



# *The Human Rights Advisory Panel*

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## **DECISION**

**Date of adoption: 16 March 2012**

**Case No. 203/09**

**Svetlana MARINKOVIĆ**

**against**

**UNMIK**

The Human Rights Advisory Panel sitting on 16 March 2012,  
with the following members present:

Mr Marek NOWICKI, Presiding Member  
Mr Paul LEMMENS  
Ms Christine CHINKIN

Assisted by  
Mr Andrey ANTONOV, Executive Officer

Having considered the aforementioned complaint, introduced pursuant to Section 1.2 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 of 23 March 2006 on the Establishment of the Human Rights Advisory Panel,

Having deliberated, decides as follows:

### **I. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE PANEL**

1. The complaint was introduced on 30 April 2009 and registered on the same date.
2. On 23 December 2009, 8 December 2010, and 20 July 2011, the Panel sent the complainant requests for additional information. On 26 August 2011, the Panel received the requested documentation from the complainant.

## II. THE FACTS

3. The complainant is a former resident of Kosovo currently residing in Serbia. She is a co-owner of a property in Kosovo, in the Municipality of Suharekë/Suva Reka.
4. The property is located in the village of Mushitishtë/Mušutište. The complainant states that the parcel included a house that was her primary residence until she and her family were forced to leave it in June 1999 for security reasons. Besides the land, it contained other houses and fruit trees that have been subsequently plundered and destroyed, which the complainant learned about in 2003.

### A. Proceedings before the Housing and Property Directorate

5. On 3 December 2002, the complainant filed a claim with the Housing and Property Directorate, requesting that the Housing and Property Claims Commission (HPCC) issue a decision confirming her ownership of the property in the village of Mushitishtë/Mušutište.
6. On 24 February 2005, the HPCC issued a decision that the complainant was the owner of the property in question.

### B. Proceedings before the Municipal Court

7. On 12 August 2004, the complainant filed a lawsuit in the Municipal Court of Suharekë/Suva Reka against the Municipality of Suharekë/Suva Reka and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), seeking compensation for the damage to her house and the accompanying buildings, which were located on her property in the village of Mushitishtë/Mušutište.
8. By the end of 2008, the Municipal Court of Suharekë/Suva Reka had not contacted the complainant and no hearings had been scheduled concerning the aforementioned lawsuit.
9. Approximately 17,000 compensation claims were lodged in 2004 before Kosovo courts, the vast majority of these by Kosovo Serbs who, due to the hostilities, had left their homes in Kosovo in 1999 and whose property was later damaged or destroyed. With a view to meeting the statutory five-year time-limit for submitting civil compensation claims, these claimants lodged their claims around the same time in 2004. The claims were directed against some combination of UNMIK, KFOR, the PISG and the relevant municipality (see Human Rights Advisory Panel (hereinafter HRAP), *Milogorić and Others*, cases nos. 38/08, 58/08, 61/08, 63/08 and 69/08, opinion of 24 March 2010, § 1; for the legal basis upon which the claimants based their claim, see the same opinion, § 5).
10. With respect to these cases the Director of the UNMIK Department of Justice (DOJ) sent a letter to all municipal and district court presidents and to the President of the

Supreme Court of Kosovo on 26 August 2004. In the letter, the Director of the DOJ mentioned that “over 14,000” such claims had been lodged. He referred to “the problems that such a huge influx of claims will pose for the courts”, and asked that “no [such] case be scheduled until such time as we have jointly determined how best to effect the processing of these cases” (for the full text of the letter, see the *Milogorić and Others* opinion, cited in § 9 above, at § 6).

11. On 15 November 2005, the DOJ called on the courts to begin processing claims for damages caused by identified natural persons and for damages caused after October 2000, considering that the “obstacles to the efficient processing of these cases” did not exist any longer. Claims related to events arising before October 2000 were not affected by this letter.
12. On 28 September 2008, the Director of the DOJ advised the courts that cases which had not been scheduled according to the 26 August 2004 request should now be processed.
13. On 9 December 2008, UNMIK’s responsibility with regard to the judiciary in Kosovo ended with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) assuming full operational control in the area of the rule of law, following the Statement made by the President of the United Nations Security Council on 26 November 2008 (S/PRST/2008/44), welcoming the continued engagement of the European Union in Kosovo.

### **III. THE COMPLAINT**

14. The complainant in substance alleges that the Municipal Court of Suharekë/Suva Reka has stayed the proceedings concerning the compensation claim lodged on 12 August 2004 against the Municipality of Suharekë/Suva Reka and the PISG for the destruction of her property and that as a result these proceedings have not been concluded within a reasonable time, in violation of Article 6 § 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). She alleges that for the same reason her right to an effective remedy under Article 13 of the ECHR has also been violated.
15. The complainant further in substance complains that by the destruction of her property and by the refusal of the the Municipal Court of Suharekë/Suva Reka to decide her compensation claim, her right to property (Article 1 of Protocol No.1 to the ECHR) has been violated.

### **IV. APPLICATION OF RULE 29BIS OF THE PANEL’S RULES OF PROCEDURE**

16. The Panel notes that the complaint raises questions which are substantially the same as those that have been raised, among others, in cases nos. 38/08, Milogorić, 58/08, Živaljević, 61/08, Gojković, 63/08 Ćukić, and 69/08, Bogićević, which have already been examined by the Panel. Moreover, it appears from the file that no new admissibility issue arises with regard to the present case. Therefore, pursuant to Rule

29bis of the Panel's Rules of Procedure, the Panel finds that it is not necessary to communicate the present complaint to UNMIK. The Panel considers that it can examine the admissibility of the complaint without so doing.

## V. THE LAW

17. Before considering the case on its merits the Panel has to decide whether to accept the case, taking into account the admissibility criteria set out in Sections 1, 2 and 3 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 of 23 March 2006.

### **Alleged violation of Articles 6 § 1 and 13 of the ECHR**

18. The Panel considers that, insofar as the complainant invokes a violation of Articles 6 § 1 and 13 of the ECHR, she in fact raises two complaints (see the approach adopted, among others, in *Milogorić*, no. 38/08, decision of 22 May 2009; compare European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), *Aćimović v. Croatia*, no. 48776/99, decision of 30 May 2000; ECtHR, *Kutić v. Croatia*, no. 48778/99, decision of 11 July 2000). On the one hand, she complains about the fact that due to the stay of the proceedings in the competent court, she has been unable to obtain the determination of her claim for damages to her destroyed property. The Panel considers that this complaint may raise an issue of her right of access to a court under Article 6 § 1 of the ECHR and of her right to an effective remedy under Article 13 of the ECHR. On the other hand, she complains about the length of the proceedings before the competent courts, due to the fact that the proceedings were instituted in 2004, and that her claim has not been examined since then. This complaint may raise an issue of her right to a judicial decision within a reasonable time, in the sense of Article 6 § 1 of the ECHR.
19. The Panel considers that the complaint under Articles 6 § 1 and 13 of the ECHR raises serious issues of fact and law, the determination of which should depend on an examination of the merits. The Panel concludes therefore that this complaint is not manifestly ill-founded within the meaning of Section 3.3 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 (see, among others, HRAP, *Milogorić*, cited in § 18 above, at § 18).
20. No other ground for declaring this part of the complaint inadmissible has been established.

### **Alleged violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the ECHR**

21. The complainant complains about a violation of her right to property (Article 1 of Protocol No.1). She in essence complains about the fact that her property has been damaged or destroyed and about the failure by the Municipal Court of Suharekë/Suva Reka to decide on her claim for damages.
22. The Panel recalls that, according to Section 2 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12, it has jurisdiction only over "complaints relating to alleged violations of human rights that had occurred not earlier than 23 April 2005 or arising from facts which occurred

prior to this date where these facts give rise to a continuing violation of human rights". The damaging and the destruction of property are instantaneous acts, which do not give rise to a continuing violation (see HRAP, *Lajović*, no. 09/08, decision of 16 July 2008, § 7). Bearing in mind that the damage to the complainant's property occurred on or before 2003, it follows that this part of the complaint lies outside the Panel's jurisdiction *ratione temporis*.

23. With respect to the complaint that, due to the stay of the proceedings instituted by the complainant, she has been unable thus far to obtain compensation for the damage done to her property, the Panel notes that, insofar as the court proceedings are referred to from the point of view of the right of property, these proceedings cannot be detached from the acts upon which the claim before the court is based. Or, to state it positively, as the European Court of Human Rights has done with respect to its jurisdiction under the ECHR:

"... the Court's temporal jurisdiction is to be determined in relation to the facts constitutive of the alleged interference. The subsequent failure of remedies aimed at redressing this interference cannot bring it within the Court's temporal jurisdiction" (ECtHR (Grand Chamber), *Blečić v. Croatia*, no. 59532/00, judgment of 8 March 2006, § 77, *ECHR*, 2006-III).

24. It follows that this part of the complaint also lies outside the Panel's jurisdiction *ratione temporis* (see, among others, HRAP, *Gojković*, no. 63/08, decision of 4 June 2009, §§ 24-25).

### **FOR THESE REASONS,**

The Panel, unanimously,

**- DECLARES ADMISSIBLE THE COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO A COURT AND THE RIGHT TO AN EFFECTIVE REMEDY (ARTICLES 6 § 1 AND 13 OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS) AND THE RIGHT TO A JUDICIAL DECISION WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME (ARTICLE 6 § 1 OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS);**

**- DECLARES INADMISSIBLE THE REMAINDER OF THE COMPLAINT.**

Andrey ANTONOV  
Executive Officer

Marek NOWICKI  
Presiding Member