

JUDGMENTS ANNOUNCED FOR WAR CRIMES DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY - JUNE 2025

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Since the end of the armed conflict in Kosovo, the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo (HLCK) has been monitoring war crimes trials before Kosovo's courts. HLCK has consistently published, and will continue to publish, case analyses and bulletins aimed at informing the wider public about these judicial proceedings.

This newsletter presents information on seven (7) war crimes cases in Kosovo in which judgments were rendered in January–June 2025, either at first instance by the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština or at second instance by the Special Department of the Court of Appeals of the Republic of Kosovo.

During this reporting period, the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština rendered first instance judgments in five (5) cases: **Prosecutor against Dragiša Milenković**, **Prosecutor against Časlav Jolić**, **Prosecutor against Zoran Vukotić (joined cases)**, **Prosecutor against Gavriilo Milosavljević**, and **Prosecutor against Živojin Nešić**. In addition, one (1) case was remanded for retrial by the Special Department of the Court of Appeals, **Prosecutor against Muhamet Alidemaj**. Whereas in the case of **Prosecutor against Ekrem Bajrović**, the first-instance conviction was upheld.

FIRST INSTANCE JUDGMENTS RENDERED FOR WAR CRIMES IN KOSOVO DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY - JUNE 2025

1. PROSECUTOR AGAINST DRAGIŠA MILENKOVIĆ

On 26 December 2023, the Special Prosecutor of the Republic of Kosovo (SPRK), Atdhe Dema, filed an indictment against the defendant Dragiša Milenković, on well-grounded suspicion that during the period from 24 May 1999 until 10 June 1999, at the Prishtina/Priština and Lipjan/Lipljan Prisons, in his capacity as an official person and in co-perpetration with other official persons, he systematically mistreated Albanian prisoners by subjecting them to inhumane torture with various means to the point of unconsciousness; as a result, causing them bodily injuries and psychological suffering.

Following confirmation of the indictment, the trial against the defendant Milenković commenced on 27 May 2024. The trial panel held a total of sixteen (16) trial sessions, during which eighteen (18) witnesses proposed by the SPRK were heard.

The trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtina/Priština, presided over by Judge Kujtim Krasniqi, on 16 April 2025, rendered its judgment, finding the defendant Dragiša Milenković **guilty** of the criminal offense of *war crime against the civilian population* and sentenced to **seven (7) years of imprisonment**. For the criminal offense of *unauthorized ownership, control, or possession of weapons*, he was additionally fined one thousand and five hundred (1,500) euros.

2. PROSECUTOR AGAINST ČASLAV JOLIĆ (RETRIAL)

On 18 November 2022, the Special Prosecutor of the SPRK, Ilir Morina, filed an indictment against the defendant Časlav Jolić, on well-grounded suspicion that during the period March- May 1998, in the village of Gjurakoc/Đurakovac, Municipality of Istog/Istok, in his capacity as a police officer, in uniform and armed, in co-perpetration with other persons, he took part in the beating of three (3) Albanian civilians, thereby committing the criminal offense of *war crime against the civilian population*.

Following confirmation of the indictment, the trial against the defendant Časlav Jolić commenced on 28 April 2023. The trial panel held a total of twelve (12) trial sessions, during which ten (10) witnesses proposed by the Special Prosecutor and two (2) witnesses proposed by the defense were heard.

On 10 June 2024, the trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtina/Priština, presided over by Judge Musa Konxheli, rendered its judgment, finding the defendant guilty on all counts of the indictment and sentencing him to eight (8) years of imprisonment.

On 29 November 2024, the Panel of the Special Department of the Court of Appeals of Kosovo, presided over by Judge Burim Ademi, issued a ruling granting the defense counsel's appeal against the first-instance conviction of 10 June 2024, reversing the appealed judgment and remanding the case for retrial.

Following the remand by the Court of Appeals of Kosovo, the retrial against the defendant Jolić commenced on 5 February 2025. The trial panel held a total of five (5) trial sessions, during which three (3) injured parties/witnesses were reheard, whose statements, according to the findings of the Appeals Panel, contained contradictions.

The trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtina/Priština, presided over by Judge Ngadhënjim Arrni, on 30 May 2025, rendered its judgment, finding the defendant Časlav Jolić **guilty of beating the injured party Zef Malësia**, in May 1998, in the "Bllagaq" neighborhood of Gjurakoc/Đurakovac village, and **sentenced him to imprisonment** for a term of **five (5) years and six (6) months**. However, with regard to the beatings of the injured parties Naim Ferati and Nexhmedin Curraj, the defendant was acquitted of the charges, as the court found that it had not been proven he had committed those acts.

3. PROSECUTOR AGAINST ZORAN VUKOTIĆ (JOINED CASES)

On 22 August 2024, the Presiding Judge of the trial panel, Judge Rrahman Beqiri, held the status conference, after which he joined the proceedings against the defendant Zoran Vukotić for four (4) indictments filed against him, all on the basis of grounded suspicion that the defendant, during the war in Kosovo, committed *war crimes against the civilian population*.

The trial against the defendant Vukotić in the joined cases commenced on 14 October 2024. The trial panel held a total of eleven (11) trial sessions, six (6) of which were closed to the public.

On 10 June 2025, the trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština, presided over by Judge Rrahman Beqiri, rendered its judgment, finding the defendant Zoran Vukotić **guilty only on one count of the joined case**, requalified as count (a), because during the war in Kosovo, specifically on 18 April 1999, near the city cemetery in Vushtrri/Vučitrn, the accused, acting in co-perpetration with other persons, in the capacity of a reserve member of the Serbian Police, wearing a Serbian Police uniform and armed, killed a 13-year-old Albanian boy, B.M. For this offense, the court imposed a **prison sentence of fifteen (15) years**.

Vukotić was **acquitted** of the following charges:

- In May 1999, in co-perpetration with other members of the Serbian forces, the defendant committed sexual violence against an Albanian woman in a village of Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality.

- Between 2 and 3 May 1999, in co-perpetration with other Serbian forces, the defendant took part in an attack against the Albanian civilian population traveling in a convoy from the villages of Studime e Epërme/Gornja Studimlja to Studime e Poshtme/Donja Studimlja. During the night, civilians were subjected to mistreatment and the brutal killing of thirteen (13) civilians: Ekrem Mullaku, Xhavit Mullaku, Fatmir Ahmet Gërxhaliu, Eshref Rashica, Adnan Bunjaku, Rrahmon Ademi, Bajram Gërxhaliu, Avdyl Gërxhaliu, Bahrije Gërxhaliu, an unidentified 14-year-old boy, as well as Haki Ademi, Shaip Gërxhaliu, and Musa Gërxhaliu.
- On 5 May 1999, in co-perpetration with other Serbian forces, the defendant took part in the beating and looting of Albanian civilians, as well as in the killing of Enver Rustolli, Hamdi Fazliu, Avdulla Fazliu, and Fahredin Fazliu, and in the torture and looting of other Albanian civilians in Vushtrri/Vučitrn.

4. PROSECUTOR AGAINST GAVRILO MILOSAVLJEVIĆ

On 29 November 2023, Special Prosecutor Ilir Morina of the SPRK filed an indictment against the defendant Gavriilo Milosavljević, on grounded suspicion that the defendant, during the period 22–24 May 1999, at Dubravë/Dubrava Prison, in co-perpetration with other prison guards, Serbian inmates, and special police and military units, committed mass killings of Albanian prisoners, as a result of which 109 prisoners were killed and 108 were wounded. Furthermore, according to the indictment, during the period 1998–1999, the defendant, in co-perpetration with Serbian forces, took part in the beating, maltreatment, torture, and abuse of Albanian prisoners.

Following confirmation of the indictment, the trial against the defendant Milosavljević commenced on 11 September 2024. The trial panel held a total of sixteen (16) trial sessions, where eleven (11) witnesses proposed by the SPRK and two (2) witnesses proposed by the defense were heard.

On 16 June 2025, the trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština, presided over by Judge Vesel Ismaili, rendered its judgment, **acquitting** the defendant Gavriilo Milosavljević of all counts of the indictment for the criminal offense of *war crimes against the civilian population*, on the grounds that it was not proven that he committed the offense he was charged with. The Court does not dispute that the Dubravë/Dubrava Prison Massacre against Albanian prisoners occurred; however, it was not established that the defendant, while uniformed and armed, discharged a weapon at Albanian prisoners.

5. PROSECUTOR AGAINST ŽIVOJIN NEŠIĆ

On 26 August 2024, Special Prosecutor of the SPRK, Florie Salihu Shamolli, filed an indictment against the defendant Živojin Nešić, on grounded suspicion that, during April 1999, in a village of the Municipality of Vushtrri/Vučitrn, as a member of the reserve unit of the Serbian Police forces, in co-perpetration with two (2) other members of the same unit, he committed *sexual violence (rape) as a war crime against the civilian population*, against an Albanian woman.

Following confirmation of the indictment, the trial against the defendant Živojin Nešić commenced on 18 December 2024. The trial panel held a total of eight (8) trial sessions, all of which were closed to the public.

On 17 June 2025, the trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština, presided over by Judge Violeta Namani Hajra, rendered its judgment, finding the defendant Živojin Nešić **guilty** of committing sexual violence against an Albanian woman through the use of physical and psychological abuse and acts of extreme inhumanity. For these crimes, the Court sentenced him to **fifteen (15) years of imprisonment**.

SECOND INSTANCE JUDGMENTS RENDERED FOR WAR CRIMES IN KOSOVO DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY - JUNE 2025

6. PROSECUTOR AGAINST MUHAMET ALIDEMAJ

On 29 March 2022, Special Prosecutor of the SPRK, Ilir Morina, filed an indictment against the defendant Muhamet Alidemaj, on grounded suspicion that, on 28 March 1999, in the village of Izbicë/Izbica, Municipality of Skenderaj/Srbica, in co-perpetration with other members of the Serbian military and police forces, he participated in the inhumane treatment, violation of physical integrity and health, looting and destruction of property of the Albanian civilian population in Izbicë/Izbica and the surrounding villages, whom they expelled from their homes and, under threat of firearms, gathered in a meadow in the center of the village. On the same date, in the location known as “*Stejevci Mountains*,” the defendant, in co-perpetration, participated and contributed to the killing of 130 Albanian civilians. Two (2) months after the killing of the civilians, the defendant, accompanied by other members of the Serbian forces, returned to the village and exhumed the corpses using an excavator, with the intent to relocate them to an unknown location. Following the end of the war, the victims’ bodies were discovered in mass graves across Kosovo. Such conduct constitutes the criminal offense of *war crimes against the civilian population*.

Following confirmation of the indictment, the trial against the defendant Alidemaj commenced on 28 December 2022. The trial panel held nineteen (19) trial sessions, during which seventeen (17) witnesses proposed by the SPRK were heard, the statements of three (3) witnesses were read, and four (4) witnesses proposed by the defense were heard.

On 12 July 2024, the trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština, presided over by Judge Vesel Ismaili, rendered its judgment, finding the defendant Muhamet Alidemaj **guilty of two (2) counts of the indictment**, namely for participation in the inhumane treatment, violation of physical integrity and health, looting and destruction of property of the Albanian civilian population in Izbicë/Izbica and the surrounding villages, as well as for participation in the killing of 130 Albanian civilians on 28 March 1999 in the location known as “*Stejevci Mountains*.”, and was **sentenced to fifteen (15) years of imprisonment**. The defendant Alidemaj was acquitted of the final count of the indictment, namely the exhumation of the

corpses.

On 23 April 2025, the panel of the Special Department of the Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Vaton Durguti, issued a ruling granting the appeal of the defense counsel of the defendant, thereby reversing the first-instance judgment and remanding the case for **retrial**.

As of the date of publication of this bulletin, the retrial in this case has not commenced.

7. PROSECUTOR AGAINST EKREM BAJROVIĆ

On 15 September 2023, the Special Prosecutor of the SPRK, Ilir Morina, filed an indictment against the defendant, Ekrem Bajrović, on grounded suspicion that on 7 May 1999, in the village of Staradran/Starodvorane, the defendant participated in the arrest, kidnapping, and mistreatment of eighty-four (84) Kosovo Albanian civilians. These civilians were taken to the Police Station in Gjurakoc/Đurkovce, where they were subjected to inhumane torture, causing them severe bodily injuries and psychological suffering. Further, according to the indictment, on 8 May 1999, in the same village, acting in co-perpetration with Serbian forces, after stopping a column of civilians traveling toward Albania, the perpetrators robbed them, separated the men from the column, took them to the house of D.Z., where they were physically assaulted, and subsequently transferred them to the house of Z.S., where they executed sixteen (16) Kosovo Albanian civilians: Dinë Grabovci, Hasan Elshani, Niman Elshani, Muharrem Elshani, Muhajedin Elshani, Shemsedin Elshani, Nexhmedin Elshani, Avdyl Elshani, Ismet Ahmetaj, Mustafë Dreshaj, Berat Dreshaj, Remzi Shala, Gani Isufi, Bekim Mavraj, Jeton Ahmetaj, and Naim Elshani, the latter of whom was left wounded.

Following confirmation of the indictment, the trial against the defendant Bajrović commenced on 24 November 2023. The trial panel held thirteen (13) trial sessions, during which twenty (20) witnesses proposed by the SPRK were heard.

On 19 July 2024, the trial panel of the Special Department of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština, presided over by Judge Mentor Bajraktari, rendered a **guilty** judgment on all counts of the indictment and sentenced the defendant to **twelve (12) years of imprisonment**.

The panel of the Special Department of the Court of Appeals presided over by Judge Afërdita Bytyçi, on 21 May 2025, rendered a judgment rejecting the appeals of the defense counsel and **upholding the judgment of the Basic Court in Prishtinë/Priština**, thereby affirming the twelve (12) year prison sentence against the defendant Bajrović for war crimes against the civilian population.

HLCK FINDINGS:

An analysis of the judgments rendered for war crimes in Kosovo during the period January - June 2025 shows that the Special Department of the Court of Appeals is demonstrating a high level of diligence in the assessment of the parties' appeals. This reflects a careful, reasoned, and fair approach to sensitive criminal matters, such as those concerning war crimes.

A review of the cases recorded in this bulletin indicates that the decisions of the second instance are establishing a sound standard and consistent practice in the adjudication of war crimes cases in Kosovo. The professional approach, grounded in law, evidence, and the rights of the parties in the proceedings, makes the Court of Appeals a key instance in strengthening the rule of law.

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