



Croatian American Association

September 21, 2018

The Honorable Chairman Sen. Bob Corker
The Honorable Ranking Member Sen. Bob Menendez
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6225

Dear Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Menendez,

On behalf of the Croatian American Association (CAA), a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization representing tens of thousands of concerned Croatian Americans, we write to express our deep concern for the silence regarding the violent speech which young journalist Gloria Lujanovic has endured in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Many of our members are Croatian Americans with roots from BiH who are worried by the serious threats and hate-filled language directed at journalists in their ancestral homeland.

Ms. Lujanovic is facing threats and ethnic slurs for her brave work as an investigative journalist at Dnevnik.ba, one of the leading news portals in the country. As one of the few outspoken voices on wartime justice in BiH's media, Ms. Lujanovic's work has sought to tackle the extremely fraught topic of war crimes committed against Croat civilians in BiH by the Bosnian Muslim armed forces during the war in BiH. Most of these atrocities, which resulted in the brutal murder of hundreds of Croats and the systematic expulsion of over 100,000 more, including Ms. Lujanovic and her family who were forcibly removed from their ancestral home, were never prosecuted by local or state authorities.

Last month, Ms. Lujanovic was the subject of a physical threat from the now-closed Twitter account @Smjehuljak, which, in response to her article investigating ethnic cleansing in the Croat villages of Milietici, Bikosi and Maljine, incited violence against her with calls to "break her jaw", presumably in order to silence her for her diligent work in investigating and reporting on these atrocities. Among other things, her work has sought to shed light on the presence and role of the Mujahideen, Islamic warriors who were organized into a foreign brigade and integrated into the Army of the Republic of BiH by the then-General Rasim Delic, during the war. Instead of universal praise for tackling the most important issues facing contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian society—issues that the country will need to confront in order to heal and foster trust and good relations between all three Constituent peoples (i.e., Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs)—Ms. Lujanovic has had to contend with threats and insults in her homeland. The social media posts in question are only the latest examples of unchecked hate speech articulated against the country's Croats. Sadly, they are not the exception but the rule in a country that has witnessed numerous egregious instances of harm inflicted on journalists in the current year alone, in keeping with a worrying trend of press intimidation and increasing infringement of free expression.

Even more worrying is the lack of universal condemnation of this assault on freedom of speech and freedom of the press by a part of the public and media scene in BiH. Furthermore, we find it inexcusable that the Sarajevo-based Journalist Association of BiH has not put out a statement of condemnation, as they normally do for such threats.

Investigative journalism is one of the most powerful tools for transparency and accountability, the sine qua non of a properly functioning democracy. Now, more than ever, it is important to rally to the defense of journalists doing the vital work of investigative reporting in post-conflict societies such as BiH. At this fragile moment in Bosnian-Herzegovinian history, we must stand unapologetically firm in proclaiming to the public

that silencing journalism with hateful and violent speech is unacceptable. We hope that the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will join us in strongly condemning these threats and demonstrating unmitigated support to Ms. Lujanovic for her important, brave and diligent work of uncovering BiH's forgotten wartime atrocities.

Sincerely,

John Z. Kosir, President
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