

Check against delivery



Remarks by Mr. Dusan Kozarev, Deputy Director at the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Working session 17 Fundamental Freedoms
21 September 2017, Warsaw

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am Dušan Kozarev, Deputy Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, in the Government of the Republic of Serbia. For the third time in a row here in Warsaw, I am emphasizing substantial problems of internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. The first time, I presented the initiative of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the so-called “Skopje Initiative”, which should represent a mechanism for reaching durable solutions and their implementation. The following year, I pointed out the failure to respect the procedure for enacting the Law on the Kosovo Property Comparison and Verification Agency, as neither the representatives of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, nor the IDPs have participated in it, even though the subject of the law mostly relates to their usurped property.

In July of this year, Priština adopted administrative instructions for the implementation of the contested law, which may result in the legalization of usurped property of IDPs. There are a few fundamental issues with this law:

- It is not clear how will the IDPs be informed in a timely manner on the fate of their property;
- The newly formed agency will cease to manage the leased property, and together with the rule that the usurper may be evicted only twice, this will inevitably set off a new wave of massive usurpation or ignoring the obligation to pay rent;
- The Law provides for future forced evictions of usurpers through private executors whose tariffs are from 1,500 to 10,000 euros. IDPs represent a population exposed to multiple existential risks without the resources for this purpose and will be forced to either completely renounce their property or accept a sale at an undervalue;
- The Agency is *de facto* seen as a quasi-judicial institution, hence it is unclear as to what will happen with the cases already in proceedings before courts and if the agency’s decision will have primacy over the court one. Also, there is a risk that the case of a displaced person will be considered “res iudicata”, because the person was unable to get involved in the procedure on time and make a complaint, as it was uninformed.

In addition, on January 30 and February 14 of this year, the Kosovo Privatization Agency reached a decision to liquidate 11 business entities operating in Serbian majority municipalities in northern Kosovo and Metohija, which seriously threatens the economy of this area. We have a

situation where, on one hand the Community of Serbian Municipalities which is the essence of the 2013 “Brussels Agreement” and should have jurisdiction over economic development hasn’t been formed yet, and on the other, Priština is making such moves that undermine economic development in the northern Serbian majority municipalities. This certainly does not contribute to trust building.

Also, the pre-election rhetoric of Albanian politicians was particularly worrying, as it often contained open threats toward the Serbian community and its interests in Kosovo and Metohija. It is therefore not surprising that since the previous meeting of the human dimension, there were over 80 ethnically motivated attacks on Serbs during which 11 persons were injured, 10 Serbian orthodox churches desecrated, property was robbed, and there were attempts at kidnapping minors. In February 2017, anti-Serbian graffiti – kill all Serbs, arose in vicinity of the Serbian orthodox church in Gnjilane, a city from which 8.000 Serbs were expelled and only 20 of them live in today.



Graffiti in Gnjilane

Last year, here in Warsaw, I drew attention to the existence of an organized group in the region of Peć, whose aim is to prevent the return by placing information on raising alleged war crimes indictments against Serbs, usually IDPs who applied for return.

We just had such a case on August 28. Bogdan Mitrović was arrested while travelling by bus to Suva Reka, with his family and a large number of returnees from Serbia Proper, to visit his house in Mušutište and the Church of the Holy Mother of God from 1315, which was demolished in March 2004 violence against Serbs, their property and sanctities.



The arrest of Bogdan Mitrovic

He was accused of alleged war crimes by his first neighbor, who was the first to burn and destroy his house, and then usurp his land, and what makes the irony worse, it is the same man who is in charge of the return of Serbs in the Municipality of Suva Reka. Bogdan Mitrović is a member of the Working group for the return of displaced persons and interethnic dialogue with Albanians in the Municipality of Suva Reka, and since he fled Kosovo and Metohija in 1999, he has been coming to his place of origin each year, but the indictment has been magically raised against him 18 years after the end of conflict.

By doing this, the judiciary in Kosovo and Metohija joined the campaign of intimidation of Serbian people, and once again confirmed that it is not ready to give justice independently. All of this indicates an elaborate model for undermining personal and collective rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, according to which the indictments for alleged war crimes are an instrument for obstructing freedom of movement and return of IDPs, and at the same time an institutionalized support for the usurpers of Serbian property.

In addition to this event, on the night between September 13th and 14th, employees of the Red Cross of Serbia were taken into custody and the documentation on socially vulnerable families was confiscated, which represents shameless abuse of humanitarian issues for political purposes.

All of the above demonstrates the necessity of strengthening the international role in Kosovo and Metohija, EULEX mandate included. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Priština are not responsible and mature enough to apply for UNESCO membership, and especially due to the demonstrated political instrumentalization of the Kosovo Police, the so-called Kosovo should not be admitted to Interpol at the upcoming General Assembly of this organization in Beijing.

We call upon all international actors to devote themselves to the resolving of these issues, as they are a serious threat to basic rights of returnees, displaced persons and Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, but also a continuous attempt at nullifying the cultural and spiritual features and origin of one European nation.

Thank you for attention.

