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CHRONICLE No.9

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA AND TERRORISM.

Observing Bosnia and Herzegovina in this time of transition, in great economic crisis, various political and economic turbulence and period of hunger and poverty - we can notice links between Bosnia and Herzegovina and certain types of terrorism and terrorist organizations. It is difficult to say that any country in the world is not linked with some kind of terrorism, and therefore B&H is not immune to this sort of violence and political influence.

After the dissolution of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ)¹, and after the first democratic elections in B&H, nationalist parties, whose key objective were to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina, came to power. When all of the political options for some kind of division of B&H by the nationalist parties were exhausted, governments of our neighboring countries were supported greatly with political and all kinds of actions and the war in B&H started. Some call this war the civil war or national war, some call it a religious war, and some call it aggression, but because the influence by the neighboring countries (in particular Croatia and Serbia) on the war was aggression.

The war was generally conducted by three sides (Serbian, Croatian and Bosniak). There were three military formations: **B&H Army**² - which fought for the entire B&H, and whose members were mostly Bosniaks. Then **HVO**³ (Croatian Defense Council), members were citizens of Croatian nationality, with the aim for the creation of territory with the Croatian majority, largely from Herzegovina, central and northern Bosnia. Third side was comprised by members of the **Army of the Republic of Srpska**⁴, members of this army were Serbian nationality, and whose aim was the creation of the Republic of Srpska, separation Srpska from B&H, and annexation of B&H to Serbia within the Great Serbian politics called Great Serbia. Everybody fought against everyone.

The Bosniak side, was the B&H Army, and was also the weakest when it comes to weapons and other material assets, at one point of four-year war decided to introduce mercenary fighters, mostly from Arab countries. Thus, during the four-year war in B&H in B&H Army, several units were established. Members of those units were mostly mercenaries from Arab countries under the command of the Army of B&H. Bringing those new foreign mercenaries will have a great impact on the many negative things in B&H which happened in the last 15 years when it comes to terrorism and lessening of secularism within B&H.

One of the best known units of Army of B&H consisted of foreign mercenaries was **El Mujahid**⁵.

¹ http://bs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socijalisti%C4%8Dka_federativna_republika_Jugoslavija

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

³ http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hrvatsko_vije%C4%87e_obrane

⁴ http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vojska_Republike_Srpske

⁵ http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Mud%C5%BEahid

El Mujahid (Arabic: الجهاد) was the unit of the Army of Republic of B&H, and it was consisted of mujahedeen, foreigners and Bosnian Muslims. It was established on August, 13th of 1993, under the command of General Rasim Delic. It was the part of third corps of Army of Republic of B&H, and fought against Croatian and Serbian forces during the war in B&H. The El Mujahid it is known for its deeds committed during the wars.



It is undisputed that the other two sides, during the war, had also foreign mercenaries in their units, but the impact of mercenaries like El Mujahid members was more visible and obvious on the increase of the violence and terrorism in B&H after war.

INTRODUCTION OF WAHHABI (SALAFI) MOVEMENT IN B&H AND REFLECTION OF THIS MOVEMENT TO THE EU INTEGRATION

After the war, many Arab mercenaries, members of the El Mujahid unit, decided to continue to live in B&H. They had the great help from the ruling parties in B&H, especially those from the Federation B&H entity. Together with their religious counterparts they established a few locations to live on (Gornja Maoca⁶ and some parts of Krajina), where they will practice their religion and live according to the Salafi teaching.

Salafi⁷ - preaching of Islamic Monotheism, or tahwid, and taking some knowledge from Ibn Taymiyyah, who was Syrian scholar that lived in 14th century. Salafism is fundamentally in conflict with Sufism and Shia Islam, which they consider to be heretics. Salafi theology advocates puritanical and legal view on matters of faith and religious practice. They believe that their task is to bring Islam to the state it was during the time of Prophet and his caliphs. They want to throw out all of the novelties, deviation and heresy in Islam.

Greater stratification within Salafism are not known except that in recent times other Islamic groups, that are using the name of reformer and scientist Muhammad ibn Abdul Vehab, are consider Salafis to be Vahhabis.

Vahhabism⁸ is the movement that is named after its founder Muhammad ibn Abdul Vehab that lived in 18th century. Abdul Vehab was educated under the auspices of Sunni Islam and studied the Fiqh Hanbali School. However, whenever he noticed a discrepancy, he would turn to that law school, that in his opinion had more correct opinion. This movement is dominant in Saudi Arabia.

In B&H there are an adequate number of believers who accept the Abdul Vehab's opinions, but they do not accept the term "Vahhabi". They rather call themselves Salafis.

Salafis from B&H, during the time from the end of the war until present, were often brought in connection with many terrorist groups, specifically al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda cells in Sandzak, Serbia and Austria, as well as with members of the Islamic state in Syria.

⁶http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gornja_Mao%C4%8Da

⁷http://bs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravci_u_islamu#Selefizam

⁸<http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vehabizam>

Al-Qaeda⁹ (Arabic **القاعدة** - **al-Qaeda**, "base") is the name of an international alliance of Islamic terrorist organizations. It was founded by the Arab mujahedeen volunteers who during the 80s went in Afghanistan to fight against the forces of USSR. The obvious leaders of the organization are Saudi **Osama bin Laden**¹⁰ and Egyptian **Ayman al Zawahiri**¹¹.

Al Qaeda is responsible for many serious terrorist attacks; such is the attack that happened on September 11th of 2001. After that attack USA starts the war against terrorism which essentially weakens and forces their members from Afghanistan. After that event Al Qaeda is reorganizing and is getting ready for new attacks. Although many state governments consider Al Qaeda a terrorist organization, some consider that Al Qaeda is an alliance fighting for freedom of its people and against occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Salafis (Wahhabis) and their followers are having the frequent conflicts with the democratic authorities in B&H as well as with representatives from the Islamic community. The main reason for these conflicts, happening from the first years of the peace, is their learning and understanding of the Quran. These conflicts often led to extreme situations and violence, sometimes even to terrorist actions.

Terrorist activities closely related to Salafis (Wahhabis) from B&H are:

- The terrorist attack at a hypermarket and police station in Bugojno, when the member of the Salafi, Haris Causevic, detonated an explosive device in the grocery store and killed one police officer, wounded another police officer, and material damage made has never been determined¹².



- The attack on the US Embassy in Sarajevo. Member of the Wahhabi movement Mevlid Jasarevic¹³ (23) from Novi Pazar was wounded after he attacked the Embassy of USA in the B&H capital. Armed with Kalashnikov, shooting around, he wounded one police officer. It is speculated that he had one or more helpers during this attack.

⁹ <http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Kaida>

¹⁰ http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osama_bin_Laden

¹¹ http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayman_al-Zawahiri

¹² <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/B&H-u-eksploziji-poginuo-policajac.html>

¹³ <http://www.jutarnji.hr/tko-je-mevlid-jasarevic--napadac-na-ambasadu-sad-a/983917/>



- Attacks on members and residents of other nations and religions, such as murder of the Andelic family in 2002 by members of the Wahhabi movement. Muamer Topalovic¹⁴ was accused of committing this crime and sentenced to 35 years in prison for committing a triple murder for religious and ethnic reasons.

DEPARTURE OF B&H CITIZENS TO WAR IN SYRIA

Lately the Salafi movement in B&H is often associated with collecting the fighters (volunteers) for the departure in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan to fight on the side of Islamic state, which was declared to be the terrorist organization by many countries in the world.

The Islamic state, formerly known as the **Islamic state of Iraq and Levant (ISIL)**, or **Islamic state of Iraq and Shama (ISIS)**¹⁵, is internationally unrecognized state and Jihad group active in the area of Iraq and Syria.

This group is described by the United Nations as a terrorist group and it was defined as a terrorist organization by USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. United Nations and Amnesty International accused this group for severe human rights violation.



Area of the territory of the self-proclaimed Islamic state

Director of the Intelligence and Security Agency (ISA), Almir Dzuvo, sent a report to B&H Council of Ministries. This report contains data on B&H citizens who are at the battlefields in Syria. There is also data regarding 200 B&H citizens who resided in recent years or still are in the war zone in Syria.

It is not yet known whether the highest state officials will soon have a meeting in order to finally take a stand on this global threat, which is judging by the lack of official reaction, still a taboo topic in B&H.

¹⁴ <http://www.hercegovina.info/tags/index/muamer-topalovic>

¹⁵ http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamska_Dr%C5%BEava_Iraka_i_Levanta

The data from the ISA report according to Council of ministers is:

- 200 citizens of B&H have so far visited Syria
- 100 B&H citizens are still in Syria
- 28 B&H citizens were killed in the last 3 years in Syria (27 men, one woman)
- 40 citizens of B&H returned to B&H from Syria¹⁶

B&H SOCIETY IN OPPOSITION TO GLOBAL TERRORISM- STATE OF SECURITY

Government's lack of interest for the growing threat of terrorism by Islamic state is disturbing and somewhat surprising. This terrorism is directed towards Europe and America. The connection between B&H and Islamic state is growing.

"The issue of the fight against terrorism is not at the local level. You cannot hermetically seal Sarajevo and say: I don't care for others. However, it is essential for security agencies to cooperate. The situation was getting better after the 27th February of 2014, but security space is still really fragmented. We have so many different agencies, but we still have a lot of problems. The state must provide material and technical support. Unfortunately, there is no one to understand you here. They do not understand that the issue of security is not just issue of the police agencies; it considers all levels of government and all citizens. However, one year after, not a single conclusion of the Sarajevo canton assembly for the creation of assumptions for efficient work of cantonal police has been realized. A unanimous decision was made to acquire specialized equipment. The deadline was- immediately¹⁷".

Recently a growing mobilization of the B&H police forces has been noted, which in collaboration with the American FBI work to prevent these types of activities in connection with the Islamic state as well as the arrest of members of the Salafi movements that are suspected to be associated with the mobilization of volunteers who go to fight for the Islamic State.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), based on suspicion of providing money and equipment to the Islamic state's terrorist, arrested Ramiz Zijad Hodzic (40), his wife Sedina Unkic-Hodzic (35), Armin Karacevic (37). All three of them are US citizens. Others accused of this crime are Nihad Rosic (26), Mediha Salkicevic (34), and Jasminka Ramic (42), who all residing in US as a foreigners.

All of them are associated with Ramo Pazara, born in Teslic in northern Bosnia. Pazara died during the fall of 2014, in the battlefield in Syria, near the small town Kobane, where tough battles between terrorists and Kurdish forces occurred. The investigators suspect that hundreds of young men were recruited for warfare in Syria and Iraq by Pazara¹⁸.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and its connections with terrorist organizations is frequently a topic for foreign media. In the last few weeks some German media wrote about Vahhabi and Salafi camps in Gornja Maoca.

„B&H is the largest recruitment center of the Islamic state in Europe. Experts estimate that thousands of fighters from the entire region of the Western Balkans went to Syria and Iraq. Among those people are Bosniaks who in the meantime have Austrian, Serbian and German citizenships. The most important center for their recruitment is Gornja Maoca"-, writes Tagesspiegel - noting that several people were arrested in December during the raid conducted in the village. „Members of the SIPA searched the village again in February, because of the speculation that there is a terrorist camp surrounding the area. Many

¹⁶ *Slobodna Bosna, br.949, 15.01.2015*

¹⁷ *(Nermin Pećanac MUP of Sarajevo Kanton, source: DANI, br.918, 16.01.2015)*

¹⁸ <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/fbi-i-sipa-istrazuju-veze-izmedju-B&H-i-islamske-drzave/800379.aspx>

residents of Gornja Maoca are followers of ultraconservative interpretation of Islam which is spread in Saudi Arabia. Even after the war this kind of Islam interpretation remained in B&H, because thousands of mujahedeen came from North Africa, Middle East to fight on the Bosnian Muslim's side. After the war in B&H many Islamist enclave were created, because of the many foreign jihadists who remained in the country. Many mujahedins brought their combat experience from Afghanistan. Among them were members of Al Qaeda who were sent to B&H by Osama bin Laden. In August of 1993 they created a unit called "el Mujahedeen".¹⁹

Some politicians are little more engaged in revealing connections between Islamic state and B&H. One of them is Mirsad Kebo, the former vice president of Federation of B&H. He delivered over thousands of pages containing evidences about connections between B&H and Islamic state to the police, as well as the connections between political structures and mujahedeen in B&H.²⁰

That is the main reason why many Bosniaks are accusing him of being a traitor. Mirsad says: I have never criticized the Army of B&H. I am talking about crimes committed by foreign Islamist during the war against civilians. Mirsad Kebo during the last few weeks changed his side. he said he no longer wanted to watch his former party comrades from the Bosniak - conservative party SDA exploiting the country and moving it away from Europe. He claims that before the war in 1992. there were no Islamists. According to him Bosnian Islam is tolerant and part of the Europe.²¹

ISLAMIC COMMUNITY AND THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM

Relationship between Islamic community and terrorism is strange and indifferent. It seems that they ignore any connections between B&H and Islamic state and Wahhabi - Salafi movement in B&H.

Any type of concrete manifestation of this subject is usually deducted and it is justified by the fact that people are condemned and persecuted only because they are Bosnian Muslims. While the other two sides (Croatian and Serbian) are not persecuted, even with the obvious existence of Ravnogorski and Ustaski movement in B&H which are directly related to religious and ethnic intolerance.

Obvious examples for this are attacks on the Imam Jamaat of Trnovo, Selvedin ef. Beganovic²². He publicly wrote against sending B&H citizens to battlefields in Syria. He publicly labeled Bilal Bosnic, whom he describes as one of the organizers of sending volunteers to jihad in Iraq and Syria. Beganovic was attacked three times because of his statements and his life was threatened. It is the matter of time when will his closest family members be attacked with the tragic consequences.

Except for a few condemnations of those attacks by local religious Islamic officials, not a single senior official from Islamic community condemned the attacks on Imam Beganovic. Reis Kavazovic office sent a press release in which they accuse police bodies and their inefficiency to find the perpetrators of these heinous attacks. This shows that there is some kind of a silent endorsement of the Wahhabi - Salafi movement by the Islamic community in B&H.

¹⁹ <http://tuzla.danas.info/2015/03/09/B&H-jedan-od-najvecih-regrutnih-centara-islamista-u-evropi/>

²⁰ <http://ekstremno.net/mirsad-kebo-za-banjalucki-atv-izjavio-bosnjaci-su-teroristi-i-krivi-su-za-rat/>

²¹ <http://tuzla.danas.info/2015/03/09/B&H-jedan-od-najvecih-regrutnih-centara-islamista-u-evropi/>

²² http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selvedin_Beganovi%C4%87

YOUTH IN B&H AND TERRORISM

As well as for all of the events in B&H (elections, social and economic, political situation in the country), B&H youth are not interested in the issue of global terrorism either. The inferiority of youth in B&H takes on more chronic indications for all of the events; therefore it is no wonder that they have a lack of interest for terrorism, Wahhabi- Salafi movement in B&H, or sending volunteers to Syria and Iraq. Apart from a few NGOs that involve youth and their attempts to inform and animate citizens about these problems, overall picture of awareness among young people is very worrying.

HOW TO KEEP UP?

The future of terrorism in B&H is neither known nor clear. The economic and social situation in B&H, as well as national and religious intolerance in this country creates a very fertile ground for even greater radicalization of extremist groups, so the escalation of terrorism on all sides is very possible. If we add to this problem that every man in this country is more and more forced to ask for his human rights using extreme ways, individual actions which as a result would have disastrous consequences with great human and material losses are not impossible.

If the authorities in B&H don't find ways to improve economic and social situation in the country and if they don't make a plan on how to control or destroy extremist terrorist groups in B&H, the worse situations will appear in which more innocent will die. Because when everything is added up, the most responsible for this situation and the growth of terrorism in B&H are those who participated in the government in the last 30-35 years. Many of them have been the authorities for all of this time.

Mario Vranjes

Tuzla, April 2015.



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ADDITION:

SIPA: There are 80 B&H citizens in Syria at war



State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) contains operational information on the outbreak of armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq. There is 150- 200 Bosnian citizens living in Syria and Iraq, it was confirmed for "Dnevni Avaz".

Multiple departures

Compared with data from the end of the last year, it is evident that this number is increased.

But it is not known whether the reason for this increased number is more accurate information or the greater number of departures of Bosnian citizens to the place where terrorist organizations of Islamic state are at war.

The agency has knowledge that there is 70-80 Bosnian citizens currently taking a part in armed conflicts on this battlefield says Kristina Jozic, the spokesperson of SIPA, adding that it is about operating data that is changeable.

When it comes to the number of casualties, the latest data of State Prosecution show that nearly 30 people were killed in direct combat on Syria battlefield. The police structures of B&H believe that this number is much higher, because of many young Bosnians where is not known that they are on the battlefields in Syria, nor their families have any information on where they are.

Part of the coalition

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a part of global coalition in the fight against the terrorists of Islamic state. SIPA has recently formed special team for the fight against terrorism. This team will closely collaborate with partner agencies in B&H and countries in this region. Because of the public recruitment for terrorist activities, there is trial for Bilal Bosnic taking place in State Court. Bilal is an unofficial leader of the Vahhabi in B&H, while operating data of SIPA are showing that one of the most wanted terrorists in the world, Nusret Imamovic, is still on the battlefield in Syria.

There are five Bosnian citizens currently at war in Ukraine

On the Ukrainian front, according to SIPA, there are a total of five Bosnian citizens, but also the data is of variable character and is also believed that this number is much higher. It is the volunteers who are fighting on the side of pro-Russian forces.²³

Terrorist form B&H are a great threat to Italy, Vatican and the Pope?!



Black flags so-called Islamic states are fluttering across Bosnia; just steps away from Italy and far away from Libya. The considered to be "a potential candidate" for the EU membership share a long, poorly guarded border with Croatia which is an EU member since 2013.

It is estimated that in the heart of the Balkans, we have about 3,000 Salafi extremists close to the this border, not counting the many who went to "jihad" in Syria and Iraq- states in his analysis Thomas D. Williams, theologian, writer, consultant, international lecturer and professor at the Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum in Rome, one of the most important institutes of the Catholic Church, who one time was a spokesman for the American Synod and the local Bishops' Conference.

Terrorist litter

Professor Williams says that the Balkans is "a special concern of the Italian government" due to geographic proximity and historical ties with radical Islam. He recalls that last week Italian Special Forces carried out the final stage of anti-terrorist operation called "Balkan ties", which dismantled a terrorist cell called Islamic state in northern Italy which had ties with Albania.

During this operation two Albanians were arrested Elvis Elezi and Elmadhi Halili for recruitment of terrorists on the "Balkan route", and for spreading of radical Islamic propaganda.

- Bosnia is no exception when it comes to threats of foreign jihadist militants. Geographical proximity, fragile system of the law and a deep economic crisis are the elements which are warning us to be caution. The Italian government is aware of this threat and operates on two levels: security level and European prospective of the country- states Williams, by Rugger Corrias, the Italian Ambassador in Sarajevo, adding that according to the estimates of our government there is around 160 of our citizens struggling or fighting in the ranks of

²³ <http://tuzla.danas.info/2015/03/29/sipa-u-siriji-ratuje-80-bh-drzavljana/>

the so-called Islamic countries, while American intelligence estimates that there is more than 340.

This Vatican professor remind us of so-called Islamic states which are fluttering across Central Bosnia, stating that they are similar to those under which jihadists from the terrorist organizations of Al Nusra Front are fighting. This front is close to the Al Qaeda which operates in Syria and Lebanon and specializes in suicide attacks. For some villages like Gornja Maoca it is stated that "Europe has never put its roots there". Nusret Imamovic, who is on the US list of global terrorists of al-Qaeda operatives, lives in Gornja Maoca.

- I'm not happy about the loss of my son, but his death was the will of Allah. If Allah decides that his two brothers went to Syria, I cannot say "no"- words of Hamdo Fojnica, whose son Emrah was released of all charges for helping Mevlid Jasarevic in the attack in 2011 on the building of the US Embassy in Sarajevo and who after his release went to the front in Iraq, where he was killed in a suicide attack.

There is also Velika Kladusa, which is home to the radical Islamic preacher Bilal Bosnic who is on trial for recruiting fighters in the ranks of the so-called Islamic state.- I am convinced that they will conquer Rome. You do not understand that the real danger is closer than Libya. It is not a threat only for Bosnia, but also for Italy and Europe - said Esad Ećimović, Sarajevo journalist who is dealing with the issue of Islamic extremism for two decades.

Europe is afraid of Muslims

In addition to this professor of theology and a regular commentator on Italian and international television stations including NBC, CBS and Sky News, several Italian / Vatican media were involved in yesterday security situation in our country, and all on the occasion of the visit of Pope Francis to Sarajevo on June the 6th.

Il Giornale published the interview with Cardinal Vinko Puljic in which he states that "Europe is afraid of Muslims" and how Europe is sensitive regarding the rights of religious minorities, but also according to him "Europe forgets its basis, its foundations: its Christian roots and culture".

Cardinal Puljic: This country does not function

Europe is afraid of Muslims, said the Archbishop and Metropolitan Vinko Puljic in an interview with Il Giornale. Cardinal Puljic said that Europe is sensitive to the rights of religious minorities. - But today's Europe forgets its basics, its foundations: its Christian roots and culture - said Puljic. Commenting on the upcoming visit of Pope Francis June 6 our country, the cardinal said that our country has not yet reached a stable peace after years of conflict.

This state does not function - Puljic said. He added that the Catholic population in B&H have almost halved with 820,000 prior to about 430,000 after the war. - Catholics were subject to discrimination. Only a little of European investment that should have help rebuilding a destroyed nation was given to the Catholics - Puljic said.

The chair for the Pope

Italian media reports these days the story of a Muslim family in Bosnia, Edin and Salem Hajderovic from Zavidovici who made a special chair made of walnut on which will sit the Pope Francis in Sarajevo. Until this day these carpenters made various religious souvenirs for Međugorje and for many tekkes and mosques in B&H. Let us remind ourselves that the entire project is funded by the parishes of St. Joseph of Zavidovici whose pastor Miro Beslic

states that the parish with their believers is financing the creation of this chair, as well as the numerous donations of people with good will from all over B&H and the world.²⁴

²⁴ <http://tuzla.danas.info/2015/04/01/teroristi-iz-B&H-prijetnja-italiji-vatikanu-i-papi/>