



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented today a protest note to the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in Belgrade, Gordan Markotic, in which it sharply protests over the annulment of the verdict against Alojzije Stepinac, considering this action to be the rehabilitation of fascism and the Ustasha-run Independent State of Croatia (NDH).

In this note, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reminds that the United Nations and the European Union explicitly prohibit the restoration of fascism and fascist ideologies.

"The Republic of Serbia is outraged by the rehabilitation of the Nazi Ustasha NDH. Stepinac's words spoken on Easter Day in 1941 saying that "the NDH was created by the mercy of God, wise and devoted work of the Poglavnik (Leader Pavelic) and the Ustasha movement, along with the will of our allies (Hitler and Mussolini)", as well as his statement that "the NDH is the most noteworthy event in the life of the Croatian people" speak volumes about Stepinac and those who are rehabilitating him.

In their public appearances and statements, and by their decision to annul the verdict against Archbishop Stepinac, which the Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Jerusalem, Efraim Zuroff, called "shameful", the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian state authorities directly support those forces in Croatia that are against the reconciliation and regional stability and that represent the views of the world opposite to the basic achievements of the civilisation and the foundations upon which the UN and the EU were built.

The rehabilitation of the vicar of the NDH's genocidal regime, whose "priests" and "nuns" were commanders of concentration camps of Jasenovac and Jastrebarsko, and who cynically defended at his trial following WWII the forcible conversion of over 200 thousand Croatian Serbs to Catholicism with the words that "it is not about conversion but about religious transition", creates a climate and a mood resulting in attacks on the Serbs and graffiti like those in the Serbian Orthodox Church in Rajevo Selo near Gunja ("This is NDH", "a bullet to the head, that's the best for Serbs" and the like).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia expresses its concern at the anti-Serbian sentiments in the Republic of Croatia that have developed unchecked over the last

few years, clearly tending to escalate further. It is evidenced by a large number of ethnically motivated incidents in which Serbs were victims. This year alone, twenty-six incidents and cases of hate speech against the Serbs have already been registered in the Republic of Croatia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia considers the state of Croatia responsible, because it does not punish the perpetrators, does not subject them to public condemnation, nor does it show the necessary concern for the victims. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia is particularly concerned about the toleration and impunity of persons who continuously and publicly affirm the Ustasha salute "Fore home ready".

The Republic of Serbia believes that the good neighbourly relations with the Republic of Croatia should develop upon the respect for the foundations and achievements of anti-fascist Europe, created after the Second World War, and built into the European integration documents. The Republic of Serbia is against and will always be against the movements and occurrences that glorify and use characteristic symbols of Nazism and fascism, defeated on 9 May 1945 by the people dedicated to freedom and anti-fascism."