

## LETTER OF REIS-UL-ULEMA TO THE PRESIDENT OF MONTENEGRO

Sarajevo, 12 March 2008 (MINA) – Reis-ul-ulema from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mustafa Cerić, Ph.D., has communicated a letter today to the president of Montenegro Filip Vujanović in relation to the informal meeting of the Muslim religious leaders of the Balkan states that took place in Podgorica on 9 March. As previously reported, reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić, Ph.D., in solidarity with the requests of the families of the persecuted Bosnians in Montenegro in 1992 did not attend the said meeting organized under the patronage of the president of Montenegro. The letter of reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić to the president of Montenegro Filip Vujanović that was delivered today also to the Embassy of Montenegro in Sarajevo, MINA transmits fully:

Mister Vujanović,

On the occasion of the informal meeting of muftis of the Balkan states on 9 March 2008 in Podgorica, and in hope of being of your assistance, I have reminded you on the following requests of the Association of the families of the deported refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- 1) That Montenegro should clearly and unambiguously apologize for the crimes committed on the territory of Montenegro over Bosnian Muslims in 1992;
- 2) That Montenegro should finalize the criminal procedure and sanction all villains and their commanders who have participated in the arrest and deportation of Bosnian refugees from Montenegro in 1992. (As is well known, at least 86 (eighty-six) Bosnians who sought refuge in Montenegro from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been murdered);
- 3) That the state of Montenegro should commemorate a day of memory for the victims of crimes over Bosnians in Montenegro;
- 4) That the state of Montenegro should build a memorial for the victims of the crime in Herceg-Novi, where the collective center for the deportation of Bosnian refugees was located;
- 5) And that the Government of Montenegro should not obstruct the civil procedures for redress initiated by the families of the deported Bosnians against the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro.

Unfortunately, you have not only ignored the stated requests of the families who have been searching for the truth and justice for the past 16 years, but deeply hurt their feelings by your statement at the ceremonial dinner of muftis of the Balkan states: “In those difficult times Montenegro received tens and hundreds of thousands of refugees, tens of thousands of Muslims and Bosnians. They found another home here, they were greeted with an open heart and full emotion, and they were helped to return to their homes” (*Vijesti*, Podgorica, 10 March 2008).

Mister Vujanović, a man may sometimes undertake injustices, but may never bear what is untruthful. What you have stated in Podgorica on 9 March 2008 has been a conscious injustice that is unbearable. It is unbelievable how you found heart and soul in yourself to say to the mothers, children, sisters and brothers of the 86 deported and murdered Bosnians that their loved ones had another home in Montenegro and how they had all been assisted to return to their homes. Some honorable people of Montenegro indeed opened their homes to their brothers from Bosnia, but you are very well aware that in those difficult times the official Montenegrin government, only because of their religion and their names, hunted Bosnian refugees in the same manner as the Nazis hunted Jews, had taken them to the Montenegrin collective centers and then sent them to the knives of the soldiers of Radovan Karadžić. This may never be forgotten and this crime may never be time barred.

Mister Vujanović, it is unbearable that families of the murdered 86 Bosnian civilians are leading civil proceedings against the state of Montenegro without success, and that you, a long-standing president of the state do nothing to prevent further obstruction of those trials. Also, you are aware that the state prosecutor's office runs a procedure against official representatives of the then

Montenegrin government – assistant Minister of police and other police officials – due to their participation in the war crime of deportation of Bosnian refugees from Montenegro, but you are also doing nothing to prevent further prolongation of that procedure. Unfortunately, and in spite of the many public appeals of the victims, of the United Nations, Amnesty International, etc., oral as well as written promises of the representatives of the Montenegrin state given to representatives of the Council of Europe that the crime over the Bosnians would be punished and their families provided redress, nothing was effectively done in order to ease the pain and suffering of the Bosnian families.

Also after our visit to your office and the office of the Prime Minister Djukanovic in 2005 you have done nothing to gain our confidence and convince us that you indeed wish to resolve the issue of the murdered Bosnian civilians in a manner required by the God's as well as human justice. All of that, including us not coming to Podgorica to the meeting of the muftis of the Balkan states, had a goal of invoking the sense of responsibility, repentance and apology, but your latest statement that the Bosnian refugees endured no suffering, forced me to write this letter as well as to write more letters to the individuals and organizations in the world to introduce them with the case of murdered Bosnian refugees in Montenegro in 1992.

Mister Vujanovic, appreciating your statements on good relations between the state of Montenegro and the Islamic community in Montenegro, the question of 86 murdered Bosnians and their families may not be connected with the status of Muslims in Montenegro, nor should this question be related to the status of Bosnians in the government of Montenegro. What is at stake here is an individual's right and individual responsibility that needs to be determined and sanctioned by the competent court. I expect from you personally, as well as from all other officials of Montenegro to clear the way to the truth and justice that the Association of families of deported refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina seek in the above stated request of five points.

Convinced that you will understand my letter as a wish for a true assistance for the state of Montenegro, and to yourself personally, and that you will undertake everything in your power as a man and statesman to minimize the suffering of the families of murdered Bosnians in Montenegro, please accept expressions of my respect,

stated reisu-l-ulema Mustafa Ceric, Ph.D., in his letter directed to the president of Montenegro Filip Vujanovic. (The End)