** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Thursday, 20 February 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Dacic: Government requests voting in Kosovo (*RTS*)**

The Serbian Government insists that parliamentary elections be organized in Kosovo and Metohija as well, with the help of international missions, outgoing Serbian Prime Minister Ivica **Dacic** told the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael **Davenport**. Dacic pointed out that the Serbian Government, regardless of the election campaign, is conducting all activities necessary for Serbia’s EU accession process. He pointed out that the implementation of the Brussels agreement and continuation of the dialogue with Pristina is of great importance, reads the statement. “The Serbs in Kosovska Mitrovica should take part in the mayoral elections on 23 February so the Union of Serb Municipalities can be formed as soon as possible,” he said.

**Gudeljevic: Only director can demand Ivanovic’s transfer (*Tanjug*)**

EULEX spokesperson Irina **Gudeljevic** says that after the decision of the international court chamber to keep the leader of the SDP Civic Initiative Oliver **Ivanovic** in custody, the request for his transfer can only be filed by the director of the detention center. Gudeljevic has explained for ***Tanjug*** that it is the decision of the court chamber and the “two sides have no right of complaint.” Earlier, Ivanovic’s defense had asked for his transfer from Pristina to Kosovska Mitrovica, due to security reasons.

**Kostunica: SNS is destroying state institutions in Kosovo (*NIN*)**

**When you say that you advocate political and military neutrality and that you oppose the Brussels agreement and EU membership, what does Serbia gain with this?**

“Serbia is given the opportunity to decide independently based on its interests. It is given an economy that can enable us to live normally from our work. And what do we get from the EU? That every following day can be worse. Germany has turned tow**a**rds Russia when it comes to foreign trade. Poland, which was tied for the EU market with 50 percent of exports, has now transferred 50 percent of its exports to the Russian market. Not to mention that the negotiations in Brussels are conducted in such a way that every time Dacic goes to negotiate with Thaqi, you can be sure that the Serbian Constitution has been violated.”

**The topic that will certainly be on the agenda after the elections is the amendment of the Constitution. What kind of outcome do you expect?**

“In 2006, when the Constitution was passed, I used to respond to questions as to whether we will have to amend the Constitution over its preamble, that the Constitution will be amended the moment when they amend the UN Charter and UNSCR 1244, documents that guarantee territorial integrity of each state, including Serbia. There is a procedure for amending the Constitution in the parliament and the referendum following it. I am convinced that the Serb people will not vote for amendments of the Constitution because this would be a vote for destroying the state.”

**What we see on the ground in Kosovo speaks of something else.**

“If things were so great on the ground the matter regarding the creation of an illegal Kosovo state would have been done a long time ago. The previous government signed in 2008 the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU and thus agreed with the countries that recognized independence of Kosovo. Then they brought EULEX through the small door. Then the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina started in 2011. And is the job done? No. The SNS government has continued to destroy Serbian state institutions in Kosovo, but things still don’t function there as it was wished in Brussels.”

**They are functioning according to Pristina’s laws, so the preamble is only a letter on paper.**

“These Pristina’s laws were recognized by the authorities in Belgrade, by the Government and the President of the Republic even though he took a different oath. They all recognized that, but the reality is different.”

**The reality is that the Serbs are participating in the local elections.**

“The real question is how many Serbs participated in these elections. They are talking about free and fair elections, but we know how the authorities in Belgrade forced their own people to participate in elections. They don’t recognize independence of Kosovo, but they force people to turn out for elections according to laws of a non-recognized state. They went to the polls as they didn’t go to the polls even in 1945. That doesn’t give credit either to Belgrade or Brussels. In the XXI century, with a full mouth of democracy and Europe, you are taking entire institutions to vote collectively against their own state. That is impermissible.”

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Finci: If we don’t make some steps on our own, it is unlikely someone else will help us (*Fena*)**

“Unfortunately, it was not expected to reach some success in the implementation of the *Sejdic-Finci* ruling at the last talks in Sarajevo, because nothing has changed in the way our political leaders think,” ***Fena*** was told by Jakob **Finci**, the President of the Jewish Community in B&H and one of the appellants in this case. “If somebody form Europe should help us with this, then it is the Council of Europe, because the Court in Strasbourg is their institution and they passed this ruling, so they should help us in its implementation. However, if we ourselves do not make some steps, it is unlikely that someone else will help us. It is obvious that the election campaign is already underway and it is unlikely that we will implement this decision by 5 or 12 May when the deadline expires for the beginning of electoral six months when laws that concern elections cannot be changed anymore,” said Finci. “On the other side, it will be very unpleasant to have elections, for the second time after the Strasbourg ruling, which do not satisfy democratic criteria, which the Council of Europe will not recognize, which may also produce the abolishment of the right to vote or even suspension of B&H in the Council of Europe. But, what else to say but that we ourselves asked for it,” said Finci.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**EU states fret about end of rule-of-law mission in Kosovo (*European Voice*, by Andrew Gardner, 20 February 2014)**

EU not in mood to take hard line on Eulex

Discussion of a controversial proposal to end the European Union's rule-of-law mission in Kosovo is being slowed down by member states anxious that early termination might weaken Kosovo's resolve to reform its justice system.

According to a proposal put to member states by the European External Action Service (EEAS) in December, Eulex, which is currently the EU's largest international mission, would be replaced by a substantially smaller and weaker mission under a different name. Crucially, the EU would lose all executive powers outside the Serb-populated north of the country. The office of special prosecutions, which has won convictions for war crimes and corruption, would be handed over to Kosovar control.

A revised version of the proposal was discussed by the political and security ambassadors of the member states last week (11 February) and talks are continuing in Council working groups.

Some member states objected that the EEAS was taking into account the expectations of the Kosovar government rather than assessing progress on the rule of law and proposing ways to encourage Kosovo to continue reforms.

Kosovo's government wants the EU to close the mission, which began in 2008 with a mandate that included the authority to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate serious criminal cases. Closure of the mission when its mandate expires in mid-June would strengthen the government's position in elections this summer or autumn, and would boost the country's ongoing campaign to win global recognition of its statehood.

Caution

The mood among member states is not to go to the Kosovars and bang the paper on the table and say that they have to comply with whatever the EU says, a diplomat said. There is also a general recognition that Kosovo has made some progress in policing. However, there is widespread concern about the state of the judiciary, and, for some member states, the idea of Kosovar courts dealing with war-crime cases is unimaginable. The “million dollar question” – as one diplomat put it – is how to deal with those deficiencies: through Eulex, or by using other instruments. Member states are willing to compromise, he said, but “you have to look at the details”. Another diplomat said that member states felt the EEAS had provided too little detail about what might follow Eulex.

A third diplomat said that without Eulex the EU would have to find other forms of leverage to ensure improvements in the rule of law.

A diplomat from another state said that, while it was “promising that the high rep [Ashton] sees a chance to reduce the mission substantially, the experience of Bosnia suggests caution in the region”. In some eyes, Bosnia, which is currently in the throes of widespread political and social unrest, has become immune to EU leverage.

It is not clear what the EEAS is proposing for an arguably even more sensitive part of the mission, a special investigative task-force that looks into alleged organised crime, including organ trafficking. Two diplomats said that preservation of the task-force, which operates from a secure building in Brussels, is assured. “It is so serious an issue politically that they will not touch it,” one said.

**Try Top Officials for Kosovo Crimes, Serbia Urged (*BIRN*, by Marija Ristic, 19 February 2014)**

After nine Serbian soldiers were convicted of war crimes in Kosovo, Human Rights Watch urged Belgrade to prosecute senior officials who controlled troops and police in wartime.

The international rights group said that Serbia should bring senior figures to justice for atrocities during the Kosovo conflict, not just “small fish” like the nine men jailed last week for war crimes committed during attacks on four villages in 1999.

“They were foot soldiers in a well-coordinated campaign across Kosovo to kill and forcibly expel ethnic Albanians,” [Human Rights Watch special adviser Fred Abrahams said in an article on the campaign group’s website on Tuesday](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/18/dispatches-kosovo-justice-welcome-incomplete_blank).

However he also welcomed the fact that Serbian troops were convicted by a Belgrade court.

“It is deeply gratifying to see justice served, even after 15 years. It is also important that these convictions came from a Serbian institution. That will make them resonate more deeply in the region and strengthen the intended effect: to deter future crimes,” he said.

On February 11, [nine former members of the Yugoslav Army’s 177th Intervention Squad were found guilty of killing at least 100 Albanian civilians](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-fighters-jailed-for-kosovo-war-murders_blank), looting their houses and property, and expelling at least 250 women, children and elderly people.

Eight men of the men who were convicted were direct perpetrators, while the only commander sentenced was Toplica Miladinovic, who was found guilty of ordering the attack.

Abrahams was one of the first researchers who [documented the crimes in the Kosovo villages near the town of Pec/Peja in 1999 in a report entitled ‘A Village Destroyed’](http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/10/25/village-destroyed_blank).

On the basis of his report and the photos he gathered, the Serbian prosecutor identified some of the perpetrators, but Abrahams argued that many others played a more senior role in the Serbian campaign against Kosovo Albanians during the late 1999s war.

“What of the police and army commanders who ran the show in Pec and other places? Prosecutors and courts in Serbia and elsewhere in the region should focus beyond those at the very bottom and top of the chain,” he said.

The presiding judge in the case against the nine men also pointed out when explaining the verdict that only direct perpetrators were convicted, although a number of witnesses claimed that hundreds of men, both soldiers and police, attacked the villages.

Some senior officials have however been convicted of war crimes in Kosovo.

**EU in Kosovo indicts top politician suspected of organized crime and bribery (*AP*, 19 February 2014)**

The European Union police and justice mission in Kosovo says top politician Fatmir Limaj and four of his associates have been indicted for allegedly embezzling over $1.2 million through organized crime and bribery.

An international prosecutor said the allegations are linked to road building tenders during the period Limaj was transport minister. Wednesday's indictment is the second against Limaj linked to his time as a cabinet member between 2008 and 2012.

Once a close associate of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, Limaj was previously cleared of war crimes by a United Nations tribunal and the EU justice mission. The mission that helps Kosovo deal with war crimes and organized crime cases alleges that part of the suspected embezzlement money was used to cover legal expenses for the war crimes case.

**'No Results' From Serbia-Bosnia War Crimes Deal (*BIRN*, 20 February 2014)**

Not a single person has been brought to justice within a year of the signing of a landmark protocol on cooperation in war crimes cases between Bosnia and Serbia.

Justice Report

The long-awaited protocol between Bosnia and Serbia was signed last February and the exchange of evidence in war crimes cases began - a move intended to stop suspects hiding behind state borders in the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries.

The signing raised hopes that cases that were previously impossible to prosecute would be brought to court, but so far this has not happened.

Some evidence has been exchanged in two cases of suspects accused of genocide and other crimes in Srebrenica in 1995, but those cases were not sent to the Serbian war crimes prosecutor's office.  
Earlier this month, the Bosnian state prosecutor’s office [withdrew its proposal to send the two Srebrenica cases for prosecution in Serbia because it did not have all the necessary witness statements](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnian-prosecution-forgot-injured-party-statements_blank).  
The cantonal prosecutor's office in the north-western town of Bihac however did send three war crimes cases to the Serbian judiciary and the verdicts have already been handed down.  
But these cases were handed over under an agreement on legal aid between Bosnia and Serbia that was signed nine years ago, not the more recent and much-touted protocol. Meanwhile the Bosnian state prosecutor's office has not requested any war crimes case to be transferred to it.  
One of the biggest problems in the prosecution of war crimes was dual citizenship, and the inability to extradite people from Bosnia to Serbia or vice versa.  
That was the reason for signing the protocol on cooperation between the prosecutor's offices of Bosnia and Serbia, a move which was approved by victims’ associations.  
Munira Subasic, president of the Association of Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves, said that she initially expected that new cases would be launched after the signing of the protocol. After a year has passed, she now says that she was mistaken.

“We gave our approval for this protocol because we wanted justice, but nothing is happening,” she said.  
Subasic said she will ask for a meeting with the chief prosecutor in order to find out the reasons for the recent withdrawal of the indictment for genocide and war crimes in Srebrenica. Cases against former Bosnian Serb policemen Nedeljko Milidragovic, Aleksa Golijanin and Milisav Gavric were also supposed to be handed over.  
Milidragovic and Goljanin are charged with genocide against Bosniaks from Srebrenica before the Bosnian court. However, Serbia's chief prosecutor for war crimes, Vladimir Vukcevic, said that the transfer of the case does not mean it will have the same legal qualification in Serbia, which means that if something is qualified as genocide in Bosnia, it may not be in Serbia.  
Despite what appears to be a lack of progress, the Bosnian prosecution still praises its relationship with its Serbian counterpart.  
"We have very good cooperation in several cases," said Boris Grubesic, spokesperson for the Bosnian prosecutor's office, although he added that he cannot say how many because that information is "confidential".  
Meanhile the cantonal prosecutor in Bihac, Jasmin Mesic, has succeeded in seeing convictions in Belgrade without using the protocol.

Earlier this month, the higher court in Belgrade sentenced Djuro Tadic to ten years in prison for participating in the killings of 18 Bosniak civilians near Bihac. His case was transferred to Belgrade from Bihac based on an agreement between the Bosnian and Serbian justice ministries on assistance in international legal matters.

"There is no problem that cannot be solved over the phone, and through mutual legal assistance," Mesic said.

**Anti-government protests continue in Bosnia (*SBS*, by Kerry Skyring and Marina Freri, 19 February 2014)**

Weeks after violent anti-government protests hit several towns and cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina the unrest is continuing and spreading.

Weeks after violent anti-government protests hit several towns and cities in Bosnia-Herzegovina the unrest is continuing and spreading.

Demonstrations are held every day outside government buildings in the capital Sarajevo, and now neighbouring Montenegro and Kosovo have also seen protests.

Our correspondent Kerry Skyring has been travelling in the region and has told Marina Freri demonstrations will continue.

**Unrest in the Balkans: Is Dayton Dead? (*RFE/RL*, 19 February 2014)**

The Balkan region is facing its worst social unrest since the end of the war in 1995, as thousands of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina have [taken to the streets](http://bit.ly/1iRWdxm) over the past two weeks to protest against unemployment, poverty and corruption. The protests began in the northern industrial city of Tuzla on February 5 and [quickly spread to Sarajevo and at least five other cities](http://bit.ly/1gWUwS1), reportedly leaving over 140 police and 20 civilians injured.  
The public anger fueling the unrest has defied the country's rigid divisions, drawing participants from across ethnic and religious lines. It has focused attention on the dysfunction of post-war Bosnia and the viability of the Dayton accords that ended the war.  
Join Daniel Serwer of Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies and our RFE/RL experts in a discussion on the next steps for the Balkans:

​Participants:  
[Daniel Serwer](http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu/about/bios/daniel_serwer.htm_blank) -- Professor of conflict management and senior fellow at the JHU SAIS's Center for Transatlantic Relations and a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, Serwer has led peacebuilding activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Balkans for the U.S. Institute of Peace and, while serving at the U.S. Department of State, mediated between the Croats and Muslims and negotiated the first agreement reached at the Dayton peace talks. Serwer blogs at [peacefare.net](http://www.peacefare.net/_blank).  
[Gordana Knezevic](http://bit.ly/MkkFMB) -- Director of RFE/RL’s Balkan Service since 2008, and previously an online editor with Reuters news agency in Canada, regularly contributing to the "Toronto Star" and CBC Radio while there. Before relocating to Canada, Knezevic lived in Bosnia, where she was the deputy editor of "Osloboðenje," the internationally recognized Sarajevo-based daily paper that never stopped publishing during the Bosnian War. For her work there, she was honored in 1992 with the Courage in Journalism award from the Washington-based International Women’s Media Foundation.  
Dzenana Halimovic -- Sarajevo bureau correspondent who joined RFE/RL 2004 after previously writing for "Osloboðenje," "Vecernje novine," and "Start" magazine, and reporting for the political magazine show "Posteno govoreci" on the state-run BHT television channel. Halimovic was part of the team that produced a series on war crimes issues for XY Films, which won the Erasmus Euromedia Award. She has received an Amnesty International Global Human Rights Award and the 2003 BiH Journalism Union Award for investigative journalism, 2003.  
[Brian Whitmore](http://bit.ly/1dLDXXa), Moderator -- Europe desk editor for RFE/RL's Central Newsroom and the writer of "[The Power Vertical](http://bit.ly/17p3uMq)" blog.

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