



**Recommendation 1424 (1999)<sup>1</sup>**

## **Evaluation of the humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, particularly in Kosovo and Montenegro**

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Recommendations 1376 (1998), 1397 (1999), 1400 (1999) and 1403 (1999) on the crisis in Kosovo and situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), and to its Recommendations 1385 (1998) and 1404 (1999) on the situation of Kosovo refugees and displaced persons.
2. The Assembly reiterates that all refugees and internally displaced persons in need of protection and humanitarian assistance should be treated in compliance with the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights irrespective of their nationality or ethnic group. The major concern should always be the protection of people. In this context a major change in existing perceptions of internally displaced persons such as Serbs, Albanians, Turks, Roma and other minority groups should be actively promoted at all political levels.
3. The Assembly welcomes with satisfaction the return of most of the Albanian population of Kosovo, and expresses its appreciation at the efficiency and devotion of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and all agencies involved in this process. However, with over 150 humanitarian organisations operating in the region, every effort should be made to improve co-ordination of their activities.
4. While remaining deeply concerned at the large number of ethnic Albanians whose plight is still unexplained, the Assembly is also deeply concerned by the plight of almost 200 000 Serb and Roma internally displaced persons, constituting more than 80% of their pre-war population, who fled Kosovo after the withdrawal of Serb military forces
5. The Assembly notes with concern that considerably less international humanitarian assistance has been provided to the Serb and Roma internally displaced persons than that provided to the Albanian refugees during the recent conflict. The Assembly expresses its firm conviction that humanitarian assistance should not be dependent on political considerations.
6. The Assembly believes that the list of items considered as humanitarian assistance should be revised and given absolute priority before the coming winter.
7. The Assembly is concerned by the reluctance on the part of the Yugoslav authorities to fully co-operate with the UNHCR in order to solve the problem of housing for internally displaced persons, and is particularly alarmed by the difficulties concerning the provision of suitable accommodation for winter.
8. A complex ethnic situation, particularly in Montenegro, combined with the burden of the influx of internally displaced persons and economic difficulties, are likely to create dangerous tensions among the population.

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1. Assembly debate on 22 and 23 September 1999 (29th and 30th Sittings) (see [Doc. 8527](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Iwinski). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 September 1999 (30th Sitting).



9. The Assembly considers that democratic reconstruction, particularly the establishment of democratic institutions and civil society, constitutes an indispensable pre-condition for future stability in the region. The Council of Europe should bring all its experience to bear in this process.

10. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

10.1. urge the member states of the Council of Europe:

- a. to apply the same principles, in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights, to all refugees and internally displaced persons in need of protection and humanitarian assistance, irrespective of their nationality or ethnicity;
- b. to propose that the United Nations Sanctions Committee review the list of items recognised as humanitarian assistance to which economic sanctions should not be applied, and, in view of the dangers to the physical well-being of the vulnerable during the coming winter, to ensure that sanctions do not prevent adequate energy being made available for domestic purposes;
- c. when applying economic sanctions, to differentiate between the Yugoslav people and the regime, and not to prevent the reconstruction of infrastructure which has a direct impact on the humanitarian situation, for example, hospitals;
- d. to step up their humanitarian support for internally displaced persons in Montenegro and Serbia;
- e. to step up donor funding in response to the revised Consolidated Interagency Appeal and to the Donor Alert launched by the United Nations on 26 July 1999;
- f. to contribute generously to the economic reconstruction of the whole region under the aegis of the European Agency for Reconstruction;
- g. to devote more human and financial resources to the work of the United Nations in Kosovo;
- h. to give priority to education at all levels, including its scientific, technological and humanitarian dimensions;
- i. to guarantee fair treatment of asylum seekers from Kosovo;

10.2. urge the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (Unmik):

- a. to speed up the process of establishing the United Nations civil police presence in order to ensure the protection and security of the population and, meanwhile, to ensure the best possible co-ordination of the United Nations system;
- b. to encourage the direct involvement of the local population in the administration of their province;
- c. to make use, in the building of democratic institutions and civil society, of the expertise and contributions of the competent organisations, in particular the Council of Europe;

10.3. urge the Serb and Yugoslav authorities:

- a. to revise the current legislation in such a way that internally displaced persons enjoy their full rights;
- b. to transfer funds received from the UNHCR for running collective centres to the municipalities concerned without undue delay;
- c. to fully co-operate with the UNHCR, and in particular to indicate buildings which could be used as collective centres for those internally displaced persons who are currently occupying schools;
- d. to ensure full access of internally displaced persons to health and education systems;

10.4. urge the Montenegrin authorities:

- a. to transfer, to all those concerned, without undue delay, funds received from the European Union for host families and local municipalities;
- b. to co-operate closely with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies in order to see internally displaced persons successfully through the winter;
- c. to ensure that people who are mentally ill are cared for in suitable accommodation.

11. The Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
  - a. ensure strong involvement of the Council of Europe in the process of democratic reconstruction in Kosovo under the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, in co-operation with the OSCE, including the preparations for truly democratic elections and the establishment of democratically elected local institutions after the return of refugees of all ethnic groups;
  - b. strengthen its existing programmes designed to build inter-communal confidence, strengthen civil society, combat prejudice and intolerance and strengthen the administration of justice, through legal assistance and support for non-governmental organisations and local democracy;
  - c. invite the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to step up its programme for the twinning of municipalities in the regions which are hosting internally displaced persons with municipalities in other Council of Europe member states with a view to increasing the flow of humanitarian assistance;
  - d. call on the Social Development Fund to explore the possibility of further contributing to international efforts towards reconstruction of the region.
12. The Assembly urges the Committee of Ministers and the member states of the Council of Europe to recognise that, for all of these humanitarian recommendations to be effective, further resources will be required in addition to those which would be available under its current policy of zero budgetary growth for the Council of Europe, and calls on national parliaments to recognise this.