Human Rights Report 18 March 97

Protection Of Minorities

Minorities in RS Allege Harassment, Discrimination UN IPTF is following up on a complaint from an elderly Bosniak woman living in Teslic (RS) who said that she was beaten up in her home on 8 March by an unknown assailant who also allegedly tried to sexually assault her. The woman reportedly sustained injuries to her nose and forehead. Also in Teslic, a Bosniak couple told UN IPTF that local authorities recently refused to issue them identification cards when they went to register with the municipality. When monitors followed up on the case with the chief of police, he alleged that the couple was employed in the Federation and were therefore not eligible to receive RS identification documents. International officials have intervened with the RS authorities on a number of cases of harassment and abuse of Bosniaks in Teslic during the past year, including on cases of discrimination, and will follow up on the two incidents. Also in the RS, a grenade was thrown into the garden of a Bosniak family living in Novo Selo (RS) on 13 March, damaging a window of their house.

Freedom Of Movement

Bosniak Motorist Involved in Fatal Accident After Robbery UN IPTF reported that a Bosniak man from Tuzla was robbed at gun point of 90 DM in Doboj (RS) by several men wearing RS police uniforms after he crossed the IEBL on 16 March. Minutes after he drove away from the scene, he was involved in a road accident in which a Serb man was killed and another man seriously injured. Local police are investigating both incidents. UN IPTF also recently received three reports of Federation-registered vehicles being damaged by stone-throwers while transiting through Doboj. Private vehicles and trucks from the Federation often pass through Doboj while travelling between Tuzla and Zenica, and have been harassed by stone-throwing youths on a number of occasions in recent months.

Institutional And Policy Developments

Bihac-based Democratic Circle Hosts Second Conference on Tolerance The domestic NGO Democratic Circle held a conference on "Tolerance and Education" in Bihac on 8 March which was attended by 35 participants from Sarajevo, Livno, Banja Luka, and Tuzla. Topics of discussion included the role of religion in the education system, political pressure on teachers, language and education, and curriculum disputes, including the issue of nationalistic history texts that are currently being used in local schools. Participants noted that these problems are common to schools in all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and must be addressed as a fundamental step toward post-war reconciliation, especially among the country's youth.
Legal Aid Meeting Held in Sarajevo On March 17, OSCE organised a coordination meeting in Sarajevo to discuss various legal aid initiatives that are currently being implemented in the Federation and the RS. The meeting was attended by legal professionals from both entities and by representatives of international organisations, who discussed ways to better coordinate their activities. Domestic NGOs also had an opportunity to present their work in the field of legal aid, and to exchange information about funding possibilities, problems with local authorities, and the needs of programme beneficiaries. OSCE is also in the process designing a programme to help disadvantaged and vulnerable groups to access legal assistance and advice. The programme has the two-fold aim of providing services to groups that are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses (such as refugees, displaced persons, and minorities), while at the same time strengthening the domestic legal system.

NOTE: *The HR Report is based on the most recent information available to the OHR from inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations. Questions on specific items should be directed to the reporting organisation or to the HRCC. Please send information for inclusion in the report to 387-71-447-420, attention Leah Melnick or by e-mail to leah.melnick@ohr.int.*

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