

largely on aid from the international community and were in a vulnerable position. International initiatives were under way to set up a printing house to help ensure financial sustainability and establish distribution networks, especially in the eastern Republika Srpska, one of the most difficult areas. The political crisis had highlighted the use of propaganda by the SDS-controlled media, and some editors and journalists had produced independent reports to express their disapproval of official media manipulation.

Addressing the situation of media in Croat-controlled areas of the Federation, the report notes that the media, both print and broadcast, did not enjoy much independence because they were closely connected to HDZ; diversity only came from publications imported from Croatia; and the media in other areas of the Federation, including Sarajevo, were characterized by the widest diversity but this pluralism depended largely on assistance from the international community.

On economic, social and cultural rights, the report refers to the convergence of the conflict and the transition to a market economy to create a bleak economic situation throughout the country. The report notes factors compounding difficulties related to economic, social and cultural rights, including many cases of employment discrimination and numerous cases of minority workers being fired on the grounds of national background, especially in the Republika Srpska and in Croat-dominated areas of the Federation. The situation of the elderly remained tenuous, in part because pensions are extremely low and insufficient to meet basic survival expenses and there were numerous instances of working people supporting older relatives while their wages barely enable them to cover their own expenses. Charges have been introduced for health care except for certain people, such as children and the elderly. Many medical professionals have left the country and some were killed during the war. Concern remains about education as it relates to cultural rights, with decentralization of the education system leading to different curricula being used. Some textbooks are marked by ethnic bias and propaganda and there have been some incidents in which minority children were prevented from attending certain schools.

On the question of missing persons, the report notes that the exact number of missing persons, as a result of the conflict, remains unknown but estimates from various sources range between 19,000 and 30,000 persons. The process of determining the fate and whereabouts of the missing is based either on information provided by local authorities or exhumations and associated identification procedures. The report notes that local authorities have often failed to respond satisfactorily to tracing requests from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and often provide imprecise information. There are approximately 400 mass graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the main obstacle to exhumations has been the lack of access by authorities of one entity to remains located in territories controlled by the other. In June

1996 an agreement on a procedure for joint exhumations was reached, providing for expert representation by both parties, methods to notify of the intent to exhume, participation by representatives of the international community, on-site security and other measures; exhumation and identification activities, especially concerning mass graves in the Srebrenica area, have not led to positive identifications of all the bodies. Factors affecting the process of exhumations include the size of the mass grave, the circumstances surrounding the disappearances and the time elapsed since the deaths. Allegations of "secret" or "hidden" detention remain a preoccupation for organizations dealing with missing persons although, in the majority of cases, the allegations are not well founded and no evidence has been produced to substantiate claims of large numbers of missing persons being held in secret detention centres. The report notes that the main responsibility for resolving the fate of missing persons lies with local authorities, mainly the three established commissions — the State Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Office of the Croatian side of the Federation and the State Commission of the Republika Srpska. These commissions have a legal obligation to cooperate with other entity authorities and international organizations.

A review of efforts by various organizations and entities to resolve the fate of missing persons is included in the report, including those related to the Expert Group on Exhumations and Missing Persons, the United Nations, the International Commission on Missing Persons and non-governmental organizations — including the Working Group chaired by the ICRC.

The recommendations in the report include that:

- ♦ the demining process be accelerated and become a part of the planning process for projects for returnees; mine information campaigns, specifically designed for different target groups, such as children and returnees, receive additional support;
- ♦ relevant authorities in the Republika Srpska and in the Federation undertake, without delay, legislative measures to eliminate the provisions of the criminal codes providing for the death penalty to be pronounced and applied; all death sentences in the Republika Srpska and the Federation be revoked;
- ♦ relevant authorities comply with recommendations made by IPTF, and in particular that, following investigations, police officials responsible for abuses be prosecuted; such proceedings be monitored by representatives of the international community; the authorities comply with the "rules of the road"; all persons detained without legal grounds be released immediately; and the Security Council consider further strengthening the IPTF mandate to expand its authority to impose sanctions for non-compliance with its recommendations;
- ♦ authorities comply with recommendations concerning trials where international observers have