



War Crimes

The cruel war fought in the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1995 affected all federal State's republics, now independent countries and members of the UN, the OSCE and other international organizations.

The war affected the countries unequally. Slovenia, managed to end its war in a few days with a small number of victims, due among other things to its lack of contiguity with Serbia and its small Serb minority. This helped discourage Slobodan Milosevic's territorial ambitions in respect to this Central European and Mediterranean country.

In Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the war was long and bloody, causing 130,000 deaths in Bosnia and 13,000 in Croatia. Missing persons in Bosnia are estimated to be 14,000 and in Croatia more than 2,000. Approximately 14, 000 persons from Serbia also lost their lives in the war.

It is difficult to try to describe the war. Each country would label it differently: war of independence, war of destruction, war of national cohesion? At least from the Croatian point of view, the legitimacy of their part in the war is not at issue: the Homeland War is considered to have been a just fight to defend their newly independent country against a much more numerous and militarily superior foe.

Croatia and Bosnia suffered significant material damage and loss of life as a consequence of the war. Not only were there many victims - the most painful cost of any war - but a good part of each country was systematically destroyed particularly along the numerous confrontation lines from Vukovar to Dubrovnik and Dobojo to Mostar. In Croatia, for every victim at least 15 houses were

destroyed, while accommodation left standing was often occupied by temporary occupants. Many of these were later looted by departing occupants.

Material damage can be repaired; it is a matter of money and time. While the reconstruction effort has not yet resulted in pre-war levels of development, destroyed areas in Croatia and Bosnia will again prosper and flourish.



The Supreme Court of
the Republic of Croatia

The loss of life and grievous injuries, to combatants and civilians alike, remain as permanent scars on individuals and the nation. It is difficult to console victim's relatives, particularly when their loved ones were persons who are supposed to be protected by the rules of war while the perpetrators remain free and unaccountable.

In the first years of the post-war period, Croatia considered all aspects of the Homeland War legitimate, rejecting the fact that war crimes were also committed by Croatian armed forces. The possibility that

war criminals and guilty individuals existed on the side of defenders in a legitimate war of independence against outside aggressors was rejected.

The establishment of the ICTY, the process of democratisation and Croatia's Euro-Atlantic integration have prompted the country to evolve, attribute criminal responsibility and proceed with trials before national courts against an increased number of defendants. Since the beginning of the war, there have been approximately 200 trials per year, primarily against Serb paramilitaries and Yugoslav army members. In parallel, the ICTY has prosecuted senior military and political leaders for crimes in Croatia and Bosnia. The ICTY trials against Yugoslav army commanders and Serb paramilitaries for crimes in Croatia include Martić, Strugar, and the 'Vukovar Three', while cases against Croatian army officers include Gotovina, Markač, Čermak, Norac and Ademi. Trials against Martić and the 'Vukovar Three' were completed in early 2007 and verdicts are expected later this year. Strugar has pleaded guilty. Gotovina, Markač, and Čermak are awaiting the start of their trial in the Hague. The case against Norac and Ademi was transferred to Croatia where they will stand trial in a process which could begin before the summer 2007.

Ambassador Jorge Fuent,
Head of Mission

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Closing of the FO Karlovac

The last Head of Field Office in Karlovac, Jan Repa, told me recently how the mayors in the Karlovac Area of Responsibility were unanimous in expressing their sadness that the FO was closing because the office and its staff had become like friends. The Mayors also expressed gratitude and thanks for the understanding, support, assistance and guidance they had received from the Field Office. People in the Karlovac AoR had come to understand that the FO and the Mission were in the county to support them in their efforts to get the region back on its feet, one village, one municipality at a time. It would be enough of a struggle for all of them in this changing global world, even without the devastation and pain of the war.

But, as Jan Repa recounted, in recent years everyone he worked with, Croat, Serb, Bosniak, supporters of the right or the left, had all come to understand that the FO and the OSCE were there to hear their story, assist them, and to support their efforts to build their lives together, guiding them toward reforms they often found hard to understand, but in the end began to accept as “the way forward.”

The evidence of the work of the OSCE and our friends in the International Community, the EC and UNHCR, can be seen and experienced all over the Karlovac AoR: Take the drive from the Knin road through Vojnić and Gvozd to Glina as I did last fall. Look at all the reconstructed houses, one after another, where ruins used to be. Look at the reviving farms. Three years ago it was still ruins and dissolution. Listen to the NGO leaders and municipal and county officials talk about the best practices they have developed, as I did this past week (at a roundtable launched by the OSCE); hear how they discuss the possibilities of working together as Civil Society and civil Government. Three years, even two years ago, that lively and positive exchange could not have been possible. Today it is part of the rebirth and growth of Karlovac County,

slow to be sure, but just as surely.

That, and a great deal more, which these two examples only begin to describe, is the legacy of Field Office Karlovac. When the Head of Mission, accompanied by the Slovak Ambassador, spoke, on March 29, to the assembled representatives of Karlovac Town and County and many municipalities, NGOs, minority groups and the staff, he observed that FO Karlovac’s closure was not a sign of failure, but of success - success in helping bring about positive change in its area of responsibility, success in achieving goals and objectives, success as a job well and faithfully done.



Nameplaques
of FO
Karlovac

Karlovac has, by its closure, become the first in a process of transferring responsibility, opportunities and challenges from the Mission to Croatian officials, NGOs, minority groups, the media and others. Now it becomes their responsibility to carry forward the work which the Field Office has initiated on their behalf over the past decade. In the course of this year, other Field Offices will also close, reflecting the success which they, their local partners and Croatia, have achieved in meeting the challenges of the Mission mandate. Now they will take over to prepare their country and its people to take up the challenge of their future in the Euro-Atlantic community.

Ambassador Todd Becker, Deputy Head of Mission

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Croatia has an obligation to co-operate with the ICTY. As of September 2005, it was found to be co-operating fully, which has enabled it, among other things, to open negotiations with the EU and progress towards membership of NATO. Progress in fulfilling the OSCE mandate was not the consequence but the motor that facilitated the process of democratization in Croatia leading to concrete progress at the end of 2005, which has continued in 2006 and 2007.

Trials against war crimes indictees are a fundamental part of Croatia’s process of reconciliation among its

own citizens and with neighbouring states. There can be no peace in the country if the population believes that war criminals are allowed to walk free.

Aside from the hundreds of people already prosecuted, primarily Serbs, Croatia is also seeking approximately 1,100 additional persons suspected of war crimes. While the majority are Serbs, some are also Croats, Bosnians or Montenegrins. The whereabouts of some are unknown, others could be dead. Those that can be located will have to be brought to trial in the coming years. Authorities in the four countries that fought in the war will have to reach an agreement on how,

when and where such trials will be held. The international community will also have to decide who - if anybody - will control the process. These domestic trials will continue when Croatia is already a member of the European Union and NATO, when the Hague Tribunal has concluded its activity and when the ICTY and OSCE have closed their offices in Croatia.

Ambassador Jorge Fuent,
Head of Mission

Calendar

Activities

1-2 March: SEECF Ministerial Meeting, hosted by Minister of Foreign Affairs. Secretary General of the OSCE, Amb. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, attended the meeting and while in Zagreb visited the Mission and met with its staff.

5 March: HOM at a working lunch with Prime Minister Sanader (his inv.), Spanish Amb. M. Salazar and Msgr. F. Lozano, Apostolic Nuncio.

7 March: Plenary meeting on War Crimes Prosecution at the Ministry of Justice with Minister of Justice and Chief State Prosecutor on Croatian side and HOM, Head of EC Delegation in Croatia and Head of ICTY Liaison Office in Croatia.

8 March: Farewell lunch for the Missions Spokesperson, Antonella Cerasino, with prominent representatives of Croatian Media and State Administration.

10 March: Diplomatic outing in Kopacki Rit, at the invitation by the President and Mrs. Mesić.

12 March: Field visit to FO Sisak with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović

23 March: EFJ General Meeting 2007

27-28 March: HOM attending Troika Meeting and other meetings, Vienna.

29 March: Closing ceremony of FO Karlovac.

30 March: IC Principals meeting with Minister of Development, Božidar Kalmeta.

Water Management

As most of us know, the Economic Forum is the most important annual event within the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE. It aims at identifying needs and priorities, raising awareness and stimulating the political will of the 56 OSCE participating states to, among other things, identify the most appropriate solutions in dealing with economic and security related challenges and to strengthen partnerships with other organizations.

Under the Spanish Chairmanship, the second preparatory Conference to the 15th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum took place in Zaragoza, Spain, on 12-13 March, focusing on Water Management.

About 200 representatives of Government and State institutions, international organizations and representatives of business community, non-governmental organizations and academia all gathered in Zaragoza, the Spanish host of the 2008 EXPO. Water was the main topic with discussions focusing on issues related to water management. The Forum aimed to provide concrete and valuable recommendations for the OSCE and its participating states on "Key challenges to ensure environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area".

The project implemented in the Sava River Basin on developing the network of local subjects in the context of the Sava initiative, has been recommended by the OSCE Office of the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, as an experience worth sharing with others who might benefit from its "lessons learned" and which could easily be applied in other regions too.

Having left very little time to prepare for the occasion I found myself in a group of four panelists with only several minutes ahead of me to present the whole concept of the project and its achievements, as well as its conclusions and recommendations. Regardless of how complex and large this project seemed while facilitating its implementation, when I got to present it together with other similar OSCE initiatives and projects, it suddenly felt tiny and small, both in terms of the geographical area covered and the number of project beneficiaries. The fact that there were

nearly 200 participants present at the conference during the panel discussion made my task even more challenging.

Nevertheless, the Sava River Project highlighted one of the key connections between the environment and security very realistic, "environmental peace making", which actually works on building peace through environmental co-operation. The Sava River Project enhanced mutual trust, trans-boundary co-operation and focused on developing co-operation between governmental officials and civil society at very local level. It actually used the environment as a neutral, so called "soft" entry point, to renew the dialogue at various levels of societies of all countries along its water course, thus reinforcing efforts invested by the Mission so far.

Recommendations emerging from the discussion following the panel presentations confirmed the role that natural resources can play in processes leading to conflicts. It also confirmed the key role of the OSCE and its field presence as an added value in conflict prevention actions. Furthermore, concrete projects implemented directly in the field received undivided recognition by all attendees.

After all, I returned from Spain with a tremendous amount of new experiences. I am still not sure how to prioritize them; the magnificent town of Zaragoza with its bridges over the Ebro River, numerous, absolutely wonderful churches, the hospitality of our hosts, officials of the town and the region of Aragon, its vineyards and fine vines, exceptional colleagues, members of the Croatian delegation and finally, my feelings when addressing the audience to present our own experiences and efforts to contribute to the world wide initiatives.

Spomenka Đurić, National
Democratisation Officer
FO Sisak



Saulius Samlys, Environmental Officer, OSCE Center in Dushanbe, William Hanlon, Economic and Environmental Officer, OSCE Mission to Georgia, Bernard Snoy, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Peter Svedbenrg, Project Manager, UNDP's Regional Center in Bratislava, Spomenka Đurić, National Democratisation Officer, Mr. David Swalley, Economic and Environmental Affairs Officer, Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Human Rights Institutions, Access to Justice, and Minority Protection

Strong and responsive institutions are key to the protection of human rights and rights of national minorities, in particular for displaced persons and refugees. They are also the natural and permanent replacement for the Mission's political interventions on rights issues. Hence, attention to the work of and support for Croatia's human rights institutions is a Rule of Law Unit priority. Because access to justice frequently requires both legal information and formal legal assistance, RoL continues to stress the need for a state-funded legal aid program and provides project funding for legal services. Finally, RoL continues to work for full implementation of employment guarantees envisaged by the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (CLNM), which will be key to the integration of minorities as well as ensuring the legitimacy of State institutions.

Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is an increasingly vocal advocate for human rights compliance by State bodies, including, in relation to Mission mandate, issues affecting displaced persons, refugees, and national minorities. This independent institution intervenes with state administration in individual cases and also serves an "early warning" function by providing notice of systemic violations that warrant reform. In both ways, the Ombudsman is a remarkably cost-effective institution, providing a means to informally resolve individual and systemic problems without the expense and delay of formal proceedings. In order to ensure Croatia's citizens easy and no-cost access to human rights protection, the Mission "Platform" includes recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of this institution, including legislative reform to expand the Ombudsman's jurisdiction and authorize the establishment of regional offices as well as sufficient funding to support this expansion. RoL's recommendations are based on the results observed from its project from 2003 until today, which with financial support of Norway amounting to approximately €200,000 and an additional €50,000 as well as logistical support from the Mission, has enabled the Ombudsman to travel throughout Croatia to receive complaints directly from citizens and have direct contacts with local officials and institutions. This project has significantly increased citizen access to the Ombudsman and has permitted the Ombudsman to have a greater impact on the local level.

Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court (CC) has yet to fully seize its role as the domestic human rights court of last resort. While progress has been ongoing, gaps remain in the CC's effectiveness as a human rights remedy, with the result that the ECHR continues to be the first reviewer of some human rights concerns in Croatia, including those affecting displaced persons, refugees, and minorities. In order to follow the effectiveness of the CC and its response to European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) judgments, RoL maintains a comprehensive compendium of ECHR

case law involving Croatia and issues periodic reports summarizing developments. This is a key year for the CC as the Parliament will nominate 75 per cent of its judges anew. The Mission "Platform" highlights the importance of transparent nominations devoid of political interference that enhance the impartiality, professionalism, and integrity of the CC as well as ensuring that the CC exercises the full extent of ECHR jurisdiction. To support the CC and enhance citizen access, RoL has since 2003 financed with Norwegian donations in excess of €100,000 and Mission funds in excess of €60,000 the development and maintenance of the CC's website, which allows the CC to disseminate its case law, procedures, and other information needed by the public. The Mission "Platform" also recommends that funding for the website becomes part of the CC's institutional budget.

Free Legal Aid. Numerous persons who approach the Mission for legal help lack the required information or funds needed to vindicate their rights through administrative or judicial proceedings. In the absence of state-sponsored legal aid, both RoL and R&I have since 1999 allocated more than €1 million to provide free legal aid services, including in-court representation, through NGOs. There remains a significant need for formal legal assistance to displaced persons and refugees, primarily in relation to housing and damages disputes. Responding to unmet needs, Field Offices Gospić and Zadar designed and funded legal aid projects, providing a crucial service that was otherwise unavailable. The Mission's "Platform" recommends adoption of a free legal aid scheme, together with adequate funding. In March 2007, the Ministry of Justice indicated that while a legislative framework for such a scheme will likely be adopted during the latter part of 2007, the system would only become operational in 2009, indicating a continued need for funding from international sources.

Minority Protection. Implementation of the CLNM's guarantee of employment of national minorities in the public service has lagged since the law's adoption in late 2002. However, several developments in early 2007, including legislative amendments and a State-level employment plan, have moved this issue forward. To bring further attention to this issue and to increase understanding by local and state officials responsible for its implementation, RoL has planned a series of roundtables in co-operation with the Government. The first held in November 2006 addressed employment of minorities in local administration. Two more roundtables proposed for late spring 2007 will address employment of minorities in State administration and the judiciary. Full implementation of the CLNM employment guarantee will not only benefit minorities but will also enhance the public's respect for and confidence in their institutions, which will be representative of all of Croatia's citizens.

RoL Unit

War crimes prosecution

Among the states of the former Yugoslavia, Croatia has been the most active in prosecuting war crimes. More than 600 persons have been convicted, another 600 have been indicted, and several hundreds more are under investigation. Croatia has issued more than 600 international arrest warrants for war crimes suspects. This high level of prosecution, which began during the war and involves several hundred people every year, means frequent arrests, extraditions from third countries, and trials involving the prosecutors and serious crime courts in nearly 3/4s of Croatia's 20 counties. Although four courts have special jurisdiction to try war crimes, the overwhelming majority of cases are investigated and tried in the communities where the crimes occurred.

Until recent years, Croatia's prosecutorial efforts in relation to war crimes were driven almost exclusively by the ethnicity of the victims and suspects, rather than the type of crimes committed. This approach resulted in the initiation by local prosecutors of numerous cases against Serbs, which upon later review have been found unsubstantiated. Many of these focused on people from the community, few involving commanders or persons in positions of senior responsibility. A particular aspect of Croatia's prosecution has been the large-scale use of in absentia proceedings, as a result of which more than 400 persons, nearly all Serbs, stand convicted as indicated by inclusion of the war crimes issue in the Sarajevo Declaration, this approach had led to a perception in the refugee community that any Serb, regardless of their war-time past, remains subject to arrest and prosecution upon return to Croatia.

Recent efforts to appropriately focus war crimes prosecution on the nature of the crimes committed have taken two forms. First, old cases primarily against Serbs are being reviewed to continue only those that are substantiated. Second, increased efforts have been undertaken to prosecute members of the Croatian armed forces for serious crimes against Serb victims. These latter efforts have met with some resistance. Political support for even-handed accountability is essential to create a climate conducive to the participation of witnesses and the work of judges and prosecutors.

A significant number of persons suspected of war crimes in Croatia remain outside its borders, frequently living in and holding the citizenship of neighboring countries. Similarly, victims and witnesses of crimes committed in Croatia also live outside the country, including those displaced by the war. The legal framework in Croatia as well as in BiH, Montenegro and Serbia severely limit judicial cooperation, maintaining maximum sovereignty but facilitating impunity. A full accounting for crimes committed during the war in Croatia depends upon lowering these barriers to inter-state co-operation.

Design, purpose and impact of RoL monitoring and reporting. Against this backdrop, RoL staff document the continuing evolution of the war crimes prosecution system in Croatia as seen through individual cases. In 2006 alone, RoL staff followed 94 war crimes cases in all stages of proceedings involving 330 individuals in police investigations, 14 trial courts and the Supreme Court as well as extradition proceedings in third countries. By monitoring all proceedings from arrest through appeal, RoL develops first-hand information on the basis of which it can observe progress, flag weaknesses in institutions and the law, and propose reforms. RoL staff also takes note of what crimes remain unprosecuted and why, as this is a key indicator of the functioning of the prosecution system as a whole and the extent of justice delivered. Issues and recommendations for reform raised in the Mission's "Platform" on war crimes prosecutions are largely based on the observations of RoL monitors.

Given the de-centralized nature of Croatia's war crimes prosecution, RoL staff in all of the Mission's field offices as well as the HQ engage in monitoring activities. In order to ensure objectivity, adequate legal and language knowledge, and accuracy, RoL staff monitor in teams composed of international and national staff members. Croatian language fluency of most international legal staff further enhances the monitoring. While most monitoring occurs in open court, RoL staff on occasion have been granted access to closed sessions, given recognition by the Supreme Court as well as several local courts of their particular status. Based on RoL's track record, the Mission was tapped, together with other OSCE Missions, to assist the ICTY in following the Ademi-Norac case transferred to Croatia under Rule 11 bis.

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RoL Unit's Leos Javurek, Alan Švarc and Mary Wyckoff with Jasmina Dolmagić, Deputy Zagreb County State Prosecutor and Antun Kvakan, Deputy Chief State Prosecutor in front of the State Attorney's Office

Feature story

War crimes prosecution

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RoL's activities and assessments are guided by two over-arching and inter-linked objectives - ensuring impartiality and ending impunity. Impartiality requires that the system of prosecution as well as each individual case is fair in the sense that similar crimes are treated similarly and suspects and victims have similar protections. Croatia's system of trying war crimes locally presents particular challenges in this regard, for judges and prosecutors as well as witnesses. Ending impunity requires overcoming political and legal obstacles that to date have facilitated perpetrators, both inside and outside Croatia, remaining unaccountable.



L-R: Mary Wyckoff, Head of RoL Unit, Goetz Brinkmann, RoL Adviser in ODIHR, Romana Mačević, National Legal Officer, Laura Fernandez, ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Leos Javurek, Legal Officer and Dagmara Pilaszek, Legal Officer, Zagreb 9 February 2007

such as the inadmissibility of testimony by video-link in the "Lora" trial, which are subject to ready and non-controversial solutions. These also include, however, more complicated issues, which are not subject to such ready fixes. For example, using the Glavas case, RoL has pointed out the need for adequate safeguards for the confidentiality of judicial investigations. Citing the Paulin Dvor and Ademi-Norac cases, RoL has highlighted the need for re-invigorated efforts by all parts of the State to address crimes committed by the armed forces or efforts to hide crimes. RoL's recommendation of a review of final in absentia convictions is based on its observation that a significant proportion of these fail upon re-trial. Finally, in-court observations have led to RoL's recommendations of measures to improve the quality of court-appointed defense attorneys and ensure adequate safeguards for witnesses, court personnel and attorneys. While not always readily quantifiable, RoL monitoring has had a positive impact on the system of prosecution and by extension on the conduct of individual cases. For example, questionable practices such as group in absentia proceedings and group representation by court-appointed defense counsel have declined significantly. The presence of RoL staff in local courtrooms serves to open a window on these proceedings and provide support to all parties for the impartial and just adjudication of individual responsibility for these most serious of crimes.

Developing domestic monitoring capacity. In recent years, Croatian NGOs have become increasingly involved in the systematic monitoring of war crimes proceedings. Given that prosecutions will continue for some years, this is an important development which RoL welcomes. In 2006 and 2007, RoL has conducted several projects with funding from Norway to facilitate the consolidation of NGO monitoring capacity across Croatia. RoL has also allocated staff to serve in the capacity of an adviser and assist with the transfer of capacity, information, and skills.

Through its reports, the Mission "Platform," as well as dialogue with judges and prosecutors, RoL has highlighted a range of concerns. These include technical matters

RoL Unit

Farewell to our dear colleagues



The Mission's staff at the Magdalena Spalinska and Ignas Jonynas farewell party in HQ, 12 April 2007



HOM, DHOM, Dražen Fočić, Nataša Roksanđić and top Police officials, including Police Chief, Marijan Benko, at Head of Police Unit, Knut Dreyer's farewell dinner party, 10 April 2007

Rule of Law Unit

Rudyard Kipling said that “truth is the first victim of war.” A close second is the rule of law. Its restoration and advancement in today’s Croatia, which includes appropriate remedies for war-time breaches, underlies the Mission’s entire mandate and is the preoccupation of the Rule of Law (RoL) Unit.

While adherence to “rule of law” is a buzz-word frequently cited among indicators of a democratic society, it has particular meaning for the Mission given the context in which it was established and works today. In crafting the Mission’s 1996 mandate, the Permanent Council understood the inter-linkage between the protection of human rights and minority rights and the rule of law in a post-conflict context, obliging the Mission to assist with the development and full implementation of clear, accessible and fair laws, strong institutions and effective remedies. The activities of the Unit’s 22 staff in its four priority areas - minority protection, strengthening human rights institutions and access to justice, legal aspects of return, and war crimes prosecutions - can be directly linked to these three fundamentals. A significant part of the Unit’s work is done in collaboration with other Mission Units, in particular Return and Integration (R&I), with numerous field staff wearing “two hats.” Recommended reforms in RoL’s four priority areas are included in the Mission “Platform.”

THE LAW: On a typical day, RoL staff deal with a wide range of national and international legal issues and their practical applications. These include legal questions within the RoL priority areas as well as those addressed by other Mission Units, for example election laws, media laws, and contracts and personnel issues. For monitoring and reporting on war crimes prosecutions, staff must be conversant in both International Humanitarian Law and Croatian Criminal Law. Staff must also be

familiar with ICTY proceedings and Case Law as well as Convention Law regulating inter-state judicial cooperation.

In order to monitor and report on numerous judicial proceedings involving refugees and displaced persons, which will be resolved outside the Sarajevo Process, staff must be familiar with the Law and new developments related to property repossession, including counterclaims for investments, termination of OTR, and damages claims for terrorist acts and Military and Police actions. These cases make up the bulk of open issues included in Field Office “inventories” to be presented to the Government through the “Platform.” Staff must also keep up-to-date on developments in the Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights related to Croatia.



The Rule of Law Unit members
L-R: Laura Fernandez, Alan Švarc, Romana Mačević, Monika Čavlović, Leos Javurek, Mary Wyckof, Ignas Jonynas and Dagmara Pilaszek

Knowledge of Croatia’s minority protection laws, in particular the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (CLNM) is also key for RoL staff, although the CLNM is another cross-cutting issue in which other Mission Units are engaged.

THE INSTITUTIONS: In order to provide recommendations for reform and assistance, RoL staff has frequent

contacts with a range of State institutions. At both the field and HQ level, Unit staff meets regularly with representatives of the judiciary, including judges and prosecutors, and including local and high courts. Sensitive to judicial impartiality and independence, staff does not discuss individual cases with judicial bodies, rather general trends and observations. FOs Gospic, Karlovac, Pakrac, and Sisak used €3,000 of project funds to fill requests for legal literature from several local courts. In relation to practical legal questions, RoL also meets with other legal actors, including defense attorneys, legal aid NGOs and bar associations. At the HQ, RoL retains links to the bodies charged with human rights protection, the Ombudsman and the Constitutional Court as well as relevant Parliamentary Committees. Finally, RoL staff deal with numerous bodies of State Administration at the local and HQ level, particularly in relation to issues associated with displaced persons and refugees and implementation of the CLNM employment guarantee.

THE REMEDIES: RoL Unit devotes considerable energy and project financing to ensure access to remedies for those who lack financial means as well as strengthening institutions responsible for providing remedies. RoL staff provides individuals and legal aid NGOs with practical and legal information on a wide range of topics, such as status and property rights and actions related to those injured, killed, or missing from the conflict. For more than five years, Field Office Sisak has hosted a forum for legal NGOs from Croatia, BiH and Serbia. RoL monitoring and reporting on court proceedings provides a solid basis for law and institutional reform recommendations, while RoL project funding fills gaps in services and institutional support.

RoL Unit

Photo gallery



L-R: Jasna Kobeščak, Language Assistant, Enrique Horcajada, Head of Coordination Unit, Ljerka Draženović, Spokesperson, Jan Repa, Head of FO Karlovac, HOM, Ján Bánas, Slovakian Ambassador, Leos Javurek, Legal officer in Karlovac on the occasion of the closure of the FO, Karlovac 29 March 2007



Gordan Jandroković, Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Policy Committee and HOM during Mr Jandroković's visit to the HQ, Zagreb 5 April 2007



OSCE member countries ambassadors at the briefing by the OSCE Mission to Croatia in HQ, Zagreb 11 April 2007



Extended Senior Staff Meeting in HQ, Zagreb 11 April 2007



Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, Minister of Foreign Affairs, HOM and Manuel Salazar, Spanish Ambassador, in a field visit to Sisak, 12 March 2007



One of the Monthly Plenary Meetings held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zagreb 21 March 2007