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SCG43353.E

Serbia and Montenegro: Incidents of harassment or violence carried out by extreme nationalist group; government response (2003-February2005)

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Information concerning harassment or violence carried out by extreme nationalist groups was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information and description of events may be useful.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) mentioned dozens of attacks against ethnic minorities in Voivodina (Serbia) since January 2004 in its *World Report 2005*: "[t]he violence ranges from tombstone desecration and painting of nationalistic graffiti to confrontation involving young persons of different ethnicities" (13 Jan. 2005). HRW indicated that authorities eventually vowed to curb such incidents after denying at first that they were ethnically motivated (*ibid.*). Only one such case was brought to court while others either did not "reach trial, or resulted in minor penalties for disturbing the peace" (*ibid.*). One source mentioned that 77 tombstones were destroyed in a Catholic cemetery of Novi Sad (*Vreme* 3 Oct. 2003).

Violence involving "Albanian extremists" erupted in Kosova in March 2004 "when 19 people were killed, several thousand, mainly Serbs, expelled from their homes, and 37 Orthodox Christian monasteries and churches demolished" (BETA News Agency 5 Aug. 2004; United Nations 17 June 2004). The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, referred to the attack against the minorities of Kosova as an "organized, widespread, and targeted campaign" (RFE/RL 9 July 2004).

President Ibrahim Rugova of Kosova stated that he asked for the 1,000 British troops who arrived after the violent events of March 2004 to stay in Kosova, in order to "crack down on the Albanian extremists" (*ibid.* 5 Apr. 2004).

On 17 March 2004, reports on the violence in Kosova sparked a violent response in Belgrade and Nis, as mosques were burned down (HRW 13 Jan. 2005; IWPR 18 Mar. 2004). According to sources, the police "stood by" during attacks on an Islamic community centres and shops "belonging to ethnic Albanians and Muslims" in Novi Sad (*Ibid.*; HRW 13 Jan. 2005).

In Serbia, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHFHR) indicated that discrimination and intolerance against ethnic minorities is still a daily practice, but that their manifestations are more "subtle and perfidious" (23 June 2004).

The IHFHR indicated that "2003 saw an escalation in intolerance, together with a strengthening of extreme nationalism" in the state of Montenegro (23 June 2004). The IHFHR claimed that the impact of racist attacks was not recognized by Montenegrin authorities and little action was taken to curb them (IHFHR 23 June 2004). Information corroborating the IHFHR's assertions could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sources, including: Amnesty International, *Le Courrier des Balkans*, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), WNC.