

High Representative and the OSCE Head of Mission announce the removal from office of various public officials

It is with considerable regret that the High Representative and the OSCE Head of Mission announce the removal from office of various public officials. These officials have failed the voters who elected them by pursuing anti-Dayton, anti-peace, anti-reconciliation and extra-legal agendas – especially at the local level where their obstructionism hurts the very people they should be helping. They have consistently refused to take ownership of the laws of their own nation by refusing to obey the letter or the spirit of law, regulation and court rulings.

Some have persistently and seriously obstructed the return of refugees and displaced persons, even to the point of failing to open a housing office. Others have directly disobeyed rulings of the Human Rights Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a body whose decisions have equal validity with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Still others have tried to block the most basic right to an education of minority populations in their areas. All have fostered the poison of division. All have snubbed the most basic rule of democracy: the rule of law instead of men. Their removal is not just due; it is past due.

Such attitudes and actions hinder Bosnia and Herzegovina in a hundred ways large and small. Economic growth and foreign investment will never thrive in such an atmosphere. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to look forward to a future integrated into the political and economic standards of Europe, not the

promotion of division and obstruction.

The three members of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina recommitted themselves to a sovereign multi-ethnic state while addressing the United Nations Security Council on November 15. In their "New York Declaration" the Presidency noted with great vigor that "anti-Dayton forces advocating ethnic hatred and division...have no place in the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina." The High Representative and the OSCE Head of Mission agree with this declaration, with the assessment of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina that serious and persistent obstruction of the Dayton/Paris peace accords simply has no place in the politics of this nation.

The High Representative and the OSCE Head of Mission as the Chairman of the Provisional Election Commission have decided that they must act -consistent with the powers invested in them by the Dayton/Paris peace accords, and in the High Representative by subsequent Peace Implementation Council instructions- to see that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the opportunity to develop political institutions consistent with the rule of law, local ownership of law and regulation, and the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a part of Europe. It is particularly important to act now in the wake of the High Representative's October 27, 1999, decision on property law and returns.

Therefore, the following officials have been informed by letter this morning, November 29, 1999, that they have been removed from office by the High Representative and banned from running in the April, 2000, municipal elections by the OSCE Head of Mission. The ban also applies to any executive office.

Djordje Umicevic; Mayor; Banja Luka

Removed For: Serious and persistent obstruction with regard to all issues involving implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Specifically, inflammatory statements

creating a non-conductive environment on returns and responsibility for non-implementation of Human Rights Chamber decisions.

Mirsad Veladzic; Governor; Una-Sana Canton

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to obstructing the 1997 election results, fostering or tolerating repeated acts of violence and intimidation, and allowing or initiating discrimination and threats against political opponents.

Zoran Nikolic; Delegate to the Republika Srpska National Assembly

Removed For: Using his influence to persistently and seriously obstruct the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to obstruction of the 1997 election results in the municipality of Foca/Srbinje, isolating Foca/Srbinje via intransigence and delay in municipal projects, and widespread opposition to minority returns.

Rasim Sahinovic; Minister of Interior; Una-Sana Canton

Removed For: Consistent failure to cooperate with UNMIBH in exercising its mandate and repeated failure to take disciplinary action concerning unfit police officers, despite Court verdicts on serious criminal offenses. Removed at the request of UNMIBH.

Slavko Topalovic; Mayor; Gorazde/Srpsko Gorazde

Removed For: Consistent and uncompromising obstruction of return to Kopaci-Srpsko Gorazde. Specifically through control of the OMI, restricting reconstruction and failing to respond in a responsible manner to a crisis in returns in the region.

Jusuf Zahiragic; Minister of Justice; Sarajevo Canton

Removed For: Abuse of position for personal gain. Consistent and insidious obstruction of return to socially owned apartments in Sarajevo through administrative delays. Interference with the independence of the judiciary; for example, through instructing municipal courts to cancel court ordered evictions. Vocal opponent of the Sarajevo Declaration.

Miladin Simic; President of Municipal Assembly; Bratunac

Removed For: Persistent, serious and aggressive obstruction to Annex seven of the General Framework Agreement for Peace.

Dragan Meter; Mayor; Prozor-Rama

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including discrimination against minority populations, failure to implement agreements reached with the International Mediator, obstructing the education of minority children, obstruction in enforcing property laws, and a long and wide record of deliberate attempts to undercut reconciliation.

Nedžad Behram; Head of Housing Department; Mostar Municipality, Old Town

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of Federation property laws, failure to apply the law in processing claims for repossession of property, illegal reallocation of vacated apartments in 1998 and 1999, and deliberate delays in solving double occupancy cases.

Marina Deronjic; Head of Housing Department; Mostar Municipality, South West

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of Federation property laws, regular obstruction of the laws on property claims, and rejection of decisions issued by the High Representative.

Krunoslav Kordic; Mayor; Capljina

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. In particular, responsibility for a long-standing pattern of intransigence on the part of municipal authorities, failure to set up a municipal housing office, failure to implement instructions of the High Representative on education for minority schoolchildren, and much more.

Pero Pazin; Mayor; Stolac

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction to numerous elements of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, especially in the areas of joint municipal administration, minority return, property implementation, and failure to implement decisions of the High Representative.

Stipe Maric; Mayor; Mostar South West

Removed For: Widespread, persistent and serious obstruction to the General Framework Agreement for Peace, especially but not restricted to obstruction in returns and property laws.

Kemal Brodilija; Mayor; Kakanj

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, especially but not restricted to obstruction in returns and property laws.

Dzevad Mlaco; Delegate to BiH House of Peoples; Member of Middle Bosnia Cantonal Assembly

Removed For: Widespread, persistent and serious obstruction of all elements of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, especially but not restricted to a concerted effort to block all aspects of returns, property and reconciliation. Since his suspension as mayor of Bugojno he has continued to have a negative effect on political developments in Middle Bosnia Canton.

Milan Djuric; President of Executive Board; Bosanski Novi/Novi

Grad

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, especially but not restricted to failure to act against parties responsible for actions taken against returns in the Japra Valley incidents of April 1998.

Pero Madzar; Mayor Kiseljak; Delegate to Middle Bosnia Cantonal Assembly; Member of the Federation House of Peoples; Member of the BiH House of Peoples

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to actively blocking the establishment of a functioning joint municipal administration and the return process, fostering intolerance and division, and the creation of a parallel housing authority.

Elvedin Hrelja; Mayor of Gorazde

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to blatant abuse of housing financed by the international community, ignoring the authority and legitimacy of the municipal council, and fostering division and intolerance during a crisis in returns.

Miladin Pesic; Head of the OMI; Gorazde/Srpsko Gorazde

Removed for: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to preventing pre-war residents from returning to their property, keeping information from such returnees, and generally fostering a climate of intolerance and division.

Milan Kecman; Head of OMI, Foca/Srbinje

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for peace, especially the blocking of

implementation of property legislation in Foca/Srbinje.

Obren Zeljaja; President of Municipal Assembly; Ilidza/Srpska Ilidza

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to obstructing property law and returns.

Savo Celokovic; President of Executive Board, Vlasenica

Removed For: Persistent and serious obstruction of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including but not restricted to systematically attempting to prevent the establishment of a property commission and fostering a discriminatory tax regime.

Finally, the High Representative also wrote on November 29, 1999, to the Chairman of the Canton 10 Assembly nullifying the Assembly's appointment of Drago Tokmacija to the Steering Board of the cantonal Privatization Agency. In doing so, the High Representative noted Mr. Tokmacija's long record of persistent and serious obstructionism, and the fact that Tokmacija had been removed from elected office by the High Representative in April of 1998.