



February 22, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to you today to express our grave concerns regarding Germany's nomination of Christian Schmidt for the role of the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). As representatives of the Bosnian American diaspora across the United States, we do not believe that Schmidt has demonstrated the vision, capacity, or the willingness to advance credible reform-oriented politics for BiH. By seeking to appease the forces of segregation and secessionists in BiH – and their benefactors in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Moscow – Schmidt will only distance the country from its rightful place within the community of Western democracies.

We are especially alarmed by allegations that Schmidt and his superiors in Berlin first sought to win the support of the Kremlin for his nomination, even before the acquiescence of the NATO Quint. Russia represents a direct threat to BiH's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We categorically reject any attempt to appease Vladimir Putin at the expense of the legitimate democratic and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the majority of the Bosnian population. By supporting Schmidt, the U.S. would allow Putin to further encroach into the region. It is also alarming that Schmidt's political party - the Christian Social Union (CSU) - is a very vocal supporter of the Croatian HDZ, a far right party with a large anti-Semitic base in Croatia and BiH. In fact, Schmidt received the Order of Ante Starcevic by the HDZ, an award that was also given to individuals that were accused and convicted of war crimes.

The United States remains BiH's foremost friend and ally and for that we remain wholly grateful. The Bosnian American diaspora is especially appreciative of President Biden's leadership in helping end the genocide and ethnic cleansing of BiH's non-Serb population. While significant progress has been made since the end of the war, the Office of the High Representative remains a critical institutional pillar in BiH's democratic transformation. This important role must be occupied by an individual who understands the power and responsibility of the office, and by someone who is willing to use it to deliver a just, equitable and accountable constitutional regime for all Bosnians. We believe that Christian Schmidt is not that person.

It is imperative that any future High Representative must enter the office with a clear pro-reform and pro-Euro-Atlantic agenda – in line with the decisions of BiH's own parliament – and a clear formula for delivering on these objectives. Above all, we expect

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clarity on how the OHR will deal with those who undermine the rule of law and continue to endanger the sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH. Any High Representative who is unwilling to forcefully defend the central objective of the Dayton Peace Accords – the preservation of BiH’s statehood – including via the Bonn Powers, is ineligible for the position.

We too envision a post-OHR BiH – but only once the 5+2 Agenda has been fully and sustainably implemented, and BiH is a full-fledged member of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosniak American Association of Iowa

Bosnian American Genocide Institute

Community of Bosniaks Georgia