Home Office
Border & Immigration Agency

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

30 NOVEMBER 2007

BORDER & IMMIGRATION AGENCY
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

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This COI Key Documents contains the most up-to-date publicly available information as at 30 November 2007. Older source material has been included where it contains relevant information not available in more recent documents.

# 1. Preface

i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Bosnia and Herzegovina has been produced by COI Service, Border and Immigration Agency (BIA), 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 30 November 2007.

ii 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 BIA opinion or policy.

iii For BIA 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 *[country]* 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.

Country of Origin Information Service
**Border and Immigration Agency**
Apollo House
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## ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

x The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information was established under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the BIA's country of origin information material. The Advisory Panel welcomes all feedback on the BIA's COI Key Documents and other country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk

xi It is not the function of the Advisory Panel to endorse any BIA material or procedures. In the course of its work, the Advisory Panel directly reviews the content of selected BIA COI documents, but neither the fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

**Advisory Panel on Country Information contact details:**
**Email:** apci@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
**Website:** www.apci.org.uk

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# 2. Background information on Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Full Country Name:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, comprising the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska
**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:** KM, Convertible Mark, pegged to the Euro
**Main political structures**: State-level Government/Parliament, two Entity-level Governments/Parliaments – see below.
**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 Zeljko Komsic (Bosnian Croat - SDP, Chair until February 2008), Nebojsa Radmanovic (Bosnian Serb SNSD), Haris Silajdzic (Bosniak - SBiH).
Federation of BiH: Borjana Kristo (Bosnian Croat - HDZ BiH).
Republika Srpska: Milan Jelic (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
**(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007) [4a]**
**Population growth** (annual %) 0.1
**Life expectancy at birth**, female (years) 77.2
**Life expectancy at birth**, male (years) 71.8
**(World Development Indicators (2006)) [32]**

## GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), UK in its Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 30 August 2007, 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]**

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## HISTORY

"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." **(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007) [4a]**

"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 fixed internal borders in the Western Balkans along lines that still exist today." **(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007) [4a]**

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### RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

"Bosnian political leaders signed a commitment to pursue constitutional reform in Washington on 21 November 2005. Discussions had been ongoing, facilitated by the international community, with the goal of improving the functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovinian institutions. 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); build a more effective Parliament and enhance the protection of human rights. This would have been an important first step for Bosnia and Herzegovinian on the process of reform towards a more functional state, European integration and better human rights. But the agreement was blocked in the Bosnia and Herzegovinian House of Representatives on 26 April 2006, largely due to opposition from SBiH and HDZ-1990. Constitutional reform is still crucially important for Bosnia and Herzegovinian and there will need to be compromise between all parties to reach an agreement. As well as decisions on the April 2006 package of constitutional reforms, we hope that a longer term process will get under way soon."

"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." **(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007) [4a]**

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Human Rights Watch in its World Report 2007 commented that:

"While nationalist parties lost some ground in the October 2006 elections, the election of Bosnian Muslim and Serb nationalists to the country's three-person presidency threatened to continue the dangerous rhetoric of the pre-election period. The presidency's Muslim representative Haris Silajdzic called for the dissolution of the two entities that make up Bosnia (Republika Srpska and the Federation), while Milorad Dodik, the Republika Srpska prime minister and head of the party holding the Serb seat on the presidency, called for Republika Srpska's self-determination. The international community's high representative in Bosnia responded by threatening to remove Dodik from office should he call a mooted referendum on the issue." **[5a]**

## ECONOMY

"Today, BiH's economic growth continues to be generated largely by post-war reconstruction funded by external aid (amounting to US$5billion between 1995-99). The macro-economic situation remains weak but stable, underpinned by a fully convertible currency (the Convertible Mark (KM), which has a fixed parity with the Euro), low single digit inflation and relatively tight fiscal policies supported by the IMF. Post-war growth rates of 30% have stabilised at around 5%. With its official GDP of US$2,440 per capita in 2005, BiH falls into the category of lower middle income countries. Approximately 62% of this comes from the service sector, 29% from industry and 9% from agriculture." **(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007**) **[4a]**

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

The United States State Department in its Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006 noted that:

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

- deaths from landmines
- physical abuse by police officials
- overcrowding and poor prison conditions
- improper influence on the judiciary
- harassment and intimidation of journalists
- restrictions on religious minorities and attacks on religious structures
- obstructionism toward minority returnees
- government corruption
- societal discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities
- ethnically-motivated violence
- trafficking in persons
- limits on employment rights **[2a]**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), UK in its Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 30 August 2007, noted that:

**Refugee Returns:** "Substantial progress has been made in allowing refugees and displaced people to return home. Statistics from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that by February 2006 1,012,320 refugees and internally displaced persons had returned to their pre-war places of origin. While this is

encouraging, around 50,000 refugees from BiH remain in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and almost 200,000 are still internally displaced within BiH. Incidents of return-related violence are rare, but do still occur. Returnees continue to face a lack of educational facilities, unresolved property issues and poor economic prospects. The failure to bring to justice all war crimes indictees has also reduced confidence in the return process." **(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007) [4a]**

**War Crimes:** "2005 saw good progress in delivery of several persons indicted for war crimes and more recently there has been further progress with the arrests of ICTY indictees, Zdravko Tolimir on 31 May 2007 and Vlastimir Djordjevic on 17 June 2007. However, the continued presence at large of ICTY indictees – most notably the Bosnian Serb wartime leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic - represents a fundamental obstacle to lasting stability, reconciliation and prosperity in BiH and the wider region. The UK Government continues to make it clear that the continued freedom of indictees is incompatible with BiH's aspirations of further integration with Euro-Atlantic structures." **(FCO Country Profile, 30 August 2007) [4a]**

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# 3. Index to key source documents

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

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| KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY | [1] | Europa World Plus Europa World Online: Bosnia and Herzegovina (Date accessed 24 October 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/entry?id=ba&go_country=GO |
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| | [2a] | United States Department of State (USSD) Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78804.htm |
| | [2c] | United States Department of State, Background Note: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated September 2007 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm |
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| | [7a] | BBC, Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Last updated 31 July 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1066886.stm |
| | [10] | Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Last updated 18 October 2007 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html |
| | [17a] | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) From Recovery to Development – ten years of the United Nations Development Programme http://www.undp.ba/?PID=3&RID=31 |
| | [17b] | 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 |
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| HISTORY | [1] | Europa World Plus Europa World Online: Bosnia and Herzegovina (Date accessed 24 October 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/entry?id=ba&go_country=GO |

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| HISTORY CONT… | [2a] | United States Department of State (USSD) Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78804.htm |
| | [2c] | United States Department of State, Background Note: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated September 2007 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm |
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| | [7a] | BBC, Country Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Last updated 31 July 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1066886.stm |
| | [7b] | BBC Timeline: Bosnia and Herzegovina, last updated 27 July 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1066981.stm |
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| | [2a] | United States Department of State (USSD) Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina 6 March 2007 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78804.htm |
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| | [3a] | The 1995 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/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/home/RSDCOI/44c4cc7e4.pdf |
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| **POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS CONT…** | **[5a]** | Human Rights Watch (HRW), World Report 2007: Bosnia and Herzegovina http://hrw.org/wr2k7/pdfs/bosniaandherzegovina.pdf |
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| | **[33a]** | Relief Web: United Nations Secretary-General Secretary-General concerned by recent Bosnia and Herzegovina political developments; reiterates support for efforts of high representative 25 Oct 2007 http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/KHII-6VD3JP?OpenDocument&rc=4&cc=bih |

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| | **[3a]** | The 1995 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina http://www.servat.unibe.ch/law/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/home/RSDCOI/44c4cc7e4.pdf |
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| **HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL: CONT…** | **[32]** | International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ICRC Annual Report 2006, Last edited 24 May 2007 http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/738DJW/$FILE/icrc_ar_06_bosnia_herzegovina.pdf?OpenElement |
| **HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:**<br><br>**(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)** | | |
| **CHILDREN** | **[1]** | Europa World Plus Europa World Online: Bosnia and Herzegovina (Date accessed 24 October 2007) http://www.europaworld.com/entry?id=ba&go_country=GO |
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| | **[7d]** | BBC News, Bosnia tries multi-ethnic education, 28 September 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/5388416.stm |
| | **[7f]** | BBC News, Q&A: Bosnia-Hercegovina election. 28 September 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/5385084.stm |
| | **[10]** | Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Last updated 18 October 2007 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html |
| | **[11b]** | Bosnia and Herzegovina: Roma and the right to education, 16 November 2006, http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGEUR630142006 |
| | **[11c]** | Bosnia and Herzegovina, Behind closed gates: ethnic discrimination in employment, 26 January 2006 http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGEUR630012006 |
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