Human Rights Report 1-8 April 97

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Eviction Threat Countered with Arrest UN IPTF reported that a HVO soldier who had been threatening to evict a Bosniak woman from her west Mostar (Fed) flat was arrested by HVO military police on 2 April. UNHCR and UN IPTF report that the west Mostar authorities appear to be responding more effectively to threats of eviction in recent weeks. No illegal evictions have been reported in the city since 10-11 February, when more than 50 Bosniak families were illegally evicted from their west Mostar homes in the 48 hours following the shooting incident. More than 80 illegal evictions, primarily of Bosniaks and Serbs living in west Mostar, were documented by UNHCR in 1996. A Bosniak man in west Mostar reported that some children broke windows of his home on 2 April. West Mostar police contacted the children's parents who agreed to pay for the damages. East Mostar police also reportedly conducted a legal eviction of a Bosniak family who had been living in the flat of a Croat family on 1 April, thus enabling them to move back into their home. In other developments, the inauguration of the joint cantonal police was held in Mostar on 4 April.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

RS Imposes "Visa" Fees RS police in Doboj (RS) reportedly stopped a bus carrying seven teachers from Spain belonging to the organisation "Teachers for Bosnia" on 25 March, took them to the police station, and tried to charge them 45 DM each for a "visa fees." The teachers were released three hours later after negotiating a fee of 45 DM for the group. A group of Croatian travellers were stopped in Modrica (RS) on 31 March and charged 60 DM for visas by local police there. On 4 April, the High Representative Carl Bildt wrote to the Prime Minister of RS to remind him that under the Peace Agreement, the joint institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are responsible for immigration policy and regulation, including visa regulations. Therefore, the RS has no authority to demand the payment of a visa or transit visa. International monitors will continue to follow this issue closely.

Bosniak Travellers Allegedly Assaulted UN IPTF is following up on a case of a Bosniak man who was allegedly beaten up by police in Kopaci (RS) on 29 March. UN IPTF monitors observed bruises on the man's face and body. The man told UN IPTF that his identification documents had been confiscated by RS police who boarded the bus he was travelling in, and told him that he could not enter the RS. He said that he was then robbed by a man who picked him up after he got off the bus, and was later beaten up by two policemen who he had approached for help. A Bosniak man also reported to UN IPTF that he was pulled from his truck on the M-17 highway near Mostar (Fed) and assaulted by two men on 20 March.

RIGHT TO RETURN

Serb Man Arrested in Drvar International organisations reported that a Serb man was arrested in Drvar (Fed) on 4 April and held overnight after taking the UNHCR bus from Banja Luka to visit his home there. The man, a displaced person now living in the RS, is a known political personality in the area who was on the candidate list for Drvar in the 1996 elections. The arrest follows several incidents last week involving Serb residents and visitors to Drvar. A Serb woman was reportedly threatened and had rocks thrown at her by a group of women after she tried to visit her house in Sanski Most (Fed) on 28 March. A Bosniak man living abroad reported to UN IPTF on 31 March that he is having difficulties returning to his house in Jajce (Fed) because the municipal authorities are saying that he must first

meet certain registration requirements. Another Bosniak man who has been living in Germany and who wants to return to his house in Jajce (Fed) complained to UN IPTF on 1 April that the Deputy Mayor told him that no more Bosniaks will be allowed to move back to the city because of the prevailing “political situation.” UNHCR also reports that 29 Croat and Serb families who want to move back into their newly reconstructed pre-war flats are facing difficulties from the Sarajevo (Fed) cantonal authorities.

INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Community Initiative Launched in Ilidza The new Sarajevo-area civic association “Protector” in Ilidza (Fed) held its first meeting on 22 March at a primary school in the village of Rakovica. The association, initiated by a journalist with the soon-to-be launched Radio DISS (Democratic Initiative of Sarajevo Serbs), was formed with the aim to “honour and commemorate those who aided people of other nationalities during the war, and to spread truth about the possibility of life together in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” The meeting was attended by 20 Ilidza residents of various ages, ethnicities and professional backgrounds, who, among other decisions, agreed to apply to join the Coalition for Return. A Bosniak principal of an Ilidza elementary school told the group that he was interested developing a multi-ethnic “magnet” school in Ilidza to serve as a model for other communities in the area, and intended to set up a round table on schooling issues in the Sarajevo suburbs with school directors, teachers and parents of different ethnicities, possibly to include participants from neighbouring towns in the RS.

Sarajevo Religious Leaders Prepare Joint Property Paper OSCE reported that in a continuing series of inter-faith meetings, Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish religious leaders in Sarajevo met on 13 March to prepare a joint paper on the restitution of religious property which they intend to share with governmental institutions. OSCE noted that the gathering asserted the religious leaders’ continuing interest in such meetings, and that representatives of all four religious groups viewed the forthcoming visit of the Pope to Sarajevo as important for the preservation of a tolerant and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. OSCE has also organised meetings of religious leaders in other parts of the country.

Confidence-Building Through the Media Planned UNHCR reported that the Bosnian Women’s Initiative is working with the Mostar Youth Centre on a funding proposal for a local confidence-building initiative involving the production of a magazine and radio programmes targeting women on both sides of the city. UNHCR hopes to link the Centre with the Sarajevo-based NGO Search for Common Ground, which is developing conflict resolution-oriented radio programmes throughout the country.

Orthodox Liturgy Held in Konjic On 30 March, an Orthodox bishop from the Saint Archangela Velikog monastery in Zemun near Trebinje (RS) and an Orthodox priest from Sarajevo visited Konjic (Fed) to conduct the first Orthodox liturgy there since 1992. The service was held at the site of a destroyed Orthodox church in the town’s centre and was attended by a large number of faithful from Konjic and Jablanica. In his sermon, the bishop expressed his hopes for peace and thanked the local police for their cooperation in providing security for the service. He also said he would return to Konjic to perform a service for Orthodox Easter and is considering appointing an Orthodox priest to stay in Konjic on a permanent basis. Visits to nearby graveyards were held after the liturgy.

Tuzla and Zagreb NGOs Hold Peace Seminar The Human Rights Office Tuzla, in cooperation with the Antiwar Campaign and the Peace Studio Centre in Zagreb, organised a seminar on the Construction of Peace from 26-30 March near Banovici. Twenty participants from eight towns (Bihac, Gornji Vakuf, Livno, Zenica, Banja Luka, Doboj, Bijeljina, and Tuzla) attended workshops on non-violent communication, development of civil society, human rights, womens issues and other subjects. The seminar’s organisers also arranged a special 90-minute programme on Tuzla- Podrinje cantonal television in which human rights protection efforts in Livno, Tuzla, Doboj and Bihac were discussed.

Federation Implementation Mechanism Established On 27 March, the Federation government adopted a decision to establish the Federation Implementation Council, composed of the Principal Deputy High Representative (chair), the Federation Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and two other international representatives. The Council

will “establish mechanisms for dismissing from duty persons whose deeds [are] harmful to implementation of the Peace Agreement, all agreements on the Federation, and decisions of the Federation arbiter,” including officials who do not respect human rights, or who systematically and seriously prevent cooperation with ICTY. The President and the Vice President of the Federation, the Chairmen of the House of Peoples and House of Representatives, the Ombudsperson for BiH, and every Federation Ombudsman, mediator or arbiter of the Federation (including members of the Council) have the right to propose re-investigation of responsibility of any persons holding elected, appointed or any other public position at the entity, cantonal, municipal or city level. Upon establishing that a breach of responsibility has occurred, the Council will submit a proposal to the competent body for removal of that person from office, and for their suspension from duty until that occurs.

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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