

NEWS FROM MRG

The work to bring communities together and to ensure protection of the rights of all individuals and communities in BiH is part of a multi-year partnership programme Southeast Europe: Diversity and Democracy. For copies of the Sarajevo and Mostar workshop reports, or for more information about MRG's work in the region, please contact Magdalena Syposz at magdalena.syposz@mrgmail.org, tel: +44 (0)20 7978 9498 ext.211, fax: +44 (0)20 7738 6265

The second annual Neelan Tiruchelvam memorial lecture

At a lunchtime session on 1 November 2001, Professor Patrick Thornberry, MRG's chair, gave the second of the annual Neelan Tiruchelvam memorial lectures, 'After "the end of history": the growth of minority and indigenous rights'. In a wide-ranging and thoughtful speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, UK, which was chaired by the journalist Yasmin Alibai-Brown, Professor Thornberry discussed some of the most pressing issues facing minorities and indigenous peoples. He went on to look

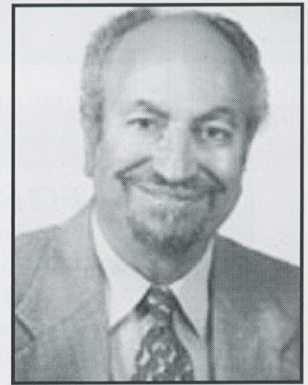
at the international legal instruments affecting their rights and considered how much work organizations such as MRG, working to promote minorities and indigenous peoples' rights, have to do now and in the future.

These memorial lectures are held by MRG to commemorate the life and work of MRG's former chair, Neelan Tiruchelvam, who was killed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, by a suicide bomber on 29 July 1999.

Prize for Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim

Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the Egyptian sociologist and founder of the Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Development, who was sentenced to seven years in jail by the High State Security Court in Egypt on 22 May 2001, has been chosen to receive the first Bette Bao Lord Prize for Writing in the Cause of Freedom.

The prize was established to honour Bette Bao Lord, the chair emeritus of Freedom House and a woman who has distinguished herself as both a novelist and advocate for democracy.



Dr Saad Eddin Ibrahim

The purpose of the award is to honour those who, through their writings, have contributed to the expansion of human freedom in 'closed societies' or societies in transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy.

Dr Ibrahim and a number of his colleagues remain in jail pending an appeal.

For further information:

www.egroups.com/group/free_saad_eddin_ibrahim

BOOK REVIEW

No Place Like Home: Echoes from Kosovo

If I went back there / probably I wouldn't find / even a shadow from my house / nor the trees of childhood / nor the cross with an iron plate / the bench where I whispered incantations / chestnuts and blood / nor a single thing that is ours ...

(Zbigniew Herbert, 'Mr Cogito Thinks of Returning to the City')

No Place like Home: Echoes from Kosovo is a journey into the lives of people who have been the unwilling witnesses of war, caught up in a complex political situation, forced to flee their homes – and who dream, someday, of returning to a normal life. The reality, however, is bleak as this book reveals through the stories, testimonies and portraits of the individuals who contributed to it.

But *No Place Like Home* is not about hopelessness; it is a portrait of human resilience, of people looking to re-build their lives in conditions many of us could never imagine finding ourselves. It is a testament not only to the survivors, but also to the integrity of the pho-

tojournalist and author, Melanie Friend, who has been travelling to the Balkans for over a decade, to record the events leading up to the war and the tensions which still pervade in the region.

The photographs record the obvious atrocities of war, displacement and loss, but they also focus on the stillness, emptiness and silence which precede and follow unthinkable violence.

In the first section: 'Homes and Gardens, Documenting the Invisible', we are shown rooms and gardens where police raids had taken place. An integral part of the process involved the photographer taping interviews with the inhabitants of those rooms and gardens. In the chapters that follow, studio-style portraits of refugees temporarily accommodated in camps in neighbouring Macedonia show the harsh conditions they endure, and their strength and spirit. The objects or photographs that they took with them serve as a reminder of former lives or the cultural symbols many refused to relinquish to the perpetrators: 'I kept my hat from Kosovo.... It's

our traditional Albanian hat.... I was hit four or five times [by Serbian police] because of my hat. They can kill me, but I won't take my hat off.'

Melanie Friend returned to Kosovo/a seeking out the refugees she had photographed in the camps after their return, re-interviewing and photographing, visiting massacre sites and recording new interviews with Roma, Serbs, Turks and other minorities.

No Place Like Home is a remarkable book, often painful to read. The photographs are shocking, thought-provoking and tender; the text provides an understanding of the political situation in Kosovo/a, but also acts as a cultural interpreter for the voices of the people who found their lives unequivocally changed by war.

Review by Poppy Szaybo

Midnight Editions, USA, 2001, £29.95, 160 pp., 65 colour photographs. Distributed in the UK by Turnaround, tel. +44 (0)20 8829 3000