

# **OHR Bulletin 28 - December 09, 1996**

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## **PIC Conference, London**

- On 4 - 5 December the Peace Implementation Council met in London with the aim of adopting measures to consolidate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The conference, entitled **"Bosnia and Herzegovina 1997 - Making Peace Work"**, was attended by over 50 national delegations, including representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina and its two Entities, the Federation of BiH and the Republika Srpska (RS), as well as members of the leading international agencies represented in BiH.

Building on the foundations established by PIC Ministers and the BiH Presidency in their Paris Meeting on 14 November, where a framework for the two-year consolidation period was agreed, the PIC approved an Action Plan for the coming twelve-month period. The Plan contains detailed recommendations on regional stabilisation, human rights, war crimes, democratisation, refugees and displaced persons, freedom of movement, elections, policing, the market economy, reconstruction, the Central Bank, mine removal, reconciliation, media, education, and customs.

In addition to sustaining and further strengthening the achievements of 1996, the Plan also addresses areas where insufficient progress has been attained in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. This includes: the small numbers of refugee and displaced persons returns; continuing human rights abuses throughout the country; hampering of reconstruction efforts; the

delayed establishment of common institutions; lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); non-implementation of agreed weapons reductions; and failure to clear mines.

The PIC concluded that, while the international community remained committed to the peace process, responsibility for reconciliation lay with the authorities and citizens of BiH, and that they would have to progressively take charge of their own affairs. The PIC agreed that further financial assistance from the international community would be conditional on the willingness of the BiH authorities to prove their commitment to implementing all provisions of the Peace Agreement.

The PIC conclusions also stressed the importance of the role of the High Representative and reinforced his powers, particularly in the area of economic co-ordination, in the framework of the Economic Task Force, and in the co-ordination of independent media projects.

In view of the fundamental importance of a secure environment to the task of civilian implementation during the following year, the PIC and the BiH authorities also welcomed the decision made in principle by NATO members, in co-operation with other states participating in IFOR, to provide a smaller multinational stabilisation force in 1997 which would operate under similar rules of engagement to IFOR. The final decisions on the successor forces will be made at the NATO Summit in Brussels next week.

- In his address to the PIC, the High Representative, Carl Bildt, outlined some of the achievements so far accomplished in restoring peace and stability to BiH. Paying tribute to the efforts of IFOR in successfully implementing the military aspects of the Peace Agreement, Mr. Bildt expressed his hope that the central disarmament provisions of the Peace Agreement would also now be respected and implemented in full. The political provisions of the Agreement – and especially the implementation of the Constitution were of cardinal importance for the future, he said. “It is only through the setting up of the common institutions that the partition of the country can be overcome and a start made in solving the economic and social issues which are looming larger and larger for the ordinary people in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, he added.

Mr. Bildt also paid tribute to the OSCE’s work. The elections, he said, had given a more or less accurate reflection of the will of the peoples of BiH one year after the end of the war. Based on these elections, the process of setting up the common institutions had begun, albeit slowly. Challenges were yet to be faced, and for the process of constitutional implementation to be able to move forward, the provisions in the Constitution needed to be respected and implemented.

Listing the problem areas within the Peace Agreement, Mr. Bildt concluded that much still needed to be done in order to attain the goal of the consolidation period – that of creating a self-sustaining peace process in all key areas. *“One of the main messages to go out from this conference must be that the key to the future can only be turned by the Bosnians”.*

Mr. Bildt stressed that the human rights situation was essentially unchanged and this must not be tolerated: *“It is only when human rights are guaranteed that we will see politics emerging from the bonds of fear and war”*, he said. *“It is only when human rights are more secure that we will see the refugees who are still hesitating starting to come back, to help in the rebuilding of the country that was and forever will be their true home”*. In concluding, Mr. Bildt also pointed out the importance of the events being played out in the neighbouring countries, particularly the FRY and Croatia. Speaking of events in Belgrade, he warned: *“Stability can never be achieved through repression. Our voice must be loud and clear. Our commitment to human rights and democracy is a commitment throughout the region”*.

## **Economic Assistance**

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is providing a 26 million ECU

(32.7 million US\$) loan as part of an international emergency programme to reconstruct and repair urgent and high-priority airport infrastructure and road links in BiH. The loan will benefit both the Federation of BiH and the RS.

The project documentation was signed by the EBRD's President, Jacques de Larosiere; Kresimir Zubak, as member of the three-person Presidency of the state of BiH, and in his capacity as current President of the Federation of BiH; and Biljana Plavsic, President of the RS. The ceremony was also attended by the High Representative, Carl Bildt, who said: *"This project, financed by the EBRD, is important for the reconstruction of BiH, and its signing by senior representatives of all interested parties is a most encouraging sign and clear evidence that the country will benefit considerably from the project. It also constitutes in the economic field a happy complement to the Peace Implementation Conference which has just ended"*.

- Additional funding for the programme is being provided by the World Bank, the European Union and several donor agencies.
- The European Commission (EC) completed deliveries of gas meters and equipment this week. Through its Essential Aid Programme, the EC has supplied Sarajevo Gas with pipes valves cookers, heaters and meters totalling 2.2 million ECU (4.2 million DEM). The World Bank has contributed an additional 500,000 US\$ to the Novi Grad project assisting with the completion of gas connections in apartment blocks.

## Human Rights

- The inaugural conference of the University of Sarajevo Human Rights Centre, entitled "Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: From Theory to Practice" was held at the University on 8-9 December. Leading academics and professionals involved in the human rights and legal fields, from Bosnia and abroad, gave presentations on various human rights issues, particularly focusing on the situation in BiH. Speakers included the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Dr. Peter Leuprecht and the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Elizabeth Rehn, among others. The Conference was sponsored by the Council of Europe and organised in co-operation with other international agencies.
- In a statement addressed to the conference participants and supporters, the High Representative, Carl Bildt, regretted that he was unable to attend the conference in person, but pledged his support on behalf of the OHR to "feed the fire ignited" by the opening of the University Human Rights Centre promising continuation of administrative assistance, advocacy on behalf of their objectives and support of their activities. "Your work is a fundamental component of our effort to build a stable peace in BiH, and your dedication to that objective...presents our best hope for that goal to be achieved", he said. Mr. Bildt expressed his hope that a similar centre would also be established in the RS.
- Harassment of minorities and opposition supporters continues to occur with latest cases reported to UN IPTF in Grbavica, Velika Kladusa, Cazin , Mrkonjic Grad, Mostar, Jajce and Novi Grad.

## Right to Return

- Evictions continue to take place in Mostar. In the last week four more Bosniaks, including an elderly couple who said they had been assaulted, were expelled from their apartments in West Mostar by groups of men. One of the expulsions was reportedly carried out by seven men in HVO (Croatian Defence Council) uniform. In response to the recent spate of evictions in the Mostar area, UN IPTF has drafted guidance for local police on restoration of occupancy which outlines proper procedures for conducting legal evictions and reinstatements, as well as

measures to prevent illegal expulsions.

- UNHCR report that the number of expulsions of non-Croats from West Mostar this year has risen to 69.
- UN IPTF reported three more explosions in the village of Tasovici in the vicinity of Capljina on 4 December where many destroyed Bosniak houses are located. This follows recent reports of attacks against other minority properties in Vogosca, Konjic, Brcko and Vares.
- International organisations report that, following a meeting in which municipal authorities were unable to provide sufficient security guarantees to the minority community living there, yet another Bosniak has left the village of Kotor Varos in RS territory. More than 200 Bosniaks have reportedly left the Kotor Varos area in the past three months.
- In the same period of time approximately 100 people have left Bosanska Gradiska, mainly because of harassment by Serb displaced persons with whom they have been sharing their homes.

## **Freedom of Movement**

- UN Civil Affairs reported that RS border police continue to impose 45 DEM visa fines on persons entering RS territory. The fees are apparently not only being levied at entry points but also within the Entity itself, where border police are said to be operating. International monitors have reported that the RS border police often turn away Croats and Bosniaks at the international frontier and at the IEBL on the pretext that they do not have the proper documentation requires to obtain a “visa” to transit or visit RS territory.
- UN IPTF reported recent hindrances to freedom of movement on the Gorazde- Sarajevo road and in Blagaj and Rogatica.

## **Cooperation & Reconciliation**

A recent statement issued by Ambassador Robert Frowick, Head of OSCE Mission in BiH, drew attention to the first formal meeting of the leaders of the four major religious groups in the region – Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Jewish. The meeting was held for the purpose of forming the Inter-religious Council of BiH (IRC). The purpose of the IRC is to promote inter-religious cooperation on issues related to common living. *“With vision and courage the [religious] leaders have just taken a highly promising step toward reconciliation and peace”*, the statement said.

The statement also congratulated and called upon others to support the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) for assisting with the formation of the IRC. WCRP is a multi-religious organisation operated by senior representatives of all the world’s major religions, as well as many indigenous religions. In its 25 years of existence, the WCRP has undertaken a broad range of programmes for the advancement of comprehensive notions of peace.

## **Media Issues**

- On 29 November the European Commission hosted a conference on the role of the media in Ex-Yugoslavia in support of the peace process. Participants including journalists from BiH, Croatia and the FRY heard presentations by the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the International Federation of Journalists. The OHR, the European Parliament and the international media took part in the panel discussion later in the day.

The conference highlighted the importance of the role of the media in support of the peace process, and pointed out the need to mobilise and convince others to deliver a strong message to the politicians in order

to show them what was at stake, what their responsibilities were and that they would be held accountable both by their own population and by the international community for the development, or lack thereof, of the free media in the countries signatories to the Peace Agreement. Proceedings of the conference and recommendations for a long term strategy were addressed to the PIC meeting in London and to the High Representative, Carl Bildt.

- The Coalition Press Information Centre (CPIC) announced on 4 December that, in addition to the regular daily briefings, weekly bilingual press conferences would be held at the CPIC, Holiday Inn, starting from 5 December. The aim of the press conferences will be to highlight items of local media interest that have occurred over the previous week and give local journalists an opportunity to address their questions to representatives from organisations such as OHR, OSCE, IFOR and UNMIBH in their own language.

## Looking Ahead

### **11-12 December:**

NATO Summit, Brussels

### **13 December:**

ICRC Chaired Working Group on Missing Persons, Sarajevo

### **15 December:**

Coalition for Return Meeting, Banja Luka

*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*