

The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies supports JMBG protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies

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The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies Director Jelena Milić participated in the second annual global convening of individuals and organizations working on the preventions of mass atrocities organized by the Nexus Fund, held in Istanbul in June 2013. Here, she used the opportunity to explain, in informal discussions, the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding personal identification numbers (JMBG) to the other participants. (...)

The protest started on June 5, 2013 as a form of solidarity with the three-month old baby Belmina Ibrišević from Tuzla, whose personal identification number was necessary in order to allow her to travel outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina for treatment. Unfortunately, the number has not been issued in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina since February 2013 because the BiH authorities failed to reach an agreement on a new law which would regulate issuing JMBG to newborn babies in the entire country.

The core of the problem lies in the fact that the BiH authorities did not implement the Constitutional Court's decision on harmonizing the Law on JMBG and the Law on Territorial Organization of the Republic of Srpska (RS). (...)

JMBG consists of 13 digits: DDMMGGGRRBBBK. DD – date of birth, MM – month of birth, GGG – year of birth, RR – region, BBB - gender, K – control number.

The dispute arose over regional labels, seeing one number of political parties, predominantly from RS, asking for regional labels to be differentiated, respecting the entity borders, while other political parties, mainly from FBiH believe that registration marks should not incorporate entity boundaries or that, at least, this matter should be solved independently from the Constitutional Court's decision implementation. As a result, this dispute became yet another in a myriad of issues related to centralization vs. decentralization of BiH.(...)

Therefore, having in mind the fact that non-adoption of the Constitutional Court's decision automatically led to the suspension of the Act, that is, an Article of it which determines part of the identification number, it seems that the entire dispute over registry areas is unnecessary blackmail in order to incorporate this amendment into the Law, even though the basis of the dispute was actually a technical issue of implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision, which does not deal with registration areas.

Under public pressure, a temporary measure valid for 180 days was endorsed, but citizens have not given up, asking for it not to be only a temporary solution.

Organized citizens of Sarajevo and other BiH cities undertook a series of actions, such as, calling upon individuals who support their requests to have their picture taken with the JMBG sign in front of them, on their T-shirt, cardboard, paper, etc. Support and photos were received from many celebrities, but also from people from all over the world, seeing social networks and websites overwhelmed by such photos.

On June 27, Amnesty International published a public statement

urging the government of BiH to, without delay, take the necessary measures to ensure that, in the context of the proposed legislation on identification numbers, the basic human rights of its citizens are adequately protected. In their view, the failure to provide citizens with personal identification numbers has a detrimental effect on several human rights, constituting, in effect, unlawful limitations of these rights. At stake are, in particular, the rights of freedom of movement (Article 12 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights – ICCPR) and the right to nationality (Article 24 ICCPR), since those without identification numbers cannot get passports or other documents needed to leave and enter the country at will. The consequences of these limitations might also have a detrimental impact on other basic rights such as the right to life (Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights - ECHR) and the right to health (Article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – ICESCR), since the failure to produce adequate travel documents that result in a denial of medical treatment abroad. (...)

The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies from Belgrade (CEAS) considers the described machinations of the RS Ministry of Interior in Suljagić's article as actually attempting to cement the consequences of genocide in eastern Bosnia, which is completely unacceptable.

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