

Press Office

Press Release

www.unmikonline.org

UNMIK



United Nations Mission in Kosovo

UNMIK/PR/1554

Wednesday, 24 May 2006

Ethnically motivated crimes on the decline in Kosovo

PRISTINA – Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Kosovo (SRSG) Søren Jessen-Petersen today called on all concerned to refrain from propagating misinformation on the security situation in Kosovo particularly with respect to the Kosovo Serb community.

“I have noted with concern periodic statements from certain quarters that risk creating a climate of fear and insecurity among the Kosovo Serbs,” the SRSG said, “All too often ethnic motive is alleged for crimes merely because the victims happen to be from the Kosovo Serb community. Whereas we always deplore any attack on any citizen, statements of misleading nature are not helpful and are in fact contrary to the interests of the Kosovo Serbs. This kind of misinformation not only erodes their confidence level, but has a cascading negative impact on inter-ethnic relations.”

Crime statistics for the first quarter of this year (January – March 2006) reveal a marked decline in potentially ethnically motivated crimes, that is, cases where the possibility of an ethnic motive has not yet been ruled out. As compared to 72 incidents recorded during January to March 2005, there were only 19 such incidents during the same period this year. Of these incidents, 12 involved Kosovo Serb, six Kosovo Albanian and one Kosovo Croatian victims. Among Kosovo Serb victims, one was a case of attempted murder, two assaults, three intimidations and six cases of criminal damage.

UNMIK Police recently analysed 1,408 Kosovo Serb convoys that were escorted by the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) during January to early May this year. It was found that there had been six incidents of stone throwing at these convoys and police had made five arrests in those cases.

In December 2005, on the directions of the SRSG, the Police launched ‘Operation Stringent Security’ focusing on vulnerable communities and localities. This operation has since involved 85,502 vehicle check points, 94,315 foot/vehicle patrols and 18,758 police visits to graveyards. 1,269 arrest warrants have been executed, 1,735 persons arrested for various crimes and 476 weapons seized. This high intensity police operation has, among other things, substantially contributed to reducing crime levels particularly with respect to the minority communities.

In view of continuing perception of insecurity among the Kosovo Serbs, the SRSG has asked the Police Commissioner to further enhance international police deployment in minority areas to support the KPS efforts to prevent any incident and to help increase community confidence.