

- BRIAN ATWOOD, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- PHYLLIS OAKLEY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEE AND MIGRATION

③ *Richard Holbrooke, Asst Sec. of State for Europe*
JULIA TAFT, PRESIDENT OF INTERACTION

② THE VERY REVEREND NICHOLAS TREE-AN-TA-FEE-LOU, CHANCELLOR OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCH-DIOCESE OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

① HIS EXCELLENCY BISHOP JOHN RICARD, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

present.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS:

- Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI)
- Senator Carl Levin (D-MI)
- Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA)
- Rep. Tony Hall (D-OH)

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Matt

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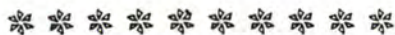
Catholic Relief Services has provided \$18 million in humanitarian assistance to more than a million refugees, displaced and affected persons regardless of their religion or ethnicity.

In the wake of the peace agreement, CRS plans to dramatically increase its support for activities aimed at bringing together former antagonists to aid in the rebuilding of war-torn economies and communities.

Much of the new support will be directed at small businesses. Throughout the conflict, rather than import relief goods, CRS opted to produce them in Sarajevo. One typical enterprise is the Sarajka Pasta Factory, which has put 500 people to work and offers Sarajevo's citizens a high-protein alternative to the bread, beans and oil that for so long formed the bulk of their diet. More than 65 percent of CRS resources in Bosnia are directed at Sarajka and similar enterprises that produce bread, socks, underwear and textiles for distribution to the local population. These projects not only provide food and clothing; they also restore pride and dignity by giving people the opportunity to be productive and provide for their families.

CRS also plans to expand programs that provide winter clothes, heating and cooking fuel for vulnerable groups; provide bricks, cement and other construction materials to rebuild destroyed houses; and help mental health counselors assist individuals and families traumatized by the war.

CRS works with four local humanitarian agencies — Caritas (Catholic), Merhamet (Muslim), Dobrotvor (Serbian Orthodox) and La Benevolencija (Jewish) — and has helped them implement joint projects. By bringing representatives of various ethnicity together, CRS is helping build the mutual trust that will aid in the creation of a cooperative post-war community.



A. Bishop

~~K. Bishop~~

MIKARIC Theodore McCARRICK

DRAFT REMARKS FOR KENNEDY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES TO MAKE AT THE JANUARY 29, 1996 WHITE HOUSE RECEPTION

Hosted Pres. & Pope
+ ...
Bel Canto

In Bosnia everyone has been a victim of war. Every woman, every child has been vulnerable to its dangers and privations to some degree. CRS recognizes this and that is why we have been relentless in our efforts to reach needy people of all communities, regardless of their religion or ethnicity.

In Bosnia, as elsewhere, our refusal to limit our assistance or deny aid to any one group is rooted in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, which emphasizes that the responsibility of the wealthy to assist the less fortunate is not limited by national boundaries or ethnic and religious distinctions.

Also in accordance with Catholic Social Teaching, we hold that problems should be solved and decisions made by the communities most affected by those decisions. As Pope John Paul II said on the occasion of his visit to Baltimore last October 8, "The best kind of assistance is that which encourages the needy to become the primary artisans of their own social and cultural development". That's why whenever possible CRS tries to work through local organizations to identify and address the needs of the population. This is most clearly exemplified in Bosnia, where we implement our activities through counterpart agencies who represent the four ethnic communities: Croatian, Serbian, Muslim and Jewish. As a Catholic organization, we believe that our presence and solidarity with *all* the peoples of Bosnia holds concrete and symbolic value. We believe that it allows us to play a unique role in helping to promote reconciliation among the

people of the region.

Recently in a symbolic act of reconciliation, Catholic Cardinal Vinko Puljic of Sarajevo attended a Christmas liturgy in a Serbian Orthodox church in Sarajevo. In remarks beforehand, he warned, "The breakdown of coexistence between the various cultures here may well lead to political and social radicalism, whose consequences would be felt far beyond the territory of this republic."

We must not let this happen. Our experience has shown us that it does not have to happen.

Each week, the directors of CRS' four counterpart organizations put aside their differences and sit down with us to decide how best to serve their communities. It isn't always easy. Centuries of animosity and resentment make this war an especially bitter one. I won't say that disagreements don't arise. Deciding that one community may be in need of more resources than another can be extremely challenging. Yet our experience has made us optimistic. It has given us a vision of what the future can hold for Bosnia. It has given us hope.

I'll give you a small example that occurred recently. During their pre-Christmas meeting, the director of Dobrotvor, our Serbian Orthodox counterpart, came forward with a request. He had nothing to give his staff after the trying year they had gone through together. No food or clothing could be spared and what little cash he had was tied up in program work. After a brief consultation, his Muslim, Jewish and Catholic counterparts offered a solution. They informed the Serbian director that they would contribute extra food and supplies so that Dobrotvor's staff could have a Christmas bonus.

At CRS we believe that this small act of generosity is a symbol of what the country as a whole can achieve.

In 1993, CRS was the first U.S. religious organization to take up residence in Sarajevo.

Throughout the war our staff stayed on, risking sniper's bullets and mortar shells. We stayed as a sign of solidarity with the people--to assure them they had not been forgotten in their hour of darkness.

Throughout the conflict, rather than import relief goods, CRS opted to produce them in both Bosnian and Serb-controlled Sarajevo. One typical enterprise is the Sarajka Pasta Factory. The project has put more than 500 people to work. After surviving for so long on a humanitarian aid diet of bread, beans and oil, seeing something as comforting and familiar as pasta on the table again, serves to bring back memories of more peaceful pre-war days. It gives back hope.

Over 65 percent of CRS' resources in Bosnia are directed at small enterprises like Sarajka that produce bread, underwear, socks and textiles for distribution to the local population. The value of these projects, however, goes far beyond the mere provision of food and clothing. Equally important are their roles in giving previously unemployed people the opportunity to be productive and provide for their families--activities that are crucial to the restoration of pride and self-respect. CRS understands that only when people have achieved some measure of physical and economic security can they begin to contemplate ideas about reconciliation.



The cornerstone of CRS' health program in Bosnia is our Trauma Recovery Program. Throughout

the region many people have been the victims of ethnic cleansing. They or their family members have been raped and brutalized; they have lost their homes and their livelihoods. Some physicians and psychologists are refugees themselves, suffering from the same trauma and shock as the people they are attempting to help. By providing local mental health care workers with training in crisis and trauma counseling, we have been able to help this seriously war-traumatized population regain control of their lives.

Like the First Lady, CRS recognizes that in times of crisis, often it is the children who suffer most and who have the least ability to bring about a change to their situation. CRS is working to help children through its support for programs designed to fulfill the most urgent needs of this vulnerable group. Throughout the war, we have distributed over **HOW MANY** winter boots, **HOW MANY** winter socks and underwear to young children. We are working to maintain a clean and healthy environment for children to learn in by providing schools with sanitation materials. CRS has also overseen deliveries of medicines to the Kosevo Pediatric Ward for treatment of children with chronic diseases.

CRS welcomes the US-brokered Dayton peace agreement with much enthusiasm. The reduction in violence and restoration of utilities has been a great relief to all citizens. It has also opened the door for us to dramatically increase our support for reconciliation and reconstruction activities. The new climate of freedom and security will allow CRS to offer new support to small businesses, **LIST NEW INITIATIVES HERE.**

In closing, let me emphasize once again that we must not allow Cardinal Puljic's warning about

the breakdown of coexistence among cultures to become a reality. In resisting such a scenario, Catholic Relief Services will continue its efforts to carry out the vision our Holy Father expressed for our agency when he said, "Each individual without exception is created in the image of God and redeemed by the Blood of Christ. In a world scarred by religious divisions and national rivalries, Catholic Relief Services testifies to the unity of the human family and to the equal and inalienable dignity of each and every person."

**CRS ASSISTANCE TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN
IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

The war in the former Yugoslavia has caused a collapse of civil society. In Bosnia, more than one million citizens have left the country. Most of them have become refugees. During the three-and-a-half years of war, many Bosnians faced food insecurity. Approximately 2.7 million people are reliant upon humanitarian aid. Women and children especially have been the greatest victims of the war in Bosnia. They have been killed, wounded, displaced and separated from their families. As a result, a great many suffer from severe trauma-related stress disorders.

CRS' mission in the former Yugoslavia is an effort to help a people to survive, to maintain their dignity and to decrease their dependance on humanitarian aid.

CRS' four program areas include emergency relief, local production, counterpart strengthening and psycho-social rehabilitation. In all projects, special attention has been paid to assisting women and children.

CRS employs hundreds of women in the production of pasta, bread, winter socks, underwear and winter clothes and boots for children. The US government has contributed \$6 million toward such local production projects. For many women, these projects have provided their first opportunity in more than two years to work and earn a salary -- activities that are crucial to the restoration of pride and dignity. Moreover, they have the satisfaction of knowing they are producing commodities that will benefit their own children, as well as those of friends and relatives.

A major challenge for Bosnians centers on how to maintain the same standards of health and hygiene they enjoyed before the war. The maintenance of these standards is a question of dignity in a developed society. It is an **emergency need**. CRS has provided hygiene kits for 30,000 of the most needy families in Sarajevo. The kits contain a monthly supply of soap, shampoo and other commodities to meet the needs of a four-member family. In the spring of 1994, CRS supplied a hygiene kit containing winter outerwear to every infant in Sarajevo 12 months and younger. Additional kits were specially designed and distributed to their mothers and all other pregnant women throughout the city.

In addition to the foregoing, CRS improved hygienic conditions for Sarajevo's students by providing sanitation materials to all elementary and high schools in the city. CRS also addresses the needs of children by sponsoring a youth club that provides opportunities for young Sarajevans to improve their skills in such areas as foreign languages, computer sciences, and the arts.

December 14, 1995

Ambassador Madeleine Albright
Permanent Representative to the UN
U.S. Mission to the UN
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Dear Ambassador Albright,

We write to you, hopeful that the Dayton Accords will bring peace, but still deeply concerned over the atrocities and human rights abuses inflicted upon the civilian population of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the conflict in that country. Women have suffered horribly in this war. As ethnic cleansing was pursued, many women were subjected to torture including rape as a weapon of war and terror. They watched their spouses, children, and friends abused and often killed before their eyes, and lost their homes, property, and often, hope.

We believe the Dayton Peace Accords on Bosnia-Herzegovina, at long last, offer the prospect of restoring that hope. To achieve this, it is crucial that those executing the Accords take action to implement the concerns of women of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Women and girls constitute the vast majority (in some estimates, up to 80%) of the nation's 2.7 million refugees. A war of 'ethnic cleansing' is waged against civilians; it is, in significant part, a war against women.

Strikingly, women were invisible in Dayton. With this letter, we seek to draw your attention to some of the issues of concern to women and to which serious attention is critical in the implementation of the Accords.

We are very pleased to see that the Dayton Accords incorporate human rights in the most prominent manner of any peace agreement in recent memory. We are grateful to you for your continuing attentiveness to these issues, and your singular, decisive support for the war crimes tribunal, for the prosecution of rape and gender related abuse, and for the principle that there can be no lasting peace without justice. In our view, the prompt and proper implementation of the Accords offers an opportunity to bring at least a measure of help to the victims and survivors of this conflict. Help is late, but we address this to you in the hope that its results will be lasting.

The attached Annex "Women and the Bosnian Peace Process: Preliminary Questions on Ten Issues of Concern", sets forth a number of our specific concerns about the implementation of the Accords in ways that will address the very real experiences of Bosnian women in this conflict and the peace process and reconciliation that are to follow.

We see these suggestions as a beginning. We hope, as you suggested, to continue a dialogue with you on the ways best to implement our concerns.

Sincerely,

Felice D. Gaer
The Jacob Blaustein Institute
for the Advancement of Human Rights

Patricia L. Rengel
Amnesty International, USA

Gay J. McDougall
International Human Rights
Law Group

Marjorie Lightman
International League for Human Rights

Ambassador Madeleine Albright

-2-

December 14, 1995

**Charlotte Holstein
The American Jewish Committee**

**Susannah Sirkin
Physicians for Human Rights**

**Firuz Kazemzadeh
National Spiritual Assembly of the
Baha'is of the U.S.**

**Marsha Freeman
International Women's Rights Action Watch***

**Karin Ryan
Human Rights Program
The Carter Center**

**Jill Merrick
International Center for Research**

**Mahnaz Afkhami
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**Charlotte A. Bunch
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**Jean Gore
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**Linda Cimino
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**Rhonda Copelon
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Law Clinic**

**Surita Sandosham
Equality Now**

**Anne T. Goldstein
Member of ABA Task Force on War Crimes
in Former Yugoslavia***

**Dorothy Q. Thomas
Joanna Weschler
Human Rights Watch**

***for purposes of identification only**

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE
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Washington, D.C. 20009
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FACSIMILE COVER LETTER

To: Date: 1/5/96
Name: Ms. Melanne Verveer - Deputy Chief of Staff
Organization: Office of the First Lady
Fax: 202/456-6244

From: Name: Sheppie Abramowitz
Organization: International Rescue Committee
Fax: _____

Number of pages 9 (including fax cover)

Comments:

Call Sheppie &
tell her
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INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

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DOMESTIC OFFICES

Ms. Melanne Verveer
Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of the First Lady
fax: 202/456-6244

January 5, 1996

Dear Ms. Verveer,

It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday. We are all delighted that Mrs. Clinton is so interested and committed to helping support the U.S. humanitarian agencies which are working in the former Yugoslavia. Her support will precipitate new interest, donors and additional involvement in projects in the former Yugoslavia.

I thought I would suggest that you meet the International Rescue Committee field director for mental health in the regions of the former Yugoslavia, Ms. Annie Foster. I can assure you that she is very well informed, articulate and enthusiastic about the possibilities for U.S. assistance to needs in this field. She happens to be coming to Washington D.C. next week for a few days, and I would be happy to contact your office and arrange an appointment, if you are available for a few minutes. I think you would find her input very interesting.

I have taken the liberty of enclosing, for your reference, information on some of our programs. Thank you again for yesterday's meeting.

Best regards,

Sheppie Abramowitz
Vice President for Government Affairs

Encl: 4

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INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

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F A X T R A N S M I S S I O N

TO: COUNTRY: USA
FAX #:

FROM: Donna Thompson
PAGES: (including cover sheet)
DATE: April , 1994

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE HEADS UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN EXILE PROJECT

As a result of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, there are as many as 40,000 children that have become separated from their parents. These children are scattered in over 27 countries. Many of these children were either evacuated, escaped from areas of intense fighting, or were hastily sent away to safety in an effort to save their lives.

The International Rescue Committee is sponsoring the UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN EXILE PROJECT which seeks to ensure that as many unaccompanied children as possible are reunited with their parents and family members. The project is headquartered in Zagreb, Croatia.

The tracing of unaccompanied children and their parents is accomplished by a network of facilitators in over 21 countries. These children are identified and assessed and this information is entered into a computerized data-base to facilitate the matching of these minors with their parents. Photographs of children can also be scanned and entered into the data-base for ease of identification. This system has several controls to assure the confidentiality of the information and the safety of the children.

There is an exchange of information between this project and UNHCR/Project Reunite and the International Committee of the Red Cross which also seek to reunite these minors with their parents.

In addition to reuniting children with their parents, the Unaccompanied Children in Exile project arranges interim care for these children, evaluates temporary foster placements, responds to children's emergency needs, trains child-interviewers, provides legal counselling, and collaborates with governmental and non-governmental agencies working with children in refugee situations.

Already in the couple of months of the project over 2,473 unaccompanied

2/2(a)

(4)

children have been identified and many reunions have taken place or are in process. One third of these children are unaccompanied by any adult person or are completely alone. Most of the unaccompanied children found through this project are between the ages of 11 to 15 years old and up to 10% are pre-school age.

Jerry Martone, director of IRC's health programs in former Yugoslavia is managing the project. Mr. Martone can provide details about the effort. He has recently just returned from Zagreb after a month's stay putting different program elements in place.



INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

FACT SHEET

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WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE?

Over the past five years, IRC has tripled in size and is now the largest private nonsectarian refugee relief agency serving refugees worldwide. IRC has been helping victims of racial, religious and ethnic persecution, as well as people uprooted by war and violence, for over 62 years. Populations displaced within their own borders, refugees repatriating and those resettled in third countries are also assisted.

IRC staff and volunteers work in Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, the former Soviet Union and the United States. A unique ability to respond quickly to refugee emergencies has marked the International Rescue Committee's history since it was founded in 1933, at the request of Albert Einstein, to assist anti-Nazis fleeing Hitler's terror.

WHAT KIND OF HELP DOES IRC PROVIDE?

In refugee emergencies, IRC's priority is to deliver critical medical services, food and shelter, as well as essential public health and sanitation assistance. Once a crisis is stabilized, IRC establishes programs that enable refugees to cope with life in exile. Through training, education, income-generating and self-reliance programs, IRC ensures that hundreds of thousands of refugees have opportunities to learn and develop skills, leading to an eventual durable solution to their plight. For those who cannot safely return to their countries, IRC assists in their permanent resettlement in the United States. This work is carried out by a national network of 17 domestic offices, for an average of 11,000 refugees per year. The goal of resettlement is to enable each refugee to achieve self-sufficiency and to begin building a new life.

WHO IS IRC HELPING TODAY?

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that there are 23 million refugees throughout the world, and 25 million displaced within their own countries. Today one of every 114 people in the world has been uprooted by conflict and forced to take flight in search of security and sustenance.

The International Rescue Committee has carried out major programs to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda and the epic exodus of refugees. Over 80 IRC international and 1,000 local staff have been assisting these refugees in Zaire and Tanzania as well as those uprooted in Rwanda.

The most hopeful solution to this humanitarian crisis lies in a safe and stable Rwanda. IRC's health-training, immunization, sanitation, water, income-generation and rehabilitation projects, as well as work assisting unaccompanied minors are already helping the 100,000 refugees who have returned to Rwanda. At the same time, IRC is paving the way for the eventual arrival of the more than one



Marie Anne Holtz

At a health post in Kibumba Camp in Zaire, an IRC medical team prepares to treat refugees from Rwanda.

million refugees still in Zaire and Tanzania. Projects include services at "open camps" for internally displaced Rwandans, and engineering and construction assistance to the new government as it restores services in the capital.

Within a week of the mid-July 1994 flight of nearly one million Rwandan refugees to eastern Zaire, IRC emergency mobile medical teams were treating cholera victims too weak to walk to clinics. Sanitation professionals quickly developed a simple latrine platform for use over fissures in volcanic rock that is now the model for the region. Over 20,000 of these latrine slabs have been built and distributed.

Other sanitation services in Zaire were provided for the more than 200,000 refugees in Kibumba Camp. IRC-trained health workers gave basic medical care and educated refugees on ways to prevent illness. IRC operated numerous health posts and outpatient clinics as well as a center that included an infant feeding program and a 108-bed tent hospital. IRC is transferring the programs and resources that have worked so successfully in Zaire to Rwanda. It is hoped that the experience gained in Zaire will result in a more rapid and efficient effort to help restore Rwanda's social and physical infrastructure to prewar levels, convincing wary Rwandans outside the borders that they can return to their homes without fear of violence or starvation. In Tanzania, health, water, sanitation, self-reliance and food-distribution programs are assisting Rwandan refugees as well as Burundians who were forced to flee the violence in their homelands.

IRC has been the leading voluntary agency in the former Yugoslavia since 1992. In addition to providing lifesaving medical supplies, food and shelter, IRC has delivered fuel to municipalities to maintain essential utilities, and has repaired water and gas lines in Sarajevo. Small factories have been revitalized to produce urgently needed relief items while adding stimulus to local economies. To compensate for

1 of 2 (b)

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INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

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The Children's Medical Project

The International Rescue Committee offers specialized medical care for Bosnian refugee children at three leading health facilities in Zagreb:

1. At the Institute for Mother and Child Health (Klarićeva), a 240 bed children's hospital, IRC supports a medical-surgical unit for the treatment of refugee and displaced children. The Institute for Mother and Child Health is a referral center for pediatric trauma, treating refugee and displaced children living in the Zagreb area as well as injured children brought by ambulance or helicopter from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The departments of Pediatrics and Pediatric Surgery are affiliated with the Zagreb University Medical School. The hospital also has a 14-bed intensive care unit and departments of Orthopedics and Diagnostic Services.

Examples of cases that may benefit from care in the unit include children with acute and chronic medical problems needing diagnostic evaluation, children with sequelae of accidents and war injuries, and children with congenital defects and orthopedic problems that seriously impair their health, growth or development. Priority is assigned to refugee children with medical or surgical problems that could significantly benefit from hospitalization at Klarićeva, based upon financial need and bed availability.

2. IRC subsidizes the treatment of refugee children with acute leukemia at the Children's Hematology-Oncology Unit of the Clinical Hospital Center, (Salata), a teaching hospital of the Zagreb University Medical School. Before the current conflict the hospital was a regional referral center for children with leukemia and hemophilia. Although access to the hospital from other parts of former Yugoslavia is limited, the 36 beds in the unit remain full; approximately one-fourth of the children in the unit are from refugee and displaced families.
3. Physiotherapy and convalescent care for refugee children is available at Krapinske Toplice, a rehabilitation center for children and adults 45 km north of Zagreb. Children recovering from orthopedic and neurologic procedures, severe burns, and war-related injuries are housed in the pediatric ward, where they can continue their schooling during their treatment.

*This is a draft report, just received
by our office.*

1 of 2(c)

IRC implements mental health projects in Osijek, Slavonski Brod, and Split, Croatia and in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. In addition, the Umbrella Grant for Trauma and Reunification provides grants and supervision for local mental health NGOs in Zagreb, Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zenica.

The projects in Slavonski Broad, Osijek and Split provides group counseling for children and adults. Outreach visits are made to people who are not able to attend the groups but who are in need of services. Each group is led by a trained paraprofessional and a professional. Education about emotional responses to the war, coping skill and supportive counseling are provided. Recently, public health components have been added to these programs so that, for example, elderly people can have blood pressure screening while attending the groups.

Though the core programs are similar, each city has developed programs unique to the people located there. For example, the refugees of Slavonski Brod are now preparing to stay in Slavonski Broad and believe that the peace accord insures that they cannot return to the Serb-held areas from where they came. Conversely, in Split, the adolescents are preparing to organize a youth center in Drinis, the city in Krajina that they will soon return. The people in Split and Drinis are working together on this project to draw the young people back after complaints by teenagers that "there is nothing to do in Drinis".

In Split, in addition to a counseling center, IRC runs an Information Center that offers referrals to anyone in need of social or welfare services. Recently, the EU requested that IRC go to Mostar and advise the EU on how to set up a similar system in Mostar.

In Belgrade, IRC works with the local NGO "Zdravo da ste (Hi Neighbor)". Professionals and paraprofessionals are being trained and counseling sessions are provided by Hi Neighbor for the refugees. The Ministry of Health in Belgrade has asked IRC to expand their program to start training students and psychiatrists in the national Institute of Mental Health. IRC is currently working on a curriculum to be used in the university classes.

IRC has made an assessment, at the request of the authorities in Belgrade, to start a mental health program in Banja Luka. UNHCR has given initial approval for IRC to start a program dealing with the secondary trauma (the traumatic effects working so intensely with the victims of this war has on the mental health workers themselves) of local relief workers in Banja Luka.

The program in Croatia employs for 58 local workers and provides services for 1600 participants a month.

In Belgrade 14 people work directly for IRC and 120 people receive a salary through Hi Neighbor. One thousand people participate in Hi Neighbor programs every month.

The Umbrella grant, with its budget of \$9 million, provides support for local NGOs who are implementing mental health related activities. The project has been running continuously since 1993 and over 50 NGOs have received assistance from this grant. Although the majority of projects were initially located in Croatia, within the last several months, most programs are in Bosnia and the Director of the Umbrella grant is moving permanently to Sarajevo.



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IRC will arrange for transportation for refugee children from outside Zagreb who are treated at these facilities, provided that each child is accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. IRC also covers the cost of accommodation for the parent in Zagreb while the child is hospitalized.

The Children's Medical Project was established so that critically ill and injured children could be cared for in a supportive atmosphere, close to their families and to children like themselves, for a fraction of the cost of treatment abroad. Through its support, the IRC also helps strengthen the capacity of these local institutions to treat all the children under their care.

Representatives of agencies familiar with refugee children who might benefit from treatment at these institutions should contact the IRC office in Zagreb for further information.

The International Rescue Committee has been working in former Yugoslavia since December 1991. In Croatia IRC operates mental health and educational services and a shelter program for refugee and displaced families. The IRC office in Zagreb also processes Bosnian refugee families for resettlement in the United States.

Leila Richards, M.D., M.P.H., Coordinator
Igor Petricek, M.D. and Dragana Sparavalo, Assistant Coordinators

2 of 2(c)

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The UN and IRC mental health staff today had a meeting in Zagreb with the program officers for Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia. IRC was asked to look into programs in Bihac and Gorazde.

IRC's mental health programs are increasingly being confronted with the problems of suicide, alcoholic and other substance abuse, domestic violence, abandonment of the elderly and developmental problems for children. The number of people requesting assistance is increasing. IRC has been noted for managing the effects of secondary trauma on its mental health workers and instituting the Information Center.

Catherine O'Neill
1078 Napoli Drive
Pacific Palisades, California 90272

To Nicole Radner

Re- Jan. 29th White House coffee with Mrs. Clinton focusing on humanitarian efforts for women and children in Bosnia.

I look forward to attending the coffee, but wanted to bring to your attention some of the work done by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children on behalf of the women in Bosnia.

We were the first delegation of women to visit the region in Sept. 1992 as people were fleeing their villages. We wrote a report "Balkan Trail of Tears" which did recommend mental health support programs to assist the women. All refugees were women and children, since no able bodied men were allowed out by any side.

Subsequently we have sent five delegation of women to Bosnia to meet with the women and children.

I have testified before Congress on this issue, appeared on numerous national television shows (Nightline, CNN, C-Span, CBS etc.) and have also addressed the National Association of Women Judges on the importance of supporting a War Crimes Tribunal. Women's Commission members have written op- ed pieces and have consistently focused on the need to take into account the unique situation of the women and the children in the region. People magazine even accompanied one of our delegations to the area.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is the only US based NGO focusing exclusively on the needs of refugee and displaced women and children. It is supported by most of the major US Foundations.

I have also been a long term member of the Board of Directors and the Program Committee of the IRC, which is one of the lead humanitarian agencies working in Bosnia. Richard Holbrooke served on the IRC Board with me.

I am enclosing some of the material relating to the Women's Commission work in Bosnia, and I have asked our Executive Director, Mary Diaz, to send additional material to your office.

I applaud you for organizing this effort. So many NGO's have worked so long and hard on this issue, that it is wonderful to know that there will be a White House reception calling attention to this work...and the need to support a peaceful re-integration of families in their communities in Bosnia.

My best,



Tel 310 4547109

P.S. We've also sent 12 tons of knitting wool to women in Bosnia!



Women's Commission For Refugee Women and Children

Fact Sheet

What Is The Women's Commission?

There are more than 50 million refugees and internally displaced people worldwide, people uprooted by conflict, famine or persecution: approximately 80 percent of them are women and children. (Refugees have crossed an international border; displaced people are still in their own country. We use the term refugee to include both categories.) The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is the *only* advocacy and public education organization working on behalf of refugee and displaced women and children.

Who Are We?

The Women's Commission was founded in 1989 by Liv Ullmann, the distinguished actress and director; Catherine O'Neill, Board Member of the International Rescue Committee, and active in national politics and refugee issues; and Susan Forbes Martin, a highly regarded expert on refugee-related issues and author of the book "*Refugee Women*." Members now include many women working at senior levels in human rights and refugee organizations, as well as in education, medicine, law, journalism, government, communication and many other fields.

Why Was The Women's Commission Founded?

There was a growing concern among women working in refugee and human rights organizations that refugee women and children had specific needs that were being ignored or not adequately addressed. The Commission realized that if there was any hope of changing the conditions under which refugee families live, it must draw attention to these needs by influencing the international organizations, governments



Waiting for medical treatment and consultations in Kirambo Camp, Rwanda

and voluntary agencies responsible for their care and protection.



Woman and children at a Karen refugee camp in Thailand

What Do We Do?

The Women's Commission is an advocacy organization: it speaks on behalf of refugee and displaced women and children, who have a critical voice in bringing about change but do not have access to governments and policy makers. Currently the Women's Commission is working to further its goals through three major projects:

• Promoting Protection for Refugee Women

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women were developed in 1991 to address a growing concern and awareness that the protection needs of refugee women were not being met in the field. They contain concrete recommendations on how to improve programming in various areas of assistance, including protection, access to food, water and fuel, health care, education and economic opportunities. The Women's Commission has undertaken a three-year project to expand the understanding and implementation of the Guidelines at the field level to insure that assistance programs reflect the requirements as well as the resources refugee women bring to all aspects of programming.

• Promoting the Protection and Care of Refugee Children

Refugee children are at risk of losing their childhood. They are the most vulnerable refugee population, especially



Women returnees in Battambang, Cambodia participate in dressmaking to provide income for their families

susceptible to the physical and psychological effects of violence, disease and malnutrition. Unaccompanied minors, children who have been separated from their parents or caregivers, or orphaned, are a particularly at-risk group. The UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Children cover a wide range of areas in need of special attention, including education, health and nutrition, and durable (long-term) solutions. The Women's Commission is working to ensure wider implementation of the Guidelines.

• The Reproductive Health Project

Women in refugee settings are having extraordinarily high numbers of children, often spaced very closely; many refugee women have no or very limited access to comprehensive reproductive health services. The Women's Commission has undertaken an advocacy project to ensure that reproductive health is on the agenda of humanitarian assistance organizations, leading policy makers in U.N.-related organizations and donors.

• Other Projects

The Women's Commission is also involved in several grassroots public education projects, including: the Landmines Project, which is launching a nationwide campaign to ban landmines worldwide; Congressional briefings in Washington, DC, to ensure refugee families are not forgotten; the Schools Project, entitled "*The Refugee Experience*"; and the Knitting Project, which has shipped yarn and needles to refugee and displaced women in Croatia and Bosnia.

How Does The Women's Commission Work?

Each year the Women's Commission sends fact-finding delegations of women professionals to meet with refugee women and children and learn first hand of their needs and conditions. Recent delegations have traveled to Azerbaijan, Burma, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Somalia, Southern Sudan and Kenya, former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire.

Members of the delegations write reports making recommendations on how to improve assistance to refugee women and children; the reports are widely distributed to policy makers in the United States government and at U.N. agencies, and to non-governmental organizations. Delegation members also meet with policy makers, hold press briefings, write articles for publication in the national media and appear on television and radio.

Is the Women's Commission Effective?

- ✱ The Women's Commission was the first organization to draw media attention to the use of rape as an instrument of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia after a delegation visit in September 1992. As a result of the delegation's recommendations, the International Rescue Committee set up a program of mutual support groups for victims of violence.
- ✱ The Afghan Women's Social Service Center in Peshawar, Pakistan was founded after a Women's Commission delegation traveled there in 1989. It is the only organization run by and for Afghan women.
- ✱ The Women's Commission conducted a ground-breaking survey on the reproductive health needs of refugee women in camps around the world. It was well received by policy makers at all levels. A consortium of agencies is using the study in developing programs in the field.
- ✱ The Women's Commission was a catalyst in bringing about "The Refugee Women and Children Protection Act" that was signed into U.S. law in 1994.



UNHCR, D. Bregnard

Child returnees from Honduras receive food aid back home in El Salvador

How Is The Women's Commission Funded?

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children was founded under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, the largest non-sectarian voluntary refugee organization in the United States. We receive no government funds, and are supported by private donations from individuals and by America's leading foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

BALKAN TRAIL OF TEARS: ON THE EDGE OF CATASTROPHE



WOMEN'S COMMISSION FOR REFUGEE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

DELEGATION TO FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

26 - 30 SEPTEMBER 1992



*An independent committee
formed with the assistance of
the International Rescue
Committee for the study of the
problems affecting refugee
women and children.*

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INTRODUCTION: THE WOMEN... AND THEIR TEARS

They cried everywhere we went. Near Dakovo in eastern Croatia, not far from the Serbian shelling of the city Slavonski Brod, Esada, a 29-year-old woman from Doboje, weeps as she talks about giving birth on the road to twins, six days after she was forced out of their village in Bosnia. One baby died after 37 days, the other clings to life. Now she lives on the floor of a tent in a refugee setting. Her husband, she believes, is in a concentration camp.

Just outside the lovely city of Zagreb -- in an abandoned barracks at Resnik -- Zanina lives with 3,500 refugees from Prijedor in western Bosnia. She weeps as she stands stirring an enormous pot in the communal kitchen. She has lost her family, and has nothing... only the clothing on her back. She shares a toilet with 3,500 people, and sleeps in a large room with 100 people, over half of them children.

Nearby, in a refugee settlement called Spansko, Azra weeps as she holds her 2-year-old son in her arms. Yesterday was his birthday. She had lived in a town near Prijedor in Bosnia when not long ago, she was told by the Chetniks (Serbian forces) that she and her son had to leave within 2 hours. Her husband remains in Bosnia, fighting the Serbs who have chased them from their village. Now, she and others refugees in Spansko live without cooking capabilities, and have only one midday meal. Every night, the children go to bed hungry.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, near the Croatian border, in the village of Posusje, 1,500 people live on the floor of the local school with no electricity, no water, no way to cook, and virtually no food. These families arrived at the border too late -- the Croatian government had already ordered their border sealed. Most in the school are women and children. An elderly woman cried as she told us how her house, near Jajce, was burned down, how her life savings of 1,700 DM was taken, and how she knows from a neighbor who escaped, that her three sons are in concentration camps.

On the road to Slavonia in the northeast region of Croatia, a group of 50 refugees -- almost all women and children -- walk carrying everything they own in small bundles. They are looking for a place to stay. Seventeen-year-old Isma, from Travnik, is travelling with her mother who tells us that in their village, the Serbian troops were taking young girls to school and mass-raping them. She hid her daughter so that she would not be attacked. She said that every week, the Chetniks came to her village "and killed 20 people."

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There are as many stories of the suffering of the individual refugees as there are refugees in this overburdened, economically suffering country of Croatia.

Ninety percent of the refugees in Croatia are women, children, and the very old. At the border, families are broken up and the men are sent back to fight the Serbian forces.

Refugee families have no winter clothes -- there has been insufficient attention to the provision of winterized shelter for the 70,000 Muslim refugees in Croatia living in the camps. There is no school for the Muslim refugee children; no United Nations organization seems to be monitoring the adequacy of food, shelter, and medical support for those refugees who escape to Croatia. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Guidelines for Refugee Women and Children have been suspended... and are not in use in Croatia. Families in Croatia have taken into their homes hundreds of thousands who have fled the fighting.

MOST AT RISK -- INSIDE BOSNIA

Despite the deprivation and inadequate international support for the refugees in Croatia, these refugee women, who cry as they tell their stories, are the lucky ones... if such a word can have any meaning in this context.

It is the women and children inside Bosnia who are at this moment most at risk. Hundreds of thousands of people are trapped in cities where there is no economy, no source of food, and nowhere to escape. In central Bosnia alone -- between Zenica and Travnik -- almost one million people will need to receive international help this winter if they are to survive.

Here, too, the international community, while writing excellent reports on the urgency of need, has been very slow to act. Medical experts believe that it will be the children inside Bosnia who will die in greatest numbers from exposure to the harsh winter. Estimates are that the number of deaths could exceed 350,000.

CAN SOMETHING BE DONE?

URGENT GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO SAVE THE LIVES OF THE INNOCENT INSIDE BOSNIA

1. **Provision of winter shelter for the numbers likely to be displaced by the fighting.** Hundred of thousands are fleeing to larger towns... and more will come. And yet, despite all the population movements, no new shelter has been built in areas that are considered removed from the fighting. Everywhere, windows have been blown out. Distribution of plastic sheeting to keep out the cold is necessary even for those still in their own homes.
2. **Open up secure corridors for distribution of relief supplies.** Currently, the United Nations is not using major roads and rail lines. These should be repaired and militarily secured so that relief supplies can reach those most in need in the most direct, efficient and cost-effective manner. The time for discussion, reconnaissance, and reports is past. **Immediate action is called for to save lives.**
3. **Secure fuel and water supplies.** If lives are to be saved this winter, the UN and international community must secure heat and fuel supplies to population centers. Major cities are currently functioning with little electricity and heat -- and no water in some cases.
4. **Clothing for winter must be provided.** People have left everything behind in their villages -- they left only with their lives. If they are to survive the winter, the children and their mothers must have some warm clothing.
5. **Medical relief should be organized using the relief capability of the many trained doctors in the area.** Hospitals have been damaged and we are concerned that as winter approaches, there has been inadequate attention and support from the world community in ensuring that there will be continued access to health care.
6. **Orderly departure.** If the UN and international community is not prepared to do the above, it is essential in the interest of saving innocent lives to arrange for international resettlement of the endangered who wish to leave as soon as possible.
7. **Greater coordination between UN agencies and major donors.** The UNHCR is overtaxed. The extent of the task is too enormous for a UN agency with no previous experience with this scale of relief effort -- and no immediate access to personnel and equipment required to do the job satisfactorily. Sophisticated equipment -- such as communication systems, building supplies, materials, machinery, and trucks -- and personnel must be loaned immediately to the UN by concerned nations. There is **urgent** need for deployment of UN PROFOR forces

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in areas such as Banja Luka where ethnic cleansing -- manifested by harassment, economic intimidation, and overt physical threats -- is currently in progress.

8. **Greater urgency from the United States.** As Americans, we express grave concern that despite the enormous international media focus on ethnic cleansing, the US, until now, has been slow to make this a humanitarian priority. There is no one at the US Mission in Zagreb charged with the primary responsibility of humanitarian relief. The one staff member in the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) is on rotating assignment. The US State Department's Bureau of Refugee Programs has only one staff person who has visited the area. Congress has paid insufficient attention to the enormity of the potential tragedy. This must change.
9. **Involvement of NGOs.** There should be more aggressive involvement of international NGOs -- both assistance and human rights monitors -- and the UN Human Rights Commission inside Bosnia-Herzegovina.

No Escape

The borders around Bosnia are effectively closed. Croatia -- already burdened with the results of the war last year with Serbia, relocating hundreds of thousands of Croats displaced by that war, and gearing up for perhaps another confrontation with Serbia -- believes it is not in a position to be the escape route for the hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Bosnia... while its wealthier European neighbors and other nations are willing to take only small numbers of Bosnian refugees.

Therefore, unless there is peace -- which everyone considers extremely unlikely -- the world community must address the question of whether there is any international collective responsibility for the lives of the unarmed families in Bosnia.

There are those who believe that focusing on delivery of humanitarian relief is futile as long as the Serbian military advances remain unchallenged. We were told, "they feed us in the morning so we will be alive to be killed at night."

CROATIA: OVERBURDENED WITH REFUGEES AND DISPLACED

Croatia is a country of 4.5 million people, with nearly one million people who are refugees or displaced. One fifth of their territory is under UN protection -- with much of the infrastructure destroyed. The 250,000 Croatian citizens who fled those areas during last year's war are at risk of losing their homes permanently. Currently, the Serbian forces are shelling the Croatian city of Slavonski Brod.

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Croatia's economy is under economic pressure: Inflation is very high (25 percent per month). The government has decided that after accepting 450,000 refugees from Bosnia -- with most moving in with host families -- that it simply cannot absorb any more refugees from Bosnia. Croatia has closed its borders to new refugees, but worries about "mass movements" this winter if humanitarian hardship and war continue in Bosnia.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOSNIAN REFUGEES INSIDE CROATIA

1. **UNHCR should provide greater focus and support.** The 70,000 Bosnian refugee families living in collective settings throughout the country, whether or not they have "official" refugee status from the Croatian government, should receive more organized attention from the UNHCR. There is a need for increased institutional presence in each of the large refugee settings we visited, and we believe that the situation is similar throughout the country. Croatia's decision to deny refugee status does not mean that the UN community has no humanitarian responsibility toward those families living in abandoned buildings a few blocks from the UN offices.
2. **UNHCR should implement the Guidelines for Refugee Women and Children.** UNHCR must ensure that minimal standards of shelter, food, and health care are provided and winterization is undertaken as an urgent priority.

THE SUFFERING OF WOMEN

In this war, civilians are the specific focus and primary target of violence. The results of ethnic cleansing, which began first in Croatia and continues unabated at a growing pace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, are obvious especially in deep physical and psychological suffering of displaced and refugee women.

Croatia is hosting 600,000 to 800,000 displaced persons and refugees. Many have been taken into families or put up in hotels and pensions at government expense, but some 70,000 are trying to survive in facilities meant to be temporary transit centers for a fraction of the number they are currently serving.

Some of the critical problems are obvious: cooking facilities, food supplies, medicine, warm clothing and bedding, heat and insulation for tents and make-shift barracks. For lack of adequate facilities and supplies, women are suffering doubly for themselves and their children.

Other problems are less obvious. Many of the women and girls have been victims of horrible physical abuse, beatings, and rape. They have been separated from husbands, fathers, brothers, and other family members, and have no information on their location

or welfare. They have witnessed violence, and the murder of family members, friends and neighbors. They have been forced from their homes and robbed of all possessions. In many instances, their homes and whole villages have been burned and destroyed.

Medical and Psychological Needs of Women

Most of the women we interviewed in the refugee camps were Muslim. We asked them about their personal experiences and what they witnessed. The overwhelming impact of their stories makes clear the fact of widespread physical and sexual abuse of women and young girls. Because of the religious and cultural sensitivities associated with rape, many told their tales as if they had happened to another person.

We were told in Gasinci Camp that a woman working in the kitchen had direct knowledge of rapes of women and their daughters. A woman from her village thought her daughters had been raped. When we interviewed her, she told the following story:

"My husband and three sons were being held in the concentration camp outside our village. I got permission to take food to them, and I went with my two daughters, ages 13 and 15, with packages of food. When we got there, we were detained. We were put in a building where there were many other women and girls, and were kept there for eight days.

"Every time the soldiers came into the building, they would kick us and hit us with sticks. In the night, they would come in and take many girls out with them. They tried to take my daughters, but I yelled at them and shook my fist. I told them they could not take my daughters. They kicked me and hit me, but I saved my girls. They stayed with me all the time. But many other girls were raped many times."

We were told of camps in northern Bosnia where young women and girls were kept for many months and raped repeatedly. Many became pregnant and were kept in the camps until their pregnancies were well advanced.

In the refugee camps in Croatia, we saw and talked to many young women who are pregnant. All said their husbands are in concentration camps or in Bosnia fighting in the forests. None would talk about rape specifically or personally; they would only say that very bad things were done to them and that they heard others had been raped.

Two refugee women ages 17 and 25 -- one Croat, the other Muslim -- are at Petrova Hospital. Both are survivors of rape, according to Dr. Veselko Grizelj, Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. One has just delivered and the other is expecting birth in 2 weeks. When they arrived, they were 30 weeks pregnancy, infected with venereal disease, physically and psychologically battered.

Recommendations:

1. Mobile medical groups should be arranged immediately to screen and treat women and girls for many medical complications they are suffering as a result of abuse as well as other medical emergencies. We recommend organizing teams of medical personnel including gynecologists, nurses, and psychologists, with equipped to examine and treat problems in the field where there is the greatest concentration of refugee and displaced women, first in Croatia and then in Bosnia-Herzegovina as the war situation allows.

We were told that there are some 600 unemployed physicians in Croatia. Those who are qualified should be trained and paid for these mobile medical teams.

Women who are pregnant as a result of rape who desire abortions and are physically able to travel could be sent to hospitals. Perhaps all such cases could be sent to a hospital, such as the gynecological center at Petrova Hospital in Zagreb, where they could be given medical care, counseling, and support.

2. At the same time, information should be collected on women as victims of this war. Preferably, this should be done by trained and professional people here, and to the extent possible by women. Muslim women especially are reluctant to speak openly around men.
3. Refugee women require training and support to cope with logistical problems of involved with the care, feeding, and nurturing of their families and others in the camps and settlements. These women should be actively involved with the distribution of relief as well as have opportunities to participate in self-help projects. Their individual capacities and skills should be identified and they should assume positions in the administration and organization of the centers. Many are suffering from severe depression and could be helped by having work to do.
4. Increase the number of professional women in UN and NGO positions addressing this crisis. There are too few women in every area, given that 90 percent of the refugee and displaced population are women, children, and the elderly.

CHILDREN OF WAR IN THE BALKANS

Commonalities:

All of the camps visited contain children from birth to late adolescence -- however, teenage boys (from 15 on) are noticeably missing. None of the camps provides schooling for any of the children, nor are the children from Bosnia now in Croatia able to attend

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Croatian schools outside the camps. In Posusje, in Bosnia, the camp is located in an elementary school which means that not only are the children in the camp not able to attend school, but the elementary-age school children of the town of Posusje are also denied access to schooling.

None of the camps provides adequate bathing or bathroom facilities, although some are better than others. The result is open latrines often dug by IRC staff in some cases or use of the outside surrounding areas as toilets. Diarrhea is a problem in most of the camps and medical supplies are vastly inadequate to deal with this and other illnesses. Chronic respiratory infections are common and, with the approach of winter, medical personnel interviewed express fear about outbreaks of pneumonia, measles and tuberculosis. None of the camps has heated facilities and without heat it will be difficult for the inhabitants to survive the winter. Plans are underway on many levels among NGOs. UNICEF, UNHCR and IRC try to provide some type of winterized housing. Even those involved in planning for this believe it is too late to do this before winter arrives. Babies and young children in the camps are among the most vulnerable during the coming months.

None of the camps provides any mental health services for either children or adults. Many children have experienced extreme trauma (rape, torture, viewing the beating of other family members) in addition to the stress of being a refugee or displaced person. Severe depression and disfunction are to be expected if the situation in the camps remains unchanged.

Resnik: There are approximately 3,300 people in this center on the outskirts of Zagreb. As in all the camps, most are women, children, and elderly men. Resnik was planned to be a transit center for 500 people. There is one toilet, inadequate washing facilities, no heat, greatly overcrowded living quarters (abandoned and aging barracks formerly used by construction workers which had been empty for a dozen years), and no provision for privacy among families or between adults. There are no educational or play materials for the children. UNICEF delivers some food, but there is not enough.

The German volunteer doctor on duty at the small medical unit (possibly a former storage room) reported a shortage of all medicines, particularly vaccines for children 0 and cough medicine. He expects a winter of devastating illnesses unless heated and less crowded housing is provided along with adequate hygiene facilities.

Spansko: This houses 500 people in Zagreb and, ironically, is surrounded by attractive, newly-constructed apartment buildings. Most inhabitants are in some way related to men who worked for construction companies in Zagreb. Although one might think that they would fare better because of this relationship, there are basically the same problems as in Resnik. Children traumatized by war and by loss have no access to mental health

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counseling, school, or adequate living facilities. Again, there is no heat and no easy way to winterize these buildings. Rooms are overcrowded, and there is no presence of any helping organization -- nor is there any attempt by refugees to organize themselves. Many of the mothers are also traumatized, depressed, and preoccupied by worry about relatives left behind. These worries often make them emotionally unavailable to their children. There are no cooking facilities and only one midday meal is provided, leaving children hungry at night.

Gasinci: One thousand five hundred (1,500) mainly Muslim refugees are housed in tents and barracks which belonged to the former Yugoslavian army. Again, 90 percent are women and children.

Of the camps we visited, this one is the best organized, with more food and more adequate housing. Rotating volunteers from Germany and Austria provide play groups for children with materials to use for drawing and reading. Assistance from Germany and Austria provides three cooked meals a day. The Educational Ministry of Croatia is being consulted about schooling. This has resulted in an avenue for children to express their feelings and experiences through paintings and drawings.

Serious problems will result here with the onset of winter and lack of heated housing. At the present time, a pediatrician is available to families in the camp.

Posusje, Bosnia-Hercegovina: One thousand five hundred (1,500) refugees are housed in a school with no water, no cooking facilities, no heat, and, on the day of our visit, no electricity. As in all the other camps, most children are with family members or friends of the family. However, living conditions are appalling: toilets do not flush; there is no water to wash; there is no way to heat food. In fact, there will be no food delivery for 20 days. Food delivered by UNICEF is stock piled in a warehouse because it needs to be cooked -- those at Posusje can only consume canned goods and other foods which need no cooking.

The already traumatic situation is intensified because the town of Posusje is becoming increasingly frustrated with the refugees' inhabiting their school. None of the elementary school children -- refugee or local -- can go to school. Reportedly, there are 1,400 mattresses which the town will not distribute to the refugees because they do not wish them to remain.

Plans by IRC are under consideration as to how to winterize the gymnasium, but nothing has been agreed upon. It is likely that winter will arrive with no solution.

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Stobrec: Seven hundred fifty (750) people are living in this summer camping area on the Adriatic, outside of Split. It is a comfortable site populated by Muslims in very adequate tents. This area was given to them by the municipality and has been an almost ideal place to spend the summer. Food is prepared by one of the hotels in town which houses refugees. The children, in effect, have had a summer by the sea. However, there is no way to provide for winterization and they will not be able to remain. In a few weeks, this will be an immense problem for the surrounding area and for the refugees.

Recommendations for Children in the Camps:

1. UN presence, including more effective monitoring and administration, need to be felt in all of the camps.
2. Blankets, medicines, adequate shelter, and winter clothing need to be provided immediately.
3. Provisions for schooling and mental health services need to be provided as soon as the basic survival needs are met.
4. Children need to be ensured that they can remain with relatives and/or adults who are known to them whenever possible.

CONCLUSION -- A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Do human rights and refugee rights have any meaning if the UN, US, and other nations turn their backs on ethnic cleansing of the innocent, cooperate in closing escape routes for families and children, and refuse to invest maximum effort to ensure delivery of food to those trapped inside?

The international community needs to work to affect a halt to the outrage taking place in former Yugoslavia which unchecked will continue to devastate the existing populations and generations to come. It is time for political leaders to do the right thing.

We believe this situation, as we have found it, cannot and should not be allowed to continue.

MEETINGS HELD

ZAGREB

US Government

Tom Midnight, US Embassy
Tom Brennan, OFDA

IRC

Dr. Sasa Caric
Dr. Dina Pfeifer

UNICEF

Dr. Christof Conrad, Head of Zagreb Office

UNHCR

Michael Keats
Robyn Ziebert, UNHCR Banja Luka
Bill Lorenz, Special Consultant on Shelter in Bosnia

Physicians for Peace

Dr. Dzenana Rezakovic, President

Zagreb University

Dr. Ivan Depolo
Professor Veselko Grizelj, MD, Head of Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology,
Medical School

Institute for Mother and Child Health

Dr. Ivan Fatorin, Director

Croatian Government

Dr. Mirjana Kujundic, Special Assistant to Vice President Granic

Ministry of Health

Dr. Bozidar Gavazzi, Advisor to the Minister

SPLIT

IRC

John Fawcett, Director for Croatia

ICRC

Daniel Lengennhager

UNHCR

Mr. Bayise

WHO

Dr. Mary Black

MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION

Catherine O'Neill, Chair of the Delegation and of the Women's Commission, Board Member of the International Rescue Committee. She has testified often before the US Congress and on refugee related issues and did her graduate work in International Relations at Columbia University.

Katherine Moseley, Psychologist specializing in trauma cases, especially women and children.

Jane Olson, Co-Chair and Co-Founder of the Los Angeles Committee of Human Rights Watch, Member of Executive Committee, Helsinki Watch, New York.



ADD YOUR VOICE

Join the Women's Commission!
Basic membership dues are \$35 per year.

In return you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to improve the lives of refugee families throughout the world.

All members will receive our quarterly newsletter, *Women's Commission News*.

Just fill out the application inside.



Cambodian refugees learn the basics of reproductive health care.

For more information, please contact:

**Women's Commission for
Refugee Women and Children**
c/o International Rescue Committee
122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10168-1289
Tel: (212) 551 3086 Fax: (212) 551 3186
Internet: WCRWC@IRC.COM

You see them on television. On the move. In makeshift camps. You hear the anguished voices of mothers trying to calm their babies. You see the anxious faces of children whose lives have been turned upside down . . .



Liv Ullmann, Women's Commission Honorary Chair, visiting Vietnamese Detention Center in Hong Kong.

Torn from their families, traditions and communities, these women and children every day face hardships and deprivation most of us cannot even imagine . . .

Who are they? Just some of the 40 million refugee* women and children around the world forced to flee their homes because of war, civil strife, persecution or famine.

How can you help? Join us!

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is the **only** organization in the United States dedicated to speaking out on behalf of these refugees. We are committed to improving the lives of refugee women and children through public education and advocacy.

We welcome new members in our efforts to ensure that refugee women and children in every corner of the globe receive the kinds of programs and support they ask for—and deserve.

** The term "refugee" is usually meant to define those individuals who have crossed an international border, while internally displaced persons refer to those who have been displaced within their own country. The Women's Commission uses the term "refugee" to include both populations. Women and children make up 80 percent of the world's refugee population.*

**Women's Commission
for
Refugee Women and Children**

REFUGEE WOMEN WANT

PROTECTION Too often, women and girl refugees, particularly those without the protection of a husband or father, are sexually harassed and exploited—sometimes by the very guards who are supposed to protect them.

EDUCATION In many refugee sites, women and girls are denied educational opportunities. Refugee women want education for themselves and their daughters.

HEALTH CARE In most refugee sites, health care for women, including birth spacing information, is unavailable. Even children's basic nutritional needs are not met. Refugee women want healthy babies; they want access to health care.

INVOLVEMENT Refugee women must be involved in the planning and implementation of programs that affect their lives. When refugee women take part in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, everyone benefits.



Refugee women often have to assume responsibility for many children. Malawi.

© Faye Richardson

WE LISTEN

Each year the Women's Commission sends fact-finding delegations to visit refugee sites worldwide to talk with women and children. Often we are the first outsiders who speak directly with them; who ask them what they need. Since our founding in 1989, under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, the Women's Committee has sent more than 30 delegations to report first-hand on the conditions faced by refugee women and children.



Guatemalan refugees in Mexico are encouraged to practice culturally appropriate skills.

© UNHCR: L. Taylor

On our return to the United States, we testify before Congress and the United Nations, write letters, articles and opinion pieces. We appear on television and radio. We won't give up. We keep testifying and talking until our voices are heard and changes are made.

WE ACT

We respond to needs on both a policy and a program level. For example:

- After Cambodian women told us about the lethal effect of landmines, we were one of the first organizations to call for an international ban on these weapons of destruction. Because of what we learned from women in former Yugoslavia, we revealed and condemned the use of rape as an instrument of war.
- Our persistent efforts led both the United Nations and the U.S. to develop guidelines on the treatment and protection of refugee women and children.
- During a mission to Pakistan, Afghan women told us they wanted educational and training programs. We assisted with the creation of the Afghan Women's Social Service Center. Today it remains the only program run *by* and *for* Afghan refugee women and girls.

Our advocacy priorities include:

- Promoting the role of refugee women as decision makers and leaders, to empower them and provide greater security.
- Monitoring the implementation of the U.S. government and United Nations guidelines on the treatment of women and children during delegation visits to refugee sites.
- Working to improve access to health care and birth spacing resources in refugee settings.

Membership Application

The most important benefit of any Women's Commission membership is the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to improve the lives of refugee families throughout the world.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Telephone (day) _____

☐ Individual \$35 ☐ Sponsor \$100

☐ Student \$15 ☐ Patron \$250

☐ Organization \$60 ☐ Benefactor \$500

Enclosed contribution \$ _____

Checks should be made payable to the Women's Commission and sent along with this form to:

Women's Commission for Refugee
Women and Children
c/o International Rescue Committee
122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10168-1289

Contributions to the Women's Commission are tax-deductible.



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**WOMEN'S COMMISSION
for
REFUGEE WOMEN
and
CHILDREN**

**1994
ANNUAL REPORT**

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

c/o International Rescue Committee • 122 East 42nd Street • New York, NY 10168-1289

Telephone (212) 551 3086 • Facsimile (212) 551 3186 • Internet wcrwc@intrescom.org

An independent committee formed with the assistance of the International Rescue Committee for the study of problems affecting refugee women and children.

January 19, 1996

Ms. Nicole Rabner
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Old Executive Office Building
Room 100
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Rabner,

Women's Commission founder Catherine O'Neill shared with us that she will be joining you later this month for the "U.S. Works for Peace" reception at the White House. We are delighted to hear that, as we have been engaged in advocacy efforts on behalf of refugee women and children in Bosnia since 1992. The Commission has sent five fact-finding delegations to the former Yugoslavia in the past four years, and was in fact the first organization to draw media attention to the use of rape as an instrument of ethnic cleansing.

We are continuing our work to bring the needs of the women and children in Bosnia to the attention of the international relief and donor community. As plans emerge for allocating assistance money to help rebuild communities and aid returning refugees and internally displaced, we are urging the international community to consider the following information:

Women and children comprise a majority of refugees and internally displaced. As a result of the bloodshed, many are widows, single heads of household, elderly and women and children traumatized or handicapped by war. Throughout repatriation and community rebuilding, they will be particularly vulnerable and in need of carefully targeted services.

Over the course of the Commission's delegations to the former Yugoslavia, women in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia have brought to our attention the breadth and urgency of their needs. We are urging relief and donor agencies to consider their concerns when deciding how to allocate resources for future relief operations. Chief among them were:

Liv Ullmann
Honorary Chair

Beverlee Bruce
Chair

Board of Directors
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Michele Beasley
Tizita Belachew
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Katherine B. Moseley
Sarah E. Moten
Roseanne Murphy
Holly E. Myers
Catherine O'Neill
Jane Olson
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Lorna Stevens
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Patricia Hynes
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Jacqueline Leo
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Mary McMechan
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Karen Olness, MD
Courtney Pastorfield
Eden W. Rafshoon
Sheila Rothman
Nancy Rubin
Jane Schaller, MD
Jill Schuker
Gail Sheehy
June A. Willenz

Mary Diaz
Director

Susan Alberti
Institutional Support

Diana Quick
Public Affairs and
Communications Specialist

Susan Toole
Director, Reproductive Health
Project

Wendy Young
D.C. Liaison

Rahel Kassa
Administrative Assistant

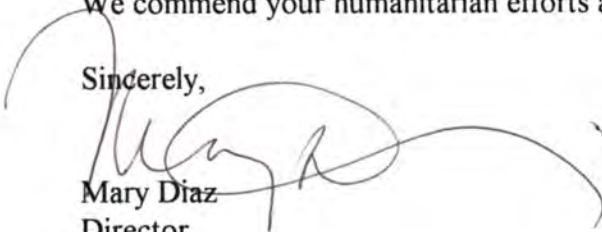
- Women must be **informed participants** in the decision to repatriate.
- Decisions made to determine where families relocate must take into consideration the needs of women and children.
- The **physical safety** of women and children must be protected throughout the repatriation process.
- The detection and removal of **landmines** must continue to be a priority for the safety of all populations.
- Women and children, particularly pregnant and lactating women and infants, must have **access to comprehensive health services** in their new communities.
- The **mental health needs** of those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder need to be met by relief programs.
- **Income-generating and employment opportunities, vocational training and education** should be made available to women (particularly single heads of household and widows) to help them re-integrate into a new economy.

For further details on the Commission's work in Bosnia, enclosed is a copy of the Women's Commission annual report, newsletter and findings from our most recent delegation visit to the former Yugoslavia in September 1995. The delegation report addresses in greater depth women's existing concerns with threats to their physical safety and lack of access to comprehensive health care. In particular, it discusses the unmet psychological needs of women who have suffered physical violence and lost husbands, children and families.

The international relief and donor community is uniquely positioned to help bring lasting peace to the lives of those who have suffered so greatly throughout this war. We are working to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

We commend your humanitarian efforts and are delighted Catherine will be a part of the reception.

Sincerely,



Mary Diaz
Director

enclosures



Women's Commission For Refugee Women and Children

Fact Sheet

What Is The Women's Commission?

There are more than 50 million refugees and internally displaced people worldwide, people uprooted by conflict, famine or persecution: approximately 80 percent of them are women and children. (Refugees have crossed an international border; displaced people are still in their own country. We use the term refugee to include both categories.) The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is the *only* advocacy and public education organization working on behalf of refugee and displaced women and children.

Who Are We?

The Women's Commission was founded in 1989 by Liv Ullmann, the distinguished actress and director; Catherine O'Neill, Board Member of the International Rescue Committee, and active in national politics and refugee issues; and Susan Forbes Martin, a highly regarded expert on refugee-related issues and author of the book "*Refugee Women*." Members now include many women working at senior levels in human rights and refugee organizations, as well as in education, medicine, law, journalism, government, communication and many other fields.

Why Was The Women's Commission Founded?

There was a growing concern among women working in refugee and human rights organizations that refugee women and children had specific needs that were being ignored or not adequately addressed. The Commission realized that if there was any hope of changing the conditions under which refugee families live, it must draw attention to these needs by influencing the international organizations, governments



Waiting for medical treatment and consultations in Kirambo Camp, Rwanda

and voluntary agencies responsible for their care and protection.



Woman and children at a Karen refugee camp in Thailand near the border with Cambodia

What Do We Do?

The Women's Commission is an advocacy organization: it speaks on behalf of refugee and displaced women and children, who have a critical voice in bringing about change but do not have access to governments and policy makers. Currently the Women's Commission is working to further its goals through three major projects:

* Promoting Protection for Refugee Women

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women were developed in 1991 to address a growing concern and awareness that the protection needs of refugee women were not being met in the field. They contain concrete recommendations on how to improve programming in various areas of assistance, including protection, access to food, water and fuel, health care, education and economic opportunities. The Women's Commission has undertaken a three-year project to expand the understanding and implementation of the Guidelines at the field level to insure that assistance programs reflect the requirements as well as the resources refugee women bring to all aspects of programming.

* Promoting the Protection and Care of Refugee Children

Refugee children are at risk of losing their childhood. They are the most vulnerable refugee population, especially



Women returnees in Battambang, Cambodia participate in dressmaking to provide income for their families

susceptible to the physical and psychological effects of violence, disease and malnutrition. Unaccompanied minors, children who have been separated from their parents or caregivers, or orphaned, are a particularly at-risk group. The UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Children cover a wide range of areas in need of special attention, including education, health and nutrition, and durable (long-term) solutions. The Women's Commission is working to ensure wider implementation of the Guidelines.

★ The Reproductive Health Project

Women in refugee settings are having extraordinarily high numbers of children, often spaced very closely; many refugee women have no or very limited access to comprehensive reproductive health services. The Women's Commission has undertaken an advocacy project to ensure that reproductive health is on the agenda of humanitarian assistance organizations, leading policy makers in U.N.-related organizations and donors.

★ Other Projects

The Women's Commission is also involved in several grassroots public education projects, including: the Landmines Project, which is launching a nationwide campaign to ban landmines worldwide; Congressional briefings in Washington, DC, to ensure refugee families are not forgotten; the Schools Project, entitled "*The Refugee Experience*"; and the Knitting Project, which has shipped yarn and needles to refugee and displaced women in Croatia and Bosnia.

How Does The Women's Commission Work?

Each year the Women's Commission sends fact-finding delegations of women professionals to meet with refugee women and children and learn first hand of their needs and conditions. Recent delegations have traveled to Azerbaijan, Burma, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Somalia, Southern Sudan and Kenya, former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire.

Members of the delegations write reports making recommendations on how to improve assistance to refugee women and children; the reports are widely distributed to policy makers in the United States government and at U.N. agencies, and to non-governmental organizations. Delegation members also meet with policy makers, hold press briefings, write articles for publication in the national media and appear on television and radio.

Is the Women's Commission Effective?

- ★ The Women's Commission was the first organization to draw media attention to the use of rape as an instrument of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia after a delegation visit in September 1992. As a result of the delegation's recommendations, the International Rescue Committee set up a program of mutual support groups for victims of violence.
- ★ The Afghan Women's Social Service Center in Peshawar, Pakistan was founded after a Women's Commission delegation traveled there in 1989. It is the only organization run *by* and *for* Afghan women.
- ★ The Women's Commission conducted a ground-breaking survey on the reproductive health needs of refugee women in camps around the world. It was well received by policy makers at all levels. A consortium of agencies is using the study in developing programs in the field.
- ★ The Women's Commission was a catalyst in bringing about "The Refugee Women and Children Protection Act" that was signed into U.S. law in 1994.



Child returnees from Honduras receive food aid back home in El Salvador

How Is The Women's Commission Funded?

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children was founded under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, the largest non-sectarian voluntary refugee organization in the United States. We receive no government funds, and are supported by private donations from individuals and by America's leading foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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Women's Commission News

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

Fall 1995

Number 11

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Women's Commission Reproductive Health Project Addresses Issues of Sexual and Gender Violence in the Refugee Community

The Women's Commission's Reproductive Health Project is working to promote awareness of refugee women's reproductive health needs among policy makers, service providers and donors.

At the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the following definition of reproductive health was adopted:

"Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.... Reproductive health care is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques and ser-

vices that contribute to reproductive health and well being through preventing and solving reproductive health problems."

This is the first in a series of articles addressing five technical areas of reproductive health: sexual and gender violence, family planning, safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS/STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and emergency obstetrics.

There are various forms of sexual and gender violence, rape being the one most frequently cited. However, sexual and gender violence encompasses a wide variety of abuses that includes sexual threats, exploitation, humiliation, assaults, molestation, domestic violence, incest, and involuntary prostitution (sexual bartering).

Continued on page 6



Marie Stopes International support group for refugee women in Bihac, Bosnia. See page 6.



A Common Thread

In hopes of mending war-torn souls, beautiful yarn makes its way to one of the world's most devastated regions.

Trying to imagine a life without knitting — without family, work, home, or hope — is what has spurred thousands of Americans and Canadians, mostly women, to donate yarn to a unique Bosnian relief venture called the Knitting Project. Since February 1994, an all-volunteer staff has collected and shipped a staggering 21,000 pounds of yarn, as well as 8,000 pairs of knitting needles, crochet hooks, and other tools of the trade to the former Yugoslavia.

The idea came about after a delegation from the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, a New York-based advocacy group that directs the Knitting Project, visited Sarajevo and described the conditions there as "beyond horrifying." Women who had managed to survive ethnic cleansing and interminable warfare now faced month upon month of equally deadly emptiness.

For want of a diversion from memories of loss, rape, and ruined lives, they began pulling apart their own clothing in order to reknit it and begin again.

When an International Rescue Committee worker asked for one or two tons of yarn on behalf of women's trauma support groups in Croatia, several Women's Commission volunteers in Boston rose to the challenge.

"We'd never done anything on that scale," says Babbie Cameron, who coordinates the Knitting Project full time along with co-volunteer Charlotte Cleveland, "but we decided we wouldn't let that be an obstacle." In three months, they collected a ton and a half of wool yarn. Now, Cameron looks back ruefully. "We thought that

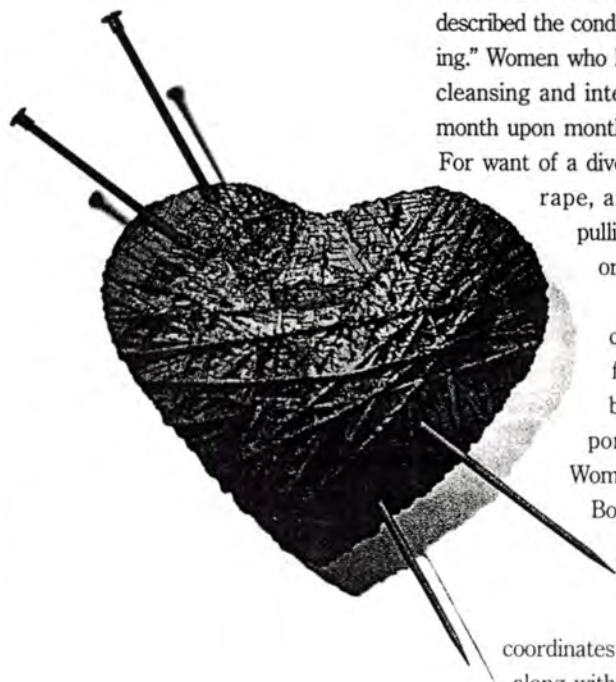
this would be a one-time deal," she says with a touch of both sadness and amusement at their naiveté. "A ton of wool seemed like a mountain. How could we need any more?"

For this first batch, the coordinators turned to Peter Hagerty of Peace Fleece in Kezar Falls, Maine, who urged them to appeal directly to New England yarn producers. Hagerty then called his competition. "I'll donate 600 pounds," he said. "How much are you going to give?" Green Mountain Spinnery in Putney, Vermont; Bartlett Yarns in Harmony, Maine; and Harrisville Designs in Harrisville, New Hampshire, all responded in kind. Harrisville's employees even elected to work an extra day for free to get their donation ready.

The result was a shipment of some of the most beautiful wool yarns spun in America to one of the most devastated places on earth, through the rare cooperation of the spinneries. As Hagerty says, "Those of us in the wool industry seem to always be competing with each other. This was one instance when we came together for a good cause to help others." Libby Mills, co-owner of Green Mountain Spinnery, felt an additional bond: "I can just imagine what knitting must mean to those women. The project feels person to person, knitter to knitter."

Cameron's "mountain" of wool was shipped by AmeriCares, a humanitarian transport organization, and distributed in Croatia by the International Rescue Committee. "The three legs of the stool," Cameron says, acknowledging the Knitting Project in this triumvirate of relief agencies. (Unfortunately, the first shipment never reached Sarajevo, but a later batch did get through.)

The yarn — which is made not only of wool but also of cotton and acrylic — is given as



BY PAMELA PETRO

A Common Thread

a gift, no strings attached, to every woman (or man) who requests it. Each allotment usually contains enough yarn to knit the equivalent of a man's sweater. Some keep what they make, but most women knit goods for a children's program in Bosnia or socks for men in the army. Because refugees are not permitted to work in Croatia, many sell their hand-knitted products back to the International Rescue

Committee, which distributes them to those in need of cold-weather clothes. In that way, they're able to make some money while providing much-needed clothing for fellow refugees in besieged cities in central Bosnia like Mostar and Zenica.

Cameron has witnessed the ability of knitting needles to help heal emotional wounds firsthand. In October 1994 and again in March 1995, she headed delega-

tions to Croatia to check on distribution of the yarn and to meet some of the women who were using it. "They knew it was good stuff," she says. But they also knew it was just a stopgap for their sorrow. "They don't expect people in the United States to solve their problems for them," Cameron says, "and they recognize the yarn for exactly what it is: a simple act of friendship."

Until the yarn arrived, women in trauma-recovery groups were often unable to look one another in the eye and talk about their experiences. But with their hands remembering better days, following stitches, and clicking knitting needles, they were able to open up. In fact, once they began talking, many couldn't stop.

Cameron relates one story about a member of a trauma-recovery group who solemnly stood up to voice her appreciation in slow English. "We thank you," said the woman. "We will use the wool. But this does not touch our suffering."

"I had to chew the inside of my cheeks out to keep from crying," Cameron says. "But I thought, Good for you, lady. Tell it like it is."

"These are women like you and me," Cameron stresses. "They come from middle-class or farming families. They've led productive lives until now. Unlike the poorest people who've always known deprivation, these women are aware of what they've lost." Because few material accessories were available under communism in the former Yugoslavia, she explains, people put their equity — both financial and emotional — into their homes. "It wasn't a mobile society like ours," Cameron says. "Home and family were everything. They have lost everything."

Mary Diaz, director of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, recognizes that the Knitting Project has helped to break a deadlock in the way Americans react to the warfare in Bosnia. "Babbie and Charlotte and the other volunteers have found a practical way to respond to what we all see on television," she says. "The situation in former Yugoslavia requires a response. It demands a response, but the world feels paralyzed.

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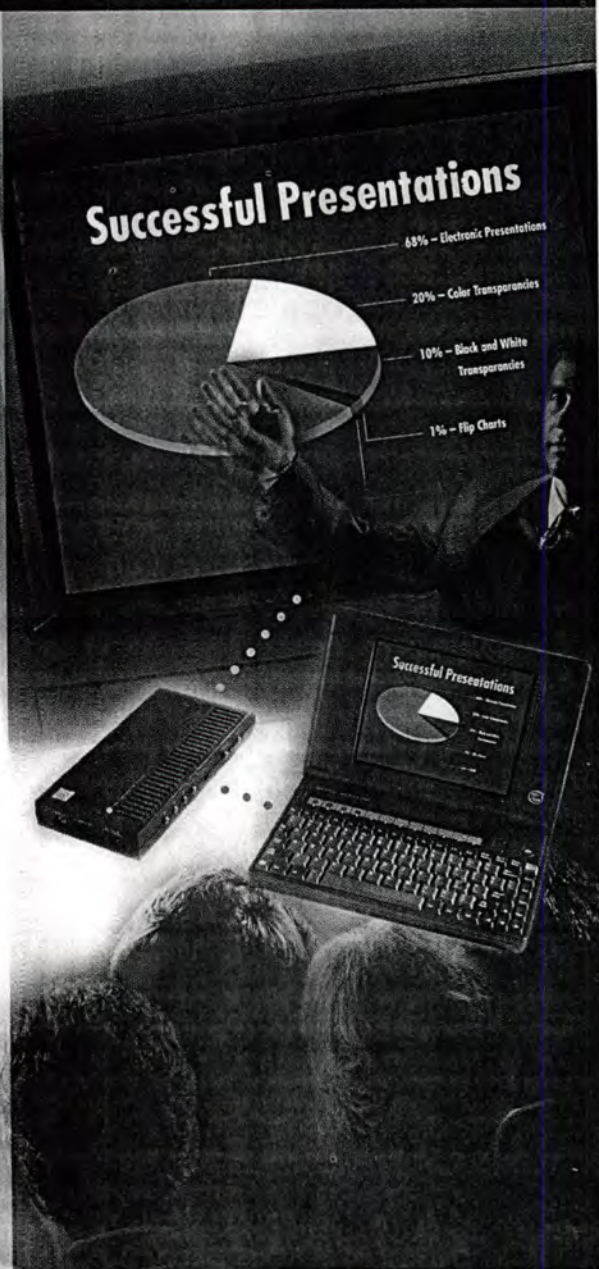
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These women [the Knitting Project volunteers] are not foreign-policy experts, but leaders should learn from their example."

And as long as the war in the former Yugoslavia drags on, leaving a wake of broken cease-fires and habitual violence, the Knitting Project will keep supplying victims with yarn, one of the homeliest, but most effective, tools of therapy. To date, five shipments have been collected and shipped to Croatia, Bosnia, and Hungary. After the first batch received modest publicity in knitting magazines, Cameron says donations began to pour in from all over the United States and Canada. "I mean, tiny places," she says. "People sent packages from towns I'd never even heard of." By the time the second shipment was ready to go — weighing in at a ponderous five tons, and made up almost exclusively of individual donations — knitters had responded from all fifty states.

One woman from Texas who had previously lost her home to a tornado was so moved by the plight of other displaced

women half a world away, she organized a twenty-four-hour spinning marathon on behalf of the knitters in Croatia.

As the yarn poured in, Cameron began keeping a scrapbook of the notes that accompanied donations. A recurring theme, she says, was how helpless people felt in front of their television screens. Finally, they wrote, they'd found a way they could make a difference.

"I don't know what life would be like if I couldn't knit," remarked an American woman who donated yarn to her sister knitters in Croatia. Another donor, an elderly woman on a fixed income who'd squirreled away a cache of wool in case she needed it someday, wrote, "Someday is now. Bosnian women need it now, and they need it more than I do."

If she doesn't save the letters, Cameron at least clips donors' signatures and pastes them into the scrapbook. On her most recent trip to Croatia, she showed the book to some of the women who'd received the yarn. Even though many couldn't read

English, all understood that fellow knitters in America wanted to share their yarn. "It was a connection that superseded language — a heart-to-heart connection," Cameron says.

Of the 3,750,000 people who have been displaced by warfare in the former Yugoslavia, two million are women and children. While Cameron says she couldn't guess what their future will be like, she knows that at least many of the women are creating an endurable present for themselves, one stitch at a time. 

To make donations of wool, acrylic, or cotton yarn, please send a package to the Knitting Project of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, in care of Babbie Cameron, The Hartford Street Presbyterian Church, 99 Hartford St., Natick, Massachusetts 01760; (508) 653-4839.

Pamela Petro is currently touring the world while at work on a book.

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REFUGEE WOMEN IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA



Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
Delegation Visit to Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia

September 22 -29, 1995

Mission Statement

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children seeks to improve the lives of refugee women and children through a vigorous and comprehensive program of public education and advocacy. The Commission, founded in 1989 under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, is the only organization in the United States dedicated solely to speaking out on behalf of women and children uprooted by civil war, violence, persecution or famine.

The Women's Commission is undertaking an ongoing project to look into the implementation of the UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women in refugee settings around the world. The Guidelines, which came into effect in 1991, contain an assessment of the protection problems faced by refugee women and propose solutions. They give concrete recommendations on how to involve refugee women in decisions affecting their security and how to identify particularly risky situations. The Guidelines suggest mechanisms to improve the reporting of physical and sexual protection problems and programs for improving protection. They propose improvements in camp design and implementation of assistance programs to ensure greater safety.

As part of this project, the Women's Commission is sending a series of delegations to examine and report on the extent to which the intergovernmental and nongovernmental relief community, as well as refugee women, are aware of the guidelines, to what extent they are being followed, and if the guidelines are applicable to non-refugee camp-like settings as in former Yugoslavia, where refugee and displaced persons are dispersed throughout a country engaged in ongoing active warfare.

This report includes an assessment of the applicability of the Guidelines in the setting of former Yugoslavia, where some three million people have been uprooted. In September 1995, a Women's Commission delegation traveled to the region and visited refugee women and children in Zenica, Bosnia, in Belgrade and Vojvodina, Serbia, and in Vojnic, Croatia, near the Bosnian border.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Goals

War in the former Yugoslavia has left more than 250,000 dead, produced hundreds of thousands of refugees, and created a legacy of the most horrific war crimes Europe has witnessed since World War II. The international community must live with the knowledge that unchecked ethnic cleansing, mass rapes, torture and concentration camps continued in the face of its faltering efforts to broker peace. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children continues to bear witness to the suffering of the most innocent victims of this war, refugee women and children.

The Women's Commission first sent a delegation to former Yugoslavia in October, 1992, as the news of ethnic cleansing, mass rapes of young girls and women, widespread killings and detention of civilians in concentration camps first became news. We urged the international community to live up to its obligation to protect civilians in war time, to stop genocide and to stop the mass rapes which were being used as a means of ethnic cleansing and a strategy of war.

Additional Women's Commission delegations to the area in January and February of 1992 and again in 1993 and 1994 continued to advocate for psychological and self-help programs for refugee women. We urged that trauma therapy for rape victims and self-help projects for refugee women be integrated into all aspects of relief programs. We further urged that those who committed war crimes be prosecuted and that the horrific acts of sexual violence committed against young girls and women be deemed war crimes.

Today we continue to advocate on behalf of refugee women and children from all parts of former Yugoslavia, who are in desperate need of shelter, food, and protection from shelling, as well as medical and psychological care.

In September 1995, two members of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children traveled to Serbia and Bosnia to examine the situation of refugee women.

Jane Olson visited Serb refugees in Belgrade who had recently arrived from the Krajina region of Croatia and from western Bosnia. She spent a week in Belgrade and the Vojvodina region in northern Serbia, where ethnic Serb refugees had been arriving by the tens of thousands.

Ms. Olson also visited refugees in Vojnic, Croatia, near the Bosnian border, where 25,000 followers of the rebel Bosnian Muslim leader, Fakir Abdic, who fought with the Bosnian Serbs, had fled since being forced out of Bihac, Bosnia.

Jane Kronenberger met with refugee women and children in Zenica in central Bosnia, who had been forced from the United Nations "safe haven" of Zepa, and newly-arriving Muslim refugees from Banja Luka and Koboje, the latest victims of Bosnian Serb ethnic cleansing.

The goal of the delegation was to see if the UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women were being followed in the region, where millions of people had been displaced since the war began in 1991. More than 80 percent of the displaced are women and children.

Key Findings

- Despite recent reports of improved conditions in some areas, ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses were continuing, and refugees continued to suffer. International aid was getting through in most areas, but ethnic cleansing campaigns continued unabated in September and October, causing Muslim refugee women and children to flee as men and boys were forcibly separated from their families and led away to

uncertain fates.¹ Tens of thousands of refugee women, children and elderly continued to live in Serbia and in politically “unacceptable” places like Vojnic, Croatia.

Central Bosnia/Zenica

- The refugee women in Zenica were suffering from severe psychological stress. Since fleeing Zepa and Srebrenica in August, they had not had news of their husbands and sons who were separated from them by the Bosnian Serb Army during the assault on the “safe havens” and are now among the disappeared. It was feared that most of them have been killed by the Serb military. International organizations on the ground did not hold out much hope for the missing men and boys, and the International Committee of the Red Cross had not been allowed access to investigate since one visit in mid-August.
- Refugee women were grief-stricken and psychologically traumatized from the brutal Bosnian Serb Army onslaught of the “safe havens.” The trauma and violence of the flight coupled with the desperation of not knowing the fate of their families have left them profoundly in need of psychological and emotional support.
- The elderly refugees, many of whom had recently fled rounds of ethnic cleansing, were in particularly poor physical and emotional states.
- The women, many of whom are pregnant or lactating, claimed they were not receiving medical or prenatal care, and their children had been denied access to pediatric clinics; they reported being turned away from clinics because they did not have money. They also could not afford medicines or supplemental food rations.
- The refugee women and children are now living in collective centers with totally inadequate facilities; in one section, there were two toilets and two showers for 100 people. Other refugees were living in abandoned houses.

Serbia

- Many of the refugees interviewed by the Women’s Commission reported that they feel unwelcome and unwanted in Serbia, and they have experienced various kinds of discrimination from the local population. Many local Serbs in Belgrade expressed their resentment at having to share their meager resources with refugees, since the international economic and trade sanctions against Yugoslavia have created great shortages and hardships for everyone.
- The Croatian Serb and Bosnian Serb refugees in Yugoslavia have no citizenship, and they fear they have no future in this country where they clearly are not wanted.
- Refugees are unable to get jobs or earn any money, and only those living in collective centers receive much assistance from the Serbian government. Those living privately receive no stipend and only a small monthly food ration if they are registered with the Yugoslav Red Cross or the Yugoslav Commissioner for Refugees.

Vojnic

- Shelter materials are scarce. Many families are housed in tents made from cornstalks and plastic sheeting, others have built “lean-tos” from plywood, cardboard and other materials. There are a few concrete block houses along the road, some of which had been shelled or burned out earlier in the war. These buildings housed about 150 persons each.

¹ The Women’s Commission delegation took place and this report was written before peace talks began in November, 1995. Prior to the talks, there was a spate of ethnic cleansing and fighting to gain land. Since early November, there have been no further reports of such activities.

Some 20% of the camp population has no shelter whatsoever. Of those who do, most people are sleeping on floors or bare ground with few blankets. No mattresses were seen in the several dozen shelters visited by the Women's Commission. Most refugees have only light summer clothing and sandals.

- Food supplies were being exhausted. Some refugees had farm animals, but very few families had any food other than the loaves of bread being brought in by relief agencies and divided up so that each person got approximately a quarter of a loaf a day. Many pregnant and lactating women who were interviewed said their only food was one or two slices of bread a day.
- There was not nearly enough potable water (approximately three liters per person per day is being trucked in), and many people were trying to get spring water as it drains from the hills. The springs had not been tested for water quality. The creek running through the muddy valley was contaminated with human and animal feces, and was being used to wash clothes.

UNHCR GUIDELINES ON THE PROTECTION OF REFUGEE WOMEN: SURVEYING THE IMPACT

The UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women were produced to help the staff of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and its implementing partners identify the specific protection issues, problems and risks facing refugee women. They provide suggestions on actions which can be taken, particularly with assistance sectors (such as food, shelter, fuel and education), and are mostly geared towards refugee settings in large refugee camps. *The situation in former Yugoslavia calls for an expansion of the Guidelines and flexibility in both their interpretation and application to meet the needs of refugee women who are dispersed throughout this war-torn country in various living conditions.* Very few of these living conditions resemble anything similar to a large refugee camp, where refugee services and assistance exist in a centralized setting with centralized distribution.

The goals of the Guidelines, which were adopted by the 41st session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR in 1991, **are to integrate the resources and needs of refugee women into all aspects of programming**, including food and fuel distribution, as well as the special nutritional and health needs of pregnant and lactating women and women heads of household. Most importantly, **the Guidelines stress the role of refugee women in program planning and participation in program activities**, so that they may be empowered to attend to their own needs and those of their children through focused program efforts.

The safety and protection needs of refugee women in former Yugoslavia were acute not at the moment of flight as in most refugee situations but, rather, they were most prone to physical and sexual attacks when their villages came under siege during periods of ethnic cleansing. The obligation of the international community was to enforce the rule of international humanitarian law and prevent the massive violations against women that took place. After failing to do this, the obligation shifted to the international relief community to provide psychological support to refugee women who had experienced extreme forms of trauma, including rape and forced impregnation.

Those portions of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women that urge that refugee women be consulted were particularly important in former Yugoslavia, as the refugee women had very definite ideas on what was culturally acceptable in terms of psychological intervention for Muslim women and what would prove to be the most healing for these overwhelmingly traumatized women. An expansion of the Guidelines addressing issues such as protecting refugee women from insensitive interviewers who, through their own ignorance, may cause a psychological crisis for the survivor of sexual abuse and torture, would be useful.² This is being addressed in the UNHCR's manual: Sexual Violence Against

2 The UNHCR plans to revise the Guidelines and will include a section on sexual and gender violence.

Refugees: Guidelines on Protection and Response. *Additionally, in settings such as former Yugoslavia, it is imperative to include skilled local and international psychological crisis staff at the very outset of the refugee emergency.* This is needed in order to help prevent suicide, and permit the refugee women to form adaptive coping mechanisms early on so that they can care for themselves. They also have the great burden of taking care of their children and elderly, since many of their men are either in prison camps, at the front line or have been killed in the war.

The Guidelines should address issues concerning the most appropriate immediate response to victims of sexual violence and torture, which would not necessarily include discussing the violations which occurred but would focus on the need to form adaptive coping measures.

Refugee women must continue to be consulted on issues concerning their **shelter**. The refugee women of former Yugoslavia have experienced many forms of degradation and humiliation. Many of the living situations, such as the collective centers with their depressive atmospheres and complete lack of privacy, as well as inadequate sanitation, reinforce the loss of self-esteem and degradation that these women had already experienced. Although resources are limited while a country is in the midst of ongoing warfare, small efforts at attaining some semblance of privacy and dignity through their living situations would have gone a long way in improving the women's ability to continue to function in their daily lives. The refugee relief staff must consider these efforts as an important part of programming. Improvement in such areas as securing privacy for women in the bathrooms, toilets and showers, and even small curtains around their sleeping bunks, could certainly foster a sense of dignity. These efforts are not secondary to the relief effort but are primary, as maintaining mental health would improve the overall physical health of the refugee women, as well as their ability to care for refugee children and their elderly family members.

In the area of **health care**, the approach of the international relief community in situations such as former Yugoslavia is to support the remaining local health infrastructure rather than to create a parallel structure where refugees are receiving health care services from the international community in a closed camp-type setting. Theoretically, this may be an appropriate approach; practically, it often does not work. Refugee women do not feel as though they have free access to the local clinics as displaced persons within that area. Additionally, refugee women often report that they must pay a fee for service and have difficulty with transportation. *It is imperative that the United Nations agencies which are supporting the local health infrastructure vigorously investigate whether or not refugee women actually do have access to health care services.* It is not enough for the United Nations relief agencies simply to state on a philosophical basis that it is better to support the local health infrastructure. If the local health infrastructure is not permitting refugees access, then it must be recognized that the relief effort is failing to address the needs of the vulnerable population, particularly pregnant and lactating women.

The UNHCR Guidelines must include a discussion on the limitations of access when the local health infrastructure is being utilized to provide the most vulnerable group with health care, in both the inpatient and outpatient settings. Public health outreach may still be the more appropriate means by which to ensure refugee women have access to health care. This is so particularly in a setting such as former Yugoslavia and in other war-torn countries.

On the issue of **food distribution**, the problem may not be so much the predominance of male-dominated food distribution as in many camp settings, but, rather, the lack of control refugee women have in food preparation. Many of the refugee women in former Yugoslavia must live in collective centers, public buildings and abandoned factories where food is being prepared in large communal settings within the collective centers and from soup kitchens. The refugee women, eager to participate in food preparation, should be more involved in and responsible for feeding themselves and their families. *The UNHCR Guidelines should include discussion on how women may be permitted to have more control over their nutritional needs in this type of refugee setting.* Again, the issue of physical and psychological needs are in tandem, as the women felt great degradation at being fed poorly-prepared food from large communal kitchens in which they had no involvement.

The UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women remain an extremely important tool for permitting refugee women to be responsible for addressing and responding to their most compelling

needs. The philosophy articulated in the UNHCR Guidelines, which is to be aware of the most vulnerable members of the population and permit them the means by which to help themselves, is a message of great importance which should not be lost in settings such as former Yugoslavia, simply because the refugee women are not in traditional camp-like settings. *Thus, the international staff, working together with local staff and refugee women, must take an expansive view towards the guidelines, perhaps focusing more on the spirit than on the letter of the Guidelines, in order to ensure that refugee women have the means by which to help themselves and their family members.*

SITE VISITS

I. Central Bosnia /Zenica

In July and August 1995, the Bosnian Muslim “safe havens” of Zepa and Srebrenica, which were pledged protection in a Security Council resolution adopted by the UN in 1993, fell to a brutal Bosnian Serb Army onslaught. The international community did little to protect the civilians, despite its obligations to do so under the Security Council resolution. Thousands of boys and men, herded onto buses and driven away by the Bosnian Serb Army, have not been seen since. Some were executed en masse, others have simply disappeared and are believed killed. There were brutal rapes and torture. All this took place under the watchful eyes of the international community.

In Zenica, the refugee women have been displaced for at least the second time—earlier in the war they had fled to the “safe havens” of Zepa and Srebrenica. The refugee women and children, who along with elderly people make up almost the entire refugee population, are now living in collective centers with totally inadequate facilities. In one section, there are two toilets and two showers for 100 people. Others are living in abandoned houses. The women, many of whom are pregnant or lactating, are not receiving medical or prenatal care; they report being turned away from clinics because they do not have money. They also cannot afford supplemental food rations.

The Women’s Commission interviewed refugee women who fled Zepa and who are now refugees in Zenica. All of the women interviewed were alone with their children, as their husbands and sons had been taken by the Bosnian Serb Army. The overwhelming grief of these women was profound, as they waited to hear news of their loved ones. They are all suffering from severe psychological stress

Interviews with Refugee Women in Zenica Whose Husbands and Sons were taken Captive by the Bosnian Serb Army in Zepa

Many of the women interviewed in Zenica had received news from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in communiques dated August 16 and August 17, which consisted of handwritten notes from their husbands and sons. The refugee women showed the delegation these communiques and wept. The notes were all very similar: the men told their wives that they were all right, not to worry, that they loved them and urged them to continue to care for their children and that the family would soon be reunited.

There has been no further information available to these women since the notes, which were delivered to them by the ICRC in Zenica in mid-September. Subsequent interviews with ICRC in Geneva reveal that the fate of these prisoners is unknown.³ International organizations on the ground do not hold out much hope for the missing men and boys, and the International Committee of the Red Cross has not been allowed access to investigate since one visit in mid-August.

³ The fate of the men and boys taken by the Bosnian Serb Army in Srebrenica is considered far less hopeful, with many believed to have been executed. See report of Human Rights Watch dated October 1995.

The delegation interviewed a family of refugee women from Zepa, who had fled there three years before from a small village in northwestern Bosnia. They were now living in a small, run-down, three-room bungalow-type summer home with no central heating. The household consisted of an elderly grandmother, her daughter-in-law, Fahira (43 years of age), and her two daughters-in-law (aged 17 and 19), as well as Fahira's two younger children, girls of 14 and five. The two daughters-in-law were sisters, both were pregnant and were married to two of Fahira's sons. Fahira had four sons in total, all of whom were taken away by the Bosnian Serb Army in Zepa. Her own husband had been killed one year earlier when he stepped on a land mine while searching for firewood for his family. Fahira had news of two sons, the husbands of the two daughters-in-law. Both young women had received ICRC communiques from their husbands, consisting of a few sentences stating that they were alive, that they loved them and that they hoped to be released soon. The pregnant women were optimistic and clung fervently to the notes from their husbands written in mid-August.

The mother-in-law, Fahira, became grief-stricken as she spoke of the uncertainty of the fate of all her sons and the loss of her husband. She tried to shield her daughters-in-law from the sadness and pessimism she seemed to feel about the fate of her sons. The interview ceased, as she became unable to withstand the grief that the interview caused her as she reflected on the fate of all of her family.

The same overwhelming despair was apparent in the interviews of refugee women who were living in the cement factory collective in Zenica proper. The living conditions were far more difficult, as 15 women and three small children were crowded into one small room which had formerly been the sleeping bunks for the workers in the cement factory. Each of the 15 women, two of whom were pregnant, said that their husbands had been captured by the Bosnian Serb Army in Zepa. They, too, were overcome with grief as they took out the ICRC communiques, the only hope that their husbands were still alive. After a short time, the interviews ceased as the women seemed too psychologically upset to discuss the fate of their husbands, as well the degradation they felt living in the collective centers.

The same stories, accompanied by the same misery, were evident in interviews with refugee women living in old bungalow-type houses in Kakan, on the outskirts of the city of Zenica.

* * *

The refugee women whom the delegation met in central Bosnia were in dire need of psychological and emotional support services. None of the women had been provided with any type of psychological support services, except for one refugee family that was being visited by a social worker from the local municipality, herself a refugee who was volunteering her services. Indeed, none of the women had had any type of informal support such as the development of group sewing centers, knitting centers, or the opportunity to work together in communal kitchens. The women advised the delegation that they very much wanted to heal their grief by engaging in some type of work, especially knitting, sewing and cooking. They seemed almost desperate for this type of support and without any prompting or suggestions from us, offered that this was the type of help that they needed.

Although time constraints prevented the delegation from meeting with the American Refugee Committee, which is providing emergency trauma treatment to refugee women in Zenica, its report was made available to us. Two mobile teams comprised of three counsellors work in collective centers and private accommodations providing emotional support. The counsellors report the refugee women, isolated from their family and other normal systems of support, have little, if any, information on their missing male family members, are living in difficult and degrading conditions and their needs are acute. Because these women do not know if their husbands and sons are alive, have been tortured, or are living in concentration camps, their anxiety levels are high. The counsellors reinforce adaptive coping mechanisms and try to assist refugee women to focus on the normal day-to-day activities of living.

As set forth in our recommendations, the Women's Commission urges the international community to give attention to the psychological needs of the refugee women in order that they may continue to care for themselves and respond to the enormous burden of looking after children and elderly family members.

II. Serbia

In the early stages of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, 1991-1993, more than 190,000 ethnic Serb refugees fled to Serbia. That population more than doubled in a few days in August, 1995, when Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in Serbia.

The Yugoslav Red Cross, responding to the crisis, tried to set up posts at the border to direct people to nearby towns for immediate food and shelter services. Tens of thousands of these refugees are still living in public and private spaces designated for initial emergency care but highly inadequate for winter or for long-term occupation.

It is estimated that about 50,000 refugees from the Krajina are living in Belgrade, and most of them have not registered with the Yugoslav Commissioner for Refugees, either because they are there illegally and want to remain, or because they have draft-age male relatives who are likely to be rounded up by Serbian police and conscripted for military service in Bosnia or Eastern Slavonia. They are hiding in the city, mostly in private accommodations. There are about 185 official collective centers of various sizes housing refugees, and some 250 new centers are expected to be opened.

About 70% of the refugee population are women and children, and half of the women are without their husbands, who were either killed by Croats or detained by Bosnian Serbs for military conscription.

Many of the refugees interviewed by the Women's Commission feel unwelcome and unwanted in Serbia, and they have experienced various kinds of discrimination from the local population. Many were worried that they would be forcibly sent to the Kosovo region in southern Serbia, a very poor area, populated by more than 80% Albanian Muslims. Many in collective centers said they were told they would be moved there, and they seem panicked at the prospect.

Refugees are not allowed to get any kind of job or earn money. Only those living in collective centers get much help from the government. Those living privately receive no stipend and only a small monthly food ration if they are registered with the local Red Cross or the national Commissioner for Refugees.

Many local Serbs in Belgrade resent sharing their meager resources with refugees, since the international economic and trade sanctions against Yugoslavia have created great shortages and hardships for everyone. Schools and hospitals are overwhelmed by the refugees.

The Croatian Serb and Bosnian Serb refugees in Yugoslavia have no citizenship, and they fear they have no future in this country where they clearly are not wanted.

There are only about 20 nongovernmental organizations from the international relief community operating in Serbia, and many more are needed. The NGOs are slow to come because it is hard to raise money or sympathy for relief programs to benefit Serbs, who are widely believed to have caused the war and perpetrated most of the war's gross atrocities, war crimes and genocide.

Collective Centers

All the NGOs reported that access to collective centers is tightly controlled by the Yugoslav Commissioner for Refugees, which requires formal requests for visits and written permission. This type of red tape hinders NGOs from operating effectively in Serbia.

The Women's Commission delegation accompanied an International Rescue Committee staff person, herself a refugee and a physician, to the Kovilovo camp. The delegation also joined a staffer from the United States Embassy political office on a full-day formal tour of the Vojvodina region conducted by the Yugoslav Red Cross, where we saw about a dozen collective centers and private living situations for Krajina Serb refugees.

1. Kovilovo Collective Center, located one-hour drive from Belgrade and run by the Yugoslav Red Cross.

Kovilovo center, formerly used as a military barracks, is located in a rural area. It consists of several small buildings which were turned into refugee housing in September, 1992, under the auspices of the Red Cross of Belgrade. It receives some help from the European Union and from JEN, a Japanese NGO.

The center holds 125 people in 25 families, with eight to 15 people living in each small room in very crowded conditions, but furnished with an electrical heating system. There are 17 new refugees from Krajina, who are there unofficially and are not registered. They have some sheep, chickens and a small garden for vegetables.

There is a separate small building with a kitchen, where two women cook each morning and another each afternoon to feed the population. Women are paid a small stipend for their work. Other women are paid to clean and do laundry.

Children are bused to schools 10 to 15 kilometers away, and the teenagers are gone from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m., then have to do their homework in the corridors with dim light. Some adults go out by bus to work each day, although working is illegal for refugees. Their basic health care is provided by the government system only if they have an official refugee card. The refugees receive hygiene boxes from the European Union every month.

The primary problem seems to be fear for the future, as people have no citizenship and worry they will never be integrated into society and allowed to have full rights. Living with mixed generations and families in cramped quarters causes depression, aggressive behavior and illness.

2. Visit to Novi Sad, Vojvodina region

Vojvodina has a population of two million people in a largely rural area. It has been the first, and often the final, stop for most refugees from Croatia and Bosnia. In 1991, during the first wave, about 130,000 refugees came, and 96% were placed into host families. About 49,000 of that group still live in collective centers.

After August 4, 1995, about 110,000 refugees from Krajina arrived within a period of 10 to 15 days. The Red Cross reserve stocks are completely depleted of everything, according to the local Red Cross.

The delegation visited a variety of collective centers in two towns near the city of Novi Sad, Temerin and Zabalj.

Temerin, with 3,200 refugees in the area, had 2,600 living in host families and 450 in five collective centers. Some host families are housing up to 40 people.

At one private home, the delegation visited a young family living in an attached concrete block room with no electricity or heat and a concrete floor. Eight people slept in a room about eight foot square, including a young mother with an eight-month-old baby and a three-year-old son. Among the others in the room was an old man with a cane, aged 80, who said, "I can't sit, I can't lie down, I can't sleep, there's nothing to eat. I want to jump under a bus. I can't live like this." They had one chair, one foam mattress and an assortment of blankets to lay out on the floor at night.

A bowling alley in town housed 135 people whose bedding was laid out side-by-side and end-to-end in a long, narrow, corridor-like room with no ventilation or lighting. There were 46 young children. A woman told us, "Living like this, if one person gets sick, we all get sick."

The school in town held 128 refugees, many with only T-shirts and sandals on a cold, windy day. In the gym, a young boy was studying English and practicing out loud, surrounded by people of all ages huddled with their piles of belongings along the walls and under basketball hoops.

Zabalj has nine collective centers and 670 refugees living in host family settings, with a total of 1,784 refugees. There are 86 children under age 18. The centers include a sports hall, a secondary school, a local administrative building, a church and a hunter's lodge.

People all complained about not enough food, lack of cooking facilities, no heat or mattresses, and the need for warm clothing and shoes. Each shower and toilet often serves 50 or more people. In many places there is no indoor plumbing, heat or electricity, and no kitchen. Food in some places is driven in from 20 or 30 kilometers away. At the sports hall, refugees complained, "The food stinks. Beans one day, rice the next. There is no seasoning. We get no medical care. The doctor never comes."

III. Camp Miholjsko, near Vojnic, Croatia

Some 23,000 followers of Bosnian Muslim leader General Fakir Abdic of the Bihac region have been trapped in a campsite since early August, 1995. Their camp, located near Vojnic, close to the border of Croatia and Bosnia, is the most miserable of all refugee situations visited by the Women's Commission in nearly four years of investigating refugee conditions in former Yugoslavia.

The camp is set on a marshy, wetlands valley about three miles long guarded by Croatian soldiers at each end of the road and along the surrounding hilltops to keep people contained. Several refugees have been shot by Croatian soldiers for venturing up the hillside in search of wood for shelter and fires. During our visit, shots were fired over the heads of children playing near the hills.

Early in the war, General Abdic allied with the Serbs in northwest Bosnia, along with tens of thousands of his followers. They were forced to flee in early August when the region was liberated from Serb control by the Bosnian Fifth Army Corps. If they return home (to the vicinity of Velikakladusa) they risk the near certainty of being killed by the Bosnian Fifth Army Corps for having allied with the Serbs.

Conditions at the camp are horrific and deteriorating. The camp population includes thousands of children, babies, women and elderly people. Children were running everywhere along the road, and many were nearly hit by speeding cars driven by refugees and by Croatian guards.

Shelter materials are scarce. Many families are housed in tents made from cornstalks and plastic sheeting, others have built "lean-tos" from plywood, cardboard and other materials. There are a few concrete block houses along the road, some of which had been shelled or burned out earlier in the war. These buildings housed up to 150 persons each.

Some 20% of the camp population has no shelter whatsoever. Of those who do, most people are sleeping on floors or bare ground with few blankets. No mattresses were seen in the several dozen shelters visited by the Women's Commission.

There were two or three existing barns, where families were living with their animals. The barns had one open side of about 20-30 feet with no door and large holes in the roofs and the walls. Only one barn, which housed four families with 39 people and their animals, had plastic sheeting as some protection from the cold and rain.

Some people had managed to bring a supply of staple foods when they fled their homes, but after more than two months the supplies were being exhausted. Some had farm animals, a few skinny cows and chickens, but very few families had any food other than the loaves of bread being brought in by relief agencies and divided up so that each person got approximately a quarter of a loaf a day.

Many pregnant and lactating women the delegation interviewed said they had been eating only one or two pieces of bread per day. Selima, age 30, showed us her slender seven-month-old baby daughter, Senida, explaining that she had not enough milk to breastfeed, and the baby cries all the time.

Potable water is being trucked in from nearby Vojnic by six trucks (two each by the ICRC, UNHCR and UN military trucks) at the rate of about 75,000 liters per day, enough for approximately three liters per day per person. The International Rescue Committee has established ten water zones with one 5,000 tank per site and placed guards at each tank location along the road. The guards monitor distribution and ensure that containers do not touch and contaminate the tank nozzles. This is not nearly enough potable water, and many people are trying to get spring water as it drains from the hills. The springs had not been tested for water quality.

The creek running through the muddy valley is contaminated with human and animal feces and it is being used extensively for bathing and washing clothes. Many women and children were seen washing clothes in the creek using scrub brushes and rocks to beat the fabrics. To reach the creek in the middle of the valley one needed to walk at least 30 yards through thick mud, sinking nearly to mid-calf.

The camp is a marshland. The water table is at or near the surface of valley wetland and road areas. Thus, it is impossible to provide adequate sanitation for fecal disposal, and there is potential for widespread bacterial contamination through surface flooding, contact with fecal materials on the ground (human and animal), and by flies and other insects. An explosion of the rat population is expected.

Such latrines as had been built (some with sticks and plastic over holes in the ground) were full and overflowing. The IRC began an emergency program to build latrines and place them at as much elevation as allowed by the Croatian military and police authorities, but they could not be very high because of security restrictions. The IRC trained and employed refugee men to build up to 10 wooden latrines per day. Plywood, nails and other building materials were located in large tents beside a project command post.

There are large piles of garbage behind many living areas. The IRC is providing four trucks with crews to pick up garbage, transport it to a disposal pit over a hill (allowed by Croatian army), and burn it. Garbage collection points adjacent to the road are being established, and compliance has been good.

In the winter, crowded conditions and lack of sanitary water for washing will increase the spread of lice infestation and disease.

Most of the Vojnic refugees fled their homes in midsummer wearing light clothing and sandals, and they are in dire need of warm clothing and shoes, rubber boots, hats and gloves. Without warm clothing and blankets, cold weather will soon cause widespread illness and death.

Camp Miholjsko at Vojnic is an armed camp. The Croatian army seized and removed about 25% of the weapons brought in to the valley by the fleeing refugees, but there are many draft-age men with hidden weapons in the camp, and the presence of so many weapons poses an enormous security risk. There have been several murders in the camp, many robberies, and some instances of bribing guards to escape. The black market is huge. All along the road are little kiosks where food, cigarettes and consumer goods are sold, although few people have money to buy.

The Croatian government simply does not want this camp to exist. The people cannot return home for fear of being killed, and they are not allowed to leave the campground because the Croats fear they will stay in Croatia. They are trapped in a no man's land, as they were earlier in the war when they first were forced to flee and live along a road for many months.

In September, the UNHCR became alarmed and lobbied the Croatian government to be allowed to provide relief to the refugees. The UNHCR called in IRC, ICRC and Médecins Sans Frontières. But the Croats caused great difficulty by not allowing materials to be purchased locally and by blocking relief efforts for weeks.

The Croatian government is very sensitive about the Vojnic camp, and does not want even semi-permanent structures to be built. It is difficult for journalists to gain access to the camp. Information on the inhuman conditions and on the "capture and containment" of these refugees by the Croatian army, if exposed by the

international media, could cause widespread expressions of outrage and condemnation and perhaps lead to the release and resettlement of the refugees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General

- The UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women should be revised to incorporate the protection issues, problems and risks facing refugee women in war situations, such as in former Yugoslavia. (See section on the Guidelines, pp. 3-5.)
- There must be no amnesty for war criminals. The international community must continue to support the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia and make clear that all those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide will be held accountable. Perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence must be tried as war criminals.

Central Bosnia/Zenica

- The refugee women must be advised of the fate of their sons, fathers and husbands, who were taken away by the Bosnian Serb Army during the assaults on the "safe havens" of Zepa and Srebrenica. The torment of not knowing the fate of their families must end.
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must be granted immediate access to the surviving men and boys imprisoned by the Bosnian Serb Army. Pursuant to the dictates of international humanitarian law, civilians, especially the children, must be released immediately and reunited with their families in central Bosnia.
- The UN relief effort and the voluntary agencies should incorporate the psychological needs of refugee women into all aspects of relief assistance and programming.
- To the extent feasible, the period of time spent in collective centers must be minimized. The extreme overcrowding and lack of sanitary conditions in collective centers add greatly to the despair and degradation of these refugee women.
- Knitting, sewing and cooking centers should be established. This will serve not only as desperately needed psychological support but is a means to provide physical, hygienic and nutritional needs to the refugees.
- The nutritional and health needs of pregnant and lactating women must be immediately evaluated by the UN and relief agencies. The Women's Commission's brief assessment of these women strongly suggested that they did not have any access to prenatal care or supplemental foods. Moreover, they were uncertain as to where they would receive obstetrical care for the delivery of their children.
- The UN agencies supporting the local health infrastructure must investigate the refugees' claims that they are being denied medical treatment for themselves and their children because they do not have money. They must ensure that refugee women and children are provided full access to health services and supplementary food rations.
- The elderly refugees, many of whom just fled rounds of ethnic cleansing, are in particularly poor physical and emotional states. Refugee relief programs should be specifically tailored for this extremely vulnerable population.

Serbia

- Relief agencies need to increase their operations in Serbia, where the doubling of the numbers of refugees in August has overwhelmed the Yugoslav Red Cross and the few organizations active in the country. With winter approaching, shoes, warm clothing, blankets and infant supplies are minimum essentials.

Vojnic

- This camp, located in a swamp, must be closed and the 23,000 refugees moved at once to a safer and more secure location where relief efforts can be organized and administered. At the very least, the vulnerable groups of women, children and elderly must be moved and sheltered before winter conditions become too severe.
- Until the refugees are able to leave, the Croatian government must allow relief agencies to supply adequate shelter, clothing, food, water and health care for the refugees.

CONCLUSION

With the peace talks for former Yugoslavia underway, there is, for the first time in four years, some hope that the conflict in the Balkans will soon come to an end. When the map of the region is redrawn, there will likely be further population movements of Bosnians, Croats and Serbs, as well as the return of refugees from their countries of asylum. UNHCR and humanitarian organizations will continue to play a role, and the Women's Commission will monitor the situation, maintaining its calls on the international community to ensure that during this time of transition the human rights of all refugees are observed and that justice is sought for those whose rights have been violated.

APPENDIX

Delegation Members:

Jane Kronenberger, attorney, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children board member
Jane Olson, journalist and photographer, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children board member

Meetings held with:

Refugee women in Bosnia, Serbia and Vojnic, Croatia.

Bosnia:

Duke Miller, Director, International Rescue Committee, Bosnia Office
David Robison, Head of Office, IRC Zenica
Snjozana Markovic, Field Office, IRC Zenica
Belma Serdarevic, Field Office, IRC Zenica
Head of Office, UNICEF, Zenica
Monique Tuffeli, Head of UNHCR, Zenica

Serbia:

Tsehay Dagnew Jacob, UNHCR Community Services Officer, Belgrade.
Biljana Teodorovic, Director of Human Affairs, Yugoslav Red Cross
Anthony McGee and Daryll Ainsworth, CARE Australia
Ciprus Vasma, Oxfam
Dusica Popadic and Lepa Mladjenovic, Women's Autonomous Center Against Sexual Violence.
Kathleen Hill and Harvey Lee, Political Office, U.S. Embassy, Belgrade
Dragon Kekic, deputy commissioner of refugees for Republika Srpska (Bosnia) and Jagoda Petrovic, head of ARA, Agency for Refugee Assistance.
Gordana Radaosavljevic, Women in Black

Vojnic:

International Rescue Committee staff

Special thanks to:

International Rescue Committee staff in Belgrade, Split, Zagreb and Zenica, and to UNHCR for air travel between Belgrade and Zagreb

State Department, Washington, D.C.:

Ambassador Brunson McKinley, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

Don Shemanski, Senior Program Officer for Europe, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

Glossary of Acronyms

IRC - International Rescue Committee
NGO - Non-governmental organization
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM - United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO - World Health Organization

**For more information on the Women's Commission,
please contact:**

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10168-1289
Tel: (212) 551 3086 Fax: (212) 551 3186
e-mail: wcrwc@intrescom.organization

file Bosnia

The Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights

Administrative Council

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Floyd Abrams
Mimi Alperin
Mary Jane Blaustein
Thomas Buergenthal
Roberta Cohen
Edith B. Everett
Seymour Maxwell Finger
Bertram H. Gold
E. Robert Goodkind
Howard L. Greenberger
David A. Harris
Barbara Blaustein Hirschhorn
David Hirschhorn
Charlotte G. Holstein
William Korey
Richard Maass
Leo Nevas
Robert S. Rifkind
Arthur E. Roswell
Elizabeth Blaustein Roswell
Oscar Schachter
Jack P. Schwebel
Jerome J. Shestack
David F. Squire
Susan Weinberg-Jaffe
Maynard I. Wisner

Felice D. Gaer
Director

Sidney Liskofsky
Director Emeritus

Selma Hirsh
Special Consultant

March 18, 1996

Ms. Melanne Verveer
Deputy Chief of Staff to
the First Lady
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Melanne,

Gerry Ferraro told me about Mrs. Clinton's forthcoming trip to Bosnia and I thought she would want to know some of the points and concerns raised in the attached letters. They come from an array of human rights and womens' organizations.

You may recall that I mentioned this to you when I attended the First Lady's reception in January and you were kind enough to insure that we spoke to Madeleine Albright again.

Thank you again for those efforts and please let me know if there is any further information that would assist the First Lady on this important visit.

Sincerely,

Felice D. Gaer
Director

FDG/era
attachments

December 14, 1995

Ambassador Madeleine Albright
Permanent Representative to the UN
U.S. Mission to the UN
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Dear Ambassador Albright,

We write to you, hopeful that the Dayton Accords will bring peace, but still deeply concerned over the atrocities and human rights abuses inflicted upon the civilian population of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the conflict in that country. Women have suffered horribly in this war. As ethnic cleansing was pursued, many women were subjected to torture including rape as a weapon of war and terror. They watched their spouses, children, and friends abused and often killed before their eyes, and lost their homes, property, and often, hope.

We believe the Dayton Peace Accords on Bosnia-Herzegovina, at long last, offer the prospect of restoring that hope. To achieve this, it is crucial that those executing the Accords take action to implement the concerns of women of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Women and girls constitute the vast majority (in some estimates, up to 80%) of the nation's 2.7 million refugees. A war of 'ethnic cleansing' is waged against civilians; it is, in significant part, a war against women.

Strikingly, women were invisible in Dayton. With this letter, we seek to draw your attention to some of the issues of concern to women and to which serious attention is critical in the implementation of the Accords.

We are very pleased to see that the Dayton Accords incorporate human rights in the most prominent manner of any peace agreement in recent memory. We are grateful to you for your continuing attentiveness to these issues, and your singular, decisive support for the war crimes tribunal, for the prosecution of rape and gender related abuse, and for the principle that there can be no lasting peace without justice. In our view, the prompt and proper implementation of the Accords offers an opportunity to bring at least a measure of help to the victims and survivors of this conflict. Help is late, but we address this to you in the hope that its results will be lasting.

The attached Annex "Women and the Bosnian Peace Process: Preliminary Questions on Ten Issues of Concern", sets forth a number of our specific concerns about the implementation of the Accords in ways that will address the very real experiences of Bosnian women in this conflict and the peace process and reconciliation that are to follow.

We see these suggestions as a beginning. We hope, as you suggested, to continue a dialogue with you on the ways best to implement our concerns.

Sincerely,

Felice D. Gaer
The Jacob Blaustein Institute
for the Advancement of Human Rights

Patricia L. Rengel
Amnesty International, USA

Gay J. McDougall
International Human Rights
Law Group

Marjorie Lightman
International League for Human Rights

Ambassador Madeleine Albright

-2-

December 14, 1995

Charlotte Holstein
The American Jewish Committee

Susannah Sirkin
Physicians for Human Rights

Firuz Kazemzadeh
National Spiritual Assembly of the
Baha'is of the U.S.

Marsha Freeman
International Women's Rights Action Watch*

Karin Ryan
Human Rights Program
The Carter Center

Jill Merrick
International Center for Research on Women

Charlotte A. Bunch
Center for Women's Global
Leadership

Mahnaz Afkhami
Sisterhood Is Global

Marian Chatfield-Taylor

Rosa C. Bicen
Women, Law & Development International

Linda Cimino
Connecticut Coalition Against
Domestic Violence

Jean Gore
Women's International League
for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section

Surita Sandosham
Equality Now

Rhonda Copelon
International Women's Human Rights
Law Clinic

Anne T. Goldstein
Member of ABA Task Force on War Crimes
in Former Yugoslavia*

Peggy Kerry
Womens Action for New Directions

Dorothy Q. Thomas
Joanna Weschler
Human Rights Watch

ANNEX
WOMEN AND THE BOSNIAN PEACE PROCESS
PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS ON TEN ISSUES OF CONCERN

(1) The Responsibilities of the High Representative: the official in overall charge

The overwhelming proportion of refugees are women and girls. The High Representative will, inter alia, be responsible for their return, rehabilitation, security and participation in Bosnia's future. What actions will the High Representative take to protect past victims of sexual assault and other human rights and to protect them from new abuses? Will the Deputy High Representative, who, unlike the High Representative, actually will reside in Bosnia, understand the gender issues, and have expertise in dealing with a population of traumatized survivors? Will he/she have a strong record in support of human rights, including the human rights of women? Will he/she be empowered to instruct those responsible for refugee return and rehabilitation to address gender-specific concerns that arise?

(2) Training and Rules of Engagement of US Military and Civilian Forces in IFOR:

What training will the U.S. military and civilian forces receive? (a) regarding their own behavior (not only to avoid Okinawa-type situations, but also to prevent other behavior exploitative of women in post-war situations) and (b) regarding their ability to relate effectively to traumatized populations, particularly the returning sexual assault victims? Are U.S. military personnel participating in IFOR required to act in accord with American law and are they bound by the Geneva Conventions and Protocols? The Conventions are not mentioned in the Dayton Accords; the IFOR rules of engagement are much talked about but have not been made public to our knowledge. We would be pleased to review them.

(3) Prosecution of War Criminals

The Dayton Accords require all parties to "cooperate fully" with the investigation and prosecution of war criminals. The statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia imposes a similar duty on all governments to "comply" in the arrest and surrender of indicted war criminals. U.S. officials have repeatedly stated that IFOR will be authorized to arrest any indicted war criminals it encounters or who interfere with its mission. What instructions have been issued to ensure this will take place and to respond to requests from the Tribunal to assist in investigations, secure or preserve relevant evidence or protect witnesses? What special efforts will be made to ensure full cooperation of IFOR with the Tribunal in its efforts to prosecute rape and sexual assault? Will IFOR personnel be trained so that they know (a) what evidence is; (b) how to preserve it; and (c) how to protect against continuing war crimes?

(4) IFOR and the Departure of Foreign Forces in 30 days: avoiding complicity in the escape of war criminals

The "foreign forces" have been responsible for many of the worst human rights atrocities (including those against women). One need only look at the reports of former UN Special Rapporteur Tadeusz Mazowiecki on human rights abuses attributed to the forces of Arkan/Seselj (on the Serb side) or those attributed to the Mujahedin (on the Bosnian side). We are concerned that the departure of

these foreign forces must not be an escape avenue for war criminals in their ranks and that U.S. forces are not complicit in any such 'escape'. What will be the role of US forces in apprehending these and other war criminals? In cooperating with the war crimes tribunal in addressing this matter? This matter is urgent in view of the 30-day deadline.

(5) **Protecting the Security of Women: from sexual assault, and other violence against women and related trauma**

This problem has many dimensions.

(a) Women survivors of rape and sexual assault in the war are potential witnesses for the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. They must be protected and feel protected from intimidation and threats so they will be able to come forward to testify in The Hague;

(b) Returning refugees will require protection in refugee camps, en route back as well as at home -- from military, police and local authorities, as well as at home from demobilized spouses, relatives and others;

(c) It is probable that there will be an escalation of domestic and community violence in the post-war situation in Bosnia as demobilized soldiers and victimized men take out their aggressions at home against the members of their own families.

Properly addressing these issues requires (a) clear instructions to the participants in IFOR as to their duty to protect Bosnian citizens and (b) training in both protection strategies and in rehabilitative and psychological counselling of both international personnel and local officials. What measures will be taken to ensure a common strategy and the combined responsibility of: The High Representative, the other political supervisors of the IFOR mission, NATO military forces, UN police monitors, UNHR and other humanitarian personnel, the personnel of the Victim and Witness unit of International Criminal Tribunal, and NGOs, domestic and foreign. The following questions are among those relevant: (1) Will OSCE human rights monitors include persons with expertise in investigating and working with victims of sexual assault? (2) Will there be training by professionals already deeply familiar with the trauma experienced by these specific populations? (3) Will women be appointed to the 14-person Human Rights Chamber? (4) Will the police monitors establish violence crisis centers within local police stations as they are re-established, and in other ways assist local authorities in dealing with the problem of post-war domestic violence?

(6) **Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons**

What actions will the High Representative and other responsible officials take to protect the right to asylum --i.e., not forcing people back when they fear harm upon their return? What measures will be taken to ensure women' independent legal status and right to own property and/or obtain just compensation (as provided in the Accords) in their own names. This is particularly important because so many women will be returning alone to their homes.

(7) **Non-discrimination in Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid**

In view of the reports that conditions have been attached to humanitarian aid by some donors (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Iran) in Bosnia, and with special reference to the effect of these conditions on women (employment, dress, decorum, free association and expression), how are the High Representative and other reconstruction authorities going to assure that women are not doubly victimized by such "aid"? What will ensure non-discrimination in aid, on the basis of either ethnicity or gender?

(8) **Participation of Women in the Electoral Process**

What will ensure that women will participate actively and publicly in the electoral process and in local reconciliation processes? What special efforts are being made to recruit women for the OSCE election monitoring process, strengthen local women's NGOs, and establish gender representation in civil society organizations and government organizations?

(9) **Police Monitoring**

In view of the experiences in the Krajina, where Serb soldiers donned police uniforms, kept their arms and terrorized civilians, what efforts will be made to disqualify persons engaged in war crimes and/or past sexual assault from serving in local police? Will women be fully represented in all ranks of the local police and international police monitors?

(10) **Ensuring Respect for Human Rights**

The Dayton Accords create a series of institutions (a Human Rights Commission, consisting of an Ombudsman and a Human Rights Chamber) to investigate and report on human rights abuses and to hold their perpetrators accountable. In addition, the Accords invite monitoring, missions, and offices to be set up by the OSCE, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other international and regional human rights bodies. To support these mechanisms, what instructions will be given to IFOR and other international personnel to report any abuses it witnesses and otherwise to co-operate with human rights bodies, the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, and other authorities? At the same time, what measures will be established to safeguard the identities of persons who present testimony about rape and sexual assault and provide the other protections cited in point (5)? What measures will ensure that women participate fully at all levels of these human rights mechanisms?

February 21, 1996

Mr. Jock Covey
Chief of Staff
Office at the High Representative of the
Peace Implementation Conference
Sarajevo

Dear Mr. Covey,

Because of your central responsibilities in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, we write to bring your attention to several critical issues affecting women in the former Yugoslavia. We are particularly concerned that nowhere do the Accords specifically address women's needs or rights. Yet, so many women have been ravaged by ethnic cleansing, conflict and dislocation, and human rights abuses, including forced pregnancies and torture by rape. Women's groups in the region have been among the most active and vocal forces for peace. In the months and years ahead women's full participation in the peace process and reconstruction is essential for their success. The following are a few areas where your attention to women's rights can make an enormous contribution to reconciliation and a lasting peace.

Police Monitors: Making women's physical and mental security a main objective of the peace process is crucial to rebuilding society. Women have not only been traumatized in war, but have reason to fear local, increased incidences of violence, including domestic violence and further abuses by the police. For example, when the UN Protected Areas were demilitarized, soldiers simply changed uniforms from green to blue and were issued new badges, often continuing their campaign of terror. Similar re-badging took place in Sarajevo's exclusion zone. We hope that the international police monitors can help forestall abusive actions by the new "local police." In this connection, we wish to inquire whether plans have been made to assure that the civilian police monitors are skilled and experienced in dealing with trauma victims, including survivors of rape? What portion of these civilian police monitors are women? Which other personnel have received training in dealing with gender-related abuses, including inter alia domestic violence?

War Crimes Tribunal: We are troubled by the early efforts of the High Representative seeking the release of suspected war criminals and at the same time arguing that his role is merely that of "monitoring" the peace accords. We wish to know how the Office of the High Representative will fully cooperate in the international effort to detain and arrest indicted war criminals for delivery to Tribunal authorities. Your involvement here is essential and a key to restoring confidence among the potential war crimes tribunal witnesses, many of whom are women who were traumatized by gender-specific abuses.

Refugees: Of the region's 2.7 million refugees, an estimated 2 million are women and girls. We would like to know what actions the Office of the High Representative is taking to secure asylum, and prevent the forced return of those traumatized women who fear returning home either to renewed violence, or to the trauma of revisiting the site of their persecution? For those who want to try to reestablish their lives in their home villages, towns and cities, what protections will be given them? And, how will the rights of those women who want to reclaim their property that may have been registered in their husbands' or parents' names be secured?

Women's Rights in the Reconstruction Process: As the women in the former Yugoslavia try to reconstruct their lives and reverse the economic dislocation they have experienced, we urge your office to assure that productive resources and international humanitarian, financial and other aid will be made available in a non-discriminatory way, to ensure the full participation of women. We urge you to be guided by international obligations to take positive measures to this end. Women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the former Yugoslavia can provide your office with knowledgeable guidance and contacts in their communities. These women's NGOs have economic and legal expertise, have been working in conflict resolution, democracy initiatives, election campaigning, training, and in women's health, including programs existing since pre-war that address violence against women. As civil society begins to rebuild, we hope you will turn to the local women's groups to assure that women actively participate in the electoral process, policy making at every level, and in leading local reconciliation efforts.

For further background on these issues we have attached to this letter an earlier letter sent to Ambassador Madeleine Albright that addresses our concerns comprehensively. These issues were discussed with Ambassador Albright over the course of two conference calls. During the second call, the suggestion was made that we raise them directly with you.

We look forward to learning where your efforts stand with respect to the issues raised in this letter and attachments. We hope to open a channel for regular communication with you on issues vital to women and the future of all Bosnians. Some of the undersigned have considerable experience in conducting programs that address violence against women, and we are ready to assist you in any way in your efforts.

Sincerely,

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*For identification purposes only

Ambassador Menzies

Hilary R. Clinton

~~Bishop Komarica~~
(Catholic Prelate of Banja Luka)

~~Mufti Kavazovic~~
(Tuzla's Muslim leader)

Jacob
Tinc

Metropolitan Krsta Vijeljac
(Orthodox leader)

Adm. Leighton Smith
(Commander, IFOR)

Sabina Piric
(Pres. Tuzla Women's Assc.)

Ljerka Knezicek
(Member, Tuzla Women's Assc.)

Vladimir Srebrov
(Formerly imprisoned Serb writer)

Fatima Husejnovic
(Member, Women of Srebrenica)

~~Father Janic Simo~~
(Catholic priest Tuzla)

Katarina Mandic
(Const. Court Justice)

~~Sabita Hadzovic~~
(Sarajevo Mayor)

Jasna Muftic
(Women's Rights Lawyer)

Melanne Verveer
(WH Staffer)

Amra Sarac
(Rape/Trauma Counselor)

Esma Zecevic
(Sarajevo Pediatrician)

Nermina Iblizovic
(Bosnian neurosurgeon)

~~Nada Salem~~
(Sarajevo journalist)



Ambassador Menzies

Hilary R. Clinton

Bishop Komarica
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Mufti Kavazovic
(Tuzla's Muslim leader)

Metropolitan Rosic
(Sarajevo's Orthodox leader)

Adm. Leighton Smith
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Nurdzihana Dozic
(Editor of Women's magazine)

Sabina Piric
(Pres. Tuzla Women's Assc.)

Ljerka Knezicek
(Member, Tuzla Women's Assc.)

Vladimir Srebrov
(Formerly imprisoned Serb writer)

Fatima Husejnovic
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(Sarajevo Pediatrician)

Nermina Iblizovic
(Bosnian neurosurgeon)

Nada Salom
(Sarajevo journalist)

Father Janic Simo
(Catholic priest Tuzla)

Notables:

Sabira Hadzovic - Mayor of Sarajevo

Katarina Mandic - Constitutional Court Judge

Metropolitan Nikolaj - Serb Orthodox Church

Bishop Franjo Komarica - Banja Luka

~~Mufti Husein Efendi Kavazovic - Chief of Islam in Tuzla~~

Nurdzihana Dozic - Editor in Chief, Zena 21

~~Jasna Muftic - President of Unija Zar, womens group~~

Nada Salom - Journalist with Sarajevo daily Oslobodenje (Slovene)

Vladimir Srebrov - formerly imprisoned Serb writer

~~Esma Zecevic - Doctor at Kosovo Hospital- pediatrics head~~

~~Nermina Iblizic - Only female neurosurgeon in Bosnia, ethnic Serb~~

Amra Sarac - Rape/Trauma counselor worked with Zepa, S'bnica refugees

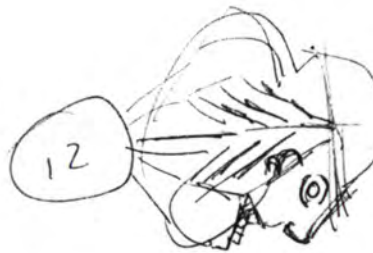
~~Sabina Piric of Women of Tuzla~~

~~Ljerka Knezicek of Women of Tuzla~~

Fatima Husejnovic of the Women of Srebrenica

VIAKKO POLIC

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ATTACHMENT B

PARTICIPATION IN "NOTABLES ROUNDTABLE":

SABIRA HADZOVIC is the mayor of Sarajevo. She is also the President of "Mak Bosanka" - a large women's group in Sarajevo.

KATARINA MANDIC (*) is a Federation Constitutional Court judge.

METROPOLITAN NIKOLAJ (*) is the head of the Serb Orthodox Church. He is from Pale, Republika Srpska.

BISHOP FRANJO KOMARICA (*) is the head of the Catholic Church in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska. He is a leading human rights activist.

REIS-UL-ULEMA is the head of the Islam community in Sarajevo

VERA JOVANOVIC is an OSCE Ombudsman.

MAKSIM STANISIC, an ethnic Serb, has organized the "Ilidza Initiative", a group of citizens committed to keeping Sarajevo multi-ethnic.

NURDZIHANA DOZIC is the Editor-in-Chief of "Zena 21", a professional women's magazine which is partially funded with USG assistance.

MIODRAG ZIVANOVIC is the President of the Liberal Party of Banja Luka, which is in opposition to the Pale regime.

JASNA MUFTIC is the President of "Unija Zar", an umbrella organization assisting 50 women's groups in Bosnia.

NADA SALOM (*) is a journalist with Oslobodenje, Sarajevo's major daily newspaper. Before the war, Ms. Salom was the Editor-in-Chief of Oslobodenje's cultural section.

VLADIMIR SREBROV (*) is an ethnic Serb writer who was imprisoned by Pale Serbs for 39 months for opposing Serb aggression.

* participated in POTUS visit January 19

Women of Serb
2 women of the 1's

FL

min
1:30 minutes
- coming w/ delegation
- usual suspects
- FM, Fed.