Dear all,

Just a quick update on the press conference we held today in Tirana regarding the situation in Kosovo.

I suppose all of you got the press release and the background information regarding the humanitarian situation in Kosovo and the reasons that made us to take this stand.

The press conference was this morning at 9:00 a.m., and some 25 journalists attended it, among them USA Today, La Republica, Liberation, New Republic, Financial Times, Stars & Stripes, ABC (Spanish newspaper) and Reuters press and TV.

The presentation took around 20 minutes starting with Christopher (HoM) introducing MSF activities in Albania. Then Diane Plessia (Mental Health Officer) explained the conclusions we could draw from the 30 testimonies we have collected from the refugees in Kukes. Finally, James Orbinski (President of MSF International Council) made the statement regarding the humanitarian situation in Kosovo.

As expected, the very first question was made by USA Today and asking for our proposals to ensure the security of the people trapped inside Kosovo. James answered MSF is a humanitarian organization, and not a state. MSF does not have its own direct information on what is happening in Kosovo at this time. Our only direct information comes from refugees who have fled Kosovo. The international community and NATO must have information on the situation of people on the ground, from aerial photography or from other sources. The purpose of the diplomatic and military initiative launched over the past months was to prevent a humanitarian crisis inside Kosovo and to ensure their security. At this time, all attention is focused on refugees outside of Kosovo and on the NATO bombing campaign directed toward Serbia. The focus on the security of people still in Kosovo is gone, and our initiative is to re-focus attention here, and not simply on refugees and NATO bombing.

The international community and NATO have launched this diplomatic and military initiative ostensibly for humanitarian purposes, they must have information on the status/security of people and are therefore responsible for assessing that information and exploring all options to ensure the security of people in Kosovo. It is their responsibility. It is not now for MSF to pose specific solutions.

Journalists were quite pushy demanding specific proposals. James was consistent with his answers and said that if NATO can obtain satellite images of military objectives, they can surely obtain pictures of population movements and the conditions they are living in. We are asking for info on the humanitarian situation of the people in Kosovo, and that the international community take the responsibility they have...
Summed to ensure the security of people in Kosovo, people whose voice is silent and whose fate is at best unknown.

At the end, we believe journalists got the message. Basically, NATO and the international community are putting all their attention on the refugees and on their military actions, and are leaving the security of people of Kosovo on a secondary level.

We will have to follow up this issue in the coming days and we are waiting for your feedback regarding the impact of this press conference in your respective countries.

We will keep you informed. Keep in touch,

Amaia & James.