** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Friday, 14 February 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Dacic: Our strength is to also say no (*Beta*)**

Outgoing Serbian Prime Minister Ivica **Dacic** says there is no agreement on connecting three Albanian and four Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo and Metohija and that this will not relativize the autonomy of the Serbs in the north. “Our goal is to respect the specific feature of northern Kosovo,” said Dacic in the National Library in Belgrade, adding there are some topics in the negotiations that are in fact goals that should not be discussed publicly. “We are still working on the final version of the agreement,” said Dacic. He announced that there should be one more round of the Belgrade and Pristina talks in Brussels before the parliamentary elections on 16 March. “We told Pristina that the fact that we are negotiating is not our weakness but our strength, and our strength is to also say no when necessary,” said Dacic. He also wondered whether the reconfiguration of EULEX means preparation for arresting Serbs in northern Kosovo and reiterated that the arrest of the SDP leader Oliver **Ivanovic** is an unreasonable decision that may destabilize the situation.

**Vucic: Government doing everything for Ivanovic to be released (*RTS*)**

Outgoing Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic has stated that the government is doing everything so Oliver Ivanovic would be released pending trial. “We are doing our best for Ivanovic to be released,” said Vucic, adding that the government had also offered guarantees for three more persons, along with Ivanovic.

**Gudeljevic: Ivanovic to remain in detention in Pristina (*Tanjug*)**

An international prosecutor of the Kosovo Special Prosecution Office has announced an appeal against a decision to transfer Oliver **Ivanovic** to a detention unit in northern Kosovska Mitrovica, EULEX spokesperson Irina **Gudeljevic** said. As a result, Ivanovic, the leader of the SDP Civic Initiative, will remain in a detention unit in Pristina for the time being, Gudeljevic told ***Tanjug***. An international judge of the Kosovska Mitrovica Basic Court has ordered that Ivanovic be transferred to the detention unit in northern Kosovska Mitrovica after his attorney Nebojsa **Vlajic** requested a transfer to the Serb-majority part of the town. In the request, Vlajic cited several problems related to conditions in the detention unit in Pristina and the distance he and Ivanovic’s family have to travel between the detention unit and their places of residence. A pre-trial judge has deemed that there are no problems regarding the detainee’s personal safety while in detention in Pristina, and that his rights are not in danger. However, under Article 33 of the law on enforcement of criminal sanctions, the permanent or temporary place of residence of a detainee’s family must be taken into account, Gudeljevic explained. The final decision will be taken by the panel of international judges of the Kosovska Mitrovica Basic Court, and the suspect will remain in the detention unit in Pristina in the meantime, the EULEX spokesperson said.

**Kurz: Vienna wants Serbia in EU as soon as possible (*Novosti*)**

Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian **Kurz** has stated that his country will support the reforms that Serbia needs to implement, in striving for the EU membership. “We wish Serbia to join the EU as soon as possible, and the perspective of that membership has always offered the boost to the required reforms in the candidate countries,” Kurz told Novosti. The head of the Austrian diplomacy, who should visit Belgrade this month, emphasizes that Austria has always been supportive of Serbia on its course toward the EU, and promises to keep on with that support.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Cvijanovic: Deepening ethnic misunderstanding - greatest harm (*Srna*)**

The Republika Srpska (RS) Prime Minister Zeljka **Cvijanovic** said that the recent events in the B&H Federation have left consequences in the form of material damage, that a bad message was sent abroad and that the greatest harm done will be a deepening of ethnic misunderstanding. Commenting on the announcement by the SDA Caucus in the B&H House of Representatives that they will ask B&H Security Minister Fahrudin **Radoncic** to resign as he failed to take steps in his power in order to protect the personal safety and property of citizens and the property of B&H during the protests in the Federation, Cvijanovic said that the problem in the Federation is far greater than the issue of whether some party will ask for the dismissal of a minister belonging to another party. “It was shown in the Federation in the worst way how relations are complicated and how there is no agreement on many important issues,” Cvijanovic told reporters in Banja Luka. She said it is evident that in the light of the recent developments in the Federation there were calls for a reorganization of the security system in B&H, and as part of this, for some new police reform. “We had three events where the B&H security system did not want to react, and certainly those accountable should be sought. We heard stories that measures were not taken since it was not known who was tasked with what, which is not true,” Cvijanovic said. She feels that no one who does not know what to do, at any government level, should receive wages, noting that it is stipulated who does what in B&H. She recollected that the protests were also held because of the law on the single personal ID number, also recollecting the attack on the US Embassy and recent events. “This is a general manipulation of all things that were happening in B&H,” Cvijanovic said.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Belgrade, Pristina Silent on War Crimes Verdicts (*BIRN*, by Marija Ristic, Edona Peci, 13 February 2014)**

The lack of debate about recent convictions for atrocities committed by Serbian forces in Kosovo show that war crimes are still a taboo subject, while victims are forgotten.

Over the past month, the Hague Tribunal has convicted five top Serbian officials of war crimes in Kosovo and a Belgrade court has jailed nine Yugoslav Army soldiers for killing more than 100 Albanians during the late 1990s conflict, but there has been little reaction to these verdicts in either Serbia or Kosovo.

Former Yugoslav deputy prime minister Nikola Sainovic, former Yugoslav Army generals Nebojsa Pavkovic and Vladimir Lazarevic and former Serbian police general Sreten Lukic [were found guilty last month of the murder, deportation and inhumane treatment of Kosovo Albanians in 1999](http://www.icty.org/x/cases/milutinovic/acjug/en/140123_summary.pdf_blank); [the conviction of former Serbian assistant interior minister Vlastimir Djordjevic was also upheld by the international court](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/djordjevic-found-gulity-for-kosovo-crimes_blank).

The only official from either Belgrade or Pristina who reacted to these verdicts was Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dacic, who said that his country now needs to rethink its position on trials at the UN-backed court and consider whether to give more assistance to its citizens indicted for war crimes.

“These are not just verdicts on the individuals, but verdicts for acts that someone could think that the state was behind,” Dacic told Serbian media.

Meanwhile there was no reaction at all from political leaders in Belgrade or Pristina to the conviction of the Yugoslav Army soldiers this week, despite the fact that there was a lot of media interest in their trial.

Both Serbian and Kosovo experts agree that such verdicts only discussed by politicians when they serve their domestic interests.

“There is still a considerable taboo about the Serbian government’s involvement in crimes against humanity in Kosovo,” said Jelena Subotic, associate professor at Georgia State University.

“This is perhaps the consequence of the political fear of elites in Serbia that acknowledging government involvement in war crimes in Kosovo will further damage its international standing as the Serbia-Kosovo arrangement [to normalise relations and ease the EU accession process] is taking hold,” she added.

Agon Vrenezi, a Pristina-based human rights expert, also argued that the verdicts are seen in Kosovo through the prism of local politics.

“The debate on war crimes committed in Kosovo has always been politicised and almost not a single legal analysis has been done on this issue during the past 15 years,” Vrenezi explained.

Media forget about the victims

Another Kosovo analyst, Bekim Bekaj from the Humanitarian Law Centre, said the Kosovo media was also failing to provide information about the high-profile trials of officials accused of being responsible for killings and persecution of Albanians during the late 1990s conflict.

“They didn’t even try to [watch the live-streamed broadcasts] of trials at the Hague Tribunal. I fear that some the representatives of these institutions don’t even know the counts of the indictments raised against the high state representatives of Serbia who were convicted of war crimes against Albanian civilians in Kosovo,” Bekim said.

No television station in Belgrade and Pristina has broadcast the trial sessions during which the verdicts were announced, or organised studio debates about the convictions.

Bekaj and Vrenezi said that the lack of debate showed that Kosovo no longer cared about those who suffered.

“I think this ignorance that society shows towards such verdicts reflects our approach towards war crimes victims. In a word, Kosovo society has forgotten those victims,” Bekaj explained.

Subotic said that it was still “difficult to produce empathy” in Serbia for Albanian victims of the conflict, but expressed hope that Prime Minister Dacic’s visit in December to an exhibition about a Kosovo family killed in a wartime massacre “may begin to change this narrative”.

Fresh momentum for justice at home?

Subotic also expressed hope that the conviction of the senior Serbian officials in The Hague could “create momentum for new local war crimes trials” in Belgrade, although this has not been the case in the past.

“Legally, however, these verdicts can provide solid precedents for domestic courts to start indicting more perpetrators of atrocities committed during the Kosovo war,” she said.

Vrenezi said that he hoped that new cases would now be instigated against people linked to the high-ranking Serbs convicted by the Hague Tribunal.

“[These cases] also need to be documented and serve as a base for establishing a collective memory for the incidents which happened in Kosovo during the war,” he said.

Most of the remaining suspects are now living in Serbia, and Belgrade’s war crime prosecution said that the recent verdicts did provide some of the groundwork for fresh probes.

“We will continue investigations on the basis of documents gathered by the Hague Tribunal, but we will also question the convicted as witnesses, bearing in mind the role they had during the war,” the prosecution told BIRN.

Whether these investigations spark any wider debate about the legacy of the conflict in either Serbia of Kosovo, however, remains to be seen.

**'Average' Bribe in Serbia Rises to 250 Euro (*BIRN*, 14 February 2014)**

New survey shows that while living standards in Serbia are declining, the amount that people pays in bribes is going up.

The average amount paid per bribe in Serbia has jumped from €160 to €250 in the period of only a year.   
This is according to research conducted in December by the Center for Free Elections and Democracy, CeSID, with support of the UN Development Program, UNDP, on a sample of 600 people.  
The average bribe has risen, pardoxically, when living standards are falling. The average monthly salary in Serbia has remained stagnant for some time at around €400 a month.

But the cost of the average monthly food basket went up from about €520 to €590 a month for a three-member family, according to statistics.The unemployment rate also remained stubbornly high, at around 27 per cent.  
The survey shows that almost 60 per cent of people who have had experience with corruption have offered bribe themselves.   
Corruption is the third biggest problem Serbian citizens face, after unemployment and poverty, according to the results of the survey.  
Corruption is the most rampant in political parties, the health system and the police, the survey added.  
Physicians and policemen are the vocations in which corruption cases constantly feature, and almost half of the total number of bribery cases are linked to the health system and doctors.  
Only 2 per cent of those interviewed expected corruption to decline in the next 12 months, though 64 per cent believed the government was trying to curb corruption in the country.

**From Kiev to Kosovo: a critical juncture (*New Democracy*, by Nikolay Nikolov, 12 February 2014)**

From Ukraine to the Balkans, the last twenty-four years have witnessed political elites preaching democracy while surreptitiously undermining every single democratic institution, atomizing individuals through economic hardship and reducing freedom to a fake political independence.

Some time ago (1991), Samuel Huntington wrote [The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=6REC58gdt2sC&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&redir_esc=y=onepage&q&f=false). The idea was that democracy spreads around the world from the core countries in Europe and the US, where it originally developed over a long period of time, eventually extending to the peripheries, which experienced quick transitions from various forms of non-democratic regimes to a range of paths to democratization. Post-communist countries were the third-wave final push with their dual transitions to a market economy and the initiation of democratic processes. The Arab Spring and the easing of the Myanmar dictatorship has tempted some to consider the existence of a potential Fourth Wave.

But back in 2002, Michael McFaul stole the term 'Fourth Wave' in a [World Politics](http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=WPO) journal article called '[The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship'](http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract;jsessionid=1861E0E920AD1F55A36C5A3547B72D21.journals?fromPage=online&aid=7666624). And dictatorship. This, I think, is really important.

Moreover, scholars of democratization like Larry Diamond, Guillermo O'Donnell, [Ivan Krastev](http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/slawomir-sierakowski/ivan-krastev-balkan-smuggler-of-ideas), Andreas Schedler, to name but a few, have been arguing for a long time that to speak of 'waves', of 'linear progress to democracy' and 'consolidation' is empirically and theoretically false. What we see in eastern Europe, for example, are façade democracies, suspended political authority, lack of civic engagement, media manipulation, questionable (post)Cold-War geopolitical relations - in a word - hybrid regimes, to use Diamond's term.

Bulgaria, Ukraine, and now Bosnia and Kosovo. A clear path from peaceful protests to chaos and bloodshed. In Europe. Twenty-four (or so) years after the end of various forms of totalitarianism.

At certain moments, all these nations have shown signs of 'hope', of ending their democratic standstill. In Bulgaria, it was the 'region's most hailed' reform period from 1997-2001; in Ukraine, it was the Coloured Revolution; for Kosovo and Bosnia - the situation is more complex. But one thing seems for certain now, at least according to [Anne Applebaum](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/anne-applebaum-ukraine-shows-the-color-revolution-model-is-dead/2014/01/24/c77d3ab0-8524-11e3-8099-9181471f7aaf_story.html), who argues that the 'colored revolution' model is dead: i.e. "the belief that peaceful demonstrators, aided by a bit of western media training, will eventually rise up and nonviolently overthrow the corrupt oligarchies that have run most of the post-Soviet orbit since 1991."

The sense of shock and disbelief at what happened in Kiev over the past months has spread to Bosnia and Kosovo this week.

Bosnia is at a critical juncture since last Tuesday, when violence erupted in the northern town of Tuzla, a former industrial town, after 10,000 workers were sacked. Their factory was privatized - its investors sold its assets and declared bankruptcy. This, as it seems, was the final straw to those suffering from the arrogant form of the oligarchic model visible in many post-communist countries. Since last Tuesday, the protests have spread to more than 30 cities and at least 300 people have been injured. Several days ago, when the municipality building was set on fire, police officers in Tuzla took their helmets off and [joined the protests](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9o37DUd7MBc=27) claiming they "could not hurt the kids".

So far, four regional cantons have resigned. The Presidency has been set on fire, apparently burning some invaluable [Ottoman era archives](http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/ekskluzivne-fotografije-iz-unutrasnjosti-arhiva-bih-steta-je-nenadoknadiva/140208018). A breaking point has been reached, but the monument of burning architecture which resembles the 'corrupt and unaccountable State' remains.

“We haven’t seen violent scenes like this since the war in the 1990s,” says Srecko Latal, an analyst at the Social Overview Service, [for the New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/08/world/europe/protests-over-government-and-economy-roil-bosnia.html?ref=world&_r=1). Why now? Why not 6 months ago? Why not one year ago? These are question that were directed at the protests in Bulgaria, which reached their largest numbers in the summer. Clearly, the situation is so dire that both nothing and something rather 'small' could trigger an unexpected public reaction. In Bulgaria, it was [the atrocious appointment](http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21586571-will-bulgarians-daily-protests-have-lasting-impact-birth-civil-society) of corruption-linked and manipulative- mass-media owner Delyan Peevski, that really did it. It seems that in Bosnia - it was the factory closing in Tuzla that was just too much.

Over the past years, the country has suffered one crisis after another - political instability has reduced its chances of joining the EU, ethnic divisions are crippling the functioning of democratic institutions, economic hardship has been sustained by a powerful (un)official oligarchic model. [Around 30% are unemployed](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/07/bosnia-herzegovina-wave-violent-protests). Many simply do not have the time or the energy to sustain a peaceful protest and patiently endure a slow, uncertain cultural progress 'to that better place'.

Of course violence cannot be the answer. It's destructive. But desperation clearly takes precedence over dialogue in this case. As one student[, Lyla Bernstein](https://twitter.com/Danesthetised), currently in Tuzla told me: violence is not the answer but "just the product of collected rage" gathered over the past twenty years. It's simple - for the people protesting, the option of patience is nonexistent. And it is understandable. There is a level of tolerance that is, as has been shown over and over again in the twentieth century, very flexible and malleable among human beings. But it has its limits. And in the Balkan countries this year, the sense of tolerance has been exhausted by the outright public arrogance of the Untouchables - call them mafia men, ex-communist, business elites. It makes no difference.

Their capacity to flaunt their economic dominance is one thing, but their increasing ability to enforce their political and legal immunity is proving too much. It has been, for a long time, a fact that democracy is very dysfunctional. People knew that and that is reflected in the constant lack of confidence which has been registered in public institutions and voting-rates. Bulgaria is the perfect example. But you can look to Bosnia and Albania as well. All countries where the discourse of corruption and 'the mafia' has become ubiquitous.

In Kosovo, it was another matter that reached the breaking point for tolerance. In Pristina, students [occupied the University](https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.714684975232631.1073741855.377834825584316&type=1) 11 days ago. The students have been protesting for weeks after reports exposed the Head of the University, among other scholars, as having published articles in fake online journals, looking for academic credentials. The Parliament subsequently failed to pass a vote on forcing the resignation of the Head of the University. Clashes became violent on Friday as students threw stones and splashed paint on police officers in Pristina.

Like in Bosnia, Kosovo is hard-hit with [soaring unemployment rates](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/07/us-kosovo-violence-idUSBREA161B820140207) (around 40%) and is often reminded that it is one of the poorest countries in Europe since gaining independence six years ago.

Like in Bulgaria, where the ['Early Rising' students](https://www.facebook.com/RanobudniteStudenti) occupied the Sofia University (twice) in the past 3 months, the message is the same: Enough. Enough with the circus that the government can claim legitimacy, that the judiciary system is free and fair; this cannot continue any longer.

Unlike Ukraine, a country divided into pro-European western Ukraine, and Russia-dominated eastern Ukraine, where #Euromaidan was a direct reaction to steps taken to further isolate the nations from the EU and where the fight is, literally, one of life and death, with clear sides and clear visions of the future, Bosnia and Kosovo and their current signs of violence are a case in point of something else. They have no normative ideal, like the EU for the protesters in Ukraine, which can be emulated; no vision for the future that looks hopeful. The transition period is widely regarded as a fiction only benefiting ‘the few’; and by extension democracy does not literally mean democracy, as it is construed as a mechanism at best for personal gain and a fake independence.

In Ukraine, the fight is over destroying the foreign influence of a political system; getting rid of the post-totalitarian continuation of the old totalitarian practices.

But in the Balkan nations, the fight is about changing the system from the inside. How can that be done when the people who attempt to do it are marginalized, excluded, silenced, and finally, met with force? In Bulgaria, the biggest weapon against those wanting to rip off the façade of pseudo-democracy, those who are forcing reform, is the manipulation of the media and the distortion of the truth. Access to truth is severely limited. I can see something similar present in Bosnia, as the media today are suffocating the public discourse with reports of ‘drug-abuse’, ‘looting’, ‘theft of important archives’, ‘vandalism’.

Bulgaria is in the EU and change is slowly happening, mostly from above with increasing pressure by the President and, more importantly, by the European institutions. The seven-month-long daily protest movement has not as yet managed to force the government’s resignation but has been firstly ignored, then rejected, then ridiculed, and all through-out lied about in the media.

Logically, the numbers since the summer have fallen and there is a growing sense of helplessness. But the protesting citizens are not alone; like the protesting citizens in Ukraine are not alone. That does not amount to much, as can be clearly seen today, but it is something that is not present, it seems, in either Bosnia or Kosovo. There, the feeling of desperation at the state of their societies and the feeling of being isolated and alone, is clearly overwhelming. It has led to a violent escalation. It has brought the international community’s attention back to them. How successful it will be in forcing change is a difficult question, but there has to be a start somewhere. Progress has a point of initiation and that point usually comes with civic (re)engagement.

One thing is clear – democracy does not flow forward in a neat linear process. In fact, in many ways it has been altered by the post-totalitarian regimes, and adapted in order to continue the practices of repression from the past. Under the loose notion of democracy, different elites seem able to continue to dominate – either economically, and/or politically, and/or culturally. The one thing they all do the same, is to perpetuate the existential crisis and emptiness of these individual transition periods. From Ukraine to the Balkans, the last twenty-four years (give or take) have been an almost uninterrupted period of preaching that yellow is green. “Here, now you have a democracy; you are free now!” is the surface story, while the underwater current has been one of undermining each and every single democratic institution, atomizing individuals through economic hardship and bad politics, and reducing freedom to pseudo-political independence.

So what is a potential step-forward? Realizing just how deep this underwater current runs in any given society; understanding just how much of a façade there is, how much of a hybrid regime one is facing, and after that really getting back to the basics of democracy, literally: ‘rule (kratos) of the people (dçmos).’

One such initiative that is gaining ground in Bulgaria is an initiative [boycotting buying goods from the corporate ‘corner-shop’ Lafka,](https://www.facebook.com/az.ne.kupuvam.ot.lafka) which is co-owned by the prospective Head of the National Security Agency, Delyan Peevski. Another is the student occupation, which gained incredible public support (almost 80%) after its initiation last year. This seems to be working in Pristina as well but we should wait and see how that develops over the coming weeks.

Alternative paths to reform need to be tried out and precedents obviously need to be created for peaceful resolutions. A counter-discourse against the alteration of truth in the public domain must be pursued – Facebook seems to be a successful tool for that, for now. That has already happened in Bulgaria and Ukraine.

The next step is national engagement – we can see that currently happening in Bosnia. Eventually, the forces will become too strong. The biggest obstacles - isolation from the political process and the reduction of democracy to a semi-free electoral process - can be overcome. When change is forced through, it cannot be expected to presuppose progress immediately. It will, however, level the playing field, initiate a process of political healing and jumpstart the institutionalization of democracy. One step at a time.

**Bosnia By The Numbers: Bureaucracy Amid Bad Times (*RFE/RL*, 13 February 2014)**

Since the Dayton accords were signed in 1995, a fragile peace has existed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the unique system created by the accords has also created a mammoth bureaucracy that some blame for the recent unrest in the country.  
Inspired by an online meme titled "[Welcome to Bosnia](https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=782356881793682&set=a.418244518204922.117774.100000581322391&type=1&theater_blank)," RFE/RL's Naida Skrbic takes a look at the numbers behind Bosnia-Herzegovina's labyrinthine bureaucracy and economic problems.  
**1 state**Bosnia-Herzegovina. The state, which declared its independence from the former Yugoslavia in 1992, descended into a devastating three-year war involving the three major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats).  
**2 entities**The Muslim-Croat Federation consists mostly of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Croats. Republika Srpska is dominated by Bosnian Serbs. There is also a small, self-governing administrative unit called Brcko District in the country's northeast.  
**5 presidents**At the state level, there is one president for each major ethnic group, with the chairmanship rotating every eight months. In addition, both the Muslim-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska elect presidents to lead their entities.  
**10 cantons**The Muslim-Croat Federation uses a federal system and is divided into 10 cantons. Republika Srpska has a centralized government.  
**127 registered political parties**The next general elections are due in October 2014.  
**136 ministries**Ministries exist at both the national and entity level.  
**422 euros**The average monthly wage (about $580), as of November 2013  
**551,456 registered unemployed**As of November 2013, the unemployment rate was 45 percent.  
**585,411 fewer people than in 1991**While many left during the Bosnian war, others have departed to find opportunity elsewhere.  
**566,025 people living in relative poverty  
627,978 pensioners**In January 2014 the average monthly pension was 187 euros (around $250) in the Muslim-Croat Federation and 170 euros in Republika Srpska.  
**3,791,622 people**Just under two-thirds of the population, 2,371,603 people, live in the Muslim-Croat Federation; 1,326,991 live in Republika Srpska; and 93,028 live in Brcko District.

**Pusic: Unrest in Bosnia caused by bad economy, EU should be more efficient (*dalje.com*, 12 February 2014)**

The EU believes that social discontent is the main cause of mass protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is aware that it should provide more efficient and faster assistance in dealing with the difficult economic situation in the country, Croatia's Foreign and European Affairs Minister Vesna Pusic said in Zagreb on Wednesday.

"There is an awareness in the EU that the entire situation should be looked at more broadly and that faster and more efficient action has to be taken. There is also an awareness that regardless of the mixed composition of participants in the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the economic situation is difficult and that that fact should be dealt with," Pusic told reporters.

She said that Croatia, which shares a 1,000-kilometre-long border with Bosnia, would discuss the situation in the neighbouring country both with European partners and the United States, but that it believed it was a European issue.

"We believe Bosnia and Herzegovina is a real European issue and that it is Europe's duty to help it overcome the current situation," said Pusic who earlier this week attended a meeting of EU foreign and European affairs ministers discussing the unrest in Bosnia.

Pusic said the EU was one of the few authorities accepted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that for a long time it had approached the country's European integration by setting conditions and demanding the settlement of concrete issues so that the process of the country's integration with the EU could start.

"We believe it would be simpler to launch a process tailored to suit Bosnia and Herzegovina, just as in case of Serbia and Kosovo the issue of mutual recognition has become an integral part of the process and is no longer a precondition for its beginning," Pusic said.

The minister added that such a plan, which was already being discussed in Brussels, would include instruments available to EU institutions.

"The EU cannot come to a country and decide on its internal configuration, but it can set criteria for the functioning of the state institutions and criteria for internal integration which runs in parallel to the country's integration with the EU."

Pusic added that the EU was not a policeman and could not impose on anyone, especially not on a non-EU country, criteria for its internal organisation.

"But it can create conditions which are attractive to that country and its people and to which they aspire. That is the EU's main instrument of power," said Pusic.

**Calls for expanded European Union intervention in Bosnia (*World Socialist Website*, by Ognjen Markovic and Paul Mitchell, 14 February 2014)**

The [revolt](http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/02/10/bosn-f10.html) of Bosnian workers and wide layers of the population last week when scores of governmental buildings were torched and ransacked has been followed by further demonstrations this week.

The United States, European Union (EU), local politicians and middle class groups are seeking to channel these protests against austerity, unemployment of 40 percent and rampant poverty behind calls for the restructuring of government institutions and economic “reforms.”

Ever since the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was ended by the 1995 US-brokered Dayton agreement, the country has been divided into two semi-independent entities each with its own president, government, parliament and police. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), which comprises 10 administrative regions called cantons, is inhabited mainly by Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, and the Republika Srpska (RS) is mainly Serb. The country is overseen by an unelected United Nations-appointed High Representative with semi-dictatorial powers, currently the Austrian Valentin Inzko.

Both Inzko and the EU as a whole have come in for increasing criticism from the US for failing to end the deadlock between the two entities and move towards a more unified state.

Shortly after becoming US Assistant Secretary for Europe last October, Victoria Nuland warned Bosnian politicians, “It is well past time for leaders to demonstrate courage and vision, to move past the petty power interests and to build a modern, unified nation worthy of the talents and aspirations of all three communities.

“If these leaders continue to block their country’s path to the EU and to NATO membership, Bosnia’s international partners, the US included, should seriously re-evaluate our approach.”

One newspaper reported how “officials, diplomats and observers in Sarajevo readily say, US officials—chief among them Nuland—are deeply frustrated with the EU’s diplomacy in Bosnia.”

The protests, nearly all of which occurred in FBiH, have led to the resignation of four cantonal government heads and various other officials, but the FBiH federal government and FBiH Prime Minister Nermin Niksic remain in office despite demands they resign. Niksic announced that elections planned for October will be brought forward.

The FBiH political elite are so badly discredited that the police reportedly cannot even guarantee their safety. FBiH presidency members Zeljko Komsic and Bakir Izetbegovic were advised on Monday morning, when they appeared for work in the badly damaged presidency building in Sarajevo, to return home before the new protest scheduled for noon that day started.

The protests in Bosnia have stunned the EU. Talks between the bloc’s 28 foreign ministers in Brussels on Monday were forced to include them in the discussion, even though it was not on the original agenda.

“What happened in Bosnia is a wake-up call,” British Foreign Secretary William Hague told reporters. “We need to focus more efforts on helping Bosnia towards the EU, towards NATO membership.”

The European Parliament’s lead negotiator on Bosnia and Herzegovina, German Christian Democrat MEP Doris Pack, said the failure of Bosnia to develop a common state had helped fuel unrest. EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said, “There are many leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina and it is time that they demonstrate leadership, and we will support them in that.”

An EU political delegation will visit Bosnia within a week.

High representative Inzko declared, “If it comes to escalation we would have to consider the intervention of EU forces. Currently, we do not have such intention.” He later backtracked, claiming he was speaking hypothetically.

However, Inzko’s outburst suggests this option is being seriously deliberated. Himzo Selimovic, director of Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies, speaking after last Friday’s protests said, “The international community and the EU should consider [deploying] international military forces in BiH if this occurs again.”

Leading Bosnian politicians have claimed that protests were imported and instigated from the outside, and aim to destabilize only the Bosnian Muslim part of the country. Niksic said it was “obvious someone is orchestrating, directing and ordering the demonstrators what to do.”

An announcement by the Association of War Veterans, published and obviously endorsed by Niksic’s Social Democratic Party, declared, “These are no spontaneous protests of socially endangered categories of people, but well-thought-out operations against the BiH state. In this case, the orders come from SANU [Serbian Academy of Science and Arts] and the Serbian government.”

In reply, the RS president said, “It is obvious that the economic and social problems in the Federation were not the only reason the buildings of three cantonal governments were set on fire, but that this is a political project intended to transfer the escalation of events in the Federation to Republika Srpska.”

Protests have continued this week. On Monday, in Sarajevo, demonstrators carried banners that read, “You have been stealing from us for 20 years and now it is over,” “Courts, police, all protecting the gang in power,” “Gang, resign,” and “We want the names of billionaires.” In other cities they declared, “No more luxury at the people’s expense,” “Hooligans are in power,” “Employer – slaveholder, worker – slave.” There are reports of villas and residences of the politicians and the rich having been set fire to.

Middle-class groups with semi-anarchist conceptions and generally reformist agendas are dominating the “citizens’ plenums” that have emerged such as that in Tuzla, the former industrial town in the north where the protests originated. On February 11, the fifth session of the Tuzla plenum was held in the People’s Theater and was filled to overflowing by workers and youth seeking a political solution to the crisis in Bosnia.

Much as was the case with the Occupy Movement internationally, or the Spanish Indignados, these forums are used to stifle political discussion in order to prevent the working class from turning consciously to socialism. They use the deep hatred of all bourgeois political parties to exclude any political tendency, in effect acting as the last line of defence for capitalist rule. A call for the first meeting of the Sarajevo plenum held on February 12 stated at the outset, “Everyone is welcome, EXCEPT MEMBERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES” (original caps).

**Bosnia’s magnificent uprising: Heralding a new era of class politics? (**[***Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal***](http://links.org.au/node/3708_blank)**, by Michael Karadjis, 13 February 2014)**

Beginning on February 5, mass protests led by workers and retrenched former workers in the privatised factories, along with students and other citizens, have rocked most major industrial cities in Bosnia, notably Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Bihac and Mostar.

The state responded to the initial protests with arrests, tear gas and other forms of repression. In many cases peaceful protests turned violent; government buildings have been attacked, occupied, sometimes torched. Tens of thousands of protesters have demanded nothing less than the complete resignation of everyone at all levels of government from all parties, which they see as equally responsible for the massive multi-decade theft of people’s assets by the three wings of the nationalist oligarchy – Serb, Croat and Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) – which have run Bosnia as their fiefdom since being granted it in the US-engineered Dayton Accord that ended the Bosnian war in 1995.

The main, if not only, form of theft that has sparked off the uprising is called privatisation. Mass lay-offs, new owners stripping assets and declaring formerly well-functioning state firms “bankrupt”, workers cheated of retrenchment packages, workers still at work not getting paid for months on end? Sound familiar? Some like to call it “illegal” or “corrupt” privatisation, but for millions of workers around the world it is just called privatisation, or better still, capitalism.

[According to Bosnia expert Eric Gordy](http://eastethnia.wordpress.com/2014/02/08/on-protests-in-bh-quickly-and-darkly/_blank), the current uprising in Bosnia “is probably not the workers’ revolution we have been promised since those nice manuscripts began to be criticised by rodents in 1844. Sorry.”

Perhaps not. But what workers’ revolution begins in some kind of pure form that can instantly be recognised?

Gordy’s otherwise excellent prose notwithstanding, he does neither himself nor the Bosnian working class much justice with this intrusion of cynicism. Whatever the current uprising is or is not, it is the largest mass outbreak of unalloyed class struggle revolt, untouched by nationalist poison, that we have seen in Bosnia since it was ripped to bits by Serbian and Croatian nationalists – i.e., the new Serbian and Croatian bourgeoisie which had arisen on the corpse of Yugoslav “market socialism” – in the early 1990s.

And this is all the more significant given that the multi-ethnic Bosnian working class, in the great industrial centres of Bosniak-majority central Bosnia, was the living heart of the best traditions of multi-ethnic socialist Yugoslavia, and it is in these same centres that the current revolt has broken out.

**'Return the factories to the workers!'**

And their demands indicate that some of the most powerful aspects of the ideology of that Yugoslavia – workers’ self-management of the factories, and radical social equality – have resurfaced, perhaps never buried very too deeply in the consciousness of the people.

Let’s just look at some of the key demands put forward in the “[Declaration by Workers and Citizens of the Tuzla Canton](https://www.facebook.com/notes/kole-kili/declaration-by-workers-and-citizens-of-the-tuzla-canton/10152284016948413_blank)” on February 7.

While the call for “a technical government, composed of expert, non-political, uncompromised members who have held no position at any level of government” may sound naiive to anyone that has experienced unelected, neoliberal “technical” governments in Greece and Italy, the protesters see this as merely a temporary government to get them to elections, and moreover it would “be required to submit weekly plans and reports about its work” to “all interested citizens”.

This demand for such constant public oversight of the government – borne of the experience of decades of detached and arrogant rule by the three “ethnic” wings of the Bosnian oligarchy and suggesting a form of “people’s power” – already looks far in advance of these other so-called “technical” governments, and certainly coming from a different direction.

However, it is the social program the people demand of such a government that makes it day and night compared to these neoliberal, anti-people governments. The third set of demands, regarding issues related to the privatisation of the major former state companies that dominated the city’s economy (Dita, Polihem, Poliolhem, Gumara, and Konjuh), are that the government must:

· Recognise the seniority and secure health insurance of the workers.

· Process instances of economic crimes and all those involved in it

· Confiscate illegally obtained property

· Annul the privatisation agreements

· Prepare a revision of the privatisation

· Return the factories to the workers and put everything under the control of the public government in order to protect the public interest, and to start production in those factories where it is possible

After decades of neoliberal onslaught, both in practice and at an ideological level, for a rising people to demand privatised factories be “returned to the workers” is an extraordinarily refreshing moment.

It should be remembered that even neoliberals and free marketeers can pretend to get behind campaigns against “illegal” privatisations in order to safely steer them in their ideological direction – they claim all the problems are caused by the “corruption” of the process, or “lack of transparency” and that indeed the problem isn’t the free market, but that the market is allegedly still not free or “perfect” enough.

For example, [in an otherwise useful article that details the theft, Aida Cerkez, writing for Associated Press](http://hosted2.ap.org/PASCR/a5050f4ad4f44dafab85bb41a15281cf/Article_2014-02-12-Bosnia-Protests/id-32fd721fbdb94ec1b6ae02dc08ad9f4c_blank), tell us that “more than 80 percent of privatizations have failed” as well-connected tycoons have swept into these companies, stripping them of their assets, declaring bankruptcy and leaving thousands without jobs or with minimal pay”. Failed? More like succeeded.

A demand for factories to be returned to the workers – i.e., to their rightful owners – cuts across these neoliberal illusions, doesn’t allow them the time of day.

Further demands include “equalising the pay of government representatives with the pay of workers in the public and private sector” – a demand that has rarely been heard since Lenin wrote State and Revolution in 1917 – as well as elimination of all kinds of special and additional payments to government representatives (eg, for sitting on committees etc.) and “other irrational and unjustified forms of compensation beyond those that all employees have a right to”.

Similarly, in Sarajevo, citizens demanded, along with resignation of everyone in government from all parties, release of arrested demonstrators, an end to the “larceny of society cloaked in politics” and criminal prosecution of those responsible, that society begins “conversations and actions at all levels of government in order to establish a more socially just order for all social strata; and for all those whose human dignity and material basic needs have been endangered or destroyed by the transitional theft, corruption, nepotism, privatisation of public resources, an economic model that favors the rich, and financial arrangements that have destroyed any hope for a society based on social justice and welfare”).

So while it may not yet be the “workers’ revolution” promised “in 1844”, it would be hard to disagree with Bosnian activist [Emin Eminagiæ](http://www.rosalux.rs/userfiles/files/Emin%20Eminagic_Tuzla%20protests.pdf_blank) that this upsurge “could be the long-awaited opportunity to reintroduce the notion of class struggle into Bosnia and Herzegovina's society, moving away from the nationalist imaginaries of political elites”. “We are hungry in three languages” explains a banner in demonstration in Zenica.

Background: The rise of bourgeois nationalism and the destruction of Bosnia

It is extremely significant that there has been no trace of nationalist poison in any of the demands of the rising people. Nationalism was a product of rising capitalism within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1980s – the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie in the dominant nations, especially Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia – as they threw off the shackles of the Communist ideology, under the leadership of Broz Tito, of “Brotherhood and Unity”, i.e., working-class solidarity between the various nations that made up the federation.

Bosnia was the hardest nut to crack, because while the five other republics within the Yugoslav Federation represented, however imperfectly, five different Yugoslav nations, Bosnia was the only fully multi-ethnic republic – a republic completely mixed between Serbs, Croats, Muslims (Bosniaks), “Yugoslavs” (i.e., those of mixed birth or who chose not to use an ethnic identifier) and others – it was Yugoslavia itself writ small. And likewise, the working-class cities of central Bosnia were in turn Bosnia’s heart – where workers of all these ethnic groups worked in the same factories, lived in the same apartment blocks – how were the new nationalist bourgeoisies to divide them?

And yet divide them they – both these nationalist bourgeois cliques in neighbouring Serbia and Croatia, and the western imperialist powers – had to do; because a working class united across ethnic lines was not going to be much good for economic “reform”, i.e., the privatisation/theft of what was then legally owned by the working class.

Especially when this Bosnian working class had such a militant history of class struggle. Indeed, it was none other than the miners in this thoroughly multi-ethnic city of Tuzla in northern Bosnia who organised collections and sent support to the heroic British miners’ strike of the 1980s. Not a tradition the British ruling class wanted to maintain at any rate; perhaps partly accounting for Tory-ruled Britain being the most solidly supportive of the demands of Serbian bourgeois nationalist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, to split up Bosnia into newly created, ethnically-cleansed statelets.

The problem with splitting Bosnia along ethnic lines being that people didn’t live in separate areas, but all together in cities, and in an interlocking, completely scattered patchwork in the countryside. Thus to create a “Serb Republic” within Bosnia as demanded by Milosevic, and likewise a smaller “Croat Republic” as demanded by his partner in crime, Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, required massive “ethnic cleansing”, in what became a euphemism for genocide.

And the main victims of this were the plurality of the Bosnian population who were at once the most scattered throughout Bosnia geographically, the most urban-based and proletarianised, and who did not have a national “fatherland” outside Bosnia to arm them to the teeth – namely, the Bosnian Muslims, and the mixed Bosnians.

And as the newly independent bourgeois states of Serbia and Croatia, via their massively armed local Bosnian proxies, began in April 1992 carving out their new “states” via ethnic cleansing, Britain and France enforced a criminal arms embargo on the Bosnian Republic, in violation of UN Article 51 on the right of UN-member states to armed self-defence, and in defiance of overwhelming votes in the UN General Assembly for this embargo to be lifted. Britain and France demanded nothing less than Bosnia’s surrender, its capitulation to one or the other of the unjust ethnic partition plans they continually proposed.

Bosnia’s multi-ethnic government – led by Bosniaks and anti-nationalist Serbs and Croats at all levels – rejected these demands for ethnic apartheid and recognition of ethnic cleansing. While massively outgunned, it attempted to hold on at least the Bosniak-majority regions (the few it could defend against massive ethnic cleansing) and the mixed working class cities of central Bosnia.

Once again, Tuzla, where the current revolt broke out, played a key role, alongside the capital Sarajevo, in maintaining a powerful multi-ethnic flavour for the resistance, not an easy task as over a million Bosniaks were driven into the small part of Bosnia still controlled by the government, from the 85 percent of the country which had been conquered and “cleansed” as Serb and Croat “republics”.

The Dayton republic of apartheid and dysfunction

In the end it was US intervention in late 1995 – following three and a half years of slaughter – that granted half of Bosnia as an ethnically cleansed “Serb Republic” (RS), though Serbs were only one third of Bosnians, to the regime of the right-wing Serb Democratic Party (SDS), which had led the ethnic cleansing; the timing would almost suggest this was a reward for the SDS-led army having just committed genocide in the Bosniak town of Srebrenica, which was included in RS seemingly just as a matter of course.

However, worried that granting a “Croat Republic” as well would leave a land-locked, poverty-stricken, revenge-seeking “Muslim state” in the heart of Europe, the US prevailed upon the Croat nationalists to accept a “Federation” with the Muslims in the other half.

As such, this US-engineered Dayton Accord was far from an equal document:

· The Serb nationalists got what they had fought for, an ethnic republic in far more of the country than could conceivably be “theirs”; but they could claim they were short-changed by not being allowed to unite with Serbia.

· The Croat nationalists were not only denied the “right” to unite with Croatia, but did not even get their own republic like the Serb nationalists, and so considered themselves short-changed; but given the weakness of the Bosniak people and of the Federation as a whole, Croatia felt it had gained the same effective suzerainty over half of Bosnia as Serbia had gained over the other half, and used this to promote Bosnian Croat interests.

· The Bosniaks lost the war, in being forced to cede half the country to RS, with the sop that the other half could still be called a “Federation”, and so were now forced to play the same game, trying now to compete with the Croats to dominate the Federation, where they at least had the advantage of numbers.

Importantly, this “Federation” was no real concession to multi-ethnicity; not only had the damage been done, and rivers of blood divided these two populations (and both from the Serbs), but moreover the entire constitution of Bosnia was re-written to create ethnic quotas at every level of government, in both halves of the country, from the municipal level right up to the weak federal government. And levels there are: as Cerkez explains, “nearly 4 million people are governed by more than 150 ministries on four different levels of government”.

And on top of this morass of ethnic-based politics, an international overseer – the High Representative – was appointed to be the final arbiter of politics in Bosnia – and to represent the interests of western capital, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as they attempted to push a neoliberal economic “restructure” on to the battered country: such issues as overall economic direction were never to be up for popular vote.

And so in peace, the policy of national division became dominant; and so every political issue that arose could become diverted into the nationalist box; every election, at every level, became a forum for the ethnic bourgeoisie to try to grab more of the spoils while spouting ethnic lies to their impoverished and frightened constituencies, while in the end, to form governments, grotesque coalitions of ethnic-based parties came into being, often mutually hostile, but competing with another such unprincipled bloc, a recipe for permanent dysfunction.

So while the Bosnian Serb, Croat and now Muslim bourgeoisie stripped the economy and thieved the people’s assets – as required by neoliberal “economic reform” – there could always be someone else to blame, another national group ready to take away the (unequal) “rights” they had all achieved at Dayton, in order to prevent the battered working people from putting the blame on their “own” thieving class.

Indeed the very lopsidedness of the Dayton set-up aggravated this ethnic politics. RS leaders could continually threaten to leave Bosnia and unite with Serbia, knowing full-well it was impossible; Bosniak leaders could threaten to try to get RS abolished, again knowing it was impossible, however morally correct it may seem in the abstract – in practice, as a form of threat, it could only act divisively now the deed was done; Croat leaders could threaten to split the Federation and form a third, Croat entity. And then they could each scare and homogenise their “own” people with these threats of what the other group might do.

Thus the significance now of today’s non-nationalist demands, not to mention ones which call for factories to be returned to the workers. In fact, this is not the first action cutting across ethnic lines – last June’s “Babylution” was a precursor, a brief multi-ethnic mass protest against the incredible dysfunction of a system in which parties and state agencies were unable to reach enough agreement to issue identity documents to babies, which led to the death of a child unable to cross the border for urgent medical treatment. But that brief moment has now been overshadowed by the current mass revolt.

Why is most revolt taking place in the Bosniak areas?

But a question then arises – why has the uprising largely taken place in the Federation, and even within the Federation, overwhelmingly among the Bosnian Muslims? In fact, it hasn’t been only Muslims – there have been smaller outbreaks in RS, particularly in its capital Banja Luka, and indeed the people of Prijedor put forward a similar list of demands to those in the Federation cities; and within the Federation, Mostar, a city divided between Muslims and Croats, has also been impacted. But overwhelmingly it is the case.

After all, the venality, the corruption and the theft have been no less obvious in RS than in the Federation; in fact the propensity of RS leader for many years now, Milorad Dodic, to farm out contracts to friends and connections is notorious. For example, the proceeds from the 2008 sale of RS Telecom were used to set up the Investment-Development Bank, supposedly to help citizens buy homes or small businesses to expand by lending at low interest rates, but most of its largest loans were given to “foreign-backed companies with offshore bank accounts and assets that exist only on paper”, largely companies with ties to Dodik himself or his regime, including $2.2-million loan for a business run by his son. [Dodik himself personally signed off on all these loans](http://www.rferl.org/content/Banja_Luka_Bank_Controlled_By_PM_Hands_Out_Millions_To_Family_Allies/1807881.html_blank).

At one level, the answer is easy: this is a working class uprising in the big industrial centres most impacted by neoliberal “restructuring” and privatisation/theft; and Muslims dominate in these cities. Of the twenty largest cities and towns in Bosnia, fifteen are in the Federation.

There are however other factors. First, the RS is probably slightly better off at the level of functionality. In its great wisdom, the international overseers of Bosnia carried out a “decentralisation” of the Federation mid-last decade, splitting it into ten cantons, while leaving RS as one entity. Now, while “decentralisation” might sometimes be a good thing, in the circumstances all it meant was a decentralisation of the already cumbersome ethnic-based bureaucracy: a proliferation of the problem, with vast extra layer of competing “ethnic” bureaucracies now running lots of new governments.

But this “cohesiveness” of the RS, while better in some ways, is also based on the less democratic and more uniformly nationalist nature of RS; even the competition in the Federation between Bosniak and Croat parties, however venal, and the remnants of officially non-ethnic parties from the past, however unreal, offers some kind of break from the stultifying uniformity in RS. Even the differences between the different parties within RS are virtually non-existent, all based on the alleged need to “protect” the “Serb nation”, despite them getting the best deal from Dayton. It also means a more cohesive repressive apparatus.

Which leads to the main point: reactionary nationalism was always stronger among the Serbs and Croats, reflecting the real interests of their ethnic elites to try to carve out parts of Bosnia as their own and to link these to the outside “fatherlands”. This means that, despite the wear and tear, this nationalism still has something of a hold in their regions, enough to divert a section of the population.

Thus the reaction of RS leader Dodik to the uprising in the Federation and even its tentative spread to RS was to denounce the whole thing as a plot to abolish the RS; and while this may seem self-evidently absurd, when protesters turned up in the RS city Prijedor to make the same demands being made nation-wide, across the road a counter-demonstration raised hackneyed old nationalist slogans. Same in Belgrade in Serbia itself: one demonstration in solidarity with the Bosnian uprising, opposed by a counterdemonstration supporting war-criminal former general Mladic.

It is fascinating to read the anecdotes. Mirjana Culina, a 72-year-old woman from Prijedor, believed the upsurge in the Federation was aimed at RS. “I don't know how. I don't have explanation. I just feel it”, she said. As psychologist and activist Srdjan Puhalo explains:

If such a thesis is repeated for years in almost all media in Republika Srpska, the fear is understandable. Such a narrative eventually produced paranoia -- systematic and planned. I would even say such paranoia was produced by the authorities themselves because it is easy to direct public attention there than to solve the problems in the economy, the health system, education and such normal problems. Here is still easier to be poor and hungry then be traitor. Because if you are poor and hungry, you are at least not contemptible.

In contrast, while the Bosniak elite inevitably became an eager player in the national game after Dayton, this nationalism was never more than skin-deep among the Bosniak masses, particularly in the industrial centres. As explained above, their survival as the most scattered and the most urbanised, yet also militarily and economically weakest, group required the maintenance of a multi-ethnic republic, meaning that even the aspiring Bosniak bourgeois elite had little use for nationalism which could only benefit its opponents.

Thus, when British and French and UN “diplomats” continually tried to force ethnic partition plans onto Bosnia during the war, drawn up in consultation with Serb and Croat nationalist warlords, the inclusion of a “Muslim” statelet alongside the Serb and Croat statelets was the aim of the Muslims’ enemies, not their own; a land-locked apartheid ghetto into which all the ethnically-cleansed Muslims from the rest of Bosnia could be driven into. Thus when the Bosniak leadership finally accepted such plans under the pressure of genocide, strangulation sieges, embargo etc, it was in the form of national capitulation, not a product of their own nationalism at all.

And so if this nationalism then became necessary and useful for the elite after 1995, it never had the same sway over the masses as elsewhere. Thus it is no accident that, imbued by less nationalist poison, the Bosniak workers have led the way back to the slogans of self-management and internationalism.

The collapse of Bosnia’s economy

Bosnia’s catastrophic economic situation, featuring some 40 percent unemployment and 57 percent youth unemployment did not come from nowhere, and the thieving of the triple-headed ethnic elite carries major blame. [Emin Eminagiæ gives an example](http://www.rosalux.rs/userfiles/files/Emin%20Eminagic_Tuzla%20protests.pdf_blank) of the kind of pillage that privatisation involved, in the former state chemical factory Dita:

In 2002, 59 percent of Dita's capital was allegedly bought by the workers … (yet) this was dragged on until 2005, when Dita was bought up by a chemical company under the name of "Lora" which is under the ownership of Beohemija, a chemical conglomerate based in Belgrade Serbia … According to the financial reports from 2010 Dita was already going downhill (yet this) was preceded by several years of great production … What actually happened between 2007 when the privatization took place and 2010/11 (the year that strike and protests occurred) remains a mystery. According to some workers, between 2009 and 2010, they were ordered to put salt into the chemical mixture the company used to make

detergent, which damaged the machines they used, thus slowly destroying actual production capacities of the company … Until now, the workers are owed over 50 salaries, most of them cannot retire, as they are lacking several years of work service due to the privatization process that had been dragged on since 2002.

One has to imagine such examples multiplied manifold.

Yet while the ethnic-based oligarchies are to blame, their actions are only to be expected within the political order imposed by Dayton and an economic program driven through by the international caretakers dictated by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Union.

The latest IMF austerity program, imposed five years ago, froze budgets, slashed wages and veterans’ benefits and sped up privatisation, massively driving down consumption and doubling public debt. Bosnia was already in deep economic crisis, and as per the norm, the IMF “cure” was to make matters worse, by forcing already battered working people to pay for the theft of the new capitalist elite.

The situation had been accentuated by the “free trade” policies imposed by the European Union as conditions for future membership, allowing foreign goods to pour in. As Andreja Zivkovic explains, “the economic model is based on opening up to foreign capital. Until 2008 foreign capital flows fed growth based on imports and consumer debt, but at the same time destroyed industry and created the present debt crisis. On the one hand, an overvalued currency pegged to the Euro enabled the borrowing needed to pay for imports; but on the other, it acted as a disincentive to investment in the real economy and made exports uncompetitive”

In particular, free trade agreements with neighbouring, richer, Serbia and Croatia in 2001, negotiated by their ethnically-connected Bosnian elites and approved by the EU as a kind of “apprenticeship” for full free trade, proved disastrous. By 2004, Serbian and Croatian products were dominating the markets in the two halves of Bosnia – ironically, it was easier to trade “free” across the official Bosnian borders than for the two halves of Bosnia to trade with each other. With Serbian and Croatian capital also grabbing assets in the two halves – for example, the 2008 sale of RS Telecom to Serbian capital – one might say the two neighbours were seeing the economic fruits of their victory in the war.

As Bosnian agriculture collapsed under the weight of these imports, in 2005, hungry farmers from both sides of the divide set up a protest camp outside Sarajevo and camped there for many months – and were ignored.

At the time the IMF program was imposed in 2009, the somewhat more democratic environment in the Federation made it the centre of resistance. While RS had already carried out significant privatisation, the Federation was far behind; and meanwhile, benefits for disabled veterans were 10 times higher in the Federation than the pittance they were getting in RS, making massive cuts a centrepiece of the IMF program. The IMF demanded cuts of 207 million euros from the Federation’s budget, some 10 per cent of its entity, cantonal and municipal budgets, while RS had to cut 73 million euros.

Despite general strikes and massive veterans’ demonstrations in the Federation – veterans threatening “social revolution” – the IMF program was driven through in slightly amended form in June that year. Yet given the moral weight of the veterans – who had defended Bosnia through the darkest years – the Federation parliament then rejected the legislation to cut veterans’ benefits by 10 percent in October.

Ironically, the fact that the RS budget was at that point experiencing a one-off windfall from its Telecom privatisation helped the argument that the RS’s more successful privatisation was a good thing. Naturally, this could not be repeated as the state lost these constant revenues, and the effects of the ramping of privatisation in both entities since 2009 speaks for itself – including what happened to the proceeds of this privatisation, as explained above.

International intervention?

In this context, the threat by Valentin Inzko, the international “High Representative” or grand vizier of Bosnia, of intervention by EUFOR (European Union) troops “if the hooliganism continues” is entirely understandable from the point of view of the imperialist overlords and their system of neoliberal pillage, gravely threatened by a horizontal, class-based uprising evoking the best of the socialist past. In this sense, the Bosnian workers are in the same boat as the Greek workers who have been resisting the catastrophe imposed on them by the same system.

This may come as a surprise to some liberals who see the international presence as a balance against the competing nationalist oligarchies. It is true that, given this ethnic partition and dysfunction, the international overseer may appear the only unifying factor. However, the Dayton constitution means the HR must work through these oligarchies, while trying to smooth over any serious division; ultimately, European and US capital, which the HR represents, has only these oligarchies to work with to maintain capitalist rule.

Thus when one faction or another of the ethnocracy steps too far out of line, threatening the entire Dayton order, they may be sanctioned or even sacked or jailed by the international vizier. This occurred, for example, in 2001, when then Croat member of the presidency, Ante Jelavic, and his Croat Democratic Party (HDZ), attempted to split the Federation by organising a referendum to set up a third, Croat, entity within Bosnia. He was sacked by High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, while NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) troops raided the Hercegovacka Bank, which he was using to finance the referendum, froze its accounts, seized documents and closed down most of its operations. Muslim and Serb leaders have similarly been sacked or threatened.

But these actions are, on one hand, exceptional, and on the other, they allow the ethnocracy to demagogically pose as the victims of foreign colonial rule and thus keep alive “ethnic” politics. This ultimate foreign sanction thus acts to prevent not only mature independent institutions, but also the development of a real democratic alternative to the ethnocracy.

The fact that these international sanctions don’t include action against the “regular” economic crimes that the nascent capitalist classes are expected to carry out in the neoliberal EU is highlighted precisely by this threat of intervention against the working class uprising: the class interests of all wings of the oligarchy and international capital are paramount. “Valentin [Inzko](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23Inzko&src=hash): Useless clown” reads one protest banner.

Where to?

Slovene writer [Slavoj Zizek writes](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/10/anger-bosnia-ethnic-lies-protesters-bosnian-serb-croat_blank): “What the Bosnian outburst confirms is that one cannot genuinely overcome ethnic passions by imposing a liberal agenda: what brought the   
protesters together is a radical demand for justice”.

Of course the so-called “ethnic passions” were never only that in the first place, and even at their height represented the new class forces that were burying the corpse of “market socialism”. He is quite right, of course, that the last 20 years of “liberalism”, presumably meaning a mixture of the capitalist market with elite bourgeois democracy, has only perpetuated these “ethnic passions” rather than overcoming them.

How could it be otherwise? Despite the ascendancy of the ideology of singing the praises of “the market”, not just among reactionaries but also among most stripes of left-liberals ever since the collapse of the grotesque Stalinist aberrations of socialism around 1990, it is nothing but a system of ruthless dog-eat-dog competition for survival, however much it may be supplemented by band-aids, liberal anti-corruption wish lists and chatter about “civil society” for the comfortable middle classes, while the working classes retrenched from and plundered by the “liberally” privatised enterprises are sent to hell.

This liberal ideology has had an unexpected staying power – countless times throughout the world what have begun as genuinely popular upsurges, featuring the same “radical demand for justice”, have been side-tracked into the liberal morass. As noted above, this often takes the form of explaining that the privatisation and neoliberalism that are the targets of the upsurge would be perfectly fine if only they had less corruption, more “transparency”, more “accountability”, the involvement of “civil society” and so on. Rather than privatisation – i.e., capitalism – itself being the problem, the problem is the incompleteness of the privatisation, its impurity, the fact that it is still mixed with “corrupt” state interests and the like.

As if there were another form of capitalism. As if their “pure” version even existed, let alone had any answers if it did.

In the case of Bosnia, the “ethnic” corruption of the process. As if there is another way.

Slogans such as “return the factories to the workers” are declaring all this to be rubbish.

Does that mean it is impossible that this upsurge too can be diverted? Who would want to make such a brave prediction. In fact, even the “factories to the workers” slogan is more a specifically Tuzla phenomenon – while all the protest demands feature issues of radical social equality, right to work, reversal of thieving privatisation etc, only the Tuzla workers have put up this ultimate demand.

We can certainly say that the “ethnic” stranglehold over the militancy of Bosnian workers has been broken, and this is significant enough, and that some of their slogans point towards a more significant break with the logic of capitalism.

That this challenge has arisen in Bosnia is entirely logical. The socialist Yugoslavia under Broz Tito had many of the faults of the other eastern European regimes, including being run by a massive privileged bureaucratic caste which repressed genuine opposition; and where it was different, in its “market” version of socialism, this was unable to escape the logic of break-neck competition, economic anarchy and unemployment that characterise “market capitalism”.

On the other side, however, Yugoslavia always had a more politically liberal atmosphere than elsewhere in the east, and above all its unique doctrine of “workers’ self-management” of the factories, and “social” property – the liberation of the means of production from bureaucratic control – is a powerful legacy that lives on in the consciousness of working people. A possibility, an image, of a different world (regardless of the fact that these worker self-managed enterprises at the time were undermined precisely by being thrown into the world of “the market”).

Thus it is not only the call for factories to the workers, but in particular the word “return” – they were ours, after all.

Nevertheless, even if the workers in Tuzla were to physically re-take control of their enterprises, this example would need to spread elsewhere in Bosnia, and indeed elsewhere in the Balkans, for it to have a chance of posing a new socially just order.

In Greece, for example, the lull in the movement against EU-IMF imposed socio-economic catastrophe that was experienced through 2013 was broken when the workers at Greek Radio-Television (ERT) took over their own enterprise when the regime tried to close it. It became a rallying point, a source of hope, an example of a different way. But after several months, it could no longer survive on its own.

Nevertheless, the movement for socialism needs such sparks to demonstrate that “another world is possible”. To again quote Zizek:

Even if the protests gradually lose their power, they will remain a brief spark of hope, something like the enemy soldiers fraternising across the trenches in the first world war. Authentic emancipatory events always involve such ignoring of particular identities.

This is well said, with the necessary addition that the “spark of hope” we are speaking of here is not only this ignoring of “ethnic” identities but also the clear pointers towards a new emancipatory socio-economic order.

**Bosnia Boils Over: An Upheaval Two Decades in the Making (*Organized Crime and Corruption Project*, by Ana Baric, 13 February 2014)**

Government buildings have been lit on fire, protestors wielding stones have been met with rubber bullets and tear gas from the police, and city center streets swarm with hives of protestors gathered to show solidarity against the government corruption and economic stagnation that has been eroding the country for two decades now.

Residents of Bosnia are witnessing the most intense political upheaval since the brutal 1992-1995 war. So what do we make of this so-called “[Bosnian Spring](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/it-spring-at-last-bosnia-herzegov-2014296537898443.html)”?

Where and why did the protests begin?

The protests began last week in the northern Bosnian city of Tuzla, after the privatization of factories that had employed most of the population. Instead of making the companies profitable, the owners sold them, stopped paying workers, and filed for bankruptcy—leaving people without pay, benefits, and most importantly, any real recourse.

Citizens in Tuzla began protesting by setting government buildings on fire, and soon thousands gathered in Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar, and Bihac in solidarity—at times also burning buildings and rioting in the streets to express their anger.

These protests have now swelled into a larger movement protesting Bosnia’s high unemployment rate, corrupt politics, and stifled economic development: issues that have plagued the country for twenty years now.

Today, the protestors say, nobody has jobs. The middle class is being squeezed out, the working class is struggling to survive, and the country-wide privatization that has occurred following the fall of Communism has ultimately benefited only a select elite: tycoons who alone reap the benefits of a corrupted capitalism.

This is a country where members of Parliament earn about 10 times as much as their fellow citizens, who on average brings in US $570 a month. That income is, of course, only enjoyed by those who can find jobs. The average unemployment rate in Bosnia is almost 40 percent—the highest in the Balkans. Youth unemployment meanwhile is reaching 70 percent.

So how corrupt is Bosnia and Herzegovina?

[According to Transparency International](http://www.transparency.org/country) (TI), quite.

Of 177 countries analyzed in Transparency International’s [2013 Corruptions Perceptions Index](http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/), Bosnia came in 72nd place, tying with Brazil, Serbia, and South Africa. According to TI, Bosnia “rests on very shaky political, social and economic foundations” which are only exacerbated by a “complex constitutional setup, deep ethnic divisions and woeful state of the economy resulting from the armed conflict in the early 1990s.”

The lack of accountability and transparency combined with Bosnia’s labyrinthine government administration lubricates back-door deals, under-the-table agreements, and stalled-if-at-all present prosecution of corruption. Businesses are sold well under their value to those who have the right connections, and war profiteering has bestowed massive wealth on a select few.

Organized crime figures have ties to government officials and political figures, and citizens who don’t have the “right” connections or political affiliations often struggle to find jobs.

Anti-corruption laws and organizations that have been put in place due to international pressure have under-performed at best. In 2010, a grand total of two cases of corruption resulted in jail sentences. Seventy percent of corruption investigations were dismissed.

This is the largest upheaval since the war in the early 1990s. What happened then?

The last time Bosnia and Herzegovina made international news was during the gruesome 1992-1995 war, the most devastating conflict in Europe since WWII.

After the fall of Communism in the early 1990s, the Yugoslav Republic began to break apart. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, and bloodshed began when Bosnia tried to secede. War soon consumed the nation as various nationalist groups attempted to partition ethnically diverse territories, using torture, murder, rape, and forced evacuation as part of an “ethnic cleansing” campaign.

More than 100,000 people were killed, 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped, and more than 2.2 million people were displaced. “Safe havens” run by the UN not only failed to protect citizens, but became easy targets for mass execution. In July 1995, under the command of General Ratko Mladiæ, the Bosnian Serb army perpetrated the largest civilian massacre in Europe since World War II, marching 8,000 Muslim men to a killing field before slaughtering them.

The 1995 Dayton Accords ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also created a very decentralized state divided along ethno-political lines. There are now two political entities: the Muslim-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska. Each has its own Parliament, police, and president.

What are politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina like now?

In a word, convoluted. Bosnia and Herzegovina is governed by a rotating, three-person presidency held between Serbian, Croatian, and Bosniak leaders. It has an internationally appointed High Representative, 10 cantonal administrations, one special district, and numerous municipalities—creating a bloated bureaucracy that not only hinders efficiency but hampers transparency and accountability.

The system is meant to offer a voice to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s three major ethno-religious groups: Muslim Bosniaks, Eastern Orthodox Serbs, and Catholic Croats, while providing oversight from the international community.

However, it has largely [only legitimized ethnic divides](http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/2014/02/10/bosnias-protests-made-in-dayton/), reinforcing the differences between the ethnic groups on the political level in a bureaucratic mess that the [New York Times called](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/11/world/europe/bosnians-furious-with-politicians-shut-down-central-sarajevo.html) “the most cumbersome political system in Europe.”

Ok, so the protests—are they nationalistic outbursts?

No, and arguing such ignores what is happening on the ground.

Milorad Dodik, the president of Republika Srpska, the Serbian political entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, [was quoted in Balkan Insight](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-croatia-meet-bosnian-leaders-to-calm-unrests) saying that the aim of the protests is “to destabilize Republika Srpska and further involve the international community” in the country. Other political leaders have released similar statements, saying that the protests are ethnically-charged or based. The protests have been described as anti-Serb, anti-Croat, and anti-Bosniak.

[In a Guardian article](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/10/anger-bosnia-ethnic-lies-protesters-bosnian-serb-croat), Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek dismisses these statements, saying, “In short, we are dealing with a rebellion against nationalist elites: the people of Bosnia have finally understood who their true enemy is: not other ethnic groups, but their own leaders who pretend to protect them from others.”

Bosnians are demanding a new government where representation isn’t just defined by having the “correct” proportion of Serbs, Croats, or Bosniaks in government on paper. They are calling for a system they feel actually represents them, one that is purged of the cronyism, corruption, and partisanship they say has become synonymous with the political elite.

People are demanding new leadership, and [meetings have been called](http://plenumsa.org/) where all except current politicians are asked to join the conversation around creating a new government. They have their own forums; they’ve had their chance, the protestors say.

What do protestors want? Who is behind this movement?

[In Sarajevo](http://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com/category/sarajevo-2/), citizens have demanded the resignation of the entire government headed by Federation Prime Minister Nermin Nikšiæ, and called for the formation of a non-partisan government.

Leaflets are being disseminated which demand reduced salaries for political functionaries, public expenditure transparency, invalidation of “illegal privatization contracts,” and release of all detained demonstrators.

[In Tuzla](http://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com/2014/02/07/declaration-of-citizens-and-workers-in-tuzla-1/), people have demanded that privatization agreements be annulled. They too are calling for a new government purged of the present political incumbents, equalized pay for public and private sector employees, and an end to “irrational and unjustified forms of compensation” for public employees.

The protests have been largely coordinated via social networks, and demands are not coming from one party, figure, or group.

Emina Busuladzic, a protester in Tuzla, was quoted by the [Global Post](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/140210/protest-hit-bosnia-mourns-ottoman-archives-lost-riots) saying, “We do not belong to any political party, we are only dissatisfied citizens of Bosnia."

Political Analyst Srecko Latal echoed her statement, saying "The main message is that the citizens are tired of the political class and they make no difference between the political parties."

Has any political change happened yet?

Amongst politicians, there has been In-fighting and finger-pointing. Bakir Izetbegoviæ, the Bosniak member of the Presidency, accused Security Minister Fahrudin Radonèiæ of failing to prevent the violence or protect the state. Radonèiæ in turn said there is an anti-graft "tsunami" coming because other politicians have failed to curtail corruption and crime in the region.

The cantonal prime minister in Zenica, Munib Husejnovic, has resigned over the protests. The cantonal prime minister in Sarajevo, Suad Zeljkoviæ, has followed suit, as has Interior Minister Mariya Sulenta from the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton government and Hilmo Selimoviæ, Director of Police Coordination in Bosnia.

In Sarajevo, a citizens' plenum, inspired by Tuzla’s ongoing one, has been scheduled for this week. The goal is to create a forum where protestors’ demands can be transformed into an action plan. The original event, scheduled for Wednesday, was re-scheduled because the chosen venue was too small for the crowds, who gathered in an eager swarm.

So what’s next? Who is leading the political change?

Although many of the initial protests led to the destruction of property, stores, and archives, the movement is not, as some local media outlets claim, led by wild “hooligans” or “drug dealers” burning down state buildings and lighting trash on fire.

The protests now are largely peaceful and composed of citizens gathered at main roads and traffic intersections. They hold political signs, whistles, and megaphones, standing in solidarity against a system that has failed them for two decades. They are youth organizing meetings on social media, parents explaining that they can’t feed their families because they are unemployed or underemployed, and workers voicing their frustration over not getting paid because their employers say they are temporarily strapped for cash.

Streets are plastered with political signs. Some lament the dismal economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: “Seven years without pension and health care” they say. Others express frustration over the way the protests have been covered: “Demonstrators are not hooligans.” And many show anger. In front of a major road sign in Sarajevo, someone has pasted a paper that says, “Fuck your mother in three languages,” referencing the ethnic divisions within the local language, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian.

So what will come of this “Bosnian Spring”?

The end result of this movement is difficult to predict, but the fact that there are even protests shows a promising shift in attitude around Bosnian politics and the country's future.

I have listened to many citizens lament the political and economic situation in Bosnia. Then they sigh, take a sip of their coffee or liquor, and say there is nothing they can do about it because the system itself is irreparably corrupt.

Cronyism, lack of jobs, and politicization of ethnic difference will likely continue to blight the country for some time, but concrete solutions and actionable game plans are finally emerging. The tone of discourse is no longer that of resigned defeat. There is suddenly a sense of possibility, room for agency, and most importantly, an opportunity for citizens to purge the government of the political elite that have plundered from rather than represented them.

Slavonic and Eastern European Studies Professor Eric Gordy says that one should not be so quick as to label the protests as a massive workers’ revolution or a “Bosnian Spring.” [It’s February, he quips](http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/ssees/2014/02/10/bosnias-protests-made-in-dayton/). However, he also highlights the importance of what appears to be a shift away from the former tolerance and patience for a “predatory government.”

Says Gordy: “The future depends on what happens, but a promising sign is that now this may depend on what a larger rather than a tiny group of people may do.”

**OSCE Gives Cautious Nod to Macedonian Media Reforms (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 12 February 2014)**

The new media legislation in Macedonia is fine on paper - everything depends on the way it is implemented, the OSCE media freedom representative, Dunja Mijatovic, said.

Describing the new media legislation as good on paper, Mijatovic said the key issue now was how it was put into practice.  
Implementation should “promote independence and ensure a plurality of opinions in media”, she said on Wednesday, adding that this posed a test for the authorities.  
During her three-day visit, Mijatovic met members of Macedonia’s journalists' associations, while on Tuesday she met Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the Information Society Minister, Ivo Ivanovski.  
The recently adopted the Law on Media and the Law on Audiovisual Media Services form part of controversial government-backed legislation that some journalists fear will curb freedom of speech. The law was adopted amid protests by journalists inside the parliament building, who said it would extend government control over the sector, hit by widespread closures of media outlets critical of the government in recent years.  
The closures are one reason why many media watchdogs have downgraded Macedonia’s rating on the issue of freedom of speech, which Reporters Without Borders has called the worst in the region.

The new legislation has been criticized for allowing the imposition of large fines against media outlets and journalists, for allowing the government to selectively allocate government advertising money to the media of its choice, and for not guaranteeing the independence and transparency of the new media regulatory body.

However, parliament later adopted some changes to the laws, submitted by the country's largest media union, the Journalists' Association of Macedonia, ZNM. The ZNM welcomed the concessions but said it was still against the new laws.   
Mijatovic said her talks with the Prime Minister proceeded in a “positive atmosphere” and praised the government for heeding the OSCE’s observations during the drafting of the laws.  
Gruevski issued a press release saying that in the talks he had “pointed out the readiness and will of the government to continue contributing towards improvement of standards in the media sphere”.  
Answering a question about whether she was being too mild towards a government that has been accused of sharply curbing media freedom, Mijatovic said journalistic unity was the best way to improve the situation.  
“I am fully aware of the situation” she said, adding: “but I cannot fight your battles”.

Calling for greater solidarity among journalist over issues of common interest, Mijatovic said that her impression was that journalists in the country are deeply divided.  
If the situation is ever going to improve, an "inclusive and independent" self-regulatory system must be established in the media sphere, she added.  
During her talks with Gruevski, Mijatovic urged the government to be more transparent about the money it spends on advertisements in the media. “We have to deal with that now,” Mijatovic said.  
During her stay, Mijatovic also met with journalist Tomislav Kezarovski, whose incarceration last year raised fresh questions about media freedom in Macedonia. He is currently under house arrest.  
“I am pleased that Kezarovski is now at home and that the authorities facilitated my visit to him. I will continue to closely follow his case,” Mijatovic said.  
Kezarovski was jailed last October for four-and-a-half years, for revealing the identity of a protected witness in a murder trial in an article he wrote in 2008.   
In November, Kezarovski was granted house arrest where he now awaits a higher court ruling concerning his jail sentence.  
Last August and September, Mijatovic and Gruevski exchanged open letters about the case.  
While Mijatovic insisted that Gruevski could not evade overall responsibility for the case, Gruevski replied that the case had nothing to do with the government and that she should have confidence in the Macedonian courts.

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