



INSTITUTE FOR THE RESEARCH OF GENOCIDE
CANADA



May 9, 2012

Lakshimi N. Mittal
CEO and Chairman
ArcelorMittal
1808 I St NW # 500
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Mittal,

On behalf of the Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina (ACBH), a non for profit organization in Washington D.C. that advocates for a united, multiethnic and democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the Congress of North American Bosniaks (CNAB), an organization representing at least 350,000 Americans and Canadians of Bosniak descent and origin, the Institute for Research Genocide, Canada (IGC), Bosnian American Genocide Institute and Education Center (BAGI), Australian Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina Organizations, as well as the Institute for Research of Crimes Against Humanity and International Law, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosniak Cultural Association, Bosnia and Herzegovina, we would like to express our utmost concern regarding the grave injustice that is currently taking place in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) at the ArcelorMittal owned mining complex Omarska - a former concentration camp located in the Prijedor municipality.

Omarska - known as one of the most notorious concentration camps during the war of aggression on BiH, was one of many camps set up in northern BiH to rid the country of non-Serbs.ⁱ During the spring and summer of 1992, approximately 3,334 non-Serb inmates were held in appalling and brutal conditions, tortured and killed. The evidence of torture and killings of detainees at Omarska, collected by a UN commission of experts, led to the establishment of an international war crimes court known as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.ⁱⁱ On December 1, 2005, at a press conference in Banja Luka, ArcelorMittal (represented by Mr. Will Smith, Ms. Petra van Helden and Mr. Mladen Jelaca) announced that a Memorial Center would be built and financed by the ArcelorMittal.ⁱⁱⁱ

Since then, ArcelorMittal has withdrawn its commitment to finance the building of the memorial, stating in February of 2006 that it is 'temporarily suspending' the Omarska memorial project.^{iv} In addition, ArcelorMittal has also started denying victims access to the site. For

example, the *Day of Concentration Camp Detainees* event takes place on May 9th of each year at the site of the former Omarska concentration camp. In May of 2011, the concentration camp survivors managed to get permission from ArcelorMittal to visit the former camp and commemorate the lives that were lost; however this year, ArcelorMittal has denied access to the sites where crimes have been committed. In March of 2012, access to the former camp was denied to a group of students from Munich, Germany and in April of 2012, a group of former camp survivors and peace activists were also denied access to Omarska.

The current Mayor of Prijedor, Marko Pavic, stated that a memorial in Omarska would undermine relations between different ethnic groups in Prijedor. This type of genocide denial is an additional burden threatening the lives of many returnees and survivors of concentration camps, ethnic-cleansing, crimes against humanity and genocide and it is deteriorating progress in regards to human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Prijedor municipality. The returnees and survivors over the years have faced a number of challenges but have reached a pivotal point this year by not being allowed to visit the Omarska site and hold a peaceful commemoration.

Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Accords guarantees all returnees and survivors the right to a safe home without harassment, intimidation, persecution, or discrimination, particularly on account of their ethnic origin, religious belief, or political opinion.^v At the same time, it guarantees the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms which include the prevention and prompt suppression of any written or verbal incitement, through media or otherwise of ethnic or religious hostility by public officials. By not allowing concentration camp survivors to enter Omarska and by not building a memorial as you have promised, you are violating the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights^{vi} which you claim to support. In addition, the ArcelorMittal Human Rights Policy^{vii} clearly states that “We seek to respect human rights and to develop an understanding of the cultures, customs and values that prevail in our local communities by developing an inclusive and open dialogue with the people affected by our operations. The ArcelorMittal Community Engagement Standard requires us to conduct an open and inclusive dialogue with local communities, including engaging with often under-represented groups such as women and Indigenous Peoples.”

“Never Again” represents international commitment that no population will ever again be subjected to genocide. Concentration sites and sites of mass killings have become commemorative memorials, preserving the memory of the horrors that happened there and are reminders of the atrocities that can occur when human rights are abandoned.

Your current policy regarding Omarska is irresponsible, dangerous, and amounts to a policy of appeasement and genocide denial which leads to a perpetual crisis that endangers the stability of the entire Southeast Europe region. We strongly urge you to exercise corporate responsibility and deliver what you have promised to the victims of the Omarska concentration camp.

Sincerely,

Ajla Delkic, M.A. Executive Director, Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina (ACBH)

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i <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1992/aug/07/warcrimes.edvulliamy>

ii <http://www.icty.org/sections/AbouttheICTY>

iii <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4449996.stm>

iv <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4731646.stm>

v http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=375

vi <http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/udhr60/declaration.shtml>

vii http://www.arcelormittal.com/corp/~/_media/Files/A/ArcelorMittal/corporate-responsibility/ArcelorMittal_HumanRightsPolicy.pdf

- i <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1992/aug/07/warcrimes.edvulliamy>
- ii <http://www.icty.org/sections/AbouttheICTY>
- iii <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4449996.stm>
- iv <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4731646.stm>
- v http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=375
- vi <http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/udhr60/declaration.shtml>
- vii http://www.arcelormittal.com/corp/~/_media/Files/A/ArcelorMittal/corporate-responsibility/ArcelorMittal_HumanRightsPolicy.pdf