

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 26/9/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: Repovci case; Pogorelica suspects soon to be released?

Dnevni Avaz: High Representative's message: Personal letters go to 1.4 million addresses

Vecernji List: Every sixth citizen of BiH is starving!

Dnevni List: Reconstruction of religious buildings for pre-election purposes

Nezavisne Novine: Chairman of the House of Peoples of BiH Parliamentary Assembly, Nikola Spiric, presented documents proving criminal activities in BiH banking system; Nebojsa Radmanovic for "Nezavisne Novine": SNSD has both – program and personnel

Glas Srpski: In the village of Margetici, near Sokolac: Zeljko Markovic buried; The investigation into the murder of the Serb Sarajevo police chief continues: Each of the bullets fired – lethal

Euro Blic: A father of a killed soldier committed suicide because of eviction; A prisoner beaten up with chains; No witnesses and leads of Markovic's murder

BiH State-level issues/Foreign Relations

BiH Council of Ministers Chairman **Dragan Mikerevic** accused on Wednesday Foreign Minister **Zlatko Lagumdžija** of arbitrarily reaching a decision that **the agreement on dual citizenship** with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be made conditional on the adoption of changes to the law on citizenship.

"The Council of Ministers had arranged the agreements which should have been signed during the visit of Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic to BiH on September 16. On the basis of that, you have no right to set conditions for the already arranged agreements by using your ministerial position without the

*necessary consultations with other members of the Council of Ministers, particularly not without the consent of the deputy foreign minister from the ranks of the Serb people, Milan Blagojevic," Mikerevic said in an open letter to Lagumdzija. He warned that the consequences of canceling agreed visits could not only be a failure to sign agreements, but could also strain diplomatic relations. (SRNA, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 4, **Oslobodjenje** p. 3)*

The FRY Ministry of Interior announced yesterday that the signing of the bilateral agreement between the FRY and BiH on border traffic without travel documents, should be preceded by the signing of three separate bilateral agreements. The FRY Ministry emphasized that in May 2002, the Yugoslav Government adopted this document and forwarded it to responsible institutions in BiH. However, this agreement has not been signed yet. (Blic p. 6)

The Chairman of the House of Peoples of BiH Parliamentary Assembly, **Nikola Spiric**, stated at a press conference yesterday in Banja Luka that more than 1 billion KM was laundered in the RS and even more in the BiH Federation. According to Spiric, it would be impossible to launder such amounts without a silent approval of the entity governments. Spiric called the Special Auditor for the RS and the Federation, appointed by the High Representative, to get involved into the investigation, *"as obviously, the Governments of RS and F BiH are not capable of doing so."* (**Nezavisne Novine**, cover page, **Glas Srpski**, p. 2, **Blic** p. 7, **Vecernje Novosti** p. 7, **Nacional** p. 11).

Oslobodjenje (front page) reports that Slovenian delegation in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg proposed that **old foreign currency** savings be paid out from the solidarity fund, which is to be filled by the funds from the former Yugoslav republics and the International Community. The head of the BiH delegation, **Sejfudin Tokic**, labeled this proposal as insulting. *"Now, more than ever before, there are reasons for*

associations of foreign currency savings depositors to organize boycott of Slovenian products in BiH. Slovenian delegation tried once again to buy time by offering an insulting solution to treat the issue of foreign currency savings as humanitarian.” (Vecernji List p. 2)

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe asked last night all member-countries to ratify the Agreement on the formation of the **ICC** and do not conclude bilateral agreements with the US on exemption of its personnel from the court’s jurisdiction. (**FENA, Oslobodjenje** p. 3)

Vecernji List (page 2 by D. Jazvic) reports, quoting reliable sources, that the US Government will not insist on BiH signing a bilateral agreement on exemption of US personnel from ICC jurisdiction, especially not before the October 5 elections. “Americans do not want to complicate the political situation in the already sensitive moment for BiH,” notes the daily.

OHR / IC activities

The High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, visited on Wednesday Bosanski Brod and Prijedor and hosted a live broadcast at the Radio Prijedor, where he responded to numerous questions of ordinary citizens inquiring mostly about the implementation of property laws. During his stay, Ashdown also visited the editor in chief of **Kozarski vjesnik**, Zoran Sovilj, a journalist who has been a subject of numerous threats because of his bold writing. Sovilj told Avaz that Ashdown’s visit represents support and encouragement not only to him and his paper, but to all journalists fighting against crime and corruption. During a public debate with citizens of Prijedor, Ashdown encouraged voters to turn out at October elections and decide on the future of their country. (**Dnevni Avaz** p. 2, **Nezavisne Novine** “The past in BiH will not be repeated”p. 9, **BHTV 1**, 4th item in **Federation Radio**, 5th item in **BH Radio 1** news)

According to a **poll** conducted by Avaz agency, 76% of BiH citizens believe that **the High Representative** will, with the

help of local authorities, succeed in purging the politics of criminals. The same poll indicates that only 6% had doubts about it, while 18% had no opinion. The telephone poll was conducted among 300 citizens in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Capljina using a method of random sampling.

US Ambassador **Clifford Bond** visited yesterday Zvornik and Janja and urged local authorities in tow town to increase their efforts in encouraging refugee return and implementation of property laws. (**Dnevni Avaz** p. 2, **Oslobodjenje** p. 5)

Dnevni Avaz (p. 2) reports that PDHR **Donald Hays** visited yesterday Sarajevo factory of gas appliances Unis-Fagas and discussed with its management the way of improving the business climate in BiH. *"Everywhere in the world, companies are fighting with competition . Only in BiH, they also have to fight with the problems imposed upon them by the elected officials. It is high time that politicians start working for the interest of their voters, instead of their personal interest, and complete the reforms necessary to attract foreign investors to the country."*

Federation Affairs

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 10), the Federation Prime Minister, **Alija Behmen**, confirmed that he has received a letter from the PDHR **Donald Hays**, in which he asked the Federation institutions not to discuss the proposed **Restitution Law** until a Law on the state level is adopted. Rejecting allegations that he tried to conceal the letter, Behmen said that he would have informed deputies in the Federation Parliament's House of Representatives, had the Proposed Law been included on the agenda. *"We have been waiting for too long on the Law at the state level. In the meantime, nationalized apartments in the RS are being offered for privatization...and nationalized land is being allocated to refugees who refuse to return to their pre-war homes...Look what happened in Kotorsko, Zitomislici, Mostar, Visegrad. Usurpation of land is advancing and I am afraid we will face a*

fait accompli waiting for the Restitution Law. The issue of restitution is important for the integration of BiH."

The daily also quotes OHR spokesman **Patrik Volf** as saying that it is necessary to find an economically feasible solution for the restitution. *"In September 2000, the PIC SB concluded that the restitution process must be physically sustainable and implemented with rightful compensation..."*

Dnevni List (page 10) reports that **Zarko Misic**, an HKDU BiH candidate for the BiH Presidency, addressed the High Representative **Paddy Ashdown**, and asked him to get involved in the case of the alleged mistreatment of Catholics in the Zenica Prison and suspected forced conversions to Islam. Misic said that during the possible investigation in Zenica, all Croats and Catholics should be transferred to the Mostar prison. **Vecernji List** (page 2) reports that officials of the Croatian Embassy in BiH also visited the Zenica Prison early this week and discovered that only one person converted to Islam while several others stated that they were not forced to change their religion. **Slobodna Dalmacija** (page 12, conducted by Darko Juka) carries an interview with **Jozo Bulic**, an inmate who was transferred from Zenica to Mostar. He said that more than one prisoner converted to Islam. Bulic added that 15 Arabs are bosses in the prison and that *"almost official greeting is fascist-like raised hand with shouting – Al'Qaida. (...) I don't expect any help from Croat politicians. I can only expect help from **Paddy Ashdown**, because Croat politicians in Zenica are too weak. If this doesn't help, after this affair, Christian inmates are dead people"*, Bulic said. SD (back page) also carries statement of Federation Minister of Justice, **Zvonko Mijan**, that there was no indications that prisoners were under pressure to convert to Islam.

Dnevni List (front and page 3 by P. Radic) carries a commentary on an official start of reconstruction of Baba-Besirova mosque in the west part of Mostar. Radic says that although the event itself has been announced as an official

start of reconstruction of a first mosque in west Mostar, many Croat officials in the Mostar City Administration will not participate in the opening ceremony because *“they recognize a clear intention of national parties to abuse the event for their pre-election purposes.”*

RS issues

Both Banja Luka dailies report that the Head of PSC Serb Sarajevo, **Zeljko Markovic**, was buried yesterday in the village of Margetici, near Sokolac. The RS President, **Mirko Sarovic**, RS Interior Minister, **Dragomir Jovicic**, and other RS officials attended the funeral. According to the results of the investigation, carried out so far, 10 bullets were fired at Markovic and each one of them was lethal. The investigation continues. (**Glas Srpski**, cover page, **Nezavisne Novine**, p.2, **Blic** p. 7, **Vecernje Novosti** p. 15, **Nacional** p. 13)

According to **Vecernje Novosti**, Markovic was killed by a mob involved in car smuggling.

UN-IPTF spokesperson for Banja Luka and Bihac regions **Alun Roberts** on Wednesday condemned the *“probably planned”* murder of Markovic, and urged the RS Ministry of Interior to conduct a comprehensive investigation. (**Blic** p. 7)

War Crimes

The war crimes trial of **Slobodan Milosevic** re-opened on Thursday with the focus shifting to charges for Croatia and BiH. News agencies (**AFP**, **Reuters**) report that, at the opening of the new stage of the trial, chief ICTY prosecutor Carla Del Ponte took a swipe at Yugoslavia which she accused of failing to cooperate with tribunal during this trial. *“Cooperation remains fractious, difficult and unpredictable,”* she told the court. Milosevic is charged with committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in both countries. In addition, he also faces the charge of genocide in BiH.

All the CRO dailies still prominently cover the Bobetko case. (**Vecernji List**: front page *“Mesic for extradition of Bobetko”*, **Jutarnji List**: front *“President Mesic in address to nation:*

'Bobetko is accused not Croatia'”, Slobodna Dalmacija: page 3 “Stjepan Mesic in address to nation: ‘Nobody has mandate to lead Croatia into isolation'”, Vjesnik: front page “Mesic: ‘Nobody has mandate to lead Croatia into isolation'”, Dnevni List, page 16 “Ivan Simonovic, Croatian Ambassador to UN: ‘Reactions from world depend on Croatian arguments'” and Globus: front page “General Bobetko accuses”

The dailies focus by and large on the address of the Croatian President, **Stipe Mesic**, who appeared on the Croatian national television last night. Jutarnji List carries the whole transcript of the address. During the address itself, Mesic reminded that Croatia was one of the founders of the ICTY and that Croatia and its citizenry should “*fully co-operate, in any case and every time*”. Commenting on the indictment against General Janko Bobetko, Mesic said “*It is not about putting the Homeland war and survival of the Croatian state into question (...) I repeat: that’s not true. General has been indicted for concrete cases on basis of so-called command responsibility (...) That’s the criteria Slobodan Milosevic is being charged on in The Hague at the moment (...) Nobody has a mandate to lead Croatia into new isolation*”.

Globus carries an exclusive interview with General Janko Bobetko in which he denies that he is responsible for crimes in the Medacki pocket for which he has been charged. Bobetko said that he had tasked general **Petar Stipetic** and admiral **Davor Domazet** to supervise the withdrawal of the Croatian Army troops from the Medak pocket (**NB:** most of the crimes were committed during the withdrawal) and that both Stipetic and Domazet left the area before the withdrawal was completed. General Bobetko also says that he talked to Goran Granic and Ivica Racan about the situation and that he received assurances from them that he would not be extradited.

Election Activities

Dnevni Avaz (front page splash) reports that the High

Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, sent a personal letter to voters in BiH urging them to vote at the upcoming elections. The daily notes that Ashdown is quite concerned about the indications that a significant number of eligible citizens may not turn out at polling sites on October 5, but reminded the voters that on that date, they will be deciding about the future of BiH. (The daily also carries a facsimile of the letter in Latin script, **Nezavisne Novine** p. 2, **Dnevni List** front page)

Vecernji List (page 4) carries a public opinion poll conducted by Transparency International. **Boris Divjak**, the President of Transparency International, stated that *'over 40% of young people from 18 to 29 years old, as well as citizens with higher education do not trust any political party when the struggle against corruption is in question.'* The public opinion poll has shown that among Bosniaks the politicians with the clearest vision of the economic development, who are trusted the most are **Haris Siljadzic**, **Zlatko Lagumdzija** and **Beriz Belkic**. Among Serbs these politicians are **Milorad Dodik**, **Mirko Sarovic** and **Mladen Ivanic**, while Croats trust the most **Zlatko Lagumdzija**, **Barisa Colak** and **Jadranko Prlic**. In the same category, the leading parties in the BiH Federation are **SDP BiH**, **Party for BiH** and **HDZ**, while in the RS these parties are **SNSD**, **SDS** and **PDP**. Divjak says that *'31, 6% of young people in the BiH Federation answered that no political party is able to fight the corruption and if we add to this percentage 8,4% of young people, who do not know the answer or do not want to give answer to this question, than the number of young people who are not interested in the elections is 40% and this is the most significant number of people, who will abstain from the elections, that has been marked so far'.*

The **association assisting refugees and displaced persons in the FRY** has expressed concern that refugees will be *"neglected and marginalized"* at the October 5 elections in BiH and that about 250,000 refugees from BiH living in the FRY will not be able to exercise their right to vote.

“Even those very few registered voters, which make 5 per cent, must pay for costs of postage in order to vote, and this will lead to only half of them bothering to vote,” the statement says. (SRNA)

In an interview with **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 5), **Dragan Covic**, the HDZ candidate for the BiH Presidency, said that if he gains the trust of the voters, he will try to turn the BiH Presidency into a genuine pillar of the state which will communicate with the International Community and lobby for positive projects. Commenting on polls which indicated that he, **Haris Silajdzic** and **Mirko Sarovic** will be the most likely members of the future BiH Presidency, Covic said that he will work with *“competent individuals, with individuals who have support of their voters, who mean something among their peoples...I believe that, together with Haris Silajdzic, I will give a new dimension to the BiH Presidency.”*

Slobodna Dalmacija (front and page 13), **Dnevni List** (front and page 5) and **Vecernji List** (page 4) report that the Chancellor of the Mostar University (West), **Frano Ljubic**, refused to see an NHI's candidate for BiH Presidency, **Mijo Anic**, at his office in Mostar yesterday. According to Anic, the visit was announced one day in advance but Ljubic's secretary informed him that the chancellor was away in Zagreb. Anic, however, claims that Ljubic spent the whole day in his office yesterday. According to all papers, Anic was deeply disappointed with the outcome because he wanted to learn more about the problems the University is facing especially having in mind that Chancellor Ljubic received HDZ's candidate for BiH Presidency, **Dragan Covic**, only a few days ago. SD quotes Ljubic that he did not want to meet election candidates during the campaign and noted that Covic had visited the *university “in capacity of the Chair of University's Steering Board.”*

Electronic Media Headlines

- The organized crime stands behind the murder of Police Chief Srpsko Sarajevo, claims the RS Government
- The last session of the FBiH Parliament did not have a quorum
- 22 % BiH citizens will not vote, said Transparency International
- Protests of employees with education and judicial branches of Herzegovina Neretva Canton will take place in Sarajevo at the beginning of October .

FTV

- Zagreb: 170 participants from 21 countries discuss the issues of terrorism and security
- Zenica: police cut the drug trade chain
- Mostar: The judiciary on strike but only in one part of Mostar
- Sarajevo: At the end of their mandate deputies show the their responsibility "in live"

RTRS

- Chief of Police Station Srpsko Sarajevo, Zeljko Markovic, buried today in Sokolac
- MoI – the best people and techniques are engaged in disclosure of Markovic's killers
- Ashdown – 60% of women, drugs and cigarettes are smuggled through BiH
- More than one billion of KM laundered in BiH – states Nikola Spiric, Chairman of the House of People of the Parliament Assembly of BiH
- World has to prevent against terrorism, warned Donald Rumsfeld