
BRCKO SUPERVISOR REJECTS BOSNIAN SERB REFERENDUM

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22.08.2016

19.08.2016

Balkan Insight

The internationally-appointed supervisor of the Brcko District refused permission to hold a controversial Bosnian Serb referendum in the area, arguing that it violates the countrys constitution.

Brcko District Supervisor Bruce Berton said on Friday that he had refused to consent to a request from the towns mayor to organise the controversial referendum on the Day of Republika Srpska, Bosnias Serb dominated entity, in the area.

Berton pointed out that Bosnias top international official, High Representative Valentin Inzko, had already described the referendum, which Republika Srpska plans to hold next month, as unconstitutional.

The High Representative has said clearly that the decision to organise the referendum on the public holiday of RS unconstitutional and that it is contrary to the decision of the Bosnian Constitutional Court, therefore, I decided not to give my permission to organise this referendum in the territory of the Brcko district, Berton said in response to mayor Anto Domics request.

The Brcko District is currently an autonomous district whose territory is part of both entities of the country, Republika Srpska and the Federation.

The district was supervised directly by the international community until 2012, after which the mandate of the District Supervisor was suspended. Until a solution is found for its status, its residents can decide whether they want to be citizens of Republika Srpska or the Federation.

But the consent of the District Supervisor is still required to organise referendums in Brcko, Bosnian media reported.

Sinisa Malic, a local member of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, the party of Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik, said that Brcko residents who have declared themselves citizens of Republika Srpska might still vote at the referendum, for instance via mail or in ballots which will be counted in nearby municipalities, Al Jazeera Balkans reported.

Last month, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska voted to organise the referendum on September 25 on the entity's annual holiday, the Day of Republika Srpska.

It made the move after the Bosnian Constitutional Court last year declared the annual holiday unconstitutional because it said it was discriminatory against non-Serb residents of the entity.

Local media have reported that the referendum question will be: Do you agree that January 9 should be marked and celebrated as the Day of Republika Srpska?

Bosniaks have strongly opposed the referendum, saying that it would undermine the authority of state-level institutions like the Constitutional Court.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ohr-opposes-organising-rs-referendum-in-brcko-08-19-2016>

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