

Bishops dissatisfied with non-implementation of law on freedom to worship

BiH Bishops appalled by approach of domestic and international leaders towards crime and its results

FENA and Slobodna Dalmacija

July 14 & 15, 2005

The Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina held their 34th regular meeting under the chairmanship of Cardinal Vinko Puljic in Banja Luka from July 12 to July 14.

The bishops of the BiH Bishops' Conference have expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that one and a half years after passing the Law on the freedom to worship and legal status of churches and religious communities in BiH, the State Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Ministry of Justice have not yet issued the bylaws without which it is impossible to implement this law.

At the session of the BiH Bishops' Conference (BK BiH), held over the past two days in Banja Luka under presiding of the Archbishop of Vrhbosna, Cardinal Puljic, the bishops ascertained with protest that the agreement between BiH and the Holy See has not yet been signed due to behind-the-coullisse games, the Secretary General of BK BiH, monsignor Ivo Tomasevic on Thursday told a press conference.

Regarding the commemoration in Srebrenica on Monday, he said that the bishops have once again with this occasion prayed to God for the victims and expressed their human and religious compassion to the families of the victims in this place as well as to all other victims in the entire BiH.

At the same time, the bishops were appalled by the approach of numerous domestic and international officials, who, allegedly, condemn the crime and demand immediate apprehending of criminals, as a condition for democratization in BiH, but still confirm the main reason why BiH over the past ten years, apart from the specious but unfair peace, has not realized expected progress.

Furthermore, the bishops note that, unfortunately, many of the statements the BiH Bishops' Conference published in their December 8, 1995 statement have proven to be correct: "The Peace Agreement contains several very dubious contradictions, fatal insecurities and difficult questions: 1. The proclaimed whole of BiH is divided into two entities by this agreement; 2. How can there be one state with three armies? 3. What kind of justice gives half the country to a third of its population? 4. Who is authorized to sign an agreement putting the majority population in Bosanska Posavina under the rule of the minority population? 5. This agreement confirms and authorizes ethnic cleansing and rule of the stronger and places the aggressor and victim at the same level."

After the ceremony, the bishops will remain in Banja Luka to attend the ceremonial celebration of St Bonaventura, the protector of the Banja Luka Bishopric and Cathedral on Friday, July 15.

NGOs in BiH wealthier than the whole country

4629 NGOs have 500 million marks

Vecernji list

By Zoran Kresic

Besides the international administration and BiH Federation, the largest budget in the country belongs to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have achieved great progress in democratizing BiH society. However, many often only serve themselves or engage in questionable activities, as is the case with several forbidden organizations with ties to Islamist terrorist organizations.

There are 4,629 registered NGOs whose annual budget is estimated at more than half a billion [convertible] marks, which is more than the state budget and close to the Sarajevo Canton and Republika Srpska's budgets. The largest budgets belong to NGOs involved in demining.

According to the register, most non-governmental organizations are engaged in humanitarian work and providing assistance to war-traumatized individuals. Associations promoting women's and children's rights are especially active. These organizations supplant the state's incapacity and non-existence of true social protections. (Excerpt)