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## **TAJANI APOLOGISES AFTER MEETING CROATIAN AND SLOVENIAN MEPS**

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After a meeting with Croatian and Slovenian representatives of the European People's Party (EPP), European Parliament President Antonio Tajani on Wednesday apologised and expressed his deep regret over statements he made in Basovizza at a recent commemoration for the victims of the foibe, karst pits in Istria.

This afternoon I met with MEPs from Croatia and Slovenia who sent me a letter, I sincerely regret and I apologise for having used words that offended your citizens and were perceived as a form of a territorial claim. I assure you that was not my intention, nor my opinion about that issue, according to a statement by EP President Tajani.

My mentioning Istria and Dalmatia was about Istrians and Dalmatians, their children and grandchildren, many of whom attended the ceremony, Tajani said.

All forms of totalitarianism deserve full condemnation and victims of fascism, Nazism and communism should be treated with equal respect, Tajani said in his statement.

Following an outcry from Slovenian and Croatian politicians, he apologised on Monday saying his comment on the regions "was in no way a territorial claim".

Tajani's explanation that his statement in Basovizza where he mentioned "Italian Istria" and "Italian Dalmatia" was misinterpreted was not accepted by Croatian and Slovenian members of the European Parliament who said on Tuesday they would ask Tajani to retract his statement and announced the possibility of asking for his resignation less than three months before elections for the European Parliament.

Addressing the commemoration for WWII foibe (karst pits) victims in Basovizza near Trieste, Italy, this past Sunday, Tajani said "Long live Trieste, long live Italian Istria, long live Italian Dalmatia." His statement caused public uproar in Croatia and Slovenia.

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