

OHR RRTF Report July 1997

RRTF: Report July 1997

Update

“Reconstruction and Return Task Force”

July 1997

2. Current Status

2.1. Return statistics in the first semester 1997

2.1.1. General

During the first five months of 1997, some 58,000 refugees and displaced persons either returned to their places of origin or took up residence in another municipality (see summary of returnees per Canton as well as expected and actual pace of repatriation movements in 1997, Annexes 1 and 1a). In total, almost 39,000 persons repatriated from abroad (and an additional 12,300 in June) – major returns were to the Cantons of Sarajevo, Una Sana, Neretva and Posavina (i.e. mainly to RRTF cluster areas); some 19,000* displaced persons returned to their places of origin.

*This number does not include the displaced persons that relocated.

2.1.2. Organised/assisted repatriation

In the same period, some 13,086 repatriates** (and an additional 5,141 in June) either returned in an organised way and/or received return assistance from host countries (see returnee summary by host countries for organised/assisted repatriation, Annex 1b).

** number included in the overall number mentioned under 2.1.1.

2.1.3. Trends in return destinations, social pressure in and outside of cluster areas

An overview of trends in return movements as well as social pressure in and outside the RRTF-designed cluster areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina ([Annex 1c](#)) indicates the complex dynamics on the ground. The trend to relocation (estimated at 30 to 50% of repatriating refugees), limiting the return possibilities of original inhabitants, is common in all areas mentioned in the overview. In some, repatriating refugees become displaced persons in locations close to their homes of origin, presently inaccessible to them for political reasons. Returnees generally face lack of housing and

employment. The overview reaffirms the assumption of the April RRTF report that donor activities in support of return should concentrate on lesser crowded areas. It is hoped that this could, indirectly, also help decongest the over-populated parts of the country by attracting some displaced persons back to their homes. The trend towards relocation highlights the need for a break-through in the field of so-called minority returns.

2.2. Extension of “temporary protection”, particularly concerning refugees from what is now the territory of the Republika Srpska

The RRTF report recommended not to repatriate persons originating from areas where they would not be in the majority upon return, except on a case-by-case basis where security conditions allow (recommendation No. 1).

Most host countries have followed this recommendation. Since April 1997, many countries decided to extend temporary protection for at least some specific groups of refugees, including those originating from areas where they would be a minority upon their return. Some offer other options to citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as asylum, permanent residence or long-term stay (e.g. in Sweden, two thirds of the Bosnia-Herzegovinan caseload benefit from permanent residence permits). Some countries apply a differentiated approach linked to the place of origin or ethnicity of the returnee, extending temporary protection to refugees originating from so-called minority areas.

More detailed information is given in an updated overview ([Annex 2](#)).

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Office of the High Representative Reconstruction and Return Task Force