



Kosovo Property Claims Commission
Komisioni i Kërkesave Pronësore të Kosovës
Komisija Kosovske Agencije za Imovinu

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DECISION

PANEL NO: 1

DECISION NO.: KPCC/D/R/96/2010
DECISION DATE: 28/10/2010

ORDER

(1) *In Claim Nos. 00235, 40331, 53884 and 90788, referred to in parts A, B and C of the attached Schedule, the Commission*

decides that

As at the date of the destruction of the residential property, the claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, satisfied the requirements for establishing ownership over the claimed property and the associated land parcel, or such part thereof as specified in the respective individual decision;

(2) *In Claim Nos. 40960 and 54428, referred to in part D of the attached Schedule, the Commission*

decides that

As at the date of the destruction of the residential property, the claimant satisfied the requirements for establishing ownership of the deceased property right holder over the claimed property and the associated land parcel, or such part thereof as specified in the respective individual decision;

(3) *In each of the 6 (six) claims referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) above the Commission*

orders that

- (a) The claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, be given possession of the associated land parcel on which the residential property stood;*
 - (b) Any other person occupying the property vacate the same within 30 (thirty) days of the delivery of this order; and*
 - (c) Should any other person occupying the property fail to comply with the order to vacate within the time stated, they be evicted from the property;*
- (4) In each of the claims identified in the relevant columns of parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule, the Commission additionally decides that the claims be dismissed insofar as the claimants seek compensation for physical damage to, or for loss of use of, the claimed property; and*
- (5) In cases in which there is more than one owner, the above decisions and order do not affect the rights of any respective co-owners.*

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. On 13 June 2008, Law No. 03/L-079 is adopting and amending UNMIK Regulation 2006/50 (“UNMIK/REG/2006/50”) on the resolution of claims relating to private immovable property, including agricultural and commercial property entered into force in Kosovo. The Law included an annex (“Annex I”) adopting and amending UNMIK Administrative Direction No. 2007/5 (“UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5”), which implements UNMIK/REG/2006/50. Law No. 03/L-079 and Annex I established the Kosovo Property Agency (“KPA”) as an independent agency and amended certain provisions of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 and UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 as necessary to effect the change in the applicable legal framework. In accordance with their terms, Law No. 03/L-079 and Annex I entered into force upon their publication in the Official Gazette.

2. Pursuant to section 22 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 the Regulation ceased to be in force after 31 December 2008. Accordingly, Law No. 03/L-079 is presently the sole source of the Commission’s statutory authority. The provisions of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 remain relevant to the extent that they have been incorporated by reference to Law No. 03/L-079.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

3. A claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, is entitled to an order from the Commission for repossession of the property, if the claimant proves:

- (a) ownership of private immovable property, including agricultural and commercial property; or
- (b) a use right in respect of private immovable property, including agricultural and commercial property,

where the claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, is not now able to exercise such property rights, and where the claim involves circumstances directly related to or resulting from the armed conflict that occurred in Kosovo between 27 February 1998 and 20 June 1999. (See section 3.1 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079.)

4. Where the claimant makes an ownership claim pursuant to section 3.1(a) of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079, the Commission must resolve the issue of ownership and, if ownership is proven to the satisfaction of the Commission and the claimant does not indicate otherwise, make an order for repossession in favour of the claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be. Where the claimant makes a claim for a property use right pursuant to section 3.1(b) of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079, the Commission may consider the claim in a summary procedure and make an order for recovery of possession. (See section 3.1 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 read together with section 9 of Annex III of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079.)¹

5. The Commission held its nineteenth session from 26 to 28 October 2010 in Prishtinë/Prishtina. A total of 25 residential property claims were submitted by the Executive Secretariat of the KPA (the "Executive Secretariat") to the Commission at its nineteenth session, together with supporting documentation, claims processing reports, verification reports, legal memoranda and other relevant information.

6. At the Commission's session, the Executive Secretariat presented the claims to the Commission and reported on the processing of and the legal and evidentiary issues raised by the claims. At the Commission's request, the Executive Secretariat provided additional information and explanations, as required.

A. Ownership claims

7. In all of the claims covered by the present decision the claimants seek the resolution of an ownership claim, and all of them relate to residential properties,

¹ There appears to be a technical error in Annex I. While Annex I clearly appears to be intended to replace UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 in its entirety, including its all three annexes, Article 26 of Annex I provides that the title of Annex III of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 shall be replaced by a title referring to Annex II. However, there is neither specific provision nor any other indication in Law 03/L-079 or its Annexes that the intention of this particular amendment was to delete Annex I or Annex II of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5. Accordingly the Commission considers that all three Annexes of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 are included in the legislative package and will be referred to by the Commission in this decision as Sub-Annexes I, II and III, respectively.

including the associated land. The present decision deals with claims for residential properties which, at the time of their notification, were found to be entirely destroyed. Claims for residential properties which were not destroyed are covered by another decision (KPCC/D/R/95/2010).

8. The present decision covers the six claims which are listed in parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule. The remaining nineteen claims are covered by KPCC/D/R/95/2010.

9. Five of the claims covered by the present decision have not previously been considered by the Commission, whereas one of the claims, namely Claim No. 00235, has been previously determined by the Commission. However the earlier decision in this claim was overturned by the Commission on account of an incorrect notification of the claimed property during claims processing by the Executive Secretariat. This claim consequently stands to be re-determined following correct notification of the claimed property and taking into account information provided by any respondents to the claim or any current occupants of the claimed property. In claims in which previous decisions have been overturned by the Commission, the Executive Secretariat has written to the claimant advising them of the notification error and informing them that their claims will be re-determined following correct notification of the claimed property. Claimants, as well as the relevant cadastral authorities, have been advised that the previous Commission decisions are invalid and cannot be used for the purposes of any legal transaction.

10. The Commission notes that all of the claims listed in parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule are uncontested in the sense that at the time the claimed properties were notified there was no evidence of illegal occupation, use or cultivation of these properties by any person or, even if there was such evidence, no party has contested the validity of the claim within the 30-day period prescribed in section 10.2 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079, or at any later stage during the proceedings, pursuant to section 10.3 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079. Based on the information provided by the Executive Secretariat, the Commission is satisfied that the Executive Secretariat has made reasonable efforts to notify the claimed properties, the persons who may be currently occupying the properties, and any other persons who may have a legal interest in such properties, as required by section 10.1 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 and section 10.1 of Law No. 03/L-079. Accordingly these claims must be considered uncontested.

11. In the claims identified in parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule, the Commission notes that the claimants have submitted various types of documents in support of the ownership claims, including possession lists, purchase contracts, contracts on gift, contracts on division of property, inheritance decisions, court decisions recognizing ownership, contracts on long life care and certificates of immovable property rights. The Commission is satisfied that final court decisions and certificates of immoveable property rights confirming an ownership interest indeed constitute proof of ownership. The other documents submitted by claimants, including possession lists and

contracts involving property transactions create a rebuttable presumption of ownership. The claims identified in the attached Schedule are uncontested and no evidence has been received or obtained by the Secretariat *ex officio* which would rebut the presumption of ownership. Consequently the Commission is satisfied that the documents submitted prove the claimants' ownership over the claimed properties.

12. In Claim Nos. 00235 and 90788, referred to in part A of the attached Schedule, the Claimant has filed the claim in the capacity of a property right holder. In light of the Commission's findings in paragraph 11 above, both claims stand to be granted.

13. In Claim No. 40331, referred to in part B of the attached Schedule, the Claimant has filed the claim in the capacity of a family household member, namely son, of the property right holder pursuant to section 1.2 of Annex II of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079. Section 1 of the Administrative Direction as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079 define "Member of Family Household" to include "the spouse, children (born in and out of wedlock or adopted) and other persons whom the property right holder is obliged to support in accordance with the applicable law, or the persons who are obliged to support the property right holder in accordance with the applicable law, regardless of whether or not that person resided in the property together with the property right holder." As the child of the property right holder, the Claimant falls within the definition of family household member. The Claimant alleges that the property right holder has died but no acceptable evidence has been submitted by the Claimant that would establish death, nor has the Executive Secretariat been able to locate any such documents. Accordingly a decision confirming the property right in favour of the property right holder stands to be granted in this claim, as set out above.

14. In Claim No. 53884, referred to in part C of the attached Schedule, the Claimant was not the property right holder at the date of loss of possession of the claimed property, but has adduced evidence of having subsequently succeeded to a co-ownership right over the property by virtue of inheritance. The Claimant must be considered as having succeeded to all the rights belonging to an owner, including the right to claim for confirmation of ownership and for repossession in the present proceedings. This claim therefore stands to be granted, as set out above.

15. In Claims Nos. 40960 and 54428, referred to in part D of the attached Schedule, the Claimants have established that they are family household members of the respective deceased property right holders. However, no valid inheritance decision or other documentary evidence has been submitted by the claimants that would establish any of the claimants as being an heir to the claimed property, nor has the Executive Secretariat been able to locate any such documents. The Claimant in Claim. 40960 has submitted as evidence a purported inheritance decision issued by an incompetent court in Serbia. As the property right holder died in Istoq/Istok in Kosovo in 1973, the Municipal Court in Bor in Serbia, which issued the inheritance decision, does not have jurisdiction over the matter. The Commission does not consider that this decision establishes an entitlement to inheritance. The Commission has no jurisdiction to resolve issues relating to inheritance. A decision confirming the property right in favour of the deceased property right holder

stands to be granted in these two claims. The Commission's decision with respect to both claims is without prejudice to the determination by the competent court as to how the heirs will succeed to the property right of the deceased.

16. The various types of documents relied upon by the claimants in support of the claims referred to in paragraphs 12, 13, 14 and 15 above are listed in the relevant column of parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule.

17. In a number of claims the claimants or the property right holders, as the case may be, left the property outside the period 27 February 1998 and 20 June 1999, referred to in section 3 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079. The Commission has determined that, even though the date of loss in these claims fell outside the above period, the loss of property right in each case occurred in circumstances directly related to or resulting from the armed conflict that occurred in Kosovo between 27 February 1998 and 20 June 1999, as required by section 3 of UNMIK/REG/2006/50 and section 3 of Law No. 03/L-079.

18. In view of the foregoing, the Commission is satisfied, based on the evidence before it, that:

- (a) the claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, had an ownership right in respect of the claimed property, or such part thereof as specified in the respective individual decision;
- (b) each claim is uncontested in that no person has contested the validity of the claim;
- (c) the claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, in each case is not now able to exercise his or her ownership right; and
- (d) the claim in each case involves circumstances directly related to or resulting from the armed conflict that occurred in Kosovo between 27 February 1998 and 20 June 1999.

19. Accordingly the claimants or the property right holders, as the case may be, have shown that they satisfied the requirements for an order establishing ownership over the claimed property and the associated land parcel as at the date of destruction of the residential property. The fact that the property has been destroyed does not affect the claimants' right to obtain a declaratory decision from the Commission, confirming, as at the date of destruction of the claimed property, the claimants' ownership over such property.

B. Claims for compensation

20. In the claims identified in the relevant columns of parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule, the claimants also seek, in addition to ownership, compensation for

physical damage to, or for loss of use of, the claimed property. Under UNMIK/REG/2006/50 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079 the Commission has no jurisdiction over such claims. Accordingly this aspect of the claims for compensation must be dismissed. -

C. *Concluding remarks*

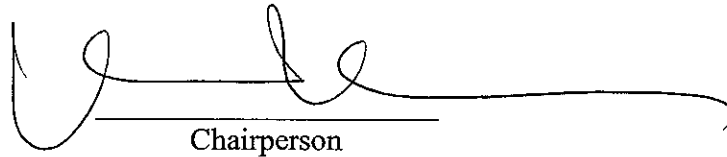
21. In view of the foregoing, the Commission finds that the claims listed in parts A, B, C and D of the attached Schedule succeed and directs that an order be made in respect of each claim as set out above.

22. In Claim No. 40331, the Claimant had filed a claim for repossession of the same property with the Housing and Property Directorate, which claim had subsequently been granted by the Housing and Property Claims Commission ("HPCC") through the issuance of a declaratory order confirming the Claimant's right to possession of the property as at the date of destruction of the property. The Commission notes that the causes of action available for claimants before the present Commission and HPCC, respectively, and accordingly the jurisdiction of the two Commissions, are not identical. Thus the decisions of the HPCC do not necessarily constitute *res judicata* before the present Commission, although in certain circumstances this may be the case. Moreover, in cases where HPCC granted an eviction order in favour of the Claimant, the Commission does not consider that such an order constitutes a bar for this Commission to issue a fresh eviction order in cases where the property is unlawfully occupied.

23. The Commission's above decisions and order also apply, where appropriate, to any associated property, *i.e.* any land or buildings owned or used by the claimant or the property right holder, as the case may be, which form a unit with the claimed residential property.

24. Pursuant to section 8.5 of Annex III of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079, the Commission may in its decision determine any property right in the name of the property right holder and make an order for possession in favour of the claimant. When the property right holder is alive, the Commission grants the right of possession in the name of the property right holder. When the property right holder is deceased and the death is proven but no valid inheritance decision has been provided, the Commission grants possession to the claimant as a family household member of the property right holder. The right to possession is granted pursuant to the applicable provisions of the law governing family relations in Kosovo, which includes the administration of family property. The Commission's decision on the entitlement to possession of property by the family household member claimant is without prejudice to the rights of other family household members or other heirs of the property right holder who have not filed claims with the KPA but who may have a joint right to possession of the property pursuant to the applicable law or as a consequence of future inheritance proceedings (section 8.5 of Annex III of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079).

25. Section 8.8 of Annex III of UNMIK/ADM/DIR/2007/5 as adopted by Law No. 03/L-079 allow the Chairperson of the Commission to sign a cover decision approving all individual claims identified in the cover decision, if the number of claims decided in a session is high. The Commission considers that this is appropriate in the present case.



Chairperson

APPEALS

UNMIK/REG/2006/50 and the Law No. 03/L-079 provide that:

12.1 Within thirty (30) days of the notification to the parties by the Kosovo Property Agency of a decision of the Commission on a claim, a party may submit through the Executive Secretariat of the Kosovo Property Agency to the Supreme Court of Kosovo an appeal against such decision.

12.3 The appeal may be filed on the grounds that:

- (a) The decision involves a fundamental error or serious misapplication of the applicable material or procedural law; or
- (b) The decision rests upon an erroneous or incomplete determination of the facts.

Further information on the appeals procedure is contained in the separate Appeals Information Sheet provided to parties with this decision

*** The English version is the official of all Property Claims Commission decisions. In case of conflict between the English language version and the Albanian or Serbian language version, then the meaning in the English language shall prevail.**

Spreadsheet /Lista /Prilog
Part A/Pjesa A/Deo A

Spreadsheet /Lista /Prilog
Part B/Pjesa B/Deo B

Spreadsheet /Lista /Prilog
Part C/Pjesa C/Deo C

Spreadsheet /Lista /Prilog
Part D/Pjesa D/Deo D

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