

## **REPORT 25 MARCH 2009**

**The following report from one of our own members concerns the visit on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009 of Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights to Osterode and Cesmin Lug camps. Our campaign hopes that Commissioner Hammarberg will include a call for an immediate medical evacuation of the camps along with medical treatment for these families in his upcoming report on Kosovo.**

I was unable to return to Kosovo in time for yesterday's meeting at 8:30 am with the Commissioner of Human Rights for the Council of Europe, but the representative for another NGO attended and reported to me today that the Commissioner was a great listener. That same representative presented some of key demands of KMEG/STP, that the IDPs be evacuated and medically treated.

I was in the camp with the American journalists (WASHINGTON TIMES AND VIRGINIA QUARTERLY) when the Commissioner and his entourage arrived. He first visited Cesmin Lug spending most of his time listening to the camp leader explain their plight for nine years, and how their main priority was to be medically treated for lead poisoning.

The Commissioner was surrounded by a large body of UNHCR officials and it was hard to approach him. However, I spoke at length with his personal advisor Rachael Kondak who told me I was invited to yesterday's conference. I thanked her and gave her ten books of UN-Leaded Blood for the Commissioner and his delegation. I also suggested the Commissioner visit the only Albanian family in Cesmin Lug that recently found out they have the highest lead levels in the camp. This is an Albanian family that was homeless in south Mitrovica a few years ago. The Roma in Cesmin Lug gave them the first barrack at the entrance of the camp to live in. Blood tests taken in the camp dated 4 March 2009 by Serbian doctors from Belgrade showed that two of their three children have lead levels higher than the care analyzer could register. The third child has a level of 58.4. The father showed me the papers and said the results were not explained to him, only that his kids had the highest lead levels in the camp. Two did, but later I saw other results with the same date and many were 60 and over. Unfortunately, Commissioner Hammarberg did not visit this family.

I followed the Commissioner to Osterode Camp where he visited the pre-school, women's center, etc, etc. On his way out of the camp, the American journalists did get beyond his entourage and spoke to him. The Commissioner said the camps were a disgrace, and that the IDPs needed to be evacuated and medically treated. He was very upset by what he had seen and heard. His personal assistant earlier had told me that they had received a copy of our dossier.

Several high-ranking officials of UNHCR came with the Commissioner, the first time they have ever been in the camps (that I am aware of). In the past year, they refused all interviews saying they are no longer involved or responsible for the camps, but, they were out in full force today for the visit.

I believe one of our representatives once met their (whose?) commissioner (or Head?), and it might be a good idea for her to email him asking his opinion of his visit.

Commissioner Hammarberg spent a lot of time talking with the camp leaders and so I felt it was best for me to remain in the background. He knew I was there; everybody knew I was there. That was enough. Also present was Paul Miller, the representative of UNHCHR (who in the past has refused to meet me). He came up and shook my hand today but didn't hang around to talk.

One other well-known NGO working on the ground gave a good interview to the American journalists and was highly critical of UNHCR and applauded our campaign.

I will remain in north Mitrovica for the next few days to help the American journalists with their interviews, especially with Kosovo ministers in Pristina. An interpreter was with them all day in the camps interviewing Roma.

That's the latest report from the camps that are killing children in Mitrovica, North Kosovo.

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