

Interview: Javier Solana, EU High Representative: **“BiH Consitution will have to be changed”**

*Every day lost in solving issue of police restructuring is a day won for criminals * Abolishing of visa regime will be discussed soon*

EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Affairs, Javier Solana, is a well known friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This politician with remarkable working experience gained in his homeland, Spain and in NATO and EU structures is an expert in the reform process which BiH must undertake in order to move closer to Euro-Atlantic structures.

He closely observes events in our country. Police Restructuring was the reason for this interview.

Historical agreement

Dnevni avaz: How do you see progress in police reform?

Javier Solana: BiH politicians reached a historic agreement on Mount Vlasica a few weeks ago. However, this is not yet sufficient. What we need now is for your leaders to reach a solid and comprehensive political agreement, when talks resume this week, followed by parliamentary endorsement and the adoption of an implementation plan. You may recall that the EU has drawn up three basic principles to guide this process and we would expect compliance with all three. These principles require that, first, all legislative and budgetary competencies are vested at state level; second, that these competencies are applied in functional areas for the sake of

achieving technically efficient policing; and third, that there is no interference in operational policing.

Only when your parliaments have agreed a final political agreement can we regard the process as complete.

The meeting at Vlasic provided a structure which will vest legislative and budgetary competencies at state level. This would therefore meet the first EU principle and goes part of the way to ensure that there can be no political interference in operational policing. What remains now is for local police regions to be applied in functional areas, so as to achieve technically efficient policing. We hope to see progress in meeting all three principles as soon as possible.

Dnevni avaz: The SDS says they will not support police restructuring

Javier Solana: Unless the EU's requirements are met, BiH cannot move forward. Serbia and Montenegro opted to move forwards last month, not backwards. BiH's leaders stand before the same choice next week. I urge them all to seize the opportunity to embrace a future in a modern Europe, with all that it can offer in terms of jobs, freedom to travel, security and prosperity.

Dnevni avaz: BH politicians are about to meet again to finalize the police reform issue. What would be your message to them?

Javier Solana: The time for action has now come. We cannot afford to remain blocked by theoretical discussions rooted in the politics of the past. We need to move forward. This is why Prime Minister Terzic and Lord Ashdown convened the Vlasic meeting.

Why this urgency? First, because every day lost in addressing police restructuring, is a day won by the criminal organisations. Second, because the Union will soon come to

Sarajevo to assess progress in police restructuring, among other issues. Without significant progress, BiH cannot proceed in European integration.

Fair and impartial policing that is responsive to citizens' needs is a cornerstone of modern democracy. Efficient policing in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only important for your country. It is also important for the EU. We need to work together against trans-national crime. Bosnia and Herzegovina should become a strong EU partner in this.

That is why your politicians must see this reform through to the end. Without it BiH cannot progress towards the EU, and without it, criminals will continue to have the upper hand over your police and over your citizens.

Dnevni avaz: What kind of answer we can expect from the EC at the end of May?

Javier Solana: I certainly hope it will be positive. Otherwise, BiH would be in real danger of slipping behind its neighbours in the region. But if the conditions are met I believe the answer can be positive. That will have a clear and substantial positive effect on BiH.

Abolishing of visa regime

Dnevni avaz: If the EC's answer is positive, most people in Bosnia are hoping for a lifting of the EU's visa regime for BiH

Javier Solana: The argument that has been advanced by your leaders – who have been lobbying for a softening of the EU's visa regime – can be helped by only a positive decision on the completion of BiH's Feasibility Study. Rejection of police reform, by contrast, would send entirely the wrong signal.

Dnevni avaz: Do you see the situation in Bosnia in light of

advance in cooperating with the tribunal, as well as in reforming police?

Javier Solana: There has been a noticeable change in the attitude of the Republic of Srbska Institutions to co-operation with the International Court Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY): 9 people have been transferred to The Hague since the start of the year. Full co-operation with the ICTY will not be achieved until all those indicted are in The Hague. With the 10th anniversary of Srebrenica approaching in July, and with the passing of nearly a decade since they were first indicted by the ICTY, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic must be brought to justice.

Dnevni avaz: Debate is going on now in Bosnia on changing constitution. What is your opinion on that issue? Is EC going to assist Bosnia in changing constitution?

Javier Solana: The time will come when your politicians will agree that constitutional change is required – but change can only happen through your institutions and with the agreement of all three BiH peoples.

Special responsibility of RS

Dnevni avaz: One of the most sensitive issues is PIFWCs at large. What are you expecting both BiH authorities as well as EUFOR (and NATO) to do to overcome this?

Javier Solana: The responsibility for full co-operation with the ICTY rests with the BIH authorities, and with the RS authorities in particular. EUFOR and NATO are working together and will play a supporting role in accordance with their respective mandates. But this is a job for the BIH authorities, working together and with their colleagues in neighbouring states.

Karadzic and Mladic cannot stop reforms

Dnevni avaz: Carla del Ponte is hoping to resolve issue of Karadzic and Mladic by July 11th of this year. Do you share that hope?

Javier Solana: I would like to see both in The Hague today. They will have their chance to defend themselves and those who accuse them will have a chance to present evidence, which can then be scrutinised. Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic can no longer stop BiH's progress, but they continue to be a weight that slows the country's recovery and development into a normal European society.