

PLIP agencies call on relevant authorities to fulfill their obligations under the property laws

The agencies of the Property Law Implementation Plan, OHR, UNMiBH, OSCE, UNHCR and CRPC (PLIP), wish to express their disappointment with Federation Minister of Physical Planning and the Environment Ramiz Mehmedagic's recent statements on property law implementation. Specifically his recommendation that evictions of temporary occupants entitled to alternative accommodation be suspended until later this year contradicts the law and points the Federation in the wrong direction. It cannot be allowed to stand.

One month ago PLIP sent a letter on precisely this issue to Minister Mehmedagic, the FBiH Ministry of Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees, all Cantonal Prime Ministers, and the Federation Ombudsman (a similar letter was also sent to the RS authorities). We deeply regret that Minister Mehmedagic chose not to heed this letter, which reminded all Federation authorities of their obligation to provide sufficient budgetary funds for alternative accommodation and ensure that this money was spent efficiently. With a few notable exceptions, the cantons and municipalities have not begun to exhaust the supply of low-cost alternative accommodation options. With regard to unclaimed apartments alone, it is estimated that thousands of alternative accommodation spaces have been lost to corruption and inefficiency.

Attached to the letter sent to Minister Mehmedagic and his

colleagues was a list of over 80 local sources of inexpensive alternative accommodation for locations throughout the Federation. These included suitable buildings in need of minor repair, state-owned hotels, and unused military barracks, as well as low-cost strategies such as renting unused private houses from their owners. Until the stock of efficient low-cost alternative accommodation freely available throughout the Federation has been put to use, the responsible authorities must take the blame for their own failures rather than passing it on to refugees and displaced persons.

The local authorities can no longer postpone the fulfillment of their legal obligations to identify and provide alternative accommodation to those entitled to it under the law. Postponing evictions is unacceptable and any recommendations to do so must be rejected.