



Göttingen, March 20, 2024

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Human Rights Organization  
with consultative status at  
the UN ECOSOC and with  
participatory status at the  
Council of Europe

## **A call for immediate accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and measures to strengthen democracy!**

Dear Sir or Madam,

on the occasion of the planned start of the EU accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, we urgently appeal to you to strengthen democracy there. This includes supporting the long overdue constitutional reform: EU member states should push for the implementation of the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), according to which the electoral laws are to be seen as discriminatory and as a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. Our human rights organization supports the planned accession negotiations, but current developments are cause for concern and require decisive action.

Together with other human rights organizations, the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) has – for years – been warning that separatist extremists in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been trying to sabotage the state, in preparation for secession and further ethnic division. The ethnonationalists managed to exploit the constitutional deficiencies in the Dayton Agreement to maintain a de facto ethnic division of the country. This means that minorities in the country – such as Jews and Roma – are excluded. Citizens who cannot be classified ethnically are denied their rights. The European Union must under no circumstances passively tolerate that Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only state in Europe in which Jews and Roma cannot be equal citizens. Also, the destabilizing influence of neighboring countries Serbia and Croatia must be stopped. Therefore, we are calling for targeted sanctions against politicians who are dividing the country and exploiting the interests of their ethnic groups.

With regard to the EU accession negotiations, we are calling for a change in the EU's Balkan policy and are appealing to the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Court of Human Rights, the members of the Peace Implementation Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, the governments of the EU states and the United Nations, as well as all NATO member states:

1. All democratic forces in the EU must cooperate to ensure that the mistakes of the 1990s are not repeated. The EU must demonstrate its full commitment to European standards and values. As a member of the Dayton Peace Implementation Council, the EU must actively support further steps towards democratization. Structural barriers to a functioning democracy must be eliminated.
2. Full implementation of all ECHR rulings is essential to ensure full and equal rights for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to put an end to discrimination against minorities – including the Jews and the Roma. The necessary constitutional and electoral reforms must be adopted by the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina with full participation of the civil society.
3. The independence of the judiciary must be guaranteed, the Constitutional Court has to be reformed, and the binding decisions and rulings of the courts must be implemented. Constitutional Court judges must not be chosen on the basis of ethnic identity, and the presence of foreign judges must continue until the court's full independence and the universal acceptance of its decisions are guaranteed

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4. Mechanisms must be established that prevent further obstruction of the institutions of governance at all levels – and ensure the acceptance and implementation of their decisions. The STP demands an effective system of targeted sanctions against politicians who obstruct the functions of the state and seek to bring about its paralysis. Harmful ethnonationalist interests, aiming to destabilize and fragment the state, must be countered.
5. An active process of democratization requires strategic cooperation with democratic forces and an end to cooperation and strategic partnerships with ethnonationalist extremists. The EU must support efforts to outlaw hate speech, mockery of victims, and denial of the crimes of the past in order to avoid a renewal of the conflict.
6. We demand an end to the policy of appeasement towards the expansionist aspirations of Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbors. The EU must act firmly against all efforts to promote the claims of a Greater Serbia or a Greater Croatia that are a threat to the multi-ethnic character of Bosnia and Herzegovina or even to the existence of the state itself. Further, the EU must condemn and combat Russia's increasing efforts to destabilize the country and the region and to promote conflicts there.

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Thank you for your efforts to establish a functioning, peaceful democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Please keep us updated on this process.

Best regards,

Roman Kühn, Director

Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), Germany

Jasna Causevic, Expert on genocide prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P),

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