



YUCOM

Lawyers' Committee
for Human Rights

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PRESS RELEASE

NON-TRANSPARENCY OF AUTHORITIES UNDERMINES REPUTATION OF SERBIA

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights – YUCOM, as an organization that has been fighting for human rights and democracy for many years, together with other Civil Society Organizations signed below, harshly condemns the actions with which the authorities in Serbia are undermining the reputation of the state, with non-transparent proposals of candidates for membership in international bodies, for positions in charge of human rights protection.

The authorities did not accept the proposal from the Ombudsman, supported by the Commissioner for Protection of Equality and 15 referent Civil Society Organizations, that the candidate of Serbia in the forthcoming elections for membership in the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture for 2017-2021 should Miloš Janković, Deputy Protector of Citizens and incumbent member of the Subcommittee, one of the most prominent individuals on the international scene in the area of banning torture, with expert qualifications in the field of torture prevention and many years of experience working in the Subcommittee.

Namely, the Republic of Serbia has proposed another candidate, doing so in a completely nontransparent way, without prior review of the expert qualifications of the candidate or determination of his experience in the field of torture prevention, which are prerequisite credentials for becoming a member of the Subcommittee, as envisioned by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture of the United Nations.

The aforementioned act brings into question the international credibility of the Republic of Serbia. The Government has once again shown its disregard for proposals by independent bodies and Civil Society Organizations, and above all else its willingness for uncompromising retribution towards collaborators of the Ombudsman.

We would like to highlight that Miloš Janković was proposed by independent bodies and referent Civil Society Organizations precisely due to his expertise in the field of torture prevention, through the establishment of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture in Serbia, with over 1000 recommendations sent to relevant bodies with the aim of improving the position of detainees and achieving excellent cooperation with state



authorities. Additionally, he is an author of several publications in the area of torture prevention, has been invited many times by UN and Council of Europe bodies respectively to prepare joint expert opinions with the Venice Committee, was a speaker at sessions of numerous committees, and is recognized as an expert in the area on both a national and international level.

We are asking the relevant authorities to withdraw their candidate proposal for membership in the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and appeal for the necessary transparency of state authorities, especially regarding the election of candidates for membership in international bodies, with the aim of protecting the reputation that Serbia has acquired in that field so far.

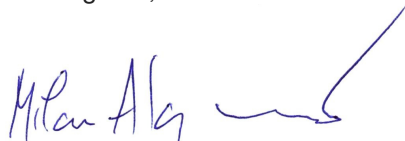
Due to these aforementioned reasons, we have submitted a Request for Access to Information of Public Importance to relevant authorities, asking them send us any and all documents relevant to the candidate proposed by Serbia for membership in the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture for 2017-2021.

We believe that the public in Serbia is entitled to find out the names of the persons that made the decision to elect a candidate for the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture for whom, due to the non-transparency of authorities when making the decision, we cannot be completely certain if he has the necessary expertise or experience in the field of torture prevention, instead of the person that fulfills all criteria, suggested by independent bodies and the nongovernment sector, who has also made significant contributions to the development of this field.

Please find the entire announcement attached below with a list of all the organizations that supported it.

Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights - YUCOM
International Aid Network I.A.N.
Center for Human Rights Niš
Human Rights Committee Valjevo
Belgrade Center for Human Rights
Belgrade Center for Security Policy
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
Mental Disability Rights Initiative of Serbia (MDRI-Serbia)
House of Human Rights and Democracy
Civic Initiatives
The Center for Cultural Decontamination
Group 484
Youth Initiative for Human Rights

Kind regards,



Milan Antonijevic, Director
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights – YUCOM

