

**Doc. 10829**  
1 February 2006

## **Situation of longstanding refugees and displaced persons in South East Europe**

Motion for a recommendation  
presented by Mr Dendias and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. Ten years after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and six years after the armed conflict in Kosovo, far too many refugees and internally displaced people still remain in the region – in total 165 000 refugees and 440 000 displaced persons. According to UNHCR figures, Croatia still has 3 000 refugees and 5 000 IDPs; Bosnia and Herzegovina has 10 000 refugees and 185 000 IDPs; and Serbia and Montenegro has almost 400 000 refugees and IDPs, including 22 000 IDPs in the Kosovo region. There are 2 250 refugees in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, mostly Kosovo ethnic minorities (Roma, Ashkalija and Egyptian).
2. These figures often represent the most vulnerable persons, including elderly without family support, traumatised survivors of atrocities, sick and disabled persons, single mothers, national minorities or persons in need of witness-protection who remain in collective centers, most of whom have been neglected in recent years as a result of a lack of local resources and humanitarian aid.
3. While many internally displaced persons were able to return, particularly in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is crucial for the whole region to address the many obstacles, including the discrimination and intolerance, which undermine sustainable return. IDPs can also be hostage to pending political issues such as the status discussions on Kosovo or a possible referendum on the future of Montenegro. The situation of displaced Roma remains a particular concern, especially in the light of many readmission agreements which have been signed recently and which generally lack adequate funding for reintegration.
4. The return and access of refugees and IDPs to property, education, social assistance, healthcare and above all employment, should be seen in the general context of economic hardship and high unemployment in many return areas of South East Europe. The “Sarajevo Declaration on Refugee Returns” signed by the governments of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro in January 2005 represents therefore an opportunity and a challenge to resolve the remaining issues and obstacles impeding durable return or local integration.
5. In the light of the above, the Parliamentary Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

5.1 calls on the governments in the region :

5.1.1 to ensure that necessary conditions including clear political commitment, full regional co-operation, a legal framework and relevant policies are implemented in order to solve the remaining obstacles to return or local integration of refugees and displaced persons in South East Europe;

5.1.2 to exercise particular caution when carrying out returns to areas where the returnees will be in a minority situation;

5.1.3 to pay particular attention to the needs and difficulties of persons belonging to the Roma community when considering return programmes for persons belonging to this group;

5.2 invites the international community and in particular the members of the Council of Europe that have signed the readmission agreements with the countries in the region :

5.2.1 to provide their technical and financial support for local development projects in order to make the return and local integration sustainable;

5.2.2 to favour voluntary return projects over forcible returns where at all possible;

5.3 invites the European Union to support this process in the framework of its pre-accession funding programmes;

5.4 invites the Council of Europe Development Bank to give particular attention to projects facilitating return, integration and employment of refugees and displaced persons in the SEE region.

*Signed*<sup>1</sup>:

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BOUSAKLA, Mimount, Belgium, SOC  
EINARSSON, Mats, Sweden, UEL  
ETHERINGTON, Bill, United Kingdom, SOC  
GJUL, Gunn Karin, Norway, SOC  
GREENWAY, John, United Kingdom, EDG  
HAGBERG, Michael, Sweden, SOC  
ØSTERGAARD, Morten, Denmark, ALDE  
PLATVOET, Leo, Netherlands, UEL  
REYMANN, Marc, France, EPP/CD  
RUŽIĆ, Branko, Serbia and Montenegro, SOC  
SALLES, Rudy, France, ALDE  
van THIJN, Ed, Netherlands, SOC  
WILLE, Paul, Belgium, ALDE

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<sup>1</sup> SOC: Socialist Group  
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party  
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe  
EDG: European Democratic Group  
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left  
NR: not registered in a group