

Former Yugoslavia

Humanitarian assistance faces major obstacles as the emergency increases in complexity

Over 3 million refugees, displaced and other severely affected persons have become the innocent victims of hostilities that continue to rage in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. To help ensure that relief supplies get through to the victims of the conflict, the UN Security Council, on 14 September, authorized the deployment of some 6,000 additional UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) troops to the region. An inter-agency assessment mission visited Yugoslavia in August 1992. On the basis of its findings, a

With the situation deteriorating and becoming more complex, the European Council, at its meeting in Birmingham on 16 October 1992, agreed that immediate and decisive action was needed in the face of the impending major human tragedy in the former Yugoslavia. It underlined the importance of providing winter shelter and zones of safety for refugees and of ensuring the delivery of relief supplies, and it called for a stock-taking conference to assess the effectiveness of the relief operation in the country.

The overall situation in the former Yugoslavia, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has continued to deteriorate. UNHCR estimates that, in the region of the former Yugoslavia, there are some 3.1 million refugees, displaced persons and other victims of conflict who are in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 1.7 million are in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone.

Comprehensive Plan of Action and Consolidated Appeal was formulated by DHA in collaboration with UNHCR and UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP. In September 1992, the provision of such assistance was made particularly urgent by the imminent onset of winter. On 4 September, a comprehensive inter-agency appeal was launched covering the needs of 2.7 million affected persons in all areas of the former Yugoslavia. The appeal for US \$434 million covered the most urgent needs for food, shelter and medical supplies in anticipation of the harsh Balkan winter.

Besides UNHCR, the following are participating actively in the humanitarian relief programmes in the former Yugoslavia: UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO, IOM, UNV and the ICRC. Several Non-governmental organizations are actively involved in the humanitarian relief efforts. Hostilities continue in many areas and grave breaches of human rights and humanitarian law have occurred and continue to be reported. Ethnic cleansing has taken place on a massive scale and reports of atrocities, murder, and rape are numerous.

Hostilities started in the summer of 1991 with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia. As the war in Croatia intensified, UNHCR was designated by the United Nations Secretary General, in November 1991, to assume the lead role in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the armed conflict in former Yugoslavia. At that time 300,000 refugees and displaced persons required assistance. In February 1992, the Security Council approved the establishment of UNPROFOR. As a result of the war in Croatia, the number of persons affected grew to about 600,000. With the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it rapidly increased to over 1 million in May 1992 and to well over 2 million by the end of August. By the end of 1992, the number of the population affected, displaced persons and refugees reached over 3.1 million.



UNHCR/A. Hollmann Photo

Almost all the refugees are women, children and elderly persons.

The humanitarian relief effort is facing major obstacles and in many areas the security situation is preventing UNHCR and UNPROFOR from reaching the besieged population. During 1992, close to 30 resolutions and decisions were

adopted regarding the conflict in former Yugoslavia. The mandate of UNPROFOR has been revised and expanded progressively as the conflict has spread and increased in magnitude and complexity. ■