaced in Višegrad. In two separate incidents in June 1992, approximately 120 women and children

were locked into houses that were then set ablaze. Approximately 60 were murdered in the Pionirska Street house on June 14, 1992, and approximately 60 were murdered in the house in the Bikavac neighborhood on June 27, 1992.

In its verdict in the case of Milan and Srejsode Lukić, the perpetrators of these crimes, the Trial Chamber offered the following haunting observations on the Pionirska Street and Bikavac atrocities:

In the all too long, sad and wretched history of man's inhumanity to man, the Pionirska street and Bikavac fires must rank high. At the close of the 20th century, a century marked by war and bloodshed on a colossal scale, these horrific events remain imprinted on the memory for the viciousness of the incendiary attack, for the obvious premeditation and calculation that defined it, for the sheer callousness, monstrosity and brutality of herding, trapping and locking the victims in the two houses, thereby rendering them helpless in the ensuing inferno and for the degree of pain and suffering inflicted on the victims as they were burnt alive. (ICTY/Lukić, 2009, §740)

Milan and Srejsode Lukić were convicted and sentenced, respectively, to life in prison and to 27 years in prison.

In addition to these unspeakable atrocities, in 1992, innocent civilians in Višegrad were murdered on the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge and thrown into the Drina river. In the summer of 2010, work on a nearby dam caused the river level to drop. Experts from the Bosnian Missing Persons Institute and the International Commission on Missing Persons realized that this might be their only chance to exhume and identify the victims from the riverbed. I was invited to accompany the government exhumation team and I can testify, Mr. Mujica, that I witnessed the discovery of the bones of the victims.

In May 2012, sixty of the victims who had been identified were buried in the Stražište cemetery, a private Muslim cemetery in Višegrad. At that time, a memorial was installed that bore the inscription: "in memory of the victims of the Višegrad genocide". The local Municipality immediately announced plans to destroy the memorial. Subsequently, in January 2014, in an act of wanton desecration, the Municipality forcibly entered the cemetery, under heavy police protection, breaking the lock on the gate, and ground the word "genocide" from the memorial.

Further, the Višegrad Municipality had announced its plan to demolish the ruins of the Pionirska Street house. This action would have resulted in the erasure of the evidence of the crime. Local survivors and activists who attempted to rebuild the house in order to protect it, including Bakira Hasečić, President of Women Victims of War, were charged with unlawful construction. They had courageously crossed the "red tape" that had been placed around the house--announcing the warning "*Zabranje Rad*" [Work Prohibited]--in order to preserve the site and to honor the memory of the victims.

The suppression of memorials in Višegrad, whether concerning the removal of the word "genocide" in the Stražište cemetery, or concerning the threat to destroy the Pionirska Street house, is a human rights violation. Such a suppression of cultural memory is also patently discriminatory, since a memorial in honor of the perpetrators of the atrocities has been erected in the middle of Višegrad.

While the Pionirska Street house faces destruction, it is cruelly ironic that Andrićgrad, constructed from opulent stone at a cost of 10 million Euros, has risen on the Drina River, just north of the bridge from which the victims were murdered and thrown into the river. Andrićgrad includes a replica of a statue honoring Montenegrin Prince/Bishop and poet, Petar II Petrović-Njegoš, as well as a replica of the Visoki Dečani Monastery from Kosovo (which has been dedicated in Višegrad to Prince Lazar and the martyrs of Kosovo). The statue of Njegoš evokes his poem "The Mountain Wreath," that called for the extermination

of Muslims, and the replica of the Church from Kosovo, recalls Kosovo as the touchstone of Serbian nationalism. In other words, Andrićgrad is an ultranationalist fantasy town that perpetuates the politics of ethnic homogeneity through exclusion or elimination, the very politics for which Karadžić was convicted.

The suppression of memorials for the victims and the propagation of Serbian nationalism are endemic to the political culture of Republika Srpska. Indeed, President Milorad Dodik is perpetrating a politics of genocide denial, social division, and national and regional destabilization. In spite of numerous rulings on the genocide in Srebrenica by international courts, including the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice, Mr. Dodik consistently denies the genocide, thereby demeaning and insulting the victims. Further, Mr. Dodik threatens secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and threatens to hold referenda on the national Court of Bosnia as well as on the authority of the High Representative. President Dodik, the person who bestowed this award upon you, is pursuing the active destabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a threat to national security and a violation of Dayton Peace Accords.

Therefore, Mr. Mujica, we respectfully ask you, as a person who has dedicated his life to the struggle for justice, to renounce and return your award. Further, we invite you to visit Višegrad, and to accompany us to the Pionirska Street house, the Bikavac site and to the Stražište cemetery, in order to pay your respects to the innocent victims. If you have time, we can also accompany you to Srebrenica, as well as to Prijedor-where survivors have also been prohibited from installing memorials at the former sites of the concentration camps, and where parents have been prohibited from installing a memorial to the 102 children who were killed.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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