

# High Representative removes the Mayor of Municipality Mostar South West

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today removed Mr. Ivan Mandic from his position as Head of Municipality Southwest in Mostar and barred him from holding any official, elective or appointive public office and from running in elections or for office within political parties.

The main reason for Mr. Mandic's removal is his continued obstruction of implementation of the property laws with the result that the rate of property implementation in Municipality Southwest has been well below the general BiH Federation implementation rate.

Mr Mandic was – inter alia – responsible for the functioning of the Municipal Housing Office (MHO) in Mostar Southwest. In this capacity, he put property cases on hold, failing to ensure that properties illegally occupied by the HDZ and the UDVDR, for example, were returned to their rightful owners.

During November 2001, 43 evictions were postponed in Mostar Southwest. On 3 December 2001, Ambassador Colin Munro, the former Deputy High Representative and Head of OHR South, informed Mr. Mandic in writing that the postponed evictions must be rescheduled and completed by 31 December 2001. Less than one third of these evictions had been completed by the given date. Mr. Mandic has also publicly defended double occupancy cases and has stated that refugees from third countries should be the last to repossess their properties.

Also, disregarding the High Representative's Decisions, of 27 April 2000 and 30 March 2001, on the Allocation of Socially Owned Land, Mr. Mandic failed to ensure that applications for waivers for the allocation of state owned land, including socially owned property, were submitted to the Office of the High Representative. Cases where waivers were never requested include the illegal addition of extra rooftop floors to existing apartment blocks in Mostar Southwest. This further illustrates Mr Mandic's general disregard for the rule of law.

Keeping in mind the fact that Annex 7 is the essence of the Dayton Peace Agreement and in light of the latest changes to the Property Laws, where the High Representative has once again reiterated his commitment to facilitating returns, Mr. Mandic's conduct is clearly unacceptable. In the letter of dismissal sent by the High Representative to Mr. Mandic the High Representative noted that such conduct " has seriously impeded the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Annex 7 in particular."

Lastly, when acting as Canton Minister of the Interior, Mr. Mandic issued illegal instructions to the police in Stolac Municipality clearly aimed at preventing the reconstruction of the Emperor's Mosque.

Despite repeated appeals from Ambassador Colin Munro Mr. Mandic acted in a way calculated to put the police in a difficult position, and to exacerbate tension generally, further disqualifying him for holding public office.

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