

# **OHR Bulletin 35 - February 4, 1997**

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## **Presidency Meeting**

The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) held its fourteenth session in Lukavica on 4 February. A statement released by the Presidency announced that the Presidency foresees the signing of contracts approved by the Steering Board of the World Bank for the reconstruction of BH on 7 February and Presidency Members, Mr. Zubak and Mr. Krajisnik, would consult on this issue with the Entity Governments by that date.

A decision was made on the organisation of the cabinets of the Presidency Members, temporary financing of the Presidency, as well as the temporary location of the Presidency and its cabinets.

A Working Group was instructed to prepare a proposal for the allocation of funds for the MoU signed between the Presidency of BH and the European Commission on economic reconstruction programmes. Also, the current problem of demining in BH was considered, and a request made of the Council of Ministers to establish a Commission at ministerial level to regularly inform the Presidency about its work. The Council of Ministers was furthermore requested to review and solve the vitally important issue of recognising public documents throughout BH, taking into consideration the letter sent to Presidency Members by the Federal Minister of Justice.

## **Federation**

- The Federation Forum held a session in Sarajevo on 3 February under the co-chairmanship of US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, John Kornblum, and Principal Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner.

The Federation partners agreed to a number of measures which included the commitment to an immediate formation of a city council and city government in Sarajevo. A number of commitments with respect to Mostar were also made concerning: freedom of movement throughout the city; the cessation of hostilities and return of expellees; and an agreement that the six municipalities of the City of Mostar would be

constituted by 14 February.

It was agreed that the question of municipalities required urgent resolution and that a draft law would be submitted to a legal procedure in the Government and Parliament on an urgent basis.

The Partners agreed that the Sarajevo Cantonal Police would be constituted in an ethnically balanced manner and determined, together with UN IPTF, that they would be constituted on 20 February. Immediately following this, Cantonal Police Forces in the Herzegovina-Neretva and Middle Bosnia Cantons would be established by 15 April.

The quick passage of the essential package of legislation which would allow the Federation to function within a unique legal system was recognised as being very important and the Federation Partners committed to submit to the Federation Assembly the relevant draft laws. Draft laws on Criminal Law and Civil Law would also be submitted, and the Ministry of Finance would propose a draft budget for 1997 by 28 February.

It was agreed that the Federation Government would submit a proposal to establish the Federation Implementation Council to the Federation Assembly by 20 February. In addition, with immediate effect, a Special Group to resolve questions on the status and organisation of the broadcast media would be established. The group would be co-chaired by representatives of the OHR and the US Embassy, with Bosniac and Croat representatives to the Special Group being jointly nominated by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federation. The Federation Partners recognised the importance of moderating the tone of dialogue in the public media and committed themselves to restraint in public discussion, as well as agreeing to refrain from personalised attacks. They undertook to take steps to support freedom of media and free exchange of information.

- On 29 January Federation Partner officials signed a military accord to appoint the commander and joint command of the Federal Army. The head of the joint command is Bosniac General Rasim Delic, with Croat General Budimir as his Deputy Chief of Staff. The orders were signed by Chairman of the Presidency of BH, Alija Izetbegovic and Croat member of the Presidency, Kresimir Zubak. Ambassador James Pardew, US Envoy for Military Stabilisation in the Balkans, said after the meeting that *"the agreement constitutes final approval of these [military] organisations and now allows critical appointments to be made"*.
- At a meeting in Jajce on 28 January with International Mediator for the Federation of BH, Dr. Christian Schwarz-Schilling, representatives of the Bosniac and Croat Parties agreed to hold an Interim Municipal Assembly for the town of Jajce by March 15. The Parties also agreed to the establishment of an Information Centre for Refugees and DPs with the aim of accelerating the return of these people to their homes in the Jajce municipality. The Parties agreed that human rights violations were unacceptable and called on the authorities and police to defend these rights actively. In order to expedite the exchange of information concerning human rights, the Jajce municipality would provide office space for the Federation Ombudsperson. The Parties also accepted that any reconstruction projects in the municipality would only be granted if the Parties fully complied with this Agreement, the Federation Constitution, the Peace Agreement and all other international treaties.

## Refugee Return

Two Bosniac men conducting repairs to their homes in the Zone of Separation (ZOS) village of Gajevi were seriously injured on 26 January when a demonstration of approximately 250 Serbs turned violent. The demonstrators, who were reportedly armed with rocks, clubs, sticks and poles, harassed and threatened 45 Bosniaks who had crossed the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) to work on their homes, and also completely demolished a house that was under construction. Another house that had recently been completed was also damaged. RS police reportedly did nothing to prevent the demonstrators from entering the area and refused to intervene. SFOR troops managed to calm the situation and escorted the Bosniaks back to the IEBL. International

officials met with local Serb authorities on Sunday afternoon to protest their failure to prevent the incident.

Following the incident in Gajevi the High Representative, Carl Bildt, denounced the Bosnian Serb leadership over violence against non-Serb refugees. Following urgent meetings with Mr. Bildt, NATO Commander, William Crouch, and UN IPTF Commissioner Fitzgerald, the RS President, Biljana Plavsic made a statement on 29 January agreeing to accept pre-war Bosniac residents wishing to resettle in the area. "We will accept people who wish to return, but on condition that they had houses in that area earlier" her statement read.

The meetings resulted in an agreement by Mme. Plavsic that:

- A Commission of Inquiry into the events on 26 January would commence on 30 January.
- Joint patrols with the IPTF would commence immediately and full cooperation would be extended to and in coordination with IPTF to operate the patrols throughout the ZOS.
- Mme. Plavsic would issue written instructions to all local authorities to cooperate fully with the International Housing Commissions.
- The Chief of Police, Mr. Bjelosevic (having presented a full accounting of all events and stating his full commitment to providing security and law and order in Gajevi and throughout the ZOS) would be "preoccupied" with his commitments in the Brcko Arbitration and elsewhere, and, therefore, would not be in the Gajevi area for the time being.

On 31 January the first group of Bosniac families attempting to move back to their homes in Stolac as part of the pilot project were blocked and forced to turn back by 200-250 demonstrators who threw eggs at their vehicles. Six of the pilot project houses had been "occupied" by local residents the previous day. UN IPTF report that local police did nothing to prevent the demonstrators' actions and in some cases were even observed to be actively encouraging them. The police also refused to disperse the crowd when asked to do so by UN IPTF. The international police will issue non-compliance reports on the officers involved and international officials are raising the matter with senior Federation authorities.

## **Joint Bodies**

On 30 January the Council of Ministers reached an agreement on a draft for working regulations and concluded that commissions charged with drafting laws on Economic Policy should complete their work within seven days. At the session, which was presided over by Co-Chairman Boro Bosic, draft laws on central bank, foreign trade and debt were also discussed. The Council officials agreed on the establishment of dedicated telephone lines between each other and asked the assistance of the OHR to that end.

## **Municipal Elections**

On 28 January the Provisional Election Commission (PEC) adopted its Rules and Regulations for the municipal elections. Head of OSCE Mission in BH, Ambassador Robert Frowick, said that the Rules and Regulations had undergone changes to eight of the articles. Rules and Regulations as adopted by the PEC for the 14 September elections would remain in force subject only to these new amendments, termed the "500 Series". The regulations include the establishment of clear procedures for voters who wish to exercise their right to vote in a municipality where he or she intends to live in the future. In order to do this, the person must provide "clear and convincing documentation to demonstrate the Refugee Voter's pre-existing, legitimate and non-transitory nexus with the future municipality". Other articles pertain to voter registration, names not found in the 1991 census, inspections and penalties.

## **Missing Persons**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a press release on 31 January expressing its deep

disappointment, as well as that of the families of thousands of persons gone missing during the conflict in BH, in the lack of progress in the search for answers.

ICRC Deputy Delegate General Christophe Girod, speaking after chairing the tenth session of the Working Group on Missing Persons in Sarajevo last week, said that the ICRC was particularly disenchanted in the meagre outcome of the session as it comes only two weeks after ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga toured BH in an effort to further the process. Girod stressed, however, that all parties attending last week's session had agreed to the need to review the modalities of approaching the issue of missing persons.

To this effect, the ICRC will, in the next few weeks, start a series of bilateral talks the outcome of which it will keep the international community duly informed.

18,172 Bosnian families have registered next-of-kin as missing with the ICRC. Only 1045 of them have received any information.

## **Human Rights**

- The US State Department released its annual report on Human Rights on 30 January, in which it said that Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina had all committed human rights abuses in 1996. The report cited the continuing situation in Belgrade, repression against the Albanians in Kosovo and Muslims in Sandzak, as well as state controlled police activities in FRY; the Croatian Government's continued allowance of serious abuses, especially of ethnic Serbs, as well as the crackdown on media freedom; and, in BH, the preferential treatment on the basis of political, ethnic and religious criteria.
- UN officials report that a UN IPTF officer was wounded and threatened at gunpoint in the course of his professional duties while attempting to arrest a person believed to be a policeman in west Mostar. West Mostar police have so far refused IPTF requests to provide the identity of the suspected policeman. IPTF investigations into the incident are continuing.

## **United Nations**

On 31 January the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, appointed Ambassador Kai Eide of Norway as his Special Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Commissioner Manfred Seitner of Denmark as the International Police (UN IPTF) Commissioner. Ambassador Eide succeeds former Special Representative, Iqbal Riza, who was recently appointed as Mr. Annan's chef de cabinet, and Commissioner Seitner replaces Peter Fitzgerald who recently completed his mission in BH.

## **Humanitarian & Refugee Issues**

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies issued a release on 28 January announcing the launch of its world-wide "Emergency Appeal 1997". The appeal seeks a total of 279.2 million Swiss francs (about 322 million DEM) for 37 operation around the world, over one sixth of which (59 million DEM) is destined for its operation in countries of the former Yugoslavia.

The release said that 24 million DEM was needed for operations in BH alone to fund activities which would be aimed at reintegrating those refugees and displaced persons who would be able to return to their areas of origin. Programmes planned for 1997 include home care and secondary health, mobile red cross teams, returnee support and reconciliation, and the development of Red Cross capacities.

## Media Issues

The New York based Committee to Protect Journalists sent a letter on 31 January to the Bosnian Presidency and officials from the local and international community condemning a recent threat to a group of journalists in Mostar and calling on the addressees “to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of journalists working in western and eastern Mostar”. The letter follows a threats made towards a group of about ten journalists waiting to attend a press briefing in Hotel Ero.

The Media Experts Sub-Commission (MESC) in Mostar also issued a statement condemning violence against and obstruction of journalists pursuing their duties called upon the authorities to prosecute violations of security of the press and requested international organisations to assist in guaranteeing safe conditions for professional journalism.

## Belgrade

Speaking at a news conference on 31 January, following a Contact Group meeting in Rome, the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt said that Serbia was in a desperate financial and social situation and was *“developing into the sick man of Europe”*. *“There is no way that we can get the stability of Serbia and for the Serbs that we seek without fundamental economic reforms.”* he said. This would not be possible, he added, *“without an opening up to the outside world and the help that is there in the form of trade relations and financial relations”*.

At the meeting, Contact Group officials had again called on the authorities in Belgrade to honour the results of the 17 November local elections in line with the OSCE fact-finding mission and its subsequent recommendations. The acceptance of these recommendations, they said, was a precondition for starting a democratic dialogue between the authorities and the opposition, The Group also appealed to both sides to refrain from violence.

## Mine Issues / Football

“Spirit of Soccer”, an organisation aimed at coaching children in football, whilst simultaneously instilling a sense of discipline and responsibility in dealing with the dangers of landmines, recently undertook a successful pilot initiative in Mostar, in which coaches from both east and west sides of the city attended a Mine Awareness (MA) seminar. *“Spirit of Football”*, founded and single-handedly run by Mr. Scott Lee, is about to begin its 1997 programme, which aims to: conduct a nation-wide tour to schools and clubs promoting MA through the medium of Association Football; raise and distribute sports equipment throughout schools; lobby sports stars for support in the anti-mine campaign; and implement a nation-wide scheme to provide MA instruction for coaches and sports teachers of all sports.

## Looking Ahead

### **11 February:**

Media projects co-ordination meeting, Sarajevo

### **22-23 February:**

Coalition for Return Meeting, Tuzla

### **25 February:**

Governing Council, Open Broadcast Network, OHR Brussels

See our [\*Chronology\*](#) for a full list of activities

The OHR Bulletin is produced by the Public Affairs Department of the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo

*and aims to give an overview of what is happening on the ground in the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement. Suggestions and contributions are welcome and should be addressed to the Public Affairs Department of the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo (387-71) 447 275 ext. 562, Fax (387-71) 447 420. Callers from outside BiH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7500 & Fax (32-2) 737 7501. The Bulletin is also distributed via e-mail through the OHR Listserver. To register, send an e-mail to [listserv@cc1.kuleuven.ac.be](mailto:listserv@cc1.kuleuven.ac.be) with "SUB OHR yourfirstname yourlastname" in the body of the message (no subject required)*