

PDHR interview for RTV Mostar Web Portal

[Mr. Gregorian, the situation in Mostar is in a stalemate: a mayor has not been elected even after three rounds of voting, nor has the decision on the temporary funding been adopted, for the 2009 budget has not even been passed yet. In your view, what's the way out of this situation?]

The fact that the Mostar City Council hasn't elected a Mayor more than five months after the municipal elections is unacceptable. It's unacceptable for the citizens of Mostar; it's unacceptable to the international community and it should be unacceptable for the political parties and their delegates in the city council.

I discussed the situation with the High Representative last night. He said that the failure to make progress on even this, the most basic requirement of forming the City authority, can not be tolerated indefinitely. The international community's patience is wearing thin – we expect a Mayor to be appointed in a matter of weeks rather than months.

We've witnessed deliberate absenteeism from sessions and a failure to reach compromise. What we are talking about here is a clear lack of political will on all sides to come to a solution.

As the third round of voting did not result in election of a mayor, the City Council must now repeat the procedure for electing a mayor, beginning with the nomination of candidates. In the meantime we will consult with relevant political leaders in order to help them find a solution.

The High Representative expects the mayoral nomination procedure to resume as soon as possible; it's time the political parties put the citizens' interests ahead of their own.

[The club of Croat councillors in the City council of Mostar has by a majority vote passed a decision to request the repetition of elections in Mostar and the change of the Statute of the City of Mostar, which was - I will remind you - enacted by the High Representative in January 2004? In your view, is the repetition of elections possible?]

The right for the City Council to dissolve is not foreseen by law. Quite simply, this is not an option. Even if it were, there is no indication that this would resolve the problem, rather it would delay finding a solution.

[Some media have reported that the OHR is willing to accept to change the Statute, more precisely, the third round of elections in the City council for the mayor of Mostar, but is not willing to accept the repetition of elections. Is that true?]

Article 44, the mechanism for electing the mayor in the City Council, was the arrangement the parties themselves arrived at during negotiations regarding the statute. This process therefore is the result of an agreement endorsed by Mostar's political parties. It's time they implement their own agreement and stop ducking their responsibilities.

If the parties can agree to changing the Statute – and the Statute itself defines the method for doing so– the OHR would have nothing against constructive change. But the Council must first adopt the statute in order to amend it. Even so, the required two-thirds majority needed to change the statute will be harder to achieve than the simple majority of the elected City Councillors needed to elect a Mayor in the third round. At this stage adoption and then amendment of the Statute is unrealistic and just a path to further delay.

[In your opinion, what's the essence of the problem in Mostar, when it comes to relations within the City council? How come that some parties are strategic partners at the Federation and state levels, and allegedly in Mostar they are on opposing sides? How come that there is no cooperation whatsoever there?]

There are many possible coalitions of councillors that can elect the mayor. The lack of political will is the only real obstacle. The OHR's patience is wearing thin and we're looking now to senior political representatives from the parties to become involved to find an agreed solution.

[Do you intend to take measures as those in Brcko: freeze the salaries of politicians until they reach an agreement!?)

Although my powers as Supervisor are limited to Brcko District, the High Representative's powers extend throughout the whole territory of BiH. The High Representative is frustrated about the situation in Mostar, and his patience is limited, but I will not speculate about his possible actions.