

OSCE campaign for the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons in Croatia

Source: On the frontlines of peace - OSCE in action- Vienna: OSCE [Prod.], 2005. OSCE, Vienna. - VIDEO (00:03:09, Colour, Original Sound Track).

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Last updated: 04/07/2016

OSCE campaign for the return and reintegration of all refugees and displaced persons in Croatia

[Commentator] Policy makers, authorities, charities ... All of them somehow missed Milos Popovic. In Central Croatia, half a kilometre from the nearest dirt road, he heads for home; crippled since childhood, all dressed up for visitors. During the Balkan War, Croat paramilitaries drove him out of his old home because he's an ethnic Serb. The War ended for most people, but Milos spent 13 years moving from ruin to ruin.

[Milos Popovic] There is no room that I haven't slept in.

[Commentator] He made his way here in the warm summer to the place his father was born. And here, OSCE field worker Christian Loda found him, living in a single room, without heat, electricity, water; chill autumn closing in.

Eager to join the European Union, Croatia has been trying to put the past behind, re housing hundreds who were displaced during the War. But local hostility and bureaucracy sometimes get in the way. And that's where Chris and the OSCE come in: connecting government and non governmental bodies with people in need. Chris knows every meter of back road around here. He's met almost every family of returnees.

[Christian Loda] The civilian population fled the village in August 1995. More than 300 000 Croatian Serb refugees were displaced during the War, and one third of them have returned so far. As you can see, the lack of access to housing is the biggest obstacle. I think OSCE has a real vision of what is really happening when it comes to the return process. This is really where OSCE can make the difference.

[Commentator] Milos wasn't looking forward to winter here, but just before the freezing weather bit, OSCE coordination bore fruit. Croatian authorities brought Milos to this collective centre in Karlovac.

[Milos Popovic] If I had stayed in that house, I definitely would have frozen to death.

[Commentator] He joined other displaced people, Serb and Croat, who'd been given refuge, and an aid organisation furnished his new quarters.

[Christian Loda] It is certainly a temporary solution. Milos will probably get a permanent solution as soon as the housing care programmes that were adopted two years ago by the Croatian government will be implemented.

[Commentator] Meanwhile, there is water, warmth and company. The influence, reach and persistence of the OSCE have made his world safer and he knows it.