

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

19 JANUARY 2009

UK Border Agency

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

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1. Preface

- This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Bosnia and Herzegovina has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 7 January 2009. It was issued on 19 January 2009.
- The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Bosnia and Herzegovina is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

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ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UKBA's country of origin information material. The APCI reviewed a number of UKBA's reports and published its findings on its website at www.apci.org.uk Since October 2008, the work of the APCI has been taken forward by the Chief Inspector of UKBA.

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2. Background information on Bosnia and Herzegovina

Full Country Name: Bosnia and Herzegovina **Area:** Total area 51,200 sq km (19,970 sq mi)

Population: 4.0m (July 2005 estimate)

Capital City: Sarajevo

People: Bosniak (Muslim), Croat, Serb, others Languages: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian

Religion(s): Islam (Bosniaks), Roman Catholicism (Croats) and Orthodox (Serbs)

Currency: Convertible Mark (KM), pegged to the Euro

Main political structures: State-level Government/Parliament and two entity-level

Governments/Parliaments. **Major Political Parties:**

State-level Government: Coalition consists of Party for Democratic Action (SDA) and Party for BiH (SBiH) (Bosniak); Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) (Bosnian Serb) and Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH), Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ-1990) and People's Party Through Work for a Better Future (NSRzB) (Bosnian Croat). Opposition: Social Democratic Party (SDP) (multi-ethnic), Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) (Bosnian Serb).

Federation of BiH Government: Party for Democratic Action (SDA), Party for BiH (SBiH), Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ-BiH), Croatian Democratic Union of BiH-1990 (HDZ-1990), Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ-1990), Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD).

Republika Srpska Government: Coalition consists of Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), Party of Democratic Progress (PDP), Socialist Party of RS (SPRS), Democratic People's Union (DNS), Party for Democratic Action (SDA). Head of State: Tripartite Presidency (with rotating chair) consisting of Nebojsa Radmanovic (Bosnian Serb SNSD, Chair until October 2008), Zeljko Komsic (Bosnian Croat - SDP), Haris Silajdzic (Bosniak - SBiH,),

Federation of BiH: Borjana Kristo (Bosnian Croat - HDZ BiH)

Republika Srpska: Igor Radojicic - Acting President (Bosnian Serb - SNSD) Prime Ministers: State Level; Nikola Spiric (Bosnian Serb - SNSD). Federation of BiH: Nedzad Brankovic (Bosniak - SDA). Republika Srpska: Milorad Dodik (Bosnian Serb - SNSD).

Foreign Minister: Sven Alkalaj (Other (Jewish) - SBiH)

Membership of International Groupings/Organisations: United Nations (UN). Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe (Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, updated 5 December 2008) [4a]

Population growth: 0.11%

Life expectancy at birth: female (years) 77.28, male (years) 71.99 (International Committee of the Red Cross, Annual Report 2007) [30a]

GEOGRAPHY

The FCO's Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008, recorded that:

"Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has borders with Serbia to the East, Montenegro to the South East, Croatia to the North and West, and a 12 kilometre coastline on the Adriatic Sea. Its landscape varies from high altitude central mountains to arable land in the north and Mediterranean vineyards in the south, with most of the major towns being

located in valleys. Climatically, Bosnian summers last from May to September and are warm and humid whilst winters tend to be foggy and snowy and last from November to February. Autumn and Spring are usually short." [4a]

Environmental Factors

Apart from damage sustained during the conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina faces the effects of industrial pollution. This is concentrated along three main industrial and mining centres: Tuzla, Zenica and Sarajevo. (Jane's Sentinel Country Risk Assessments: Bosnia-Herzegovina, 19 March 2008) [1b] (Geography)

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MAP



(United Nations Cartographic Section, Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina) [19]

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HISTORY

The FCO Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008 reported

"The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was formed in 1918 in the aftermath of the First World War and changed its official title to Yugoslavia in 1929. Following the Second World War, communist Partisan Leader, Marshall Tito, took control of the country and ruled it for the next 40 years. Although presiding over a communist regime, Marshall Tito successfully steered his own path between East and West and was a founder member of the Non Aligned Movement of countries in the United Nations."

"Following Tito's death in 1980 Yugoslavia began slowly to disintegrate in a process that culminated in the Balkans wars of the early 1990s. Slovenia, Croatia and Republic of Macedonia declared their independence in 1991, BiH in 1992. The remaining republics Serbia and Montenegro declared a new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992 and, under Slobodan Milosevic, undertook military interventions to achieve the integration of ethnic Serbs into 'Greater Serbia'. The policy was ultimately unsuccessful and prompted a co-ordinated military response from the United Nations and the international community, primarily in BiH, which eventually led to the Dayton Agreement of 1995. This agreement determined the external borders and constitutional structure, which BiH operates under today." [4a]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Elections

The FCO Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008 stated

"Municipal elections for mayors and municipal assembly posts were held across BiH on 5 October 2008. The elections were assessed to have been conducted in a fair and orderly way in line with international standards...The Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD, predominantly Bosnian Serb) made significant gains, winning 39 of the municipalities in the RS and 3 in the FBiH.

"The Serbian Democratic Party (SDS, predominantly Bosnian Serb) struggled, losing half of their Mayors and returning only 16 Mayors out of their previous 33.

"The Party for Democratic Action (SDA) emerged as the strongest Bosniak party, while the Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH, predominantly Bosniak) had significant losses. The Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH) emerged as the stronger Bosnian Croat party, beating the Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990).

"General elections were held in BiH on 1 October 2006. The OSCE confirmed that they were generally conducted in line with international standards with no major incidents...The previous Prime Minister, Haris Silajdzic (SBiH) won the race for the Bosniak slot of the Tripartite Presidency by a wide margin, with 41% of the vote. Nebojsa Radmanovic (SNSD) won the Serb slot with 55% and Zeljko Komsic (SDP) was elected for the Croat seat on the Presidency with 14% of the vote.

"At state-level, the SDA (predominantly Bosniak) led by Sulejman Tihic, have the largest representation in the BiH House of Representatives (9 seats). Other big winners, who have all made notable gains on the 2002 elections, include SBiH (Bosniak) with 8 seats (+2) and SNSD (Serb) with 7 seats (+4). HDZ 1990, the Bosnian Croat party gained 2 seats, but HDZ are still the largest Croat party overall with 3 seats (despite a loss of -2). Parties with notable losses include the Bosnian Serb parties PDP, who now have 1 seat (-1) and SDS with 3 seats (-2).

"On 4 January 2007 a state-level coalition government was formed. It consists of SDA and SBiH (Bosniak), SNSD and PDP (Bosnian Serb) and HDZ, HDZ 1990 and NSRzB (Bosnian Croat). Nikola Spiric (SNSD – Bosnian Serb) was appointed as state level Prime Minister. The Bosnian Parliament confirmed the new state level Council of Ministers on 9 February and the majority of Ministers took up office on 12 February. The only exception to this was Defence Minister Selmo Cikotic, who took up his position on 23 April once the necessary three years had passed since his retirement from the military.

"On 1 November 2007, PM Spiric resigned in protest over Lajcak's changes to the procedures of the Council of Ministers. Following resolution of this standoff Spiric was reconfirmed as Prime Minister." [4a]

Constitutional Reform

The FCO Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008 reported

"Bosnian political leaders signed a commitment to pursue constitutional reform in Washington on 21 November 2005.... The leaders of the largest political parties agreed to a constitutional reform package on 18 March 2006, which would have established a rotating Presidency with a single President and two Vice Presidents (as opposed to the previous, tripartite structure); built a more effective Parliament and enhanced the protection of human rights... However, the agreement was blocked in the BiH House of Representatives on 26 April 2006, largely due to opposition from SBiH and HDZ-1990. Constitutional reform remains crucially important for BiH and progress on this issue will require compromise by all political parties." [4a]

Military Reform

The FCO Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008 stated

"One of the successes of recent years has been military reform. In 2005 agreement was reached on a package of defence reforms that would establish a NATO compatible single military force. Implementation has been underway since January 2006. The Presidency approved detailed proposals for the new Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 5 July 2006, which enabled BiH to begin the process of forming a single NATO compatible military force.

"Taking into account progress made so far, BiH, along with Montenegro and Serbia, was invited to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council on 29 November 2006 at the Riga Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government. The then Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Nebojsa Radmanovic, signed the Framework Document of the Partnership for Peace at NATO

Headquarters in Brussels on 14 December 2006. PfP is an important step on the path to closer integration with NATO and seeks to promote defence reform, increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO.

"BiH was granted Intensified Dialogue (ID) at the NATO Summit in Bucharest on 2-4 March 2008. ID is a further step forward towards NATO accession." [4a]

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ECONOMY

The FCO Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008 reported

"GDP: US \$10.1 billion (2006) GDP per capita: US\$2,568 (2006) GDP growth: 5.5% (2006, World Bank)

Unemployment Level: 31.8% approx. (Labour Force Survey 2006)." [4a]

Jane's Sentinel Country Risk Assessments: Bosnia-Herzegovina, updated 19 March 2008 stated

"BiH's economy is growing strongly, expanding by an estimated six per cent in 2006 and 5.5 in 2007. Although in large part this high growth rate represents recovery from the 1992-1995 war which devastated the country's economy, it also marks the success of the economic stabilisation policies implemented by the governments of both the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska (RS). The country has also benefited from high levels of international aid, and the oversight provided both by these international donors and the Office of the High Representative (OHR). BiH benefits from a well-educated labour force and growing investment into its key industries. However, several challenges remain; most crucially the politically-charged reform programme, and a high unemployment rate, which is estimated at up to 40 per cent." [1a] (Economy)

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina, released 11 March 2008, noted in its introductory section that:

"The government's human rights record remained poor. Although there were improvements in some areas. Serious problems that remained include:

- deaths from landmines.
- police abuses,
- poor and overcrowded prison conditions,
- increased harassment and intimidation of journalists and members of civil society,
- discrimination and violence against women and ethnic and religious minorities,
- discrimination against persons with disabilities and sexual minorities,
- obstruction of refugee return,
- trafficking in persons,

limits on employment rights." [2a]

The Amnesty International Annual Report 2008: Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering events in 2007, released on 2 May 2008, reported

"Many perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the 1992-95 war continued to evade justice, and thousands of enforced disappearances remained unresolved. Although efforts to bring perpetrators to justice remained insufficient, progress was made in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal) and in the domestic prosecution of war crimes, including in proceedings at the War Crimes Chamber in Sarajevo. Minorities faced discrimination, including in employment and in access to education. The return of refugees still displaced by the war remained slow. There were reports of ill-treatment by the police and in prisons." [9a]

Displacement and return figures

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in a report dated 28 August 2008 noted that "By June 2008, the number of IDPs estimated by UNHCR and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) had dropped from 1,200,000 to around 125,000 (UNHCR, June 2008 citing government figures), indicating that over one million refugees and IDPs had returned to their pre-war residence." [18a]

War Crimes

The FCO Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 5 December 2008 reported

"In 2007, there was more progress in arresting persons indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Zdravko Tolimir was arrested on 31 May 2007 and Vlastimir Djordjevic was arrested on 17 June 2007. On 12 December 2007 Dragomir Milosevic was found guilty by the ICTY of war crimes on counts of murder, terror and inhumane acts; he has been sentenced to 33 years imprisonment. Dragomir Milosevic was the commander of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps (SRK), which laid siege to Sarajevo for approximately 15 months during the 1992-1995 conflict. The SRK carried out a campaign of shelling and sniping resulting in injury and death to many civilian citizens of Sarajevo.

"On 11 June 2008, Serbian authorities arrested Stojan Zupljanin on the outskirts of Belgrade. Zupljanin is charged with genocide, crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war and breaches of the Geneva Conventions. He has now been transferred to The Hague, where he awaits trial.

"On 21 July 2008, Serbian authorities in Belgrade arrested Radovan Karadzic, the former President of the Republika Srpska. He is charged with genocide; crimes against humanity; violations of the laws or customs of war and grave breaches of the Geneva conventions of 1949. Karadzic was transferred to The Hague on the 29 July 2008 for trial. On the 30 August Karadzic refused to enter a plea, the court entered a plea of not guilty on his behalf." [4a]

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3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[1a]	Jane's Sentinel Country Risk Assessments: Bosnia- Herzegovina, (Economy) dated 19 March 2008 Hard copy only
	[1b]	Jane's Sentinel Country Risk Assessments: Bosnia- Herzegovina, (Geography) dated 19 March 2008 Hard copy only
	[2a]	United States Department of State (USSD) Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100551.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Background Note: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated January 2009 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last reviewed 5 December 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/europe/bosnia-herzegovina?profile=all
	[6a]	BBC, Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 7 January 2009 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/10668 https://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/10668 https://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/10668
	[8a]	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook, Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 18 December 2008 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html
	[15a]	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 'Better Local Development In Bosnia And Herzegovina In The Next Three Years', 23 October 2007 http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=7&RID=430
	[26a]	Department for International Development (DfID), Bosnia- Herzegovina Country Profile, updated 24 September 2007 http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/europe/bosniaherzegovina.asp
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	[3a]	The 1995 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/bk indx.html
	[3b]	Constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Report Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) Co-rapporteurs: Mr Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Doc. 10982 27 June 2006 http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country , COEPACE, BIH, 4562d8 b62,44c4cc7e4,0.html
	[4a]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last reviewed 5 December 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/europe/bosnia-herzegovina?profile=all
	[5a]	Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2009: Bosnia and Herzegovina http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/wr2009_web.pdf
	[6a]	BBC, Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Last updated 7 January 2009 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/10668 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/10668 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/10668
	[6b]	BBC Timeline: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 7 January 2009 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1066981.stm

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CONT	[7a]	Reuters Alertnet: Roma Information Center to seek progress for minority group's plight, 30 October 2007 http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/fromthefield/wvmeero/d1300ec508e90d97ede9f31696523e45.htm
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	[5a]	Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2009: Bosnia and Herzegovina http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/wr2009_web.pdf
	[5c]	Human Rights Watch (HRW) Karadzic's trial won't end Bosnia's human rights problems – dated 29 July 2008 http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/07/29/karadzic-s-trial-won-t-end-bosnia-s-human-rights-problems
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	[21a]	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, IHF Annual Report on Human Rights Violations, 2007 http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?download=1&doc_id=7395
	[22a]	Council of Europe – Commissioner for Human Rights Report by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Thomas Hammarberg, on his visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 4-11 June 2007. Dated 20 February 2008 https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1251561&Site=CommDH&BackColorInternet=FEC65B&BackColorIntranet=FEC65B&BackColorIntranet=FEC65B&BackColorLogged=FFC679
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	[29a]	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR), OHCHR Report 2007 on Activities and Results http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/OHCHR_Report_07_Full.pdf
	[30a]	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ICRC Annual Report 2007 http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/7euete/\$file/icrc_ar_07_bosnia_herzegovina.pdf?openelement

HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:		
(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)		
CHILDREN	[2a]	United States Department of State (USSD) Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100551.htm
	[2d]	United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2008 http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/105656.pdf
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