

Press Release on Drvar

Today, units of the Federation Army are vacating civilian housing in Drvar in order to enable the return of Displaced Persons to their homes. Over 150 heads of household will return.

OHR views this as a significant event, contributing to implementation of Annex 7 of the Peace Agreement. OHR commends the Federation Army units involved for the orderly manner in which they are relocating from the housing. We also welcome the support offered to the process by the municipal authorities and the Chief of Police and their acceptance that, two and a half years into the peace process, military units should no longer be based in civilian accommodation.

We also look to the municipal authorities and the local police to ensure the security of those who are today exercising their right to return to their prewar homes in accordance with the Dayton Agreement. They are entitled to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as their fellow inhabitants of Drvar. It is the responsibility of the Cantonal and Municipal authorities to ensure that they do so. OHR will monitor this process.

We congratulate the returnees on their courage and determination. Today's returns are another clear demonstration that there are individuals of all ethnic groups who wish to return to their homes.

We stress that today's movements in Drvar are but one element of a larger process. We note that on 8 April UNHCR brought more than 40 Croats from Drvar to Teslic for an assessment visit. Many other movements of Displaced Persons and Refugees are gathering speed throughout the entire country. All ethnic groups must be granted their right of return.