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# BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Population:** 3.9 million (807,000 under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 11,900

**Compulsory recruitment age:** no conscription (ended 2006)

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 18

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** ratified 10 October 2003

**Other treaties ratified (see glossary):**

CRC, GC AP I and II, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182

*There were no reports of under-18s serving in the armed forces.*

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## Context

Bosnia-Herzegovina remained divided into two semi-autonomous entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a special status granted to the Brcko district. The international community exerted influence over the country's political process, in particular through a high representative with executive powers nominated by the intergovernmental body responsible for implementing the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. A European Union (EU)-led peacekeeping force, EUFOR, replaced NATO troops in December 2004. The EU decided in March 2007 to reduce EUFOR's size from approximately 7,000 troops to 2,500.<sup>1</sup> In addition to EUFOR, about 150 NATO troops remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reportedly to provide support to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in detaining people indicted for war crimes, to combat terrorism and to assist the Bosnia-Herzegovina authorities in defence reform.<sup>2</sup> In 2007 some 200 members of the EU Police Mission remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>3</sup>

In June 2006 the Peace Implementation Council, an intergovernmental body that monitors implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, began preparing the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in June 2007.<sup>4</sup> However, in February 2007 the Peace Implementation Council reviewed this decision and decided against closing down the OHR in 2007, with the aim of OHR closure by June 2008 instead. The decision was taken as a result of little progress in reform and because the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina had not been fully constituted following a tense electoral campaign in October 2006. The engagement of the international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina was also

expected to continue through the strengthening of the Office of the EU Special Representative.<sup>5</sup> In June 2007 UN Security Council Resolution 1764 reaffirmed the importance of the high representative in pursuing the implementation of the Peace Agreement and noted that the Office of the High Representative would continue to carry out its mandate, with the aim of closing the office by 20 June 2008.<sup>6</sup>

Impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity during the 1992–5 war remained widespread, with thousands of enforced disappearances still unresolved. Of an estimated 2.2 million people displaced by the conflict, more than 1 million refugees and internally displaced people from the 1992–5 war were estimated to have returned to their homes.<sup>7</sup>

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## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

Conscription formally ended on 1 January 2006 under a defence reform law passed by parliament on 5 October 2005. The law abolished separate defence ministries for the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entities, thus creating a single unified force and in general moving the military closer to NATO standards.<sup>8</sup> On 5 July 2006 the Presidency – the country's three-member head-of-state body consisting of a Bosniac and a Croat elected from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a Serb elected from the Republika Srpska – approved the proposals.<sup>9</sup>

In its declaration on ratifying the Optional Protocol in October 2003, Bosnia-Herzegovina stated that voluntary recruitment into the armed forces was not permitted for anybody under the age of 18.<sup>10</sup>

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## Developments

In its 2005 Concluding Observations on Bosnia-Herzegovina's initial report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that, although the number was decreasing, between 1992 and August 2000 a total of 4,371 people, including about 300 children, had been victims of landmines. There were still 1 million mines in approximately 30,000 minefields throughout the country, including around schools and play areas, and Red Cross sources reported that 50 children were injured every month. The Committee was also concerned at the physical and psychological effects of the armed conflict on child victims.<sup>11</sup>

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1 EUFOR, 16 March 2007, [www.euforbih.org](http://www.euforbih.org).

- 2 Amnesty International (AI), Europe and Central Asia: Summary of Amnesty International's concerns in the region, January–June 2006, 1 December 2006, AI Index Number EUR 01/017/2006.
- 3 EU Police Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina website, 16 March 2007, [www.eupm.org](http://www.eupm.org).
- 4 AI, above note 2.
- 5 <http://www.ohr.int>.
- 6 UN Security Council Resolution 1764(2007), UN Doc. S/RES/1764(2007), 29 June 2007.
- 7 Amnesty International Report 2007.
- 8 War Resisters International, "Bosnia to end conscription on 1 January 2006", CO Update, No. 15, November 2005, [www.wri-irg.org](http://www.wri-irg.org).
- 9 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk).
- 10 Declarations and Reservations to the Optional Protocol, [www2.ohchr.org](http://www2.ohchr.org).
- 11 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of report submitted by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Concluding Observations, UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.260, 21 September 2005.