

An Appeal for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Stability in the Balkans

Since the international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state, violence in this country, exercised by the former Yugoslav Army and Serbian paramilitary troops, has escalated to an open aggression. Dozens of towns and villages have been burned or leveled to the ground. The capital Sarajevo, Mostar and some other major cities are under constant gun and mortar fire, not to mention the air attacks. Mosques, catholic churches, monuments of culture, hospitals and TV centers are shelled on purpose. Casualties among innocent civilians, mostly Moslems and Croats, are counted in ten thousands. Inhabitants of cities besieged by Serbian forces face a slow death by starvation. More than 600,000 refugees and displaced persons have been forced to leave their homes, thus increasing their number in the former Yugoslav region to 1.3 million, which represents the largest exodus in Europe since World War II. Bloodshed and human suffering assume apocalyptic scale, little children, women and elderly people being no exception in this distressing drama. The pattern of destruction and ethnic "purification" of large areas by pogroms reveals plans for formation of Great Serbia by territorial (Lebensraum) gains already encountered in Croatia.

Human solidarity demands that we immediately act against aggressor and help the victims. This is one of the moral issues and categorical imperatives of our time.

There are critical shortages of food in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the same may well take place in Croatia soon. We, therefore, appeal to all governments and humanitarian organizations to provide an adequate aid for the refugees in these countries without any delay. Borders of democratic states should be always open to these unhappy people.

We appeal to all governments and particularly to the U.S.A. and the European Community countries to use their influence and power to stop the brutal attacks of the Serbian dominated former Yugoslav Army. This army, in its somewhat disguised form, operates against by now independent states of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Consequently, it should be dismissed and its weaponry should be either annihilated or put under international control. Refugees and displaced persons should be allowed to return safely to their homes in both attacked states. Their basic human right to live at their own hearths should be internationally protected.

Aggressive wars and territorial conquests are unacceptable particularly in these days when new horizons of international cooperation have been opened after the end of the cold war era.

We appeal, therefore, to governments of all democratic countries to exercise any form of efficient pressure on Belgrade necessary to stop its aggressive policy towards its neighbors and oppression of its minorities. Otherwise, larger regional conflicts, onslaughts and additional million(s) of refugees in Kosovo (Albanians), Sandzak (Moslems) and Voivodina (Hungarians and Croats) seem to be inevitable. Since the former Yugoslavia has disintegrated, the new states should be diplomatically recognized under the same general conditions and employing the same principles, i.e. if and only if they respect the territorial integrity of the neighboring countries, foster human rights and advance democratic institutions. The rights of the minorities should be strictly respected. Democratic processes in the new states should be encouraged and strongly supported by the international community as a guarantee of peace and stability in the Balkans.

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