

**Question for written answer E-004715/2020
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Dominique Bilde (ID)

Subject: Remarks by the Croatian President on *Operation Storm*

On 5 August 2020, Croatia celebrated the 25th anniversary of *Operation Storm* which enabled it to recover part of the territory controlled by Serbian separatists ¹ .

This operation, however, also caused some 200 000 Serbs to leave Croatia and resulted in 667 civilian deaths. Moreover, according to a report by Human Rights Watch from 1996, the refugees have not been able to regain possession of their homes ² .

On this occasion, the President of Croatia delivered a virulent speech, declaring in particular that 'not everyone who was sentenced in The Hague is a war criminal' and that Croatia cannot be held responsible for these crimes ³ .

Does the Commission intend to react to the above statements and how does it intend to promote the pacification of inter-ethnic and inter-state relations in the Western Balkans and foster a balanced and objective approach to remembrance and respect for the rights of the refugees concerned?

¹ <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/05/croatia-hails-25th-anniversary-of-operation-storm-victory-serbs-mourn/>

² « A 1996 Human Rights Watch report details how the Croatian government refused to allow those who were made refugees by Operation Storm to return to their homes. » <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/18/eu-must-confront-croatias-president-over-operation-storm-remarks/?nocache>

³ <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/18/eu-must-confront-croatias-president-over-operation-storm-remarks/?nocache>