

Interview: Miroslav Lajčák, High Representative / EU Special Representative for BiH: “This can no longer be tolerated”



Slovak Miroslav Lajčák, 44, the High Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, speaks about the politics of blockage employed by nationalistic politicians in a multi-ethnic state.

Spiegel: The final deadline for the police reform expired the week before last. And this should have been a cornerstone for the further development of the country. How do you plan to thwart nationalistic blockages of reforms in the future?

Lajčák: This country does not function the way it should. In the course of one year the Parliament adopted only three reforms. This can no longer be tolerated. That is why I used my powers in order to simplify the decision-making mechanism in a multi-ethnic government. In the future decisions will be taken according to the rules that do not allow obstructions. In addition to this, I am regularly having consultations with the ruling parties.

Spiegel: The signing of the SAA has been postponed for the time being. Does the threat of non-entry into the EU still help at all? For no one in the EU counts any longer on the Balkan countries joining the EU soon.

Lajčák: Politicians in BiH do not understand what the EU means for their country. According to the polls, 70% of the population is in favor of the entry into the EU. But this majority is neither seen nor heard by anybody. Even the media did not criticize politicians for the failed police reform. Who wants to join the EU, must work on their own, we won't and cannot force anyone to do it.

Spiegel: Would BiH tread faster towards the EU if you would remove nationalists from the government?

Lajčák: These are democratically elected politicians, they are my partners. And I have to work with them, whether I like it or not. Currently, I do not have the intention to use my powers for those purposes. But I cannot promise that it will remain the case.

Spiegel: The RS continues to hope that it will secede one day. Wouldn't this be one of the options to stop a several-year-long stagnation of the country?

Lajčák: This still is not the topic. And it would be contrary to the Dayton Agreement.

Spiegel: When you took over your mandate four months ago, did you count on such problems?

Lajčák: Honestly speaking, yes. But I was only surprised by the atmosphere. As if no one believes that anything can ever be improved here.