

Interview: Raffi Gregorian, Principal Deputy High Representative: “There Will Be State and Local Police Forces Only”



The Directorate's Report provides a good basis for discussion and agreement – it is unclear what RS leaders mean when they say that Entity Police must remain

The second most senior ranked official of the Office of the High Representative and experienced American diplomat, Raffi Gregorian, believes that the BiH politicians' readiness to engage in police reform is a very important factor.

“I believe all of them want a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). To achieve this it is necessary to negotiate. To reject negotiations would simply be unacceptable. During the defence reform, on which I worked very intensively, we had discussions all the time. It is time now to discuss this reform too because there are some issues that Police Reform Directorate cannot resolve”, says Gregorian in the interview to the *Dnevni Avaz*.

Political Decisions

Dnevni avaz: Which issues?

Raffi Gregorian: Political decisions are required on the Law; when will the Law on Police of BiH be enacted, what will it contain, where will the Police headquarters be, where will the support services be located, how fast will the transfer of powers from the Entity and Cantonal level to the State level be carried out...

Dnevni avaz: What about the existence of lower level police structures, particularly the police at the Entity and Cantonal level?

Raffi Gregorian: The Report refers to so-called 'local' police areas. The Report contains criteria for their establishment and their size. What I am clear about, what I'm explaining to everybody, is that the status quo has to change.

So when RS leaders say that the RS Police has to remain then I do not know what that means. It is clear that policing will be at the State level and local police bodies below that. It is less important what these local bodies are going to be called. The status quo will not remain. The current RS Police will not stay and the same goes for the status quo. What the structures will be called once the status quo changes is less important.

We did a similar thing in the defence reform – there are three ethnic regiments but they are a part of greater structure which is at the State level.

Dnevni avaz: Are you afraid of the rhetoric that is increasingly becoming louder although the negotiations have not started yet?

Raffi Gregorian: Not really. It is the usual position taking exercise that happens before the beginning of negotiations. As far as I am aware, the negotiations should take place on Friday. We from the international community will be there to assist and assess whether or not an agreement complies with the three EU principles.

Karadzic Must Go to the Hague

Raffi Gregorian: I am glad international and local structures have taken action against war crime indictees and their support networks. This is the result of discussions we have had with the BiH authorities. They are now starting to use the legal instruments available to them. This will intensify and it will not stop until the war crime indictees end up in the Hague. OHR and I will ensure that this happens. The pressure will be constantly increasing.

We know that Radovan Karadzic supports his family financially. I cannot go into details, but we know that for sure. I can say that they were receiving money last year too. We believe Karadzic is in the region, the Chief Prosecutor believes he is not in BiH, but his family is at the centre of his support network and that is the reason why they are on the lists. They have contacts with him, they get money from him, they help him – perhaps even meet with him. Several months ago Karadzic's wife asked him to surrender, his son was arrested, they promised to help, but they lied.

So the pressure to have Karadzic brought to justice in the Hague will not go away until he either goes there or is declared dead.

Dnevni avaz: Prime Minister Dodik said that if forced to choose between the EU and the RS Police he would choose the RS Police. Have the negotiations failed before they even began?

Raffi Gregorian: I do not think so. What does the RS Police actually mean? One or more local police areas within state police structures. What you call them is less important than the way in which they are organized and who commands them. The Police Budget will be at the State level; legislation will be at the State level; and the State Parliament and the Council of Ministers will have the oversight.

The Directorate's Report is a good basis for further discussion and agreement. There are lot of things that still have to be done, so this reform will last anywhere between three to five years. If the agreement is reached by 2 March the SAA process will be opened, but there are still a lot of things that have to be done.

Rejecting Negotiations

Dnevni avaz: There concerns that some Sarajevo-based political parties may reject the negotiations?

Raffi Gregorian: Well, some of those parties had said that there is no need to negotiate and that they would refuse to participate. Such a development at this point would be a huge mistake and the people who voted for those parties would be entitled to ask why somebody does not even want to discuss something that will result in a SAA for the country. A lot of effort has been invested in this reform, it is now time to start its implementation. Any time wasted would not bring anything good to BiH. If the BiH authorities fail to meet the deadlines agreed would mean means at least one more year would be wasted.

Dnevni avaz: You have spoken will all political leaders in BiH about this. What is the most likely scenario – that the agreement will be reached or that there will be no agreement?

Raffi Gregorian: Well, they want to open the SAA process. There are a number of things that have to be done afterwards, but with agreement the whole process will proceed much more quickly and without complication. All European police forces have to deal with reform. BiH cannot be an exception.