

PRESIDENCY CHAIRMAN

Bosnian Soldiers in Afghanistan Are True Ambassadors of the Country



Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Milorad Dodik, visited members of the BiH Armed Forces in the peace support operation "Resolute Support" in Afghanistan and congratulated officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers the Day of BiH AF and thanked them on their role in keeping peace in that country

"The methods and responsibility in your work testify to the high level of professional preparedness. It shows that you are the true ambassadors of your country," said Dodik in his address to the BiH AF units.

The Presidency Chairman informed the BiH AF members that the Presidency adopted the Defense Review document. The ceremony of marking the BiH AF Day was attended by the representa-

tives of armies participating in the "Resolute Support" operation in Afghanistan. The Bagram military base commander, Major General John Thompson, expressed his gratitude to the BiH AF members, stressing their high professionalism and responsibility in their work.

During the visit, Dodik and the BiH AF Chief of Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Anto Jelec, met with Major General

John Nicolson, the "Resolute Support" Mission Commander. Nicolson informed them about strengthening of the Afghan armed forces fighting for stabilization in their country and thanked BiH for participation in the peace support operation in Afghanistan.

Dodik and the BiH delegation also met with Major General Thompson, who stressed the exceptional professionalism of the BiH units.



Zeljka Cvijanovic, RS PM: I am not sure that the Republika Srpska citizens want any RS property and assets registered to any other (state) institution, including the Ministry of Defense



Dennis Gratz, Nasa Stranka: Make no mistake: Sarajevo will not be overly concerned about the developments in Stolac. For most decision-makers, the elections in Stolac are yesterday's news



Milorad Dodik, RS president: There can be no new decisions in BiH until a decision on the Constitutional Court is made. It is a decadent place where rulings are made by Bosniaks and foreigners

Leaders of Ruling Coalition Meet in Sarajevo

The leaders of parties that form the ruling coalition on the state level had a regular meeting in the BiH Presidency building

SDA's Bakir Izetbegovic, SBB's Fahrudin Radoncic, HDZ's Dragan Covic and Vjekoslav Bevanda, PDP's Branislav Borenovic and SDS' Mirko Sarovic discussed the current issues.

"Today we have agreed about the excise duties, the Rulebook on Medications, we dealt with some personnel issues, the clearing debt, the Budget, the construction of a border crossing at Bratunac... This was a good meeting," said the SDA Leader Bakir Izetbegovic.

Speaking about the details of the agreement on the Bratunac border crossing and the excise duties, Izetbegovic said that the border crossing was a necessity for BiH and the RS, that it was in the citizens' best interest and it will be financed by the means of the clearing debt this year, and then it will be continued in 2018 using the funds from capital investments.

"As for the excise duties, these are the old solutions related to oil and oil products, except that so far we have been unable to include blue diesel. We will continue working on this. We have a clear position of the IMF which can jeopardize the arrangement, so we will have to search for solutions, and in this moment we do not have this in the case of blue diesel," Izetbegovic said. SBB leader Fahrudin Radoncic said

that the leaders had a constructive working meeting and confirmed that they mostly discussed the oil and oil products excise duties and the budget issue.

Sarovic believes that it is questionable whether they will ever have the "blue diesel", and in the statement to the media after the meeting he said that the funds for the Bratunac border crossing had been provided and that in the 950 million KM budget there were no capital investments. He explained that the budget item for the border crossing will not be included in the capital investments, but in a separate annex.

Speaking of the excise duties, or the blue diesel, Sarovic said that this was the IMF's requirement for the next credit tranche, but emphasized that the RS Government or its Prime Minister Zeljka Cvijanovic and member of the Indirect Taxation Authority's Steering Committee and RS Finance Minister Zoran Tegeltija did not want the blue diesel.

"They are giving up on several dozen million KM of support for the BiH agriculture and this is why it is questionable whether blue diesel will ever be available," said Sarovic, adding he would advocate for the support to farmers and the introduction of blue diesel.

CoM Approves Bratunac Border Crossing Construction

BiH Council of Ministers adopted a decision on approval of the "Construction of Bratunac-Ljubovija Border Crossing" project, worth 11 million KM. The project will be financed in the amount of seven million KM in 2017 from the succession

proceeds on the basis of collection of funds from the clearing debt of the Russian Federation, and in 2018 in the amount of four million KM from the BiH institutions Budget and BiH's international commitments.

SDA Threatens Legal Action against CEC

The Party of Democratic Action, SDA, condemned a decision of the Central Election Commission to ban their candidate for mayor of Stolac, Salmir Kaplan, from running in the local election in that town.

"We believe this is a case of unprincipled coalition of individual members of the CEC and that their votes cast doubts over the integrity of the elec-

tion process in Stolac. In fact, their decision has elected the mayor of Stolac in advance, as their decision means that only one candidate remains. In this way, the CEC gave itself the role of a court, as well as the role of voters," said SDA.

"We will file charges against members of the CEC who abused and misused their duties," said the SDA.

Daily Markers

Petritsch's Predictions

A few days before the referendum in Republika Srpska, opinions were published that the smaller BiH entity will have no benefit from the referendum and that the RS President Milorad Dodik will pay the highest price, in the form of complete political and diplomatic isolation after the referendum. Moreover, the former head of the OHR, Wolfgang Petritsch, very clearly announced then that Serbia and its Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic will take the lead in Dodik's isolation. Indeed, it is a striking fact that the RS president wasn't in Belgrade for two months, nor did he meet with Serbian leaders, since he previously did that once in ten days. During the last two months, Dodik met only once with the Ambassador of Serbia to BiH Stanimir Vukicevic (October 25, in East Sarajevo) and that would be all of Dodik's bilateral meetings with officials from Serbia following the referendum! It was clear that Dodik's stocks plummeted in Vucic's eyes after the referendum of 25 September, held despite opposition from Washington, Brussels and Belgrade, on October 7, when the RS president tried to arrange an audience with Vucic at least for a few minutes, to no success. Vucic avoided meeting with Dodik in his cabinet, but persistent Dodik "caught" Vucic at the Belgrade airport and exchanged a few courtesy sentences with him. After this humiliation, Dodik tried to arrange a meeting with Vucic several times, but each time the door of the most powerful man in Serbia was closed. Former head of the OHR, Wolfgang Petritsch, predicted just that a few days before the referendum in the RS. "Serbia, led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, took responsibility for stability in the region. For me, it doesn't even matter that much whether a referendum will be held on September 25 in Republika Srpska, because Milorad Dodik lost all legitimacy in the eyes of Belgrade," said Petritsch, announcing a deep diplomatic isolation of the RS president. But his prophetic announcement wasn't heard by anybody in the RS - the government, the opposition or most of the citizens.



The Social Life of a Reputable Fugitive

It has been almost a year since the Bosnian state prosecution raised indictment against Zlatan Mijo Jelic, a retired HVO and HV general

BY IVICA DJIKIC
AL JAZEERA BALKANS



The former high-ranking officer of the HVO military police is charged with command responsibility for war crimes against Bosniaks in Mostar, committed from May 1993 to March 1994.

Yet there was no political-military-clergy hysteria in Mostar and Zagreb in January last year, when the indictment against Jelic was raised, like it

was the case when ten HVO and police members were arrested recently in Orasje on suspicion of committing crimes against Serbs in 1992 and 1993, among them retired HVO and HV general Djuro Matuzovic. What is the difference between Jelic and Matuzovic?

The difference is that SIPA members found Matuzovic at his home in Orasje and detained him, while Jelic pulled a fast one on the law enforcement in January last year and moved to his apartment in Zagreb after renouncing the Bosnian citizenship. Since Jelic now has only Croatian citizenship, and Croatia doesn't extradite its nationals, the retired general from Siroki Brijeg enjoys freedom in Zagreb. And not only that: he is perceived as a national hero, and a welcomed guest in higher class patriotic circles.

Last Tuesday, Jelic attended the second International Security Conference in Westin hotel in Zagreb, organized by a HDZ foundation and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The conference was addressed by Andrej Plenkovic, Croatian Prime Minister, and German ambassador in Zagreb, Thomas Schultz. Yet, nobody in the room minded that that an international fugitive, indicted for war crimes, was sitting there as an accredited participant. The conference discussed for hours the current security threats, but nobody found it strange that a man accused of the gravest crimes was in the audience.

Nobody finds it odd or shameful that Croatia, an EU and NATO member, became a country in which international fugitives from justice don't hide in holes, but show up in

nice hotels, pose for cameras and participate in international conferences and all sorts of patriotic events. Suspected and convicted war criminals are perceived as martyrs and heroes in Croatia, provided they are Croats, and they have at their service the government institutions and main media so that they and their advocates – in Jelic's case, the most agile ones were Ivo Lucic and Nino Raspudic – can say that those people did nothing wrong and that they are the victims of anti-Croatian, politically motivated trials.

Zlatan Mijo Jelic's celebrity freedom in Zagreb is nothing but Croatia's belittling of Bosnia's judiciary, and Bosnia's sovereignty, which is getting close to becoming the official policy of Croatia. Namely, following the recent arrests in Orasje, an idea was seriously entertained in Zagreb to have Croatia's intelligence organize the operation of relocating all Croats suspected of war crimes in Bosnia to Croatia. Of course, only those that aren't as cautious as Jelic and didn't simply cross the border to enjoy freedom and sympathy of the community.

Yet, this "legal" maneuver is not intended for all holders of Croatian citizenship in Bosnia that violated the law. A flight to freedom is not available to ordinary murderers and criminals; the privilege is reserved for persons suspected of harming anybody but Croats during the war.

Dealing drugs or stealing cars are not crimes in the patriotic catalogue, unlike war crimes, because the prosecution of peacetime stealers and traffickers is hard to be identified as political persecution of an entire group.

The logic is simple: persons who steal cars, rob and sell drugs, do that for personal gain; war crimes served the group, they were committed in the name of the nation and its salvation, and the perpetrators made a sacrifice for the group, so the right thing is to identify with them.

That is the logic of the functioning of a sick society that is stuck in the maze of its own contradictions and misconceptions, yet it doesn't try to find a way out; instead, it convinces itself and everybody else that the maze is in fact the moral-political Mount Everest at whose foot the lesser nationals and worthless individuals crawl.

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BOSNIA
DAILY

EU and UNHCR Secured Housing Units for 10 Displaced and Returnee Families in Prijedor

Ten families, two displaced and eight returnee families from the Prijedor area received housing units with complete infrastructure

Construction/reconstruction of these housing units for displaced persons and returnees is part of an 8.1 million Euro worth project „Support to durable solutions of the Revised strategy for implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton peace agreement“, that is funded by the European Union (in the amount of 7 million Euro through IPA 2012), and co-funded and implemented by the UNHCR in cooperation with project partners in ten priority municipalities. Within the implementation of the project known as „My place under the Sun“, 10 houses with accompanying infrastructure were constructed/reconstructed in Prijedor in the period from August 15 to November 20 2016.

Hilfswerk Austria International (HWA) is responsible for the implementation of the project components of housing and economic sustainability.

Until its completion at the end of this year, the Project will have ensured in the Municipality of Prijedor the creation of jobs or self-employment opportunities based on needs and abilities of each individual for 81 beneficiaries, connecting of individual producers with companies in order to ensure product placement, construction and rehabilitation of housing units as well as their connection with infrastructure for 20 households, effective and timely free legal aid for 98 beneficiaries, and psychosocial assistance to support integration into the



local community for 13 beneficiaries.

The project has started in 2014 and will be implemented by the end of 2016 in Bosanski Petrovac, Gradiska, Prijedor, Derventa, Maglaj, Bijeljina, Zivinice, Mostar, Foca and Brcko District BiH, with aim to assist at least 2,400 vulnerable displaced persons and returnees in BiH in finding solutions to social challenges they face every day.

The project is working in close cooperation with local authorities, local communities, civil society and other partners, including BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, to assist vulnerable displaced persons and returnees in BiH, by strengthening their social protection

and inclusion, providing health care for the elderly and education for children, as well as free legal aid, psycho-social counseling, livelihoods and housing. Within this project, all 10 target municipalities have established Municipal Commissions for Social Protection and Inclusion, developed detailed situation analyses and adopted Action Plans.

In addition to UNHCR, project implementation partners include UNICEF, the UN Development Program (UNDP), International Organization for Migrations (IOM), Hilfswerk Austria International (HWA), Bosnian Humanitarian Logistic Service (BHLS), Foundation of Local Democracy (FLD), and Vasa prava BiH Association (VP).

The Real Work of Defense Review Implementation Begins: US Embassy

The U.S. Embassy congratulated the Presidency of BiH and the Minister of Defense on the completion of the Defense Review. „While it was years in the making, we welcome the spirit of cooperation that led to the drafting of a framework for the future of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will right-size the number of soldiers, reduce the number of prospective immovable defense properties, and outline an action plan for the modernization of the military. The Defense Review is a living document that can be reviewed and revised in line with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina's desire to continue to reduce excess ammunition stockpiles, eliminate landmines throughout the country, train and

equip soldiers to assist in natural disasters at home and missions abroad, ultimately becoming a modernized force capable of partnering with other nations,” the Embassy said.

“With the completion of the Defense Review, the real work of implementation begins. This is an opportunity for BiH to reinvigorate its relationship with NATO

and work with regional partners. In the year to come, we urge leaders in BiH to continue to move forward on registration of defense properties – to include Han Pijesak in accordance with the court order – and to seek opportunities to work with NATO Allies in preparation with the activation of its Membership Action Plan.”

Ambassador Contacts Authorities over Detained Kuwait National

Kuwait Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Nasser Al-Mutairi said the embassy has been in contact with the Bosnian authorities since the Kuwaiti national Mohammad Al-Mutairi was detained.

The embassy is doing its utmost to review the sentence issued for the citizen and ensure his early release, the ambassador said in a statement received by KUNA.

Crnadak Receives Ambassadors of China and Iran

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Crnadak received in separate visits the ambassadors of China and Iran, Chen Bo and Mahmoud Heidari respectively

Minister Crnadak and Ambassador Bo agreed that the 5th Summit of Heads of Governments of the Central and Eastern Europe and China (16+1), held earlier this month in Riga, was very successful and useful for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that the next step is implementation of the summit conclusions meaning that BiH will host and organize a conference on tourism and agriculture and wine fair. Ambassador Bo has offered all the necessary assistance and support of her embassy in organizing of this event. Minister Crnadak and the Ambassador agreed that the Agreement between



Mahmoud Heidari and Igor Crnadak



Chen Bo and Igor Crnadak

the BiH Council of Ministers and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the abolition of visas for holders of diplomatic passports, service passports and passports for public affairs, which was signed in Riga, is a very good base for activities in further liberalization of visa regime.

Minister Crnadak expressed welcome to Ambassador Heidari to Bosnia and Herzegovina and wished him success in

his work and stay in BiH during his engagement and diplomatic mission in the Embassy of Iran in Sarajevo. Heidari stressed that the visit of the BiH delegation headed by Minister Crnadak to Iran in February this year was very important for intensifying cooperation in the field of economic relations and invited him to visit Iran again, stated the Public Relations Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH.

Ambassadors of China and Italy Plant Trees in the Ambassadors' Alley



Ruggero Corrias and Stari Grad mayor

Ambassadors of China and Italy to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chen Bo and Ruggero Corrias, planted linden trees in Sarajevo's Ambassadors' Alley. The Chinese Ambassador thanked for the opportunity to plant a linden tree, concluding that the Alley is a symbol of the openness of the city of Sarajevo toward the world and the desire to establish cooperation with all countries.

"I have planted a tree here, thus making a promise to contribute to an even greater openness of this city and establishment of a greater cooperation with the entire world," said Bo. Ambassador Corrias also thanked Sarajevo for the opportunity. "This tree will remind you of us, but we do not need a tree to forever hold Sarajevo in our hearts and remember you," he concluded.

Joint BiH and UN Steering Committee Holds Session

Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Finance and Treasury, Vjekoslav Bevanda and Resident Coordinator of the United Nations for Bosnia and Herzegovina Sezin Sinagoglu co-chaired the second session of the Joint Steering Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UN, which focused on the beginning the realization of Sustainable Development Goals until 2030. The meeting also focused on future activities that include establishment of a technical body that will deal with operational tasks and will include all levels of government, and the preparation of work plans for 2017/2018. The UN representatives presented the goals agreed at the Summit on Sustainable Development and the obligation of all UN member states to implement them.

Bosnian General's Trial Delayed Again in Belgrade

The trial of Bosnian Serb general Novak Djukic - already convicted in Sarajevo of ordering a deadly artillery strike on Tuzla in Bosnia - was postponed again because of the defendant's poor health, reports BIRN

Wartime general Novak Djukic's trial in Belgrade suffered another delay on Wednesday because he has been hospitalized for medical treatment, his lawyer said. Djukic, the former commander of the Bosnian Serb Army's Ozren Tactical Group, is accused of ordering an artillery squad to shell the Bosnian town of Tuzla on May 25, 1995. Seventy-one people died in the attack. He was sentenced to 20 years in jail for the crime by the Bosnian state court in June 2014, but did not turn up to serve his sentence in Bosnia, claiming he was undergoing medical treatment in Serbia.

Bosnia issued an international arrest warrant for him in October 2014, but Djukic cannot be extradited to Bosnia because it has no extradition treaty with Serbia.

Serbia then offered to deal with the case, but Djukic has not appeared for a series of hearings so far, claiming that the Bosnian court has not sent the necessary case documents yet. His defense



Novak Djukic

lawyer Milorad Konstantinovic told BIRN that Djukic did not appear for the latest hearing at the Higher Court in Belgrade on Wednesday because he was in hospital, and said that an expert opinion was needed to determine whether he is fit to appear in court.

Konstantinovic also said that only "maybe some ten per cent" of the case documents had arrived from the

Bosnian state court so far.

"Nothing came from the Appeals Council, nothing came from the investigation, written evidence that was required didn't arrive, so I don't know on what basis they will judge here," he said.

The Bosnian court confirmed to BIRN in June that it received the request for the documents, but said there was no legal basis for the sending the entire case material.

It argued that the court in Belgrade does not need to confirm the Bosnian verdict, but just to take over the enforcement of Djukic's 20-year sentence.

Serbia signed an agreement with Bosnia in 2010, which allows Sarajevo and Belgrade to ask each other to take over the enforcement of sentences. Serbia's behavior in the Djukic case has been criticized by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and its chief prosecutor, Serge Brammertz.

Deputy Minister Discusses Defense Cooperation with French Ambassador



Deputy Minister of Defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Resource Management Boris Jerinic met with Ambassador of France Claire Bodonyi and French Military Attache, Colonel Philippe Delsol and discussed bilateral defense cooperation between the two countries. They talked also about participation in peace support operations of the Armed Forces as one of the priorities of the Ministry of Defense BiH,

cooperation of MoD and the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina with EUFOR and the importance of operation ALTHEA.

Jerinic informed the French Ambassador about the plans and priorities of MoD BiH for 2017 and activities in connection with the activation of the Action Plan for membership in NATO with a special focus on the Defense Review strategic document, said MoD.

Malaysian Ambassador Delivers Lecture in Sarajevo

The Association of the Bosnian-Asian Friendship (ABACUS) organized a lecture in Sarajevo by the Ambassador of Malaysia to BiH, Anuar Kasman, entitled "Malaysia - Truly Asia". ABACUS is a platform formed by a group of diplomats, scholars, media experts and cultural workers from Asia and BiH. Ambassador Kasman presented his country, the areas of cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Malaysia, the education projects and scholarship programs, the volume of foreign trade, as well as the plans for future cooperation.

The lecture was attended by the diplomatic representatives in BiH, the doyens of BiH diplomacy - ambassadors who served in Asia, the representatives of the academic community, businessmen, university students and students of the Second Grammar School in Sarajevo.

Broadband Internet Subscriptions Grow in Third Quarter

The number of xDSL connections in Bosnia and Herzegovina edged up 0.1 percent from end-June, reaching 376,187 at the end of the third quarter of 2016

The number of broadband internet subscribers in Bosnia and Herzegovina rose to 641,527 at the end of September, increasing by 0.7 percent on the quarter, data from the country's telecommunications regulator indicated. The number of xDSL connections in Bosnia and Herzegovina edged up 0.1 percent from end-June, reaching 376,187 at the end of the third quarter of 2016, according to figures posted on the website of the Communications Regulatory Agency (RAK). Cable network internet connections gained 2.03 percent on the quarter, reaching 207,983 at the end of September. The number of WiFi connections ticked up to 55,130, a rise of 0.2 percent compared to the April-June period. The number of mobile services users in Bosnia and Herzegovina stood at 3,427,401 at the end of September, up 5.6 percent from end-June and 2.9 percent lower than a year earlier. The mobile penetration rate in the country climbed to 89.55 percent at the end of September from 84.84 percent at the end of the previous quarter, according to RAK figures. Eight mobile carriers operate in the two BiH entities - the Federation and Republika Srpska. The country's leading mobile operator, state-controlled BH Telecom, had a 47.14 percent market share at



the end of September, followed by Telekom Srpske, majority owned by Telekom Srbija, with a market share of 37.99 percent. HT Mostar, co-owned by Croatia's Hrvatski Telekom, had a market share of 14.49 percent at the end of September. Sarajevo-based Izi Mobil, owned by Izi Mobil Slovenia, and Banja Luka-based Blicnet, part of Telekom Slovenije, had market shares of 0.21 percent and 0.07 percent, respectively. Logosoft, Telrad and Elta recorded a 0.03 percent market share each.

The number of fixed telephone lines operated by the dominant telecommunication companies in Bosnia and

Herzegovina fell to 697,884 at the end of September, decreasing by 1.7 percent on the quarter and down 2.7% on the year, the telecoms regulator said. BH Telecom had a 41.64 percent market share at the end of September, followed by Telekom Srpske with a market share of 33.82 percent. HT Mostar had a market share of 12.93 percent, while new operators, of which there are 13, had a combined market share of 11.61 percent.

Fabrika Duhana Sarajevo Welcomes Buyout Bid of Austria's CID

Tobacco company Fabrika Duhana Sarajevo (FDS) said it supports the buyout bid launched by Austrian investment company CID Adriatic Investments GmbH (CID) for the 60.09 percent stake it does not already own in FDS. The supervisory board and management at FDS have welcomed the bid and believe that the Sarajevo-based tobacco company will continue its operations under CID's management, FDS said in a filing with the Sarajevo bourse last week. In mid-November, CID launched a buyout bid for the 770,234 shares it does not hold in FDS, offering to pay 83.5 KM apiece, or a total of 64.3 million KM. CID was legally bound to submit an offer for the remaining FDS shares after purchasing

a 39.9 percent stake in FDS from the government for 42.7 million KM in September. CID's bid was deemed the most favorable at a bourse auction, after the company offered to pay 83.5 KM apiece for a total of 511,478 shares in FDS held by the government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The funds for the transaction were provided to CID by British American Tobacco (BAT), which, in a separate release, confirmed its involvement. BAT also said it will enter into exclusive negotiations with CID on the possible purchase of a part of FDS's tobacco business. Last year, BAT purchased Croatian tobacco company Tvornica Duhana Rovinj (TDR) for 505 million euro.

Stake in Insurer Bosna Sunce Osiguranje Sells Outside of Bourse

A 5.2 percent stake in local insurer Bosna Sunce Osiguranje was sold outside the Sarajevo Stock Exchange for 1.4 million KM on Wednesday, November 23, the bourse said. A total of 4,125 shares were traded at 350 KM apiece. The sale was mediated by Bosnia's unit of Raiffeisen Bank, the bourse said in a statement last week. The bourse did not disclose the names of the parties to the transaction but according to media reports, the shares were bought by Sarajevo-based insurer Euroherc Oosiguranje from Croatian company Autoslavonija. Euroherc Sarajevo now holds a 12.7 percent stake in Bosna Sunce, while Autoslavonija has exited the insurer, news portal Indikator.ba reported. BSO's largest shareholder is Croatian peer Jadransko Osiguranje with a 19.9 percent stake.

Half of Recorded Hate Crimes Prosecuted, One in Eight Perpetrators Punished

24 hate crimes were recorded in Bosnia in 2015, according to the OSCE human rights office. 12 cases were prosecuted and 3 perpetrators were sentenced, said the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR

On 16 November 2016, the International Tolerance Day, the ODIHR published data on the number of hate crimes recorded in 2015 on its hate crime reporting website. The website was launched in 2014 with the aim to facilitate access to hate crimes information that the ODIHR compiled. It serves the member states, civil society, the media and the public. The 2015 stats include reports from 41 OSCE member states. 113 civil society organizations in 41 countries reported 5,357 incidents. 4,197 incidents were classified as prejudice-motivated. Data from international organizations, UNHCR and OSCE Missions in 35 countries, were added to the stats.

Reporting Hate Crimes Still Poses Challenge

Many victims do not report hate crimes cases. The reasons for that are

many, like language barriers and lack of trust in authorities. There is a constant need to work with the marginalized social groups in order to encourage and empower them to, when these cases occur, report them to the institutions in charge, for efficient processing and sanctioning of the perpetrators.

In the 2015 report that the OSCE Mission to BiH delivered to ODIHR, the cooperation with civil society was highlighted. When it comes to law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions, the cooperation with Sarajevo Open Centre on a two-year project, "Combating hate crimes in BiH", was also emphasized. The project included organization of hate crime trainings, more precisely trainings on prejudice as a motive for crimes. 155 police officers attended the trainings.

ODIHR noted that BiH didn't submit data on prejudice-motivated hate crimes.

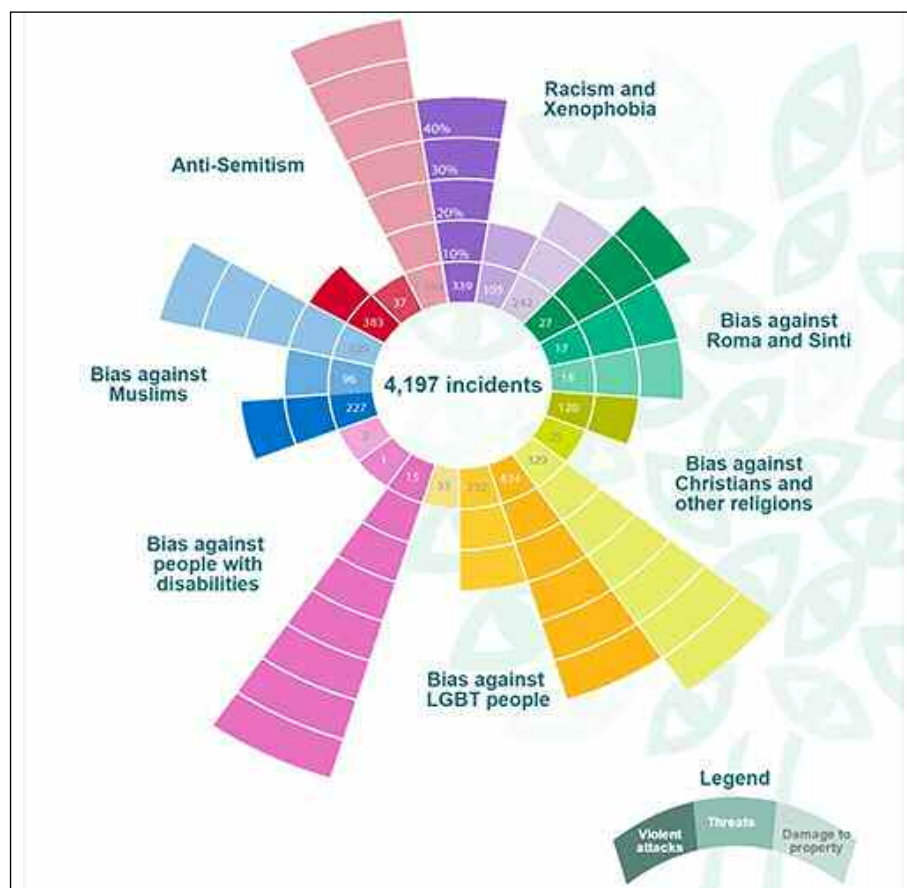
The communities at risk of hate crime in Bosnia are returnees, minority religious communities, LGBTI and Roma community.

Regarding the LGBTI community, the Sarajevo Open Centre documented 103 hate speech and incitement to hatred and violence cases in 2015, as well as 20 cases of hate crimes motivated by prejudice based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. From January to March 2016, the SOC documented 23 cases of hate speech and incitement to hatred, and 2 cases of hate crimes motivated by prejudice based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Those incidents were not necessarily reported to the authorities, which indicates the still low level of trust in the institutions, and the fact that violence against LGBTI persons is still in the so called "gray" area. A research carried out by the National Democratic Institute in 2015 showed that 15% of LGBT persons in BiH suffered physical violence because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and 72% suffered verbal abuse and harassment. The research did not include intersex persons.

Hate Defined as an Aggravating Circumstance

Hate crimes in the Bosnian criminal legislation are regulated on the level of entities and the Brcko District. The first significant amendments were made in 2010 in the Criminal Codes on the state level, in Brcko District and Republika Srpska entity. In 2013, the regulation was improved in the RS Criminal Code, and finally in the Federation entity in 2016.

Hatred (prejudice as the motive) is defined as an aggravating circumstance when sanctioning all crimes that the national Criminal Code regulates. The RS Criminal Code regulates hate crime as an aggravating circumstance. The new amendments to the Federation's Criminal Code regulated hate crime as an aggravating circumstance.



Salafists' Terror Tag is "Malicious"



After spending two months with members of the Salafi movement in Bosnia, social psychologist Srdjan Puhalo says it is time to stop demonizing the community as terrorists, reports BIRN

A leading Bosnian social psychologist has turned the two months he spent meeting 130 Bosnian members of the Salafi movement - in the municipalities of Jablanica, Sarajevo, Zenica, Maglaj, Bocinja, Tuzla, Gracanica, Sanski Most, Kljuc, Osve and Maoca - into a landmark book, "Salafis in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Srdjan Puhalo's aim was to collect as much information on them as possible and enable Bosnians to see beyond the terrorist tag that Salafis are often landed with, he told BIRN in an interview. "This is not a book about Salafism. It is about the people referred to as Wahhabis and Salafis. They simply call themselves 'Muslims,'" Puhalo said.

Fear of "the Other"

Puhalo conversed over lunch with Salafis in Maglaj. In Kljuc, a Salafi family welcomed him into their home. In Sarajevo, he enjoyed a risotto with 20 Salafi members. In Osve, they took selfies together. In Maglaj, he attended a Jum'ah, a regular Friday congregational prayer.

"I have to disappoint you - I didn't meet a single terrorist," Puhalo said. The idea that Salafis threaten Bosnia's national security is wrong, Puhalo told BIRN. Ignorance, fear, media reporting, general insecurity and the closed nature of the Salafi community all affect people's perception of them, he said. This hardline Muslim movement, a fundamentalist strain of Islam that adheres strictly to the prophet Muhammad's

teachings, has been feared in Bosnia since the 1990's war, but has recently become notorious throughout Europe after a number of its followers left to fight in Syria and Iraq.

But Puhalo says the fear of Bosnian Salafis is largely misplaced. "People attribute negative characteristics to this community, so any mention of Salafis arouses fear and suspicion. Accompanied with biased media reporting, it leads to a perception that Salafis are eager to blow themselves up and kill in acts of terror. But this view of Salafis and Salafism is far from reality. It is not honest and can even be considered malicious," the Banja Luka-based social psychologist explained.

Puhalo added that none of the Salafis he met with justified the killing of civilians or terrorism. Society functions and survives on the fear of "the other" and the different, he opines.

"Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks once used to cause fear. However, since they have become familiar, new groups are sought to keep society in fright," he said.

Puhalo warned also that by demonizing the community, society risks pushing them deeper into isolation and towards extremism.

Before setting out on his unusual journey, Puhalo admits he too knew very little about the Salafis and their version of Islam. His colleagues told him he was embarking on an impossible feat. Some were appalled by the idea, and others advised him to see a psychiatrist.

"Today, I am immensely proud of the results of the research," Puhalo said.

An Excellent Scapegoat

To be accepted into their community, Puhalo says he informed his examinees of his intentions from the onset.

"I promised them that I would be fair, would not be malicious, and that they would get the chance to talk about themselves anonymously," he explained. "It is important to note that I accepted them for who they are and at no time did I condemn them, or their way of interpreting Islam. I was not there to educate them or convert them," Puhalo added.

He found that although at first sight they look different from the average Bosnian citizens, they are beset by much the same problems as everyone else.

Salafis believe their practice of Islam is authentic, original and the only correct way to worship Allah. They behave in accordance with these teachings and, in doing so, differ from the Bosnian Muslim tradition that people are accustomed to, Puhalo said.

"Their attitudes, behavior and asceticism can be explained by their interpretation of Islam. Of course they differ from Bosnian Muslims in appearance, the way they dress and their attitude to women, but the essential difference lies in their willingness to subordinate their lives to Islam in a way they feel is right," he said.

People's view of this community is too often shaped by sensationalist media

reports, which portray Salafis as terrorists, religious fanatics and as people who see themselves above the law, he said. But, by allowing this, we are subjecting ourselves to an obscure version of reality, he added.

"It seems to me that they are an excellent scapegoat for everything that is wrong in Bosnia. They are an excellent subject for [media] spin. With a few



good headlines on the Salafis, you can always distract people's attention from real issues," Puhalo noted.

Because of this widespread fear, about 40 per cent of Salafis say they have been victims of verbal, emotional, physical or even sexual attacks, he found out. Many have been arrested based on their looks, long beards and trimmed pants, despite not having committed a crime.

"Does our fear of them, either objective or subjective, give us the right to carry out violence against them? As citizens of BiH they should have equal rights, regardless of which God they pray to and in which manner," Puhalo judged. The moment they break the law they must face the consequences like all other citizens, he reiterates, adding that the notion that they live above the law is false.

"Children in Maoca go to school like all other children in BiH," Puhalo described, referring to one of their well-known bastions.

He added that due to the misconceptions surrounding their community, Salafis face obstacles in getting work, which adds to their isolation. A third of Bosnia's Salafis are jobless, Puhalo's research shows.

"They have to earn money to survive, but I'm not sure that they have the same opportunities as other citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Realistically, who would hire a Salafi and endure a visit from SIPA every 10 days?" he said, referring to the intelligence agency.

Salafis, on the other hand, understand the predicament employees find themselves in. They are frustrated, but also aware that this is a consequence of the lifestyle they choose.

In terms of the popular belief that Salafis in Bosnia are funded by Saudi Arabia to live within the guidelines of this ultra-conservative movement, Puhalo says he saw no evidence of this.

"When I asked them about this, they asked me to introduce them to these people who are allegedly funding people to wear the niqab and short pants, because they need the money. I did not

get the impression that they have a lot of money or that they are rich," Puhalo said.

Like many ordinary citizens in Bosnia, they have to come up with ways to earn money to support their families.

Puhalo reiterated that it is important to learn about the Salafi community in Bosnia, and talk about them, but also to listen to them.

"You cannot have a discussion if you consider the other side to be the enemy, terrorists, and inferior, and if you belittle their choices," Puhalo clarified.

The Shades of Green

Looking back at the past few months, he says it was more difficult to voice his decision to write the book than to actually work in the field and talk to these people.

Puhalo concluded that his experience with Salafis has taught him to react with great reservation to everything that is said about the community.

"I am fully aware that among them there are all kinds of people, just like us. But I observe them primarily as people and then as Salafis. I do not idealize them, far from it, but I do not want to take part in their demonization".

In a short summary of his book, Puhalo wrote: "The world is not black and white and we cannot ignore all the shades of green that exist. I will always defend their right to practice Islam in any way they wish, as long as it is their personal choice and as long as they do not threaten my right to believe in something else, or not to believe at all. If and when they try to impose it on me – in me they will find their biggest enemy."

Brussels Urged to Support Balkan Civil Society

A civil society network called on the European Commission to deepen its commitment to civil society groups and initiatives in the Balkan region. The Balkan Civil Society Development Network, BCSDN, in its latest report, says civic organizations in Balkan countries are at a critical juncture in their initiatives in key areas such as media freedom, rule of law and anti-corruption. The report urged the European Commission to "continue its support for critical and strategic national and regional civil society initiatives that it has helped to develop and shape."

The BCSDN report, which analyses the latest Commission progress reports on Balkan countries, highlighted that the EU had "noted the declining pace of reforms, a trend towards authoritarianism and an unstable economic situation in Enlargement countries", while assigning an important role to civic society organizations as the "fourth pillar" of democracy in the Balkans. However, the BCSDN stated that the Commission had not addressed the problem that these organizations "still do not sufficiently diversify their funding, remaining overly-dependents on limited public funding and foreign funds".

"Considering the lack of significant progress in the structural reform process in all countries and the political instability, providing the background for increased attacks and pressure on civil society activists and CSOs, the Commission will need to both push further and higher," it said.

The network urged the Commission to "provide clear progress (or its lack) on EU CS Guidelines targets to show concrete results and achievements with the Guidelines and needed adjustments on the road ahead to 2020", in its next reports in 2018.

The BCSDN wrote that the Commission had noted numerous issues that civic activists and organizations are facing.

"Restrictions on freedom of association were this year again reported in Montenegro and Turkey as well as in Macedonia. While in Montenegro this was due to intimidation of civil society activists, freedom of association was overtly restricted in Turkey as part of the post-coup measures taken by the Government. In Macedonia, targeted investigations and infringement of privacy by law-enforcement agencies, when CSOs disagreed with the government on sensitive political issues, were noted," the BCSDN wrote.

Effective Anticorruption Mechanisms Lacking: TI

Transparency International in Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the monitoring report on the implementation of the Convention of the United Nations against corruption and concluded that when it comes to BiH, the biggest problem for the application of the provisions of the document is the lack of effective mechanisms

Executive Director of Transparency International in BiH Lejla Ibranovic told a press conference during the presentation of the report that the Convention gives equal importance to the establishment of an adequate legal and institutional framework and its implementation, so that it is very difficult to give a precise evaluation of the implementation of the measures provided for in the Convention.

"In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it must be noted that the partial compliance with the Convention in some areas is greatly relativized by the fact that the legislative and institutional framework for fighting corruption is not efficient due to a failure at various levels, that is not in accordance with international standards and best practices, and that in fact the biggest problem is still the lack of efficient mechanisms for implementation, which essentially prevents any progress in the field of rule of law and the fight against corruption," Ibranovic said.

An associate of this organization Nermin Kadribasic said that the measures of prevention are the biggest challenge for Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing the Convention.

"Progress in this area has been partly realized, but most of the goals set by the Strategy for fight against corruption 2015-2019 have not, including the previous strategies and action plans. The area of prevention is generally the least regulated and complied with the obligations under the Convention," Kadribasic said.

He stresses that the only professional and independent body in BiH is the Agency for prevention of corruption and coordination of the fight against corruption, which has limited powers and capacities, while lower levels of government, most of the cantons and Brčko District, have failed to adopt appropriate anti-corruption policies.



Lejla Ibranovic

"The process of employment in the public administration is not based on principles of transparency, there is discretion in hiring, individuals are selected and appointed to the positions in a manner that is not in line with the anti-corruption principles and does not recognize the ban on corruptive behavior, while the recommendations of the Group of States of the CoE against corruption in funding of political parties have not yet been fully implemented," added Kadribasic. Conflict of interest in the public sector in BiH is still inadequately regulated in institutions and in norm, codes of ethics in the public service are not implemented, penal policy in the public procurement is inadequate, planning, adoption and implementation of the budget is still not sufficiently transparent, and institutions have different interpretations on protection of public information in the field of budget data," said

Transparency International.

Ibranovic also said that the financial statements and property cards for judicial office holders are still not available to the public and that there are no mechanisms and competences for their verification. Codes of ethics in the private sector are a rarity, and civil society organizations are still generally excluded from the decision-making process.

In many cases, the laws are adopted on an expedited basis and in such cases an opportunity for public participation is reduced to a minimum; it was noted among many of other observations in the monitoring report.

It was also stated that the protection of persons reporting corruption is still not ensured in BiH except at the state level, and the criminal offense of illicit enrichment is not criminalized in any of the criminal codes.

Sarajevo Students to Learn about Corruption

Local authorities in Sarajevo say they plan to teach primary and high school students what corruption is, and what it does to society. The Sarajevo Canton's Education Ministry said that a working group will draft

a plan for addressing the issue in schools. According to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, which rates citizens' perceptions of corruption, Bosnia is one of the worst-rated countries in

Europe and Central Asia.

The ministry says children should learn the causes, forms and consequences of corruption so they can develop values which resist corruption.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Snow is eagerly expected on Jahorina mountain

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Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

WEATHER OUTLOOK



Air pollution in Sarajevo

HIGH

Sarajevo

Today: Snow. High 6C.

Tonight: Low -1C.

Tuesday: Partly cloudy. Close to -1C.

Banja Luka

Today: Partly cloudy. High 6C.

Tonight: Low 1C.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny. Close to 3C.

Tuzla

Today: Partly cloudy. High 4C.

Tonight: Low 0C.

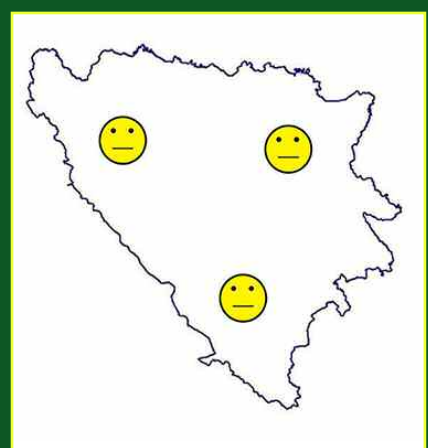
Tuesday: Sunny. Close to 1C.

Mostar

Today: Partly cloudy. High 11C.

Tonight: Low 4C.

Tuesday: Sunny. Close to 4C.



UV Index

Low