

Introduction: learning from Kosovo

by Matthew J Gibney, Guest Editor

This edition of *Forced Migration Review* was originally conceived as Part II of a discussion on forced migration and security. Very early on in planning, however, it became apparent that events in the Balkans were giving rise to Europe's largest movement of forced migrants in recent history. Faced with these developments, and a wealth of interest among academics and practitioners in these events, the Editors decided to dedicate most of this issue to the Kosovo crisis.

While the focus of this issue has changed, the theme of security remains extremely relevant. The Kosovo crisis powerfully illustrates the inextricable linkage between issues of forced migration and national and international security. Forced migrants have been a central element in every part of the response of states. Western involvement in the region was originally legitimated by the desire to prevent the instability and human misery caused by domestic and international displacement. The Serbian response to Western intervention, which reached its peak with the beginning of the NATO bombing campaign on 24 March, was to expel Kosovan Albanians from Kosovo, resulting in mass movements of refugees into Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. As the crisis unfolded, it quickly became clear that the safe and secure return of the refugees to Kosovo was the West's fundamental requirement for an end to the bombing. Even now that most Kosovans have returned and NATO occupies Kosovo, forced migration remains the province's biggest challenge. As I write, the flight of Serbs and Romas threatens to reduce Kosovo to a virtual mono-ethnic polity. The cost of successful intervention on behalf of the Kosovan Albanians risks being a Kosovo unsafe for Serbs and Romas.

No event in recent memory illustrates so clearly how crucial forced migration has become in expanding the humanitarian objectives of states in the post Cold War world. Yet few events offer such a salu-

tary reminder of the problems and difficulties that confront states, NGOs and international organizations motivated by humanitarian imperatives. What can we learn from Kosovo?

The articles assembled here represent a cross-section of responses to this question from academics and those in NGOs and international organizations. They range from the relatively sanguine, if qualified, interpretation of the consequences of the NATO intervention of Richard Caplan's 'Kosovo: the implications for humanitarian intervention' to Michael Barutciski's more pessimistic account of how the bombing campaign will affect the authority of the UN Security Council and regional stability in the Balkans, 'Western diplomacy and the Kosovo refugee crisis'. In 'Failing the internally displaced', Roberta Cohen and David Korn remind us of the inadequacy of the international protection available to the most vulnerable of Kosovan Albanians, the IDPs, who could not access the humanitarian assistance available in neighbouring states.

The next three pieces look at Kosovo from the perspective of international agencies. Nicholas Morris, in 'UNHCR and Kosovo', analyses the development of UNHCR's involvement in the region. Peter Morris' 'Humanitarian interventions in Macedonia', discusses the involvement of NATO in the provision of humanitarian assistance and its relationship with UNHCR and NGOs. Finally, in 'Coordination in the midst of chaos', Toby Porter draws upon his experience in Albania to illustrate the problems associated with coordinating the activities of humanitarian organizations in refugee settings.

The final three pieces are Alice Bloch's 'Kosovan refugees in the UK', Peter Marsden's 'Myth and reality' and my 'Kosovo and beyond'. Bloch's piece considers refugees evacuated from Macedonia, contrasting their treatment in the UK with that of asylum seekers from Kosovo and other countries.



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Marsden considers the issue of repatriation, raising doubts as to whether the conditions for voluntary return have been fully met in the case of refugees from Macedonia. Finally, I ask why the Kosovans elicited such a powerful humanitarian response among Western audiences, and consider the prospects for replicating this reaction for less popular forced migrants.

The dust has not settled in Kosovo. Tensions continue to rack the region, people are still being displaced, the KLA has yet to disarm, and not all the Kosovan Albanians have returned. Furthermore, we still lack the historical distance that would enable us to put Kosovo in context. What the contributors to this edition of *Forced Migration Review* offer are early reflections on the significance, implications and lessons of the Kosovo crisis. They disagree with each other on whether Kosovo represents a turning point in dealings with forced migration or whether it stands simply for lessons unlearned and problems repeated. Where they agree, as must all those concerned with the fate of forced migrants, is in the importance of learning from Kosovo.

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