BiH Media Round-up: 28/12/2001

BiH State-related Issues

- BiH Council of Ministers adopts new draft law on the use of succession money
- Radisic says next year to be crucial for BiH and RS
- Lagumdzija assesses BiH Council of Ministers 2001 annual performance as successful
- Dnevni List: Who pays American lawyers as legal advisors in the BiH suit against FRY and how much they are paid?
- Vecernji List: **All BiH Federation political parties support a BiH Constitution change**

Federation

- Rotation in the Office of the BiH Federation President: Safet Halilovic assumes presidential duties
- Mijo Brajkovic says the state has no right to claim ownership over Mostar Aluminum
- Prime Minister, his Deputy say BiH Federation Government succeeded in carrying out a series of reforms during the past year
- Slobodna Dalmacija: Cardinal Puljic organized a Christmas reception
- Dnevni List: So called Federation Television fails to mention that the Pope uttered Christmas greetings in the Croatian language
- Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Edhem Bicakcic, a former Federation Prime Minister

Republika Srpska

- RS National Assembly initiates public debate on the amendments to the entity Constitution

- Bosniaks did not withdraw veto on the draft RS Budget for 2002
- RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic met with Serb Delegates to the BiH House of Peoples
- RS Education Minister Gojko Savanovic announced teachers would receive November salaries by January 10

International Community

- OHR annuls regulation plan for the settlements of Kopaci and Zidine
- The Washington Post: UN halted probe of officers' alleged role in sex trafficking
- Reuters: UN denies report linking its police with sex trade
- The High Representative's Editorial for Austrian Profile Magazine
- Slobodna Dalmacija: Jacques Verges, a French lawyer, claims that the ICTY cannot be objective as long as it is financially dependent

Editorials

- Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Jutarnje Novine
- Dnevni List: Radovan Karadzic – Minister for Refugees!?

BiH State-related Issues

BiH Council of Ministers adopts new draft law on the use of succession money

At its session held in Sarajevo on Thursday, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted the new draft law on the use of the funds, which BiH had received from the process of the succession to the former Yugoslavia's properties. Dnevni Avaz quoted BiH Treasury Minister Anto Domazet as saying that the

amended provision was about the definition of the parliamentary control over the use of the money. Oslobodjenje reports, according to BiH Council of Ministers Chairman Zlatko Lagumdzija, the new draft had immediately been sent into the urgent parliamentary procedure in the both BiH Parliament's Houses.

Radisic says next year to be crucial for BiH and RS

According to Dnevni Avaz, Serb member of the BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic told journalists in Banja Luka on Thursday that the next year would be hard and very important in terms of the future of BiH and RS. He expressed hope that all in BiH were decisive to preserve and strengthen the peace, ensure the equality and tolerance among all peoples, and particularly improve economy. Radisic pointed out at a need that BiH citizens make decisions on the destiny of their country, while the cooperation with the international community should be defined on the basis of equality and partnership.

Lagumdzija assesses BiH Council of Ministers 2001 annual performance as successful

Work of the current BiH Council of Ministers in the past ten months was successful, which may be proved by concrete data such as 51 held sessions, 879 discussed issues and 52 adopted laws. According to Dnevni Avaz, such an assessment was made by the Council chairman, Zlatko Lagumdzija, at a press conference in Sarajevo on Thursday. "What is particularly important for us is not just quantity but also a quality of our work, which is much bigger than in the previous mandate," Lagumdzija emphasized.

Dnevni List: Who pays American lawyers as legal advisors in the BiH suit against FRY and how much

they are paid?

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List says due to the inexpertness of Kasim Trnka, who, in the capacity of BiH agent, is representing our country before the ICTY in the process that the BiH launched against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Federation Government has been damaged considerably. The Government illegally paid 100,000 DEM to an American law firm for drafting a written report that the alleged legal expert Trnka was not able to write although it is his primary task. This scandalous and illegal act was initiated by Beriz Belkic, the Bosniak Member of the BiH Presidency, outside of his colleagues' knowledge. Dnevni List found out from their source in the Federation Government that not even the Federation Minister for Finance, Nikola Grabovac, was informed of this illegal transaction, which makes the scandal take on a national color, says the daily.

Vecernji List: All BiH Federation political parties support a BiH Constitution change

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List says the President of the Liberal Democratic Party, Rasim Kadic, supports the SDA initiative for changes and amendments of the BiH Constitution, which would provide for a reduction of entity powers to the benefit of the state, as well as for reinstatement of the name Republic.

SDA Vice President Seada Palavric thinks that maintenance of the existing situation would be in favor of the RS, which has not had a single act, since Dayton to date, that mentions the State of BiH, so she believes the RS could apply for international recognition in time.

HDZ official Mariofil Ljubic says that he initiated discussions about changes of the BiH Constitution over a year

ago. Ljubic says BiH as a state and its integrity could stand as a guarantee of the constituency of all the three peoples. The existing organization of BiH is an obstacle to that. “I think it is time for the state to get more powers. The result of the discussions I initiated together with my associates was supposed to be a new BiH Constitution,” said Ljubic.

Federation

Rotation in the Office of the BiH Federation President: Safet Halilovic assumes presidential duties

Oslobodjenje reports that a ceremony was held in Sarajevo on Thursday on occasion of the regular rotation in the Office of the BiH Federation President. Safet Halilovic, who assumed the presidential duties, sad that establishment of the partnership relations with the international community would be one of the priorities in future work of the BiH Federation leaders. “We maintain that our and their goals are compatible, and that, together, we shall move faster on our path towards the European and wider integration,” Halilovic said. He added that the current authorities had a vision of the development both of the BiH Federation and the State of BiH. “The main aim is to revive economy, attract foreign investments to create new jobs, and transform the ownership structure,” Halilovic emphasized. According to the rules of rotation, former BiH Federation President will continue to act as the entity Deputy President.

Mijo Brajkovic says the state has no right to claim ownership over Mostar Aluminum

At a press conference in Mostar on Thursday, Aluminum Combine General Director Mijo Brajkovic said that the state had no right to claim major ownership over the company, since it had

invested nothing in its reconstruction. Brajkovic said that the state share in the Aluminum actually amounted 24.9 percent, but that the BiH Federation authorities disagreed with these figures, Oslobodjenje reports. According

To Slobodna Dalmacija, Brajkovic stated that this company “has been existing and functioning in the state, which, for the most part, does not have legal regulations organized.” “For six years Aluminij has been under attack of politics that wants to destroy it. It is the biggest BiH exporter and it has never received any stimulation from the state or a single pfening of the funds that are being invested in BiH. Aluminij by itself meets all obligations towards its workers on the waiting list,” said Brajkovic.

He also mentioned the case of Hercegovacka Bank. He in person was on the list of the named persons although he was not a shareholder of Hercegovacka Bank, he did not have an account in this Bank and he was not granted with a loan. On the contrary, Hercegovacka Bank owes Aluminij 300,000 Marks. Vecernji List quotes Brajkovic as saying that international corporations alleviated the pressures on Aluminij. Brajkovic said their reputable partner (Daimler Chrysler) “brought the attention of the BiH officials to Aluminij” during the officials’ visits to Western countries. Brajkovic does not think the reputation of Aluminij has been shaken but is of the opinion that the reputation of the state has been shaken due to the Aluminij-related actions behind the scene, since the international partners are on Aluminij’s side. Brajkovic said Croatia secretly “lobbied for Aluminij,” but he would have preferred if they had reacted in public, primarily because of the 18 million DEM that Croatia invested in the company and their 12% share in the company’s capital.

Prime Minister, his Deputy say BiH Federation Government succeeded in carrying out a series of

reforms during the past year

At a new-year's press conference held in Sarajevo on Thursday, BiH Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen and his Deputy Nikola Grabovac assessed that the Government had succeeded to carry out a series of reforms during the past year. Dnevni Avaz reports that this was done in spite of a HDZ attempt to establish so called Croat self-rule and a fact that the entity Government had received not a single KM of the international assistance. Industrial production increased by 12.7 percent as the export activities were increased by more 26 percent during the year. Behmen particularly emphasized that the Government had succeeded to abolish parallel funding and administrative structures.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Cardinal Puljic organized a Christmas reception

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija reports that Cardinal Vinko Puljic gave a Christmas reception for persons of BiH religious life, politicians, representatives of educational, humanitarian and cultural organizations, as well as of the OHR, IPTF, SFOR, EU and OSCE.

On that occasion, Cardinal Puljic said: 'It is necessary to stop some abnormal things in the social and political public life, and it refers to constant accusations at the expense of the other side, and especially if one belongs to the other side, one is always suspicious despite not having been proven guilty. For this reason we need a dialogue seeking for the way of trust, understanding and cooperation. All sides say that religious tolerance and coexistence are necessary. I also believe that it is necessary to have tolerance towards religion and coexistence with different structures of religious communities and churches in this country. Religious communities and churches cannot be responsible all the time

for all frustrations of domestic and international leaders. It is necessary for everybody to hold responsibility at his/her own level'

Dnevni List: So called Federation Television fails to mention that the Pope uttered Christmas greetings in the Croatian language

Written by I. Drmic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List says that the "so called Federation Television," in their Christmas newscast, reported on the Pope's *urbi et orbi* address, during which he uttered Christmas greetings in 60 languages, but the FTV reporter failed to mention that Croatian was one of those 60 languages. Indeed, the Pope's voice could be heard, but the reporter did not say that he wished a merry Christmas to all Croat(ian)s, wherever they were. The fact that he wished a merry Christmas in the Croatian language was skipped, concealed and even underestimated. The author concludes by saying "the Federation Television does not acknowledge this fact. We do not acknowledge this Television."

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Edhem Bicakcic, a former Federation Prime Minister

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

In an interview for Slobodna Dalmacija, Edhem Bicakcic, a former Prime Minister of the Federation, stated: 'We have been accused that we had given assistance amounting to 825,000 Marks to the Association of Fallen BiH Army Soldiers. The funds were used in the way that a hundred Marks for each of 8,000 war orphans were secured through Sehin Bank Zenica. I cannot understand how it could occur to someone to sanction such behavior.'

The other criminal charge against Bicakcic refers to the famous Employment Bureau of the BiH Federation and his former

Deputy Dragan Covic was not charged on this ground. Bicakcic says that the Law on Mediation at Employment was undergoing a parliamentary procedure and because of obstructions it was never adopted. ‘Up until the beginning of this year, the High Representative had been turning a deaf ear to a few requests coming from the competent Ministry and myself to impose this Law, but then at the beginning of the year he did it using the same text of the Law that the Government had prepared.’

Bicakcic says that the Cantonal Court where the Bureau is registered, is now processing the very act of establishing of the Bureau. ‘If there was something irregular, they could have told us during the registration itself. This act is the best warning of how absurd this accusation is.’

Republika Srpska

RS National Assembly initiates public debate on the amendments to the entity Constitution

BiH electronic media reported that the first part of the Thursday’s session of the Republika Srpska National Assembly ended by adoption of the conclusion that the draft amendments to the RS Constitution, proposed by the Constitutional Commission and delegates, are sent to public discussion. According to the conclusion, the Commission and the RS government are to organize public discussions that are to last until February 15. Oslobodjenje reports that. During the session, the deputies of the Serb and Bosniak nationality expressed fully opposite positions on the issues such as use of the official languages and equal representation of the constituent peoples in the authorities at all levels.

Bosniaks did not withdraw veto on the draft RS Budget for 2002

Glas Srpski, on the cover page, reports that the Bosniak

members of the Republika Srpska Constitutional Commission did not withdraw their veto on the proposal of the RS budget for the next year. The daily adds that, for this reason, the RS National Assembly will not discuss this issue. “Discussion of the RS and Bosniak members of the Constitutional Commission did not result in an agreement. Instead of the budget, we will propose a decision on temporary financing of the entity to the Parliament,” said RS Finance Minister Milenko Vracar.

RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic met with Serb Delegates to the BiH House of Peoples

Nezavisne Novine writes that the Republika Srpska Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, held a secret meeting with the Serb delegates to the BiH House of Peoples in Banja Luka on Thursday. New law on the use of the succession money, which will be discussed in an urgent procedure, was discussed at the meeting, according to the newspaper.

RS Education Minister Gojko Savanovic announced teachers would receive November salaries by January 10

Republika Srspka Education Minister Gojko Savanovic stated that the RS teachers would get their November salaries by January 10, 2002, and not by January 1t as had been announced by their Trade Union. “RS Government and this Ministry haven’t had any talks with the Trade Union regarding the matter and the Trade Union has just been manipulating with the public in order to save their positions,” said Minister Savanovic.

International Community

OHR annuls regulation plan for the settlements of Kopaci and Zidine

Dnevni Avaz reports that the Office of the High Representative

has fulfilled its promise and annulled a decision on the adoption of the regulation plan for the settlements of Kopaci and Zidine. In a letter sent to the Srpsko Gorazde-Kopaci mayor, Caslav Semiz, Head of the Sarajevo RRTF Regional Office Morris Power said that such a regulation plan had negative influence on the process of the return to the municipality.

The Washington Post: UN Halted Probe of Officers' Alleged Role in Sex Trafficking

The United Nations quashed an investigation earlier this year into whether UN police were directly involved in the enslavement of Eastern European women in Bosnian brothels, according to UN officials and internal documents. According to the Thursday's Washington Post , the decision to halt the investigation came when the UN Mission in Bosnia was reeling from the disclosure that several of its police officers had been dismissed for sexual misconduct. (Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje carried the article)

Reuters: UN denies report linking its police with sex trade

The United Nations denied on Thursday that its police officers had been involved in the trafficking of women in Bosnia despite a published report linking them to the illicit trade. The world body issued a statement on the matter after the Washington Post on Thursday reported that UN police officers in Bosnia were directly involved in recruiting and selling women to local brothels. The United Nations said the charges in the article had been thoroughly investigated and "found to have no substance."

The High Representative's Editorial for Austrian Profile Magazine

Nezavisne Novine carries the full text of the High

Representative’s Editorial for Austrian Profile magazine at its fifth page.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Jacques Verges, a French lawyer, claims that the ICTY cannot be objective as long as it is financially dependent

Written by Ivica Mlivoncic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Jacques Verges, a reputable French lawyer, is one of the harsh critics of The Hague Tribunal. During his visit to Belgrade, where he addressed law students, he stated that he is suspicious about the independence and thus the objectivity of the ICTY. He stated that some states and some individuals are financing the work of the Tribunal. George Soros, a famous rich man, is among the individuals and Saudi Arabia among the states that finance the work of the Tribunal.

The daily says Saudi Arabia was sending mujahedeens to BiH and some of them have been suspected of war crimes. For this reason Saudi Arabia is interested to see to it that the mujahedeens are not charged with war crimes so that it can conceal its role in the war. Verges is suspicious about legality of The Hague because it was not established by the UN Assembly, but by the Security Council, its executive body. It is difficult to justify its retroactive work. It was established in 1993, and it includes the crimes committed since January 1, 1991. He believes that it is unacceptable that the Tribunal has the legislative authority as well, because the Tribunal itself annuls the existing and determines a new procedure. He also objects to the institution of witnesses whose faces cannot be seen and thus a defendant and his defense do not know who it is. Also, the prosecution is not obliged to present its documents to the defense.

Many things are questionable in all this. However, victims and their dignity demand that perpetrators are identified and sentenced, reads the daily.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Jutarnje Novine

Edin Krehic wrote in the Oslobodjenje In Focus column that the danger of the nuclear war in the world should not be underestimated, as Hamza Baksic commented in a retrospective way on the current situation in Argentina. In the Dnevni Avaz Commentary of the Day, Armin Zeba wondered why the BiH state authorities were not reacting on the changed rules and regulations for transit of oil and oil derivatives through Croatia, which would be in force from the beginning of the next year. According to Zeba, these regulations will cause increase of oil prices in BiH.

Indira Tabucic commened in the Jutarnje Novine The Seal editorial on the new year's press conferences of the current BiH authorities' representatives. She concludes that they should be more realistic in assessing the achieved results.

Dnevni List: Radovan Karadzic – Minister for Refugees!?

Written by Brane Vrbic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List says the end of the year is marked by another "scandal" related to the Hague Tribunal and no objective observer could escape the impression that the Tribunal is making legal precedents and odd compromises. "Sefer Halilovic, who was the Commander of the Bosniak army at the time when the Muslim forces committed the most severe crimes against Croats in BiH, has been granted a pre-trial release."

The author comments it is nothing unusual as far as the legal procedure is concerned, but it is a completely incomprehensible act if one bears in mind the fact that the Tribunal would not let the Croat prisoners out on a pre-trial

release. “This war crimes suspect enjoys the support of the Federation Government. The OHR, UN Mission and the OSCE have a benevolent attitude to all this. Following this logic, we could expect that none of the international administrators in BiH would have anything against the war crime suspect Radovan Karadzic becoming the RS Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons. Why not!? If the war crime suspect Sefer can be a minister, why couldn’t the war crime suspect Radovan perform the same duty?”

The editorial further reads that the international community even backed this by their decision that the war crimes suspects Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic cannot be members of the SDS, while forgetting, or if you will, applying completely different standards on Sefer Halilovic. The ICTY and the international community in BiH have thus shown once more that, as far as their actions are concerned, not all citizens have the same rights, reads Dnevni List.