

Human Rights Watch Questions UN Accountability

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UPCOMING EVENTS

FDI Grants Due...**Mar. 15.**

Public discussion - Mjajt and KAN: Citizen Initiatives in Kosovo and Albania.....**Mar. 5, 16:00.**

Training:Active Citizen and Voluntarism**Mar. 6, 10:00-16:00.**

Demonstration to change electoral system...**Mar. 8, near UNMIK HQ, 12:00.**

Fred Abrahams, a writer and a former researcher in the Balkans recently visited Prishtina to write a strategy paper on the degree to which the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is fulfilling its obligations to protect the human rights of Kosovo citizens.

Human Rights Watch believes that compared to international standards, human rights abuses related to the judiciary, minorities, transparency, accountability and missing persons exist in Kosovo. Human Rights Watch is especially concerned that UNMIK has a lot of power but not enough transparency, responsibility or accountability. "Ruling structures in Kosovo are like a Byzantine maze with doors in Prishtina, UN Headquarters and even Belgrade. It is easy to lose the way in this labyrinth and blame one

another," he said. Abrahams suggested citizens demand accountability by changing laws and regulations.

NGOs can play a vital role in pressuring Kosovo authorities and UNMIK, according to Abrahams. He suggested that NGOs collect facts and information in a professional way and understand laws and regulations. There are two types of advocacy to bring about change, according to Abrahams: quiet advocacy and public advocacy. "Quiet advocacy" is not necessarily secret; it includes drafting laws, consulting with authorities and working in cooperation with governing structures. "Public Advocacy" is public criticism, what Abrahams refers to as "Name and shame" style. Here NGOs use the press, conferences and newsletters to point out individuals' or institutions'



Abrahams has worked in the region since 1992. He is best known for his reporting on human rights abuses in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. Now, he is completing a book on post-communist Albania, a detailed account of the political actors and events from 1990-present.

corrupt practices.

Abrahams suggested that local and international NGOs cooperate in their advocacy efforts. Local NGOs have good information, contacts and context; they understand the politics and culture. International structures have contacts in the US government, UN, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Internationals also understand the international context and have powerful reputations. "For example, our final report can go to the New York Times and the impact is automatically greater," he said.

"Ruling structures in Kosovo are like a Byzantine maze."

ATRC Promotes Free Access to Information in the Region

Led by Article 19 and supported by the European Commission, NGOs from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro started a joint regional project on Freedom of Information (FOI) in January. Article 19, a leading European organization that works to promote free access to information worldwide, has gathered successful South-eastern European organizations to promote citizens' rights to access information held by their governments. ATRC is responsible for

implementing the Freedom of Information project in Kosovo.

The "Law on Access to Official Documents" as it is called in Kosovo was adopted by the Assembly and signed by the UN Administrator in November 2003. The law allows for all citizens to request official documents from the authorities. It also requires authorities to disclose the requested information. Only sensitive documents are exempt according to the law. ATRC's project will aim to encourage the law's implementation by

building NGO and public awareness on how to effectively use the law.

"The law is crucial for the creation of a transparent, democratic and non-secretive government", Kreshnik Berisha, ATRC Director said. "However, according to the law, the UN Mission in Kosovo [UNMIK], Kosovo's ultimate governing authority, retains unlimited power to disclose or not disclose the documents it holds. This is against transparency principles promoted by the [FOI] law around the world," he added.

Meet the Donors: FDI Gives Guidelines to Potential Grantees

The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) was ATRC's "Meet the Donors" second guest. FDI only funds advocacy projects and encourages coalitions and anti-corruption projects. Grants for 4000 to 40,000 euros are available for: advocacy campaigns; strategic intervention (anti-corruption or public policy analysis); and training.

Amy Horton from the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) asked about FDI's requirements for organizations, including how they manage money, how long they have existed, if they have a code of conduct and what is their mission. FDI Executive Director Bashkim Rrahmani said that all these are considered during application review. "The application forms can facilitate the submission of projects," he said. FDI also meets with NGOs to provide briefings on project requirements, Rrahmani said. FDI has established a grant review committee composed of foundation staff and board members to review grants after every round of applications.

To illustrate FDI's project design requirements, Muhamet Veliu from Victoria Co and other grantees presented their FDI approved projects. They also discussed the successes and challenges of their projects.

FDI is a primary implementing partner for the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), a cooperative agreement between the USAID and East-West Management Institute, Inc. FDI has established grant-giving and grant-tracking systems that meet Western standards. With ATRC, FDI's operational support, fundraising, networking and mentoring opportunities have helped to transform NGOs from service providers to issue-based agents of change.



Ministry Representatives Explain Kosovo Budget

ATRC hosted a budget training for NGOs provided by the Kosovo Government's Ministry of Finance and Economy. The training provided basic information about the Kosovo budget process; compared the Kosovo budget process with international models; and assisted NGOs in understanding the budget process. Through the training, ATRC hoped to build NGOs' capacity to educate citizens as to what funds the budget contains and entry points for influencing it. Training participants also had the opportunity to discuss budget issues with Ministry representatives.

"The budget process in Kosovo is totally different from other states; it is exclusively executive," which means the Parliament is not involved in the process, Steven Leeds from the Ministry of Finance and Economy explained.

While the Ministry starts drafting next year's budget in April, changes occur as more money becomes avail-

able. Therefore, after reexamining the budget, the Ministry of Finance and Economy asks the municipalities and other ministries to propose additional projects. During this mid-year review, NGOs can influence the ministries and municipalities' budget priorities.

"Can NGOs have any impact on the law for public financial budget management and accountability?" Fron Nazi, Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP) Chief of Party asked. Two types of budget laws exist, Leeds said. First, the base law regulates the budget planning process every year; the base law does not change. Second, the annual law sets the yearly budget allocations for each budget organization; the annual law changes each year. Since the Parliament drafts and adopts the annual law, NGOs can influence it.

"How open is the process



Stephen Leeds and Agim Krasniqi explain the budget to Kosovar NGOs.

before the budget is disclosed? How can I see how my taxes are spent?" Kimete Klenja from ATRC questioned. An existing law states how funds should be allocated and resulting fines if it is not allocated properly. Structures such as auditing also exist, but have not been implemented, Leeds answered.

Other participants questioned the media's publication of a 330 million euro budget surplus that later fell to 75 million euros. Estimation for the surplus was according to the money left in the bank; much of this is earmarked projects delayed for 2004, Agim Krasniqi said.

Citizens Demand Ministry Publicize "Miss Kosova" Spending

Ministry of Culture representatives who have used public funds to support local businesses in organizing "Miss Kosova" were not present at an ATRC debate called "Woman Figure and Beauty Contest in Kosovo" on February 11. Debate participants accused the Ministry of failing to distribute promised gifts, not disclosing potential financial gains and other financial irregularities related to the competition. They requested that the Ministry make public the amount of money spent and any other financial benefits gained from "Miss Kosova".

"The presentation of beauty among us is done through a very ugly activity," Professor Kadri Metaj from Prishtina

University's Philosophy Faculty said. The other speakers invited to the discussion included Luljeta Krasniqi, a linguist and women rights activist who recently published a paper on the issue and Adem Gashi from the Ministry of Culture who did not come.

Krasniqi discussed the competition's weaknesses and the women's role in it. She questioned the absence of age requirements for "Miss Kosova" participants, which allow for minors to compete, the ability of young participants to make educated decisions regarding their participation in the event and their naked appearances that are somehow considered representative of their "beauty".

"In this contest 'woman' has become an object of ridicule. She has no [name and no] identity, only a number tag around her neck" Luljeta Krasniqi said. Rather than presenting values, the opposite occurs at this "spectacle organized under the patronage of the highest institution dealing with cultural issues," she said. Discussion participants expressed concerns regarding the organization of "Miss Kosovo", the presentation of "values" in relation to women and the role of the Ministry of Culture in this activity. Another important issue discussed by participants was the relation between the adult public viewers and the young age of contest participants.

FDI Announces Grant Competition

The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) invites Kosovo NGOs to apply for Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP) grants. KNAP is a cooperative agreement between USAID and East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI). Projects submitted jointly by advocacy and think tank/policy NGOs will be given priority. FDI strongly encourages applicants to propose innovative approaches to working with the media to increase the impact of proposed activities. Grants ranging from €4,000 to €40,000 are available for anti-corruption, policy analysis and advocacy activities. Applications are due by March 15. For further information and grant applications please contact:

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SHARRI-NET Celebrates Two Year Anniversary

Sharri-net, also known as the Kosovar Environment Organizations Electronic Network celebrated their 2nd anniversary by throwing a cocktail party and showing a video presentation. The purpose of the meeting was also for NGOs to sign a memorandum of understanding and to present their code of conduct. Representatives from Sharri-Net distributed letters of appreciation to network members and congratulated them on their achievements in the environmental field. The network consists of 17 environmental organizations from throughout Kosovo.

How to Write a Winning Project for FDI Approval

Amy Horton from the International Center for Not for Profit Law (ICNL) and Gjyljeta Mushkolaj from the Kosovo Institute for NGO Law (IKDO) led a workshop for NGOs interested in applying to the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) for funds. The workshop gave guidelines on how to write a project proposal for implementing a public participation regulation for the municipal assembly.

"Why should you [NGOs] be interested in this? Some of you might think that maybe the project was successful in some of municipalities but it won't be in yours," Horton addressed some of the NGO representatives' fears. "However, FDI wants to fund such a project if you prove to them that you will have success," she said.

ICNL and IKDO have already worked with local NGOs to design models that led to the adoption of public participation regulations in

other cities. During the workshop NGOs discussed how this project could be adapted to their municipalities' individual circumstances. Horton stressed that the NGOs should tailor their projects to their municipality's individual needs. She also encouraged NGOs to include their own creative, unique ideas.

"You as an NGO can have the best project in the world but no clear objectives [...] The donor will not risk in this case. Present yourself as a professional and make an impression" Horton said.

During the workshop Horton and Mushkolaj tried to elicit from participants the important components of a proposal. They illustrated in detail the subtle distinction between an overall goal, objectives and activities because many NGOs confuse these components: the goal is the final result or main point of influence that one wants to achieve. Objectives are changes in



Amy Horton and Gjyljeta Mushkolaj provide NGOs with grant-writing techniques for a project on public participation.

behavior of target groups that serve toward achieving the project goal. Activities are specific actions undertaken to accomplish the objectives and the goal.

More specifically, Horton and Mushkolaj discussed the importance of having a clear, achievable and measurable goal (output, or result) and clearly articulated activities (input) that are designed to achieve the goal. Using the public participation project as an example, they described specific goals or objectives (i.e. increased public participation through adoption of the regulation and regulation implementation).

Citizens Advocate for a Better Public Transportation System in Prizren

The Center for Civil Society (CSS) provided a briefing on their new project "Community and Decision-making" at a roundtable discussion on February 12 at Prizren's Municipal Assembly. Legal, economic and communication experts explained to NGOs, citizens and local government representatives the significance of public participation in decision-making. "Genuine democratic processes cannot be imagined without citizen participation," Xhevdet Mekani from CSS said.

CSS has already held a press conference, surveyed over 140 citizens, published fliers and met with citizen groups, influential persons and NGOs. This resulted in 14 local NGOs signing a

memorandum of understanding. Through this project, CSS hopes to draft a regulation or amend existing regulations to allow for a new mini-bus route in Prizren's public transportation network. They aim to solve problems such as traffic jams, parking shortages, narrow roads, pollution, sidewalks blocked by vehicles and high transportation costs.

According to the draft regulation, the service fee would be 0.30 Euros per trip and the route would go throughout the city. "Citizens will benefit financially from this project since other services like taxis or personal vehicles have higher prices" said Anton Çetta, an economic expert.

While a legal and a communication expert confirmed their participation in the discussion, they did not attend.

The Director of Communication and Links in Prizren Municipality questioned the mini-buses' security, especially for disabled people and children. He suggested a six month pilot project to test the proposed transportation system's efficiency.

Teuta Luzha from the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI), the organization sponsoring CSS's project, suggested that the municipality include funds for expanding Prizren's roads in the 2004 budget. Road expansion would enable a more functional transport system, she said.

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Transparency International Presents Anti-corruption Manual in Serbia

BELGRADE, 4 February 2003 - A manual on practical steps that can be taken in each sector of society to fight corruption was published on February 4 in Serbian at a special event in the capital Belgrade.

The publication, TI Source Book 2000: Confronting Corruption: The Elements of a National Integrity System, introduces the concept of a National Integrity System. This approaches anti-corruption not only from an angle of suppression but also of prevention and education.

The Serbian version of the

manual was prepared by the Serbian Chapter of the non-governmental organization, Transparency International, in co-operation with Beta News Agency and the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro.

The system also defines a multi-level framework with 11 pillars on which the fight against corruption rests. These include the executive and legislative powers, the judiciary, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the police, public services, the Auditor General, anti-corruption agencies (commis-

sions), the Ombudsman, the media and civil society.

The anti-corruption manual also contains best practice documentation and practical tools that can be used in order to fight against corrupt practices.

The main speakers at the presentation of the manual were: Ambassador Maurizio Massari, the Head of the OSCE Mission; Professor Vladimir Goati, President of Transparency Serbia; Nemanja Nenadic, Project Manager of Transparency Serbia; and Zlatko Minic, Internet Editor of Beta News Agency.

Guest Article: Zëri i Ditës

Achievements and Failures of the International Administration

From 1999, we knew that the UN would be responsible for constructing a democratic society in Kosovo. Western countries were ready to exchange a fast and successful end to the war by engaging the UN as a responsible structure for Kosovar peace. Yet few of them really believed that the UN would function properly in Kosovo.

Maybe UNMIK's greatest problem is the very fact that it is UNMIK. UNMIK, a UN body, even after the end of Cold War is searching for its identity. As an informal protectorate--a mission without a timeframe or clear mandate regarding the main issues or the status of Kosovo, UNMIK is a structure that depends upon NATO soldiers, EU money, relations between the US and EU core countries and decisions made by the Contact Group - the most relevant body for the resolution of Kosovo's final status.

UNMIK only has competencies over Kosovo Albanians. Serbian politicians in Kosovo and the Serbian regime in Belgrade do not respect UNMIK as a ruling structure. This is illus-

trated by the existence of parallel Serbian structures in Kosovo. These parallel structures continue to exist despite UN General Secretary Kofi Annan's and Head of UNMIK Harry Holkeri's public appeals for their decomposition.

UNMIK maintains reserved powers in security, minority issues, the judiciary, foreign politics and the economy. Any analysis of the results produced by this administration, which holds competencies over key segments of government, would conclude that UNMIK has had more failures than successes. After a two-year war and an eight-year institutional vacuum, Kosovar society needed an international administration that would help with the reconstruction of a war-damaged Kosovo as well as with establishing institutions for a democratic society. Five years after the war, UNMIK has more power than was expected five years ago and more power that it deserves. The bad quality of local government cannot serve as a justification for UNMIK maintaining exclusive power.

To escape the evident cri-

sis in functioning relations between the International Administration and the local government, all focus is on "Benchmarks for Kosovo". Now a partnership will be established, and the actual implementation of a detailed plan is expected to begin. However, a series of problems that will shake the process. First, Belgrade and Serbian politicians in Kosovo oppose benchmarks. Without their sincere commitment to the process, the western idea of results from standards, which emphasizes relations with the Serbian minority, will be difficult to achieve.

UNMIK and Kosovars will continue on their roller coaster ride, even beyond February 2004. Harri Holkeri will not be the last administrator in Kosovo. UNMIK will still be in Kosovo on January 1, 2006. The situation in Kosovo can only change through the initiative of politicians and local institutions. So far, there is no indication that such initiatives are possible.

(This special annex to 'Zëri i Ditës' newspaper was supported by Swedish Helsinki Committee)