MSF PRESS RELEASE
April 13, 1999
Silence on Over One Million

MSF Demands An Immediate Solution to the Security of Civilians in Kosovo

In the last six days, borders for Kosovars seeking refuge have been effectively closed, and people turned back by force. At this time, there is no security for trapped civilian populations, and no independent and impartial humanitarian access, presence or assistance inside Kosovo.

MSF demands that the international community not simply focus attention on the refugee crisis. MSF demands security for the people remaining in Kosovo.

MSF has obtained reports from refugees of rape, massacres, murders, mass graves and a clear pattern of brutality and a forced expulsion of civilians from Kosovo:

- "We were rounded up at the village square and told that if anyone dared to leave, they would be killed."
- "You have no place in Kosovo, go to Albania."
- "We were never allowed to stop and could only rest a bit when the line was stopped by the paramilitary soldiers. People were frequently abducted and taken away in military trucks."
- "One man in the convoy next to me stopped to piss. There he saw that a group of people had been taken aside and were being machine-gunned en masse."
- "We were taken to a neighbouring village, and then we heard shots from where the men had been left behind."
- "We were all set to go. One of the paramilitary soldiers told my husband to get off the truck and give him his money. My husband shrugged, indicating that he had no money. The paramilitary soldier shot him in the heart. We started crying. The soldier walked away and then returned. In order to make absolutely sure that my husband was dead, he slit his throat."
- "Almost all the houses we could see along the road had been burned down, and there were soldiers all over that place."
- Serb military: "This is Serbia."

These reports demonstrate a clear and convergent pattern of a state-planned and implemented campaign of expulsions, forced migration and terror that approximates the gravest of crimes against humanity.

People now inside Kosovo have not been reached, and their situation is critical. According to official figures, over 450,000 people have fled Kosovo since March 24, 99. The refugee crisis is simply the tip of the iceberg. At this time it is clear that a massive and systematic campaign of terror and forced migration has taken place inside Kosovo. Yet, two thirds of Ethnic Albanians remain in Kosovo and their fate is not known. Beyond the urgent refugee crisis is a widening and ongoing primary crisis of the absence of security for, and information on the status of hundreds of thousands of civilians inside Kosovo.

MSF, firmly poses the questions:

Are the parties to the conflict and the international community assuming as a priority their full political responsibility for the security of people trapped in Kosovo?
Are they now engaging all options in taking clear and effective action to ensure the security of civilians inside Kosovo, and to ensure respect for neutral and impartial humanitarian assistance inside Kosovo?

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Bas Tielens at 038-202.7761 or Amaia Espana at 00-871.761.847.249.
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