



YUCOM

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Human Rights and Democracy Violation Early Warning *Weekly Newsletter* No. 13

1. The *Democratic Party* (DS) held a Main Board session on June 7 to discuss the developments after the May 11 elections and elaborate the Party's strategy for the forthcoming negotiations to form a new government. DS President **Boris Tadić** – who is simultaneously President of the Republic of Serbia – demanded and acquired his Party's full endorsement to conduct the negotiations relating to the formation of a new Government, including "the authorization to decide on personnel issues concerning future cabinet ministers", a DS press release stated. Almost a month after the election, the DS has not yet nominated its own candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

In addition to this, that session will be remembered after **Mr. Tadić's** further elaboration of his favorite subject of "national reconciliation"¹: the President argued that agreement on a joint future is possible only if his Party and the *Socialist Party of Serbia* (SPS) both "forget about the past". He went on to say that the DS and the SPS were faced with the fact that the leaders² of both parties were "not among them" and that both had "their pain".

This session of the *Democratic Party's* highest body between two congresses represents another opportunity missed to outline and discuss the priorities of a DS-led future government": other than reiterating what boils down to a lip service to a "socially responsible pro-European Government", the delegates did not venture to step out of the safe grounds of loyalty to the party line and obedience to their leader.

¹ See EWS Newsletter 11, page 3, #6.

² This equation between **Slobodan Milošević** (who needs no introduction) and Prime Minister **Zoran Djindjić** who was assassinated by a Lt. Colonel of **Milošević's State Security Service**, provoked a wave of protests by political organizations, groups and outstanding individuals known for their opposition to the latter's policy of war in the Balkans and autocratic rule in Serbia itself.





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2. According to official data issued by the Interior Ministry, 1.138,590 adult inhabitants of Serbia possess firearms. Another study, published recently in Geneva, suggests that there are 38 weapons per 100 inhabitants in Serbia, whereas the *South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons* (SEESAC) estimates the quantity of light weapons in Serbia at 3 million: 1.1 million are licensed, 900,000 illegal³, and the remaining million possessed by the armed forces, police and several thousand private security companies⁴.

These disturbing statistics point at two acute problems burdening Serbia's present condition:

- inadequate and deficient legislation on possession, carriage and usage of weapons, as well as fairly mild sanctions against trespassers, represent a favorable environment for the reproduction of this problem in a society traumatized by recent wars;
- the heritage of war – expressed in the omnipresent violence as once the dominant form of behavior in today's Serbia – appears to be a phenomenon to be dealt with within the context of the desperately needed modernization of Serbian society.

3. After the disgraceful outburst of homophobia and attack on LGBT population in a column of *Politika*⁵, a protest of more than twenty NGOs was published as a reader's letter (!) in the daily on June 3. It was followed June 4 by an editorial signed by Editor-in-Chief **Lj. Smajlović**, which contains an apology and self-criticism for the views expressed in the said column.

4. In submitting the ICTY regular progress report, its Chief Prosecutor told the UN Security Council in New York that the arrest of four remaining fugitives indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity remained the key challenge. **Serge Brammertz** also said that Serbian authorities could reach them, and could do more to arrest the war crimes suspects. "In addition to that, there has been no evident progress in this critical area of cooperation in the past six months," **Brammertz** said, and added that the explanation of the authorities in Belgrade was "political instability in Serbia".

³ Military sources in Belgrade estimate the number of illegally owned weapons at 2 million. Their view deserves credence since the Army is normally expected to account for the difference in their weapons' stocks before and after the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

⁴ Prof. **Zoran Dragišić** of the Belgrade *Security Faculty* underlines that there is still no law that would regulate the work of these companies (his estimate: 40,000), most of them licensed to carry and use weapons.

⁵ See EWS Newsletter 12, page 1-2, #2.





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5. While composing their candidate lists for the May 11 parliamentary election in Serbia, all parties restricted themselves to nominating the exact number of women requested by law, which stipulates a female quota of 30%. However, the number of women to actually take seats in Parliament once it is constituted, will remain far under that: a total of 52 female deputies will represent 8 parties and coalitions in the 250 single-chamber *People's Assembly*:

Party/Coalition/Group	Women MPs
Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	15 of 78
For a European Serbia (ZES), of which:	25 of 102
- Democratic Party (DS)	18 of 65
- G17+	5 of 24
- League of Vojvodina Socialdemocrats (LSV)	2 of 5
- <i>Sandjak Democratic Party (SDP)</i>	0 of 4
- <i>Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO)</i>	0 of 4
<i>Democratic Party of Serbia/New Serbia (DSS/NS)</i>	7 of 30
<i>Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS/PUPS/JS)</i>	2 of 20
<i>Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)</i>	3 of 13
Hungarian Unity	1 of 4
List for a European Sanjak	0 of 2
Albanian Coalition (southern Serbia)	0 of 1

6. The Government of Serbia *Office for Human and Minority Rights (SLJMP)* was established in June 2006 to succeed the *Ministry for Human and Minority Rights* abolished together with the state union Serbia and Montenegro.

Two years on, organizations, institutions and experts in the field express serious misgivings as to the setup, competences, transparency and track record of this body. These criticisms were summed up by the *Center for the Development of Civil Society (CRCD)*:

a) SLJMP lags behind in initiating and accelerating the work on legislation relating to human and minority rights, especially in the field of national minorities' councils which are still operating out of any legal context;





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- b) SLJMP has shown no progress in facilitating communication between minorities' bodies and the authorities: the Government's *National Minorities Council* has met only once since its inception two years ago;
- c) As a matter of routine, SLJMP keeps failing to react to events relevant to its jurisdiction, such as the alteration of the election legislation which increased the number of signatures to support minorities' election lists from 3,000 to 10,000 etc;
- d) SLJMP still has no website, which, *inter alia*, seriously diminishes transparency in its work;
- e) SLJMP's practice of focusing on single issues – such as readmission of illegal aliens from EU-countries, or problems of the Roma community – leads to a neglect of a range of other burning problems in its realm.

Outlook:

The new Government of Serbia, likely to be installed as a product of a multi-faceted compromise between the *Democratic Party* (DS) and the *Socialist Party of Serbia* (SPS) can count with success in wrestling with countless problems accumulated over the years of the **Milošević** rule and hence only if there is sufficient political will to openly address the recent past instead of hushing it up for the sake of political harmony in the coalition.

