

# **Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments**

- unofficial translation -

The Law on Abandoned Apartments ("Official Gazette of RBH" no. 6/92, 8/92, 16/92, 13/94, 36/94, 9/95 and 33/95), Decree on Use of Abandoned Apartments (Official Gazette HZHB 13/93) and the regulations passed thereunder, as well as other regulations regulating the issue of abandoned apartments passed between 30 April 1991 and the entry into force of this Law which are being applied on the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: the Federation) shall cease to be applied on the day of the entry into force of this law.

Following the entry into force of this Law, the authorities of the Federation and other bodies in the Federation shall refrain from undertaking any new actions by which apartments will be declared abandoned.

The competent bodies referred to in Paragraph 2 of this Article shall decide about the rights of occupancy right holders to return to their apartments which have been declared temporarily or permanently abandoned and the rights of temporary occupants of the abandoned apartment, and about further use of the apartment, in accordance with the provisions of this Law and the Law on Taking over the Law on Housing Relations (hereinafter: the ZOSO).

## **Article 2**

All administrative, judicial and any other decisions enacted on the basis of the regulations referred to in Paragraph 1 of Article 1 of this Law terminating occupancy rights shall be null and void.

All administrative, judicial and any other decisions enacted on the basis of the regulations referred to in Paragraph 1 of Article 1 of this Law in which rights of temporary occupancy have been created shall remain effective until cancelled in accordance with this Law. Persons who moved into apartments on the basis of acts which have expired shall be considered to be temporary users. Article 3, Paragraph 3 of this Law shall not apply to such persons.

Any occupancy right or contract on use made between 1 April 1992 and 7 February 1998 is cancelled (*prestaje*). A person who occupies an apartment on the basis of an occupancy right which is cancelled under this Article shall be considered a temporary user for the purposes of this Law.<sup>1</sup>

A temporary user referred to in the previous paragraph who does not have other accommodation available to her/him has the right to a new contract on use to the apartment, if the occupancy right of the former occupant is cancelled under Article 5 of the Law or if a claim of the former occupant to repossess the apartment is rejected by the competent authority in accordance with this Law.

An occupancy right holder to an apartment as at 1 April 1992, who agreed to the cancellation of her/his occupancy right in exchange for another occupancy right which is cancelled under this Article, is entitled to make a claim for repossession of her/his former apartment in accordance with this Law.<sup>2</sup>

## **Article 3**

The occupancy right holder of an apartment declared abandoned or a member of his/her household as defined in Article 6 of the ZOSO (hereinafter the "occupancy right holder") shall have the right to return in accordance with Annex 7 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be applied only to those occupancy right holders who have the right to return to their homes of origin under Annex 7, Article 1 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Persons who have left their apartments between 30 April 1991 and 4 April 1998 shall be considered to be refugees and displaced persons under Annex 7 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and

Herzegovina.<sup>3</sup>

Holder of occupancy right in the apartment which is inhabited by a person using the apartment without legal basis or which is vacant as of the date this Law enters into force shall be able, without any restrictions, to repossess the apartment in which he has an occupancy right. Persons using the apartment without legal basis shall be evicted and the authorities competent for allocation of emergency accommodation shall not be obliged to provide emergency accommodation to such persons.

A temporary user of an apartment who is required to vacate the apartment pursuant to the provisions of this Law and whose housing needs are otherwise met *and to whom Article 18f. para 1 of the Law applies*<sup>4</sup> shall be obliged to move out from the apartment that he/she has been using *within 15 days of the date of delivery*<sup>5</sup> of the Decision by which it has been decided about the right of an occupancy right holder to the relevant apartment (hereinafter: the Decision under Article 6).

A temporary user of an apartment who is required to vacate the apartment pursuant to the provisions of this Law and whose housing needs are not otherwise met, shall be provided with accommodation in accordance with the ZOSO by the administrative body on the territory of which she/he had his/her latest domicile or residence. The temporary user shall be obliged to move out of the apartment within the deadline set in Article 7 of this Law.

Para 6 - repealed<sup>6</sup>

Para 7 - repealed<sup>7</sup>

In all cases in which the current occupant remains in the apartment, all moveable property of the occupancy right holder found in the apartment must be returned to him/her upon his/her request.

In no event shall the failure of the responsible bodies to meet their obligations under this Article operate to delay the ability of an occupancy right holder to enter into possession of the apartment.<sup>8</sup>

## **Article 3a<sup>9</sup>**

As an exception to Article 3, paragraph 1 and 2 of this Law, regarding apartments declared abandoned on the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the disposal of the Federation Ministry of Defence, the occupancy right holder shall not be considered a refugee if on April 30, 1991 s/he was in active service in the SSNO (Federal Secretariat for National Defence) - JNA (i.e. not retired) and was not a citizen of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the citizenship records, unless s/he had residence approved to him or her in the capacity of a refugee, or other equivalent protective status, in a country outside the Former SFRJ before 14 December 1995.

A holder of an occupancy right from paragraph 1 of this Article will not be considered a refugee if s/he remained in the active military service of any armed forces outside the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina after 14 December 1995, or if s/he has acquired another occupancy right outside the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **II. THE PROCEDURE FOR REPOSSESSION OF AN APARTMENT AND THE RIGHTS OF THE OCCUPANCY RIGHT HOLDER**

### **Article 4**

The occupancy right holder as defined in Article 3, Paragraph 1 of this Law shall be entitled to claim the repossession of an apartment.

A claim for repossession of an apartment shall be presented to the municipal administrative authority competent for housing affairs, unless otherwise determined by cantonal law.

The claim shall be submitted in writing signed by the occupancy right holder or orally, in person by the occupancy right holder or an authorised representative.

A claim should include:

1. information on the apartment;
2. any evidence that the claimant is the holder of an occupancy right or a member of the latter's household;
3. the date when the occupancy right holder intends to reoccupy the apartment, but not later than one year from the date of submitting the claim; and
4. information on the place of residence of the occupancy right holder and the members of the occupancy right holder's household at the time the claim is filed.

## **Article 5<sup>10</sup>**

A claim for repossession of the apartment must be filed within fifteen<sup>11</sup> months from the date of the entry into force of this Law.

Exceptionally, the deadline for submission of claims for repossession of apartments under Article 2, para 5 and Article 18b para 1 of this Law, and Article 83a. para 4 of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Taking Over of the Law on Housing Relations (Official Gazette of FBiH, No. 19/99) shall be 4 October 1999.<sup>12</sup>

If the occupancy right holder does not file a claim to the competent administrative authority, to a competent court, or to the Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees, within the appropriate time limit referred to in this Article, the occupancy right is cancelled.<sup>13</sup>

## **Article 6**

Upon the receipt of a claim for return of the apartment to the occupancy right holder, the competent authority shall decide on the claim by a decision within 30 days from the date of receipt of the claim.

## **Article 7**

The decision referred to in the preceding Article by which the claim of the occupancy right holder is accepted, shall contain:

1. a decision confirming that the claimant is the holder of the occupancy right;
2. a decision on repossession of the apartment by the occupancy right holder if there is a temporary user in the apartment, or if the apartment is vacant or occupied without legal basis;
3. a decision on termination of the right of temporary use of the apartment, if there is a temporary user in the apartment;
4. a time limit for vacating the apartment by a temporary user or another person occupying the apartment;
5. a decision concerning whether the temporary user is entitled to accommodation in accordance with the ZOSO.

The deadline for vacating the apartment, referred to in Paragraph 1(4) of this Article may not be shorter than 90 days from the date of the issuance of the decision, nor longer than the day of intended return of the holder of occupancy right, and the day of intended return may not be earlier than 90 days from the date of submitting the claim.

In exceptional circumstances, the deadline referred to in Paragraph 2 of this Article may be extended to up to one year if the municipality or the allocation right holder responsible for providing alternative accommodation in accordance with Article 3 of this Law provides detailed documentation regarding its efforts to secure alternative accommodation to the cantonal administrative authority responsible for housing affairs, and the cantonal authority finds that there is a documented absence of available housing. In each individual case, the requirements of the

European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols must be met, and the occupancy right holder must be notified of the decision to extend the deadline and the basis for the decision 30 days before the deadline has expired.

## **Article 8**

The competent administrative body shall deliver the decision within 5 days from the date of issuance of the decision to:

1. the occupancy right holder;
2. the occupant of the apartment;
3. the allocation right holder.

Any appeal against a decision must be submitted to the cantonal ministry responsible for housing affairs within 15 days from the date of receipt of the decision.

An appeal shall not suspend the execution of the decision.

## **Article 9**

The handing over of the apartment to the occupancy right holder shall be witnessed by an official of the competent authority.

The handing over of the apartment and its contents shall be recorded in the minutes including, among other things, a detailed description of the current state of the apartment and its contents.

## **Article 10**

Proceedings in the cases initiated by the claims referred to in Article 4 of this Law shall be considered urgent.

## **Article 11**

If the person occupying the apartment fails to voluntarily comply with a decision ordering him/her to vacate the apartment, the competent administrative body shall employ compulsory enforcement in accordance with law.

The enforcement shall be carried out at the request of the occupancy right holder.

## **Article 12**

The occupancy right shall terminate by the force of the law if the occupancy right holder fails, without good cause, to reoccupy the apartment within one year from the date when his right to return to the apartment has been established by a final decision.

The occupancy right holder is considered to have good cause not to reoccupy the apartment:

1. if s/he has requested the commencement of enforcement proceedings, but the apartment continues to be occupied by another party;
2. if s/he has been unable to return to the municipality in which the apartment is located due to a well-founded fear of persecution;
3. if the occupancy right holder was called up for military service;
4. if the occupancy right holder has been receiving medical treatment;
5. if the occupancy right holder is staying in a retirement house;

6. if the occupancy right holder has been convicted and is serving a prison sentence for this period;
7. if security measures are being applied to the occupancy right holder;
8. if the occupancy right holder and the members of his/her household are temporarily staying in an other place in the country or abroad on the bases stated in paragraph 1 of Article 48 of the ZOSO; or
9. if the apartment is the subject of an unresolved claim submitted to the Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees.

In the cases referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article, as long as these reasons last, the right of the occupancy right holder to use the apartment shall not terminate.

## **Article 13**

Upon the cancellation of an occupancy right under Articles 5 or 12 of this Law, the allocation right holder may allocate the apartment for use to the temporary occupant or to another party in accordance with the provisions of the ZOSO.

Where the apartment is allocated to another party under the paragraph 1 of this Article, the temporary occupant of the apartment must vacate the apartment within 60 days of being notified of the final decision on allocation of the apartment to another occupant.

## **III. CLAIMS TO THE COMMISSION FOR REAL PROPERTY CLAIMS OF DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES**

### **Article 14**

A party affected by a decision made under Article 7 may at any time file a claim with the Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees (GFAP, Annex 7, hereinafter the Property Commission). In the event that such a claim is filed, all proceedings, including execution of decisions or orders, shall be stayed pending the final decision of the Property Commission.

A decision of the Property Commission is final and binding.

Following a decision of the Property Commission, the rights and obligations of the party referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be the same as if the decision of the Property Commission was a decision of the competent authorities made in accordance with this law.

## **IV. PURCHASE OF APARTMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN DECLARED ABANDONED**

### **Article 15 - repealed<sup>14</sup>**

## **V. FINAL PROVISIONS**

### **Article 16**

Contracts on the use of apartments declared abandoned in accordance with the regulations referred to in Article 1 (1) of this Law, as well as other decisions on allocation of apartment for use issued after 7 February 1998 are null and void.

Provision referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall also apply to contracts on the use of apartment if they were concluded before 7 February 1998 but their beneficiary did not move into the apartment.

Any person who uses an apartment on the basis of a decision or contract referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be considered to occupy the apartment without legal basis.

## **Article 17**

The Federation Minister of Urban Planning and Environment shall pass an instruction on the application of Article 4 of this Law within 30 days from the date of the entry into force of this Law.

## **Article 18**

The procedure for the return of apartments to the possession of the occupancy right holders determined by this law shall be carried out in accordance with the Law on General Administrative Procedure ("Official Gazette of FBiH" No. 2/98), unless otherwise stipulated by this law.

## **Article 18a<sup>15</sup>**

A person whose occupancy right was cancelled under Article 2 of this Law, who spent his/her personal funds on necessary expenses for the apartment, shall be entitled to recover those funds from the previous occupancy right holder under the Law on Obligations (Official Gazette SFRJ, 29/78 and 39/85, Official Gazette RBiH 2/92, 13/93 and 13/94). Proceedings under the Law on Obligations may be commenced from the date when the previous occupancy right holder regains possession of the apartment.

## **Article 18b<sup>16</sup>**

The provisions of this Law shall also apply to the apartments that have not been declared abandoned in terms of Article 1 of this Law, including damaged and destroyed apartments, provided that the occupancy right holder lost possession of the apartment in question before 4 April 1998.

All final judicial decisions ordering repossession of the apartment by the occupancy right holder shall be executed by the court. The initiated judicial proceedings for repossession of the apartment shall continue, while new claims shall be filed with the administrative body in charge of the housing issues.

## **Article 18c**

Where the temporary user has the right to a new contract on use of apartment under Article 2 Paragraph 4 of this Law, the administrative body in charge of the housing issues shall be authorised to conclude the contract on use of apartment in accordance with the Law on Housing Relations.

## **Article 18d**

Where an occupancy right is cancelled in accordance with Article 5 of this Law, and the temporary occupant does not have the right to a new contract on use of the apartment, the apartment shall be administered by the administrative body in charge of the housing issues until 4 July 2001.

In the case mentioned in the previous paragraph, the administrative body in charge of the housing issues shall issue a temporary decision on use of the apartment for a period that does not exceed six months.

The right to a temporary use of apartment in terms of the previous Paragraph shall be given to a person referred to

in Article 3 Paragraph 5 of this Law or in Article 7, paragraph 1 of the Law on Cessation of Application of the Law on Temporary Abandoned Real Property Owned by Citizens.

The temporary occupant referred to in Paragraph 3 of this Article may request extension of the time limit for the use of apartment.

The temporary permit shall be cancelled immediately if the temporary user ceases to meet the conditions for the right to temporary use of the apartment.

While processing the requests for extension of the time limit, the responsible body shall determine whether the temporary occupant still has the right to use the apartment and, if not, it shall order his/her eviction.

## **Article 18e**

While processing the requests for temporary use of apartment under the provisions of this Law, the responsible body shall determine:

- where the temporary occupant lived on 30 April 1991;
- in what capacity he/she occupied that apartment or real property in his/her possession on 30 April 1991;
- whether is possible to live in the apartment or real property;
- whether the temporary occupant or a member of his/her 1991 family household is in possession of that apartment or real property;
- whether he/she voluntarily exchanged or sold the apartment in question or real estate in his/her possession.

## **Article 18f**

In case both conditions from Article 18e points 3 and 4 are fulfilled or in case the condition from Article 18e point 5 is fulfilled, the temporary occupant shall not have the right to temporary use of the apartment in terms of Article 18d Paragraph 3 of this Law.

The provision of Paragraph 1 of this Article shall also apply to the right of the temporary occupant to conclude a new contract on use of apartment in terms of Article 2 Paragraph 4 of this Law.

## **Article 18g**

If a destroyed or damaged apartment is reconstructed, the occupancy right may without limitation enter into possession of the apartment, unless the occupancy right has been cancelled under Article 5 of this Law.

## **Article 19**

This law shall enter into force on the day following its publication in the "Official Journal of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina".<sup>17 18</sup>

**1** This para was replaced by the High Representative's Decision, 14 April 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 18/99. Previous wording: "All administrative, judicial and any other decisions including the acts of allocation right holders enacted on the basis of the regulations referred to in Paragraph 1 of Article 1 of this Law in which new occupancy rights are created, as well as the contracts concluded pursuant to those acts, shall remain in force unless cancelled in accordance with this Law."

**2** Article 2, paras 4 and 5 were introduced by the High Representative's Decision, 14 April 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 18/99.

**3** Amended by the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99. Previous wording of Art 3 para 2 second sentence: "Persons who have left their apartments since 30 April 1991 are presumed to be refugees and displaced persons under Annex 7 absent a showing that they left their apartments for reasons wholly unrelated to the conflict."

**4** Amended by the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99.

**5** Amended by the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99. Previous wording: "... within 90 days of the date of the issuance ..."

**6** This Article was repealed by the High Representative's Decision, 14 April 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 18/99. Previous wording: "Within thirty days of a Decision under Article 6 of this Law which concerns an apartment inhabited by a new occupancy right holder on the basis of a decision of the allocation right holder, or of a contract (hereinafter: the current occupant), the allocation right holder shall refer the case to the responsible cantonal administrative authority which shall pass a decision on allocation of another apartment to the current occupant or the occupancy right holder, within 30 days from the date the case has been submitted."

**7** This Article was repealed by the High Representative's Decision, 14 April 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 18/99. Previous wording: "If the responsible cantonal authority decides that the occupancy right holder should be allocated another apartment, the decision shall be made in accordance with the criteria which must comply with Article 1. of Annex 7 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the European Convention of Human Rights and its Protocols, as well as the Law on Housing Relations. These criteria shall be developed by the Federation Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment, in consultation with organizations competent for the implementation of the standards mentioned in this Paragraph."

**8** Amended by the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99. Previous wording: "In no event shall the failure of the cantonal authorities or of an allocation right holder to meet their obligations under this Article, or the failure of the current occupancy right holder to accept an apartment, operate to delay the ability of an occupancy right holder to reclaim the apartment."

**9** Article 3a is inserted according to the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99.

**10** Please note that the HR issued a decision on 30 June 1999, according to which the application of Article 5 of this Law shall be suspended in the Municipality of Drvar, until such time as the HR's Special Envoy for Drvar certifies that the municipal administrative authority responsible for housing affairs is functioning properly.

**11** Amended by the High Representative's Decision, 15 September 1998; published in FBH Official Gazette, no. 38/98. Previous wording: "... six months ..." Further amended by the High Representative's Decision, 1 April 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 12/99. Previous wording: "... twelve months ..."

**12** Amended by the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99. Previous wording: "If the occupancy right holder does not file a claim within the time limit referred to in the previous paragraph, the occupancy right is cancelled."

**13** Introduced by the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99.

**14** Repealed by High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99. Previous wording: "The occupancy right holder, whose contract on the use of the apartment was cancelled in the period between 30 April 1991 and the entry into force of this Law, on the basis of regulations referred to in Article 1 of this Law and Article 47 of the ZOSO, and whose apartment has been returned to him in line with this Law has the right to purchase the apartment in the sense of the Law on Sale of Apartments with Occupancy Right. The occupancy right holder shall acquire the right to purchase after he has been using the apartment for a period of at least six months.

The occupancy right holder may not sell the apartment within 5 years from the day of the registration of his ownership right, and this shall be noted in the land books or other respective registers on rights in real property. The prohibition of purchase of the apartment by the current holder of occupancy right shall last until the deadline for the former occupancy right holder to submit the claim for repossession of the apartment has expired, i.e. until the proceedings under this Law have been finalised."

**15** Article 18a was inserted by the High Representative's Decision, 14 April 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 18/99.

**16** Articles 18b., 18c., 18d., 18e., 18f., and 18g. were inserted after Article 18a according to the High Representative's Decision, 1 July 1999; published in the FBH Official Gazette, no. 27/99.

**17** Provisions introduced by the High Representative's Decision on 14 April 1999; entered into force on 14 April 1999.

**18** Provisions introduced by the High Representative's Decision on 1 July 1999; entered into force on 4 July 1999.

## **Office of the High Representative**