



United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

UNMIK/PR/265

6 June 2000

IAC Condemns Violence Against Serbs

Following its meeting today, the Interim Administrative Council issued the following statement:

"The IAC is deeply concerned by the recent upsurge in inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo, particularly of criminal acts targeting members of the Serb community.

"The IAC condemns in the strongest possible terms what in many cases appears to be systematic violence against members of minority communities.

"These acts only are destabilizing Kosovo and are playing into the hands of extremists on all sides.

"Kosovo is home to all people living here, regardless of their ethnic background. Kosovo's future lies in Europe but this is conditional upon respect for human rights, minority rights and all of the values on which our culture and civilisation are based.

"It is the responsibility of all inhabitants of Kosovo to contribute to the building of a democratic and tolerant new Kosovo.

"The IAC calls upon the people in Kosovo to contribute actively to the co-existence of communities and to support the investigations of the police and KFOR."

The statement followed a briefing by COMKFOR General Ortuno and PDSRSG Jock Covey on the recent violence in Kosovo. Gen. Ortuno outlined statistics on serious crimes against the Serb population in Kosovo which occurred over the past month, telling the IAC members that the ongoing "terror" is having a greater impact on the population than the incidents themselves. Gen. Ortuno said he believes the perpetrators' goal is the flight of all Serbs from Kosovo. He reminded the IAC that the international community could withhold resources should Kosovo's image not improve. Repeating the words of NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, he said that NATO was committed to a multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo and would not accept another round of ethnic cleansing. For its part, KFOR was trying to support minorities based on the model of KFOR's Multinational Brigade Center.

PDSRSG Jock Covey questioned the role of Kosovo leaders who he said were not exercising their moral authority by not speaking out in the wake of the recent killings. He said the international community has also been questioning its reasons for being in Kosovo, particularly when such serious crime was met by silence from Kosovo's own leaders.

The IAC was informed of the decision by the representatives of the Serb National Council of Gracanica to absent themselves from meetings of the IAC and Kosovo Transitional Council for one week. Meanwhile an SNC delegation plans to travel to New York to meet with members of the Security Council, at the same time as SRSG Bernard Kouchner, who will address the Council on the anniversary of Security Council resolution 1244.

The IAC was also briefed on a new regulation authorizing the licensing of international security providers, as well as one on the appointment and removal of international judges and prosecutors, who may now serve in any

part of Kosovo. Previously UNMIK regulation allowed the appointment of international judiciary only in Mitrovica. Both regulations were signed by SRSG Kouchner last week. Since then, he appointed Ms. Agnieszka Konowiecka-Milart of Poland to the Pristina District Court and Mr. Mrantti Ruotsalainen of Finland to the Gnjilane District Court.

The IAC was also briefed on UNMIK's progress in providing a regulatory framework for the print media, on the temporary closure of the newspaper Dita's office in the Media House and on a draft regulation on print media which would authorize the issuance of a temporary code of conduct. UNMIK officials explained that they had respected the wishes of the Kosovo media community for self-regulation, but that this self-regulation was clearly not working, particularly with the media's practice of publicly identifying and charging Serb residents of Kosovo as war criminals. The newspaper Dita's identification and allegations against a UN staff member in late April was followed by his murder a few days later.