Canton 10 Officials Removed

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the OSCE Head of Mission, Robert Barry, have removed from office the Governor and Prime Minister of Canton 10, Ivan Ivic and Mirko Mihaljevic. The dismissed officials were informed of this decision, yesterday, Monday May 22nd, 2000.

Both Mr. Ivic and Mr. Mihaljevic abused their power by persistently and seriously obstructing implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Since their assumption of office in 1998, Mr. Ivic and Mr. Mihaljevic presided over a Canton characterized by a dysfunctional judicial system and lack of respect for the Rule of Law. They refused to appoint competent prosecutors and judges for the Canton, thus greatly disadvantaging the law-abiding people of Canton 10. Furthermore, they bear the ultimate, and often direct, responsibility for the Canton's poor record in property law implementation.

They are culpable for the fact that police, under their ultimate authority, applied totally different and separate standards of justice and law enforcement for citizens of Canton 10 depending on their ethnic origin.

Blatant disregard for the responsibilities of public officials and for the welfare of citizens was vividly demonstrated by Prime Minister Mihajlevic's reaction to a recent leaflet threatening journalists in Canton 10. Rather than condemning those who initiated the attack, he chose to cast blame on the journalists themselves. Meanwhile, the Governor remained silent, eventually reacting only under pressure form the International Community.

By their consistent obstructionism and refusal to take necessary actions, the two dismissed officials played a central role in creating a climate of hostility and

intolerance in Canton 10, in doing so they have failed to live up to their responsibilities to its citizens.

The actions of both Mr. Ivic and Mr. Mihaljevic exhibit a disturbing and unacceptable pattern of obstruction. For this reason the High Representative, exercising the powers vested in him by Annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has decided to remove both Ivan Ivic and Mirko Mihaljevic from their respective positions of Governor and Prime Minister of Canton 10, and to ban them from holding any public office unless authorised to do so. The Decision became effective yesterday, May 22nd, and will not require any further procedural steps. Mr. Ivic and Mr. Mihaljevic must vacate their offices at once.

The President of the Cantonal Assembly, Anto Omazic, will become acting Governor, and Deputy Prime Minister, Marko Bagaric, will become acting Prime Minister. The High Representative and Ambassador Barry expect the Cantonal Assembly to appoint a new Governor within 30 days, as is required by the Canton 10 Constitution.