



Press release - 533(2009)

"All people in Kosovo¹ should benefit from European standards of human rights protection" says Commissioner Hammarberg on publishing his report

Strasbourg, 02.07.2009 – Presenting his special mission [report](#) on Kosovo today, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that all people living in Kosovo, regardless of their ethnicity, must benefit from European standards of human rights protection. They should not be held hostage to any lack of international consensus on the status of Kosovo.

The Commissioner analyses the every day human rights problems faced by the people living in Kosovo. Focusing on access to justice, policing, and minority rights, as well as the fate of refugees and internally displaced persons, he observes that Kosovo has an advanced legislative framework in place, but its implementation still needs to be ensured. "An effective access to the judicial system is not being respected in practice, in particular in the northern municipalities. Corruption of the judiciary and different public sectors should be also tackled more effectively."

The Commissioner appreciates the work of the UN-established Human Rights Advisory Panel in examining complaints against UNMIK and recommends that the European Union's Rule of Law Mission, EULEX, improve accountability by providing Kosovo "with an effective mechanism to challenge alleged unlawful conduct of the international civil and security presence."

In addition, Commissioner Hammarberg welcomes the efforts made to promote police training and encourages more "efforts to combat organised crime and corruption. Moreover, inspection of police detention cells is essential, and the OSCE should continue with its work in this field." He stresses that it is essential to retain a multi-ethnic police service.

Gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities should be promoted and intercultural education policies strengthened to favour mutual respect and understanding. "It is important to develop a Serbian language curriculum, improve textbooks at all levels as well as provision of Albanian language classes for minority groups. Better education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian people should be also ensured, especially in response to the high drop-out rate."

The Commissioner calls an urgent closure of the lead-contaminated Roma camps in northern Mitrovica. Action on this serious health hazard is long overdue and should now start through an immediate relocation of the families still living there. Moreover, he urges UNMIK and the Kosovo authorities to step up their efforts to find a solution to this humanitarian disaster.

Furthermore, the Commissioner appeals to European governments to avoid forced returns of minorities to Kosovo and to regulate the status of those in their host country until conditions permit their safe return. "The economic and social situation is still a major obstacle to a sustainable return process. While security issues have improved, the situation in Kosovo remains tense with inter-ethnic violence occurring sporadically."

The report is based on the findings of a special mission carried out on 23-27 March and is available on the Commissioner's website, together with photographs taken during the visit.

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¹ "All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo."

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