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BiH State-related Issue

OHR and BiH Council of Ministers sign a Memorandum of Understanding on payment of social contributions for OHR local staff

The High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch and BiH Council of Ministers Chairman Zlatko Lagumdzija signed on Wednesday a Memorandum of Understanding on the payment of social contributions for the OHR local staff. "This is a sign of cooperation and partnership between the local authorities and the international organizations in finding practical solutions for the benefit of the BiH citizens," Petritsch said following the ceremony. (all three Sarajevo and both Banja Luka dailies reported on the ceremony)

SDP says talks are being held with RS political parties on the election law

Vice-president of the BiH Social-Democratic Party Ivo Komsic stated that the talks were being held on the draft election law with the Republika Srpska political parties that supported the ruling Alliance for Changes. Komsic also said at a press conference on Wednesday in Sarajevo that the Hague Tribunal's

request was expected for the documents related to the work of the wartime BiH Presidency to be submitted. Oslobodjenje reports that this request has already revealed certain irregularities in the Presidency's work, such as a fact that seven politicians, who were members of the body in the period, had never been officially employed as such.

BiH Council of Ministers to meet on Thursday

The BiH Council of Ministers is scheduled to meet on Thursday and discuss the draft law on civil service, as well as the activities related to establishing a single BiH security policy.

Radisic emphasizes BiH charges against Yugoslavia not pressed by a Dayton state institution

Serb member of the BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic warned on Wednesday that the

statements of certain Bosniak officials concerning the charge brought by the wartime Republic of BiH before the International Court of Justice in The Hague against Yugoslavia do not reflect the position of the entire BiH Presidency. He added that the charges were not pressed by the Presidency of the Dayton's BiH, so that the proceedings might be considered invalid.

Federation

Bicakcic and Covic give their testimonies to Sarajevo Canton investigating judge

An initial hearing of former BiH Federation Prime Minister Edhem Bicakcic and his deputy Dragan Covic took place on Wednesday in Sarajevo. The Sarajevo Canton Court investigating judge, Vladimir Spoljaric, heard the two former senior officials behind the close door. The investigation against

Bicakcic and Covic was launched on the basis of reasonable doubt they had abused the offices through illegal financial transactions.

A hearing of Luzanski postponed for September

A hearing of former BiH Federation President and senior Croat National Assembly (HNS) official Ivo Andric Luzanski before the Sarajevo Canton Court, scheduled for Wednesday, was postponed for September this year, due to a Catholic religious holiday he was celebrating on the day. The Sarajevo Canton Prosecution Office requested an investigation against Luzanski and six other HNS officials under a suspicion they had jeopardized BiH territorial integrity. Not a singe hearing took place so far since Miroslav Prce, former BiH Federation Defense Minister, had informed the Court he was on annual leave, as Dragan Curcic and Zdravko Batinic did not appear before the Court as scheduled. Petar Milic did not accept the Court summon at all, as the summons were not delivered to Ante Jelavic and Marko Tokic because their addresses were unknown.

Suspended Hercegovacka Banka employees receive five average Federation salaries

Vecernji List says that the suspended employees of Hercegovacka Banka received from the Bank's Provisional Administration five Federation average salaries. Most of the employees believe that this is the last money they will receive from the Bank because the Provisional Administration announced that it will dismiss the employees.

***Slobodna Dalmacija:* Assumption of the Virgin Mary commemorated in Komusina** (provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija reads that a few thousand people yesterday gathered in Komusina, one of the most famous shrines of the Virgin Mary in BiH, on the occasion of the Assumption.

Cardinal Vinko Puljic was saying the mass and asked for the

Virgin Mary's blessing for the whole of Vrhbosna Diocese, and primarily for the war wounds to be healed and for return and existence. He referred to what he called a disagreeable political situation and wished that it be resolved as soon as possible so that the prospect of equality and existence in BiH can truly be opened. Also, he appealed for trust, forgiveness, and reconciliation with the others in this region.

Slobodna Dalmacija: **Kukic says charges to be pressed against HPT Mostar director** (provided by OHR Mostar)

In an interview for Slobodna Dalmacija, Slavo Kukic, the newly appointed Chair of the HPT Mostar Steering Board, said that the Cantonal Court in Mostar has not registered the signature of HPT Mostar Acting Director although the Federation Supreme Court overruled the appeal that the three Croat-majority municipalities in Mostar filed against the Federation Ministry of Traffic and Communications.

He stated that a lady judge at the Cantonal Court in Mostar informed him on Monday that she took into account the Supreme Court ruling, but still could not go ahead with the registration because the three Croat-majority municipalities filed another appeal against the decision of appointing a new HPT Steering Board, this time with Mostar Municipal Court II.

Kukic said it is now more than obvious that the HDZ leaders are using the institution of Cantonal Court in Mostar as a defensive instrument. In his words, it is as obvious that the Court is not acting as an institution of the state of law, but rather as a classic partisan affiliate.

Kukic said: "We are now forced to wait for the ruling of this judicial instance and after that I believe that everything will be done and over with, at least judging by the talk I had with the lady judge at the Cantonal Court in Mostar today. Also, today we are going to file an appeal with the OHR's International Judicial Commission against the work of the

Cantonal Court and the judge working on this case and the same appeal we will file with the Federation Supreme Court. That is all we can do in this moment."

Kukic said he knows HPT Mostar Director Marinko Gilja in person and is sorry that Gilja let himself be used as an instrument in the opposition to the processes that cannot possibly be stopped. Since the interests of the company and legality of its business operations must be protected, "we will have to press a number of criminal charges against Mr. Gilja in the next few days," said Kukic.

Vecernji List: Izetbegovic knew about Grabovica

Written by Ilko Barbaric (provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List reads that the arrest of Ramiz Delalic Celo, one of the BiH Army war commanders, sheds a new light on the numerous war crimes that Bosniaks committed against Croats in BiH, especially the crime in the village of Grabovica where 32 persons of Croat nationality, mostly women, children and elderly persons, were murdered on September 9, 1993.

The paper says that former BiH Army Commander Sefer Halilovic addressed a letter to Alija Izetbegovic in May of 1995, in which he claimed that the perpetrators of the massacre of 33 Croats in the village of Uzdol had not been identified and that army units from the territory of Sarajevo were responsible for the cases of Uzdol and Grabovica.

In the letter, Halilovic claimed that the operation titled 'Neretva 93' started on September 9, 1993, and that it was the zone of responsibility of the members of the special unit 'Zulfikar,' commanded by the controversial Zulfikar Alispago Zuka.

A source of Vecernji List said that Alispago was in Turkey before the war, that he was very close to the US intelligence services and that the ICTY investigators, while inquiring into

the crimes against Croats in the Neretva Valley, evaded investigating into Alispago's actions but laid the blame on Delalic instead.

At length, Vecernji List says that the Hague Tribunal investigators were deliberately deceived and misinformed of the Grabovica crime because all the crime leads point to the very top – Ganic, Silajdzic, Izetbegovic and others.

Republika Srpska

A senior RS Army officer surrender to the Hague Tribunal

Republika Srpska Army Lieutenant-Colonel Dragan Jokic voluntarily surrendered to the representatives of the Hague Tribunal in Banja Luka on Wednesday. A sealed indictment against Jokic related to war crimes committed in eastern BiH, including the 1995 massacre of up to 8,000 Bosniak men and boys in the United Nations "safe area" of Srebrenica. Republika Srpska Defense Minister Slobodan Bilic said the entity Government was informed about the surrender of the 43-year-old Jokic, who served in the engineering headquarters of the Bosnian Serb army's Fifth Corps after the war, by his lawyer. "This act was motivated exclusively by Mr Jokic's personal beliefs and in no way has the military organization or the defense ministry been involved,"

Bilic said at a government news conference. He added that the RS Government, which is under pressure to cooperate with the Tribunal and start detaining war crimes suspects, welcomed Jokic's surrender as it prevented "another illegal and unbalanced use of force" by peace-keepers.

***Reuters:* Another senior RS Army officer pleads not guilty to genocide**

A Republika Srpska Army colonel on Thursday pleaded not guilty to charges of genocide and crimes against humanity for his

alleged role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. Vidoje Blagojevic, who commanded an infantry and engineering brigade in the wartime RS Army Drina Corps, denied responsibility for the execution of thousands of Bosniak men captured after the United Nations “safe area” fell to Serb forces in July 1995.

RS Government held session on Wednesday

ONASA reported that the Republika Srpska Government had on its Wednesday session approved 50,000 KM for the funding of the RS office for cooperation with the Hague Tribunal in Banja Luka. According to the Banja Luka dailies, RS Agriculture Minister Rajko Latinovic stated at a press conference held after the session that damage caused by the floods in the RS was assessed up to 60 million KM, out of which 49 million related to sector of agriculture.

Construction in Kotorsko continues

Although the Doboj municipal authorities have issued an order for the stoppage of the construction of houses on the disputed land in Kotorsko claimed by Bosniaks, Serb refugees, who do not want to return to the Federation, are continuing the works. According to Ilija Maticic, the Serb representative, the land was allocated in a legal way and with the OHR permission of December 4 last year. He added that, if the construction works are stopped, the Serbs would organize a protest to demand final resolution of their housing problems.

RS Interior Ministry brings 3,800 war-crime charges against Bosniaks and Croats

The Republika Srpska Ministry of Interior (MUP) brought before prosecutor’s offices in the RS approximately 3,800 charges against the Bosniaks and the Croats for crimes committed against the Bosnian Serbs during 1992-95 Bosnia war, ONASA reported. The charges were also forwarded to the Hague-based International War Crimes Tribunal, stated former RS Assistant Justice Minister and former RS Liaison Officer in the Tribunal

Goran Neskovic in an interview with the Nezavisne Novine.

Investigation continues into the May 7 violence in Banja Luka

Nezavisne Novine reports that a continued investigation into the May 7 violence in Banja Luka, which occurred during the first attempt to lay cornerstone for the town's Ferhadija mosque, has resulted in three more charges pressed by the Public Security Center (PSC). This puts a total number of pressed charges related to the violence to 24, said Alun Roberts, the UN/IPTF spokesman for the Banja Luka and Bihac regions. Roberts added that the UN mission was not satisfied with the pace of the investigation but that it was making progress.

International Community

OHR calls on journalists who wrote that United States would change its BiH policy to now deny their allegations

At the Wednesday's press conference in Mostar, Spokesperson for the OHR South Avis Benes quoted Deputy US Ambassador to BiH Christopher Hoh as saying that his country would not change its political stands towards BiH. She called on journalists who had been writing that the US congressmen would investigate into the work of the High Representative to now deny their allegations. Benes said that the High Representative's press conference on the occasion of the second anniversary of his mandate, scheduled for Thursday in Sarajevo, would be an opportunity for certain journalists who were writing much about his work to ask him directly what they want.

UN launches campaign to promote BiH State Border Service

The campaign aimed at promoting the work and strengthening the position of the border service was officially opened on Wednesday in the UN Mission building in Sarajevo. Head of the

UN Mission in UN Jacques Klein stressed the importance of the service in the protection of BiH borders, warning that BiH loses some 500 million marks of revenues every year because of the organized crime and unprotected borders.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje editorials

Zija Dizdarevic wrote in the Oslobodjenje In Focus column about the Hague Tribunal's request for submission of documents related to the work of the wartime BiH Presidency, as Gojko Beric comments on the Alliance for Changes failures with a special attention paid to the work of the BiH judicial institutions.

Nezavisne Novine: A road towards Izetbegovic

Author of the Nezavisne Novine editorial Nenad Kecmanovic writes that a request of The Hague Tribunal addressed to the BiH Presidency asking for transcripts of all Presidency sessions in the period from 1990 to the end of the war is not just a coincidence. Kecmanovic links it with the recent apprehension of three senior Bosniak military officers by the ICTY and Rasim Delalic-Celo. He is wondering if all these events could lead to the indictment against the Bosniak wartime leader Alija Izetbegovic.

Vjesnik: Petritsch's bodyguard beats up teenagers in Sarajevo

Written by Alenko Zornija (provided by OHR Mostar)

In the article with the above headline, Vjesnik first reports that the OHR will start paying social contributions for its national staff and comments that the OHR is the leading international organization in the country and that other organizations should follow the example. In addition, Zornija says since the salaries of the national staff employed with

the international organizations are higher than the average salaries in the country, the payment of contributions should reflect largely on the filling of the chronically empty funds because international organizations employ a total of several thousand national staff members.

A little further in the article, Zornija says: “The term ‘appropriate’ (contributions; referring to the OHR statement that ‘appropriate social contributions’ will be paid) does not fulfill the expectations of the local authorities because the contributions will be calculated on the basis of the average entity salary and not on the basis of the employees’ real monthly incomes. Still, even that much is significant for the new BiH administration, even more so because there have been a few conflicts between the Government and the OHR regarding the license for the third GSM operator and the CIPS project. The Alliance for Changes finds it important to change the previously bad relations between the domestic and international authorities and replace the open protectorate with an at least ostensible partnership. The goal is to show the public that international officials in BiH cannot do whatever they please.

In this context, it will be interesting to see the outcome of another bizarre case. Last weekend, a bodyguard employed with Petritsch’s Office brutally beat up a group of teenagers who were celebrating a birthday in a private residential unit. He was bothered by the loud music that the girls and boys would not turn down and when they invited him to join them, he took it as a provocation and started threatening them with a gun and beating them.

The local authorities want to prosecute him for the threats with firearms and infliction of heavy injuries, but the bully is referring to the immunity he has as an international organization employee.

The way things are now, Petritsch’s Office will not be

insisting on his immunity because they do not want to make their public image even worse," concludes the article.