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## **KFOR forces should live up to responsibility to protect all inhabitants of Kosovo**

KFOR forces should live up to their responsibility “to ensure public safety and order” and make every effort to protect Serb, Montenegrin and Roma communities from revenge attacks, Amnesty International urged today.

This follows increasing reports of killings and beatings of members of the Serb and Roma communities in Kosovo in the wake of the departure of Yugoslav and Serb forces and the return of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees.

“KFOR forces have a duty to prevent these attacks, and the burning and looting of Serb homes, but in some cases it was reported that they have clearly failed to do so,” Amnesty International said.

“It is also crucial that KLA leaders speedily fulfil their undertakings to demilitarize and disarm their followers and to use their influence to deter Kosovo Albanians from seeking retribution for the gross human rights violations many have suffered at the hands of Yugoslav and Serb forces.”

The organization is also concerned about reports of the forcible eviction of Serbs from their homes, and the burning and looting of these homes -- which in many cases amounts to the forcible expulsion of their owners from Kosovo. Roma communities are reported to have been similarly victimized, for their alleged role as accomplices in atrocities carried out by Yugoslav and Serb forces in Kosovo in past months.

Recent attacks on Serbs have included the killing of three Serbs at Pristina university, the murder of a father and son in Urosevac and of two elderly Serbs in Prizren; there are also reports of numerous kidnappings. Serb and Roma homes have been looted and burned in Pristina, Mitrovica, Prizren and Pec, and in other towns and villages.

Amnesty International is urging KFOR forces to exercise more robustly their mandated responsibility to ensure the protection of all ethnic communities in Kosovo until the international civil presence can take responsibility for this task and to adhere strictly to international human rights, including criminal justice, standards, when doing so.

Amnesty International has called for the protection and promotion of human rights to be given a central place in the structure now being designed for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and for the international security forces to adhere to the highest human rights standards.

The organization urges all states contributing to the Interim Civil Administration speedily to respond to the UN's request that they supply civil police for deployment in Kosovo, and to ensure that these police have adequate human rights training or experience. The purpose of this deployment will be to establish respect for the rule of law in Kosovo -- to ensure that all inhabitants of Kosovo, regardless of ethnic origin, enjoy protection from attacks on their life and property. Any violation of these rights should lead to a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation and the bringing of the perpetrators to justice.

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**Balkan field press officer, Brendan Paddy, will be in Pristina from Wednesday 23 June through Friday 25 June. He will be available for interviews and briefings regarding our concerns in Kosovo and the region. Brendan can be contacted on: +44 831 640 150 (a landline may be available for broadcast interviews). You can also call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566.**