

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

OHR, Mario Brkic

OSCE, Mersiha Causevic

EUPM, Zinaida Ilaria

EUFOR, Tom Ryall

NATO, Dwight Mood

OHR

Pardons - No One Is Above the Law

There has been considerable media debate about executive pardons handed down by politicians to their political cronies.

The OHR believes that BiH politicians in executive authority - in the most recent case this applies to Federation President Niko Lozancic - should exercise the right to grant pardons only in very exceptional circumstances. They should be particularly careful about issuing pardons to their political allies, when these allies have been tried and convicted of abuse of office. Otherwise an increasingly exasperated and public will reach the conclusion that some BiH politicians still

think they are living in an era when the powerful can do as they wish and only the common people must obey the law.

That era has passed. Bosnia and Herzegovina is governed by the rule of law. If a politician is convicted of a crime, he should serve his time.

Mr Prce pled guilty to abuse of funds, agreed this plea with the court and in return was given a sentence of five years, when it might have been a maximum of 14 years. The judge in the case recommended that in view of this plea bargain a pardon would be utterly inappropriate. His party affiliation or ethnic origin have nothing to do with the crime or the punishment. Everyone, irrespective of position or ethnicity should be equal before the law.

The High Representative has intervened once before in the case of an executive pardon, when he amended the State Law on Pardon and the Entity Criminal Procedure Codes, in the wake of a similarly politically inspired pardon extended to Munib Jusufovic, former mayor of Brcko, who had also been convicted of fraud and abuse of office.

SDHR Ney to Speak on BiH Reconciliation Model

SDHR Martin Ney will be one of the opening speakers at a four-day conference on reconciliation and human rights in BiH that opens this evening at Unitic in Sarajevo. The conference is being organized by UNDP. Ambassador Ney will highlight the importance of developing institutional means of promoting reconciliation in BiH that reflect the character and culture of the country. Each country that has gone through this process has adapted models that fit its own needs, and Bi must do the same. We will be posting a copy of the speech on the

OHR website later today.

OSCE

No statement.

EUPM

No statement.

EUFOR

No statement.

NATO

No statement.

RTQs:

Ljiljana Ćoro, News agency SRNA:

I would like to inquire about the events that occurred in Gradiška yesterday. This question is for EUFOR. Is an investigation being conducted, as reports in the media mention that a thirteen year old boy ran out of the car? What did actually happen?

EUFOR:

If you're referring to the car accident that happened on Sunday night, well EUFOR is not going to speculate on anything. The facts are there was a car accident involving a EUFOR vehicle. Two EUFOR soldiers were slightly injured in the accident. They were removed by a EUFOR helicopter and later transferred to Zagreb hospital by local ambulance.

Nobody else was involved in the accident. EUFOR would like to thank the local services for their assistance in transporting the two soldiers to the hospital and other than that there are no other details, and I'm not going to speculate on anything in the media on any other subject.

BiH TV:

Also a question for EUFOR: I would like to inquire about the cases of weapons found near Mostar. Is EUFOR also participating in the investigation and when will the weaponry be destroyed?

EUFOR:

There was an operation undertaken yesterday which found a fairly sizeable quantity of weapons and ammunitions. I'm afraid your question is still ongoing so I can't offer any comments on what's going to happen from this stage on. But I can confirm that EUFOR was involved in an operation about 25 km north-east of Mostar, and other than that we've got no details. As and when those details become available we will then be able to pass them on to you.

TV Hayat:

A question for the Office of the High Representative: Does the OHR have an official document in relation to whether the pardoning in fact really did occur? Secondly, if they don't and according to reports it seems that they don't, why have all the institutions, including the B&H court and the OHR, reacted in such an official manner? What I mean is that until now you have never accepted media reports as true and reacted to them in such a way. Thank you.

OHR:

Well, in our statement we did make it clear that our reaction is pertinent only if the reports are true, and that is why we

have allowed time for the president of the Federation to explain, to formally inform us of the correct information. If the reports are in fact true, you are aware that the deadline is Friday the 19th and after that the High Representative will decide what actions, if any, it will be necessary to take.