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PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

Minority Homeowners in RS Harassed by "Housemates"
Human rights monitors visited two Bosniaks in Teslic (RS) who report that they are regularly threatened by Serb displaced persons accommodated in their home according to the RS practice of placing displaced persons in privately owned homes where there is more than 15 square meters per resident. When OSCE brought this case to the RS authorities, they refused to address the problem, saying that the Bosniaks could "go to the Federation." Minorities in Teslic note that pre-war Serb citizens of Teslic are typically not perpetrators of harassment and crimes against minorities, rather it is usually the work of Serb displaced persons. Similarly, on 16 April, a Bosniak couple in Banja Luka (RS) reported to OSCE that the displaced persons placed in their home continue to harass them. This couple also alleges that they have been visited by officials from the RS Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons and the local police, who told them they should leave their home. In Brcko, OSCE reports that Serb displaced persons housed in a Bosniak home are harassing the owner and threatening to evict her to a "backyard shed." When confronted with the case, local police told the victim that such harassment is "not their business" and referred her to the RS Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons.

Human Rights Organization in Sarajevo Suburb Vandalized
In Vogosca (Fed), UN IPTF learned that during the night of 27-28 April the door of the office of the Democratic Initiative of Sarajevo Serbs (DISS), a local human rights NGO supporting the rights of Sarajevo Serbs, was damaged and the organization's sign was stolen. Sarajevo Cantonal police are investigating.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Robberies and Car Thefts Resume on "Arizona Highway"
UN IPTF received two reports of violent incidents on "Arizona Highway", the main transit route from Tuzla to the Posavina Region. The first report involved a robbery between Loncari (RS) and the IEBL (at the site of the now dismantled SFOR checkpoint), in which the victim said he was robbed by two suspects, who pulled him out of his vehicle and pistol whipped him. The same day, a Bosniak reported to UN IPTF that he was stopped at the same place by an RS police officer and two armed civilians. The civilians fired shots into the air, struck him with a pistol, and stole 2000 DEM, the vehicle, and vehicle registration documents. These incidents raise concern about the freedom of movement situation since SFOR dismantled its formal checkpoints along the road approximately one month ago. UN IPTF and other international monitors are following the situation closely, as the Arizona Highway is a critical transit artery to Croatia and the Federation pockets of Orasje and Odzak.
May Day Celebration in Brcko Marred by Stonings On 1 May, two busloads of Social Democratic Party supporters from the Federation visited Brcko to celebrate Labor Day. The visit was announced one week beforehand and UN IPTF had informed the local police of security requirements. On the way to Brcko, one bus was stoned, breaking a window and injuring slightly two passengers. The buses then traveled to the Brcko Office of the High Representative (OHR) without any further incident. At the OHR office, a crowd of local residents gathered, jeering the passengers. UN IPTF informed the Deputy Chief of Police, who was on the scene, that he should increase the police presence. He complied and the increased RS police presence helped deter any physical incidents while the Federation residents boarded the buses. However, aggressive verbal harassment from the crowd continued. As the buses traveled through Brcko back to the Federation, many more stoning incidents occurred, breaking a total of thirteen bus windows and causing injuries to four passengers. UN IPTF observed that the RS police did not react to the stone throwers, try to

deter them in any way, or arrest any of the perpetrators. UN IPTF is conducting a special investigation of this incident. The same afternoon, a SFOR bus (not involved in the visit) was stoned by 3-6 men, resulting in the driver receiving lacerations to the head.

RS Authorities Continue to Issue Visas
UN IPTF received a report from two Bosniak residents of Mali Zvornik, a town across the river from Zvornik (RS) in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, who were charged a visa fee of 50 DEM each to cross in to RS. UN IPTF checked with the local police, who denied any visa requirement.

RIGHT TO RETURN

Arson Attacks Against Serb Homes in Drvar
International monitors report that 25 uninhabited Serb homes were damaged by fire in a village outside of Drvar (Fed) during the night of 2-3 May, and an additional 25 homes were vandalised (roofs, doors and windows removed). This destruction directly followed a meeting concerning returns to Drvar held by Federation Mediator Christian Schwarz-Schilling on 2 May, in which local authorities agreed to permit returns on a case-by-case basis (as is required under the Peace Agreement). The Coalition for Return, an association of refugees and displaced persons from both the Federation and Republica Srpska, condemned the destruction and sent a letter to the local authorities in Drvar stressing that the incident "must not thwart the return of all pre-war Drvar citizens to their homes." International organizations condemned the house destructions in both Drvar and Jajce (Fed), where 12 uninhabited Bosniak homes were burned in the village of Bulici 17-18 April.

UNHCR Announces Developments in Inter-Federation Returns
UNHCR announced on 29 April that of the four pilot projects for inter-Federation returns, only the Stolac (Fed) project for the return of 100 Bosniak families has yet to be completed. According to the travelling commission designated to assess implementation of the four pilot projects, the terms for minority returns under the pilot project to Bugojno,

Travnik, and Jajce have been met. An UNHCR spokesperson told journalists that several obstacles are hampering the implementation of the Stolac initiative, including robberies of construction materials from returnees' houses. In one case, a Croat family moved into one of the reconstructed pilot project homes belonging to a Bosniak family with the approval of the local authorities. The UNHCR pilot project travelling commission met last week in Bugojno (Fed) and recognised the Bosniak and Croat representatives' commitment to ensure that 200 Croat families will be able to return to the municipality. UNHCR also facilitated a visit of Croats from Drvar to Kakanj (Fed) on 28 April to assess the possibility of future returns there. In her address to the UN Security Council on 28 April, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata said that UNHCR would only give support to municipalities that permit the return of minority ethnic groups, and that only 10,000 refugees and displaced persons have been allowed to return to areas in which they are not of the majority group. "My office has decided to provide support and material assistance to municipalities and regions which accept minority returns and to withdraw it in areas where minority returns are refused," Ms. Ogata told the UN Security Council in her briefing.

INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

New Centre Opens to Support Domestic NGOs The NGO Information and Support Center in Bosnia and Herzegovina, located in the Stranke Building on Marsala Tita 7 in Sarajevo, officially opened on 30 April with the aim of supporting and strengthening domestic NGOs throughout the country by providing them with information about funding sources, and by helping them to network and thereby cooperate with other organisations. The Centre will maintain a data base of domestic NGOs and their activities, and hopes to provide continuity to existing organisations and to foster the development of new NGOs in anticipation of the eventual departure of international organisations involved in this field. The Centre can be reached by phone at 387-71-206-011 or by fax at 205-434 or 665-653.

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 (leah.melnick@ohr.int), Kristina Koch (kristina.koch@ohr.int), or Vladimir Stanisic(vladimir.stanisic@ohr.int).*

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