MRG OUTSIDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL NO. 58 FEBRUARY 2002

WCAR Participants Perspectives on Participation

Asociación Proyecto Caribe, Costa Rica

Asociación Proyecto Caribe (APC) is one of the few organizations of Afro-descendants working on human and ethnic minority rights in Costa Rica. The preparatory meetings for the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) allowed us to interact with national and international organizations with similar aims. On a national level, there was a wide-ranging debate between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on issues of racism and discrimination. This enabled a wider range of people and organizations to hear how racism affects people in Costa Rica and the world.

A relatively consensual agenda emerged between the NGOs and the official delegation to the preparatory committee (Prepcom) in Santiago, Chile, where the organizations of Afro-descendants supported the Costa Rican state's position.

MRG support

Members of APC learnt about the instruments and mechanisms of the United Nations (UN), at the Prepcom in Santiago and at an MRG training seminar in Geneva, in May 2001. APC representatives also learnt about the processes of negotiating with official state representatives.

APC first heard about MRG's work in 1996. In 1998, APC's President participated in an MRG training workshop for the UN Working Group on Minorities in Geneva. This helped APC to focus its work in the field of human and minority rights.

In 2000, APC took part in the Prepcom in Santiago, with two representatives from MRG, who gave us a computer to facilitate communication between our organization and the bodies involved in organizing the WCAR. MRG's support was integral to APC's participation in the WCAR process.

Highlights

As members of an ethnic minority of Afro-descendants living in a Latino country, we have to learn to deal with different forms of racial discrimination and have developed skills to identify forms of covert exclusion. The WCAR in Durban allowed us to work with people from other regions of the world, such as the Batwa people and Dalits, who face forms of discrimination we did not know about. A press conference held by MRG gave organizations the opportunity to highlight these issues.

The Durban conference gave us the opportunity to reaffirm our determination to fight alongside our African and Afro-descendant brothers and sisters and others throughout the world against racism.

We attended a session presided over by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. He said that we had all come to Durban with the aim of negotiating over different proposals, but the most important things weren't the documents that were produced, but the use that everyone made of the Declaration and the Plan of Action once we had returned to our respective countries.

APC feels privileged to have been one of the organizations which went to Durban to condemn the racism which led to one of the worst and most prolonged atrocities in the history of humankind: slavery and the

Cont...

Paul Weinberg/Panos Pictures

Joining against racism

Cont...

transatlantic trade in slaves. It is a real breakthrough that this has been declared a 'crime against humanity' (though without retroactive application).

Hopes for the future

APC plans to continue working on the policies of cooperation and solidarity, which were established in the pre-Durban process. We also feel the need for more and better contacts and exchange of experiences with MRG's various partners.

A Special Representative on Afro-descendants should be instituted to support and ensure the realization of the Declaration and the Plan of Action. Also, the media should pay more attention to victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

Costa Ricans have little information about the results of the WCAR, as the media resists covering these issues. We believe NGOs should receive support to spread the word about the WCAR Declaration and Programme of Action, through talks and conferences in schools and colleges, and via radio programmes.

The Humanitarian Legal Centre, Belgrade

The NGO Forum and WCAR were the first international events I have attended. MRG staff made it clear that we should take any opportunity to be heard that came up. This meant using all available possibilities to lobby and develop links with different NGOs, international organizations and governments. I was on my own, but not isolated, and MRG staff generously provided me with support and guidance. MRG also organized a press conference, on the last day of the NGO Forum, in which several partner NGOs, including the Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC), participated.

At the NGO Forum, I was disappointed by the polarization of the NGOs over demands to include a condemnation of Israel as a 'racist' state in the Declaration. Also, the procedures in 'working groups' and 'caucuses' were not clear. Nevertheless, it was obvious that the NGO Forum has huge potential to influence global policies and international approaches to different minority issues.

The WCAR was a very different experience. The poorly organized NGO accrediting service was frustrating. A real benefit for me was to understand the global decision-making process, and the gap between public commitments against racism made by some states and their actions at the WCAR, which were directed toward weakening and even negating those commitments in the Declaration and Programme of Action.

Back in Belgrade, I thought about how to include post-Durban follow-up activities in our ongoing projects. HLC plans to develop several partnership and capacity-building programmes with local minority NGOs. HLC also plans to organize several roundtables, to develop more specific mechanisms for exchange of opinions between NGOs and minority leaders in the region – from Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo/a – and to elaborate strategies for a post-Durban approach to inter-ethnic issues.

Paul Weinberg/Panos Pictures

Taking a stand

Union pour l'Émancipation pour les Femmes Autochtones, Democratic Republic of Congo

Representatives from the Union pour l'Émancipation pour les Femmes Autochtones (UEFA) attended one preparatory meeting for the WCAR, at Dakar. At this meeting all the participants – the tribes, the people of all the African countries, and people of African descent – were able to express their concerns.

For us, the Pygmy people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), this meeting enabled us to voice our problems in front of other nations and peoples. We also learned a lot about our rights that we had not known before.

Due to the support of MRG, we were able to participate in the regional meeting and the WCAR in Durban. For financial reasons, we could not participate in all the preparatory meetings. However, thanks are due to MRG and their partners, from the Pygmy women of the DRC, for helping us express ourselves in front of the nations of the whole world.

Indigenous peoples' organizations were disappointed, however, that some governments did not support the rights of indigenous peoples in the Programme of Action.

The importance of the WCAR for me, as an individual, was in talking with people from other places, and learning about their experiences. For our organization, the WCAR allowed us access to the experiences of other peoples and organizations, helping us to see the struggle we must undertake to recover our dignity and to be recognized at the local level, nationally and internationally. It allowed us to talk about the abuse we have suffered, and send a warning cry to the UN and international NGOs to listen to the voice of the Pygmy people, and search for ways of permitting the Pygmy people to emancipate and promote itself at all levels.

We hope that our voice has been heard and that the UN and NGOs will pay attention to people like us, and help the indigenous peoples' organizations to realize their objectives.

This article was written by: Donald Allen, Executive Director of the Asociación Proyecto Caribe, based in San José, Costa Rica; Tanja Pavlovic-Krizanic, who works for the Humanitarian Legal Centre, Belgrade; and Adolphine Muley, who works for the Union pour l'Émancipation pour les Femmes Autochtones, Kigali, DRC.

Minority Rights and Development in the Philippines

By Gerardo Gobrin

Indigenous peoples and 'development'

In one of those brief visits to an indigenous people's community when I was still a student volunteer for KAMP (Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas – the National Federation of National Minorities in the Philippines), I asked a community elder his reaction to the common belief that the indigenous peoples do not want 'development', or, more bluntly, why indigenous peoples are 'anti-development'? The wise elder said to me: *'It is precisely the aspiration for development that compels us to resist the intrusion of development projects in our ancestral lands.'*

That was 10 years ago. But the words remain indelibly in my memory and maybe influenced my decision to work full time with indigenous peoples. Since then, my perspectives on 'development projects' have gone beyond the technicalities that measure only the alleged national benefits: job creation, infrastructure development, etc.

The case against 'development'

When I joined KAMP, I quickly grasped the principles of our long-time campaign against 'development aggression'. The Philippines teeters along the line of progress, much too dependent and just too ready to pick up on everything that trickles down from those rich nations that control and dictate the tempo of global development. No wonder the indigenous peoples, considered to belong among the so-called poorest of the poor, resist almost all the 'development projects' being introduced from the outside. They simply cannot relate to these projects, or see any relevance in them to advance their interests and well-being.

Since the 1980s, KAMP has tried to communicate to the wider world the controversial sentiments of the indigenous peoples against the encroachment of multi-billion enterprises on their lands. The message is clear: these projects do not serve the real needs of the poor peoples, especially those of the indigenous villagers who become their unwilling hosts. Rather, these so-called development projects are being implemented at the expense of the national interest, to serve the purposes of big-time foreign corporations.

The energy-resource projects, for example, aim to make dams out of the indigenous peoples' rivers, and geothermal plants out of their revered mountains and volcanoes. But the indigenous peoples do not have a need or use for this energy; nor do the lowland people, who consume very little of it for their households. These energy-resource programmes cater to the need for electricity of big foreign firms. And the funds needed to finance these types of development are loaned from the banks of countries where these firms are based in the first place.

Over the last decade, this situation has become worse. But the protests of indigenous peoples continue to be easily dismissed as misplaced and uncalled for. Advocacy for genuine development, a development that respects and works for those who really need it, is still unrecognized by the people and institutions who call the shots.

The Minority Rights and Development Programme

Thus when MRG introduced its Minority Rights and Development programme to KAMP, we did not have any hesitation over taking part. From the start, we wanted to show that the extent of exploitation of the lives and resources of the indigenous peoples was masked in the guise of 'national development'. The main problem was how to accommodate all the communities besieged by the same predicament. Even the format and design of the Minority Rights and Development programme's Country Case Studies cannot stretch so far as to include most of the communities affected.

Consequently, we decided to focus on three communities threatened by three different types of 'development projects'. The first is an *Ifugao* indigenous group in the north threatened with displacement by a foreign mining project. Another is the *Aeta* indigenous people in central plains of Luzon, fighting against the conversion of their ancestral lands into an agro-forest and eco-tourism venture. The third case involves the *Bagobo* warriors in Southern Mindanao, who are resisting a tree plantation project, a joint undertaking between the government and a private corporation. Our thesis is that these three micro-cases, when synthesized, show the major trends that affect indigenous peoples throughout the Philippines, and thus mirror the nation-wide situation with regard to development programmes and indigenous peoples.

Jeremy Horner/Panos Pictures

Ifugao tribeswomen, near Banaue

The process was more difficult than we had expected. The research team had to traverse difficult mountain terrain and lived with the communities for the duration of the research. Each researcher had hardships to endure, which lowered morale. But these feelings were easily overcome by the realization that we were partaking in a very small fraction of the 'normal' lives of the people we have vowed to serve. The information we have gathered has yielded more than enough ammunition to aid us in the continuing struggle to make 'development' a genuine reality for those who have been deprived of it most.

Gerardo Gobrin is Coordinator of the Minority Rights and Development Macro-Study in the Philippines.

Developments on Minority Rights in Europe: FCNM

By Magdalena Syposz

The Council of Europe's (CoE) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) is the first legally-binding multilateral instrument devoted to the protection of minority rights.

The Convention entered into force in 1998. Thirty-four states, mostly from across the CoE area, have ratified the Convention to date; a further eight have signed but have yet to ratify. The FCNM contains programme-type provisions setting out principles and objectives which State Parties undertake to pursue. It includes basic non-discrimination provisions and protects the right to self-identification. It also puts positive obligations on states to take measures to ensure effective minority protection in several key areas. These include identity protection (Art. 5); full and effective equality (Art. 4); language rights, including use of language in public administration (Art. 10–11); education (Art. 12–14); effective participation of minorities in political, cultural, economic and social life (Art. 15); and the right to transfrontier contacts (Art. 17).

Chris Chapman/MRG

Small group work

The FCNM is to be realized and implemented through national legislation and policies; this formula leaves governments a measure of discretion in order to take into account varying situations across the CoE. One criticism of the Convention is that vaguely worded provisions, and the discretion states have, might lead to governments interpreting the Articles narrowly or restrictively; so the situation would not improve. However, the idea behind the programme-type provisions and the flexibility is to enable governments, with the involvement of minority communities, to devise the most appropriate legislation, policies and programmes to offer the best protection. This is the philosophy behind the Convention. The FCNM, like all international minority rights instruments, offers a minimum level of protection. In some cases, a higher level of protection may be needed. The Convention should be used to improve the situation, and cannot be used to lower existing provisions (Art. 22) or acquired rights. The strength of the Convention will depend to a large extent on its monitoring mechanism, government approaches and engagement of civil society.

Monitoring and implementation

At the level of the CoE, the implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee of Ministers (CoM), with the assistance of the Advisory Committee (AC). The AC is a body of 18 experts who act in their personal capacity. The Convention is monitored on the basis of state reports. State reports are due one year after the entry into force of the Convention, and then every five years. The state reports are assessed by the AC, which issues its opinions to the CoM, which issues its comments and recommendations on state's implementation of the Convention. The Convention enters a crucial stage now, as the first sets of CoM's recommendations have been issued, and dialogue on implementation between civil society, governments and the CoE needs to continue.

In October and November 2001, the CoM issued its decisions – on the basis of the AC's opinions and state comments on the opinions – on Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Malta, San Marino and Slovakia. These states now have the obligation to implement the recommendations of the CoM. The AC's opinions, states' comments and CoM decisions are made public at the time of adoption of the decision by the CoM. The AC has also issued opinions on Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Romania and the United Kingdom. The CoE procedure means that these are confidential until the states concerned issue their comments and the CoM issues its decisions; however, some states have chosen to publicize the AC's opinions soon after they had received them in the interest of transparency. MRG has been urging states to publicize the AC's opinions.

Involvement of civil society

The Convention tries to promote the spirit of cooperation and dialogue. Civil society in a number of countries has been involved in the reporting process, either by contributing to the state report or by providing alternative reports or additional information to the AC. It is crucial that this civil society/government/CoE dialogue continues after the reporting cycle has been completed. This can include, government meetings with minority-based NGOs on how to implement the CoM recommendations, seminars to raise awareness of the Convention, and publicizing the CoM recommendations in the press.

MRG believes that the Convention can be a useful tool to improve minority protection. MRG has been working to raise awareness of the Convention by conducting training seminars for NGOs at the CoE and in-country. MRG also provides support to NGOs with advice on advocacy strategies and alternative reports. *FCNM: Guide for NGOs* is available from MRG free of charge to NGOs in English, Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian and Greek, and will soon be available in Macedonian and Serbian.

For more information on the FCNM see Council of Europe website on www.humanrights.coe.int/minorities.
For more information on MRG's work or to find out how NGOs can become involved please contact Magdalena Syposz at magdalena.syposz@mrgmail.org or Chris Chapman at chris.chapman@mrgmail.org, or by tel +44 (0)20 7978 9498, fax +44 (0)20 7738 6265.
Magdalena Syposz is Europe/Central Asia Programme Coordinator, MRG, London.

Minorities in Kosovo/a

Andrew Testa/Panos Pictures

Roma wait to board the Kosovo Polje to Zvecan train at a village near Vucitern

By Stephan Muller

Although many members of minority communities were expelled or left Kosovo/a after the NATO intervention, substantial communities of Serbs, and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, among others, still live there. However, their numbers have decreased dramatically since the arrival of KFOR (Kosovo Forces) and UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo).

Out of a total population of approximately 2 million, the Kosovo/a Serb community is now down to 100,000, from more than 250,000 pre-war. Unlike the Serbs, the other communities live together with the Albanians. The Bosniac and Gorani communities were reduced from around 80,000 to 50,000. The number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians dropped to 30,000–35,000 from around 150,000 pre-war. The Turkish population remained stable, at 20,000–25,000. The Cherkessi and Croats declined to less than 1,000 and 500 respectively.[1]

Minority protection in Kosovo/a

The Constitutional Framework provides for a high level of minority protection.[2] In addition to substantive rights and entitlements, it foresees guaranteed representation in the government and the Assembly, and procedures for preventing and addressing problems. The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) can overrule decisions in order 'to ensure that the rights and interests of communities are fully protected'. The Kosovo/a Assembly has to establish specific committees for minority communities.

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians[3]

However, the situation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians highlights the gap between the *de jure* situation and the *de facto* situation. Despite the rights granted to them, they are excluded from decision-making and discriminated against. Additionally, the lack of security, the hostility of the majority population, limited access to employment, education and health systems, etc, all shape their situation.

The inadequacies of the international community's response are obvious in the following fields: political participation (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians were not included in the discussion of the Constitutional Framework and the Central Election Commission); the limited reconstruction efforts and lack of planned return activities; education (no schools offer lessons in Romani). Furthermore, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, like Bosniacs, Gorani and Turks, are not permitted to study at the University of Pristina. Also, almost no Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are employed by international organizations, and appeals for affirmative action policies in the organizations, and in projects financed by them, go unheard.

In summer 1999, after the return of the refugees and the arrival of KFOR, the vast majority of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (up to 100,000) were expelled or fled. Their property has been either destroyed or illegally occupied. In some towns, only a few hundred people, out of communities numbering thousands, remain.

The majority of Albanian society justifies these crimes by alleging that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians collaborated with the Serb regime and participated in war crimes. What was true of some individuals is being blamed on whole communities. Combined with the lack of support from the international community, this constitutes a major obstacle to the return of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.

The pressure on some already small Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, is strong; when respected families leave, the rest follow. Preventing people returning to some areas contributes to further departures. There is social pressure on Roma to declare themselves as Ashkali or Egyptians, since the latter are regarded as being closer to Albanians. Many people follow this approach as a survival strategy. There is also strong pressure on the Ashkali and Egyptian groups to 'turn into Albanians'.

In order to change this situation, UNMIK, OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and KFOR must accept that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are equal to Albanians, Serbs and other groups, and Albanian society must start a public debate on the situation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians before, during and after the conflict, to pave the way for reintegration. If this does not happen, and Western European countries start to forcibly repatriate the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian refugees, the situation will deteriorate further and the vicious circle of flight and repatriation will be perpetuated.

Stephan Müller worked as Adviser on Minority Affairs in the Democratization Department of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo in 2000 and 2001.

Notes

1 *All the figures are estimates. There has been no reliable census, either before or after the war.*

2 *Similar provisions exist on municipal level.*

3 *Ashkali and Egyptian representatives claim that they are distinct ethnic groups, originating from Persia and Egypt respectively, and deny any relations to Roma. At the same time, they claim to be close to Albanians. Despite these claims, and the interest of some Albanians in supporting this idea, they are in general perceived as being related to Roma.*

NEWS FROM MRG

Mainstreaming Minority Rights and Development

MRG was one of a small number of non-governmental organizations that brought attention to the correlation between poverty and discrimination at the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) and in doing so ensured a higher profile for the Minority Rights and Development programme and its partners in the process.

The link between poverty and racism may not have been a high-profile issue at the WCAR, but it appeared everywhere behind the headlines: demands for financial compensation for slavery; extreme poverty of the Dalits in India; social exclusion of the Roma across Europe; and denial of land and resource rights to indigenous peoples. Many of the contentious issues that dominated the discussions in Durban had their roots in poverty, yet few groups stood up to demand a voice in development and full enjoyment of their economic and social rights.

In July 2001, MRG was asked by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene a preparatory meeting for an international seminar to be held in Durban in parallel to the WCAR on the subject of Cooperation for the Better Protection of Minority Rights. Following a recommendation of the UN's Economic and Social Council to discover ways of making the various UN bodies work better for minorities, MRG was identified early on by the UN Working Group on Minorities as an important partner in examining how to successfully integrate minority rights into development cooperation.

The preparatory meeting was convened in London, on 26–27 July under the title: 'Tackling Poverty and Discrimination: Mainstreaming Minority Rights in Development Assistance'. Participants were drawn from UN agencies, including two independent experts of the UN Commission on Human Rights, minority and indigenous representatives from Africa, Latin America, Asia and South-East Europe, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the UNDP, and several international non-governmental organizations. Working in small subject-focused groups, the participants elaborated an extensive set of recommendations to be presented to the International Seminar in Durban. The recommendations centred on several key themes that comprise a broad framework for mainstreaming minority rights into all stages of the development process: respecting international standards; redressing discrimination; ensuring participation; assessing impact; and building capacity. The International Development Goals agreed by the international community, and the role of transnational corporations, were also a special focus of the recommendations.

In Durban, MRG had a unique opportunity to present these recommendations to a distinguished panel that included experts from the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Minority Rights, the new Special Rapporteur on Indigenous People and Vice-Presidents of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. A vast audience of minority and indigenous representatives was also present and contributed with examples from their own experiences of discrimination and exclusion in development. The international seminar adopted nearly all of the recommendations presented by MRG, and they will now be considered by the UN Commission on Human Rights at the 59th session beginning in March 2002. A copy of the recommendations presented by MRG is available on our website [www.minorityrights.org] in English, with French and Spanish translations forthcoming.

Chris Chapman/MRG

Participants at the London conference, 26-27 July 2001

Human rights seminars in Bosnia and Hercegovina

In September, MRG and the Human Rights Centre of the University of Sarajevo organized a seminar on 'The Status of Constituent Peoples and Minorities in Bosnia and Hercegovina' (BiH).

The objectives were to develop a deeper understanding of the key issues in effective protection of the rights of constituent peoples and minorities in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and consider ways forward in law and practice; particularly to consider strategies for effective implementation of BiH's Constitutional Court's decision on the Constituent Status of Peoples in July 2000. There were 32 participants; they included judges, academics, lawyers, NGO activists, Members of Parliament, members of intergovernmental organizations and minority rights specialists.

MRG considered it important to examine the issue of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in more detail in the context of the Constitutional Court's decision because of the impact this decision could have on the return process. An interactive workshop on 'The Interrelation between the Constitutional Court's Decision on the Constituent Status of Peoples and the Return Process' was organized by MRG and the Association of Citizens for Human Rights Protection (ZGP) and held in Mostar in November. Thirty-nine people from Bosniac, Croat and Serb communities from across Bosnia and Hercegovina and international actors in BiH participated, and focused on practical ways forward. Securing conditions necessary for the displaced to be able to return to and remain in their homes was seen by most participants to be of immediate importance and a pre-condition for reconciliation among the different communities.

NEWS FROM MRG

The work to bring communities together and to ensure protection of the rights of all individuals and communities in BiH is part of a multi-year partnership programme Southeast Europe: Diversity and Democracy. For copies of the Sarajevo and Mostar workshop reports, or for more information about MRG's work in the region, please contact Magdalena Syposz at magdalena.syposz@mrgmail.org, tel: +44 (0)20 7978 9498 ext.211, fax: +44 (0)20 7738 6265

The second annual Neelan Tiruchelvam memorial lecture

At a lunchtime session on 1 November 2001, Professor Patrick Thornberry, MRG's chair, gave the second of the annual Neelan Tiruchelvam memorial lectures, 'After "the end of history": the growth of minority and indigenous rights'. In a wide-ranging and thoughtful speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, UK, which was chaired by the journalist Yasmin Alibai-Brown, Professor Thornberry discussed some of the most pressing issues facing minorities and indigenous peoples. He went on to look at the international legal instruments affecting their rights and considered how much work organizations such as MRG, working to promote minorities and indigenous peoples' rights, have to do now and in the future.

These memorial lectures are held by MRG to commemorate the life and work of MRG's former chair, Neelan Tiruchelvam, who was killed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, by a suicide bomber on 29 July 1999.

Prize for Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim

Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the Egyptian sociologist and founder of the Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Development, who was sentenced to seven years in jail by the High State Security Court in Egypt on 22 May 2001, has been chosen to receive the first Bette Bao Lord Prize for Writing in the Cause of Freedom.

The prize was established to honour Bette Bao Lord, the chair emeritus of Freedom House and a woman who has distinguished herself as both a novelist and advocate for democracy.

Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim

The purpose of the award is to honour those who, through their writings, have contributed to the expansion of human freedom in 'closed societies' or societies in transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy.

Dr Ibrahim and a number of his colleagues remain in jail pending an appeal.

For further information:
www.egroups.com/group/free_saad eddin_ibrahim

BOOK REVIEW

No Place Like Home: Echoes from Kosovo

If I went back there / probably I wouldn't find / even a shadow from my house / nor the trees of childhood / nor the cross with an iron plate / the bench where I whispered incantations / chestnuts and blood /nor a single thing that is ours …
(Zbigniew Herbert, 'Mr Cogito Thinks of Returning to the City')

No Place like Home: Echoes from Kosovo is a journey into the lives of people who have been the unwilling witnesses of war, caught up in a complex political situation, forced to flee their homes – and who dream, someday, of returning to a normal life. The reality, however, is bleak as this book reveals through the stories, testimonies and portraits of the individuals who contributed to it.

But *No Place Like Home* is not about hopelessness; it is a portrait of human resilience, of people looking to re-build their lives in conditions many of us could never imagine finding ourselves. It is a testament not only to the survivors, but also to the integrity of the photojournalist and author, Melanie Friend, who has been travelling to the Balkans for over a decade, to record the events leading up to the war and the tensions which still pervade in the region.

The photographs record the obvious atrocities of war, displacement and loss, but they also focus on the stillness, emptiness and silence which precede and follow unthinkable violence.

In the first section: 'Homes and Gardens, Documenting the Invisible', we are shown rooms and gardens where police raids had taken place. An integral part of the process involved the photographer taping interviews with the inhabitants of those rooms and gardens. In the chapters that follow, studio-style portraits of refugees temporarily accommodated in camps in neighbouring Macedonia show the harsh conditions they endure, and their strength and spirit. The objects or photographs that they took with them serve as a reminder of former lives or the cultural symbols many refused to relinquish to the perpetrators: 'I kept my hat from Kosovo…. It's our traditional Albanian hat…. I was hit four or five times [by Serbian police] because of my hat. They can kill me, but I won't take my hat off.'

Melanie Friend returned to Kosovo/a seeking out the refugees she had photographed in the camps after their return, re-interviewing and photographing, visiting massacre sites and recording new interviews with Roma, Serbs, Turks and other minorities.

No Place Like Home is a remarkable book, often painful to read. The photographs are shocking, thought-provoking and tender; the text provides an understanding of the political situation in Kosovo/a, but also acts as a cultural interpreter for the voices of the people who found their lives unequivocally changed by war.

Review by Poppy Szaybo

Midnight Editions, USA, 2001, £29.95, 160 pp., 65 colour photographs. Distributed in the UK by Turnaround, tel. +44 (0)20 8829 3000

New Publications from MRG

NEW REPORT

AFGHANISTAN: MINORITIES, CONFLICT AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

By Peter Marsden

This timely MRG Report examines the political, social and ethnic factors behind Afghanistan's recent history. It considers the complex interaction of domestic conditions and foreign interests that led to the rise and dominance of the Taliban, as well as the social and political impacts of prolonged conflicts. The Report concludes with a series of recommendations that consider the interests of all ethnic and religious groups in order to establish a lasting peace for Afghanistan's people.

ISBN 1 897693 34 6. November 2001, A4, 36 pp. £6.70 inc. P&P (£6.95/US$11.75 outside UK).

NEW REPORT

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND CHINA

By Michael Dillon

Michael Dillon provides an authoritative overview of the Chinese treatment of religious minorities since 1949 and the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to control and attack religious institutions in China and the contested territories of Tibet and Xinjiang. The Report focuses on Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, which the state considers synonymous with separatist movements and a threat to China's territorial integrity, and discusses the rise of new religions such as the Falungong.

ISBN 1 897693 24 9. November 2001, A4, 28 pp. £6.70 inc. P&P (£6.95/US$11.75 outside UK).

NEW REPORT

UGANDA: THE MARGINALIZATION OF MINORITIES

By Wairama G. Baker

MRG's new Report examines the marginalization of minorities in terms of their access to education, health, employment, political participation and other key concerns. Under the 1995 Constitution, Uganda's numerous minorities should enjoy rights specifically linked to their minority status, including the right to maintain and enjoy their culture, religion and language(s) free from discrimination. Successive governments have ignored, exploited or flagrantly violated their obligations; this Report argues that minorities' rights must be observed.

ISBN 1 897693 19 2. November 2001, A4, 32 pp. £6.70 inc. P&P (£6.95/US$11.75 outside UK).

MINORITY RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT – MACRO STUDY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE FIJI ISLANDS

By Satendra Prasad, Jone Dakuvula and Darryn Snell

This study examines how the debates about minority and majority communities or group rights have been affected by the development process, and how they have shaped the contours of Fiji's politics. It traces the origins of economic inequalities and social separateness between indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and smaller minority groups, under a colonial construction that emphasized 'race' as the basis for organizing politics and the economy.

ISBN 1 897693 346. November 2001. A4. 12 pp. Free publication.

Minority Rights Group International

MRG is an international non-governmental organization working to secure rights and justice for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities worldwide, and to promote cooperation between communities.

MRG:

- **Publishes well-researched and accessible Books, Reports and Papers on minorities**
- **Promotes minority rights through direct advocacy in international fora and in dialogue with governments**
- **Challenges prejudice and racism through education projects**

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This issue of *Outsider* was edited by Sophie Richmond

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ISBN 1 897693 03 6