

BiH Media Round-up, 15/10/2001

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BiH State-related issues

Independent Judicial Commission Director: BiH has too many courts, judges and prosecutors

In a short interview with Dnevni Avaz, the Director of the Independent Judicial Commission, Rakel Surlien, said that

BiH has entirely too many courts, judges and prosecutors. "At this moment, BiH has more than 220 courts, which is too large number for such a small country. We also have 900 judges and 250 prosecutors, which is also too much for BiH. If we compare these figures with countries which are the same size as BiH, it turns out that BiH has twice higher number of courts and judges than those countries," said Surlien. She also explained that the Federation Law on Judicial and Prosecutorial Position could be amended by the end of the Fall in order to enable professors of universities other than Law Faculties, and experts in the field of law who have not passed the bar exam to be nominated to the Entity Constitutional Court.

Deputy Presiding of the House of Peoples of BiH Parliamentary Assembly Nikola Spiric Said Joint BiH Army Would BE Created in Three Years

Nezavisne novine carry statement of Nikola Spiric, Deputy Presiding of BiH House of Peoples who said that Joint BiH Army would be created in period from three to five years.

"I have a document which confirms that, after constitutional reforms, after three years, there will be efforts on creation of joint BiH Army", said Spiric. Participation of the RS politicians in preparation of various documents leading towards creation of BiH Army only speak in favor of such theory, suggested Spiric.

BiH Council of Ministers Chair Zlatko Lagumdzija Says Osama Bin Laden Was Not Staying in BiH

Zlatko Lagumdzija stated in interview to SRNA, NN carry, that all registers were checked for Osama Bin Laden - citizenship, passport, ID., and that nothing was found.

"Simply we do not have it registered. It is known that many people entered BiH through Croatia and FRY and that information not available to us. It is also known that UN's air-bridge way one way to enter the country" said Lagumdzija.

Federation

SDA elects new president, adopts new statute

All Federation media reported that delegates at the third congress of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) adopted on Saturday a new statute of the party and elected Sulejman Tihic, a vice chairman of the RS National Assembly, to the post of the party president. Tihic is to replace Alija Izetbegovic, the founder of the SDA and its thus far leader. The delegates also elected Edhem Bicakcic, Seada Palavric, Elmir Jahic, and Mirsad Kebo as party vice presidents, while Adnan Terzic was appointed to the post of the party Deputy President. According to the new statute, the SDA is defined as "a national party of the political centre", and the function of the deputy president of this party is established. The number of members of the SDA main board is reduced to 109, and the new statute foresees that the members of the main board are presidents of the cantonal and regional boards of the party, president of the SDA organisation of the Brcko District and a representative of the SDA members who live in European countries.

Commenting on the results of the Congress, Sarajevo media report that this was rather a step backwards by the SDA, which once again failed to rejuvenate its leadership and now risks being compromised by individuals like Edhem Bicakcic. Dnevni Avaz notes that the SDA surprised everyone by not electing Halid Genjac, Amor Masovic or

Hasan Muratovic to any posts in the party.

Alija Izetbegovic does not rule out being indicted by The Hague

Speaking only a day before the beginning of the SDA Congress, the then leader of this party, Alija Izetbegovic, announced his withdrawal from this post and stressed that the SDA will move to a new direction following the congress. "I have no intention of putting forward my candidacy for chairman of this party. The main reason is my age and my health. I think that it would be irresponsible for me to accept such a post when BiH is facing turbulent times, Izetbegovic said. Answering journalist questions about his alleged responsibility for war crimes committed by the Bosnian Army, Izetbegovic said that he had never ordered crimes, but prevented them. Nevertheless, he did not dismiss entirely the possibility of being indicted by The Hague Tribunal. "History is full of injustice. I do not deserve to go to The Hague. I prevented massacres in BiH, numerous massacres would have been carried out had it not been for me. I have never ordered a crime, never approved of a crime, all I did was to prevent crimes wherever I could. However, this does not mean that I could be not be sent to The Hague. History is full of injustice. If I were to go to The Hague, I will not be defending Alija Izetbegovic. I will defend the right of an attacked state to defend itself, and the right of the people set to be ethnically cleansed to defend themselves," Izetbegovic explained.

Federation premier says government work not affected by minister quitting

Reacting to the last week resignation of Muhamed Besic from the post of the Federation Minister of Interior, the Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen issues a statement confirming the resignation and saying that the review of the responsibility must take place in the scope of the constitution and the law. Besic also stressed that the Interior Ministry gave and is still giving significant contribution to the changes in the legislation and the practice of the interior bodies, all aimed at ensuring the rule of law and the fight against all sorts of criminal acts. "This resignation does not in any way bring into question the decisiveness of the government to continue implementing the plan of anti-terrorist activities at the state level," Behmen said. He said the activities aimed at combating terrorism are currently the priority of all institutions. "Besic's resignation will not in any way bring into question the continuance of the activities and other measures to prove our decisiveness to go on with the fight against all sorts of terrorism and crime," Behmen said. All Federation media carried Behmen's statement for the press.

Dnevni Avaz reports that the US Embassy in Sarajevo sent letters to "several addresses in the Federation" in which it strongly criticised the resignation of Minister Besic, which was, as the embassy claims, extorted by the Party for BiH. "In this critical time, his (Besic) removal is a blow to all joint efforts," said the embassy in the letter.

Dnevni List: What is behind the resignation of the Federation Minister of Interior, Muhamed Besic

Written by Vladimir Buic

Dnevni List reports that Muhamed Besic resigned from the position of Federation Minister of Interior on Friday, and that the Sarajevo press quoted him as saying that his resignation had been requested earlier by Haris Silajdzic, the leader of the Party for BiH that Besic himself is a member of.

However, Dnevni List claims the real reason behind his resignation is his press statement about 70 Taliban who are planning to enter BiH, and his inappropriate behavior towards journalists who do not share his opinion. During his mandate as the Security Assistant to the Minister in Izetbegovic's war-time Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "100,000 BiH passports were sold, distributed or misappropriated." As a former Director of the State Border Service he was involved in the corruption cases that appeared in the institution and finally, he is responsible for forging the data on the basis of which the Turkish police arrested and then released a Slobodna Bosna journalist in Istanbul last

week, says Dnevni List. The fact that the IPTF does not criticize Besic's resignation shows Besic's real reputation, concludes the daily.

Zepce Croats support the Zepce Group in its appeal to declare the Cantonal Court in Zenica inadequate the try their case

Onasa reports that several hundreds of Croat residents of Zepce gathered on Saturday on the main square in this town expressing support to the 15 Croats of the so-called Zepce Group who have been charged with committing war crimes against Bosniak civilians in this area. Addressing the crowd, Ivica Siric, the president of the Coordination Board of Zepce Croats, reiterated the request of the Zepce Group to declare the Cantonal Court in Zenica unfit to try this case, and added that this board will ask the OHR to transfer the case to a different court.

Federation Prime Minister: Aluminij ought to be privatised urgently

In Friday talks with the German and French ambassadors to BiH, Hans Jochen Peters and Bernard Bajolet, the Federation Prime Ministers, Alija Behmen, said that the Federation government needs to determine the real structure of ownership in this company and stressed that this is the only reason for the additional control/audit in the Aluminij. "That has to be done in order to create conditions for its urgent privatisation," Behmen explained, and added that the company needs to be put on a tender for privatisation as soon as possible. Dnevni Avaz, Oslobođenje and ONAS news agency carried reports on this meeting.

Independent Journalist Association: Interference of Politics in the transformation of the RTV BiH is unacceptable

In a statement for the press, the Independent Journalist Association in BiH said that the constant interference of politics in the process of transformation of the RTV BiH is unacceptable. The last drastic example of political pressure on the RTV BiH was the rejection of election of Jasmin Durakovic to the post of the Federation TV director by representatives of the Federation government, Dubravko Lovrenovic and Ivo Komsic, who interfered in the process now...although they have been turning a deaf ear to all the earlier games about the transformation and the fate of the employees in this media house," said IJA in a statement. It asks at the end if the selection of a "fit" director is more important than the creation of the public broadcasting service which would be out of the scope of political influence and would serve to all citizens in the Federation.

OSCE's Urdur Gunnarsdottir: We are disappointed with the SDP's behavior

Vecernji List carries an interview with the new OSCE Mission Spokesperson, Urdur Gunnarsdottir. She talks about the latest OSCE's initiative in BiH aimed at reduction of the military in BiH and says that the OSCE will not be the one that will say how many soldiers BiH needs at the moment and adds that the military expenditures in BiH are too high (6% of the Gross Domestic Product).

"When you compare this to other European countries, where the expenditures are between 1 and 2% (of the Gross Domestic Product), you see that BiH's expenditures are too high (...) There are 34,000 soldiers in BiH who are not getting their salaries and it is obvious that the thing can be set up in a far better and more efficient manner", says Gunnarsdottir.

Speaking of the influence of the public opinion in BiH she says that it does exist in BiH which was evident when

pensioners protested in front of the OHR (Sarajevo), “we have people who react in concrete situations.”

Talking about the pressure exerted on journalists, Ms. Gunnarsdottir says that the SDP is not the biggest problem with regards to the issue but it is disappointing that some members of the SDP behaved the way they did because they (the SDP) had claimed that they represented something new and democratic. She concluded the interview by saying that, unfortunately, pressures on journalists do exist across BiH.

Police in Sarajevo confiscates posters calling for jihad

Jutarnji List reports that the police in Sarajevo confiscated posters calling Muslims in BiH to join the holy war against Americans. The posters were printed and ready for distribution prior to the US attacks on Afghanistan. According to the Associated Press, which was the first to publish the news, one of the posters read: “We want the third and fourth world war for Islam – long live bin Laden!” and the other read: “Afghanistan, Bosnia – why wouldn’t you fight for downtrodden men, women and children?”

Extremists in action in Stolac - Crosses and Croat flags as targets

Dnevni List reports that “an intensive display of hatred of all that is Catholic and Christian is on the scene in Stolac, just as it was in the time of the notorious Sultan Selim’s rule in the early 16th century.” The daily reports that Croat flags were removed from a number of buildings in Stolac on Friday night, and that it happened only a few hours after the October ceremony of the Way of the Cross and a service held at the old town Krizevac. Croat flags disappeared from the café ‘Amigos,’ a shop in Podgrad and the ‘Villa Ragusa” Motel in the center of Stolac. The person who removed the flag from the Motel was caught in the act. His name is Mustafa Turkovic, a Bosniak, born in 1982, with the current place of residence in the Stolac settlement of Poplasici. He was caught and detained by a Motel night guard at exactly 1.30 a.m.

The daily says the people in Stolac comment: “The more concessions they get from us, the more they hate us and the more wrong they do to us.” They wonder about the goal of this religious and national hatred and the Bosniaks’ aspirations for total domination.

Stolac Croats tend to link this with the most recent events in the world, reads the daily in conclusion.

Hercegovacka Banka owners: We will win the case before international court

Written by T. Kvesic

We are sure that we will win the Hercegovacka Banka case before an international court, some of the Bank owners

told Dnevni List in a telephone conversation. They wanted to remain anonymous for the sake of the companies they run because, one of them said, they think their companies might as well experience what Hercegovacka Banka did. The Bank owners say the International Community could barge into their companies without any authorization and do what it did in the Bank.

They are certain they will win because a number of lawyers advised them to launch an international litigation. One of the owners said that the case intrigued many of the foreign law firms, including an American one, and that they offered their legal aid in the case. However, the case was given to Josip Muselimovic, who filed an appeal with the Municipal Court, which eventually ruled that the Court had no jurisdiction over the case and that the OHR could not be sued in accordance with the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations. That was followed with an appeal filed with the Cantonal Court in Mostar and the ruling is still being awaited.

A more detailed information about the litigation and the choice of law firm to represent them is expected to be made public after a meeting of the Hercegovacka Banka Contact Group, which is the liaison with the Provisional Administration, and the meeting will most likely be held today, Monday.

However, it was said earlier that they would wait with the litigation until 25 October because the Bank owners want to give the Provisional Administration 15 days more.

The owners fear the international litigation may take a long time, up to five years, which does not suit them.

Dnevni List says they tried to contact the Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson but it proved a failure. They also tried to contact the Provisional Administrator's Spokesperson Johan Verheyden, but were told that he had an exceptionally long meeting so that he could not talk to the daily until the conclusion of the text.

Companies from Croatia concerned about doctored goods that are on sale in BiH under their brands: BiH will not join the WTO because of violation of copyrights

A number of major producers of food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages from Croatia asked BiH authorities to undertake resolute steps in preventing the sale of doctored goods on the BiH market that are being sold under Croatian brand names, reads Vecernji List. The producers say that the quantity of doctored goods coming from private workshops is increasing especially when it comes to alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Apart from food industry this is causing serious damage to the Croatian music industry and Croatian entertainment industry in general. Croatian Ambassador to BiH, Josip Vrbosic, is quoted as saying that BiH does not observe copyrights and that this could prevent BiH from joining the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Circle 99 joins the Mothers of Srebrenica in their objection to the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Kofi Annan

At yesterday's session, Association of Intellectuals Circle 99 supported the protest of the Mothers of Srebrenica who objected to the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Member so the Circle said that the UN conceded that it made a mistake in the case of the safe zone of Srebrenica and has done little to preserve the world peace in the past year.

Republika Srpska

RS prime Minister Mladen Ivanic Says There is Crisis in RS National Assembly's Majority

Nezavisne novine and Glas srpski carry statement of the RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic saying that insisting of SDS (Serb Democratic Party) on "controversial cadres from the past" could jeopardize majority at the RS National Assembly created by PDP (Party of Democratic Progress) and SDS and added that SDS should turn towards reforms and not only to plane appointment of cadres.

Momcilo Novakovic, member of SDS's Main Board in a comment to this statement said that " National Assembly's majority was based on interest relationship of the parties and if anybody was not satisfied with such relationship it could be broken up".

Nezavisne novine furthermore carry reactions of representatives from other political parties to this Ivanic's statement. Glas srpski reports that Ivanic gave this statement at PDP's Assembly in Bijeljina.

International Community

First session of the Civic Forum: Public debate about the future of BiH needed

Oslobodjenje reports that the first session of the Civic Forum took place on Thursday upon the initiative of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. At his residence, Petritsch hosted eight intellectuals and representatives of BiH NGOs and civic society organisations and discussed with them a range of topics relating to the Civic Forum itself as well as the underlining meaning of the importance of the civic society in BiH.

Petritsch and Kretschmer visit Alplast Company in Ilijas

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Head of the European Commission delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hansjoerg Kretschmer, visited on Friday the firm of P.V.S.H. Alplast in Ilijas, where they viewed production facilities and met the staff, many of whom are returnees, and discussed the starting of small businesses in BiH. Dnevni Avaz carried the [QHR Press Release](#). See the attachment below!

Wolfgang Petritsch to replace Bodo Hombach as Stability Pact Coordinator

Sense agency reports that after the present Coordinator of the Stability Pact of the South-east Europe, Bodo Hombach, announced that he will withdraw from this post and start working in a "private sector", numerous officials in Brussels expected a start of a new discussion about the role of this organization following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US. Such debate, notes Sense, has not started yet, however unofficial diplomatic sources in Brussels speculate that the present High Representative for BiH, and an Austrian career diplomat with substantial experience, Wolfgang Petritsch, could replace Hombach on the post of the Coordinator.

Editorials

Saturday's *Oslobodjenje* carries an editorial written by Emir Habul about the creation of a single economic space in BiH. Habul argues that RS authorities, and most notably the RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic have done everything to obstruct this effort by preventing state level regulatory agencies to be created. He also noted that nothing has changed significantly since the change of governments in the neighboring Yugoslavia and Croatia, as both are still trying to place BiH behind margins in both economic and political sense.

In *Saturday's* issue of *Dnevni Avaz*, Fadil Mandal also writes, somewhat less sceptically, about the economy in BiH and welcomes the recent establishment of the Board for the Economic Development as the long awaited step forward towards the necessary economic reform. "It appears that Lagumdžija, Ivanic and Behmen are finally about to discover the formula which could be our door opener to foreign investments and European integration.

In the same issue of *Oslobodjenje*, but in a separate column, Januz Bugajski discusses two possible scenarios for Afghanistan and the ramifications of the ongoing war against terrorism.

In a *Sunday's* issue of *Oslobodjenje*, Zija Dizdarevic wrote a lengthy column about the effects of the global fight against terrorism on BiH. He noted that thus far all effects have been largely negative, as BiH has developed into a black list country and as Bosnian Muslims are increasingly being Satanized by both international and local factors. "The fate of Bosnia will largely depend on the will of the US," concludes Dizdarevic, adding that the US and the International Community ought to redefine the engagement of their peace mission in BiH and help the country set on the path towards being self-sustainability.

Today's *Oslobodjenje* carries yet another editorial about terrorism and the fight against it written by Ibrahim Prohic.

Sunday's *Dnevni Avaz* carries a column about the serious situation with the lack of natural gas in BiH and irresponsible and arrogant behavior of local authorities in charge of this issue.

In today's issue of *Avaz*, Mladen Dakic writes that the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra will on November 1 hold a commemoration concert for all victims of terrorist attacks on the US. This will be one more proof that Sarjevo spirit remains intact regardless of disastrous things happening around.