Dear All,

Just a short note to follow up on Ruud's last note -

There were over around 15 TV stations at the Ogata press conference and around 100 journalists. Most had received the MSF press statement in the morning when we all distributed it at breakfast in the main hotels. It seems as though most of them will hang around for another week or so - and then go down to basic rotations until something radical happens again. That means that this week they will be running around looking for stories and following up on any of the issues raised, including checking if the HCR and NGOs are doing their job properly now that they have made such a fuss!

It is essential that we follow up on the issues that we have raised - both in terms of our operations (explos / working with non NATO camps + coherent message follow up) plus following up with the HCR to make sure they do register the refugees and deal with the refugees not in the NATO camps etc.

PRESS CONFERENCE - Ogata came into the press conference after meeting with the Prime Minister and President. She said that "Both the UNHCR and the Macedonian Govt have learned some lessons". Many of the journalists raised questions about the UNHCR's capacity to actually deal effectively with the refugee crisis - not competent enough. Also questions about missing refugees. HCR said would start registration today and that they were concerned about those remaining in Kosovo.

The main point that was picked up in the UNHCR press conference from our statement was asked by Il Giornale - Italian newspaper to Ogata - basically saying that MSF was concerned about the refugees who were not in the three official NATO camps, and what would be done for them. Ogata then said that they were trying their best, that they were negotiating with the Macedonian govt to better assist these refugees and that the UNHCR looked forward to working for these refugees with MSF. MSF was the only international NGO mentioned by name in the press conference.

MSF's statement came out at the right time as yesterday the German govt also expressed concern at the way the UNHCR had been working (in diplomatic speak that is tantamount to slamming them). Most of the journalists had already seen for themselves what a mess the whole thing was from a humanitarian point of view, and are clear that without the military assistance the NGOs/HCR could have never got their act together (this means this is what the public is reading!)

OPERATIONAL FOLLOW UP - It is essential that now MSF operations follow up on these concerns that we have expressed. If we are saying that we have been blocked or have not had enough access and are concerned about the people outside the camps, then we have to make sure that we really are trying to reach them and to do something (also be visible working outside NATO camps).

MSF teams in Macedonia are already planning/doing explos etc - so good news
MILITARY HAND-OVER Some of the handovers from military are now happening - the Israeli military hospital will hand over to the German Red Cross (Israelis coming over to help the Muslims and then being taken over by the Germans in a camp...).

The NATO health post in Brazda camp will be handed over to MSF on Sunday. The NATO healthpost in Stancovich will be handed over to IMC. The NATO soldiers will still be in the camps but not doing health or sanitation - security presence (not sure of exact wording for what they are doing).

PRESS INTERVIEWS/BRIEFINGS ETC - Lex, Ruud, Denis P and I did most of the briefings over breakfast with the journalists. We gave out over 100 press statements to different media - very difficult to know from here how much will be picked up as the HCR answering to our questions was the main issue (in the sense that they dealt with all the questions we asked so in that sense we achieved our objectives - next issue is whether they actually get their act together).

Dont know all the names of everyone we briefed, but did include: L Avvenire (Claudio Monaci); Famiglia Cristiana (Alberto Bobbiop); Il Tirreno (Roberto Galli); NTV (Fuat Kozluklu); Netwerk (Man Driessen); BBC (Fergal Keane); Daily Telegraph (Patrick Bishop); Sunday Telegraph (Olga Craig); The Sun (Phil Harnaford); Baldzeitung (Erwin Dedher); TFI (Valerie Fourneau); NBC News (Martin Fletcher); The New Yorker (Elizabeth Ruben); The New York Times (David Rohde); KTV (Kenzo Inamoto); LExpress (Vincent Hugueux); ZDF (Thomas Fuhrmann - who want to do a story following us around); Liberation, Dutch TV / Radio etc

That is all for now. Marieke will be staying on to do all press work - on the number you have been using - Ruud and I are leaving tonight / tomorrow

Great to be back in the field - good to work with Marieke and Ruud and Denis (who has renamed himself the French spy!)- sorry didnt get to go to Albania or Montenegro!

sb

PS - After press conference HCR spokesperson Kris Janowski was being filmed and interviewed by ZDF and made a big show of coming up to give MSF a big kiss and a hug to show that HCR and MSF are friends! Even said jokingly that he was irritated that ZDF had turned off the camera for the event!!!! - maybe we should readapt our comm tactics...