OHR BiH Media Round-up, 24/9/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: Federation Prosecutor accepts FOSS report incriminating former Boniak officials

Dnevni Avaz: Federation government – no increase in pensions; Croat inmate in Zenica – I converted to Islam on my own free will

Glas Srpski: Seven prisoners in Zenica prison convert to Islam: Pressure changes religion; Brcko: A fight over a girl

Euro Blic: Government provides money for RTRS; 12,000 families in Sarajevo in someone else's property; Svetozar Mihajlovic: Crossing the border with ID card; Vuk Draskovic: Drina will never be a border

Nezavisne Novine: Results of the parliamentary elections in Germany: Victory of Social – Democrats; The Hague Tribunal delivers new indictment against former Commander of the Croatian Army: Croatian Government refuses to extradite Bobetko

Vecernji List: Croat inmate: I converted to Islam on my own free will

Dnevni List: Who wanted to leave Mostar without airport?

Federation Affairs

Croat Inmates in Zenica prison

BHTV 1 reported that the **Federation Ministry of Justice** has not yet officially been informed about the details of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly's commission in connection with the situation in the **Zenica prison**, and the alleged abuse and forceful conversation of Croat inmates. The Federation Justice Minister, **Zvonko Mijan,** did not want to comment on the report and allegations until his Ministry officially receives the details. *"Of course, this does not mean that I doubt the truthfulness of the report, but I think it is necessary first to receive an official report, and after that we shall issue*

an official reaction to it…We are monitoring the situation in Zenica prison, because it is under our special attention, since it is the only limited-access prison in the Federation. Of course, we know about the situation in other prisons. I believe that there is nothing dramatic there and that there is nothing that stands out as peculiar in any of our prisons."

Meanwhile, the **committee on human rights and refugees** of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly will request an investigation into the circumstances under which Croat prisoners serving sentence in Zenica decided to convert to Islam and the information that they had been subjected to physical abuse. The deputy chairman of the parliamentary committee, **Miro Grabovac Titan**, confirmed to journalists in Sarajevo on Monday that during a recent tour of the prisons in our country, an information was received that up to seven persons of Croat nationality have undergone surgeries which can be linked to conversion to Islam. (**BiH Radio 1, Glas Srpski** front page**, Nezavisne Novine** p. 9, **Vecernji List** front page, **Dnevni List** front page, **Slobodna Dalmacija** p. 13 **Jutarnji list** p. 7, "**Vjesnik** p. 2)

Director of Zenica prison, **Hidajet Jabandzic,** rejected the allegations of abuse of Croat inmates. *"The parliamentary commission was told in no unclear terms that this only referred to only one man who did it only of his own free will. We in the prison do not understand at all why there has been so much speculation in the media about some 30 people being converted."* In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (front page) and **FTV** prime time news, the Croat inmate who converted to Islam, **Viktor Dumandzic**, confirmed that he did so on his own free will. *"Nobody forced me. I did it of my own free will as my heart desired, I read some books on Islam. I was not a believer before I converted to Islam."*

FOSS report

Oslobodjenje (front page) reports that the **Federation Prosecutor's Office** asked the Ministry of Interior to start

preliminary investigation of allegations published in the **FOSS** (Federation Intelligence-Security Agency) report, and which charges a number of former Bosniak officials (Hasan Cengic, Senad Sahinpasic, Bakir Alispahic, Irfan Ljevakovic, Edhem Bicakcic, Fikret Abdic, Alija Delimustafic, Senan Memic, Murid Djuliman) with involvement in organized crime between 1992-2002. The controversial report also accuses the officials of illegal appropriation of funds which were earmarked or donated for defense purposes during the war in BiH.

Pogorelica

Commenting on the initiative of the Federation president, **Safet Halilovic**, to allow the suspects from the so-called **Pogorelica case** to stand trial out of detention, the founder of the Party for BiH, **Haris Silajdzic**, said that this case has to be treated consistently with other cases and in according to a precedent set by the former High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, in the case of the so-called Zepce group. *"If Biljana Plavsic can stand trial out of detention, I don't see why they couldn't,"* Silajdzic said. (**Dnevni Avaz** p. 3)

According to a **poll** conducted by **Dnevni Avaz** in Mostar, Sarajevo, Zenica, Tuzla, and Bihac, 68% of the polled citizens supported Halilovic's initiative, 5% were against it, while 27% had no opinion on the matter. The poll was conducted among 500 individuals using a method of random sampling.

BIH State-level issues/IC

The FRY president, **Vojislav Kostunica**, has said that he has never questioned the fact that BiH is an internationally recognized state and that he has never supported the incorporation of the RS into Yugoslavia. *"I am not out of my mind to take part in several talks with the Presidency of BiH, to help organize the trilateral meeting between Croatia, BiH and Yugoslavia, and to support border changes at the same time,"* Kostunica told the Banja Luka-based **Patriot** magazine. He said that he did not even think about border changes and

added that he wants to establish links between people, which is not contrary to the Dayton Agreement. *"Establishing links between people is in our interest and I have to say that we are especially interested in the RS and our people in the RS, in line with the Dayton Agreement,"* he added. (**Oslobodjenje** p. 2, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 5, **Vecernje Novosti**)

UNDP mission in BiH presented on Monday in Sarajevo its **report on human development in BiH** for 2002. Speaking at a press conference, the UNDP resident representative, **Henrik Kolstrup**, said that the most recent figures for the country are quite alarming. *"Not just is the HDI (Human Development Index – indicator for measuring human quality of life in one country) for Bosnia and Herzegovina far below the European average, which is not particularly surprising, but also the country appears to be in worse shape than almost any other country in the Southeast Europe….Nearly one fifth of the BiH population lives below the poverty line."* (**Oslobodjenje** p. 3, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 5, **Vecernji List** p. 2)

The **Kuwaiti Minister of Finance**, Planning and State Administration **Yusuf Hamad al-Ibrahim** arrived yesterday on a two-day visit to BiH. Immediately after the arrival, he met with the BiH Minister of Trade and Economic Relations **Azra Hadziahmetovic** and BiH Ambassador to Kuwait **Edhem Pasic**. **Oslobodjenje** and **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 2) report that Hamad al-Ibrahim will, during his stay, also meet with the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, and visit the BH Steel company in Zenica.

Dnevni List (front and page 7) quotes the Russian Ambassador to BiH, **Alexander Griscenko,** as commenting on speculations that the Russian Mafia is trying to get involved in the process of privatization in BiH. Ambassador Griscenko says that the speculations are unfounded and could only influence economic relationships between the two countries.

PIC

Oslobodjenje (p. 4) reports that at a two-day session of PIC

Political Directors, BiH officials will present concrete initiatives for the establishment of the rule of law. *"This is the second such meeting since Paddy Ashdown assumed the post of the High Representative. During the first session, BiH officials presented their plan for fulfilling the necessary conditions for the economic reform. This time, they should present a similar contract on the establishment of the rule of law,"* said **Kevin Sullivan**, an OHR spokesman. *"This is not only about BiH meeting the European standards in the sphere of the rule of law…but about practical and tangible measures which would bring the rule of law closer to common man."* (**Dnevni Avaz** p. 4, **Slobodna Dalmacija p. 17, RTRS Morning Radio News**)

BIH Deposit Insurance Agency

The RS Prime Minister, **Mladen Ivanic,** sent an open letter yesterday to the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown,** in which he said that, during selection process of the steering board members and Directors of the Deposit Insurance Agency, the principles of legality, transparency and equal representation of RS and BiH Federation were not respected (**Glas Srpski, p.3, Nezavisne Novine, p.10).** In his letter, Ivanic says that out of six members of the steering board, only one is Serb and bearing in mind that the Agency is a joint institution *"…such representation and domination of BiH Federation representatives is unacceptable and implies continuation of the practice that representatives of Bosniak and Croat people determine all issues in joint institutions."* The RS Government will treat the Agency as Federation body until the equal position for RS is provided. (**Dnevni List** p. 5)

Constitutional Court appointments

Glas Srpski (p.5) continues with its reports related to the election of judges from RS to the BiH Constitutional Court. In today's issue, Gojko Dakic and Milenko Sajic write that the Serbs answered with veto to the Bosniak's veto on the selection of judges to BiH Constitutional Court. Namely, the

Serb members of the Constitutional Commission decided that Bosniak veto is endangering vital national interest of Serbs and thus replied with the veto, for the first time since it was introduced. Furthermore, Serb members of the Constitutional Commission expressed an opinion that Bosniak veto is undermining dignity of the RS institutions, first of all the RS National Assembly and then High Judicial Council and IJC, which participated in the election of judges.

The Speaker of the RS National Assembly, **Dragan Kalinic,** warned the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown,** that after all the consultations with OHR and procedure that was carried out, he sees no justified reasons for Bosniaks to invoke veto right. Glas Srpski says that it will be really interesting to see what will the High Representative decide and whose veto will he support, Bosniak or Serb.

SIPA

The BiH Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications, **Svetozar Mihajlovic,** said on Monday that the BiH Council of Ministers has received 18 applications for the leading post in the State Information and Protection Agency, and noted that the selection will be made by a competent commission of the CoM. *"The commission should review all the applications and send its evaluation to the CoM. Finally, the CoM will nominate three of its favored candidates to the BiH Presidency by September 30."*

Mihajlovic also told the journalists yesterday that the CoM has adopted proposed Law on amendments and changes to the Law on Citizenship, which is to postpone the deadline for signing of a bilateral agreements between BiH and interested countries in order to avoid a situation in which a number of BiH citizens would lose their BiH citizenship. (**Dnevni List** p. 4)

War Crimes

Croatian Government received new indictment against General **Janko Bobetko** yesterday.The Croatian Prime Minister, **Ivica Racan,** stated at the meeting with representatives of War Veterans Organizations that Bobetko will not be arrested nor extradited to the Hague Tribunal due to the fact that *"…the indictment against him is unconstitutional".* High officials of the HDZ met in Bobetko's house in Zagreb and discussed the establishment of a board for protection of the Homeland War with the main goal to prevent any future arrests and extradition of Croatian Generals to the ICTY. (reported very prominently in all Croat(ian) media and **Nezavisne Novine, p.2)**

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Račan promised that Bobetko would not be extradited and that Croatia is getting ready to suffer the consequences.
- Parliamentary Commission: There are no conditions in BiH prisons
- A Visit of a high Kuwait delegation could open the possibilities for foreign investments.
- The research of NDI: moderate parties are loosing support

FTV

- Travnik: an hour-long warning strike of police
- Brčko: New mass protests in Arizona case
- Drvar: Protests sue to the inadequate school programs
- Sarajevo: UNDP's ID of the social status of BiH
- Parliamentarian Commission claims: Human rights of prisoners in BiH are violated
- Floods in Bihać and Cazin

RTRS – no report due to technical problems