

BiH Media Round-up, 25/1/2002

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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Council of Ministers confirms ban on the road oil import from Croatia

According to Oslobodjenje, the BiH Council of Ministers confirmed on Thursday its decision of January 20 on the special road oil import regime with Croatia extending its validity for seven days in order to analyze all consequences of the disputed oil transport-related decision of the Croatian Government. On the other side, BiH Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Minister Azra Hadziahmetovic said following the session that the Council welcomed the Croatian Government's decision to eliminate a discriminatory provision from the regulation on the road oil transport through Croatia, as well

as its efforts to respect key objections made by the BiH Council of Ministers.

BiH Human Rights Ombudsman expresses serious concerns over the extradition of the Algerians

Oslobodjenje reports that the BiH Human Rights Ombudsman expressed serious concerns over the recent extradition of the "Algerian Group" describing the disregard for the Human Rights Chamber's order related to this matter as illegal, incorrect and even stupid. It is understandable, according to the Ombudsman, that the United States is impatient to collect all information related to the September 11 terrorist attacks and that the BiH authorities are prepared to provide all the assistance in this process. However, the Ombudsman emphasized that all such assistance must be made in accordance with the BiH Constitution and international conventions.

Representatives of the RS and BiH Federation political parties to meet on Mrakovica near Prijedor on Friday

Both Banja Luka dailies report that the representatives of the major political parties from the RS and BiH Federation will meet on Friday on the mountain of Mrakovica near Prijedor to discuss the constitutional changes. The papers quote PDP Spokesman Igor Crnadak as saying that the representatives of PDP (Party of Democratic Progress), SDS (Serb Democratic Party), SNSD (Party of Independent Social Democrats), SDP BiH (Social Democratic Party of BiH), SBiH (Party for BiH), SDA (Party of Democratic Action), HDZ BiH (Croat Democratic Union) and NHI (New Croatian Initiative) will meet on the Mrakovica mountain in order to discuss the constitutional changes. The participant agreed that none of the participants will not make any statements to the press.

OHR expects BiH local authorities to implement the Constitutional Court Decision

According to Dnevni Avaz, OHR Spokesman Kevin Sullivan told journalists in Sarajevo on Thursday that "it is up to the Entity parliaments to display the political maturity and skills which are required to implement the historic decision" of the BiH Constitutional Court related to the equal constitutional status of all three peoples in the entire country's territory. "This is not an option but a necessity. Intensive debate over coming weeks must produce practical proposals. It is not a question of what will happen if solutions are not found.. It's a question of which solutions will be found. It is very strange that two days after the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommended BiH accession to the Council the option of imposition is being mulled. The Council of Europe clearly expects BiH to be able to implement this important ruling. It should also be borne in mind that BiH is not yet a member of the Council. This decision still needs to be made by the Council's Committee of Ministers and it would be counterproductive if the local authorities fail to show a suitable sense of ownership," Sullivan said.

The Alliance for Change leaders meet with EU Ambassadors

According to Oslobodjenje, the economic reforms, the implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on the constituent peoples, and the respect for human rights and freedoms will be the main goals to be realized in the coming period by the BiH authorities at all levels led by the Alliance for Change. This was concluded at a Thursday's meeting of the Alliance leaders headed by GDS President Ibrahim Spahic and the EU countries Ambassadors to BiH headed by Spanish Ambassador Rafael Valle Garagorri.

Vecernji List: POLL – Serbs and Croats support entities, while Bosniaks support single BiH

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The public opinion poll was conducted among ordinary BiH Citizens of all three nationalities, from both entities. Out of 60 questioned persons there were 20 Bosniaks and 20 Croats from the Federation and 20 Serbs from the RS. The Serbs are the most satisfied with the present political situation- the current BiH organization (15 out of 20 of them) while only two Croats and 4 Bosniaks are satisfied with the Dayton BiH. While the most of Serbs (16 of them) believe that the DPA provisions are good and just, none Croat or Bosniak think so.

Out of 20 questioned Croats even 16 of them believe that each of constituent peoples should have its own Republic-entity, while two of them believe that the RS should be abolished and that we should have a single Republic of BiH. 17 out of 20 questioned Bosniaks believe that Serbs should not have got their own entity since BiH is divided because of it.

It is also interesting that three Bosniaks believe that each of the constituent peoples should have its own Republic-entity, and these entities should form the Federation.

Most of them (48 out of 60 questioned persons) believe that that the Annex 7 of the DPA is just, but that it is impossible to implement it because many people do not want to return and many of them will be waiting that the conditions for their return are met.

14 Croats, 11 Serbs and only three Bosniaks support a demilitarized BiH, that is, BiH without Army and weapon. 4 Croats, 3 Serbs and 2 Bosniaks support the Army with three components. 12 Bosniaks, one Croat and none of questioned Serbs support the idea on the joint Army.

As far as the Constitutional Court decision on constituency of

peoples is concerned, 55 out of 60 questioned persons believe that it is right, while 26 of the questioned persons are suspicious about the application of this decision in practice. 14 Serbs, 9 Croats and 3 Bosniaks do not believe that the application of this decision is possible.

Federation

BiH Federation Defense Minister meets with SFOR Commander

Oslobodjenje reports that BiH Federation Defense Minister Mijo Anic met with SFOR Commander in Sarajevo on Thursday to inform him on the process to reduce the number of soldiers in the entity. Anic said a first poll conducted among the BiH Federation Army members showed that approximately 5,000 of them were prepared to voluntarily leave military service if they were provided with an adequate financial support to help securing their future existence.

Jelavic again sends letter to Dizdarevic

According to Oslobodjenje and ONASA, the dismissed HDZ BiH President, Ante Jelavic, sent another letter to the President of the BiH Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Srdjan Dizdarevic, in which he welcomed the Committee's conclusion that the officials removed by the High Representative should have been provided with a right to lodge a complaint. Jelavic called on the Committee to once again consider decisions on the removal of 165 elected BiH Croat officials otherwise he would address the Strasbourg-based European Court for Human Rights and request the protection of the rights annulled by the will of the High Representative.

BiH Federation House of Peoples supports economic

policy measures for this year

At a session held in Sarajevo on Thursday, the BiH Federation House of Peoples supported the macro-economic vision of the entity development and the economic policy measures for 2002. The deputies also supported the measures to stimulate employment.

Misura illegally abolished the pensioner's solidarity fund

The director of the BiH Federation Pension-Invalid Fund, Bozo Misura, made a decision to stop collecting of the Entity pensioner's association membership fee through the pension checks. Since these funds fill the pensioner's solidarity fund and are aimed to support the most jeopardized association members, the association requested Misura to immediately abolish this decision.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Mostar Mayor Neven Tomic comments on the allegations that bodies of killed Bosniaks were buried at Vihovici waste dump

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija writes about the project of the sanitizing of the Vihovici waste dump and quotes the Mayor of Mostar, Neven Tomic, as saying that the project has been used for a political conflict within the Alliance and a political conflict in Mostar. He says the project was sitting in the drawers of the Federation Government for two years and could not make it to the list of priorities because there was an interest to re-direct the money for another purpose. Tomic says they started it up together with the German Government, since the arrangement refers to the write-off of the Paris debt, i.e. repayment of the BiH debt to Germany. Germany agreed to having 20% of this money re-invested in BiH, but projects that Germany endorses, and those are projects of

environment protection. The two projects that met the criterion are the mine strips in Vares and Vihovici. However, says Tomic, once the contract was signed, factions within the Alliance in Mostar started making complications. The Alliance parties entered the pre-election stage and are competing for Bosniak votes. Some of them wanted to show that they take more care of those missing Bosniaks than the SDP does. In his words, everyone is involved in the discussion about the project from the very beginning and besides, some people are not happy about the fact that the money is being invested in, conditionally speaking, the west part of Mostar because they immediately requested applying the parity principle in the east part.

World makes rules for us

Commenting on Mandic's removal, Tomic says there are always two sides to any event. "As far as we can see it, there was no reason for that (Mandic's removal), because there has been a progress return-wise, there has been a progress in terms of compliance with the High Representative's decisions. However, the international community has a different view of it and that is the major problem as far as Croats are concerned. We think the world abides by our rules. The world has its own rules they want to impose those rules on us. Their rule is: if he sends you two letters warning you about something, and you do nothing about it, he thinks you are disrespectful of him. He has the stick and he will not write a third letter, but will start looking for a way to impose sanctions against you.

He simply thinks: taxpayers from the world gave me the money to come here and help you and you do not even want to communicate with me. That, in my opinion, is the principal problem from the High Representative's point of view.

Therefore, their view is completely different, but it is a fact that they are here and have all the elements of a protector and we have to find a way of communication which

will allow us to make some results. We do realize we are most often in the right, but we cannot do it by ourselves, without our surrounding, and within this surrounding, the High Representative is the biggest rock on the way of realization of our plans. There are smaller rocks as well and those are the interests of Bosniaks, Serbs, etc.” said Tomic.

Republika Srpska

NATO delegation visits Banja Luka – Through partnership to Europe

“The BiH Constitution is a sufficient framework for joining the Partnership for Peace program, and the Dayton Peace Agreement is not an obstacle for regional integration. The RS has made a significant step forward when it comes to the re-organization of the armed forces, the acceptance of the standards that exist in other European armies, participation in peace operations and better coordination at the BiH level, said RS President, Mirko Sarovic after the yesterday’s meeting with the NATO delegation. Robert Serry, who headed the delegation told journalists after the meeting that he is glad that he heard from the representatives of both Entities, the RS and the BiH Federation, that, at the present level, the armed forces of both entities are not sustainable and that the re-organization of the armed forces of both entities has to be a priority. “The armed forces have to be smaller, more modern, under democratic control and organized in a way that they will not represent a threat to each other, but rather start working on a common goal. The strengthening of their joint coordination at the State level is something that should be worked on, because it is not possible for us in the Partnership for Peace program to make contacts with two Entities within one state. We should approach this goal by going step by step”, said Serry.

Sarovic says one should not think about establishment of a single army in BiH at this moment

The Republika Srpska President, Mirko Sarovic, said in an interview with the ONASA news agency (carried by Dnevni Avaz) that he welcomed the recommendation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly for the BiH's admission into the organisation. "I am convinced that the day will come when we will a majority of our sovereignty transfer on a large-scale community named Europe. I think this should be the final goal," Sarovic said. Asked whether the integration processes would result in the establishment of a single army in BiH, Sarovic said this should not be subject of consideration at the moment. "I do not know why some insist on this. RS has its own army and it will not give up the Entity authorities related to the sectors of defence and security," Sarovic emphasised. He also said that, according to his knowledge and information he was receiving from the authorised RS bodies, Karadzic and Mladic were not in the RS.

Nikola Spiric accused Zivko Radisic of doing nothing to protect interests of RS

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Both Banja Luka dailies report that Co-chair of the House of Peoples of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, Nikola Spiric accused BiH Presidency member, Zivko Radisic of doing nothing to protect interests of the RS and the Serb people in BiH. Spiric told a news conference that Radisic and the Serb representatives in the BiH Council of Ministers do not work in the interest of the RS and that there is a huge gap between them and the RS authorities. Spiric said that the debate on constitutional changes will not make any sense, regardless of its outcome, if some state-level laws, supported by the Serb representatives in BiH institutions, are passed. He also said

that some parties from the RS such as PDP and SNSD support the Alliance for change despite the fact that the Alliance has been working on destruction and elimination of the RS.

Post-war financial operations of RS Pension-Invalid Insurance Fund under investigation – Prosecutor is waiting for police

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas Srpski quotes Head of the Department for economic crime with the RS Interior Ministry, Stjepan Cemazar, as saying that the RS Interior Ministry will have preliminary results of the investigation about post-war financial operations of the RS Pension-Invalid Insurance Fund. Cemazar says that due to extensiveness of the case, the investigation could last several months. The paper quotes Deputy RS Public Prosecutor, Jovan Spajic, as saying that last year on October 31st, the Supervisory Board of the RS Pension-Invalid Insurance Fund submitted to the RS Public Prosecutor's Office its report on financial operations of the Fund. Two weeks later and after a thorough analysis, the RS Public Prosecutor's Office requested the RS Interior Ministry to launch an investigation. Spajic told the paper, that the Prosecutor's Office requested the Polic to investigate investments in construction and purchase of apartments in period between 1996 and 2000, allocation of funds and long-term loans to the Fund employees in Trebinje and Pale intended for construction of houses, purchase of business premises for the Fund in Skelani and Vlasenica, repair of roof on the Pensioners' House in Vlasenica and repair of roof on the building of the Fund in Banja Luka.

Letters with threats appeared again in Mrkonjic Grad

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Both Banja Luka dailies report that some respectable citizens

of Mrkonjic Grad (RS) and people who took part in the homeland war have started again, as it happened two years ago, to receive anonymous letters in which they are threatened that they would be arrested or killed for the crimes they had, allegedly, committed. "The time has come for you to pay for the crimes you had committed during the aggression, and especially the massacre in which you took part in the village of Oborci near Donji Vakuf on 13 September 1995. There are video tapes, photographs and at least 10 living witnesses. All evidence is prepared and in The Hague," the anonymous letters say. The citizens of Mrkonjic Grad are warned that they "will be arrested when they expect it least". "You will eat your just desserts. You will hear the witnesses, but you will not see them. You will be arrested or liquidated", the letters say. The letters, which all have the same text, come in blue or white envelopes with printed addresses. It has not been determined yet where they are posted from.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Bishop Komarica talks to Croatian Foreign Minister Picula – Very few people take care of Croats from Republic of Srpska

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Banja Luka Bishop Franjo Komarica on Wednesday talked to the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Croatia, Tonino Picula. On that occasion, Bishop Komarica informed Minister Picula about the status of the Croat population in the northwest Bosnia and Bosanska Posavina and the status of around 10,000 Croats who did not leave the Republic of Srpska during the war. He also spoke about the position of several dozens of Croat refugees who want to return to their homes. He told Minister Picula that he addressed the Croatian Government with requests for help on many occasions before, but unfortunately, "there are far more promises than there is help." Very few of the domestic or international officials take care of those people, said Bishop Komarica.

Minister Picula deplored the dramatic information and needs he was presented with and said he is not “a politician in BiH, or in the RS entity,” and that “politicians there must take care of their fellow citizens.” He also stated that the Croatian Government will try to do more for Croats in the RS, who are really in an unenviable position, through the Croatian Consulate General in Banja Luka.

International Community

The Council of Europe General Secretary to visit BiH

Secretary General of the Council of Europe (CoE) Walter Schwimmer told ONASA he expects a positive decision by the CoE's Committee of Ministers regarding BiH's possible membership in the association. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Tuesday recommended that the Committee of Ministers invite BiH to join the Council. The Assembly felt that BiH recognizes the principles of the rule of law and respect for human rights and that it is able and willing to continue democratic reforms to bring its legislation and practice globally into conformity with Council of Europe principles and standards. BiH was asked to honor an extensive set of commitments dealing specifically with constitutional, legislative and judicial reform, human rights and co-operation with the international community. On the basis of these commitments, the Assembly recommended that the Committee of Ministers invite BiH to join the Council. The monitoring of compliance with commitments should begin as from accession. The Committee of Ministers should redefine its priority areas for co-operation with BiH and should allot the necessary financial resources to them. Out of a total 112 votes, 105 were in favor, one was against and six abstained. Schwimmer will on February 6-7 visit BiH in order to remind the BiH authorities of the obligations BiH must meet after it

is welcomed in the CoE. He said the Committee of Ministers has never before refused the recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly, but he also reiterated that Croatia had waited six months for the final decision of this body, and that the process also lasted a long time for Azerbaijan and Armenia. Speaking about the so-called post-conditions that BiH must meet, Schwimmer said the Assembly next month will appoint members to the monitoring committee and reporters of the committee who will be monitoring the fulfillment of the conditions. He said the "most sensible" problem is the issue of armed force restructuring. However, Schwimmer said he was convinced it will be solved. ONASA unofficially learned that former reporter of the Committee for Political Matters of the Parliamentary Assembly, Laszlo Surjan, will be appointed as the reporter of the monitoring committee.

Petritsch sees new will to grab Karadzic and Mladic

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the top international official charged with bringing lasting peace to BiH said in an [interview with Reuters](#) on Thursday he detected a new determination among major powers to bring Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic to justice. Petritsch also urged local leaders to build on the Dayton agreement which ended the 1992-95 war and make greater efforts to turn Bosnia into a viable state rather than an international protectorate. Petritsch said that the arrest of Karadzic, charged with genocide by the United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague, was a key part of the process of drawing a line under the war and moving towards normality. (Dnevni Avaz and Jutarnje Novine carried the interview)

Spanish Ambassador to BiH says fact Karadzic and Mladic are still at large cannot be tolerated

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, Spanish ambassador to BiH Rafael Valle Garagori said that the European Union, whose

Presidency was being held by his country, has priorities in its relations towards BiH. "The rule of law is in the first place," Garagori emphasized adding that this included the reform of the police, judiciary as well as the return of refugees and the respect for human rights. It is not less important, according to the Spanish Ambassador, to apprehend the war criminals, particularly Karadzic and Mladic. "A fact they are still at large, six years after Dayton, cannot be tolerated," Gragori said. He emphasized that other priorities included the strengthening of the state institutions, economic development and creation of a single market in order to attract foreign investments.

US military presence in BiH not to be changed

According to Oslobodjenje, for now, there will be no change in the US military presence in BiH in the framework of the international Stabilization Forces (SFOR). This is a message from a letter US President George Bush sent to the Congress on the basis of his obligation to provide a semi-annual information on the prospects of the US-led peacekeeping mission in BiH.

Croatia lifts disputed oil transit ban

Croatia's government lifted a disputed ban on the road transport of oil derivatives on Thursday after protests by its neighbors Slovenia and BiH, threatening to retaliate by banning Croatian transits, Reuters reported. Croatia enforced the regulation banning the transport by road tankers of oil products such as gasoline, diesel fuel and heating oil on January 20, saying it was aiming to curb illegal sales. It said such products could only pass through its territory by ship, rail or pipeline to improve road safety and guard the environment. But Slovenia, which has a number of truckers carrying oil to BiH through Croatia, threatened to hit at Croatian trucks crossing its own territory. BiH, which is estimated to have bought some \$100 million worth of Croatian

oil products last year, said it would ban imports of crude and oil derivatives in return. Now the Zagreb government changed the regulation by allowing those oil transports along specific routes through Croatia as well as in and out of the country. It also imposed stricter customs control of road tankers and the transport documentation. "We want to win a battle against crime and protect the environment," Prime Minister Iвица Račan told a cabinet meeting. He said the move was not aimed at discriminating against anyone. "These measures refer to local and foreign companies alike, to transit, exports and imports," Račan said. Governments in Ljubljana and Sarajevo had protested to Zagreb over the ban through diplomatic channels and said they might report Croatia to international trade organizations.

The circle is tightening around Karadzic

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Nezavisne Novine quotes an anonymous source, close to the IC circles in Sarajevo, as saying that the US intelligence officers and Rangers know for sure the Radovan Karadzic's whereabouts and that they easily follow his moves and communication. The source also told the paper that the Americans identified the exact location of Karadzic after the false news about his arrest had been launched. "Though they assumed what might happen after the news had been launched, they were very surprised with the data they obtained. Intelligence officers and Rangers were very surprised with telephone trafficking that followed the news", said the source. He claims that calls from several RS politicians registered. The source also claims that the Americans made a some kind of deal not only with authorities of Montenegro but also with BiH authorities. "The US representatives in BiH made BiH authorities extradite the Algerian group and in return gave strong guarantees that Karadzic will soon be arrested, because 'otherwise, everything that was happening with the Algerian group' would be an embarrassment", said the source.

FRY Foreign Minister on BiH lawsuit against FRY

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

RTRS Radio quotes FRY Foreign Minister, Goran Svilanovic as saying that BiH has not withdrawn the lawsuit against the FRY before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Svilanovic said that he appreciated efforts made by the RS leadership and representatives to the BiH joint institutions to withdraw this lawsuit.

“The lawsuit is still before the court. The FRY has filed to BiH a submission. However, no agreement has been reached. I think that at this point the FRY and BiH have to focus on steps that can be taken. I hope that we will come to the issue of the lawsuit at some point, but I am not sure that something could be achieved if the issue of the lawsuit were raised at that point. That would not help anyone. Significant steps that would guarantee mutual understanding between BiH and the FRY should now be taken. I am monitoring with great respect efforts that RS representatives to the joint institutions are making. I believe that can help in establishing better understanding. I think that at the time of the bringing of the lawsuit certain steps, which left the RS aside, were made. So, I understand that now the RS is trying to go back to this issue and define its stance.”

Editorials

Oslobodjenje and Jutarnje Novine

Edin Krehic wrote in the Oslobodjenje In Focus column that the US gratitude for the extradition of the “Algerian Group” should be maximally used by the BiH state officials in a final effort to apprehend Karadzic and Mladic and break their way of thinking in the heads of thousands of their followers. In the Jutarnje Novine The Seal editorial, Vanja Ilcic concluded

that, since the BiH local authorities had clearly showed they were not prepared to implement the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the constituent peoples, it would be again as the international community and High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch say (meaning that they will again make the final decision on the issue).

Vecernji List: Words joint and single 'are killing' Dayton Peace Agreement

Written by M. Bosnjak (Provided by OHR Mostar)

You can hear frequently from the current Authority representatives the words that show that the Dayton is not holy of holies. Out of numerous words, that are being used in daily political statements, the words 'single' and 'joint' are being used the most frequently. By using these words they are trying to tailor or they are already tailoring curriculum, organizing the state, Army etc. The word 'joint' is being used when they are talking about the Tax Administration, Army, BiH without entities. In this way, from the most of the politicians, who are in power at the moment, you can hear the statements by which they want to create a unitary BiH, opposite to the decentralized one, as it was stressed in the DPA. And while within the Federation they have almost agreed to introduce a unitary principle everywhere, in the RS there is no room for anything that smells of unitarianism. The culmination is a wish of Jozo Krizanovic and Beriz Belkic, the members of the BiH Presidency, to create a single Army, weaken not only the Cantons, but also the entities, in order to establish a completely unitarian BiH.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Misura illegally abolished the pensioner's solidarity

fund

Dnevni Avaz

- The Election Commission set deadline to the Tuzla Canton Governor: Beslagic must make a choice

Jutarnje Novine

- BiH Council of Ministers extended road oil import from Croatia for seven days: One must get to Bosnanski Brod to import oil

Glas Srpski

- Financial operations of the RS Pension-Invalid Insurance Fund under investigation;
- Mrkonjic Grad: Threats wrote letter;

Nezavisne Novine

- Representatives of the world's religions in Assisi – Joint prayer for peace;
- The circle is tightening around Karadzic;

Dnevni List

- HDZ BiH Youth sends open letter: Neven Tomic called for tanks on Hercegovacka Banka
- Who will replace Ivan Mandic: Marin Topic or Nada Dalipagic
- Ante Jelavic writes to Srdjan Dizdarevic, President of BiH Helsinki Committee: Do Croats have same rights as Algerian group

Vecernji List

- Demobilized persons find out in banks that their compensation are cancelled: 750 HVO members left without any incomes