

Human Rights Report 31 Aug. - 6 Sept. 97

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Brcko Supervisor Orders End to Fee Collection

On 30 August, the Deputy High Representative and Supervisor for Brcko Ambassador Farrand issued orders for the RS police to stop charging for "RS visas" and for road tolls from travellers crossing into Brcko using the bridge from Croatia. Ambassador Farrand noted that it is illegal for the RS entity to charge for visas and referred to specific cases in which RS police and customs authorities stationed on the bridge have collected visa fees and tolls. Farrand referred to a 21 August letter from Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Wagner to RS President Plavsic and Prime Minister Klicekovic notifying them that the RS road toll regulations and the practice of enforcing such tolls are in violation of the BiH Constitution as they constitute illegal discrimination, obstruct freedom of movement, and violate the competencies of the joint institutions of BiH in the field of foreign policy. Based on this, Farrand ordered that activities related to the collection such fees on the bridge cease without delay.

THREATS TO LIBERTY AND SECURITY

Travnik Deaths Under Joint Investigation

On 30 August, local police informed UN IPTF that two Croat men (a father and his son who had returned to the area in 1996) were killed in the Travnik (Fed) area when someone fired nine shots at them through a window of their home. Croat and Bosniak police are jointly investigating the case, and forensic and ballistics examinations are underway. Local police and UN IPTF reported that the motive for the crime is still unclear and noted that no reports of harassment of the two men or of any other Croats in this village had been reported. UN IPTF is monitoring the investigation, which they note is one of the first joint efforts by Croat and Bosniak police in the area.

RIGHT TO RETURN

Bosniaks Return to Villages Around Jajce

Between 16-21 August, the agreement of 5 August for Bosniak return to villages around Jajce (Fed) was implemented. During this period, about 400 heads of families registered for return in an operation that was monitored by SFOR, UN IPTF, UNHCR, and local authorities. Human rights monitors report that the majority of returnees feel secure enough to stay overnight in the villages and have begun reconstruction and cleaning of their homes. Returns to Bucici (Fed) and Divicani (Fed) were momentarily delayed on 19 and 20 August, respectively, when local Croat leaders tried to reduce the number of agreed-upon returnees, but the process was put back on track following an intervention by the Office of the High Representative. The return process was marred by two mine incidents on 20 August, when two returnees were seriously injured. These mines were located on an often-traversed main road in a mixed Bosniak-Croat area, raising speculations that they were planted. Humanitarian organisations note that the next step to ensuring permanent return is reconstruction of homes, since most are currently damaged and unsuitable for habitation through the winter months. On 5 September, donor agencies and Federation authorities met in Sarajevo and pledged initial funds for reconstruction and humanitarian assistance for realisation of the Canton-wide return programme.

Pilot Project Returns to Stolac Postponed

On 1 September, UN IPTF observed a group of young people and an adult throw stones at a bus transporting Bosniaks to Stolac (Fed) for an assessment visit. According to UN IPTF and SFOR, the stone throwers had gathered a few kilometers outside Stolac and waited for the bus to pass. On the same day, buses carrying Bosniak

construction workers (who travel frequently to Stolac to rebuild their homes) were stoned in Gorica (Fed), and police later arrested an intoxicated man who had thrown some stones at trucks parked next to homes being rebuilt as part of the pilot project. On 2 September, 4-5 teenagers stoned a bus passing through Gorica carrying Bosniak construction workers, causing damage to the bus and slightly injuring two workers. After hearing about this incident, an assessment visit planned for that day was postponed. International monitors believe that the same group of perpetrators are responsible for the incidents and have identified a man who allegedly instructed the teenagers to stone the buses. On 3 September, UNHCR announced that following these incidents, the completion of the pilot project under which 22 families were to return to Stolac at a rate of four per day had been put on hold. Some 40 Bosniak families have returned as a part of the project so far.

THREATS TO MONITORING ENVIRONMENT

International Community Targeted Amidst Political Unrest in RS

During the early morning hours of 27 August, crowds in Brcko looted and damaged the UN IPTF station and property, stoning the station and damaging about 65 vehicles. Angry mobs also attacked international personnel, including three UN IPTF monitors who sustained minor injuries and a few SFOR soldiers who suffered non-fatal, though more serious, injuries. Brcko residents were aroused by air raid sirens during the night and Brcko radio called upon local citizens to rally against "occupying forces." Crowds gathered during the night at local police stations and proceeded to damage, vandalise, and overturn vehicles owned by international organisations. A number of international staff members were also threatened following radio broadcasts which incited local residents who house members of the international community to "throw out all foreigners." Brcko Supervisor Farrand condemned media incitement of violence against SFOR and the international community and held talks with Brcko municipal authorities during the day, underlining that he holds local authorities personally responsible for any violence that occurs. SFOR noted that its troops showed tremendous professionalism and restraint dealing with "orchestrated mobs." Elsewhere, on the night of 26 August, a UN IPTF monitor was returning to his accommodation when he was stopped by five people in Foca (RS). The people threatened him and put a hand grenade to his face. On 27 August, a UN vehicle was damaged outside the station in Pale (RS).

INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

NGOs Meet in Bihac

OSCE and the Bihac-based non-governmental organisation Democratic Circle organised a conference on 22-24 August in Bihac (Fed) which brought together representatives from thirty-five local NGOs based in Bihac, Sanski Most, Livno, Glamoc, and Drvar, among other places. Representatives of local media, the NGO Information and Support Centre, UNHCR, USAID, Malteser, and other international partners participated in discussions on media, funding, and networking. Bosnian participants discussed specific types of projects in working groups moderated by OSCE staff, which concentrated on income generation, women's issues, education and rule of law. The conference concluded with a discussion on the possibility of strengthening ties between local non-governmental organisations based in Bosniak-majority areas and those in Croat-majority areas.

Festivals in Mostar Bring Youth Together

OSCE and other international and local non-governmental organizations hosted a youth festival in Mostar (Fed) on 21-24 August which included photo and art exhibitions, concerts, folkloric dancing, puppet theatre, dramatics, and creative workshops for kids. In an encouraging development, Bosniak groups performed in west Mostar and Croat groups performed on the east side of the city. OSCE noted that the festival was particularly commendable because it involved cooperation between Croats and Bosniaks and successfully drew participants from both sides of the city. Also in Mostar, the eighteenth International Youth Theatre Festival "Dani Teatra Mladih" was held from 29 August to 2 September. The festival brought together 17 youth theatre companies from BiH, Croatia, and other European countries. OSCE reported that despite the fact that the festival was held on the east side of the city, a youth theatre group from Zagreb accepted the invitation and participated, and also reported that the links forged at the

festival should result in cooperation between youth theatre groups in east and west Mostar.

Red Cross Updates Guidebook for Returnees

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has updated a guidebook for prospective and actual returnees entitled *Going Home: A Guidebook for Refugees*. This book is meant to serve as a practical tool for refugees contemplating return and displaced persons considering going back to their pre-war homes. The book spells out procedures for return and gives advice on which organization or authority to contact for questions about return of property, education, human rights, humanitarian assistance, landmines, and job opportunities, among others. The guide notes that return has occurred at a much slower pace than initially intended, in particular due to continued harassment and discrimination of minorities, lack of freedom of movement, and a limited stock of adequate housing. To obtain a copy, fax your request to +41 22 73 30 395 or call the Red Cross offices in Sarajevo at 071 666 011 for more information.

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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