

OHR Bulletin 12 - July 29, 1996

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Mostar

The Croatian Democratic Union party (HDZ) failed to sign up to an agreement, brokered by the OHR, spelling out minimum conditions for co-operation in Mostar, based on the results of the elections in the city. Their obstruction of the forming of a new City Council led to representatives of the European Union meeting in Brussels on 24 July, taking note that the Joint Action could not enter into force and giving the HDZ a deadline of 4 August to comply and accept the Joint Action of 15 July. The main provisions were that the EU Administration of Mostar ends on 22 July and that a gradual transfer of responsibilities to the newly elected local administration would then take place, with this transfer ending no later than 31 December 1996.

Under a Special Envoy, the EU role in Mostar would then be to stabilise and strengthen the new administration, ensure freedom of movement, complete reconstruction projects and consolidate a unified and effective law enforcement system.

The EU also expressed its position on Mostar in a Declaration of the Presidency on 26 July, calling upon the Republic of Croatia to "*shoulder its responsibility for the behaviour of the local Croats and to exercise its influence, which the EU believed to be crucial. In the absence of co-operation from the Croats on the terms proposed, the EU will have no choice but to terminate its presence in Mostar and reconsider its future attitude towards the Croat side*".

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Michael Steiner, addressed reporters on Sunday 28 July in Sarajevo on the situation in Mostar and the obstruction by the HDZ saying "*the core problem in Mostar is that a small group of mafiosi figures who rule (part) of the city at the expense of Croat and Bosniac citizens alike*" adding that "*if you allow the side that doesn't like the election to practically undo the election and its results then we destroy the very*

Elections

As of 23 July 1996, the Refugee Elections Steering Group (RESG) has received commitments from twenty-four country Governments to participate in the programme of offering electoral services to Bosnians temporarily residing abroad in their respective States. Of these twenty-four, twenty-two have already opened Co-ordination Offices and trained staff, who are currently carrying out the mechanics of the electoral process in concert with the OSCE.

OSCE technical equipment and materials being used in the verification process include a dedicated computerised database of the 1991 Bosnia and Herzegovina census, multilingual posters, pamphlets and other information materials. The RESG has also fielded seventeen Country Representatives to co-ordinate with the twenty-four host country mechanisms. These Representatives have been trained in PEC and OSCE electoral policy, and carry the authority to make eligibility decisions in their respective assignments.

Additionally, RESG maintains staff in the Vienna-based office to receive and respond to requests concerning registration from Bosnian currently residing in countries where no RESG Country Representative is resident. Queries have been received so far directly from Bosnians in four other countries, and indirectly from Bosnians in five others.

Dates for the outside-Bosnia and Herzegovina electoral process, as specified by the PEC, remain as follows:

31 July: Outside-Bosnia registration ends

07 August: Outside-Bosnia appeal process ends

25 August- 01 Sept: Outside-Bosnia voting occurs

Acting by appointment of the European Commission, Causes Communes, Belgium, in co-operation with Tele Bruxelles, will produce audio-visual material to be broadcast in BH before 14 September 1996. The material will aim to promote the elections as a democratic process of civil society development.

The general objectives of the project are to improve the public awareness of the importance of the coming elections, while specifically, it will aim to offer information, as complete as possible, about the election framework and its impact at local and national level.

The information will be broadcast in a 60- minute programme, which will be composed of short spots/videos covering election topics under a number of different formats: interviews of voters and of OSCE representatives, didactic presentation of the election system and its regulations, advertising cartoons, etc.

Human Rights

In order to co-ordinate human rights responses during the electoral season, the Human Rights Co-ordination Centre established an informal working group with the main human rights implementing organisations. Among other issues, the group devised guidelines on issuance of rally permits, display of campaign posters, and security at party meetings. The guidelines are designed to compliment existing regulations and specify acceptable campaigning procedures for all parties.

OHR staff met last week in Bijeljina with the newly-established RS Helsinki Committee, one of the few active human rights NGOs in Republika Srpska to discuss ways to improve links with the OHR.

Joint Bodies

The 5th meeting of the Joint Civilian Commission (JCC) North East Working Group on Economic Reconstruction was held in Tuzla on 23 July, chaired by OHR. A meeting of 20 business representatives from both the RS and the Federation in the JCC region was held simultaneously.

The meeting discussed the various road projects in the region but no compromise on an Entity-linking road was reached despite numerous efforts. It was agreed, however, that a small sub-group comprising representatives from the Posavina and Tuzla Cantons as well as the RS be set up to work on a priority proposal that would have clear Entity-linking character and could be endorsed by the Group. Both parties are to inform OHR of their participation by 2 August.

The representatives of the 20 businesses from the Federation and the RS who met alongside the JCC gave those present a chance to discuss business opportunities and eventually move to practical negotiations. A similar meeting will be arranged in parallel with the next Working Group meeting for follow-up.

The next meeting will take in place in Bosanski Samac on 21 August.

Refugee And Humanitarian Affairs

The Expert Group on Exhumation and Missing Persons met at OHR on 22 July. Those attending included representatives of ICRC, UNHC for Human Rights, IFOR and Physicians for Human Rights.

ICRC informed the assembly of the slow but steady flow of information on individuals listed in its missing persons gazette published last month. Several people have been located and information has been received on several dozen individuals who have died and whose remains have been located. ICRC has also deployed a staff persons to the Hague to look through the ICTY files for information on the missing.

UNHCHR will hold a meeting with Geneva-based ambassadors on 10 August to discuss funding. A similar meeting will be held in Sarajevo on 13 August.

PHR reported that the establishment of the antemortem database is proceeding smoothly and that the Tuzla PHR/ Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights office in Tuzla is now producing a newsletter answering questions on missing persons/exhumation issues. Data collection questionnaires and procedures have been developed, interviewers are being hired and trained, and a local psychologist has been employed to develop a strategy for approaching families of the missing.

Economic Assistance

The first train in four years to run down the Neretva river valley, linking Sarajevo to the Adriatic coastal port of Ploce, will leave Sarajevo on 30 July at 10.00 hrs.

The line Sarajevo-Mostar-Ploce was restored thanks to a Joint Action of the European Union Member States, under the "*Common Foreign and Security Policy*" (CFSP), aimed at reviving the economy, supporting the Federation and the peaceful reintegration process.

The project was initiated in 1994, as part of the Action Plan for the Restoration of Essential Services to Sarajevo, through the Office of the UN Special Co-ordinator for Sarajevo. Altogether, EU Member States have contributed more than 6,650,000 ECU for the repair of the line and its stations, through contributions in cash, provision of equipment and material in kind and technical assistance. Other international co-ordinating partners have been the EU Administration in Mostar, UNPROFOR, IMG and then IFOR, assisting in the de-mining.

Pending completion of the electrification system, diesel train will connect the Bosnian capital to the Croatian coast.

In May 1996, the Neretva I and Neretva II railway bridges in Mostar, funded by Germany, were opened.

After a ceremonial opening at Sarajevo railway station, the train will run a symbolic return trip to Mostar, where the new Railway Station Mostar Putna is scheduled to be officially opened.

Media Development

The Provisional Election Commission adopted on 25 July an amendment to Article 127 of its Rules and Regulations governing elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The amended text of this Article reads as follows: *“The Governments, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 7 of the Agreed Measures adopted in Geneva on 18 March 1996, will ensure that licenses and frequencies for electronic and print media are granted expeditiously, on the basis of objective non-political criteria, in order to ensure that all political parties and candidates in the elections have equitable access to the media.*

In particular, in accordance with the Geneva Agreed Statement of 2 June 1996, the Governments will grant without delay to the Open Broadcast Network all necessary licenses, including the right to broadcast and feed via satellite, frequencies, permissions to use and develop sites, and any other broadcast-related permits and authorisations, local or international.

The Commission will review the implementation of the above decision at its next meeting on 30 July 1996, and take any necessary action to ensure compliance.”

Looking Ahead

- **31 July:** Carl Bildt to address UN Security Council
- **1 August:** JCC North, Tuzla
- **13 August:** JCC West, Banja Luka
- **21 August:** JCC South

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. Callers from outside BH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7000 & Fax (32-2) 737 7901