

# **Human Rights Report 21-26 July 97**

## **FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT**

### **FOM Violations**

Illegal Checkpoints Reported in RS On 23 July, UN IPTF discovered an illegal checkpoint on the road from Sarajevo to Pale (RS). When UN IPTF asked the RS police to dismantle the checkpoint, the officers refused, citing orders from their superiors. UN IPTF took the badge numbers of the police officers and will file a non-compliance report. On the same day, SFOR discovered an illegal checkpoint in the village of Mosko near Trebinje (RS). The checkpoint was removed and the badge numbers of the officers were recorded by UN IPTF. UN IPTF is following up on these cases.

## **RIGHT TO RETURN**

### **Mixed Progress Reported on Returns to Central Bosnia**

A Bosniak man reported to international monitors that a Croat man who had been living in his house in Dastansko near Vares (Fed) removed the fixtures and furniture from the premises when he moved out last week to enable the Bosniak man to return. The former occupant also reportedly removed the doors and windows from a nearby house belonging to the complainant's son. The Federation Ombudsmen and other human rights monitors report that they often receive complaints of this kind, and note that many homes have been rendered uninhabitable by former occupants who strip the properties before they depart. Potential returnees are often required to conduct costly repairs and renovations in order to move back to their homes, which creates de facto barriers to return. In other developments, local officials Drvar (Fed) have recently told international officials that some 200 Croats living in the municipality would like to return to their homes in Vares, Kakanj and other Central Bosnia towns, and that they are looking at ways to facilitate this process. International officials also report that the authorities in Vares, who for months have been obstructing potential minority returns, appear to be adopting a more flexible approach on the issue of apartment tenancy rights and are improving their cooperation with international organisations in this regard.

### **Local Agreement Facilitates Returns to Kresovo**

According to human rights monitors, a number of Bosniak and Croat families have been returning to the Kresovo (Fed) area under the terms of a local agreement between Croat and Bosniak authorities there, and that few returnees have experienced any problems. However, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH reported that on 23 June, two unknown assailants entered the home of a Bosniak couple that had recently returned Kresovo and assaulted them. UNHCR is currently assessing Kresovo's eligibility for participation in the "Open Cities" initiative.

## **OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**

### **EASC Announces Decisions on Registration Irregularities**

On 22 July, OSCE's Election Appeals Sub-Commission (EASC) issued a decision regarding irregularities in the registration of voters in Brcko. This decision rejected 3,270 registration appeals lodged by displaced persons who registered to vote in Brcko rather than in their pre-war municipality. The EASC found that SDS officials, local police, and municipal authorities created and distributed bogus residency documents to potential voters, in particular displaced persons, to enable them to vote in Brcko rather than in their pre-war municipality. In addition, the EASC found that the Brcko Red Cross was conditioning humanitarian assistance upon proof of registration. The decision found the SDS, as the ruling party in Brcko, responsible for these irregularities, and therefore, struck the first three

candidates from the SDS candidates list. The president of the Brcko Local Election Commission was also fined one month's salary for public statements he made threatening residents who did not register. On 18 July, the EASC issued five decisions involving irregularities in the registration of displaced persons and refugees. In Zepce (Fed), the EASC found that the SDA had engaged in deliberate, coordinated planning to improperly register 350 displaced persons now resident in Maglaj and Dobož for the municipality of Zepce. The investigation found that local authorities had falsified records to support the attempted registrations, which were identified as fraudulent by OSCE. In the HDZ-controlled municipality of Jajce (Fed), the EASC found that the local authorities, including the police, participated in the creation of false documentation for displaced persons to allow them to vote in Jajce and subsequently struck the first three HDZ candidates off the party list. In Stolac (Fed), the EASC found that HDZ officials participated in a scheme to produce and distribute false citizenship certificates to former Stolac residents now living in Croatia to enable them to register to vote in Stolac. Two HDZ candidates were struck from the party list and all registration applications submitted to registration centers in Croatia to vote in Stolac were denied. In Brod (RS), SDS party members were found to have created and distributed false documents to enable displaced persons to illegally register in the municipality. Two SDS candidates were eliminated from the list.

## **INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Human Rights and Mental Health Discussed**

On 11-13 July, a conference on human rights and mental health was held in Sarajevo, which provided a forum for discussion on European law in the field of mental health and served to expose gaps in the current body of Federation law in this field. Discussions focused on the implementation of international health standards and the present mental health status of the population. Medicos Del Mundo, a non-governmental organization active in this field and one of the sponsors of the event, will publish the lectures delivered at the symposium in English, Spanish, and Bosnian languages.

### **BiH Presidency Pledges Funds for Human Rights Institutions**

During the 22 July session of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a decision was passed to earmark 200,000 DM for each of the domestic human rights institutions mandated by the Peace Agreement (the Human Rights Ombudsperson, the Human Rights Chamber, and the Commission for Real Property Claims). As this amount only partially covers the projected operating costs of these institutions, donor governments have been called upon, including at the recent Donor's Conference, to meet the shortfall.

**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).*

## **Office of the High Representative**