

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

**Weekly Meeting  
Summary Notes**

5 October 2005  
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Geneva

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**I Internal Displacement in Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo)**

*By Ms. Barbara McCallin, Global IDP Project/NRC*

Barbara McCallin briefed participants on IDPs who have fled within and out of Kosovo since 1999 and are still unable to return to their pre-war homes. In light of the still undecided status of Kosovo, and the ongoing review of the situation by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Kai Eide, the issue is very topical.

Firstly, she provided some general background on the situation. Currently, some 226,000 IDPs from Kosovo live in Serbia and Montenegro, most of them in Serbia (208,000). In addition, about 22,000 IDPs reside in Kosovo itself. About 65 percent of the displaced are Serbs. The rest belongs to about 30 different minorities, of which the Roma are the biggest group. The return of IDPs has been complicated by an outbreak of ethnic violence in Kosovo in March 2004. The attacks were mostly targeted at minorities and signaled that they are not welcome. As a result, IDP return figures in 2004 have dropped by about 37 percent compared to 2003. The positive return momentum, which had built up over the last years effectively collapsed.

Secondly, Mrs. McCallin focused on the limited return and integration prospects of the remaining IDPs. Several issues complicate their return to Kosovo. Property repossession, security, employment and the freedom of movement are far from guaranteed. Even though UNMIK indicates that the security situation has improved, it is still volatile as shown by the recent killing of two Serbs in August. In this context, the absorption capacity for asylum seekers forced to return from abroad is very limited and can lead to further internal displacement. These people can expect only little local support to integrate upon return and overcome the challenges mentioned above. Furthermore, the ongoing uncertainty over the final status of Kosovo has contributed to a certain unwillingness to go back before the issue is decided.

The integration of IDPs in their host regions is similarly difficult. Both the Serbian and Montenegrin government are reluctant to adequately support local integration. For example, while IDPs in principle have access to social services in Serbia, exercising their rights requires proper identification. Obtaining such documentation, however, can be disproportionately burdensome and costly. In addition, the programme of closure of collective centres is not supported by measures to facilitate local integration of IDPs such as provision of proper housing and cash grant assistance. IDPs are not entitled to this type of assistance, which is reserved to refugees. The Serbian Government links assistance to local integration to genuine return opportunities in Kosovo therefore making IDPs hostage of the political deadlock. In Montenegro, IDPs are not granted citizen status, which severely limits their employment prospects outside the informal sector. In general, Mrs. McCallin emphasized that obstacles to integration are extremely high for the Roma. They face severe discrimination and typically live in informal settlements without access to adequate housing, education, water and electricity.

In conclusion, Mrs. McCallin argued with regard to return, that only full respect for the rights of all communities in Kosovo could ensure an environment safe enough for returning IDPs. The way the final status discussion will evolve will also have a crucial impact on return prospects. With regard to integration, she emphasized that Serbia and Montenegro have to respect their human rights obligations and provide adequate standards of living to their IDP citizens, in particular for the Roma. The discussion focused on differences between agencies in their assessment of the security situation in Kosovo, the difficulties around property repossession and the difficulties faced by the Roma.

## **II IDD Mission to Sudan - debriefing**

*By Internal Displacement Division/OCHA*

Aimee Wielechowski (IDD/OCHA), briefed on the recent IDD mission to Sudan from 23 to 29 September. The purpose of the mission was to follow the return of IDPs from Khartoum to the south and to raise awareness of the needs in the area of return in the south

The mission team, which was accompanied by journalists from the BBC, the *Guardian* and IRIN, traveled from Khartoum to Juba, via Kosti, Kadugli (Nuba Mountains) and Malakal. The team met with the DSRSG/RC/HC in Khartoum, and his deputies for the north and south, the respective UNMIS Directors, members of the UN Country Team, the Heads of UNMIS in Kadugli, Malakal and Juba, the Vice President of the Government of Southern Sudan, NGOs, and numerous IDPs in Khartoum camps, along routes of return, and in areas of return.

Sudan has a targeted IDP population of approximately 6 million people of whom 4 million are from the South (of these some 2 million live around Khartoum). Since the signing of the north-south peace agreement was signed in January 2005 approximately

250.000 people have returned to the South. And at least 500.000 are expected to return during the coming dry season (November 2005 – March 2006).

The areas of return are is still insecure and the reception capacity is very poor with practically no infrastructure and very limited access to basic services. Thus, the UN in Sudan is not encouraging returns at this time. However, in the interest of providing a minimum of protection to people who choose to return, it is providing a limited humanitarian support, such as emergency transport of vulnerable people. En route from Khartoum to the South, the mission heard unconfirmed reports from IDPs and returnees of looting, abuse and sexual violence along the routes of return. It takes returnees up to 25 days to travel from Kosti to Jubba.

During the coming return season the UN is planning to facilitate small-scale organized returns to selected areas that meet basic requirements in terms of security and availability of basic services. For this effort the UN is urgently seeking USD 55 million by 1 November. These funds will also be used for information campaigns to provide the IDPs and returnees better information about the conditions in the areas of return.

Furthermore the new Government of National Unity needs to take on more responsibility for the development of the South. The mission raised this when meeting with the Vice President of the Government of Southern Sudan.

One of the specific concerns of the mission is the continued forced relocation of IDPs living around Khartoum, ordered by the Governor of Khartoum State. Planned relocations after 1 November is estimated to affect 236,000 people. The proposed relocation sites (which the mission visited), do not even have basic services in place. The mission is worried that this could create a major humanitarian crisis in Khartoum state, encourage premature returns to the South and increase ethnic tensions and violence. The UN Secretary General has strongly condemned these acts and named the Governor by name in his report to the Security Council.

On the inter-agency collaboration, Ms. Wielechowski repeated the call of the DSRSG/RC/HC to UNHCR to enhance their role in protection monitoring in the Khartoum Camps under the auspices of UNMIS Director of Protection. Generally, agency and NGO presence in the camps, and in the areas of forced relocation is inadequate.

In the South, there is a general need for increased presence of aid workers. Compared to the some 10.000 thousand aid workers in Darfur, all of South Sudan is estimated to have about a 1000. Especially UNICEF is called upon to deploy more staff to deal with problems of water supply, and UNHCR to enhance protection. The UN is relocating its regional headquarters to Juba and the NGOs, of which most are still based in Nairobi, are urged to do the same. The UN is drafting a handbook for NGOs on how to set-up in Juba and in the South in general. The mission was told that a law would soon be passed, which would ease the procedures for NGOs of getting visas.

In the discussion following the briefing, several participants repeated the need for increased presence and capacity of the international community in the South.

Furthermore, issues of reconstruction and land rights were brought up and UNDP was urged to do more in terms of recovery planning. On refugees, it was pointed out, that in consistency to the recommendations from the UN in Sudan on IDPs, UNHCR does not encourage massive return of refugees in 2006.

### III IASC Standard Briefing

*By Ms. Marilena Viviani, IASC Secretariat*

- Today (5 October) IFRC's World Disaster Report will be launched. The event takes place at 11.00 at IFRC HQs
- Also today (5 October), at 14.30, there is a meeting of the Cluster WG on Logistics at WFP HQs. Participants can link up by teleconference.
- Tomorrow (6 October) at 17.00 the IASC-UNDG Tsunami Task Force will meet in room F.3 of the Palais des Nations.
- On Friday 7 October there is a first meeting of the Informal Consultative Group on Capacity Building of Emergency Response at Regional, National and Local Level. The meeting has been called and will be chaired by IFRC. The meeting starts at 11.00 in room F.3 of the Palais des Nations
- Also in Friday 7 October, from 15.00-16.00, the Cluster WG on Protection will be meeting in the Operations Room on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor in UNHCR HQs. Participants can link up by teleconference
- The Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS), formerly known as MCDU, will hold its 52nd training course on civil-military coordination in Accra, Ghana, next week. The discussions will focus on integrated mission and the benefits and challenges of the humanitarian community. A balanced mix of 27 military and civilian personnel will take part in the one-week training course. Further courses in West Africa are planned to be held in 2006 in Liberia and Ghana.

### IV Participants

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