Crime Situation in Sarajevo

At the moment, the criminal suspect Ramiz Delalic, nicknamed “Celo,” is in detention in Sarajevo, following an alleged attack on a policeman last Saturday. On being pulled over during a police traffic control, he reportedly hit the policeman with his car and then brutally threatened him and other people.

There are numerous pending criminal charges against Delalic, for which he has never been prosecuted. They include murder, robbery, theft and violent assaults since 1990. One of the more prominent crimes of which Delalic is accused of is a murder during a Serb Orthodox wedding celebration in 1992. Many cases had to be dropped after witnesses were beaten, intimidated and threatened and withdrew their testimonies.

The OHR and the UNMIBH strongly believe that for too long the organized crime situation in Sarajevo has been ignored. This is an opportunity to start dealing with it and hold suspects such as Delalic responsible. We call on the authorities at all levels to fulfill their obligations toward the public by aggressively rooting out crime and vigorously prosecuting all who break the law, even those with political connections. We also appeal on them to protect witnesses who offer to testify.

There is a need to firmly establish the rule of law in this city to make it a safe environment for all its citizens and to encourage returns. The fact that criminal suspects are not being prosecuted is contrary to the principle of law and order and the Dayton Peace Accords.

The UNMIBH has informed the Cantonal Minister of Justice that it will closely monitor the investigation and prosecution of Delalic, while the OHR has conducted talks with other Cantonal officials and offered its assistance. The OHR and the UNMIBH expect the investigation and prosecution to be conducted

seriously and rigorously. We also urge the Federation to urgently pass witness anonymity and protection laws to guarantee that citizens can safely and freely testify in major organized crime cases.