

Organised crime situation in the BiH

The post-war situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina :

- 1 milion displaced citizens
- devastation of property
- fragmented state with diluted powers and authorities
- the lack of institutions such as a border service, fragmented judicial, legal and economic space

The political and legal vacuum caused by the war has been with difficulty filled through the efforts international and local community since 1996.

Serious crime, achieved an advantage which BiH authorities are trying to catch up with through many institutional and legal reforms completed in the past several years.

ECONOMIC CRIME and MONEY LAUNDERING

Economic crime thrives due to the :

- fragmented economic space,**
- jurisdictional division between BiH law enforcement agencies,**
- widespread ID fraud made possible by a vast number of people displaced or killed in the war and the country's internal divisions**
- fictitious companies that were relatively easy to register,**

Recent efforts of the BiH authorities in the area of taxation and business registration are aiming at increasing internal connections and uniformity of the tax system and business registration have already brought some positive results.

DRUG TRAFFICKING

Factors such as relatively porous borders, developing legal^[1] and institutional framework, the lack technical equipment, and the internal fragmentation of the criminal justice system, all play into the hands of criminals and make BiH an attractive transit area, convenient for repackaging and redistribution of drugs.

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

In terms of trafficking in human beings, the practice significantly changed due to law enforcement efforts and closure of numerous strip clubs and brothels in the country. As a consequence, sexual exploitation has become more clandestine and sophisticated, taking place in private apartments and through escort services, and expanding onto Internet. Also, victims seem to be receiving a less violent treatment and better living conditions and are currently mainly servicing a domestic market. Such a market shift indicates managerial sophistication of the criminals involved in the trafficking business, all of which makes a new challenge for investigation and prosecution of those crimes.

SMUGGLING OF HUMANS

In terms of smuggling of humans, BiH is considered as a transition country where citizens of Albania, China, Turkey, India and Pakistan are being illegally transported to the countries of Western Europe. They enter BiH via Serbia and Montenegro through legal and illegal border crossings in eastern BiH. From there, a local criminal groups escort them across rivers or illegal border crossings into Croatia. In the past, cases of large groups of illegal immigrants were recorded to have entered BiH as tourists or members of cultural associations.

The market for smuggling in people is has rather simple structure flat and seems to largely rely on close collaboration between the organised criminal groups from different countries in the region.

OTHER

One of characteristics of BiH is the link between organised crime and indicted war criminals, causing a great concern to some BiH authorities. Financing runaway indicted war criminals, appears to be well organised and connected with a number of institutions such as banks, governing and other public institutions, and political parties in BiH. In 2004, the bank accounts of those suspected of supporting indicted war criminals have been blocked and dozens of persons have been dismissed from public posts by the High Representative in BiH, Lord Ashdown. The final outcome of these investigation has yet to be known.

CONCLUSION

Significant efforts have been made to consolidate and harmonize Bosnia and Herzegovina's cumbersome criminal justice system (namely prosecutor's offices and the judiciary) that have already produced positive results against organised crime, including convictions. Nevertheless, the law enforcement agencies are still fragmented, disconnected, and over-stretched. The current trends of organised crime, however, require good police intelligence and effective exchange of information both within the country and internationally. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, police system reform - a unified police structure that could help eliminate many of the problems mentioned here - continues to occupy the top of the agenda.