



Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	199
Land:	Bosnien - Hercegovina
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	"Bosnia - Hercegovina (2006)"
Udgivet:	29. november 2006
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	29. november 2006

Bosnia-Herzegovina (2006)

Overview

Polity:

No polity available

Political Rights:

4

Civil Liberties:

3

Status:

Partly Free

Population:

3,800,000

GNI/Capita:

\$1,530

Life Expectancy:

74

Religious Groups:

Muslim (40 percent), Orthodox (31 percent), Roman Catholic (15 percent), other (14 percent)

Ethnic Groups:

Serb (37.1 percent), Bosniak (48 percent), Croat (14.3 percent), other (0.6 percent)

Capital:

Sarajevo

Additional Info:

[Freedom in the World 2005](#)

[Freedom of the Press 2005](#)

[Nations in Transit 2004](#)

[Countries at the Crossroads 2005](#)

In 2005, Bosnia-Herzegovina passed several reforms crucial to the country's integration into the European Union (EU), including a long-awaited reorganization of the police along non-ethnic lines, an agreement to establish a unified military, and a new law regulating the country's public broadcasting system. Consequently, the European Commission recommended the opening of negotiations with Bosnia on the Stabilization and Association Agreement, a contractual relationship with the EU. Despite this progress, Bosnia continued to be marred by high-profile corruption scandals. The Croatian member of the Bosnian presidency, Dragan Covic, and the Constitutional Court president, Mate Tadic, were indicted during the year for allegedly accepting bribes from businesspeople linked to organized crime.

Formerly a constituent republic within socialist Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina is among the most ethnically diverse countries in the region. The population is comprised of three ethnic groups: Bosniacs, who are mainly Muslim; Serbs, who are largely Eastern Orthodox; and Croats, who strongly identify with the Catholic Church. As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s, Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized as an independent state in April 1992. A 43-month-long civil war immediately ensued, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of individuals and the forced resettlement of approximately half of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population. In November 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords brought an end to the civil war by creating a loosely knit state composed of the Bosniak-Croat "Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina" and the largely Serbian "Republika Srpska."

The Dayton accords gave the international community a decisive role in running post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, manifested in the significant powers and authorities (known as the "Bonn powers") granted to international civilian agencies such as the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Despite considerable efforts by the international community to aid Bosnia's integration, most aspects of political, social, and economic life in the country remain divided along ethnic lines.

In the country's October 2002 presidential and legislative elections, Bosnians across the ethnic divide voted mostly for nationalist parties-contrary to the hopes of many members of the international community. The most important ethnically-based parties-the (Bosniak) Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the

Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)-took control of the joint state presidency, the joint state parliament (Parliamentary Assembly), and both entities' governments.

Widespread and high-profile corruption, which greatly reduces the public's trust in government institutions, remains one of the most significant problems facing Bosnia's democratic development. In March 2005, Dragan Covic, the Croatian member of the joint Bosnian presidency, was indicted by the Supreme Court on charges of abuse of power, corruption, and organized criminal activity dating back to the period between 2000 and 2003 when he served as finance minister of the Bosniac-Croat Federation. The court also confirmed corruption charges against Constitutional Court president Mate Tadic. Many analysts viewed these two high-profile indictments as evidence of the growing independence of the country's judiciary, which has been undergoing significant reforms under the sponsorship of the international donor community.

With the urging of the international community, Bosnia-Herzegovina's central government made some progress in 2005 in passing legislation critical to the country's integration into the European community. In September, the Bosnian leadership agreed to establish a unified military consisting of a single Defense Ministry funded by the central government. The new army will be a volunteer force of 10,000 members and is expected to begin functioning in July 2007. A long-awaited police reform, which will reorganize police along non-ethnic lines and without regard for entity boundaries, was adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly in October. The U.S. State Department characterized this move as the "most significant step towards Euro-Atlantic integration taken by [Bosnia-Herzegovina] since the signing of the Dayton peace accords 10 years ago."

In October, after months of deadlock, the Parliamentary Assembly passed a law regulating the public broadcasting system (PBS). The new PBS system will retain its tripartite nature: Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation will have their own public television stations with head offices in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar. The three services will now belong to a single corporation. The main obstacle to the adoption of the reforms came from Herzegovinian Croats, who demanded a separate channel in the Croatian language; this request was rejected by both the Constitutional Court and by parliament. Many linguists outside of the country view Serbo-Croatian as a single language with regional, rather than ethnic, variances, which encompasses Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian dialects.

As a result of these reforms, the European Commission recommended the opening of negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina on a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), the first major step in the European integration process.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

In general, voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina can freely elect their representatives, although the High Representative has the authority to remove publicly elected

officials from office if they are deemed to be obstructing the peace process. Ethnic divisions in Bosnia are institutionalized on several levels of government. The country does not have a single president, but a three-member rotating presidency comprised of one Bosniac, one Serb, and one Croat. The National Assembly is a bicameral body: the House of Peoples consists of 58 delegates, including 17 Bosniacs, 17 Serbs, 17 Croats, and 7 delegates belonging to other ethnic groups-all elected by the Bosnian/Croat legislature and Republika Srpska Assembly; the House of Representatives has 98 members popularly elected by secret ballot. The most important ethnically based parties include the (Bosniac) Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).

Corruption, which remains a serious problem in the country, penetrates the top levels of Bosnian leadership. In 2005, a member of the Bosnian presidency and the president of the Constitutional Court were indicted on corruption charges. There is a widespread belief of direct links between organized crime groups and extremist political forces. Bosnia-Herzegovina was ranked 88 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

A large number of independent electronic and print media organizations operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, broadcast outlets and the press continue to be plagued by a relatively low standard of professional ethics, a reliance on foreign funding for survival, and the fact that most media outlets appeal only to narrow ethnic constituencies. Government-owned companies sometimes withhold advertising from media outlets that print or broadcast information critical of the regime. Journalists who criticize the government or publish politically sensitive material at times face public denunciations and threatening phone calls from government officials. In September, deputies of the SDS in Gacko announced that a reporter was unwelcome in the town after she published an article about corruption of local SDS officials. As of the end of November 2005, some 50 complaints were registered through a help-line for journalists for reporting instances of pressure by public officials. Internet access in Bosnia is open and unrestricted; however, only 5 percent of the population subscribes to an internet service.

Citizens enjoy full freedom of religious belief and practice, but only in areas where they represent a majority. A 2004 Law on Religious Freedom grants churches and religious communities legal status akin to those enjoyed by nongovernmental organizations. Some acts of vandalism against holy sites associated with all three major religions-Islam, Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism-occurred in 2005. In May, unknown perpetrators desecrated a Muslim cemetery in Prijedor, Republika Srpska. In October, unknown persons broke into a mosque in Bosanski Samac and arranged stones in the shape of a cross.

While the various governments in Bosnia-Herzegovina do not restrict academic freedom at institutions of higher education, ethnic favoritism in appointments to academic positions, the politicization of such appointments, and widespread corruption remain problems. According to local media sources, students can

purchase a PhD diploma for approximately \$30,000 and a passing grade for around \$1,500. The curriculums of primary and secondary schools are subject to intensive political influences. In parts of Herzegovina, students of different ethnicities have been divided into different classrooms, have separate school entrances, learn from conflicting textbooks, and attend classes in different time shifts. This policy of "two schools under one roof" was established under pressure from local politicians to prevent cultural assimilation. The main sensitive subjects include history, geography, and language; depending on their ethnic background, children learn from textbooks printed in Zagreb, Belgrade, or Sarajevo. The Bosnian branch of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights warns that the current situation resembles a "practice of open segregation and apartheid."

The constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association, and the various entity and cantonal governments generally respect these rights in practice. However, ethnic or religious minorities in a particular area often find it more difficult to exercise these rights than the local majority population. Although there are no legal restrictions on the right of workers to form and join labor unions, there are growing allegations of discrimination against union members.

Corruption in the judiciary, police forces, and civil service forms a considerable obstacle to the establishment of the rule of law in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The judiciary remains unduly influenced by nationalist political parties and executive branches of the government. Judges who demonstrate some independence are reported to have come under various forms of intimidation. One of the most significant developments in 2005 was the inauguration of the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the first court in the former Yugoslavia to try individuals for war crimes committed during the conflict that followed the disintegration of that country. While the establishment of this court is viewed as evidence of the maturing of Bosnian judicial institutions, the most sought-after indicted war criminals-former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic-remain at large.

Ethnic nationalism in Bosnian society is widespread and presents a major obstacle to the country's integration. Individuals are discriminated against in terms of employment, housing, and social services in regions not dominated by their own ethnic group.

In 2004, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announced that 1,000,000 Bosnian refugees and displaced persons had returned since the end of the war, roughly half the total number driven from their homes during the fighting. The vast majority of property restitution cases left over from the war have now been resolved. Despite these relative successes, however, many people are returning to their prewar homes only to sell their property and move back to areas in which they are members of the local ethnic majority. Consequently, Bosnia- Herzegovina is now divided into three relatively ethnically homogenous Bosniac, Croat, and Serb areas.

Women are legally entitled to full equality with men. However, they are significantly underrepresented in politics and government and face frequent discrimination in the workplace in favor of demobilized soldiers. To compensate for the absence of women in public life, political parties are legally required to include three women among the top 10 names on their lists of candidates. Domestic violence remains a problem, and the police are still largely unresponsive to violent domestic disputes. A significant problem in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina is its emergence as a destination country for trafficked women for the purposes of prostitution, and UN reports claim that the large international civil and military presence in the country provides considerable demand for such services. A new Bosnian criminal code that went into effect in March 2003 criminalizes trafficking in human beings and increases penalties for such offenses.