OHR Local News Issues, 25 April 1997

The four Bosniaks who were released after yesterday's court trial in Zvornik arrived in Tuzla today. The media covered extensively statements of the four Bosniaks who gave their account of events. All of them confirmed that the Serb police had used torture to extort a confession from them. With critical overtones, the report maintained that an IPTF official was present during the investigation, while SFOR gave a false promise and never came back to their rescue.
5'00

UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Elizabeth Rhen strongly condemned the court proceedings against the seven Bosniaks conducted by the Municipal Court in Zvornik. Ms. Rhen declared that the court trial in Zvornik represented a gross violation of human rights and the international law.
1'00"

The international community refuses to recognize the sentence passed by the Court in Zvornik and requests a new trial against the two Bosniaks sentenced to 20 years, announced Spokesmen for the OSCE and OHR at a press conference in Sarajevo today. OHR Spokesman, Colum Murphy has added that Deputy HR Michael Steiener warned RS PM Klickovic that international aid to the RS would be conditioned with respect of human rights. However, Murphy advised that RS President Biljana Plavsic indicated that a renewed trail in Zvornik would be conducted differently and in accordance with the international law.
4'00"

US State Department Nicholas Burns stated at a press conference in Washington that the US did not share the views expressed in Izetbegovic's letter on the implementation of the

DPA, which he qualified as “a lamenting litany”.
3 ’00

President of the BiH Presidency Alija Izetbegovic commented on Burns’ statement by saying that he was rather surprised by such stance, and that nobody could deny that some points of the DPA had not been implemented. According to Izetbegovic, the crux of his letter seems to have been misconstrued by the Americans. Namely, the letter was meant to point out to new positive trends which should be used to accelerate the process. He reiterated that the BiH side insisted that the main criteria should be compliance or non-compliance with the DPA.
2’00 ”

At a press conference in Sarajevo today, Rasim Kadic, FBiH Minister for Refugees and DPs, spoke about results of the Human Rights Group meeting in Geneva. Kadic stated that the Geneva meeting was crucial for the implementation of Annex 7 of the DPA. All participants signed the UNHCR document on repatriation to BiH. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, in her closing speech underlined that more than US $ 300 million were missing to fund projects for the return of 200,000 people.

As for the RS, Kadic told the press that the Serb entity remained “hermetically closed” and conditioned its consent on return of refugees with financial aid for regions in question. This was not accepted by the international community.
3’00

Summary SRT News

Belgrade – Patriarch Pavle served the holy mass at the main Orthodox church prior to the great Orthodox holiday Easter. Today is a day of fasting, the Great Friday, the last one before Easter. Prior to Orthodox Easter, all political and

religious leaders and public figures of the RS wished a happy Easter to Serbs worldwide.
5:00
The international community is in support of a massive return of refugees. However, while campaigning, they often forget that this process requires a long time and a number of concrete measures. How is it possible to return the people when even the destiny of those who stayed in the other entity is uncertain. Last night, about 10 p.m., an old Serb man was shot five times while sleeping in his house. He was shot twice in the head and three times in the body, which caused instant death. The murder occurred in the village Koprivna, near Sanski Most, in the ZOS under Federation control. This is only one of many murders that happened in the ZOS, the majority of which were committed by Muslim police or army.
3:00

At the last SFOR press conference, UN spokesman Ivanko coarsely attacked the RS judiciary because of the sentences pronounced for the Srebrenica Seven. The UN deemed it necessary to react only by the end of the trial, and in any case they ignored the DPA clause providing autonomy for the RS and Federation judiciaries. According to HR Spokesman Murphy, the international community shall condition the allocation of financial resources to the RS by a retrial for those Muslims sentenced to 20 years of prison. If the UN decided to condemn any proceedings in any other European country, that country would consider it as grave interference with its own judicial system. It seems that the international community keeps on forgetting that it was exactly them who turned the accused over to the RS police in the first place. The UN reported that the confessions of the accused were extorted by physical torture, but it does not have any evidence such as medical findings to support that, therefore this constitutes mere slander. On the other hand, no lawyer can defend a person in one country if he is not a member of the bar association of that country (this rule is also applied in Germany, for

instance, but the UN does not mind it in that case), therefore the Federation lawyers could only have been assistants to the RS lawyers appointed by official duty to the Seven, because the Seven had not chosen their defence after they had been given the opportunity to do so in accordance with the law. By insisting on defence from the Federation, the UN wanted to have an ethnic trial, which is not in spirit of the DPA, and the fact should not be forgotten that one of the Seven wanted exclusively a lawyer from the RS to defend him. It is still uncertain whether the international community wants to crush the indenpendence of RS courts or mentally contaminate the public.
4:00

World News:

Mostar – The pro-Muslim coalition formed by 5 political parties sent a letter to HR Bildt, warning him that the Croats restarted construction works on the Croat Theatre in the city zone at another sensitive point in time, prior to the local elections.
2:00