Complaint filed by OCS against president of Kanjiža Municipality for multiplied discrimination in area of performing of public authorities

This opinion was issued in the procedure acting upon the complaint filed by organizations “R.” and C.z.z.i p.t.a. against M.B., mayor of Kanjiža municipality regarding the statement he made on 12 August 2015 on the premises of Kanjiža municipality building in respect of refugees staying on the territory of the Republic of Serbia and Kanjiža municipality. In the course of the procedure it has been ascertained that during a press conference held on 12 August 2015, M.B., the mayor of Kanjiža municipality, had said among other things: “Regular bus routes run from Preševo, Belgrade and Subotica bringing multiple buses full of refugees to our town. These people have desecrated our cemeteries, graves, our chapels, they have destroyed public and recreational areas throughout the town, they have devastated our plough fields and orchards. Let us all look and reflect upon what these foreigners who lack basic intelligence and manners have done in the past month. However, what they do not lack is the money and that seems to be the gist of things. Each and every inhabitant of Kanjiža, Martinoš and Horgoš is right when they fear to walk down the town street, when they are worried about their children’s future and they are rightly concerned about the time when their children would be back to school in the fall because of all the devastation of public and recreational areas, streets. On behalf of the local self-government of Kanjiža I call on all the citizens to stand prepared.“ This statement made by M.B. was published on the Kanjiža municipality official website on 13 August 2015. In the course of the procedure it has been ascertained that a statement of this kind represents an act of discrimination as it constitutes an insult to the dignity of refugees, it creates a degrading and offensive climate and breeds prejudice, resentment and intolerance. This is especially important as the person who made such a statement is a public official, someone who is bound by the Constitution and the law to respect, implement and enforce the prohibition of discrimination and to strengthen equality of all citizens. This is the reason why an opinion was issued stating that the statement made by M.B., the mayor of Kanjiža municipality at the press conference held on 12 August 2015 and then posted on Kanjiža municipality official website on 13 August 2015, which was presented as the official stance of the local self-government unit regarding refugees staying in Kanjiža Municipality, contains views which are disturbing, degrading and offend the dignity of refugees. A recommendation was issued to M.B. and Kanjiža municipality to make a public apology in respect of the statement made on account of refugees that would be posted on Kanjiža Municipality official website. In addition, the recommendation also instructs them to refrain from making and posting statements in the future which offend dignity of and reinforce prejudice against refugees, but instead to exert efforts towards suppressing xenophobia, racism and discrimination and enhance tolerance for refugees.