

Harassment and intimidation of the political opposition in Bijeljina

The High Representative is extremely concerned at the pattern of harassment and intimidation of the political opposition in Bijeljina. He is particularly disturbed by reports of direct threats against individuals in political opposition parties, the dismissal from positions of employment of several members of the SNS, and the detention of four members of the Democratic Party, who have been charged in connection with the attack on the TV transmitter in Bijeljina.

Harassment of this sort seems to be nothing new in Bijeljina, where incidents have been reported for several months. The scale of the threat, however, has taken on proportions of even more substantial concern in the past week, culminating with the incident on 14 November when two masked gunman threw a tear gas grenade and fired around 200 rounds of ammunition at the SNS offices in Bijeljina on 14 November.

The local authorities and police in Bijeljina have not responded adequately to these abuses. They must take concrete and demonstrably effective measures to reverse this trend and to prevent further incidents. The High Representative condemns this failure unequivocally. He will continue to monitor the situation in the region closely.

Finally, The High Representative would like to remind the local authorities of their obligations under the Dayton Peace Agreement to ensure that political campaigning is carried out in a free and fair environment, an environment in which citizens can seek public office without fear of discrimination or reprisal. However, these authorities should not need any such reminder.