

Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 462a07

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

pressunit@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



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Commissioner for Human Rights voices concern about the status of Kosovo refugees in Bosnia

Strasbourg, 28.06.2007 - The security situation in Kosovo does not allow for the safe return of all refugees, said Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Commissioner urges the Bosnia and Herzegovina government not to withdraw temporary admission permits for Kosovo refugees at the set deadline of 30 June. He also says the authorities should continue to provide protection for those refugees who cannot return, including the Roma refugees.

"Kosovo's future still holds a lot of uncertainties and the security situation remains fragile," the Commissioner said. "I strongly believe that for those refugees who cannot return, a lasting solution should be found within Bosnia and Herzegovina."

According to the Commissioner, this could mean either the granting of asylum, a permanent residence permit or even citizenship, which some of the refugees would be entitled to after years of living in Bosnia.

Thomas Hammarberg, who supports the similar view of the UN refugee agency, says that there continues to be a need for the international protection of the 3,000 strong Kosovar refugee community in Bosnia, and most notably the Roma who are still in collective centres.

The Commissioner said he would closely follow the situation of these refugees after the 30 June deadline.

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