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CHRONICLE No.10

MIGRANTS – REFUGEES AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq during 2015 ... Every day they are moving towards the European Union. Their main route is across the Balkans, mostly through Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Thousands and thousands of men, women and children began their journey in various ways, by land or sea, just to reach the territory of European countries. Their final destinations are countries like Germany, Austria, Scandinavia, and even France and Spain. Many of them want to find their peace in Great Britain, too.

Refugees, whose number is increasing every day, stay in Macedonia and Serbia only for a day or two, and then they try to go further towards the European Union via Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia. A lot of sparks and crisis flared in the last few months, not only because of the large affluence of refugees, but also because of the unpreparedness of Balkan countries in reception and transit, so it resulted even with closure of the borders between countries.



Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) is not on the transit yet, but the refugee crisis which is more complicated by each day, has a great influence on the security situation in our country. First of all - there is the issue of Bosnian asylum seekers expulsion from Germany¹. Along with it, there is the constant threat of Islamic terrorism strengthening in BIH that we discussed in our last chronicle. All these tensions, along with the alarming political, economic and social situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, country which is in deep crisis 20 years after the war, serve to the development of insecurity among its inhabitants.

In this chronicle, we will discuss the influence that refugee crisis has on human security situation in BIH. In addition to the data that we have collected from various media during the preparation of the chronicle, we talked with: **Slobodan Popović**, politician from Banja Luka, **Nermuna Begagić**, writer from France and BIH, **Kenan Idrizović**, LLB from Tuzla, and **Emir Selimagić**, law student from Tuzla.

¹ "Germany plans to expel 94,000 asylum seekers from the Balkans and prohibit them re-entry to Germany, announced Manfred Schmidt, the President of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), in an interview for Die Welt. "

REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE BALKANS

More than four million people have escaped from Syria in the period from 2011 until now, majority of them travelling through the "Balkan route". According to the UNHCR, 2.2 million Syrians are in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 1.8 million in Turkey, while 24,000 are in Libya. In the period from April 2011 to July 2015, 348,000 Syrians have asked for asylum in Europe. Also, 47



percent applied for asylum in Germany and Sweden, 33 percent in Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria and the Netherlands, and 20 percent in other countries.²

One can search for reasons for the migration waves of refugees on various sides, but the basic reasons are certainly political and economic.

Total economic collapse has affected Syria, due to the civil war, which is waged for years between the rebel forces and those loyal to the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, and his ruling BAAS party, and for which, unfortunately, there is no end in sight. This situation has resulted in the increasement of poverty and the number of people who have lost their all their belongings. Moreover, a huge, almost total devastation of Syrian cities and villages has struck Syria during the war, and thus increased in great manner the number of people without any kind of material or other resources. Furthermore, members of ISIS³, or in other words, members of the Islamic state who terrorize all those who are not on their side and do not have the same opinion as them, made their appearance.

Migrations of people from Arab countries have covered EU, and the largest number of migrants is currently found in the Balkans and the countries of former Yugoslavia.

The way in which the migrations of the Arab population affect the overall situation in BIH and its surroudings is not yet visible, but some answers may soon become apparent.

INFLUENCE OF ARAB POPULATION MIGRATION IN EUROPE ON BIH AND SECURITY SITUATION?

"It is obvious that the aim of the refugees is Europe, but only the most developed part. They are not interested in countries like Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, but not even Slovenia. BIH is not on their route, therefore it is outside the zone of interest. Problems, that will definitely appear, are when Germany, France, England and Scandinavia decide to close their borders, so the refugees must choose to go back or stay anywhere else. And there lies a real danger of BIH becoming the zone of interest. As for the security situation in BIH, it will not be compromised by the refugees because, in most cases, they are highly educated people with families and children. Therefore, they are not dangerous for the security of BIH population. On the other side, individuals, who will be SLEEPERS in the masses of the unfortunate ones and wait for the opportunity to connect with those who are already inside, can definitely represent a problem.

²Source: <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/pogledajte-koje-su-zemlje-primile-najvise-izbjeglica-iz-sirije/837701.aspx>

³Islamic State (Arabic دولة الإسلام في العراق وسوريا); known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria until 2014 - source Wikipedia

“That is a serious problem which refugee crisis carries, not only for BiH, but also for other countries. The problem of receiving asylum for the BiH inhabitants in EU countries has been serious for a long time now, and the refugee crisis complicates it even more. Germany has already announced the return of around 97,000 potential asylum seekers from the Balkans, mainly Kosovo Albanians, a number of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighboring countries, mostly Roma people. As the refugee crisis strenghtens, Europe will have to make place for those who come from areas affected by war and give them advantage over those who do not carry the burden of war problems. One thing is certain - the process of receiving refugees. Europe, primarily Germany, need those migrants as biological, educational, employment and every other potential and nothing significant will change there. Some analysts already see the large part of the refugee population as something that will improve demographics on long term, because most of them are young and family people.” (**Slobodan Popović – politician from Banja Luka**)

“Even though most of the European countries identify themselves officialy as secular, the fact that they are rooted in the Catholic culture remains, so the arrival of people who bring Islamic culture bothers many. It is not the affluence of refugees that the developed part of Europe is not able to accept, it is the invasion of people that can impair on long term a bearable religious equilibrium, where Christianity is dominant. I do not see at all that BiH has anything to do with it, except, maybe, a little less space in some considerations. We have done to ourselves greater disservice in relation to Europe by connecting with the Russians ... In fact, we, people from the Balkans, give more importance in all our reports to Europe and the events than we, actually, have..” (**Nermana Begagić-writer-BiH, Francuska**)

“BiH is a country of limited sovereignty, with the Octroyed or Imposed Constitution⁴, which is, as such, an annex to the international agreement colloquially called 'Dayton'. Along with the legal authorities, which are, among other things, responsible for the security issue, there is also the Peace Implementation Council, which by the High Representative in BiH, directly intervenes on the issues of the greatest importance for the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Essentially, the situation of migrants who pass through the Balkan countries does not represent any danger to BiH in terms of security, but in psychological sense, in a situation when there is no strategy and public-proclaimed principles of relations within the internal political scene, any development concerning the situation can be used to further destabilization of the country in all its aspects.” (**Kenan Idrizović-lawyer, Tuzla**)



⁴ **Octroyed constitution is the constitution adopted "from above", by decision of the executive power, that is, without consultations or involvement of lower government levels or representatives of citizens on whom its decrees would apply. Octroyed constitutions are typical for absolute monarchy (which transform into constitutional monarchies after its enactment), dictatorships, or countries that are under foreign military occupation or international administration - source: https://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oktroisani_ustav**

HOW CAN MIGRATION CRISIS AFFECT BIH POPULATION AND THEIR REQUESTS FOR ASYLUM OR JOB IN COUNTRIES INTERESTING TO ARAB MIGRANTS?

⁵“Great numbers of countries have intensified control on asylum seekers - not because of them - but for its internal issues, economic crisis and increased unemployment. No one deprives Balkan man (Bosnian or anyone else) from its position. No position is secured for anyone (*Nermana Begagić, writer*)

“It is clear that a certain number of inhabitants will try to use the situation in order to seek asylum in one of the EU member states. It is also a fact that today, more than ever, it will not end on fertile ground, because any request of that type is considered to be an attack on the social budgets of those countries and, as such, will not be warmly received, especially in a situation when refugees from Syria and the Middle East are advancing in masses.”(*Kenan Idrizović, lawyer*)



It is a fact that Syrians have been departing from Syria for the past five years, since the outbreak of war. And in five years, they never dared to start the mass migration towards Europe. They spent most of the time living in harsh conditions in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. A considerable part of them went to Iraq, and some ended in Egypt. In other words, the great refugee crisis which we follow right now on Croatian territory has been followed by the population of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey on daily basis for five years.

Are their capacities full to such an extent that people now do not have any other option but to move towards Europe? This is allegedly one of the reasons, but not the main.

If refugees indeed had an idea to enter the Europe at the time when their country had been struck by war, then the Croatian police in Tovarnik would have registered them daily for more than 10 years, actually, since the United States carried out the invasion on Iraq and Afghanistan. But it had not happened then, therefore why now?

Wave of migrants towards Europe sharply escalated this summer. Thousands of them come every day. Why are they arriving now?

*They come because they are invited*⁶

It depends who you ask. If we ask migrants, they will often tell us how they made a decision right now based on their own judgement, or how it is a coincidence that they arrive in large numbers at this particular moment.

⁵ *Translation of the Cartoon: What are you doing at the border crossing? We are waiting for immigrants to come to Bosnia! And what are you going to do then? We are going with them to Germany!!!*

⁶ *Source: (<http://www.advance.hr/vijesti/razumijevanje-tragicne-izbjeglicke-krize-i-odgovori-na-2-kljucna-pitanja-zasto-stizu-mahom-mladi-muskarci-i-zasto-tek-sada-ako-rat-u-siriji-traje-jos-od-2011>).*

One Syrian woman, who crossed the territory of North Serbia with her four children on foot, said in the interview for TIME how her husband has been detained by Syrian authorities and how she made a choice to go to Europe only after he told her that there is no chance of him being released from prison. A young Afghan, who was found at Greek island of Lesbos, said that he started his journey after his family has managed to collect over enough money, over few months, for his trip.

These are all individual stories, but there is one, collective story. There is a fact which attracted migrants and refugees to Europe this summer as a magnet and the responsible for the attraction of this wave can be found in Berlin. Namely, German Government has stated in the beginning of last month that it will accept all Syrians who apply for asylum in Germany, no matter how they arrive on the German territory.

That is a rather good offer for people who, until now, spent years of the war either in horrors of Syria or often equally horrible refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL INFLUENCE OF REFUGEES ON EUROPE?

“The most interesting thing is that Europe tries to solve the problem by eliminating the consequence, not the cause. Globalization has been followed by the destruction of regimes in Iraq, Libya and Syria, all because of the gas and oil flow control, where the key role is performed by "Uncle Sam" - USA. People who approach the Arab Spring fairly and analytically have been indicating this fact for a long time, but apparently the imperialist-fascist lobby with headquarters in America manages to block this kind of thinking through media. When people finally realize who and what is behind the curtains of the refugee story, its solution will certainly not be migration of people from evil and misfortune, but removal of the cause and establishment of normality so people can live normal lives in their country. When will that be, it is hard to predict, but the masks are falling. *Evil and imperialist-fascist* intentions of big corporations whose motto is „Dollar above all and Dollar in front of all“ cannot be hidden anymore behind the stories of „non-democratic“ regimes who need to be overthrown. When that kind of philosophy reigns, everything is permitted: war, murder, prosecution, robbery, frauds, conspiracies... When end justifies the means, then there is no space for reason, morality, integrity, civilization or humanity.“ (**Slobodan Popović, politician, Banja Luka**)

“The global influence of refugees on Europe is minor and less detrimental compared to the influence of certain European countries and USA on the countries from which these refugees originate. Chaos, terrorism and wars, because of which refugees are leaving their homes, are the direct consequence of various Western interventions in Arab countries (aggression on Iraq, intervention in Libya, arming of ISIS in Syria and etc)“ (**Emir Selimagić, law student, Tuzla**)



“In my opinion, with all the sorrow for what is happening to those people, there is a good side from political point of view (emotions are excluded in political analysis), world is connected by communications, trade, interest zones and markets. However, there is one immoral and unsustainable assumption: We will do whatever we want to you, and you shall stay put (as in

the period of colonialism in Africa). Today, the oppressed man no longer stays put! One goes where and with whom one feels safe and better.

Sometimes even to those who put one's life in danger! And that has to change something in the minds of lords of war and peace.“ (**Nermana Begagić, writer, France-BIH**)

“The influence of refugees on Europe is primarily a question of psychological nature. A number of 600.000 refugees, respecting the fact of all being Muslims, will not significantly change the demographic structure of Europe. The refugee issue is primarily the question of reengagement of world relations, individual and collective responsibility and readiness of Europe to determine itself vis-a-vis the events on Middle East, as well as on the other parts of the world. When the war in Bosnia raged, Europe acted poorly and, apart from accepting refugees, it did not take an active role in stabilization of the situation in the Balkans. Similar scenario is possible with Middle East, with the exception of the fact that Middle East might be generating a significantly larger number of refugees, that in long term can have influence on what Europe is today, wants or aspires to be. That is why I claim that the refugee "problem", and the way Europe approaches it, is primarily a psychological question, whose effects will mark a new epoch.“ (**Kenan Idrizović, lawyer, Tuzla**)

This whole refugee crisis is already influencing the international relations of European countries. Negative tensions are increasing every day from all sides. Tensions are especially present between Serbia and Hungary, but the situation is nothing less tense between Slovenia and Croatia.



Relations between Zagreb and Belgrade are once more in a critical state as a consequence of the refugee crisis. Tensions have not been lowered even after the meeting of two Prime Ministers **Aleksandar Vučić** and **Zoran Milanović**. Meanwhile, their Ministers continue to accuse each other of being guilty for the current situation. The two Prime Ministers have finally talked about the refugee crisis "intensely and substantially", as one of them said, but that did not bring any change to the situation. It is not the first time that sparks fly between Belgrade and Zagreb, but this time it appeared unexpectedly, because of the refugee wave that is travelling through Serbia, Croatia and Hungary towards the Western Europe countries. Croatian officials have been accusing Serbia of having a "deal with Hungary" and that they send refugees towards Zagreb intentionally, what Belgrade denies.⁷

What we can expect here in Bosnia, concerning the refugee crisis, is a strong influence of the crisis on all economic and trade relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina with neighbouring countries and Europe. Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a central Balkan country, simply has to be on the windward side of relations and non-relations between our neighbours, and even though

⁷Source:(<http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/izbeglicka-kriza-kroz-prizmu-srpsko-hrvatskih-zategnutosti/27264997.html>).

BIH does not seem as an interesting destination (at the moment) for the refugees, our neighbours relations concerning the refugee crisis have a direct impact on economy of BIH.

Mirko Šarović, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BIH, said that Bosnia will definitely suffer the consequences caused by the current situation on the Serbian-Croatian borders, and he also emphasized that the greatest problem at this moment is the difficult flow of goods. Šarović added that they requested from Indirect taxation authority (UIO) of BIH to implement additional shifts and the Veterinary office of BIH to increase attendance, with a statement that this situation will cause greater strain on border crossings in Rača, Pavlovića most and Gradiška. Šarović also added that there is no data on eventual flow of migrants to BIH and that a coordination committee was formed to manage that particular issue. “There are no signs of migrants crossing to BIH, but we are already suffering the consequences of the blockades on Serbian and Croatian borders. We cannot say at the moment how big is the damage, but there will be some for sure”, said Šarović to the reporters in Bijeljina. Šarović says that he is constantly communicating with colleagues in Serbia and Croatia, and that he will consult with Serbian colleagues. He emphasized that Bosnia and Herzegovina will commit to help with keeping the border crossings “adequately flowing”, in order to avoid congestions, taking into account the goods and food of animal origin, particularly. Šarović acknowledged that he had a meeting with the representatives from the Border police of BIH and the Indirect taxation authority (UIO), where they discussed the current situation “which was not dramatic yesterday, but is completely different today.” “We will act in such a way to ensure, at least partially, unobstructed flow of goods and people through the borders. I will make sure of that right on the spot – on the most frequently used border crossing Rača, that is, at the moment, the most vulnerable for unobstructed passing of goods and people”, concluded Šarović.⁸ The entity relations within Bosnia and Herzegovina will also be tested. They have already been disturbed in the last year, due to political changes and changes of the influences on the political reality of former leaders and leaders who intend to win the future elections and rule on the entity and state levels.



⁸ Source: <http://tuzla.danas.info/2015/09/24/sarovic-i-bih-ce-trpjeti-posljedice-zbog-situacije-srbija-rh/>

Milorad Dodik, President of Serb Republic (RS), said that migrants can pass through BiH or RS only if the EU position about them leaving the territory of BIH immediately is resolved. Dodik stated that any concentration of migrants in BIH would significantly destabilize not only economic and social, but also political situation. He implied to the the representatives of joined institutions at the state level, who invite migrants to come to BIH, to think about those calls and noted that RS has no intention of doing anything to its detriment in order to solve the problem of migrants. - We did not provoke it, contribute to it, nor interfere, and we have no intention to extract any funds in that regard. Our funds are not as rich as some in Western Europe so it could maintain hundreds or thousands of people - said Dodik to the reporters in Banja Luka. He mentioned that RS has no space, accommodation or money, nor it is ready to provide any other logistics.

Dodik emphasized that Europe is trying to solve the problem of migrants before they enter the EU by closing the borders. - The problem of migrant crisis should be resolved promptly by the EU, but it is obvious that there is no consensus in the Union, said Dodik. He condemned the Croatian move of closing the border with Serbia, describing it as unacceptable and unfair, but also as an opportunity for BIH to serve as a potential space for the passage of migrants. "We see that the good intentions of Serbia to be fair in the approach to refugees, who are widely present on almost entire territory of Serbia, shows that those things are not always profitable. Serbia is left with enormous damage today." said Dodik.

The President of RS added that Serbia, which did not contribute to the migrant crisis, but apparently bears a great burden of it, has not received proper response from the EU. "Those who obviously have caused this migrant crisis by giving political support to the interventions which spread to North Africa and later on the Middle East, are now trying to prevent the migrants running from war by closing their borders" He estimated that the closed borders between Serbia and Croatia, along with the retention of passengers and goods, will harm the relations between the two countries. Dodik mentioned that the closure of borders also harms the economy of Serb Republic, which already bears with particular issues. - Our businessmen are losing time waiting for a solution day by day, said Dodik. He expects the problem to be resolved soon.⁹



CONCLUSION

The refugee crisis on the Balkans has no direct impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina yet, because BIH does not seem currently as an interesting final destination to refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. However, in case of unfavourable development of the situation for refugees and a possible reversal of asylum policies of the EU countries, there is a high chance of refugees seeking asylum in BIH, as an only or at least temporary option.

With a possibility like that, Bosnia and Herzegovina, taught by the experience of other countries in the region, must be 100% ready to receive thousands and thousands of refugees at any time. Coordination of all governmental levels must be at the top, because the possible

⁹ Source: <http://tuzla.danas.info/2015/09/24/dodik-rs-nema-nista-sa-izbjeglicama/>

wave of refugees, without any clear vision of reception and accommodation of the above mentioned, can lead already problematic BIH to economic collapse. That means that a clear plan about possible locations of refugee camps and preparation of the existing resources for the first wave of refugees has to be made. Use projects to ask for the economic and financial assistance from the European Union and other international organizations. Involve Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations in all projects concerning help, reception and accommodation. Include citizens through local communities. Regular inclusion of all types of media. Coordination of all security services, involvement of the police on all levels, army and border controls, as well as the intelligence services (for possible terrorist attacks or eventual entrance of some terrorist cells into the country). Cooperation of authorities, including state, entity and local levels, with a clear vision of tasks and duties. This also includes coordination of all operations with the neighboring countries, together with the European Union.



Knowing our politicians, as well as the representatives of all organizations that could possibly be involved in these operations, cooperation is possible because all citizens and their political representatives already showed maturity in critical situations (floods in 2014). But, nevertheless, it is more likely that the most of the responsibility and burden regarding any eventual crisis will be undertaken by ordinary citizens. In other words, God help us all. Us and refugees.

Mario Vranješ
October, 2015

