

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 1/8/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: Fikret Abdic sentenced to 20 years in prison

Dnevni Avaz: Fikret Abdic sentenced to 20 years in prison

Jutarnje Novine: Abdic sentenced to 20 years in prison; Ashdown and Lagumdzija: BiH future is above individual and party interests

Dnevni List: Haris Silajdzic sues Dnevni List for million KM, Fikret Abdic sentenced 20 years in prison

Vecernji List: Fikret Abdic sentenced to 20 years in prison; NHI to withdraw from the Alliance

Glas srpski: Milojica Kos released; Banja Luka Public Security Center files criminal report against PDP deputy;

Nezavisne novine: Abdic sentenced to 20 years in prison; PIC Steering Board supports economic reform in BiH – Foundation stone for legal system and justice laid;

Euro Blic: July's pensions by 10 August; Sinisa Djordjevic: The Hague has not answered on Srpska's requests

Vecernje Novosti: Vojislav Kostunica: Break up with Djindjic

War Crimes

Fikret Abdic

The Karlovac Cantonal Court sentenced Fikret Abdic, former Bosnian rebel leader and a candidate for the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, to a 20-year jail term for war crimes committed during war in BiH. Abdic was found guilty of "war

crimes against the civilian population and prisoners of war" Bihać in 1993 and 1995. Media report that Abdić and several hundred of his supporters who gathered outside of the court building greeted the sentence with disbelief but in a dignified manner. His lawyers have already announced that an appeal is being drafted.

The BiH Election Commission president, Lidija Korac, told the press that it is still too early for this body to discuss the fate of Abdić's candidacy, as the sentence will be appealed.

(Top story on **BHTV 1, FTV** prime time news, front page splash in **Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz, Jutarnje Novine, Nezavisne Novine, Slobodna Dalmacija, Dnevni List, Jutarnji List and Vecernji List, Glas Srpski p. 3, Vecernje Novosti p. 11, Blic p. 16, Nacional p. 7, The New York Times, BBC News, and Guardian**)

ICTY

ICTY announced that **Milojica Kos**, a Bosnian Serb who led a group of guards at the infamous Omarska detention camp in BiH in 1992, will be freed after serving two-thirds of his six-year prison sentence. *"We have decided to allow the petition for the release of Milojica Kos,"* an order signed by the court's president **Claude Jorda** said. The decision is prompted by the procedures governing detention in the UN member state that has agreed to house war criminals convicted by the court, in this case the Netherlands, where a reduction of one third of a sentence is the rule if prisoners do not misbehave. The document also noted *the "impeccable behavior of the prisoner and his determination not to relapse into crime"*. Kos was jailed for six years in November 2001 for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Omarska. He was due to be released in May of 2004. (second item in **BHTV 1, FTV** prime time news, **Glas Srpski, Nezavisne Novine** front pages, **Nacional p. 7, Blic p. 9, Vecernje Novosti p. 8**)

PIC Steering Board

At the end of the two-day session in Sarajevo, the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board supported the program of economic reform for BiH, which was presented by the BiH authorities. In its communiqué, the SB said that *"if implemented, the reforms discussed at this meeting will help set BiH irreversibly on the road to successful statehood and integration into Europe."* The PIC Political Directors also welcomed the formation of the Rule of Law Pillar and commended the work of the BiH Election Commission on organizing the first BiH –run elections. Finally, the Steering Board thanked the Paddy Ashdown for taking over the post of the High Representative and expressed its full support to his priorities – first justice, then jobs, through reform. (BHTV 1, FTV, and RTRS – first item – news carry the press release. Dnevni Avaz quotes the PR almost in full on p. 2, Glas Srpski p. 3 quote excerpts of the PR, Nezavisne Novine p. 5, Blic p. 3)

At a joint press conference in Sarajevo, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, and the BiH Foreign Minister, Zlatko Lagumdžija, said that BiH citizens at the upcoming election will have a choice between *"reforms or a failure"*. Ashdown: *"Citizens will have a choice: to keep things the way they are, or to implement reforms. By virtue of simply turning out for the elections, the citizens are starting reforms in the country...These elections are truly important. They are a chance to choose a better future. That is why you should give your mandate to all those who propose and insist on reform. You will not be able to change anything if you stay at home on October 5."* Ashdown also stressed that the Peace Implementation Council and he personally will not support any individual political party, but *"the programs and reforms which will help Bosnia succeed."* He emphasized that the program of economic reform, which was accepted by the PIC, represents a *"contract of sorts between BiH and the International Community."*

Lagumdžija stressed that this program of reform should *"become a program of all BiH and its citizens."* *"The program opens*

possibilities for BiH's way out of crisis, for it is supported by the EU, US, all more powerful financial institutions in the world, and the PIC. IT should be a foundation of reform, which will allow opening of new jobs and help set BiH on her way to Europe." (BHTV 1, FTV, RTRS, **Oslobodjenje** p. 3, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 2, **Jutarnje Novine** front page)

BIH Foreign Relations

Djindjic's statement

Recent statement by the Serbian Prime Minister, **Zoran Djindjic**, that BiH and Kosovo are the two "unresolved problems in the Balkans which hamper its effective integration into Europe" caused numerous reactions in BiH. The PIC Steering Board and the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, strongly condemned the statement. "Every politician who doubts or questions the sovereignty or the statehood of BiH is not only doing harm to his own reputation, and the reputation of the country he is representing, but also to BIH," said **Paddy Ashdown**.

Zlatko Lagumdžija seconded this view: "The only good thing is that Djindjic is not deciding about the future of BiH...I believe that this is one of the pre-election excursions of a man who used to barbecue with Bosnian Serb forces while they were attacking Sarajevo and who later managed to extradite Milosevic to The Hague. Luckily, it is the BIH citizens who decide about the future of their country."

BiH Presidency also condemned the statement: "The BiH Presidency finds this view unacceptable and detrimental, especially because it was expressed during the regional conference held in Salzburg, in which BiH participated as a sovereign state and UN member".

The BIH Council of Ministers chairman, **Dragan Mikerevic**, however, said that he personally cannot condemn Djindjic's statement. "I am afraid that Djindjic's statement was taken

out of the context, because he did not say specifically that BiH is a protectorate.”. (Dnevni Avaz p. 2, Oslobođenje p. 6, Glas Srpski, BHTV 1, FTV, Slobodna Dalmacija, Dnevni List)

Kostajnica

Both Banja Luka dailies, **Glas srpski (p. 3)** and **Nezavisne novine (p. 3)** reports that the State Border Service (SBS) requested that Croatian team of engineers along with construction machines returns to the left bank of the river Una yesterday. Both papers quote the Kostajnica Mayor, Drago Bundalo, as saying that the Kostajnica municipality leadership is disappointed and dissatisfied with one-sided moves and hostile trespassing of the Croatian border police on the BiH territory.

Jutarnji List (page 6, by Koraljka Djetelic), **Vecernji List** (page 2) and **Slobodna Dalmacija** (last page by N. Pavelic) report that the Croatian utility services (electricity, water, phones etc) are doing preparatory works for opening of the border crossing which is scheduled for August 15, 2002. In a statement for **Jutarnji List**, **Filip Vucak**, the President of joint Commission for border crossings said that the Croatian police will eventually be deployed on the other side of the Una river: *“A great deal of diplomatic efforts has been put invested in the resolution of this issue, and the Croatian border service will cross the Una (river) at the point when its arrival will not bring into question the good relations between the two states”*, said Vucak, adding that the Croatian side wants to be patient and not force the arrival of (Croatian) police. *“However, out patience will not last forever.”*

In an interview with Zagreb’s weekly **Globus**, the Croatian Foreign Minister, **Tonino Picula**, said that the dispute over the Kostajnica border crossing is a part of the pre-election campaigns in BiH and Yugoslavia. *“It is the pre-election time in BiH and in Yugoslavia, so a part of political forces in*

these countries believes that they can score some points by aggravating relations with their neighbours."

Federation Affairs

Defense Ministry

At a press conference in Sarajevo, the Federation Deputy Minister of Defense, Ferid Buljubasic, said that he does not feel responsible for the ongoing financial affair in the Federation Defense Ministry. Buljubasic also denied accusations of the Minister Mijo **Anic** about suspicious transactions from the Federation budget and discriminatory attitude towards a Croat component of the Federation Army and argued that it was the Bosniak component which "was actually in a discriminatory position." Buljubasic accused Anic that he is against the abolishment of parallelism in the Ministry of Defense and the Federation Army and that he manipulates with incorrect information about sale of weapon. (**Dnevni List** p. 5, **Vecernji List** p. 2, **Slobodna Dalmacija** p. 17, **Oslobodjenje** p. 6, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 9)

Leutar case

Vecernji List (page 2) reports that summer vacations suspended the ongoing trial on the Leutar case. VL notes that during the talks with representatives in the Federation Parliament, **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative, did not respond to concrete questions regarding the Leutar case. The daily claims that Ashdown is "*interested in resolving this case, however, his concrete moves do not testify to this.*"

NHI- Federation Ministers

Commenting on the failure of the Federation Parliament's House of Representatives to secure the necessary Parliament majority to name Franjo Franjic to the post of the Federation Finance Minister, **Ivan Madunic**, the President of the HDZ Caucus in the Federation Parliament, stated: '*HDZ is not an Alliance member.*

They should wonder as to how they cannot rule, adopt things or appoint someone if they do not have majority, that it their problem. It is well known what happens with such Governments, that do not have such majorities in the Parliament.' (**Dnevni List** front page)

In separate commentates in **Dnevni Avaz** and **Oslobodjenje**, Fadil Mandal and Gojko Beric note that the failure of the Alliance to secure the necessary parliamentary majority to appoint the new Minister so of Finance and Social Affairs and Refugees is a clear indicator that this coalition is facing a break-up on national basis, *"which is perhaps the worst possible scenario."*

Economic Affairs

By implementing economic reforms the RS Government intends to reduce the number of the unemployed and considerably improve the financial position of the pensioners in the RS, said **Mladen Ivanic**, the RS prime minister, in Banja Luka on Wednesday. At a news conference, **Ivanic**, **Simeun Vilendecic**, the RS minister of finance, and **Milica Bisic**, the director of the RS Tax Administration, reported on the most important economic and financial indicators for the first six months this year. According to the six-month report, the RS registered a decrease in inflation and industrial production and an increase in the average salary and the overall budgetary revenues in relation to the same period last year. According to Ivanic, the average salary has increased in relation to last year while the number of the unemployed had decreased. He added that the RS Government would be able to give financial assistance to an increased number of pensioners. **Ivanic**: *"Yesterday, at the PIC meeting I raised the issue of a bad agreement that was signed two ago, since we in the RS are now paying the pensioners who had paid their contributions in the Federation. We raised this issue and I believe that in the next month or two we will manage to have the number which would automatically mean that, according to our estimates, there would be about 25,000 – or more – fewer*

pensioners in the RS and more in the Federation, which would automatically lead to an increase in pensions of about 15 to 25 percent at the current level.” (Blic p. 16 and Vecernje Novosti p. 13, Oslobodjenje p. 9, RTRS)

Vecernji List (front page, by Zoran Kresic) reports that due to Federation regulations and poor work of Tax Administrations, the Cantons in the BiH Federation have been brought in a difficult financial situation. The daily notes that in the first 6 months of 2002, all Cantons, apart from the Sarajevo Canton, marked a budget shortfall of 20%. Kresic notes that **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative for BiH, also referred to an inefficient administrative apparatus, when he said in his introductory speech that the Dayton BiH, organized in this way, cannot survive. VL said that, by all accounts, Cantons will be the first administration units that will disappear.

High Representative's Decisions/Reactions

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, issued on Wednesday a Decision extending the ban on the allocation of state-owned land in BiH, first introduced by a Decision of the High Representative on 27 April 2000. The ban is extended until 31 March 2003, or until the enforcement of legislation regulating the issue of state-owned property, including former socially-owned property. (**Oslobodjenje** p. 3, **BHTV 1**)

Dnevni List (page 4) reports that the Pro-European Party issued a press release in which the party fully supports statement given by **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative, in the Federation Parliament. “*Our goal is to strengthen responsibility of governments that have to serve the peoples and citizenry and not rule over them*”, reads the PR.

Commenting on Ashdown's speech before the Federation Parliament, **Dnevni List's** Ivica Glibusic notes that the High Representative is clearly dissatisfied with the work of the Alliance. “*It is obvious from the speech of the High*

Representative, in which the HR expressed great dissatisfaction over the achieved progress that International Community is disappointed over the work of the Alliance... The sentence that BiH desperately needs reforms speaks for itself. A former HR and his associates brought the Alliance for Changes in power and at the end the Alliance has not change anything. BiH peoples should vote for some third option at the next elections because the first two ruling structures were not efficient.'

Pre-election Campaign

Nacional (p. 11) reports that the BiH Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Zlatko Lagumdzija**, during his last-week visit to Washington, asked for the US support to "his SDP". He also asked the US Administration to exert pressure on moderate RS and Croat political parties to enter a coalition with the SDP, in order to prevent the nationalistic parties from winning the upcoming elections. A high-ranking Western diplomat confirmed to the daily that Lagumdzija, at the meeting with US President **George Bush**, expressed his readiness to be "a leader of all BiH citizens, and not only Bosniaks." Nacional claims that Lagumdzija will "get what he was asking for." **Nacional** : "As far as the RS is concerned, the US Institute for Democracy survey showed that the SDS will win the elections, but it will not be able to make a government of its own. The US Ambassador to BiH, **Clifford Bond**, has been, for the past several weeks, presenting an idea in Banja Luka that the parliamentary majority in the RS should be made up of 6 parties (PDP, SNSD, SPRS, DNS, SDP and Party for BiH). **Zekerijah Osmic**, an SDP member in the RS National Assembly, confirmed that the US wants to create an anti-SDS coalition of 6 parties."

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Cantonal Court in Karlovac sentences Fikret Abdic to 20

years in prison

- ICTY decides to release Milojica Kosa, a sentenced war criminal and a former guard commander of Omarska prison, after he served two thirds of his 6 years sentence
- BIH Council of Ministers chairman Dragan Mikerevic says he cannot comment on Djindjic's statement about BiH and Kosovo as "unresolved problems in the Balkans"
- High Representative Paddy Ashdown condemns Djindjic's statement- "Status of BiH must not and will not be brought into question"
- High Representative issues a Decision extending a ban on allocation of state-owned land in BiH

FTV

- Cantonal Court in Karlovac sentences Fikret Abdic to 20 years in prison
- ICTY decides to release Milojica Kosa, a sentenced war criminal and a former guard commander of Omarska prison, after he served two thirds of his 6 years sentence
- Travnik: Palma company affair
- PIC Steering Board accepts a package of economic reform presented by BIH authorities
- High Representative Paddy Ashdown condemns Djindjic's statement- "Status of BiH must not and will not be brought into question"

RTRS

- PIC Steering Board accepts a package of economic reform presented by BIH authorities
- RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic says RS budget in the first six months of this year has increased by 8,3%
- RS Ministry of Education affair of buying equipment for schools