

**Question for written answer E-004352/2025
to the Commission**
Rule 144
Stephen Nikola Bartulica (ECR)

Subject: Investigation of war crimes

On 12 April 2018, the County Public Prosecutor's Office in Osijek launched an investigation into Spasoje Petković for his alleged involvement in the abduction and murder of civilians during the Croatian War of Independence. There are also strong indications that he participated, on 20 November 1991, in the torture and killing of wounded people and civilians taken from the Vukovar hospital, as well as in the executions that took place in the hangar at Ovčara. The French authorities conducted their own separate investigation, as the French volunteer Jean-Michel Nicolier was among those killed.

After more than three decades, Jean-Michel Nicolier's remains were finally found and identified among the victims of Ovčara. Petković confessed to Nicolier's murder in his testimony, yet he did not face prosecution in Serbia.

He was granted protected witness status before the War Crimes Chamber in Belgrade and provided with a new identity and protection by the Serbian authorities.

1. Does the Commission consider that Serbia, by providing sanctuary to a war criminal who has admitted to the murder of a French national, is enabling him to evade justice and thus breaching its international obligations towards Croatia and France?
2. Can the Commission clarify how cooperation with the Croatian and French judicial authorities in securing the arrest and extradition of Spasoje Petković and other war criminals who committed crimes in the territory of the Republic of Croatia will be ensured in the context of accession negotiations with Serbia?

Submitted: 5.11.2025