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PM to consider more refugees, Bosnian, Muslim groups told; [1* Edition]

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Abstract (Summary)

Mulroney met in the lobby of the Hotel Vancouver with Dr. Mel Dilli, a Vancouver psychiatrist and immigrant from former Yugoslavia, who is leading a campaign to raise funds for refugees.

During the conversation with Dilli and lawyer Al Jina, Mulroney called over his press secretary, Mark Entwistle, and asked him to see that External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall telephoned Dilli this week. Mulroney suggested Dilli and other representatives of the Balkan community in Canada go to Ottawa for a meeting to discuss the whole question of aid to refugees and to the region.

Dilli said afterward he was very pleased with the meeting and satisfied that Mulroney wanted to do something more for refugees, although there was no discussion of further military efforts or the peacekeeping forces already in Bosnia.

Full Text (457 words)

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Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has promised to consider increasing the number of refugees Canada will accept from the war-torn Balkans.

He made the promise in Vancouver on Saturday in a conversation with representatives of the Bosnian and Muslim communities, who showed him newspaper reports of atrocities in Bosnia.

"I don't usually believe what I read in the papers, but I do believe this. This is true," Mulroney said.

The prime minister described the situation in Bosnia, where continuing civil war is blocking humanitarian aid, as "a disgrace."

He said the crisis in the Balkans had affected many peoples' lives and said it had touched his family personally when his father-in-law, Dimitri Pivnicki, a Montreal psychiatrist, had been booted out of the Serbian Orthodox Church because he did not agree with what was happening in his native land.

Pivnicki was born in southern Serbia. His mother-in-law, Bogdana, came from Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital still under Serbian siege despite supposed ceasefires and agreements to allow movement of aid convoys arranged by the United Nations.

Mulroney met in the lobby of the Hotel Vancouver with Dr. Mel Dilli, a Vancouver psychiatrist and immigrant from former Yugoslavia, who is leading a campaign to raise funds for refugees.

Dilli said that Mulroney had promised to consider raising the ceiling of 26,000 refugees at present allowed to enter Canada from the region.

"I will talk to the minister about it. We will discuss this in cabinet," Mulroney said.

During the conversation with Dilli and lawyer Al Jina, Mulroney called over his press secretary, Mark Entwistle, and asked him to see that External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall telephoned Dilli this week. Mulroney suggested Dilli and other representatives of the Balkan community in Canada go to Ottawa for a meeting to discuss the whole question of aid to refugees and to the region.

The prime minister, who had been in Vancouver to address a political fund-raising dinner Friday, left for the airport after talking to them for about 10 minutes.

Dilli said afterward he was very pleased with the meeting and satisfied that Mulroney wanted to do something more for refugees, although there was no discussion of further military efforts or the peacekeeping forces already in Bosnia.

"I believe he has a genuine humanitarian concern," he said. Before the meeting, Dilli had said he did not think Canada was doing enough. Now, he said, he was more hopeful.

Dilli, who said he came from the same region in southern Serbia as Mila Mulroney's father, and had known him earlier in Montreal, said the local Bosnian Association, of which he is president, had collected \$150,000 in the last few weeks in Vancouver. The money is for medical supplies and food aid to besieged Bosnians.

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