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The office carries out activities both in support of the mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The field office in Belgrade is actively monitoring human rights developments in Kosovo, as well as in other parts of the country. The OHCHR has urged the government to permit the opening of an office in Kosovo.

The main activities carried out as of August 1998 included: weekly and monthly reports to the OHCHR on human rights developments; provision of regular information and briefings to the Special Rapporteur, and assistance in the drafting of reports to the Commission on Human Rights; liaison work with the government, the OHCHR, and the UN human rights mechanisms; provision of information to the government as well as to elements of civil society, notably non-governmental organizations, on aspects of the UN human rights programme; and regular workshops and training sessions with NGOs, academic institutions and others.

Reports of the Human Rights Field Operation

Public distribution of the periodic reports prepared by the Field Operation was discontinued in June 1998 on the basis that the reports contained confidential information. Five reports were made publicly available prior to that decision (30 January 1998; February 1998; April 1998; 30 April 1998; 29 May 1998).

The reports address such human rights issues as: continuing deterioration in the social and economic situation; the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers to Kosovo and Sandzak; the need for assistance for internally displaced persons in Sandzak; and the situation of the Roma community.

References to the situation in Kosovo included the following: attacks against Serbian police and private individuals, in some cases causing wounding and/or death; the fact that several villages around Srbica-Drenica were reportedly under the *de facto* control of armed and uniformed groups presenting themselves as members of the Liberation Army of Kosovo (UCK/KLA); deaths and injuries caused by the Serbian police in response to attacks on or against them; arrests followed by torture and sometimes killing, noting that some bodies recovered at the morgue showed signs of mutilation; deaths of civilians during police operations, noting that authorities claimed they had been caught in the cross fire while witnesses claimed the bodies showed evidence of shooting at close range.

General developments noted included the following: the political crisis, which caused a number of pending legal reforms and new legislation to be put on hold, including

the draft law on the media; the easing of tensions in Montenegro and changes to the Law on Elections, which made it easier for smaller parties to reach the four per cent threshold — the required minimum for a candidate to be elected, and which reserved five seats in Parliament for deputies from regions with a predominantly Albanian population; the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on education in Kosovo, which allowed Albanian professors and students to return to ten faculties of Pristina University and permitted the reopening of the Institute for Albanian Studies; the signing of a protocol related to the normalization agreement between Croatia and the FRY on procedures for an organized return of refugees and displaced persons; protests by media associations in response to temporary measures by the Ministry of Telecommunications for the licensing and registration of the independent media; the proposed new Law on Universities, reviewed during the 26 May session of the Serbian Parliament, which stipulates that the rector, deans, and governing boards of universities would be directly appointed by the Serbian government, without any guarantee of representation for the faculties or the students.

The activities of the Field Operation included, *inter alia*: visits to Pristina and Novi Pazar to follow up on developments in Kosovo, including alleged human rights violations in connection with police operations, and to Sandzak; field trips to Montenegro and Vojvodina; work to link efforts of independent human rights advocates, legal professionals, the international community, NGOs, and government commissions formed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration; assistance to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights during his visit to Kosovo in April; work related to citizenship and documentation issues affecting refugees from Croatia living in FRY; a visit to Montenegro to devise a plan to cope with pressing demands, in particular the growing number of missing persons, and to explore what additional material and staff resources are needed urgently in the short and long term; monitoring a war crimes trial in Bijelo Polje; a meeting with the defence attorney representing over 70 members of the Roma community in Danilovgrad, in cases related to restitution for being violently ousted from their homes during riots in 1995; monitoring of the trial of an artist who was arrested during a street performance and accused of verbally insulting police; meetings in Kragujevac with representatives of the Association for Human Rights of Roma in the FRY, visits to a social centre and a kindergarten run by the local Roma community; a meeting with representatives of the trade union of the "Zastava" weapons factory regarding the deteriorating social situation among its workers; and, a meeting with the head of the Helsinki Committee of Sandzak to discuss issues raised in the Committee's 1997 annual report on the situation of the Muslim (Bosniak) community in the region.