

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condemnation of Klepci incident• Condemnation of Stolac incident
UNHCR	Sanja Alikalic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condemnation of Klepci incident
OSCE	Philipp Henning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 September Anniversary• Welcoming ODIHR• OSCE RC Mostar “Two-way Street” Forum• OSCE RC Mostar series of Public Forums
SFOR	Maj. De Lambert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement

Avis Benes - OHR

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to yet another press conference of International Organisations seated in Mostar. On behalf of the OHR today we have a statement of condemnations. The first one refers to the incident in Klepci that took place the other day. This statement will be available in written after the press conference.

The Head of our Regional Office and the Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot, is appalled by the serious incident that occurred on 7 Sept in the Serb returnee settlement Klepci, near Capljina. As you have probably heard, around 4 am, unknown perpetrators fired automatic weapons at the village, hitting at least four of the houses. What is truly worrying is the fact that human casualties could have easily resulted, and it is very fortunate that they did not.

Ambassador Bercot and the OHR fully condemn this impermissible behavior and calls on the local authorities to do likewise. He also considers it of utmost importance that the local police, who are conducting the investigation, take this case very seriously and do its best to apprehend the perpetrators. Moreover, it is vital that municipal authorities fully involve themselves in bringing the matter to justice and send a clear message about this concerning event – which unfortunately has not happen yet on their part.

Whoever committed this act can only be a criminal and an element dangerous for the whole society. Incidents such as this are a threat to everybody.

What we would also like to add and briefly mention is last week’s vandal act committed in Stolac when unknown perpetrators pulled down the monument to Don Ivan Music in front of the Stolac Secondary school, which we also condemn. Such acts can in no way contribute to more peaceful and tolerant environment – and such an environment should be a goal of all the normal citizens in Stolac.

One more thing: you all received our yesterday’s Press release concerning the statistics on the Property Law Implementation Plan in BiH for the month of July. The title was “The Glass Is Half-Full” as, during that month, PLIP in the RS reached the rate of 50%. Some municipalities, in which it is necessary to accelerate the process, have been noted – none of these municipalities, neither in the RS nor in the FBiH, come from our AoR. In any case, you can get the statistics on our web-page which is, I believe, known to all of you. This is all on behalf of the OHR for the time being, now I give the floor to Sanja Alikalic from the UNHCR.

Sanja Alikalic - UNHCR

Good morning to everyone. Our today’s statement also refers to the incident in the settlement of Klepci. The UNHCR strongly condemns the attack that took place against returnees in the village of Klepci, Capljina

municipality, on 7 September. Four returnees' houses were shot at from the road by unknown perpetrators. The UNHCR expects the local police to do its utmost to find the perpetrators and invite the local authorities to also condemn the attack. We note with satisfaction that the local police and SFOR have stepped up patrols in the area and we want to thank them for contributing to the protection of returnees in Klepci.

Philipp Henning - OSCE

I would like to start with a statement by Ambassador Thomas Timberman, Head of the Regional Centre of the OSCE here in Mostar. This is the statement regarding the anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attack. "September 11 is a day when America will remember long into the future the three thousand innocents, representing dozens of countries, who died one year ago today. However, for the OSCE staff and for all of us living and working in Mostar, we are reminded powerfully every day of the senseless death, destruction, damage to the living and the ruination of history that mindless violence visits upon average people like us".

On another note, the OSCE Mission to BiH extends a warm welcome to the Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights, ODIHR. An ODIHR delegation has arrived to BiH and has taken up their job to monitor the upcoming general elections. We wish them success with their important mission. Point of contact for media in the ODIHR is Mr. Ian Mitchell whose telephone number is: 061 - 398 031.

And finally, announcement of 2 events which may be of interest for you. The OSCE RC Mostar, in co-operation with Nansen Dialogue centre, is hosting a meeting between young people and representatives of the Canton 7 Ministry of Education. i.e. Deputy Minister, Mr. Halil Spago, and Assistant to Minister Dujmovic, Mr. Kresimir Culjak. The idea of "Two-way Street" is to create a platform where young people can meet politicians, ask questions and get answers regarding the issues which are important to them. The name "Two-way Street" stands for two-way communication, meaning that youth is not only on the receiving side, but can engage in creative discussions with politicians. "Two-way Street" is a practical approach through which the gap between the generations and, in particular, between the young people and the political leadership of their country. And since the OSCE has established these "Two-way Street" events late last year, we have already conducted more than 70 of them throughout BiH. All of them turned out to be very attractive for both the politicians and the young people. All media are cordially invited to attend the next event on Thursday, 12 September, in the "Sun" caffè starting at 18:00 hours.

And, my final item: the OSCE RC Mostar is organising a series of public forums for political parties, coalitions and independent candidates running for the upcoming elections. The ones which might be of particular interest for the media in Mostar are on education on Monday, 16 September, and the next one on demobilised soldiers on Monday, 23 September. Objective of these forums is to offer political subjects the opportunity to present their views, strategies and plans and, at the same time, to give citizens the opportunity to express their concerns, ask questions and present proposals. You will receive later this week more information regarding the exact place and time of the forums. Thank you.

Questions

Q: Alden Kajtaz (RTV Mostar, Dnevni Avaz): Question for OHR - Could you comment on the wave of strikes in this canton and the request the Cantonal Government representatives' addressed to the OHR with regard to the assistance to overcome the crisis in the Canton?

A: Avis Benes: You know that the OHR has been for a long time interested and involved in the issues pertaining to the functioning of both the Cantonal Government and the budget, the functioning of the Canton itself. However, the OHR cannot ensure the financial resources and revenues for the canton - this is something the responsibility for which lies with the Government. They are obliged to do that the best way they can. True, the current situation is very, very grave and we hope there will be enough reasonable elements on all sides that will realise which direction the social crisis is heading to.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): The letter by the Cantonal leaders, Messrs. Coric and Macic, addressed to the OHR reads that the FBiH Government promised to rehabilitate the Cantonal budget once the unified Cantonal budget is adopted. Mr. Dziho even reminded that the IC / OHR has labelled the adopted budget as a unified one although the reality is different - the budget is being distributed to two components. So, what is the OHR position - is this a truly unified budget? The Trade Unions from the part of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton with Bosniak majority have

also turned to the OHR asking for assistance in overcoming the current situation, what is the OHR competence, can the OHR make the Federation leading officials to ensure the money? How can the OHR get involved?

A: Avis Benes: Of course, apart from only asking for help from the other side, there is also the option that the cantonal officials perhaps also try to rationalise their business and do their best in the sense of a better collection of revenues. The OHR fully supports quality and constructive relations between the Canton and the FBiH Government, such relations are necessary. We hope they will be fruitful. As for the unified budget, the information we have is that revenues flow into a single account and that the payments to all the budget beneficiaries are going to be made from there.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): I have a question for SFOR. For four months now there has been no response on who is responsible for the Mostar mortars caches. Also, the RS authorities last night very indolently reacted to the news on the weapons sent from Bijeljina to Iraq. Do you think that this "hold at gunshot" is a spite, a challenge to SFOR? What position will SFOR take with regard to this?

A: Major de Lambert: As far as I know and as I read yesterday in the newspapers that the Government will present the results of its own enquiry yesterday of maybe today. What I also read, SFOR should be in close contact with them on the issue. On the Division level here, we are absolutely not related to this issue. Maybe SFOR HQ in Sarajevo could give you more information.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): But Mostar mortar cache, is that spite and a challenge?

A: Major de Lambert: No, I do not think so.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): The Islamic Community from Trebinje has sent an open letter and has also addressed it to the OHR sharply condemning and accusing the IC of allegedly having helped the RS authorities in obstructing the reconstruction of the Trebinje mosque. The RS ministry of Urban Planning has issued the reconstruction permit but under very specific conditions, such as the archaeological research. They have also accused the IC of having done nothing to protect the returnees to Trebinje. Also, the trial in the case of last year's riots that occurred during the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the mosque is about to continue on 13 September. Could you comment?

A: Avis Benes: I do not think there is any need to justify the work of the IC as the results speak for themselves. As for the mosque reconstruction, it is well known that the implementation of Annex 8 of the DPA is one of the OHR priorities, including the cases of the reconstruction of the Osman-pasha's mosque in Trebinje and Ferhadija in Banja Luka. These have been cases of particular concern of the OHR. If you remember last years' events, the fact that lives of some of our staff were endangered in relation to the reconstruction of the mosque also speaks for itself. As for the Trebinje mosque itself, there have been amendments made to the RS Law on Urban Planning in order to facilitate the process - i.e. not just the reconstruction of this facility, but the entire process in general. As it is known, the Urban Planning Ministry on August 14 issued the permit which fully ensures the Trebinje mosque reconstruction. The most important thing is that from the legal point of view, there are no obstacles to immediately start the reconstruction process of the Osman-pasha's mosque and the OHR fully supports its reconstruction.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Are any of the amendments disputable?

A: Avis Benes: There are certain speculations on the possibility, but what is certain and what matters is that the OHR will attentively continue to monitor the process and will not tolerate any obstructions. The most constructive thing to do would be to direct the energy on the very mosque reconstruction process, that being the main objective.