



BIH PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE - UNODC

A Roadmap for the fight against corruption

The Chief Prosecutor of the Prosecutor's Office of BiH, Gordana Tadić, with her Deputy Ozrenka Nešković and associates, met with the officials of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - Aleksandar Đorđević, an official of the UNODC program in Serbia for confiscation of illicit assets and anti-corruption, Alen Gagula, an official of the same project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a representative of the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative - Anti-Corruption Project Manager Aneta Arnaudovski.

The two sides discussed the activities carried out by the UNODC aimed at creating an Anti-Corruption and Illicit Flows Roadmap for the Western Balkans, as well as the joint cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office of BiH, given that the Prosecutor's Office of BiH is working on cases related to this area.

The activities to be carried out regarding the creation of the Roadmap and cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office



of BiH in this process were presented at the meeting.

The Prosecutor's Office of BiH is committed to cooperation in this area, it is taking intensive activities to strengthen the

capacity for the fight against corruption and financial crime, and will continue to actively participate in these activities, which is one of the priorities for BiH in the process of European integration.

Montenegrin Bosniak Party proposed Draft Resolution on Srebrenica

The draft resolution on Srebrenica already has the support of 40 MP's from the Montenegrin opposition but in order to be adopted, it will need the votes of some MP's from the ruling coalition, Bosniak Party spokesperson Adel Omeragic told N1 Wednesday.

"The text of the Resolution envisages that July 11 be declared a day of mourning and a day of remembrance for the victims of Srebrenica and that the Parliament of Montenegro will condemn any public denial of the genocide in Srebrenica in its future work," Omeragic said. He added that the denial of genocide has increased over the past six months.

"We've witnessed the desecration of the buildings belonging to the Islamic Community, and the inscription 'Knife, wire, Srebrenica' on the walls of

mosques. This shows that such a Resolution is needed in Montenegro for this to be a step forward in the democratic sense, and for Montenegro to send a message that it remains firmly on the course of the values it has created in the past 15 years," he noted.

The spokesperson of the Montenegrin Bosniak Party also stressed that with this motion for the Resolution, they do not want to place the collective blame on any people, and that collective blame does not exist.

"The blame is individual and there are people who have been convicted of genocide. When we proposed this Resolution, it did not get support for discussion because the deputies of the current majority were not in the mood to support it. Now the conditions have

been met and it will be a kind of test of the seriousness and democratic capacity to show whether they will move from words to deeds. It is a matter of coexistence, reconciliation, to show that by adopting this Resolution," Omeragic pointed out.

The spokesperson also said that the Montenegrin government does not have a joint position on this matter.

Speaking about the conditions towards the Bosniaks in this country, Omeragic said that they received several threats in Pljevlja after the recent elections.

He concluded by saying that a recent survey found that of the 220 leadership positions, seven were occupied by minority representatives. He added that this is, perhaps, the best indicator of the government's attitude towards the minorities in Montenegro.

COVID-19 UPDATE

145 new cases

A total of 145 new coronavirus infections and 16 COVID-19 fatalities were registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past 24 hours, health-care authorities said on Wednesday. Of the 2,063 people tested for the virus in Bosnia's Federation (FBiH) entity since Tuesday, 63 were positive and two

COVID-19 patients passed away. Healthcare authorities in the other semi-autonomous entity, Republika Srpska (RS), reported 73 infected among the 600 people tested, as well as 12 COVID-19 deaths. Bosnia's Brcko District reported nine new coronavirus cases, as well as two COVID-19 fatalities.

Indictment filed against eight people for war crimes in Velagići near Ključ

A war crimes indictment has been filed against a total of eight people in the town of Velagići near Ključ, the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced yesterday regarding inquiries from several media outlets regarding the case.

A number of accused are in BiH, and some of the accused are in Serbia, who were examined as suspects in the

investigation according to the Institute for International Legal Assistance. The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed the indictment in that case, and scheduled a guilty plea in the case for July 20 this year, and then more details will be known about the further course of the proceedings, it is said in the statement.

Renowned Bosnian columnist Dragan Bursac receives new death threats

Renowned columnist, Dragan Bursac, received new death threats - a person sent him a message via Facebook saying the journalist would get a "bullet in the head" in case he ever steps foot in Montenegro.

"I am very serious. I'll kill you if you ever step foot into Montenegro. A bullet to the head and greetings!" the message reads.

The user continued to threaten Bursac in

the comments section, implying he is willing to serve time for harming him. Dragan Bursac is a well-known critic of nationalism in the region and an advocate for anti-fascism, multiculturalism and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was recently awarded the prize for the best journalist in Southeast Europe, awarded by the German Association for Southeast Europe at a ceremony in Germany's Bundestag.

COMEUFOR Supports demining efforts in Kladanj

Yesterday COMEUFOR Major General Alexander Platzer and COM NATO HQ Sarajevo Brigadier Eric General Folkestad conducted a visit to an AFBiH demining site in Kladanj. At the demining site they were briefed by Major General Radovan Ilić, Commander of the Operations Command, Armed Forces Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The current project on site consists of 2.18 km², having commenced last month it is forecast to run for fourteen months concluding in May 2022. In accordance with the AFBiH monthly demining plan the site will be cleared by a combination of two manual demining teams and one addi-

tional machine to be used for mechanical ground preparation.

Upon completion of the briefs from Maj Gen Ilić and the demining Battalion commander Col Dzevad Zenunovic, COMEUFOR expressed his gratitude for the conduct of visit and that he was very satisfied with what he had observed. COMEUFOR acknowledged that demining is not a fast process, that it requires time, patience and continued support. EUFOR Operation Althea will continue to support the demining efforts in BiH, through close cooperation with BHMAC AFBiH and other relevant organisations.

Daily Markers**Domestic violence**

Within the regional project "Implementing Norms, Changing Minds", funded by the European Union and implemented by UN Women, the Association "Vive žene" Tuzla in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior of the Tuzla Canton in recent months implemented the project "Prevention of violence in the Tuzla Canton".

The main task of the project was to provide protection to victims of domestic violence through consistent submission of requests for the imposition of protective measures.

One of the activities of the mentioned project is the media campaign "You hear, you see, you know - react!", which ended yesterday.

"This project is extremely important for us because it lasted quite a long time. Unfortunately, the public is still not aware that everything they see and hear, should be reported. When we started the project, the number of protective measures imposed was about 20 percent, while for the three months that the campaign lasted, that percentage increased to 59 percent. This tells you that this campaign is successful and that it should continue with this intensity, all with the aim of quick and efficient help to women and children, victims of domestic violence," said President of Vive žene Jasna Zečević for FENA.

The preparatory activities were carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the Tuzla Canton, and the most important for the Association of Citizens of Viva žena Tuzla is the signing of the Protocol on Cooperation with the Cantonal Mol.

Women from Vive žene are satisfied with the legislation that solves the problem of domestic violence and cooperation with police officers.

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Wednesday marks the anniversary of creation of Trnopolje concentration camp



Wednesday marks the 29th anniversary of the formation of the largest civilian concentration camp since World War Two, the Trnopolje camp near the north Bosnian city of Prijedor, where over 23,000 Bosniaks and Croats were detained, tortured, raped and killed by Bosnian Serb forces.

"Today, May 26, 2021, marks the 29th anniversary of the establishment of one of the most notorious and biggest camps in the Prijedor region, the Trnopolje camp, the formation of which was an introduction to terrible crimes committed against citizens of the Prijedor region of non-Serb ethnicity, primarily in the Keraterm and Omarska camps and in Koricanske rocks, but also into the expulsion of the entire non-Serb population from the Prijedor region," said the Association of concentration

camp detainees of BiH said.

The Association recalled that the Trnopolje camp is known for the "photo behind the wire" featuring the surviving camp detainee-witness Fikret Alic, but also for the fact that, according to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, some 23,000 camp detainees, Bosniaks and Croats, passed through this camp, making it the largest camp of this kind since World War II.

The world learned about the Trnopolje camp on August 5, 1992, when ITN television broadcasted the footage of the detainees behind barbed wire. One of the United Nations' reports on the Trnopolje camp states:

"Murders and torture are not uncommon in the Trnopolje camp. Harassment and torture were the rules, not the

exception. Of the serious crimes committed against detainees, rapes are the most common. These atrocities were most often committed at night. Night terrors due to possible abduction for rape or other types of abuse caused serious mental suffering, even to those prisoners who stayed in the camp for only a short time."

The Association noted that an unacceptably small number of people, only a few dozen of them, were convicted of systemic crimes against citizens of the Prijedor region in the period 1992-1995, which was backed by a complete structure of both local authorities and illegal and illegitimate Serb authorities in BiH, which resulted in over 50,000 expulsions (the entire non-Serb population), hundreds of rapes, and 3,176 murders, including 102 children.

Ambassador Gendler: Israel has better cooperation with Banja Luka than Sarajevo

The latest conflict in the Gaza strip is a continuous the conflict that occurs every few years, non-resident Ambassador of Israel to BiH Noah Gal Gendler said for N1 on Tuesday, adding that Israel supports peace, but without Hamas. He noted that he understands the divisions in BiH regarding the Middle East but that they are ready to cooperate with everyone.

The Ambassador also revealed whether the Israeli political situation played a key for the beginning of the recent



conflicts and how much the political fate of Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu has anything to do with what is happening in the Middle East. When it comes to BiH, Gendler said Israel has better cooperation with Banja Luka, the administrative centre of the country's Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS) entity than with the nation's capital – Sarajevo, but that there is room for cooperation. He noted that the BiH authorities never contacted his country for help in the fight against the coronavirus or help in purchasing the vaccines.

EU Delegation, WHO support adoption of Law on tobacco control in FBiH

US Embassy also supported the adoption of the said law from its official Twitter account saying they support the adoption of laws aimed at improving the health of all citizens

The Delegation of the European Union in BiH, World Health Organisation as well as the Swiss Embassy to BiH sent a joint letter Tuesday to the Federation of BiH (FBiH) entity House of Representatives, FBiH Prime Minister Faril Novalic and FBiH Health Minister Vjekoslav Mandic reiterating the importance of the adoption of the Law on Tobacco Control for the health of the population and for fulfilling Bosnia's International obligations.

"The discussion on the Proposal of the Law on Control and Restricted Use of Tobacco, Tobacco Products and Other Smoking Products at the upcoming session of the FBiH House of Representatives is of utmost importance. We commend the Members of the FBiH House of Representatives for the positive steps taken in support of this important regulation. The adoption of this Law in the original form as proposed is essential both for the health of the entire population, as well as for fulfilling the obligations assumed by BiH through international agreements and on the path of European integration," the letter said.

The signatories warned that the high prevalence of tobacco use is one of the key factors contributing to the rise of non-communicable diseases in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"In the Federation of BiH, data shows that 8,400 persons die annually from diseases attributed to tobacco smoking; 43,95% of adults and 24.4% of children aged 13-15 are current consumers of tobacco products; and 55% of children in this age group are exposed to second-hand smoke in enclosed public places," they recalled.

The letter also recalled that BiH has ratified the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in 2009, that obliges the countries Parties to the



WHO FCTC to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco use. As a potential candidate country for membership in the EU, the adoption of the Law in the original form is also envisaged by the harmonization with the EU Directive 2014/40/EU on tobacco products.

The EU Delegation also noted the EU's long-standing recommendation to adopting legislation at all levels prohibiting smoking in public places in line with the EU acquis and ratifying the protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco, and starting to enforce both measures.

Then they addressed the concern that smoke-free laws economically harm the hospitality industry, noting that not a sin-

gle study using objective data and rigorous research methodology in the EU or worldwide found an overall negative impact because of smoke-free laws.

"We are once again inviting you to adopt the proposed Law in its original form and contribute to improving the health situation in the FBiH in these difficult times," the letter concluded.

US Embassy also supported the adoption of the said law from its official Twitter account saying they support the adoption of laws aimed at improving the health of all citizens:

We encourage BiH political leaders to make legislative decisions that will protect and improve the health of their citizens. The United States respects the right of foreign governments to establish and maintain sound public health practices," the US Embassy tweeted.

First shipment of Sputnik V vaccines in Sarajevo expected in June

The Sarajevo Canton (KS) expects the first shipment of Sputnik V vaccines it managed to secure to arrive in June, KS Prime Minister, Edin Forto, said on Wednesday. He noted that there were numerous problems in the negotiations because the Government of KS has no authority to negotiate on vaccine pro-

curement so it managed to reach the manufacturer of vaccines against Covid 19 through wholesalers, TVSA reports. Together with the Bosnian pharmaceutical company Bosnialijek, an agreement to procure the vaccines for a price of 9.95 USD per dose was reached.

Forto requested an urgent session of the KS Assembly, asking it to approve the agreement. He also asked the Government of Bosnia's Federation (FBiH) entity to co-sign it. Forto said the Sarajevo Canton will procure a total of 200,000 vaccines, while 300,000 vaccines are expected for FBiH.

BH Journalists Assoc condemns attacks on Face TV editor by SDA party

The BH Journalists Association Steering Committee strongly condemned "hate speech and political pressure" coming from Bosnia's main Bosniak ethnic party, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), directed at Face Television and its founder and editor, Senad Hadzifejzovic.

"The political pressures of Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and key people from this party on Face TV and Senad Hadzifejzovic personally, which have lasted for weeks, represent an illegal interference in the editorial policy of this media outlet and an organized chase aimed at targeting Hadzifejzovic and his media as "hostile", anti-patriotic and propagandistic," the BH Journalists Association said.

The association argued that Face Television's critical reporting on the SDA and its leaders is being presented as false and as a "consequence of Hadzifejzovic's "hurt vanity, anger or other motives", by the party.

"The organized SDA chase on Face TV was additionally supported by daily posts on social networks of sympathizers and members of this party, which were marked by hate speech, insults, swearing and threats addressed to Senad Hadzifejzovic, as well as attempts to discredit his personality and journalistic work in every way possible."

The Steering Committee of BH Journalists said it considers such attacks and pressure a "brutal threat to the freedom of



speech and work of the media" in the country which is orchestrated in order to silence all those who criticise the party and its officials.

"Online campaigns against journalists and independent media in BiH, which have exposed numerous scandals in the last year in public procurement, health care system, fake diplomas, political employments..., are frightening and represent open attempts by BiH political leaders and their henchmen to stifle free journalism in a democratic society, contrary to all the principles of the EU for which they declaratively stand!" the statement said.

However, the association also said it "wishes to draw the attention of Face TV and all other media outlets to the need of respecting journalistic ethics and professional standards, especially the prin-

ciples of accurate, fair, decent and balanced reporting on leading persons of any political party, including SDA."

"Fierce reactions and inappropriate vocabulary lead to some media and journalists themselves undermining their professional integrity, thus devaluing the legitimate criticism of public officials and their work, and especially the value of independent media as a corrective of social reality," it said.

Still, the association stressed that "none of the above" could justify any kind of political pressure on the work of any media outlet or journalist, noting that "maintaining the principles of professionalism, objectivity, reasoned reporting and journalistic ethics is the best way to combat political influences on the media, hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric of party "bots" from social networks."

BiH Prosecutor's Office files an indictment for smuggling of illegal migrants

The Prosecutor of the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina has filed an indictment against Alan Duraković (1997) from Bihać, a previously convicted BiH citizen, charged with human trafficking. The accused is charged with getting in contact with illegal migrants in the area of Bihać in order to gain illegal property, and then agreed on the transportation of smuggled persons, citizens of Egypt and Syria

through the territory of BiH from the direction of Bihać for the agreed amount of money.

The indictment alleges that the accused transported illegal migrants, initially a group of five smuggled persons, and shortly afterwards a group of seven smuggled persons to the BiH border, who had previously entered BiH illegally and whose final destination was to leave to the territory of EU countries.

In the commission of the criminal offense, the accused was discovered and stopped by the police officers of the BiH Border Police Izačić, in the immediate vicinity of the border, and another group of seven people was found in the vehicle, whose smuggling was prevented.

The indictment was forwarded to the Court of BiH for confirmation, the Prosecutor's Office of BiH announced.

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BOSNIA
DAILY

Montenegro Activists Commemorate Wartime Deportations

The Centre for Civic Education, Human Rights Action and Anima NGOs on Tuesday commemorated the anniversary of the deportation of at least 66 Bosniak refugees and some ethnic Serbs from the Montenegrin town of Herceg Novi, and called for a permanent memorial to the victims to be built.

On May 25 and 27, 1992, the Bosniaks and Serbs were illegally detained and brought to the police headquarters in Herceg Novi, near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, from where they were deported on buses to Bosnian Serb-controlled territory.

They were sent to a Serb-run detention camp in Foca in eastern Bosnia. Only a few survived, and the remains of most of the dead have not yet been found.

"The deportation was a war crime, although Montenegrin courts, under political pressure, did not establish this," the head of Human Rights Action, Gorjanc Prelevic, told media.

Nine former policemen indicted for the deportations were acquitted in November 2012 because the court ruled that while the arrests were illegal, they did not constitute a war crime and



Activists and Interior Ministry representatives at the commemoration in Herceg Novi

the nine men were not party to any side in the Bosnian war.

For the first time, representatives of the Interior Ministry and Police Directorate attended the ceremony on Tuesday.

The former government led by Milo Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists never responded to rights groups' proposal for a memorial to be installed in Herceg Novi.

The Democratic Party of Socialists was in power in Montenegro since 1990 until last year, and Djukanovic was prime minister at the time of the refugee deportations in 1992. He is now president of Montenegro.

As part of Yugoslavia, Montenegro took part directly in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic.

Kosovo PM Faces Pressure to Involve US in Serbia Dialogue

Ahead of the expected resumption of the stalled dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, from which Kosovo declared independence in 2008, Kosovo leader Albin Kurti is coming under domestic pressure to get the United States involved in the European Union-facilitated process.

"Without its participation there should be no dialogue," one opposition party leader, Lumir Abdixhiku, said on Wednesday about US involvement in the talks.

In a series of consultations with party leaders, Prime Minister Kurti met the leader of the opposition Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, on Wednesday. A day earlier he did the same with Ramush Haradinaj, of the opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, who also voiced concerns about the lack of US involvement.

"What we see is an absence of United States in the dialogue. We think his is not a good situation for Kosovo, as it damages the balance of interests for Kosovo in the dialogue," Haradinaj said after the meeting, referencing widespread perceptions that the US is a far more steadfast ally than the EU, five of whose mem-

ber states do not recognise Kosovo.

The high-level dialogue between, interrupted more than two years ago, is expected to restart next month in Brussels.

However, experts say that opposition attempts to shape the dialogue are weakened by their lack of unity over their goals.

Political analyst Imer Mushkolaj said the three main opposition parties, the PDK, LDK and AAK, remain divided on the way the dialogue should be handled.

The head of the biggest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, Enver Hoxhaj, has so refused the PM's request even to meet.

"The opposition does not have a unified position on the dialogue. I see the PDK having only angry reactions. They are behaving like they have never managed the dialogue," Mushkolaj told BIRN.

Abdixhiku of the LDK also asked Kurti to keep the parliament informed about the dialogue "before and after the meetings" in Brussels. "We made a request to do with [Kosovo's] political position. Kosovo needs to know what the government's position about the

dialogue is," Abdixhiku said.

He said he had submitted a document outlining the LDK's view on the position Kosovo should maintain in the dialogue to Kurti, based on three key principles: discussions are to be held on the basis of the 2010 International Court of Justice ruling supporting Kosovo's right to declare independence, the territorial integrity of Kosovo and its constitutional order.

Publicist Veton Surroi on Monday meanwhile said that he will join an advisory team established by the government to assist the negotiation team in Brussels. Speaking to Pristina-based TV channel Klan Kosova, Surroi stated that any final agreement must lead to a "full normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia" and to "opening the door to NATO and EU integration."

Since 2011, talks between the two sides have brought some progress in technical issues but not on the main political point of Kosovo's independence. An attempt by the US in 2020 under Donald Trump to nudge matters forward foundered after Kosovo President Hashim Thaci was indicted for war crimes and had abruptly to resign.

Ratko Mladic Seeks Postponement of Genocide Verdict

Ratko Mladic's defence asked the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals in The Hague on Tuesday to postpone the final verdict in the former Bosnian Serb Army commander's trial because lead counsel Branko Lukic cannot be present in court due to illness.

The verdict, which is being handed down after Mladic appealed against his original conviction for genocide and other crimes committed during the Bosnian war, is currently scheduled for June 8.

But defence lawyer Lukic said in his motion to the UN court that he will not be able to attend the verdict in person or via video link because of "emergency

hospitalisation and ongoing treatment". Lukic also noted that Mladic has rejected the suggestion that any part of the verdict hearing could be held by video link, "insisting to be present personally in the courtroom accompanied by both of his acquainted legal counsels".

The motion repeated the defence's previous assertion that Mladic's mental faculties may be impaired, stating that his "mental capacity to meaningfully participate in the proceeding still remained unverified, and has been potentially identified as impacting negatively to the integrity of the proceedings".

The defence lawyer said the verdict should be postponed "until a time when both [defence] counsels could be pres-

ent in court in person with their client".

The Hague court sentenced Mladic to life imprisonment in November 2017, finding him guilty of genocide of Bosniaks from Srebrenica in 1995, the persecution of Bosniaks and Croats throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, terrorising the population of Sarajevo during the siege of the city, and taking UN peacekeepers hostage.

The defence appealed against the verdict, calling for an acquittal on all counts in the indictment, a retrial or a reduced sentence for Mladic.

The Hague prosecution also appealed, calling for Mladic to be found guilty of genocide in five other municipalities in 1992.

Serbia Mass Grave Exhumation Yields 'At Least Nine' Bodies



The Kizevak mass grave

Missing persons officials from Serbia and Kosovo on Wednesday announced the completion of exhumation work at the former Kizevak open-cast mine, near the town of Raska, where victims' bodies from the Kosovo war have been found.

"What is certain on the basis of the forensics, on the basis of what the anthropologists and archaeologists have done, is that it is to be expected that there will be at least nine identifications here, but we will confirm the final number when we receive the reports at the end," the head of Serbia's Commission for Missing Persons, Veljko Odalovic, told media in Kizevak, N1 television reported.

The Kosovo government said on Wednesday that two of the victims have been already been identified through DNA analysis.

Ibrahim Makolli, the representative for missing persons on Kosovo's negotiating team at the EU-mediated talks with Serbia, said that the two victims who were identified were killed in a massacre in the Kosovo village of Rrezalle/Rezala in 1999.

Makolli expressed hope that more war victims' bodies can be found buried in Serbia.

"There are a number of suspected locations in Serbia that we believe will be addressed in the coming months and weeks. According to Serbian officials, there are suspicions of 16 mass graves," Makolli said.

Odalovic confirmed that more locations in Serbia will be checked.

The Kizevak mass grave was discovered in November after aerial images indicated where the bodies might be buried.

An exhumation was launched shortly afterwards but was temporarily halted at the beginning of December due to bad weather, before resuming in May. The Kizevak mass grave is the fifth such site to be discovered in Serbia since the end of the Kosovo war 22 years ago. It is not far away from the Rudnica mine, where a mass grave was found in 2013 containing the remains of 52 Kosovo Albanians.

In 2014, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague sentenced former senior Serbian police official Vlastimir Djordjevic to 18 years in prison in part for his role in concealing the bodies of ethnic Albanians who were killed in Kosovo.

Over 900 bodies have been found in mass graves in Serbia, but no Serbian court has ever convicted anyone of involvement in the cover-up.

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Retirement Severance as Pocket Money for Officials

During the past decade, almost BAM 440 thousand was paid as retirement severance to fifteen BiH politicians in three state institutions. However, most of them continued working and receiving salaries in addition to their retirement benefits

Bariša Čolak and Jakov Galić, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (PABiH), received severance payments for retirement during the coronavirus pandemic, but immediately resumed full-time employment. Although during this time of crisis and uncertainty, MP Damir Arnaut made three proposals to the State Parliament to lower the salaries of officials in order to save public funds, his proposals were rejected. The idea did not even gain the support of Čolak or Galić who had each received 29 thousand convertible marks from the budget as their retirement severance package.

In the period from the start of 2010 until the end of March 2021, a total of BAM 436,767 was paid in retirement severance packages for fifteen officials from the BiH Parliament, the BiH Council of Ministers, and the BiH Presidency. However, most of them remained in office and continued to receive a salary in addition to retirement benefits. In addition to Galić and Čolak, these include delegates Sredoje Nović and Dušanka Majkić, representative Nebojša Radmanović, and former state-level MPs Mirsad Mešić, Krstan Simić, Boško Tomić, Petar Kunić, and Beriz Belkić, who decided to continue working after they had received their retirement severance packages.

By the end of March 2021, this enabled them to receive another BAM 2.31 million from the state institutions' budget,

By CIN
Sarajevo

not counting the severance packages. Most of the money was paid to state MPs who have the power to decide on savings in the state - ten of them received two thirds of the total amount.

"Continuing to serve as an MP, that's okay, but it is completely incompatible - or at least should be - to receive severance pay and continue to receive a salary. The whole point of severance packages is to help you transition from employment into retirement. That is the purpose of the severance packages. They're not meant as a reward," said Damir Arnaut, MP for CIN.

Severance pay, salary, and retirement benefits

Elected and appointed officials, as well as other employees of state institutions, are entitled to severance packages based on the Law on Salaries and Remunerations in the Institutions of BiH and the Decision on eligibility for severance pay upon retirement from institutions of BiH.

An amount equivalent to six net salaries is paid "by force of law" upon reaching 65 years of age and 20 or 40 years in service.

From the beginning of 2010 to March 2021, state institutions have paid a total of BAM 17.5 million in retirement severance

packages for 1,973 employees. Among them, the largest severance packages were given to elected and appointed officials on account of their average salaries being close to BAM 4,800.

Severance for bh. politicians IG

The former director of the "Šume Srpske" Public Enterprise for forest management Jakov Galić was elected to the House of Representatives of PABiH from the compensatory mandates list at the general elections in 2018. He believes the salaries of state officials are "enormous" and incommensurate with the results of their labour.

In his statement of assets submitted for the elections, he wrote that he owned real property valued at BAM 570,000 and a family business that he estimated at BAM 6 million.

"This is my first term in Parliament and I am truly surprised by the enormous salaries," Galić said, adding that he would "vote for abolishing the salaries in their entirety" and having experts in Parliament who can contribute to "reducing tensions and helping economic recovery".

However, last year, he voted against Arnaut's proposal to reduce retirement severance payments twice. He claims that he voted against the proposal as part of a coalition. "Those are the rules, unfortunately."

Having received his severance payment, Galić reactivated his full-time employment status as a representative in the House of Representatives of PABiH and continued receiving a regular salary on top of his retirement benefits.

"If it were up to me, I wouldn't retire before the end of my mandate. As far as I'm concerned, you're absolutely right. Because I've looked at these lists, and contributions are still paid both for retirement and health insurance - which makes no sense," Galić said.

As of May 2020, when he received BAM 28,997 as severance pay, he acquired the right to a pension and continued working for a monthly salary of around BAM 5,500.

As a delegate in the House of Peoples of PABiH, Bariša Čolak also retired. At the

In the last decade, a total of **BAM 436,767** was paid in retirement severance packages for fifteen state-level politicians in BiH. Most of them continued working after exercised this right.



BERIZ BELKIĆ
SBIH

received severance pay as a member of the PA BiH

BAM 31,201
(December 2010)

benefits after severance pay

BAM 291,970



PETAR KUNIĆ
DNS

received severance pay as a member of the PA BiH

BAM 30,169
(July 2011)

benefits after severance pay

BAM 255,599



BOŠKO TOMIĆ

SNSD /Advisor to the member of the Presidency of BiH

received severance pay as a member of the PA BiH

BAM 28,770
(November 2012)

benefits after severance pay

BAM 147,050



start of March 2021, he received a severance payment of BAM 29,112 but continued working for a monthly salary of BAM 5,565 while retaining the right to retirement benefits.

He had no comment when asked about the comfortable position of MPs even after they retire.

Different labour rights

Thanks to a 2013 decision of the RS Constitutional Court and a 2019 decision of the FBiH Constitutional Court, elected and appointed officials in BiH institutions are eligible for retirement benefits during their mandates, just like pensioners employed in other sectors. The Constitutional Courts ruled that the provisions of entity laws on retirement and disability insurance mandating that retirement benefits be suspended upon employment were unconstitutional. They justified their decision by the fact that the right to retirement benefits belongs to the category of acquired rights and cannot be restricted or revoked, which ultimately enabled retirees in employment to receive both their salaries and their retirement benefits at the same time.

As a representative in the House of Representatives of PABiH, Dušanka Majkić received a severance payment of BAM 28 thousand in June 2015 but has continued to be employed there. Since her retirement, she has received BAM 386,649 from the budget in salaries and remunerations, while in her statement of assets filed with the CEC, it says that her annual retirement benefits for 2018 amounted to BAM 13,200.

"Why should an MP be treated any differently from others? Isn't that some sort of discrimination? Why should I be punished for being in Parliament?" Majkić said for CIN, adding that severance pay as an institute should be made available to everyone. There is a difference between officials in BiH institutions and employees at the entity level, but not as Majkić would have it.

Dina Duraković, a lawyer specialising in commercial and labour law, explained that in the entities, there are no general collective agreements that would entitle everyone to severance pay upon retirement. Instead, there are less advantageous regulations that treat severance pay differently in FBiH and RS.

In FBiH, severance pay is only mandated for employees of institutions that have regulated severance pay in their rulebooks and in sectors where there are branch collective agreements, if provided for by such agreements. "If severance pay is not regulated by the collective agreement, such as, for

Officials in state institutions are entitled to a retirement severance pay in an amount equivalent to their six net salaries. They take the money and continue working and receiving salaries in addition to their retirement benefits.



example, in the service sector, then everything is regulated by the employer's rulebook. The employer must guarantee the minimum rights mandated by law, and may use the rulebook to stipulate additional rights for workers, but is not obliged to do so," Duraković said. The general collective agreement is not in force in RS, and instead, the RS Government Decision on determining salary increases, overtime, and benefits is being applied.

"The right to severance pay upon retirement is regulated for all workers. The amount is equal to three net salaries," Duraković said for CIN.

In March 2015, Sredoje Nović, the former state-level minister of civil affairs, received a severance payment of BAM 28,748. After that, he became a delegate in the House of Peoples of PABiH and by 31 March this year, he has earned another BAM 412,466 from the budget in that capacity.

"Absolutely!" Nović responded when a CIN reporter asked him whether he had been receiving both a salary and retirement benefits ever since 2015. His monthly income is around BAM 5,600 and in the assets statement filed with the Central Election Commission of BiH in advance of the 2018 General Elections, he wrote that he had received retirement benefits of BAM 23,640 that year.

"...You don't receive the severance payment for your work as a minister or an MP, you receive it for 40 years of employment," Nović said.

Actively employed retirees

The highest severance payment made in the past decade went to Nebojša Radmanović, a former member of the Presidency of BiH. In 2014, he received BAM 34,130 as severance, but then continued in employment, first as a delegate in the House of Peoples and then as a representative in the House of

Representatives. In that time, by the end of March this year, he earned more than BAM 430 thousand.

"I've said everything there is to say about my severance pay. Everyone knows everything. I have nothing more to say." These were the words of Radmanović whose statement of assets also includes retirement benefits totaling BAM 13,500 in 2018.

A slightly smaller amount of BAM 30,169 was paid as severance to representative Petar Kunić in 2011. At that time, he taught at the Law Faculty of the University of Banja Luka.

"University professors [in Republika Srpska] can remain in employment up to the age of 68. Then, they must retire. There is a specific case with representatives in Parliament, though, because they belong to the so-called general legal regime," Kunić explained.

He believes that politicians who meet the requirements for severance pay and retirement benefits should be allowed to continue working to the end of their mandate, but that in such cases, they should not have the right to receive retirement benefits.

"The law should prohibit this possibility," said Kunić who served out his mandate in Parliament in 2016 and 2017 and went on to serve as Dean of the Law Faculty in Banja Luka, which was permitted under the Law on Higher Education of RS.

At the end of July 2014, the Joint Committee for Administrative Affairs adopted a decision to award a severance payment of BAM 29,112 to Hasan Bećirović, a delegate in the House of Peoples, three months after his death. Lawyer Dina Duraković explained for CIN that there is nothing contentious in this situation and that it is merely a procedural issue that the severance payment was made later.

"The right to the severance payment was achieved while the man was alive. [...] His family could have filed a claim if it hadn't been paid," Duraković explained.

ALTHOUGH THE RULES REMAINED THE SAME

Border Crossing Velika Kladusa-Maljevac is Open for Truck Traffic

"The Velika Kladusa-Maljevac border crossing was opened to traffic, but the Ordinance remained the same. We have no information when it comes to other border crossings that are closed to trucks", Ahmet Egrlic, President of the Foreign Trade Chamber of B&H said. He added that changing and correcting the rulebook is necessary, and that Croatia did not respect the existing rulebook

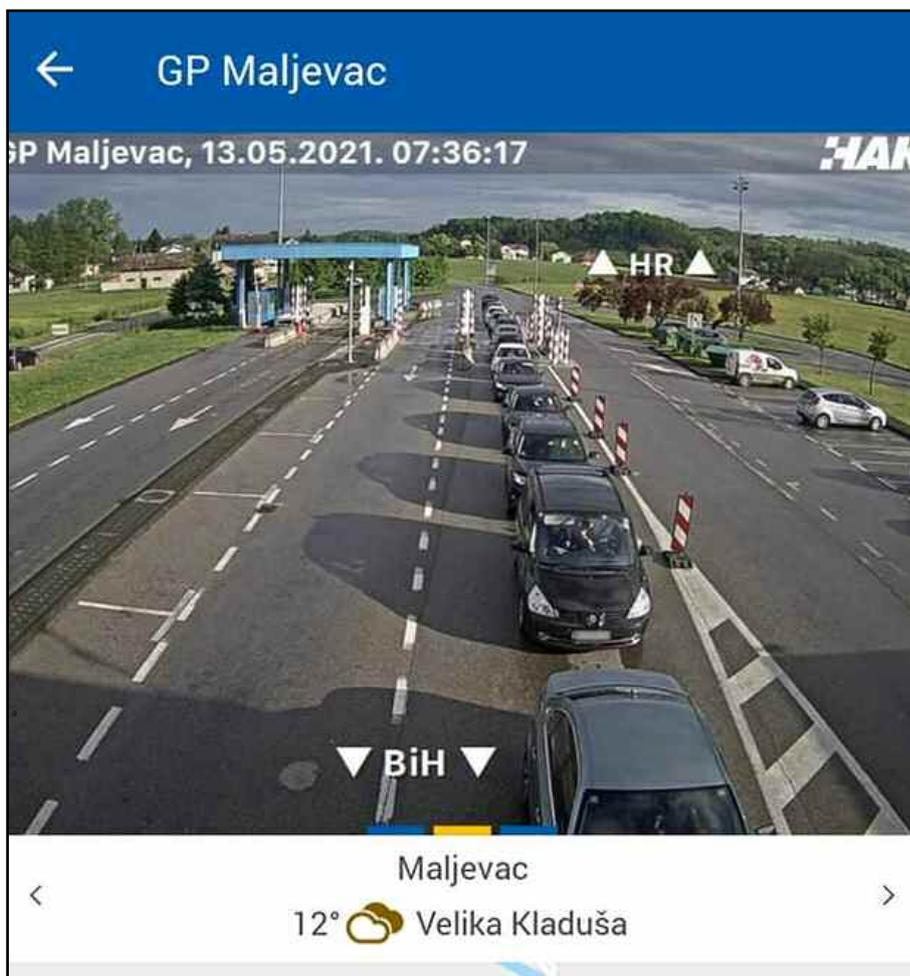
The Velika Kladusa-Maljevac border crossing has been opened to traffic. The closure of this crossing has caused major congestion and problems for carriers who have waited for hours at border crossings.

The information on the opening of the Velika Kladusa-Maljevac border crossing was confirmed by Ahmet Egrlic, President of the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"The Velika Kladusa-Maljevac border crossing was opened to traffic, but the Ordinance remained the same. We have no information when it comes to other border crossings that are closed to trucks", Egrlic said. He added that changing and correcting the rulebook is necessary, and that Croatia did not respect the existing rulebook.

After yesterday's session of the BiH Council of Ministers, Minister of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Vojin Mitrovic said that they are in constant contact with the Croatian authorities in order to solve the problem of re-categorization of five border crossings.

We remind you that the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure of Croatia has adopted an ordinance which prohibits the passage of trucks over 7.5 tons and a length of 14 meters through the border crossings Gornji Brgat, Maljevac, Strmica, Vinjani Gornji and Gunja. This caused dissatisfaction of Bosnian (BiH) businessmen and government representa-



tives due to the potential impact on the flow of goods, and after yesterday's session of the BiH Council of Ministers, Minister Mitrovic said that the

decision was made unilaterally and that BiH was not informed.

"The Stabilization and Association Agreement implies the adoption of certain legal acts between the two countries on the basis of joint decisions. This was not the case in this decision", Mitrovic said.

He emphasizes that he is in constant communication with the Croatian Minister Oleg Butkovic, from whom he has promises that this problem to be resolved.

He points out that he has been promised that certain steps will be taken to enable the transit of goods through border crossings.

Finally, he emphasizes that Bosnia and Herzegovina has mechanisms to defend itself against unfair decisions by Croatia, but did not specify which mechanisms and how it plans to use them.

Possible Blockages

The Association of Employers of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina sent an open letter to the heads of BiH institutions and the EU Delegation to BiH, asking them to solve the problem within 48 hours, created after the application of the Ordinance on the determination of public roads on which transit traffic of goods vehicles through the Republic of Croatia must take place.

They note that the border crossing for road transport, ie routes for freight transit traffic between the Republic of

Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with EU legislation and standards, cannot be determined by a unilateral decision.

If this issue is not resolved, the border crossings between BiH and the Republic of Croatia will be blocked for freight and passenger traffic.

The Association of Employers of FBiH demands from the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina that if this issue is not resolved through diplomatic channels, they immediately start introducing reciprocal measures towards Croatia.

BECAUSE OF CROATIA'S DECISION

A Kilometer-long Column of Trucks

The costs have been increased by a minimum of 250 to 300 euros per truck, but it is not a matter of that, but that the truck cannot reach Austria within three days

The decision of the Republic of Croatia to close five border crossings with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for the traffic of trucks heavier than 7.5 tons caused kilometer columns at the Izacic Border Crossing near Bihac, ie major business and export problems and financial losses for bh. businessmen. The biggest problem for companies from the Una-Sana Canton is the ban on truck traffic through the Maljevac Border Crossing in Velika Kladusa, which due to its geographical position was ideal for transport to the European Union (EU).

"The costs have been increased by a minimum of 250 to 300 euros per truck, but it is not a matter of that, but that the truck cannot reach Austria within three days. So, we cannot deliver the goods on time and that is why we are in big trouble", said the president of the Association of Businessmen of Velika Kladusa, Boris Horvat.

Drivers are particularly affected by this decision, who are now concerned not only by waiting at border crossings but also by the announcement by many companies of closures or reductions in the number of employees.

"You work as a driver and you are paid per kilometer traveled, and where are you today. You stand and wait for more than 15 hours, sleep in a truck and walk on the road. I don't really know who needed this", are the words of the carrier from Cazin Fikret Mujadzic.

Associations of businessmen in BiH have already confirmed the losses of Bosnian exporters in hundreds of thousands of



Lots of losses

convertible marks, and they warn that the situation will be much worse if something does not change.

Nikola Grbic, the president of the Association of Carriers for International and Domestic Transport of the Republika Srpska, announced blockades, strikes, until the final solution. The question is the blockade of border crossings, customs terminals, roads, until the problem is solved, Grbic points out. The Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Croatia has not abolished the existing routes for the transit of cargo vehicles between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with the new Ordinance on determining public roads for the transit of cargo vehicles through Croatia, the Croatian Ministry

confirmed for FENA. As they pointed out, the previous Decision on determining public roads for the transit of cargo vehicles through the Republic of Croatia, which was in force from 1 January 2009 until the entry into force of the new Ordinance, did not allow the transit of freight motor vehicles with a carrying capacity of more than 7.5 tons and a total length of up to 14 meters at the border crossings Ivanica-Gornji Brgat, Velika Kladusa-Maljevac, Strmica-Strmica, and Osoje-Vinjani Gornji.

At the Brcko-Gunja border crossing, freight traffic was interrupted more than two years ago at the initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the age and dilapidation of the bridge over the Sava River, the Croatian Ministry added.

Croatia's Decision a New Way of Interference in BiH's Internal Matters

The decision of the Republic of Croatia to close five border crossings with BiH, which causes direct, and obviously intentional, economic damage to BiH businesses that export their products to the EU, is the latest in a series of wrong and provocative activities that further complicate and worsen relations between BiH and Croatia, wrote the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly Denis Zvizdic on Twitter.

"I do not want to believe, although there are indications of such a thing, that this unilateral decision, which is

contrary to the BiH-Croatia Agreement on border crossings, as well as the provisions of the EU-BiH Stabilization and Association Agreement, has a political background and represents a new type of pressure, blackmail and interference in the internal matters of BiH", says Zvizdic.

He believes that the competent institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina should urgently take action to protect the economic sovereignty of BiH, including the initiation of reciprocal legal and economic measures of Bosnia and Herzegovina against legal and natural persons from the Republic of Croatia.

Zvizdic is of the opinion that the campaign should be intensified, especially by chambers of commerce at all levels do buy and use domestic products as much as possible, with special emphasis on the recommendations to spend the summer in resorts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If there is no reaction from the competent EU bodies, and interstate talks and common sense do not give a quick and efficient result, Zvizdic notes that an agent should be appointed and a lawsuit filed by Bosnia and Herzegovina against the Republic of Croatia before international arbitration tribunals.

PHOTO NEWS



Bosnia's Minister of Civil Affairs, Anika Gudeljic, signed agreements between BiH, Croatia and the AstraZeneca pharmaceutical company which will result in BiH getting a donation of 30,000 doses of vaccines against COVID-19.



Members of the Interdepartmental Working Group for Amendments to the Election Legislation of BiH adopted at yesterday's session the Rules of Procedure which should define the future work of the body.



The House of Representatives of the Parliament of Bosnia's Federation entity adopted the Draft Law on Control and Restricted Use of Tobacco, Tobacco Products and Other Smoking Products, on Wednesday evening. The Law was passed with 63 votes in favour of the bill while three were against it and two abstained. The bill now goes to the House of Peoples of the FBiH Parliament for its final adoption.