

ALEM Association for Nurturing and Promoting Bosniak Cultural, Musical and Spiritual Traditions

Thank you, Madame Chair.

My name is [inaudible] , and I represent ALEM and the Bosniak minority of Croatia. Today I would like to talk about the exclusion of Bosniaks in the political decision-making process. Bosniaks are the second largest national minority in Croatia, and according to the 2021 population census, 24 000 registered Bosniaks live in Croatia. Not all of them being registered voters. A large percentage of the Bosniak electoral body is excluded from the election due to the fact that after turning 18 one's ethnicity is erased from the system and needs reaffirming, resulting in unaware Bosniaks being ineligible to vote for their representative. Moreover, Bosniaks share an electoral unit with Macedonians, Albanians, Montenegrins, and Slovenians. All vying for one Parliamentary position. Coupled with the fact that minorities cannot cast a ballot in both the general and minority election, the system is tilted in a way that results in Bosniaks being disincentivised from voting. And despite taking up a smaller demographic percentage than Bosniaks, other national minorities are guaranteed their own member of Parliament. This inequality materializes in funding, with Bosniaks ranking 5th in allocated funds, directly impacting their ability to preserve their cultural autonomy through associations. The Bosniak community salutes the strides that have been made to ensure our constitutional rights. We can proudly state that the Bosnian language is being taught in schools and the community was also given its own symbols: a flag and a crest. However, negative demographic trends and the threat of assimilation due to the lack of funding point to a larger problem at hand. Therefore, our recommendation to the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues is establishing a separate electoral unit for Bosniaks, based on their demographic significance, or the implementation of the constitutional right of minorities to vote in both the general and minority election. Thank you.