



Bosnia & Herzegovina Chronicle 7: Social Unrest in BiH

by Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) Tuzla - Youth Resource Center Tuzla

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(A brief chronology of social unrest in Bosnia and Herzegovina)

...FROM THE LIBERAL SOCIALISM TO THE DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM, FROM THE DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM TO WAR, FROM THE WAR TO DEMOCRATIC TRASITION, FROM TRASITION TO THIEVERY AND CRIMINAL PRIVATIZATION OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GIANTS AND GOODS, FROM PRIVATIZATION TO INCREASED NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED AND SOCIALY UNPROTECTED POPULATION IN BiH, FROM SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSECURITY TO CIVIC DISSATISFACTION, FROM CIVIC DISSATISFACTION TO CIVIL TURBULENCE, DEMOSTRATION AND PROTESTS, FROM PROTESTS TO CIVIC ORGANISATIONS AND CIVIC ORGANISATION LEADS TO PLENUM...



In 1990th. First democratic elections were organized in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The attempt was to make transition from some moderate liberal socialism to democratic capitalism. The results of those first elections brought such results that in almost every republic of former Yugoslavia nationalist parties and forces won the elections, while reformist forces and the communists were defeated. With the first democratic elections begun to emerge policy and thinking of secession of some republics of Yugoslavia's federal structure. The year of 1991 was the year of secession and independence on the ground of former Yugoslavia. The first country to separate from Yugoslavia was Slovenia, then Croatia, and after Croatia was Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Turning on the referendum¹ on the 1st of March in 1992. Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed their democratic opinion and the right to leave the Yugoslav federation. On the referendum 60% of citizens came out, and 99% of them voted for independence.

¹ The Referendum is the submission of draft for new constitution, constitutional amendments, some law or policy decision of significant importance (at national, regional or local level) through the voting citizens who make decisions about it with "for" or "against" or "yes" or "no". (Wikipedia)



With the first independent BiH political structures, in which the lead role had the nationalist parties, there was also the first nationalist intolerance, misunderstanding, confrontation and conflicts, which eventually led to the war in BiH from 1992. Till 1995. The war was cruel, inhuman and devastating and it was waged on all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Supported by neighboring countries, the war in BiH had a variety of names, and those names differed in relation to the perception of the participants in it. So the war in BiH was characterized as aggression or as a defensive war on the one hand, while on the other hand it was called ethnic conflicts, inter-religious and even civil war.

War is organized conflict of armed people, as an extension of the state policy, nation, class, and through means of armed violence in order to achieve certain political, economic and other income.

War is a social phenomenon caused and associated with the emergence and development of class society, whose basic laws are also the general laws of war development.

The main content of the war is the armed battle, but the war itself is not just about weapons. It is wider, more complex because it involves other forms of battle (political, economic, etc.) which are highly significant for the preparation and conduct of war.

Altogether the ultimate „result of the war “in Bosnia is: By nationality 64.036 victims were Muslims (Bosniaks), 24.905 were Serbs and 7.788 were Croats. The majority of Serbian (20.690 of 24.905) and Croatian (5.719 of 7.788) victims were soldiers, while the majority of Bosniak-Muslims were civilians (33.403 of 64.036). There were hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced, tens of thousands of disabled people, raped, maltreated, camp prisoners and inmates.²

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ends with the Dayton agreement regulating new demographic and political structures in BiH. The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided by percentage: 49% Serbian Republic, 51% Federation of BiH and Brcko District as a separate administrative unit. So politically it looks like this. The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina contains two entities (Federation of BiH and Serbian Republic), within Federation as one of the entities we have 10 cantons, as a separate administrative units and Brcko District. Basically that means that we have 14 governments, hundreds of ministers and undetermined number of administrative jobs within those governments.

Canton³ is the name for administrative-territorial unit in Switzerland, France, Belgium, and administrative sub-unit of the Federation of BiH. In this final meaning in Croatian language the name they use for its county.

The Brcko District, by its Statute, which was declared by Robert W. Farrand - the first Supervisor for Brcko, is an unique administrative unit of local government under the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has its own multi-ethnic administration, police and judiciary. The area is demilitarized and it provides all the necessary freedom to their citizens. The District has no other flag or emblem than the flag and emblem of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, as well as Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian language are equal in use for all purposes. The international supervisor and the head of the ORH-North are supervising the functioning of the District.

The popular name for the postwar period that lasts since 1995 and continues today is transition time. During this time one of the worst results of this transition and democratic capitalism is the privatization of all social and economic giant goods. During the period when war ended till today, in privatization brokerage all economic giants are destroyed. The destruction therefore produced a large number of unemployed people, reduced social power of the state, economic tailspin, government debt with the MMF, new national intolerance. The destruction also strengthened the nationalist and reduced the power of social democratic and liberal forces.

Denationalization or privatization is transfer of ownership and accountability from public or the state to the private sector. This term can refer to any transfer of state property. The reverse process is nationalization (Wikipedia)

Advocates of privatization in accordance with the liberal economic attitude, argue that the state cannot be a good entrepreneur, because it restricts opportunities for private initiative. According to this attitude private businesses operate more efficiently than those under state administration, they stimulate the economic growth and employment. Privatization also leads to innovation, and thus to new services and products.

According to the ATTAC organization, areas of public services such as education, transportation, health care, energy and water supply, should not be handed over to the private market, because it is about fulfilling tasks that go beyond economic issues, and therefore cannot be guided by the criteria of profitability.

Opponents of privatization warn also about the price increase of the goods and services of privatized companies.

² http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rat_u_BiH

³ Middle French, Old Provençal word canton, derivative of cantoun , "street corner" ,then „province“

Results of privatization in BiH are devastating and extremely worrying. Dozens of former economic giants are sold under very suspicious contracts and right after sales they began to disappear, to work less and finally they would totally shut down and declare the bankrupt.

Only in Sarajevo Canton, lot of companies disappeared, some companies are on the way to disappear, such companies are: „Feroelektro“, „Sarabon“ (one of the pre-war giants in food industry), Building Company „Put“ (once a large construction company), Hotel „Holiday inn“, „Alhos“, „UNIS-Pretis“ (pre-war car factory, but also and factory of arms and military equipment), „Ključ“.

In the Tuzla Canton disappearing companies are: Chemistry factory „Polihem“, detergents industry „Dita“, „Resod Guming“, factory of transport equipment „TTU“, „Steel Foundry Tuzla“, „Yeast Factory“, „Tuzla Dairy“, Furniture factory „Konjuh“ Zivinice, footwear factory „Aida“ Tuzla.

So many adverse, suspicious and unrealized privatizations have normally increased the number of the unemployed, dissatisfied, socially and economically uncared citizens.

Regarding Tuzla Canton, only every sixth citizen is employed. In September of 2013. there has been 80.146 employed people, and 99.961 unemployed. Nobody has calculated how many workers are on hold because they belong nowhere: in the office of employment, or social assistance, because they are classified as employed, so they do not receive salary , nor they are paid social, health or pension obligations.

When these data are compared to the date from December of 2002, there were 70.182 employed, 72.519 of those looking for a job. 2012 ended with 97.805 people looking for a job.⁴

In the report of CCI still states that they have only five of the 98 deputies in the House of Representatives and only 13 of the 58 delegates of the House of Peoples opted not to receive a salary in Parliament. Representatives from the House of Representatives at the meetings in 2013. spent an average of 16 hours per month, and delegates in the House of Peoples of less than seven hours.

Therefore, the period of the 1995th by 2014. with so many adverse privatizations, inactivity of political structures at all levels, further strengthening of inter-ethnic unrest, nepotism and political malfeasance at all levels of government, further debt to MMF and foreign partners is a relatively long period, for the civil unrest in response to the current state does not happen.

Protests, demonstrations in February 2014. in cities of BiH ARE JUST NORMAL, SEQUENCE OF DEMOCRATIC AND STEPING OUT OF RIGHTLESS, INVISIBLE AND INAUDIBLE PEOPLE.

Demonstrations⁵

In the early days of the second month of 2014. In Tuzla, ordinary, peaceful demonstrations of disenfranchised workers of firms from Tuzla Canton turned into a public revolt against the system, against former anti-social policies. Members of the informal group "Stroke" and "Big kids", "Fukare" (fans/supporters of football club "Freedom" from Tuzla), as well as a large number of young, unemployed people, pensioners, demobilized soldiers and veterans and invalids joined by workers and unions.

Peaceful demonstrations have turned into open physical clashes between demonstrators and police special forces of the Tuzla Canton and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unnecessary use of force by the police in the coming days caused more vigorous demonstration from citizens, which is from Tuzla spread to other cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Zenica, Bihac, Mostar) as a final result had the following

- Destroyed and burned Tuzla Canton's government building,
- Destroyed and burned the main building of Tuzla municipality,
- Destroyed and burned Canton Zenica's government building,
- Destroyed and burned Sarajevo Canton's building,
- Burned building of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a good part of the BiH's archive in Sarajevo,
- Destroyed government building of Mostar Canton and the national office of the SDA and HDZ,

⁴ Svetlana Cenić, independent economic expert

⁵ demonstrations - a public display of moods in the society in the form of parades, public speaking and different expression of dissatisfaction - wikipedia.

- Destroyed and burned dozens of police cars and a large amount of police equipment,
- Over tens of thousands of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina went to the streets in protests,
- Several hundred people and police were injured,
- A dozen seriously injured protesters and police,
- Resignations of four prime ministers, together with the governments of the cantons (Tuzla, Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar),
- Charges pressed for over twenty citizens of BiH "Terrorism and the threat to the constitutional order of BiH"
- On the addresses of more than 500 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina arrived offense reports for "disturbing public order" and "disturbing public officials in the performance of their duties."

After three to four days of protests, very intensive, with physical harassment, things have calmed down a bit and there was a period of civic responsibility and organization.

In most cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina PLENUM's are organized. Through Plenum attempts are to influence the organizational structure of the Assembly, the House of Peoples at the cantonal level, the Federation and the Republic.

What is the plenum?: Plenum is assembly of all members of a group. This is a public space for discussion, without restriction and without hierarchy of participants, in which decisions are made. The plenum has a particular structure of work.

Why plenum?: Because the plenum is open to all. Everyone has the right to vote, everyone has the right to participate. Everyone has a voice; this is an area without prohibitive and belongs to everyone.

How does the plenum work?: All who wish to participate. One person has one vote, and respect the order of dialogue.

Who can participate in the plenum and who can make decisions?: Whoever feels compelled, or feel the need to participate, to be without any obstacles, in addition to respect the rules of behavior that participants establish at the beginning of the plenary session. Decisions at the plenary session made all participants on the principle of majority decision, participants vote for or against. Option restrained does not apply to the plenum, since only complicates the decision making process, as a rule, it is assumed that the participants familiar with the issue date of the session. If not, the moderators at the beginning of each session recapitulate the conclusions from the previous session and the current agenda items with short notice.

Who leads the plenum?: Plenum does not have a leader, on the sessions are selected who will manage the discussion and determine how much time to give each speaker, and the order of agenda items. Moderators have the right to warn participants that discussion turned away from the major themes and to return to the original topic. This is done to save time. There are no functions in plenum. If there is a need for someone to come forward in public and say any statement, interview or the like, the person may nominate themselves with the consent of the plenum or for plenum to suggest someone for that work. Moderators for the next session are chosen at the end of each session.

How the decisions are made on plenum? The voting is for or against. The decision is made by majority basis. If there is no consensus, that is to find a compromise that will not satisfy everybody completely, but will bring the best possible solution in a given situation for a given issue. This is a huge advantage to vote without abstentions, because the decision will always exist, and not just disappear into the discussion, as is often the case in a parliamentary form of decision-making.⁶

What next?

How to behave, what to do, where to go? Plenum, as a democratic, currently the only possible response of the citizens to the irresponsible government, must not remain the only possible answer. The citizens now need to participate more and more in the political life of the country- and through Plenum and through many bodies inside the Plenum. The government, defined by its inability, in the next elections should gain a clear message from citizens that this will not go any more like it is, and that everything must begin to change from the bottom up. Lethargic and depressed citizenship is no longer an option for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Demonstrations from February have shown that the people have the power to initiate change. Possible attempt of ignoring, belittling and political structures of the events in February- I'm afraid- could bring up by the Spring even bigger, more intense and bloodier conflicts.

⁶ Source: <http://protest.ba/v2/sta-je-plenum/>

What will be the safety of citizens in BiH depends mostly on whether the politicians, the political elite and the oligarchs, and the political party to which they belong have learned anything from the events in February, as well as whether is the awareness of BiH citizens, shown them that they are the important pillar of any democratic system.

All this that is happening in BiH, can easily and has already started to transmit to other countries in the region (Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), so we can expect a very intense spring and the years ahead of us. We hope to finally create some democratic forces where citizenship is still important, so we can build a country for the people and not the politicians.

Mario Vranješ⁷

Tuzla, March 2014.

Additions:

- Damir Arsenijevic – article from the Guardian,
- Pictures

After 22 years of being bullied Bosnians are desperate, and must protest⁸

Since the war we have been told to accept our status as victims. Now we are demanding change – and an end to corruption

[Damir Arsenijevic](#)

[theguardian.com](#),

Friday 28 February 2014 11.00 GMT



⁷ *Mario Vranješ is an unemployed writer, journalist, poet, columnist from Tuzla.*

⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/28/bosnia-protest-citizens-change-corruption>

An anti-government protester in Sarajevo with a placard reading: 'Europe, you owe us, do you remember 1992-1995?'
Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

[This month's protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) have a clear message: the elites who carved up power among the different ethnic groups before lining their own pockets with the country's resources, wealth and capital, have had their day. The 85 wealthiest oligarchs in the state [are collectively worth \\$9bn](#): this "wealth" was looted either via corrupt laws or by siphoning off money from the international community designed to prevent a return to conflict.

But now the citizens are waging a determined struggle – to keep open the space for direct democratic participation, to insist their voices are heard and that their actions count. Public gatherings or plenums have sprung up which are open to anyone, and where collective decisions and demands can be made and action taken. These are open, direct and an example of transparent democracy in practice.

But the plenum as a form of self-organisation, in which citizens come together to articulate demands underpinned by protest marches, is now under attack. The pushback comes from all quarters: from corrupt and complacent elites who vilify the plenums' demands for openness, transparency and an end to corruption, to incredulous international figures, who have been stunned by the outstanding class solidarity shown during this crisis.

By maintaining a dysfunctional, nepotistic and parasitic bureaucratic power structure, local and international politicians have exhausted the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina for almost 22 years. Out of rage and despair, those who have been forced to rummage through dustbins to survive, and to give bribes for basic services, have finally stood up to demand change.

The plenums have given citizens a forum to vent their anger at the everyday terror they endure. That is, the worker who has not been paid for almost four years but is forced to go to work every day, with no health benefits, or has to watch his wife die in agony because he cannot afford healthcare. The student who was forced to give huge bribes or sell her body to pass an exam. The woman whose son was severely beaten by the police because he took part in a street protest, and who came to the plenum at Tuzla and asked her son to show his bruises to the gathering of more than 700 people.

For 22 years, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina who survived the war were told that they faced a shapeless future and the best they could hope for was to get by, to put up with it and be grateful if their children were offered work in American military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For 22 years, the "transition to democracy" has not prevented the raping and killing of mentally and physically abused women, men and children. Since the end of the war in 1995, instead of mourning their horrific losses, Bosnian citizens have been forced, by local and international figures alike, to accept that they can only speak and act if they embrace the status of victims, off the backs and bodies of whom the ethnically divided elites can get rich.

The recent protests have created, for the first time, an opportunity to move from melancholia to mourning, to face the losses and start counting the gains from the war. Ours is a life that has survived war and genocide, but has been brutalized by the corrupt privatisation of public companies; a life that now only dreams of fleeing the country to avoid dying in solitude and hunger. This is the life we have to reclaim. We have to create more humane ties, and a society that offers our young people a future. I am part of this life and every day I remind myself to get up and go to the streets to protest because this is our only hope.

Pictures







Alen Alić
photography



Alen Alić
photography











photo by Edmond Ibrahim



EDMOND IBRAHIMI



FOTOGRAFIJE

