



YUCOM

---

Komitet pravika za ljudska prava / Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights  
17 Svetogorska Street, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia Tel/Fax: +381 11 33 44 235; 33 444 25; 3238 980  
e-mail [yucomoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yucomoffice@gmail.com)  
[www.yucom.org.yu](http://www.yucom.org.yu)

---

## Human Rights and Democracy Violation Early Warning *Weekly Newsletter* No. 22

### Radovana Karadžić's Arrest and Transfer to The Hague in the Media and Political Elites' Mirror

**Radovan Karadžić**, 1990s wartime leader of Bosnian Serbs indicted by the *International War Crimes Tribunal* (ICTY) in The Hague for genocide, extermination, murder and ethnic cleansing, was arrested in Serbia on Jul. 21, 2008. This arrest came as a gigantic surprise, having in mind that the second most wanted indictee General **Ratko Mladić** has been in the focus of attention whereas **Karadžić** seemed to have sunk in oblivion.

As soon as the news of the arrest was broken, two (out of seven) nationally broadcast TV channels -- *Fox* and *B92* -- interrupted their programs and started a dynamic live coverage that included news, comments and analyses. Other than a lapidary statement issued by the Office of the President, there was no official comment on the part of the Government or ruling political parties. On the other hand, sharp „patriotic“ statements came from opposition circles, whereas the state-run *Radio Television of Serbia* (RTS) continued its program after a two-hour delay by broadcasting a brief uncommented news -- based on hitherto experience, one would say they awaited instructions from „above“.

**Karadžić's** arrest was officially confirmed at a press conference held a day later: Minister **Rasima Ljajić**, Coordinator of the Action Team for the Cooperation with the ICTY, and **Vladimir Vukčević**, special War Crimes Prosecutor, read a statement, whereupon Minister **Ljajić** showed two photographs of **Karadžić** disguised in his new „identity“ as the obscure alternative medicine practitioner **Dragan David Dabić**. In substitute for denied answers to their questions, the photographs were offered to sensation-hungry journalists as a slick decoy: instead of focusing on a genocide indictee and atrocities he was charged with, public attention was diverted and the discourse turned into a banal soap opera where the most essential question was avoided – who has been hiding **Radovan Karadžić** or helping him hide thirteen years long?





YUCOM

---

Komitet pravnika za ljudska prava / Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights  
17 Svetogorska Street, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia Tel/Fax: +381 11 33 44 235; 33 444 25; 3238 980  
e-mail [yucomoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yucomoffice@gmail.com)  
[www.yucom.org.yu](http://www.yucom.org.yu)

---

**Ivica Dačić**, the new Interior Minister and President of **Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia** (SPS) hurried to stress that his Ministry has been involved in the arrest, thus rendering the official interpretation that "security services" -- without specifying whether it was the civilian BIA or one of the two military agencies: VBA and VOA -- had arrested **Karadžić**.

Parliamentary Committee for Security Affairs devoted a session to the arrest and adopted a statement that concludes that „security services located and arrested **Radovan Karadžić** in a lawful procedure which confirms Serbia's legal order and her determination to uphold international law". This step, too, was praised as „fulfillment of international obligations necessary to retain Kosovo and Metohija".

Apart from the fact that **Karadžić** was arrested, his cover identity (**D. D. Dabić**) and the insistence that the arrest was carried out by unidentified „security services" rather than the Interior Ministry, no other relevant facts have been made public – a decision which opened all gates to an unprecedented wave of speculations and manipulation.

It has remained disputable whether the arrest was made three days earlier -- on Jul. 18 -- although Justice Minister **Snežana Malović** confirmed July 21 when signing the indictee's transfer warrant prior to his flight to The Hague.

After the initial shock caused by the sensational information about the arrest, the way practically all media reported on the course of events demonstrated not only a deplorably low level of professionalism, but the fact that there is a large number of newspapers and magazines, radio and TV stations that engage in outright propaganda and practice blind servitude towards power centers under the label of journalism. Media poor professionalism blended with the spinned story of „the white magician **Dabić**„ led to a climate where war crimes **Karadžić** is accused of, and responsibility for helping him hide all these years, were overshadowed by a multitude of cheap stories and speculations about what cafes **Karadžić** had been frequenting<sup>1</sup>, what brand of water he had been drinking, how he had exercised meditation, who his lover had been... The media scene was (and still is) flooded with emotional statements by witnesses who had been meeting **Karadžić** and worked together with him. A whole range of expert in various fields are interviewed about the hardness of his character and his psychological profile. Belgrade journalist **Miša Brkić** was the first to point out that a new myth of a righteous loner was in creation, who was able to successfully hide for twelve years under a new identity, ostensibly without help and security, logistical and financial assistance and support and

---

<sup>1</sup> Symptomatically, **Karadžić's** favorite place was an illegally (!) erected restaurant called *Madhouse* (!!) in Novi Beograd, whose menu now features "Pancakes a la Radovan Karadžić"), numerous newspapers report.





protection. A weeks long full-fledged flood of largely uniform reports -- another argument to support the presumption that these texts are inspired in the same „cuisine“ -- **Karadžić's** brother, numerous journalists, psychologists and psychiatrists, experts (and „experts“) in security and other related matters, is aimed at making the new image of a person accused for gravest crimes against humanity convincing and acceptable. The Belgrade Danas daily carried a list of headlines featured in other newspapers, which only partially illustrate the tone and contents of such an approach:

- "The Kind Uncle Dabić"
- "He Invigorated Spermatozoa"
- "Radovan Seen with an Exceptionally Beautiful Woman"
- "It Took Them 45 Minutes to Cut Radovan's Hair"
- "Dr Dragan Dabić Hid Masterfully "
- "Radovan Fell in the Middle of Serbia! "
- "Even Two Lives Insufficient for Karadžić"
- "The Hague – A Conveyor of Death"
- "Karadžić: Please, Forgive Me for Dabić"

A number of so-called „serious“ electronic and print media under a direct or indirect stat control have not been immune to this line of reporting.

On the other hand, an extremely small number of observers -- such as Belgrade sociologist **Srećko Mihailović** – pointed at the „unbelievably big avalanche of media kitsch ... and unanimity in aapproach and contents“, whereby „many so-called analysts failed the test of morality and intelligence“ and „equalized a criminal with a genius or hero“.

Legal experts who gave their contribution to the explanation of the **Karadžić** case from that aspect give a special dimension to it. Notwithstanding numerous lawyers who unanimously and ardently portrayed **Karadžić** as a victim, the example of **Milan Škulić**<sup>2</sup>, PhD, a prominent jurist and Professor at the Belgrade University *Law School*, deserves to

---

<sup>2</sup> **Dr. Škulić**, who belongs to a group of BU *Law School* professors who signed a *Statement on the Illegitimacy of the ICTY* in September 2001, occupies important and responsible posts in the state apparatus: he is Chairman of the Justice Ministry's Working Group to draft a new Penal Procedure Law; member of working groups in charge of drafting: Law on Cooperation with the International Criminal Court; Ammended Law on Penal Procedures; Law on State Authorities in Procedures Related to Organized Crime Cases, etc. Since June 2006 Prof. **Škulić** performs the duty of General Secretary of the *Seretariat to Support the Implementation of the Strategy to Reform the Judiciary of the Republic of Serbia*.





## YUCOM

---

Komitet pravnik za ljudska prava / Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights  
17 Svetogorska Street, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia Tel/Fax: +381 11 33 44 235; 33 444 25; 3238 980  
e-mail [yucomoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yucomoffice@gmail.com)  
[www.yucom.org.yu](http://www.yucom.org.yu)

---

be mentioned in this paper. In a contribution to *Politika*<sup>3</sup> on Jul. 29, 2008 (headline: „Bucklers and ‘pirates’”) he denies the possibility of individuals who have shielded an indictee being criminally prosecuted, whereby he appeals the principle of presumption of innocence: since **Karadžić** has not (yet) been pronounced a final judgement, people who have been hiding him cannot be prosecuted. **Prof. Škulić** declares himself „personally fully convinced that those who assist him commit no felony”. **Prof. Škulić’s** text should be read as a serious warning or announcement that state authorities are prepared to definitely cover up the secret services’ and politicians’ role in sheltering **Karadžić**.

As the story about the „white magician” and „fascinating Dr Dabić” gradually faded, all media without exception took up a new one: an agreement between **Karadžić** and US negotiator **R. Holbrooke** had allegedly been concluded, that the former would be guaranteed impunity if he withdrew from public life and politics. Former allies and aides to **S. Milošević** and **Karadžić**, politicians (excluding those presently in power), as well as serious analysts and even **Florence Hartman**, former press representative of ICTY Chief Prosecutor **Carla del Ponte**, took part in this flood of speculations. A new conspiracy theory -- this time *embellished* in American diplomacy’s amorality – has the same goal: to camouflage the fact that **Karadžić** has been arrested and will stand trial for genocide and other heavy crimes against humanity. If the legend woven around his false identity had the purpose of divert the attention from those who have been sheltering him, the new story featuring **R. Holbrooke** -- irrespective of whether it is founded or not – is aimed at belittling **Karadžić’s** crimes and blame the responsibility on the international community, most notably on the US, France and UK.

The most recent, third stage of the spinning campaign aimed to depict **Karadžić** as a victim of political and other games was initiated in mid-August: according to (selected) media reports a shoulder bag containing a laptop computer, diskettes (allegedly with preparatory data necessary for **Karadžić’s** defense before the ICTY) and personal effects, was found in an abandoned police watch post in a Belgrade suburb. The way this information was relayed in the public, **Karadžić’s** lawyers’ statements and comments made by a range of journalists, analysts and other observers<sup>4</sup>, suggest that foreign intelligence services are behind this episode -- and indeed the whole story of **Karadžić’s** arrest – and thus once more demonstrate their anti-Serbian attitude.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Politika* is a daily newspaper representing views close to those of the Government, which also holds a considerable share in its ownership.

<sup>4</sup> Confused and unconvincing explanations given by representatives of the *National Council for the Cooperation with the ICTY* contribute to these speculations considerably.





## YUCOM

---

Komitet pravnika za ljudska prava / Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights  
17 Svetogorska Street, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia Tel/Fax: +381 11 33 44 235; 33 444 25; 3238 980  
e-mail [yucomoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yucomoffice@gmail.com)  
[www.yucom.org.yu](http://www.yucom.org.yu)

---

Serbian politicians' silence remains apparent. Apart from the *Serbian Radical Party* (SRS) which organized mass rallies<sup>5</sup> to express support to **Karadžić** and condemn the Government, not even the *Democratic Party of Serbia* (DSS) reacted as expected. Former Prime Minister and staunch nationalist **Vojislav Koštunica's** silence is also conspicuous: it was only *en passant* in a newspaper interview that he once again question the ICTY's legitimacy.

Ruling *Democratic Party* (DS) representatives' reactions were almost discrete, while its coalition partners -- *Serbian Renewal Movement* (SPO) and *G17plus* – remained silent.

**Ivica Dačić** gave a statement only in his capacity as Interior Minister (see page 1) while his party comrade and Speaker of the *People's Assembly* **Ms. Slavica Djukić-Dejanović** (SPS) said she had received the news "with grief".

Foreign Affairs Minister **Vuk Jeremić** appears to be the first Serbian official who views Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY not only as an obligation conditioning her integration into Europe: in a *BBC World* interview, he said that it represents a moral obligation and a way to personalize crime and responsibility for it. This approach made itself noticeable in several ruling politicians' statements that followed **Jeremić's**.

NGOs representatives either failed to comment **Karadžić's** arrest or restricted their reactions to usual phrases on "conditions to be met along the way towards Europe". In what appears to be a rare exception, **Nataša Kandić**, Chairperson of the *Humanitarian Law Center* (HLC) underlined the numerous crimes **Karadžić** was charged with, while **Sonja Biserko**, Chairperson of the *Helsinki Human Rights Committee in Serbia*, argued that **Karadžić's** arrest "finally pushes his Serbian (Belgrade) mentors and authors of the greater- Serbian project in the forefront". **Radovan Karadžić** was considered to be a true galvanizing leader. He was introduced into politics by **Dobrica Ćosić**, academician and one of the chief architects of the Serbian nationalist project. **Ćosić** praised **Karadžić** as "the most gifted Serbian politician" and installed him as leader of Bosnian Serbs. **Ms. Biserko** is convinced that this very fact represents the reason for the silence of the very segment of the elite whose survival at the scene would be jeopardized by the arrest. She calls to mind that some sixty prominent intellectuals signed 1997 a declaration calling for an annulment of the indictment and a stop in all ICTY procedures against **Karadžić**, claiming that "the hunt on Radovan Karadžić has no real substance in real facts", as well as that "Radovan Karadžić's fate is the fate of the whole people". The Declaration, which

---

<sup>5</sup> The biggest of these rallies, held on Jul. 29 in downtown Belgrade, was marked by violence and ended with more than 80 persons injured. On Aug. 16 one person died in a Belgrade hospital, allegedly of aftereffects.





## YUCOM

---

Komitet pravnika za ljudska prava / Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights  
17 Svetogorska Street, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia Tel/Fax: +381 11 33 44 235; 33 444 25; 3238 980  
e-mail [yucomoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yucomoffice@gmail.com)  
[www.yucom.org.yu](http://www.yucom.org.yu)

---

flocked nationalists representing various political directions, was initiated by head of the *Serbian Orthodox Church*, **patriarch Pavle**.

**Vojislav Koštunica** openly supported **Karadžić**, whereas his party, the DSS, was a sister-party to **Karadžić's** *Serbian Democratic Party* (SDS) ever since the DSS was formed after Koštunica had left the DS to form the DSS, where **Karadžić** actively helped.

After **Koštunica** defeated **Milošević** at the presidential election in Sep. 2000, Serbian nationalistic block assumed democratic legitimacy and international community's support for the first time. **Koštunica's** election gave Serbian nationalism a great encouragement which was also reflected in the expectation that Serbia would be allowed to retain her booty, Republika Srpska most of all. **Koštunica** often underlined that "it is not normal that Serbian cities are abroad" and that "Serbs in Serbia and Bosnia are separated only temporarily". It is when **Koštunica** took power in Belgrade that **Karadžić** retained full support and protection by Serbian state authorities.

**Karadžić's** arrest and **Koštunica's** departure from the top echelons of Serbian power structures close an important chapter, because two key ideologues of the Serbian nationalistic project are no more at the scene, **S. Biserko** stresses. She concludes that President of the Republic, **Boris Tadić** -- having mobilized majority support to the idea of Serbia's European future at the May 2008 election, and having signed (albeit not without reluctance) the *Stabilization and Association Agreement* (SAA) with the EU -- now has an opportunity to enter history as a statesman.

### Outlook:

The above described attitude toward **Karadžić's** arrest does not provide sufficient argument to ascertain whether the authorities in Serbia are ready to face the recent past, or continue to systematically relativize the crimes he personifies. One thing is certain at this point: political and intellectual elites in Serbia (deliberately?) miss yet another opportunity to draw a clear line of discontinuity with the policies that have led to those crimes. The upcoming **Karadžić** trial before the ICTY will give an answer to these questions.

