

Joint Statement on Visits across the IEHL

On 27 April 1996, IFOR, the Office of the High Representative, the IPTF and the UNHCR discussed measures to ensure that civil disturbances resulting from visits, particularly across inter-entity boundary line visits, do not threaten peace and public order in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Acting in accordance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace, they have agreed that:

- They fully support the right of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to organise, peacefully demonstrate and assert freedom of expression, speech and movement. However, politically orchestrated events which encourage violence are incompatible with this ideal.
- It is the obligation primarily of the Parties and their police forces to provide a secure and safe environment for all persons in their respective jurisdictions. They are obliged to maintain law and order in accordance with internationally recognised standards and with respect for internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Visits or demonstrations, when not properly co-ordinated with local civil authorities, have the potential to degenerate into civil disorder.
- If the responsible Parties and their civil and police authorities are not prepared or are unable to take appropriate action to control events, the demonstration will be considered a threat to peace and public order.
- Armed soldiers are not the right instrument to control. However, in the absence of the acceptance of their responsibilities by the Parties, the High Representative, the Commissioner of IPTF and the UNHCR Special Envoy may request that the IFOR Commander take appropriate measures to restrict or prevent large scale movement of vehicles in order to assist in controlling the situation.
- Nothing in the above detracts from the principles of freedom of movement and the right to return of displaced persons and refugees.

IFOR, the Office of the High Representative, the IPTF and the UNHCR call on all the Parties, civil authorities and community leaders to exercise their obligations to ensure that peace and public order are maintained in Bosnia and Herzegovina.