



COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



Ref: CommHR/NM/sf 041-2016

Mr Aleksandar Vulin
Minister for Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs
Serbia

Strasbourg, 12 September 2016

Dear Minister,

I should like to take this opportunity to follow up on the issue of reparations to victims of wartime crimes, which was addressed in my report of July 2015 following my official visit to Serbia. The issue is of the utmost importance for the on-going process of achieving social cohesion as well as justice and lasting reconciliation in the region as a whole.

In my report I expressed concern about the fact that many victims of crimes committed during the wars in the 1990s remain without access to adequate and effective reparations by Serbia. I noted with interest that a new bill on the rights of veterans, disabled veterans, civilian disabled war victims and their family members had been prepared and that public consultations on the bill were completed in December 2014. Although the bill significantly improved the legal status of veterans and military victims of war, it excluded certain categories of war victims (estimated at 15 000), such as families of missing persons, victims of wartime sexual violence, and victims of action by Serbian armed forces. I have also been the recipient of reports indicating that the valuable expertise of civil society organisations that have been active in this field for many years has not been fully taken into account in this legislative process.

According to my information, the bill has not yet been tabled in the parliament. I would very much welcome any further information you may provide me with on the bill's progress and the possibility of expanding its scope so that all victims of wartime crimes are provided with adequate and effective reparation, in line with internationally established standards.

I look forward to receiving your reply and continuing a constructive dialogue.

Yours sincerely

Nils Muižnieks