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The Arrest of Jovan Divjak: The Victim Becomes the Criminal

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The arrest of Jovan Divjak symbolizes the continuation of the counterproductive behavior of Belgrade when it comes to interpreting the recent past from the nineties. After arrests of Ejup Gani, Ilija Juriši, and recently Tihomir Purda, who were arrested and acquitted for lack of evidence, the “Divjak” case only deepens the mistrust of the countries in the region towards the intentions of Belgrade. Such behavior places Belgrade in the role of prosecutor and defines the character of the war as one in which Serbia, in its version of events, had the minor role.

The arrest of Jovan Divjak is a tremendous scandal, given that this man is the symbol of resistance to Serbian aggression against Bosnia. As a Serbian general, he opposed the siege of Sarajevo from the beginning, which is why he enjoys undivided respect in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Jovan Divjak has always been Belgrade’s target. He was not arrested in 2005, when he was in Belgrade; instead, his case is now being activated when Belgrade is undertaking a systematic revision of the history of the nineties. With such behavior Belgrade is building its lead position in the region on all the wrong foundations.

Both the international community and the ICTY hold responsibility for this behavior of Belgrade officials since they concede to these policies in order to pull Serbia closer to the EU. Their approach, however, *loses* meaning since it compromises principles, distorts facts, and transforms the victim into a perpetrator.

We demand that the Austrian authorities immediately release Jovan Divjak and that Interpol re-examines all the warrants put on their list by Serbian authorities. We want to know what are the criteria that are taken into consideration when similar demands from countries, in this case, Serbia, are considered.

We demand that the Serbian government stop with its policy that further increases distrust between countries in the region, particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and give up on its demand for Jovan Divjak’s arrest.

We also demand that officials in the Serbian government distance themselves from Miloševi?’s policies such as their policy of relativization of responsibility for the wars in the nineties.

In addition, we remind government officials in Serbia that their most important commitment has to be the arrest and extradition of Ratko Mladi?, indicted for the genocide in Srebrenica, to the ICTY. That will be the only step that will contribute to the restoration of confidence between Serbia and her neighbors, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
 - Biljane Kovačević-Vučo Foundation
 - Center for Cultural Decontamination
 - Civic Initiatives
 - Civil Right Defenders, Serbia
 - Women in Black
 - YUCOM
 - Youth Initiative for Human Rights

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