

OHR Bulletin 16 - August 27, 1996

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Elections

The Provisional Election Commission (PEC) decided on 27 August that it would not be feasible to hold the municipal elections at the same time as cantonal and higher level governing body elections on 14 September. Ambassador Frowick, Chief of OSCE Mission (BH), explained in a statement that "the electoral guidelines drawn from the General Framework Agreement for Peace were meant to enable individual voters to decide for themselves where they wish to reside and vote. But they have been seriously distorted at the municipal level". According to the OSCE, the greatest difficulties with the electoral process had centred on the struggles over many municipalities around the country, notably Brcko, Srebrenica, Bugojno, Mostar and Stolac. The PEC was particularly concerned about the P2 registration forms submitted by Bosnian refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The PEC decided that elections at the cantonal and higher levels, i.e. the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the House of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, would take place as scheduled as they do not involve the same conditions.

The High Representative (HR), Carl Bildt, warmly welcomed the PEC's reaffirmed commitment to hold the national, entity and cantonal elections as planned. He emphasised that they were critically important in paving the way for setting up joint institutions. In view of the current circumstances, Bildt said that the international community, in close contact with the different national authorities, would now have to consider how to handle the new situation. "The PEC decision raises a number of issues which will affect both the nature and scope of the peace implementation process during the rest of this year and 1997", Bildt added.

These questions will be added to the agenda of the next PIC Steering Board meeting, scheduled for 5 September and will be the subject of urgent international consultations in the meantime.

The OSCE Election Appeals Sub-Committee (EASC) imposed a penalty against the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) on 21 August after it was discovered that one of their officials in Jasenica had illegally taken completed voter registration forms from the town's registration centre. As well as ordering the immediate dismissal of the local election commission president in Mostar, the EASC also ordered the removal of the HDZ candidate, Vlado Bevanda,

from the party list and the payment of a US\$10,000 fine.

The EASC released on 23 August a decision that parties and candidates must be permitted the exercise of freedom of political expression, including the right to create and distribute campaign materials. Related to this, EASC censured the Bihac police for taking and destroying Joint List materials.

In addition to the above decision, the EASC also released an advisory opinion on job dismissals and other employment-related threats directed against opposition party leaders and supporters. The strongly worded opinion noted that such threats constitute a “serious form of intimidation” and cautioned that if such threats are found to be instigated by a political party, penalties against that party would be forthcoming.

Joint Bodies

The third session of the Joint Civilian Commission (JCC/South) was held under the chairmanship of Principal Deputy HR, Ambassador Michael Steiner, in Siroki Brijeg on 20 August. The session was attended by representatives of municipalities from both Entities, as well as various international organisations. The agenda included elections, freedom of movement, refugees and displaced persons, human rights, economic reconstruction and media issues.

Elections dominated the session with the Chair voicing concern about the misuse of Form 2. Harassment of opposition party leaders, obstacles to media access for the opposition, constraints on freedom of movement and the return of refugees and displaced persons were other outstanding problems to be resolved on the eve of the elections. The Chair criticised the “absurd situation” which exists where displaced persons on both sides of the IEHL, who live just a few kilometres away from their homes, are denied the right to return. He underlined that a “reservation mentality (closing the doors of their municipalities to other peoples of BH)” was in complete contradiction to the hopes of closer ties with the rest of Europe and any prospect of economic recovery.

In the economic field, the Governor of the West Herzegovina canton expressed readiness to have direct contacts with international finance organisations, and proposed a meeting with the businessmen from the area. At the proposal of the Chair it was agreed that this meeting could be organised with assistance from the OHR.

The JCC/Sarajevo met on 27 August under the chairmanship of Ambassador Michael Steiner in the suburb of Vogosca to continue its work on peace implementation in Sarajevo. The session was attended by representatives of the Federal and city governments, surrounding opcinas, Serb citizens of Sarajevo and suburbs and members of the various international organisations.

Discussion focused on the right of DPs and refugees to return to their homes of origin and topics related to creating conditions for this return, including housing; political participation and representation in transitional bodies; security; and health, education and employment. It was agreed that, as the capital of BH, Sarajevo had a central role to play in restoring the unity of the country. There was a general feeling that Sarajevo authorities should therefore increase efforts to realise the right of return for all refugees and DPs and move expeditiously to provide the necessary conditions for this to occur.

Economic Assistance

The European Union has granted a total of 200,000 ECU (about 400,000 DEM) in support of 18 micro-projects prepared by the Bosnian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The projects aim to promote civil society development by strengthening local NGOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the first time the European Union has decided to include BH among countries eligible for the “PHARE Democracy Programme”, aimed at assisting countries from central and eastern Europe with the strengthening of their democratic institutions. The projects, which were evaluated by a team of experts and the European Commission, cover a wide range of small-scale activities including the development of NGOs throughout BH, support to independent media, protection of human rights, promotion of social reintegration, non-discrimination and reconciliation. Additional projects amounting to 350,000 ECU have also been approved and will be funded later this year.

A large reconstruction project, supported by the ICRC and aimed at repairing the existing water distribution

network in Gorazde, has resulted in running water for a large number of residents for the first time in four years. A temporary water supply line from the Drina river has been installed to pump water into the main reservoir of the town. Repairs to the town's war damaged distribution network have been carried out by the local water board with material worth 120,000 DEM donated by the ICRC.

The Overseas Development Administration recently provided 230,000 DEM for repairs to the damaged power station at Kakanj. The coal conveyer system had been destroyed by a fire which caused severe disruption to the power supply of thousands of residents in the surrounding areas, including Sarajevo. This funding is in addition to the considerable help the British Government, through the ODA, has provided over the years to the thermal power stations at Kakanj and Tuzla, as well as their associated coal mines.

Human Rights

The HR Carl Bildt, travelled to Cazin and Velika Kladusa on 23 August to express strong concern over the situation facing opposition parties in the area. Numerous attacks, many involving the use of explosives or grenades, have occurred against opposition party representatives and supporters in recent weeks. Bildt emphasised that police and local authorities must increase their efforts to investigate and deter future attacks and should cooperate fully with IPTF in this regard.

UN IPTF have also strongly protested the lack of police action in these incidents and sent a formal protest to the cantonal Interior Minister of the region on 20 August that included a list of 24 incidents including beatings, bombings and intimidation since 1 June. High level UNIPTF and OSCE officials also met with cantonal and municipal officials in the area last week to express their concern about the situation.

IPTF and IFOR responded to two separate shooting incidents that occurred on 25 August at the IEBL in Dobrinja. In the first incident, two persons were shot by unknown assailants and sustained serious injuries. Two hours later a Federation police officer who was on duty nearby was shot by unidentified persons driving from the RS side of the IEBL. IPTF will monitor the local police investigation.

In a 24 August letter to Acting President of the RS, Dr. Biljana Plavsic, the HR Carl Bildt took issue with a recent statement by the RS Minister of Interior which referred to a purported agreement permitting no more than 20 points of entry into the RS on election day, and specifying that only buses would be allowed to enter. Bildt wrote to confirm that no such agreement exists, nor would such restrictive measures be tolerated by the international community.

Open Broadcast Network

The principal donors and participants in the Open Broadcast Network (OBN) attended a Governing Council meeting on 23 August at the OHR in Brussels to discuss progress on the project and inform donors on implementation. Attending the meeting were representatives from principal donor nations including the U.S., Sweden, Japan and the UK, the European Commission, the OSCE, the International Federation of Journalists, and the OHR.

At the meeting Ambassador Frowick, Chief of Mission for OSCE, reiterated his full support for the enterprise saying that he shared the OHR's view that the OBN should not be seen only as an election oriented project but more importantly as a means of assisting, through independent media, with the long-term democratization process. He offered OSCE assistance in helping to realise the final stages of the project and wished the endeavour every success.

The project was reported to be moving ahead, albeit slower than hoped due to a number of obstacles caused by difficulties with the BH authorities and the funding timetable. These problems were now being overcome. After a progress review of the political, technical and training/programming aspects there was an initial discussion of medium term strategy for the project. It was decided that this subject, which included preparation of the budget and activity programme for 1997, and future relations with the authorities and state media, would be reviewed in greater depth at the next Governing Council meeting.

Looking Ahead

- **3-5 September:** Conference on Displaced Persons and Refugees entitled “The Right of Refugees to Return and Conditions of Return”, Sarajevo
- **4 September:** International Contact Group Meeting, Brussels
- **4 September:** JCC/South – Economic Reconstruction Working Group
- **5 September:** PIC Steering Board Meeting at OHR, Brussels
- **7- 8 September:** Informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Tralee

See our [Calendar](#) 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 BH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7500 & Fax (32-2) 737 7501