

# **BiH Media Round-up 27/9/2001**

## **BiH State-related Issues**

- **BiH Presidency support Council of Ministers plan to combat terrorism**
- Croat caucus in the BiH and BiH Federation Houses of Peoples discuss protection of vital national interests

## **Federation**

1. BiH Federation House of Representatives transformed war citizens' claims into the public debt
2. BiH Federation loses four billion KM due to slow privatization process
3. Mostar faces fresh dilemma: What will happen with the City reintegration Plan?
4. Slobodna Dalmacija: Head of the OHR South Colin Munro comments on action plan for reunification of Mostar
5. Slobodna Dalmacija: A press release of Apel Journalists' Association on document on reunification of the City of Mostar
6. Slobodna Dalmacija: HDZ councilor Pavo Saravanja says Milan Jovicic manipulates both with councilors and citizens
7. Slobodna Dalmacija: Hearing of Ivo Lozancic and Zepce Group resumed before the Cantonal Court in Zenica
8. Zubak and Anic request Petritsch to stop trial of Zepce group before Zenica Cantonal Court
9. Slobodna Dalmacija: Bosniak representatives did not attend session of the Stolac Municipal Council
10. Halilovic's lawyer claims Alija Izetbegovic responsible for raising indictment against his client
11. Izetbegovic denies media reports he has recently been in The Hague

12. Eight terrorists hiding in the BiH Federation
13. Vecernji List: Intensified control of mujahedeen camps and humanitarian organizations
14. Slobodna Dalmacija: **Mujahedeens chopped and sawed off prisoners' heads**
15. Reuters: Two Bosnian police arrested in arms smuggling case
16. Slobodna Dalmacija: High School in Uskoplje to be reconstructed no sooner than in one year
17. Vecernji List: **There are no independent media today**

#### Republika Srpska

1. RS National Assembly adopts set of tax laws

#### International Community

1. A Socialist Group in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly supports BiH accession to the Council
2. Serbian Justice Minister Vladan Batic says 10,000 mujahedeens took part in the BiH in BiH
3. Reuters: Ex-Yugoslavia states to share \$2 billion financial assets
4. Vecernji List: 120,000 refugees from BiH have taken Croatian citizenship

## **BiH State-related Issues**

### **BiH Presidency support Council of Ministers plan to combat terrorism**

The BiH Presidency supported, at its session on Wednesday in Sarajevo, a nationwide plan to combat terrorism agreed a day earlier by the BiH Council of Ministers. The Presidency also supported an initiative of The Hague Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte on processing certain war crime cases in BiH. According to Serb member of the Presidency Zivko Radisic, it is still needed to decide whether the initiative will be implemented through the BiH State Court established by OHR or through some other judicial institutions.

### **Croat caucuses in the BiH and BiH Federation Houses of Peoples discuss protection of vital national interests**

The Croat caucuses in the BiH and BiH Federation Houses of Peoples met on Wednesday to discuss activities on the harmonization of the entity Constitutions with the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on equal constitutional status of all three peoples in the entire country's territory. They concluded that the existence of the houses of peoples at the entity levels was the only guarantee for the vital national interest protection, and that they could not therefore be replaced with the constitutional commissions.

## **Federation**

### **BiH Federation House of Representatives transformed war citizens' claims into the public debt**

The BiH Federation House of Peoples transformed at its extraordinary session held on Wednesday in Sarajevo all citizens' claims from the war period into a public debt. The BiH Federation Finance Ministry was tasked to propose way of payment of the debt in 30 days. The regular session of the House was interrupted for the third time after the governing Alliance for Changes had again failed to gain majority for the adoption of the law on social contributions.

### **BiH Federation loses four billions KM due to slow privatization process**

Oslobodjenje reports that the experts involved in the BiH Federation privatization met on Wednesday to discuss how to accelerate the process. They concluded that the entity had lost four billions KM in reduction of the value of the state capital in the companies due to a slow privatization process.

### **Mostar faces fresh dilemma: What will happen with the City reintegration Plan?**

Oslobodjenje reports that it is likely the plan for continuation of the Mostar reintegration will not be implemented soon. Mostar City Council Chairman Milan Jovicic said following Monday session of the Council that the plan had

been adopted and that Mayor Neven Tomic and his Deputy Hamdija Jahic were due to sign it in seven days. Tomic, however, said that he would not sign the document since he was not informed about its contents. On the other side, Jahic emphasized that the goals set by the plan were realistic and that Mostar and its citizens needed their implementation. Commenting on the issue, Head of the OHR South Colin Munro told a press conference on Wednesday in Mostar that the proper procedure had not been followed at the adoption of the plan. He added that procedures used for the adoption of the document were unacceptable in a democratic society. The US Embassy to BiH also expressed its concern over using the Mostar City Council in political games.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: Head of the OHR South Colin Munro comments on action plan for reunification of Mostar**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Head of the Regional OHR in Mostar, Colin Munro, told journalists on Wednesday that the "Action Plan for Reunification of Mostar", contrary to some media reports, has not been adopted at the session of the City Council on September 24 this year. Chair of the City Council Milan Jovicic said on Tuesday that the City Council had adopted the aforementioned plan and that Mayor Neven Tomic and his Deputy Hamdija Jahic would have seven days to sign it otherwise "they would lose the Councilors confidence". Ambassador Munro said at the press conference "the procedures that were used to deceive the media and to convince them that the Action Plan has been adopted at the session of the City Council are unacceptable in democratic societies which are based on the rule of law". "This deception questions the devotion to democracy of the ones who created such procedures", said Munro. When asked by journalists as to who is responsible for the deceptions, Munro answered that the Chair of Mostar City Council Milan Jovicic "is responsible for these procedures". Munro also reported that he met Jovicic and that they had agreed that "the plan was not adopted by the Council, it did not commit the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the International Community and the deadlines proposed in the plan were remote from reality". Munro ended his elaboration with an appeal to all to devote more attention to resolving real problems and less to political strategies that only postpone the political reunification and economic development of Mostar, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: A press release of Apel Journalists' Association on document on reunification of the City of Mostar**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Initiative Board of the journalist association "Apel" hereby wishes to express their surprise for the way in which certain media in Mostar reported from the session of the City Council of Mostar, held on September 24, 2001.

Although it has not been on the agenda of the City Council, nor has it been discussed, this document, titled "Action Plan for the Continuation of the Reintegration of the City of Mostar" was given to the journalists after the completion of the session. Some Mostar media published several times the parts of this document, claiming that it was adopted in the session of the City Council, although the majority of the journalists, who made an attempt to verify this information, learned that it was incorrect.

Having in mind that several journalists from different media outlets came to "Apel" complaining that from some sources they got the text of the mentioned document with the request that the same be published, and they refused to do so, we most fiercely condemn these kinds of pressures on the freedom of the media and the attempts to manipulate the public. Unfortunately, we have to state publicly that some politicians support such manipulations and take part in the process of misinforming the public.

We reject however, every thought that "Apel," through its efforts to promote the free and professional journalist trade, taking the truth as the principle, and basing its information on verified facts, could as such be against the processes of reintegration of the City of Mostar. On the contrary, we support it wholeheartedly and we wish that it brought the well-being to all the citizens of Mostar.

Still, we wish to remind those who published this untruthful information that the primary obligation of the media is to serve the interests of the public, and not any centers of power.

Also, we express our repugnance over the public statements of one of the representatives of the judicial authorities of Hercegovina-Neretva canton, that recently practically called for the public lynch of one of our colleagues, a journalist, in the program of one local television.

We call on all the relevant institutions and competent persons to prevent similar things from happening and adequately punish those who are responsible for the misuse of public media.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: HDZ councilor Pavo Saravanja says Milan Jovicic manipulates both with councilors and citizens**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The last session of the City Council of Mostar brought the political situation in Mostar to a fever pitch. The Chairman of the Mostar City Council, Milan Jovicic, issued a press release the day after the session and said 'the councilors adopted the Action Plan for Continuation of Reintegration of Mostar.'

According to him, the City Council obliged the city leaders to adopt and sign it within seven days.

However, contrary to Milan Jovicic, other participants, including the councilors, international observers and numerous journalists present in the City Council session, claim the opposite.

The Mayor of Mostar, Neven Tomic, directly denied Jovicic's allegation in a letter he addressed to him, and the OHR in Mostar, according to Dnevni Avaz, did not hide their surprise at this unusual case.

Dnevni Avaz reads that the Spokesperson for the Regional OHR in Mostar, Avis Benes, stated that she would address this matter in more detail at the press conference of the international organizations, but that "it is obvious that the procedural matters turned out to be very incorrect and badly carried out, since the councilors had not been informed about it ('Action Plan'). What we are worried about in this entire matter is the fact that the OHR has been dragged into this game, because the City Council has given us concrete tasks as well, with the ultimatum-like nature of their execution", Benes stated, reminding that she guesses "it is clear to everyone as to which kitchen this all has come from."

HDZ councilor Pavo Saravanja who was present at the City Council session, is appalled at the fact that it was only in the evening after the session that he found out about the adoption of some sort of action plan. In the letter that he addressed to the Head of the Regional Office in Mostar, Saravanja says he is surprised at the frame-up and the behaviour of the City Council Chairman Milan Jovicic, who, Saravanja writes, "was obviously manipulating both us the councilors and citizens of Mostar."

In conclusion, Saravanja demands that certain sanctions be undertaken against Chairman Jovicic and says that the City Council Standard Operating Procedure has been violated.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: Hearing of Ivo Lozancic and Zepce Group resumed before the Cantonal Court in Zenica**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Cantonal Prosecutor's Office in Zenica launched an investigation against the Zepce Group after the ICTY Prosecutor examined the documentation submitted and established that it held enough evidence for the suspects to be prosecuted for the crimes they are charged with.

Ivo Lozancic's attorney Danilo Stijovic on Monday put forward a motion for the exemption of the Cantonal Court in

Zenica in the case against his client, the Commander of the 111<sup>th</sup> HVO Brigade in Zepce, and 13 more suspects of war crimes. The Federation Supreme Court reacted urgently and ruled on Tuesday that the appeal of attorney Stijovic was declined as ungrounded.

Ivo Lozancic did not appear at the first hearing on Monday because, according to his attorney, he was in Strasbourg as a member of a BiH parliamentary delegation. The attorney of the suspect Perica Jukic, Anto Petrusic, could not say why his client did not appear before the Judge Hilmo Ahmetovic because he had not been in contact with his client.

The second hearing on Tuesday was not attended by two other suspects Niko Jozinovic and Drago Dragicevic, either.

The investigation against the so-called Zepce Group will take around 6 months and over 200 witnesses will be questioned during this period of time.

## **Zubak and Anic request Petritsch to stop investigation against the “Zepce group” before Zenica Cantonal Court**

President of the New Croat Initiative (NHI) Kresimir Zubak and BiH Federation Defense Minister Mijo Anic sent letters to High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch requesting him to stop an investigation launched before Zenica Cantonal Court against 15 Croats, or if necessary transfer the process to some other, impartial court. The investigation against so called Zepce group for alleged war crimes committed against Bosniaks in the Zepce area during the war conducted in such way might, according to Anic, cause negative consequences related to the political and security situation in the BiH Federation. Anic reminds that most of the Zepce group members are active BiH Federation Army officers or participants in the project of the Alliance for Changes. Zubak requested Petritsch to ensure that a court based in Travnik, Orasje or Livno is being authorized for the process.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: Bosniak representatives did not attend session of the Stolac Municipal Council**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija carries a report on the state of the situation in Stolac, describing it, to put it mildly, as very critical. Head of Municipality, Dr. Zdravko Kuzman, has put in his resignation, Municipality is in big debts, acting Police Chief, who comes to work from Mostar, is on leave, President of the Municipal Council, Kemal Isakovic, who is also the Cantonal Justice Minister, refuses to convene a session of the Municipal Council (MC), illegal constructions in centre of Stolac where there had been a church then a mosque, provocations of the Croat population on daily basis...all of these are just a part of the vivid reality in the Stolac Municipality. Vice President of the Municipal Council, Stjepan Boskovic, in accordance to authorities stipulated in the Municipal Statute, tried to convene a session of the MC on two occasions, on September 18 and 25, but only the Croat Councilors of the HDZ and HSP showed up whilst the Bosniak Councilors from the (CD) Coalition and SDP did not show up which resulted in blocking of the Municipal Council. Prior to the session on September 25, OSCE representatives talked to Kuzman and Boskovic, but same as other IC representatives, they did not want to answer the question what is the two-thirds majority in the Council with 17 Councilors. Competent institutions of the Federation are also refusing to give a direct answer to that question. In the absence of the Bosniak Councilors, the Croat Councilors discussed the current political-security situation in the Municipality and deemed it as catastrophic. The situation is especially catastrophic in the Stolac Police Station with its Chief on leave, which leaves the Deputy Chief Smajo Cerkez with all the authorities. Deputy Cerkez deploys Bosniak police officers to the centre of town and “chucks” the Croat ones, who already fear for their jobs, to the suburbs. Perpetrators of many incidents in the Stolac area are not discovered at all. During the session, the Councilors warned that the Bosniak workers, who are undertaking works without a permit in the town centre, are extracting stones from the foundation of the church of St. Anthony in order to wipe out every trace of its existence. Councilor Sonja Marcic warned that many refugees from Central Bosnia live very badly, some of them have nothing to eat, a lot of them live in “patched up” concrete houses and the

autumn and winter are coming. Majority of the Croat Councilors are of opinion that the Bosniak Councilors' aim is to show that nothing is functioning in Stolac in order to submit legal and other arguments for an International Community's arbitration for Stolac with the IC being in the anti-Croat mood. Unofficially, Slobodna Dalmacija learns that Kemal Isakovic is preparing a session of the MC with his own agenda. It still remains to be seen who will show up then, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

## **Halilovic's lawyer claims Alija Izetbegovic responsible for raising indictment against his client**

The lawyer of Sefer Halilovic, wartime Commander of the BiH Army indicted for war crimes who recently surrendered himself to The Hague Tribunal, stated that Alija Izetbegovic (wartime Bosniak leader), SDA and the Federation secret police were responsible for raising indictment against his client, Glas Srpski carries the BBC radio report.

## **Izetbegovic denies media reports he has recently been in The Hague**

SDA President and the Bosniak wartime leader Alija Izetbegovic denied media reports that he had recently been in The Hague. He told Dnevni Avaz that he had last time visited the town in 1991. Split daily Slobodna Dalmacija said in its Wednesday report on the Sefer Halilovic's surrender to The Hague Tribunal that Izetbegovic had also recently been in The Hague but that it was not clear whether he had gone there as a suspect or a witness.

## **Eight terrorists hiding in the BiH Federation**

Nezavisne Novine published an article, based on information it learned from the source close to the international community, suggesting that 8 persons of Arabic origin, against whom the Interpol had issued arrest warrants for involvement in terrorist actions, were currently hiding in BiH Federation and were in possession of BiH passports. The daily added that, according to the source, there were no evidence these individuals were related to Osama Bin Laden or recent terrorist attacks on the USA. Interpol also informed both entity Interior Ministries and the BiH State Border Service on their presence in BiH requesting cooperation, according to the newspaper.

## **Vecernji List: Intensified control of mujahedeen camps and humanitarian organizations**

Written by Zdenko Jurilj (Provided by OHR Mostar)

SFOR units make frequent helicopter overflight controls of the new mujahedeen camp in the village of Borci near Konjic. According to unofficial estimates, around 200 people live there in isolation, abiding strictly by the Islamic code.

No one except the SFOR, which have intensified their aerial control of the camp after the terrorist attacks on the USA, has access to the camp where surrounding village residents saw video cameras. The villagers claim Konjic police officers never go to the camp. Since the police have no control of the area, the press release from the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Ministry of Interior, which claims that there are no mujahedeen camps in their area of responsibility, seems ridiculous.

Stories about mujahedeen camps have triggered speculations by many political parties on whether the territory of BiH can serve for suicidal actions of terrorist sleepers. Although the speculations about suicidal terrorists in BiH get

rejected more and more, there remains the alarming information that there are still 400 naturalized citizens in BiH.

The New Croat Initiative (NHI) demanded the Government to annul all citizenship certificates granted to persons from Arabian countries who are still living in BiH.

“Any other solution would be a whitewash of the eyes of the public and would allow possible terrorist sleepers, who are waiting for the right moment to do their plans, to stay in BiH,” say NHI Officials.

To show that such an epilogue is possible, the NHI stated the case of the explosive planting in Splitska Street in Mostar at a time. The bomb was planted by Ahmed Zuhar Handala, an Egyptian who used his humanitarian activity as a cover for his terrorist intentions.

International intelligence services advised the security personnel to control the personnel of humanitarian organizations. There is a reasonable suspicion that individuals whose names are linked to terrorist activity have infiltrated in BiH under the guise of humanitarian work.

By 15 October this year, the commission in charge of examining the matter of naturalized citizens should come up with the results on who has been granted the BiH passport in the last 9 years. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Misić, has announced the possibility of reducing the expiration date of the passports of the third generation so that new ones can be issued.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: Mujahedeens chopped and sawed off prisoners' heads**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija carries an article about mujahedeens. This time SD writes about their involvement in the military operations on Mount Ozren together with pictures of massacres and scenes of chopping of heads off. It reads that it is becoming clearer that the ICTY is going to devote more attention to events on Mount Ozren that took place between May and September 1995 when the BiH Army launched an offensive to liberate Vozuca and take over the control of communication between Zenica and Tuzla. During these operations, members of the “Squad El Mudzahid” who were a part of the BiH Army’s 3rd Corps, committed a massacre over wounded and captured soldiers of the Republic of Srpska Army. The mujahedeens, stationed in Podbrezje near Zenica, brutally killed 50 Serb prisoners chopping their heads off with axes and swords. Executions and mujahedeens holding chopped off heads were taped for propaganda videotapes of the “El Mudzahid Squad” that were later distributed to donors in Islamic countries. Some disturbing witnesses’ reports claim that some heads have allegedly ended up in Iran and in Alija Izetbegovic’s cabinet in Sarajevo as a gift and a proof of loyalty to Allah and Islam. The RS Committee for missing persons had searched for 463 missing persons in autumn of 1995 after the Dayton Peace Accord was signed. Many headless bodies were exhumed but the remains of 240 Serb nationals are yet to be found to this day. Eight Serb prisoners miraculously survived the slaughter, enough to start an investigation about this war crime. The Serb side, accusing Commanders of BiH Army’s 2nd and 3rd Corps, Sead Delic and Sakib Mahmuljin, has already requested an investigation. Especially on Mahmuljin who was in charge of liaison with the mujahedeens and the state pinnacle and Alija Izetbegovic(...) The whole operation of taking over the Vozuca area was called “Hurricane 95” and was headed by Refik Lendo, the man in charge of “Bosnia” operation group. Along the 2nd and 3rd Corps units, there was the “Black swans” unit, the same unit that committed war crimes in Grabovica (...) Instead of taking the prisoners to the Zenica prison or to retirement home in Zavidovici, the mujahedeens took the Serb prisoners to their camp in the village of Gostovci, 12 kilometres outside Zavidovici. That is where the ritual slaughter, caught on videotape and remembered by survived Serb prisoners, started. The article then illustrates torture methods used by the mujahedeens. Ex Minister of Police in the RS Government, Tomo Kovac, says that they are in possession of original videotape that shows executions that could freeze one’s blood. Representative of the RS Committee for missing person, Milan Ivancevic, met with Sakib Mahmuljin at the end of 1996 asking him that the Bosniak side releases the remaining POWs from the Zenica prison. Mahmuljin dismissed the possibility but later he admitted to Ivancevic that the Serb soldiers were killed in Gostovci by the mujahedeens who chopped their heads off. “General Mahmuljin told me that the mujahedeens presented Alija Izetbegovic with 28 heads and the remaining 28 heads were sent to Iran (...) Bodies of the soldiers that were killed in Gostovci were never recovered. Three bodies that were found were confirmed to be soldiers of the Prnjavor

based brigade who went missing in May 1995 (...) Findings of the Documentation centre for war crimes that is based in Banja Luka were sent to The Hague. After a long investigation, The Hague investigators verified the authenticity of the gathered evidences. Their records clearly show the responsibility of the "El Mudzahid Squad" for the committed war crimes but also deal with activities of Islamic volunteers that operated as apart of the 3rd Corps of the BiH Army. It is clear that general Mahmuljin is next on The Hague's list of senior military officials, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

## **Reuters: Two Bosnian police arrested in arms smuggling case**

Police said on Wednesday they had arrested six Bosniaks, including two police officers, suspected of smuggling weapons to Yugoslavia's volatile province of Kosovo. Two of the suspects were arrested last Friday in the eastern town of Gorazde on the basis of arrest warrants issued by the United Nations mission which runs Kosovo, the Interior Ministry of the BiH Federation said. The UN Mission in BiH said on Tuesday the case had been opened on June 13 after members of Kosovo's UN mission and NATO-led peace force seized hundreds of long-barrelled automatic weapons from a shipment off a truck coming from Bosnia. The third suspect was also arrested on Friday in Sarajevo while the fourth gave himself up on Monday, a ministry statement said. "The Federation Supreme Court ordered the detention for all four persons," it said. The two police officers were detained on Tuesday and the ministry handed them over to the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: High School in Uskoplje to be reconstructed no sooner than in one year**

Written by Josip Senda (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Under the Agreement on the Reconstruction of the High School in Uskoplje, which was signed on 19 December 2000, the High School building was supposed to be reconstructed by the beginning of the 2001/2002 school year. The Agreement was signed by the Minister and Deputy Minister for Education in the Cantonal Government, the Principals of the High School in Uskoplje and Mixed High School in Gornji Vakuf, the Mayors of the aforementioned two municipalities, and on behalf of the International Community Claude Kieffer, the OHR's Senior Advisor for Education, and Ulrich Bucher, the High Representative's Special Envoy.

However, since the funds required were not provided on time, the deadline for the completion of the reconstruction has been postponed for a year.

According to Jozo Jurina, the Principal of the High School in Uskoplje, so far the SFOR units have cleaned the area surrounding the decrepit part of the building which was a constant threat to the safety of children, and Jurina took the opportunity to thank the SFOR for doing this.

Resumption of the reconstruction in accordance with the Agreement is doubtful now because, Jurina says, there has been an attempt of changing the Agreement in the way to have the new part of the building reconstructed, instead of having the entire building reconstructed. That would not provide for the fulfillment of the condition stipulated in the Agreement that this building would house two schools, and according to Jurina, no other solution under these conditions, will be accepted.

Besides, the full amount of funds has not been ensured because, Jurina explained, the High School in Uskoplje ensured 200,000 \$ from the funds that the Central Bosnia Canton received from the OPEC for the reconstruction of Croat schools in the Canton, whereas the Mixed High School in Gornji Vakuf has not provided its share of the funds, which makes the reconstruction start questionable.

Jurina said not even the technical documentation for the reconstruction is being prepared in accordance with the Agreement because the two high schools are in charge of technical preparations, but the Mayor of the former Gornji Vakuf Municipality, Dzevad Agic, has arbitrarily hired 'Hidrogradnja' Sarajevo to produce the project documentation without any prior consultation with the project holders - the High School in Uskoplje and the Mixed High School in Gornji Vakuf.

## **Vecernji List: There are no independent media today**

Written by Zlatko Tulic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Zlatko Tulic, the guest author of the 'Openly on Thursdays' column in today's edition of Vecernji List, says that the catastrophic TV program offered by what is allegedly to become the Federation Television made many citizens of Sarajevo buy a satellite receiver and a digital card for HTV program.

He says a number of international organizations tried to improve the media landscape by means of donations in money or equipment, but once the money was received, editorial offices of many media started dancing to their financiers' music.

"Cases of media being financed by national parties that are no longer in power in BiH, are not unusual, either. Those political groups also use money to direct the editorial concept of 'their' media. However, such attempts very rarely remain concealed, same as the attempts of some media to always be 'on the right side.' Being on the side of the authorities at all times is as bad as remaining faithful to either international or domestic sponsors. That is where the story about independent journalism falls through. There are no independent media in BiH today. They all depend on those who finance them or help them in any way to survive on an undeveloped market," reads the article.

## **Republika Srpska**

### **RS National Assembly adopts set of tax laws**

The Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted on Wednesday four laws further regulating tax policy sector. The laws intend to increase number of tax - payers through a reduction of the rates. The Assembly is expected to continue its session on Thursday and, among other things, consider the entity law for cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. According to both Banja Luka dailies, the reached a decision to establish the Tax Administration, which will regulate all tax-related issues including their establishment, collection, registration and control.

## **International Community**

### **A Socialist Group in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly supports BiH accession to the Council**

The BiH parliamentary delegation, headed by Sejfudin Tokic, met in Strasbourg with the representatives of the Socialists, who with 203 deputies represent the strongest political group in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly. They confirmed their support to the BiH's accession to the Council. The Laszlo Surjan's report on the issue should be considered o Thursday at the session of the Assembly's Political Committee.

### **Serbian Justice Minister Vladan Batic says 10,000 mujahedeens took part in the BiH in BiH**

The Republika Srpska dailies carry a statement of Serbian Justice Minister Vladan Batic given to SRNA news agency, in which he said the Serbian Government possessed evidence proving that (wartime Bosniak leader) Alija

Izetbegovic had engaged 10,000 mujahedeens during the war in BiH. Batic confirmed that, during the last visit to Belgrade, The Hague's Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte said name of a high-ranking politician from former Yugoslavia (SFRY) territory who could soon appear before the ICTY. Asked if this was about Izetbegovic, Batic said that the phrase "high ranking politician" was suggesting enough.

## **Reuters: Ex-Yugoslavia states to share \$2 billion financial assets**

The financial assets of the former Yugoslavia still to be divided among its five successor states total around \$2.0 billion, a key negotiator said on Wednesday.

Dobrosav Mitrovic was speaking after a meeting at which Slovenia, Croatia, BiH, Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) comprising Serbia and Montenegro agreed to meet again in Sarajevo next month to start dividing the assets. Mitrovic, head of the negotiating team for FRY, said the meeting agreed after two days of talks in Belgrade to set up a joint committee, which will also apportion around \$100 million in debts. The successor states initialled a wide-ranging deal on the division of the old state's assets in Vienna in May, a decade after the breakup of the six-member communist federation. The May agreement covers moveable and immoveable property, property outside Yugoslavia, financial matters such as the distribution of foreign exchange reserves and liabilities, archives, pensions, trademarks, copyrights and private property. The agreement has to be ratified by each country's parliament and then submitted to the United Nations. "The total value of the financial property is around \$2.0 billion. The value of the debts to be shared is around \$100 million, the most of which is allocated, commercial debt, a tiny part of which belongs to Yugoslavia," Mitrovic told Reuters. The assets to be shared include some \$70 million worth of monetary gold, \$365 million in hard currency reserves of the old state's central bank frozen mainly in the United States and a further \$645 million worth of foreign currency deposited by the former state with old Yugoslavia's banks abroad. Yugoslavia stands to get around 38.0 percent of the total, Croatia 23.0 percent. Slovenia 16.0 percent, BiH 15.5 percent to Bosnia and Macedonia 5.5 percent. The five have already split \$450 million in gold reserves held with the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), which acts as a sort of central bank for the world's central banks. The outstanding financial assets also include a few clearing accounts, Mitrovic said. "The most important clearing account is that with Russia, or rather the former Soviet Union. The five successor states have a clear surplus of some 1.3 billion clearing dollars, but we have to negotiate with Russia on the value of the clearing dollar," he said. The Soviet Union and its former trading partners, such as Yugoslavia, often used a system in which each country's exporters were paid from special clearing accounts, avoiding the need for currencies to cross borders.

## **Vecernji List: 120,000 refugees from BiH have taken Croatian citizenship**

Written by Irena Kustura (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Over 120,000 former refugees, most of them coming from BiH, have taken the Croatian citizenship in the meantime and decided to live in Croatia. Around 30,000 of them are accommodated in the houses of Serb refugees, but some of them will certainly be affected by the Croatian Government's decision ruling that all property must be returned to its owners by the end of next year.

There are around 20,000 citizens of BiH with the refugee status in Croatia. According to the Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees and the Ministry for Civil Affairs, all of them are expected to return to their homes once the reconstruction is completed. Those are mostly Croats from Posavina and Republika Srpska, and their returns will be assisted by the Croatian Government. They are currently accommodated in private facilities and very few of them found refuge in refugee settlements. The Croatian Government donated 20 million Kunas worth of building materials for the reconstruction of their houses, and according to the Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, it will be sufficient to cover the reconstruction of 300 to 500 housing units, depending on the degree of devastation. The priority in reconstruction will be given to the refugees who are accommodated in private houses or flats of Serb refugees in Croatia.

Since the end of the war, over 4,500 refugees have returned to BiH. Most of them are Serbs who fled to the

Republika Srpska from Banovina, Lika and Slavonia during the military actions Bljesak and Oluja. Their returns have been intensified after the Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Croatia and BiH reached an agreement to that end.