Author: james orbinski at msf-international  
Date: 5/7/99 5:46 PM  
Priority: Normal  
TO: Tine DUSAUCHOIT at MSF-Brussels  
TO: Bart MEIJMAN at MSF-Amsterdam  
TO: Beate GERLING at MSF-Amsterdam  
TO: Clemens VLASICH at MSF-Vienna  
TO: MSF-Tokyo (Dominique LEGUILLIER) at MSF-Paris  
TO: Filomena PIETRANTONIO at MSF-Roma  
TO: Isabelle PETIT at MSF-Brussels  
TO: Isabelle SEGUI-BITZ at MSF-Geneva  
TO: james orbinski at msf-international  
TO: Jean-Marie KINDERMANS at msf-international  
TO: Johan VON SCHREEB at MSF-Stockholm  
TO: Mari MORRAL at MSF-Barcelona  
TO: Marjorie PIOVAN at MSF-Luxembourg  
TO: MSFE-JD Presidente (Miguel-Angel PEREZ) at MSF-Barcelona  
TO: MSF-Copenhagen (Remote) at MSF-Brussels  
TO: MSFB-Hong-Kong at MSF-Brussels  
TO: Odile HARDY at MSF-Paris  
TO: Olivier BONNET at MSF-Hong-Kong  
TO: Olivier DECHEVRENS at MSF-Geneva  
TO: Philippe BIBERSON at MSF-Paris  
TO: Romain POOS at MSF-Luxembourg  
TO: fierry@coombs.anu.edu.au at INTERNET  
TO: Hans_Epp@t-online.de at INTERNET  
TO: Jenshillingsoe@dadlnet.dk at INTERNET  
TO: Johan_Von_Schreeb@stockholm.MSF.org at INTERNET  
TO: mjs@ices.on.ca at INTERNET  
TO: morten.rostrup@ntk.no at INTERNET  
TO: morten.rostrup@ullevaal.no at INTERNET  
TO: tine.dusauchoit@wvc.vlaanderen.be at INTERNET  
TO: jwmcgill@tc.umn.edu at INTERNET  
TO: pjbishop@compuserve.com at INTERNET  
Subject: MSF Greece, to all IC members  

Message Contents

May 7, 99

Dear All:

This letter is to inform you of developments over the last days involving MSF Greece.

Yesterday MSF Greece announced and launched a unilateral mission to Pristina and Belgrade. They entered this morning via Macedonia with 2 trucks, 18 tons of supplies, and a team of five Greek expatriates, which includes two surgeons and a doctor. This is without the approval of the Executive Committee of General Directors. It runs counter to the policy that MSF actions in Kosovo and Yugoslavia must be according to transparent humanitarian principles that are not open to manipulation by any party to the conflict.

MSF Greece organized the action through its links with the Greek Government that has an agreement with the Yugoslav government to allow access of Greek NGOs to Yugoslavia. MDM Greece has acted on this agreement, and has operations in Pristina. For MSF this is not an acceptable means of achieving humanitarian access in this situation, as
independence and the freedom to assess, monitor, modify and deliver humanitarian assistance is not assured. MSF has and is making ongoing efforts to enter Yugoslavia through official channels in Belgrade. These efforts have been persistently stalled by the Belgrade authorities.

Additionally, Thiery Durant, the Operations Director for the Greek-Swiss OC resigned his responsibilities for management of Greek operations because he felt that he could no longer manage them. This occurred on May 6. I was kept informed about MSF Greece on Wednesday May 6 announced that it has appointed its own apparent OD for operations. It then launched this unilateral exploratory mission.

I have discussed the situation with members of the Restricted Committee. I also discussed these issues with Odysseas Boudouris, the president of MSF Greece, last week and in two lengthy discussions yesterday afternoon, when he was in Scopje, Macedonia. The results of the discussions are in the attached letter, which I sent to Odysseas and the general Director of MSF Greece yesterday.

As well, yesterday Odysseas agreed in my discussion with him that the unilateral exploratory mission would be put on hold, until other MSF international expats could be added to the team. He also agreed that MSF Greece would apply for Visas for these expatriates to the Yugoslav embassy in Greece, and that the terms of reference for the mission would be according to those described by the Executive Committee on April 20, 99, (that it is an exploratory mission to explore the viability of humanitarian space, that no humanitarian assistance is to be delivered, that no media attention would be sought, and that the results of the mission would be considered by the Executive Committee before deciding on how to proceed with further actions in Kosovo). I spoke again with Odysseas who then said that while he agrees with this, the decision is not his, but that if the executive of MSF Greece, and that he has global responsibility for MSF Greece, not executive responsibility, and that he could not guarantee that our agreement would be respected. With the launching this morning of the unilateral mission, clearly the agreement was not respected.

At this time then there are two issues that emerge from these events. The first is one of governance and will be dealt with in the coming days and weeks, and at the IC in June 99. The second is more immediate, and deals with potential political implications for MSF's humanitarian actions in Kosovo and surrounding region.

We will not react publically at this time to this action. However, we may be confronted with statements from the unilateral mission that are not in accord with our principles and strategies for the region. If this happens, we will react publically as required.

Should you have any questions or comments on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at the office 32 2 280 1881, or on my mobile at 32 (0)47 777 4328.

I will be in further contact in the coming days.

Sincerely,

James Orbinski
President, MSF International Council