

The Coalition for Access to Justice greatly concerned over statements of current and former Presidents of Serbia regarding Srebrenica

The Coalition for Access to Justice has expressed great concern over the statements of Serbia's current President Tomislav Nikolic, and its former President Boris Tadic, which deny the facts established by courts about the genocide in Srebrenica. The Coalition would like to direct the current and former Presidents' attention to Serbia's obligation as a member of the UN, of the Council of Europe and of the OSCE, to respect court verdicts, and to request that in their public appearances and statements they cease bringing the Republic of Serbia into disrepute and doing harm to the process of reconciliation in the region.

Shortly after taking office, in a statement to the Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTM) on May 31, 2012, President Nikolic said that nothing like genocide was committed in Srebrenica, while during his visit to Italy, in a statement to the *Corriere della Sera* on October 9, 2012, he indicated that there was no genocide in Srebrenica, adding that "no Serb would call it genocide," and neither would he. On October 28, 2012, in the TV programme "Sunday at 2 p.m." on the first channel of Croatian Radio and Television (HRT), former President of Serbia Boris Tadic repeated several times that he has his private opinion about Srebrenica, and that, as a politician, he will not publicize these views "until all legal procedures have been completed. Until then, let the historians and lawyers talk about it."

The Coalition for Access to Justice wishes to remind both the current and former Serbian Presidents that in 2004 the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) convicted a high-ranking officer of the Serbian Army (VRS), Radislav Krstic, and sentenced him in a final judgment to 35 years in prison for aiding and abetting the genocide committed against Bosnian Muslims in July 1995 in Srebrenica. In 2010, the ICTY rendered a first-instance verdict which sentenced high-ranking officers of the VRS, Vujadin Popovic and Ljubisa Beara, to life imprisonment for the genocide in Srebrenica, while Drago Nikolic, also an officer of the VRS, was sentenced in a first-instance judgment to 35 years in prison for aiding and abetting the genocide.

On the basis of Bosnia and Herzegovina's lawsuit against Serbia, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found in 2007 that a genocide was committed against Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995. The same ICJ decision declared Serbia responsible for failing to prevent the genocide, as well as for its failure to prosecute, arrest and extradite persons indicted by the ICTY for genocide.

By denying that genocide had been committed in Srebrenica, President Nikolic and former President Tadic have insulted and disturbed the victims of the genocide, as well as victims of other crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. They have also undermined the on-going reconciliation process in the region. Having failed to recognize the decisions of the ICTY and the ICJ, these officials have *de facto* supported the violation of Serbia's international obligations, which has inflicted great harm on the Republic of Serbia.

The Coalition for Access to Justice includes: Center for Advanced Legal Studies, Civil Rights Defenders, CHRIS – Network of the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia, Humanitarian Law Center, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Independent Journalist' Association of Vojvodina, Praxis, Sandžak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedom.