

Mato ZOVKIĆ

**CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN THE COUNTRIES THAT EMERGED
FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

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The present ratio of Christians and Muslims in Southeast Europe is the result of a long historical development, not the fruit of recent missionary endeavors. Christians are Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants of different denominations. Muslims are Sunni believers of Turkish descent. The individual's family faith gradually – through education and adult choice – becomes a personal conviction and an integral part of personal and group identity.

Muslims in this region are Slavs and Albanians whose ancestors accepted Islam during their incorporation in the Ottoman Empire. This process began in 1371 with the Turkish victory at the River Marica in Bulgaria and it continued with the Battle of Kosovo Field on 15th of June 1389, where the Sultan Murat and the Serbian Prince Lazar met their deaths; Serbian rulers became Turkish vassals and then, with the fall of Smederevo in 1459, Serbia itself was fully absorbed in the Ottoman Empire. To Serbs, Kosovo was and still is the cradle of nationhood and of the Serbian Orthodox Church. This may explain why so many myths about the Battle of Kosovo were formed in Serbian historiography, literature and folk-epics (N. Malcolm, 1998, 58-80). After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Turkey was obliged to recognize the full independence of Serbia and hand over administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Thanks to the *millet system*, Jews and Christians were left unmolested under Turkish rule as long as they remained loyal to the new rulers and paid taxes to the Sultan and the local officials. The Turkish scholar Talip Kucukcan has argued that the *millet* offered fair protection for non-Muslims under Ottoman rule (Kucukcan, 2003, 480-485) but most Christian historians have evaluated the system differently. Malcolm contends that in Kosovo "Some restrictions were imposed, and Christians in general certainly acquired a second-class status; but

forcible conversion to Islam was extremely rare. As for the šeriat law and Muslim fanaticism, the Ottoman Empire never became a narrowly Islamic state, and even sacred Koranic law was only one element in a complex legal system" (Malcolm, 1998, 94). Malcolm also takes the view that there was no massive forcible conversion of Bosnians to Islam although there was discrimination against Christians under Turkish rule. The Catholic Church especially was regarded with deep suspicion because the Bosnian Franciscans were educated in Italy or Hungary (Malcolm, 2002, 51-69).

As well as the appalling massacre committed by Serb forces against Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica in July 1995, Bosniak Muslim historians evaluate as genocide the expulsion and persecution of Muslims which took place in Croatia after the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, then between 1804 and 1820 in Serbia after the first uprising of Serbs, during the second Serb uprising in Serbia and Montenegro in 1876-1878, and finally in Serbia and Montenegro during the Balkan War of 1912 (Ahmet Alibašić, "Hronološki pregled historije islama i muslimanskih naroda", *Atlas islamskog svijeta* 2003, 799-801). Reputable Christian scholars acknowledge that a kind of "de-islamization" took place after Ottoman rule ended in the region (M. Dogo, "La de-islamizzazione: fasi, metodi, risultati", in L. Vacari, *Storia religiosa dell'Islam nei Balcani*, 283-310). Several hundred thousand Bosnian Muslims moved to Turkey in the late nineteenth century because they were afraid that they could be forcibly Christianized by the new rulers.

It is fair to say that in the era of imperial rule, Muslim authorities tended to favor Muslims and Christian authorities tended to favor Christians. Each religious and ethnic community has experienced oppression and discrimination. At the same time, all of the communities also have experience of good neighborly relations.

Orthodox majority in Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro

1. *Serbia* is a country of 77.474 km² with a population of 7,498,001. In the 2002 census 6,371,584 of Serbia's inhabitants registered as Orthodox, while 410,976 were Catholics, and 239,658 were Muslims. In percentage terms this means 85% Orthodox, 5.5% Catholic, and 3.2% Muslim. In addition, 1.1% of the population registered as Protestant, 2.6 percent said they were other than the listed religious options or atheist, and 2.6% declined to answer. The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) was formally established in 1219 when the Patriarch of Constantinople granted the Serbian Church autocephalous status and

consecrated the Mount Athos monk, Sava Nemanjić, a brother of the Serbian ruler, Stefan Nemanja, as “Archbishop of Serbian and Maritime lands”. “The Archbishop of Ohrid was in revolt against the Patriarch, and this move was a way of cutting half the Archbishop’s territory from under his feet. Sava returned in triumph in Serbia, kicked out the Greek bishops from Kosovo, and set about reorganizing the Church with himself as autocephalous Archbishop – a position he held until 1233 (He died in 1235, and was canonized soon thereafter)” (Malcolm, 1998, 45). Today, the SOC comprises 38 eparchies, five of which are in Bosnia and Herzegovina, four in Croatia, four in the United States and seven in other foreign countries. The SOC is a member of the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches, both headquartered in Geneva.

Around 2,000 young men and women study at the SOC Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, where one of the professors is Radovan Bigović. Professor Bigović believes that the participation of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement and in dialogue with non-Christian religions “is not a matter of tactics and diplomacy. It represents the mission of the Church – manifestation of the very identity of the Church. The question of religious tolerance and ecumenism is primarily a soteriological problem and a soteriological question, i. e. it is an expression of the Church’s concern for the salvation of all” (R. Bigović, 2009, 108).

Recently I related to another professor at the same Faculty the story of a young Serb woman in Banja Luka who grew up in an agnostic family and as a university student came to the conclusion that Christianity makes her life meaningful. She asked her parents and grandparents for instruction in their traditional Orthodox faith but they were unable to help her. Because of this she turned to a Protestant community in her city, was baptized and is now practicing her faith. Her family and traditional Orthodox friends accuse her of having betrayed her Serb heritage. The professor of Theology responded to this story by saying: “Well, Serbs are an Orthodox people and even non-baptized Serbs belong somehow to the Orthodox tradition. This is why Western missionaries should not try to convert agnostic Serbs to Protestant Christianity; the Serbian land and people are the canonical territory of the Serbian Orthodox Church!” I have come across comparable views expressed by Russian Orthodox theologians. (Cf. J. Oeldemann, “The Concept of Canonical Territory in the Russian Orthodox Church”, in T. Bremer, 2008, 229-236).

The Constitution of Serbia states that religious communities

have equal rights and that religion and the state are separate. The current Law on Churches and Religious Communities was enacted by the Parliament in 2006 and it recognizes seven traditional faith communities: the SOC, the Catholic Church (organized in four dioceses), three Protestant Churches, Muslims and Jews. These seven faith communities inherited their legal status from the Kingdom of Serbia – recognized by the Republic of Serbia – and they are authorized to give religious instruction in public schools where there are at least eight students of that confession on the roll. The law explicitly cites the historic role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the development of the national identity of the Serb people. “In practice, the SOC enjoys a privileged status and plays an important social and political role in the country. On the occasion of the death of Serbian Patriarch Pavle on 15 November 2009 the Government decreed three days of mourning” (A. Alibašić, “Serbia”, *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, 2010, 459).

Muslim representatives in Serbia have questioned the accuracy of the 2002 census data and argue that the Muslim population is much larger, perhaps as large as 700,000. As a result of historical developments, the Muslim population in Serbia is concentrated in the region of Sandžak in the southwest, in the Preševo Valley in the southeast and in the Belgrade area. About 56% of Muslims in Serbia are ethnic Bosniaks, 25% ethnic Albanians, 8% Roma and 7% of other ethnicities. Ethnicity is probably at the root of obstacles to the creation of one Islamic community for the whole country. Muslims in Sandžak through their Grand Mufti, Muamer Zukorlić, tend to accept the Grand Mufti of Sarajevo as their supreme religious authority, while Albanians and others have resisted this and insist that they are an autonomous religious community. The Islamic community in Serbia is organized in four muftiates: Preševo, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Sandžak. Bosniak Muslims maintain the Gazi Isa Bey madrasa in Novi Pazar, established in 1990, and the Faculty of Islamic Studies, established in 1996. The Faculty publishes an annual collection of articles entitled *Islamska misao* (Islamic Thought) while students of the madrasa publish a magazine called *Softa*. Bosniak Muslims also publish a monthly magazine called *Glas Islama* (The Voice of Islam). In the autumn of 2009 the Ministry of Religion withdrew financial support from *Glas Islama*. This decision was criticized by Muslim Bosniak representatives, who argued that it was further evidence of discrimination against Muslims in Sandžak and an attack on freedom of expression. Only marriages concluded by a public registrar are legally valid in Serbia, but the Islamic Community encourages Shari’a weddings administered by an imam.

For decades Muslims in Belgrade have been seeking permission from the civil authorities to build a new mosque in the city and open a separate Muslim cemetery, but until now this has been denied.

Zorica Kuburić, a sociologist of religion at the University of Novi Sad in Serbia, in an article, "Images of the Religious Other in Serbia" (Chr. Mae, 2008, 167-198), points out that in the past, people were not inclined to believe that there was anything positive in other religions; at the same time, misinterpretations were common and were often amplified. She blames religious representatives for the very slow change in attitudes: "The historical memory of conflicts between the adherents of different religious traditions maintains a negative and frightening image of the other. In Serbia, that religious other is, on one hand, Islam, as a competing religion: some Orthodox believers consider it a 'scourge of God', a punishment for their own deviations from the faith and their own sins. On the other hand, there are foreign faiths that come from the West, previously known as *novoverci* and today as sects. In their efforts to preserve the faith of their flock, in their fear that their believers might be deceived and led on a wrong path, religious representatives use various methods, among which prevails painting of a negative image of the others and spreading fear."

2. The *Republic of Macedonia* has a land area of 25,713 km² and a population of 2,022,547 (2002 census). The country is predominantly Orthodox as around 65% of its citizens are ethnic Macedonians, Orthodox by faith. In the second half of the ninth century the Bulgar rulers who had recently converted to Christianity seized control of Kosovo and the western Macedonian town of Ohrid. They helped to set up a diocese in Ohrid, which thus became an important center of Slav culture for the whole region (Malcolm, 1998, 27). By the end of Tsar Samuel's reign (976-1018) the Archdiocese of Ohrid included Dioceses in Skopje, Lipljan and Prizren. Today the Archeparchy of Ohrid includes seven Eparchies of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Since it declared its independence from the Serbian Orthodox Church during the communist era in Yugoslavia, without due canonical procedure, the autocephalous status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church has been questioned by most Orthodox Churches. The Theological Faculty of the Macedonian Church is in Skopje.

In the 2002 census 674,015 Macedonian citizens declared their religious affiliation to be Muslim, accounting for about 33% of the total population. Among Muslims, ethnic Albanians account for 77% and Turks for 12%; other significant groups in the Muslim population are Roma and Bosniaks. Muharem Jahja, author of a survey of Muslims in

Macedonia for the *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 2010*, points out that due to a high fertility rate the Muslim population is growing at around 2.5% per annum “so that the total number of Muslims in 2009 is probably over 700,000” (*Op. cit.*, 335).

Macedonia’s Constitution describes the country as a secular republic with no state religion. It guarantees freedom of religion and provides for the right to express one’s faith freely and publicly, individually and as a community. The state Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups regulates the concrete legal position of faith communities as an autonomous state institution. The Islamic Religious Community in the Republic of Macedonia (IRCM) is recognized as one of five main faith communities in the country and represented by its legally elected leaders; it is organized in thirteen muftiates with seats in major cities around the country. “There are tens of political parties affiliated to the Muslim communities in the country, some of which take part in the government coalitions and are represented in the parliament by more than 30 MPs. Their politics are ethnic rather than religious” (Jahja, 2010, 337). Isa Bey Madrasa in Skopje was established in 1884 and is run by the IRCM. The Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Skopje was established in 1997. The main Islamic periodical is *El Hilal* published in Albanian by the IRCM.

The Parliament of Macedonia has a 19-member Committee for Inter-Community Relations, which includes ethnic and religious representatives: seven ethnic Macedonian members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, seven Albanian-Muslims, one Turk-Muslim, one Vlach-Orthodox, one Roma-Muslim, one Serb-Orthodox, and one Bosniak-Muslim. The Parliament is obliged to take the Committee’s proposals into consideration. Similar committees also exist at the municipal assembly level.

3. *Montenegro* has a land area of 13,812 km² and a population of 620,145 (2003 census). The country separated from Serbia following a referendum in 2006. Orthodox Christians comprise 74% of the population and are members of the Serbian Orthodox Church, organized in two Eparchies. Muslims comprise about 18% of the population and are organized in the Islamic Community of Montenegro. The Orthodox population was divided in the referendum between, on the one hand, a large group of ethnic Serbs (32%), supported by their bishops and priests, who voted to maintain the connection with Serbia and, on the other, a group of ethnic Montenegrins (43%) who voted for separation. About 90% of Muslims voted for independence. Muslims are ethnic Bosniaks, Albanians, Muslim-Montenegrins and Roma. A Madrasa

opened in 2008 as the most important project of the Islamic Community in Montenegro. It admits only male students but the IC is working on extending the building to establish a girls' department. The new law on personal identity documents allows citizens who wear a hat or headscarf for ethnic or religious reasons to have ID photographs taken wearing the hat or headscarf. The IC publishes a magazine, *Elif*, in Bosnian and Albanian. It also publishes religious books and regular news on its website.

Omer Kajoshaj in his contribution on Montenegro in the *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 2010, on the topic of interreligious relations briefly states: "No activities reported". He also mentions that the visits of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in July 2009 and Turkish President Abdullah Gül on 2nd of December 2009 "gave a high credibility and a positive reputation to the Islamic Community and its current leadership" (p. 365-367).

Catholic majority in Slovenia and Croatia

1. *Slovenia* was the most developed of the six Republics of Yugoslavia and it was the first to initiate the process of independence in the late eighties, a process it completed on 25th June 1991. Since 1st of May 2004 it has been a member of the European Union and on 1st of January 2007 it became the thirteenth member of the Euro-zone. It has a land area of 20,273 km² and a population of 2,039,399.

Slovenia has 43 registered religious communities. According to the 2002 census, about 58% of interviewees declared themselves as Catholic, but according to the annual survey of the Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Center at the Ljubljana Faculty of Social Sciences, between 64% and 70% of adult citizens declare themselves as belonging to the Roman Catholic religious community (*The State and Religion in Slovenia*, 2008, 129-332).

According to the 1991 Constitution of Slovenia, state and religious communities are separate; religious communities enjoy equal rights and they can pursue their activities freely; all citizens are equal before the law. In 2004 the National Assembly adopted an Agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Holy See on Legal Issues, granting the Catholic Church the full freedom "to perform its activities under canon law, in line with the legal order of the Republic of Slovenia". In 2007 the parliament adopted a Religious Freedom Act providing, *inter alia*, for state funded spiritual care in public institutions such as the army and police, prisons and hospitals. Agreements on the

Legal Status of individual Churches and faith communities have been signed with the Evangelical Church, the Slovenian Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Pentecostal Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community.

Catholics in Slovenia are organized in six Dioceses with seats at Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper, Murska Sobota, Celje and Novo Mesto. Catholic Faculties of Theology operate in Ljubljana and Maribor; the Church publishes a weekly newspaper, *Družina*, in Ljubljana and several other magazines elsewhere.

The first Islamic Community was founded in Ljubljana in 1967. In the 2000 census 47,488 interviewees declared themselves as Muslims by religion, which represents 2.4% of Slovenia's population. Ethnically, 74% of these are Bosniaks coming from Bosnia or Sandžak, 11% are Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia, and the others are Slovenes, Macedonians, and Roma. In fact, there are two registered Islamic Communities: a majority organization headed by the Mufti, Dr. Nedžad Grabus, consisting of 15 local chapters and two smaller congregations, and a dissident organization headed by an imam, Osman Đogić, who led a breakaway movement after an internal conflict blocked his re-appointment in 2006. The Islamic Community *in* Slovenia (Đogić's organization is called the IC *of* Slovenia) headed by Mufti Grabus is a branch of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Slovenia has no purpose-built mosque with a minaret. Muslims have sought to build a mosque in Ljubljana since 1968 and have stepped up their efforts in the last decade. At the end of 2008, a location was approved for an Islamic cultural center and mosque, and the IC bought most of the land from the city, taking on substantial debt. After an anti-mosque referendum initiative was squashed by the Administrative Court in June 2009, the obstacles to the mosque project are now financial rather than political" (Chr. Moe: "Slovenia", in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 2010*, 476). Islam is taught to children *in* Slovenian in *mekteb* classes organized in about a dozen towns by local congregations of Muslims. From my personal contacts with Mufti Grabus I know that a translation of the Qur'an into Slovenian has not yet been made, which means that only selected texts are used for religious instruction of children. An important heritage site for Slovenian Muslims is a cemetery for Muslim troops from Bosnia who fought for Austria-Hungary in World War I, when Bosnia was under the Habsburg Monarchy. In 2007 the cemetery was marked with Muslim tombstones. As well as distributing the Bosnian Muslim bi-weekly, *Preporod*, to its members, the IC operates a website and publishes its

own internal bulletin. It takes an active part in interreligious dialogue at home and abroad. Among other activities, Mufti Grabus is a member of a working group on intercultural dialogue in the Western Balkans supported by the Slovenian government.

2. *Croatia* has a land area of 56.594 km² and a population of 4,440,000. According to the 2001 census 87% were Catholics, 4,42% Orthodox, and 56,777 identified themselves as Muslims (1,28%).

During World War II the pro-Nazi regime opened concentration camps for innocent Jewish, Serbian, Roma and other civilians. One of these, known for the cruelty of the regime's soldiers and supporters, was at Jasenovac. Only the Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac and the former Sarajevo auxiliary bishop, Smiljan Čekada, dared to raise their voices publicly against the massacre of innocent civilians (Čekada was transferred in December 1940 to Skopje where he made special efforts to save persecuted Jews and orphaned Jewish children, and in 2011 the *Yad vashem* Memorial Center in Jerusalem honored him posthumously as one of the "righteous among nations"). Ante Pavelić, the dictator of the puppet state was unfortunately a criminal Catholic. After the war, communist regime historians in Serbia asserted that 700,000 Serbs and others were killed at Jasenovac, while contemporary Croatian historians sharply question this number. On 17th of March, during a televised service at Jasonavac Memorial Museum, the Museum custodian Katica Sedmak in her opening address to survivors, families of the victims and representatives of the state authorities said that so far the names of 81,988 victims have been traced, and other speakers estimated the total number at about 100,000. Serbian ethnic representatives and Orthodox leaders expect Croatian Catholic bishops and clergy to acknowledge more openly the crimes committed against Serbs during World War II and during Croatia's war of independence from 1991 to 1995.

Catholic bishops and priests currently apply the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in their respective Dioceses and parishes and at five Catholic Faculties of Theology. Orthodoxy and Islam are being taught to future priests and teachers of the Catholic faith in public schools. Catholics are active in the Croatian Chapter of *Religions for Peace*. The Catholic Bishops' Conference through its Council for Ecumenical and religious collaboration takes an active part in ecumenical and interreligious meetings. Such a meeting of representatives of Christian Churches, Islam and Judaism in Croatia took place in the Islamic Center of Zagreb on 28th of February this year and adopted a common Declaration on the Family

entitled "The Family is God's gift to humans". In a joint press release they evaluated recent events in Arab countries as a call for democratic change, not a danger of Muslim extremism (*Glas Koncila* 2011, n. 10, p. 1 and 8).

Islam has been officially recognized in Croatia since 1916. Muslims in Croatia are ethnic Bosniaks and Albanians, mostly concentrated in the Zagreb, Dubrovnik and Istria regions. They are organized in the Islamic Community in Croatia under the able leadership of Mufti Ševko Omerbašić in Zagreb, with mosques in Zagreb and Gunja and 15 prayer facilities (*masjids*) in other cities since they are essentially part of the urban population in Croatia. After a long fight with administrative structures they secured permission to build an Islamic center with a mosque in Rijeka and work began in September 2009. The ICC runs an Islamic high school in Zagreb. Plans for an Islamic Faculty as part of the Islamic Center in Zagreb have been initiated; for the time being, imams are being educated in Sarajevo or in Arab countries. Muslim children are entitled to receive confessional religious education in public schools if they can form a class of seven or more. I have been told by one Zagreb imam that school directors acknowledge Muslim students' religious instruction in school certificates in cases where students have taken instruction at the Islamic center of Zagreb because there are fewer than seven Muslim students in their respective state schools.

Muslims in Croatia are symbolically connected with the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina so that the ICC recognizes as its supreme leader the *Reisu-l-ulema* of Sarajevo, while the Grand Mufti of Sarajevo confirms their mufti as the head of the ICC.

Muslims have the right to a day's holiday on both major festivals, 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha (since the Muslims of Croatia and Bosnia are of Turkish descent they call these feasts *Ramadan Bayram* and *Qurban Bayram*). The 'Id prayers are broadcast live on national television and radio and on these Muslim feasts prominent politicians, such as the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister or the Mayor of Zagreb normally visit the Zagreb mosque to congratulate Muslims in Croatia on the occasion of their religious festival. "As a result of the cultural proximity of Croatian Muslims with the Christian Majority, there are no social tensions and Muslims are well integrated in Croatian society. Nevertheless, negative prejudices towards Muslims, increased by ethnic war between Croats and Bosniaks in Bosnia in 1993-1994, still have some influence on public opinion, which was visible in the resistance of part of the local population to the building of the Islamic

Center in Rijeka. On the other hand, major political groupings and the relevant media tend to be supportive and open to the ICC and to Muslims" (D. Mujadžević: "Croatia", in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 2010, 123).

Muslim Majority in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. *Kosovo* has a land area of 10,882 km² and a population estimated by the Statistical Office of Kosovo at 2,180,686 in 2010. Kosovo was taken from the Ottomans by Serbia in 1912 and in 1918 included in the state that subsequently became Yugoslavia. In 1974 it became an autonomous province within Serbia but its autonomy was suspended in 1989 by the Milošević regime. After a decade of repression, an escalating armed conflict that started in 1997 between Kosovo Albanians and Serbian forces was ended through NATO intervention against Serbia in 1999. Kosovo was placed under UN administration but in February 2008 the Assembly of Kosovo declared independence. The Republic of Kosovo has been recognized so far by 65 UN member states.

About 90% of Kosovo's population are ethnic Albanians; the most significant minority are Serbs; other minorities are Montenegrins, Roma, Gorani, Turks, Bosniaks, and Croats. The International Crisis Group in its Report of 31st January 2001 said: "Kosovo Albanians do not define their national identity through religion, but through language and have a relatively relaxed approach towards the observance of the forms of the Islamic religion. Neither Islamic leaders nor Islamic theology played a significant role in either the eight-year campaign of non-violent resistance to the Serb occupation regime or the armed resistance of 1998-99. Islamic political and social fundamentalism, as that term is understood with respect to the Middle East, has very little resonance in Kosovo... During the war Serb forces destroyed numerous Islamic facilities, including virtually all Islamic libraries and archives. After the war, Albanians replied by destroying scores of Orthodox churches. These acts of reciprocal vandalism seemed motivated on both sides more by the desire to eradicate the evidence of the other's presence in Kosovo than by religious fanaticism."

Orthodox believers in Kosovo are organized in the Eparchy of Raška-Prizren with its seat at Gračanica Monastery. Its bishop, Artemije Radosavljević, sharply criticized UN representatives and troops in Kosovo for not protecting Serb churches, monasteries and people in an effective way. On 24th of June 2003 he issued a Statement criticizing

the Serb political representative, Oliver Ivanović, for his decision to resume his seat in the Kosovo parliament before ensuring that essential demands of the Serb community had been met. A commission formed by the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church ruled in February 2010 that Bishop Radosavljević had seriously mismanaged the church's administration and finances and he was forced to retire. In November of 2010 he wrote to the Holy Synod of his Church rejecting the official decision of retirement and indicating his intention to return to his office. He did this while withdrawing to another monastery with his followers. The Synod responded by demoting him to the rank of a simple monk and nominating a new bishop to the Raška-Prizren Eparchy.

Catholics in Kosovo are organized in the Diocese of Prizren. There are about 65,000 Catholics in 24 parishes; they are ethnic Albanians and Croats. The diocese publishes a monthly magazine, *Drita*. Currently, the state of Kosovo refers to Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy as traditionally present religions. In 2005 a Law on Religious Freedoms was adopted. The legislation envisages certain privileges for the traditional religious communities but it has not yet been implemented. This is why faith communities continue to function within the legal framework inherited from former Yugoslavia. The Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo foresees the establishment of Municipal Security Councils for each municipality and these would include representatives of faith communities.

Muslims in Kosovo are organized in the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK), which consists of 25 regional Islamic councils. The ICK does not receive any support from the state budget and consequently depends on donations from adherents to finance its pastoral activities and pay its 1,200 employees. Besa Ismaili and Xhabir Hamiti in their report on Muslims in Kosovo, stress that, "Several imams were beaten up during 2009, including ICK senior officials, the President of the ICK, an administrative assistant at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, and an imam in Drenica region. The ICK publicly condemned these attacks and asked the authorities to deal with the perpetrators" (*Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 2010, 292). There are currently 750 mosques in the country, 120 of which are new.

The Alaud-din Madrasa in Prishtina was established in 1952 and provides education for boys and girls. It has branches in Prizren and Gjilan. An Institute for memorizing the Qur'an (*Hifz*) was established at Gjakova in 2005 with the support of a Turkish association. The ICK is making efforts to introduce confessional religious instruction in public schools. A Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) was estab-

lished in 1992 and is open to students from neighboring regions who would like to study in Albanian. Discussions about incorporating the FIS in the public university of Prishtina are ongoing.

Cemeteries in Kosovo are under the control of municipalities, and Muslim cemeteries are separate from Orthodox and Catholic ones. 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha are recognized as official holidays by the state and on these festivals all public institutions are closed. Representatives of state authorities, foreign diplomats and leaders of other faith communities attend the reception organized by the Grand Mufti on the day of 'Id.

As part of the Islamic revival which took place largely after the withdrawal of the totalitarian Milošević regime in 1999, many young women increasingly started to wear the hijab. High school and university students are allowed to attend classes wearing the hijab. "In recruitment for employment there are numerous complaints about discriminatory practices against women who wear the headscarf. Nevertheless, there is a small but representational number of women who wear the hijab and work in both the public and private sectors, as well as in international organizations" (Ismaili-Hamiti, 2010, 299).

Since 1970 the ICK has published *Takvim*, an annual Islamic almanac with popular and accessible articles. Since 1971 it has published the quarterly magazine *Educata Islame* (Islamic Education) and since 1986 the scientific review *Ditura Islame* (Islamic knowledge). Muslims who are ethnic Turks, Bosniaks and Roma do not have periodicals in their own language published in Kosovo. Members of all faith communities are obliged by law to contract civil marriages first at a registry office before proceeding, if they wish, to a religious ceremony. The Inter-religious Council of Kosovo was established through the mediation of the *Religions for Peace* New York office in 2000 and its efficacy has depended very much on the concrete goodwill of officiating Orthodox, Islamic and Catholic leaders. Women's interreligious groups are more active: "Muslim and Catholic women have paid visits to Orthodox women in Gračanica. Muslim and Catholic women's groups regularly visit each other on major religious festivals. They have also been part of a joint working group against trafficking, and participated in the public hearing of the draft law on abortion" (Ismaili-Hamiti, 2010, 300-301). Apart from providing airtime for religious scholars to speak about Islam on the main annual festivals, public television in Kosovo devotes little space to religious matters. Since recognition of Kosovo by Muslim countries is viewed as a vital national interest, in 2009 more interest in Islam generally and in the Muslim world began

to be shown by the media.

2. *Bosnia and –Herzegovina*, with a land area of 51,209 km² and a population of 4,377,043 population according to the 1991 census, is a country recovering from the 1991-1995 war for ethnic territory that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It consists of two “entities”, the Federation of Bosniaks and Croats, which has ten cantons, and the Republika Srpska, from which Croats and Bosniaks were ethnically cleansed during the armed conflict. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, appointed by the Peace Implementation Council, has the authority to remove elected officials, and enact or suspend legislation when such action is deemed necessary to uphold the peace process.

In the 1991 census about 44% of respondents registered as ethnic Muslims, something they had been able to do under the communist regime since the late 1960s. In 1993 Muslim civil and religious leaders decided to adopt the name “Bosniak”. In doing so they had in mind the fact that most ethnic Croats in BiH are Catholics and most ethnic Serbs are Orthodox. For centuries ethnic and religious identities in BiH have overlapped.

Regarding the origin of Muslims in BiH, Mirnes Kovač and Aid Smajić say briefly: “Bosnian Muslims are mainly descended from Christians (Catholics, Orthodox, or adherents of the extinct Medieval Bosnian Church) who converted to Islam during the four centuries of Ottoman rule from the middle of the fifteenth century until 1878, when Bosnia became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and remained so until 1918” (*Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* 2010, 90).

On 1st of March 1992 the democratically elected government of Bosnia-Herzegovina organized a referendum asking citizens if they wanted to remain within a truncated Yugoslavia or become a new independent country. The referendum was boycotted by most ethnic Serbs in BH (though not all!). Citizens who took part in the referendum voted for independence.

BH was quickly recognized by the UN as a new member state but Bosnian Serbs, assisted by the Yugoslav army, initiated a war to secure a portion of the country which they hoped eventually to join with Serbia. Bosniaks and Croats describe this armed conflict as a war of aggression, while Serbs refer to it as a civil war. Perhaps an appropriate description would be a war for ethnic territories.

The war ended with the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995. In addition to the expulsion of ethnic minorities from their homes and the destruction of mosques and churches the conflict took

the lives of 97,207 victims, of whom 64,036 were Bosniaks or Bosnian Muslims.

The Srebrenica genocide and other atrocities committed by Serb armed forces were characterised by Ratko Mladić as being revenge for the mediaeval defeat at Kosovo and part of an effort to prevent the re-Islamization of the Balkans. This myth has also been propagated by some Jewish extremists: "The Bosnia and the Kosovo Wars, which were conceived in much of the world only in terms of Serbian nationalism under Milosevic, have yet another dark side to them that is not widely discussed, and that is the rise of Islam in the Balkans" (R. Israeli, 2000, 5). Declaring that citizens who are different are also dangerous opens minds and hearts to discrimination and crimes against minorities.

Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are organized in the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ICBH) with eight geographical muftiates consisting of 60 *jam'as* and a military muftiate. The head of the IC is the *Reis al-ulema*, a position held since 1993 by Dr Mustafa Cerić, who is the President of the *Riyasat* and the Grand Mufti of all Muslims in the country. The Council of the ICBH (*Sabor*) elects the Reis and is the highest representative and legislative body of Muslims in BiH. Bosnian Muslims living abroad are organized in five *Meshihats*: in Slovenia, Croatia, Sandjak in Serbia, Germany and Australia. Bosnian Muslims are organized also in Austria, the US and Canada. The Office for the Bosniak Diaspora in Sarajevo coordinates pastoral care of Bosniak Muslims living abroad. The ICBH also has an Office for the Hajj, an Office for Relations with the Islamic World, a *Waqf* or Endowment Directorate, the El-Kalem publishing center, the Center for Islamic Architecture, the Muslim News Agency (MINA), the Agency for Halal Quality Certification, the Gazi Husref Bey Library, the Association of Islamic Scholars (*Ilmija*), the Tariqah Center and Radio Station *BIR*. Faith-based organizations that are not directly responsible to the Riyaset include the Muslim Charitable Association, "Merhamet", the Women's Education Center "Nahla" in Sarajevo, the Women's Education Center "Kewser" in Zenica and many others.

The ICBH runs about 1,700 mosques and *masjids*. "In larger towns, such as Sarajevo, Zenica, Bugojno, a number of mosques were built after the war as a gift from friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Jordan, and Kuwait. Many mosques are still under reconstruction after being destroyed or damaged during the war, while others are new builds. The ICBH reports that 613 mosques, 218 *masjids*, 69 mektabs, 4 *zarwias*, 37 *turbes* and 405 vari-

ous other *waqf* properties were completely destroyed in the 1992-1995 war” (Kovač-Smajić, 2010, 95-96).

The ICBH runs six Islamic high schools or madrasas (in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Travnik, Visoko, Cazin and Mostar). Since 1977 the Faculty of Islamic Studies (*Fakultet islamskih nauka – FIN*), which educates future imams, teachers of religion and postgraduate candidates for MA and PHD degrees, has operated in Sarajevo. In Zenica and Bihać there are Islamic Education Faculties, which train teachers for Islamic education in public schools. The Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo publishes an annual collection of scholarly papers (*Zbornik FIN-a*) and makes its premises available for international interreligious conferences as well as organizing such conferences on its own. With several professors of the Faculty I have attended interreligious conferences in Croatia, Slovenia, Germany and Austria. Professors Enes Karić, Fikret Karčić, Adnan Silajdžić and others have through their books and articles helped to show that Bosnian Islam is a European phenomenon, intrinsically part of the European value system. I have often heard them say: “We are Muslims and Europeans and both are important for us!”

At the request of Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox religious leaders confessional religious instruction was introduced in public schools in 1994. Teachers of religion are educated by the respective Schools of Theology; the canonical mission of the territorial religious leaders is recognized, and religious education texts are prepared by believing experts in religious pedagogy. The education authorities employ and pay the teachers of this elective course in primary and high schools. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has proposed the introduction of a non-denominational course on the religions practiced in BiH and elsewhere. Progress is being made but the course is still at an experimental stage.

As followers of Sunni Islam and Europeans with experience of living for 130 years under non-Muslim rulers, Muslim representatives in BiH are open to interreligious dialogue. Grand Mufti Dr. Cerić was in June 1997 one of the co-founders of the Interreligious Council in BiH (other co-funders were Nikolaj Mrdja, the Orthodox Archbishop of Sarajevo, Vinko Puljić, the Catholic Archbishop of Sarajevo and Jakob Finci, the President of the Jewish community in BiH). Dr. Cerić signed an Open letter of 38 Muslim leaders to Pope Benedict XVI dated 13 October 2006 in response to the Pope’s lecture in Regensburg. The Grand Mufti of BiH was also one of 138 original signatories to the Appeal “A Common word between you and us” addressed to Benedict XVI and other Christian leaders on 13 October 2007, which was an invitation

to dialogue based on the love of God and the love of neighbor.

On the occasion of the visit of Hans Küng to Sarajevo on 14th and 15th of May 2009 the Faculty of Islamic Studies and several Christian institutions organized a Conference on Christian-Muslim relations where the distinguished visitor spoke of a modern interpretation of the Qur'an. Among seven domestic speakers I presented the Open Letter of 138 Muslim scholars to Christian leaders (my paper was published in the Croatian periodical *Crkva u svijetu* 2009). In 2010 the *El-kalem* Muslim publishing house in Sarajevo published the Bosnian translation of this letter along with selected answers to it, including a document of the Christian-Muslim Forum in Rome on 4-6 November 2008, speeches of Benedict XVI, Professor Nasr, Grand Mufti Cerić and the concluding Declaration of the participants at the November 2009 conference.

During the war in BiH, President Alija Izetbegović as supreme commander of the BH army invited Muslim fighters from Near Eastern countries to help their fellow Muslims in their struggle for survival. These fighters had a unit within the army structure which committed crimes against non-Muslim civilians. After the war a number of them remained in Bosnia having married Bosniak Muslim women. For a certain period they tried to form a separate settlement administered according to *shari'a*. After the terror attack on 11th of September 2001 in New York, the US intelligence services drew attention to the fact that some new Muslim settlers in Bosnia had criminal records. Five individuals were transported to Guantanamo Bay. Simultaneously, Bosnia witnessed the phenomenon of Wahhabis, mostly young Muslim men who reproach traditional Muslims for what they regard as wrong Muslim practice, try to "convert" them to proper Islam and stress the need to keep a distance from Christians. The number of Wahhabis is disputed; Christian commentators tend to exaggerate, while Muslim commentators are inclined to minimize their number and influence: "During and after the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, the first Salafis, locally known as 'Wahhabis' emerged. Their exact number is not known and, contrary to general belief, they control no mosques and their initial public influence has been steadily weakening" (Kovač-Smajić, 2010, 91). I know of several Muslim professors who have publicly expressed sharp criticism of the Grand Mufti for not saying explicitly that this kind of Islam is alien to Bosnian Muslims.

In the period between 1994 and 2009 several private publishers published pamphlets and books, mostly translated from Arabic or English, in which the Bible and Christianity are ridiculed. At a Chris-

tian-Muslim conference in Stuttgart in September 2009 where many Bosnian Muslims participated I presented an analysis of eleven such writings. One of the Bosnian participants at the conference sent my text to the editorial staff of *Saff* in Zenica, a pro-Salafi Muslim magazine founded in 1998 with a circulation of around 5,000. I was criticized for spreading hate speech, but Dr. Cerić told me in a private meeting that he was fully informed about the real situation and that he did not intend to raise my conference paper as an obstacle to Catholic-Muslim relations in our country.

In the 1991 census 31.2% of interviewees declared themselves as ethnic Serbs. Most were affiliated to the Orthodox tradition. Orthodox believers in BiH are members of the Serbian Orthodox Church, recognizing the Patriarch in Belgrade as their supreme leader. They are organized in five Eparchies, with seats at Mostar, Sarajevo, Bijeljina, Banjaluka and Bosanski Petrovac. The Orthodox Church runs its Theological faculty at Foča near Sarajevo where candidates for the priesthood and teachers of the Orthodox religion are trained. Orthodox bishops and priests have the experience of being a majority in Banjaluka and Bijeljina and a minority in Mostar, Sarajevo and Bosanski Petrovac. Those in the minority situation are very cooperative in ecumenical and interreligious programs. One of these programs is the IRC in Sarajevo, among whose active members are an Orthodox bishop, an Orthodox priest and a lay Orthodox theologian.

In the 1991 census ethnic Croats accounted for 17.4% of BiH inhabitants; most were Catholics. The supreme administrative body of the Catholic Church in BiH is the Bishops' Conference with its Councils and Commissions. Diocesan seats are at Mostar, Sarajevo and Banjaluka. In February 2011 the Holy See nominated a military bishop for Catholics serving in the armed forces and police. The Catholic Church runs three Divinity Schools, two in Sarajevo and one in Mostar. The Dioceses of Sarajevo and Banjaluka publish *Katolički Tjednik* (Catholic Weekly Magazine), the Mostar Diocese publishes a monthly magazine *Crkva na kamenu* (The Church on the rock), the Bosnian Franciscans publish a monthly magazine *Svjetlo Riječi* (The Light of the World) and the Herzegovina Franciscans publish *Naša Ognjišta* (Our Hearths), also a monthly magazine. Due to wartime disruption and ethnic cleansing the Catholic population of BiH has fallen from 830,000 in 1991 to about 460,000 today.

Despite diverging views on past atrocities and present tensions, believers can contribute to building a pluralistic civil society

Christians and Muslims in the countries that emerged from former Yugoslavia sharply disagree in their assessments of Ottoman rule in our region from the mid fourteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. Catholics and Orthodox Christians disagree in their assessments of language and ethnic rights issues in Yugoslavia from 1918 to 1991. Muslims and Orthodox Christians disagree in their assessments of the shocking events that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia, from the destruction of Croatian villages in Eastern Herzegovina in October 1991, to the siege of Sarajevo from April 1992 to November 1995 and the Srebrenica Genocide in July 1995. Serbs in Serbia and Kosovo complain that the cruelties of the Milošević regime were used as an excuse by Kosovo Albanians to fight for political independence. The government of Serbia and Serbs in BiH, Croatia, and Montenegro continue to view Kosovo as the southern province of the Republic of Serbia, while Albanians in Kosovo cannot understand why Serbia – and more UN members – do not recognize their independence.

Inspired by the works of Costa Carras, collaborators of the Joint History Project in Southeast Europe identified as problematic the fact that the history of each nation and of the region is not treated as a continuous, homogeneous and harmonious whole. The Project has produced four volumes of alternative educational material for high-school history teachers as Workbooks: 1 – The Ottoman Empire, 2 – Nations and States in Southeast Europe, 3 – The Balkan Wars and 4 – The Second World War (published by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, Thessaloniki 2005). Christina Koulouri in her General Introduction to Workbook 1 explains the working group's belief that it would not be possible to compile a uniform, homogenizing history of Southeast Europe in a single textbook that would be used in all countries. It is self-evident and legitimate that history textbooks are addressed to students of individual nations but they should not be nationalistic: "National history to be taught in the school should not be nationalistic history. Taking as a given fact that the dominant form of history in the school is national history and the history of the neighboring peoples is also taught from an ethnocentric viewpoint, we do not propose to replace national history but to change the way it is taught" (p. 10). In early April 2011 the four Workbooks were published in Bosnian and publicly launched. I hope that courageous teachers of History in BiH will gradually start to use these texts in preparing their lessons. The simple fact is that coming generations of citizens and fellow believers must be helped to reconcile their specific identities with the common needs and values of other people

with whom they share their country.

Christianity and Islam as universal religions exceed the boundaries of ethnic and national communities; besides cherishing individual and group identities they educate believers to live in the broad human family and to respect the human dignity of people who are different. Despite our diverging views of past atrocities and present tensions, our respective Faith can and should educate us to contribute to pluralistic civil societies.

Ina Merdjanova and Patrice Brodeur use the concept of *conversation starter* in presenting the role of religions in peace-building: "Contrary to the evocative warning of Richard Rorty that religion turns into a 'conversation stopper' for people of different religious backgrounds, we, as scholars of religion and practitioners of interreligious dialogue, see religion-related issues as a good starting point for important conversations between people of different worldviews. Moreover, we also believe that such conversations can grow into crucial dialogues without which peace-building is difficult to imagine" (Merdjanova-Brodeur, 2009, 9). Based on their field research they believe that interreligious cooperation should not be restricted to clergy and official representatives but complemented by the laity and by grassroots interaction (*Op. cit.*, 126-127). I fully agree, though in traditional societies like BiH faith ministers (priests and imams) who preside at weekly prayer services can make an effective contribution to educating their own congregations to live responsibly in a pluralistic society and to contribute to a just and lasting peace. May God help us in this noble endeavor!

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