

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



BARONESS NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
PRESIDENT, DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH IRAQ
VICE PRESIDENT, WOMEN'S COMMITTEE OF THE EUROMED ASSEMBLY

EN/PL/20081120Kouchner

Mr Jean-Pierre Jouyet
Minister for Europe
Republic of France

20 November 2008

Dear Minister, dear colleague

Lead Poisoning in IDP Roma families in Kosovo

I raised the question of the plight of 150 families resident in Kosovo who live as IDPs on the edge of a non-working lead mine.

I visited them myself in September 1999 and subsequently saw Mr Kouchner and other UN officials. I, and inter alia the families, were assured that their stay in this dangerous area would be swiftly curtailed and would not be any longer than 45 days maximum. Mr Kouchner added that he would ameliorate their plight immediately by calling in Medecins Sans Frontieres of which he is the founder.

I need hardly remind you of the impact of lead on human health, which is catastrophic. Lead is a poison for humans and the damage it causes is either terminal or at best irreversible. Nearly ten years since my visit, these families are still in place, with tests by WHO and other professional health bodies disclosing levels of lead in blood tests of those affected of acutely damaging levels. Ten micrograms/decilitre is the level above which human health will start to suffer. Blood tests reveal levels of lead in this affected population of up to 65 mg/dl. Such levels give pre and post natal, infant and child mortality and acute ill health, high probabilities. The World health Organisation has earlier demanded that this population be moved and I have evidence to give you of the damaging consequences of their continuing stay positioned as they are on the tailing stands of a lead mine.

As President-in-office of Council, I urge Mr Kouchner and yourself to act. You have the backing of those us in the European Parliament who are aware and knowledgeable of the situation and I am confident you can take this up successfully.

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne MEP

Enclosures