

A New Strategic Direction in PLIP: IC principals demand an end to selective implementation of the property laws

SDHR Gerhard Enver Schrömbgens, OSCE Head of Mission Robert Beecroft, UNHCR Deputy Chief of Mission Udo Janz, CRPC Executive Officer Steven Segal and UNMIBH Head of Civil Affairs Jaque Grinberg today announced a New Strategic Direction for the full implementation of the property laws by end 2003.

Seven years after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed, over 110,000 families are still denied repossession of their own homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It has become clear that the reason for such widespread human rights violations is selective enforcement of the property laws. Property laws have not been enforced in a uniform, efficient and transparent way. Even in some of the best-performing municipalities, local officials still violate the law in order to allow privileged groups—such as judges, politicians, police and war veterans—to remain illegally in other people's homes. Many local authorities throughout the country still fail to meet their legal obligations to find alternative accommodation and then use this failure as an excuse to refuse to meet their legal obligations to evict temporary occupants according to legal deadlines.

This selective implementation of the property laws must stop now. The authorities must ensure that all pre-war owners or occupancy right holders repossess their claimed property in a

timely manner and receive equitable treatment in the processing of their property claims. The IC Principals therefore reiterate that

- All evictions must be carried out in strict accordance with legal deadlines, authorities cannot hide behind their failures to provide alternative accommodation.
- in the interest of legality, efficiency, transparency and fairness, all cases must be processed in chronological order, save for the specific categories of claimants specified in law;
- All verified double/multiple occupants should immediately vacate occupied property;

As part of a New Strategic Direction for property law implementation, the IC Principals will continue to treat any deviation from the strict implementation of the property laws as obstruction to the full implementation of Annex 6 & 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.