

BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

UPDATE: NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE DAYTON ACCORDS Ongoing Ethnically-Motivated Expulsions and Harassment in Bosnia

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INTRODUCTION

The ethnically-motivated intimidation, mistreatment and expulsions of civilians that were the hallmark of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina have continued since the signing of the Dayton agreement. Those ethnic minorities who have remained in their homes have come under increasing pressure in recent months to leave. Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat political leaders have not given up on their war goal of ethnically pure states—a goal that fueled much of the violence of the last four years. The Bosnian government of Alija Izetbegovic appears to have given up on the idea of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, opting instead to embrace both the goals and some of the means of its adversaries. Ethnically-motivated harassment of civilians continues to be motivated by local and national politician who maintain the political goal of “ethnically pure” states.

The Dayton peace agreement, which brought an end to the fighting in Bosnia, emphasized the right of displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes and the right of minorities to security and freedom from discrimination. Regrettably, however, the signing of the Dayton agreement did not bring an end to the forced displacement or harassment based on ethnic criteria of the civilian population. Non-Serbs recently forced to flee Republika Srpska territory report a campaign of intimidation and harassment. They report being beaten, having their homes bombed or set on fire and their property destroyed or stolen, and having endured a constant barrage of verbal insults and threats. Ethnic Serbs who remained in the Sarajevo suburbs after they were turned over to the authority of the Bosniak-Croat Federation report that they are under constant pressure to leave their homes. They too report beatings, thefts, destruction of their property, discrimination in access to medical treatment and other services, and a generally hostile and threatening atmosphere. On July 17, the International Police Task Force (IPTF) reported: “Families are told they will be killed if they don’t leave,” and reported that a thirty-seven-year-old woman was recently found dead in a pool of blood in her home in the suburb of Ilidza.¹

The local police have refused to protect civilians who are of a different ethnicity, typically failing to respond to calls for assistance and refusing to investigate complaints of violence or theft. Most of those interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki had little or no confidence that they could count on the local authorities for protection.

The international community in Bosnia is slow to respond to ethnically-motivated attacks on civilians, and its response has been weak. In the Teslic area, for example, the International Police Task Force maintained no presence in the villages where the worst abuses were occurring, but instead remained in the nearby town. Patrols at night, when most of the violence occurred, only began after over a hundred Bosniaks had already fled to Federation territory. Both IPTF and IFOR have often downplayed the authority they have to intervene to protect minority populations, opting instead to leave this to the local authorities who are often the very ones complicit in the harassment and violence. However, as this report notes, when there is an increased international presence in certain areas, abuses decrease. Recent efforts by the IPTF to increase its presence in the Teslic area are to be commended and should be encouraged in other areas of serious ethnic tension.

Although a fundamental right guaranteed by the Dayton agreement, return to their homes in Bosnia and Hercegovina has been nearly impossible for those wishing to return to an area where the majority of current residents are from another ethnic group. Those who have tried to return have often been turned away by violent mobs or obstructionist local authorities. Many others have been too intimidated to attempt going home. The harassment and expulsion reported below and the repeated failure of local officials to protect minorities make it increasingly unlikely that potential returnees will be willing to return, especially when there is no seed community to return to, and when they fear they will not be protected.

¹ Mark Heninrich, Reuter, Sarajevo, July 17.

In this report, based on interviews in Bosnia primarily between May and June, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki documents the recent expulsions of Bosniaks in and around Teslic, a town in Republika Srpska (RS), as well as the intimidation and harassment of Serbs in the Sarajevo suburbs and of Bosniaks in the Sapna Thumb region near Zvornik. It should be noted that ethnically-motivated pressure on civilians is not limited to these areas: ethnic minorities in many other towns in Bosnia and Hercegovina continue to live in fear of persecution. Indeed, fifty Bosniaks living in the Banja Luka suburb of Vrbanja were recently evicted², and new cases of evictions have been reported in Kostanica as well.³ There are allegations that there have also been recent expulsions from Kotor Varos. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki will continue to monitor and report on these cases. For this report, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki field representatives conducted dozens of interviews in the Teslic area, in the Sapna Thumb region, and in the suburbs of Sarajevo.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls on the international community to take immediate action to protect minority communities under threat. NATO troops in Bosnia (IFOR) and the International Police Task Force (IPTF), should increase their presence in areas where populations are at risk, as detailed below. In anticipation of elections planned for September, IFOR recently promised to ensure freedom of movement and other rights set out in the Dayton agreement. IFOR troops should be instructed to take direct action to prevent the ethnically-motivated expulsion and harassment of civilians. The Military Annex of the Dayton agreement permits IFOR to "prevent interference with the movement of civilian populations, refugees and displaced persons, and to respond appropriately to deliberate violence to life and person."⁴

TESLIC

- IFOR and IPTF must increase their presence in all the villages around Teslic where minorities remain, and should make it clear to local authorities that they must not tolerate further incidents. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki is especially concerned about the villagers in Osivica and Dzulic, which are more remote, and where there are specific abuses such as forced labor. Patrolling has not served to deter attacks; IFOR should establish a twenty-four-hour watch on the villages for the time being. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki commends IPTF on its reported decision to begin patrolling the villages three times per week with the RS police, but believes this will not be sufficient to stop abuses, especially if the patrols are conducted in a predictable pattern. Night patrols are particularly important; IFOR seems better equipped for night patrols, which are by their nature dangerous.

² According to reports by the UNHCR and OSCE human rights monitors, fifty people were forced to leave the suburb between June 3 and 21. Thirty were expelled through physical coercion (when Bosnian Serb residents, many of them displaced persons, physically attacked or advanced on Bosniak residents, in some cases breaking down doors with sticks and axes and chasing people). The remainder were evicted by official order of the local authorities, under articles 39 and 40 of the Republika Srpska law on abandoned property. Evicted persons were reportedly told that the evictions were related to their contacts with OSCE and IPTF representatives. The local police often show up when called by someone, but always arrive too late to intervene. These reports have been confirmed to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Civil Affairs.

³ IPTF reported to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that six or seven families had been served with official eviction notices in Kostanica, which is in RS territory. Half the families were Bosniak; the others were Bosnian Serb families. Various reasons were given for the evictions by local authorities, i.e. that the evictees had "incorrect papers" or that they had abandoned their property according to RS law. IPTF has succeeded in preventing evictions in several cases, but reported that the president of the court in Bosanski Novi (the municipality which governs Kostanica) refused to answer IPTF's questions about the evictions.

⁴General Framework Agreement, Annex 1A, Military Aspects of the Peace Settlement, Article VI, 3 (d).

- The Office of the High Representative and the IFOR commander should insist that the RS government in Pale order the Teslic authorities to take all necessary steps to stop the harassment and abuse of vulnerable populations.
- IFOR, IPTF, and the High Representative should continue to publicly condemn human rights abuses in the Teslic area.
- IPTF should insist on a full investigation by the RS police of the incidents described in this report and the arrest of those responsible. The investigation should be closely supervised by IPTF. Non-compliance should be reported publicly and to the Office of the High Representative.
- IPTF should be present at all RS police checkpoints. IPTF and IFOR should stop the local practice of charging people to leave or return to Teslic or otherwise impeding their freedom of movement. Any new procedures for passage should be closely scrutinized by IPTF. IFOR and IPTF should insist on removal of all checkpoints, temporary or otherwise, on the road to Tesanj, should violations of checkpoint rules on that road continue.

SAPNA THUMB

- Human Rights Watch/Helsinki strongly urges IPTF and IFOR to continue twice-daily patrols in the villages and to issue stern warnings to the Bosnian Serbs to stop actions against the villagers, to cease provocations in the media, and to issue public warnings to those inciting ethnic hatred (as required under the Dayton agreement).
- IPTF should establish a communications system with the villagers so they can be notified immediately in case of emergency, as there are no telephone lines to the villages.
- International and nongovernmental organizations are encouraged to conduct needs assessments in the villages and to increase their presence. The villages have received little humanitarian/reconstruction aid, probably due to their isolated location and poor roads.

SARAJEVO SUBURBS

- Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls upon the Bosnian government immediately to stop attacks upon minorities, to condemn them on Bosnian radio and television, and to make arrests of those responsible. The Bosnian government should also cease the politically motivated resettlement of displaced persons in the suburbs. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki believes the resettlement is being carried out in order to prevent the return of Serbs and other non-Bosniaks to the city.
- In the interim, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls on IFOR and IPTF to increase their presence in the suburbs, especially at night. The international community's failure to protect the Serbs of Sarajevo and thereby prevent mass exodus during February and March was widely condemned; the mistakes made then should not be repeated. IPTF should not decrease its forces substantially while serious abuses are taking place; certainly the closure of the IPTF office in Ilijas seems contraindicated given the current situation.
- International human rights monitors and IPTF should create a mechanism by which Serb residents in the Sarajevo suburbs can report incidents of harassment or violence and obtain protection. Human rights groups should work with remaining Serb residents to develop self-protection systems—e.g. a “neighborhood watch” system which would provide notification to international monitors or others of abuses so that immediate intervention can take place.

Finally, a note about the protection of IPTF personnel themselves. In light of recent threats by Bosnian Serb authorities to attack IPTF officers, it is critical that IPTF immediately be provided with sufficient communications equipment for use in the field. IPTF officers have repeatedly expressed concern to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki and other

organizations about the lack of equipment such as hand-held radios, vehicles, etc. The failure to provide IPTF with this essential equipment places the lives of civilians and IPTF officers at risk.

ETHNIC CLEANSING BY BOSNIAN SERBS IN TESLIC

In a blatant violation of international law and the Dayton agreement, an estimated 200 Bosniaks living in villages around the town of Teslic in central Bosnia have been forced to flee over the past two months due to a campaign of bombings, beatings, stone-throwing, threats, and verbal harassment conducted by Bosnian Serbs. Villagers from Gornji Rankovic, Gornji Teslic, Irice, Gusti Teslic, Barici, Marica, Krklese, Osivica, Mladenovac, Gomjenica, and Ruzevici are under threat. Local Republika Srpska police have refused to intervene to stop the harassment and expulsions, which, according to victims, are most frequently committed by displaced Bosnian Serbs. One of the villages, Gornji Rankovic, which had a population of more than one hundred Bosniaks before the recent exodus, is now almost completely empty, and other villages are steadily being abandoned due to harassment or fear.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interviewed Bosniaks recently displaced from Teslic and surrounding villages, all of whom reported serious and protracted harassment by Serb displaced persons and/or neighbors. They reported beatings, confiscation of land, produce, and other property, bombings of houses with grenades, the burning of haystacks, and verbal provocation. One young man stated that non-Serbs are still conscripted as forced laborers by Bosnian Serbs.

Bosniaks leaving RS territory have been required to obtain a pass from the military authorities, at the cost of DM 10 (German) per person.⁵ They are required to report where they are going and for how long, whom they will visit, and the names of relatives remaining in the Teslic area. They leave with few, if any, possessions unless they are willing to pay additional "baggage fees". Most people said they were afraid to carry anything which might show they were leaving for good. The passes reportedly entitle them to leave and come back, as long as they return by a certain date, but those who have tried to return reported they were subject to harassment. All those interviewed stated that the RS police either participate in the harassment of ethnic minorities or do nothing to stop it, and that reports made to police result in repercussions instead of protection.

According to expelled persons, conditions for ethnic minorities in the villages are worse than in towns, and they reported that in some areas, the situation is worse than it was before the signing of the Dayton agreement. In particular, minorities appear to be in jeopardy in the villages of Gomjenica, Barici, Rankovic, and Ruzevici.

A joint mission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and human rights monitors from the Office of the High Representative (OHR) confirmed reports of "ethnic cleansing" in the Teslic area. "There is a general sense of terror among the Muslims and Croats in this area—they are hesitant to talk out of fear of retaliation," said Michael O'Flaherty of the Human Rights Coordination Center of the OHR. Local radio stations incite hatred and violence against non-Serbs. The mayor of Dobojski told the delegation that there had been ninety-one "voluntary" departures between May and mid-June alone. One monitor told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that there is "a general lack of awareness on the part of IFOR and IPTF about the details of the situation because the local people do not talk to them. Many abuses take place at night, but IPTF does not patrol after eleven p.m. because it is too dangerous."

⁵ IPTF reported to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that as of July 11, travellers are no longer required to pay DM 10, but must have identification cards with RS stamps. Non-Serbs do not generally have these stamps, and they are prohibitively expensive.

A.S., a twenty-year-old Bosniak male from one village outside of Teslic⁶ who left his village on May 29, 1996, described the situation in Gomjenica and told about his experiences:

I had to leave because I was tortured several times. My neighbor [. . .]⁷ beat me. I did not dare to go out—each time I went out of my home I was beaten. They [Serb civilians] told me “This is the Serb entity, why don't you leave?” A few days before I left, [my neighbor] beat me and tried to kill me, but I ran away. They said they would come to our house to find me, so I was afraid and I left. I left with nothing—only with this [pointing to clothing he was wearing]. I crossed [the inter-entity boundary line, or IEBL] at 3:00 a.m.—no one stopped me. I was afraid to go during the day because they would not have let me pass.

When we went to the [Serb] police, they did nothing. The police just helped them [the civilians committing the abuses] to do this. Every night they [Serb civilians] throw some grenades. . . if they don't throw grenades into the house, they throw them outside the house. Some people saw IFOR soldiers and complained to them. IFOR told them it is the job of the IPTF, but we didn't ever see IPTF in our village. There are only fifty people left in [my village].⁸ Now we are a minority so they abuse us. We must leave—we have no choice unless things change.

A.S. expressed deep concern for those left behind:

My parents wanted to come with me, but I didn't have a place to bring them, so I came first. My parents are still there, but I want to get them out. My mother is afraid now. She came here to visit me and went back, but she is afraid because they have beaten her and they harass her all the time. The police have a list [of who goes out of Republika Srpska and returns]. If you have been out to the other side they say you are a spy if you come back.

An eighteen-year-old man who did not want to give his name, had to leave his parents and sister behind in his village. He had difficulty relating his story to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki because he was shaking and upset.

They [Serb civilians, including neighbors and displaced persons] mistreated us, with the help of the police. We had a house on the road, but they came and threw us out of our house. We went to live in another house—an old abandoned one. They [local Serbs] took our land and everything. A man named [. . .] came and beat my father, and threatened to stab him if he went to the police.

Asked about international presence in the village, the young man stated that “ IFOR just passes on the road—we don't dare to say anything to them at all. We never saw IPTF.”

A middle-aged couple described the events which led them to leave their home in Gomjenica. S.J.⁹, a fifty-five-year-old Bosniak male, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki:

Five members of my family left with us. They [the Serbs] took all my land, they destroyed everything. When you ask the police to help you, they don't do anything. They took my land away about one

⁶ The village is not named here because of fear of retribution against family members.

⁷ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has the name of the neighbor and other details about the case that have been omitted here.

⁸ According to the witness, there were about 1,000 Bosniaks living in Gomjenica before the war, and about 150 remained as of January 1996.

⁹ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview. Dolac (near Tesanj), June 9, 1996.

month ago. When I went to plant on the land, four guys came and told me not to plant there. I tried to complain to the municipality, but they told us we have no right to protest, that Muslims have no rights. They said, "Why didn't Alija [Itzebegovic] tell you that you have no rights here and that you have to leave?" Then, a representative of the village, Miro Jovic, came and took the land. During that last month the pressure on us was very strong. They thought I had family on the other side and used that as a pretext for kicking us out. As soon as the sun set, we locked our door—Serbs outside were shooting, throwing grenades, singing, shouting, screaming, and burning haystacks. We didn't dare to stand near the window. This month was the worst, but ever since Dayton was signed, we have had troubles like this. It was the Serb refugees doing these things; we know, though we didn't dare to look [as it was happening]. We complained to the police in writing and by verbal report, but they always told us, "Be happy because you are in our country" and "you do not belong here." Only once did we see IFOR armored vehicles passing through Gomjenica. We never saw the IPTF. We were all scared to go to IFOR headquarters in Teslic because we would be seen. [When we left the village], we brought our clothes and whatever we could carry in some bags, but nothing more. Before the war there were about 130 Muslim houses—now there are about ten. Half of those people left before Dayton and half after.

His wife, M.J., continued:

When I came back to Teslic [from a visit to Federation territory] on the date of expiry of my pass¹⁰, a big crowd [of Serb civilians] gathered around and began beating us. One Serb policeman was there and tried to stop it when I asked him for help, but when he said something, the crowd pushed him away. This happened in the center of town—there were at least thirty people there, men and women. One of my friends was beaten black and blue. We ran away and when they caught up with us they beat our legs to make us run faster. The crowd was threatening us, and we ran all the way to the Serb checkpoint before the inter-entity line.¹¹ The Serbs stopped us there and did not let us pass. They called back to their headquarters in Teslic to ask who we were. Then they told us to go back to our houses in Gomjenica. They told us that if we don't go back my husband would be beaten. I was crying and so afraid, and my friend was badly beaten. They [the police] told us we were beaten because Muslims from Tesanj¹² were trying to visit their houses in Teslic. The crowd must have thought we were from Tesanj and trying to visit Teslic. When we got back no one offered to take care of my friend, who was badly injured. No one offered a doctor to us. We stayed in the house for one month, and then we left.¹³

¹⁰ Non-Serbs are required to obtain a pass for traveling across the inter-entity line from the municipal authorities, according to non-Serbs from the area. These passes are necessary in order to be permitted to exit and to re-enter.

¹¹ The checkpoint referred to consists of three Serb policemen in their car, and is about one kilometer from the IFOR checkpoint near the IEBL. While fixed checkpoints are prohibited by IFOR and the IPTF, police often use parked vehicles as de facto checkpoints. Checkpoints are supposed to be temporary (less than one hour) and are not supposed to be used for purposes other than routine traffic control—the use of checkpoints for identity checks is not permitted under the established checkpoint guidelines.

¹² Tesanj is a town in Federation territory.

¹³ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Dolac, near Tesanj, June 9, 1996.

B.R.¹⁴, a twenty-six-year-old from the village of Ruzevic, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that the Bosnian Serbs are still using non-Serbs for forced labor, in direct violation of international law and the Dayton agreement.¹⁵ This information is consistent with other reports received by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki over the past several months. According to B.R.:

Muslim men are still being forced by Serb civilians to work for them fixing roads and harvesting potatoes. They don't let you work on your own land—you must work for them, harvesting their land. When you are a minority you have no rights. They take us and force us to work, when I have already worked for them for four years.

B.R. told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki about what he saw in Teslic and the procedure one must follow in order to travel or to leave:

I saw everything—who did what. I saw when Serb civilians beat a Muslim woman of about fifty years old in the center of town...As they beat her they stopped IFOR and told them to “take this garbage” away to Tesanj. IFOR took the woman's things and then other IFOR soldiers came and took the woman out to Tesanj. If you manage to grow something, you come back in the morning and everything is gone—they come at night to take your crops. In the hospital here, Muslims wait until dark for care and have to pay for medical treatment. You have to pay with one gold ring for treatment for one illness. The Serbs are helped first. I think it is worse in the villages, there they are throwing bombs and setting things on fire. People asked IFOR for help, but each time IFOR said they could do nothing and to go to IPTF. I saw the IPTF in town but not in the villages. For a year we didn't dare to sleep at night. . . .

I was [recently] in the town of Teslic, because two buses [of Bosniak visitors] were coming to visit and I was waiting for them. Serb civilians— refugees—told me, “We have orders to kill you. Get out of here.” In order to leave Teslic, you have to get a pass from the *milicija* [Bosnian Serb military authorities]. You must pay DM 10 per person, then you must tell them where you are going, whom you will visit, and for how long. You also have to write the names of relatives you have left in Teslic. You have to pay DM 50 extra to take your things with you. The man in charge of the *milicija* and who is in charge of giving permission to leave is Maj. Marinko Dukic.

In June 1996, B.R. decided he could no longer risk staying, and left Teslic for good.

¹⁴Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Jelah, June 13, 1996.

¹⁵ Throughout the conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina, the parties used civilians as forced laborers to dig trenches on the front lines and for other dangerous work, in violation of the Geneva Convention. Forced labor on the Bosnian Serb side was particularly widespread; practically all non-Serb males who refused to serve in the Bosnian Serb army were placed under what was referred to as “working obligations” by the Bosnian Serb authorities. Conditions were often brutal, with exposure to the elements, lack of food, and mistreatment occurring frequently in forced labor brigades. Non-Serbs were not paid for their labor except in rare cases. Families were separated without notification for months at a time, and an unknown number of men were killed while in forced labor. Some women and minors were also forced to perform hard or dangerous work. For more information, see Anti-Slavery International, “Forced Labor in Northern Bosnia,” London, 1995, and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, “Northwestern Bosnia: Human Rights Abuses During a Cease-fire and Peace Negotiations,” A Human Rights Watch Short Report, vol.8,no.1, February, 1996.

A forty-eight-year old Bosniak man from Gornji Rankovic,¹⁶ now living in Federation territory, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that he and his wife, together with their five children, had been forced to leave the village after his wife was beaten by Bosnian Serbs. According to the couple, beatings of Bosniaks by Bosnian Serb police and local civil defense forces occur frequently. On one occasion, said the man, "I was beaten up and went to the Polish IFOR in Banja Vrucica covered in blood. They wrote down my information and then sent me to the RS police station to make a report. I was too afraid to go, so I just went home." The man stated he had never seen an IPTF patrol in the village, and that there was a heavy presence of RS police and soldiers. He claimed that several people had died since January as the result of beatings, and that persecution of Bosniaks in the villages around Teslic had actually worsened since the Dayton agreement. He reported that grenades are thrown at villagers, both men and women are beaten, and men are taken for compulsory labor.

Two sisters who fled Teslic in May 1996 told of the harassment they had experienced since the signing of the Dayton agreement, and of their eventual expulsion.

D.N., about fifty years old, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, "We didn't dare to sit at the window. They [Serb civilians] threw grenades, threw bottles at our windows, and yelled and screamed. We didn't dare to work on our land."¹⁷

H.P., D.N.'s sister, about fifty-five years old, continued:

After Dayton, we wanted to work, but we had no work and no food. We had to pay for humanitarian aid. The harassment started as soon as the political parties were formed. On May 4, we looked out our window and saw the police stop a young man, ask him for his ID papers, and then beat him for twenty minutes. Our name, which is Muslim, was on our door. They came to the door and forced us to open it. Then they beat me so much that people around us were screaming "Why don't you fall down?"

The sisters, in fear of their lives, decided to leave. H.P. told of their departure from Teslic:

We had to pay DM 10 per person for the papers to leave. On the way out of Teslic, there is a Serb checkpoint before you reach the IFOR checkpoint. At the checkpoint, the Serb police took my passport, the letters of the transfer of my apartment, my son's papers [her son died during war]. . .they took everything except my personal ID card, which was at the bottom of my bag. We didn't dare to talk to IFOR or IPTF because the Serbs don't like them, and we would be killed if they saw us talking to them. IFOR sees how the Serbs stop people at the checkpoint before the IFOR checkpoint, but they too are afraid to say anything to the Serb police.¹⁸

D.F., a fifty-five-year-old Bosniak woman from the village of Gornji Teslic, related the events which led to her family's flight:

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Dolac, June 2, 1996.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Jelah, near Teslic, June 13, 1996.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Jelah, near Teslic, June 13, 1996.

We had no living conditions... We had only a drop of oil... They took everything from us... We couldn't work, we were terrorized. We didn't dare to pray, to walk outside, to sit at the window. We covered the windows at night so they wouldn't see the light. We didn't dare to go out in *dimija*,¹⁹ only in pants or skirts. We had no jobs. We turned out the lights if we heard someone coming so no one would come to our house. When we went to the market in Teslic to sell things, they would just take our products and chase us away. We didn't dare to go to anyone to talk [about what was happening] because we were afraid of being punished after. We never saw IFOR or IPTF [in the village]—no one came.²⁰

The parents left first, and headed toward Tesanj.

We didn't dare to stay home... They took everything from us, they took our land. We have nothing... We left everything. When we left, the police stopped us, looked at us, and saw I had some things in my hand. They said, "You have to pay something." I told them I paid already and had permission to leave. They asked, "Why are you carrying all that?" But I had almost nothing with me. I had to give them DM 400. The day after I arrived in Tesanj, TV reporters interviewed me, and the report appeared on television. The following day, the Serbs destroyed my house and broke my windows in Teslic looking for us to kill us. My son came to visit us here [in Tesanj, Federation territory], and when he went back [to Republika Srpska] the Serbs beat him. Two Serb civilians, one named Dragan Kuzmanovic, who was in charge of a concentration camp during the war, knew my son was Muslim and asked him "Who are you?" [My son] answered with his name. The men said "You are in Republika Srpska, you don't belong here, you know this is Serb land. If you stay longer than seven days we will kill you."

Her son told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, "I am still afraid, even here. I am scared of cars when they come because I think they are Serbs."²¹

Adil Osmanovic, the exiled Muslim mayor of Teslic, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that according to the 1991 census, Teslic had a 55 percent Serb majority, but that the town's population is at least 95 percent Serb. The mayor expressed concern about Article 3b of the OSCE Voter Registration Rules and Regulations, which permits people to vote where they currently reside. According to Osmanovic, displaced Serbs in Teslic are likely to vote there because they too are afraid to vote in their places of origin in Federation territory. The media in Teslic are controlled by Pale, which contributes to an atmosphere of intolerance. Osmanovic fears that the Serb vote will make it impossible for non-Serbs to return to Teslic. There are approximately 2,000 Bosniaks and Croats remaining in the Teslic area, according to Mr. Osmanovic, but more are leaving each day. Each day a few people come to Tesanj to visit relatives who have been expelled from Teslic, he told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, but few go back. Mr. Osmanovic claims that the police are complicit in crimes against Bosniaks because they fail to take action to stop abuses.²²

Until recently the International Police Task Force (IPTF), mandated by the Dayton agreement to monitor police forces, had no regular presence in the villages outside Teslic, although it conducted patrols through the town and as of mid-June had twenty-five officials there. As the previous testimony reflects, villagers interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki said they had never seen IPTF in the villages, and claimed that IPTF's presence in the city of Teslic was ineffective as it did not actively monitor the activities of the RS police. The villagers reported they were in any case too afraid to approach IFOR or IPTF for fear of reprisal. An IPTF spokesperson admitted that while there had been plans to

¹⁹Traditional Muslim clothing worn by some women.

²⁰Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Jelah, June 13, 1996.

²¹ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Jelah, June 13, 1996.

²² Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Tesanj, June 14, 1996.

deploy IPTF in the villages in the Teslic area, the plans had never been carried out. After at least six weeks of expulsions, IPTF announced that it would conduct regular patrols with RS police in the villages, but Human Rights Watch/Helsinki is concerned that the plans call for patrols only three times per week. As of several weeks later, villagers in Osivici had only seen IPTF once, and in Barici, patrols have been too infrequent to make a difference. IFOR also has little or no presence in most of the villages. There is, in sum, no international authority present to protect remaining villagers. In the meantime, returnees have been blocked from returning to visit their homes in Teslic—on June 2, some would-be returnees were injured when their bus was attacked by a Serb mob, less than twenty-four hours after RS spokesperson Biljana Plavsic promised full cooperation with the Dayton agreement.

BOSNIAK VILLAGES NEAR ZVORNIK UNDER THREAT

Given the "ethnic cleansing" conducted in Bosniak villages around Teslic, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki is very concerned about the vulnerable Bosniak populations of eight Bosniak villages located in Republika Srpska, in the region called the "Sapna Thumb". These villages were transferred to the authority of the RS on March 21, 1996, according to the Dayton agreement.

These villages, which include Mahmutovici, Kovacevici, Vitinica, Selimovic, Handelici, Zaseok, Nezuk, and Dugi Dio, fall under the jurisdiction of the Zvornik municipality, where Bosnian Serb police beat confessions out of Bosniak males from Srebrenica (referred to in the media as the "Zvornik 7"), who had been turned over to them by IFOR in mid-May. While the RS police, in an agreement with IPTF, have not entered the villages (with the exception of Dugi Dio) to assume authority, the situation remains tense.²³

The combined population of the villages is about 4,200 people. Following the transfer, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki visited two of the villages. In a March 29 communication to IPTF, UNHCR, OSCE and several NGOs, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki expressed concern for the security of Bosniaks in the villages given the history of the region and provocative statements made by the local press in Zvornik, which called for Bosnian Serb displaced persons to be moved into Bosniak homes and Bosniak men to be sent to Zvornik for interrogation. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki visited the villages again from May 27 to 30 to reassess the situation, following the bombing of several houses in the village of Dugi Dio, and continues to be concerned about the potential for interethnic violence there.

The local television and radio stations in Zvornik have continued to make provocative statements about the Bosniaks in the villages, threatening to arrest men of military age, and calling for the expulsion of Bosniaks so that displaced Bosnian Serbs can be resettled in Bosniak houses.

Abuses by Republika Srpska Police in Dugi Dio

In April, Bosniaks started to return to Dugi Dio, a village which previously stood in "no man's land" between the Serb and Bosnian armies but is now in RS territory. On April 25, the RS police beat up five men from Dugi Dio who were repairing the road to the village. Since the beatings, there have been other incidents of harassment and intimidation: Serb nationalist music was blasted from the hills down into the village, a grenade was thrown into the village, and there was an incident of sniper fire.

On May 23, 1996, at 4:00 a.m. several houses were blown up in Dugi Dio. The RS police immediately stated that the Bosniaks had blown up their own houses. A man who had been working for weeks to rebuild his house told

²³ It has been reported, but not confirmed, that the IEBL Commission, a commission made up of representatives from RS and the Federation that negotiates changes in the inter-entity line, recently agreed to shift the IEBL line in the Sapna region, which would return the aforementioned villages, with the exception of Dugi Dio, to the Federation. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki believes that the concerns raised in this report are nonetheless important and may relate to other areas. The villagers in Dugo Dio continue to fear for their safety, needless to say.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki tearfully that he had just gone to Tuzla to bring his wife and child back to live in their house when it was destroyed.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki is concerned that IPTF and IFOR are not sufficiently cognizant of or concerned about the potential for violence in this area and have not taken the steps necessary to ensure protection for vulnerable populations there. IPTF sometimes uses Bosnian Serb translators from Zvornik while conducting patrols in the villages, decreasing the chances of the villagers openly expressing their concerns. Further, IPTF personnel made statements to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki which indicated disregard for the Bosniak population. One IPTF officer in a position of authority stated, "Muslims are crazy—one minute they will smile at you and the next minute they will stab you in the back." Human Rights Watch/Helsinki was told by the same person, "IPTF and IFOR have an understanding that if any fighting starts among the locals, we will just run away." Several IPTF officers were not even aware that the villages were in RS territory. Nonetheless, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki recognizes the substantial effort made by many IPTF personnel in the Sapna area to prevent an escalation of the tension through patrols and negotiations. Several IPTF officers expressed concern about the villagers and assured Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that when they were on patrols with the RS police in the area, "we don't let them out of our sight."

HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION OF SERBS IN SARAJEVO

Bosnian Serbs—who previously resisted substantial pressure to leave Sarajevo during the transition of authority from Bosnian Serb to Federation control in February/March—are now being forced to leave their homes by a campaign of beatings, expulsions and threats conducted by Bosniaks. Abuses are most serious in the suburbs of Vogosca, Ilidza, and Ilijas. In early June, IFOR spokesman Maj. Simon Haselock told reporters in Sarajevo that one elderly Serb man was beaten five times in a ten-day period.²⁴ On June 13, six men in Bosnian army uniforms attacked a group of Croats and Serbs in Semizovac, near Sarajevo, according to IPTF. The victims appeared to have been badly beaten.²⁵ An estimated 200 persons are reported to have fled the Sarajevo suburbs in the last two months.

While the Federation police claim they cannot prevent these attacks, eyewitnesses report that the police often do not try to assist non-Bosniaks who are being harassed, and some reports indicate that the police have been involved in some attacks. The International Police Task Force has stated that it is investigating approximately 400 reports of abuses against Bosnian Serbs living in the suburbs of Sarajevo.

Serb representatives in Sarajevo are also experiencing harassment. For example, Bogdan Milanovic, head of Democratic Initiative for Sarajevo Serbs (DISS), was recently arrested by Sarajevo authorities and accused of war crimes, in violation of agreed-upon guidelines set by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for the arrest of suspected war criminals. Milanovic has not been formally charged. According to IPTF, the Bosnian government has offered no strong evidence of his involvement in war crimes.

Harassment of Serbs in the Sarajevo Suburb of Ilijas

There are approximately 250 Serbs remaining in Ilijas. Many of those interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki report growing fear for their safety. Some of those interviewed reported that they have suffered beatings and other forms of harassment by Bosniaks living in the Sarajevo suburbs. According to international monitors, abuses against Serbs remaining in Ilijas are often committed by displaced persons, many of whom are women from Srebrenica.

²⁴ ONASA, "IFOR Getting Harassment Reports from Teslic, Sarajevo," June 4, 1996.

²⁵ ONASA, "Croats, Serbs Beaten in Sarajevo Suburb," June 14, 1996.

Since the transfer of authority, sixty-seven Serb graves in the suburb of Ilijas have been vandalized and the Serbian Orthodox church partially destroyed. The Federation police arrested five suspects, but released them almost immediately.²⁶ No charges have been filed in the case.

On July 17, IPTF spokesman Alexander Ivanko said, "The problem [of human rights abuses in the Sarajevo suburbs] seems to be getting worse instead of better...A number of families are coming to us asking for protection and support in evacuating them because their situation is getting unbearable...If the Bosnian government is truly dedicated to multi-ethnicity, as it says it is, they are really blowing their chances in [former] Serb Sarajevo with people being harassed and threatened on a daily basis...We believe the Bosnian government is doing absolutely nothing to stop this harassment."²⁷

Despite the ongoing abuse and harassment of Serbs living in Ilijas, and the fact that the local police have failed in most cases to intervene on the behalf of Serb citizens under threat, IPTF plans to close down its Ilijas²⁸ office in July. The IPTF force has already been reduced from thirty to eighteen. The relative ethnic balance of the police force at the time of the transfer of authority of the suburbs (of ninety local police, fifty were Bosniak, thirty-three Serb, and seven Croat) has deteriorated. Currently, there are 113 local police, of whom all are Bosniak except for one, who is Croat.

Nevena Talic, a fifty-nine-year-old Serb woman who lives in the village of Ljubnici near Ilijas²⁹, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that she was constantly harassed, her belongings stolen, and that she had been severely beaten:

I lived here with one son—I had no one else, my husband died eighteen years ago. . . . I stayed because I had nowhere to go. I hoped they wouldn't kill me. I did not want to go to a collective center. I had an operation one year ago. I don't know how it will be now. Two months ago, some Muslim men came and stole things in other houses and then they came here and broke into my garage at 1:30 a.m. I heard them but was afraid to go out. One month ago people broke into [my other house] and stole things. Then they came to this house—they knocked on the door at about eleven p.m. I was sleeping. They said, "This is the police, open up." I said, "I will call the police on you," and I screamed and they ran away. The next night they came back and took everything . . .

Before all this a man from Srebrenica moved into a house near here and came and threatened me. He said, "Karadzic fucked you, Mladic fucked you. I will cut you into pieces and burn down everything you have." I went to the police in Ilijas and asked, "Can you come and help me and protect me? They are provoking me." I asked that if they could not protect me they would help me to take my stuff and leave. They said they would help. They listened to me. I trusted them. But on June 1, five or six civilian men came to my house. Some others stood around the house to watch if the police were coming. Two broke into the garage and set fire to it. The garage burned for three days. They burned my clothes and all my things that were there. . . . I went to the garage to open it and saw them inside and asked what they are doing, what do they want with an old woman? They said, "We are waiting for a Cetnik like you to throw bombs at us." I told them, "It's easy for you to fight with an old woman!" Everyone was awake around in other houses. I screamed and screamed. Someone [a man responsible for the local Muslim community] came by and asked what they want with me. I thought he would help me. But he left and closed his door behind him. . . . I screamed for one hour. Their lights were all on. Everybody heard but no one helped me.

²⁶ Mark Heinrich, Reuter, July 17, 1996.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ilijas is one of the formerly Serb suburbs of Sarajevo.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview. Ljubnici, June 25, 1996. Nevena Talic is not her real name.

Two of the guys went to a store to get drinks. After that they came back to beat me. I was waiting in front of the house with a stick. I didn't expect that they were going to beat me. They saw no one was helping me and I wasn't ready to leave to go somewhere else. They came to the gate and came into the yard when they were already drunk. The young one took the stick from me, and came into my house. He took my telephone and vacuum cleaner. The other one hit me on the head with the stick, he took my hands and beat my legs. My back and legs were all black and blue. He tried to strangle me twice. If he had done it [showed bruises on neck, still visible] a third time I would have died. My back and behind still hurt me. I stayed on the ground all night. They took all they wanted and left. No one came to help me. I woke up and came inside all dirty. I boiled water and changed my clothes. . . One Muslim man came to stay here with his wife to help me. He helped me. The police didn't do anything. They took statements but waited for me to leave. I wanted IPTF to come but the Federation police wouldn't tell the IPTF about it. The police came here and said they didn't have a car to take me to the doctor. I couldn't walk very far and I was afraid to leave my house. The police took a statement, but they did not contact IPTF.

The woman described the problems she had getting medical treatment:

I didn't get to the doctor until three days after the incident, when a social worker came to get me by car. In the hospital a Serb doctor came to see me. I have problems with my heart and have had a hysterectomy. When I was beaten, I felt pain inside. The doctor said she couldn't believe that I had survived this beating. The nurses didn't let the doctor treat me. Other patients came in and complained, which prevented the doctor from helping me. I was all blue but they didn't take x-rays. The doctor did not ask me any questions. She didn't dare to ask because of the nurses. The doctor was good but couldn't ask anything. The nurses asked if she was done. The doctor said yes and shrugged. I said "Aren't you going to take blood or something?" I felt all broken inside. The doctor gave me a piece of paper to go get an x-ray in another room. There, two doctors said to me, "Why don't you go to have Karadzic help you? You're a Cetnik." They took blood. They were threatening me inside the hospital too.

A sixty-two-year-old Serb man³⁰ also told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki about being beaten:

A Muslim man lives in my house—he is from Srebrenica and I made a deal with him to [live in] one floor of my house. It is good to have someone live in my house to protect it—before someone lived there, it was broken into five times. I went back every ten to fifteen days to visit my house. On May 19, I went to my house but did not find [the tenant]; only his wife. I went to see my crops behind the house. When I went to the field, a refugee from Srebrenica—about twenty-eight years old—came and said, "It is finished for you here. Don't come back." I said, "Where is your father?" and he said, "My father is not here." I turned around to walk away, and I heard a noise and saw three women with wooden sticks and three boys, each about eighteen years old. They came over and frisked me to check if I had any knives or guns. I only had my wallet. The women and the young boys and the twenty-eight-year-old beat me and threw me to the ground. They beat me with wooden sticks on my shoulders and head. I tried to run away—I ran 400 meters and they continued to beat me the whole way. One man tried to choke me. They threw stones, but the stones did not hit me. I fell many times. I heard people calling from the surrounding houses, "We will fuck your mother".

I went onto the road and saw [an IPTF officer] I knew and the other American IPTF guys. They took me in their car, and we came to the big new bridge. IPTF called Visoko police and more IPTF to come. It took the Visoko police forty minutes to come from the moment the IPTF called them. They [Federation police] refused to take me to the doctor. I was wounded on the face and chest. The IPTF

³⁰ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, interview, Ilijas, June 24, 1996.

took me to Visoko, and the doctor examined me in front of IPTF. The next day I went to the hospital to get an x-ray, and another surgeon/specialist said, "They beat you just a little bit, they should have beaten you more." On May 21, I visited the police station in Visoko to report on this. They took my information, but they did nothing.

M. K.³¹, a sixty-six-year-old Serb man living in Ilijas, described to a Human Rights Watch/Helsinki representative how his house was confiscated:

I lost my house when the Federation police took over. The Muslims came to occupy my house. I don't know who they are or where they come from. One of the refugees said, "Karadzic fucks your mother. Why doesn't Karadzic give you a house?" I went to the IPTF to ask for help, and they said to go to the Federation police. The Federation police said I have to give my house to Muslims and I can live here in this little house [behind the larger house] with my sons. That night another policeman came and said we should stay in this [smaller] house. One night I was sleeping, when someone knocked on the window. I thought it was the police. Someone said, "[Open the door]—what are you waiting for? I will cut your throat." I don't know who did it, I can't be sure. I was quiet, and nothing happened. I went to the police and they said they can't protect me. Muslims broke the crosses on my mother's grave. Once, at night, they threw stones and stole my bicycle and nine of my chickens. This was about one month ago. I don't dare to go out at night. I lock the door at 9:00 p.m. and keep an ax at the door. I have only one ax or else I would keep more there. . . . The neighbors [in my house] have all my things—they have heat, our TV—I can't take back my things from them. We want to go to the Republika Srpska side but we need help taking our things. We found some people who were willing to trade a house in Kotor Varos [RS] for our house here. We went to the mayor to try to do this but the mayor refused, and said, "Muslims don't have to exchange anything. They can just take it. Nothing belongs to Serbs here."

S. S.³², forty-two years old, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that he planned to leave the suburb of Ilijas with his wife and two children as soon as possible, as he believes Serbs cannot lead normal lives there. Daily activities such as going to work or school have become terrifying events.

I was here among many Serbs, but now I'm finished. Since February 28, when the Federation took over, they [Bosniak displaced persons] took my car. Then they threw explosives. They prevented my wife [a nurse] from going to work. They waited on the road and prevented her from going to work. For five days she didn't dare go to work. The Federation police came to my house seventeen times, but they did not do anything [to stop the harassment]. I informed IPTF and told them my whole story. I am waiting for the elections to get out of here. On Thursday [June 20] I went to the IPTF. Since then I have not had any problems. Before then we had problems non-stop. We did not dare to go out at all. We slept in the basement. We want to leave because we can't stay here anymore. Our neighbors are all Muslims—they are refugees from Sokolac and Pale. We don't have problems with them. We have problems with only one family. They live in a house with many families in it [about fifty meters from this house]. They took over that house from a Serb family. They are the ones who cause all the problems. Even their children come and throw stones at us.

When the Federation police come, at that moment it's okay, but the moment they leave, it is even worse than before. This family wants us to leave so they can take our house. They threaten us and say they will beat us or kill us. They take all our produce from the gardens, and they throw stones, throw explosives, yell things and scream. They threaten to kick us out.

³¹Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Ilijas, June 24, 1996.

³²Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, Ilijas, June 25, 1996.

This past Friday [June 21], the son of the [Bosniak] family came and said that if my son goes to school [in Visoko] we will never see him again. For five days I did not dare to send my son to school. Then on Friday my wife said to let him go. The director of the school also said that there will be no problems if he comes, and that he should come. My children are the only Serb children in the school, and he is the top student. There is one Croat child, and all the rest are Muslim. My daughter came home after school, but my son did not. My daughter went back to look for my son. There she found the school closed, and the teachers gone. My son was not there. This fit with what threats we got from the neighbors. We called the director and the teachers. My son had been taken to visit another school as an honor because he is the best student. All's well that ends well, but we were terrified.

We have been to the Federation police at least ten times but they don't write down anything or do anything. Once I went to the police at the beginning [when the Federation took over] and said I was worried for my place because all the surrounding houses were being occupied by Muslims and they were taking our land little by little. They said, "You will lose your house too."

J. S.³³, thirty-three years old, described some of the difficulties her family had experienced since the transfer of authority:

Serbs have trouble getting documents. We have Serb identity cards from Republika Srpska, because this was Republika Srpska during the war. Only women and children and the elderly stayed in the suburbs—men of army age couldn't stay. Even we have trouble. We had no place to go. When the first transfer happened, people came to ask if we would leave. We said no. In March they [Bosniak displaced persons] poisoned our sheep. Some died. We have some good neighbors but some bad ones too. We told the police about the sheep, but they did nothing. Another time they poisoned the sheep, the doctors came and saved them. The third time another one died. The fourth time, the neighbor's pig was poisoned [neighbor is a Croat]. We then moved our sheep and the neighbor's pigs to Muslim friends' house. There is no problem [now]. Once, they came to open our door downstairs just to show us that they can do it. Visitors come to our neighbor and talk loudly about Cetniks and what they will do with Cetniks. We are threatened if we go to visit and have coffee with our Croat neighbors. Some people asked me if they could rent my shop in Ilijas. [A woman] gave me an offer and another man gave me an offer. I gave him a key to see what's inside and how much needs to be done. I gave them each a key for one day. That was June 16, 1996—I remember because it was my birthday. I found the shop open and broken into and the lock was broken and everything in the back room was taken. They took everything from inside my shop, cups and other things. I told the police, but they won't do anything. We changed the locks now. The only solution is to leave from here.

* * *

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Human Rights Watch/Helsinki

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³³Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview. Stari Ilijas, June 25, 1996.

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