** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Wednesday, 9 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Vekaric: KLA crimes to be processed in a third country (*RTS*)**

The formation of a special tribunal for war crimes in Kosovo is a response to the understatement from the past, Deputy Prosecutor for War Crimes Bruno **Vekaric** told the morning news of ***Radio and Television of Serbia*** (RTS). “We haven’t received enough answers, while international justice as if avoided punishing the criminals. This court gives answers to all that. Someone will be held responsible for crimes,” said Vekaric. He points out that underway are negotiations on how this court will look like. Unlike previous courts that were under the UN auspices, this one will be under the EU auspices, says Vekaric, adding that the difference is that here at issue are not only territories of the former Yugoslavia, but also other locations, such as Albania. We support that and hope to receive a final answer, he says. The Deputy Prosecutor points out that it is important to conduct trials at a third location, adding that a consolation price for the Albanians might be to have the administrative center of the court in Pristina. “I doubt that they will transfer everything to Pristina. The question is whether the witnesses want to go there,” says Vekaric. It really isn’t easy for Kosovo Albanians to pass a decision on them being processed and this is why the U.S. interfered in order to exert pressure, he says. He points out that the Special Investigative Team is completing the investigation and collected material. The key locations were visited – Albania, Montenegro, B&H and Serbia, said Vekaric. In regard to the mass grave in Rudnica, he says they are presently demolishing a house in Rudnica because they suspect a mass grave is located here. It was confirmed with DNA analysis that the mortal remains, discovered in Rudnica near Raska in mid-December, belong to Kosovo Albanians. So far, two bodies have been identified, which is important so we know what event is at issue, says Vekaric, pointing out that a preliminary investigation has started.

**Beyer: Amending preamble on Kosovo would facilitate Serbia’s EU accession (*Danas*)**

“For the first time there is a chance of approaching the long considered amendment of the Serbian Constitution, which would imply the amending of the preamble on Kosovo,” said Peter **Beyer**, an MP of the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) in the Bundestag, pointing out that this would facilitate Serbia’s EU accession process. He told ***Danas*** that the main focus of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) should be on how to use the concentration of power for the sake of Serbian citizens. Speaking about the key tasks of the new Serbian government, Beyer underlines the fight against corruption and organized crime, normalization of relations with Kosovo, adoption of court judgments in regard to corruption and organized crime, ambitious efforts towards promoting rule of law, economic reforms that will lead to prosperity of citizens, new jobs and budget consolidation. “The future government received enormous responsibility, of which it should be aware and it should behave in accordance with this. It remains to be seen whether **Vucic** will fulfill promises. For the sake of the people of Serbia, we can only hope that the new government will quickly and ambitiously conduct reforms,” said Beyer.

**Miscevic: Serbian team to have 20 experts (*Novosti*)**

“The Serbian team for the EU accession talks will be complete as soon as the new government is formed, and will consist of no more than 15 to 20 people,” the Head of the Serbian EU team Tanja Miscevic has announced. A large number of experts from nearly all state institutions are already involved in negotiations with Brussels at various levels, **Miscevic** told ***Novosti***. As the process of opening negotiation chapters moves forward, up to 2,000 people will be working on EU integration affairs. Miscevic’s office currently has five people, who greatly rely on the capacities of the Office for EU integrations, where there are 90 people working on European affairs, with each of the 35 negotiating chapters addressed by sub-groups consisting of a total of some 600 experts. Serbia has already completed the screenings for the chapters on the judiciary and fundamental rights, police, financial control, freedom of movement for workers and the process of normalizing the Belgrade-Pristina relations. Belgrade’s goal is to open the initial chapters in the next two months, by the end of the Greek EU presidency, Novosti writes.

**Serbs in Vukovar on the list for boycott (*Novosti*)**

A call has appeared on certain social networks to boycott Serb shops and goods in Vukovar as long as Cyrillic script is being used in the city, website dnevno.hr reads. The leader of the Serb National Council (SNV) Milorad **Pupovac**, who is also member of the Croatian parliament, condemned the call in the harshest terms, and urged the authorized institution to react. Pupovac said at an impromptu press conference in Zagreb that if no reaction takes place, he will inform the authorized foreign institutions. “The call for boycott issued over social networks refers to Serb goods and 35 shops owned by Serbs who are doing their jobs properly and trying to make their living. This is characteristic of Nazi, Fascist and Ustasha regimes in 1930 and should not occur in the European democracies. The call for boycott is in breach of the Croatian Constitution, the Constitutional Law on the Rights of Ethnic Minorities, the Penal Law, the Anti-Discrimination Law and a number of charters and conventions,” Pupovac said. He said that such incidents can seriously poison the relations between Croatia and Serbia. “It is not a question whether this is Fascism, but rather how much fascist this is,” Pupovac said. Aleksandar **Tolnauer**, head of the Croatian Council for National Minorities, also deplored the boycott at the press conference adding that an atmosphere of xenophobia is being created similar to the one in early nineties in which the fear is being converted into hatred and hatred into violence. This is not in line with the achievements of the 21st century civilization, Tolnauer said, adding that the Council will react if the authorized institutions fail to do so.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Inzko supports ICTY work (*Oslobodjenje*)**

In talks with the ICTY Chief Prosecutor Serge **Brammertz**, the High Representative in B&H Valentin **Inzko** voiced full support to the work of the ICTY, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) stated. “Processing war crimes is crucial for reconciliation and stability, and B&H citizens have the right to achieving justice,” said Inzko in Sarajevo. The HR stressed that jurisprudence established by The Hague Tribunal and its legacy significantly contribute to strengthening capacities of the judiciary in B&H so war crimes cases could be resolved independently and efficiently. Brammertz is on a working visit in B&H until 10 April. This is a regular visit within preparations for the report on the strategy for ending the ICTY’s work that will be submitted by Brammertz to the UN SC in May.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Kosovo Urges EU to Expedite Visa-Free Travel (*BIRN*, by Edona Peci, 9 April 2014)**

Kosovo minister says authorities in Pristina have met all the necessary criteria for visa-free travel to the EU Schengen area - and continued criticisms of shortcomings is unwarranted.

Vlora Citaku, Kosovo's Minister of European Integration, said the EU had not taken into account the achievements Kosovo had made on the visa issue and it had no reason not to relax conditions forthwith.

“There were 101 criteria, and I can say that each of them was fulfilled, one by one," she said. "The bad news is that the EU Commission hasn’t sent its missions to assess the fulfillment of these criteria,” she told students in Pristina.

Citaku was referring to a so-called roadmap for visa liberalization handed to Kosovo on June 14, 2012, some six months after the European Commission launched its visa liberalization dialogue with the country.

An EU commission was expected to visit Pristina in March in order to see the progress made in implementing criteria set in the document, but no such delegation has arrived.

Citaku said Kosovo was not seeking short cuts. “We ask the EU for cooperation and dynamism [in the visa process]. We are not asking them to take a shorter path,” Citaku said.

Officials in Brussels have recently maintained that Kosovo was not fulfilling all the criteria set out in the visa road map.

During a visit to Kosovo in January, the European Parliament’s Special Rapporteur on Kosovo, Ulrike Lunacek, dampened hopes that Kosovo would access visa-free travel to European states within the next few years.

A similar statement was made by Tanja Fajon, former European Parliament rapporteur for visa liberalisation, who said the authorities in Pristina needed to do more to curb the flow of people from Kosovo seeking asylum in the European Union.

Although Kosovo has signed readmission agreements with several EU states, people from the country continue to seek asylum in the bloc in relatively large numbers, with more than 17,000 applications seen in 2013.

Organized crime and corruption and problems in the public administration are some other core problems that Kosovo needs to tackle before visas to the EU can be lifted.

Kosovo is now the only country in the Western Balkans whose citizens are excluded from a visa-free travel regime with the EU's Schengen area.

The EU lifted visas on Albania and Bosnia in 2010. Visa requirements were lifted for Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia a year earlier.

**Serbia Extradites War Crimes Suspect to Bosnia (*BIRN*, 9 April 2014)**

Prosecutors in Bihac in northwest Bosnia said that Milutin Babic, from Kljuc, suspected of war crimes in Bosanski Petrovac, had been extradited from Serbia.

Babic was ordered into custody as per a decision of the Cantonal Court in Bihac, which previously issued the arrest warrant for him.  
After he was located and arrested in Serbia, Babic was handed to the Bosnian authorities at the border crossing at Raca.  
"Milutin Babic is charged with participating in the crime against war prisoners, along with Slavko Stricevic and Obrad Ozegovic," the Bihac prosecution said, adding that the investigation in this case was ongoing.  
In July 2013, the Cantonal Court in Bihac jailed Stricevic, a former police reservist, for ten years for helping to kill two Bosniak prisoners in Sanski Most in 1992.  
The victims were Bosniak territorial defence servicemen who surrendered without putting up resistance but were then killed and their bodies thrown into a pit.

**Croatian President pledges to help BiH over EU integration (*Xinhua*, 8 April 2014)**

MOSTAR, Bosnia and Herzegovina -- Visiting Croatian President Ivo Josipovic on Tuesday pledged to help Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) over its EU integration.

BiH is an important neighbor of Croatia, said Josipovic at the opening ceremony of the International Trade Fair Mostar, adding that his country will help BiH to overcome the deadlock on the road to the EU.

The EU was expected to develop new instruments and mechanisms to deal with situation in BiH, he said.

Talking about the Mostar trade fair, Josipovic said the fair will benefit BiH economy and enhance regional cooperation.

The Croatian president, who started his visit to BiH on Tuesday, will travel to central BiH and meet representatives from local Croatian community.

He is scheduled to meet high BiH officials in Sarajevo on Wednesday before heading back to Croatia.

**Bosniaks and Croats Unveil Joint Plan For Mostar (*BIRN*, by Elvira M. Jukic, 9 April 2014)**

The two main Bosniak and Croat parties in Mostar said they would work together on economic issues in the city, putting aside their political disputes over the voting system.

Two key parties in Mostar, the Bosniak Party of Democratic Action, SDA, and the Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ, discussed development of the troubled Herzegovinian city, adding that they had come up with a strategic document to aid the economic situation.  
In a meeting on April 8, the two parties discussed the functioning of the city and cantonal authorities and revealed some of their plans.   
“We agreed a strategic document that will contribute to the development of Mostar and speed up employment of people,” said Bakir Izetbegovic of the SDA, adding this party together with the HDZ will work on holding the elections in Mostar this year.  
Mostar has held no elections for six years, owing to disputes over the voting system. In November 2010 and February 2012 the Bosnian Constitutional Court issued two rulings ordering the electoral system to change to give all voters the same rights.  
This followed a complaint by Croats on the City Council who said their rights were being violated by an electoral system that gave Bosniaks the same number of councilors even though Croats are the majority group in the city.  
Despite the rulings, the electoral system in Mostar has remained unchanged. Mostar's City Council is currently a unitary authority elected from six voting units. Each unit elects the same number of councilors regardless of the number of voters in the unit.  
Mostar is an ethnically divided city and political power is mostly shared between two ethnically-based parties, SDA and HDZ.   
Although there have been no exact data on the population or ethnic structure of Mostar since the 1991 census, estimates indicate that Croats now make up a majority of residents.   
The HDZ has long argued that in 2004, when former High Representative Paddy Ashdown abolished the municipalities in Mostar, his only aim was to prevent Croats from having more power than Bosniaks, thus discriminating against them.

The SDA solution is to again divide Mostar into municipalities with authority over them given equally to Bosniaks and Croats.  
But the two parties have agreed to put the electoral system dispute aside and focus on economic issues. Although they did not reveal concrete details of the strategy to develop Mostar economically, Covic said there would be benefits to it.  
“What was agreed is a strategic partnership between the two parties so that relations of the two ethnic groups may relax,” Covic said.  
“We are aware we are working in a difficult environment due to the tough social-economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and because we are six months ahead of the elections,” Covic noted.

“The strategic document for Mostar agreed with the SDA will attract investors in this region,” he added.

**Pack against Croatia's proposals for Bosnia (*Hina*, 8 April 2014)**

The European Parliament rapporteur on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Doris Pack, has said she disagrees with Croatian Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic's proposal for a new European Union approach to BiH to step up the negotiating process between BiH and the EU.  
There should be no new or different requirements for BiH other than those which apply to all other states, Pack was quoted as saying in the Bosnian daily Oslobodjenje of Tuesday.  
Every country has its difficulties and those in BiH are different than, say, in Serbia. Serbia had problems with Kosovo, while BiH has a situation based on (the) Dayton (peace agreement), she said.  
Pack said BiH's Constitution had created the problems such as those relating to the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the Sejdic-Finci case, but added that BiH should not be awarded special candidate status because of that.  
The key to the solution for BiH is the equality of all three constituent peoples. It must not happen that Bosniaks believe that they must make all the decisions while Croats have no say, Pack said, adding that all the problems could not be solved at once, but their number must be reduced.  
Asked what federalisation, mentioned in the European Parliament's latest resolution, would mean for BiH, Pack said this was about respecting the two entities as constituent parts of BiH and that there should be no centralisation within the Federation entity.  
When we say federation, we mean the one consisting of two parts, she said, adding that no one in the EP advocated the further federalisation of the Federation entity.  
If cantons are abolished, one must see that Croats in the Federation are not neglected, but there can be no new divisions and a third entity is out of the question, said Pack.

**Long Jail Term Sought for Edin Dzeko (*BIRN*, 9 April 2014)**

The Bosnian State Prosecution, in its closing arguments, called for former Bosnian Army fighter Edin Dzeko to receive a long sentence for crimes committed against Bosnian Croats in Konjic and Jabhlanica in 1993.

Prosecutor Vesna Ilic said she had proved that Dzeko, a former member of the Zulfikar Unit of the Bosnian army, took part in killing Croat civilians on April 16, 1993 in Trusina and had committed other crimes in Jablanica later that year.  
“The only conclusion the Trial Chamber can reach is that the defendant is guilty,” the prosecutor said, adding that there were no mitigating circumstances on behalf of Dzeko.   
In her closing arguments, Ilic recalled witnesses who said that during the attack on Trusina, Dzeko killed an elderly couple and a woman before taking part in the execution of six prisoners.   
She noted that Dzeko’s former co-fighter, Rasema Handanovic, had seen him kill the elderly couple - and she had also also taken part in executing prisoners. “She recalled that Dzeko had stood on her right when the executions happened,” Ilic said.   
According to her, the defence had tried to discredit Handanovic, claiming that in fact she had killed the elderly couple.

Handanovic was jailed for five-and-a-half years after admitting taking part in the executions of six prisoners.   
The prosecutor also reminded the judges of the statement of protected witness X, a former member of the Zulfikar unit, who recalled seeing Dzeko shoot a woman in the genitals.   
Ilic said it was proven beyond doubt that Dzeko had also illegally detained, tortured and robbed Bosnian Croats in Jablanica in the second half of 1993.   
She dismissed defence claims that Dzeko had only been a driver when three Croats were arrested - and that prosecution witnesses had mixed him up with another person, nicknamed Dzeki, and who was a member of the Handzar unit of the Bosnian army.   
“The prosecution witnesses made no mistake in recognizing the defendant,” the prosecutor said.  
Dzeko’s defence will present its final arguments on April 29.

**Macedonia Parties Misusing Resources for Election, NGOs Say (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 9 April 2014)**

Parties are blatantly misusing public resources for their election campaigns, NGOs observing the elections said in a preliminary report.

With days to go before the first round of presidential elections, and at the start of the early general election campaign, election monitors from CIVIL - Center for Freedom say parties continue to misuse public funds and resources for election activities.  
The NGO made the claim on Wednesday as it issued its preliminary report on the election campaign so far.  
CIVIL quoted one mayor, whose name was not revealed, using a municipal limousine to travel to Italy to take part in a campaign to persuade Macedonians there to vote for the main ruling VMRO DPMNE party.  
“On return, the car broke down at the Slovenia-Croatia border and some 5,000 euros were paid from the municipal budget for the damage and to transport the vehicle back to Macedonia,” the monitors alleged.  
CIVIL, along with MOST, another local NGO, has provided the most domestic election monitors during several past elections in the country.  
“Our monitors, as well as some media, have also reported about the case in Prilep, where a medical emergency vehicle ‘paraded’ through town with VMRO DPMNE party flags attached to it,” CIVIL noted.  
After media reports this week showed video footage of the incident, the Prilep City Hospital said it would penalise the staff who misused the vehicle.  
Another point of concern, according to the observers, is political campaigning in schools.  
CIVIL, as well as some media, has reported that promotional posters for the junior ruling ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration, DUI, have been displayed in classrooms in a Skopje high school, Cvetan Dimov.  
Albanian-language media reported that promotion material for the DUI also appeared at the main entrance of the state-funded Tetovo University in Skopje.  
Macedonia is holding early general and presidential elections. On April 13, Macedonians will choose between four presidential candidates.   
A second round, pitting the two best-ranked candidates against each other, takes place on April 27, alongside snap general elections.

**Biden meets with Montenegro's prime minister on Ukraine; speaks by phone to Slovakia's leader (*The Associated Press*, 9 April 2014)**

WASHINGTON - Vice-President Joe Biden has discussed the crisis in Ukraine with the leaders of Montenegro and Slovakia.

Biden met at the White House on Tuesday with Montenegro's prime minister, Milo Djukanovic. The White House says Biden and Djukanovic discussed the situation in the Balkans as well as Russia's pressure on Ukraine.

Biden praised Montenegro for making progress toward joining NATO and said the U.S. supports Montenegro's aspirations to form closer ties with Europe.

The White House says Biden also spoke by phone Tuesday with Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia. The leaders discussed concerns about Russia violating Ukraine's sovereignty and upcoming elections in Ukraine.

Biden thanked Slovakia for helping Ukraine diversify its energy supply. Western nations see that as key to reducing Europe's dependence on Russian gas.

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