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PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Cemetery Desecrated in Capljina
In following up on an incident of vandalism at an Orthodox cemetery in Capljina (Fed) that occurred two weeks ago, UN IPTF monitors observed further desecration of graves at the site on 6 and 8 June. UN IPTF reported that nearly all of the tombstones had been damaged or knocked down, and that several of the graves had been opened and the mortal remains removed and scattered around the site. In several cases, skulls and bones appeared to have been burned or intentionally destroyed. Local police and UN IPTF are investigating.

RIGHT TO RETURN

Intimidation and Vandalism Hinder Return
UN IPTF reported that a Bosniak man was hospitalised on 8 June after he was beaten up by a group of people while visiting his house in a village south of Novi Grad (RS). UNHCR also recently condemned the harassment of several Bosniaks working on their homes in the Stolac (Fed) area by local residents on 7 June, and the destruction of two Bosniak-owned homes there last week. Local police also informed UN IPTF that an uninhabited Bosniak-owned house in the Busovaca (Fed) area was reportedly damaged by an explosive device late last week.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Police Assault Minority Motorists
On 9 June, UN IPTF monitors prevented two RS policemen from further harming a Bosniak motorist who they had stopped in the zone of separation village of Dugi Dio on 9 June. Monitors witnessed the two policemen punch, kick and slap the man, who was reportedly driving without a license. The matter will be raised with the policemen's superiors. A Bosniak truck driver complained to UN IPTF that Croat police in Vitez (Fed) shot out the back tire of his truck on 10 June, forcing him to stop. The policemen then allegedly assaulted the man, pointed a gun to his head, brought him to the station, and confiscated his cargo. UN IPTF spoke to the policemen who said they fired at the truck because the driver had refused to stop, but denied maltreating him. UN IPTF is following up.

OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Appeal to be Filed for "Zvornik 7"
After more than one month, the written verdict in the case of the seven Bosniak men convicted by Zvornik Municipal Court on 24 April (the so-called "Zvornik 7") was delivered on 5 June. The delivery of the written decision initiates the 15 day period for filing an appeal. The Human Rights Ombudsperson for BiH had issued a Special Report on 3 June critizicing the Zvornik Court's failure to prepare and provide the official judgment within the timeframe (15 days after the conviction) set by the domestic law. International organizations, including OHR, OSCE, and the UN High Commisioner for Human Rights are assisting in efforts to ensure that the men will be able to file their appeal with the competent court, and in cooperation with lawyers from the Federation, the International Human Rights Law Group is preparing appeal statements, particularly focusing on violations of international

fair trial standards by the first instance trial.

MEC Protests Detention Broadcast
On June 6, the Chairman of the Media Experts Commission (MEC) wrote a letter to the director of the Sarajevo-based RTV BiH concerning the station's broadcast on 6 April of an interview with two Serb juveniles arrested and accused (but not yet convicted) of crimes, as well as footage of them while they were detained at the Novo Sarajevo police station. The report was rebroadcast on 9 April, despite requests by UN IPTF to refrain from doing so in view of international standards which provide for a greater degree of privacy for juveniles. According to the MEC, the broadcast, which was sanctioned by the police, violated the juveniles' human rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the international human rights conventions BiH is obliged to uphold. The MEC asked the director of RTV BiH to inform station staff that any broadcast of information revealing the identity of juveniles involved in court cases violates international standards of journalistic behavior.

INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Alternative Groups Meet in Banja Luka

More than 80 representatives of local non-governmental organizations and civic groups from BiH, the FRY and Croatia attended round table discussions on 6 and 7 June in Banja Luka in which issues relating to NGOs and economic reconstruction were debated. The first session focused on the role of international and local NGOs in building civil society and the need to focus on financial sustainability for this sector. Some speakers noted that civil society in BiH has been devastated to a such degree that it has virtually has ceased to exist, and that countering this will require adopting a political approach based on long-term strategies for overcoming the prevailing nationalist environment. They also noted that this process requires greater inclusion of local expertise and vision. Participants in the second session, called the Regional Civic Dialogue, discussed economic policies and reconstruction, and included members of the Alternative Council of Ministers of BiH and representatives of various opposition and alternative civic groups from Croatia and the FRY. Observers noted that in addition to the lively and at times confrontational debates, the Regional Civic Dialogue provided an effective forum for sharing professional experiences, discussing future projects and strengthening ties among an impressive array of alternative, democratic forces in the region. Regional Civic Dialogues have also been held in Belgrade and Tuzla in 1996.

Inter-entity Women's Conference Held in Mostar
On 22-23 May, OSCE sponsored an inter-entity women's conference entitled "Women Today, Joint Life, Return, and Employment" in Mostar which was attended by 30 participants, including Bosniak, Croat, and Serb women. Participants concluded that given the dearth of women's organizations in southern RS, women's groups should also be formed in Nevesinje and Trebinje with support from existing Federation-based groups and the international community. RS participants explained that despite their interest and efforts to form such groups, the political climate in the RS makes it difficult for them to maintain independence from the authorities, which is why assistance from Federation-based groups and the international community is a necessary prerequisite at this time. They also agreed that only by working together can there be a chance to address some of the underlying obstacles to freedom of movement and return. OSCE reported that the conference demonstrated that women are "ready to move beyond dialogue to action".

Children's Rights Addressed in Bijeljina
A seminar on the rights of the child sponsored by the Office for Human Rights in Bijeljina, a domestic non-governmental organisation, was held on 24 May. Participants discussed the obstacles faced by local institutions charged with providing child care, the increase in teenage pregnancy among the displaced and refugee population, and the rapid increase in juvenile delinquency, which seminar leaders linked to the high level of unemployment in the RS.

Religious Leaders Issue Joint Statement
On 9 June, the leaders of the Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish communities issued a joint statement of "shared moral commitment" in which they stated that their faiths hold many common values, including recognition of the fundamental human rights of all people. The four leaders condemned all acts of hatred based on ethnicity or

religious differences, including obstruction of the right to return, the destruction of houses and religious property, acts of revenge, and the use of the media to spread hatred. They also called for freedom for all religious leaders to fulfil their missions, for children to have the opportunity to be instructed in their own faith, and for guarantees that no citizen will be compelled to attend instruction in a faith other than their own. They appealed to the three members of the BiH Presidency and to all citizens to take heed of their statement.

Amnesty Makes Recommendations to New High Representative
On 12 June, Amnesty International (AI) issued its report entitled “Bosnia-Herzegovina: From Promise to Reality” in which it makes recommendations to the incoming High Representative Carlos Westendorp and to the international community for implementing the human rights aspects of the Peace Agreement. According to AI, while protecting the human rights of its citizens should be as much of a priority for the authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina as it is for the international community, the Parties to the Peace Agreement have shown little willingness to implement those aspects which would grant former adversaries the basic human rights revoked during the war. AI fears that the domestic authorities are stalling on their commitments until the international community loses patience and eventually departs and, correspondingly, that the international community is “committed to human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina only to the extent that it can exit without losing face”. Among other measures, AI recommends that human rights protection be placed at the centre of a long-term strategy to ensure implementation of the Peace Agreement’s key provisions, and that impunity for war crimes be ended.

NOTE: *The HR Report is based on the most recent information available to the OHR from inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations. Questions on specific items should be directed to the reporting organisation or to the HRCC. Please send information for inclusion in the report to 387-71-447-420, attention Leah Melnick (leah.melnick@ohr.int), Kristina Koch (kristina.koch@ohr.int), or Vladimir Stanisic(vladimir.stanisic@ohr.int).*

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