

Romana Tomc

Poslanska skupina Evropske ljudske stranke
Slovenska demokratska stranka

Brussels, 22th November 2022

Your excellency,
Mr Johan O. Verboom,

I was very surprised to learn about the decision of the Dutch embassy in Ljubljana as well as the Dutch Ministry of foreign affairs, regarding the decision for this year's nominations for the Dutch Embassy's Tulip Award 2022 for outstanding and courageous human rights defenders. Of course, it goes without saying that it is your sovereign right to award whoever you desire, yet I feel it is my duty to inform you of realities that only Slovenians understand when it comes to the group of people you are honoring.

I am certain you are familiar that Inštitut 8. Marec (I8M) and Danes je nov dan are highly politically defined institutions, despite the fact that they declare themselves as non-political organizations that stand for democracy and human rights. The actions they carried out in the past years and those we are witnessing now, show deep and unequivocal connections with the left political option and the ruling coalition.

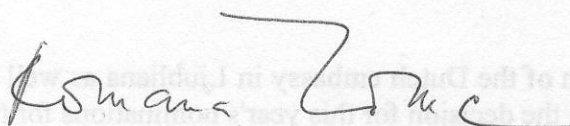
Their actions during the pandemics were primarily aimed at destroying all government measures. Active involvement in anti-government protests did not stem from concern for the protection of Slovenian citizens, but had the fundamental purpose of opposing the Covid-19 measures. Considering that your government also faced similar problems, I am certain you know how difficult it was to ensure health related measures in those challenging times, while also taking care of the economy and providing adequate social security for citizens. Your government has often dealt very harshly with protesters who did not comply with government measures. In Slovenia, security measures were much more lenient. Unfortunately, it was precisely organizations such as Inštitut 8. Marec and Danes je nov dan and their like-minded supporters who supported the protests and at the same time, with the help of the media, created the impression that the measures were disproportionate. Anyone who has at least a little knowledge of the situation in the EU knows that this was not the case.

I am also sure that you are aware that I8M, together with some other organizations, prepared proposals for the repeal of the laws that were adopted during the pandemics and that it is currently acting as one of the organizers of the referendum campaign regarding the law on broadcasting.

Moreover, let me express my great disappointment that I8M, despite the fact that it is supposed to stand up for human rights, did not stand up for the victims in the notorious affair about the sexual abuse of women in the Fotopub affair, with which you are probably also familiar. They also did not come forward regarding the attacks on journalists. Their principles have also been tested in many other cases of human rights violations.

I would like to believe that you have reviewed the operations of the I8M and Danes je nov dan in detail and the recognition has been given based on careful consideration. That is why your decision is even more of a surprise. According to my experience so far, ambassadors of countries never interfere in domestic political topics, nor do they want to comment on what is happening in the country. The recognition that you gave to an organization that is so openly politically motivated, and at a crucial time, could be seen as unacceptable political support and could lead to further division of citizens.

Sincerely,



Romana Tomc, Member of the European parliament