

# Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

|      | Spokesperson         | Topic   |
|------|----------------------|---|
| OHR  | Avis Benes           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HR holds press conference on Orao affair</li><li>• OHR support return of cultural premises to its original use.</li><li>• Reminder of the PLIP statistics</li></ul> |
| OSCE | Richard Medic        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•<br/>Young People are Mostar's Future</li><li>•<br/>OSCE Deputy Head of Mission visits Mostar</li></ul>  |
| SFOR | Capt.<br>Magistretti | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•<br/>No statement</li></ul>  |

---

## Avis Benes – OHR:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and welcome to yet another press conference of the international organizations based in Mostar.

On behalf of the OHR, the main information for today is the one concerning the Orao affair. As you all probably know, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will announce it today at 1400 hrs in Sarajevo. He will explain the actions he intends to take with regard this affair, which will deal both with the issue of political responsibility for the violation of UN Security Council Resolutions, and the need for systemic reforms to prevent this happening again.

On behalf of the OHR South I have one statement which is a regional or rather city related issue, concerning the OHR support for return of cultural premises to its original use.

Deputy High Representative Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot welcomes the proposal initiated by "Centre", the network of Mostar NGOs. This project appeals to the City of Mostar to return the premises of former RKUD Abrasevic to its pre-war function as a cultural and educational center available to all Mostarians. It is imperative that the Mostar Central Zone is maintained as the center for cultural life in Mostar, and as much as possible that the unique urban cityscape is preserved with respect to historical structures such as the Abrasevic building, which was formerly the seat of the government during the Austro-Hungarian period. Most importantly, as the "Center" proposal is part of a civil society initiative, and concerns activities of interest to the public of whole Mostar, it demands the attention and consideration of the City Administration. Ambassador Bercot expresses his hope that this will be the case.

Secondly, let me remind you of yesterday's PLIP statistics as of the end of February 2003, that some of you have already collected. As you know they are available on the website but we have printed them out for you today. You could have also noticed that the press release mentioned that destroyed property was finally excluded from the statistics for Mostar Central Zone and thus the percentage of the rate of property law implementation increased and it is around the Federation average.

Lastly, we were kindly asked by the Hague Tribunal to distribute verdict in the case of the prosecution versus Mladen Naletilic-Tuta and Vinko Martinovic-Stela. This is not only a summary that you have already received by agencies but the full text of this verdict.

That's all on behalf of the OHR for today.

**Richard Medic – OSCE**

Good morning. I have two points from OSCE today.

OSCE joins the youth of Mostar in drawing the Mostar City Administration's attention to the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life. Article 30 of the Charter states that 'Local and regional authorities shall strive to provide young people with facilities and conditions in which to express themselves and exercise their creative skills'. The initiative by the Mostar NGOs Network Centre to return the former Abrasevic premises to the youth of Mostar highlights an oft-neglected truth: The participation of young people in cultural and civil society plays a vital role in the future of Mostar, and such participation can only be realized if there are premises available to facilitate youth initiatives. OSCE calls on the Mostar City Administration to seriously address the proposal to establish the 'Youth Cultural Art Center Abrasevic'.

Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Ambassador Victor Tkachenko, met local representatives of the Ombudsman's Office and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton officials in Mostar yesterday. During his meeting with Ombudsman Office representatives, Ambassador Tkachenko reinforced OSCE's ongoing commitment to provide Entity Ombudsmen with adequate political support. The meeting focused mainly on social and economic rights, as well as the situation in the three informal Roma settlements located in Old Town Municipality. Ambassador Tkachenko also met Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Prime Minister-designate Miroslav Coric and President of the Cantonal Assembly Omer Cevra. In separate meetings, the Ambassador expressed concern at the fact that this canton remains the only one in the Federation without a government, emphasizing that the suspension of urgent decisions and draft laws is further undermining citizens' patience and trust in cantonal officials. In his meeting with Mostar Mayor Hamdija Jahic and Deputy Mayor Ljubo Beslic, Ambassador Tkachenko highlighted the importance of Mostar re-unification in the context of the vital challenges facing BiH today. Mostar, the Ambassador stressed, could serve as an example for solving nationwide

issues for which mutual understanding and good will are essential.

**Avis Benes – OHR:**

Thank you. SFOR does not have a statement for today. We are now all available for your questions.

**Questions:**

**Q: Zvonimir Jukic (Onasa/FTV):** Last week, President of the Association of DPs and Refugees Mirhunisa Zukic addressed a request to the OHR, requesting for a representative of returnees/DPs to be included in the Commission for reorganisation of Mostar. I would like to know if the OHR is taking this request into consideration, will you support it? My second question is related to the same issue. Namely, the High Representative stated that all political parties participating in the Mostar City Council should be involved in the Commission. In the meantime, the number of political parties increased as some councillors left their original parties and joined new ones. Will the Commission comprise of only those political parties that became members of the City Council on the basis of election results or including the parties that joined the Council afterwards.

**A: Avis Benes:** I can give you one answer to both of the questions you posed. Actually both the letter and the question as to who is going to be represented in the Commission is the process that should be concretely carried out by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. When the High Representative recently met with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and members of the City Council he presented his proposals on the basis of which the Commission is to be established, one of which was involvement of all political parties represented in the City Council in the work of the Commission and this was supported by all interlocutors. He suggested that individual members are nominated by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and appointed by

the City Council along with the consultations with the Prime Ministers of the Canton and the Federation. Therefore, in principle all issues concerning the members of this Commission should be addressed to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The OHR's position is that, at the moment, the two of them are the ones who should carry out this process independently.

**Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88):** Journalists are basically speculating about Sarovic's removal but I suppose we shall all have to wait until the High Representative's press conference. I would like to ask SFOR representative if he could confirm that the security measures in the RS were increased today in the light of possible riots?

**A: Capt. Magistretti:** Nothing has changed from our point of view. We are still here to maintain safe and secure environment. Our behaviour will change only if there is a real change of the situation.

**Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar):** In order to avoid various and numerous misinformation and speculation I would like to ask you to clarify the situation for the sake of all of us. At the last press conference, while speaking about the fact that C7 does not have a Government you said that the Government should be formed on the basis of election results. At the press conference of the Coalition, HDZ President stated that the Government should be formed on the basis of election results and 1991 census. According to information that I have, this Coalition won over 60% of authority while in the line with the 1991 census Croat nation has 40%. In my opinion it is a discrepancy.

**A: Avis Benes:** You are now posing a question suggesting that the OHR should be an arbiter in regards to certain issues. Our position concerning this issue and even small details was clearly presented at the last press conference. The general position is that it is both impermissible and disgraceful that the Cantonal Government has not yet been formed and has not

yet started functioning. Once again the OHR calls upon all sides to sit at the negotiating table and express a constructive approach to this process and demonstrated a bit more seriousness than they demonstrated so far. That's all I can tell you at this moment.