

## **WEB ACTION**

### **Amnesty International**

#### **Bosnia: Stop ethnic discrimination in employment**

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s ethnic discrimination led to thousands of workers being unfairly dismissed from their jobs. A decade later, ethnic discrimination in employment is still widespread.

The authorities and companies in Republika Srpska -- one of the two semi-autonomous entities comprising Bosnia and Herzegovina -- do not take sufficient steps to encourage minority refugees and internally displaced persons to come back to their previous workplaces, while there are no support programs for returnees' reintegration in the labour market.

The Republika Srpska government claims there is a system in place to compensate unfairly dismissed workers but it has been reported that the authorities did not allocate any funds in the 2007 budget to repay them.

Without access to employment and financial security, those who fled their homes cannot hope to return and contribute to rebuilding multi-ethnic communities.

#### **Take action!**

Write to the Republika Srpska authorities to stop ethnic discrimination at work.

Dear Minister Tomić,

I am writing to express my concern about widespread ethnic discrimination in employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both during and after the 1992-95 war. As well as being a serious violation of the economic, social and cultural rights of the workers, ethnic discrimination in employment also poses one of the main obstacles to the sustainable and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons back to communities in which they will be in a minority.

I am particularly concerned about discriminatory practices against former employees of the Ljubija mines near Prijedor. These are outlined in Amnesty International's report *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Behind closed gates – ethnic discrimination in employment* (EUR 63/001/2006, 26 January 2006). They included arbitrary dismissals on ethnic grounds during the war, and continuing denial of employment.

Discrimination on any grounds is explicitly and clearly prohibited by international conventions to which Bosnia and Herzegovina is party, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Racial Discrimination, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. It is also prohibited by law in Republika Srpska.

I therefore urge the Republika Srpska authorities to take all necessary measures to eliminate ethnic discrimination and to promote the safe, sustainable and dignified

return of minority refugees and displaced persons. These are outlined in Amnesty International's report. In particular, I urge you to:

- ensure that all workers who were unfairly dismissed during the war, or who have suffered discrimination since then, receive full and adequate reparations;
- ensure that adequate financial resources are allocated in Republika Srpska's budget to pay reparations to unfairly dismissed workers;
- to introduce training and vocational education programmes targeted at minority and returnee workers who have been in a situation of long-term unemployment, including as a result of unfair dismissal or placement on a waiting list;
- take concrete and targeted measures to eliminate any form of discrimination in all areas of employment, and monitor the implementation of all measures taken;
- ensure that laws that comply with international standards to prohibit ethnic discrimination in employment and secure the right to freedom from harassment, intimidation and discrimination are in place;
- to fully implement existing labour law provisions and Constitutional Court decisions addressing and prohibiting discrimination in general and discrimination in employment in particular;
- devise and implement special measures or "affirmative action" plans to increase the representation of returnees belonging to ethnic minorities in the workforce both in the public administration and in the private sector; such steps may include setting quotas;
- to monitor the implementation of anti-discrimination provisions, including by collecting, analyzing and publishing statistical and other information on the ethnic composition of the workforce in the public administration as well as in the private sector;
- to ensure that the privatization of state-owned companies is conducted in a manner which respects human rights, including by ensuring that it does not result in discrimination and that it respects the rights of all workers, including those who were unfairly dismissed or placed on a waiting list, to collective bargaining and other representations;
- to ensure that economic activity does not result in the concealment or destruction of evidence of war crimes or crimes against humanity, and does not thereby hamper in any way any criminal investigation of such crimes and the appropriate commemoration of the victims.

Yours sincerely,

**Please send appeals to:**

**Minister for Labour and Veterans**

Boško Tomić  
Vuka Karadica 4  
78000 Banja Luka  
Republika Srpska

**Fax:** +387 51 331 652

**E-mail:** [mpb@mpb.vladars.net](mailto:mpb@mpb.vladars.net)

**Prime Minister**  
Milorad Dodik  
(Banski Dvor)  
Vuka Karadicia 4  
78000 Banja Luka  
Republika Srpska

**Fax:** +387 51 331 366

**E-mail:** [kabinet@vladars.net](mailto:kabinet@vladars.net)

Please write to, Boško Tomić, Minister for Labour and Veterans of Republika Srpska with copies to Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of Republika Srpska.