

29 December 2009

Serbia:

IDPs still seeking housing solutions and documentation to access their rights

NOTE: In 2008 Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. The United Nations General Assembly subsequently voted to refer the independence declaration to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. As of December 2009, 64 countries had recognised Kosovo. For the purpose of this overview references to the situation in “Serbia” since 2008 do not include Kosovo.

In 1999, over 245,000 members of local minorities fled from or within Kosovo in fear of reprisals from the majority Albanian population after NATO air strikes forced the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops and ended years of oppression of ethnic Albanians. Kosovo’s declaration of independence in February 2008 created new uncertainty for those still displaced, but there have been no major incidents targeting minority communities and no further displacement. Serbia has not recognised the independence of Kosovo, continuing to regard it as a United Nations-governed entity within its sovereign territory.

As of August 2009, there were an estimated 230,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) from Kosovo within Serbia, including an estimated 20,000 displaced Roma people who were never registered as displaced. In addition, 19,700 people are displaced within Kosovo. Few of the people displaced in 1999 have found durable solutions. The rate of return decreased significantly in 2008 from an already low level, as most IDPs waited to evaluate the approach of the Kosovo authorities towards Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanian communities.

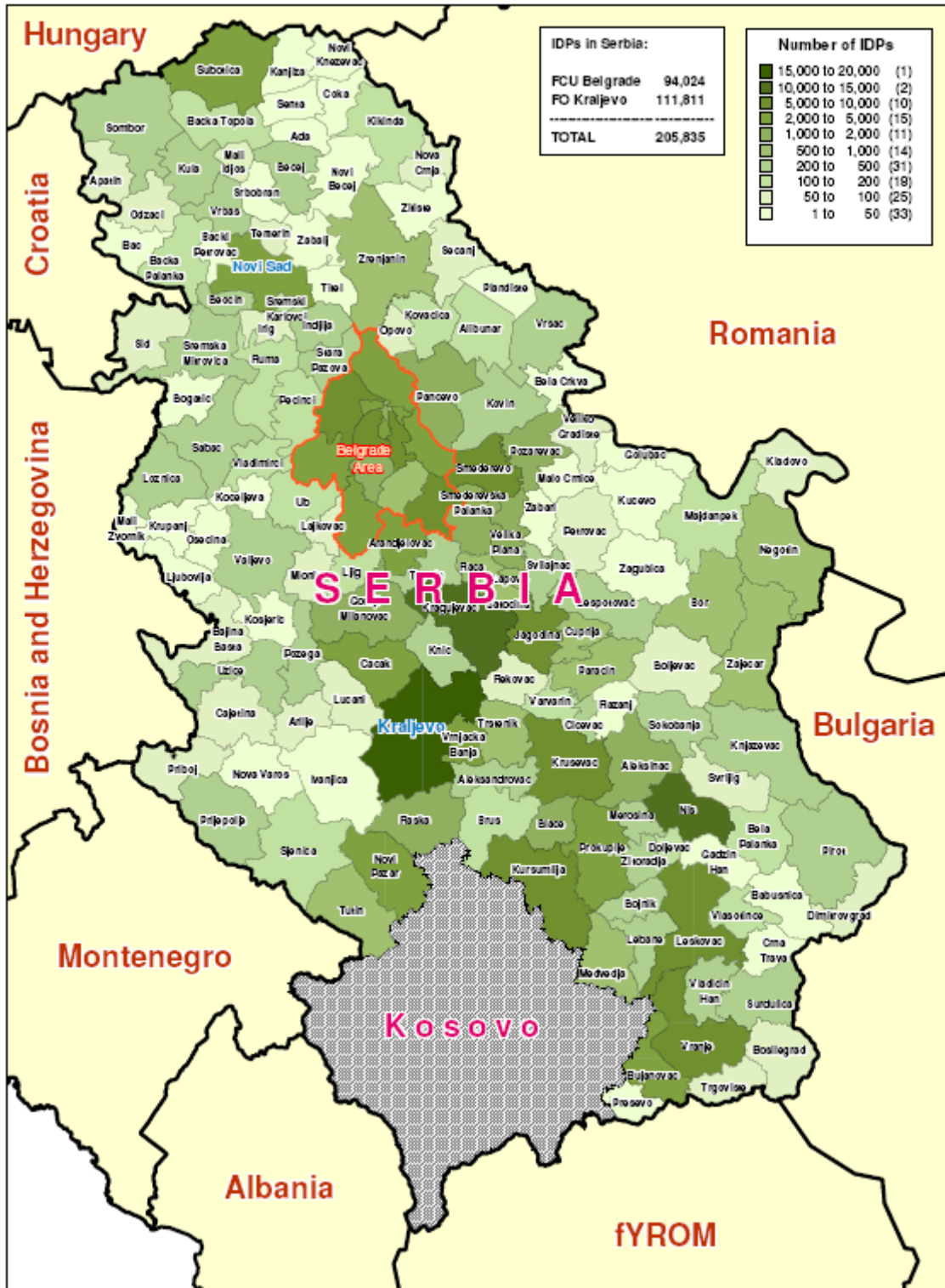
Prospects for durable solutions in Kosovo are limited: the political, security and economic situation is not conducive to return, and many IDPs face difficulties in repossessing property and obtaining legal documentation. Those who have returned to Kosovo have struggled to find work, notably because of widespread discrimination against Serbs and Roma people. As a result, efforts by the Serbian government to support return have had limited success, and Serb IDP associations estimate that only 5,000 IDP minority returns out of 15,000 have been sustainable.

The Serbian government’s position on local integration has improved. It has implemented projects supporting the development of social housing for IDPs in recent years, notably for the 4,200 displaced people still accommodated in collective centres. However these efforts do not represent a comprehensive strategy.

The most vulnerable IDPs are Roma people who have specific protection needs as they are so marginalised. Their lack of documentation and any official residence, combined with the complexity of procedures and inflexibility of public officials, prevents them from registering as IDPs and limits their access to housing assistance, health care and other social benefits. As a result, many endure extreme poverty and poor health in informal settlements without electricity, water or sewerage.



IDPs in Serbia (except Kosovo) as of 1st February 2009



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Feb 2009, UNHCR Representation in Serbia

Source: UNHCR

More maps are available on <http://www.internal-displacement.org>

Background

In 1999, over 245,000 people fled from or within Kosovo in fear of reprisals from the majority Albanian population after NATO air strikes had forced the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops and ended years of oppression of ethnic Albanians. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), but did not rule on the final status of the Serbian province, instead reaffirming the commitment of the UN to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

UNMIK's mandate was to provide a transitional administration pending a final settlement, support the development of provisional democratic self-government institutions and create an environment in which refugees and internally displaced people could return home. UNMIK promulgated a constitutional framework which included parliamentary, executive and judicial bodies (known as Provisional Institutions of Self-Government or collectively the PISG). In October 2005, the UN Secretary-General appointed Martti Ahtisaari to lead negotiations between teams from Kosovo and Serbia over the final status of Kosovo, which lasted from early 2006 to March 2007.

The resulting "Ahtisaari plan" proposed Kosovo's independence under international supervision. The Serbian government rejected the plan and the Security Council did not adopt it, but Kosovo proclaimed independence in February 2008. The Kosovo authorities began asserting control of an increasing number of structures and functions (USDoS, February 2009). In accordance with the Ahtisaari

plan, international mechanisms were established, most notably an International Civilian Office and the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), and so UNMIK's role and administrative capacity was drastically reduced. As of December 2009, 64 countries have recognised Kosovo's independence. However, Serbia has only recognised the authority of UNMIK as mandated under UNSCR 1244, and this position, backed by Russia, remains unchanged.

Soon after the declaration of independence, Serbia took control of northern Kosovo, resulting in a *de facto* partition of Kosovo. Serbian-organised local elections in Kosovo were won by nationalist parties such as the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia which then created and reinforced parallel municipal institutions directly competing with those of the Republic of Kosovo (ICG, 12 May 2009).

However, the Serbian government's current approach suggest that, while rejecting independence, it is willing to leave more room for Serbs in what it calls "Kosovo and Metohija" to decide where their best interests lie. The re-election in February 2008 of the pro-European Boris Tadić as President of the Republic of Serbia, and the subsequent support he gained in parliamentary elections, facilitated a more moderate approach involving fewer inflammatory declarations and more monitoring of Serbian government expenditure in Kosovo (ICG, 12 May 2009). Although the Serbian government called on Kosovo Serbs to boycott municipal elections in Kosovo in November 2009, the Serbian Minister for Kosovo and Metohija did not condemn those Kosovo Serbs who participated. He has

supported a pragmatic approach which entails cooperation with the international community and local Serbs (Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, 29 November 2009). Meanwhile, the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the municipal elections enabled them to establish decentralised municipalities with wider responsibilities and decision-making capacity.

Current displacement figures and location of IDPs

The main wave of displacement took place in 1999, with the overwhelming majority of those displaced internally fleeing Kosovo to central and northern Serbia. In 2004, ethnic violence against non-Albanians (mainly Kosovo Serbs and Roma) displaced another 4,200 people, who mostly sought refuge in mono-ethnic areas within Kosovo.

In 2009, the main concentrations of IDPs in Serbia were in the Kraljevo and Belgrade areas in south-east Serbia and in the northern cities of Novi Sad and Subotica (UNHCR, February 2009). According to the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees (SCR) there were around 210,000 IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia and a further 19,700 are displaced within Kosovo (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 23 July 2009; UNHCR, November 2009). Approximately three-quarters of the overall total are Serbs and 11 per cent are Roma people (ECRI, December 2007). However, these figures were uncertain as there had been no registration of IDPs since 2000, and return figures had not been deducted from the total (IDMC interview with SCR, May 2009). For these reasons, the current figures do not reflect the (albeit limited) achievement of durable solutions over the past years be it lo-

cal integration or return; a re-registration of IDPs would give a more transparent and accurate picture.

On the other hand, official estimates are likely to be low, since many displaced Roma people, together with others in the category known as RAE (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians) have been unable to obtain IDP status due to their lack of documentation and inability to access registration procedures. Some organisations have estimated that the total number of Roma people in Serbia is between 40,000 and 45,000 (USDoS, February 2009), half of whom are not registered as IDPs. If this were so, the total number of Kosovo IDPs in Serbia would therefore be closer to 230,000.

A decade after their displacement, most IDPs from Kosovo live in private accommodation. An estimated 4,200 IDPs are still accommodated in 53 official collective centres in Serbia and 17 in Kosovo (email correspondence with SCR, 30 September 2009). Residents of these centres, which the SCR is responsible for, receive very limited assistance. Since 2005 the SCR and UNHCR have worked together to close collective centres and move their residents into new supported social housing. This process is complicated by the fact that most remaining residents of collective centres are extremely vulnerable (many are elderly people or have disabilities or post-traumatic stress disorders) and require targeted assistance (UNHCR, 21 August 2009; UN HRC, 7 July 2009).

In addition, 1,000 IDPs, mainly of Roma ethnicity, are living in unrecognised collective centres (USDoS, February 2009), makeshift huts, corrugated metal contain-

ers and other sub-standard shelters (UNHCR, 9 November 2009). Some of the non-recognised collective centres were formerly official centres which were closed but continue to be occupied by people unable to move elsewhere. Some of these centres, such as one which IDMC visited in Grocka near Belgrade, are never visited by social welfare officials or other authorities (IDMC field mission, May 2009).

A significant number of Roma IDPs also live in approximately 600 illegal settlements in Serbia alongside other Roma people (Praxis, email correspondence, 15 December 2009). They are at ongoing risk of eviction and relocation. In August 2009, more than 130 Roma families were evicted from a settlement under the Gazela Bridge, a major bridge in central Belgrade. Alternative housing was only provided to those who were legally resident in Belgrade, and denied to the many who did not have documentation proving their residence rights (AI, April 2009; HRW, April 2009; AFP, August 2009).

IDPs' difficulties in accessing documentation

Ten years after their displacement, a considerable number of IDPs either live without personal documents or face extreme difficulties getting them renewed. This greatly curtails their access to various political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

The major constraint is the need to obtain personal documentation in the place of displacement. During the conflict, many civil and property registries from Kosovo were relocated in Serbia. They are now administered by seven municipalities

whose offices are now sited in Serbia at Krusevac, Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Vranje, Leskovac, Nis and Jagodina. These offices are often located far from where IDPs live because they have to go the municipality that corresponds to their area of origin and many cannot afford the time and expense needed to reach them. Because of insecurity and distance, access to the property and civil registries still held in Kosovo is limited.

The many IDPs whose documents were destroyed or went missing in the conflict have to prove their identity, civil status or citizenship. Bureaucratic complexities and the inconsistent procedures of the competent authorities make it very difficult for IDPs to obtain civil documents (Praxis, March 2009). If, as often happens, their applications are turned down they can only appeal through the courts.

In a positive development, a law adopted in March 2009 provides for the computerisation of registries. This should facilitate the faster delivery of personal documentation and spare IDPs the burden of travel. Computerisation of civil registries of the seven dislocated municipalities is currently under way, funded by the USA's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), and three municipalities have completed the process (interview with UNHCR Kraljevo, May 2009).

Access to documentation is further limited by the fact that the Serbian authorities do not recognise documents issued by the authorities in Kosovo, either during the period of external tutelage under the PISG or post-independence. This restricts entitlements such as pensions; many internally displaced pensioners received restricted pensions as documents attesting

to their years of work in Kosovo are not recognised. This non-recognition of documents also affects access to education and employment, as Kosovo-issued certificates of educational attainment are not recognised (Praxis, March 2009).

Serbian authorities require an officially-registered place of residence attested by an ownership title or tenancy contract in order to issue personal documents, including identity cards. This excludes IDPs living in informal settlements, those who do not have an official tenancy contract or those unable to deregister from their previous address in Kosovo (US-DoS, February 2009; Praxis, March 2009). Such IDPs have limited access to assistance and social benefits. Roma people living in informal settlements are particularly affected, but the impacts are also felt by Kosovo Serb IDPs in unrecognised collective centres (IDMC field visit, May 2009). The situation has worsened since February 2009 when new health regulations were introduced denying access to health care to those IDPs without registered residence (interview with Praxis, May 2009). IDPs affected are forced to give false information, such as a fake address or tenancy agreement, or someone else's identity or health card, to access their rights. Legal assistance efforts by national and international organisations to improve matters have had limited success, and only a modification of the legislation and procedures in relation with registered residence could improve the situation significantly.

Roma IDPs are most affected by lack of documentation. In some cases, people have not been registered for several generations, and establishing identity is difficult as most births and marriages are not

registered, and parents and their children lack precise information about dates and places of birth. Highly complex procedures to identify and verify parentage, and the prejudice and inflexibility of officials charged with issuing documents, make it virtually impossible for Roma people to obtain basic forms of personal documentation without legal assistance. As a result, a significant number of IDPs are not regarded as legal persons and cannot legitimately interact with the authorities to assert their rights or even to establish their identity. A report by Praxis, a Serbian NGO providing legal assistance, shows that courts routinely require applicants for identity documents to undertake DNA tests which cost over \$700 (Praxis, October 2008). This is beyond the means of most IDP families, particularly Roma. Even when legislation and procedures do leave room for flexibility in dealing with people with a "chronic lack of documentation", these provisions are often ignored by civil servants (Praxis, March 2009 and October 2008). With international encouragement, Serbia has adopted a national framework document, the Roma National Strategy, with the aim of reducing the vulnerability of displaced and non-displaced Roma people, but it includes no provisions to ensure their legal recognition.

Added vulnerability of displaced Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities

IDPs belonging to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities are highly vulnerable. The challenges they share with other IDPs are compounded by deep-rooted discrimination and marginalisation.

While other internally displaced children generally access education, most Roma children face obstacles to public education and many who can enrol subsequently drop out (UN CRC, June 2008; Praxis, March 2009). Lack of personal documentation prevents many from enrolling (Praxis, March 2009). The education system does not encourage multiculturalism or welcome the use of the Romany language in schools, further reducing prospects of integration (UN CRC, 2008). Roma school children face prejudice, verbal abuse and violence. Education authorities have failed to protect their rights and have often reinforced discrimination by separating Roma children from their peers or referring them to schools for children with special needs (Praxis, March 2009; UN CRC, 2008; ECRI, December 2007).

Roma IDPs also face more difficulties accessing employment (EC, 5 November 2008). While all IDPs are affected by high unemployment rates (UNDP, 2008), the situation is worse for Roma IDPs who are often informally self-employed, working as street traders, lacking basic welfare rights and unable to access the formal labour market. Since many lack personal documentation and live in informal settlements without registered residence, they cannot access the National Employment Service and are thus denied their right to unemployment benefits, further contributing to their poor living conditions (UNDP 2008).

Durable solutions

Return and settlement elsewhere
Ten years after the conflict, some 15,000 IDPs have returned to their place of origin in Kosovo. Approximately 12,200

have returned from Serbia and some 2,800 from other areas within Kosovo (UNHCR, November 2009). Just over half are Serbs, around ten per cent Ashkali and nine per cent Roma. Supporting initiatives have mainly focused on helping people return to rural areas, with very few returns to urban areas (Ombudsperson Institution, July 2008).

Since the violence against Kosovo Serbs and Roma in 2004, and despite the stabilisation of the security situation, the rate of return of IDPs and refugees to Kosovo continued to fall until 2009 (COE, 2 July 2009). Returns reached their lowest level in 2008, after Kosovo's declaration of independence, when there were only 680 minority returns from within the region, compared to 1,800 in 2007 (UNHCR, June 2007; UNHCR, 31 October 2009; UNSC, June 2009).

However, this trend has been slightly reversed in 2009, with some 1,000 minority returns from within the region as of November 2009, an increase of over 40 per cent compared to the same period in 2008. Of the IDPs among them, 540 had been displaced in Serbia and 215 within Kosovo (UNHCR, 31 October 2009).

The sustainability of returns, and hence the validity of all the return figures, have been contested (OSCE, June 2009). According to the Government of Serbia and to Unija, an umbrella organisation of IDP associations, the total number of IDPs who have sustainably returned is around 5,000 (IDMC interview with Unija and Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, May 2009). Field sources in Kosovo indicate that return of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian people has proved more sustainable than that of Serbs.

The main reasons behind this low return figure include the volatile security situation in Kosovo, the limited freedom of movement there, the restricted access of minorities to public services and school facilities, the lack of economic prospects in the area of return and difficulties they face in repossessing property or rebuilding houses (UN HRC, 7 July 2009; OSCE 19 June 2009; UNSC, 10 June 2009; Balkan Insight, 14 January 2009). Donors have often been reluctant to provide funds for return and reconstruction due to prolonged non-occupation and the sale of reconstructed houses by beneficiaries (interviews with UNDP and UNHCR Kosovo, May 2009). Another reason for the limited number of returns is the reality that, after a decade of displacement, some IDP families have decided not to return and would rather integrate in their place of displacement.

In 2009, the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija and UNHCR Serbia conducted a return registration exercise aiming at assisting IDPs in collective centres who would like to return to Kosovo. Some 1,200 families (approximately 3,200 IDPs) were registered. The UNHCR offices in Serbia and Kosovo will deliver assistance packages to returnees and UNDP will assist with reconstruction. For return to be feasible, around 850 housing units need to be rebuilt while 240 occupied flats need to be vacated (Government of Serbia, 4 September 2009). This programme also supports return to locations in Kosovo other than the former place of residence, as provided for in the Protocol for Sustainable Return to Kosovo signed by the PISG, UNMIK and the Government of Serbia in June 2006. In many cases, Kosovo Serbs previously living in

areas where they constituted a minority expressed a preference for return to Kosovo but only to areas mainly inhabited by Serbs (interviews with Kosovo Serb IDPs, May 2009). As of December 2009, there was no precise information on the number of people who have benefited from the programme and have returned.

Local integration

Return is the preferred durable solution emphasised by the Serbian government, but it has made progress in relation to local integration, with several initiatives involving the international community and municipal authorities. It has focused on closing collective centres and providing alternative housing solutions to residents. Various options have been offered to IDPs, including help to buy a house in the village of displacement for those living in collective centres, allocation of land in their place of displacement, and of building materials for IDPs who have already bought land (COE, 26 October 2009).

The government has also worked with UN-HABITAT, the Italian government and the European Union to provide social housing for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable non-displaced people. Beneficiaries of these projects do not get ownership of flats allocated to them, but are exempted from paying rent for an initial period of three years, after which they have to pay a social rent based on their income. The government, in collaboration with Housing Centre (a Serbian NGO) and a number of international organisations, has also offered particularly vulnerable residents, such as elderly people or those with disabilities, social housing in a protected environment in which a designated family maintains the building and helps its residents liaise with social and public

service providers (Housing Centre, 6 October 2008).

Property issues

One of the major obstacles to durable solutions is the difficulty displaced people face when trying to repossess their property. There has been widespread illegal occupation and expropriation of houses and land left behind by displaced people (mainly Kosovo Serbs). The restitution process has been slow and is far from complete. Some 18,000 property claims had been decided as of September 2009 (COE Commissioner for Human Rights, 2 July 2009). In many cases authorised evictions of occupants are not carried out. According to the Kosovo Property Agency (KPA), a Kosovo institution in charge of addressing property claims, there were 850 cases pending eviction as of May 2009, of which 630 were in Mitrovica. Properties are often looted by departing occupants, making them uninhabitable. Very few of those who have looted property have been prosecuted, creating a perception of impunity and thus perpetuating the situation (IDMC field mission, May 2009). In other cases, properties are re-occupied, forcing the owner to embark on time-consuming litigation (Praxis, 10 June 2009).

Lack of access to the property registries which moved from Kosovo to Serbia has slowed down the restitution and decision-making processes of the KPA. The situation has worsened since the independence of Kosovo in February 2008, when the Serbian authorities closed KPA offices in Serbia as part of their general refusal to interact with institutions of the new Government of Kosovo. Serbia has thus prevented the KPA from verifying the

ownership status of disputed properties whose title deeds are now located in the Republic of Serbia. The closure of KPA offices also complicates the process of informing IDP claimants about the status of their cases. By March 2009 there were already 3,500 claims “on hold” pending verification of evidence in Serbia, and this has quickly grown. There are some 10,000 cases in which the KPA has asked claimants to produce additional documents (Praxis, March 2009). A memorandum of understanding was signed in August 2009 between KPA and UNHCR under which KPA employees would work in Serbia under the umbrella of UNHCR. Under this proposed arrangement the Serbian authorities would no longer object to the re-opening of KPA offices in Serbia, potentially facilitating the verification of evidence and leading to speedier processing of IDP claims. The details of opening UNHCR property offices in Serbia are being finalised.

Monitoring in courts of property cases has revealed numerous procedural weaknesses. Ethnic bias against Kosovo Serbs, limited access of judicial officials to property registries in Serbia and the destruction of some registries held in Kosovo, have resulted in multiple abuses. Individuals have used falsified documents such as power of attorney agreements or contracts of sale to claim in court that they are the legitimate owners of properties belonging to displaced people (OSCE, 6 April 2009 *and* August 2009). Courts are often insufficiently diligent in trying to locate the alleged sellers of properties (OSCE, 6 April 2009; Praxis, March 2009; Ombudsperson Institution, July 2008). Thus IDPs may not be informed of claims against their property, and so may be unable to defend their

rights. In the absence of a written contract, courts have been using the doctrine of positive prescription, whereby an individual can acquire rights to property after a certain number of years of occupation (OSCE, 6 April 2009). Some courts tend to attach more value to witness testimonies than to written documents. All these developments seriously affect the property rights of IDPs.

Other property violations which particularly affect displaced people in their absence from Kosovo are illegal expropriations and construction (Ombudsperson Institution, July 2008, Praxis, 10 June 2009). There are numerous reports of IDPs finding on visits to their places of former residence that their house has been demolished and replaced by a new building. One family found their home had been converted into a memorial for deceased soldiers from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the militia group which fought for Kosovo's independence against Yugoslav rule (interview with DRC Serbia, May 2009).

For more information on property issues, see the Kosovo overview.

National and international responses

Support for durable solutions

Serbia's response to IDPs exclusively focused on return for several years. Return was the objective behind the 2002 National Strategy for the Resolution of Issues of Refugees and IDPs. The situation evolved in 2006 with the signing of a Protocol for the Voluntary and Sustainable Return of IDPs to Kosovo. Signed by the PISG, UNMIK and the Government of Serbia, the Protocol also envis-

aged support for resettlement in areas within Kosovo other than original places of residence. However, the Protocol has had little impact on returns in view of the uncertainty surrounding Kosovo's final status. Since independence, it has not been implemented and the Kosovo authorities no longer consider themselves bound by the agreement.

The Serbian Commissariat for Refugees (SCR) and the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija are the two Serbian government institutions responsible for IDPs from Kosovo. The Ministry is currently drafting a Strategy for Sustainable Return and Subsistence, which supports return to places of origin but also resettlement elsewhere in Kosovo, and provides for a monthly cash allowance and social assistance. The strategy was due to be finalised by the end of 2009.

The SCR, which is responsible for the maintenance and the closure of the remaining collective centres, is being reconstituted as part of administrative restructuring to meet requirements for Serbian accession to the European Union. The SCR is to be restructured as the Commissariat on Migration, with an expanded mandate to cover economic and conflict-induced migration. A new Migration Management Strategy was adopted in July 2009, and a revision of the 2002 National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs was also expected to be finalised by the end of 2009. An inter-ministerial working group has been focusing on the issue and there have been consultations with both UNHCR and Group 484, a Serbian NGO supporting refugees and displaced people. However there has not been a wider consultation process involving more na-

tional NGOs working on IDP issues or representatives of IDPs (IDMC field mission, May 2009).

The local authorities and the international community are now more supportive of local integration, but there is no open and comprehensive strategy to achieve this or establish links with agencies providing social housing. Numerous housing projects were ongoing in 2009, but these tended to be ad hoc and to only focus on collective centre residents as part of the closure strategy.

Support for Roma inclusion

Both national authorities and the international community have pledged to facilitate the social inclusion of Roma people, in particular their access to documentation. In April 2009, a Roma National Strategy (RNS) was adopted as Serbia chaired a meeting of the Decade for Roma Inclusion, a commitment by European governments to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma people. The document includes recommendations on Roma IDPs, forced returnees and personal documentation. However, the section on legal recognition has been removed from the RNS, seriously undermining efforts to address the difficulties faced by Roma people in obtaining documentation. An initial budget of some \$17 million has been significantly reduced because of the financial crisis. Some analysts believe the document lacks a clear time-frame and benchmarks (IDMC interviews, May 2009). While the adoption of the RNS is a positive development, reports of ongoing forced evictions of Roma people from informal settlements in Belgrade (AI, April 2009; HRW April 2009; AFP, August 2009) highlight the persistence of

widespread discrimination against members of RAE communities.

International organisations and NGOs run a variety of projects promoting the social inclusion of members of RAE communities and other marginalised groups through access to documentation. Since May 2008, UNHCR, UNICEF and Praxis have conducted campaigns in 20 municipalities to raise awareness among RAE communities and local and central authorities of the importance of birth registration and issuing of personal identification documents (Praxis, January 2009). Praxis has also provided free legal assistance, information and counselling to members of RAE communities (Praxis, January 2009). In 2008, the Centre for Advanced Legal Studies and Praxis supported by UNHCR, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Ministry for Human Rights drafted a law on procedures for legal recognition which included facilitated procedures for people without any documentation. The draft legislation has been accepted by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, but not by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government which has argued that facilitating a lower evidentiary threshold for issuing documents would violate European Union requirements on migration control and personal documentation. Others have expressed fears that simplified procedures would encourage Roma people from elsewhere in the region to try to obtain Serbian citizenship (interview with Roma National Secretariat, May 2009).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC's new internal displacement profile on Serbia. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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