

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 27/8/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: The largest mass grave discovered in Kamenica near Zvornik; Kostajnica border crossing officially reopened

Dnevni Avaz: August pensions to be paid out on Sept 2; Kostajnica border crossing opened

Jutarnje Novine: Sarajevo to get its first private heart surgery center?

Nezavisne Novine: Kostajnica border crossing opens

Glas Srpski: Brcko schools: Clark shortened history in Brcko schools; Privatization of banks

Blic: Zoran Zivkovic: "Everyone will cross border only with IDs"; "Zrinski" connected two Kostajnicas

Vecernji List: Kostajnica border crossing opens

Dnevni List: Kostajnica border crossing opens

BiH Foreign Affairs

The BiH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, Svetozar Mihajlovic, and the Croatian Foreign Minister, Tonino Picula, opened on Monday the border crossing in Hrvatska Kostajnica and the bridge connecting BiH and Croatia. Mihajlovic: *"From today on, this reconstructed bridge should connect people, contribute to the improvement of neighborly relations and encourage refugee return."* Picula seconded this view, adding that the bridge should also improve communication between BiH and Croatia. The two ministers also signed yesterday the Annex to the Agreement on the temporary solution of the border crossing between the two countries. (First item in BHTV 1, RTRS and OBN prime time news, second in the FTV news, front page story in Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz, Nezavisne Novine, Jutarnji List, Vecernji List, Dnevni List, Slobodna Dalmacija,

Vjesnik, and Euro Blic, Glas Srpski p.3)

In an editorial in *Oslobodjenje*, Mirko Sagolj notes that the US had offered BiH a very unconformable deal (the bilateral agreement on giving immunity from prosecution by the ICC to all US personnel serving in BiH), which BiH can not accept, but should be weary of simply rejecting as well. *"The only positive thing is that the US has not insisted on any deadline. BiH should use this fact in the wisest possible way and wait for the final view of the European Union. Only then, BiH could make a proper political decision, which should be in line with the European."*

Vecernji List (page 3) and **Vjesnik** (page 7) report that BiH is trying to find a compromise about the proposed exemption of American citizens from the ICC jurisdiction. VL notes that BiH is considering an inter-state agreement on extradition signed between the Kingdom of Serbia and the USA in 1901. A senior official from the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: *'We have confirmed in practice that we stick to the application of this agreement from 1901 because we demanded from the USA extradition of **Muhamed Sacirbegovic**, a former BiH Ambassador to UN, by referring to this document.'* The official added that *'most probably the USA will insist on a new, more precise agreement, because only the agreement, which precisely stipulates the ban of extradition of American citizens, suits them'*.

Mirko Sarovic, the RS president, said yesterday that he *'supports the initiative of **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative for BiH, to enable the BiH and Yugoslav citizens to cross the border between the two countries with identity cards only'*. Sarovic also said that *'this initiative cannot be related to Ashdown only because it came from the RS one or two years ago'*. (**Dnevni List** p. 8, **Nezavisne Novine** p. 3)

BiH State-level developments

The **BiH Presidency** adopted on Monday a decision on the organization and work of defense institutions at the state level. According to the decision, the Standing Committee for Military Matters (**SCMM**) will be the institution tasked with coordinating activities of the armed forces at the state level and will have seven members – the three members of the BiH Presidency, the presidents of the entities, the chairman of the Council of Ministers and the foreign minister. According to Presidency member **Zivko Radisic**, the decision represents a step closer to the Partnership for Peace. *“I think that this is the maximum we could achieve in line with the existing constitutional provisions. [Dealing with] All other issues stemming from constitutional provisions would mean adopting fundamental constitutional and legal changes.”* (second item in **BHTV 1** and **RTRS** prime time news, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 2, **Oslobodjenje** p. 6, **Dnevni List** f.p., **Vecernji List** p. 2 and **Slobodna Dalmacija** p. 14, **Glas Srpski** p. 3, **Nezavisne Novine**, p. 2, **Blic** p. 17)

SENSE Agency from Brussels reported last night that the NATO HQ marked the Presidency decision on the establishment of the SCMM *“an important step towards the Partnership for Peace program.”*

Blic quotes the RS President, Mirko Sarovic, as saying: “In next four years, I see BiH as de-centralized state, with the highest authorities in frame of the entities. If I were elected to be a member of the Presidency, I would put my efforts for preserving the RS dignity.”

War Crimes

Oslobodjenje (front page) reports that exhumation experts discovered yet another **mass grave** in eastern Bosnia, this time in Kamenica near Zvornik. According to the daily, this thus far the largest found mass grave contains remains of around 200 Srebrenica Bosniaks who were expelled from this town by the Bosnian Serb Army in July 1995.

Sarajevo City authorities and numerous other domestic and international officials marked yesterday the tenth anniversary of destruction of **Vijecnica** (city library). The famous

Sarajevo building is currently under construction, but officials could not speculate about its potential reopening. US Ambassador **Clifford Bond**: *"This was not only an attack on culture, it was an attack on civilization."* Austrian Councilor **Herbert Gucci**: *"...The perpetrators who destroyed this building also destroyed a part of their own cultural heritage..."* (**BH Radio 1, BHTV 1, Federation Radio and TV** and all **Sarajevo papers** extensively report on the anniversary)

Refugee Return

Commenting on the High Representative's call for urgent ban on all construction on the socially-owned land in **Kotorsko** near Dobož, the acting head of municipality there, **Mirko Stojcinovic**, said that the original ban has not been violated since August 5, that is, since the introduction of the mixed police team inspections. *"I responsibly say that all construction in Kotorsko had been stopped and will be effective until the OHR makes a decision on the waiver. I expected that the OHR will issue within ten days the waivers for undisputed plots of land, as was promised by the High Representative. However, since this did not happen, I am calling upon OHR officials to ...urgently resolve all contentious issues connected with the construction on land in Kotorsko."*(**Oslobodjenje** p. 3 and the **Federation Radio, Glas srpski** p. 3 and **Nezavisne novine** p. 3, quote Stojcinovic)

Federation Affairs

Following the news that the Federation Government dismissed the acting Director, the Deputy Director and Steering Board of the Federation Pension and Disability Fund (MIO-PIO), the dismissed officials sent a letter to the High Representative **Paddy Ashdown** in which they reject the reasons for their removal. *"We believe that the explanation on dismissal of the Steering Board, acting Director and his Deputy is absurd and highly politicized and that we are victims of election showdowns which we already pre-announced in our memos regarding the problem of Decision on temporary cession of claims. Since we thoroughly informed the OHR and World Bank on the process of establishment of the Federation MIO-PIO we feel*

abandoned by the IC and publicly humiliated by the Federation Government”, reads that letter. (**Vecernji List**, page 2)

OHR and the **Federation Human Rights Ombudsman** sent to the **Federation government** yesterday a very strong statement, criticizing its proposed text of the **Defamation Law**. According to the letter, the proposed law is not in line with the European conventions and human rights regulations. “*The Federation government is trying to introduce a back door strategy for adopting new restrictions which would significantly affect the freedom of media,*” OHR said, asking the Federation government not to discuss this issue at its next session. (**Dnevni Avaz**, **Federation Radio**, **Federation Television**, **Nezavisne novine** p. 8, **Jutarnje novine** p. 3)

Pre-election activities

The poll conducted by agencies “Medijum” from Belgrade and “Puls” from Split for the US State Department indicate that the SDS is still the most popular party among the Serbs, while Bosniaks mostly trust the SDP, and Croats – the HDZ. According to the same survey, Radovan Karadzic is still the most popular political personae among the Serbs, while Alija Izetbegovic has the best rating among Bosniaks. (**Blic** p. 17)

Dnevni List (page 2, Miroslav Vasilj) notes that Croats in BiH need strong and wise leaders now more than ever before. “*Having in mind the position of Croats in BiH, Croats need a wise and uncorrupted politician more than ever, or to put it more precisely, a leader and statesman who will give them so much wanted freedom within BiH, equality and who will not cope with corruption.*” Vasilj concludes that, unfortunately, such politician cannot be seen among the Croat politicians, who are running for the October elections, however, nevertheless, it is important to vote at the coming elections.

International Community

FRY Nacional reports that more than 300 politicians and judges from BiH will ask for a protection of their rights from international courts, because they have been removed or banned

from further political engagement by the High Representatives Carlos Westendorp, Wolfgang Petritsch or Paddy Ashdown. Claiming the violation of the basic human rights, the majority of the removed politicians announced they would start a court process against Westendorp, Petritsch and Ashdown before the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg. Nikola Poplasen, former leader of the RS Radical Party has been dismissed from the position of the RS President by the decision of then High Representative Carlos Westendorp. His charges were earlier rejected by the ECHR. *"The Court in Strasbourg claims it has no jurisdiction over this case, because I am not a citizen of a country that is a member of the EU. The Constitutional Court of BiH also has no authority, and all International Organizations I have addressed said I had no right to file a complaint because I did not possess a passive legitimacy. I will try again to prove through a court that Westendorp has dismissed me against the Law, endangering my political rights"*, Nikola Poplasen said. Serb, Croat and Bosniak politicians, who have been replaced by decisions of the High Representatives, say they are planning to establish an association, in order to jointly seek for a protection by the International Courts.

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Kostajnica border crossing opens
- BiH Presidency adopts decision establishing the Standing Committee for Military Matters
- UN Summit begins in Johannesburg
- Tenth anniversary from destruction of Vijećnica in Sarajevo

FTV

- Political parallelism jeopardizes investigation into the Mostar mortar rounds
- Kostajnica border crossing opens
- UN Summit begins in Johannesburg
- Employees in Tuzla Polihem organize road blocks in protest against their management decisions

RTRS

- Kostajnica border crossing opens
- Standing Committee for Military Matters to coordinate activities of BiH Armed Forces
- First agreements on dismissal from the RS Army delivered
- UN Summit in Johannesburg begins