

BOSNIEN - HERZEGOVINA (79)

INFORMATION NOTES

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Overview

During March and April, the alarming escalation of violence in Kosovo raised international concern and triggered a flurry of diplomatic initiatives intended to defuse the crisis. Growing impatience with the obstruction of returns to many Croat-administered areas of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina led to mounting pressure on Bosnian-Croat authorities, as well as Croatia, to comply fully with Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement and to accelerate repatriation to and from Croatia. The Banja Luka Regional Return Conference of 28 April 1998 highlighted the unconditional right to return to their homes of all displaced persons and refugees and made a number of important recommendations to accelerate return movements in the region. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata travelled to the region from 3 to 18 April seeking high-level political support for a region-wide strategy to achieve durable solutions which UNHCR will present to the international community at the request of the December 1997 Bonn meeting of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC).

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The months of March and April registered a marked increase in interest in minority return movements and "go and see visits", but witnessed some of the worst incidents aimed at preventing return since the signature of the Dayton Agreement.

Growing International Pressure on Bosnian-Croat Authorities and Croatia

Given its growing impatience with perceived obstruction to peace implementation in Croat-administered areas of the Federation, the international community redoubled pressure on Bosnian-Croat leaders, and also on Croatia, for action to implement the Peace Agreement, particularly Annex 7. In a visit to Bosnia in early March, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said Croatia was the single greatest obstacle to resolving the refugee crisis (see also section on Croatia, below). On 26 March, High Representative Westendorp warned Croatia that the country's membership in the Council of Europe and its relations with the IMF might

be jeopardized and sanctions levied unless the situation improves in Croat areas of the Federation. The US Ambassador to Croatia, Ambassador Montgomery, said that Croatia must use its influence to dismantle parallel "Herceg-Bosna" institutions. Bosnian Croat officials complained, however, that Croat returns within the Federation and to the Republika Srpska were also being blocked, but without similar pressure on Bosnian Serb and Bosniak authorities. On 21 March, for example, five Croat returnees were beaten up in the village of Bukovica, near Travnik. Bukovica was also the scene of incidents of house burning directed against Croats. In a statement on Bosnia and Herzegovina dated 25 March, the Contact Group urged the Federation to make urgent progress on police restructuring, minority returns, economic reform and the dissolution of illegal wartime institutions. The Federation Forum convened in Mostar on 16 April to discuss issues related to returns to Mostar, Cantons with a Special Regime, the continued existence of parallel structures, media matters, municipal reform and other Federation issues.

Implementing Municipal Election Results

Efforts continued to focus on implementing the results of the September 1997 municipal elections and to make returns of elected officials a priority. An update on the status of implementation of the results of the September 1997 municipal elections, prepared by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), appears on page 6.

Amendments to Federation Property Legislation

In a welcome move, the Federation authorities enacted important changes to property legislation which became effective on 4 April. Many questions remain, however, regarding how the authorities plan to implement this legislation, which should enable pre-conflict owners and residents to reclaim rights lost by operation of war-time property legislation. In addition, a number of issues remain to be resolved by Federation authorities, including how the claims process will actually work, particularly regarding the reinstatement of pre-conflict occupancy rights. Instructions on these issues are urgently needed. The new Federation property legislation is described in more detail on page 3.



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Rise in the Number of Those in ICTY Custody

March and April also saw a rise in the number of war crimes suspects either surrendering to the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) or being apprehended by SFOR. Dragolub Kunarac handed himself over to French SFOR troops on 4 March. Kunarac is charged with orchestrating sexual assaults on Bosnian women during the Serb conquest of Foca. On 8 April, SFOR detained two Bosnian Serbs, Miroslav Kvočka and Mladen Radic, both indicted by ICTY for war crimes in the town of Prijedor. On 16 April, Zoran Zigic was transferred by SFOR from a military detention centre in Banja Luka to The Hague. Zigic, the fourth Bosnian Serb to turn himself in to the Tribunal, has been indicted by ICTY for torturing non-Serbs in the notorious Keraterm camp, a ceramics factory on the outskirts of Prijedor turned into a prison camp, as well as at the nearby Omarska camp during 1992. Much press coverage was given to the comments of High Representative Westendorp and other senior officials of the likelihood that Radovan Karadzic would soon be on trial at The Hague. There was also speculation whether SFOR was poised to detain Mr. Karadzic. In an interview with Belgrade's B92 radio on 16 April, RS Prime Minister Dodik said that he is confident that the best solution is for Karadzic to go to The Hague of his own free will. In April, new exhumations began on a series of grave sites around Srebrenica, aimed at unearthing evidence in support of existing or potential indictments by ICTY. Srebrenica women carried out a number of demonstrations in March and April demanding information on their missing relatives.

Continued Progress in the Process of Normalization

Signs of further normalization of relations within Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region included the first return flights between Belgrade and Banja Luka by Air Bosna. The 2 March flight marked the first commercial flight between the two cities in 8 years. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) also formally joined Eurocontrol. Interest amongst international air carriers in new markets in the region increased. The German air carrier Lufthansa recently inaugurated regular flights between Munich and Sarajevo. On 13 March the European Union com-

pleted its Telecom Project, establishing inter-Entity telephone links throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. In early April, the Joint Presidency agreed to liquidate the national Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a move allowing the IMF to finalize a long-pending letter of intent, making it possible for Bosnia and Herzegovina to benefit from International Monetary Fund (IMF) funds and bringing the country one step closer to the planned introduction of the convertible Marka at the end of May. For the first time since 1991, a commercial train from Croatia carrying WFP food aid of 620 tonnes of wheat rolled into Brcko, using the Ploče-Brcko line. The re-establishment of the rail link follows the signature in February of an MOU restarting rail traffic between the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

Brcko

A decision on the fate of Brcko scheduled to be taken on 15 March was postponed by International Arbitral Tribunal for Brcko to give the new moderate Bosnian Serb leadership time to enact reforms. A final decision on the fate of the town was already postponed last year for a period of 12 months. A final arbitration decision has been promised by the end of 1998 or in early 1999. The move drew criticism from both ethnic Serbs and Bosniaks, since it will keep the strategic north-eastern town under international supervision. In a Presidential Statement issued on 19 March (S/PRST/1998/7), the Security Council welcomed the 15 March Supplemental Award and called upon the parties to the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the award without delay.

Elections in 1998

Meeting in Brussels on 26 March, the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council confirmed that elections, which will again be supervised by the OSCE, will be held on 12 and 13 September. The elections will cover each level of government from the Cantonal to the Presidency levels.



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Flashpoints

The months of March and April unfortunately witnessed numerous acts of violence and intimidation intended to prevent or reverse the return of displaced persons and refugees. The worst of these occurred in Drvar, Glamoc, Kupres and Stolac. For example, in the first week of March, a crowd of 200 Croats carrying clubs blocked 28 Serb refugees from visiting their homes in Kupres. In early March, house torchings took place in other Croat-held areas, such as Glamoc.

Stolac also remained a source of concern. In response to repeated acts of violence directed against Bosniak returnees and prospective returnees, as well as a spate of house bombings in Stolac, the High Representative for the first time exercised new authority accorded to him by the Bonn Meeting of the Peace Implementation Council to dismiss the town's mayor, Pero Raguz, with immediate effect on 4 March. At the same time, Mr. Westendorp asked the HDZ leadership to identify someone dedicated to implementation of the Peace Agreement to take over. The Mayor of Stolac formally resigned on 5 March. Nevertheless, Bosniak houses continued to be targets for arson and bomb attacks. In the period from 26 March to 7 April, 21 houses belonging to Bosniaks were mined or burned. On 31 March, a stoning incident occurred against a bus carrying Muslim refugees. In four new incidents occurring in the night between 11 and 12 April, the wells of four Bosniak returnees were mined. Despite continued incidents in Stolac, on 18 April some 230 Bosniak displaced persons returned to their places of origin in villages in Capljina, Stolac and Prozor to prepare their shelters. This was followed on 25 April by the return of a group of some 300 Bosniaks to villages in Capljina. There was also a sharp increase in the month of March in the number of assessment visits carried out by prospective Serb returnees to Bosanski Petrovac.

By far the worst incidents of obstruction, however, occurred in Croat-administered Drvar, where incidents of arson, harassment, violence and murder, intended to dissuade former Serb inhabitants from returning home, drew international outrage. Tension about Serb returns to Drvar had been running high for weeks. Since 1 January, close to 50 instances of arson were registered in Drvar, along with a spate of incidents

involving mob violence, stone-throwing and other types of harassment. The most shocking incident involved the savage murder of Vojin and Lejla Tminic, two elderly Serb returnees who on 16 April were beaten, shot and then burned inside a house they were temporarily occupying. The elderly couple had returned to Drvar in early April, but had been unable to reoccupy their own home, which is being used by Bosnian Croat displaced persons. On 17 April, High Representative Westendorp and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Elizabeth Rehn announced their respective decisions to sack the Deputy Mayor and the Deputy Police Chief of Drvar, as well as the local interior minister, for failing to prevent harassment and arson against Serb refugees returning to their pre-war homes. Rehn also ordered the rapid addition of Serb policemen to join some 40 Croats in the Drvar police force. Federation Ejup Ganic vowed on 19 April to shake-up the police force in reaction to the brutal murder.

But tensions culminated after 131 Bosnian Serbs (representing 108 households of both refugees and displaced persons) returned to housing vacated on 9 April by units of the Federation Army's First Guards Brigade, in a move praised by the Office of the High Representative. Though their initial return movement went off without incident, violence flared on 24 April. Several cars and five buildings were set on fire by angry Croat demonstrators in violent and orchestrated demonstrations against returnees as well as the international community. UNHCR's office in Drvar and IPTF premises were amongst those destroyed by fire. The building housing Serb returnees was also targeted and then set on fire. The returnees lost everything and many were eventually evacuated to Banja Luka. Drvar Mayor Milan Marceta was attacked by the crowd and was among fourteen people injured. Marceta later charged that the violence had been orchestrated by the HDZ leadership, working in collusion with elements of the hard-line Serb Democratic Party (SDS), but Federation Vice President Soljic said that the incident in Derventa (see below) had very likely been the spark which ignited the violence. In the days following the violence in Drvar, Serbs living in surrounding villages were subjected to death threats and intimidation by roving bands of hostile Croats. Despite the incidents, most returnees (some 1,400-1,500) are determined to stay.



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The violent demonstrations in Drvar followed an incident in Derventa on 23 April, when SFOR troops were obliged to evacuate the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bosnia, Cardinal Vinko Puljic, and a group of 40 Bosnian Croat refugees besieged by a mob of Serbs for six hours in a ruined church on Saint George's Day. The group of refugees had travelled from Croatia to hear mass in the church of Saint George but were met by an angry crowd of Serbs. Part of the group never reached the church, having been forced back to Zagreb by felled trees set on the roads to block their passage. The crowd of Serb demonstrators hurled rocks at the frightened refugees and reportedly lobbed two Molotov cocktails. SFOR NorBat troops prevented the crowd from setting the church on fire and eventually led the besieged refugees to safety.

Following incidents in Derventa and Drvar, on 25 April hostile Serbs forced a few buses carrying some 400 Bosnian Croat refugees to turn back after they had crossed into RS territory while attempting to visit a monastery in Plehan to hear St Mark's Day mass. SFOR troops decided that the Croats' safety could not be guaranteed, and told the group to turn back following consultations with Senior Deputy High Representative Schumacher and Sarajevo's Bishop, Pero Suhar. A mass nevertheless went ahead for the some 40 Croats who managed to enter the church, but was marred by more than 100 Serb protesters, many of them armed with sticks, who had gathered around the church.

Efforts by Bosniak displaced persons and refugees to mark the religious holiday of Kurban Bajram with visits to damaged homes were thwarted on 8 April by a well organized angry mob of 60-70 Serb displaced persons, refugees and local residents hurling stones and eggs. Some 500 Bosniak displaced persons living in Sanski Most, joined by refugees from overseas, were taking part in an organized visit to Novi Grad (Bosanski Novi) municipality, but were met on arrival at Blagaj Rijeka by the angry crowd. Amongst the visitors was the newly elected Bosniak Deputy Mayor of Novi Grad (Bosanski Novi), whom the crowd especially singled out for abuse and intimidation. After a two-hour stand-off, during which local police presence proved woefully inadequate and failed to calm the situation, the displaced persons and refugees were obliged to leave without the opportunity to visit their homes and graveyards.

On 26 April, a serious incident occurred in the village of Svjetlica (Doboj) (RS) when a group of Bosniak displaced persons decided to return and remain there. Although the municipality of Doboj has accepted the return of some 200 persons to other villages in the municipality, return to Svjetlica has remained a bone of contention. According to reports, a confrontation ensued between Serb displaced persons in the area and the Bosniak returnees. Five Serbs were wounded by grenades. Bosnian Serbs on the RS side of the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) and Bosniaks in the Federation later set up barricades and the important road connecting Tuzla to Western Bosnia and Herzegovina was closed. On 27 April, following a meeting between the local authorities and UNHCR, SFOR and IPTF, it was agreed that a joint police investigation of the incident would be carried out.

Action by Federation authorities to detain war crimes suspects continued to be a source of tension between the Entities. The arrest in late March by Federation authorities of Serbs on locally-levelled allegations of war crimes drew sharp protest from RS President Plavsic and the Serb member of Bosnia's Joint Presidency Momcilo Krajisnik, and later sparked protests on 8 April during which Bosnian Serbs blocked a road leading to Sarajevo. Following the February arrest of Goran Vasic when he crossed from RS territory into Sarajevo, Federation authorities had confirmed the arrest of Dragan Pejic and Milomir Tepes, although neither had been indicted by the ICTY. On 25 March, a UN spokesman announced ICTY would not try the two but said that local courts were free to do so. The Serbs claimed the arrests of the former soldiers in Sarajevo by Federation police were part of an intimidation campaign to keep Serbs out of Sarajevo.

CROATIA

Redoubled Diplomatic Efforts Focusing on Return

The return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes became a major political issue in Croatia in March and April, both on the domestic and international fronts. Most foreign diplomats and officials visiting Croatia raised this issue as a deep concern in contacts with the authorities. Despite the successful completion in January 1998 of UNTAES' mission of ensuring the peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region, the repatriation of refugees from

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abroad and the return of displaced persons remains a huge task facing the international community and Croatian authorities. As the High Commissioner stated during her recent mission to the Croatian capital, Zagreb, durable solutions for the situation of some 500,000 persons (Croatian Serb displaced persons and refugees, ethnic Croat displaced persons and Bosnian Croat refugees) are linked to Croatia. Yet the return process within Croatia is practically stalled. New departures from the Croatian Danube continue in what the OSCE has termed a "silent exodus". As a result, there is growing recognition within the international community that lasting peace in the region will hinge on the success of the return process, with Croatia being key to the attainment of durable solutions in the entire region. The international community therefore began to push for "all-way returns", meaning returns of displaced persons within Croatia, and well as the repatriation of Croatian refugees from abroad and the repatriation of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina presently in Croatia.

Refugee repatriation had been highlighted in a joint statement of US Acting Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak, which was released in Washington on 30 January. In this statement Minister Susak reaffirmed the Croatian Government's commitment "to encourage national reconciliation and facilitate the safe and orderly return of all displaced persons and refugees to their homes in Croatia as soon as possible". Talbot and Susak agreed that the "appropriate Croatian authorities will publicly clarify by March 15 procedures by which all DPs and refugees from Croatia can promptly obtain Croatian citizenship documentation and will announce by March 30 plans for nation-wide returns". The Government paper entitled "Programme for return of persons who left the Republic of Croatia" which was publicly presented on 31 March encompassed both of the above elements.

The French and German Foreign Ministers, Hubert Vedrine and Klaus Kinkel, visited Croatia on 18 March. During separate talks with Foreign Minister Granic and President Tudjman in Zagreb, they expressed support for Croatia's efforts to establish closer ties with the European Union (EU), on condition that Croatia continues to co-operate in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the repatriation of Croatian refugees. Both foreign ministers noted that

"there are many steps that need to be accomplished" and reiterated the fact that responsibility was entirely in Croatia's own hands. The Ministers asked for concrete projects relating to the repatriation of refugees and received Foreign Minister Granic's pledge that Croatia would fully pursue the issues discussed. Foreign Minister Granic also informed his guests that the Croatian government was already negotiating refugee return with the Yugoslav authorities and would soon open talks with Bosnian Serb officials on the same issue. The latter talks were initiated on 27 March during the visit of to Zagreb of Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik.

The EU Troika, comprising British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Wolfgang Schuessel and Luxembourg State Minister Lydia Ermet met with Foreign Minister Granic in London on 23 March 1998. According to a statement issued by Foreign Secretary Cook on behalf of the EU, it was made clear that Croatia would not move closer to Europe without demonstrating a clear, long-term commitment to the Dayton and Erdut Agreements, ethnic reconciliation and democratic reform. The EU indicated four key areas which needed rapid improvement: compliance with the peace agreements, return of refugees, internal democracy and Eastern Slavonia.

The EU was very specific in laying out its expectations with regard to refugee repatriation. Firstly, it highlighted a need for a definitive public statement by the Croatian authorities setting out commitments to reconciliation and implementation of the National Programme for Establishment of Trust, Accelerated Return and Normalisation of Life in the War Affected Areas and presentation of a credible concept for refugee return to all parts of Croatia and legal implementation of principle of non-discrimination on ethnic grounds. Another important point made was the need for a public campaign which would reassure minority communities of their rights and place in the Croatian society, as well as resolute police action to prevent harassment of minorities. Finally, the EU expected Croatia's full participation in the regional return process and related initiatives, in particular balanced and equitable reconstruction assistance, action on housing, employment, property-related legislation and refugee documentation.

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Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed a Protocol on Return of Refugees in Belgrade on 2 April. In a joint statement, both parties stressed the importance of free, safe and unconditional return of refugees. According to the Protocol "all people wishing to return would be guaranteed all necessary conditions for free, normal and safe life, including the introduction of, upon possession of property, guarantees for personal and property security and equal treatment".

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, also gave significant impetus to the issue of return during her five-day visit to Croatia from 4 to 8 April. Mrs. Ogata carried out a number of field visits during which she stressed repeatedly the need for additional efforts by the authorities to accelerate returns, as well as to create conditions and build the necessary infrastructure to facilitate them and make them sustainable. The High Commissioner especially emphasized the necessity to expedite procedures and the issue of documentation since 1998 is "the Year of Return". The High Commissioner also met separately with Foreign Minister Granic and with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman in Zagreb on 7 April. In her contacts, Mrs. Ogata emphasized the need for a comprehensive plan for returns and a regional approach aimed at solving the region's problems of displacement. The High Commissioner also emphasized UNHCR's readiness, as the lead UN agency for humanitarian relief efforts in the region as well as in accordance with its specific mandate for refugees, to participate actively in heretofore bilateral talks on return with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. While noting the obvious gap between high-level political commitments and administrative arrangements on the ground, the High Commissioner reiterated that solutions should be reached through consultations which take due account of the humanitarian aspects of the problem, and in particular the rights and wishes of the individuals concerned.

A week after the High Commissioner's visit, representatives of UNHCR, OSCE, the EU and the USA met with President Tudjman to discuss Croatia's responsibilities in the "all way" refugee return process in the region. Representatives of the international community expressed satisfaction with positive elements of the latest draft of the Government's programme for the repatriation of persons who left Croatia. The 31

March plan had been the subject of intensive discussions between the Croatian Government and the international community and was amended to reflect international concerns. On 9 April, the Croatian Government adopted a Report on Implementation of the Programme for the Two-Way Return and Care of Refugees and tabled it for parliamentary discussion. The international community supports the revised set of procedures and the main purpose of the meeting with President Tudjman was to reiterate this support, particularly in view of the discussion in the Croatian parliament.

After debate, the House of Representatives of the Croatian Parliament endorsed, on 24 April, the Government's Report on the Realization of the Programme of Two-Way Return in Regard to Requirements of the International Community. This report contains the aforementioned set of return procedures amended with the cooperation of the international community. The document guarantees the right of all Croatian citizens to repatriate to Croatia. It endorses a more detailed, clearer, simpler and a more transparent procedure for issuing necessary Croatian documents. Since the document is not a return plan, the parliament called upon the Croatian Government to draw up a return plan, in cooperation with UNHCR and the OSCE. Following the endorsement by Parliament of the Government's report, intensive consultations took place within the Government on 26 April, resulting in the approval of a different and far less transparent set of procedures for return. This move sparked a negative reaction from the international community with the PIC Steering Board and the Article 11 Commission calling on the Government of Croatia to adopt procedures which are in line with the principles agreed and outlined in the initial procedures endorsed by Parliament as part of the Government's Report on the Realization of the Programme of Two-Way Return in Regard to Requirements of the International Community. The Banja Luka Regional Return Conference made a number of specific recommendations aimed at facilitating voluntary repatriation and stabilizing the situation in the Croatian Danube region. At the Conference the OSCE Mission to Croatia made clear the disappointment of the international community with regard to the adoption of new procedures and expressed the wish of the international community that the Government would reconsider its position in light of its international obligations.

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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Kosovo

The months of March and April witnessed a worsening security situation inside Kosovo, with violent incidents spreading to a wider geographical area and an increase in tension which could easily degenerate into wider armed confrontation. International focus on Kosovo was galvanized by two major security operations mounted by Serbian security forces on 28 February and 5 March 1998. Throughout February, it appeared that certain areas in the Drenica triangle had passed out of central government control. On 28 February, Serbian special police carried out an armed security sweep in the villages on Likoshane and Cirez, near Glogovac in the Drenica region, prompted by a reported attack on a regular police patrol by "Albanian separatists." On 5 March, a second police operation took place in the villages of Gornji Prekaz and Donji Prekaz in Srbica municipality, also in the Drenica region. The security operations, apparently intended to wipe out UCK strongholds, reportedly left 80 people dead, including a large number of women and children. It has been alleged that the operations entailed serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, which are presently being investigated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Jiri Dienstbier. A preliminary report already submitted by Mr. Dienstbier to the Commission on Human Rights on 8 April following a mission to Kosovo concludes that "The human rights situation in Kosovo is grave."

Even before the well-publicized security sweeps by Serbian security forces in the "Drenica triangle" of Kosovo (which includes the municipalities of Glogovac, Klina and Srbica), the Drenica region had witnessed violence for many months. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Drenica had for several months been a stronghold of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) and had already been the scene of confrontation and operations intended to root out armed elements. During March and April the number of Serbian special police armed checkpoints and patrols in the Drenica triangle increased. At the same time, the number of armed and uniformed persons identifying themselves as UCK members increased sharply, as

did the number and firepower of their weapons and the openness of their presence. Movement by humanitarian agencies in the areas affected remains limited by insecurity. Some areas, such as Vojnic and Broja in Srbica municipality and Glogjan in Drenica remain "no-go" areas for UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies.

Security incidents, which occurred almost on a daily basis in March and April have spread beyond Srbica and Glogovac to Klina in the Drenica region, and to the west and south into Decani and Djakovica, bordering on Albania. On 24 March, Serbian authorities carried out a security operation in Glodjani and Dubrava, near Decani, in response to an attack on police. From early April, there were a series of alleged border incursions of armed men from Albania. Since that time, Yugoslav military presence has increased along the border, in an effort to stem the alleged flow of weapons and "terrorists" entering from Albania and skirmishes have been reported. On 16 April, the National Army (VJ) was drawn into the violence for the first time when they reportedly encountered a group in the border area bringing arms from Albania into Djakovica. Further clashes between the Yugoslav army and armed infiltrators have reportedly occurred. A serious incident involving the murder of six Albanians considered to be "Serbian sympathisers" also occurred in the municipality of Orahovac, south of Drenica, in the first week of April.

Security incidents have affected not only Kosovo Albanians, but also Serbs, Montenegrins, Roma and Muslim Slavs. During the first two weeks of April, almost all Serb families from 18 villages around the town of Decani left their homes and moved to a summer resort near the town, reportedly in response to the presence of armed Albanian "terrorists" in military uniform roaming around their villages. On 18 April an attack by Kosovo Albanian "terrorists" at the Babolac settlement reportedly caused 120 Serb families to flee the settlement, where Serbs from Albania have been living since the early 1990s. Though some subsequently returned, tensions in the area are running high and many Serb women and children have fled Babolac in search of safety in other locations. On April, three Serb IDPs residing in Decani town were reportedly detained and beaten by UCK members while returning to their homes in Dubrava village to pick up some belongings they had left behind. A

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on 19 April, Serbian police exchanged gunfire with armed persons at a technical school used as a collective centre to house Croatian Serb refugees in Srbica. This was the third attack on a collective centre accommodating refugees since February 1998. On numerous occasions, including when the High Commissioner met President Milosevic on 9 April, UNHCR has expressed grave concern for the safety of refugees housed in collective centres. Amongst displaced persons arriving in Montenegro are Roma, who have alleged attacks on members of their community by Kosovo Albanians who consider them to be sympathisers of the Serbian authorities. Other Roma families, displaced from Klina, have arrived in Belgrade, claiming they had been driven from their homes by ethnic Albanian neighbours.

According to UNHCR estimates, the number of persons displaced internally since the end of February had reached some 25,000 by the end of April. Of these, some 20,000 have been displaced within Kosovo, both east of the Drenica triangle into the area around Pristina, and west within Djakovica, Decani, the Pec area, as well as to Belgrade. Some 5,000 have arrived in Montenegro. UNHCR had begun to observe modest return movements during the month of March, particularly to villages in Drenica where security forces had diminished their presence. Nevertheless, intermittent but persistent gunfire in villages in south-west Srbica municipality as well as Prekaz continue to create panic in those localities and surrounding areas. It is now apparent that return movements have largely ceased and that displacement is again on the rise not only from and within Drenica, but also along the Albanian border – scene of the most recent clashes and violence. UNHCR led contingency planning discussions with United Nations and other partners aimed at ensuring an adequate and timely response to meet humanitarian needs which may arise.

Although the signature of the implementing procedures for the September 1996 Education Accord by Serbian and Kosovo leaders on 23 March offered hope that a process of dialogue had finally commenced, no meaningful dialogue between the Serbian authorities and Kosovo Albanians has begun. While the Kosovo Albanians insist on international mediation of the Kosovo question and aim at independence, this continues to be steadfastly refused by the Serbian and Federal authorities, who insist that independence is not

negotiable and that the Kosovo question is purely an internal matter. The referendum on this question held on 23 April at the request of President Milosevic overwhelmingly rejected international mediation, and further entrenched the extreme positions.

The energetic, forceful efforts of the international community to defuse tensions and encourage dialogue have failed to produce tangible results. The Contact Group met on 9 March, 25 March and 29 April, in an effort to encourage dialogue and avoid a further escalation of the conflict. On 31 March, the Security Council, acting on a recommendation of the 25 March meeting of the Contact Group, decided to ban the sale or supply to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, of arms and related materiel of all types, including weapons and munitions, military vehicles and equipment, as well as spare parts for them. At its latest meeting on 29 April, the Contact Group (with the exception of the Russian Federation) agreed to an immediate freeze on funds held abroad by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian Governments and warned that this would be followed by a ban on foreign investments within 10 days, unless President Milosevic withdraws security police and opens unconditional talks on Kosovo's future. The Group also offered incentives to President Milosevic if he agrees to set up the framework for dialogue and stabilization measures and permits a mediation mission by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, the personal representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and Representative of the European Union. The European Commission and the European Parliament, the EU Presidency, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have all taken steps during March and April to contribute to an end to the crisis.

In the present explosive climate, UNHCR is convinced that the return of rejected asylum-seekers from European States entails security risks for those being returned and could well expose them to treatment proscribed in international human rights instruments. UNHCR appealed to European States on 9 March and again at the end of April to suspend temporarily the deportation of rejected asylum-seekers until there is clear and marked progress towards dialogue and tensions have subsided.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia applied to join the



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Council of Europe on 19 March. The Council said that a decision on admission would be based on FRY's respect for human rights and the rights of minorities.

Asylum-seekers from Croatia

In a slow but continuing exodus, Croatian Serb asylum-seekers from the Croatian Danube region (former UNTAES area) continued to enter the Vojvodina region of Yugoslavia. The claims to refugee status are being considered by the Office of the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees. It is estimated that as many as 60,000 have entered Yugoslavia since mid-1996.

Progress on Repatriation

On 2 April, the Yugoslav government signed a Protocol on Two-Way Return with the Republic of Croatia, raising hope for an increase in repatriation movements to Croatia. There are nearly 300,000 Croatian refugees in Yugoslavia. The procedures for implementation of the Protocol published by the Croatian Government at the end of April have raised deep concern, as they appear to set up a series of administrative obstacles which could hinder the repatriation process.

In March and April, seven refugees were assisted by UNHCR to repatriate to Bosnia and Herzegovina, while an additional 80 persons repatriated spontaneously. One returnee subsequently re-entered Yugoslavia, following the violence in Drvar. During the same period, a total of 70 refugees were assisted to repatriate to Croatia.

Regional

The High Commissioner travelled to five countries in the region of the former Yugoslavia -- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Slovenia -- from 3 to 18 April. During her mission, she met with leaders in the region, as well as with displaced persons and refugees. She emphasized to the leaders that durable solutions need to be pursued on a region-wide basis, in view of their complexity and inter-linkages. Mrs. Ogata also sought high-level political support for such a regional approach. As requested by the December 1997 Bonn meeting of the Peace Implementation Council, UNHCR plans to present a region-wide strategy on durable solutions to the international community.

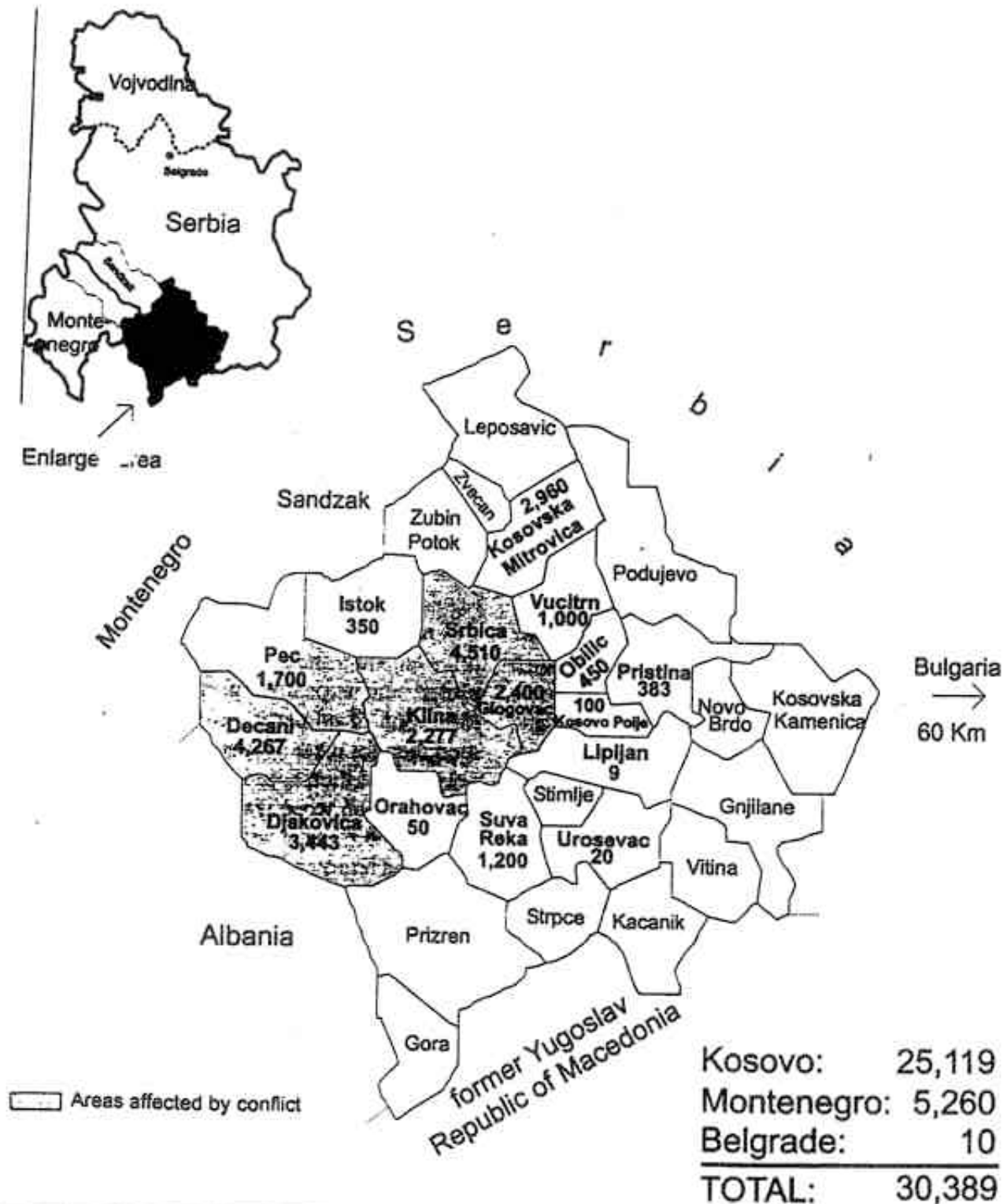
The High Commissioner named Mr. Nicholas Morris as her Special Envoy to the former Yugoslavia, effective 1 April.

Mr. Jiri Dienstbier, a former Czech political prisoner who became foreign minister after the collapse of communism, was named Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the former Yugoslavia on 13 March, replacing Mrs. Elisabeth Rehn. Mr. Richard Monk took up his duties as Commissioner of the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF) on 5 March. Ms. Peggy Hicks was appointed Deputy Representative for Human Rights on 17 March.

The High Commissioner designated Serbian singer Djordje Balasevic as UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador for the former Yugoslavia on 8 April.

KOSOVO: Estimate of Internally Displaced Persons as at 29 April 1998

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia



The boundaries displayed on this map do not imply official recognition by the United Nations



Source: UNHCR Belgrade

All figures are based on UNHCR estimates except those from Djakovica, Decani and Pec, reported by a local NGO.



REGIONAL RETURN CONFERENCE

15

BANJA LUKA CONFERENCE GIVES NEW IMPETUS TO MINORITY RETURNS

The Banja Luka Regional Return Conference, held on 28 April, gave new impetus to efforts to encourage return movements throughout the region. The Conference spotlighted the region-wide dimension of the problem of displacement and made a number of concrete recommendations with accompanying deadlines. The Conference, which was co-chaired by High Representative Westendorp and newly appointed UNHCR Special Envoy Nicholas Morris, concluded that "the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons has to be addressed as a priority by all authorities" throughout the region.

The participants, which included representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as other key Governments and international organisations, stressed the need for return movements to the territory of the Republika Srpska (RS) to take place now, without further delay, and insisted that urgent measures be taken by the RS Government to reinstate 300-400 minority families who were evicted from their homes in 1995. Regarding Croatian refugees presently in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Conference urged immediate measures to facilitate their voluntary repatriation, but listed a number of major concerns regarding the Croatian Government's Return Procedures of 27 April 1998. It urged Croatia to adopt effective property restitution legislation, apply amnesty laws in a fair and transparent manner and take decisive action to promote reconciliation. The participants urged that return movements to a series of identified empty villages in Croatia be facilitated. They urged similar support for the repatriation of Croatian refugees presently in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Conference also encouraged a number of measures to facilitate the repatriation from Croatia of Bosnian refugees and especially encouraged the RS authorities to facilitate and sustain such movements.

The Conference highlighted a number of changes needed in the legal, administrative and social framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina to facilitate returns and make them sustainable. These include: the passage of legislation on displaced persons and returnees consistent with Annex 7, the passage of new property legislation and the promulgation of accompanying regulations by the RS, as well as the promulgation of instructions and regulations to implement new prop-

erty legislation in the Federation; the initiation in the Federation of a campaign to inform displaced persons, refugees and other potential claimants of rights to reclaim property contained in the new Federation legislation, the establishment of a multi-ethnic police force throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina; the rapid passage by both Entities of Citizenship Laws consistent with the State Citizenship Law and prevailing international law and standards relating to statelessness and nationality matters; an order by RS authorities requesting municipal authorities to issue RS ID cards under specified circumstances and the abolishment of the requirement in both Entities to provide so-called "de-registration papers"; as well as the elimination of discriminatory practices in the field of education.

The Conference also recommended changes to the legal and administrative framework in Croatia in order to facilitate voluntary repatriation, by introducing a simple and flexible mechanism to allow "go and see" visits by refugees and to expedite the issue of temporary entry permits. Croatia was urged to recognize the right of all refugees to return to their homes and to regularize their citizenship as a matter of urgency. It was requested to enact new comprehensive and non-discriminatory property legislation and to set up simplified and expedited procedures for dealing with restitution of property, providing alternative accommodation for those who must vacate housing but cannot return to their homes, and providing some form of compensation when warranted. The participants also encouraged Croatia to accept both spontaneous and organised returns equally and to take further measures to stabilise the situation in the Croatian Danube region. Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were urged to eliminate the current border regime which discriminates against residents of the Republika Srpska and, in cooperation with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to normalise river traffic on the Sava River.

The Conference succeeded in sharpening international attention on the many legislative and policy changes which will be needed to address the complex problem of displacement throughout the region. If implemented rapidly, such changes will create conditions conducive to return and go a long way towards resolving the region's problem of displacement.

FOCUS ON CROATIAN REFUGEES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

For the over 40,000 Croatian Serb refugees currently in Republika Srpska, "home" is on the other side of an uncrossable border. For the past three years, they have been unable to return home, deprived of official documentation in their country of birth and have not yet integrated locally in their country of asylum. Many feel that they are left with very few options.

The refugees arrived in Western Republika Srpska after the August 1995 Croatian military offensive against the Krajina Serb Republic in Croatia. This also coincided with the departure of Bosnian Croats to Croatia who today live either in collective centres or in homes owned by Croatian Serb refugees. Now members of both groups are signaling their intention to return, but the process of return has proved too difficult for most. The Croatian Serb refugees face many obstacles: the inability to cross the international border into Croatia, inability to gather/obtain the necessary documentation for return, the occupation of their former homes by Bosnian Croat refugees and displaced persons in Croatia, high levels of unemployment in their host country and other barriers to sustainable repatriation.

One of the most formidable problems faced by Croatian Serb refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the issue of citizenship documents. Many of them fled their former homes in a matter of hours – leaving behind birth certificates, passports, citizenship certificates; anything to prove that they are legal residents of Croatia. Currently, the Government of Croatia requires ethnic Serb refugees to hold Croatian passports to enter Croatia. To obtain these passports, a Serb must travel to the Croatian Consulate in Sarajevo to lodge an application. Unfortunately, the Consulate has repeatedly refused to issue any of the documentation required for repatriation, including passports.

These difficulties relating to documentation were highlighted recently during a 24 March visit of Croatian Serbs now living in Banja Luka to Vojinic in Western Slavonia. The visitors, who intended to retrieve vital

citizenship documents as well as to visit family and friends, were obliged to wait at the border for nearly six hours before being allowed to continue to the town, where they were prevented by Croatian police from leaving the bus. Though two previous visits to a nearby town went without a hitch, the 24 March visit exacerbated the deep frustration of Croatian refugees who would like to repatriate voluntarily, and in safety and dignity.

Other issues, such as the loss of former property by Croatian Serb refugees to displaced people in Croatia, the inability to collect much needed pensions and health care benefits as well as the overall poor economic health of their host communities have compounded the frustrations of the Croatian Serb refugee community.

Under international pressure, the Government of Croatia has now signaled its readiness to address the issue of return of citizens from other countries in the region. (Please refer to page vi of the Regional Update.) Whilst the process of negotiation is not completed, it is hoped that a return plan can now be developed by the Government of Croatia, in cooperation with UNHCR and with the support of the OSCE Mission to Croatia. The High Commissioner intends to present this plan as part of a wider plan for durable solutions at the next high-level Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meeting.

It is increasingly recognised that Croatia's role is pivotal to the success of the implementation of Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement and that durable solutions for the problems of displacement in the region can only be resolved by adopting a regional focus. That the Government of Croatia has undertaken to meet its obligations more comprehensively is a signal that the process is moving forward. Pressure must continue to be maintained to ensure that those people of concern to UNHCR are enabled to return to their homes in conditions of safety and dignity.

ANALYSIS OF NEW FEDERATION PROPERTY AND HOUSING LAWS

The Law Regulating Application of the Law on Temporarily Abandoned Real Property Owned by Citizens

This law applies only to private property. The law supersedes the *Law on Temporarily Abandoned Real Property Owned by Citizens*, which was introduced during the war and provided that if the owners of private property left after 30 April 1991, the authorities could declare the private property "abandoned" and grant temporary occupancy rights to a third party. Importantly, ownership rights were not permanently affected by the *Law on Temporarily Abandoned Real Property*, and the owner could return at any time and reclaim the property. However, the right of owners to reclaim their property was not effectively implemented under the law largely because it did not provide a realistic procedure for repossessing property and addressing the needs of current users.

Under the new law, owners of private property may file a claim to reclaim their property at any time. The authorities must decide on such claims within 30 days. If the property is vacant, or occupied illegally, the owner may move in immediately following the decision on the claim. If the property is occupied by an authorised temporary user, the current occupant has 90 days to vacate the property. In exceptional circumstances, this deadline may be extended up to one year, but only if the authorities can demonstrate to OHR that other accommodation for the current occupants is not available.

The Law on Cessation of the Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments

This law applies to "socially-owned" apartments, i.e. apartments for which persons were given occupancy rights by companies, governmental organs, or social organisations. Occupancy rights were subject to substantial regulation before the war, in particular under the *Law on Housing Relations*.

During the war, the *Law on Abandoned Apartments* was introduced. This law permitted the authorities to declare socially-owned apartments whose occupants had left as "abandoned," and to grant temporary occupancy rights to the apartment to other persons. On 22 December 1995, the law was amended so that if people did not claim and re-occupy their apartment by 6 January 1996, their apartment was declared permanently abandoned and could be permanently reallocated to a new occupant. This law blocked the return of tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons to their pre-war homes.

Under the new law, all decisions terminating the occupancy rights of refugees and displaced persons are null and void. Pre-war occupants, or their authorised representatives, must file claims for repossession of their apartment. Instructions will soon be issued which will clarify the procedures to be followed in filing claims.

Claims by pre-war occupants must be filed within six months after the law comes into force. The claim must contain an intended date of return which must be within one year of the date the claim is submitted. Pre-war occupants who do not meet the six-month filing deadline, or who fail to return within one year of the date a decision on their claim is made, face permanent loss of their occupancy rights.



ANALYSIS OF NEW FEDERATION PROPERTY AND HOUSING LAWS

The authorities must issue a decision within 30 days of the date a claim is filed. These decisions will confirm pre-war occupancy rights, terminate rights of temporary use of the apartment, and set a deadline by which the current user of the apartment must move out. As there are different categories of current users of apartments, and some apartments are vacant or uninhabitable, this time period will vary:

- if an apartment is vacant or occupied illegally, the pre-war occupant can repossess the apartment immediately;
- an authorised temporary user will be given 90 days to vacate the apartment which can be extended if the pre-war occupant's nominated return date is later;
- if the apartment is occupied by a person who has received a permanent occupancy right prior to 7 February, 1998, the case may be referred for an additional decision concerning whether the pre-war occupant should be allocated a different apartment, allowing the current occupant to remain in place. This decision must be made according to specific criteria which comply with Annex 7 of the Peace Agreement and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols. These criteria are now being developed.

Authorised users of apartments must be provided with alternative accommodation by the responsible authorities within the time period set by the law for repossession of the apartment by the pre-war occupant.

The Law on Taking Over the Law on Housing Relations

This law also applies to "socially owned" apartments, and simply amends the *Law on Housing Relations*, a pre-war statute that regulates use of housing with the occupancy right. Under the *Law on Housing Relations*, an occupancy right can be canceled when the occupant has not resided in the apartment for a continuous period of six months, except in certain limited circumstances (e.g. the occupant is serving in the military or undergoing medical treatment).

The amendment provides that occupancy rights cannot be cancelled automatically for failure to use an apartment since 30 April 1991, if the occupancy right holder is a person with the right to return under Annex 7. The amendment also provides that persons who left their apartments after 30 April 1991 are presumed to be refugees and displaced persons under Annex 7, absent a showing that they left their apartments for reasons wholly unrelated to the conflict. These persons must still meet a deadline to file a claim, either under this law or under the Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments.

Purchase of Apartments with the Occupancy Rights (Privatisation)

The Law on Sale of Apartments with the Occupancy Rights came into force on 6 December 1997, and provides that applications to purchase socially-owned apartments under the Law could be filed from 6 March 1998. However, under an amendment to the law adopted on 4 March 1998, persons who acquired occupancy



ANALYSIS OF NEW FEDERATION PROPERTY AND HOUSING LAWS

rights to apartments that were declared "abandoned" since 1991, are not permitted to purchase the apartments in which they now reside. This amendment does not affect occupancy right holders who never left their apartments.

At the same time, under the *Law on the Cessation of Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments*, pre-war occupants who left their apartments during the war will not be able to purchase their apartments until they have returned and resided in the apartment for six months. In addition, such pre-war occupants will not be permitted to sell the apartment for a period of five years from the date the purchase of the apartment is registered.

Implementation of the Federation Laws

The first three laws were published in the Official Gazette on 3 April 1998 and came into force on 4 April 1998. As noted above, implementation of the new laws will require the preparation of detailed instructions on the claims process and criteria for decision-making in certain cases. In addition, a broad public information campaign will be essential to ensure that all persons are informed of their rights under the laws, and in particular of the deadlines for filing and return set in the *Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments*. Effective monitoring of the implementation of the laws will be also be necessary, to ensure that any breaches or inconsistencies in application of the laws are promptly redressed. International organisations are working with the responsible Federation authorities to address these issues.

Amendment of Property Laws in the Republika Srpska

Property laws in the Republika Srpska also violate international standards and obstruct return. Until recently, there had been no progress in efforts to amend these laws. However, since the establishment of the new RS Government, a working group has been established to develop property and housing law amendments for submission to the RS government. Initial drafts have been prepared, and OHR is working with the RS authorities to ensure that the proposed laws comply with Annex 7 and are consistent with the laws adopted within the Federation.

OSCE ELECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

By 4 May 1998, 131 of 136 municipalities holding elections received final certification, while five remain outstanding.

The municipality of Teslic is still awaiting final certification. This municipality was subject to an investigation by the Election Appeals Sub-Commission (EASC). The decision has now been issued. OSCE is awaiting the response to the decision, and compliance with its demands. It is anticipated that there will be a Council session in the near future.

Arbitration awards have been issued by the OSCE Head of Mission and the High Representative in four municipalities: Kresevo, Prozor/Prozor-Rama, Foca/Srbinje and Srebrenica. The table below indicates the award date and the respective deadline for implementation.

Municipality	Award Date	Deadline for Implementation
Kresevo	2 March	16 March
Prozor/Prozor-Rama	11 March	25 March
Foca/Srbinje	11 March	25 March
Srebrenica	7 April	

In the four municipalities subject to Arbitration Awards the current situation is as follows.

In Kresevo Municipality, the Coalition walked out of the Council meeting, however, the Council implemented as many of the Award instructions as possible without their attendance. There are indication that the Coalition are now willing to implement the Arbitration. A National Elections Results Implementation Committee (NERIC) member has contacted HDZ Kresevo to arrange for a meeting to be called. Confirmation of the meeting is pending.

In Prozor/Prozor-Rama, at a meeting held on March 25, the HDZ and HSP councilors refused to implement the Arbitration Award. The council meeting was not able to continue when they refused to participate in a vote on the agenda. Federation Vice-President Soljic has met with the local HDZ to seek implementation of the Award. An all-party meeting was held on 29 April and a second will be held on 6 May. A Council session is expected to be called for 12 or 13 May to implement the Award.

In Foca/Srbinje, the Arbitration Award has been fully implemented, and the EASC has heard and dismissed an outstanding complaint from one of the parties. The municipality is scheduled to go before the NERIC on 5 May for recommendation for Final Certification.

In Srebrenica, the Assembly meeting was scheduled for 24 March. The SRS/SDS broke a previous agreement by playing the RS anthem. The Coalition walked out and refused to come back. A Supplementary Arbitration Award has now been issued for Srebrenica municipality which constitutes an internationally-chaired Executive Board for the municipality with four Serb members and four Bosniak members. The Assembly itself has been temporarily suspended.



OPEN CITIES UPDATE

During March, three new Open Cities were recognised: Laktasi and Srbac in the Republika Srpska (both recognized on 2 March) and Zenica in the Federation (recognised on 11 March). This brings to eleven the total number of Open Cities recognized by UNHCR, based upon their demonstrated commitment to receiving minority returnees and re-integrating them as full members of the community.

The 2 March recognition ceremony at Laktasi was attended by the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska, Mr. Dodik, who comes from the town. The potential for minority returns to Laktasi is low since, before the war, the municipality of 30,000 inhabitants counted some 2,700 Bosnian Croats and 600 Bosniaks. Nevertheless, in the past months the municipal authorities have demonstrated their willingness to receive back pre-war residents, notably by establishing contacts with minorities currently living in the Federation, including religious representatives, and by directly arranging for some returns.

Recognized as an Open City on the same day as Laktasi, Srbac has also demonstrated a commitment to preparing the ground for minority returns. In the months that preceded recognition, some 39 minorities spontaneously returned to the village of Kobas, where the municipal authorities efficiently ensured the protection of the returnees. The municipality has also allowed the opening of a independent local television station. As in the case of Laktasi, the recognition of Srbac was followed by visits of potential donors.

Zenica was recognized owing to the long-standing efforts of the municipality to accommodate minority returns, as well as to its undertaking to foster conditions for additional organized minority return movements within the framework of the Zenica-Doboj Cantonal Return Plan. According to available information, it is estimated that the municipality, with a pre-war population of 145,500 inhabitants, witnessed the departure of 16,000 Bosnian Serbs, 11,000 Bosnian Croats and 7,000 Bosniaks. UNHCR estimates that some 3,000 minorities have returned to their homes of origin in the municipality since December 1995 (out of whom, two thirds are Bosnian Croats and one third are Bosnian Serbs). In their municipal return plan, the Zenica authorities have identified over 780 vacant houses to which pre-war owners could return (over 460 Bosnian Croat families and over 320 Bosnian Serb families).

According to UNHCR estimates, some 5,300 minorities had returned to Open Cities as at mid-April 1998. In addition, several thousand have begun to come and go between their current residences and homes of origin (so-called "overnight stayers") to prepare for return. Most are assessing safety conditions and economic opportunities, and attempting to sort out administrative formalities, before taking a final decision. The international community has been very supportive of the Open Cities initiative. UNHCR estimates that some US\$ 49 million have been invested or committed to Open Cities thus far, supporting a wide range of projects, including for shelter repair, rehabilitation of infrastructure, income-generation, micro-credit in urban and rural areas, as well as community development. Of this total, UNHCR's own contribution has amounted to US\$ 13 million -- 26 per cent of the total.

INFORMATION NOTES

Covering South-eastern Europe:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albania

No. 3/98
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**WITH
CONTRIBUTIONS
FROM:**

**The International Federation of Red Cross
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United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees
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Former Yugoslavia Liaison Unit - UNHCR HQ

PEACE IMPLEMENTATION COUNCIL AND THE HUMANITARIAN ISSUES WORKING GROUP

A Ministerial meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) took place in Luxembourg on 9 June and adopted a declaration enumerating the priorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the remainder of 1998: the acceleration of return; police and judicial reform; increased economic reintegration and reform; free and fair elections in Bosnia in September, the implementation of the High Representative's media strategy and a general strengthening of Government institutions at all levels.

The declaration endorses UNHCR's Regional Return Strategy and calls upon all parties to cooperate in its implementation. The Steering Board declaration also reiterates its support for initiatives such as the Open Cities, and emphasises the regional character that future actions must take by "urging that the links between the Reconstruction and Return Task Force (RRTF) and relevant actors in neighbouring countries be further developed."

As a follow-up to the 9 June Steering Board Meeting, on June 26, the High Commissioner chaired a meeting of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group (HIWG) of the Peace Implementation Council in Geneva. The purpose of the June meeting was to continue consultations on a regional strategy for sustainable return movements in the Former Yugoslavia through the presentation and discussion of UNHCR's Regional Strategy for Sustainable Return of Those Displaced by Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia. Participants endorsed UNHCR's Regional Strategy and welcomed the "Summary of Actions Identified in the UNHCR Regional Strategy" as concrete steps towards achieving regional solutions to the continued problem of displacement and lack of minority return throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Most speakers acknowledged that conditions for return are still being created, but that security issues and political barriers continue to constitute the biggest obstacle to minority returns. Participants expressed their willingness to attain UNHCR's revised target of 50,000 minority returns in 1998 by redoubling their efforts to ensure that the foundations for return are solidly laid.

Participants at the meeting strongly condemned the

violence in Kosovo and the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by the Yugoslav Army, and expressed concern over the displacement of more than 75,000 people displaced as a result of the conflict.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Effects of the Kosovo Conflict

At the end of June the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina estimated that there were 5,000 Albanian refugees in the country. Since the beginning of the Kosovo crisis, 230 Kosovo Albanians have approached UNHCR's Field Office in Sarajevo, 60 of which were initially accommodated in the UNHCR transit center for Bosnian returnees before finding other accommodation in the Sarajevo area. UNHCR offices in Mostar and Tuzla also reported that they had been approached by 35 and 14 Kosovo Albanians, respectively. Similarly, UNHCR Banja Luka reported that there were approximately 100 Croatian Serb Refugees from Kosovo currently in Western Republika Srpska, many of whom had approached international organizations to register for assistance.

Federation Return Plan

On 4 June, the Bosnian Federation House of Representatives adopted a Plan and Program for Return and Repatriation of Displaced Persons and Refugees and called on the Federation Government to adopt it. The Plan anticipates the return of 220,000 persons throughout the Federation by the end of 1998.

Progress on the Return of Displaced Persons and Refugees

Despite a marked increase in the number of displaced persons who expressed interest in overnight stays, assessment visits and return applications, the total number of registered returns of both displaced persons and refugees remains lower than anticipated. Minority returns within the country are now estimated at approximately 10,000 although the incidence of relocation upon return remains high. During the months of



REGIONAL UPDATE

May and June, the highest number of returns took place to the Sarajevo, Una Sana, Tuzla-Podrinje and Herze-govina Neretva Cantons. More than 150 Bosniaks returned peacefully to Prozor in Mostar AOR as sched-uled on 28 May, despite earlier threats by Croat Dis-placed Persons Association that the returns would be blocked.

In May, UNHCR signed two agreements with the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Re-publika Srpska and the Federation Ministry for Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees. Both of these agreements have as one of their most important aspects the goal of reducing, by up to 50 per cent, the collective center populations in both Entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was agreed that the strategic planning for this reduction will be carried out in close cooperation with UNHCR. Meanwhile, the Republika Srpska Parliament approved a financial plan for the closure of collective centers in the Republika Srpska in 1998, which estimates closing costs at some DEM 45 million (\$US 25 million).

On 26 May 1998, Republika Srpska Minister for Refu-gees and Displaced Persons Dragicevic signed the "Instruction on the Method of Organizing the Return of Displaced Persons and Repatriates for the Territory of the Republika Srpska". In essence, the Republika Srpska Instruction mirrors the Federation Instruction, with the addition of Republika Srpska-specific ele-ments, and will enter into force once it has been published in the Official Gazette.

On 23 June, the Republic of Croatia and the Republika Srpska signed the "Protocol on Organized Return". To combat the rising frustration of Croatian Serb refu-gees (estimated at 40,000 at the end of June), the Croatian Embassy in Sarajevo will begin consular days in Banja Luka, where Croatian Serbs wishing to return will be able to submit their documents. At a meeting held on 2 June between RS Prime Minister Dodik and Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic, Dodik wel-comed Croatia's suspension of the requirement of visas for RS citizens.

Reconstruction activities through implementing part-ners contracted by UNHCR have started in a number of (minority) return areas including Kljuc, Mrkonjic Grad/Sipovo, and Grahovo. However, due to the low number of minority returns in some regions, UNHCR is considering re-deploying shelter resources. Mines have also hampered the smooth implementation of the shelter programmes in return areas.

Assessment Visits

Positive developments occurred in the Municipality of Srebrenica during June. On 11 June, the first graveyard visit to Srebrenica took place without any problems. The visit was arranged by OSCE and IPTF and sup-ported by SFOR. OHR conducted two graveyard visits from Srebrenica to Ilijas and Donji Vakuf.

On 27 June, 66 Serb DPs from Nevesinje and Trebinje (Republika Srpska) visited their homes in Ortijes, lo-cated in the Bosnian Croat-controlled municipality of South Mostar, and began reconstructing their damaged houses. Fifty people stayed overnight and 16 went back to Nevesinje and Trebinje. This was the first organized return of Bosnian Serb displaced persons from the Republika Srpska to the Federation. The movement was closely monitored by the political lead-ership in Banja Luka and the Federation. The Mayor of Mostar and the Vice Governor of Canton 7 visited the Serb returnees on the day of their arrival. The Serbs' decision to return met considerable resistance from the local authorities although the area remained calm and without incident. Bosnian Serbs also visited the villages of Donji Rakovac and Krsno Polje, in the municipality of Maglaj, located on the outskirts of East Mostar. Both occasions were televised and attended for the first time both by the Mayor and the Cantonal Minister for Displaced Persons. Maglaj police ensured the security of the visitors in an orderly and profes-sional manner.

Freedom of Movement

Over 400,000 of the newly issued uniform license plates have been distributed throughout the country, and are increasingly visible on the road. This opera-tion has been more successful than even optimists expected. The Croat-led authorities in Cantons 7, 8 and 10 have finally agreed to start issuing the correct vehicle and registration documents (in both Latin and Cyrillic characters). However, non-compliance by the authorities of the same Cantons with regard to border crossings continues to impede the freedom of move-ment process.

As an example of the grass-roots support for the new license plates, on 6 June an Association of Bosnian-Croat truck drivers from Mostar, in an open letter to the press, called for the implementation of the interna-



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tionally-recognised vehicle registration documents and license plates previously rejected by Bosnian-Croat authorities. They added that they could not travel abroad and that if their leaders did not meet their demands they would apply methods "used by drivers all around the world".

Property Law

The return procedures to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation, including the claims for repossession of property, continue to be a source of confusion among actual and potential returnees. Those interested in return face a number of obstacles when applying for return with the municipal authorities. The deadline for submitting an application to claim socially-owned apartments in the Federation is 4 October 1998. All international agencies involved, including UNHCR, have initiated a mass information campaign in order to provide basic information and the necessary forms to any potentially interested returnees.

Zubak founds New Croat Initiative Party

On 2 June, the Bosnian Croat member of the joint Presidency, Kresimir Zubak, announced that he would be forming a new political party for Bosnian Croats which would "take over the fundamental principles of the Bosnia and Herzegovina HDZ." This split in the Croatian Democratic Party (HDZ) ranks was mended later in the week, but then reaffirmed on the evening of 8 June when President Zubak wrote to Croatian President Tudjman that "it is not possible to overcome differences among us," adding that "we completely differ in our judgment on how we perceive the present and the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the position of the Croat people in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as our interest in the return of Croat refugees." On 18 June, President Zubak announced formally the creation of his party, the New Croat Initiative. On 27 June, the Constituting Congress of the New Croat Initiative was held in Sarajevo and attended by 183 delegates.

Changes on the Republika Srpska Political Front

Republika Srpska President Biljana Plavsic was re-

elected to the Presidency of the SNS. The parties of Bosnian Serb President Plavsic - the Popular Alliance - and of Prime Minister Dodik - the Independent Social Democrats - have agreed to join the Republika Srpska Socialist Party to form a coalition for the September elections. The coalition "Sloga" (Concord) has announced that it will support joint candidates for the posts of Bosnian Serb President and Deputy, the Serb member of Bosnia's Joint Presidency, and Bosnia's House of Representatives. Each of these parties will have their own candidates for the positions of Deputies of the Assembly, but, according to their agreement, will form a Joint Government after the vote. Their political agenda includes maintaining the integrity of the territory of the Republika Srpska, protecting Republika Srpska citizens in terms of providing security and ensuring economic development and becoming part of Europe.

The RS Parliament delivered a vote of "no confidence" for the Speaker of the House, Dragan Kalinic (SDS), and one of his two deputies, Nikola Poplasen, from the Radical Party, both extreme hard-liners. Petar Djokic (Socialist Party) replaced Kalinic as the new RS Assembly Speaker while Safet Bico (a Bosniak from the Coalition for a United and Democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina) was named as his deputy. On 27 June, the President of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), Aleksa Buha, resigned, citing "disagreements" with the leaders of the party. Buha had replaced former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic as the SDS President. Along with Momcilo Krajisnik, Buha had been a key opponent of President Plavsic. The ousted Parliamentary Speaker, Dragan Kalinic, was elected immediately to replace Buha.

On 24 June, the Republika Srpska Parliament was officially moved to Banja Luka (from Pale), a move that was supported by the overwhelming majority.

New Bosnia and Herzegovina Currency

On 21 June the new Bosnia and Herzegovina currency, the convertible "Marka", went into circulation and sparked a marathon exchange of "old" Bosnian dinars, worth 5 million German Marks, within only three hours. The Bosnian mark is linked 1-to-1 to the German Mark, with the exchange rate guaranteed by the country's internationally run Central Bank. By the end of the reporting period, the Bosnian Central Bank had 130 million German marks (\$ 73 million) as back-up



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the new currency. The money was printed in France, which donated DEM 7 million (\$3.9 million USD) for printing and transport.

Flashpoints

Although less frequent than in previous months, a number of violent incidents intended to prevent or dissuade persons from returning to the Croat-administered municipalities of Stolac, Capljina, West Mostar, and Drvar nevertheless continued throughout the months of May and June. UNMIBH received reports of 61 return-related incidents in Canton 7 between 26 March and 30 June. Of these, 37 occurred in Stolac. Five properties in Trijabanj, a village near Stolac, were target of arson attacks, and explosions in two Bosniak properties occurred in Capljina over the weekend of 16-17 May. The explosion of two more Bosniak houses in Capljina was reported on the weekend of 31-1 June. Three explosions took place in Bivolje Brdo on 1 and 26 June. Because these houses were empty, it is presumed that the explosions were meant to intimidate. UNHCR has continuously emphasized the point that no arrests have been made despite clear indications about the suspects.

On 31 May, IPTF reported the burning of a house due to be re-occupied by a returning Serb, thus bringing the total of arson-related house burnings as of 1 January 1998 to 61. Following the wave of security incidents which occurred in Drvar during the month of April, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) assigned a Special Representative to Drvar, Mr. Andreas Herdina, who will be expected to closely monitor the developments in this municipality, with special attention to the security situation.

On 4 June, a bomb exploded in Pudhum (Mostar) destroying the only house in good condition in the area. Local communities maintained that the explosion was a warning message for the Deputy Head of South-west Mostar Municipality who is currently trying to rebuild his house not far from where the explosion took place.

Wide publicity was given to the Novi Travnik explosion of 22 June which resulted in the death of two Croat residents. At the present it appears that the two Croats in question were killed while handling the explosives.

On May 28, Bosnian war-crimes indictee Milojica

Kos, accused of crimes in the Omarska detention centre during the war, was arrested by British SFOR troops and extradited to the Hague. He has since pleaded not guilty to eleven charges of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

CROATIA

Progress on a Programme for Return in Croatia

Following the Banja Luka Regional Return Conference in April 1998, the international community clearly expressed its dissatisfaction with the Procedures for the Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons adopted by the Croatian Government on 27 April 1998, which differed substantively from the draft hammered out with representatives of the international community in Croatia earlier in April. In the communiqué issued on 29 April, the Article 11 Commission referred its concerns to the OSCE Permanent Council, the EU, the Council of Europe, the UN Secretary-General and the Contact Group, and recommended that strong action be taken.

Simultaneously, the EU Council of Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg on 27 April, unanimously adopted a report by the European Commission on south-eastern European countries, including Croatia. The report concluded that Croatia continued to hamper seriously its chances of realising reconciliation and democratic reform and lacked a clear commitment to implement its obligations under the Dayton and Erdut Agreements. The same report also noted that, despite positive declarations by Croatian authorities, Croatia had not fulfilled the relevant conditions for additional progress in its relations with the EU. This meant prolongation of the three year-long suspension of the PHARE assistance programme. Discussion on the possible opening of negotiations on a Co-operation Agreement between Croatia and the EU was described as premature. The EC report concluded that justification of autonomous trade preferences for Croatia "may be questioned" unless the country "makes progress in relation to the relevant criteria".

Within days Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic publicly cautioned that the international criticism was serious, and emphasised that Croatia should take careful note of the position of the international community. While attending the 120th session of the Ministerial



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Council in Strasbourg on 4 May, Minister Granic said that Croatia fully respects the right of its citizens to return and would draw up a return plan "in co-operation with the international community and in line with refugee conventions and principles". By the beginning of June, Minister Granic announced that the programme for the return and care of displaced persons and refugees would be finalised and delivered to the Croatian Parliament by 20 June.

On 14 May, the Croatian Government unanimously adopted Mandatory Instructions which complement and clarify some regulations of the Government Procedure for Individual Return, which had been applied since 27 April. The Government also established a nine-member task group to draw up a Programme for the Return and Accommodation of Displaced Persons and Refugees within 30 days, in co-operation with UNHCR. The Mandatory Instructions clarified the procedure for issuing documents needed for repatriation, regardless of whether an individual can prove that he/she is a Croatian citizen.

The Article 11 Commission issued on 14 May, a communiqué indicating the consolidated position of the international community in Croatia regarding the Mandatory Instructions which, to a certain extent, acknowledged the international community's concerns regarding the Procedure for Return of refugees from Croatia. The Commission said, "We look forward to the implementation of these Mandatory Instructions, the elaboration of a return plan, and to the concomitant compliance by the Government of Croatia with its obligations and commitments to allow Croatian citizens to return home and reclaim their property in conditions of security and dignity". The Commission further stated that the final evaluation of Croatia's compliance would depend on the implementation of the Instructions.

The United Nations Secretary General's mid-June report to the UN Security Council on the work of the United Nations Police Support Group in the Danube Region noted that if returns to the Danube Region are implemented without an increase in incidents, the UN observers could be reduced progressively from 180 to 140 by August and to 120 by September. The UN Secretary-General will present another report to the Security Council in September.

Consultations with the Croatian Government on its "Programme for the Return and Accommodation of Displaced Persons, Refugees and Resettled Persons" began immediately following receipt of the draft text

by UNHCR's Zagreb office on 15 June. Throughout the process, UNHCR maintained that the Government's programme should be consistent with the UNHCR Regional Return Strategy of 9 June 1998, and incorporate principles recommended by the office. The Return Programme, drafted with expert assistance from the international community, was unanimously accepted by the Croatian Government on 20 June. It endorses all the principles and positions of UNHCR and the international community, particularly as regards property-related matters, habitual residence as an additional ground for return, and a reaffirmation of the unconditional nature of the right to return and the equal treatment of organised and spontaneous returnees. UNHCR encouraged the authorities to ensure that these principles not only be clearly stated in the introductory chapters but throughout the document as a whole, and guide the spirit of the operational provisions as well. The Return Programme was welcomed by the international community as a useful basis to make progress on return.

The Return Programme was formally adopted by the Croatian Parliament on 26 June. According to the Programme, a Co-ordination Committee will be formed and co-chaired by the Croatian Government and the international community. The Committee will include representatives of UNHCR, the OSCE, a Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, the Article 11 Commission and others, and will meet regularly in order to encourage and guide the progress of the return process. UNHCR, as the refugee agency concerned with the operational aspects of the Return Programme, is now looking towards the implementation phase.

The period under review also witnessed the continued exodus of Croatian Serb asylum-seekers from the Danube region. On 25 May, Denmark, which had received some 200 asylum-seekers, introduced a visa requirement for Croatian citizens. Norway and Finland shortly followed suit.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Kosovo

The security situation in Kosovo deteriorated rapidly during the months of May and the beginning of June, triggering a concerted but so far unsuccessful effort by



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The international community to stop the violence from escalating further and threatening the whole region. On 15 May, after energetic US shuttle diplomacy, FRY President Milosevic and Kosovo Albanian leader Rugova met in Belgrade and agreed to start a dialogue on the Kosovo question. However, a Serbian/FRY government delegation and representatives of Kosovo Albanian parties met only once, on 22 May, after which the budding negotiating process was stifled by the rapidly evolving situation on the ground. On 29 May, Serbian police forces, supported by the Yugoslav Army, launched an offensive in the border municipalities of Djakovica and Decane in an apparent attempt to stop the movement of arms smugglers and Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) fighters across the border from Albania. This massive operation caused a large refugee movement into northern Albania as towns and villages were being heavily shelled. There was a significant population displacement both within Kosovo and into Montenegro and, to a lesser extent, into other areas of Serbia.

The displacement and human suffering caused by the UCK action and the Serbian response roused indignation and deep concern. In an unusually blunt statement, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan condemned the violence being committed against ethnic Albanian civilians and demanded that "this kind of aggression" should be confronted immediately and with determination. Diplomatic activity to halt the fighting was further prompted by fears that neighbouring Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) were in danger of being drawn into the conflict. On 8 June, European Union countries banned all new investments in Serbia (Montenegro being excluded from EU sanctions) and froze Serbian accounts in EU Member States. On 12 June, the Contact Group presented a list of demands to Belgrade, asking for an immediate halt to attacks on civilians and a withdrawal of security forces, access to the conflict area for international monitors and humanitarian organisations, unimpeded return to their homes for refugees and displaced persons and a resumption of dialogue. Meanwhile, Western Governments started preparations for a possible NATO intervention in Kosovo. A one-day NATO exercise over the skies of northern Albania and Macedonia on 15 June was designed to show the determination of the alliance to contain the conflict.

On 16 June, President Milosevic visited Moscow at the invitation of President Yeltsin, as part of the international pressure on the Yugoslav President to reverse

his policy. In a statement issued after the meeting, Milosevic made a series of commitments, addressing partly the demands of the Contact Group. The Joint Statement issued after the meeting promised free access in Kosovo for international observers and humanitarian organisations, the unimpeded return of refugees and displaced persons and negotiations with Kosovo Albanian leaders. However, the declaration did not foresee an immediate withdrawal of Serbian security forces, but only a gradual withdrawal parallel to the scaling down of terrorist activities. Western Governments reacted cautiously to this declaration, welcoming the commitments made, but pointing out that they still fell short of fulfilling all demands of the Contact Group. The NATO Council on 17 June asked military planners to start preparing for an intervention in Kosovo with all options open, including air strikes against Yugoslav military targets and the use of NATO ground troops.

In the following weeks, however, the prospect of immediate Western military intervention receded, as the Serbian offensive was apparently stopped and fighting reverted to sporadic clashes and sniping activities. Also, the Serbian Government made an effort to fulfil the Moscow Joint Statement by appointing a civil administrator and new commander of police to establish a Government programme of humanitarian assistance and to liaise with humanitarian organisations, thus facilitating aid convoys and improved access to areas of concern. A diplomatic monitoring mission, consisting of diplomats from the Contact Group countries and other embassies in Belgrade, was also prepared, with the intention to establish the mission in Pristina in the beginning of July.

Meanwhile, intense diplomatic activity continued with the aim of bringing the parties back to the negotiating table. Preliminary moves were undertaken to include the UCK in the negotiating process as well. On 24 June a group of US diplomats visited the UCK-held area in western Kosovo and met with UCK representatives in the village of Junik. This first public contact between Western diplomats and UCK members was followed by the first informal talks on 26 June, as US Special Envoy Robert Gelbard met UCK representatives in Switzerland. At the same time, international pressure was placed on Kosovo leader Rugova to re-start the talks with Belgrade, which the Kosovo Albanian side had broken off because of the recent Serbian offensive. Talks had not resumed by the end of June, while Dr. Rugova continued a tour of Western capitals.

By the end of June, the security situation had again



deteriorated dramatically¹⁰¹. The UCK apparently used the lull in fighting which had ensued after the Moscow meeting to consolidate positions and even make substantial territorial advances. It was reported that as much as 30 - 40 per cent of the territory of Kosovo had come under UCK control. The main road between Pristina and Pec remained closed by fighting as the UCK seemed to concentrate their efforts on forging a link between the UCK-held areas in Western Kosovo and Drenica. On 28 June, UCK forces surrounded the village of Kijevo placing the 200 Serb inhabitants under siege, and in one of their most daring attacks yet, took the mining village Belacevac only ten kilometres west of Pristina. On 30 June, Serbian police forces supported by Yugoslav Army troops launched an attack to retake the village. As June ended, Serbian authorities announced a new offensive "very soon" to break the UCK siege⁹⁷ of Kijevo.

At the end of June, consistent media reports indicated that Yugoslav Army troops were taking an increasingly active part in the fighting in all parts of the conflict area, although the activities of the Army had until June been restricted to the border zone near Albania. Western diplomats warned that the situation in Kosovo, now described as critical, was turning explosive.

Internally Displaced Persons and Refugee Emergency

During the reporting period, infringements of human rights by both parties to the conflict continued, including the abduction of civilians by the UCK in the Stimlje-Suva Reka area, among them three Serbian refugees from Croatia on 29 June. They were taken from a bus at gunpoint at the village of Dulje. The conflict has led to the displacement of all ethnic groups - Albanians, Serbs, Roma and others. During the period May-June, the number of persons uprooted by the conflict in Kosovo more than doubled. As of 30 June, UNHCR estimated that a total of 76,300 persons had been displaced: 52,900 within Kosovo, 13,400 IDPs from Kosovo into Montenegro and 10,000 refugees from Kosovo into Albania. Most of the IDPs and refugees originate from Western Kosovo (Decane, Djakovica, Pec) and the Drenica triangle (Srbica, Glogovac, Klina). However, increasing tension and clashes in south-western Kosovo (Stimlje, Suva Reka and Orahovac) caused a population movement from that area as well. Heavy fighting in Obilic near Pristina

led to some displacement in central Serbia

On 30 May, refugees fleeing the fierce fighting in Decane and Djakovica started arriving in northern Albania. The population movement grew rapidly, with approximately 10,000 people arriving in only one week. After 15 June, the movement almost stopped, reportedly because the border had been sealed off by Yugoslav Army troops. On the Yugoslav side of the border, it appeared clear that large areas along the border had been emptied of inhabitants. Refugees told UNHCR that they had fled indiscriminate shelling of their homes, and reported atrocities, including the targeting of fleeing civilians.

The number of IDPs in Montenegro reached 13,400 at the end of June, over twice that of one month earlier. Two peaks in the rate of influx were reported: one in the first week of June, as the fighting in western Kosovo increased, the other during the last week of June, as the refugee movement to Albania had slowed down. At the end of June the authorities reported that 200 people a day were crossing the mountains to the municipalities of Rozaje and Plav. Many continued to other municipalities such as Podgorica and Ulcinj. As the Montenegrin Government and local Red Cross appealed for international assistance to cope with this new influx, local media reported a critical food situation especially among some 400 IDPs accommodated in collective centres. An ECHO/WFP food donation which arrived in Montenegro on 26 June came as welcome relief. Serb and Roma IDPs were coming to Nis, Kragujevac, Pozarevac, Belgrade.

The relief effort as well as monitoring of the IDP situation in Kosovo itself was hampered, during May and early June, by denial of access to areas of concern. Both UNHCR and ICRC teams were turned back at police checkpoints, as well as roadblocks of the UCK. On two occasions, humanitarian assistance intended for the Mother Teresa Society was confiscated by police. However, following the Milosevic-Yeltsin meeting in Moscow on 16 June, humanitarian access eased considerably. In fact, the situation had actually improved somewhat before the Moscow Declaration. On 12 June, UNHCR escorted the first aid convoy into Djakovica. Assistance has since then reached previously closed areas such as Junik where, on 25 June, a joint UNHCR/ICRC team visited a group of 600 IDPs who were hiding in the mountains. Their situation was serious as they were facing lack of food and medicines. The following is an excerpt from the UNHCR field report which provides a picture of the hardships IDPs face as they cross or hide in the moun-



REGIONAL UPDATE

ns of Kosovo:

"The overcrowded shelters and harsh mountainous environment make for extremely unsanitary conditions. Living conditions for the group are extremely basic, with families living in tents and make-shift shelters made from branches, logs and plastic sheeting. Shelters are usually overcrowded, with up to 30 members of extended families sharing space. People have few clothes and shoes. Snakes, rodents and insects present a danger especially for the children.

Those interviewed complained that food supplies are dwindling. They stated that they are supplied with food and other items by villagers from Junik, but that food reserves in Junik are quickly being depleted. It appears that items needed most are wheat flour, sugar, cooking and rice. However there is an abundance of drinking water, which is prevalent in the mountainside area. Some families have livestock with them, including cows and sheep, so fresh milk is available to some, but on a limited basis.

A major concern expressed was a lack of basic drugs to treat such ailments as fevers and colds. In addition, drugs were also needed for the elderly who suffered from chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. While the children appear to be relatively healthy, they are undoubtedly vulnerable to disease and infection given the harsh living conditions."

Antiwar Opposition

As the clashes in Kosovo were spreading and becoming more intense, opposition in FRY to President Milosevic's policy grew. Although most political parties in Serbia still supported the government's Kosovo policy, dissenting voices could be heard especially from those directly involved in the police/military operation: Serbian police officers, parents of soldiers and ethnic minorities in Serbia. According to media reports, over one hundred police officers in Serbia refused orders to go to Kosovo to join police forces there. Most of them were dismissed from service because of this disobedience or resigned voluntarily. Policemen interviewed by media expressed reluctance to go to Kosovo to fight for a cause they did not believe in. Parents of conscripted soldiers held demonstrations outside the Army HQ in Belgrade on 18 and 19 June, demanding that their sons be moved from Kosovo to barracks in central Serbia or Montenegro. A similar demonstration was held in Nis on 16 June. The main

political party of ethnic Hungarians, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, demanded on 30 June that ethnic Hungarian soldiers be withdrawn from the "war-zone" in Kosovo. The President of the party, Federal MP Josef Kasa, told reporters that he had assurances from Milosevic's Socialist Party that this would indeed happen soon.

On 17 June, the Montenegrin Parliament passed a resolution condemning President Milosevic's Kosovo policy and demanding that all Montenegrin Federal Army recruits serving there be sent home immediately. The resolution also requested that Milosevic fulfil all demands made by the Contact Group for resolution of the conflict.

MONTENEGRO

The dismissal of Federal Prime Minister Radoje Koncic on 18 May and his replacement by former Montenegrin President Momir Bulatovic on 20 May plunged FRY into its worst constitutional crisis since the break-up of former Yugoslavia. The Government of Montenegro stated that it would not recognise the new Prime Minister, and the Republican Parliament passed a corresponding motion declaring the Federal Parliament's approval of Bulatovic null and void. The formal reason for this non-recognition was that six Federal MPs from Montenegro, who had been stripped of their mandates by the Montenegrin assembly, had participated in the vote of no-confidence against Koncic. A newly adopted Montenegrin law forbids Federal deputies to vote against a position taken by the Montenegrin assembly.

The parliamentary elections in Montenegro on 31 May resulted in a very convincing victory for the reformist coalition led by President Djukanovic. The coalition won 49.5 per cent of the votes, while the Socialist People's Party led by FRY Prime Minister Bulatovic won only 36.1 per cent. Bulatovic's party nevertheless announced that it recognised the election results "although the elections were not held in free and democratic conditions". The OSCE Monitoring Mission in Montenegro however issued a statement supporting the election process, saying that the people of Montenegro had been able to freely exercise their right to vote.



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FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Since the beginning of the crisis in Kosovo in late February 1998, the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) have not registered the arrival of any asylum seekers from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Border monitoring by the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), the OSCE and UNHCR has not given any indication of an influx into the country. Under prevailing legislation permitting short term stays, Kosovo

Albanians have been entering FYROM on normal three month temporary stay permits since the start of the conflict. They have been staying with relatives and friends. Given both the three-month time limit and the fact that their and their hosts' resources are limited, the Government has agreed in principle to register and assist them as refugees, with UNHCR's help. There may be several thousand, but an accurate idea of numbers will only be available after the registration.

30 June 1998

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REPATRIATION AND RETURN TRENDS: 1998

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:

REPATRIATION AND RETURN TRENDS IN 1998

Over 15,000 refugees repatriated from abroad during the months of May and June, bringing the total for the first half of 1998 to 35,000. Most returned from Germany to the urban areas in Una Sana, Tuzla-Podrinje and Sarajevo Cantons, confirming the trend observed in the previous months.

Repatriation from Abroad

While the rate of repatriation from abroad remains lower than anticipated, return trends in June confirmed the expected rise in the summer months, linked to the end of the school year. Applications for repatriation grants in Germany during the month of June indicate that up to 30,000 refugees could repatriate in July and August.

Most returnees are relocate to majority areas (i.e. not their original homes) where difficulties in registering with authorities upon return persist, particularly in the cities of Sarajevo and Tuzla where only an estimated 40 per cent of returnees have been registered. A total of 438 returnees have so far been registered in Republika Srpska, but belong mostly to the ethnic Serb majority.

In many cases, municipalities appear to exploit the situation of returnees in need of registration by failing to provide accommodation, while at the same time linking repatriation and social benefits to official recognition of arrival and residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some municipalities have apparently accepted to register relocatees in exchange for illegal payments or rehabilitation assistance provided to receiving municipalities by the host countries. Sarajevo Canton does not accept relocatees from abroad, stating that the Canton must first comply with the target figure of 20,000 minority returns set forth in the Sarajevo Declaration. They argue that such minority returns would be blocked by the occupation of apartments and houses by returnees from abroad.

Return of Displaced Persons

Out of the estimated 12,000 minority returns reported by UNHCR Field Offices since the beginning of 1998, only 4,181 are registered returns, excluding returns to Brcko and the Zone of Separation (ZOS). Of the 411 registered minority returns to the Republika Srpska, 142 persons returned in April and May with the following breakdown: to the Open City of Sr bac (43, mostly Bosniacs), Bosanski Dubica (16) and Bosanska Gradiska (54). Most returns in the Federation took place to Sarajevo and Herzegovina-Neretva Cantons, including 133 Serb and 121 Croat returns to Sarajevo and 370 registered Croat returns to the Open City of Konjic.

Tensions in the Tuzla-Podrinje Canton are on the rise, due in part to the bleak prospects for return to the Eastern parts of Republika Srpska, as well as to the high DP population (an estimated 140,000). Assessment visits to the Zvornik, Bratunac and Bijelina areas continue, but are often marred by violence.

UNHCR Field Offices continue to verify return options for 600 Collective Centre residents in Republika Srpska who would like to return to areas in the Federation.



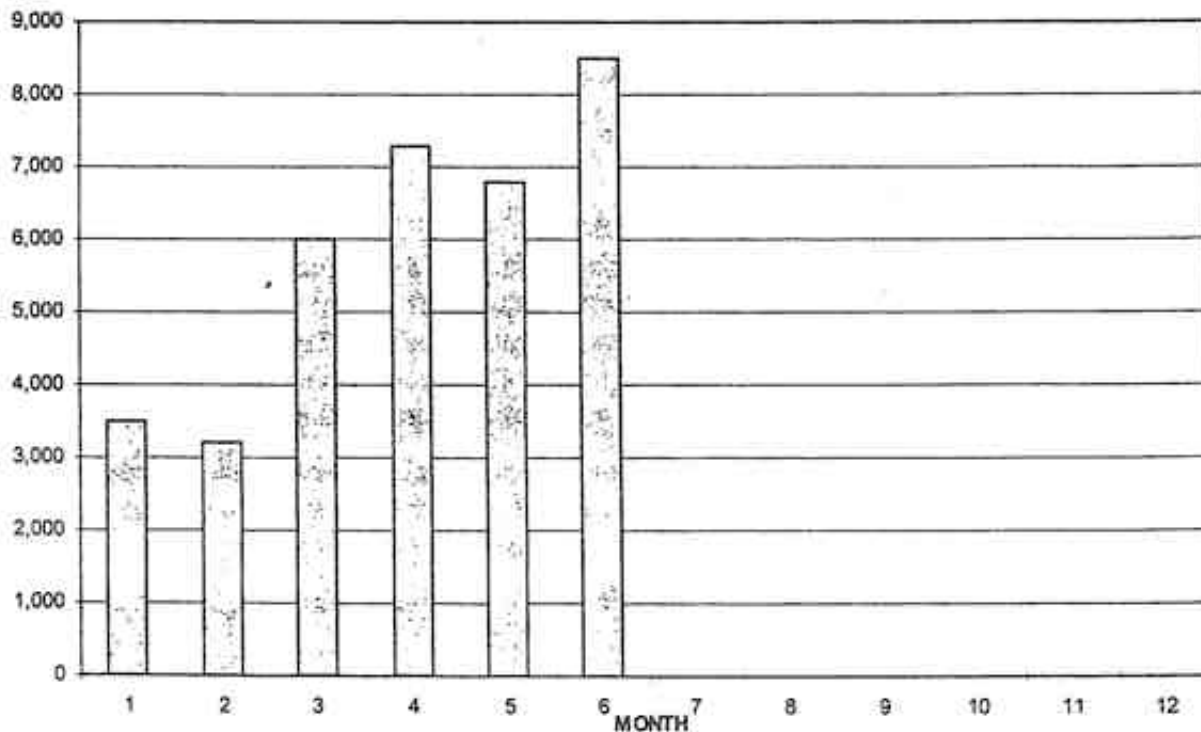
REPATRIATION AND RETURN TRENDS: 1998

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ORGANIZED AND SPONTANEOUS REPATRIATION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

MONTH	1998				
	Organized/Assisted			Estimated	
	UNHCR IOM GARP ¹	Other	Total	Expected	Actual ²⁾
January	2,484	335	2,819	7,500	3,500
February	2,274	224	2,498	15,000	3,200
March	4,339	335	4,674	20,000	6,000
April	6,196	277	6,473	23,000	7,300
May	5,157	60	5,217	25,000	6,800
June	6,341	155	6,496	17,000	8,500
July				35,000	
August				25,000	
September				20,000	
October				15,000	
November				10,000	
December				7,500	
TOTAL	26,791	1,386	28,177	220,000	35,300

REPATRIATION IN 1998



¹ Returns under GARP (German Government Assisted Repatriation Programme) and other return assistance programmes administered by IOM

²⁾ Including estimates of spontaneous returns

Source: UNHCR, IOM; Ministries for Refugees; Deportation movements; Transit through Slovenia; and NGOs





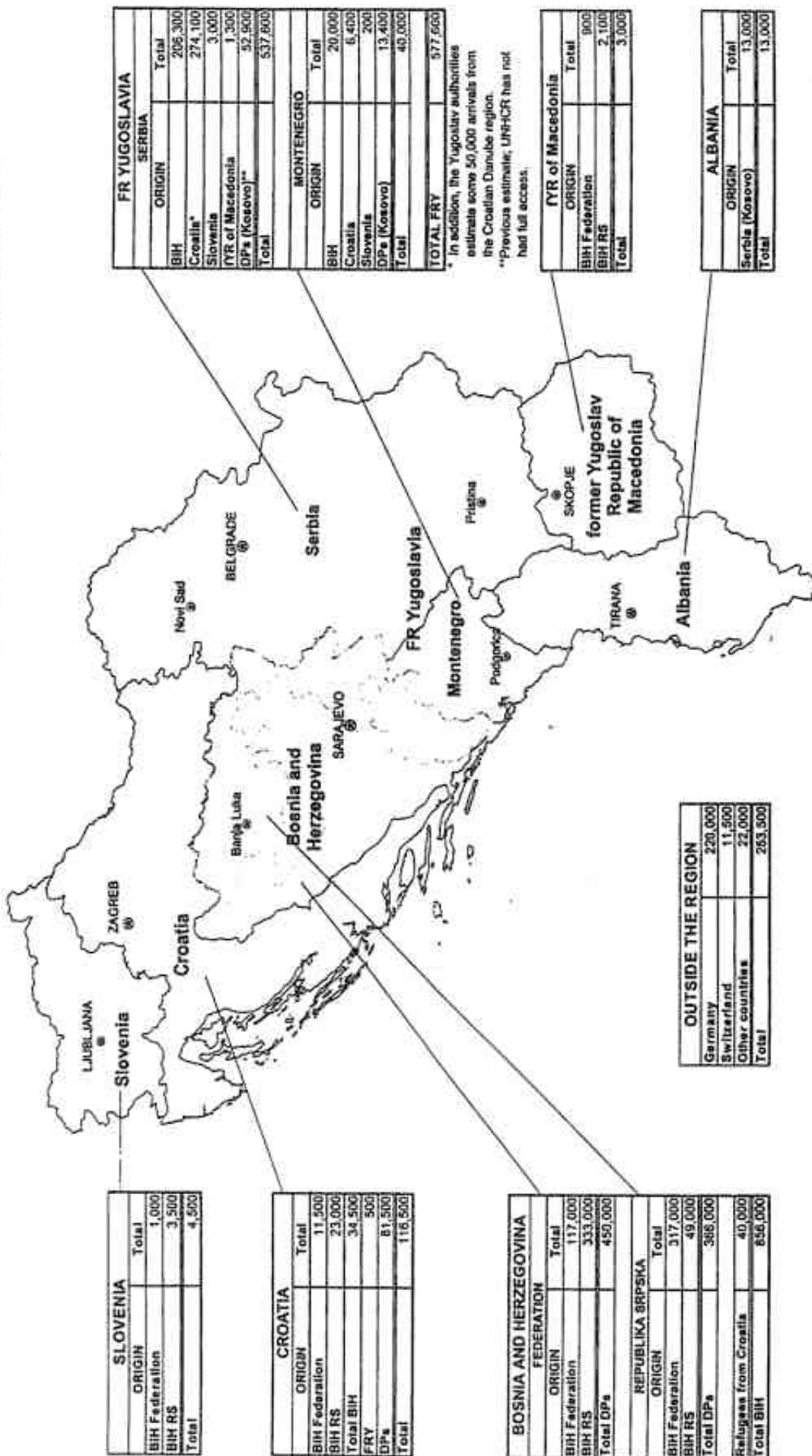
ESTIMATE OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS STILL SEEKING SOLUTIONS

THIS MAP SHOWS ONLY THOSE WHO DO NOT YET HAVE A DURABLE SOLUTION

THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THESE 1.8 MILLION PERSONS HAVE THEIR HOMES IN AREAS WHERE THEY WOULD BE IN A MINORITY IF THEY RETURNED

Office of the Special Envoy - Former Yugoslavia Liaison Unit

MAP OF DISPLACEMENT



SLOVENIA		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH Federation		1,000
BIH RS		3,500
Total		4,500

CROATIA		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH Federation		11,500
BIH RS		23,000
Total BIH		34,500
FRY		500
DPs		81,500
Total		116,500

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA		
FEDERATION		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH Federation		117,000
BIH RS		333,000
Total DPs		450,000
REPUBLIKA SRPSKA		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH Federation		317,000
BIH RS		49,000
Total DPs		366,000
Refugees from Croatia		40,000
Total BIH		856,000

OUTSIDE THE REGION		
Germany		220,000
Switzerland		11,500
Other countries		22,000
Total		253,500

FR YUGOSLAVIA		
SERBIA		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH		208,300
Croatia*		274,100
Slovenia		3,000
IVR of Macedonia		1,300
DPs (Kosovo)**		52,900
Total		537,600
MONTENEGRO		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH		20,000
Croatia		6,400
Slovenia		200
DPs (Kosovo)		13,400
Total		40,000
TOTAL FRY		577,600

* In addition, the Yugoslav authorities estimate some 50,000 arrivals from the Croatian Danube region.

** Previous estimate; UNHCR has not had full access.

IVR of Macedonia		
ORIGIN		Total
BIH Federation		900
BIH RS		2,100
Total		3,000

ALBANIA		
ORIGIN		Total
Serbia (Kosovo)		13,000
Total		13,000



UNHCR
OSE Sarajevo
1 July 1998

UPDATED TO REFLECT THE SITUATION AT 1 JULY 1998

THE BOUNDARIES AND NAMES SHOWN AND THE DESIGNATIONS USED ON THIS MAP DO NOT IMPLY OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT OR ACCEPTANCE BY THE UNITED NATIONS.



IFRC IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Background

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is a humanitarian organisation with a worldwide network. Its mission is to improve the situation of the world's most vulnerable people and provide assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.

The IFRC has a presence in almost every country in the world through National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the IFRC mandate is to aid the local Red Cross with designing programmes, raising funds and training staff and volunteers. Thanks to an extensive network of volunteers and professionals throughout the three countries, all activities supported by the IFRC are carried out by the local Red Cross branches themselves.

The International Federation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The IFRC began operating from Split in 1994 and established a presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995. Various forms of assistance are given:

The Home Care Programme

The International Federation Home Care Programme is implemented throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina by the local Red Cross using 1,000 local volunteers. It was established in February 1996 and has expanded to cover the entire country; every municipality now has its own team of Home Care volunteers. These volunteers visit elderly people in their homes, helping them with daily tasks such as washing, cleaning, shopping, chopping wood and - no less important - simply talking and listening. Many of the elderly beneficiaries live in total isolation and have no contact with relatives and neighbours. Some were simply left behind when younger people fled their towns and villages or were killed in the war and the approach of a white vehicle bearing the distinctive emblem of a red cross and a red crescent signals the arrival of their only human contacts.

When necessary, the elderly are referred to doctors or clinics for assistance with hearing aids, eyeglasses, walking canes, etc. Many of the beneficiaries have not seen a doctor during the past five years and their health problems have been largely untreated.

In the first six months of 1998, Red Cross volunteers made over 274,000 visits to an average of 12,500 beneficiaries per month under the Home Care Programme. These beneficiaries are selected by the local Red Cross according to the criteria set by the International Federation and receive as many visits per month as required according to their condition. The criteria focus on the elderly and disabled people in the country who are living without support from family members.

Mobile Technical Teams

Under the Mobile Technical Team Programme, teams of local Red Cross activists, equipped with tools and plastic sheeting, visit the most vulnerable people, many of whom live in remote and inaccessible areas, and perform minor repairs of damaged houses, thus guaranteeing that the beneficiaries have at least the minimal conditions for survival during the winter. The Mobile Technical Teams have two main tasks:



IFRC IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Carrying out basic repairs to windows (with plastic sheeting), doors, stoves, roofs and chimneys, to minimise heat loss and protect beneficiaries from the elements.

Locating, chopping and storing firewood in the homes of elderly beneficiaries to ensure that adequate heating material is available and to allow for the preparation of hot food.

At present there are 29 teams working in both Entities. The teams support the work of the Home Care Programme and cross-referrals are often made. In the first six months of 1998, more than 8,000 households benefited from the assistance of the Mobile Technical Teams.

In many cases, the elderly have spent much of the past five years in collective centres, only to return to former front line areas where their homes had been damaged or destroyed. Others who have remained in their area of origin throughout the war have had no means to ensure the maintenance of their homes. Finally, thousands of displaced people have moved into whatever form of shelter they could find. As a result, the lives of many elderly people are now threatened by a combination of isolation, destitution and totally inadequate housing.

Support to the local Red Cross

A key activity of the IFRC is support to the local Red Cross. Many branches suffered losses during the war of staff, volunteers and premises. In order to re-establish adequate working conditions, the IFRC has provided branches with office equipment and administration kits. It also provides support to the local Red Cross by assisting with the establishment of a single Red Cross National Society for the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This process is underway in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the local Red Cross structures.

Social Policy

In order to ensure that long-term assistance is provided to the most vulnerable populations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the IFRC supports the Social Policy Task Force, which makes recommendations to the appropriate Ministers concerning future social policy in both Entities.

Support to Mobile Populations within Bosnia and Herzegovina

IFRC assistance through the Home Care and Mobile Technical Team Programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina is provided according to vulnerability and without specific reference to whether an individual is a returnee, a displaced person or has remained in their original home.

However, the continuing population displacement has caused much greater vulnerability among the displaced, partially due to the larger numbers of elderly and disabled persons now forced to live without family support. Mobile Technical Teams in particular are aware that an ever-increasing proportion of their beneficiaries are returnees from within Bosnia and Herzegovina or from countries of asylum.

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: OPEN CITIES UPDATE

According to UNHCR estimates, some 9,300 minorities had returned to Open Cities by mid-June 1998. In addition, several thousand have started to divide their time between their current residences and homes of origin (so-called "overnight-stayers") in order to assess safety conditions and economic opportunities and to sort out administrative formalities, before taking a final decision on whether to return. The international community has been very supportive of the Open Cities initiative. UNHCR estimates that some US\$ 70 million have been invested or committed to Open Cities thus far, supporting a wide range of projects, including shelter repair, rehabilitation of infrastructure, income-generation, micro-credit in urban and rural areas, as well as community development. Of this total, UNHCR's own contribution has amounted to US\$ 16 million, i.e. 23 per cent of the total.

During June, two new Open Cities were recognised: Ilidza in Sarajevo Canton (recognised on 12 June) and Zavidovici in Zenica-Doboj Canton (recognised on 24 June). This brings to 13 the total number of Open Cities recognised by UNHCR on the basis of their demonstrated commitment to receiving minority returnees and re-integrating them as full members of the community.

The recognition of Ilidza as the twelfth Open City was the result of several months of efforts, monitoring and consultations between UNHCR, municipal and cantonal authorities, the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM), the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and, most importantly, minority representatives in Ilidza.

At the beginning of June 1998, the Municipal Return Office (MRO), composed of one Bosniac, one Bosnian Croat and one Bosnian Serb, had registered 5,407 persons for return to Ilidza: 2,136 Bosniacs, 1,723 Bosnian Serbs, 1,460 Bosnian Croats and 88 of other origins. Displaced Bosnian Serbs originating from Ilidza are currently residing in Eastern Republika Srpska (RS), mainly in Visegrad, but also in Bijeljina, Brcko and Trebinje. According to the census of refugees conducted in 1996, an additional 2,800 live in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY).

The number of minorities who have returned to their homes in Ilidza since the Dayton Peace Agreement is estimated at 3,500 persons (2,000 Bosnian Croats and 1,500 Bosnian Serbs), bringing the total number of minorities currently living in Ilidza to some 6,200. An assessment of their living conditions shows that they are well integrated. While the rate of unemployment is high - as for the rest of the population in the Sarajevo Canton - some 77 minorities are currently employed in various municipal services including education and the judicial administration.

An Open City Committee (OCC), composed of municipal authorities, UNHCR and minority representatives, should shortly be established. Its primary role will be to follow-up on the actual return of minorities who have expressed a wish to do so. One of the main challenges will be to pursue the return of minorities to their homes of origin - especially to their pre-war socially-owned flats - in a context where a large proportion of the dwellings are currently occupied by Bosniac displaced persons (there are some 15,600 Bosniac displaced persons residing in Ilidza at present). Through support in the areas of housing and infrastructure repair, income-generation, as well as reconciliation activities, UNHCR's implementing partner in Ilidza, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), will assist the authorities to find durable solutions for minority returnees as well as for the displaced persons.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: OPEN CITIES UPDATE

The recognition ceremony for Zavidovici, held on 24 June, was attended by municipal, political and religious authorities, as well as international and non-governmental organisations, UNHCR and SFOR. Since the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement, some 250 minorities (mainly Bosnian Serbs, but also Bosnian Croats) have returned to their homes of origin in Zavidovici, whose pre-war population included some 40 per cent non-Bosniacs, within a total population of 57,000. UNHCR estimates the total number of minorities currently living in Zavidovici (i.e. including those minorities who remained in the municipality during the war) to be around 2,000 (55 per cent Bosnian Croats, 34 per cent Bosnian Serbs and 11 per cent other nationalities).

Recent developments which led to the formal acknowledgement of Zavidovici as an Open City include: the February 1998 municipal decision to abolish war taxes for returnees, the successful resolution of long-standing minority property cases, the establishment of a Double Occupancy Commission tasked with addressing obstacles to minority returns, the opening of the MRO and concrete steps towards ensuring equal employment opportunities for all.



UNHCR

OPEN CITIES

INITIATIVE

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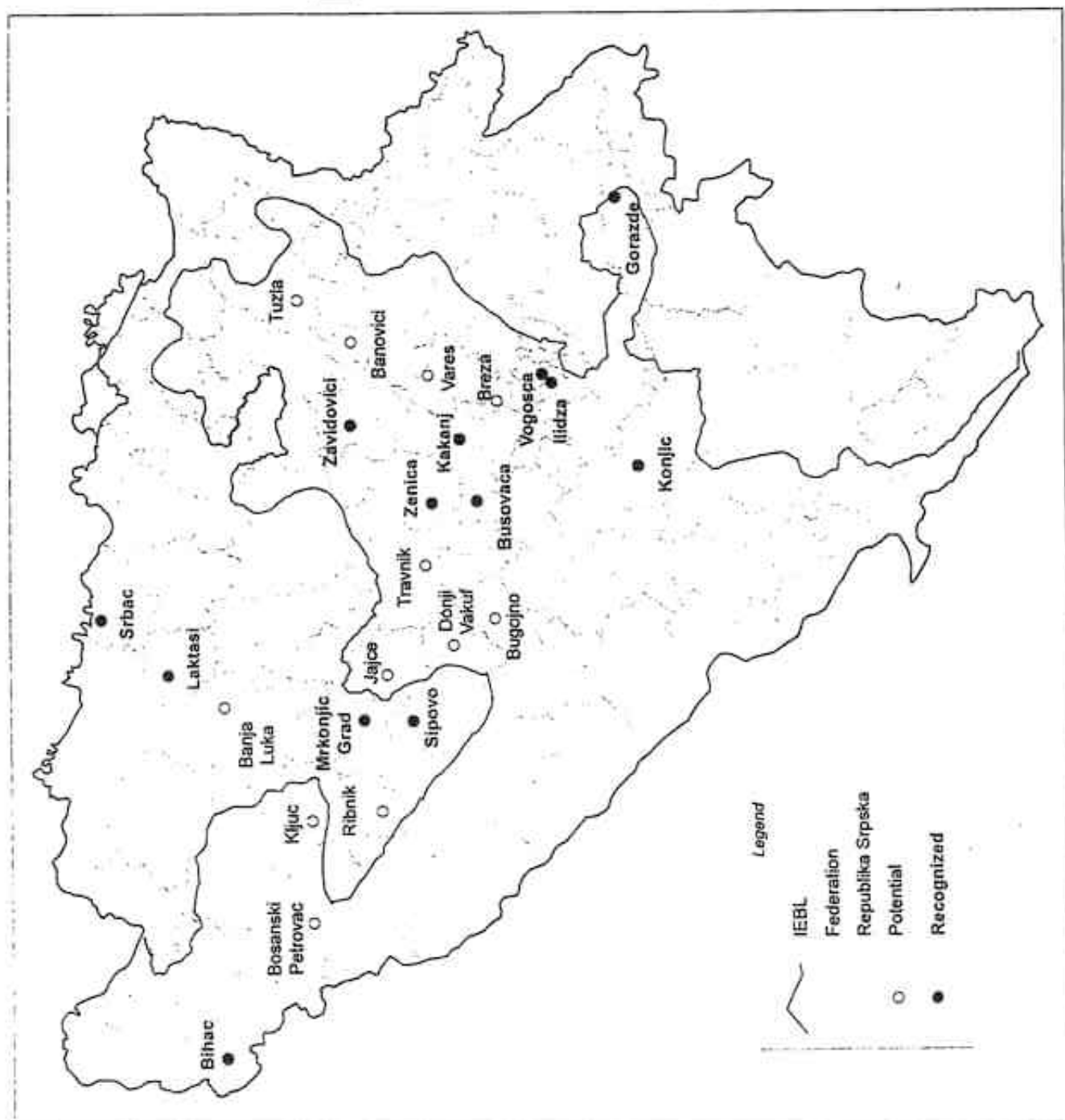
AND

POTENTIAL

OPEN CITIES

UNHCR Sarajevo
30 June 1998

The boundaries displayed on this map do not
imply official recognition by the United Nations



1998 UNHCR SHELTER PROGRAMME IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1998 UNHCR SHELTER PROGRAMME IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Update as at 30 June 1998

Housing has been identified by the international community as a key element to facilitate the return of displaced persons and refugees. In 1996 and 1997, UNHCR shelter projects covered the repair of 23,700 homes, benefiting some 100,000 returnees. In 1998, UNHCR's shelter programme aims to support return to Open Cities, potential Open Cities and to other selected minority return areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The programme is community-based, in the sense that the identification of needs and the allocation of resources is being done in consultation with the local authorities and representatives of community groups (minorities, resident community and associations of displaced persons). To foster sustainable minority return movements, the programme combines housing assistance and the repair of infrastructure, as necessary. Sustainability is further encouraged through other UNHCR programmes, including income-generation, micro-credit, the provision of returnee packages and delivery of community services, as a function of actual needs and available resources.

1. Home Repair

Planned Beneficiaries: 4,300 households (21,500 returnees)

Assistance for home repair is provided through local contractors. The aim is to rehabilitate war-damaged dwellings up to basic standards established by the International Management Group (IMG). Construction materials are - to the maximum extent possible - produced and procured locally or, when not available, are imported through locally-owned companies to stimulate the local economy. In addition, cross-Entity trade is given preference over the importation of materials.

Implementing arrangements have been made in 1998 with the Technisches Hilfswerk (THW), the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the Mercy Corps/Scottish European Aid, the Project Implementation Unit of the Federation Ministry for Physical Planning and Environment (PIU), World Vision Bosnia (WVB), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

UNHCR Shelter Liaison Officers consolidate applications for housing assistance submitted through the local authorities or by the returnees themselves. Beneficiaries are selected jointly by UNHCR and the implementing partners, in consultation with the local authorities and the community groups, on the basis of criteria which take account of ownership rights, an assessment of the level of damage and vulnerability of the applicants, as well as the resources available. IMG provides technical expertise by assessing the level of damage of the housing units, as well as by evaluating, on an ad hoc basis, the reconstruction projects. Finally, financial control of the programme is carried out by UNHCR staff in UNHCR offices throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Office of the Chief of Mission for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo and at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva.

2. Social Infrastructure

To promote the sustainability of returnee communities, the reconstruction of social infrastructure, such as schools and public health facilities, is being carried out in parallel with housing repair. Implementing arrangements have been made with THW, MC/SEA, UMCOR, CRS, NRC, IRC and WVB for the rehabilitation of educational and health facilities in Open Cities, potential Open Cities and other selected minority return areas. Repairs are effected through local contractors, to boost the local economy.



3. Transit Centres

Capacity: 1,400 persons

To ensure the smooth reception of refugees repatriating to Bosnia and Herzegovina, transit centres have been established to offer overnight accommodation and food to repatriates, before they continue their journey to their home of origin or join relatives or friends. In 1996 and 1997, nine transit centres were established: in Bosanski Petrovac, Gorazde, Mostar, Kljuc, Sarajevo (two), Travnik, Tuzla and Zenica (total capacity: 1,200 persons). Given the projected repatriation of as many as 220,000 refugees in 1998, UNHCR concluded a new agreement with the Federation Ministry for Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees for the maintenance and running of the existing transit centres, as well as for the rehabilitation of one additional transit/reception centre in Stup (Sarajevo Canton) with a capacity of 200 beds. Similar arrangements may be concluded with the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska.

4. Collective Centres

Beneficiaries: 12,380 displaced persons

At the time of the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995, some 45,000 displaced persons were housed in 214 collective centres throughout the country. Since then, many collective centres have been closed and reverted to their original functions, such as schools, with the assistance of UNHCR. However, there were still 116 collective centres operating by the end of May 1998, accommodating some 12,380 persons. UNHCR is monitoring the condition of all of them and basic maintenance and repair (as well as provision of fresh food and community services to the residents) is being undertaken on behalf of UNHCR by the Federal Ministry for Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees (FMSA), in the Federation, and by the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska (MFR) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF), in Republika Srpska. Although the overall population of collective centres has been steadily decreasing since December 1995, the centres have also been used to accommodate displaced persons who have been expelled by host families or repatriates who have returned from abroad but cannot - for security reasons - return to their homes of origin. UNHCR is assisting the return of resident displaced persons to their homes of origin (mostly minority returns), on a case-by-case basis.

5. Demining

Return movements should not be jeopardised by the presence of mines or unexploded ordinance. To augment the limited demining capacity in the country, UNHCR decided to launch a demining programme in 1998 aimed at facilitating return movements. In the framework of an implementing agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), six UNHCR demining teams (240 local deminers in total) were recruited, trained and equipped, during the first quarter of 1998. The United Nations Mine Action Center (UNMAC) is providing administrative, logistics and operational support. In addition, a number of NATO contributing nations (Australia, France and the Netherlands) provided six international supervisors (one for each demining team). Active deployment of the UNHCR demining teams started in April 1998. A list of areas considered a priority for demining has been established and is being updated by UNHCR, as a function of minority return trends. In addition to the six UNHCR demining teams, four UNMAC-operated teams are greatly contributing to the programme by also concentrating their efforts within priority areas for demining identified by UNHCR.