
SERB NATIONALIST MILORAD DODIK WINS BOSNIA PRESIDENCY SEAT

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Mr Dodik, who has close links with Russia, has urged Bosnian Serbs to secede, saying the country had failed.

The main Bosnian Muslim party, the SDA, said its candidate Sefik Dzaferovic would be the Muslim representative.

Croat voters returned the centrist Social Democrat, Zeljko Komsic, to their presidential seat.

The turnout for Sunday's vote was 53%, election commission president Branko Petric told reporters.

The run-up to the election was marred by ethnic abuse and intimidation, observers say, more than 20 years after Bosnia was torn apart by civil war.

The country is still split into two entities - the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) and the Muslim-Croat Federation.

Its three-member collective presidency - Croat, Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) and Serb - was established as part of the US-brokered 1995 Dayton peace deal that ended the war in which in 100,000 died.

Mr Dodik, who has led Republika Srpska since 2006, claimed victory in the northern town of Banja Luka.

"My first priority will be the position of the Serb people and of the Republika Srpska," he said.

"I believe that Bosnia-Herzegovina also may progress if everyone is respected."

Under Bosnia's complex political system, voters had to elect a total of five presidents and 14 prime ministers.

Candidates stood for the central government - two chambers of parliament and the tripartite presidency - plus governments for the two separate entities.

In Republika Srpska voters had to elect MPs, a president and two vice-presidents. In the Muslim-Croat Federation a bicameral parliament has to be elected that includes a president and two vice-presidents.

In addition, voters cast ballots for assemblies that run the federation's 10 cantons. In all, nearly

7,500 candidates stood for 518 offices across the country.

The parliamentary results will be announced later on Monday.

Election monitors had complained that campaigning had been marred by ethnic leaders using divisive rhetoric harking back to the war.

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