



OSCE Mission in Kosovo

(print version)

Press release

Sustainable return to Kosovo remains a challenge, says OSCE Head of Mission

PRISHTINE/PRISTINA, 19 June 2009 - The sustainable return and reintegration of displaced persons from Kosovo continues to be a major human rights challenge despite the efforts undertaken by the Kosovo authorities and the international community, the OSCE Head of Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Almhofner said today.

In a statement released to mark World Refugee Day on 20 June, Almhofner called for more concerted action to promote returns.

"The return and reintegration of displaced persons must be treated as a matter of priority," he said in the statement.

"The OSCE Mission in Kosovo monitors human rights and rule of law issues in areas affecting the right to return, such as housing and property rights, non-discriminatory access to public services, and employment opportunities, civil registration of communities' members, security and freedom of movement, and access to justice.

Central and local authorities must create an environment conducive to sustainable return of all displaced persons through increased commitment and implementation of return-related projects. The fact that so many people remain displaced in the region or within Kosovo, without adequate protection of their rights, highlights the need for greater involvement of all parties and dialogue to find a sustainable solution.

I welcome the willingness of Kosovo authorities to engage in the closure of the lead-contaminated camps in northern Kosovo, and to provide for the return of about 700 displaced Roma to the Roma Mahala in the southern part of Mitrovica/Mitrovica or any other place of origin.

The OSCE Mission promotes and monitors the development of policies and procedures aimed at creating conditions for sustainable return in close co-ordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is the leading agency in this field. In addition, the Mission offers its expertise to the Kosovo authorities to find a durable rights-based and participatory solution for the affected population."

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