

REPORTS

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OF BOSNIAKS - MUSLIMS IN SANDZAK

1. The geographical location of Sandzak and the number of Bosniaks- Muslims

Sandzak (Sanjak), covering an area of 8,687 km.sq, is a border region between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. It is administratively divided between the two Yugoslav federal units. Six of its municipalities are in Serbia (Novi Pazar, Tutin, Sjenica, Prijepolje, Priboj and Nova Varos) and five are in Montenegro (Bijelo Polje, Rozaje, Plav, Pijevlja and Berane).

Until 1912 and the First Balkan War Sandzak was a part of the Ottoman Empire. The Berlin Congress of 1878 confirmed this state of affairs. Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin set forth that Sandzak would remain within the Ottoman Empire, specifying also that the Austrian troops would be stationed in Pijevlja, Prijepolje and Priboj. In October 1912, at the height of the First Balkan War, the Montenegrin and Serbian armies took Sandzak and the demarcation line between the two armies became the partition line and the border between Serbia and Montenegro.

In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, Sandzak was incorporated into two states - Serbia and Montenegro - and in the aftermath of the First World War it became a part of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The emigration of the Bosniak population began at about the same time. In April and June 1914 16,500 Bosniaks embarked ships in the port of Bar and moved to Turkey from the Montenegrin part of Sandzak, and 40,000 left the Serbian part.

The emigration of the Bosniak-Muslim population continued after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Memorandum of the Sandzak Bosniaks-Muslims adopted towards the end of 1919 stresses that since that state came into being 194 Bosniak villages were pillaged in the southern part of Sandzak, 1,300 Bosniaks killed and the material damage amounted to over 20 million dinars. The emigration gained further momentum after the massacre of Bosniaks-Muslims in Srebrenica, Pavino Polje and Gancaravo on 11 November 1924.

The Bosniak emigration was encouraged by the Yugoslav and Turkish governments. They had several written and verbal agreements to that effect after the First and Second World Wars. The latest in the series of "gentleman's agreements" between the two countries was signed in 1954. Its implementation was entrusted to a state commission, comprising, among others, Aleksandar Rankovic, Krsto Civenkovski and Svetislav Stefanovic. A. Rankovic was also the chief executor of a weapon-collection campaign in Sandzak, during which repressive methods were used against Bosniaks-Muslims. In the mid-Fifties, according to the Council for Migrant Affairs, almost 200,000 Bosniaks-Muslims emigrated from Sandzak, Kosovo and Macedonia to Turkey.

According to the 1991 census, the population of Sandzak totalled 440,000; of them, 253 were Bosniaks-Muslims and 187,000 Serbs and Montenegrins. In its Serbian part, the Bosniaks-Muslims were a majority in Tutin (97 per cent of the population of 35,000), Sjenica (83 per cent of its population of 38,000) and Novi Pazar (80 per cent of its

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population of 85,000). The Serbs were a majority population in Priboj, Prijeplje and Nova Varos. In the Montenegrin part of the region, the Bosniaks were the majority population in Rozaje (95%) and Plav (80%), and the Montenegrins in Bijelo Polje, Pijevlja and Berane.

The ethnic picture of Sandzak has changed with the new emigration wave, which began with the outbreak of the Yugoslav crisis and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the information supplied by Muslim parties, somewhere between 60 and 80 thousand Bosniaks-Muslims have left the area. Since the outbreak of the war in the neighbouring Bosnia.

According to the census, there were also significant numbers of Bosniaks in Kosovo (57,408). A much smaller number of Bosniaks lived in Belgrade and Podgorica, in Vojvodina; for instance, there were barely 6,000 of them.

### 1. The legal status

In the Yugoslav constitutional and legal system Sandzak has never enjoyed any region-specific treatment or status. The same holds true of the Bosniaks-Muslims. All three Yugoslav states denied their ethnic specificity. Only as late as 1937 did the Communist Party of Yugoslavia adopt a course, pronouncing the Bosniaks-Muslims a separate ethnic group. It is curious to note that before and during WWII some Serb and Montenegrin revolutionaries, such as Stjepan Vukosavljević, Vladimir Knežević-Volodja and Tomas Zizic, alongside the national hero Rifat Burdžević-İrza, advocated Sandzak autonomy.

The delegates of the anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Sandzak (AVNOS), founded on 20 November 1943 in Pijevlja and disbanded on 29 March 1945 in Novi Pazar, also advocated the Sandzak autonomy. The Bosniaks-Muslims "dropped out" again from the first Constitution of FPRV and were accorded the status of a nation only as late as 1967. Prior to that the Bosniaks-Muslims said they were Serbs, Croats, Turks or of an undefined ethnic origin. The last constitution of the second Yugoslavia, adopted in 1974, accorded them the status of a people and gave them the name of Muslims. However, the new federal and Serbian constitutions do not mention the Bosniaks-Muslims either as a people or as a national minority. In 1996 the Montenegrin authorities recognised them the status of an ethnic group and called them Muslims.

Since the beginning of the Nineties under the pretext of the struggle against words of Turkish origin, the Serbian political theory and practice began to refer to this area as the Flaska Region in contrast with the previous widely accepted term Sandzak. The territory of the Serbian Sandzak municipalities is split into Zlatibor and Rasik districts. The former comprises Sjenica, Priboj, Nova Varos and Prijeplje and the latter Novi Pazar and Tutin. This division effectively precludes the emergence of any strong Muslim party bloc - especially for election purposes.

the confusion in the recognition of the Bosniak ethnic specificity was also contributed to by their political representatives and intellectuals who could not agree on how their people should be called. The long-standing dilemma as to whether they should be called Muslims or Bosniaks was settled in Sarajevo in 1993 when the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals with participants across the former Yugoslavia, opted for the name 'Bosniak'. The Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina shortly accepted the term. The Sandzak political parties and national societies officially adopted this term in 1996.

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The republican and federal authorities in Yugoslavia, however, refuse to accept the term and continue to refer to this community as Muslims, often spelling it with a small 'm' (religions and members of religious communities are spelled in the lower case in the Serbian language - trans.). Some members of the Serb political-intellectual elite continue to deny the Bosniak specificity and refer to them as the 'Serbs of Islamic faith'.

## 2. Language and Education

The Sandzak Bosniaks define their mother tongue as Bosniak but, since the authorities refuse to accept it, only the Serbian language and Cyrillic are officially used in Sandzak.

The schooling network in Sandzak is underdeveloped and this particularly holds true of the higher education. In the Serbian part of Sandzak there are no high or higher educational establishments, and in the biggest Sandzak town - Novi Pazar - with the population of over 80,000, there are only four secondary schools. One of them, which was named after the revolutionary Zenun Haskovic was renamed in the early Nineties and is called the Technical Schooling Centre now. Some elementary schools were also renamed to reflect the Serb culture.

From 1946 to 1974 there was the Higher Teachers School in Novi Pazar. It was closed down when this type of educational establishments was transformed into teachers academies.

Last year, in agreement with the former Muslim municipal authorities, the Braca Kacic Private University opened a detached department for management studies in Novi Pazar but for financial reasons it is largely inaccessible to prospective students. Over the past years many young people from Sandzak studied abroad, stating that they felt unsafe and discriminated against in Serbia's university centres.

Five years ago the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) of Sandzak arranged for the enrollment of 700 Sandzak students in Turkish universities but almost two thirds of them dropped out. This year 300 young people from Sandzak enrolled the Sarajevo University. Sandzak politicians say that their number will grow from one year to the other and that the university studies in Bosnia constitute only the first step towards their definitive emigration from Sandzak.

## 3. The political life

The national and political homogenisation of the largest - Serbian - people in the former Yugoslavia prompted an identical process among the members of all other ethnic communities. On 26 May 1990, for instance, the Party for Democratic Action was formed in Sarajevo with a view to bringing together the Muslims in the territory of the former common state. Shortly afterwards it set up its branches in all the former Yugoslav republics.

The Serbian branch was founded on 29 July 1990 in Novi Pazar at a big rally organised at the local football stadium. In early September 1990 the Serb Renewal Movement held its electoral rally near Novi Pazar. On that occasion Vuk Draskovic pronounced his famous sentence: "Whoever brandishes Turkish banners on the Serb soil, will lose both the banner and the arm". After the rally, which took place next to St Peter's Church, a skirmish broke out between the SDA



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and the SPO supporters. Although it involved members of two different ethnic communities, the police arrested only members of the Muslim party, arousing seething fury among the local population. The town was under the state of siege that night and little was needed for the citizens to take over the town. This event was one of reasons why in the early 1991 the then Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic ordered the police to be in the state of preparedness. At the proposal of the republican public prosecutor in December 1992 the proceedings were started to prohibit the SDA because of its allegedly anti-state activity. Although the case was never completed and the SDA was not banned, the threat of prohibition hangs over the SDA whenever the political tension mounts.

Even if in the early months of its existence the party seemed to be a monolithic organisation with the strong leadership - Alija Izetbegovic as the Bosnian and Yugoslav Muslim leader and Sulejman Ugljanin as their leader in Serbia and Sandzak, the first disagreements in the SDA surfaced as early as 1991. Adil Zulfikarpasic, the vice-president of the Bosnian SDA, criticised the allegedly totalitarian tone of the party meetings and the SDA's rightist and fundamentalist leanings. Adil Zulfikarpasic and Muhamed Filipovic left the SDA and founded the Liberal Bosniak Federation. The strife found its reflection in the SDA's Sandzak branch so that some of its founding members also left and with the former SDA vice-president Kasim Zoranic founded the Liberal-Bosniak Organization of Sandzak on 17 August 1991.

In late October 1991 the Sandzak SDA organised a referendum on the Sandzak autonomy. Ninety-eight per cent of the Muslims-Bosniaks pronounced themselves in favour of the "complete political and territorial autonomy with the right to join one of the republics".

the Muslim National Council of Sandzak (MNVS) was formed in Novi Pazar in early May 1991. It has recently changed its name into the Bosniak National Council. It is an ambitiously conceived political organization, which can be likened to a popular front, and which is expected to bring together all ethnic associations and political parties. In the summer of 1992 the MNVS adopted the Memorandum on the Establishment of the Special Status for Sandzak. The document envisions broad political powers (government, parliament, governor, police and judiciary), leaving to Yugoslavia to take care of the postal services, railroad transport and ecology. The memorandum was submitted for consideration to the Serbian and Montenegrin assemblies. Podgorica rejected it without further ado and Belgrade did not even take it into consideration.

In July 1993 the District Court in Uzice banned the publication and distribution of the Memorandum "because it incites hatred and instigates national and religious intolerance". The Supreme Court of Serbia confirmed the judgement.

At the first multi-party elections in Serbia in 1990 the SDA won three seats and its candidate Sulejman Ugljanin came fourth in the presidential elections. In 1991 the SDA deputies walked out of the Serbian Assembly because of the ever mounting tension in Sandzak, the deployment of JNA armoured units around Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tulin and the hostile parliamentary environment.

The SDA boycotted the next presidential and parliamentary elections and in 1993 the police began to seize weapons in Sandzak. The results of the campaign were rather humble: in 1993 and 1994 the police searched 1082 Muslim houses and found weapons in only 19 of them. Nevertheless, the media raised big noise

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about it.

Court proceedings followed suit. Forty-five SDA leaders and supporters in Novi Pazar and Bijelo Polje were charged with association for the purpose of hostile activity. Some human rights organizations qualified the trials as rigged. One of the accused was the president of the Montenegrin wing of the party and a member of parliament Harun Hadzic. The 45 accused were sentenced to a total of 168 years of imprisonment. In 1996 the then Montenegrin president Momir Bulatovic pardoned 21 accused in the Bijelo Polje trials and the Supreme Court of Serbia vacated the judgments pronounced on the "Novi Pazar Twenty-Four" and ordered the competent court to review their cases.

An identical indictment was raised in the spring of 1993 against Sulejman Ugljanin who left the country that same year to come back only in September 1996. In the federal elections that year Ugljanin was elected to the federal parliament but in mid-July 1997 the 1993 indictment was reactivated and he was charged with allegedly endangering the territorial integrity. The relevant committee of the Federal Assembly stripped him of the immunity and Sulejman Ugljanin was brought for interrogation at the Novi Pazar District Court that same year.

While Sulejman Ugljanin was absent from the country, one wing of the SDA embarked on a different political course. The smoldering disagreement between the president of the SDA Sulejman Ugljanin and its secretary-general Rasim Ljajic became manifest in 1994 when Ugljanin, while living in Ankara, declared the state of emergency in the party and Ljajic refused to comply. One of the chief reasons for the conflict in the Sandzak SDA leadership was the attitude to Belgrade or rather Ljajic's intention to establish contact with Serbian opposition parties.

In the summer of 1995 Ugljanin's and Ljajic's supporters convened separate party conventions and applied to the republican Ministry of Justice with the request to register the party anew. In October 1995 the Ministry of Justice registered the SDA headed by Rasim Ljajic. The political divergence resulted in the emergence of five parties under the same name: SDA, Sandzak SDA, SDA of Yugoslavia, True SDA, and Real SDA.

After several boycotts of the elections, in November 1996 the SDA participated in the federal and local elections in coalition with the Liberal Bosniak Organisation and the Reformist Democratic Party of Sandzak, called The List for Sandzak Dr Sulejman Ugljanin, and in the parliamentary elections in Serbia and Montenegro last year.

The SDA won three seats in the Serbian and the Montenegrin parliaments, two in the Federal Assembly and the local government in Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin. This success was marred by the rout it suffered in the local elections in Montenegro, where it failed to win the local elections in Rozej and Plav.

The rule of the Bosniak-Muslim parties in the biggest Sandzak town did not last long as in July last year the Serbian Government introduced an emergency government in Novi Pazar, alleging that "an indubitably unlawful conduct of the municipal authorities, infringing upon the constitutional and legal rights of the citizens" had taken place. Belgrade alleged that the Novi Pazar authorities were exercising their majority rights at the expense of the Serb population, that they were not financing educational institutions and that unacceptable national symbols were being brandished. The Serbian Ministry of the Interior prohibited the

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MNVS Assembly and several public meetings of Ugljanin's party, scheduled for the summer of 1997.

The Serbian Government replaced the List for Sandzak Dr Sulejman Ugljanin by a nine-member municipal council which now controls the municipal government in Novi Pazar. It consists of five Bosniaks-Muslims and four Serbs. Of the latter, six are members of the SPS and three come from the JUL. This is not the first time that emergency measures are declared in a Sandzak locality. In Sjenica they were introduced in 1991 and remained in force for four years.

The enforcement of emergency measures in Novi Pazar took place in a rather peaceful atmosphere in spite of the marked presence of the army and police forces. A Novi Pazar politician commented it by saying that the Bosniak-Muslim population is so apolitical and exhausted that even if "Seselj took over the power, they would not protest much and would forget it all in three days". The List for Sandzak Dr Sulejman Ugljanin responded to the situation by publishing a proclamation in which it invited the population to "seize every opportunity to manifest their protest in a peaceful and dignified manner".

The political parties hold slightly different views on the status of the Bosniak-Muslim minority. The Party for Democratic Action of Sulejman Ugljanin advocates a broadly defined special status. Rasim Ljajic's party promotes regional autonomy based on the European model, to be implemented, with the consent of the parties concerned, "step by step". The Liberal Bosniak Organisation does not have a clearly defined attitude. The Reformist Democratic Party led by Izudin Susavic, which is also active among the Sandzak Bosniak population, advocates regionalisation. The forerunner of this party, founded in 1990, was the Alliance of Reformist Forces. Sandzak Reformists advocate the regionalisation of Serbia and Sandzak after the European model, which would create room for the articulation of the ethnic, historical and cultural specificity of Sandzak.

In contrast with the SDA of Montenegro whose return to the political stage was marked by its concrete support to Milo Djukanovic - the Serbian SPS then declared that all Bosniaks-Muslims were Islamic fundamentalists - and subsequent participation in the new republican cabinet of Filip Vujanovic, the Serbian wing of the SDA cannot boast of any significant contact with Belgrade. The first official talks between the SDA and the Serbian government took place in May 1995 when Rasim Ljajic and the Deputy Prime Minister Svetozar Krstic addressed the security and economic situation in Sandzak. The talks were not resumed although there were announcements to this effect. In mid-July 1997, the then president of FRY Zoran Ljilic received a four-member Sandzak delegation, consisting of the representatives of SDA, LBO and RDSS but this was a purely formal visit.

#### 4. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sandzak

Engrossed in its own problems, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which the Sandzak Bosniaks perceive as their mother-country, could not undertake any significant action to alleviate the tension in Sandzak and protect the rights of its countrymen in Yugoslavia. As the Sandzakians enjoy the reputation of diehard extremists among a part of the Bosnian public, some Bosnian politicians deliberately took a detached attitude to Sandzak issues. The Bosnian Party for Democratic Action is an exception to a degree as its leading party bodies often considered the situation in Sandzak.



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In March 1995 the Assembly of B&H adopted the Declaration on the Violation of Human Rights and Freedoms of Bosniaks-Muslims in Sandzak and Other Parts of Serbia and Montenegro. The Declaration says that B&H will advocate the Sandzak autonomy in keeping with relevant international law documents and seek obligatory international guarantees. 'Nobody has the right to deprive other peoples of what it requests for the members of its own people' concludes the document.

The official Bosnian political stand is that one of the conditions for the normalisation of the relations between B&H and Yugoslavia is the respect for the rights of Sandzak Bosniaks-Muslims. Within this context, one of the unavoidable questions is the dual citizenship. One of the conditions for the conclusion of an agreement on the dual citizenship between the two countries is the principle of reciprocity. 'Special ties between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia can exist only if identical ties are established between the Bosniaks in Bosnia and their countrymen in Sandzak' concluded the Steering Board of the B&H SDA at it session in March 1995.

The Sandzakians have invariably turned to Sarajevo asking it to rule in their political disputes and the top leadership of this country has invariably refused it. Alija Izetbegovic, the President of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the president of the SDA replied to the latest appeal from Montenegro to arbitrate in a dispute between the president and the vice-president of the Montenegrin SDA Harun Hadzic and Rifat Veskovic that "he was neither Tudjman nor Milosevic" and that "he was not going to order the Sandzak Bosniaks what to do and whom to elect as their leader".

Owing to the good offices of the Bosnian leadership and the President of the Presidency Alija Izetbegovic Sandzak regularly figured on the agenda of the conference of the Organization of the Islamic Unity. The participants in the latest OTU conference held in Teheran in April 1997 called on the Yugoslav authorities to respect the human rights of the Sandzak Bosniaks-Muslims.

### 5. Abductions and human rights violations

Although no drastic human rights violations were recorded in Sandzak in 1997, full normalisation will not be possible until dark blotches from the recent past are removed and legal acts discriminating against the members of the Bosniak ethnic community and Sandzak as a region rescinded. These acts include the Law on Property Transactions, the Law on the Implementation of the Programme for the Discontinuation of Unfavourable Migrations, the Instruction on the Prohibition of the Asylum-Seekers Return, The Law on Underdeveloped Regions and the Law on Special Planning. One could say even that in the post-Dayton period, after the first stage of human rights violations in Sandzak, which lasted during the Bosnian war and was characteristic of the gravest breaches of international conventions on human rights and national legislation, disguised methods of legalised human rights violations, are at work now.

Harassment, intimidation and violence were at their height in 1992-1994, especially in areas bordering on Bosnia. It is thought that human rights violations were largely

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committed by the Bosnian Serb troops, especially in the areas of Sjeverin and Bukovica but neither the Yugoslav army nor the Serbian police did much to prevent the incidents.

On the territory of the Bukovica Neighbourhood Community in the Pijevlja Municipality, for instance, there were 186 Bosniak-Muslim households before the war and now there are only 24 of them. During the war this area was closed to foreign and domestic journalists. Yugoslav Army units were also deployed in the area to calm the situation down but witnesses claim that their presence only added fuel to the fire.

In Pijevlja attacks on the Bosniak-Muslim population began as early as 1992 and their principal organiser was Ceko Dacevic, MP for the Serb Radical party at the time. The first murders of Bosniaks-Muslims in Bukovica were recorded in October 1992. The victims were Hajro Music and his son Ejup. In February 1993 Serb paramilitary formations raided the village of Ravne (Bukovica NC) and killed Latif and Osmo Bungur. On the same day members of the Army of the Republika Srpska attacked Ravne and forcibly took some twenty villagers to Cajnice. In addition to Pijevlja, armed assaults on Bosniaks-Muslims were also recorded in Priboj. In February 1993 in Kukurovici, a village near Priboj, three persons were killed in one of those attacks (Huzeir Bulat, Mucan Husovic and Sadeta Sarac) and two persons were wounded.

After the Dayton Agreement, according to a number of domestic human rights organisations, there were six cases of abduction of Bosniaks-Muslims; altogether 51 persons were kidnapped; 34 Bosniaks-Muslims were killed; 51 objects were mined and 27 Muslim villages ethnically cleansed.

In 1997 Bosniaks-Muslims continued to move away for Bosnia. According to the Muslim National Council of Sandzak, Vladimir Trifkovic, a lawyer in Priboj, has received as many as 10000 applications of Bosnian Serbs, offering to exchange their property for property in Sandzak. Most Sandzakians swap property with Bosnian Serbs and go to B&H on their own and it is still impossible to obtain the accurate figures on the number of those who have left.

Although there are no records of drastic violations of Bosniak-Muslim rights in Sandzak, the incidents have not stopped altogether and were particularly frequent during Orthodox holidays. In the night of January 6-7 (Orthodox Christmas Eve) a bomb was thrown at a coffee bar in Priboj, owned by a Bosniak-Muslim. That same night windows were broken on shops owned by Bosniaks-Muslims in Priboj. On the eve of the Orthodox New Year an attack was attempted on the Priboj mosque and on the New Year's Day fire was put to a Bosniak-Muslim house in the village of Milanovici in the neighbourhood community of Sjeverin.

It was not easy for Sandzakians in Western Europe to come back to Yugoslavia. Some twenty of them were kept at the Belgrade Airport for several days in spite of the Yugoslav-German agreement on the return of Yugoslav nationals illegally



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residing in Germany. Some of them were eventually admitted to Yugoslavia and some were returned to Germany. The police have not issued an official communication about this event but according to off-the-record information of Belgrade media, five policemen lost their jobs. They had allegedly been bribed by the detained Sandzakians to let them into the Yugoslav territory.

## A. SJEVERIN

Around 7 a.m. on 22 October 1992, near the formerly torched *Amfora* coffee-bar in the village of Mloca 17 Bosniaks-Muslims were abducted from the Priboj-Sjeverin bus. They were taken in an unknown direction and - according to unofficial army sources - massacred in the vicinity of Visegradska Banja.

The abducted were Ramiz Begovic (1933), Hajrudin Sajtarevic (1955), Mithad Softic (1951), Dervis Softic (1953), Mustafa Bajramovic (1948), Sead Pecikoza (1962), Idriz Gabovic (1942), Medo Hodzic (1955), Mevlida Hodzic (1962), Medredin Hodzic (1962), Sabahudin Catovic (1970), Ramahudin Catovic (1968), Zafer Hodzic (1956), Mehmed Sebo (1962), Mujo Alihodzic (1950), Alija Mandal (1954) and Esad Dzihic (1968). All were Yugoslav nationals. They were taken off the bus and put on a lorry to Visegrad. There the Yugoslav border was crossed without any difficulty, raising doubts about the role of the Yugoslav authorities in this incident. The largest part of the Bosniak-Muslim population from Sjeverin, Medjurecje, Zabrđe, Zabrnjice, Krajcinovci, Zivinice, Sastavci, Kukuruvici and other border villages in the Priboj municipality left the area after this abduction. No charges have been brought because and the state commission established to investigate the abduction closed its activities without any result.

## B. STRPCI

in the village of Stupci Members of Serbian paramilitary formations abducted and liquidated 21 passengers from the Belgrade-Bar train.

The abducted were Adem Alometovic (59), Fehim Bakija (43), Ismet Babacic (30), Rifat Husovic (26), Samir Rastoder (45), Esad Kapetanovic (19), Iljaz Licina (43), Nihad Sahman (30), Senad Djecovic (16), Halil Zupcevic (49), Rasim Coric (40), Nijazim Kajevic (30), Fikret Memovic (40), Muhedin Hanic (27), Seco Softic (48), Dzafer Topuzovic (55), Safet Preljevic (22), Fevzija Zekovic (54), Fehim Sejfic (43), Zvezdan Zuljic (23) and Toma Burzov.

Milan Lukic, the commander of the *Orvetnik* (*Avenger*) chetnik detachment, although suspected of the abduction, was arrested in Uzice on 16 April 1993 under charges of document forgery and smuggling of arms. On 6 April 1994 the investigation for his role in the Stupci abduction was undertaken but he was released

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some twenty days later.

In August 1996 Dusan Petrovic from Despotovac contacted the Montengrian police as an alleged eyewitness of the Stupci abduction. He identified Milian Lukic and Nebojsa Ranisavljevic as those responsible for the abduction and liquidation of the abducted. N. Ranisavljevic was arrested on 19 October 1996. Throughout 1997 the courts in Bijelo Polje and Jagodina haggled about the court jurisdiction in the case against him. The Supreme Court of Yugoslavia ruled that the case fell under the jurisdiction of the Bijelo Polje court but the date of the trial has not been set yet.

### 1. Economic and social conditions

Sandzak has always been one of the least developed parts of Yugoslavia. Of the three Bosniak-Muslim towns in the Serbian part of Sandzak, two (Sjenica and Tutin) fall into the category of underdeveloped areas and Novi Pazar escaped such ranking only lately and by a hair's-breadth.

With the national revenue of less than 15% of the republican average, Tutin is the most underdeveloped Serbian municipality and Novi Pazar with 89 job seekers per 1000 inhabitants leads, together with Presevo, on the unemployment list. The national income of Novi Pazar is 53% and that of Sjenica 41% of the republican average. In the neighbouring towns with the Serbian majority - Raska and Brus - the national income totals 87 and 61% of the republican average respectively. The inequitable status of the Bosniak towns is demonstrated also by the amount of funds received from the republican Fund for the Development of the Underdeveloped Municipalities. Although it is claimed that in the Eighties and Nineties Tutin, Novi Pazar and Sjenica have received considerable funds, the truth is that Raska, although less than half the size of Novi Pazar, received five times the amount allotted to the former. Raska, with a population of about 35,000, has twice as many communal flats as Novi Pazar.

According to the authorities, the economic underdevelopment affects equally both ethnic groups and the ethnic equality is strictly observed at the local level. Novi Pazar is quoted as an example to support this claim.

The municipal SPS committee (figures for 1993) claims that In Novi Pazar, the town with a population of slightly over 85,000 (Bosniaks-Muslims 89%, Serbs 20%) 18,230 persons hold full-time jobs; that of them, 75% are Bosniaks-Muslims and 25% Serbs; that of nine managers of public companies, five are Bosniaks-Muslims, and four are Serbs; that towards the end of 1995 Bosniaks-Muslims owned 95% of the total number of registered private companies and Serbs 5%; and that In 1996 151 Bosniaks-Muslims were executives in the industrial and non-economic sector and 79 Serbs.

The figures available to Muslim parties are different and this holds true

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especially of the non-productive sector. It employs 2,886 persons, of whom 57 % are Bosniaks-Muslims and 42% Serbs. Fifty-three per cent of managerial posts are held by Bosniaks-Muslims and 47 per cent by Serbs. Personnel changes in the municipal authorities took place in 1992 when several Bosniaks-Muslims were removed from office. Their jobs were given to Serbs so that of more than ten executive posts, only two are held by Bosniaks-Muslims who are also members of a suitable party. In other Sandzak localities similar changes have taken place. In Priboj, for instance, 18 Bosniaks-Muslims were removed from executive posts.

The "ethnic cleansing" is most conspicuous in the local police. No Muslim holds an executive post there. The director of the Medical Centre is a Serb. The same holds true of the radio station. Of the eight judges, six are Serbs and two Bosniaks-Muslims. Political representatives of the Bosniak-Muslim people support their claim that the Bosniak-Muslim localities are discriminated against by the fact that of 11 villages in the Novi Pazar municipality, which received subsidies from the Republican Fund, only one has a Bosniak-Muslim majority. In that village, called Kominje, Serbia does not finance a production facility but a dump-yard.

The average salary in Novi Pazar public companies totals 38 % of the republican average but strikes are a rare occurrence in this town. "Those in Belgrade can hardly wait for us to go on strike to then fire us all" claims a teacher of the Bosniak ethnic origin. The giants of the socialist self-management, *Ras Footwear Company* and *Raska Ready to Wear Factory* have gone bankrupt, like many others, and the effects of it are felt not only in Novi Pazar but also in Tutin and Sjenica where these two factories had their plants.

When the socially-owned enterprises collapsed the Sandzakians, and especially the Novi Pazar inhabitants turned to private business. In the early Nineties Novi Pazar became a new Yugoslav Trieste and a centre for the production of jeans and footwear. Rather than encourage the development of these and similar branches of industry, the state exerted itself to choke the Novi Pazar economy under the pretext of the struggle against "gray economy". One of the ways to do it is the levy of taxes and dues, many times higher than in other parts of Serbia.

Such state policy has affected also livestock-raising, once a well-known local activity. Sheep breeding has been almost destroyed by inadequate policy and the number of sheep dropped from 160,000 in 1939 to bare 50,000 in 1990.

## 2. Cultural life

The political crisis and the national homogenisation in the early Nineties have



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practically pushed to the margins former multi-ethnic cultural institutions and associations, such as Writers' Clubs *Sandzacka iskra* and *Rascia*.

Mono-ethnic cultural-political societies are formed in their lieu. The most prominent among them is *Stari Ras*, which brings together Serb intellectuals, notorious for their nationalistic views. Under the auspices of the Muslim National Council of Sandzak, Bosniaks-Muslims founded different artistic societies but their activities are barely worth mention. The Muslim Cultural Society *Preporod*, founded in March 1991, has not done much to advance the cultural level of Bosniaks-Muslims. Although established to preserve the Bosniak-Muslim identity, *Preporod* does not go beyond organising events on the occasion of religious holidays and siding with one or the other side in inter-Bosniak political reckonings. The cultural life in most Bosniak towns is rather modest due both to the limited resources and the generally low education level. The only amateur theatre operates in Sjenica.

### 3. Media

The Socially-owned media in Sandzak are controlled by the regime. Local radio stations are a part of the large RTS family, that is its three channels. Under the circumstances, satellite dishes became a much-sought after item in this region in the Nineties. Sandzakians prefer to watch Bosnian, Croatian, Turkish or other channels and switch on the Serbian Television only when it airs *Cassandra*, *Llovisma* or "when we feel an urge to hear Belgrade lies".

There were also private television stations, whose principal feature was giving a wide berth to political topics. Of three such private stations, only the one in Tutin has survived. The other two, in Novi Pazar, have closed down: *RTV Sar* by the decision of the relevant inspection after barely a month or two on the air and *Jedinstvo* due to the strike of the personnel in the printing house of the same name and unsettled property status.

Two towns with the Bosniak-Muslim majority - Tutin and Novi Pazar - have their private radio stations. A private station in Sjenica was ordered to close a few weeks after it went on the air. In addition to their allegedly unlicensed broadcasting, another reason for the frequent closure of private media is the suspiciousness of the authorities which see US capital or interests lurking behind every station owned by Bosniaks-Muslims. There is no regional daily in Sandzak. *Sandzacke Novine* is a weekly, reputed to be the organ of Ugljanin's SDA. *Has* is an independent magazine. The Meshhat (Office) of the Islamic Community of Sandzak issues its paper called *Glas islama* (*The Voice of Islam*) and Damad, a private publisher, issues a literary magazine called *Mak*.

### 4. Conclusions and recommendations

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Relevant state authorities need to take an all-embracing action to prevent further disruption of the Sandzak ethnic structure and enable the restoration of the inter-ethnic confidence and the Bosniak-Muslim confidence in the state and its institutions. To this end, it is indispensable to solve the cases of abductions in Sjeverin and Stupci and punish the perpetrators of these and other human rights violations.

## HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SERBIA PROPOSES:

1. To enable Sandzak refugees, whether in the country or abroad, to return freely;
2. To regulate the constitutional and legal status of the Bosniaks-Muslims as a people or a national minority, depending on their wishes and professional opinion;
3. To rescind all legal acts discriminating against the members of the Bosniak-Muslim ethnic origin and the region of Sandzak;
4. To resume without delay the negotiations, embarked upon long ago by the representatives of the state and the Sandzak Bosniaks-Muslims;
5. To establish the institution of ombudsman for national minorities;
6. To adopt a law on the rights and freedoms of minority ethnic communities and their members.



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