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2009-08-07

### **Congress of North American Bosniaks Press Release Regarding a lawsuit against Greek journalist Takis Michas**

The Congress of North American Bosniaks, umbrella organization representing approximately 350,000 American and Canadian Bosniaks, strongly condemns a lawsuit against a respectful Greek journalist, Takis Michas for his writing about the presence of Greek paramilitaries in Bosnia supporting the Serbian aggression. The lawsuit was launched by Stavros Vitalis, a former self-admitted Greek participant in the Srebrenica genocide who claims that the Greek volunteers were there in order to help the Serbs whom he characterizes as the “real victims”.

This is of course a false assessment that is being perpetrated with the intent of distorting the truth and contradicts all the historical facts that have already been established by the international courts, including the decision in which Serbia was found responsible for violating its obligation to prevent genocide in Srebrenica. The facts are that more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were slaughtered by Serbian forces, including Greek volunteers, simply because they belonged to a different ethnic and religious group.

The Congress of North American Bosniaks believes it is incomprehensible that participants in the genocide are not only allowed to walk free, unpunished for their crimes, but they are able to harass highly respected journalists for telling the truth. This is a further insult to injury to all the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and their families.

This is simply a case of trying to intimidate journalists, like Takis Michas, from telling the truth and publicly criticizing the Greek involvement and public attitudes towards the Srebrenica genocide. This is not only an attack on free speech but a repulsive attempt at distorting the truth and spreading of hate propaganda that somehow tries to justify war crimes. This also comes at a time when Radovan Karadzic, the former leader of the Bosnian Serbs, is about to face trial for his role in leading and orchestrating the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important that journalists are allowed to express their views on all aspects of the events that took place in the region, so that we can prevent them from occurring in the future.

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Unfortunately Greek government has not prosecuted those who took part in war crimes in Bosnia and operations that resulted in tragic death of Bosnian civilians, namely around Srebrenica where 8,000 Bosniaks were summarily executed by Serbian forces. As evidenced by the statement from Stavros Vitalis actions of the volunteers "were widely endorsed by Greek society because of the warm friendship that connected Andreas Papandreou with Radovan Karadzic".

Greek government should take steps to apologize to the families of those who were killed, for their role in not doing anything to prevent the spread of hatred towards Bosniaks and for allowing the Greek volunteers to operate freely without fear of being prosecuted for their crimes. Furthermore, we ask of the Greek justice system to throw out the frivolous charges against Takis Michas, and ensure that freedom of the press is upheld according to the standards of the European Union.

Semir Đulić  
Spokesperson