

MEMO

RIA

LIZAT

ION



Fondi për të Drejtën Humanitare Kosovë
Fond za humanitarno pravo Kosovo
Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo

IT'S ROLE
AND IMPORTANCE
IN DEALING WITH
THE PAST

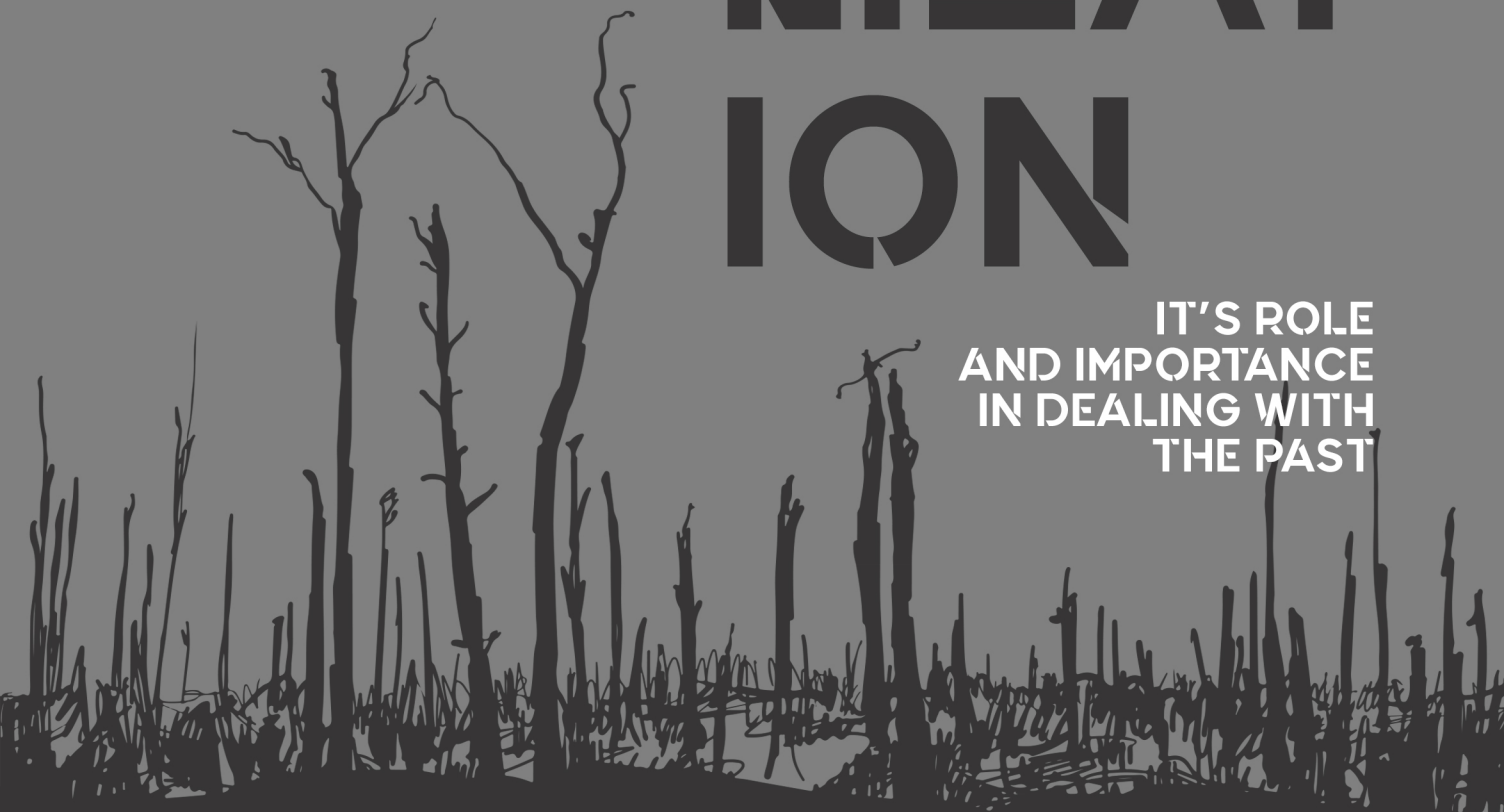


NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

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ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN LAW CENTER KOSOVO

The Humanitarian Law Center (HLC Kosovo) was established in Prishtinë/Priština in May 1997, by the human rights activist Ms. Natasha Kandić, as a branch office of the Humanitarian Law Center.

As of April 2011, the HLC Kosovo operates as an independent organization. The HLC Kosovo continuously contributes to enabling Kosovo to establish the rule of law and implement transitional justice mechanisms, in order to develop a just society that deals with the past and respects the rights of every citizen.

The HLC Kosovo is working to document facts that will help Kosovo society to deal with its violent past. The organization seeks to counter the denial and political manipulation of human losses, and to ensure the integrity and transparency of war crimes trials.

Until the outbreak of hostilities between Serbian security forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army in February 1998, the HLC Kosovo focused on documenting police repression against Kosovo Albanians, investigating cases of torture, illegal detention, mass summons of Albanians to appear for “informative talks”, and political trials. After the conflict escalated, the HLC Kosovo shifted its focus to documenting the killings and disappearances of Kosovo Albanians, as well as disappearances of members of other ethnic groups. When NATO intervened in 1999, the HLC Kosovo moved its offices to Montenegro, where it continued its documentation work with the Kosovan Albanians who were expelled from Kosovo. Following the 1999 Peace Agreement that ended the war, the HLC Kosovo returned to Prishtinë/Priština and began docu-

documenting the crimes committed by Serbian forces during the NATO air campaign. After the establishment of the international administration in Kosovo, the HLC Kosovo began to investigate the kidnappings, disappearances, and killings of Serbs, Ashkalis, Bosniaks, and Albanians.

Today, the HLC Kosovo maintains its efforts to monitor judicial proceedings related to the consequences of the recent conflict. In addition to monitoring and reporting on trials, the HLC Kosovo is actively involved in locating victims and representing their families in courts in Kosovo and Serbia. The third essential element of the HLC Kosovo activities is the dissemination of knowledge on transitional justice within professional and non-professional communities.

INTRODUCTION

This publication was prepared under the project "Promotion of Dialogue and Historical Understanding" supported by the foundation 'The National Endowment for Democracy' (NED). The project seeks to close the knowledge gap that exists among young people in Kosovo about the recent conflicts in the Balkans, as well as the commemoration of civilian victims from all ethnic backgrounds throughout Kosovo.

The publication is arranged in two key parts. In its first part, it provides an examination of how important the memorialization process is and how such a process is being practiced in Kosovo regarding the events of the last war during 1998-1999. While the second part of the publication addresses the importance of marking crime sites in the process of dealing with the past in Kosovo, providing an overview of twelve (12) such sites where serious violations of human rights occurred, and those sites had not been marked until now. Both parts are the result of two years of work by the HLC Kosovo staff.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo and do not necessarily reflect the views of the 'National Endowment for Democracy'.

1. MEMORIALIZATION

ROLE AND IMPORTANCE IN STATES AND SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION

Memorialization efforts, taking a variety of forms ranging from the building and establishment of memorial monuments, research and archival centers, museums, documentation, and other similar forms, occupy an important place in the process of dealing with the past (Toma, 2020, p. 11). However, memorialization processes are geared not only towards the past by recalling events, recognizing, and honoring victims and enabling stories to be related, but equally to the present by contributing to healing processes and rebuilding of trust between communities, and the future by contributing to the prevention of further violence through education and awareness-raising (A.HRC/25/49, 2014, para.13). In addition, memorialization is an essential process for recovery from trauma and atrocities where, among the many ways of addressing the past through transitional justice, memorialization has the potential to involve larger numbers of people over longer periods of time and to be initiated equally by both communities and governments (Hamber et al, 2010, p. 398).

Researchers Barsalou and Baxter consider that for collective memory processes, the process of remembering and honoring is not just victor's justice, but a thoughtful process of reflection on the past. Further, they note that survivors must be directly involved in the discussion of what should be remembered and how. And finally, memorialization should be considered as a long-term policy and process in transition countries (Barsalou & Baxter, 2007, p.13). In cases where such principles are not taken into consideration, the memorialization process in post-conflict societies can significantly harm the process of dealing with the past towards building lasting peace and guarantees of non-recurrence (Toma, 2020, p.11; Baliqi, 2017, p.5). Therefore, memorialization should have an important place in the processes of dealing with the past in the creation of collective memory based on facts, promoting peace and reconciliation between divided societies.

2. KOSOVO CONTEXT

The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia was followed by numerous armed conflicts during the 90s, and these were characterized by serious violations of human rights. The armed conflict in Kosovo during 1998-1999, caused numerous victims, great material harm, and also brought a whole new reality regarding the political status of Kosovo, which from an Autonomous Province of the former Yugoslavia became subject to international administration, moving on to subsequently declare independence in 2008, transforming into a parliamentary republic. At the moment, Kosovo has a population effectively divided along ethnic lines as a result of the events that took place at the end of the 80s and throughout the 90s, which also affected the breakdown of relations between the ethnic groups living in Kosovo, especially between Albanians and Serbs.

According to preliminary data published in the Kosovo Memory Book, as a result of the conflict during 1998-1999 and after the war until the end of 2000, there were 13,535 people killed and/or forcibly disappeared. Of the total number of victims, there were 10,317 civilians (of which 8,676 Albanians, 1,196 Serbs, and 445 from other ethnic groups) and 3,218 from various armed forces (of which 2,131 from the Kosovo Liberation Army, 1,084 from the Serbian and Yugoslav armed forces, and 3 from the NATO forces). On the other hand, over 1,600 persons are still missing.

The period of 1998-1999 was also accompanied by a significant displacement of the population internally and in the countries of the region. Over 1 million citizens of Kosovo were forcibly expelled from the country. Within nine weeks of the beginning of the NATO air strikes in the former Yugoslavia, nearly 860,000 people were registered as refugees in the countries of the region (of which 444,600 in Albania, 344,500 in FYR Macedonia, and 69,900 in Montenegro) (UNHCR, 2000, p. 7). While immediately after the end of war in June 1999 and the following months, over 200,000 Serbs, Roma, and members of other minority communities fled Kosovo (UNHCR, 1999, p. 6).

3. MEMORIALIZATION IN KOSOVO

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At the central level, there are currently two laws and one regulation governing issues

related to the memorialization of events of the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo. According to Law No. 04/L-146 on the Agency for the Management of Memorial Complexes of Kosovo, the overall responsibilities for the design, construction, administration, and management of memorial complexes are supported by this Agency (Law No. 04/L-146, 2013). On the other hand, the status of the "Adem Jashari" Memorial Complex is governed by a special law which defines its status and obligations of the Kosovo institutions towards the memorial complex and provides that this memorial has ontological, anthropological, historical, cultural, and civil importance for Skenderaj, Drenica, Kosovo, and the entire Albanian nation (Law No. 06/L-059, 2018). The Government of Kosovo has drawn up a regulation applicable to visits to this memorial complex, which defines the rules and conduct of visitors in the facilities of the "Adem Jashari" Memorial Complex in Prekaz (Regulation No. 01/2021, 2021).

As for the local level, the procedures and criteria for memorialization processes are governed by each municipality based on the powers established by the Law on Local Self-Government (Law No. 03/L-040, 2008). Such procedures and criteria for commemorations are provided in concrete regulations introducing a series of rules, conditions, and sanctions applicable to remembrance activities of collective and commemorative importance (example: R-01-331/12-K.VU, 2012).

AGENCY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF MEMORIAL COMPLEXES OF KOSOVO

The Agency for the Management of Memorial Complexes is an independent body, established by the central level institutions of Kosovo, responsible for the design, construction, administration, and management of memorial complexes throughout the territory of Kosovo (Law No. 04/L-146, 2013). This Agency has a register of over 1,300 memorials that have been built in Kosovo and most of them are related to the war that took place during 1998-1999. The register can be easily accessed on the official website of the Agency and includes memorials built by victims' families, by organized community groups, by the municipalities, and by the Government (website - <https://amkmk.rks-gov.net/> ; Haxhijaj, 2021). The creation of this register is welcomed and provides a general overview of the number and location of memorials throughout the territory of Kosovo and represents an important source of information for various

interest groups and the general public. However, the register of memorials is marred by some shortcomings that are damaging the process of creating a collective memory that contributes to lasting peace, such as:

- The register usually only provides a single photograph and the location where the memorials are located, and only for a small number of monuments contains more additional information, such as: when, by whom, and why they were built. Accordingly, most items lack basic information about the event which prompted the memorial monument to be erected;

- The Agency has included in its register memorials that feature incorrect information and promote hatred on ethnic grounds; and

- The Agency has included in its register only the memorials dedicated to Albanians. Hence, memorials dedicated to members of other communities, such as Serbs, Roma, Egyptians, and other ethnic groups, are excluded from the Agency's registry and stewardship. This reflects a one-sided approach and contrary to the principles of non-discrimination on ethnic grounds.

MEMORIALIZATION PRACTICE IN KOSOVO

The proper memorialization of events of the war in Kosovo during 1998-1999 remains outside the attention scope of relevant institutions in Kosovo. The process of commemorating the past continues to be characterized by the construction of busts, commemorative plaques, and naming of streets and public buildings in honor of various figures, and there is a practice of non-compliance with municipal regulations regarding the process of erecting such memorials. On the other hand, Kosovo is yet to establish a war museum which would contribute to the enhancement of the collective memory of the Kosovan society regarding the events of the last war. Research and archival centers accessible to the general public are also lacking. In general, memorialization in Kosovo is characterized by a focus on the heroism of the KLA war; there is no proper commemoration of civilian victims; there is focus on commemorating men as heroes and commemorating women only as victims; an ethnically inclusive practice is missing, and memorialization is characterized by inaccurate content and promotion of hate speech.

Focus on Armed Groups: As noted above, more than 10,000 people who were executed and/or forcibly disappeared were civilian victims. However, the practice of memorialization in Kosovo persists in an approach that does not acknowledge these facts. Post-war memorials and public narratives in Kosovo continue to focus “on the heroism of the fallen soldiers and the sacrifice for the ‘liberation war’ by the war survivors” (Baliqi, 2017, p.2). In every city you can see large busts, memorials, and commemorative plaques dedicated to members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which were initiated and funded by state institutions and other community groups. The focus on armed forces is also noticeable in terms of size, place, and relevant attention. What does this mean? For example, in the main square of Prishtinë/Priština, you can easily notice the statue of former KLA commander Zahir Pajaziti because it is large, well placed, and receives attention on many commemorative days, but on the other hand, you can hardly notice the memorial dedicated to missing persons because it is much smaller, located in a corner of the square, and is usually visited by state institution representatives only on April 27 – National Missing Persons Day.

Lack of Attention to Civilian Victims Commemoration: Civilian victims continue to lack adequate attention from state institutions in the commemoration process. Most commemorative initiatives dedicated to civilians are initiated and supported by their families, their community, local businesses, or non-governmental organizations. State institutions have focused mostly on the arrangement of the cemeteries of civilian victims, but even in this part they have failed in many cases: one example of note relates to the Mejë/Meja Massacre, the biggest massacre of the war in Kosovo, but until today the cemetery where the victims of this massacre have been laid to rest has not been completed. Transitional justice promotes a victim-centric approach to victims in all its mechanisms. Therefore, memorialization as one of the mechanisms of transitional justice should contribute to remembering and honoring the victims, thereby recognizing their loss and pain while also serving as a form of symbolic reparation to victims.

Women as Victims in Collective Memory: Women, on the other hand, continue to be commemorated only as victims and not for their contribution in various forms. The HEROINAT memorial, which was built in 2015 and is dedicated to the victims of sexual

violence during the war in Kosovo, is a memorial that is mostly related to the commemoration of women during the war and is an example of how women continue to be commemorated only as victims of war. On the other hand, there are a number of memorials that are dedicated to women as former members of the KLA, but do not receive proper attention, same as the HEROINAT memorial on commemoration days. Such practices are feeding the construction of a collective memory in the Kosovan society where women are not recognized for their contribution in the war of the late 90s.

Lack of Ethnically Inclusive Approach: Another shortcoming of the memorialization process in Kosovo is the lack of an inclusive approach on ethnic grounds. As noted above, memorials dedicated to non-Albanian victims are not registered and consequently not managed by the Agency for the Management of Memorial Complexes. On the other hand, there are cases where certain victims are excluded from memorials sponsored by municipal institutions, such as the case of a Roma girl who was not included in the group of victims noted on a memorial plaque (HLC Kosovo, 2020). Another case is the memorial dedicated to the victims who lost their lives on the Llu-zhan/Lužane Bridge where a passenger bus was hit by a shell in 1999 – the plaque that was funded by the Municipality of Podujevë/Podujevo excludes the Serbian victims. (Fazliu & Robinson, 2021). Memorials dedicated to non-Albanian victims are also not visited by state representatives on their commemorative day activities.

Inclusivity in commemoration is promoted by non-governmental organizations, criticizing cases such as those mentioned above, raising awareness among citizens on the importance of inclusivity, and also implementing commemorative initiatives that promote inclusivity such as:

- “Once upon a time, never again” – An exhibition dedicated to the 1,133 children killed and/or missing as a result of the war in Kosovo. This exhibition was opened in 2019 in the premises of the Kosovo Documentation Center (DCK) produced by HLC Kosovo and served as a memorial for all the children who lost their lives as a result of the war regardless of ethnic background. (HLC Kosovo, 2019).

- “Virtual Museum of Refugees” – A compilation of personal narratives of individuals from different ethnic groups who reveal their personal experiences during the

period when they were displaced as refugees as a result of the war in Kosovo. This platform was created in 2021 by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo (YIHR-KS, 2021).

– “Bitter Land” – An interactive database containing the exact location of a large number of mass graves that have been discovered so far throughout the former Yugoslavia. In addition to the location of graves, this platform provides information related to the identity of bodies found in the graves, perpetrators of the crimes, and other information based on a comprehensive approach. This platform was created in 2021 by Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN, 2021).

Promotion of Hatred: Language in memorials is another issue that needs to be addressed in Kosovo. Memorials feature nationalistic language and hate speech. Phrases like “killed by Serbian criminals”, “executed by Serbian Chetnik forces”, “killed by Albanian terrorists”, “executed by KLA terrorists”, “killed by NATO aggression”, etc., represent language that we encounter in many cases in memorialization practices, both in memorials and in speeches given during various commemorative events. Additionally, hate speech is common practice even in commemorative events related to the last war in Kosovo. Such language contributes to the construction of collective memory based on hatred and also to the promotion of collective responsibility.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- Memorialization and its importance in the creation of collective memory, which would affect guarantees of non-recurrence, are not in the focus of state institutions of the Republic of Kosovo;

- Memorialization activities organized and supervised by state bodies are characterized by lack of inclusive approaches regarding the commemoration of events where individuals from all ethnic groups living in Kosovo suffered and the commemoration of all categories of victims;

- Civil society in Kosovo is playing a key role in raising awareness towards a comprehensive approach to memorialization processes;

- In Kosovo, there is no law that would establish and govern the standards applicable to memorials, including their form, placement, and size;

- Memorialization process in Kosovo continues to be characterized by inaccurate data, nationalistic language, and ethnic hatred.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- State institutions should recognize the importance of the memorialization process in dealing with the past and support such a process;

- Memorialization in Kosovo should rely on an inclusive approach for all ethnic groups living in Kosovo;

- Memorialization in Kosovo should include remembering and honoring all categories of victims;

- Institutions should take concrete steps in drafting a law that would establish and govern standards for the construction of memorials;

- Memorials must be built with integrity, providing services to citizens, with accurate information, free of hate speech, and without biased and divisive narratives;

- Kosovo Agency for Memorial Complex Management should:

- include all memorials in the database,
- provide a brief explanation for each memorial in its database,
- find ways to remedy memorials that promote hate speech and nationalism and stop this practice for future memorials;

- Relevant institutions in Kosovo should establish a war museum, pursuant to a holistic approach and based on accurate facts;

- Survivors and victims' representatives should be consulted directly and continuously regarding memorialization processes;

- Practices of group commemoration should be promoted in addition to the current individual practice in Kosovo.

6. MARKING CRIME SITES

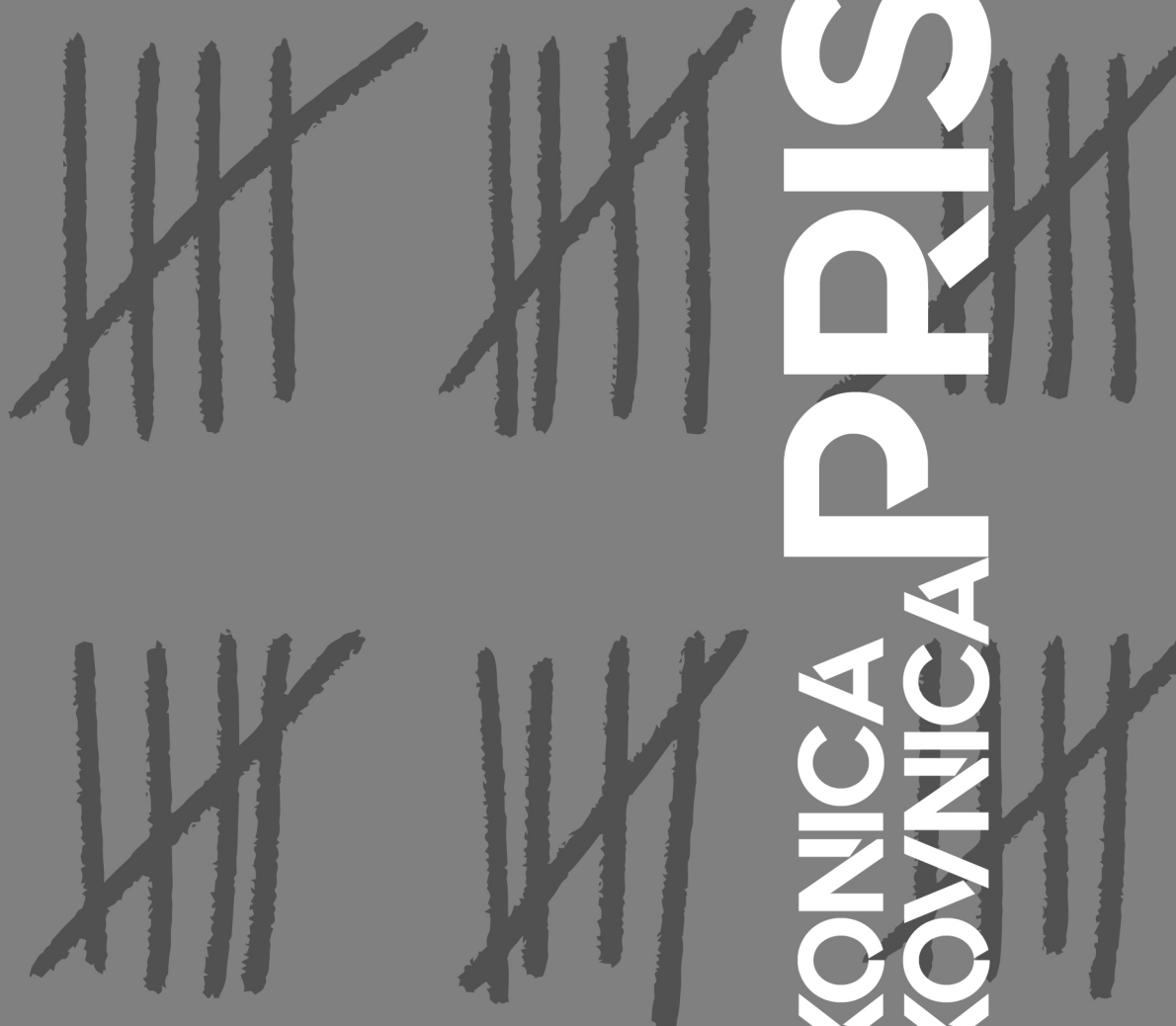
Considering memorialization as an important tool of transitional justice in its role in dealing with the past, the HLC Kosovo has, over the last two years, conducted an analysis of how such a process is evolving in relation to the events of 1998-1999 in Kosovo. As a result of such an analysis, the HLC Kosovo has found that the process of memorialization in Kosovo is mostly focused on static memorials such as busts, tombstones, memorial complexes, statues, commemorative plaques, and cemeteries of different categories of victims. The register of the Agency for the Management of Memorial Complexes lists 1,356 such memorials and most of them are directly related to the war in Kosovo during 1998-1999. That total number consists of 160 commemorative plaques, 85 memorials, 103 KLA War heritage sites, 203 martyrdom sites, 546 tombstones, 95 busts, 17 memorial complexes, 70 statues, 35 cemeteries of fallen soldiers, 17 cemeteries of fallen soldiers and martyrs, and 25 cemeteries of martyrs in the entire territory of Kosovo. In addition to these, there is also a group of different memorial sites which are outside this register because they commemorate events related to certain ethnic groups.

Although a little more than two decades have passed since the end of war in Kosovo, a large number of sites where serious violations of human rights occurred have faded from the collective memory of our society. This is the result of the lack of crime site recording and consequently, the collective memory of our society regarding the past is lacking. Bearing this in mind, the HLC Kosovo has worked on identifying several locations throughout the territory of Kosovo where serious violations of human rights have occurred and have not yet been marked.

The marking of such crime sites was conducted through writing short narratives related to specific locations where there were serious violations of human rights committed during the war in Kosovo. These narratives were also augmented with figurative illustrations to provide a reader friendly approach and built based on the facts proven by national and international judicial institutions, interviews with witnesses and survivors, site visits, photographs, and various documentary evidence. Such narratives focused on three key aspects: what purpose did that particular site serve, what happened there during the war, and what has that space turned into now. The process of crime site identification and drafting the stories of what happened in those places encountered many challenges, ranging from collecting factual evidence, presence of controversial narratives, witness hesitation to interview, changing spaces, and forgetfulness, up to denial of certain events, which part of the society considers as irrelevant to remember and establish on record. In the framework of the process, HLC Kosovo has selected 12 places of crime, which have not yet been marked and which are not well known to the public in Kosovo. By working on narratives related to the events that took place on those sites, the HLC Kosovo seeks to achieve two key goals: firstly, to commemorate the victims of serious violations of human rights committed on those sites; and secondly, to contribute to enhancing the collective memory of our society, as a significant milestone towards achieving lasting peace.



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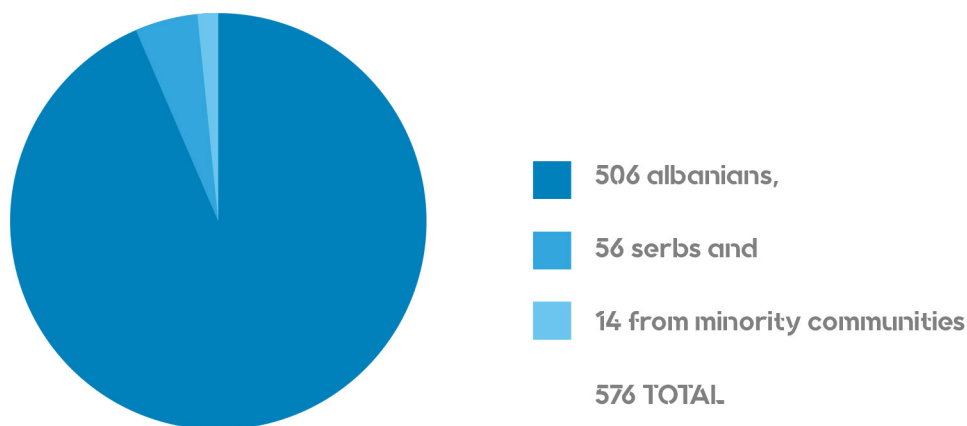
SMREKONICA PRISON SMREKOVNICA

VUSHTRRI/VUÇITRN

SMREKONICĚ / SMREKOVNICA PRISON

VUSHTRRI / VUČITRN

The municipality of Vushtrri/Vučitrn is one of the areas most affected by the war. Approximately 90.000 inhabitants used to live there, around 90% were Albanians, while Serbs were settled mainly in the town of Vushtrri/Vučitrn and some surrounding villages. There, between 1998 - 2000, 576 people lost their lives / went missing as a result of the war. Of these, 506 were Albanians, 56 Serbs and 14 from minority communities.



The day NATO bombing began, on March 24, 1999, the town of Vushtrri /Vučitrn was shelled by Serbian forces and thousands of Albanians were forced out of their homes. Violent displacements intensified by the end of April, and consequently, tens of thousands of residents gathered in the Shala region until the offensive began, which broke the crowd in two directions: towards Podujeva/Podujevo and along the Sllakoc/Sllakovc River.



Escorted by the armed forces, a caravan of 30.000 refugees headed towards the town of Vushtrri/Vučitrn. In the evening of May 2, 1999, the convoy of people was stopped between the villages of Studime e Epërme/ Gornje Studimlje and Studime e Poshtme/ Donje Studimlje as it was the time of the curfew they decided to spend the night there. Suddenly, Serbian forces began attacking them from all sides, penetrating within the civilian caravan and torturing the citizens gathered there for hours. Amid looting and severe beatings, around 100 people were killed and many more were wounded.



After midnight, the caravan was ordered to move towards Vushtrri/Vučitrn. The survivors continued their way throughout the night, until the morning of May 3rd, leaving behind their killed family members and their belongings. Under the supervision of police and some soldiers, the crowd headed towards the agricultural cooperative near the Vicianum motel.

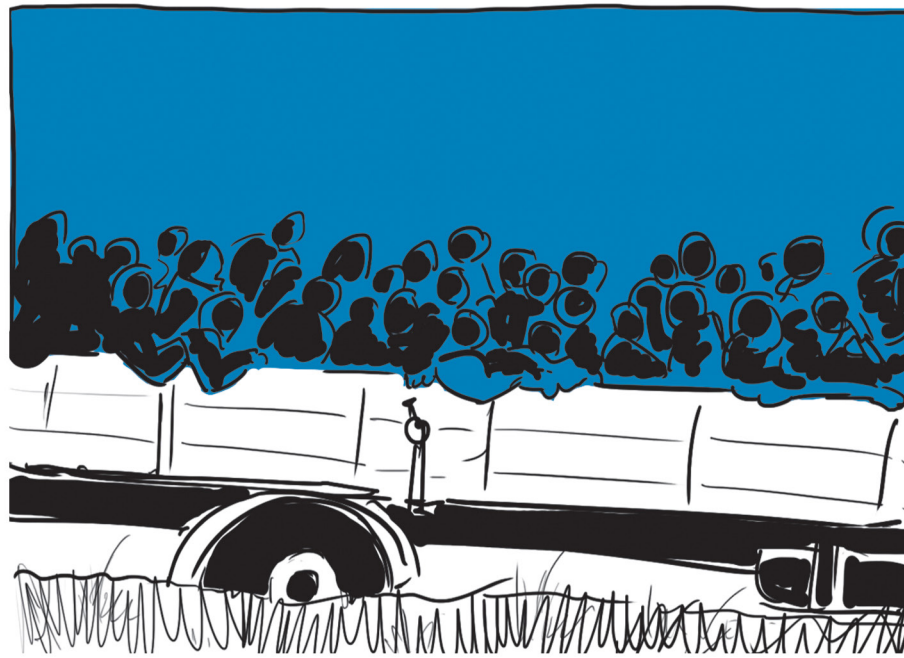


After staying there for a while, the police started to separate the men on one side while the others were ordered to get on the tractors and carry on to Albania.



While the convoy of tractors was leaving, two trucks with trailers came to the cooperative, where, the remaining men were hit and forced to get on the trucks and then drove them to Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison. Trucks had made this route several times, thereby transporting hundreds of prisoners.

In the prison yard, after collecting personal data, they started beating and dividing the men in different spaces/facilities of the prison. The prison rooms were empty, there were no beds, nor blankets. Tens and hundreds of people were put in small rooms without eating or drinking for three days in a row.

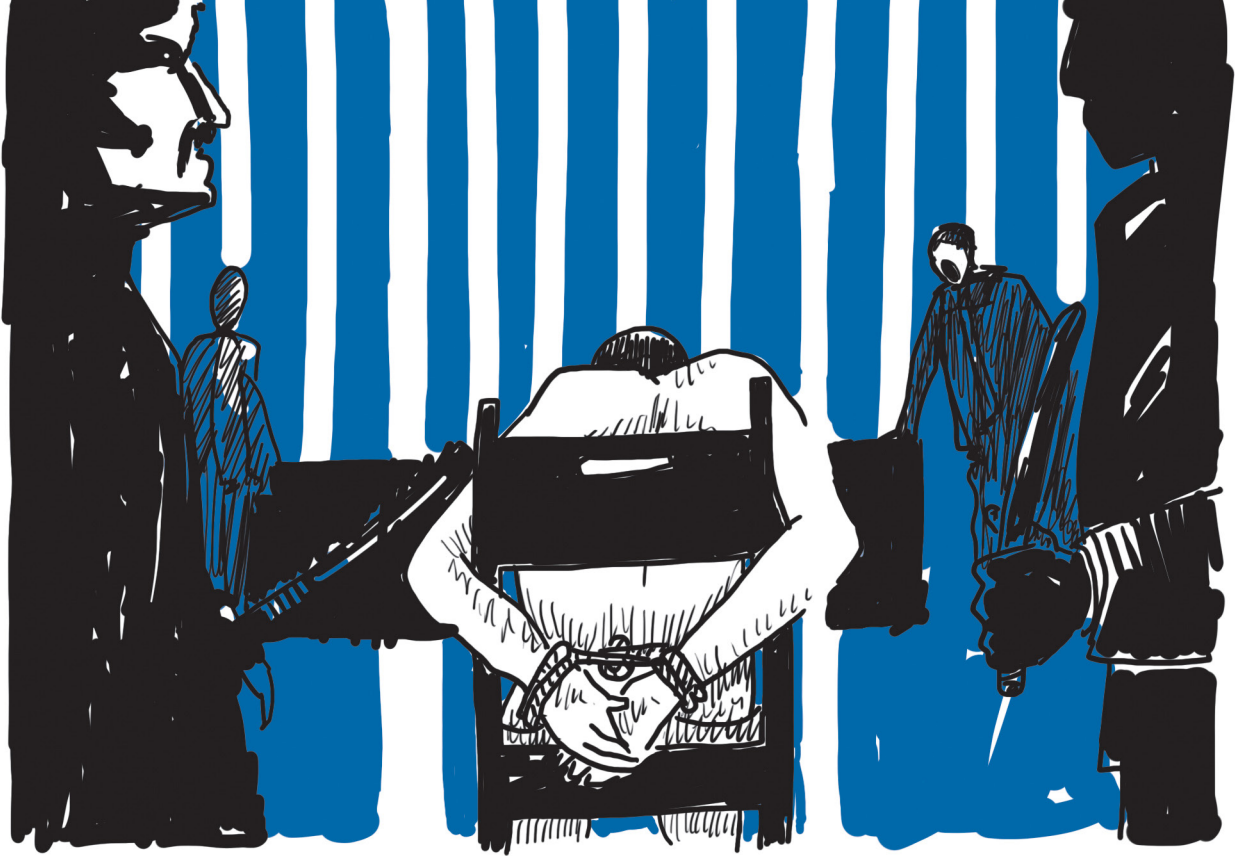


After three days, the prisoners were given some bread and water, which seemed contaminated as many prisoners got ill. The prison was overcrowded, there were prisoners staying both in the gym and in the corridors. They were constantly abused and sent in groups to the prison yard or near the television room and beaten until they lost consciousness. After a few days, during the torture, they were interrogated and given a letter to sign, that they had been accused of terrorism. In addition to the prison guards and the regular police, the prisoners also noticed the presence of the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit.



The situation of the prisoners deteriorated after May 16th, 1999, when another 830 prisoners from Mitrovica were brought to prison. Prisoners were then kept in bathrooms and basements whereas those in the rooms had no space, not even to lie down on the concrete floor. Food rations were reduced and very often prisoners had nothing to eat. Beatings and ill-treatment occurred on a daily basis, with prison guards and police officers occasionally loading two trucks of prisoners and sending them to the Mitrovica Medical High School and Technical High School. They were held there all day, where they were 'interrogated' and ill-treated and then returned to the Smrekonicë/Smrekovnica prison. The health condition of the prisoners was aggravated. From the constant beatings they suffered serious injuries to the head, body, as well as broken limbs and teeth. From the statements of the witnesses, it is known that at least one person was beaten to death while two others died later as a result of ill-treatment in prison.





Around 3,000 prisoners were held in these circumstances, until 23rd of May 1999. On the morning of 23rd of May, the prisoners boarded the bus and were taken, under police supervision, to Shtime/Štimlje from where they were escorted by the Yugoslav army to Zhur/Žur. There they got off the buses and walked to the



border and were forced to submit their identification documents to cross over to Albania.

The crimes in the Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison were also confirmed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the Basic Court in Mitrovica in the case against Zoran Vukotić, who was sentenced to 6 years and 6 months in prison for inhumane treatment, and causing of great suffering through torture, beatings, violation of the bodily integrity and health of a high number of Albanian civilians detained in the Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison.



SMREKONICË/SMREKONICA PRISON

WHAT DID IT USE TO BE?

In 1978 in the village of Smrekonicë/Smrekonica, near the chicken farm in an area of 18 ha, a parallel division of Mitrovica prison was built for convicted returnees from prisons in Serbia (Požarevac and Niš), as existing prisons in Kosovo no longer had any free capacity.

On January 1, 1981, in Smrekonicë/Smrekovnica, all those persons for whom no special measures were needed, began to serve their sentences. During this time, the prison in Smrekonicë/Smrekonica had a capacity for 180 prisoners, and 1 year later this institution was transformed into a Correctional Facility, accepting convicts sentenced to six months to one-year prison sentences, from all over Kosovo.

After the demonstrations of 1981, the number of prisoners reached 700 even though the conditions in the facilities could not cope with this number, in different areas of the facilities (farm, reception room, ambulance and block) more beds were added.

By another decision in 1987, all men convicted of minor offenses as well as political prisoners were admitted to this Correctional Facility.

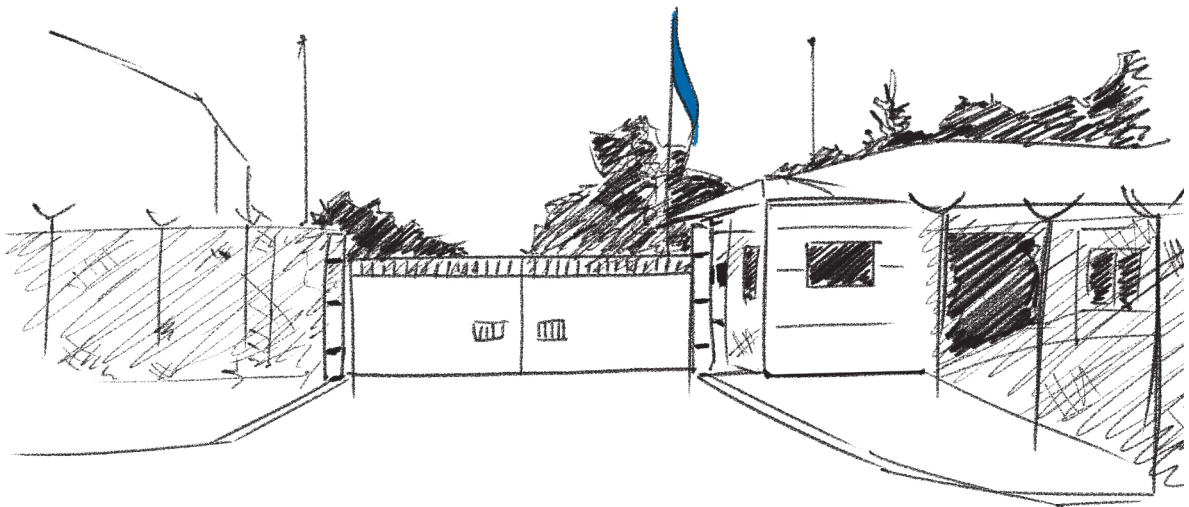
Between 1980 to 1999 the prisoners in Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison were over 70% Albanian. While serving their sentences, the prisoners were engaged in agriculture, livestock breeding, and canal opening.

SMREKONICË/SMREKONICA PRISON

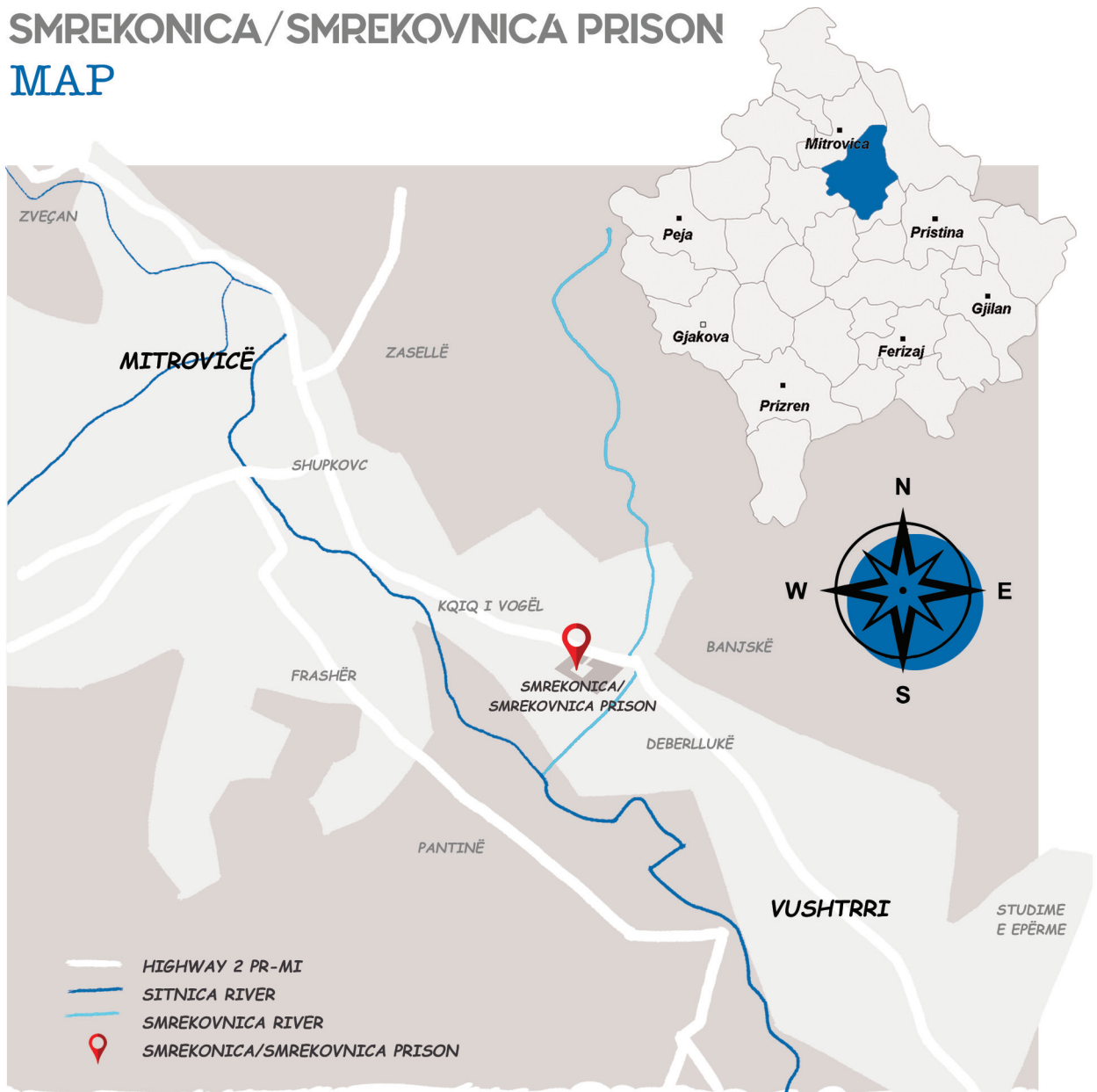
WHAT IS IT TODAY?

Since the end of 1999, Smrekonicë/Smrekonica Correctional Center has been an open prison with a capacity of 200 inmates for sentences of up to 3 years. The facilities of the Correctional Center are the same, they have only been renovated. Prisoners in Smrekonicë/Smrekonica are engaged in the cultivation of agricultural cultures.

Although there is a lot of data on the crimes and suffering caused in the premises of this prison between 1998-1999, to date there is no record that shows the events of that time.



SMREKONICA / SMREKOVNICA PRISON MAP





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PRISTINA

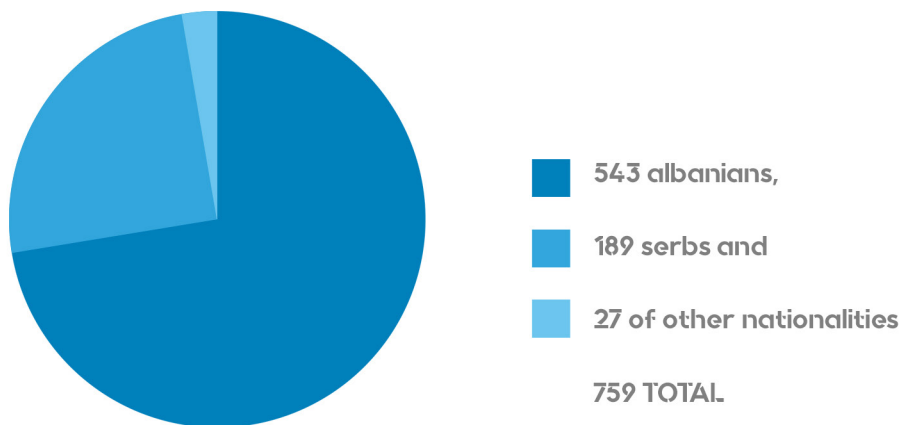
PRISTINA HOSPITAL

PRISTINA HOSPITAL

PRISTINA

The municipality of Pristina at broad had a population of 225,388 inhabitants while the city itself had about 162,800 inhabitants, of whom about 80 per-cent were Albanians. There were also approximately 20,775 Serbs and 12,568 members of non-majority communities living in Pristina.

In this municipality, throughout the years 1998 - 2000, 759 people lost their lives and/or disappeared as a consequence of the war. Of these, 543 were Albanians, 189 Serbs and 27 of other nationalities. In the city of Pristina 320 people were killed and/or went missing while the surrounding villages that suffered the most were: Koliq/Kolić, Makoc/Makovac, Grashticë/Graštica, Keqekollë/Kaçikol and Marec/Marevce.



Being it a capital city, Pristina was the administrative and institutional centre of Kosovo in which all central institutions were located. Pristina had its University since 1970, as well as the public institution of Radio Television of Pristina.



When in 1989 Kosovo's autonomy was abolished, discrimination against Albanians took on drastic proportions. Albanian-language university and high schools were closed, Albanians were expelled from their jobs in public institutions, and police repression increased. A serious consequence of these measures was the dismissal of many Albanian doctors and staff in the public health system. This forced Kosovo Albanians to respond to these measures by creating parallel, self-funded institutions in health and education.

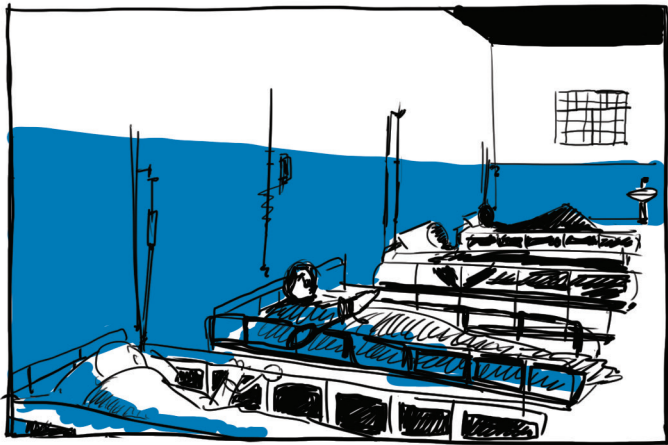


During the 1990s, many Albanians in need of non-urgent health services were treated in private clinics of the parallel system, supported by the Mother Teresa charity. However, such a system could not replace a state health program, and this was reflected in the health status of the population, where according to a report of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), during that time, maternal and child mortality of Albanians was the highest in Europe.

This already aggravated condition worsened even more by mid-1998, with the needs for medical assistance exceeding the capacities of private clinics of the parallel system. The victims of the war, which had just begun, were sent to Pristina Hospital to be treated for bodily injuries and wounds from firearms and explosive devices.



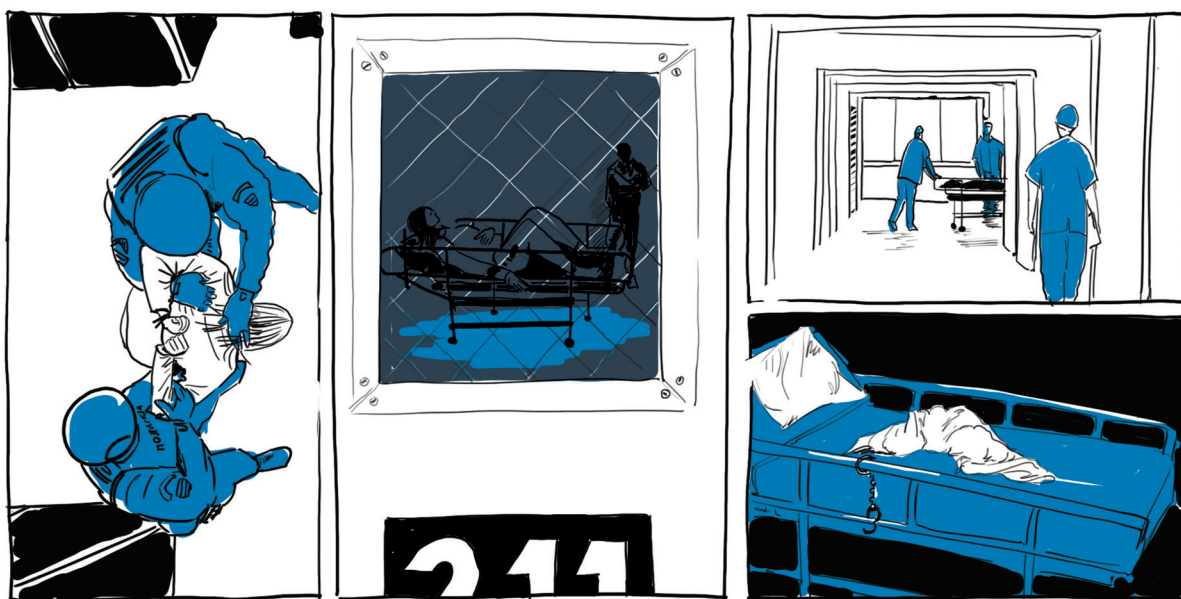
During the 1998-1999 period, cases of patients being physically abused were documented, and the most at risk were people who were coming from conflict areas, who were KLA fighters or supporters, or for whom Serbian authorities believed to be so. They were handcuffed to the bed even in cases when they were unconscious. There were cases when they were mistreated and treatment was denied to them. Pristina Hospital was constantly under police surveillance which made Albanian patients and doctors feel insecure and increased the risk of ill-treatment. Albanian doctors were also afraid, and during this period the Serbian medical staff dispersed them and did not allow more than three Albanian doctors to be together, with the idea that they might prepare some plotting.



Citizens from all over Kosovo were hospitalized in Pristina Hospital with an urgent need for intervention. In the chaos created there, the denial of proper provision of medical services was not the only violation committed against Albanian patients.

KLA members had an atrocious treatment in Pristina Hospital. During July 1998 there was a room in Vascular Surgery Department where 5 Albanians were hospitalized, three of them members of the KLA, and two others were civilians. All five were treated as terrorists, and besides being handcuffed to the bed or room radiators, the police was constantly guarding them. During their stay in the hospital, they were tortured on daily basis; mistreated by the police but also by Serb patients who were in the hospital. Health care was denied to them, they were fed little, and not provided water regularly. Yet, they would often let drinking water running into the faucet, as a form of torture. Late at night they were being beaten, their wounds were exposed and they were hit with rifle stocks, threatening to kill them. After about a month, they were released from the hospital, while some of them were sent to different prisons.

There were also cases of ill-treatment of patients suspected of having family ties to members of the KLA. Such an experience happened to a 19-year-old civilian girl. She was wounded in the abdomen by Serb forces in the village of Pllaqicë/Pločica, and due to the need for surgery she was hospitalized in Pristina Hospital, in late August 1998. Since her arrival in the hospital, she was mistreated, both by medical staff and police, on suspicion that she was a relative of a KLA soldier. She was being questioned about her family's involvement in the war and police was guarding the room in which she was placed. In addition to the physical abuse, she was denied proper medical treatment, and due to her wounds she died at the hospital, on August 5, 1998.



The overall situation in Kosovo was reflected also in the conditions in hospitals. From March 24, 1999, when the NATO air campaign began, Albanian doctors had heard that they could be held hostage by Serbs, and so a large number decided not to go to work anymore. The movements of patients were also dictated by the daily news, thus with the start of the bombing all patients who did not urgently need medical services, left the hospitals. This also happened at the Pristina Hospital; on the morning of March 25, 1999, military vehicles were parked in the hospital compound, while armed Serb soldiers and police patrolled the hospital premises, and snipers were stationed at the roof to monitor entrances and exits. This situation further exposed the violation of medical neutrality where most of the incidents at Pristina Hospital occurred after March 1999.

The trial of Nikola Šainović and others at the ICTY shows that at least one young girl was sexually assaulted in the basement of the Pristina Hospital in May 1999. During an attack by the Yugoslav Army and police in a village in Kosovo, with the aim of expelling Kosovar citizens from there, the soldiers took the young girl together with her brother, who was wounded, and brought them to Pristina. During that trip the girl was handcuffed, interrogated, threatened, beaten and sexually assaulted by one of the soldiers. While accompanying her injured brother to the Pristina Hospital, the girl was picked up and taken to one of the hospital basements, where there were 10 to 15 other women, all Albanian. She was then beaten, drugged and raped by three Yugoslav Army soldiers. The next day, she returned to the room where her brother was being treated, and stayed there until mid-June 1999, when they left the hospital. For this rape case, the court panel convicted defendants Nikola Šainović, Sreten Lukić and Nebojša Pavković.



PRISTINA HOSPITAL

WHAT WAS IT?

The Hospital Clinical Centre started its work in December 1958. After the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Pristina, on November 7, 1973, the Faculty merged with the Hospital of Pristina, as a United Labour Organization. From December 29, 1977, until 1991, it has operated as a working organization of the Faculty of Medicine.



PRISTINA HOSPITAL

WHAT IS IT TODAY?

Since June 1999, it is renamed to University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK), part of the Hospital and University Clinical Service in Kosovo (HUCSK). In addition to health activities, UCCK also offers educational and research-scientific activities. HUCSK is organized in clinics, institutes, centres, services and administrative units.

From the war until today, although there are evidences of massive human rights abuses during the period of 1998-1999, there are no records of the events of that time in the hospital premises.

PRISTINA HOSPITAL MAP





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PODUJEVË/PODUJEVO

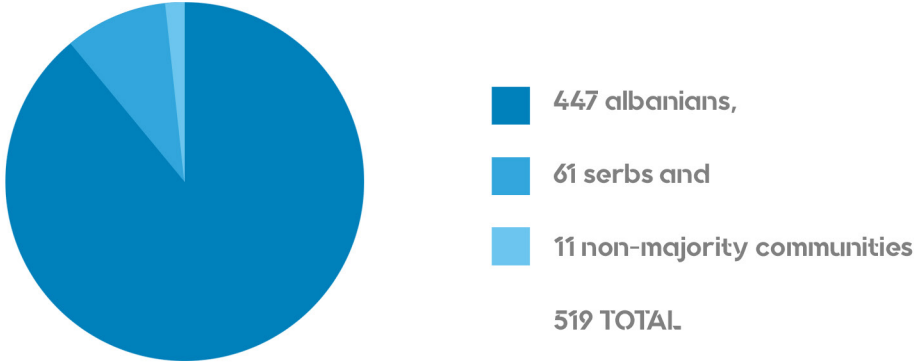
ILUZHIAN'S BRIDGE

LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

PODUJEVË/PODUJEVO

Before the war, the city of Podujeva/Podujevo was predominantly inhabited by Albanians, while about 2.8% were Serbs and 1.4% belonged to other non-majority communities.

In the period 1998-2000, 519 people were killed and/or disappeared in the municipality of Podujeva/Podujevo, of which 447 were Albanians, 376 were civilians and 71 were members of the KLA. Also in this municipality 61 Serbs lost their lives and/or disappeared, of which 28 were civilians and 33 were from armed formations. There were also losses from other non-majority communities; a total of 11 persons lost their lives, 2 of them belonged to armed formations.



During 1998, the municipality of Podujeva/Podujevo was characterized by occasional fighting between the Serbian armed forces and the KLA. On September 15, 1998, Serbian forces shelled the village of Dobratin/Dobrotin, forcing some 400 villagers to flee their homes. While on December 20, 1998, large military and police forces arrived in Podujeva/Podujevo where there was fighting, both in the city of Podujeva/Podujevo and in the villages around, such as Obrança/Obrandë, Gllamnik/Glamnik and Llapashticë e Poshtme/Donja Lapaštica.

The situation became more tense during March 1999, especially in the city of Podujeva/Podujevo, forcing the remaining population to flee to Macedonia or seek refuge in the mountains.

One of the places that suffered the most during 1998 - 2000 was the city of Podujeva/Podujevo with about 100 dead and/or missing people, then the villages like: Lluzhan/Lužane, Dyz/Duz, Obrancë/Obrandža, Popovë/Popovo, Bradash/Bradaš, Pakashticë e Epërme/Gornja Pakaštica and so on.



On May 1, 1999, at around 12:00, over 40 people were waiting for the bus near the Besiana Hotel at a Podujeva/Podujevo crossroads, between two roads; one leading to the city and the other to Pristina.

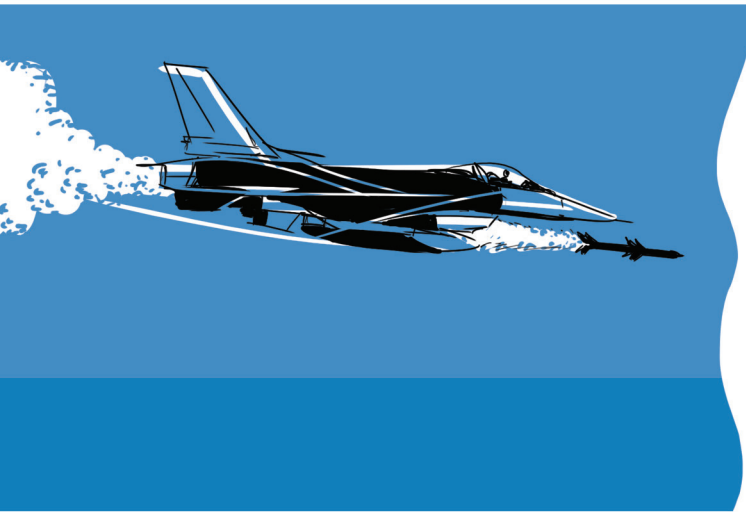


Around 12:30, the Niš Express bus passed through, coming from the direction of Niš, and the passengers were persons in uniforms. The bus did not stop there, but continued in the direction of Podujeva/Podujevo. After a while, the same bus came back almost empty and stopped to pick up the waiting passengers. On the way to Pristina, as they were crossing the Lluzhan bridge, a NATO plane hit the bus with a projectile.



As a result of the strike, 44 people lost their lives. Among them were 31 Albanian civilians and 13 Serbs, of which 7 civilians and 6 members of the Serbian forces.

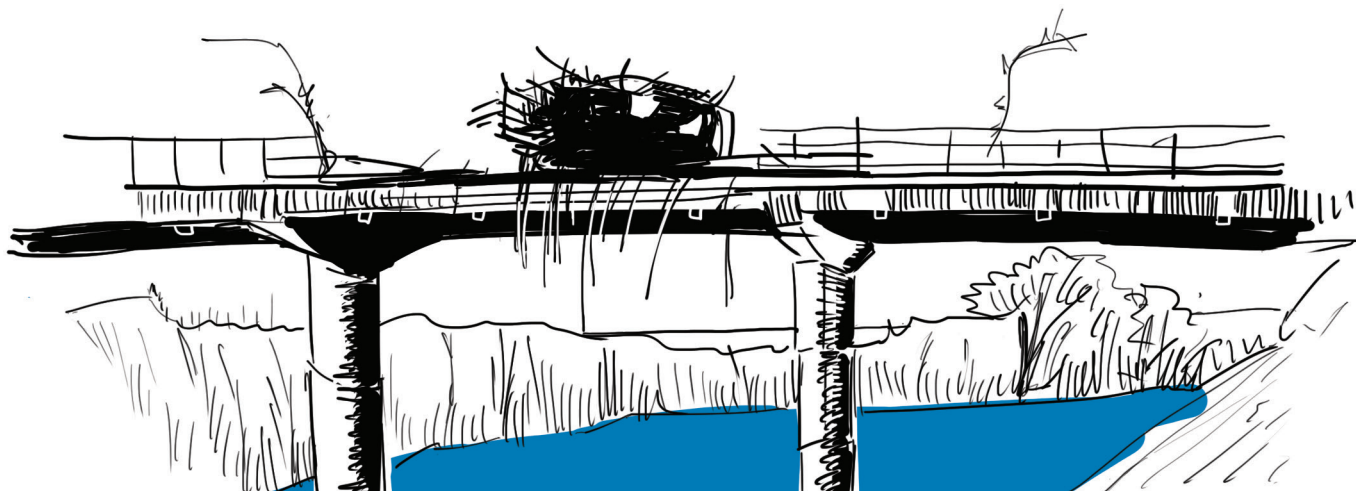
From the collision, the bus split into two parts; one fell from the bridge and the other part remained on the bridge, burnt. The survivors suffered severe burns and bodily injuries, for which they were treated at the Hospital of Pristina; one of them lost his arm, one eye and later had his leg amputated.



NATO Colonel Konard Freytag stated that NATO had claimed responsibility for the attack, arguing that unfortunately the bus, which was crossing the bridge at the time, had not been seen by the pilot, as his attention had been focused on his target, which was the bridge.

According to the findings of the HLC and the HLCK, that day on the Lluzhan/Lužane bridge, the following lost their lives:

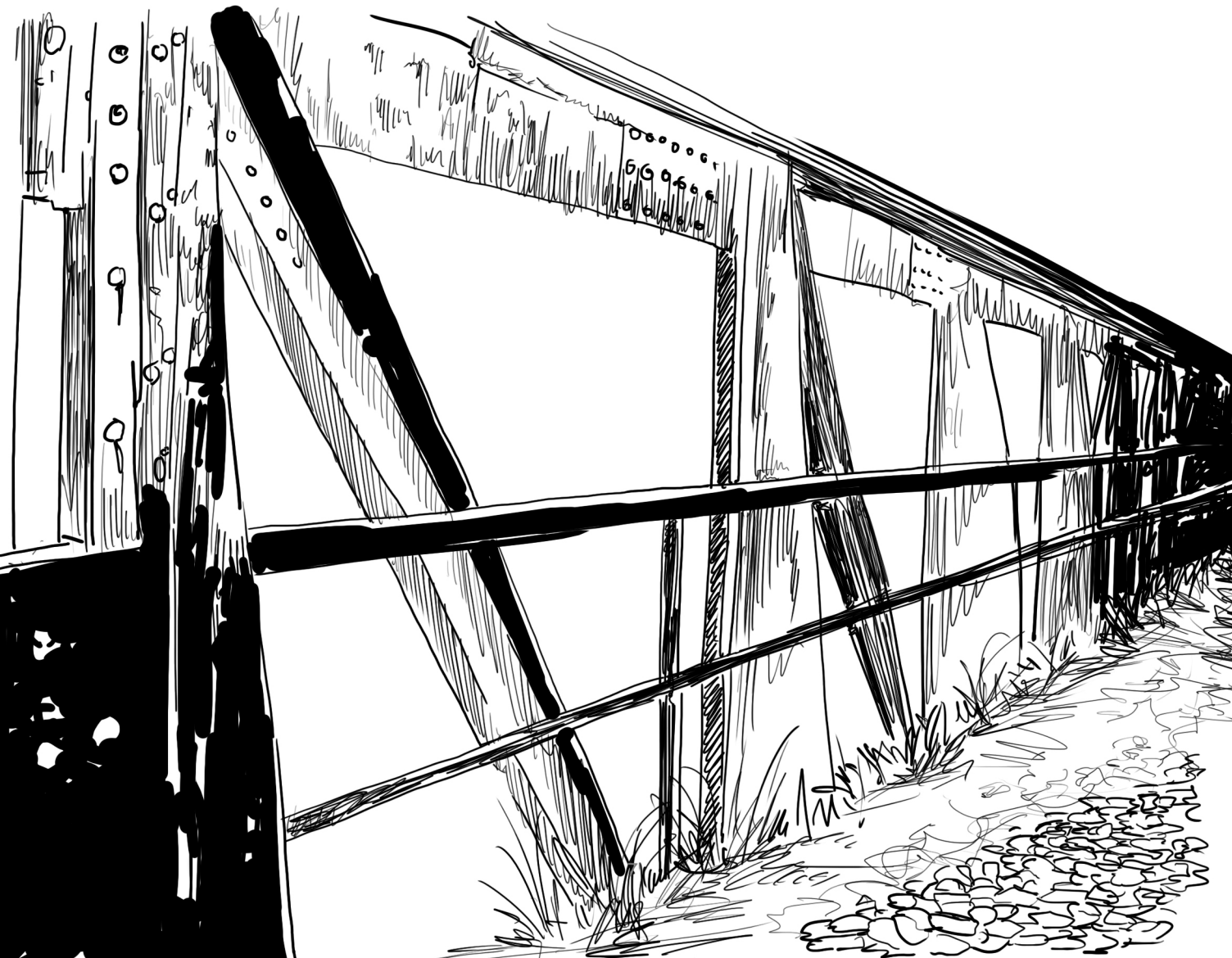
Shefqet Ajeti (1945), Kujtim Aliu (1968), Behxhet Bulliqi (1946), Milovan Cvetic (1949), Božur Filipović (1948), Života Grujić (1964), Miroslav Ilić (1961), Vladica Ivanović (1969), Ajeta Jakupi (1958), Ibrahim Jakupi (1935), Miodrag Janković (1950), Vukosav Jelić (1950), Gani Jupolli (1932), Mehmet Jusufi (1960), Arjeta Kopalla (1985), Fatime Kopalla (1966), Fetije Kopalla (1953), Florinda Kopalla (1981), Mirjeta Kopalla (1997), Xhavit Kopalla (1984), Bojan Kostić (1973), Milana Malinić (1950), Drita Musa (1977), Fexhrije Musa (1970), Selman Musa (1973), Marija Petrović (1984), Nikola Petrović (1982), Smiljana Petrović (1933), Bexhet Podvorica (1960), Milazim Potera (1958), Nurije Potera (1967), Ibrahim Qerimi (1940), Besa Ramadani (1991), Besarta Ramadani (1993), Besnik Ramadani (1983), Bislim Ramadani (1996), Fatime Ramadani (1963), Gani Ramadani (1928), Muzafer Ramadani (1986), Rizah Ramadani (1959), Serbeze Rexhepi (1933), Halime Rrahmani (1964), Adem Uka (1947), Zoran Vukadinović (1972).



LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

WHAT DID IT USE TO BE?

The Lluzhan Bridge was built in the late 1960s as a bridge between the village of Lluzhan/Lužane and the village of Shakovica/Šakovica of Podujeva/Podujevo over the Llap River, which originates in the Kopaonik Mountains and flows through Podujeva/Podujevo. The bridge is an important structure, because the road artery that connects Pristina with the Podujeva/Podujevo region and further with Serbia passes over it. The damaged part as a result of the 1999 coup was repaired after the war.





LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

WHAT IS IT TODAY?

Until 2021 at the Llužhan bridge there was no mark of the event that took place there, except wreaths of flowers placed on the bridge. However, on the 22nd anniversary of the tragic event, on May 1, 2021, a memorial plaque dedicated to the victims was inaugurated, erected by the Municipality of Podujeva/Podujevo. The names of 31 Albanian victims are written on the memorial plaque and the ordinal number 32, instead of the name of any victim, contained three dots. Thus, the Serb victims who also lost their lives in this event are excluded. Furthermore, the memorial plaque does not provide any explanation regarding the incident that took place on May 1, 1999. This mode of selective commemoration does not contribute to the correct narration of the event and it discriminates victims of other nationalities. Even after the HLCK's reaction, the memorial plaque remained the same, revealing a one-sided narrative. All memorial services in honor of the victims should involve all victims, regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity, in order to empower inclusive narratives.

LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE MAP





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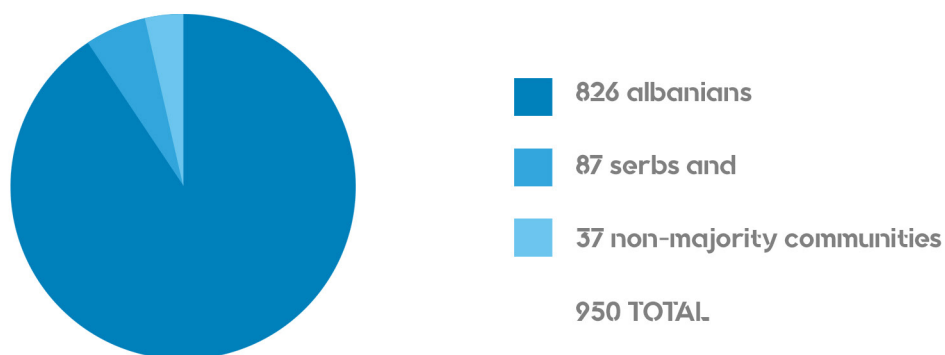
THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE / VELIKA KRUŠA

RAHOVEC
ORAHOVAC

THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA

RAHOVEC/ORAHOVAC

The Municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac is one of the districts of Kosovo most affected by the war during 1998-1999. During the 90ies, about 60,000 people lived there, with an Albanian majority of above 90%. In the period 1998-2000, 950 people lost their lives and/or disappeared in this municipality, of which 826 Albanians, 87 Serbs, 23 Ashkali, 9 Roma, 3 Montenegrins, 1 Turk and 1 Bosniak.

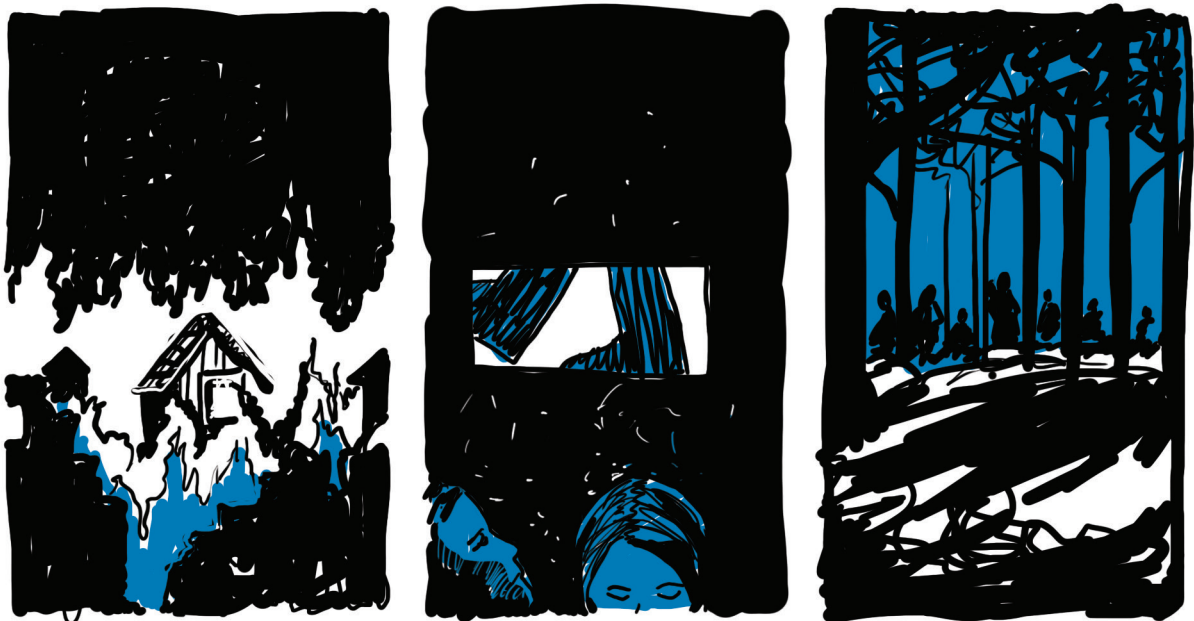


With the start of NATO bombing, attacks and persecutions of Serbian forces against Albanian population got evidently intensified. The highest number of massacres happened in this period, when also the forced displacement of the Albanian population to Albania started. The parts of the villages of Rahovec/Orahovac that border with the Municipality of Prizren where the most affected, and among them the village of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša was marked with the biggest losses in human lives, in which one of the largest massacres of the war in Kosovo happened there.

The village of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša is located in a geographical area between the Municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac and Municipality of Prizren. Before the last war in Kosovo, Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša had a population with majority Albanians, of about 2000 inhabitants, that mainly engaged in agriculture and livestock farming. The other part of the population was of Ashkali - about 20 families, and Serbs – about 4 families.

In this village, as a consequence of the war in Kosovo, 208 people lost their lives and/or disappeared, of which 194 were Albanians and 14 were Ashkali. Immediately after the start of the NATO intervention in Kosovo on March 24, 1999, throughout 3 days, the village of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša was under siege by the Yugoslav Army, Serbian police, paramilitary groups, as well as individuals from the local population that got involved in this siege.

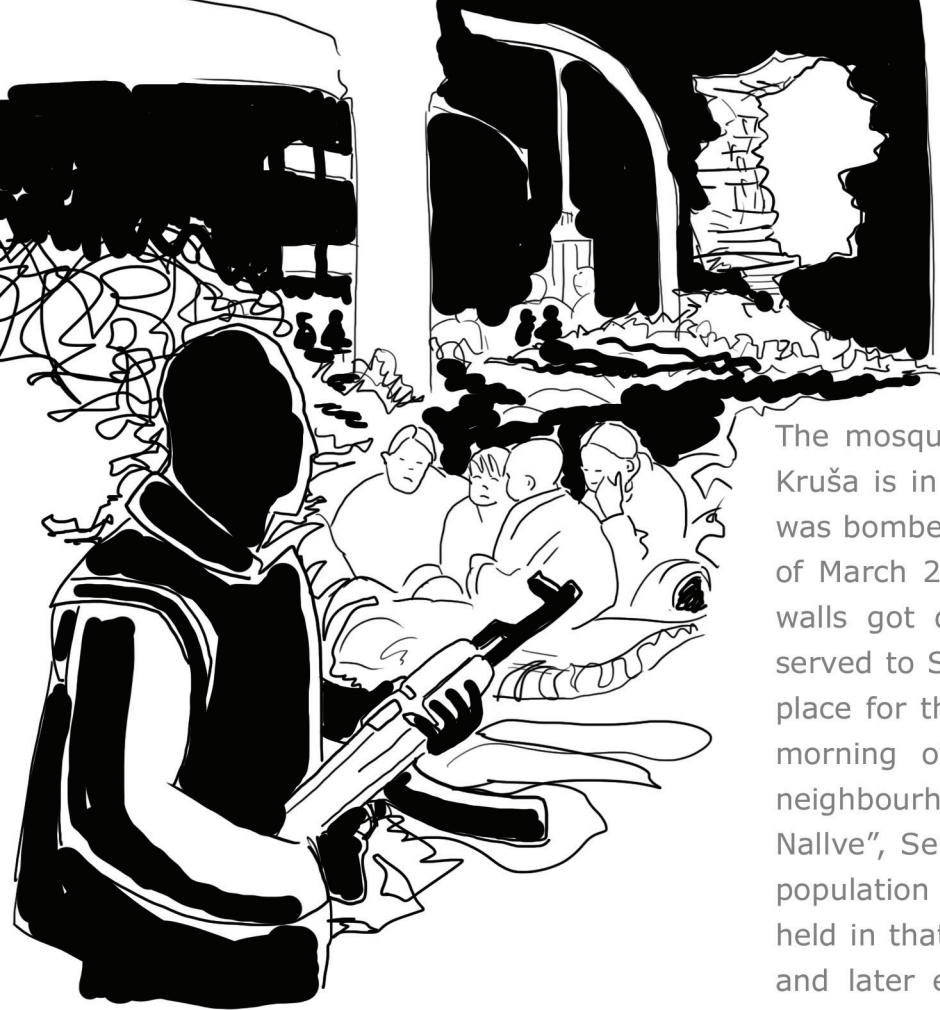
In the early morning of March 25, 1999, the village got bombarded, and the houses of its inhabitants got looted and burned by the Serbian army, police and paramilitary groups. As a consequence of these developments, the population initially got displaced in the surrounding mountains, from where it could monitor their houses being looted and burned. In the evening of March 25, a bigger



number of the population returned in the village and hid in the basements of the houses, while the other part of the population continued staying in the mountains around the village.



On March 26, Serbian forces started to gather the civilian population from different locations where they were hiding in their houses or mountains around. Men and boys were separated from the crowd, and then got mistreated in different localities, and later also executed. Most of their bodies were later burned. Women, children and the elderly were forced to leave for Albania, under the uproar of the armed Serbian forces: "Go to NATO!". One part of this population though, consisting mainly of women and children, were forced to go to the village' mosque.



The mosque in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša is in the centre of the village. It was bombed during the Serbian attacks of March 25, 1999, when a part of its walls got destroyed, and later it also served to Serbian forces as a detention place for the civilian population. In the morning of March 26, 1999, in the neighbourhood known as "Lagjia e Nallve", Serbian forces split the civilian population in two groups, men were held in that neighbourhood, got robbed and later executed, while women and children were locked inside the village mosque.

The local population inside the mosque, consisting of women and children, were robbed of all the belongings they were carrying, such as jewellery, cash, and other valuable items, and, according to the testimonies of the women that were inside, from these robbing a huge sack was filled with gold and money. Violence was applied against women that had nothing to give to Serbian forces, or in the cases when they could not remove rings from their fingers, and to a big number of these women their



ears were ripped off, while their earring being violently taken. Further, the OSCE report "Kosovo as seen, as told" mentions that members of Serbian armed forces took away by force a number of girls from the mosque, and returned them there at a later stage.

After these events, in the afternoon hours of March 26, 1999, the civilian population that was locked inside the mosque got released and forced to flee the village and go to Albania.

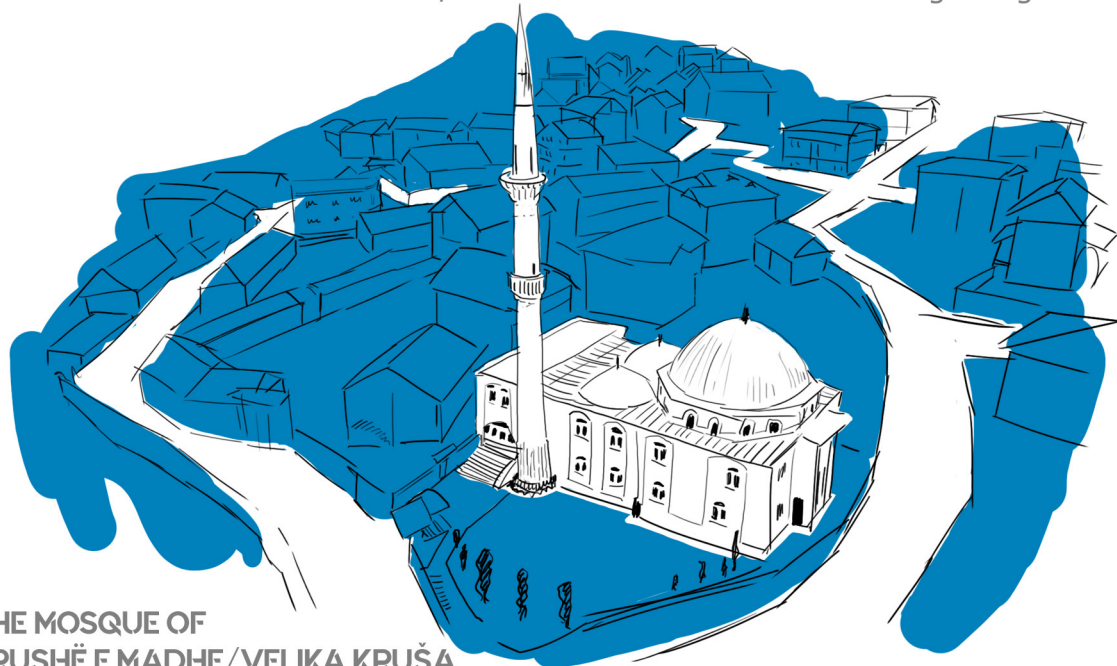
The crimes committed in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša are mentioned in the indictment against Slobodan Milošević and in the indictment against "Šainović et al" by the former International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia. The trial against Slobodan Milošević was halved due to his death during the trial. While in the trial of "Šainović et al", the trial panel treated only the point of the indictment regarding the destruction of the mosque as a cultural property and the same was rejected due to lack of direct evidence to prove how the damage was caused, and by whom. So far no one has been indicted with a final judgment about the crimes committed in this village.



THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA

WHAT WAS IT?

The mosque in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša was built in 1780 and rebuilt in 1974. In March 1999, it was bombed by Serbian forces and suffered heavy damage. Since its construction, the Mosque in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša has served as a place for performing religious rites for the population of the Islamic faith of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša and the surrounding villages.



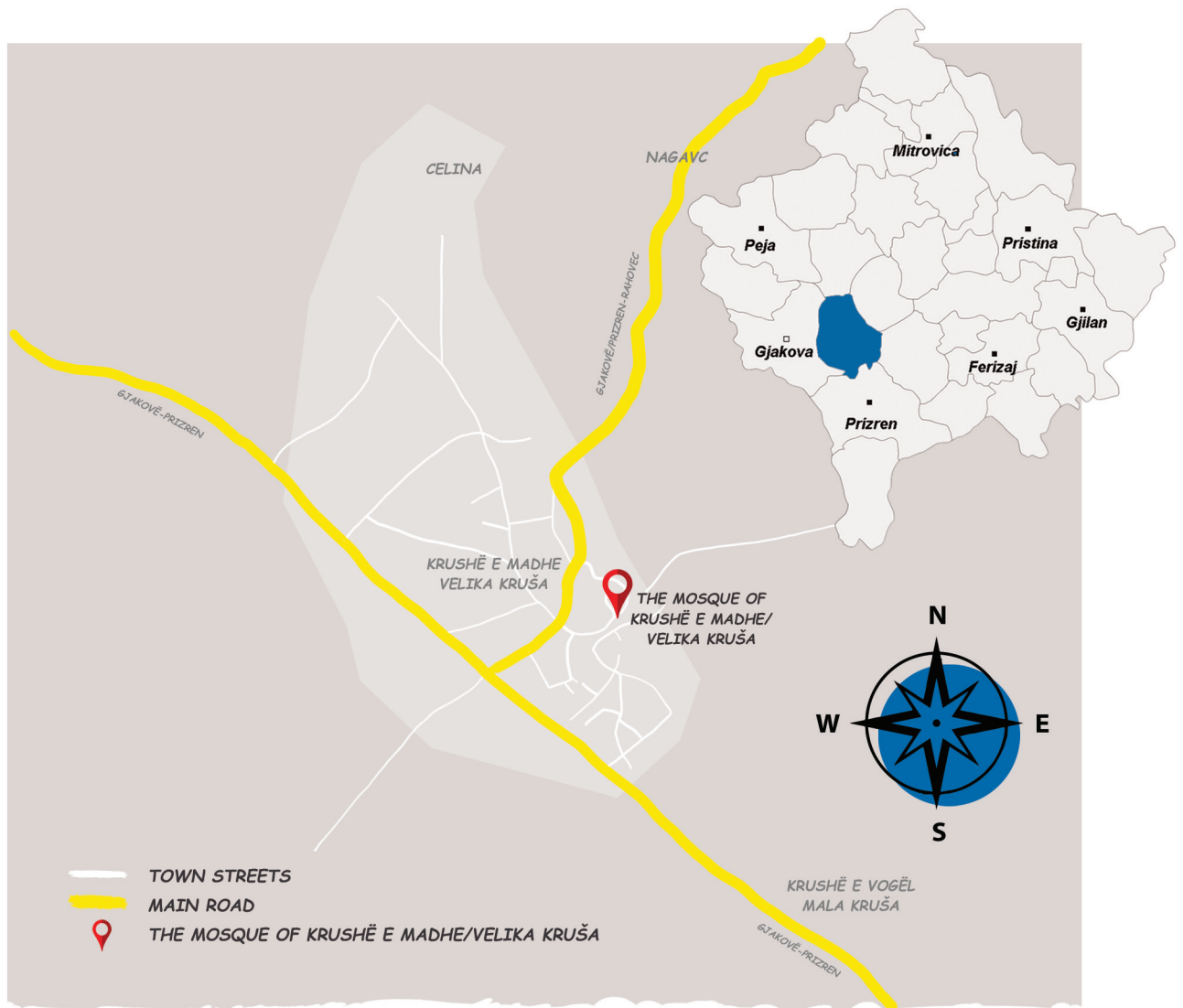
THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA

WHAT IS IT TODAY?

After the end of the war in Kosovo, the Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša Mosque was renovated in 2001. The mosque is under the management of the Islamic Community of Kosovo and continues to serve as a place for performing religious rites for citizens of the Islamic faith. An annex is currently being built, to be used for organizing funeral ceremonies for the villagers.

Despite the data and living witnesses who were victims of abuse inside the building of the Mosque of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša during the war in Kosovo - in the extent of the building of the mosque no record is placed that would tell about the events of that time.

THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA MAP





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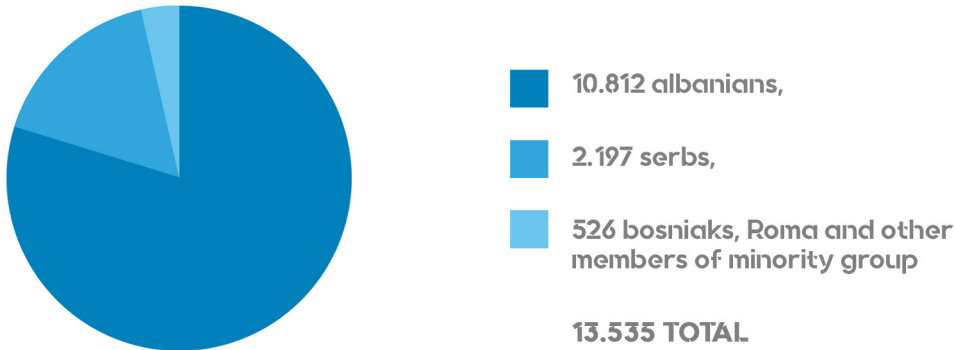
KOSOVO AND SERBIA

MASS GRAVES

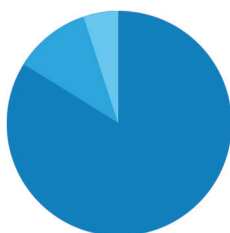
MASS GRAVES

KOSOVO AND SERBIA

In the period January 1998 - December 2000, as a result of the war in Kosovo, 13,535 people lost their lives and/or disappeared forcefully.

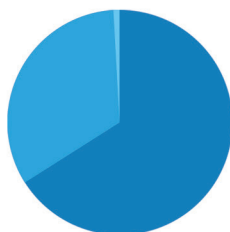


Of this number 10,812 were Albanians (80%), 2,197 were Serbs (16%), and 526 were Bosniaks, Roma and other members of minority groups (4%).



CIVILIANS 10.317

- 84% ■ 8.676 albanians,
- 11% ■ 1.196 serbs,
- 5% ■ 445 bosniaks, roma and other members of minority groups



MEMBERS OF ARMED GROUPS 3.218

- 66% ■ 2.131 Kosovo Liberation Army
- 33% ■ 1.084 Serban Military, Paramilitary and police forces
- 1% ■ 3 NATO forces/KFOR

Of this number, 10,317 were civilian victims (of whom 8,676 were Albanians, 1,196 Serbs and 445 Roma and others). Regarding the victims from the armed groups - 2,131 were members of the Kosovo Liberation Army; 1,084 were members of the Serbian military, paramilitary and police forces and 3 members of the NATO Forces in Kosovo - KFOR. In the period 1998-2000, 1133 children were killed and/or forcibly disappeared and 109 of them are still missing. After June 1999, there were about 6057 missing persons in Kosovo as a result of the war and from this number, the fate of 1620 people is still unresolved.

Immediately after the end of the war, a number of missing persons were found in various prisons in Serbia and most of them were discovered in mass graves inside and outside Kosovo.

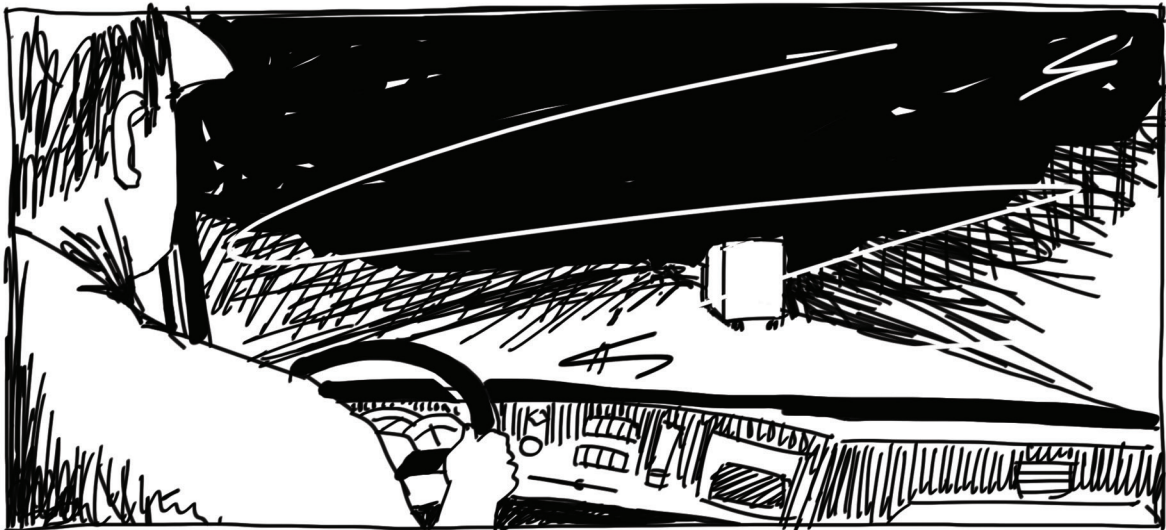


After the start of NATO intervention in Kosovo, the violence of Serbian forces against the civilian population in Kosovo intensified significantly. Thus, to cover up the mass crimes, Serbian authorities launched an organized campaign to relocate the bodies of the victims from the territory of Kosovo to the the territory of Serbia.

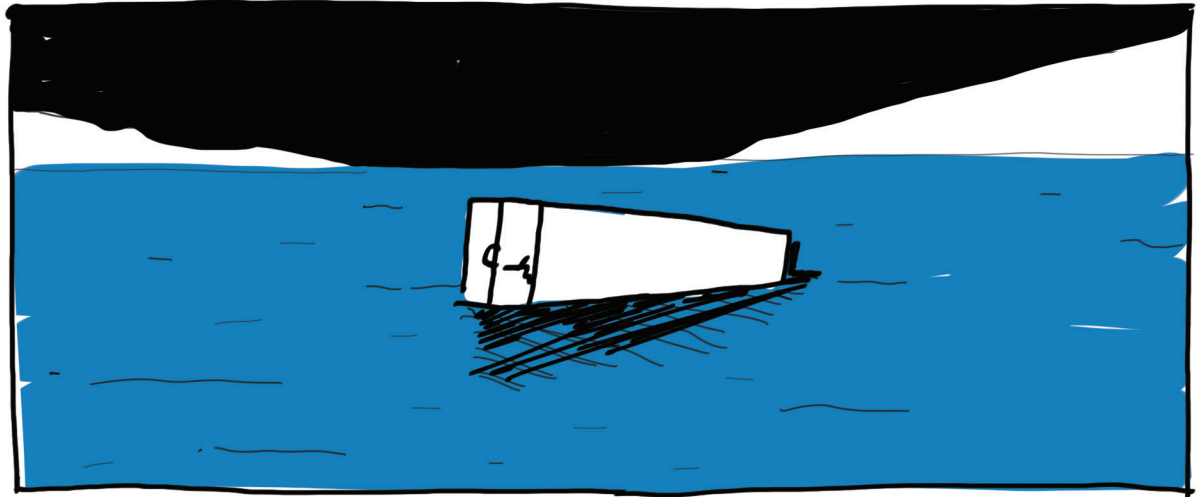
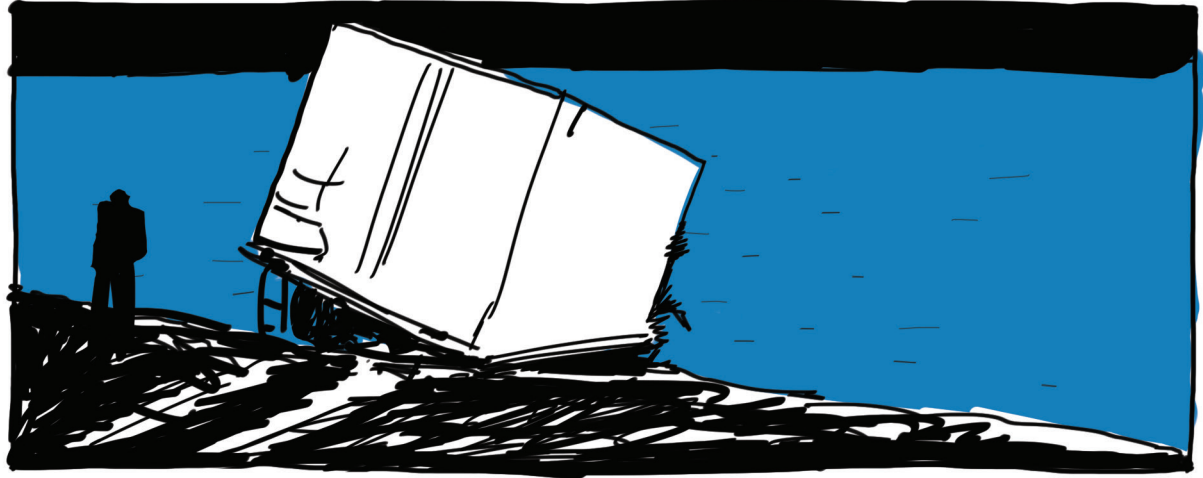
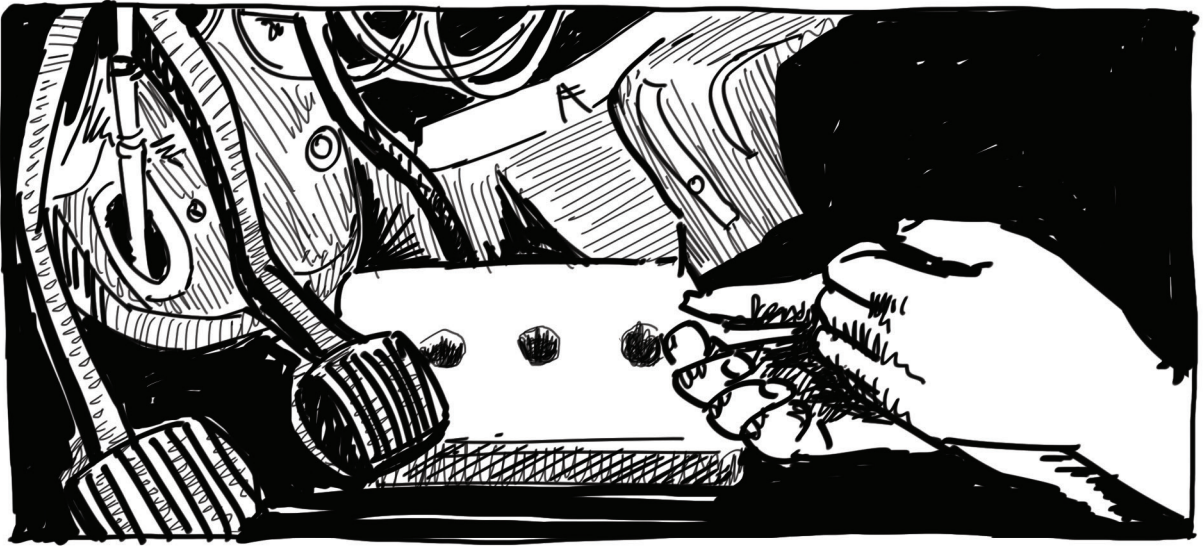
From 2001 until today, 950 bodies of Albanians killed in Kosovo, were found in 5 locations of mass graves within the territory of Serbia. In 2001, 744 bodies were discovered on the outskirts of Belgrade in Batajnica, on a plot that served and continues to serve as a training facility for the Serbian Police Special Counter-Terrorism Unit. Later that year, in Petrovo Selo, Eastern Serbia, 61 bodies were found and another 84 bodies were found in Lake Perućac in Western Serbia. In 2013, another 52 Albanian bodies were found in Rudnica near Raška in southern Serbia near the border with Kosovo. And in the 2020-2021, 9 bodies were found in the Kiževak Quarry in Southern Serbia.

The bodies of 950 Kosovo Albanians were transported from the territory of Kosovo to these 5 different locations in Serbia in order to hide the traces of crimes and protect those responsible from criminal liability.

No memorial has yet been erected in none of the 5 locations mentioned above, which would contribute to the marking of these crime sites and their inclusion in the collective memory of the society. Regarding the location of Batajnica, for several years now, there has been an initiative by non-governmental organizations Humanitarian Law Center and Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo which aims to establish a memorial center in the place where the bodies were found, thus contributing to the enrichment of the collective memory related to the events that took place in that location during 1999.



In addition to the practice of transporting bodies from the territory of Kosovo to the territory of Serbia, a large number of mass graves were discovered inside Kosovo. Most of them included Albanian victims such as in Bellacerka/-Bela Crkva (77 bodies), the cemetery in Dragodan (170 bodies), Pastasel/Pusta Selo (106 bodies), Brusnik (28 bodies), Rahovec/Orahovac (47 bodies), Bishtazhin/Bistražin (about 80 bodies), Muslim cemetery in North Mitrovica/-Severna Mitrovica (76 bodies), etc. and a number of them also contained Serb troops such as the one in Voljakë/Volujak (24 troops), Malishevë/Mališevo (13 troops) and Kleqkë/Klecka.



Similarly, to those in the territory of Serbia, these locations in Kosovo are not marked and in a way are only part of the memory of the relatives of victims but do not form a part of the broad collective memory. In addition to marking the mass graves, Kosovo also lacks a register of the total number of mass graves, their exact number and the exact number of bodies found in them.

Such a practice of not marking crime scenes contributes to forgetfulness and makes it impossible to create a common collective memory about the past.

MASS GRAVES

WHAT WERE THEY?

Sites that served various functions before the start of the armed conflict in Kosovo were used as mass grave sites to cover up crimes. To list some of them, such as the case of the mass grave in Batajnica in which a training center for the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit of the Serbian police was located; The case of the Kiževak mass grave in which a quarry was located; The case of the mass grave of Dragodan in which a civil cemetery of the municipality of Prishtina was located or the case of the cave in the village Volljakë/Volujake in which a number of bodies were hidden.



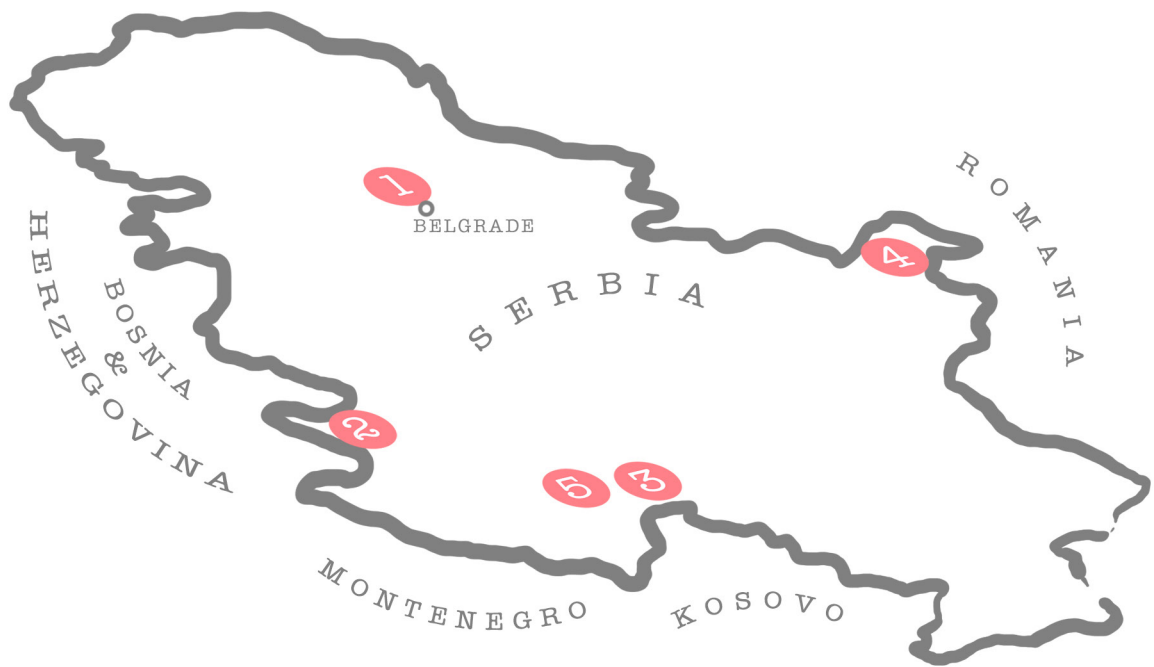


MASS GRAVES

WHAT ARE THEY TODAY?

A number of sites where mass graves were discovered continue to have the same function as the case of the Batajnica Training Center or the Arbëria/Dragodan cemetery. While a number of sites where mass graves were discovered have changed their function such as the case of Kizhevak Quarry which has already been privatized or the case of the Training Camp in Petrovo Selo which belonged to the Serbian Police Special Forces that operated in Kosovo during the war and is now closed. After the exhumation, many locations that contained mass graves, have remained abandoned, without any sign.

For these reasons and because of failure to mark them, mass grave sites will in time fade away even from the collective memory of society.

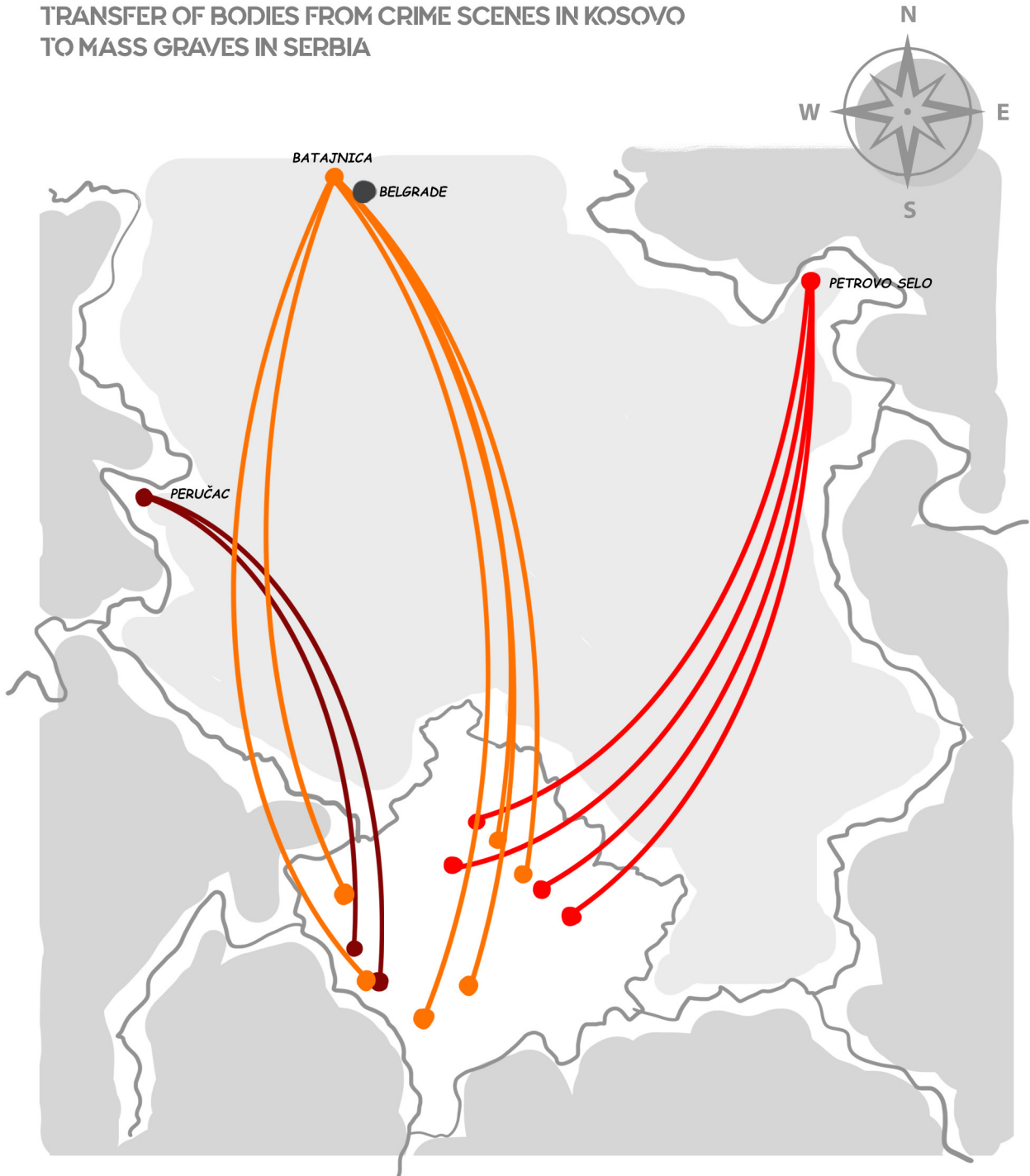


LOCATIONS

Locations of mass graves identified in Serbia

1. Batajnica: Discovered in 2001. 744 bodies of Kosovo Albanians were found in it.
2. Perućac: The bodies of Kosovo Albanians appeared on the surface of the lake in 1999. In 2001, a mass grave with the remains of 84 people was found near the lake.
3. Rudnica: In 2013, the mortal remains of 52 Albanian civilians were found.
4. Petrovo Selo: Discovered in 2001. 61 bodies of Kosovo Albanians were found in it.
5. Kiževak: In 2020-2021, 9 mortal remains were found in the Kizevak quarry.

TRANSFER OF BODIES FROM CRIME SCENES IN KOSOVO TO MASS GRAVES IN SERBIA



- FROM PEJA, VUSHTRRI, LANDOVICA, FUSHË KOSOVË, SUHAREKË, MEJË AND KORENICA TO BATAJNICA
- FROM MITROVICA, PRISTINA, IZBICA AND JANJEVO TO PETROVO SELO
- FROM DEÇANI AND GJAKOVA TO PERUČAC



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FUSHË KOSOVË
KOSOVO POLJE

BUS STATION

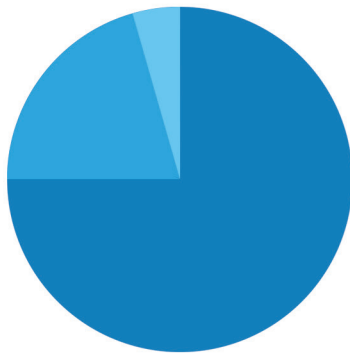
BUS STATION

FUSHË KOSOVË/KOSOVO POLJE

The municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje is located in the central part of Kosovo and belongs to the Priština/Priština region. It is the center of air and rail traffic in Kosovo. The Airport of Pristina started to operate in 1965 in a village called Slatina e Madhe/Velika Slatina, located in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, which is now called "Adem Jashari Airport". This area developed into a settlement after the establishment of the railway station which connects the city with the city of Prishtinë/Priština as well as with other centers such as Peja/Peć, Mitrovica and Skopje in North Macedonia.

Until 1998, the municipality had over 30,000 inhabitants, where about 59% were Albanian, 24% Serb and 17% other communities. Only the city of Fushë Kosova/Kosovo Polje hosted a population of over 16,000 inhabitants of which about 36% Serb, 27% Albanian and 37% other non-majority communities.

Over the period 1998-2000, as a result of the war in Kosovo, 173 victims lost their lives in the territory of this municipality, of which 130 were Albanian, 35 Serb and 8 from non-majority communities. 78 victims were killed and/or disappeared, only in the city of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje as a result of the war, while among the tragic events there is the case of the Mirena family in the village of Nakaradë/Nakarade where 16 members of this family were killed.



- 130 albanians,
 - 35 serbs,
 - 8 non-majority communities
- 173 TOTAL**



Murders and disappearances of people started happening in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje as early as June 1998. The situation worsened almost immediately after the withdrawal of the OSCE Observation Mission from Kosovo in March 20, 1999. The abuses, looting, forced expulsions and murders became even more frequent and a large number of residents of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje were expelled from the city. They were forced to leave to Macedonia or Albania. The railway station in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje was the place from where most Albanians left by train in the direction of Macedonia.



However, the railway station was not the only place in the city of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje where serious violations of human rights occurred. The bus station is in the same building as the railway station. During the war this place was also used by Serbian military and paramilitary forces to detain Albanian population and mistreat and abuse them.



One such a event happened at the bus station on March 26, 1999. On Friday morning, at around 11:00, over 100 Albanian civilians, men, women and children, had gathered at the bus station in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje to get to the bus, in an attempt to leave Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje to Pristina Priština for security reasons. After a while, a group consisting of at least ten members of mixed Serbian forces arrived at the place in a military vehicle, some wearing masks.



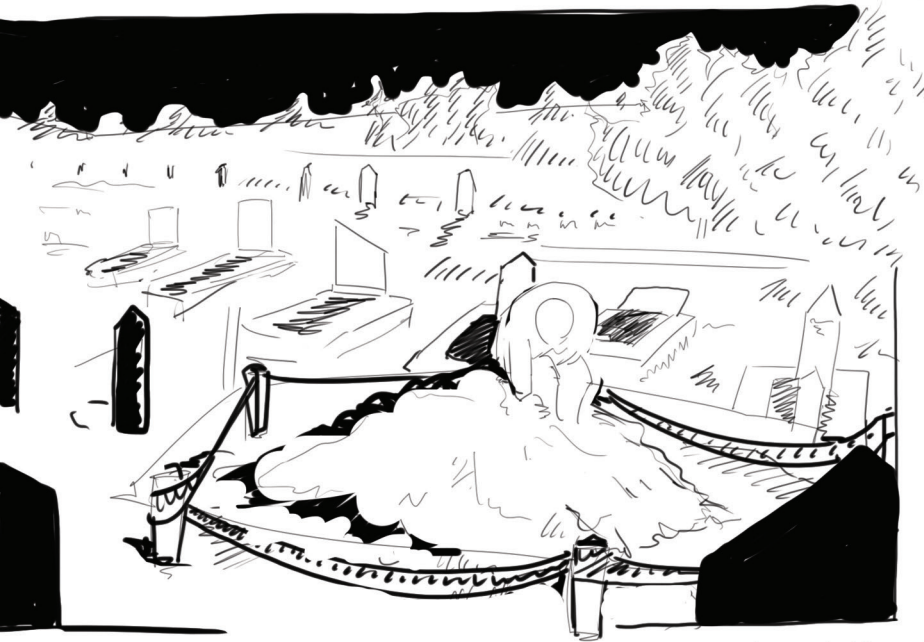
The armed group of Serbian forces stopped the civilians from getting on the bus or leaving the station, while those already on the bus were forced to get off. After gathering them, they separated the men from the women and children, pushing them with the barrels of their guns and kept control over them at gunpoint.

According to eyewitnesses, who were at the scene and who also testified in the two court proceedings related to this event, the women and children were forced to turn their backs so as not to see the mistreatment of the men.

First, the men were forced to kneel with their hands behind their heads and sing Serbian nationalist songs, then they were beaten with rubber and wooden sticks. One of the witnesses testified that a member of this group had taken the crutch of an elderly person and hit the men with it until it broke.



During that day, two male Albanian civilians were forcibly kidnapped, one of whom was then released, while the other, Haki Bajrami, is unaccounted for since the critical day and was considered missing. However, later his body was found in a mass grave in the



Dragodan neighborhood, in Pristina, while his remains were identified in 2000.

From the many mistreatments of that day, one of the people who suffered that day, who was 70 at the time, testified that he never managed to fully recover from the injuries he suffered.

Two court proceedings

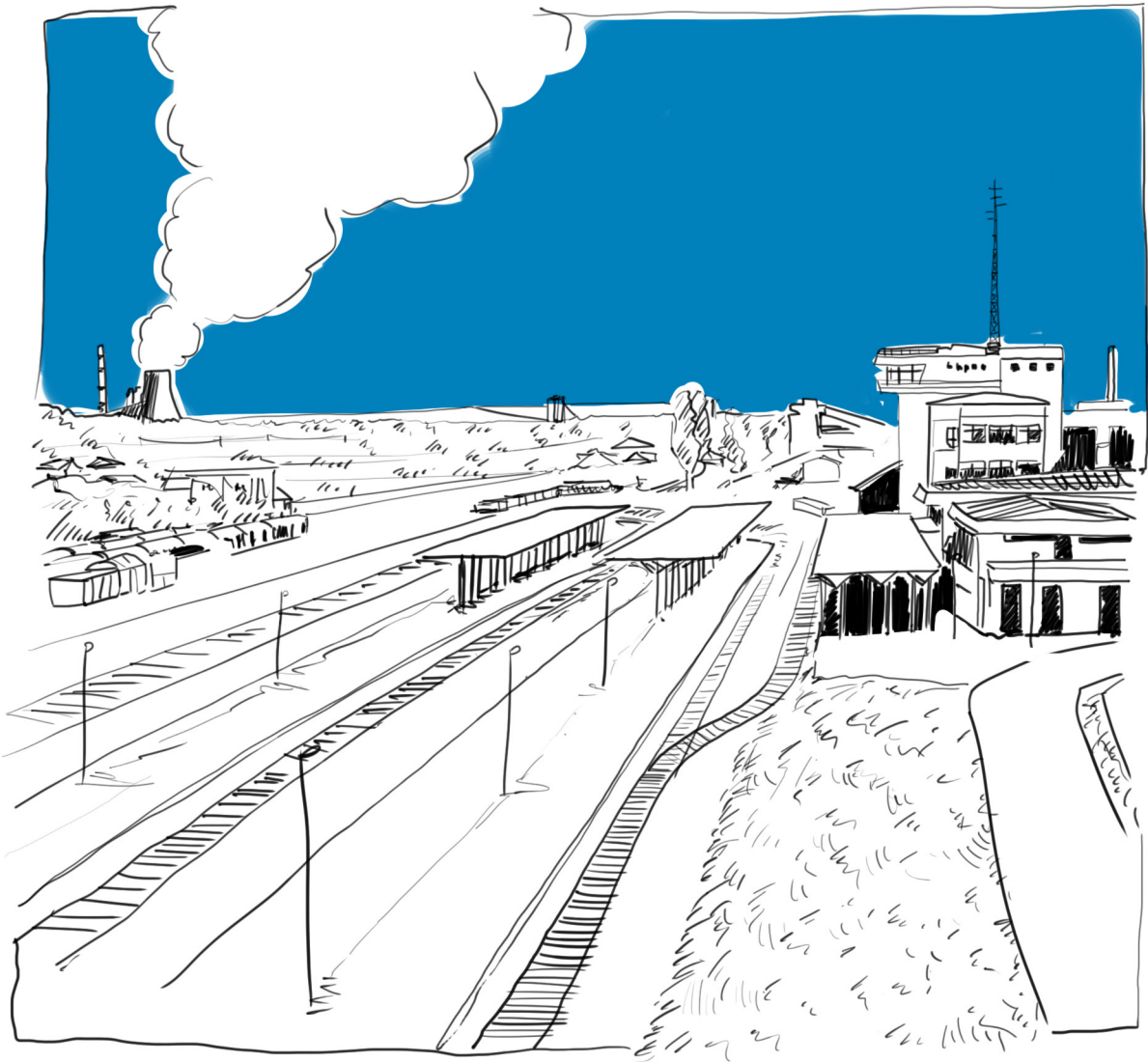


have been held in Kosovo in relation to this case, in which Ivan Radivojevic, a former member of the Serbian reserve police forces and Skender Bislimi a former member of the Serbian paramilitary forces were convicted of war crimes against civilian population. The court found that defendants had inflicted fear and terror, violated the bodily integrity and health of at least 40 Albanian civilian men. For this reason, Ivan Radivojevic was sentenced to 6 years in prison, while Skender Bislimi was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

BUS STATION

WHAT WAS IT?

The railway station of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje was built during the 1870-1874. Much later, after the Second World War, the space in front of this station was also used as a departure and stop point for buses that went on the route Prishtinë-Fushë Kosovë.





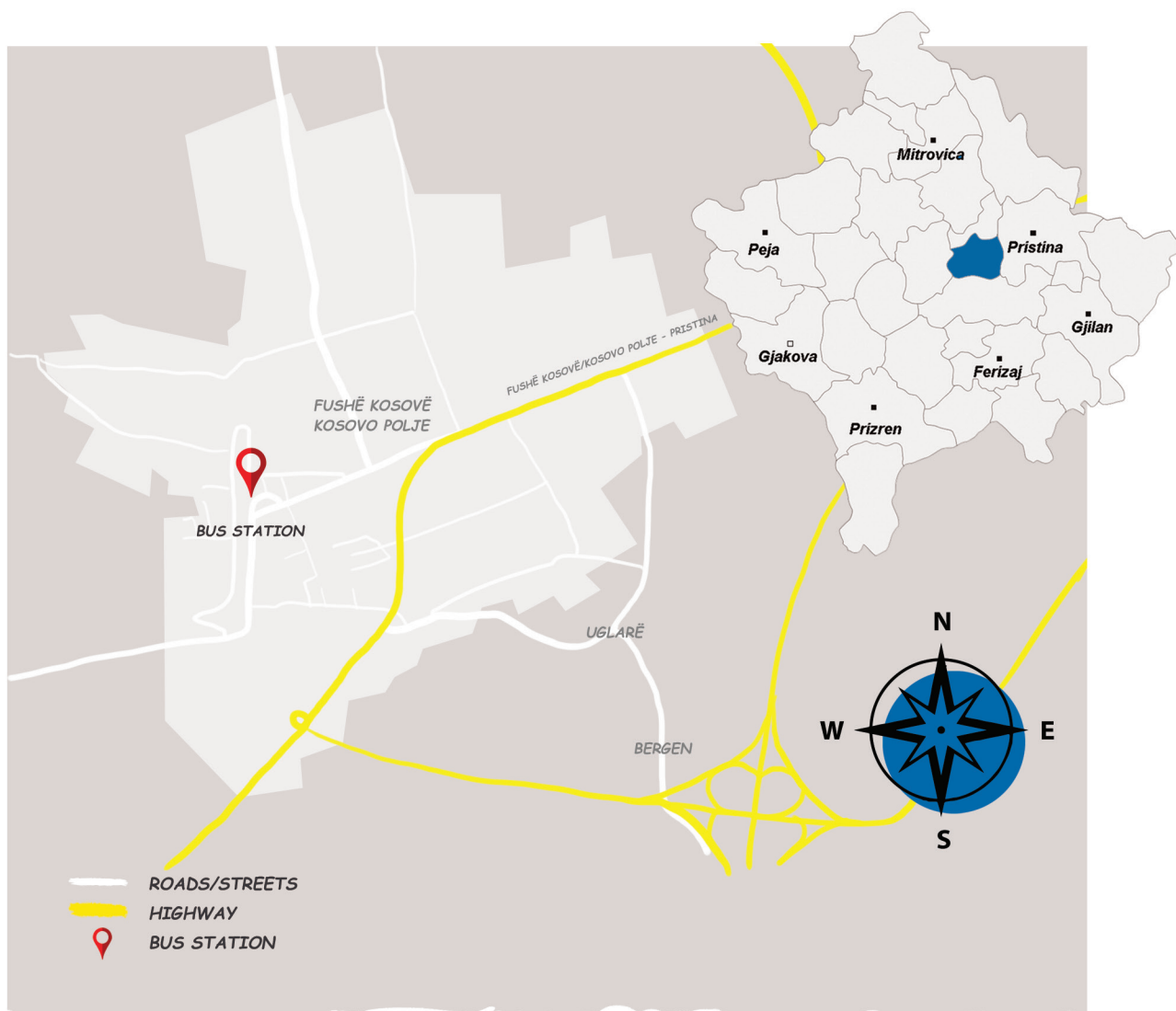
BUS STATION

WHAT IS IT USED FOR TODAY?

The same space is still used for as bus station in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, as before.

This station lacks a recollection mark of the events of 1999. Despite the fact that there is abundant information about the events and the fact that there were many witnesses who gave their testimonies in court proceedings and final decisions were issued about the events that occurred at the bus station in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, this place is still not marked as a crime scene. Marking this place as such in the future, would contribute to the collective memory and would serve to inform citizens about the events that occurred at the bus station in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje.

BUS STATION MAP





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VËRMICË/VERMICA

THE BOORPER WITIT ALBANIA

THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA

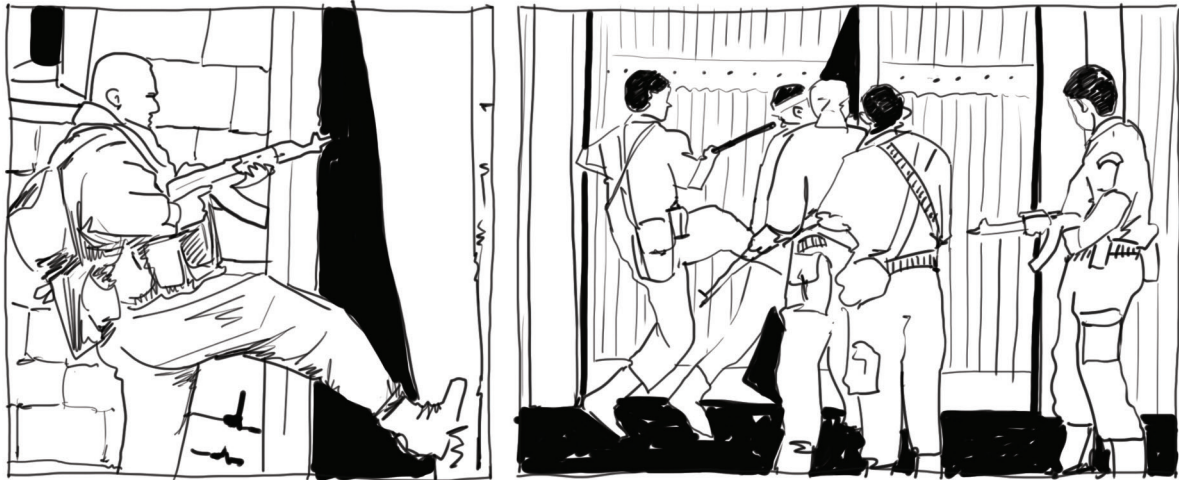
VERMICA, PRIZREN

During the war in the 1998-1999, the expulsion of the Albanian population from the territory of Kosovo was organized based on a special plan through the use of violence, measures of intimidation and through the creation of an unsafe living environment. The forced expulsion of the Albanian population from Kosovo was carried out with a degree of coordination and control that undoubtedly leads to a conclusion that there was systematic forced deportation. Such a conclusion was also confirmed by the trial of Sainovic and others in the case of establishing the counts of indictment which stated that "The forces of the FRY and Serbia, systematically, and forcibly deported and relocated hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians from their homes throughout the province of Kosovo. To facilitate these deportations and displacements, the FRY and Serbia forces deliberately created an atmosphere of fear and oppression through the use of force, threats of force and acts of violence".

The eviction of the Albanian population from Kosovo started at the beginning of the 90s, as a result of violent measures, dismissal from work and discriminatory measures in education, healthcare and other basic rights. At the beginning of the armed conflict, a more violent form of expulsion started which was forced removal from homes, which significantly intensified after the beginning of the NATO intervention on the former Yugoslavia.

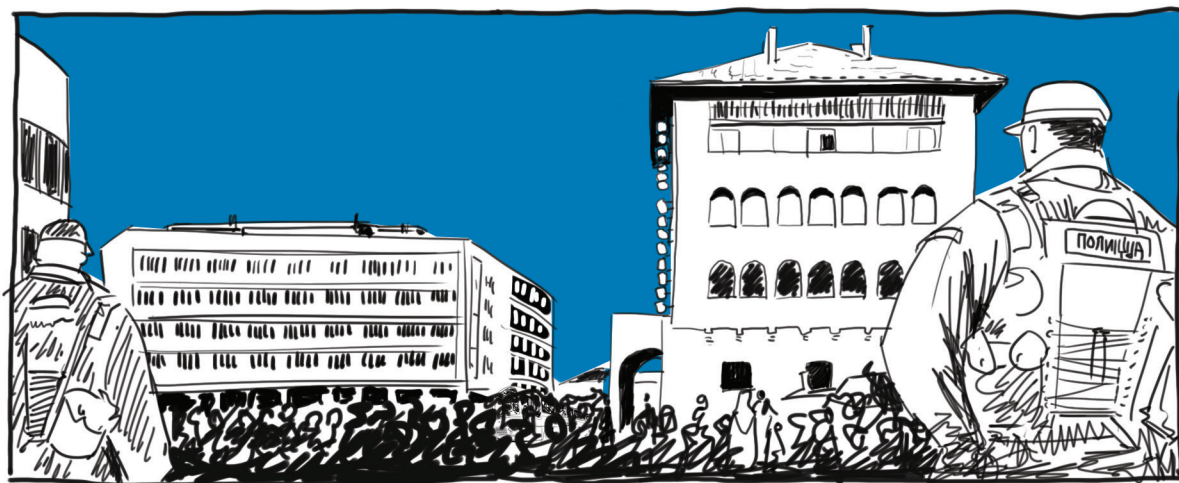
According to the UNHCR report, "The refugee crisis in Kosovo, an independent assessment of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response", over 1 million citizens of Kosovo were expelled from the country and only during the first 9 weeks after the start of the NATO intervention - more than 860,000 citizens were sheltered in the countries of the region. Of which 444,600 were sheltered in Albania, 344,500 in Macedonia and 69,900 in Montenegro.

During this period, the deportation reached such a level that the Serbian armed forces would go house to house in different settlements and would forcibly expel residents from their homes, ordering them to leave Kosovo. The population was ordered to leave Kosovo in the direction of different countries through different



border crossing points. Usually the expelled population was directed to the nearest borders. Most of the population from the western half of Kosovo was directed to the southwestern border with Albania, while the eastern half was directed to the southeastern border leading to Macedonia. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn and other areas with Albanian population in the north of Kosovo were generally sent to the border with Albania. A large part of the residents of Peja/Pec and Istog/Istok crossed the border to Montenegro, while a number of residents from the easternmost municipalities of Kosovo first entered southern Serbia and then crossed the border to Macedonia. But there were also areas that were characterized by smaller number of population evictions, such as the Drenica region in central Kosovo, from which few residents left Kosovo, except for the residents expelled from the town of Glogoc/Glogovac in early May 1999.

The majority of population left by using their own means of transportation such as cars, tractors or carts, but also on foot. However a relatively large number also left through the transportation organized by the Serbian forces, gathering the population at certain points and then using buses and military vehicles to transport the population to the designated borders. The ethnic cleansing of the City of Peja/Pec during the period covering 24-29 March 1999 is a concrete example of the organization of transportation for the purpose of deportation of the population. During this period, the Albanian residents of all neighborhoods of Peja/Pec were forced to leave their homes and gather at the collection points in the center of the city. The Serbian police would then organize buses to transport residents to Prizren/Prizren and then to Albania. On March 29, almost all Albanian residents were forcibly expelled from the city of Peja/Pec.



As emphasized above, the border with Albania was the busiest with refugees who were leaving the territory of Kosovo and most of the citizens expelled from their homes, close to half a million, crossed into Albania through the border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica. Only during the period of 27-29 March 1999, about 64,000 refugees crossed into Albania through this border crossing point, reaching up to 28,000 refugees on a daily basis. While the column of refugees in many cases reached a length of up to 15 km in the border area of Kosovo.



The population groups that were leaving Kosovo, from their homes to the border crossing points, were subjected to constant abuse by the Serbian forces, looting, insults, desecration of cultural-national symbols, and in many cases many people were even executed. The violence and mistreatment went to such extent that many people were asked for certain sums of money in exchange for their lives and those of their families.

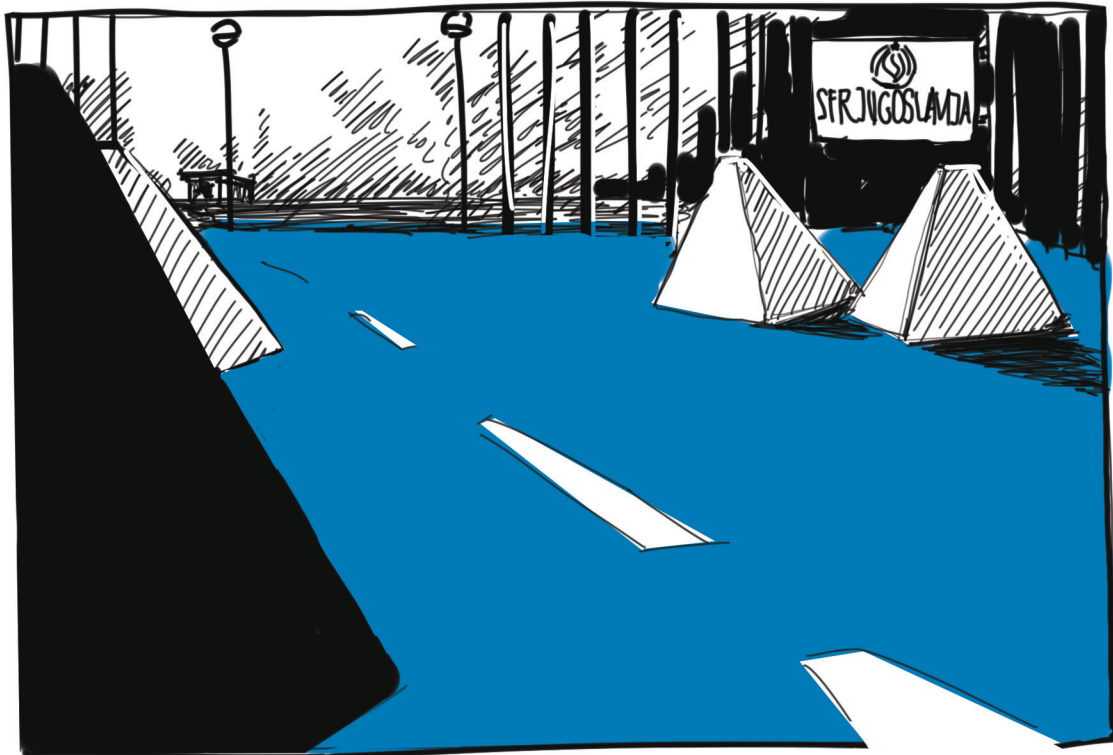
Hundreds of refugees who were deported to Albania said that before they were allowed to cross the border, they were forced to hand over their passports, identity cards, driver's licenses, vehicle registration documents and birth certificates, which were often torn in front of them. On the other hand, those crossing the border by car were given screwdrivers and ordered to remove the license plates from their vehicles. However a completely different practice was used for refugees who were deported to other countries in the region such as Macedonia and Montenegro, who were generally allowed to keep their documents, even after they were checked by Serbian police officers.



Such a practice of identification documents confiscation was used to achieve the goal of stripping the deportees of the citizenship of the former FRY thus preventing them from returning to Kosovo afterwards. This way, the border procedures were used as complementary means for the ethnic cleansing of the territory of Kosovo. The widespread confiscation of identity documents and car license plates by Serbian police and border guards also demonstrates the systematic nature of deportations.

THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA WHAT WAS IT?

The border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica has been one of the main connections that connected the Albanian state with the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo of the former Yugoslavia. During 1945 - 1990, as a result of the communist government policies in Albania, this border crossing point was closed. The same was opened again in 1991 after the fall of the communist government in Albania.

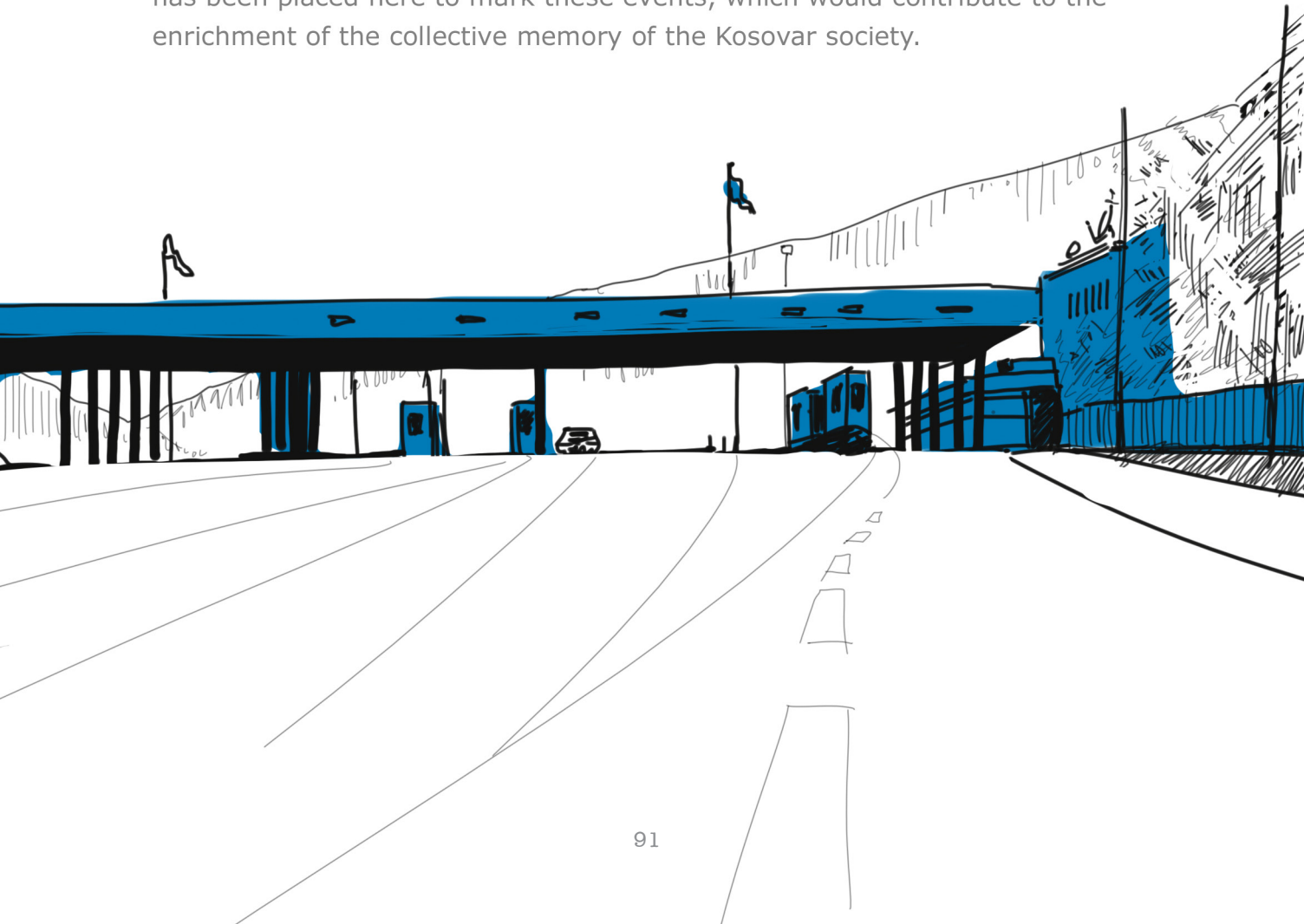


THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA

WHAT IS IT USED FOR TODAY?

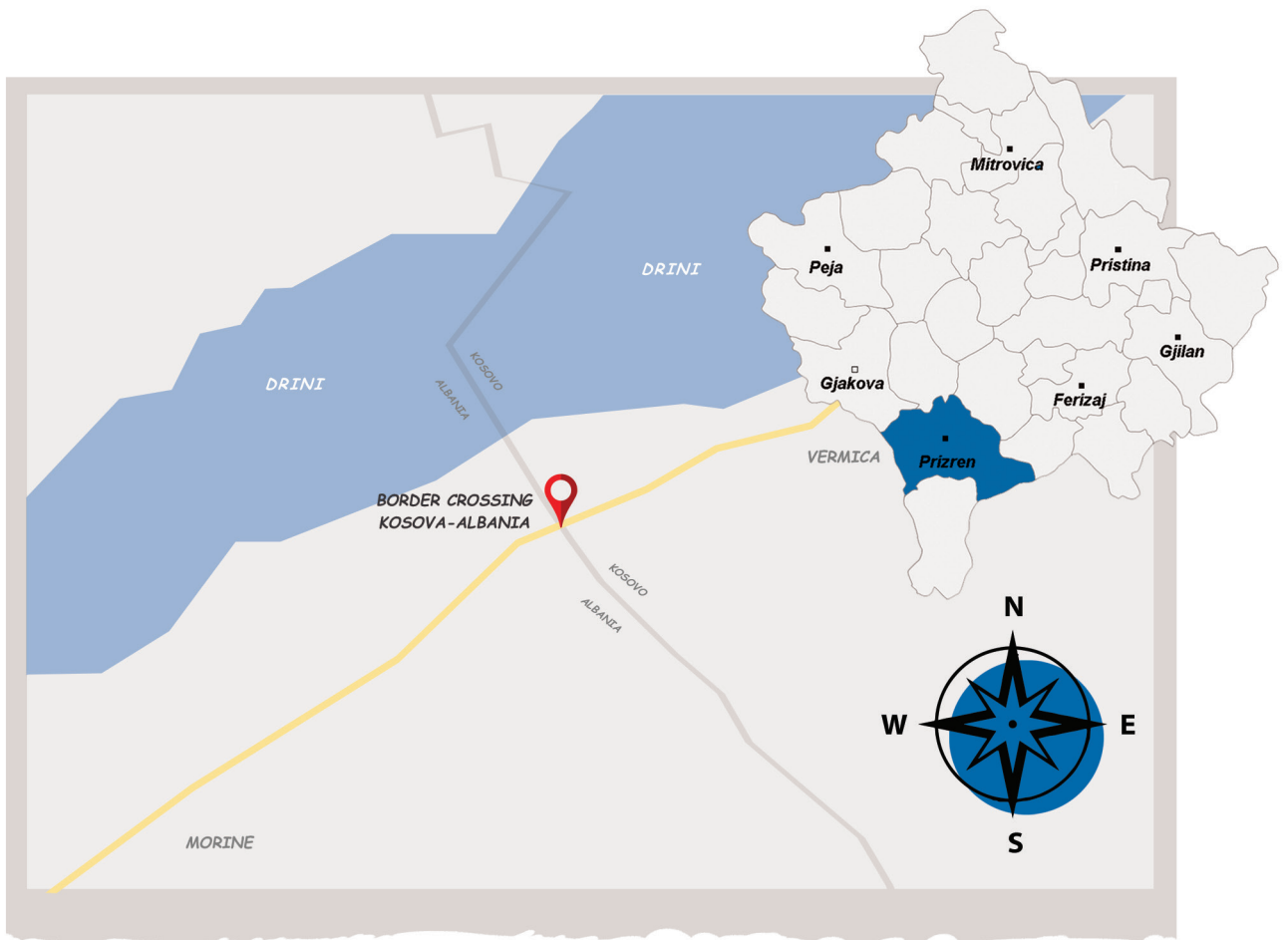
The border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica is one of the official international border crossings of Kosovo and serves as a link between Kosovo and Albania. This border crossing point is now used for circulation of passengers, goods, means of transport, cars, as well as customs clearance and control of goods and passengers. The border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica with its own geographical position is the only border crossing point that serves for the circulation of commercial goods and is the point with the largest circulation of citizens, who go to or come from Albania.

Despite the facts that hundreds of thousands of refugees passed through this border crossing point from Kosovo to Albania as a result of the war in Kosovo and the many mistreatments they have suffered at the border, no memorial has been placed here to mark these events, which would contribute to the enrichment of the collective memory of the Kosovar society.



THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA

MAP





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VUSHTRI
VUÇITRN

THE HOUSE
SNOW

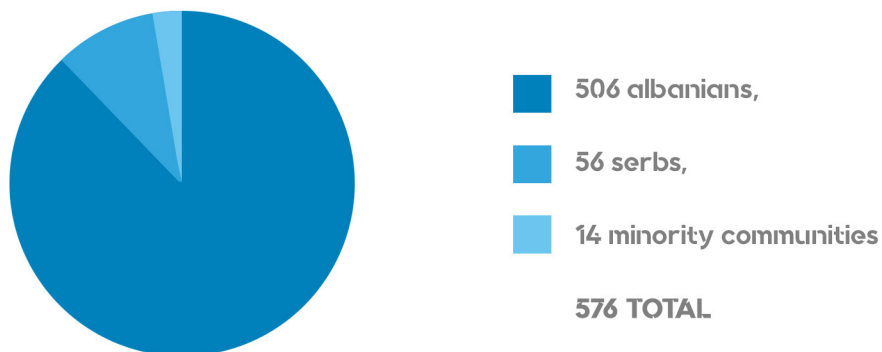
NEAR THE CEMENTERY

THE HOUSE NEAR THE CEMETERY

VUSHTRRI/VUČITRN

Vushtrri/Vučitrn is one of the oldest cities in Kosovo. According to the population census before the war, it had 65,671 inhabitants, with a mixed ethnic structure. About 90% belonged to the Albanian ethnicity. While according to the population census conducted in 2011, the number of inhabitants in the Municipality of Vushtrri/Vučitrn was 69,870.

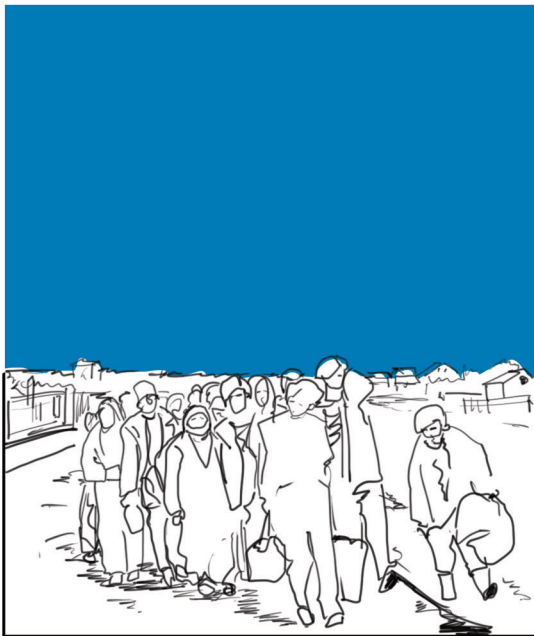
The NATO Military Operation against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia started on March 24, 1999, whereby a state of war was officially declared in the entire territory of Kosovo. From this date, terrible crimes were committed in the entire territory of Kosovo, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn was no exception, where, among other crimes, sexual violence was also committed.



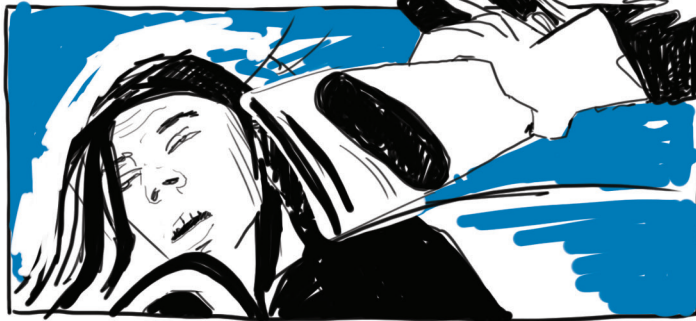
As a result of the war, 576 people were killed and/or disappeared in Vushtrri/Vučitrn and its surroundings, of them 506 Albanians, 56 Serbs and 14 from minority communities.



On May 22, 1999, after having looted them, the Serbian military, police and paramilitary forces expelled the Albanian civilian population from their homes and gathered them near the city cemetery of Vushtrri/Vučitrn where they forced them to sit on the ground. While the civilians were staying in that position, they were beaten up with wooden sticks, and were hit on the head and in different parts of the body by some members of the police and military forces of Serbia.



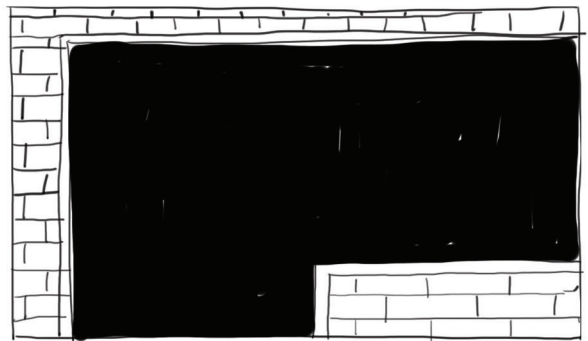
Some of the men were then separated from the crowd, forced to board some trucks and were driven away in different directions, some of them towards the Smrekonica/Smrekovnica prison, and others towards the Vushtrri/Vučitrn sports hall. The rest of the civilians that remained there were old men, women and children, and they were lined up and forced to walk towards a two-story house, to be registered and provided with identification cards.



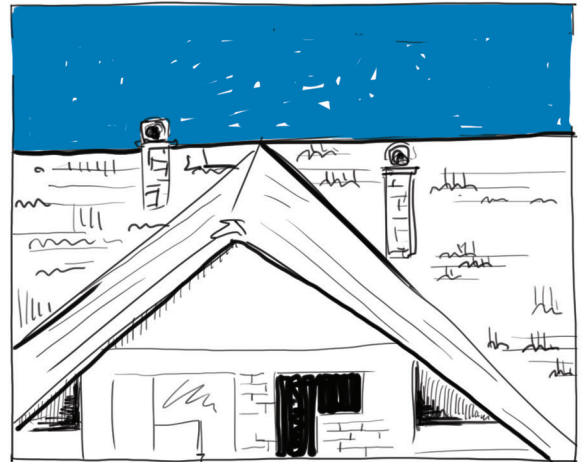
In the line of people who were lined up to receive identification cards, there was also a woman (who due to her anonymity, will hereinafter be referred to as the woman), who at that time had been in her third month of pregnancy, expecting twins. She was waiting in line with her mother, sister, mother-in-law and her two daughters, one of whom was 9 months old at the time, which the woman was holding by her arm, while the other was 3 years old.

The woman was pulled from the line by a member of Serbian police forces, who took the little girl who the woman was holding by her arm and slammed her to the ground. At that moment, her mother-in-law reacted, and as a result of her reaction, she was hit on the forehead with the stock/handle of an automatic rifle, causing her bleeding in her head, and then she was pulled and violently pushed into the house in front of which they were standing in line.

He sent the woman to one of the rooms on the second floor, where other women were held who were naked and raped by some Serbian policemen. He knocked the woman to the ground, forcibly took off her clothes and raped her, with the help of another policeman.



After experiencing pain, the woman turned to the side to vomit. At that moment she was kicked in her back, and as a result the woman lost consciousness. After regaining consciousness, the woman saw herself naked in the room and one of the policemen who was there, grabbed her by the arm and forcibly removed her from there, telling her to "go away".



Such a crime had an extremely negative impact on the woman's life, since she suffered great physical and psychological trauma, and above all, she lost her unborn babies, as a result of an abortion she suffered during the month September that year.

The woman still suffers the consequences of this crime committed against her even today. Despite continuous treatment, she did not manage to overcome her post-traumatic stress disorder.



A judicial process was conducted on this case by the Basic Court in Pristina, whereby the accused Zoran Vukotić, former member of the reserve forces of the Serbian police, was found guilty in 2021 for the criminal offense "War crimes against the civilian population" and was sentenced to a term of 10 years of imprisonment. The judgment has not taken the final form.

A large number of other crimes were committed on the same day, especially in the homes of the Pasoma and Cakaj families, where 72 civilians were massacred, including men, women and children, who were mistreated and killed in a cruel manner. The distance from the house where the rape/s was committed, to the house of the Cakaj family is only 15 meters, while the distance from the house of the Pasoma family is approximately 100 in a straight line.

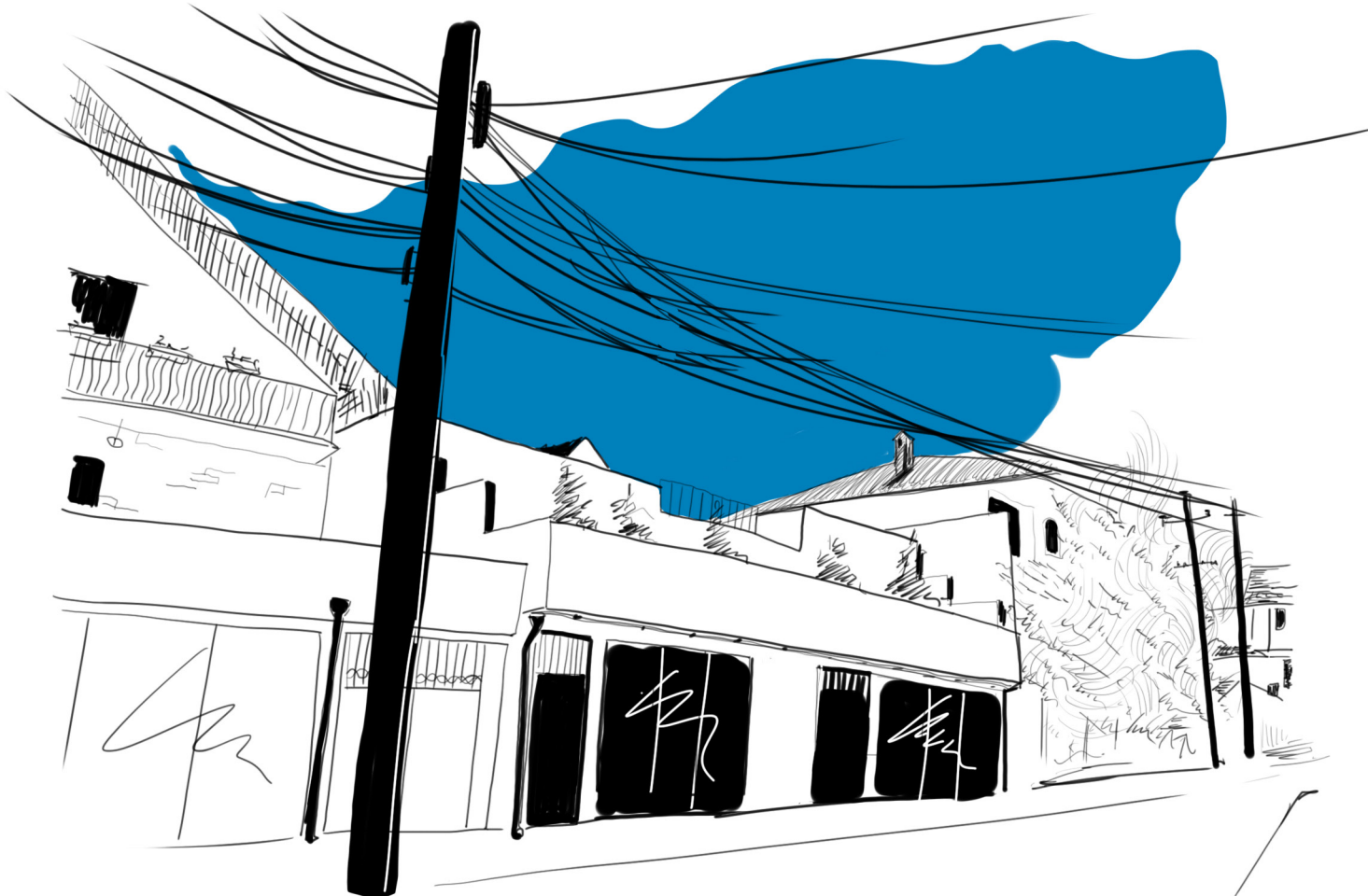
THE HOUSE NEAR THE CEMETERY

WHAT WAS IT?

The house in which the incident took place was the home of two Albanian civilian brothers, which was built in 1981/1982. It was a house divided into two entrances, for both brothers and their families, with two floors and an attic. Next to this house there were 4 other houses, all belonging to their relatives, in which around 81 people were sheltered during the war.

During the critical day of May 22, the brothers' house was used by the police, army and Serbian paramilitaries, and a large number of crimes were committed inside it.

This house together with 3 other houses of their relatives and many adjacent neighbors, were completely burned on the same day of May 22, 1999.



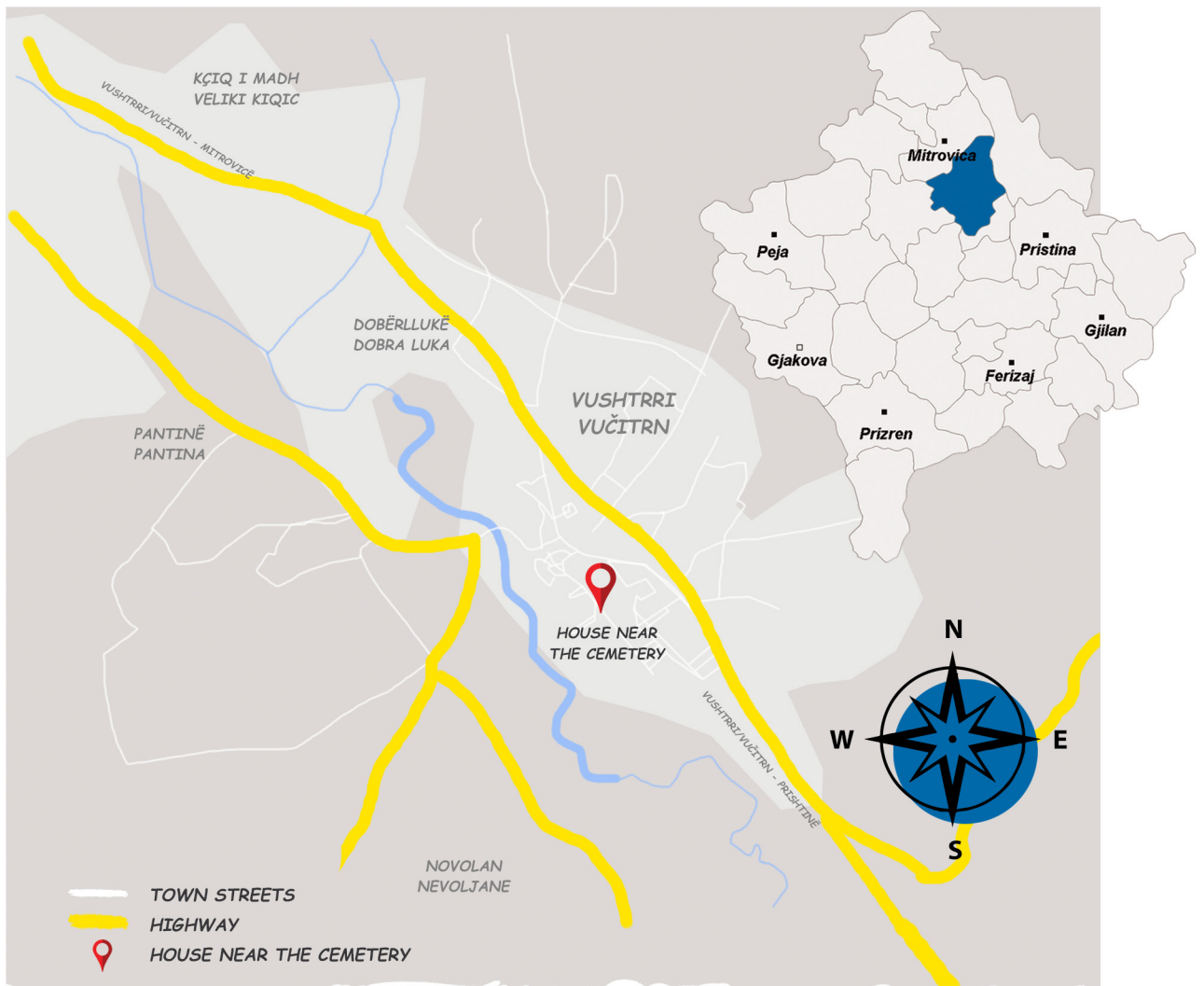
THE HOUSE NEAR THE CEMETERY

WHAT IS IT CURRENTLY USED FOR?

About two years after the end of the war, the house was rebuilt by the owners and brought back to the same shape as it was before, where they lived until 2013. The house was then bought by another owner, who completely restructured it and currently lives there.

Despite the fact that serious war crimes were committed in this house, no memorial or plaque was erected that would mark this house as the place where crimes were committed.

THE HOUSE NEAR THE CEMETERY MAP



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RAHOVEC/ORAHOVAC

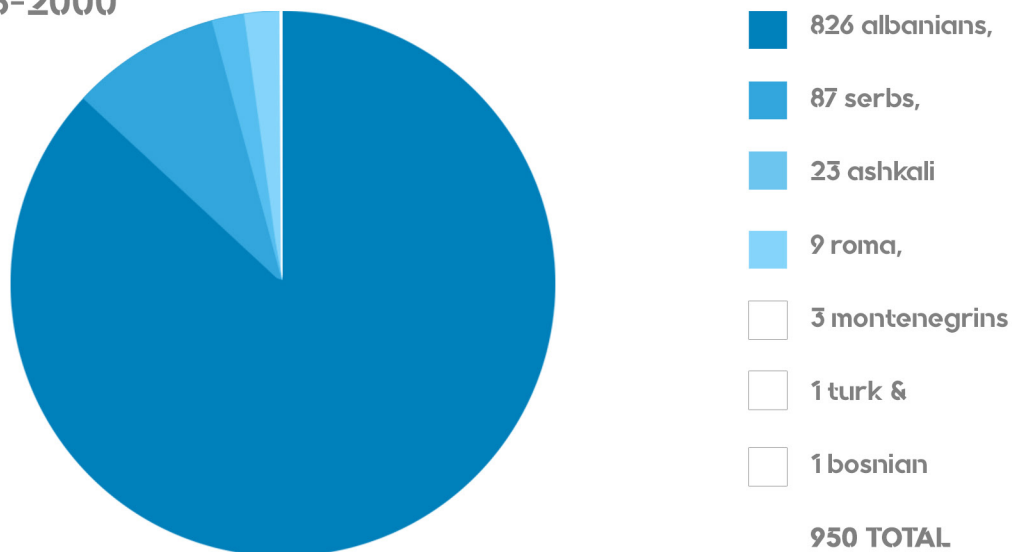
SO-CALLED 'GARRBAGGE PIT'

SO-CALLED 'GARBAGE PIT'

RAHOVEC/ORAHOVAC

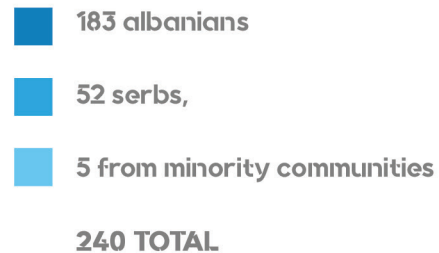
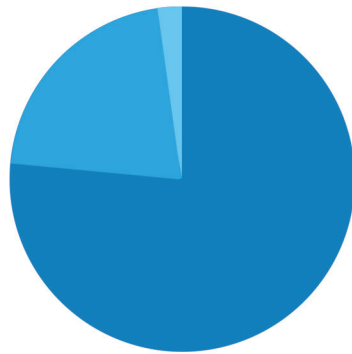
The municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac is one of the regions in Kosovo mostly affected by the war in 1998-1999. During the 90s, about 60,000 inhabitants lived there, with an Albanian majority of over 90%. During the period 1998-2000, 950 people lost their lives and/or went missing in this municipality. Of them, 826 were Albanians, 87 Serbs, 23 Ashkali, 9 Roma, 3 Montenegrins, 1 Turk and 1 Bosnian.

1998-2000

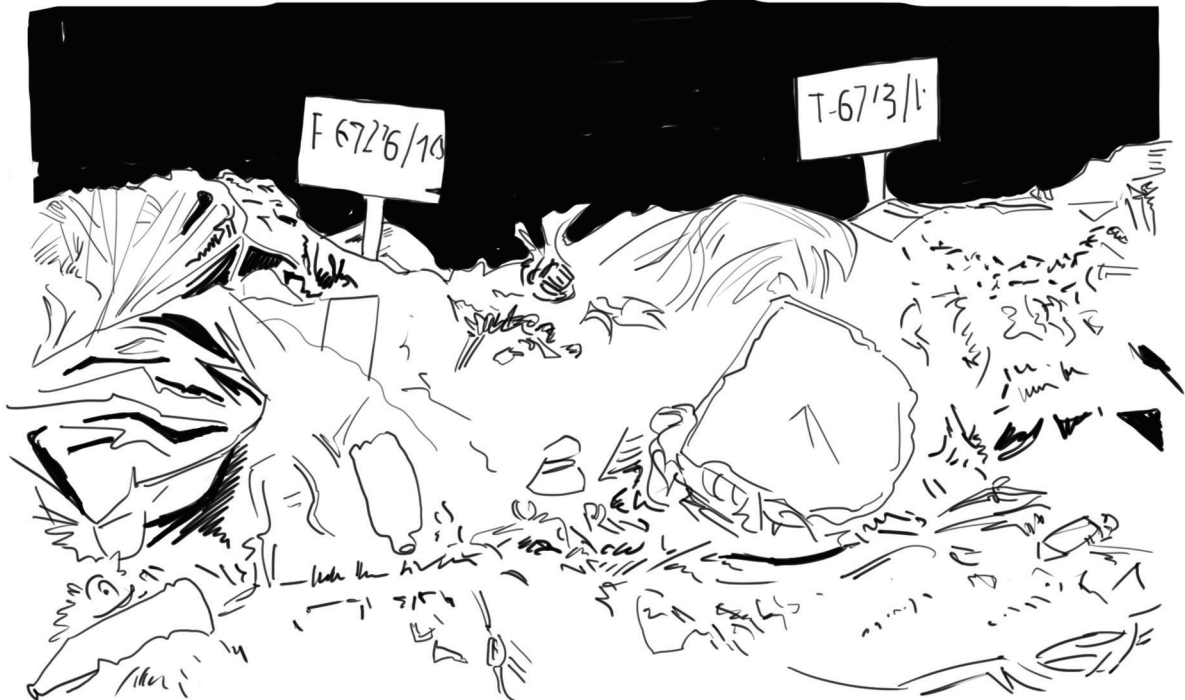


The municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac was also characterized by a large number of victims in 1998. During this period, 240 people were killed and/or disappeared in this municipality. Of which, 183 Albanians, 52 Serbs, 4 Roma and 1 Montenegrin.

1998



The largest number of victims were unarmed civilians, namely 186 civilians, who were executed in different places and circumstances and their bodies were subsequently buried in different locations either by their relatives, when this was possible, or by the relevant municipal institutions of that time. The largest number of victims who were buried by municipal structures, was done in the so-called "Gropa për Bërlllog" [Garbage Pit].





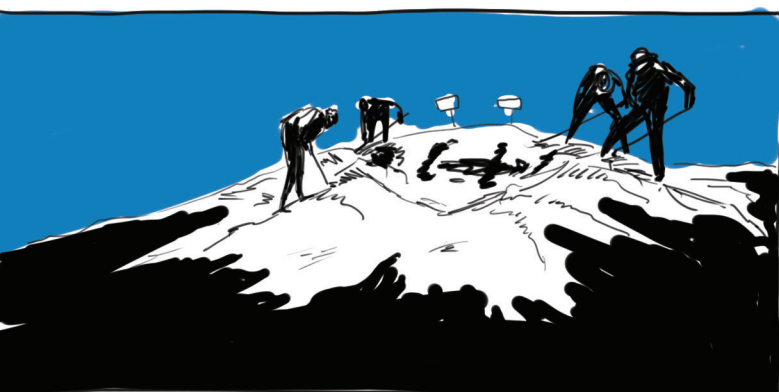
The Garbage Pit was located immediately behind the Muslim cemetery of the city of Rahovec/Orahovac and was a space in which various types of wastes were dumped for a long time and had turned into an illegal dump site. During 1998, bodies of Albanians who were executed by Serbian forces were buried in this place.

On July 17, 1998, the Kosovo Liberation Army forces entered Rahovec/Orahovac and fighting between them and the Serbian armed forces began. In the evening of July 18, 1998, Serbian Special Police Forces of the Prizren Station arrived in the town of Rahovec/Orahovac. Early in the morning of the next day, on July 19, special police forces started to enter the houses of Albanian residents - raiding them, looking for weapons, shooting in all directions, throwing hand grenades into the basements, looting them and setting the houses on fire. On the other side, members of the 549th Motorized Brigade bombarded the city from the direction of Landovicë/Landovica and Rogovë/Rogovo villages.



The special police action lasted until July 22, 1998 when they regained control of the city whereby 79 Albanian civilians from the city of Rahovec/Orahovac were executed in their homes, on the street, in the workplace and similar places. After the executions, police forces ordered the municipal structures to take the bodies of victims and bury them in the place called "Garbage Pit". Victims were buried individually one by one and in a number of these graves wooden boards with names of victims or an identification number were placed. However due to the continuous digging with an excavator, these identification boards were mixed with the garbage that was located there. Thus, these cemeteries resembled more to a space dedicated for dumping garbage than a burial site.

The then spokesman of the Serbian police, Colonel Bozhidar Fillic, in an interview with the CNN, in August 1998, had denied that the space was a place for dumping waste, implying that someone had made a mess of the place afterwards and had also emphasized that the bodies were buried there because of the proximity to the Muslim cemetery. On the other hand, Colonel Filliq said that the victims buried in that space were 'terrorists' who had been killed during the fighting and were not civilian victims as alluded by the Kosovo Albanians. But such a thing was refuted in August 1998 when some of the identification wood boards containing names of civilians were discovered, such as the case of Sabrije Mullabazi, who was a 90-year-old woman executed in her yard and then buried in the Garbage Pit.



The bodies of the victims buried in this space were identified and reburied in different time periods. A group of them were identified immediately after the end of the war, in October 1999, while a number of other victims were identified and reburied during 2005-2007. All the bodies identified in this space were reburied in the Muslim cemetery of the city of Rahovec/Orahovac.

SO-CALLED 'GARBAGE PIT'

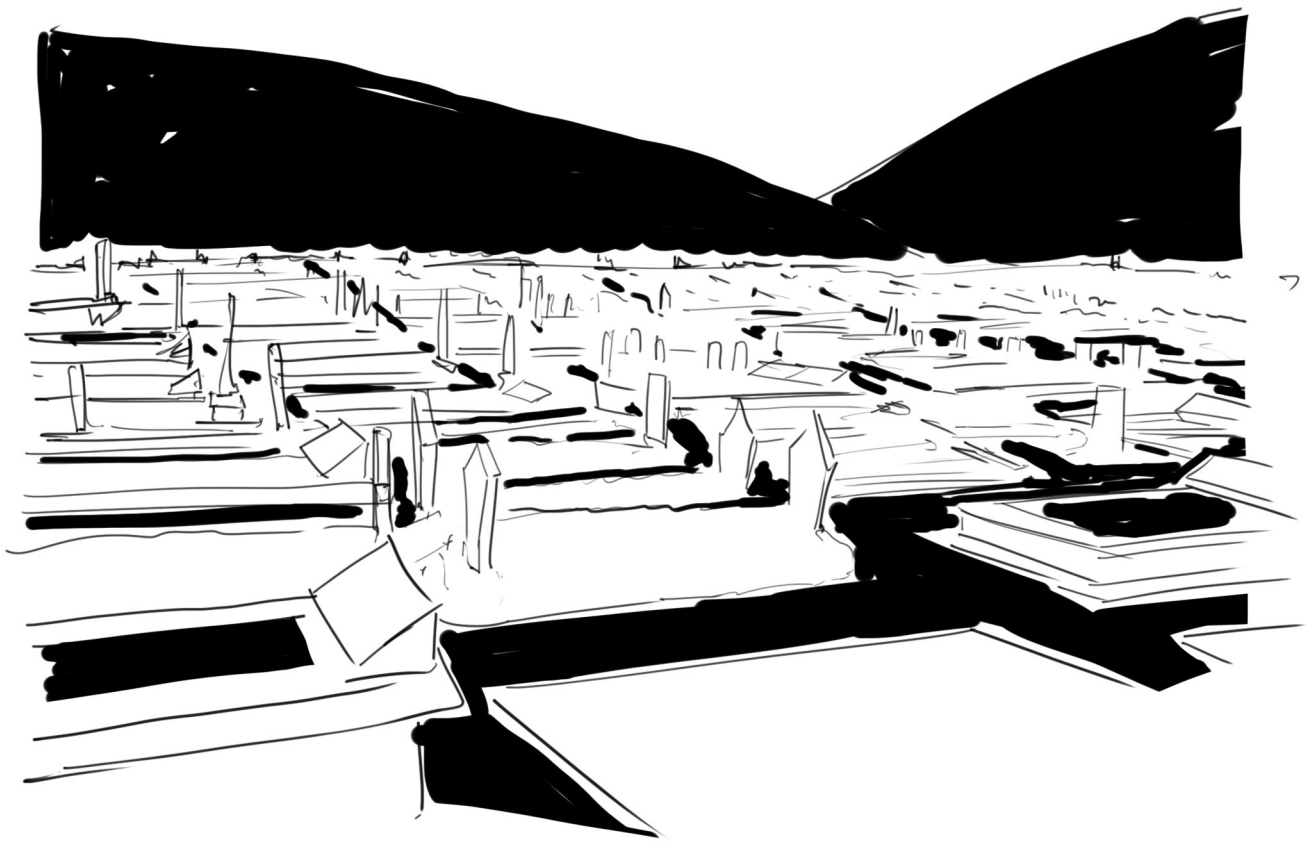
WHAT WAS IT?

The Garbage Pit was a space near the Muslim cemetery of the city of Rahovec /Orahovac in which waste of different categories was dumped by the residents of the area before and during the 1998-1999 war period.

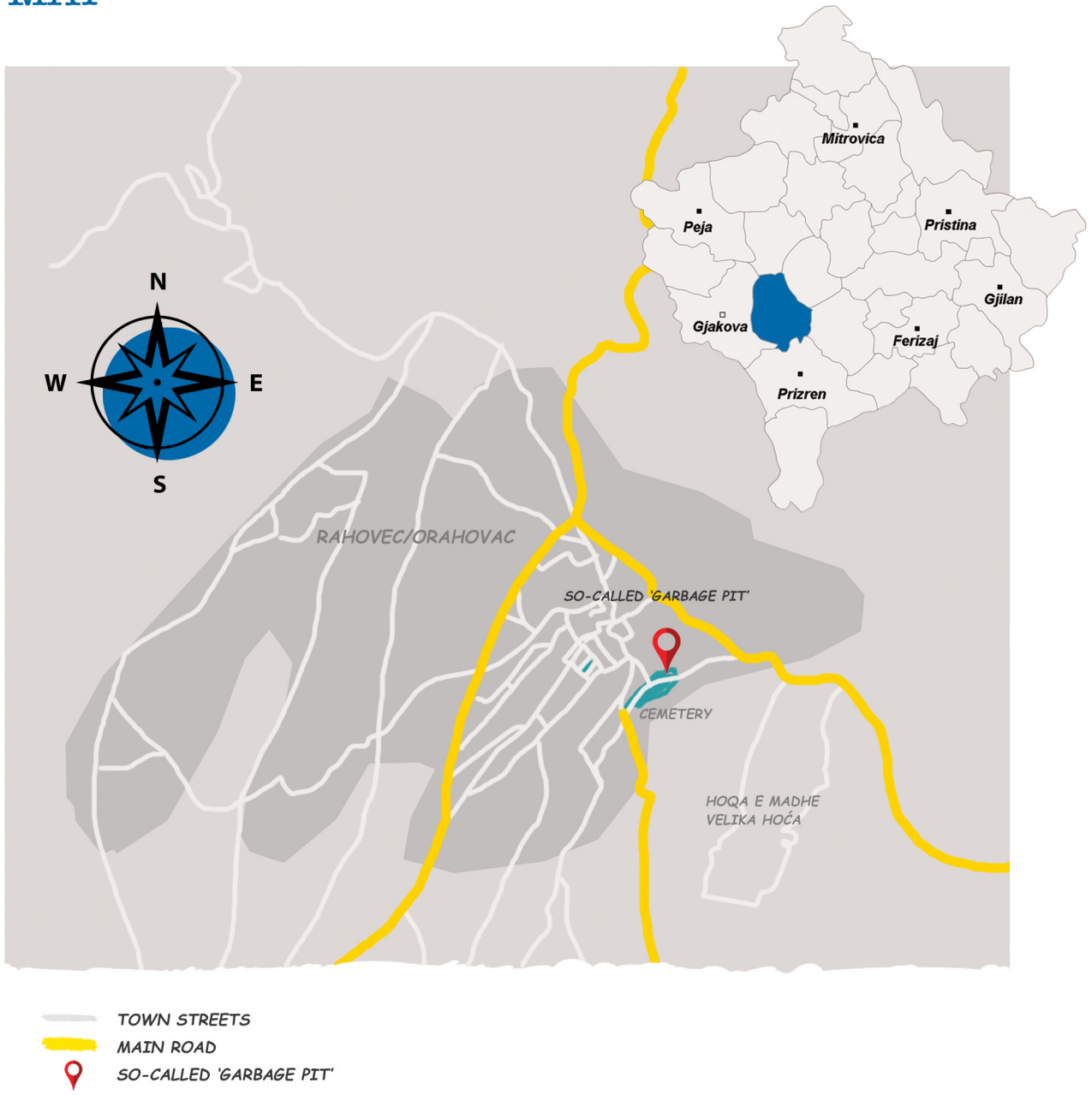
SO-CALLED 'GARBAGE PIT'

WHAT IS IT NOW?

After the end of the war, no more waste was thrown in the Garbage Pit, and it was transformed into a dignified place for a cemetery. So, after the exhumation of bodies that were buried there in 1998, the space of Garbage Pit became a part of the Muslim cemetery of the city of Rahovec/Orahovac. Until now, there is no marking in that space that shows that it was a location where the bodies of Albanian civilians executed in 1998 were buried in a non-dignified manner in a place where garbage was continuously dumped.



SO-CALLED 'GARBAGE PIT' MAP





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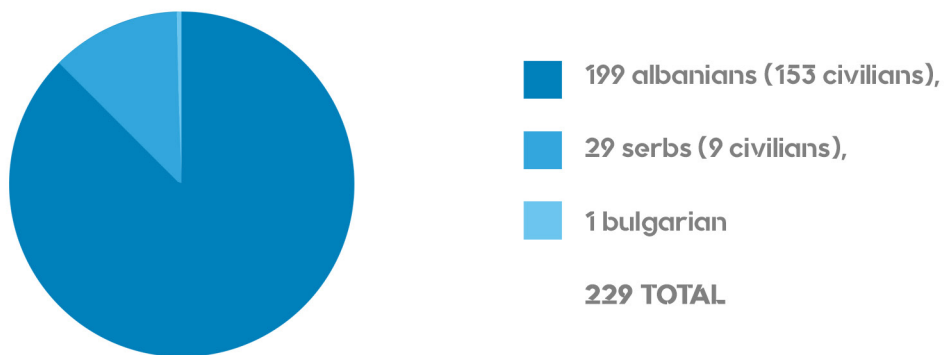
GRADICË/GRADICA

UNFINISHED WELL

UNFINISHED WELL

GRADICË/GRADICA

The war in Kosovo officially started in the Municipality of Glogoc/Glogovac, following the February 28, 1998 attacks in the villages of Likoshan/Likošane and Qirez/Ćirez of Skënderaj/Srbica municipality, where 29 people lost their lives. Given that the Drenica region was considered as the home of the Kosovo Liberation Army, the beginning of March 1998 continued to be characterized by fighting and numerous casualties amongst civilians and armed forces.



In the municipality of Glogoc/Glogovac, during 1998, 229 people were killed and/or disappeared forcefully as a result of the war. That year alone, 199 Albanians (153 of whom civilians), 29 Serbs (9 of whom civilians) and 1 Bulgarian, as a member of the Serbian armed forces, lost their lives.

Since April 1998, Serbian police forces started to station around the mountain of Çiçavicë/Čičavica - a mountainous area between Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Glllogoc/Glogovac, Skënderaj/Srbica and Obiliq/Obilić, where the presence of the KLA was suspected. From 22 to 27 September 1998, the Yugoslav army was also supporting the police when the operation known as "Çiçavica" began. This military operation initially included the villages of Vushtrri, continuing to those of Glllogoc/Glogovac and Skënderaj/Srbica.

The situation in municipalities of Glllogoc/Glogovac, Skënderaj/Srbica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn and Obiliq/Obilić was getting worse, citizens were being forced out and many houses were burned.

On September 23, 1998, the Serbian forces started the attack on the mountain of Çiçavica/Čičavica where hundreds of residents found shelter, while the next day in the early morning hours the army entered the mountain.



The Hoti family was also sheltered in the mountain of Çiçavicë /Čičavica. They were from the village of Marinë/Marina of Skënderaj/Srbica municipality, but they had left their homes in June 1998. Until September 23, 1998, they had stayed with their relatives, the Saliuka family, in Gradicë/Gradica village. Due to escalation of situation, they were forced to leave their homes and head for the Çiçavicë/Čičavica mountain, where they settled in a tent. While in refuge in the mountains, some of the men separated from their families and hid in a pit/well and stayed there hidden all day. Late at night they went to the tent for food and rest, and in the early hours of the morning they returned to the pit.



The pit had been dug to build a well, but it was unfinished. There was no water and it was difficult to access because it was covered by bushes. As a location, it was around 150 meters away from the tent where the other family members were located.



That morning, on September 24, 1998, the 6 men were in the well when Serbian forces approached, forcibly dragging them out, lined them up, and started to beat them up. The youngest, who was only 12 at the time, was beaten and told to leave while the other 5 men were brutally killed.

The other members of the family who were in the mountain, women and children, heard the shots and then the Serbian forces reached their location as well, asking them some questions, burning their personal belongings and forcing them to leave.

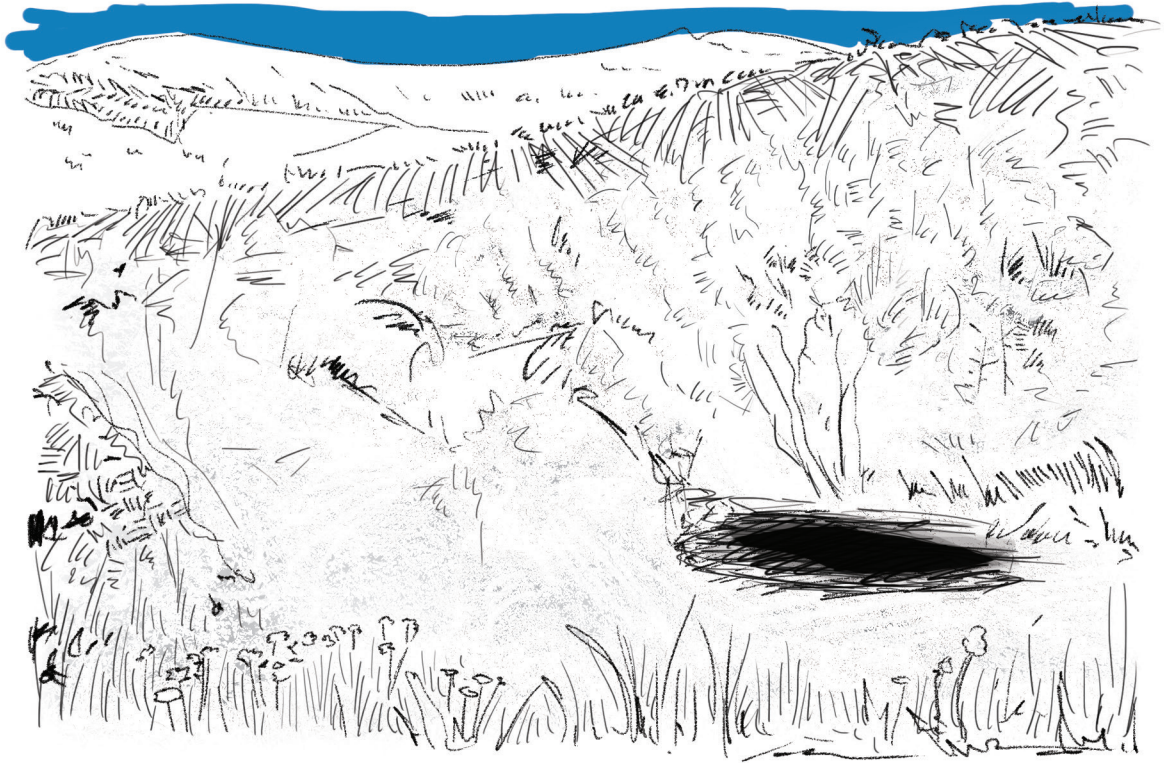
The next day, the family members heard that several men had been killed in the mountains of Çiçavicë/Čičavica. Near the well, where the men were hiding, they found the massacred bodies of Sefer, Rrustem, Enver and Naim Hoti as well as Mehmet Saliukaj, who were initially buried in the Gradicë/Gradica cemetery.



UNFINISHED WELL IN GRADICĚ/GRADICA

WHAT WAS IT?

This pit in Gradicë/Gradica near the mountains of Çiçavicë/Čičavica, where the tragic event of the Hoti and Saliuka families took place, was opened before the war for the purpose of constructing a well. Being unfinished and surrounded by bushes, this place was considered as a safe place to hide in a state of danger.



UNFINISHED WELL IN GRADICĚ/GRADICA

WHAT IS IT USED FOR TODAY?

Today this place continues to be in the same shape, it is completely covered by bushes and you cannot see the pit. However, the place is not maintained or marked to indicate the event of 24 September 1998, even though 5 civilians were brutally killed there. Failure to mark the places of crime contributes to collective forgetfulness, making the history and events that occurred as a result of the war in Kosovo fade away.

UNFINISHED WELL IN GRADICË/GRADICA MAP

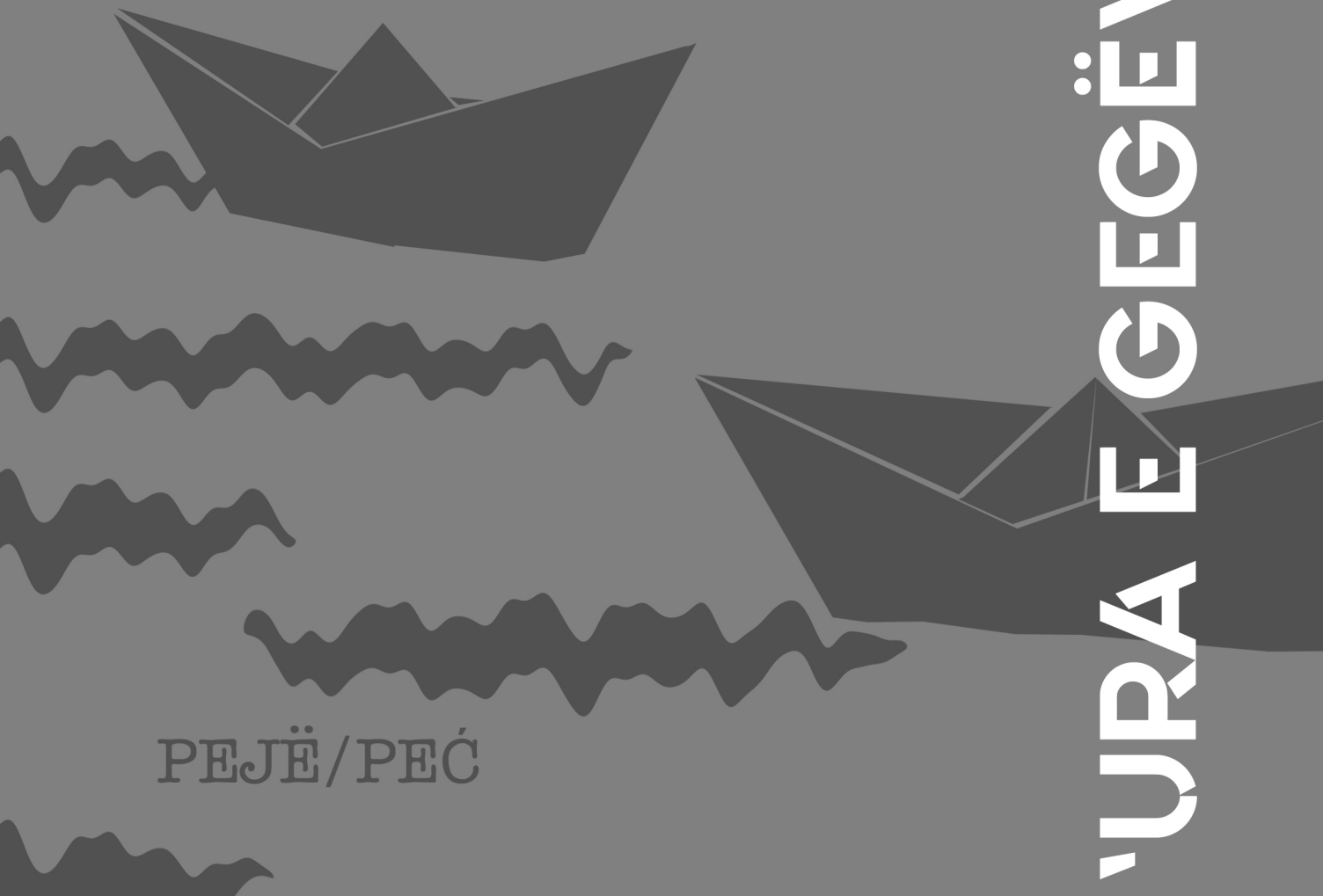




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'UPRA E GEGËNËVE', BRIDGE

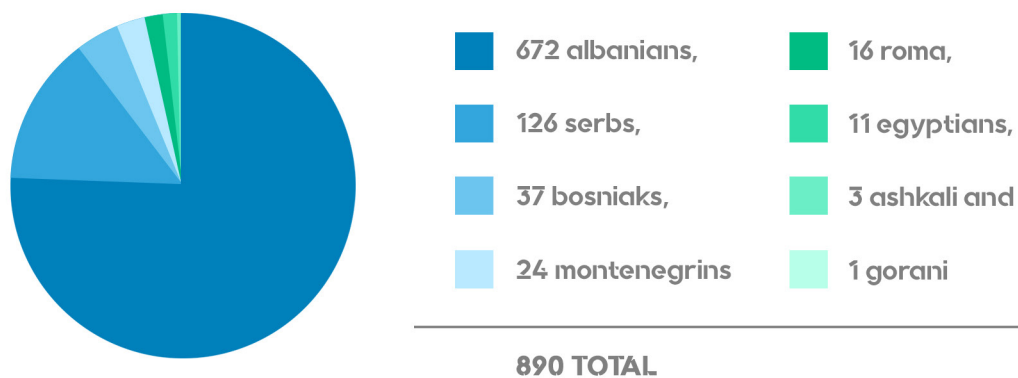
PEJË/PEĆ



'URA E GEGËVE' BRIDGE

PEJË/PEĆ

The municipality of Peja/Peć lies in the western part of Kosovo with wide plains of Dukagjin on one side and bordered by the high mountains of Rugova Mountains on the other side. During the 1990s, the Municipality of Peja/Peć had a population of roughly 150,000 inhabitants, which consisted of about 80,000 Albanians, 22,000 Serbs, and the rest consisted of Roma, Bosniaks, Egyptians and other smaller ethnic groups.

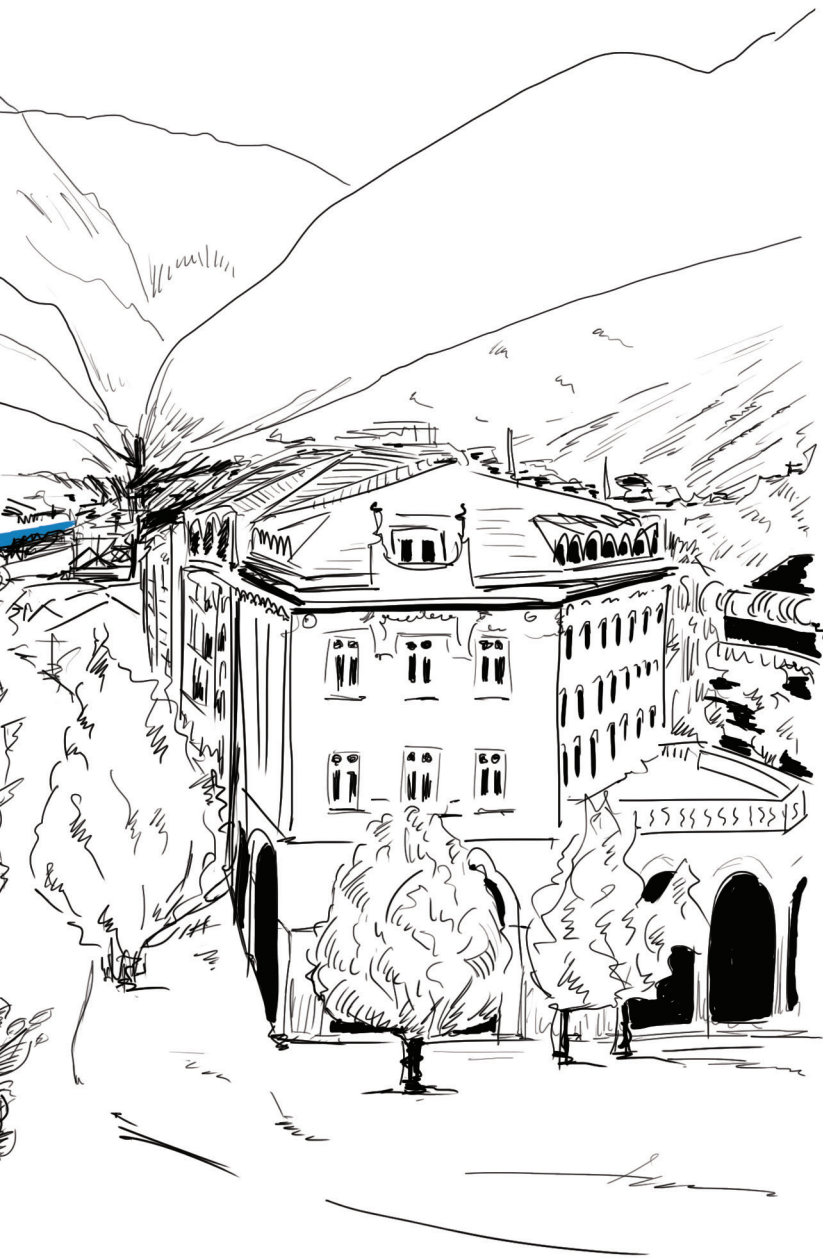


As a result of the war in Kosovo, a total of 890 people lost their lives and/or disappeared violently in the municipality of Pejë/Peć, of which 672 Albanians, 126 Serbs, 37 Bosniaks, 24 Montenegrins, 16 Roma, 11 Egyptians, 3 Ashkali and 1 Gorani. The largest number of victims were unarmed civilians (728) who were executed under different conditions and circumstances and most of them during the period March-June 1999 as a result of mass executions such as: massacres in Qyshk/Ćuška, in Lubeniq/Ljubenić, in Pavlan, in Zahaq/Zahac, in the city of Peja/Pec and many other similar instances.

On June 10, 1999, the Kumanovo Agreement was reached, which ended the war in Kosovo. However, many crimes directly related to the war, occurred after this agreement was reached. The Humanitarian Law Center has registered 1470 victims who were killed and/or disappeared in the period June 11, 1999 - December 31, 2000 related to the war of 1998-1999. The largest number of these victims were members of the minority communities living in Kosovo and Albanians who were described as collaborators of the Serbian regime. The Bosniak community was also the target of various crimes immediately after the end of the war. In the period 28 February 1998 – 31 December 2000, 86 Bosnian civilians were killed and/or disappeared and most of them lost their lives and/or disappeared after the Kumanovo Agreement was reached, respectively 57 of them.

After the end of the war, a large part of members of the Bosniak community left Kosovo, while the rest continued to live in their homes as they did not feel threatened. Among these families, is also the Begović family that lived in the city of Peja/Peć.





The house of the Begović family, was inhabited by Hamdi and Ifete, together with their two sons and close families of the sons, where the entire family had a total of 9 members. While the daughter of Hamdi and Ifete, was married and lived with her husband in Gjakovë/Djakovica.

A few days after the start of NATO bombings, on March 27, 1999, considering the situation, the two sons of Hamdi and Ifete decided to leave the house and leave Kosovo altogether with their families. The older son and his family went to Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the younger son and his wife took refuge in Montenegro.

Hamdi and Ifete did not leave and stayed in their house in Pejë/Peć. From the late March, until June 12, 1999, they took care of the houses belonging to Albanian families in the neighborhood. After the end of the war, they did not leave home because they felt safe.



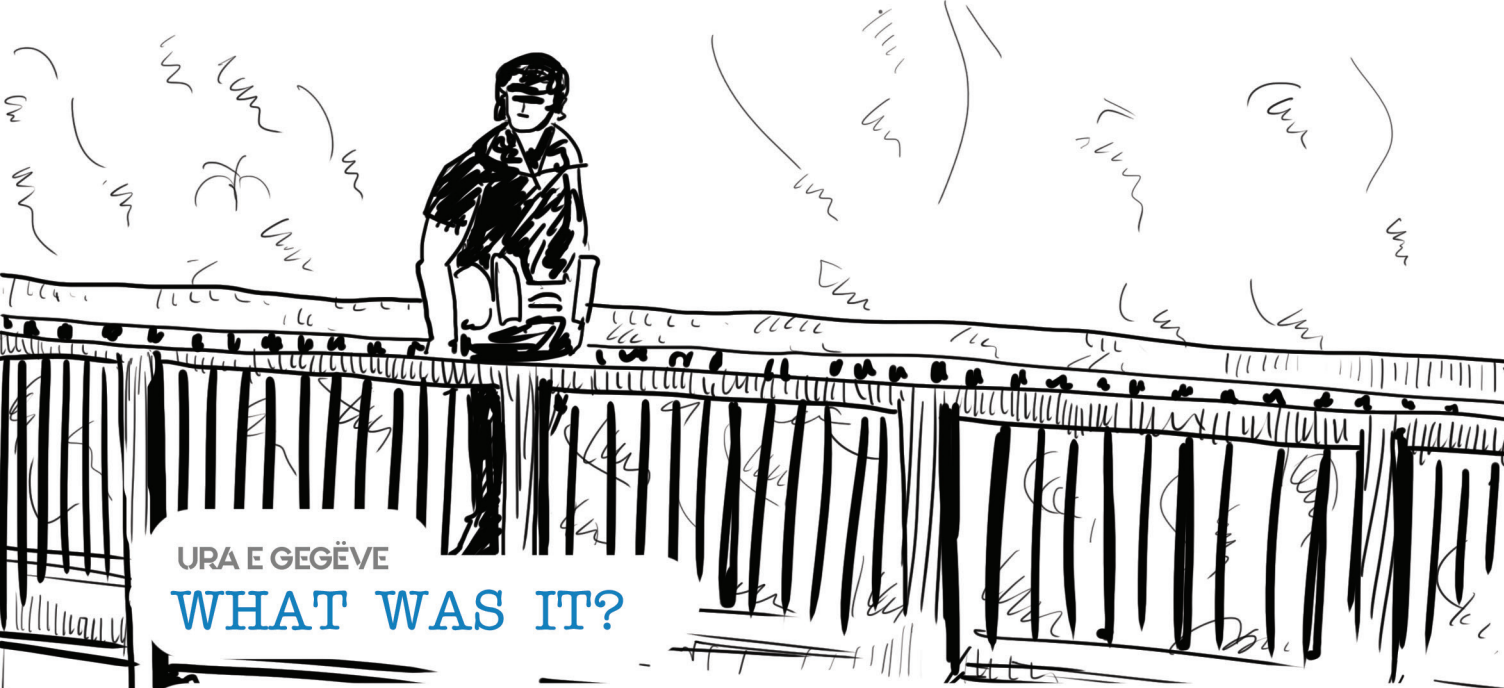
On July 9, 1999, their neighbor came to Ifete and Hamdiu for coffee. While they were chatting, at around 06:00 in the evening, 6 people in KLA uniforms stormed the house. They ordered the neighbor to leave, while they stayed in the house for about two hours. They took Hamdi and Ifete and left in an unknown direction.

The next day, the dead bodies of Hamdi and Ifete were found under the bridge of the "Lumbardhi i Pejës" river by some members of the KFOR. Their hands were tied and they were killed with a bullet to the head.

Ifete's mother identified the bodies, and they were buried in Vitomiricë/Vitomirica 3 days later on July 12, 1999.

No one has yet been brought before any domestic or international court to face justice for the commission of this crime.





URA E GEGËVE

WHAT WAS IT?

The river "Lumbardhi i Pejës" springs in Usovishte/Usoviste at an altitude of 1932 meters and its flow passes through the limestone formations of the Rugova Gorge continuing through the town of Pejë/Peć dividing it into two parts. The "Lumbardhi i Pejës" river is joined by the Turjaka stream and Isniq stream and all of them join the "Drini Bardhë" river which flows into the Adriatic.

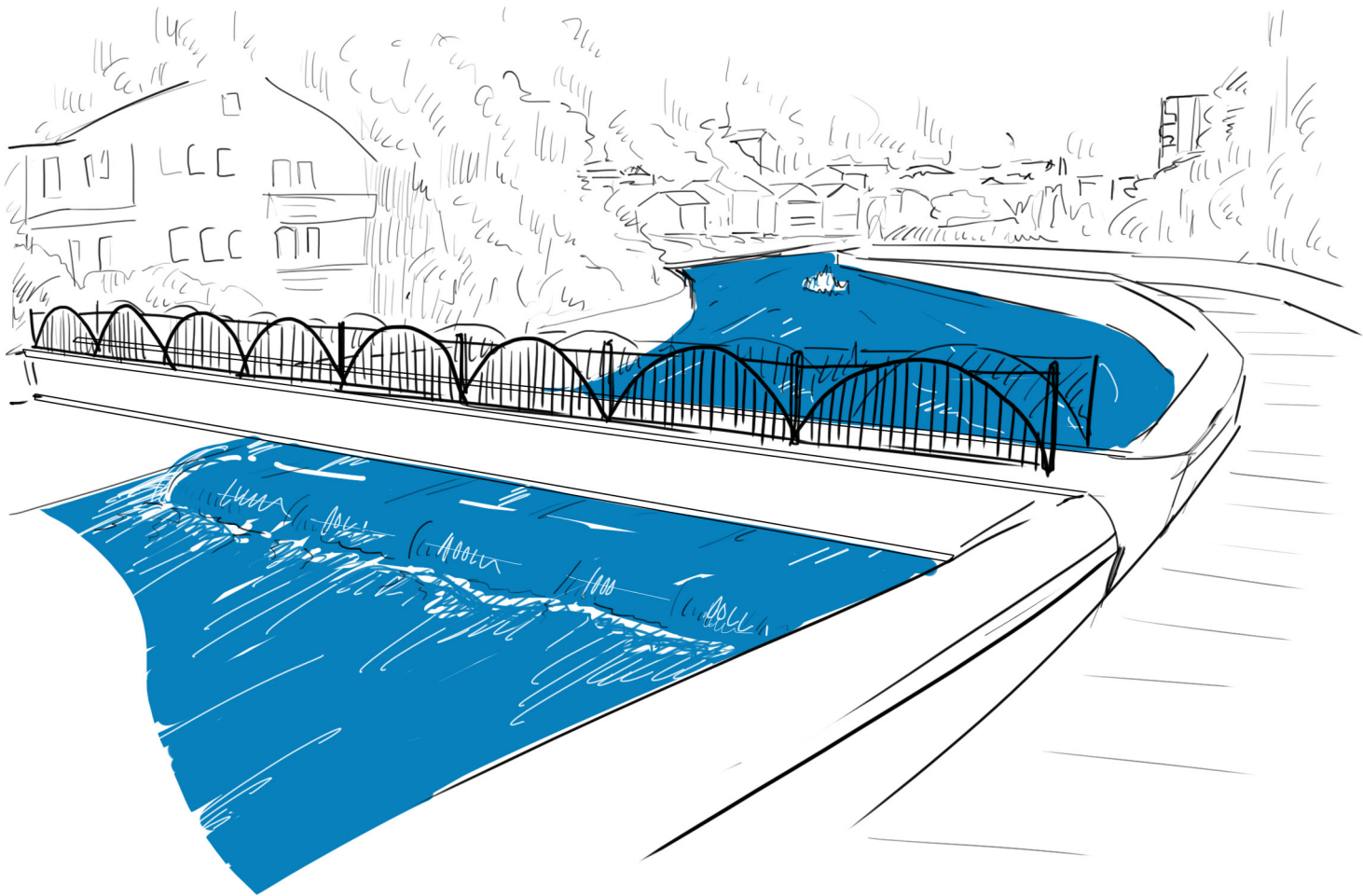
During the war period in Kosovo, there were three main bridges in the city of Peja/Peć which served as crossing points over the "Lumbardhi i Pejës" river and as connection points of different parts of the city. These three bridges are known by names such as: "Ura e Gurit", "Ura e Zallit" and "Ura e Gegëve" and were built in different periods and with different methods. They were rebuilt in 1979 after the floods of that year that destroyed them. The bodies of the Begović couple were found right under the "Ura e Gegëve" bridge.

"Ura e Gegëve" bridge is located in the western part of the city of Peja/Peć and connects the part of the city to the Kapeshnica neighborhood. Its name derives from the family with the surname Gegaj that lives in Kapeshnica and thus it got the name "Ura e Gegëve/Gegiqve". The "Ura e Gegëve" bridge was originally a narrow wooden bridge which was rebuilt with metal material after its destruction as a result of the floods of 1979, and was used only for pedestrian traffic.

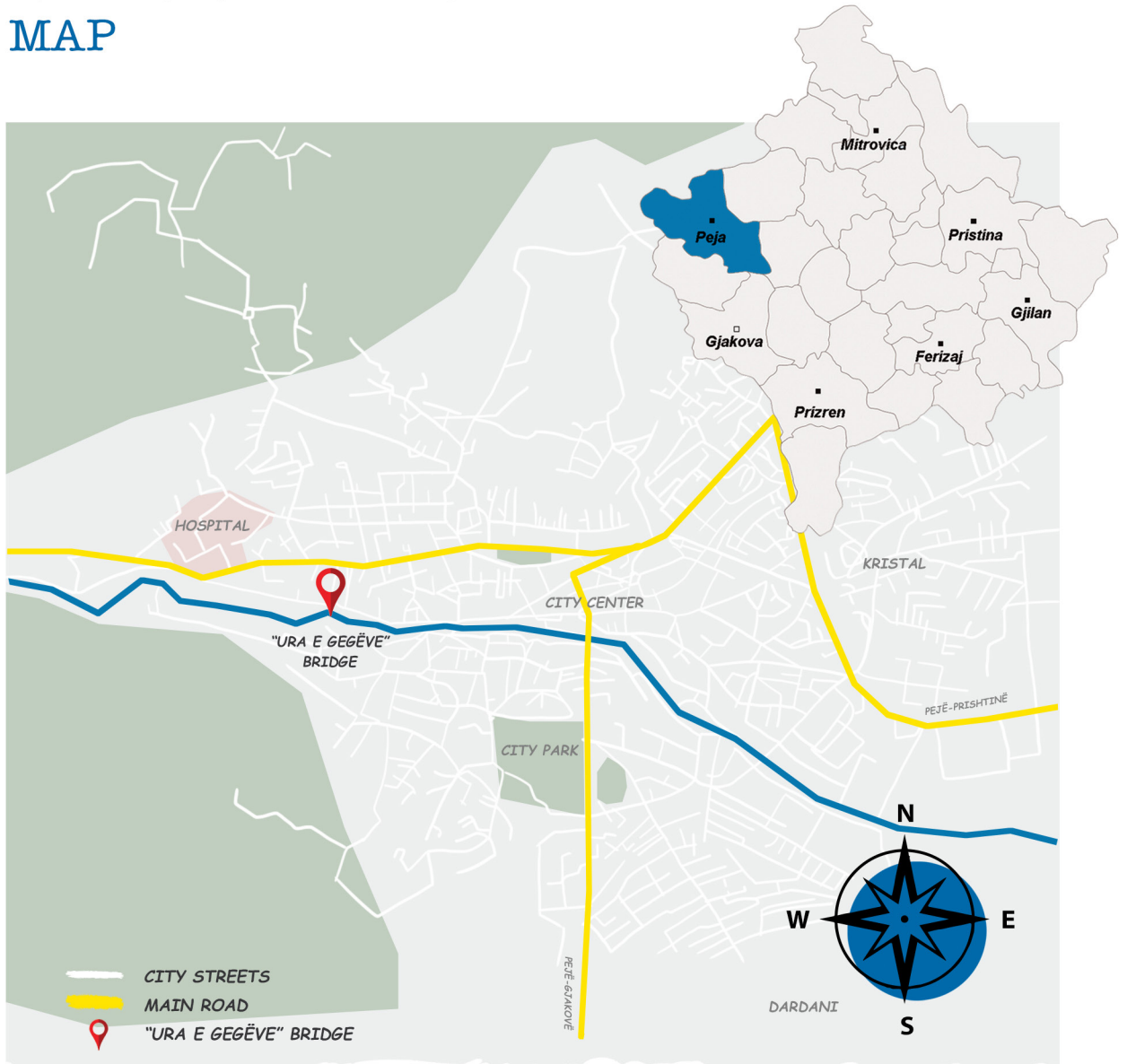
URA E GEGËVE BRIDGE

WHAT IS IT?

The “Ura e Gegëve” bridge was renovated after the war, taking a more modern shape, but continues to have the same function, it is used only for pedestrian traffic connecting the city of Peja/Peć with Kapeshtica neighborhood. However, despite the fact that the bodies of the Begović couple were found under this bridge, who were unarmed civilians, there is still no mark that would inform the citizens about this event that happened in July 1999.



"URA E GEGËVE" BRIDGE MAP





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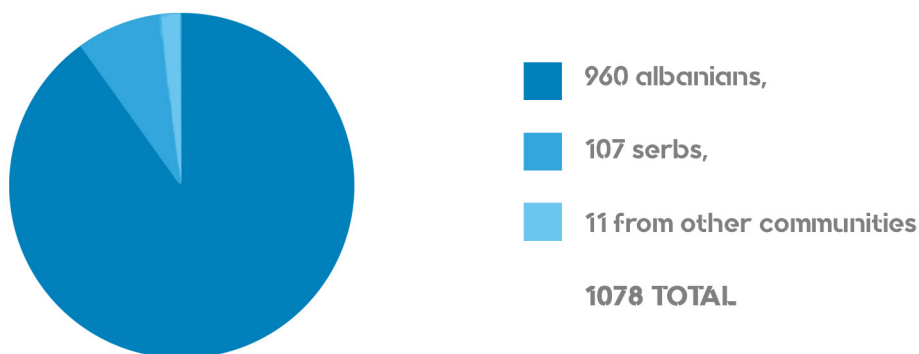
HOUSE OF CULTURE FRANJEVIĆI JOŠNOVIĆI

GLLOGOC/GLOGOVAC

HOUSE OF CULTURE

GLLOGOC/GLOGOVAC

The municipality of Gllogoc/Glogovac is one of the most damaged municipalities as a result of the war in Kosovo. About 69,000 inhabitants, mostly Albanians, lived there at that time. During 1998-2000, 1078 people were killed and/or disappeared forcefully in the municipality of Gllogoc/Glogovac, of whom 960 were Albanians, 107 Serbs and 11 from other communities.



Positioned at the center of Kosovo and surrounded by the mountains of Çiçavicë/Čičavica and the hills of Drenica, the first battles between the Serbian forces and the forces of the Kosovo Liberation Army took place in this area.

In addition to the murders and disappearances of civilians, arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment of detainees and forced labor were common in this municipality, all of which significantly intensified after the start of NATO's intervention in Kosovo.

The House of Culture, which is the first facility opposite the Police Station in this municipality, is one of the facilities that served as a place for keeping Albanian detainees and mistreating them.

From 1998 until the end of the war, Serbian forces followed the same pattern of mistreatment at the police station and at the House of Culture.

Mass arrests and detention in the House of Culture increased in April, May and until the beginning of June 1999. The detainees were brought there in smaller and bigger groups. One of the largest groups that were brought to that facility were the residents of villages Shtuticë/Štutice, Vërboc/Vrbovac, Tërstenik/Trstenik, Polluzhë/Poluže, Baks, Gllanasëlle/Gladnoselo, Qirez/Ćirez, Dashec/Daševce, etc., who were arrested during the offensive of the Serbian forces in the territories of those villages on April 30, 1999. During this offensive by the Serbian forces, over 140 Albanians were killed, most of whom civilians. A large part of the men were arrested, transported and locked up in the Qirezi mosque. The next day, on May 1, 1999, they were transported in several trucks from the Qirezi Mosque in the direction of Glllogoc/Glogovac. 118 of them were executed in

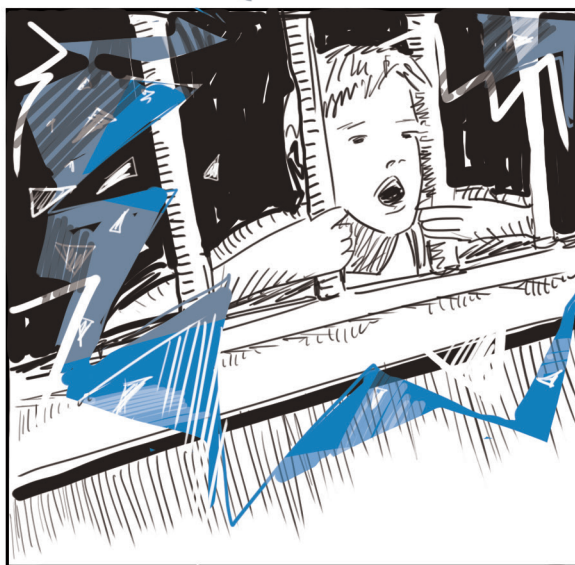
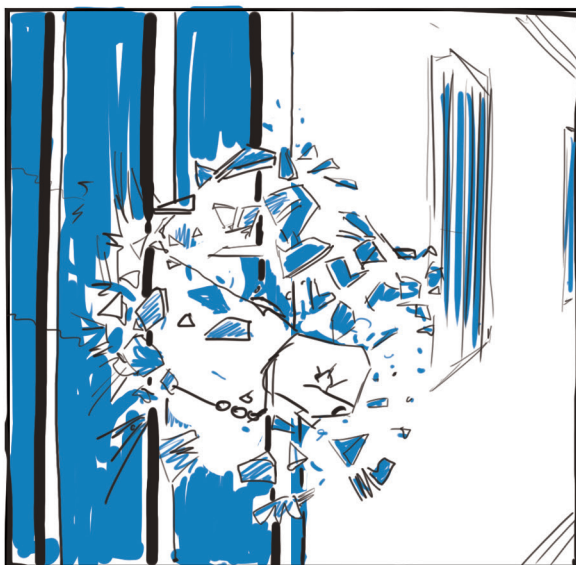


the village of Old Çikatovo/Staro Čikatovo, in the place called Shavarinat/Šavarine. After the horrible experiences of those days, and amid fear for their lives, the rest were sent to the premises of the House of Culture in Glllogoc/Glogovac.

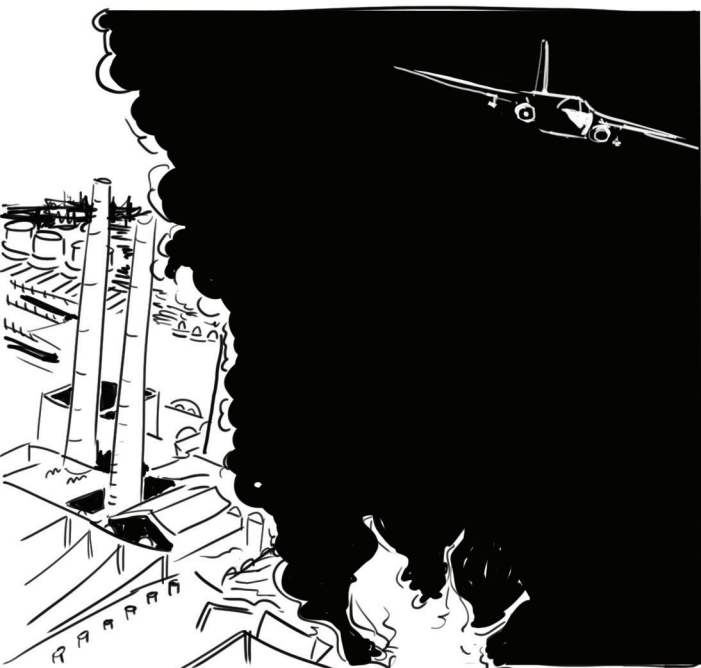
Albanian civilians arrested in the city of Glllogoc and in the surrounding villages were held in the House of Culture in inhumane conditions and were subjected to to cruel

treatment. Many people were held in tight spaces, there were times where over 150 people were held in the small wardrobe room, sitting on top of each other. They were not given food or water, and sometimes they did not even have enough air to breathe.

In a case which occurred at the end of April 1999, people who were locked in the premises of the House of Culture asked members of the Serbian forces to open the windows because they had ran out of air.



After a while, someone from the Serbian forces broke the window panes, threatening them not to try to leave because they are under surveillance. In addition to keeping the detainees in inhumane conditions and subjecting them to cruel treatment, they were also subjected to torture inside the House of Culture. They were often punched kicked, hit with sticks and electric cables. Sometimes, crowds of detainees were forced to go out into the courtyard of the House of Culture and sit or kneel with their hands behind their heads for a long time.



Detainees who were interrogated by members or police inspectors were sent to the premises of the Police Station which was opposite the House of Culture or they were sent to the railway station which was very close. All those who were sent for interrogation were beaten up and tortured during the interrogation. They would then bring them back to the premises of the House of Culture.

Many of them were then sent to Lipjan Prison and on June 10, 1999 they were sent to Serbian prisons.

Some of them were sent to do forced labor in different villages, including the village of Krajkovë/Krajovo, where they opened military pits and did other type of work. After being held for a few days in the house of Culture, a small number of them was released.

The House of Culture in Glogoc/Glogovac is a rare case where a cultural facility was used to hold and brutally mistreat hundreds of innocent civilians.

HOUSE OF CULTURE

WHAT WAS IT?

The House of Culture started operating in May 1970, where many cultural activities were held before the war. The House of Culture hosted concerts, organized by the Cultural Society called 'Shote Galica', film screenings, theater performances, as well as festivals.



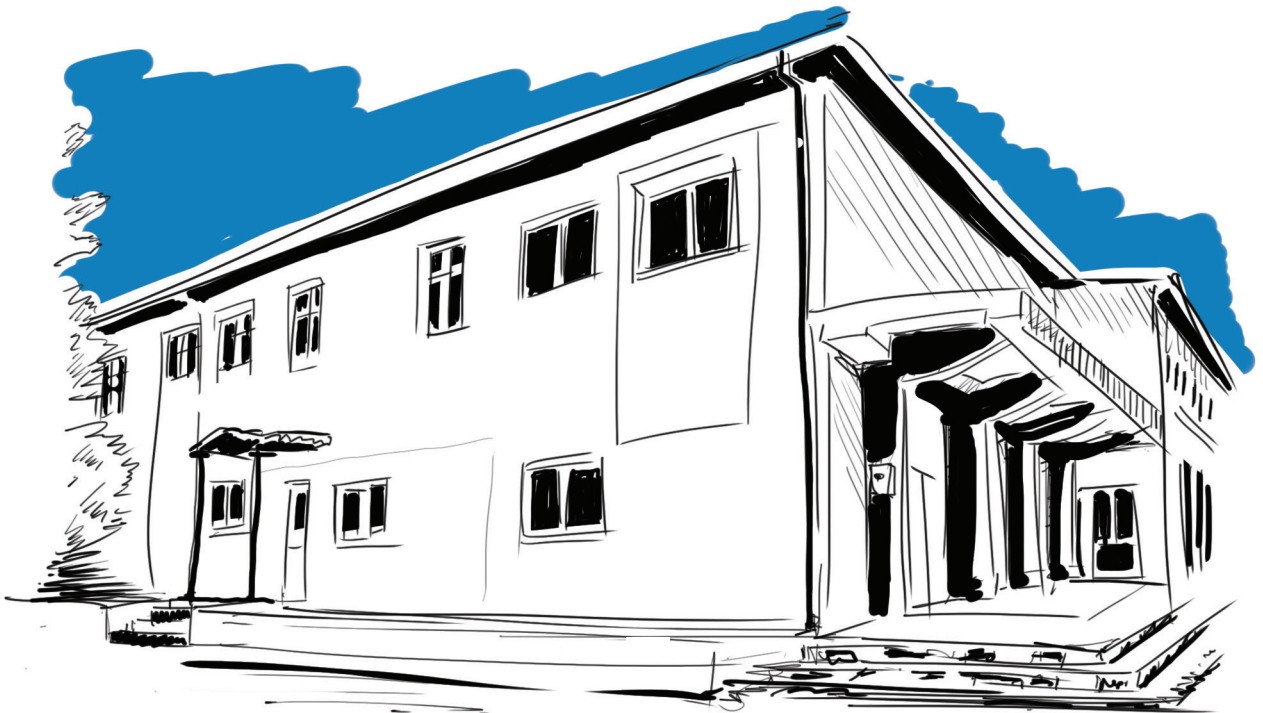
HOUSE OF CULTURE

WHAT IS IT USED FOR TODAY?

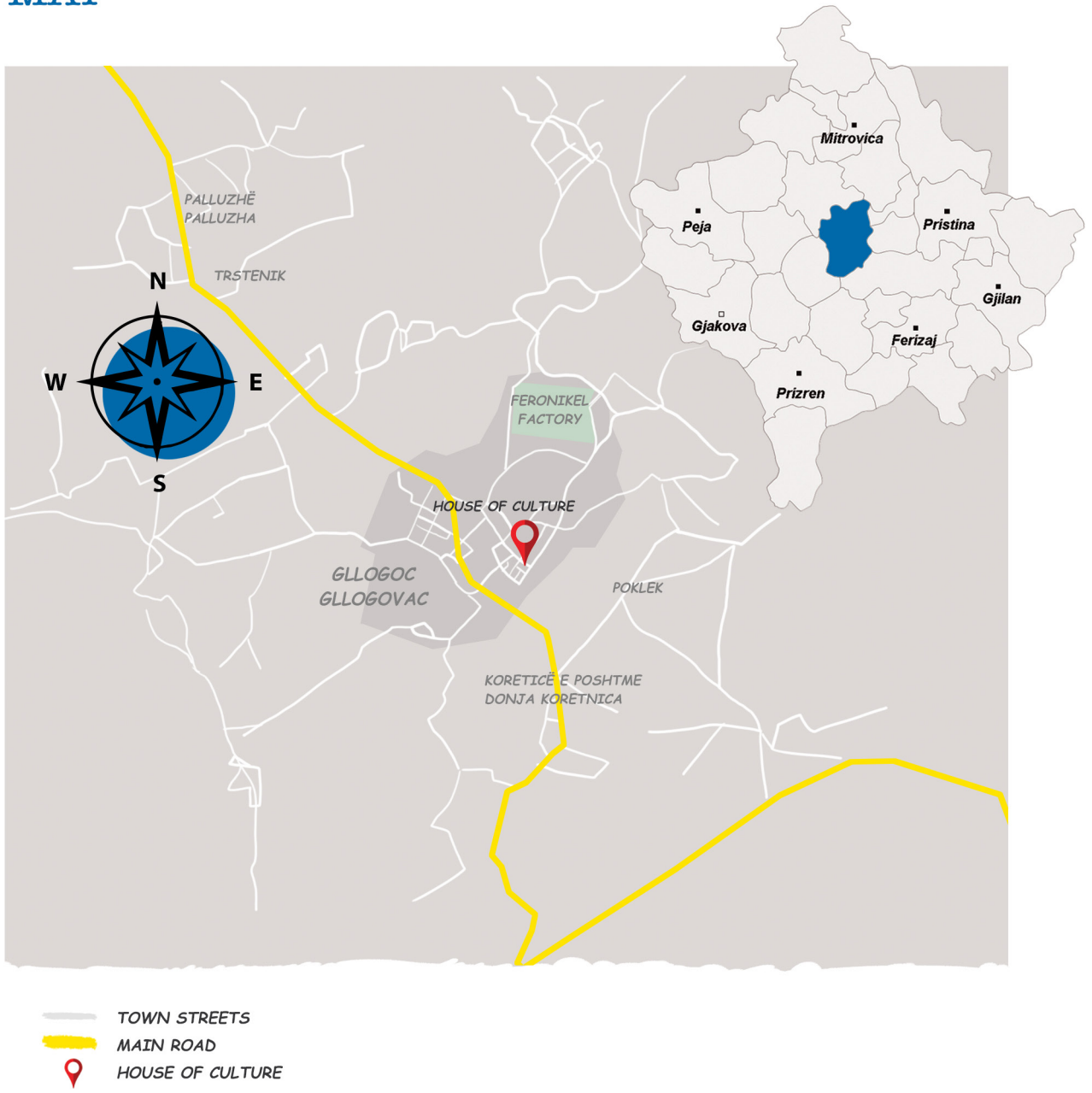
The House of Culture was made operational after the war and is used by the Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports for hosting cultural activities, film screenings, book promotion and various documentaries.

The House of Culture is operational, and has 306 seats. This space is used for rehearsals by groups of cultural NGO's, for organizing the "Drenas Humor Days" Festival, the "Ymer Elshani" poetry table, literary classes with the Children Writers' Caravan, the Festival of music groups with primary schools which is of competitive character at the municipal level, commemorations and book promotions.

However, it is not operational on a daily basis and most importantly, it has no sign of the events of 1998 – 1999, and it is extremely important to be marked as a crime scene, considering that hundreds of people were detained, ill-treated and subjected to violence precisely there. The cultivation of the non-remembrance culture runs a risk of this period being forgotten or remembered only by the affected persons, while this case should be part of the collective memory and memorialized.



HOUSE OF CULTURE MAP





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Dealing with the Past Principles is a civic initiative, promoted by a group of practitioners and civil society organizations in the field of *Dealing with the Past*. The group has embarked on a joint initiative to chart and endorse a set of principles that will inform and guide political and public actors on how to engage with victims, survivors, painful pasts, and historical accounts. This initiative seeks to prevent harmful discourse and actions related to the legacy of the conflict and will serve as a reference document where anyone violating its principles will be held morally accountable. <https://yihhr-ks.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Principi-Eng.pdf>

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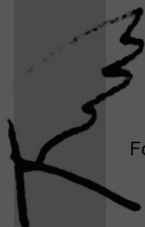
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This publication was prepared under the project "Promotion of Dialogue and Historical Understanding" supported by the foundation 'The National Endowment for Democracy' (NED). The project seeks to close the knowledge gap that exists among young people in Kosovo about the recent conflicts in the Balkans, as well as the commemoration of civilian victims from all ethnic backgrounds throughout Kosovo.



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