

Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo: An Accounting

FORCED EXPULSIONS, LOOTING, BURNING, DETENTIONS, USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS,
SUMMARY EXECUTIONS, EXHUMATIONS OF MASS GRAVES, SYSTEMATIC AND ORGANIZED
MASS RAPE, VIOLATIONS OF MEDICAL NEUTRALITY AND IDENTITY CLEANSING



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Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo: An Accounting is a new chapter in our effort to document the extent of human rights and humanitarian law violations in Kosovo, and to convey the size and scope of the Kosovo conflict. The information in this report is drawn from refugee accounts, NGO documentation, press accounts, and declassified information from government and international organization sources.

The atrocities against Kosovar Albanians documented in this report occurred primarily between March and late June, 1999. This document is a follow-up to the U.S. Department of State's previous human rights report, *Erasing History: Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo*, which was released on May 10, 1999.

A central question is the number of Kosovar Albanian victims of Serbian forces in Kosovo. Many bodies were found when KFOR and the ICTY entered Kosovo in June 1999. The evidence is also now clear that Serbian forces conducted a systematic campaign to burn or destroy bodies, or to bury the bodies, then rebury them to conceal evidence of Serbian crimes. On June 4, at the end of the conflict, the Department of State issued the last of a series of weekly ethnic cleansing reports, available at www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/rpt_990604_ksvo_ethnic.html, concluding that at least 6,000 Kosovar Albanians were victims of mass murder, with an unknown number of victims of individual killings, and an unknown number of bodies burned or destroyed by Serbian forces throughout the conflict.

On November 10, 1999, ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte told the U.N. Security Council that her office had received reports of more than 11,000 killed in 529 reported mass grave and killing sites in Kosovo. The Prosecutor said her office had exhumed 2,108 bodies from 195 of the 529 known mass graves. This would imply about 6,000 bodies in mass graves in Kosovo if the 334 mass graves not examined thus far contain the same average number of victims. To this total must be added three important categories of victims: (1) those

buried in mass graves whose locations are unknown, (2) what the ICTY reports is a significant number of sites where the precise number of bodies cannot be counted, and (3) victims whose bodies were burned or destroyed by Serbian forces. Press accounts and eyewitness accounts provide credible details of a program of destruction of evidence by Serbian forces throughout Kosovo and even in Serbia proper. The number of victims whose bodies have been burned or destroyed may never be known, but enough evidence has emerged to conclude that probably around 10,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed by Serbian forces.

Death represents only one facet of Serbian actions in Kosovo. Over 1.5 million Kosovar Albanians—at least 90 percent of the estimated 1998 Kosovar Albanian population of Kosovo—were forcibly expelled from their homes. Tens of thousands of homes in at least 1,200 cities, towns, and villages have been damaged or destroyed. During the conflict, Serbian forces and paramilitaries implemented a systematic campaign to ethnically cleanse Kosovo—aspects of this campaign include the following:

- *Forcible Displacement of Kosovar Albanian Civilians:* Serbian authorities conducted a campaign of forced population movement. In contrast to actions taken during 1998, Yugoslav Army units and armed civilians joined the police in systematically expelling Kosovar Albanians at gunpoint from both villages and larger towns in Kosovo.
- *Looting of Homes and Businesses:* There are numerous reports of Serbian forces robbing residents before burning their homes. Another round of robbery occurred as Serbian forces stole from fleeing Kosovars as they crossed the border to Montenegro, Albania, or Macedonia.
- *Widespread Burning of Homes:* Over 1,200

residential areas were at least partially burned after late March, 1999. Kosovar Albanians have reported that over 500 villages were burned after March, 1999.

- *Use of Human Shields:* Refugees claim that Serbian forces used Kosovar Albanians to escort military convoys and shield facilities throughout the province. Other reporting indicates that Serbian forces intentionally positioned ethnic Albanians at sites they believed were targets for NATO airstrikes.
- *Detentions:* Serbian forces systematically separated military-aged men from the general population as Kosovars were expelled. These men were detained in facilities ranging from cement factories to prisons. Many of these detainees were forced to dig trenches and were physically abused. At least 2,000 Kosovar Albanians remain in detention in around a dozen Serbian prisons today.
- *Summary Executions:* There are accounts of summary executions at about 500 sites across Kosovo.
- *Exhumation of Mass Graves:* Serbian forces burned, destroyed, or exhumed bodies from mass graves in an attempt to destroy evidence. Some were reinterred in individual graves.
- *Rape:* There are numerous accounts indicating that the organized and individual rape of Kosovar Albanian women by Serbian forces was widespread. For example, Serbian forces systematically raped women in Djakovica and Pec, and in some cases rounded up women and took them to hotels where they were raped by troops under encouragement of their commanders. Rape is most likely an underreported atrocity because

of the stigma attached to the victims in traditional Kosovar Albanian society.

- *Violations of Medical Neutrality:* Kosovar Albanian physicians, patients and medical facilities were systematically attacked. Many health care facilities were used as protective cover for military activities; NGOs report the destruction by Serbian forces of at least 100 clinics, pharmacies, and hospitals.
- *Identity Cleansing:* Kosovar Albanians were systematically stripped of identity and property documents including passports, land titles, automobile license plates, identity cards, and other forms of documentation. As much as 50 percent of the population may be without documentation. By systematically destroying schools, places of worship, and hospitals, Serbian forces sought to destroy social identity and the fabric of Kosovar Albanian society.
- *Aftermath:* Following the withdrawal of Serbian forces in June, Kosovo saw manifestations of a new set of human rights problems. These include acts of retribution against the Serb minority, including the killing of 200-400 Serb residents. In addition, as many as 23,000 conscientious objectors, draft evaders, and deserters in Serbia are threatened with legal action.

On June 10, 1999, NATO forces entered Kosovo and the world for the first time saw overwhelming evidence of the atrocities that Serbian forces had committed. Before then, most of these crimes had occurred out of sight, or the evidence of these crimes were seen through the lens of aerial photography. But today we are piecing together the story of one of the largest population displacements in Europe since the 1940s. Many details remain obscure; a complete picture of what happened will not be known for a long time. This report, which identifies about 500 individual mass grave and killing sites across Kosovo, is only one step toward documenting the Kosovo conflict, securing justice for its victims, and ensuring accountability for its perpetrators.

On May 10 of this year, the State Department released *Erasing History: Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo*. This report helped fill the information shortfall surrounding events in Kosovo after the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission left Kosovo on March 19. *Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo: An Accounting* has been compiled as a follow up to *Erasing History*. It documents not only the Serbian assault on its own citizens in Kosovo, but also the retribution that took place against ethnic Serbs, Roma, Gorani and other minorities after Serbian security forces left the province.

This report offers only a snapshot of the Milosevic regime's brutal, premeditated, and systematic campaign to expel many Kosovar Albanians from their homeland. Based on maps, aerial photography, and aggregate data collected from interviews of eyewitnesses, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the press and other sources, this report provides a more comprehensive assessment of the chronology, scale, and intensity of human rights and humanitarian law violations that occurred in Kosovo in 1999.

As was the case when *Erasing History* was released in May, this report aims to establish the facts, sketch the

big picture of ethnic cleansing, and to assist in ensuring accountability for these crimes. This report provides more extensive data than the earlier one on ten broad categories of human rights violations and war crimes that have occurred in Kosovo: forced expulsions, looting, burning, detentions, use of human shields, summary executions, exhumations of mass graves, systematic and organized mass rape, violations of medical neutrality, and identity cleansing. Most importantly, it describes about 500 mass grave and killing sites in Kosovo.

This report highlights the need for a consistent and systematic means to gather and collect the stories of victims and witnesses. NGOs that have contributed to a common approach to information gathering among refugees and other displaced persons include: the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative, the Coalition for International Justice, the International Crisis Group, No Peace Without Justice, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and others. These groups are fulfilling the first function of human rights reporting—truth telling—and in this way are helping to hold the perpetrators accountable. The May indictments of Slobodan Milosevic and others of his inner circle provide evidence that comprehensive and methodical reporting from governments and non-governmental organizations can make a difference.

The facts, figures, photos, and maps in this report represent a broad scale approach to cataloguing the nature of Belgrade's crimes against the people of Kosovo. But we must stress that it is impossible to know the full scope of the atrocities that were committed by Serbian forces during the Kosovo conflict. Details on these crimes and the high level policies behind them surface daily. Meanwhile, human rights violations are still ongoing in Kosovo and in Serbia itself.

This volume, like its predecessor, was produced by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and the

Office of War Crimes Issues at the Department of State.

Sometimes, when an unspeakable horror unfolds day after day, it is hard to separate the fragments of tragedy from the big picture. We encourage international organizations, other governments, the NGO community, and the media to join us in systematically and comprehensively documenting these crimes so that we can distinguish anecdote from history. By documenting these crimes, we can come to a better understanding of how to avert future ethnic cleansings.



An impromptu obituary on a street post in Pristina of ethnic Albanians killed by Serbian forces. Photo date August 1999.

The following is a general account of atrocities committed by Serbian forces against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo primarily between March 1999 and late June 1999. Most of the information is compiled from victims and witness accounts provided to KFOR, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and other international organizations, supplemented by diplomatic and other reporting available as of early November 1999.

Since the signing of the military withdrawal agreement and departure of Serbian forces from Kosovo, earlier reports of Serbian war crimes in Kosovo, including the detention and summary execution of military-aged men and the destruction of civilian housing, have been confirmed by journalists and international organizations. According to press reports, Serbian troops and militias continued to rape women, loot property, burn homes and mosques, and murder Kosovar Albanians while withdrawing from Kosovo. Since the Serbian withdrawal, virtually all Kosovar Albanian survivors have returned to their villages and towns. However, there has also been a mass exodus of Serbian civilians who—despite KFOR efforts to protect them—are fearful of retribution from returning Kosovar Albanians and the influence of former members of the UCK. KFOR troops have intervened on numerous occasions to prevent further violence in Kosovo.

War crime investigators and forensic teams from a number of countries and staff of the ICTY have begun investigating the numerous sites of mass graves and mass executions in Kosovo. KFOR has established security at many of the locations of alleged atrocities and requested returning family members not to disturb the potential evidence at any of the sites. Many family members choose to rebury their relatives without waiting for forensic investigations, however.

Kosovar Albanians have reported mass executions and mass graves at about 500 sites in the province. As of early November 1999, the ICTY has conducted site investigations at about 200 of these and has confirmed

finding bodies at over 160 of the sites. Numerous accounts indicate that Serbian forces took steps to destroy forensic evidence of their crimes. This included execution methods that would allow the Serbs to claim their victims were collateral casualties of military operations, and burning or otherwise disposing of bodies. Over 2,100 bodies have been found by the ICTY among the some 200 atrocity sites that have been field investigated so far. However, the total number of bodies reported to the ICTY at over 500 gravesites is more than 11,000. If the pattern established among these 200 sites holds for all of the remaining sites—claimed by all sources—that have yet to be field investigated, we would expect the total number of bodies to be found at the known gravesites to be over 6,000. To this total must be added three important categories of victims: (1) those buried in mass graves whose locations are unknown, (2) what the ICTY reports is a significant number of sites where the precise number of bodies cannot be counted, and (3) victims whose bodies were burned or destroyed by Serbian forces. Press reporting and eyewitness accounts provide credible details of a program of destruction of evidence by Serbian forces throughout Kosovo and even in Serbia proper. The number of victims whose bodies have been burned or destroyed may never be known, but enough evidence has emerged to conclude that probably around 10,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed by Serbian forces.

As a result of Serbian efforts to expel the ethnic Albanian majority from Kosovo, almost one million Kosovar Albanians left the province after Serbian forces launched their first security crackdown in March 1998, with most having fled after March 1999. Based on the scope and intensity of Serbian activities throughout the province, as many as 500,000 additional Kosovars appear to have been internally displaced. In sum, about 1.5 million Kosovar Albanians (at least 90 percent of the estimated 1998 Kosovar Albanian population of the province) were forcibly expelled from their homes.

Virtually all Kosovar Albanians who desired to return to Kosovo have done so at this time.

Thousands of homes in at least 1,200 cities, towns, and villages were damaged or destroyed. Victims report that Serbian forces harassed them with forced extortion and beatings, and that some were strafed by Serbian aircraft. Reports of organized rape of ethnic Albanian women by Serbian security forces during the conflict continue to be received. According to the victims, Serbian forces conducted systematic rapes in Djakovica, and at the Karagac and Metohia hotels in Pec.

With the return of international organizations to Kosovo in late June 1999, an unambiguous picture has unfolded, showing the scope and intensity of the ethnic

cleansing campaign waged in the province.

Refugees have reported that Serbian forces systematically separated military-aged ethnic Albanian men—ranging from as young as age 14 years to 59 years old—from the population as they expelled the Kosovar Albanians from their homes. An exact accounting of the number of men killed is impossible because of Serbian efforts to destroy bodies of their victims, but clearly it includes civilians, combatants who were killed while prisoners of war as defined under the laws of armed conflict, and combatants killed while participating in hostilities. Forensic investigations will provide some, but not all, of the answers as to the relative proportions of each category.



Vlastica. On 30 April 1999, Serbian paramilitary forces lined-up 19 members of an extended Albanian family in this house, shooting them and killing 13. The wounded victims survived by playing dead. Several days later, Serbs bulldozed some of the walls and earth into the house, covering the bodies in an attempt to hide their crimes. In June 1999, an international forensic team excavated the site and found the remains of the dead. *Photo date August 1999.*

The following is a partial list of war crimes, violations of international humanitarian law, or other human rights violations reported throughout Kosovo:

Forcible Displacement of Ethnic Albanian Civilians

Serbian authorities conducted a campaign of forced population movement on a scale seldom seen in Europe since the 1940s. They drove the vast majority of the ethnic Albanian population from their homes. The Serbian regime's claim that this population outflow was the result of voluntary flight in fear of NATO airstrikes is not supported by the accounts of victims. Victims consistently reported being expelled from their homes by Serbian forces at gunpoint, in contrast to the fighting of 1998, when the bulk of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees fled to escape the crossfire or to avoid reprisals by Serbian security forces. Many victims were herded onto trains and other organized transport and expelled from the province. In addition, Serbian forces expelled the majority of Kosovar Albanians from urban areas such as Djakovica. Refugees say that those forced to remain behind were used as human shields.

Serbian forces also disguised themselves as refugees to prevent targeting from NATO aircraft. Refugees claimed that on May 6, Serbian forces dressed in white hats and jackets with Red Cross and Red Crescent logos moved with convoys of IDPs between Djakovica and Brekovac. In order to conceal their military cargo, Serbian forces covered their wagons with plastic tarpaulins taken from NGOs.

In contrast to 1998, when Serbian security forces attacked small villages, Yugoslav Army units and armed civilians this year joined the police in systematically expelling ethnic Albanians at gunpoint from both villages and the larger towns of Kosovo. Serbian authorities forced many refugees to sign disclaimers saying they were leaving Kosovo of their own free will. Victims also reported that the Serbian forces

confiscated their personal belongings and documentation, including national identity papers, and told them to take a last look around because they would never return to Kosovo. Many of the places targeted had not been the scenes of previous fighting or UCK activity. This indicates that the Serbian expulsions were an exercise in ethnic cleansing and not a part of a legitimate security or counter-insurgency operation, but instead a plan to cleanse the province of a significant proportion of its ethnic Albanian population.

Looting of Homes and Businesses

There are numerous reports from victims and the press of Serbian forces going house to house robbing residents before burning their homes. In addition, Kosovar Albanian victims claimed that Serbian forces robbed them of all their personal belongings before they crossed the borders.

Widespread Burning of Homes

Over 1,200 residential areas, including over 500 villages, were burned after late March, 1999. Most Serbian homes and stores remained intact during the conflict, and Serbian civilians in many towns painted a Cyrillic "S" on their doors so that Serbian forces would not attack their homes by mistake. The destruction is much more extensive and thorough than that which occurred in the summer of 1998. Many settlements were totally destroyed in an apparent attempt to ensure that the Kosovar Albanian population could not return. Serbian forces reportedly burned all houses previously rented to the OSCE in Vucitrn, Stimlje, and Kosovska Mitrovica. Mass burnings of villages waned towards the end of the campaign, by time many Kosovar Albanian homes had been abandoned. Those homes that were still intact were sometimes taken over by Serbian security forces.

Kosovar Albanians have reported that over 500 villages



Destroyed village in southern Kosovo. This scene is typical of villages where buildings are being reconstructed this summer that were previously destroyed by Serbian forces in southern Kosovo. *Photo date August 1999*

burned from late March 1999. The following villages are confirmed as having been mostly burned or entirely destroyed.

Bajcina	Bajgora
Banja	Batlava
Bela Crvka	Bradas
Celina	Crebnik
Crni Lug	Dobr Do
Donja Penduha	Donja Lapistica
Donji Streoci	Dumos
Gajrak	Gede
Godisnjak	Gorane
Gornja Zakut	Gornje Pakistica
Gornji Crnobreg	Gornji Streoci
Jablanica	Jovic
Kacandol	Klincina
Letance	Lipovac
Luzane	Mamusa
Madare	Mala Hoca
Malisevo	Mirusa
Neprebiste	Novo Selo Begovo
Ostrozub	Pakistica
Pantina	Pasoma
Radoste	Randubrava
Retimnje	Rogovo
Skorosnik	Slatina
Smac	Sopnic
Stanica Donje Ljupce	Suvi Do
Vlaski Drenovac	Vucitrn
Vujitun	Zrze
Zym	

Use of Human Shields

Serbian forces compelled Kosovar Albanians to accompany Serbian military convoys and shield facilities throughout the province. The extent to which civilians were used to shield military assets is difficult to measure, because Serbian units also escorted or herded Kosovar Albanians in the course of military operations.

Beginning in mid-April, Serbian forces used Kosovar Albanian men to shield military convoys from NATO airstrikes. Serbian forces reportedly removed young Kosovar Albanian men from refugee columns and forced them to form a buffer zone around Serbian convoys. Numerous Kosovar Albanians claimed to have witnessed and participated in this activity on the roads between Pec, Djakovica, and Kosovska Mitrovica.

In at least one instance—Korisa—Serbian forces intentionally positioned ethnic Albanians at sites that they believed were targets for NATO airstrikes. In other instances, unconfirmed reports say Kosovar Albanians were kept concealed within NATO target areas apparently to generate civilian casualties that could be blamed on NATO. In addition, Kosovar Albanian reports claimed that Serbian forces compelled Kosovar Albanian men to don Serbian military uniforms, probably so they could not be distinguished by NATO and UCK surveillance.

Detentions

Kosovar Albanians have claimed that Serbian forces systematically separated military-aged ethnic Albanian men—ranging from as young as 14 to 59 years old—from the population as they expelled Kosovar Albanians from their homes.

Refugees reported early in April that Serbian forces used the Ferro-Nickel factory in Glogovac as a detention center for a large number of Kosovar Albanians.

According to refugees, a cement factory in Deneral Jankovic had also been temporarily used as a detention center for Kosovar Albanians. The prisoners reportedly were released in late April.

From May 21 to early June, some 2,000 Kosovar Albanian men entered Albania after being detained by Serbian forces for three weeks in a prison in Smrekovnica near Srbica. Serbian authorities were apparently looking for UCK members and sympathizers among the prisoners. While detaining the men, the Serbian authorities forced them to dig trenches and physically abused many of them. After interrogations, the detainees were loaded on buses and driven to Zhure, from where they walked to the border.

Summary Executions

Kosovar Albanians have provided accounts of summary executions and mass graves at about 500 sites throughout Kosovo. In just one example, Serbian security forces reportedly locked an entire family into a house in the Drenica area and burned them alive. In addition to random executions, Serbian forces apparently targeted members of the Kosovar Albanian intelligentsia including lawyers, doctors, and political leaders. Survivors reported that Serbian forces burned bodies exhumed from mass graves in an apparent attempt to destroy forensic evidence of war crimes. Detailed information on these 500 sites are provided below in the section entitled, *Atrocities and War Crimes by Location*.

Exhumation of Mass Graves

Kosovar Albanian refugees claim that Serbian forces exhumed bodies from mass grave sites from the outset of the conflict, apparently in an attempt to minimize evidence of atrocities. Reports indicate that in some instances Serbian forces re-interred bodies of executed ethnic Albanians in individual graves, while in others

corpses were burned. Moving bodies from mass graves to individual graves has impeded the location of execution sites and hampered the ability of forensic investigators to discriminate between “regular” graves and graves containing massacre victims.

One of the most egregious examples is also one of the best-documented. In April, Serbian forces massacred Kosovar Albanian civilians in a field near Izbica, in north-central Kosovo. After the massacre, local Kosovar Albanians buried the victims in individual graves, an event videotaped by a local dentist from a nearby village. The videotape was smuggled out of Kosovo by the UCK. In May, the Department of State showed how the location of the videotape could be corroborated from overhead imagery. Serbian forces, during their retreat from Kosovo in early June, destroyed the graves at Izbica along with other graves of their victims—a fact that the Department of Defense confirmed through imagery at a press briefing in June.

According to Kosovar Albanian reports, Serbian forces in Lipljan, probably in early May, exhumed the bodies of ethnic Albanians who had been executed on April 18. After moving the bodies to a building in the village, Serbian forces reportedly ordered the surviving family members to rebury them in individual graves.

Similarly, Serbian forces exhumed the bodies of at least 50 ethnic Albanians in Glogovac and transported the bodies to the nearby village of Cikatovo on May 15, according to refugee reports. The bodies were then buried in individual graves.

Kosovar Albanians reported in mid-June that Serbian police excavated bodies from a mass grave in Kacanik and moved them to a local cemetery. Residents indicated that the bodies might be those killed by Serbian police in early April.

Rape

Numerous reports by Kosovar Albanian refugees reveal that the organized and individual rape of Kosovar Albanian women by Serbian forces was widespread. According to Kosovar Albanians, Serbian forces

systematically raped women in Djakovica and Pec. Kosovar Albanian women reportedly were separated from their families and sent to an army camp near Djakovica, where they were raped repeatedly by Serbian soldiers. In Pec, Kosovar Albanians said that Serbian forces rounded up young Kosovar Albanian women and took them to the Hotel Karagac, where they were raped repeatedly. The commander of the local base was said to have used a roster of soldiers' names to allow all of his troops an evening in the hotel. A victim who escaped her captors reported that Serbian forces used a second hotel in Pec, the Metohia, for raping Kosovar Albanian women. In addition to these three specific accounts, numerous Kosovar Albanians claim that during Serbian raids on their villages, young women were gang raped in homes and on the sides of roads. There are probably many more incidents than have not been reported because of the stigma attached to the survivors in traditional Kosovar Albanian society. Medical facilities have reported abortions among refugee women who reported being raped by Serbian forces.

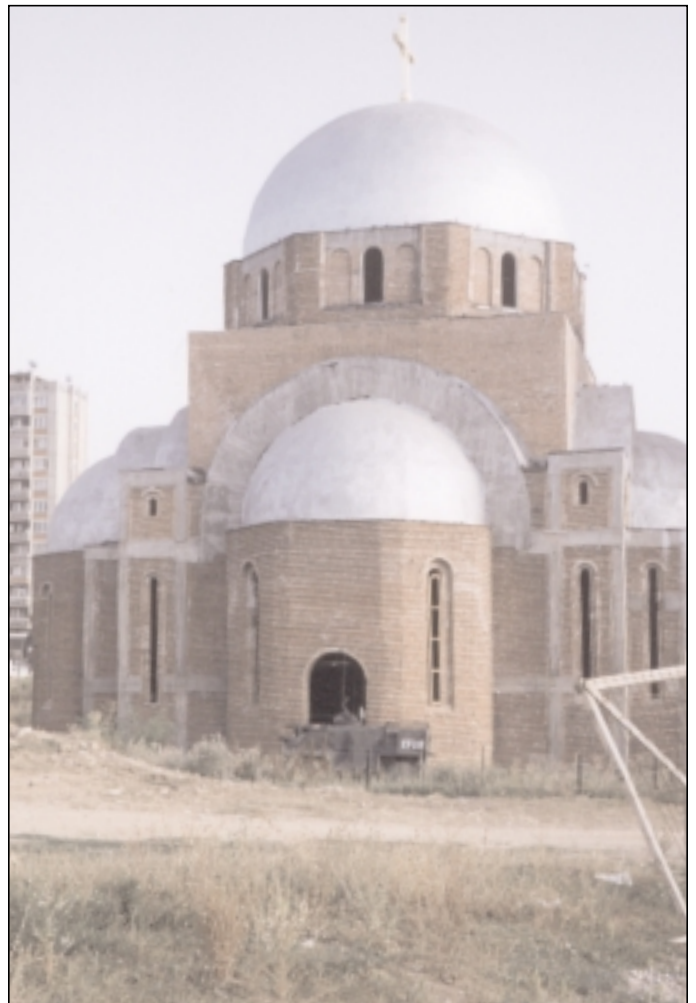
Violations of Medical Neutrality

Serbian forces systematically attacked Kosovar Albanian physicians, patients, and medical facilities. Violations of medical neutrality by Serbian forces include killings, torture, detention, imprisonment, and forced disappearances of Kosovar physicians. In March and April, Serbian health care providers, police and military expelled Kosovar Albanian patients and health care providers from health facilities as protective cover for military activities. The NGO Physicians for Human Rights has received reports of the destruction of at least 100 medical clinics, pharmacies, and hospitals.

Identity Cleansing

There are multiple reports of Serbian forces confiscating identity and property documents including passports, land titles, automobile license plates, identity cards, and other forms of documentation from Kosovar Albanians as they were forced out of villages or as they

crossed international borders into Albania or Macedonia. Physicians for Human Rights reports that nearly 60 percent of respondents to its survey observed Serbian forces removing or destroying personal identification documents. Physicians for Human Rights also reported that the intent to destroy the social identity of Kosovar Albanians is also reflected in the number of places of worship, schools, and medical facilities that were destroyed by Serbian forces.



Albanian Retribution. Pristina Orthodox Cathedral. Serbian Orthodox church officials claim that over 40 churches have been damaged or destroyed in acts of Kosovar Albanian retribution since the end of the NATO bombing campaign. This Orthodox cathedral in Pristina was under construction prior to the bombing campaign. In July 1999, a bomb exploded inside the church, probably as an act of retribution. This and many other churches in Kosovo are being protected by KFOR troops, such as those in the armored personnel carrier shown here at the side of this church. Photo date August 1999.

THE REFUGEE INTERVIEW PROCESS

An ad hoc coalition of NGOs, governments and international organizations began conducting systematic interviews of refugees who had fled Kosovo for the relative safety of refugee camps and homes in Macedonia and Albania.

Physicians for Human Rights

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and the Program on Forced Migration and Health of Columbia University's Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health designed a human rights oriented, epidemiological study to establish patterns of human rights violations among Kosovar refugees by Serbian forces using a population-based approach. Rather than seeking out victims or witnesses of abuse, PHR sought to assess the pervasiveness of abuses. Representatives of these organizations interviewed 1,209 Kosovar refugees in 31 refugee camps and collective centers in Albania and Macedonia between April 19 and May 3, 1999. The survey assessed human rights abuses among 11,458 household members at the time that they were living in Kosovo.

The results of this assessment are contained in Physicians for Human Rights' report *War Crimes in Kosovo*, published in August 1999. PHR notes that the findings of their study indicate that Serbian forces engaged in a systematic and brutal campaign to forcibly expel the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo throughout the province. In the course of these mass deportations, and over the past year in Kosovo, Serbian forces have committed widespread violations of human rights against Kosovar Albanians including: killings, beatings, torture, sexual assault, separation and disappearances, shootings, looting and destruction of property, and violations of medical neutrality. One in three households reported at least one of these abuses in the past year, with the majority of abuses occurring in March and April of 1999.

ABA/CEELI's War Crimes Documentation Project

The American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) and Coalition for International Justice (CIJ) established a war crimes documentation project in May 1999 which is ongoing. The purpose of the project is twofold. The first objective is to assist efforts to investigate war crimes and prosecute perpetrators. To this end, ABA/CEELI conducted refugee interviews in Macedonia, Albania and Fort Dix, New Jersey from May to July 1999. The second objective of the project is to increase public awareness of war crimes, their prosecution, and the role of the ICTY.

The information collected during the refugee interviews was entered into a computer database approved by the ICTY. ABA/CEELI issued a report in August on the uses of this database and the nature of its data. The database currently includes 1,582 witness statements with 4,328 discrete incidents reported. Reported crimes include torture, destruction of property, arrests and detentions, forced displacement, harassment, sexual assaults, and killings. This information has assisted ICTY investigators with locating witnesses, identifying potential crime scenes and conducting strategic planning for their investigations.

ABA/CEELI continues to work with the ICTY to refine the interview process and the computer database to suit ongoing needs. Consistent with the nature of criminal investigations, the data has not been collected using scientific sampling techniques, but has revealed areas where additional human rights documentation will likely be needed.

Other Documentation Efforts

Medecins sans Frontieres released an April 30 report of refugee accounts and conducted an epidemiological survey on a population of 1,537 persons who had arrived at the Rozaje refugee camp in Montenegro. The

survey covered events in more than 50 villages in Kosovo between March 24 and April 15, 1999. This report concludes that the main cause of Kosovo's mass population movements was deportation under the threat of death; deportation was accompanied by looting and destruction of victims' possessions; the

methods of enforced deportation were almost identical across Kosovo; identity papers were systematically confiscated and destroyed by Serbian forces and the separation of men and women was a common practice during expulsions. More than half of Medecins sans Frontieres witnesses described murders.



Vlastica. These graves contain the remains of seven of the 20 villagers killed by Serbian paramilitary forces in April 1999. They were buried at this site overlooking Vlastica by Kosovar Albanians who returned to the village in June 1999. *Photo date August 1999.*

POSTSCRIPT: ALBANIAN RETRIBUTION AND MISSING PERSONS

Ethnic violence in Kosovo did not halt with the end of the international conflict, the withdrawal of Serb forces, the deployment of NATO troops and the UN Mission, or the return of Kosovar refugees. This continued violence has affected both sides, but proportionally the Serbs and other minorities have suffered most heavily. Serbs have been subjected to kidnapping, murder, arson, grenade attacks, shootings, and a variety of other intimidation tactics, including bombing places of worship. NGOs have also recently documented abuses against Serb patients in hospitals in Kosovo and intimidation of Serb physicians.

Since June 10, between 200 and 400 Serb residents of Kosovo have been killed, thousands of Serb homes and apartments have been torched, destroyed, or looted, and according to Serbian Orthodox Church officials, more than 40 Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries have been damaged or destroyed. In one of the worst incidents, on July 23, 1999, 14 Serb farmers were killed while working their fields near the village of Gradsko. On August 11, an international forensic team completed a site investigation at Llapushnica and confirmed finding a mass grave containing seven bodies. While none of the bodies had been positively identified at that time, preliminary indications suggest that the victims were Serbs.

The Roma population has also been the focus of retribution, being accused of collaborating in the expulsion of Kosovar Albanians. Historical animosity against the Roma community has also played a role. A July 20 statement condemning attacks on Serbs and Roma was released by the former UCK leadership, and former UCK leader Hashim Thaqi publicly denounced the July 23 Gradsko attack. There is no evidence that the former UCK leadership is orchestrating the violence. On the other hand, Kosovar Albanians have neither identified the perpetrators of these crimes, nor has the condemnation of these abuses by leaders of the Kosovar Albanian population been as broad, sustained, or

effective as the circumstances warrant.

Prior to 1999, there were an estimated 200,000 Serbs in Kosovo. Today, some 97,000 remain, according to KFOR. This report documents all that we can now confirm about war crimes that occurred in Kosovo before the end of the conflict. Although this volume is far more detailed than the first edition, which was published before international investigators had physical access to alleged mass grave sites in Kosovo, this second volume still does not and cannot fully document the horrors that took place during the Spring of 1999 and before. Meanwhile, the question of violence and persecution against ethnic Serbs, Roma and other, as well as the question of Kosovar Albanian detainees and missing persons deserves a documentary approach and detailed reporting that the United States continues to support both financially and politically.

The United States is also committed to supporting NATO and UNMIK efforts to break the cycle of violence. In the long term, the solution will lie in developing robust and pluralistic Kosovar institutions dedicated to respecting the rule of law. With logistical and financial assistance from the U.S., the police academy in Kosovo recently graduated its first class, a group of Kosovars, selected and trained to enforce the laws and guarantee due process without regard to ethnic background. In addition, the U.S. and the international community are focusing resources and training on integrating former UCK members into the Kosovo Protection Force (KPC).

OSCE and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released a joint report on November 3, 1999 on the situation of ethnic minorities in Kosovo, which observed that the overall situation remains tense. Movement out of Kosovo of persons from minority groups, particularly Serbs and Roma, continues. The report notes that fear is usually the major factor, but increasingly concerns about lack of access to humanitarian assistance, medical facilities, education, pensions, and employment are causing

displacement. It states that this exclusion from such facilities and opportunities are either the direct result of a lack of freedom of movement brought on by the security situation or a consequence of real or perceived discrimination in the delivery of public services which are now predominantly, if not exclusively, Kosovar Albanian-run.

Finally, there is a further set of human rights issues emanating from Serbian authorities' actions in Kosovo. According to Amnesty International, as many as 23,000 conscientious objectors, draft evaders, and deserters from the Yugoslav Army during the Kosovo conflict may face trial before former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) military courts. At least several hundred conscientious objectors reportedly are imprisoned in the FRY, along with draft evaders and deserters. Meanwhile, at least 2,000 ethnic Albanians, and perhaps a significantly higher number, are reportedly held in Serbian detention facilities—some without formal charges against them. While Belgrade has released the names of approximately 2,000 of these detainees and released a few hundred in the past few weeks, ethnic Albanians claim that thousands more could be held in Serbian prisons. NGOs have documented that these detainees include women and children. The United States government calls upon Serbian authorities to release all imprisoned conscientious objectors, account for and unconditionally return detained Kosovar Albanians to their families in Kosovo, and suspend legal proceedings against both groups immediately.