

Bugojno Investigation

The OSCE and the OHR regret that Mayor Dzevad Mlaco has again chosen to use Dnevni Avaz to attack the work of the Federation Ombudsmen through the Ombudsperson Branka Raguz. In its 8 February 1999 edition, Dnevni Avaz published the headline, "Ombudsperson Branka Raguz is most responsible for the crime in Vrbanja". The article quotes Mayor Mlaco as implicating Ombudsperson Raguz in HVO action and crimes against Bosniaks in Vrbanja. Mayor Mlaco has made these allegations before. Despite numerous opportunities, he has failed completely to provide any evidence to support the allegations. The OSCE and the OHR view the allegations against Ombudsman Raguz as politically motivated and wholly unsubstantiated. It is noted that the article comes on the heels of the arrival of the Special Envoy of the High Representative to Bugojno on 5 February.

Mayor Mlaco uses the opportunity to again criticise the report prepared by the Federation Ombudsmen and the OSCE at the request of OHR in November 1998, which itemises cases wherein state-owned property was misallocated by the municipal authorities in Bugojno. As stated in the joint OSCE-OHR press release dated 9 November 1998, this report was initiated by OHR in response to numerous complaints by citizens alleging violations of the law in the Bugojno municipality. The OHR and the OSCE fully support the report, and call upon the responsible Cantonal Attorney to speed up the investigation of the cases mentioned therein. Mayor Mlaco was informed at the last meeting of the Joint Municipal Committee with Prozor-Rama that he would be personally held responsible should these findings corroborate the Ombudsmen's report.

OSCE and OHR call upon Mayor Mlaco to desist from his irresponsible and inflammatory remarks, which demonstrate his complete unwillingness to follow the rule of law, and to remedy these violations regarding the misappropriation of property. They also note with dismay Dnevni Avaz's biased presentation of the interview with Mayor Mlaco, in particular their headline, which represents profoundly incompetent journalism at best, a malicious libel at worst.