

Croatia

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	2,600
Percentage of total population	0.1 %
Start of current displacement situation	1991
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	191,000 (1995)
New displacement in 2008	0
Returns in 2008	250
Causes of displacement	Internationalised armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations.
Human development index	45

Between 1991 and 1995, 220,000 ethnic Croats and subsequently up to 300,000 ethnic Serbs were displaced by armed conflict in Croatia. Since then almost all the Croat IDPs have returned to their homes, while most of the Serbs displaced have resettled in Serbia or in the majority-Serb Danube region of Croatia. In March 2008, 2,600 people remained displaced in Croatia, over half of them ethnic Serbs in Danube region, and their numbers continued to fall slowly as a result of property restitution or reconstruction.

Since the end of the conflict, only one third of Croatian Serb IDPs and refugees have been able to return and it is estimated



that only 50 per cent of returns have proved sustainable. The main obstacles to their return have been impunity for war crimes, lack of livelihood opportunities, non-restitution of former housing occupancy rights and difficulties accessing full pension entitlements. Progress has been made in terms of minority rights, since the arrival of a more moderate government in 2000, and under EU pressure. This includes the adoption of legislation on minority rights, restitution of private property and reconstruction of destroyed properties, and a review of cases involving Serbs arrested or convicted for war crimes. In 2008, Croatia adopted a procedure which should assist Serb IDPs and refugees in obtaining their full pension rights.

The main outstanding issue preventing durable solutions for Croatian Serb IDPs is the lack of remedy for former holders of occupancy rights. The arbitrary cancellation of these rights during and after the war affected mainly Croatian Serbs. Contrary to the practice in other Balkan countries, Croatia refused to allow restitution of flats held under occupancy rights, and former holders of such rights are only entitled to limited and delayed benefits from a housing care scheme.