

Meeting of the Joint Civilian Commission in Sarajevo

The Joint Civilian Commission Sarajevo (JCCS) met today and resumed its work on the implementation of the peace agreement with the participation of representatives of the local Serb authorities in Sarajevo, the city of Sarajevo, and the Federation.

The JCCS welcomed the results of the Rome conference. The JCCS endorses and will orient its work toward implementing the Rome declaration on Sarajevo and its goal of a unified city in which all peoples and citizens will have the opportunity to participate fully in the governance of the city and the opstine.

As an urgent issue, the JCCS discussed the impending transition of law enforcement in the areas around Sarajevo to Federation police. At the same time, existing local civilian authorities will continue in practice until D+91, provided they do not act inconsistently with the Federation constitution and laws. All parties agreed that in order for the transition to remain peaceful and for Sarajevo to emerge as a united city in accordance with the peace agreement, it is of the utmost importance for Federation police to act professionally according to international standards. International police will accompany Federation police when they are carrying out their law enforcement activities. They will have immediate access to any action taken by the Federation police including investigations. They will be present at all times in every police station.

All members of the JCCS encourage all citizens of Sarajevo to remain in their city. There is full freedom of movement and freedom of choice. Should residents choose to leave, all routes between the entities will, as required by the Peace Agreement, remain open. Anyone can depart, and should they choose, return at a later date. Because of the transition, a great many Serb Sarajevans believe they must leave their homes before Federation police arrive. This is incorrect.

The Federation police will be overseen by the International Police who will enforce strict guidelines to ensure conformity with international police standards. The Federation police cannot enter any homes without International Police present. No one can be forced to leave his own home. A law has been passed granting amnesty for all, except for war crimes as defined by the Hague Tribunal. No one can be arrested only for having served in the army.

For those who choose to leave, there will be full freedom of movement in both directions. All routes to and from the Republika Srpska will remain open. No checkpoints will be allowed. The Federation police will not exercise any control of the main road from the areas of transition to and through Vogosca to the territory of the Republika Srpska. There will be IPTF and IFOR patrols on the road. This freedom of movement will not end with the arrival of the Federation police or on March 20. It will be permanent. The parties are committed by the peace agreement to maintaining freedom of movement between them. The arrival of Federation police will not in any way inhibit the travel of Serbs to and from the Republika Srpska.

Sarajevans who choose to remain in Sarajevo will have full participation in local and city governments as specified in the Rome agreement. The JCCS will provide a forum in which all legitimate concerns may be addressed including the issues of the organizations of the city and will continue its work as the advisory and coordinating body for all matters pertaining to civilian implementation in Sarajevo. The JCCS will establish cooperation, on an opstina by opstina basis, between Federation authorities and representatives of the local Serbs, to resolve cooperatively all practical issues associated with the transfer of civil authority.

The Commission agreed to reconvene immediately its working groups on police, infrastructure, and refugees with full participation. It decided that telephone and public transport services in the city shall be re-established as soon as possible.

The JCCS, with its Serb, Croat, and Bosniac members, appeals jointly to the Serb citizens of Sarajevo to stay in their city and rest assured their legitimate rights and concerns will be considered.