

International Justice/ICTY: May '08

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Tribunal transparency discussed by Bosnian media following IWPR round table.

Bosnian media have expressed renewed interest in the ICTY's decision to grant protective measures to parts of the Serbian military archives used as evidence during the Milosevic trial, following IWPR's recent coverage of the controversy.

During a visit to Sarajevo in May, Fausto Pocar was asked in an interview with Bosnian state television to comment on the non-disclosure of the Serbian Supreme Council documents, which the interviewer, Suzana Solomon, said was the main focus of an IWPR round table in The Hague, entitled Secrecy and Justice.

Pocar said of the confidentially granted to the transcripts of SDC meetings, "This is a question that is still open. We at the tribunal will have to make a decision about that."

The May 15 Secrecy and Justice conference was reported widely in the Balkans. In addition to Bosnian state television, there were reports in Bosnia's largest daily Dnevni Avaz and the Croatian daily Vecernji list, which published a two-page piece in their special weekly edition; the popular Zagreb broadcaster Radio 101; and Belgrade's B92.

Also in May, the IWPR radio programme Facing Justice produced jointly with Radio Free Europe, RFE, continued to attract the attention of audiences in the Balkans.

President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, Branko Todorovic, said, "It is very important for people here to be informed about problems related to the justice system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because that's one of the key issues in this country.

"Programmes such as Facing Justice can certainly help people here understand what the Hague tribunal and local courts do in order to administrate justice."

News editor at Bosnian state television, Benjamin Butkovic, welcomed the "non-partisan approach" adopted by the programme. "This programme can serve as a guideline for all Balkan media dealing with this very sensitive issue," he said. "Facing Justice is an informative, detailed, unbiased and analytical programme, produced to the highest standards."

"We need programmes like Facing Justice. People have to tell their stories. If they do not tell them, perpetrators of war crimes will remain unpunished," said Spomenka Drljevic from Mostar's Association of Prisoners of War.

Significantly, politicians in Republika Srpska, RS, agree that the media have to pay more attention to these issues.

"I don't think ignoring our recent past is good for anyone. We need a dialogue and open discussions about sensitive issues. But most of all, we need these subjects to be approached objectively and in a non-

partisan way, because media can have a very dangerous role once they start taking sides,” said Jovan Spajic, head of the RS department for cooperation with the Hague tribunal. “All programmes dealing with justice and reconciliation – including Facing Justice – are welcome and absolutely necessary.”

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