

Transcript of the International Agency's Joint Press Conference in CPIC

CPIC/Media Conferences

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 1130 hours on Tuesday 30 July 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Patrik Volf	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High Representative condemns attack on Islamic community center in Prijedor.• High Representative to Address Federation Parliament.• PIC Steering Board meets with Council of Ministers and Entity governments.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft met yesterday with the Ministers of Education in the Entities.
c. UNMIBH	Alun Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main trial hearing in Banja Luka.• Explosions in Prijedor and Dubica.
d. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander John Coppard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closure of Ploce seaport.
e. ICTY Outreach	Refik Hodzic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular summers recess at ICTY.• Efforts to make it easier for journalists report on ICTY.• Prosecutor's submission of 26 July.

2. Twenty-one members of the media and one television crew attended the conference.
3. A transcript of the questions and answers is attached.

C. Barraud

Lt. Col. (FR A),

Chief Operations and Plans

Patrik Volf - OHR

I have three items for you today; the first one regards an incident happening over the weekend.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, strongly condemns the attack on the Islamic Community Centre in Prijedor that happened over the weekend. He expects the relevant authorities to act swiftly and bring the people responsible to justice. The International Community will monitor the investigation into this incident closely. If people think that they can use the pre-election period to intimidate returnees and exercise pressure on political or religious leaders, they need to feel the full force of the law.

Secondly, the High Representative Paddy Ashdown as we speak is addressing the Federation Parliament. This is the third speech by the High Representative to the state and Entity Parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina since his arrival. He will remind parliamentarians of the necessity of maintaining sensible public spending, boosting the economy and establishing the rule of law.

In his speech, the High Representative will raise the issue of political immunity. All democracies have such systems, but they are not and should not be used as a way of evading justice.

He will say, "immunity is designed to strengthen institutions, not to protect individuals". He will say, "that he fears that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the way in which immunity is used contradicts the democratic standards of openness, accountability and equality before the law. It seems a little strange that politicians, who make laws, should then declare themselves immune from the normal legal procedures. Perhaps there are reasons for this, in which case the High Representative would like to hear them. Perhaps there are not. In which case, maybe reform should be considered".

The High Representative will urge parliament to debate immediately the law on electricity, the law on land registries and the law on banks. Ahead of the coming elections, politicians will have to prove that they can pass practical, affordable, and specific reforms that will modernise the economy and benefit the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The High Representative is also impressing upon the Federation Deputies that the High Judicial Council must be operational by autumn so as to ensure that in future Bosnia and Herzegovina gets the high-quality judges and the prosecutors it deserves.

On the last note, as you know, the Steering Board Political Directors of the Peace Implementation Council and the High Representative, joined by the Principals of the International Organisations will today, at 17:30 meet with the representatives of the Council of Ministers and the Entity Governments. The Council of Ministers will present its economic reform agenda for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its economic targets to the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board. The presentation of this agenda will be open for the media.

Tomorrow, after the meeting with the Political Directors, the High Representative will hold a press conference, presumably at around 14:15 at the Office of the High Representative. We will send out the notification later on this afternoon. Thank you that is all from my side.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir - OSCE

Good morning just one brief point from me.

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft Head of the OSCE mission met yesterday with the Ministers of Education in the Entities, Mr. Mujo Demirovic and Mr. Gojko Savanovic as well as the Deputy Education Minister in the Federation, Mr. Lovrenovic and Mr. Izet Banda, Deputy Head of District Brcko Education Department. Ambassador Beecroft and the ministers discussed the new co-ordination role of the OSCE in education.

The ministers expressed support for the co-ordination structures that are suggested in the field of education regarding; modernisation and quality of primary, secondary, higher and vocational education, legislation and finance, as well as equal access to education.

To elaborate further on this, the ministers, along with over one hundred local and international stakeholders in education, have been invited to an education forum where they will discuss shared goals in education as well as how to achieve them. The forum will take place on Thursday at the Holiday Inn. There will be a press opportunity at the end of the meeting, around 13:00, to which you are all cordially invited and there will be a media advisory later on today or tomorrow morning. Thank you.

Alun Roberts - UNMIBH

Two Items from UNMIBH this morning.

The first item is in regard to the main trial hearing in Banja Luka in regard to the riots and violence and threat to peace and public order, that occurred on 7 May 2001, at the attempted ceremony to lay the cornerstone for recommencing reconstruction of the Ferhadija mosque.

Yesterday in Banja Luka, the presiding judge at Banja Luka basic court, Mirela Jagodic postponed again for the third time the main trial of the 16 suspects, all 16 are charged with a group offence of disturbance to peace and public order during the riots of last year.

This time postponement was because one of the 16, Vitomar Javanovic failed to attend the court, despite being summoned to do so. This is not the first time that Mr. Javanovic failed to attend the main trial. He also, with two

others failed to attend at the date of the first main trial hearing on 14 June.

The second attempt to hold the main trial, was on 15 July, on that occasion the trial was postponed because lawyers for three of the 16 accused failed to attend, they were elsewhere on other business. Causing the judge, Ms. Mirela Jagodic to reschedule for the third time, to yesterday 29 July, the main trial hearing.

Recognising the high significance of this case, the worst rioting seen in Banja Luka ever. UNMIBH is not only concerned at the judge's decision to postpone the trial, not just for a few days but until the summer period is over to 2 September, a further delay of almost five weeks.

UNMIBH is also concerned that the judge seemed passive yesterday, in not exercising the powers available to her. Namely by use of article 300 of the Republika Srpska criminal procedure. To basically adjourn the procedures temporarily, request the police for assistance, ask them to go to the address of the defendant who failed to appear, Mr. Jovanovic and attempt to locate him, and apprehend him and bring him before the court.

Yesterday, UN lawyers of the UN Mission Criminal Justice Advice Unit, visited Judge Jagodic to discuss her actions. Although aware of the high profile nature of the trial reminded her of the authority that she could have used but did not, under article 300 of the Republika Srpska criminal code and procedure.

UNMIBH Criminal Justice Advice Unit, has expressed its concern to the judge, UNMIBH will now monitor closely whether the judge's order to have the defendant apprehended and detained for a month, as she said, she would be carried out by the police.

The second item, is in regard to the explosion in Prijedor at the weekend, we join with the Office of the High Representative in condemning this explosion on the Islamic community property in Prijedor.

We just basically want to characterise that since the 14 April, there have been 13 separate explosive incidents in either Prijedor or Dubica. These however, have not been entirely focused upon Bosniak returnees; they have been on both Bosniak returnees and Serb returnee property. The last five since the 26 May, there have been two explosions on Serb owned property, and two on Bosniak owned property, and one an explosive device, which failed to detonate.

Although, yesterday the police were prompt to condemn publicly, the explosion at the Islamic community building. They have yet to make progress on actually locating and bringing to justice any of the persons responsible for these explosive incidents, which UNMIBH closely monitors the investigations of and wish to see the police in Prijedor do more about. That is all I have this morning.

Lieutenant Commander Coppard - SFOR

I have just one item for you today:

Tomorrow, SFOR's seaport of disembarkation facility in Ploče on the Croatian coast will close as part of a general downsizing effort. The facility has been operated by French SFOR troops since December 1995, and serves as a ship embarkation and disembarkation point for supplying SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The closure is not expected to affect SFOR operations, as individual nations will now deal directly with civilian port managers in order to supply their troops. SFOR troop contributing nations will continue to maintain an aviation, security and logistics presence in Ploče, however future reductions are expected.

Approximately 30 SFOR troops will be transferred to other duties.

Refik Hodzic - ICTY Outreach

I have just three short points.

To start with a reminder that on Monday, 5 August a regular summer recess starts at the ICTY

This week we still have proceedings in the cases against Stakic, Galic, Martinovic, Naletilic, Brdjanin and Talic. Tomorrow there is also a status conference in the appeals proceedings against Krnojelac.

To draw your attention, to two documents that we have for you, in an effort to actually make it easier for journalists here to follow the work of ICTY. Following the recess we will start to regularly supply court orders and submissions that are being presented to journalists in The Hague as soon as they come out.

Today, we have the text of the Prosecutors submission of 26 July for the joinder of Omarska and Keraterm trials, regarding the remaining accused Zeljko Meakic, Momcilo Gruban, Dusan Knezevic, Dusan Fustar and Predrag Banovic.

The submission proposes reorganisation of certain counts of the two indictments and introduction of new counts against some of the accused. The text of the submission contains all the details for those interested and it is available outside in the lobby.

Also, we have a full text of the decision of the Trial Chamber II to deny request for provisional release to Vidoje Blagojevic. This decision attracted a lot of interest among journalists in The Hague. As it deals with, which governments can provide guarantees for provisional release, when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina and again you are more than welcome to a copy, they are available in the lobby.

Patrik Volf - OHR

Thank you to all of you of the podium. I forgot to tell you that the High Representatives speech is available outside on the table. Any questions?

Questions and Answers

Q: Amra Hadiosmanovic - AFP:

Alun, according to the Republika Srpska criminal court, how many times can an indicted person fail to appear before the court, before the police are asked to intervene?

A: Alun Roberts - UNMIBH:

The Judge has the power under the Republika Srpska code on criminal procedure, is what you mean to intervene basically when the first main trial hearing took place on the 14 June. To then say, as the defendants were not available, they had been issued subpoenas to attend, exercise a right by requesting them to go to the addresses and locate any of them that were not available and bring them before the court, that did not happen. The second time was because the lawyers did not attend and it was very poor excuses again and this time we had one defendant, who still did not appear. The press asked yesterday in Banja Luka, why it is that if one defendant is not there, the trial cannot proceed on the 15th. It is a group offence; they all have to be read the charges against them at same time, all together in court. In our view from the UN Criminal Justice Advice Unit, the judge appears to be rather passive in what is a main trial hearing of a very significant case, but also has the discretion to use it if she wishes and she has not done so.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic - Reuters:

On these two occasions this Jovanovic guy, was a problem because he was absent, in theory the remaining 15 defendants can do the same thing and delay this trial for several years?

A: Alun Roberts - UNMIBH:

I would not put it at several years. It is now I think, been made clear to the judge and we will probably also speak to the President of the Basic Court in Banja Luka. To ensure that our feeling of dissatisfaction at the lengthy postponement until 2 September, is not itself a good sign in this particular case and that in future that all 16, if necessary be brought before the court physically. Which, the judge again has the right to decide upon and in turn request police intervention. That is basically where we are, it is again a sign in this country overall, I think, in terms of much more pressure, encouragement, assistance to ensure a much better performance by judiciary all the way round.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic - Reuters:

Just to clarify, are these 16 charged with violence during the first mosque ceremony or the second one?

A: Alun Roberts - UNMIBH:

The first ceremony on 7 May, and they are charged basically with...if you like misdemeanours. As you said repeatedly, the persons who were the main organisers of the riots have not been identified. There has been one person identified separately under a different order by the prosecution for responsibility of encouraging or en sighting others to set fire to the buses that were burnt on the day. As regards the serious injuries inflicted on the male Bosniak, who died two and a half weeks later, in a hospital in Sarajevo. Again we remain dissatisfied with the police investigation failing to identify the persons who were responsible for the physical assault, which caused his injuries and those remain open.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelane for Cox Newspapers:

Has the High Representative ever removed a judge and if so on what grounds and is that a possibility in this case?

A: Patrik Volf - OHR:

I do not have anything to add substantially to what Alun has said in this regard. When it comes to the removal of judges, yes we did remove judges. The grounds I will have to look up for you, there were several reasons, it was a whole bunch.