** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Wednesday, 5 March 2014**

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**Dacic: Ivanovic to be released pending trial (*Radio Serbia*)**

Outgoing Serbian Prime Minister Ivica **Dacic** has stated in Vranje that he is in daily contact with the family of the SDP leader Oliver **Ivanovic** and that the government continues to insist that he is released pending trial. “It is impermissible for Ivanovic, who is in the Pristina detention unit with an Albanian, to be in detention for such a long time, even though the Serbian government had given all guarantees that he and other detained Serbs will be available to the authorities,” said Dacic. He reiterated that there will be no new round of the dialogue with Pristina in Brussels before the elections on 16 March, but that the Serbian government was also asking European officials to request Ivanovic’s release pending trial.

**Letter of the prisoner from cell 09 (*Politika*)**

Dear friends,

Today I was informed verbally that my third request to be transferred to the detention unit in Kosovska Mitrovica was rejected. Even though I have for this legal ground, human and economic reasons, which should be more than enough for any truly legal institution or for humane people, it seems that I am expecting justice and humanity in the wrong place!

A political and completely pointless procedure is conducted against me, which would be doomed to failure before any legal institution. It seems the prosecution is aware of that, but it is the obvious intention to exhaust, discourage and finally break me this way. How else does one explain the persistent refusal of my transfer to the place of residence close to my family that is exposed to maltreatment and travelling to Pristina, which is not safe for them anymore. All those refusals, apart from violating the law, also represent a violation of my human rights!

Due to the entirely founded feelings of insecurity in the surrounding that is 100 percent Albanian, I am not even using the right to walk indoors. TV programs that I watch (we can only see TV stations in Albanian) present my case very tendentiously, which additionally aggravates my position.

Because of everything that I am experiencing, and I assess this is an utmost inhuman and inhumane attitude, I have decided to start a hunger strike.

Your support means so much to me, as well as everything the Serbian Government is doing, but obviously this is not enough, so I have to opt for this kind of protest and draw the attention to the injustice done to me.

It is important that you maintain order and peace in Mitrovica with reasonable and constructive cooperation and start resolving the accumulated communal problems in the town. Thereby, make sure you don’t allow to be imposed some political solutions that are not in the interest of citizens.

Pressure will be exerted on you, just as on me, but you have already demonstrated political maturity and ability to resist this.

The constituting of municipal organs should be completed because in Pristina they are hoping this will fail, so they can receive one more “argument” against the Serbs in northern Mitrovica and the Union of Serb Municipalities.

They just can’t forgive us for surviving in Mitrovica and in the north, and this is our, and my obviously, greatest “sin”.

Hold up!

Best regards,

Oliver Ivanovic,

Political prisoner from cell 09

**Samson: Indonesia maintains principled stand on Kosovo issue (*Tanjug*)**

Serbian Defense Minister Nebojsa **Rodic** conferred with Indonesian Ambassador to Serbia Samuel **Samson** and expressed gratitude for Indonesia’s principled support to the fight for protection Serbia’s legitimate interests over the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. During the meeting, the officials said that Serbia’s EU membership is the country’s main goal in terms of foreign policy but it will not affect Serbia’s wish to realize cooperation with friendly countries in the East and the West on grounds of partnership and respect, the Defence Ministry said. The two countries’ cooperation is based on mutual respect ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1954, which later developed further though the exceptionally positive cooperation within the Non-Aligned Movement up to this day, states the release. During the meeting, Rodic and Samson said that cooperation in the defense sector can be further improved, especially since the Agreement on cooperation in the defense sector signed in September 2011 has created the legal framework and conditions for development and intensification of cooperation. The focus of cooperation in the defense sector will be realized through enhancement of military-medical, military-educational and military-economic cooperation, as well as the cooperation in the fight against terrorism and exchange of experience on participation in peace-keeping missions.

**Journalist Robert James Parsons on hidden UN report on consequences of bombing of Serbia (*Novosti*)**

Part of the report of the head of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Program) Bakari **Kante** in 1999 on the horrible consequences of the bombing of Serbia has never been published officially, but parts of it leaked to the public thanks to the American independent journalist Robert James **Parsons**. According to Parsons, NATO tried to prevent the United Nations to send after the war a team of investigators to Serbia. In the end, a compromise was made – a UN team came to Serbia, but they didn’t go anywhere without NATO soldiers’ escort. This second report was published in 2001. “They took them only to places where uranium ammunition was not used or to locations that had been previously cleansed. The report that was composed afterwards was pointless,” Parsons told ***Novosti***. “Frederick **Barton**, UN deputy high commissioner for refugees, requested the World Health Organization to do a study on the influence of uranium ammunition. That study was never completed, because the International Agency for Atomic Energy used its right to stop this. Still, one Russian professor from the World Health Organization gave the unfinished report to Barton. Afterwards, he requested that pregnant women are not sent to Kosovo, as well as to introduce the rule that nobody can be sent to Kosovo if they don’t want to. Barton lost his job later on, even though he was seen as the successor of Sadako **Ogata** at the helm of the Commissioner.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Arrest warrant for Oric withdrawn (*Klix*.ba)**

The Interpol headquarters in Lyon have withdrawn the arrest warrants for the Srebrenica war commander Naser **Oric**, the war chief of the Srebrenica police Hakija **Meholjic** and Amir **Mehmedovic** Gera. B&H Justice Minister Barisa **Colak** confirmed for ***Klix.ba*** portal that the Interpol had also withdrawn the arrest warrant for the commander of the Republika Ruska headquarters Manojlo **Milovanovic**. Colak said the above mentioned people are not any more in the bases of the Interpol member states. He also explained the reasons why the Interpol accepted the requests of the B&H authorities in regards to Oric and other B&H citizens. “We have a protocol on cooperation and it states that information is exchanged between prosecutors. It would be logical, since the above mentioned people have B&H citizenship and reside in B&H, to be processed here,” said the B&H Justice Minister. Colak recalled that “a session of the Interpol General Assembly was held in 2010 over frequent Interpol arrest warrants published in this region in connection with war crimes.” “It was concluded under item 3 that if a member state publishes an arrest warrant for some person from some member state, then the other state has the right to protest over the published arrest warrant and we used this right,” said Colak.

**Security situation in B&H very complex and delicate (*Fena*)**

The security situation in B&H is “very complex and delicate,” the B&H Council of Ministers concluded based on analysis of the events during the destructive demonstrations in several towns in the Federation B&H and in Sarajevo, when the building of the B&H Presidency, where the Federal government headquarters is also located, was burning. The conclusion of the Council of Ministers states that maximal engagement of all relevant factors is demanded – political and institutional at all levels of authority. The Independent Board and police agencies of B&H are demanded to activate in the shortest time, in line with the valid rules and in cooperation with the authorized judicial bodies, most optimal mutual coordination mechanisms with police institutions from other levels of authority, while taking into consideration the specificity of the legal regulative concerning public order and peace, for responsible treatment in such and similar situations, as well as to inform the Council of Ministers about the assumed activities. The General Secretariat is obliged to send the B&H government conclusions to the B&H parliamentary assembly.

**Dodik: Referendum on independence possible but not now (*Nezavisne Novine*)**

“A referendum on the independence of the Republika Srpska (RS) is a possibility but not right now. Referendum is not something you bring up several times. You do it only once and its success depends on whether you have chosen the right time and way. I think we can’t do it at this point, it would be dangerous,” the SNSD leader Milorad **Dodik** said at a public debate in Bijeljina in front of several hundred people. He explained that a referendum is a huge risk because if it failed, the RS could lose the little it has right now. “I can’t say if someone who comes after me or after us will recognize when the time is right, but I do know that a few years ago you weren’t even allowed to speak about referendum, and now, the RS has its law on referendum and the National Assembly may make a decision tonight or some other night to call a referendum on the status of the RS,” Dodik said.

**U.S. Embassy: We are not violating the RS constitutional order (*B&H agencies*)**

The recent claims by the SNSD that certain NGOs, media and individuals have been engaged by foreign countries, including the U.S. Embassy and USAID, to perform duties of “foreign agents” aimed at violating the constitutional order of the Republika Srpska (RS) are absurd and represent humiliation to the citizens of this country, the U.S. Embassy in B&H said. It adds that these claims serve only to draw away the attention from inadequacy in the economy, judiciary, political representation, battle against corruption and etc. “When political parties and their leaders start ‘looking’ their own citizens and embassies of countries that have been and are a reliable friend and partner to B&H as enemies, then it is clear that their race with election survival has turned into paranoia,” reads the statement. It is stressed that the U.S. is proud for the support and assistance offered to B&H over the past two decades so the country would rebuild again, develop democratic institutions, clear mines, strengthen rule of law, bring justice to victims of war and help create new jobs.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Serbia Accused of ‘Coordinated Killing’ in Croatia (*BIRN*, by Josip Ivanovic, 5 March 2014)**

In its genocide case against Serbia at the International Court of Justice, Zagreb argued that campaigns of ethnic cleansing ordered by Belgrade during the 1990s war were proof of genocidal intent.

On the third day of the genocide hearings at the International Court of Justice in The Hague on Wednesday, Zagreb's legal team said there was a pattern behind the Yugoslav People's Army's attacks on Croatian towns and villages that showed Serbia intended to commit genocide.

"There was a carefully coordinated effort to shell village after village; killing, raping, torturing and expelling Croat women, men and children," said attorney Helen Law, describing the Yugoslav People's Army's engagement in the Eastern Slavonia region of Croatia during the war.

"By 1992, 97 per cent of the population were Serbs in an area which had been previously inhabited by more than 70 per cent Croatians,” Law said.

"Entire Croat villages were destroyed... The plan of Serb nationalist leaders to create an ethnically homogeneous area was completed," she added.

Croatia accuses Serbia of committing genocide and is also demanding that Belgrade punish all perpetrators of war crimes during the 1990s conflict, return looted cultural property and pay for wartime damages.

In a counter-suit which will be heard next week at the International Court of Justice, Serbia is also alleging that Croatia was guilty of genocide against Serbs during and after the war.

During Wednesday’s hearing, another member of the Croatian legal team, Kier Starmer, said that the Yugoslav People’s Army’s siege of the Croatian town of Vukovar involved "systematic expulsions, bombing, burning, brutal killings and torture".

"Vukovar has never recovered," Starmer concluded.

Croatian professor of international law Maja Sersic told the UN-backed court meanwhile that facts established by the Hague Tribunal also proved that a genocidal pattern existed.

"In two different parts of Croatia, the same was pattern used: intensive shelling followed by heavily-armed paramilitaries entering the villages firing at houses," Sersic said.

The Yugoslav People’s Army "struck with the intent of destroying a part of the population", she said.

The Croatian team [argued on Monday that genocide does not necessarily mean the extermination of an entire ethnic group](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatia-serbia-start-icj-hearing_blank).

Both Zagreb and Belgrade have expressed confidence that they will win their cases, but [some experts have suggested that neither will be able to prove genocide, and expressed concerns that the court proceedings will sour relations between the two neighbours](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-croatia-genocide-lawsuits-expected-to-fail_blank).

Since it was established after World War II, the International Court of Justice has only recognised one case of genocide – the Srebrenica massacres in Bosnia in 1995.

**Serbia's central bank sells 50 million euros to bolster dinar – statement (*Reuters*, 3 March 2014)**

BELGRADE - Serbia's central bank sold 50 million euros ($68.87 million) on the domestic currency market on Monday to support the dinar, which began to weaken against the euro on bank demand for the European single currency.

The central bank offered euros for sale on several occasions as the dinar hit 116.2 to the euro, said a dealer with a Belgrade-based commercial bank.

"Serbian subsidiaries of several foreign banks were purchasing euros," the dealer said.

In a statement on its website, the central bank said only that it had sold 50 million euros, but offered no details about what had motivated it to intervene.

The dinar subsequently stabilised at around 115.9 to the euro, a preferred foreign currency in the Balkan country.

The central bank, which maintains a managed float of the dinar, has sold a total of 640 million euros this year in support of the domestic currency. ($1 = 0.7240 euros) ($1 = 0.7260 euros) (Reporting by Aleksandar Vasovic; Editing by Matt Robinson)

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