

# BiH Media Round-up, 28/9/2001

## BiH State-related Issues

- **BiH Council of Ministers discusses CIPS project**
- **Radisic visits Una-Sana Canton**
- ***Nezavisne Novine*: BiH Presidency accepted Del Ponte's initiative on war crimes processing in BiH**

## Federation

- **Sefer Halilovic pleads not guilty to war crimes**
- ***Vecernji List*: Interview with Sefer Halilovic's attorney Faruk Balijagic**
- ***Jutarnji List*: BiH: Croats unhappy with constitutional changes**
- **Seven thousands signatures submitted to OHR for removal of the cross on the Mostar Hum Hill**
- **Aluminium workers went on five-minute strike of warning**
- ***Slobodna Dalmacija*: Truths and half-truths regarding the famous Mostar 'Action Plan'**
- ***Slobodna Dalmacija*: HDZ BiH says trial of Zepce Croats will not contribute to reinforcement of mutual trust**

## Republika Srpska

- **RS National Assembly delays discussion on the law on cooperation with ICTY**
- **DNS to use all democratic means to topple RS Government**
- **RS human rights group appeals on BiH authorities to present full information about international terrorists having BiH passports**
- **PDP Main Board Member calls for review of BiH passports issued to Mujahedeens**

## International Community

- **Council of Europe's Political Committee recommends BiH's**

**admission into the Council**

- **Petritsch welcomes recommendation for BiH's accession to the Council of Europe**
- **OHR says current debate on the Mostar City Action Plan against interests of the Mostar citizens**
- **Hays and Beecroft visit Identification Center in Tuzla and a site of Cancari mass grave near Zvornik**
- **OHR says consultations "Banja Luka – Steps toward Peace, Prosperity and Reconciliation" started in Britain**
- ***Slobodna Dalmacija*: Head of the UNHCR Mission in BiH Werner Blatter visits Herceg- Bosnian Canton**
- ***Slobodna Dalmacija*: Austrian Deputy Foreign Minister meets with Tomic and Jahic**

## **BiH State-related Issues**

### **BiH Council of Ministers discusses CIPS project**

The Sarajevo dailies report that BiH Council of Ministers on Thursday accepted a report on the CIPS (Citizen's Identification Protection System) project, which had provoked a number of controversial discussions in recent months. BiH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications Svetozar Mihajlovic told journalists following the Council's meeting that, from now on, the project should be realized in two phases. The first is re-publication of the tender in order that more bids are collected. Siemens, the only bidder so far, can, according to Mihajlovic, apply with the same bid or amend it. The second phase, in which a completely new tender will be published, will also include definition of rules about the visa system, system for documents checking and computer system.

### **Radisic visits Una-Sana Canton**

Member of the BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic visited on Thursday Bihac, and this was the first visit of a Serb member of the

BiH Presidency to the Una-Sana Canton,

Radio Free Europe reported. Radisic opened a scientific meeting on the revitalization and modernization of BiH economy taking place in the town and met with leaders of the Bihac municipality and Una-Sana Canton.

### **Nezavisne Novine: BiH Presidency accepted Del Ponte's initiative on war crimes processing in BiH**

Nezavisne Novine reports that the BiH Presidency on Wednesday accepted an initiative on creation of special state court that will process war crimes and forwarded it to the BiH Foreign Ministry. The paper quotes member of the BiH Presidency, Beriz Belkic, as saying that the Presidency unanimously accepted the initiative, suggested by the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte. Members of the BiH Presidency, Jozo Krizanovic and Beriz Belkic, commended the initiative but could not provide more details as to how this new court should work. They both stressed that there is a wide range of technical and financial problems that have to be resolved. They also confirmed that the BiH Presidency discussed two options. According to the first option, a new court should be established and the UN Security Council should approve its work. According to the second option the state court, established by the High Representative, should process war crimes.

## **Federation**

### **Sefer Halilovic pleads not guilty to war crimes**

Sefer Halilovic, the highest-ranking Bosniak to face trial at the United Nations war crimes court in The Hague, pleaded not guilty on Thursday to charges of failing to prevent the killing of Bosnian Croats in 1993. The wartime commander of the BiH Army, who was serving as minister for refugees and social affairs in BiH Federation until surrendering to the

ICTY on Tuesday, is charged with violating the laws and customs of war. The 49-year-old is accused of failing to prevent the killing of more than 60 Bosnian Croat civilians in two villages during a Bosniak offensive against Croat forces near Mostar in southern Bosnia in September 1993.

### **Vecernji List: Interview with Sefer Halilovic's attorney Faruk Balijagic**

Vecernji List reporters talked to Sefer Halilovic's attorney, Faruk Balijagic, before Halilovic's first appearance before The Hague judges. Mr. Balijagic is convinced that his defendant will prove his innocence.

### **How do you comment the indictment against Sefer Halilovic?**

Indictment has been made on the basis of incomplete documentation that was given to The Hague investigators, according to which Sefer Halilovic was in charge of operation "Neretva 93" which has no legal ground, and is untrue. That is to say, decision to launch this military-police operation was made at a political level at a meeting in Zenica on August 21 and 22, 1993 and after that the operation was launched. The meeting was attended by a few commanders of BiH Army Corps and independent units.

### **Dates of slaughters do not favour your defendant because he was the commander (of the BiH Army) during the events. What counter arguments will you go out with?**

Crimes in Uzdol and Grabovica were truly monstrous because the civilians were slaughtered. According to my information from the investigative records, those people were tortured too. But, Sefer Halilovic was in the investigative team together with Zicro Suljevic, Vehbija Karic, Namik Dzankovic and few other persons. That means that he was not officiating any command duty. I have proves that the units were communicating with the main HQ directly, in other words with Rasim Delic and their superior HQs in the Corps. So, there is a clear

documentation that shows that Halilovic was completely bypassed. He was 25 kilometres away from the Grabovica slaughter at the time of the event, and in the case of Uzdol even 80 kilometres. He did not have a physical contact or a possibility to prevent the events and he did not issue the order to execute them. The indictment charges him that he was in charge of the operation. The operation had a military-police character and the most senior person was Bakir Alispahic, who was somewhere between Jablanica and Grabovica on September 8, 1993, and after the slaughter was already committed, of which he was informed, he went to Mostar with a special police unit.

**How do you comment the testimonies of Bosniak fighters and politicians that could play a crucial, negative role for defence of your defendant?**

Witness is a witness. But my documentation is very strong and I can expose every false witness, Those witnesses will be responsible for false testimonies.

**Will the Sefer Halilovic trial reveal the true culprits of the Grabovica and Uzdol slaughters?**

The trial is very important for democratisation. New democratisation processes in BiH will be opened by every crime that gets revealed and prosecuted. Not only the culprits of the Grabovica crimes will be revealed by the Halilovic process but also the culprits of other crimes that were committed in the war. You know that Halilovic is a victim of a genocide that is punishable by the Geneva Conventions because his wife and her brother were killed, and the assassins believed that it was Sefer (who got killed). Other crimes will be talked about in that manner too. When I say that I meant the activities of the terrorist group "Seve". I have been in contacts with The Hague investigators and I am pressing for the real truth to be discovered regardless of the fact who is involved. Unfortunately, many people who are involved in the

crimes have infiltrated into the police and judiciary even. But I will contact del Ponte and I will insist on the truth.

**How is Sefer Halilovic coping with the first days in jail and is he disappointed with attitude of the Sarajevo authorities in light of him going to The Hague?**

As soon as he found out about the indictment, and before that, Halilovic's conduct was dignified. He had a big desire to settle the issue before an impartial court and now we can sort it out before The Hague Tribunal. He is feeling healthy and very good. We are preparing our defence and awaiting for documents on which the prosecution is basing the indictment. The documents have not been translated to Bosniak yet and the deadline set for them giving us the documentation is 30 days. But I expect that within that time frame we will do many things to neutralise the indictment, said Faruk Balijagic, reads Vecernji List.

**Jutarnji List: BiH: Croats unhappy with constitutional changes**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Ilija Simic, President of HSS BiH (Croat Peasants Party) and Chair of House of Representatives in the Federation of BiH Parliament, said that the proposed constitutional changes that should ensure the constituent status of the three peoples in the whole of BiH did not guarantee the protection of national interests of all peoples. Simic stressed out that the Croat representatives in the Federation and State Parliament feel that the International Community is in favour of abolishing the House of Peoples in the Federation Parliament, in other words they are in favour of protection of national interests through constitutional commissions in both BiH entities. Simic also disagreed with constitutional strengthening of so-called others as the fourth constituent element in BiH, reads Jutarnji List.

**Seven thousands signatures submitted to OHR for removal of the**

## **cross on the Mostar Hum Hill**

The committee for the collection of signatures for the removal of the cross from

the Hum hill overlooking Mostar handed the Head of the Office of the High

Representative South, Collin Munro, on Thursday a petition with some 7,000 signatures. In a cover letter sent to Munro, members of the committee for the signing of the petition, Djulsa Bajramovic, Dzemał Cosic, Hivzija Hasandedic, Alija Kebo and Safet Krkic, state that the placement of such an enormous cross on the Hum Hill jeopardizes rights of other peoples living in the town.

## **Aluminium workers went on five-minute strike of warning**

Acting by the decision of the Independent Union of Aluminijs Employees, the workers on Thursday went on a five-minute strike of warning, in protest against political pressures on Aluminijs. Union members called upon the Aluminijs management not to allow any more audits or inspections to be conducted in the company, as they consider the audit conducted by the OHR auditing team "official and binding." One of the messages written on the banners held by the employees was "Not even Petritsch or the OHR are good for you now." According to Vecernji List, Federation Financial Auditors on Monday asked the management to provide them with documentation required for financial audit, but the Aluminijs's legal advisor Zoran Buntic asked for a court warrant and suggested that the documents be audited "within the company," and the auditors then "went to Sarajevo for advice."

## **Slobodna Dalmacija: Truths and half-truths regarding the famous Mostar 'Action Plan'**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Hamdija Jahic, the Mostar Deputy Mayor, was a guest at the RTV Mostar. He did not declare himself on the issue whether the Action Plan for the Reintegration of Mostar was adopted or not at the session of the City Council, which was held on September 24, 2001. Jahic only stated that the goals and contents of the Action Plan are realistic and necessary for the City of Mostar and its citizens.

Milan Jovicic, the President of the City Council, stated at the press conference, which he held on Wednesday afternoon, that Colin Munro, the Head of the OHR Mostar, simply does not tell truth when he says that the Action Plan was not adopted at the disputable 10<sup>th</sup> session of the Mostar City Council.

Jovicic denied the statement of Avis Benes, the OHR Spokesperson, in which she stressed that she knows from which 'cuisine' all activities were conducted. Jovicic stressed that the only 'cuisine' are the Councilors of the SDP and the Coalition for the Integrated and Democratic BiH.

Jovicic stated that it is not truth that the Councilors of two Caucuses want to remove Neven Tomic, the Mayor, and that he has their support. According to Jovicic, the goal of the action Plan is the acceleration of the processes in Mostar.

**Slobodna Dalmacija: HDZ BiH says trial of Zepce Croats will not contribute to reinforcement of mutual trust**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Public Relations Office of the HDZ BiH issued a press release with regard to the trial of 15 Zepce Croats before the Cantonal Court in Zenica.

HDZ BiH does not think the trial will contribute to reinforcement of mutual trust, tolerance or coexistence in BiH and considers the trial an attempt of collective incrimination of Zepce Croats by the Bosniak Prosecutor's Office and Cantonal Court in Zenica.



“We see the legal proceedings instituted against Croat officials Perica Jukic, Ivo Lozancic and thirteen more Croats of Zepce as a trial against the survival of Croats in that territory,” reads the press release from the HDZ BiH.

## **Republika Srpska**

### **RS National Assembly delays discussion on the law on cooperation with ICTY**

Oslobodjenje reports that the Republika Srpska National Assembly did not at its Thursday session consider the draft law on cooperation with The Hague Tribunal as well as a report on the BiH Defense Policy. The issues are expected to be discussed at the continuation of the ninth session scheduled for October 2. According to Speaker of the Assembly Dragan Kalinic, the discussion on these important documents was delayed because RS President Mirko Sarovic, Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic and Serb member of the BiH Presidency Zivko Radisic were not able to attend the session due to some previously scheduled events. However, Nezavisne novine learns from an anonymous source that the real reason for delaying the discussion on the RS Law on ICTY is that the ruling coalition in the RS National Assembly cannot reach an agreement whether the RS needs this the law or not. The source claims that a large number of deputies, mostly from SDS, are afraid that they can find themselves “down by the law” and that the RS Government, voted also by SDS, will have to start arresting war crime indictees.

### **DNS to use all democratic means to topple RS Government**

Both Banja Luka dailies quote an official of the Democratic National Alliance (DNS), Drago Kalabic, as saying that the party will use all democratic means to topple the Republika Srpska Government and to prove that 10 senior officials have abused office to make profit in their private businesses. “The

DNS will continue to pinpoint all the failures and pre-election promises of the RS Government”, Kalabic said at a news conference in Banja Luka, adding he doubted that there would be a reshuffle of the Government. The papers also quote a member of the DNS Executive Board, Djordje Krsmanovic, as saying that the resignation of the Director of the RS Pension-Disability Fund (PIO), Ostoja Kremenovic, who is a member of DNS, will probably be followed by the resignation of the Director of the RS Inland Revenue and the Deputy Director of the RS Telekom, so that the ruling coalition (PDP, SDS and SPRS) can take control of these posts too. “In this way the DNS will show that it does not care for those posts, as it does not want to be a prisoner of the ruling Government’s policy with regard to party political appointees”, Krsmanovic told a press conference in Bijeljina. He emphasised that the DNS will continue to contest everything that is damaging for the Serb people, and to support everything that is in its interest and the interest of the RS.

### **RS human rights group appeals on BiH authorities to present full information about international terrorists having BiH passports**

Glas Srpski quotes President of the Republika Srpska Helsinki Human Rights Committee, Branko Todorovic, as saying that the NGO appeals on BiH authorities at all levels to present all necessary information about members of the international terrorist groups who were granted BiH passports during the war. Todorovic said at a news conference that there are serious indications certain groups and individuals, connected to terrorism, say and exist in BiH.

### **PDP Main Board Member calls for review of BiH passports issued to Mujahedeens**

Srna News Agency quotes member of the Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) Main Board, Milan Malisan, as saying that BiH should work together with the international community in

attempting to resolve the issues related to the mujahedeens, who have stayed living in BiH after the war, since their presence is a destabilizing factor in the region. At a regular news conference, Malisan said that the presence of the mujahedeens in BiH posed “a serious obstacle to establishing stable and good neighbouring relations with other countries in the region”. “The PDP insists that a task force set up by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly complete investigation into the BiH passports issued to the mujahedeens as soon as possible,” he concluded.

## **International Community**

### **Council of Europe's Political Committee recommends BiH's admission into the Council**

All media report that the Political Committee of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly made on Thursday a positive recommendation for the admission of BiH into the Council of Europe, and said that BiH could be admitted into the oldest European political organization at the beginning of the next year.

The Committee's Special Rapporteur, Laszlo Surjan, said at the meeting in Strasbourg that a significant progress had been achieved in BiH's closing to the Council of

Europe, which was, according to him, especially visible in the field of legislation and human rights protection, as well as creation of a single economic space. Surjan suggested that immediately after BiH's admission into the Council of Europe a process of monitoring and realization of conditions, which each country must fulfill is launched, such as is the case with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Head of the BiH parliamentary delegation Sejfidin Tokic said that there was a consensus among all political parties in the BiH Parliament that BiH must accept all obligations arising from the admission into

Council of Europe.

### **Petritsch welcomes recommendation for BiH's accession to the Council of Europe**

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch welcomes the decision of the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe to recommend the accession of BiH to the Council of Europe. In this regard, Petritsch, in a letter addressed to the

Foreign Ministers of the Council of Europe Member States, stated that BiH should enter the Council of Europe as soon as possible, preferably by the end of the year. ([Press Release](#) prominently carried by all media)

### **OHR says current debate on the Mostar City Action Plan against interests of the Mostar citizens**

OHR Spokesman Patrik Volf told journalists on Thursday in Sarajevo that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, considered current debate on the Mostar City Action Plan as a destructive development, which was against the interests of the town's citizens, who wanted a city properly serving them. According to Oslobodjenje, Volf said that, contrary to certain media reports, the Action Plan for the Continuation of the Mostar Reintegration, drafted by some members of the City Council, had not been adopted at the session of the Council of September 24. "Moreover, the procedures employed to deceive the media and others, into believing that it had been adopted, are unacceptable in a democratic society based on the rule of law," Volf added.

### **Hays and Beecroft visit Identification Center in Tuzla and a site of Cancari mass grave near Zvornik**

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, and Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH Robert Beecroft on Thursday visited the DNA identification laboratory in the Tuzla

University Clinic Center. The laboratory was formed thanks to the assistance provided by the International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP), and so far more than 15,000 blood analysis have been carried out there. According to Dnevni Avaz, in the course of the day, Hays and Beecroft also visited a site of Cancari mass grave near Zvornik. From which remains of more than 200 Srebrenica war victims have been exhumed in the past few days.

### **OHR says consultations “Banja Luka – Steps toward Peace, Prosperity and Reconciliation” started in Britain**

Nezavisne Novine quotes OHR Spokesman, Patrik Volf, as saying that the High Representative for BiH, Wolfgang Petritsch will together with BiH Foreign Minister, Zlatko Lagumdžija and prime ministers from both entities, Mladen Ivanic and Alija Behmen participate in consultations titled “Banja Luka: Steps toward Peace, Prosperity and Reconciliation”. The consultations have been started in Coventry, UK, and will last two days. According to Volf this open discussion, organised by the British NGO “Soul of Europe”, has brought together a multi-ethnic group of key individuals from political, economic and religious backgrounds in BiH, but prevalently from Banja Luka, to address the problems of spiritual, social, political and economic renewal in this town.

### **Slobodna Dalmacija: Head of the UNHCR Mission in BiH Werner Blatter visits Herceg- Bosnian Canton**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Head of the UNHCR Mission in BiH Werner Blatter visited the returnees in the Herceg Bosna Canton. They are Serb returnees from the urban part of Drvar, Crni Lug, located in the Municipality Bosansko Grahovo, and Sajkovici in the Livno Canton. The goal of this fourth visit was to get an insight into the situation with regard to the process of return in this area, including the Property Laws implementation.

According to Blatter, an important progress with regard to the Property Laws implementation was achieved in Livno. He also added that they marked a sort of progress in Drvar as well. The UNHCR sent a message to donors to additionally help returnees before the coming winter because many of them are still living in tents. Blatter stressed that the Croatian Government offered the UNHCR 150 000 packages of food which will be distributed during the next five months and at the same time they will ensure an additional assistance.

### **Slobodna Dalmacija: Austrian Deputy Foreign Minister meets with Tomic and Jahic**

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Austrian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Albert Rohan, accompanied by the Austrian Ambassador to BiH, Gerhard Jandl and his associates, met with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Mostar, Neven Tomic and Hamdija Jahic.

In his press statement, Mr. Rohan said that he had substantial talks with the leaders of Mostar and that they exchanged opinions about the situation in Mostar in the past year, since his last visit to Mostar, of which he learned more from Mayor Tomic.

Minister Rohan said he is aware of the fact that there were difficulties in the reintegration of the City of Mostar and stressed that the Austrian Government supports the idea of a normal, undivided city and a society that is not organized on the national principle, which requires co-operation of all sides involved.

Asked to comment on the events related to the last session of the City Council of Mostar, Mayor Tomic stated that he does not want to talk about the contents of the 'Action Plan' because he spoke of some of its parts before, but stressed it was important to say that it was a perfidious attempt of pushing the plan through contrary to the standard operating

procedure of the City Council.

Mayor Tomic said another important thing to mention was that neither he as the Mayor was informed about the plan, nor was it handed with the materials to the councilors prior to the session, which is the usual practice. According to Tomic, after the session was officially ended, the plan copies were handed to some councilors and some media, which then carried the misinformation that the plan was adopted at the session, reports Slobodna Dalmacija.