

## **Introduction**

Effective implementation of the human rights aspects of the [General Framework Agreement on Peace](#) depends on the active participation of a broad range of organisations, some of which work exclusively in the human rights field and others which have roles that directly involve human rights issues. For many of the important aspects of the agreement, such as return of refugees and holding of elections, establishment of effective mechanisms to monitor human rights and redress human rights violations is essential. Long term protection and promotion of human rights depends on the establishment of functioning domestic institutions that uphold the rule of law, as well as the development of non-governmental organizations and civic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In order to achieve the implementation of the GFAP and the establishment of a lasting and just peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the OHR Human Rights/Rule of Law Department is active on a wide range of Human Rights Issues. These include:

- [Human Rights Coordination Center](#) (HRCC): The HRCC acts as a clearinghouse for human rights information and a focal point for inquiries and action on human rights issues. The Center ensures consistent human rights reporting among major agencies active in BiH, ensures a link between the Human Rights Steering Board and field staff of member organizations, through regional Human Rights Working Groups. The Center is staffed with three human rights officers: representatives from OSCE, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as a representative of the OHR. The Centre also relies upon close links with UNMIBH and UNHCR.
- [Rule of Law Unit and the Independent Judicial Commission](#): Rule of Law is an indispensable element of democracy and human rights. It is also clear that without Rule of Law supported by an independent and professional judiciary and prosecution, BiH will be unable to build a sustainable economy and attract international investors. The Rule of Law Unit within the OHR Human Rights and Rule of Law Department developed a comprehensive strategy on judicial reform in BiH in July 1999 and has co-ordinated the work of the international agencies concerned with judicial reform since. While significant progress has been made in reforming the BiH judiciary in the last two years, the High Representative issued a decision in March 2001 giving further emphasis to judicial reform and providing for consolidation of the activities undertaken in this field by the establishment of the Independent Judicial Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This international body is tasked to take a lead role in co-ordinating and implementing judicial sector reform programmes and to supervise and assist the ongoing review of new and sitting judges and prosecutors in BiH. The OHR Human Rights and Rule of Law Department will continue to promote and facilitate other important aspects of rule of law and human rights, including war-crimes monitoring, legal aid and assistance, and the building of strong human rights institutions.
- [Support for Human Rights Institutions](#): This team provides support and coordination with the human rights institutions at the BiH level, which include the Human Rights Ombudsperson, the Human Rights Chamber and the Commission for Real Property Claims. The team also works with the entity Ombudsman offices, which currently includes working towards the establishment of the RS Ombudsman office.
- [Civil Society and NGOs](#): This functional area seeks to develop and support civil society in BiH, first by establishing a legislative framework conducive to NGO activity, and secondly by coordinating the efforts of the international community to avoid duplication, and ensure mutual strategizing.
- [Education](#): A system of education which respects the rights of all children and promotes tolerance and

reconciliation is an essential component of a stable multi-ethnic BiH, as well as being vital to supporting return of the displaced. Schools, teachers, curricula and textbooks must foster the return of minority families and provide an educational system free from bias, coercion and discrimination. This team is responsible for coordinating the efforts of the international community in removing objectionable material from textbooks and helping to design a curricula which meets European standards.

- [Economic and Social Rights](#): Ensuring equal access to employment, pensions, utilities, ID cards and health care to all is essential to sustainable minority and majority return and general stability in multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. Working groups have been established to identify priorities and coordinate the efforts of the international community.
- [Gender Equality](#): The general process of transition as well as the recent war have had a particularly negative effect on women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through its policy development and legislative review, this team works to reduce disparities between men and women. Many of the laws in the former Yugoslavia were not gender sensitive, so the team has focussed on ensuring appropriate changes to key pieces of legislation, and ensuring that laws which would protect the rights of women are prioritized. Attention has also been devoted to the addressing trafficking of women, as this is a serious issue throughout the region.
- [Property Rights/ Right to Return](#): Securing existing property rights for individuals, particularly refugees and displaced persons, is essential to facilitate return and to ensure a multi-ethnic society. The complexities of property rights under the existing system have been exacerbated by the war. Thousands of families left their homes, which, if not destroyed, were occupied by refugees or displaced persons from other areas of the country. Work on this topic includes the development and implementation of legislation to protect existing rights and encourage return. The team consists of two international attorneys and a local assistant.
- [Domestic War Crimes and Exhumations](#): This team is responsible for the monitoring of domestic war crimes trials to ensure that local authorities comply with the provisions of the 1996 Rome Agreement (Rules of the Road) in the arrest and trials of alleged war criminals. Supervision of the Inter-Entity Exhumations process was transferred from OHR to the Missing Persons Institute in January 2001.