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BiH State-related Issues

LDS asks the High Representative to arrange for the abolishment of visa regime for BiH citizens

Liberal Democratic Party asked, once again, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to deliver on his earlier promise and arrange the abolishment of visa requirements for BiH citizens traveling abroad. The vice president of LDS, Hamid Custovic, told a press conference yesterday that a segment of BiH population with only BiH passports is being discriminated against and virtually "lives in an apartheid society." "BiH citizens did not deserve such a treatments by Europe they have now, especially because our country has fulfilled all requirements and accepted the realization of the CIPS project, which will resolve all problems connected with identification of citizens," said Custovic, asking the High Representative to appeal to the International Community to abolish the visa regime for BiH citizens. (Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje carry the report)

Presidency, CoM warns against delay in implementing international commitments

The BiH Presidency members and the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Dragan Mikerevic, agreed in Sarajevo on Monday that BiH's commitments from the "road map" were clear and must

be implemented on time, especially the legislative projects and those connected with the country's forthcoming formal admission to the Council of Europe. "Throughout April, BiH institutions must make decisive efforts to adopt this year's budget, otherwise we shall have to face a blockade of vital state functions," the Presidency says in a statement following the meeting of Beriz Belkic, Jozo Krizanovic and Zivko Radisic with the BiH Council of Ministers chairman, reports BiH Radio 1.

Dragan Mikerevic: CIPS project depends on adoption of budget

During Monday's meeting with members of the BIH Presidency, the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Dragan Mikerevic, stressed that it was necessary to adopt the state budget for 2002 in the shortest possible period in order to start the implementation of the CIPS (Citizens Identity Protection System) project worth over 33 million KM. "We will not have a source for its financing unless we adopt the budget," said Mikerevic, adding that the only way around this problem is to pass a law on financing of the project and to send it through the parliamentary procedure. "However, at this time, we presume that such a project would never get the necessary support," said Mikerevic, urging once again the adoption of the State budget.

Constitutional Reform

Deputy BiH House of Peoples Speaker voices misgivings about constitutional changes

Deputy Speaker of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly House of Peoples Nikola Spiric said on Monday that the negotiators from the RS had to defend the democratic principle that election results were the only criteria during the formation of government in the RS, and that the agreement signed in

Sarajevo ought to be the end of the demands by the international community and Federation representatives as far as constitutional changes were concerned. "The harmonization of entity constitutions with the constitution of BiH, and the partial signing of the agreement between some political representatives at the OHR in Sarajevo contradict the outcome of the 1991 census and lead towards the abolition of the RS," he told journalists, SRNA reports. Spiric added that these claims were confirmed by the recent statements made by the Federation president, Safet Halilovic, who said that the agreement "is a solid foundation for further constitutional reform in BiH, after which the demand for changing the names of entities and their abolition will follow". Spiric also said that the purpose of the Thursday agreement is to cement divisions in BiH and added that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, "would like to finish the story about the entities and enable his successor Paddy Ashdown to develop BiH the way he sees fit, that is, as a civic state where entities are not mentioned as a solution."

Commenting on the Friday decision by the High Representative, which stipulates that officials who have been dismissed may not put themselves forward as candidates in the next BiH elections, Spiric said that this decision goes against all European standards and that the decision was made "in order to free certain posts for certain people earmarked by the international community".

Party for BiH: We can no longer preserve Karadzic's constitution

In a statement for Dnevni Avaz, the chairman of the presidency of Party for BiH, Safet Halilovic, expressed hope that the entity parliaments will by April 10 adopt constitutional changes agreed by political parties in the OHR last Wednesday. Halilovic said that the alternative would be highly undesirable. "If the constitutional changes are not adopted in

both entities, the present foundation of the RS – Karadzic's 1992 constitution – will be preserved," said Halilovic, adding that he hopes that SDA and HDZ representatives will demonstrate enough political maturity and vote for the further development of multiethnic society in BiH. "It is better to adopt constitutional changes delineated in the agreement reached in the OHR, then keep indefinitely the status quo created on the project designed by Radovan Karadzic," Halilovic stressed, and added that the High Representative should intervene if there is any obstruction in the process of adoption of constitutional changes in the entities.

SDP: Agreement on constitutional changes must be implemented fully and without alternations of its content

The vice-president of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Slobodan Popovic, said on Monday that the agreement on constitutional changes must be implemented literally, without any changes to its content, as soon as possible, reports ONASA news agency. Popovic said that ambassadors of the Contact Group had recently warned Serb representatives that the agreement must be implemented, adding that he hoped Serb deputies in the RS Assembly would have "enough wisdom and responsibility to implement constitutional reforms without mentioning a referendum." "This is a very important moment for BiH and its peoples, when finally we are taking off the agenda the issue of a rule that the nationalist parties had taken for themselves, that they are the only ones who have the right to discuss the national interests of the people they allegedly represent," Popovic said.

Croatian ambassador calls HDZ to sign the agreement on constitutional changes in BiH

Addressing BiH Croat officials in Mostar on Monday, the Croatian ambassador to BiH, Josip Vrbosic, called HDZ

representatives to sign the agreement on constitutional changes reached in the OHR last Wednesday. "This is certainly a painful compromise, but still, the agreement provides a good basis for gradual overcoming of antagonism and opens a European perspective for BiH," FENA quotes Vrbosic as saying. He added that he also finds certain parts of the agreement complicated and unclear, however, stressed that it reflects the present situation and reality on the ground.

HDZ: There will be no major corrections in amendments of Agreement

In an interview with Dnevni List, the Vice President of HDZ, Barisa Colak, said that the Agreement on the constitutional changes threatens to turn Croats into a national minority. He also added that Kresimir Zubak (NHI) broke the agreement on principles of Croat political parties reached before Bishops' Conference in Stup, near Sarajevo. If the whole process goes in direction that harms Croats, Colak said that HDZ would look for a solution that will be supported by a majority of Croat political parties in BiH and Catholic Church. Talking about possibility of imposing the solution by the High Representative, Colak stated his impression that Wolfgang Petritsch wanted the agreement at any cost, regardless of its quality, justifying it with the integration to Europe.

BiH Election Commission urges state institutions to implement the Constitutional Court ruling on constituent status of peoples in BiH by April 18

The president of the BiH Election Commission, Lidija Korac, urged on Monday all state institutions to promptly implement the BiH Constitutional Court decision on constituent status of all peoples in BiH in order to fill the gaps in the BiH Election Law, Korac stressed that all constitutional changes need to be implemented by April 17 and reflected in the Election Law by the following day, when the Commission is

scheduled to announce the exact date of October elections.

Political parties in the RS to take positions on constitutional changes by Thursday

SRNA news agency reports that RS political parties are to take final positions on the forthcoming constitutional changes in the entity by Thursday when the session of the RS National Assembly is scheduled to start. Agency notes that all political parties are to hold meeting of their main boards and agree on their individual positions about the agreement on constitutional changes signed last Wednesday in the OHR in Sarajevo before the beginning of the important session which will make a final decision on the document.

Serb Radical Party claims constitutional changes to destroy the RS

The Secretary General of SRS, Ognjen Tadic, said at a press conference held on Monday in Banja Luka that the Agreement on constitutional changes represented an attempt to completely destroy the RS. According to Glas srpski, Tadic warned that the Agreement would cause new crisis and political conflicts and that it clearly showed that there were international organizations who do not see the Dayton agreement as necessary for preservation of peace in BiH.

Representatives of 'others' on Agreement on constitutional changes

The representatives of national minorities or 'others' in the RS see that the Agreement on constitutional changes does not meet basic European standards of democracy. This especially refers to the Constitutions of BiH and BiH Federation, in which the national minorities were excluded from the structures of power, to which the leaders of Alliance for Change, Zlatko Lagumdžija and New Croatian Initiative, Kresimir Zubak, contributed to a great extent. Member of the

BiH Constitutional Commission and Professor at the Banja Luka Law Faculty, Branko Morait, said that the Agreement was non democratic and anti-European. Glas srpski quotes Morait as saying that the agreement "pushes the national minorities on margins."

Federation

Minister says army demobilization delayed

The process of dismissal of members of the Federation Army who after three rounds of consultations volunteered to leave the army's professional service was delayed despite being scheduled to start on Monday, report Federation media. About 8,000 soldiers decided to leave the armed forces with a severance pay amounting to 10,000 KM. It is envisaged that 10,000 soldiers should leave the army's professional service. Federation Deputy Minister of Defense Ferid Buljubasic confirmed yesterday that the campaign to dismiss soldiers from the Federation Army has not started yet. "We are waiting for the parliament to pass a decision on Wednesday [3 April] outlining the Federation government's obligations and to adopt a programme of care for demobilized soldiers. Activities currently being carried out by Federation Army joint command and units are of a preparatory nature and are designed to make demobilization as organized as possible, but only once the parliament passes and adopts the above decisions," Buljubasic explained.

Republika Srpska

SFOR arrests a former Bosnian Serb officer over Srebrenica massacre

SFOR troops arrested on Monday a former Bosnian Serb military

officer indicted by the ICTY over the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. In a statement for the press, SFOR spokesman confirmed that Momir Nikolic, accused of genocide, forcible transfer and inhumane acts as crimes against humanity and murder as a violation of the laws or customs of war was detained by SFOR soldiers on Monday morning in Bratunac, near Srebrenica. RS Ministry of Interior said it did not participate in nor it was informed about the arrest of Nikolic.

NATO Secretary-General George Robertson welcomed the arrest, which he said passed off without casualties. "Let today's detention serve as a warning. There will be no hiding place for anyone accused by the tribunal of these horrific crimes... you have only two choices: turn yourself in with dignity or justice will be brought to you," Robinson said. (Top story in nearly all media in BiH)

RS war crimes suspects ignore government ultimatum

Some 20 Bosnian Serbs wanted for trial in The Hague for war crimes have ignored a government ultimatum to turn themselves in or lose assistance once they face trial. Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Ratko Mladic top the list of wanted men. The RS government earlier gave the indictees until March 31 to surrender, saying that failure to do so would mean that authorities would not offer guarantees for them to enjoy provisional release. "None of the Bosnian Serbs indicted for war crimes have contacted the government of Republika Srpska to turn themselves in," said Dejan Miletic, the RS official responsible for relations with the war crimes tribunal. Speaking for the Federation Television last night Miletic said that Bosnian Serbs who turn themselves in or are arrested will not get assistance from the government.

Mirko Banjac leaves SDS, forms a new political party

SRNA news agency reported that a senior official in the SDS, Mirko Banjac left the SDS today and decided to form a new party called Alliance for Peoples Revival, that would gather several political parties from RS. According to Banjac, three political parties already joined in and talks are ongoing with few more parties and individuals. Banjac refused to provide any details or say the names of the parties in question. He also added that the drafts of the Statute and the program of the alliance were created and that the inaugural session would be organized when the final drafts are made.

International Community

CoE Committee of Ministers chairman to visit BiH

Chairman of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Atanas Valionis will visit BiH from April 2 to 5, the BiH Foreign Ministry said in a statement, carried by ONASA. Valionis, who wants to get acquainted with the political situation in the country ahead its accession to the Council of Europe, will meet with members of the BiH Presidency, BiH Council of Ministers, as well as with the Collegium of both Houses of the BiH Parliament and entity officials, High Representative to BiH and political parties' representatives, and is to visit the Lithuanian troops serving with the NATO-led Stabilization Force in Dobo.

SFOR: NATO worried about terrorists in BiH

International terrorist organisations such as Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network often travel through BiH and have associates in the Balkan country, the commander of the NATO force in BiH told a news conference on Tuesday. However, US General John Sylvester, commander of the NATO-led SFOR, said

it remained unclear whether they were planning attacks in BiH or using the country as a safe haven. "There are, of course, a number of international terrorist organisations, and individuals who are within those organisations, who periodically transit Bosnia and Hercegovina," Sylvester said, report news agencies. "In fact, there are international terrorist organisations which have individuals within BiH," he added. "What we have to determine is whether or not the individuals involved are here for the purpose of planning operations or are here for the purpose of something else, being supported, being provided documentation, seeking respite or whatever," Sylvester said.

AFP: Powell postpones decision on Yugoslav aid, US money stays frozen

US Secretary of State Colin Powell on Monday indefinitely postponed a decision to certify Yugoslavia's cooperation with a UN war crimes tribunal, a move that keeps millions of dollars in much-needed assistance to Belgrade frozen. Powell "has decided to defer a decision on whether the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has met the criteria," deputy State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said. "Although Yugoslavia has made significant progress with respect to the certification criteria, the secretary has determined that it would be premature to certify at this point," he said in a statement. "We have communicated our decision to Belgrade authorities and have reiterated to them our desire to see further progress on certifications issues."

About 40 million dollars in direct US aid plus Washington's support for multilateral loans to Belgrade from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank were at stake. The freeze does not, however, affect assistance for humanitarian or democratization projects.

Djindjic: First extradition on Tuesday or Wednesday

The first extraditions of Yugoslav citizens indicted for war crimes by The Hague tribunal should come on Tuesday or Wednesday, Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic told *Glas Javnosti* daily on Tuesday. "There still isn't any official information on when the extradition will begin. We expect that to be tomorrow or the day after," Djindjic said on Monday. "I must stress that the extradition to the tribunal are not in the jurisdiction of the Serbian but the federal government. When the persons, wanted by the ICTY, will be extradited depends primarily on the decision of Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica and his policies," Djindjic told the daily.

Headlines

Glas srpski

- In the settlement of Repovac, near Bratunac: SFOR arrested Momir Nikolic
- Collective centers in RS: less residents
- Lagumdzija took off his mask

Nezavisne novine

- Bad weather in Spain: five lives lost in the storm
- Five companies sold in Banja Luka: Mandic bought "Autorad" and Dusanic bought "Snabdjevac"
- BiH officials on the requests of US Congress: are the sanctions against RS introduced?
- Bratunac: war commander Momir Nikolic arrested

Oslobodjenje

- SFOR arrests Momir Nikolic

Dnevni Avaz

- Pensions for Invalids by the end of the week

Jutarnje Novine

- Lay off of soldiers began on Monday

Dnevni List

- Easter holidays in Stolac cannot be peaceful and dignified as holidays suggest: Who does not want that Stolac loses “a town case” syntagm
- Interview with Barisa Colak, Vice President of HDZ BiH, on Agreement on constitutional changes: There will be no major corrections in amendments to Agreement

Vecernji List

- Claude Jorda, President of ICTY, requests UN to decide on reimbursement: The Hague pays out innocent
- Incident in Stolac: Monument to defenders damaged
- After lifetime ban to Ante Jelavic not to be active in politics: HDZ sues Petritsch in Strasbourg