



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
SITUATION IN BOSNIA

All Australians have been horrified by the bloodshed and human rights abuses in Bosnia, and appalled by the misery that has been inflicted on the civilian population in the former Yugoslavia.

In particular, we feel for those among us who have families and friends and ties with communities caught up in the fighting.

The Bosnian Serb capture of Srebrenica and continuing Bosnian Serb attacks on other UN 'safe areas' have provoked another exodus of families and a wave of suffering, with horrific violations of human rights.

The latest acts of aggression by the Bosnian Serb forces are a moral affront to all of us. They offend every international standard of decency.

The international community faces immensely difficult decisions about how to respond to this critical situation.

Though often criticised, UNPROFOR's operations with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the former Yugoslavia have helped protect nearly three million people affected by the conflict. Despite the extreme difficulties imposed on UNPROFOR by confused mandates, it can continue to make an important contribution to the humanitarian effort and in restraining conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

The Australian Government welcomes the agreement in London among the countries most involved in peace efforts in the former Yugoslavia and the UN to ensure access for supplies to the civilian population in Sarajevo and to meet further Bosnian Serb offensives with a decisive and effective response.

In order to help relieve immediate suffering, the Government has decided to provide a new \$3 million aid package.

Australia will provide \$1.5 million to the UN lead agency in the former Yugoslavia, the UNHCR, and \$750,000 to the World Food Program. We will also provide \$350,000 to kick-start a joint appeal announced today by UNHCR and Austcare for cash contributions to make up family survival kits with food, blankets, clothing and other essential items.

The Government will give World Vision Australia \$350,000 for its program to provide food and care to displaced people in and around Zenica. And we will provide \$50,000 to Austcare to support local women's initiatives to help women who have been subject to violence.

This package of assistance is additional to the almost \$5 million the Government has already provided to the victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, including a contribution of \$500,000 to help civilians displaced by the latest fighting announced by the Acting Foreign Minister on 18 July.

Since the outbreak of the conflict in 1991 Australia has accepted for resettlement some 14,000 victims of the war. This financial year, provision has been made for an additional 5,600 people under the Government's humanitarian program. Sir Ninian Stephen and other expert Australian staff work with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

It is in the interests of the entire international community that the crisis in Bosnia be brought to an end and an enduring peace established in the Former Yugoslavia. That means all participants must make a determined effort to negotiate a settlement.

CANBERRA

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