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BiH State-related Issues

Serb member of Presidency to veto genocide lawsuit against Yugoslavia

ONASA news agency reports that the [Serb] member of the BiH Presidency and chairman of the RS Socialist Party (SP), Zivko Radisic, will exercise his power of veto on the lawsuit brought by BiH against Yugoslavia on charges of genocide and aggression if the Presidency is to pronounce on this issue, SP deputy chairman Petar Djokic told reporters on Thursda, and ONASA reports. Djokic added that the conclusions of the RS National Assembly, which had noted that the said lawsuit jeopardises the vital national interests of the RS, commit Radisic to exercise his power of veto. “The lawsuit compounds and renders more difficult the normalization of relations in the region, and I really cannot understand some Bosniak officials who are still blinded by the war-time frustrations,” Djokic said. The Republic of BiH filed charges against Yugoslavia in 1993, when the war had still been fought, RS officials do not consider them legitimate. This lawsuit, as was stated by the BiH counsel before the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, Kasim Trnka, had become one of the topics again last week.

BiH and Austria Became Partners

All media report on the visit of the BiH Council of Ministers delegation, lead by the Chair Zlatko Lagumdzija, to Austria during which four ways of cooperation of the two states were agreed.

Lagumdzija said, stressing that this was the first visit of

the kind, that apart from the usual political issues related to BiH joining European integration, the main reason for this visit was economic cooperation between BiH and Austria. Lagumdzija added that Austrian only expected a safe environment for small and medium businesses.

"Watergate" Affair in BiH

Nezavisne novine and most Federation dailies extensively write about the so-called "BiH Watergate" affair of phone-tapping.

"The affair got its new dimension after the statement of BiH Minister Kresimir Zubak and confirmation from the Cabinet of BiH Presidency member Zivko Radisic that their conversations were tapped by various intelligence services", the daily writes.

Sejfudin Tokic, Presiding of House of Peoples of BiH Parliament Sejfudin Tokic said that there was no serious control of any intelligence service in BiH, which was one of the reasons for requesting establishing of one, state Intelligence service with strictly defined authorities.

Federation

Ante Jelavic to resign if courts conditions registration of the HDZ

An anonymous senior official from the HDZ told Dnevni Avaz that Ante Jelavic is ready to withdraw from the leading position in the party, if the Cantonal Court in Mostar refuses to re-register the HDZ because of his re-election. He explained that the failure to register would result in the inability of the party to run in general and presidential elections which are scheduled for the next year. "Jelavic himself is becoming increasingly aware of the positions of the party after his decision to be candidate for the president,"

the same source said. Avaz speculates that Jelavic could be succeeded by Dragan Covic, who although dismissed by the High Representative, does not have a ban on holding a public post.

Federation topping world unemployment league table

Fena news agency reported that a 40 per cent rate of unemployment, as it stood in mid-2001 in the BiH Federation , which is the highest unemployment rate among 50 countries that forward such data to the UN, could be significantly reduced next year thanks to measures designed to encourage employment of around 30,000 people. The total amount of money to be spent on creating jobs in 2002 is 220.5m convertible marks – 136.5m will be secured from the Federation budget, 30m from the job centre funds, 34m from World Bank loans and 20 from commercial bank loans.

HDZ sends a letter to Peace Implementation Council

The Secretary General of the HDZ BiH, Josip Merdzo, sent a letter and the Platform for a possible establishment of a democratic and self-sustainable BiH to the Peace Implementation Council in Brussels, American, Italian, French, British, Russian and German Ambassadors in BiH in which thoughts on possible standardization of collective and individual rights and freedoms as well as possible framework for a self-sustainable BiH were displayed. The letter also reads that the solutions are possible if minimum revisions of the DPA were carried out that would eventually result in the just and self-sustainable solution to the BiH crisis. The addressees are suggested to encourage the High Representative to review his decisions on removal of officials, decisions that imperiled the private property and slowed the free market development, reads Vecernji List.

Miljenko Brkic, the President of the Croat National Community (HNZ), about the initiative of

gathering political parties into Croat Democratic Block

SDP leaders stated that the initiative on the establishment of the Croat Democratic Block comes from the HDZ BiH top?

It is their perception and their problem. The initiative does not have anything to do with getting the HDZ out of an unenviable situation, as they say. Furthermore, the HDZ opposes this initiative, not as much as the SDP, since the HDZ, actually, underlines the position of the Croat National Assembly, which, in its opinion, could gather political forces. This idea is certainly not new, it has been launched a few times, however, circumstances are different now. This is the time when the people can no longer be represented by one party, but the parties have to negotiate. I believe that even the HDZ is aware that they have to negotiate with other parties in order to be able to negotiate with representatives of other peoples. (…) The HDZ has not rejected the initiative. I believe that they are looking for ways of communication. HSS BiH and NHI support the idea in general, however, their party bodies have not made concrete decisions. (…)

How do the international community representative see this idea?

I am not aware of any reactions from the international community representatives. I believe that they want to learn facts before passing their judgment on something. (…) **What has motivated you to launch the initiative of establishing Croat Democratic Block?**

In my judgment, it is realistic to expect that three or four Croat parties will cross the election threshold and become parliamentary parties. Votes given to 10 other parties with the Croat prefix would be wasted and finally it would mean that approximately one sixth of representatives in the legislative authority bodies would be erased at the very

beginning, by their own fault. It is the main reason why I persist on the idea of establishing a coalition of the Croat parties that can harmonize a joint program.

Sarajevo Court has no mercy for a Croat war crime suspect from Kresevo, in spite of the Petritsch's recommendation

Although none out of the 50 prosecution witnesses blame Vlatko Buzuk for the crimes committed against Bosniak civilians in the area of Kresevo and Kiseljak, the Sarajevo Court has extended his custody period for the fourth time. They explained that they did it because of the fact that the Republic of Croatia, where he could take refuge, does not extradite suspects of war crimes.

Slobodna Dalmacija says that the OHR has been informed about the case, and that the OHR has recently made a recommendation that persons suspected of war crimes be allowed to defend themselves while not in detention.

The High Representative's recommendation referring to the release of the persons suspected of committing war crimes, has not been applied in two cases only, says Slobodna Dalmacija. Vlatko Buzuk remains in custody, as well as Goran Vasic, a Bosnian Serb who is suspected of murdering Hakija Turajlic, the wartime Vice President of the Government of the Republic of BiH.

Republika Srpska

Dragan Kolundzija Released by the Decision of The Hague Tribunal

Both RS dailies carry that Dragan Kolundzija from Prijedor, sentenced for three year imprisonment by The Hague Tribunal because of crimes committed against Bosniaks in Prijedor in

1992. was released yesterday. President of the Tribunal Claude Jorda approved Kolundzija's request for early release since due to his good behavior and the fact the Kolundizja has already spent the most of his sentence in the prison. Dragan Kolundzija arrived to Prijedor yesterday but did not give any public statements.

International Community

Petritsch heading the new cabinet of foreign officials in BiH

At Thursday's session, the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) has adopted the OHR plan on streamlining of the international organizations in BiH, and which will significantly strengthen the role of the High Representative who will chair the cabinet made up of heads of international organizations. In an exclusive interview with Dnevni Avaz, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, explained that this is the new concept of coordination of the International Community in BiH, and which will operate directly via four working groups: return of refugees, economic reform, strengthening of state institutions, and rule of law. "This working groups will be partners to local authorities," he said, adding that this model is more efficient and it will enable the faster implementation of the IC program. Speaking for SENSE news agency, the High Representative said that, in a few years time, BiH will become completely independent state, representatives of the International Community will start leaving, and full authority will be handed over to local governments. "We are not in BiH to stay forever, but to help it become an independent state," Petritsch said. Although, he refused to disclose the details of the streamlining proposal, SENSE news agency speculates that some 30% of intentional representatives will leave by the year 2003 and that large international organizations will be fully restructured

according to a geographic principle. Unidentified sources from several international agencies told SENSE that they were hoping that the proposed reforms would be more far-reaching. For more information, see Steering Bard Communiqué. (This item was to top story in all electronic and print media in the Federation.)

UN, OSCE, CRPC, and UNHCR welcome the Property Law Amendments imposed by the High Representative; local authorities say some provisions will stall the return process

While international agencies in charge of implementation of property laws in BiH (UN, OSCE, CRPC, and the UNHCR) welcome the Decision of the High Representative to impose amendments to the Property Laws in both entities – see attachment below – local authorities are slightly more reserved. At a press conference held yesterday, the Federation Minister of Urban planning and environment, Ramiz Mehmedagic, said that the Federation will comply with "Petritsch's amendments", but stressed that certain provisions will provide for open abuse of return rights and numerous dubious transactions. Expressing his surprise with the imposed amendments, Mehmedagic stressed that the OHR did not take into consideration a single proposal of the Federation government in this respect. He added that several amendments are even contrary to Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, but stressed again that the Federation government will nonetheless comply with them. "I believe that High Representative's associates are either legally incompetent or consciously work against the interest of the Federation," said Mehmedagic.

Rasim Kadic of the LDS (Liberal Democratic Party) organised yesterday an extraordinary press conference to criticise the latest decision of the High Representative. Kadic openly accused Wolfgang Petritsch of wanting to complete the ethnic division in BiH. "Petritsch's decisions are intentional game

by which the High Representative does not want to accelerate the return, but to ensure that millions of KM are taken out of BiH or its property sold," said Kadic. See attachment below. (All media carry the joint PLIP press release, but also reaction by the Federation government and the LDS)

Editorials

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List: Two approaches to the same reality

Written by Drago Juric

Dnevni List says Barbara Contini, the Head of the OSCE Regional Center in Mostar, is leaving BiH after three years. The daily says people in Mostar were cautious when she first arrived because they did not believe anyone more efficient, honest and objective than Daniel Simpson was as the Head of Office, could ever come to Mostar. The very fact that all of the Croat cantonal (deputy) governors are arranging a farewell party for her, speaks of her principle and her commitment to the democratic approach to problem solving. The daily goes on to say:

"Colin Munro, the Head of the OHR in Mostar for a few more days, has acted quite the opposite. Together with his Political Advisor Maarten de Sitter and his colleague Chapell, the Head of the OHR Office in Livno, he probably holds the major responsibility for many of the wrong moves. It was on the basis of superficial 'intelligence' work of his Office in Mostar that Petritsch made his most ridiculous statement, about Bishop Peric's 'language of hatred.' All the decisions on dismissals of officials, the decision of stripping officials of their mandates, and finally the dismissal of Jelavic from the position of HDZ President, were also made on the basis of 'wise' advice from the 'workshop' of the OHR in

Mostar," reads the editorial at length.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Serbia arrests Mladic, SFOR Karadzic and then Izetbegovic goes to The Hague!

Written by Tomislav Zoric

According to BiH media, unofficial sources from the international organizations reveal that should the suspicion that Alija Izetbegovic was involved in incriminating actions during the war prove to be grounded, a sort of scenario for his departure to the Hague has already been prepared, says Slobodna Dalmacija.

According to these sources, says the daily, the whereabouts of Radovan Karadzic, a former President of the RS, who has been charged with the war crimes, and Ratko Mladic, his supreme Army Commander, have been discovered. They are just waiting for the right moment for the RS authorities to arrest Mladic and send him to The Hague. As far as Karadzic is concerned, SFOR should arrest him and then an envelope containing a bill of indictment with Izetbegovic's name on it would reach the BiH institutions. The sources close to the ICTY claim that if the Tribunal issues a bill of indictment against him he will be suspected of severe violations of the War Law but not of genocide, unlike Karadzic and Mladic.

Demilitarization of BiH society under OHR pressures infiltrates educational institutions: Defence "expelled" from schools and colleges

Vecernji List reads that the course entitled "Defence Science" that was a part of the curriculum in the first year of college was dropped from the curriculum. The pressure, applied by the OHR, which was of an opinion that further exploration of defence and security issues led to militarization of the society, reflected on the Department of Defence and Security Sciences of the Political Sciences College in Sarajevo, the only college of that kind in the Federation of BiH. In order

to salvage the course, the Sarajevo University decided to rename the course to the Study of Security, which would in practice lead to abolishment of courses that dealt with military and defence issues. The OHR’s behaviour enraged more than 200 students of the renamed course who are of opinion that such moves are endangering their and the future of BiH. “There is not “Security of a Democratic Society” course in secondary schools any more. It means that we, people who attend the course, are left jobless in advance”, say students of the Sarajevo Faculty of Political Sciences, reads Vecernji List.