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Bosnia & Herzegovina Chronicle 3: JMBG¹ – Cause or consequence of long term political instability in B&H?

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Case:

All children born in B&H after 12th February this year don't have possibility to obtain JMBG, and thus can't obtain any documents. Problem occurred after constitutional court B&H revoked the law on JMBG.

JMBG system was conceived in the early 1980 in EX Yugoslavia, in order to simplify administrative affairs. Basic of this system is simple: there is a need to have unique and unrepeatable number for each citizen, this way there would be no misunderstanding about person's identity (day, month – two numbers, year of birth – three numbers, code of city/republic/ or region – two numbers, gender – two numbers and control number – from two numbers). On 12th February this year constitutional court B&H decided that these JMBG numbers need to be adjusted according to the constitution. This doesn't concerns Republic of Srpska and Sarajevo canton, they are issuing temporary numbers, it concerns the rest of the B&H, two girls badly sick couldn't receive passport to go for medical treatment abroad.

B&H parliament and its parliamentarians five months after that, because of their negligence and inter political conflicts, were not been able to pass the JMBG law, and thus they have left B&H newly born children without this most important document. Casualty of this situation, a month and a half year old baby Berina Hamidovic died because she could go abroad to receive medical treatment.²

Little girl Berina succeeded were nobody could, she united citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina thousands of B&H citizens went to streets and gathered in front of B&H parliament to express their dissatisfaction with the parliament work.

Civil protests in Sarajevo in the beginning of June caused even bigger political instability in our country. Members of B&H parliament from Republic of Srpska refused to continue with their work, as they put it, fear for their safety and lack of security. This is a clear expression of their negligence toward our citizens which have elected them and gave them power.

They didn't even try to solve political crisis and chaos in our country or at least reduce problems by doing their work – voting for this law.

"If they have any shame or at least some conscience, politicians in the B&H parliament should resign their positions after the death of baby Berina Hamidovic"

Wave of demonstrations occurred through Bosnia and Herzegovina. After Sarajevo, public display of discontent with authorities spread to Banja Luka, Mostar, Zenica Tuzla and the rest of the cities. Protests begun because of the inactivity and irresponsibility of the authorities to finally pass the law on unique identification number, but they have been expanded by the other numerous requests for the better work of the government.

"We are coming from Banja Luka to support Sarajevo and all B&H. Actually we have come to show our protest against horrors and discrimination, against ethnic divisions and all those horrors given to us by those who have fled this building and went to their homes, but they have collected their honorariums and their salaries, and now in their mouse holes they fear what will happen to them. Nothing will happen to them, because we just want to raise our voice peacefully" said one of the protest participants from Banja Luka.

¹ Unique identification number shorten JMBG is identification number issued to all newborn babies in SFRJ (Social Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) since 1976. All citizens born before 1976 received the number according to their regions in which they have lived. This number is still in use in the newly formed states of former SFRJ

² <http://www.euronews.com/2013/06/17/bosnians-mourn-baby-victim-of-political-wrangling/>



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It is extremely important fact that many participants of the protests see how ethnic divisions are one of the biggest problems in B&H, and how based on ethnic division biggest pillage is conducted by the ruling political elites and they have been using this method for a very long time.

If protestors manage to raise these demonstrations on higher level, protests could gain on magnitude in future. There is no doubt that situation in B&H is "ripe" for joined resistance of all its inhabitants from all ethnic backgrounds in B&H. The notes of these protests have everything that is meaningful in the context of this struggle.



"JMBG" (unique identification citizen's number) has become a symbol that unites all of us across the country.

These days another symbol (Gezi Park) drew out on to the streets hundreds of thousands in Turkey, maybe something similar can happen – or it is already happening – in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In any case, these are positive news showing us that taboo of solidarity protest is present in Balkan region, with the potential of spreading.

Domestic politicians and foreign bankers have been blocked in the B&H institutions, ten thousands of people protesting on the streets of Sarajevo, hundreds and thousands of others protesting in the cities across B&H. Discontent has been accumulating since the end of the 90's, when last optimist realized that we will not have a better life and rule of law in our country. Last drop which spilled the glass was not passing the law on JMBG, thus endangering the lives and health of our youngest citizens.

B&H politicians, accustomed to peaceful inactivity and fast accumulation of wealth, in disbelief in front of the spontaneous uprising of the people, which we in the era after the war in B&H haven't witnessed, are giving panic statements these last few days, false information, and in already tested way are trying to disperse interethnic hate among people.

CAUSES:

This problem of not passing the law on unique identification citizens number in any case was just a „trigger“ for the people of B&H to go in to the streets (same as Gezi park in Turkey, or „Picin Park“ in Banja Luka³) are not the cause. Causes are to be searched in much deeper meaning.

Deep political crisis, poor economy, slow consolidation of the market compared with the surrounding countries, are just some of the characteristics of the present B&H. Because of the deep divisions and more and more complicated political crisis B&H which is slowing progressing to the EU membership.

Pessimism with this condition has been expressed in the recent European commission report in which among other things is said: “EU is not expecting that this crisis in Federation B&H will be solved any time soon” and it is doubtful that we will see some positive changes from the new Republic Srpska government with the new president Zeljka Cvijanovic.

“Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is dramatic. We are witnessing maybe most important historic moment in our country after the war. What everybody fears is misuse of discontent masses which is very easy to manipulate. It is its basic characteristic”.

What is interesting is that people didn't go on the streets because of the poor economic situation, but because of the law that prevents issuing documents to children. When we talk about economy, last year in B&H there was a drop of 0,5 percentage in comparison with 2012 when despite global economy crisis went up one percentage.

Special EU commissioner for expansion Stefan Fuele described recent situation in B&H as very bad, not even giving estimate deadline when B&H could finally become full time EU member. “B&H political, economic, social, ideological blockade lies in schizophrenic double faced country structure. Federal government would prefer to abolish itself, from practical and ideological aspect. RS government is living mythical image of some secession and lonely life in Nazi Piemont, which is pure fantasy”, says Dragan Bursac, journalist and analyst from Banja Luka.

“B&H is as we can see at total collapse. Government has shown itself as totally incompetent and uninterested to solve basic problems of our citizens, they have blocked institutions with their petty party interests, and all under the mask of “vital national interests”, says Ivana Korajlic from Transparency International.

“Persistently story goes on that we need OHR and international community to meddle in our decisions, but reality is that our government is incompetent to make responsible decisions on itself, furthermore we still need a policeman from a side who will make it happen in the last minute. Considering all of this, discontent of our citizens which has culminated is tried to be presented as inter-ethnic conflict and as a evidence that “Sarajevo is not safe” (whatever that means), because it is always easier to raise inter-ethnic tensions and agitate conflicts thus diverting public eye from real problems, then really take responsibility for irresponsibility for not making decisions, functionality of institutions and all of these credits that we now have to pay”.



Unlike past years, international community at least not openly is meddling in the functionality of the government. Last example is assembly of the PIC (counsel for the peace implementation) when it was said that Valentin Inzko will not enforce the law on JMBG. Inzko explained that PIC decided that our government needs to find solution for this problem on a state level.

How will this situation will develop, we still don't know (like everything else in B&H). Demonstrators have given to our parliamentarian's deadline till end of June to pass the JMBG law. B&H parliamentarians don't want to come to Sarajevo on the parliament assembly because of the “security reasons”. Holiday season is near. We don't know how many more babies will day because they don't have JMBG and passports and can go outside country. At the beginning of July Croatia is entering EU, so B&H with its problems and crisis becomes hostage to its problems, isolated and lonely.

Sociologist and political analyst Zlatko Hadziabdic said that the protests in B&H are beginning of the civil society awakening. Civil protests in B&H are not finished. They are continuing.

On Monday 1st July at exactly 10.00 am in front of the B&H parliament in Sarajevo started new protests, mass protest of B&H citizens, they all were carrying signs with drawings of politicians from all parties, over their faces was a note “resign”.

³ <http://www.6yka.com/novost/25588/picin-park-otimaju-se-nove-parcele-i-prijeti-se-novinarima>

To the citizens of Sarajevo many people from Zenica, Mostar, Zivinice Gradacac and other cities have joined, as well as workers from some companies: Konjuh, Dita, Feroelektra and others.

Organizers of this symbolic action "Resign" have announced symbolic handling of demission's to our parliamentarians which haven't passed the law on JMBG, and they have invited citizens not buy or pay anything, and that month of July should be a month of civil disobedience, to postpone paying bills and tickets, in short not to fill budget and to deny our political elites their power – money.

"Resign" is action which will show that true power belongs to us. In our pockets we have power. One of our KM (convertible mark) is power. We don't want to give these danglers even that one mark. Come in front of the B&H parliament, and in all our cities. Come out and give them dismissal because they have endangered children, because they don't respect the voice of citizens, because they are using it to provide themselves privileges, because they have long forgotten for who they work for, because they don't respect the hand that feeds them, because they are responsible for the catastrophe we are in" says the official notice of this action.

And for the end we will mention the names of people who are representing us in the B&H parliament (information taken from the web portal: <http://www.regija.ba/contents/4471>)

Representatives in the house of the representatives:

Babalj Darko (SDS), Djugum Mirsad (SBBiH), Fazlic Amir (SDA), Kusljagic Mirza (SDP), Lozancic Niko (HDZ), Hadziahmetović Azra (SDA), Belkic Beriz (SBBiH), Ljubic Bozo (HDZ 1990), Sarajlic Asim (SDA), Bosic Mladen (SDS), Pandurevic Aleksandra (SDS), Dzaferović Sefik (SDA), Magazinovic Sasa (SDP)... total 42 of them.

Delegates in house of peoples

Becirovic Hasan (SDP), Ivanic Mladen (PDP), Kristo Borjana (HDZ), Tadic Ognjen (SDS), Bradaric Mehmed (SDP), Kapetanovic Nermina (SDA), Raguz Martin (HDZ 1990), Sulejman Tihic (SDA), Covic Dragan (HDZ), Kosarac Stasa (SNSD), Rodic Dragutin (DNS), Vrdoljak Krunoslav (SDP), Genjac Halid (SDA), Kresic Stjepan (HSP) i Simic Krstan (SNSD).

Miralem Tursinovic

Mirjana Stamenkovic - Tursinovic