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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION FINDS COUNTRY NOT SAFE FOR REFUGEES TO RETURN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DAYTON AGREEMENT HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS FALTERING

**SARAJEVO** -- An Amnesty International delegation in Bosnia and Herzegovina today called on governments at tomorrow's meeting to review the Dayton peace agreement not to forcibly return refugees to the country as it is not safe to do so.

The delegation also said that the Dayton peace agreement could not bring a lasting peace as long as the Implementation Force (IFOR) is unwilling to fulfill its legal duty to search for, arrest and bring to justice those responsible for grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

"People are rightly afraid to return because human rights violations continue and war criminals are not being pursued," said the Amnesty International delegation.

"So far, many of the promises made in the Dayton peace agreement have not been turned into action -- and the credibility of the agreement hinges on the governments meeting tomorrow turn their words in reality".

Amnesty International is calling upon all states at the Mid-Term Review Conference in Florence opening tomorrow to ensure that refugee hosting states do not return refugees until the question of protection and property rights of both displaced persons and refugees are properly addressed.

The human rights organization is also renewing its call to IFOR and states contributing personnel to IFOR to search for, arrest and bring to justice those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The delegation's findings followed the launch of a 105-page report by Amnesty International this week, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: The international community's responsibility to ensure human rights* which makes extensive recommendations for strengthening international human rights implementation.

The report documents the failure to turn the principles underlying the Dayton agreement into meaningful protection of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina from further human rights violations.

"The international effort to monitor human rights has been plagued by insufficient funding, inadequate public reporting of violations, lack of qualified and properly trained personnel and slow deployment," the Amnesty International delegation said.

Many of the international civilian police monitors (CIVPOLs) operate without interpreters. The complex web of international bodies with overlapping mandates increases the difficulties of coordination and human rights monitors have been diverted to work on election related issues. Indeed, the international effort has focused more on conducting the election than on ensuring that people are safe.

Although many individuals cross internal boundaries without incident, recent organized visits by displaced persons have resulted in violent confrontations while some local authorities have refused to ensure their safety. Amnesty International has learned of forcible evictions of Muslims in the Teslić area, and harassment of members of ethnic minorities, including beatings, detention without charge or trial and deliberate and arbitrary killings.

The Amnesty International delegation stated that it is not safe for refugees and displaced persons to return home in most parts of the country. One elderly man from Srebrenica interviewed by the delegation said "I always think of going back. I think of nothing else, but how can I?" Nine members of his family are "missing" or were killed. His comment was echoed by many displaced persons who fear persecution if they return, particularly as long as the perpetrators of human rights abuses remain at large.

Amnesty International is particularly concerned that the imminent certification that conditions for elections exist may be used to gloss over continuing human rights abuses and may be taken by certain countries which host refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina as a signal to end the protection they enjoy and forcibly return them under the presumption that it is safe to do so.

"We fear that the run up to elections will lead to increased tension and further human rights abuses -- placing returning refugees at greater risk," the Amnesty International delegation said.

Human rights violations continue against Serbs who remained in, or who are attempting to return to, their homes in areas

of Sarajevo which were transferred under the Dayton agreement to the Federation. Bosnian Croat authorities have been committing human rights violations against Bosnian Muslims in the areas of the Federation which they continue to control, particularly in the western part of Mostar.

Amnesty International urges all states to implement the recommendations in this week's report to ensure that human rights are effectively protected and promoted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since there can be no lasting peace without human rights and justice.

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