OHR Condemns Violence Against Returnees in the RS, in particular Prnjavor

The Office of the High Representative condemns the recent increase of violence against returnees in the RS, and in particular in Prnjavor.

Since the beginning of March, more than 30 incidents directed against returnees have been recorded across the RS. No less than four incidents of violence have involved returnees in Prnjavor:

- On 26 March 2000 a returnee house was stoned.
- On 24 March 2000 an explosion resulted in the death of a returnee.
- On 21 March 2000 an explosion injured a returnee in his home.
- On 12 March 2000 an explosion destroyed the property of a returnee.

These incidents represent an escalation of intimidation aimed at obstructing the return process. In Prnjavor, the situation is particularly worrisome. Over the last year, similar explosions have been directed at minority returnees in Prnjavor on 6 March 1999; 11 July 1999; 13 July 1999; and on 28 September 1999. None of these cases has resulted in individuals being convicted for the attacks.

The OHR urges the local authorities to condemn such attacks in public; to ensure that perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice, and to take action to prevent further incidents against minority returnees.

Four and a half years after Dayton, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in both Entities must ensure that displaced

persons and refugees are able to exercise their right of return in a secure environment.

In order to stem the current tide of impunity, the OHR urges local and Entity authorities to identify and punish the perpetrators of all criminal acts designed to impede minority return and to protect returnees.