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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Committees:

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Chairman, Subcommittee on
Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Subcommittee on Space
Subcommittee on Energy

January 31, 2017

President Tomislav Nikolić
President of the Republic of Serbia
Andrićev venac 1, 11000 Beograd, Serbia

Dear President Nikolić,

I write you having served nearly three decades on the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. I have been part of the effort to bring lasting peace and stability to Southeast Europe. Recently, I was disheartened to learn that, last month, a thirteen-year-old Interpol arrest warrant was activated against Kosovo MP and former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj.

The resulting arrest of Haradinaj after he arrived in Paris en route from Kosovo was yet another regrettable setback in Serbian relations with Kosovo. Eighteen years after the conflict's end, it is time to fully recognize that the 1998-1999 war is over. The effort to have Haradinaj detained as a "war criminal"—after he has been twice acquitted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia—was counter-productive and simply ripping a scab off a healing wound. Such acts of irrational vengeance will undoubtedly undermine efforts to secure peace and maintain stability in the Balkans.

Taking this hit on a leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army could well open the door to similar legal attacks on Serbian leaders involved in the bloodletting and ethnic cleansing during the ugly and brutal conflict that enveloped the Balkans after the fall of Yugoslavia. As long as actions like this are happening, the possibility looms of a breakdown in civil order, and even the eruption of violence on an uncontrollable scale. Instead of stoking the fires of conflict, all parties in the Balkans should be seeking reconciliation, which will benefit the entire region.

In yet another recent negative example: a train with provocative signs rolled into the northern part of Kosovo, above the Ibar River. Instead of trying to entice Kosovo into a fight over the sovereignty of this heavily Serbian area, both sides should seek a mutually beneficial alteration of northern border that would result in more Serbs in Serbia and more Kosovars in Kosovo. That option is available and should not be ignored.

It is time for both governments to take steps to deescalate the conflict between Prishtina and Belgrade—first by withdrawing the request for prosecutions based on war crimes during the decades-old conflict. This chapter in the history of the Balkans needs to be shut, and if possible, forgotten. Both sides need to look forward, rather than backward. This positive approach, if given a chance, will bring peace and prosperity to your part of the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana Rohrabacher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress