

OHR and UNMBIH demand resolution of the Zepce problem

On 3 April 2000, Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Dr. Matei Hoffmann and United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jacques Paul Klein demanded that Zenica-Doboj Canton Prime Minister Vehid Sahinovic establish a specific police and judicial jurisdiction for Zepce municipality in parts of Maglaj and Zavidovici municipalities as an interim measure in support of an overall resolution of the Zepce problem. The Zenica-Doboj Canton Government must implement this arrangement, as well as other measures to enhance the functioning of the Zepce police and judiciary in full accordance with democratic principles, before 14 April 2000.

The Office of the High Representative and the United Nations Mission in BiH find it unacceptable that the Cantonal Government has not previously taken positive and concrete steps to promote a climate of reconciliation and normalization. This is despite being fully aware, for over a year, of the framework within which OHR demanded the Zepce problem be solved.. This is inconsistent with the spirit of the democratic institutions and principles that the Cantonal authorities claim to represent and clearly a straightforward case of irresponsible and bad governance. The people of Zepce and Zenica-Doboj Canton deserve much better.

Furthermore, OHR and the UNMBIH condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the Bosniacs' continuing political obstruction that prevents the local authorities from resolving local problems in accordance with their wishes. OHR and the UNMBIH will no longer allow the Zepce problem to destabilize Zenica-Doboj Canton and will no longer tolerate such a 'black hole'

in the fabric of Cantonal law and order. OHR and the UNMBIH now want to send the clearest signal that the Zepce problem is to be solved now.

Finally, OHR and the UNMBIH wish to reassure the citizens of Zepce that the days of political interference and obstruction that undercut local relations and inhibit reconciliation to the detriment of the interests of all citizens are over. The OHR and UNMBIH are again seized of the problem, fully determined to resolve it successfully and rapidly in the interests of all citizens, and will be vigilant in ensuring effective implementation. In the last few days before the elections, OHR and the UNMBIH strongly urge all citizens in the Zepce, Maglaj, and Zavidovici municipalities to exercise their democratic right to vote and effect the change on the ground that best serves their collective interests.