

Human Rights Report 5-16 May 97

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

RS Police Fail to Respond to Crimes Against Minority Residents UN IPTF received a report from a Croat in Teslic (RS) that an electricity box was stolen from his house. The victim reported the crime to the local police, but the police have not responded to his complaint. In nearby Dobož (RS), UN IPTF learned that local police failed to react or start an investigation after a Bosniak reported a death threat from a Serb neighbour several months ago. UN IPTF informed the local police of their duty to investigate and will monitor the work of the local police.

OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Serb Police Officer Arrested Near Sanski Most On 12 May, the local police in Sanski Most (Fed) arrested an RS police officer who was visiting a graveyard in the deserted ZoS village of Tomina on charges of weapons possession (he was allegedly carrying a pistol and a hand grenade) and giving false information to the police. After he was arrested, he told international human rights monitors that he was beaten and threatened by civilians at the invitation of the local police. The detained man appeared in the Sanski Most court the following day, and was found guilty of misdemeanor charges of carrying a handgun and intentionally giving false information, for which he was fined 120 DM. Human rights monitors reported that the accused did not have legal representation in the trial and the court based its decision only on the testimony of the two Federation police officers who apprehended him. The detainee was then transferred to Bihac, where he will face prosecution on the criminal charge of illegal weapons possession (relating to the hand grenade). The authorities have also said that the accused may eventually be charged with "war crimes." Any investigation or prosecution of the detained man on war crimes charges would violate the Rome Agreement (the "Rules of the Road"), which commits the RS and Federation authorities to only investigate "war crimes" cases which are reviewed by ICTY and found to meet international standards. Human rights monitors will continue to monitor the case closely.

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING ENVIRONMENT

Two More Thefts of International Vehicles in Banja Luka On 12 May a UNHCR vehicle was hijacked at gun point in Banja Luka (RS). The perpetrator stopped the vehicle, forced the driver to get out of the car and drove it away. On the same night, a truck owned by an NGO was stolen at gunpoint by a masked man in front of the Chinese Restaurant in Banja Luka.

INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Issues Newsletter The Helsinki Federation issued a special newsletter entitled "Human Rights and Civil Society," with numerous articles by both international and domestic human rights specialists. Of special note are articles by Srdjan Dizdarevic, Chairperson of Helsinki Committee BiH, "Human Rights and Basic Freedoms in BiH" and Branko Todorovic, President of the Helsinki Committee in RS. Todorovic's article updates the human rights situation in Republika Srpska since the GFAP. His analysis notes that thus far the RS Parliament has passed 12 amendments to the RS Constitution to bring it into compliance with certain provisions of

the GFAP, but existing RS legislation on amnesty, taxes, and property are still contrary to the Peace Agreement. The article notes that a second human rights problem in RS is the discriminatory application of laws, such as the Law on Abandoned Apartments, which has been used to evict homeowners who have not actually left the RS. To obtain a copy of the newsletter, call or fax the Helsinki Federation Secretariat in Vienna at tel: +43 1 402 73 87 or fax: +43 1 408 74 44 or e-mail helsinki@ping.at.

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