



ACTION FOR NONVIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING



# THE SOUL'S REMEMBRANCE

Stories



**NGO ACTION FOR NONVIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING**

**Project: Dealing With the Past in Kosovo**

# THE SOUL'S REMEMBRANCE

## Stories

**PRISHTINË, 2015**

*We are thankful to everybody who contributed to the documentation of the past in the book  
“The Soul’s Remembrance”*

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*Time does not heal wounds*

# Foreword

The publication of the book “The Soul’s Remembrance” is part of the project “Dealing with the Past in Kosovo” implemented by the NGO Action for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding (ANP.) Going back to the past means to walk back again through a road once taken... Memories can overwhelm us, and can awake in us all sorts of emotions, depending on what we remember. Every instance of dealing with the past is hard. It is more painful, however, to talk about war, suffering, and how we survived.

In October 2014 we started the project by selecting sixteen individuals among 150, who had applied to be part of the project “Dealing with the Past in Kosovo.” Such a large number of interested people made us realize that dealing with the past in the right way had been a much awaited initiative.

The group we selected comprises of individuals from different areas in Kosovo. They are of different ages, ethnicities, religions, occupations, languages etc. We shared in the group our stories, no matter how painful, thus creating a “safe space” allowing everyone to express themselves freely. We are now sharing these stories with you in written.

The book “The Soul’s Remembrance” contains seventeen stories from the past of each participant in the project. Considering that each time we resist going back in time, being aware of the sensitivity of dealing with the past, in our project we used art as a pathway to the past. Hence it is easier to express emotions through art.

These stories are personal experiences. Everyone has his or her own way of telling their story. Someone can do that through painting alone (the paintings were made during the workshops organized by NGO ANP). Another has chosen few words and a painting, while there are others who have documented their stories with pictures and documents, dating back to the time the story is took place.

One story contains other stories, some of them silent. Others talk about themselves and tell the stories of their dearest people, of their relatives, friends, and neighbors with whom they share the same street or neighborhood. We remembered all those who no longer live, people we have known. Memories never die.

Along the written stories, the book brings visual stories, too. They speak more than our words can ever do. Wounds of the past cannot be healed in silence. We need to speak, to tell, and to talk about what has happened. We should use the process of dealing with the past in Kosovo in a constructive way.

**EMINE ISMAJLI**



# I

My  
Holliness  
Dressed  
In  
Light  
Walks  
Paths  
of  
Eternety

Love  
Inside  
Me  
Wakes  
Love  
To  
The  
Others  
And  
Jointly  
Brings  
Peace

**EMINE ISMAJLI**





## “Wounds from the Past”

Agim Rexhaj  
Prizren

# WOUNDS FROM THE PAST

The street where I used to live was called “Bulevardi i Rinisë” (*“Boulevard of Youth”*). The youth of living in this street organized protests against the Serbian regime in the ‘90s. They would raise two fingers making the victory sign, and would shout for freedom and rights like all the other people.

I was part of a big family; at that time there were my parents and six brothers. Protests resurfaced in March 1997. My three older brothers were active participants in the protests but then came a time when they realized that more sacrifices were required. That was the moment they decided to join their friends who were members of the Kosovo Liberation Army. At that time, I was 10 years old, attending third grade. They would help me do the homework. One day, when I came home from school, they were not there. I asked my parents where my brothers were but they did not tell me, as my parents too did not have any specific information about my brothers’ whereabouts. From that moment I started to worry and feel concerned. Several days later I understood where they were. I heard my parents talking together and they sounded very worried about their sons, who were too young of age. At first, I could not believe my ears! To verify what I had heard, I asked my parents. As usual, they did not want to tell me anything but I insisted and asked them persistent questions so they finally gave in and told me, on condition that I would not repeat those words, not even to my own shadow. Some Serb families lived in our neighborhood and we had to guard our secret well because if the Serb neighbors found out that my brothers were in the army, we would have a lot of problems. My parents were telling us all the time that should anyone ask us about the whereabouts of our brothers, we were supposed to say they had emigrated.

On 6 May 1998, my brothers were enlisted in the KLA: Hysni Rexhaj born on 23 April 1977, he was 21 years old, Sadri Rexhaj, born on 20 October 1978, he was 20 years old, and Bekim Rexhaj, born on 28 May 1980, he was 17 years old. Personally, I was very pleased and proud and I wanted to join them in war, but I was too young. I lived with the desire to see them, but that was nearly impossible. One day I understood that sometimes my father was going to visit them. So I started to insist to be taken along to see my brothers. One of those days, my father heard my plea and took me along to see my brothers. That day,

I was the happiest child in the world. We went to Peqan village in Suhareka where we met with Sadri. Then we went to another village to meet with Bekim. At that time, I served as the cashier for my class. I was in charge of collecting money for the school magazine "Pionieri". Without telling anyone, I used that money to buy three cigarette packets. When I finally had the opportunity to meet my brothers I gave each secretly a packet of cigarettes, with the exception of Hysni, whom we could not meet that day because he was located in a village too far away to visit.

It was January 1999 when we received some uneasy news that filled us both with excitement and mixed feelings. On one hand, we were happy to hear that all three brothers were alive, but on the other hand we were saddened to hear that the eldest brother Hysni had been wounded. I quote Hysni about the occurrence: "On 14 January, 1999, the General Headquarters ordered us to engage in an action. On our way we came across the enemy. The distance was short. We were so close that there was no time to think how to react ...We heard shots, but God had not ordained for me to die that day. More than thirty bullets were shoot in my direction. Fortunately, the bullets hit my machine gun and I only lost two fingers from my left hand. I lost consciousness and fell on the ground by the force of bullets that hit my machine gun. The machine gun was damaged and I had been sent to the military hospital of operational area in Pashtrik, where I of Dr. Agim Hazrolli took care of me." This is mentioned in page 98 of his book "Monografia"<sup>1</sup> with notes from the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Fejza Dr.Hajrullah and Dr. Agim Hazrolli, Military hospital of Operative Zone of Pashtriku, Monography, Pristina, 2009, 98/



*The picture shows the left hand of Hysni Rexha after amputation of two fingers*

On 27 March 1999, it was Eid el-Fitr. That was the day we were cast out of our homes. The entire neighborhood was emptied. We joined the convoys to Albania, but later left the human lines. After we were expelled from home, my parents, my two young brothers and myself, together with my 86-year old grandmother, who lived with my paternal uncle, but during the war stayed with us, we had nowhere to go. We decided to seek shelter in a house we found in the outskirts of Prizren. The house was big and had a yard with a beautiful garden and many flowers. There was no other family but ours and it seemed like a safe place for those trying times. We remained there until 10 June, 1999. We started to adapt to the new life. Sunrise meant a new day for us, a new day that was both sad and happy, although the war was happening all over the country. We would spend the days watering the flowers, cleaning the garden and I was playing with my two brothers. Happiness faded away with the sunset, as fear overtook us and we were crushed by the silence that reigned in my country. We would close all

doors and windows, light up a candle and switch on the TV, staying inside the house, battling with the silence.

Days started to become tiresome... My brothers and I we were exploring the house sometimes as a way to fight off boredom. One day, we came across a box with photographs, so we began to look at each one of them... we found some pictures from the elementary school "Ibrahim Femi" which was the school of our neighborhood. We found photographs of our brothers Hysni and Bekim. From those photographs we understood that the house we had found shelter in was the house of teacher Nexhime, my brothers' teacher. Those photographs brought great sadness upon us, because it had been months since we had received last news from our brothers. Their happy faces smiling at me from the photographs brought me a ray of hope – the kind of hope that can only grow deep in the heart of an innocent child, who misses the faces of his brothers, who were away fighting for me to be able to live in freedom.

Days passed, we were running out of food reserves, while the anxiety of waiting grew ... we did not know when that insecurity would come to an end. One day, out of curiosity, I went out to look for food in the houses of the neighborhood and I was so happy to find enough reserves in one of the houses, which was enough for us to make it through "for a little while" longer in those times of misery. I was so happy, so I started to run back to our house. Taking the turn, I hid an iron bar with my foot. I fell and was short of breath because of the pain I felt. Thankfully, it did not last too long and I got up back on my feet. I went to tell my parents about what I had found. Afterwards, with my father and brother we went back to that house with a cart, which we filled with food items: ketchup, mayonnaise, pasta, flour, sugar, salt, shampoos and much more. It looked like those were items that families had saved for such times, but had not managed to take with them.

One night, as were listening to the news in Albanian, the newscaster, Mustafë Muçaj, gave us wonderful news; some news we had been waiting for months. The news, which gave us back happiness and made fear disappear forever. According to the news, NATO forces would enter Kosovo the following morning. We could not sleep that night. We said farewell to the fear of war, and we sat waiting for sunrise and for the arrival of NATO.

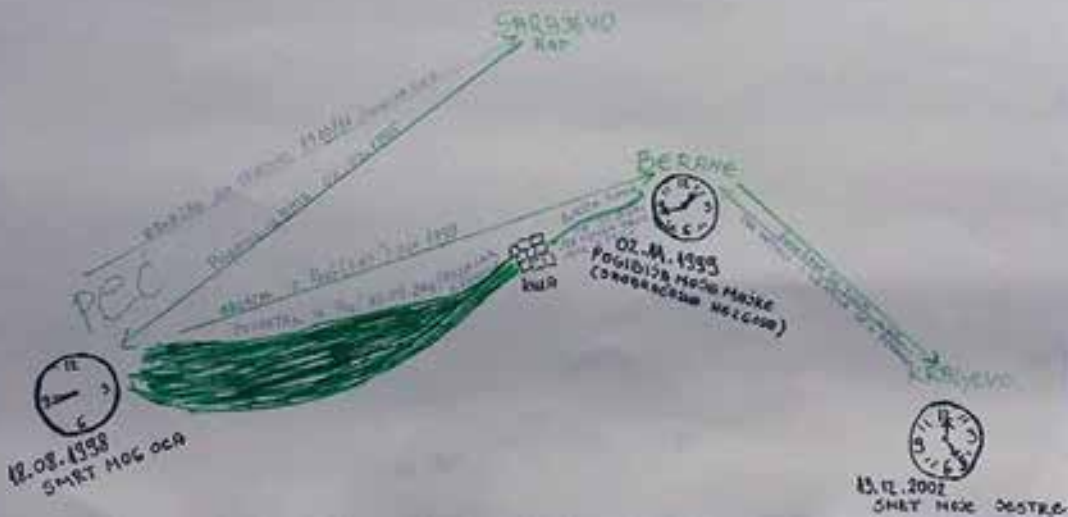
The following day, on 12 June, 1999, all of us, but the grandmother, went outside to greet NATO. We were amidst the crowd, when a car passed by and from its window we heard a voice: "Oooo, Uncle Gani, Hysni is in Tusuz!" (Tusuz is a quarter in Prizren, where the KLA HQ had been located). I hadn't seen Hysni

from the time he left to join the KLA. To Tusuz we went and there we met him... when I saw him, I started to weep for joy. I could not stop the tears for a long time. I cried and cried looking at his left hand. I hugged him, I kissed him on the cheek, I cried and laughed at the same time. I was full of mixed feelings. We did not stay there for long because he had other things to do. From there we went into the city center where people were celebrating freedom with songs and dances. On the same day, we went back to Arbana neighborhood to visit our house. The entire neighborhood was empty. The grass was overgrown but I ran around mad with happiness and it felt like the entire neighborhood was mine. We settled back home. The neighborhood started filling up with people again. Our neighbors started to come back. We met them with happiness. I was eager to see my friends again, who were returning from Albania, every day. In the end, everybody returned and I met everyone... Those were very happy moments in my life, moments I will never forget. We were back together again and my brothers were back. They returned the weapons and the army uniforms. From then, a new life began for us.

**AGIM REXHAJ**

# PUT ŽIVOT - SMRT

Verica Lazović  
K. 10. 2014 ucinig



## “The Journey”

Verica Lazović  
Pejë

# WE HAVE ONLY ONE LIFE

I was born on 2 September 1961 in city of Pejë. I lived with my parents, sister and brother, until I left to study in Sarajevo.

In the academic year 1980/1981, I enrolled at the Higher Pedagogical Academy, the department for classroom teaching. Upon completion of the academy, I got married in Sarajevo. I gave birth to my daughter on 20 December 1985.

When the war started in Bosnia in 1992, most people could not believe that war would “come” to Sarajevo. Personally, I was convinced that this would not happen, because we had so many mixed marriages, brotherhood, family ties, godparents ...Something like that simply did not reached my mind.

Although I lived in the building next to where the first barricade was actually erected - in Ljubljanska Street - I looked at it as if it was happening in a movie. However...after that, we had three years of shelling, starvation and freezing. The temperature in my apartment was -17 degrees. There was no water, no electricity. Simply said, it was a real fight for survival. Besides all of that, I saw enough of death, so by the years I began to appreciate LIFE much more.

At the end of the war, in fact on 2 February 1995, my daughter and I got out of Sarajevo (as an exchange - one Muslim soldier was exchanged for the two of us). I came to Pejë to my parents.



Bus tickets 20 years ago



I became a REFUGEE in my hometown. Even some of my distant cousins called me a refugee. For them I was “Bosanka” and refugee, although it did not bother me. Officially, I was a displaced person.



*Data of refugee person and refugee identity card*

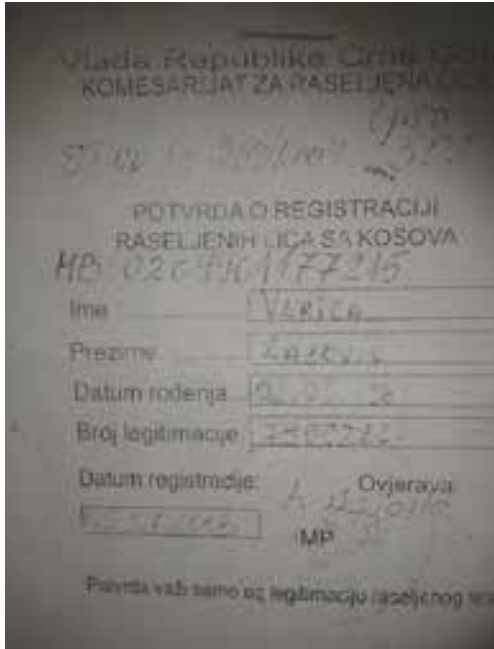
It took time, three to four months for me and my little daughter to get used to the peaceful moments and to quietly lie down in our beds. To get used to the fact that there was no shelling, and that when we would get up in the morning it would not be cold; to eat fresh bread, and that again we had three meals, as we had before the war.

Remark: During the war, everyone I knew in the area ate one meal a day. During the summer time the meal was at 16:00h and in winter time usually from 17:00h to 18:00h. Normally, if there was anything left, it would be for the children.

There were several of us who would give blood to get a candy bar. I remember the name of the candy bar, OvoKat. We would receive a small package of juice with a straw and a pound of beans, which we would bring to our children.

It was not easy to get used to just open the fridge ... and see the food there. However, when something is good, it does not go on for a long time. I noticed that something was going on. But my mother did not tell me anything. After

my persistent questions, my mother told me that dad was sick and had to be operated in Belgrade. The agony began for all of us: search, operations, and then dad's death on 19.08.1998.



*Registration certificate of displaced persons from Kosovo*

For all of us that was a big loss. I thought that I would not live another day after losing my father. The loss of my father, the first loss in my close family, was to me like the end of the world.

After that, the war started in Kosovo. I took my daughter to her grandmother and uncle in Sarajevo in May 1999. My sister went to Berane (Montenegro), and my mother and brother stayed in Pejë. On 9 June 1999, I left for Serbia, wandering from relative to relative, wondering what to do and where to go. In Serbia, I was officially a displaced person and unofficially a refugee.

I even found out that here, I was a refugee and “Šiptarka” (derogatory name for Albanians) from Kosovo. They openly told me that no one from Kosovo was welcome here.

For one month I had no information about my mother or brother. After a month, they informed me they had left Pejë and were coming to Montenegro. In the meantime, my sister had settled with relatives in Berane (Montenegro). She asked me to provide her with transportation to Kraljevo in Serbia (where we had an uncle), because due to her illness (multiple sclerosis) she needed to be in a hospital and spa.

I took my sister to Kraljevo (Serbia), and I was going to Berane (Montenegro), because I did not have any particular desire to stay in Serbia. In Berane it was the same situation. Officially, I was a displaced person and unofficially a refugee, with a great emphasis that we were not welcomed, because we were “Šiptari” from Kosovo. We were welcomed nowhere.

I met my mother and my brother in August in Podgorica. By the end of September, my mother and brother arrived in Berane. We lived together until 02.11.1999 when mom went to Podgorica to take some medicine for my sister and after that, she and my brother were supposed to go to my sister in Kraljevo.

My mom took the bus from Berane, around 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. At 1:45

p.m. she was hit by a car on a pedestrian crossing in Podgorica. We were notified around 4:00 p.m. that my mom is in a hospital in serious condition.

I received this news with great disbelief. We went by car with friends to Podgorica. Along the way, we stopped in Kolašin, where my mother's brother lived with his family and my mother's father, a 90-year-old man who had also recently arrived from Pejë.

I talked to my uncle and he told me that he was waiting for his two other brothers to come from Serbia and that we would meet in Podgorica at the hospital where my mom was.

I can still hear it very clearly. As I was saying goodbye to my uncle and heading for the car, a neighbor of my uncle was calling him, and yelled "Rada died". For a couple of seconds, maybe a minute, I lost consciousness. We left for Podgorica.

When we arrived in the evening, we were not allowed to see mom until the morning, while they did the autopsy.

What we lived through until the next day, my brother, me and our uncles. I would not even wish this upon my enemy. Starting with the behavior of the hospital staff, which were so rude, and ending with the behavior of the killer's family towards us. They even had the audacity to offer us money so that the killer will not be charged, because he was recently out of prison as he had killed a young boy also. Normally, we would not even hear of it, we were already so bitter. The killer was not sentenced even for one day for the death of my mother.

Later I heard that the father of the killer had some important position.

As for the "KILLER OF MY MOTHER" I will always call him a killer because I cannot call otherwise a person without responsibility who sits behind the wheel and gets into a wild behaviour on the road without thinking that he could kill someone.

He had no right to drive high speed and overtake at a pedestrian crossing. SUCH PERSONS WILL ALWAYS BE KILLERS FOR ME. This killer had no right to do so. He had no right to take the life of my mother who was 66 year old. My mother was a healthy person.

He had no right to do that and to do that to me. Fourteen months after my father's death I lost my mother too.

The police in Podgorica kept the killer in the prison just one night.

Later, the killer did not appear for the scheduled court trials. The judge's conclusion was as follows: The damaged party Verica Lazović accepted the court summons, while the police "did not comply with orders" to arrest N.N and escort him to the trial. He was never convicted, apparently waiting for the case to run the statute of limitations, because he has a father who is an important official.

In the end, we got some compensation from the insurance, which will never replace my MOTHER.

**We took my mom and we buried her in Berane.**

**After a year or two, my grandfather died. He is buried in Kolašin.**

**After my grandfather's death, the eldest uncle died and he was buried in Belgrade.**

Then in **the 2003 my sister died at the age of 47.** We buried her in Kraljevo although her greatest wish was to return to Pejë/Peć and to die there.

In this period we received the remains of my uncle, who was shot in Pejë/Peć.

Another innocent victims of the war.

**In 2004 the youngest uncle died** and is buried in Kolašin.

After all these deaths in my immediate family, frankly, I began to think about my life and life in general.

The desire to return to Pejë/Peć would increase from day to day. I saw and felt in my skin the bad things that happened in my life. I was not ready to allow people worse than me, people with endless prejudices, their ridicule, to call me a refugee. Officially, we were displaced persons in Serbia and Montenegro, and unofficially, only refugees and "Šiptari" from Kosovo.

In some way, I become "obsessed" by getting back to Pejë/Peć so that when my time came, to be buried next to my father.

I heard that some people were regularly going to Pejë/Peć so I decided to go, too.

I was only worried about one thing. In Pejë/Peć I had no one from my family and I would have been alone. However, I knew that my parents had made "a place" for me and I was not wrong.

In September 2006 I took the decision. I took a cab from Berane and came right into the apartment of my parents, which had been totally demolished. I stayed with old neighbors for lunch. I had a feeling like I was with parents, and then I went to spend the night at my godfather's place. For some time I was coming and going every second day, until I finally applied for return in Podgorica. Officially I "returned" on 17.05.2007 and my apartment is now renovated.

Since then, I live and work in Pejë/Peć and I can honestly say that I have not regretted the return a single moment.

Every day I thank God that I came back to my hometown and I'm surrounded by great people. I have great colleagues, friends, and godparents and never once I did feel disadvantaged in anything.

**I wish I had the power to do, that all people in the world speak the same language, to be equal, good, friendly, helpful, happy, and equally provided to just die naturally in their old age, not in wars or disease, because MY PEOPLE, WHEN WE WILL UNDERSTAND THAT LIFE IS JUST ONE ?**

VERICA LAZOVIĆ



## “Gjakova, 1999”

**Dafina Cana**  
Gjakovë / Đakovica

# MY CITY

It does not seem easy at all to go back in time, many years ago, to a part of yourself that is locked away or should I better say, to that part that I have locked away, not wanting to dig into the abyss that conceals the darkest memories.

The period of 1999 takes me back many years ago to the war in Kosovo and that is when a naïve girl appears before my eyes; a girl who once tried to find a reason why her people were victim of such a harsh war, and why she saw so much evil happening around her.

While I remove the dust from the long-forgotten memories, I try to tell you my story in the recent war in Kosovo.

The notion of “war” takes me right away to those images of smoke coming from the huge fire scorching my country.

Fire was the first act of violence that I experienced during the war, and to be honest, I still shiver when I think of it...

A little girl, who usually looked out her window to search for the warm sun, in the spring of 1999 unexpectedly, saw something else burning turning everything into dust and ashes, even the dreams and hopes of the people...

Only now, that girl who felt so powerless and unprotected has understood that she is strong enough to endure such trauma.

She has worked hard to transform that experience into strength and she strongly believes that she will provide a supportive arm for many people who have not yet left these painful experiences behind them.

Today, that girl has understood the importance of the profession she had chosen “by chance” and of being the voice of strength for the others, doing her best to “eradicate” the traumas of people and empowering them to follow their dreams.

**DAFINA CANA**



## “The Family Mirena”

**Hysni Shala**

Prishtinë/Priština

# THE MIRENAS – MARTYRS OF THE RECENT WAR IN KOSOVO

Some 200 years ago, or more, a family moved from the village of Mirenë in the municipality of Lipjan, and settled in the village of Hade in the municipality of Obiliq. In this village, the family grew and expanded. Around 1953, Sylejman Mirena and his family moved to the village of Mirash, where they stayed for a short while, and finally, in 1962 they settled down in the village of Nakaradë in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë.

The village of Nakaradë is located in the north of Fushë Kosovë. The Mirena neighborhood is located along the railway, namely on the left side of the railway in the direction of Fushë Kosovë–Mitrovicë.

Out of that family, an entire neighborhood has sprung in the village. Sylja had five sons: Zymer, Zenun, Xhafer, Muharrem, Beqir and one daughter, Mehreme.

They all got married and had children. They invested in educating their children, so the majority of them are now machine engineers, electro-technical or mining engineers, because the place



where they lived was in the vicinity of two excavation sites and the thermo-power plant (KEK). So, the possibility to be employed was greater and such professions offered a future.

In general, it was an educated family, with high moral and human virtues. They all had harmonious families. They were quite people, blessed by God, and blessed they were for falling martyrs for the freedom we all enjoy today.



The war in Kosovo started on 28 February 1998, following the assault of the Serb forces in the villages of Likoshan and Çirez in Drenica.

Although the Serb regime, army and paramilitary police expelled nearly 800,000 Albanians during the war in Kosovo, this family decided to stay in their land, in their autochthonous Kosovo.

On 24 March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched daily bombing against Serb military targets, with support on the ground by the KLA. On the same day, Mehdi (Muharrem) Mirena, born in 1955, was executed by the Serb paramilitaries.

Not a month passed from the murder of Mehdi when on 21 April 1999, the Serb paramilitaries and neighbors, entered the Mirena neighborhood in barbarous and inhumane manner, and gathered all Mirena men.

First, they wounded Nazif Mirena with a fire weapon on his right leg while he was standing in front of his house. Then they gathered all Mirena men and forced them to get into a truck. They took them away, never to return them alive...

### **These are the men of the Mirena family who were taken that day:**

	Name	Father's name	Surname	Date of Birth	Abduction Date	Burial Date
01	Idriz	Zenun	Mirena	03/08/1952	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
02	Hakif	Zenun	Mirena	01/01/1955	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
03	Nazif	Zenun	Mirena	01/07/1961	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
04	Nezir	Zenun	Mirena	01/01/1964	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
05	Mentor	Idriz	Mirena	10/02/1973	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
06	Veton	Idriz	Mirena	24/02/1974	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
07	Ismet	Zymer	Mirena	13/06/1945	21/04/1999	28/07/2006
08	Hilmi	Xhafer	Mirena	01/01/1950	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
09	Fehmi	Xhafer	Mirena	01/01/1955	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
10	Hamdi	Xhafer	Mirena	01/01/1957	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
11	Bedri	Muharrem	Mirena	05/03/1965	21/04/1999	28/07/2006
12	Zeqir	Muharrem	Mirena	01/01/1967	21/04/1999	28/07/2006
13	Sami	Muharrem	Mirena	01/03/1971	21/04/1999	28/07/2006
14	Avni	Beqir	Mirena	15/05/1975	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
15	Arben	Beqir	Mirena	19/08/1979	21/04/1999	06/10/2006
16	Sokol	Qazim	Rama	1945	21/04/1999	28/07/2006

According to the data, they were all men above 19 years old up to 59 years old, who was also the oldest in this family.

The Serb paramilitaries executed all men of Mirena family.<sup>2</sup>

Identified as: i identifikuar si: Identifikovan kao:	Nazif (Zenun) Mirena	Ba07-122T
Municipality where body was found, cause of death: Komuna ku eshte gjetur trupi, shkak i vdekjes Opština gde je telo pronađeno, uzrok smrti	Batajnicë - Serbi Gonshot to the head, trunk and to the right lower leg	

After the execution, the lifeless bodies of Mirena men were buried in the village of Pomozotin, in Fushë Kosovë. The criminals of Milošević's regime exhumated their lifeless bodies and sent them to Batajnica, Serbia.



<sup>2</sup> Extract from the official document; ID certificate issued by UNMIK, Department of Justice, on 30/08/2005.



The crimes of this regime against the autochthonous Albanian population is a crime against humanity. The victims and the lifeless bodies were re-victimized repeatedly...

After they took the men, all women and children of Mirena family were expelled from Kosovo. They demolished and burned their properties.

After the war ended, Mirena family members started to face new challenges... This family came out of the war having suffered too many losses and too many consequences. They lost 16 men and lost the entire properties that they had acquired over the years. After the war, they returned to their home village of NAKARADË. They started a new life without a roof over their heads, and without their dearest ones.

These women and children were fighting on two fronts. On one hand, they were looking for their husbands/fathers, as they had no idea about what had befallen them. On the other hand, they had to rebuild their homes so that the children would not be out in the open, without a roof over their heads.

The Albanian people are well-known for the feelings of solidarity. Even in the rebuilding stage there were examples of that solidarity.

However, the most difficult front these women and children had to face was the search for the men; their sons and fathers, who had been taken from their homes on 21 April 1999 by the Serb paramilitaries. That was the biggest challenge for them.

The search for their men began on institutional and private ways, anywhere. It was a difficult, hard and painful search. For years it was even in vain. They had to protest in the streets.

Going out to protest was very difficult for these women. They would leave the young children home and they would go out in the streets to look for their family members. Occasionally, they had to bring the children along and stay with them in the streets protesting for days at a row.



The woman in picture is Nurije Mirena; a wife, a mother, a grandmother who wants to know what happened to her husband, Idriz Mirena, and to her two sons, Mentor and Veton.

Her son Mentor was married and had a daughter by the name of Zanita, who was only a few months old when the criminals took her father away. This girl will never experience in her life the love, hugs and caresses of her father. She was only a few months old at that time, too small to remember...



The protests to search for the missing continued for years. While the protests went on, the family members were obligated to give blood samples to possibly identify through DNA the bodies of their dearest among the bodies that were returned from Serbia from time to time.

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United Nations Interim  
Administration Mission  
in Kosovo



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Mission d'Administration  
Intérimaire des Nations Unies  
au Kosovo

**DNA Certificate**  
**Certifikata e ADN-së**  
**Office on Missing Persons and Forensics**  
**Zyra për Persona të Zhdukur dhe Mjekësi Ligjore**

Case No / Rasti Nr: **Ba07-122T**  
**MPU 2000-057052**

Name / Emri #: **Nazif (Zenun) Mirena**

Name and Relationship of Blood Donors  
Emri dhe afërsia familjare e dhuruesve të gjakut

Bashkëshortja: **Sherife Mirena**  
E bija: **Miranda Mirena**  
E bija: **Saranda Mirena**  
Nëna: **Shehida Mirena**

**Results / Rezultati**

ICMP (International Commission on Missing Persons) has provided results of matching bone and blood samples through DNA analysis.

ICMP (Komisioni Ndërkombëtar për Persona të Zhdukur) ka arritur gjër tek rezultati me krahasimin e mostrave të eshtrave dhe të gjakut përmes analizës së ADN-së.

The results obtained are:

Rezultatet e arritura janë:

*The DNA results were obtained from the listed bone and family reference blood samples. The DNA results obtained from the bone or tooth sample were consistent with the listed familial relationship.*

*Rezultatet e ADN-së janë arritur nga mostrat e eshtrave dhe mostrat referente të gjakut nga anëtarët e familjes. Rezultatet e ADN-së të arritura nga mostrat e eshtrave ose dhëmbëve përputhen me ato të familjarëve të listshëm.*

Mr J Baraybar  
Head Of the Office on Missing Person and Forensics  
**Z. J. Baraybar**  
Kryesues i Zyrtës për Persona të Zhdukur dhe Mjekësi Ligjore



UNITED NATIONS  
United Nations Interim  
Administration Mission  
in Kosovo



NATIONS UNIES  
Mission d'Administration Intérimaire  
des Nations Unies au Kosovo

UNMIK

OFFICE ON MISSING PERSONS AND FORENSICS

IDENTIFICATION CERTIFICATE  
CERTIFIKAT E IDENTIFIKIMIT  
POZYWAJA IDENTYFIKACJI

Municipality: Kosova Opština:	<b>PRISHTINË</b>	MPU Number: MPU Numri MPU Broj	<b>2000-050052</b>
Identified as: Identifikuar si Identifikovan kao:	<b>Nazif (Zenun) Mirena</b>		<b>Ba07-122T</b>
Municipality where body was found, cause of death: Kosova ku është gjetur trupi, shkak i vdekjes Opština gde je telo pronađeno; uzrok smrti	<b>Batajnicë – Serbi Pitagë me armë zjarri në kokë, trup dhe në pjesën e poshtme të këmbës së djathtë</b>		
Date and place of disappearance: Data dhe vendi i zhdukjes: Datum i mesto nestanka	<b>21.04.1999 Nakaradë – Fushë Kosovë</b>		
Date when body was found: Data kur është gjetur trupi Datum pronalaznja tela	<b>09.12.2002</b>		
Estimated date of death: Vlerësimi i datës së vdekjes Procenjeni datum smrti	<b>Para 19.12.2002</b>		
Place of burial: Vendi i varrimit Mesto sahrane	<b>Fushë Kosovë</b>		
Gender: Gjinia Pol	<b>Mashkull</b>		
Date and Place of Birth, or estimated age: Datëlindja dhe vendi lindja Datum i mesto rođenja	<b>01.07.1961 Dobrasellë – Fushë Kosovë</b>		
Marital Status of deceased (if known): Gjendja martesore e të ndjerit Bračno stanje umrlog (ako je poznato)	<b>I martuar</b>		
First name and surname of the marital partner (incl. Maiden name), - (if known) -: Emri dhe mbiemri i bashkëshortit/-ës Ime i prezime bračnog druga	<b>Sherife Mirena</b>		
Father's name: Emri i babës Ime oca	<b>Zenun Mirena</b>		
Mother's name (incl. Maiden name) Emri i nënës Ime majke	<b>Shehida Mirena</b>		
Address of residence: Adresa e vendbanimit Adresa prebivališta	<b>Ulpinna II/1 - Prishtinë</b>		

In: Në U	<b>Prishtinë</b>
Date: Data Datum	<b>30.08.2005</b>



Signature of OMPF representative:  
Nënshkrimet i përfaqësuesit të ZPZHML-së  
Potpis predstavnik OMPF

According to the official documents, the lifeless bodies of the Mirenas were found on 09.12.2002 in Batajnica, Serbia.

Batajnica (BA07): the mass grave was located within the area of the sports and recreational center, 300 meters from the Danube River about one kilometer south of Belgrade, on Batajnica road. The location of the mass grave is behind the shooting site of the sports center, 2 meters on the left in the north side, in the vicinity of Batajnica 05. The overall area is 10 x 3 meters. The bodies and clothing items and found items were kept in the tunnel, in the vicinity of the police sports and recreational center "13 May".<sup>3</sup>

The identification was not made from 2002 until 2005, until the 30/08/2005.

The identification of the lifeless bodies is made by comparing DNA samples from family members: mothers, wives and their children, with the samples from the bones of the deceased.

More than seven years following the massacre against the Mirena family, on Friday, 6th of October 2006, family members, friends, colleagues and other citizens from different places had gathered in the elementary school "Selman Riza" to receive the martyrs of freedom who were brought by the KPC members. The leaders of that time officiated at the ceremony: Prime Minister Agim Çeku, Speaker of the Assembly Kolë Berisha, Mayor of Fushë Kosova Skender Zogaj, Ahmet Isufi (AAK), Fatmir Limaj (PDK) and many other dignitaries.

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<sup>3</sup> Martinsen, Josef, What Happened in Kosovo 1998-1999 – A Documentation (2010), Syress Forlag, Oslo, Norway, ISBN 978-82-91224-50-3

<http://kosovotriology.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Albanian-edition-What-Happened-in-Kosovo.pdf>



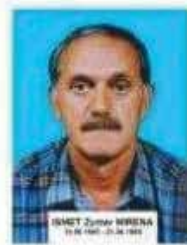
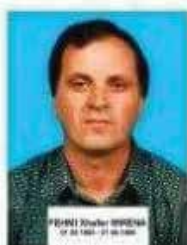


These martyrs were murdered, buried and exhumed to be sent to Serbia, where they were kept for many years... On that tearful day, people said their farewells to them.



Today, these martyrs rest peacefully in their land with the belief that the martyrs and all those who fell for freedom are the symbol of the state of Kosovo.





*Gjaku juaj u shndërrua në dritë  
dhe liri të përjetshme*

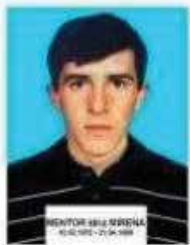


*Ju përkujtojmë me Krenari në  
familja Mirena dhe e mbarë Kosova*



*I përjetshëm do të mbetet kujtimi për ju...*

LAVDI



I have spent a lot of time with Mirena family in the village of Nakaradë both as a child and as an adult. I would usually spend my summer, winter holidays and

other holidays with them. It was a special pleasure for me to be with them. I always felt happy and respected.

I really used to spend a lot of time at my paternal aunt's in the family of the late Zenun Mirena. Zenun Mirena was married to Shehide, sister of Kamer Shala, my father. Her murdered sons were my nephews.



Shehide Shala Mirena was a daughter of Boletin area. She was born in the village of Akrashtica, Municipality of Vushtrri. She was the eldest daughter of Islam and Rahime Shala.

She married Zenun Mirena and together they created a wonderful family. They had five sons: Izet, Idriz, Hakif, Nazif, Nezir and one daughter, Hanife. Izet and his family lived in Prishtina, so did their daughter Hanife who was married in Prishtina. Their sons Hakif, Nazif, Nezir and Idriz and his two sons, Mentor and Veton, were abducted from their homes and killed during the war. On 15.02.2005 my aunt Shehide Shala Mirena passed away. Her sad soul passed on to the eternity longing for her sons and grandsons, longing to feel their hugs and hear their words.



These were my nephews, from the first one in the picture Hakif Mirena, Nazif Mirena, Nezir Mirena and Idriz Mirena and his two sons, Mentor and Veton.

Zenun Mirena  
Shehide Shala Mirena

Izet Mirena Sabrije Mirena	Idriz Mirena Nurije Mirena	Hakif Mirena Shemsije Mirena	Nazif Mirena Sherife Mirena	Nezir Mirena Lumnije Mirena	Hanife Mirena Xhevdet Thaqi
Fatmir Mirena Afrim Mirena Arsim Mirena Belkim Mirena Kadrush Mirena Fikrije Mirena	Ekrem Mirena Mentor Mirena Imartuar me Zylen dhe kishite vajzen Zanita Veton Mirena Astrit Mirena Fisnik Mirena Zylfije Mirena	Safet Mirena Burim Mirena Kreshnik Mirena	Miranda Mirena Shpend Mirena Eroll Mirena Saranda Mirena	Enkeleda Mirena Kushtrim Mirena Gentiana Mirena Erolind Mirena	Teuta Thaqi Mursele Thaqi Shkendije Thaqi Marson Thaqi Dafina Thaqi



There are other martyrs who have been buried in the martyrs' cemetery in Fushë Kosovë. But there are other cemeteries waiting for the bodies of those who are still missing, who wait to be returned and rest in their land.

**HYSNI SHALA**



## “Mirror”

**Milan Vulović**  
Leposaviq/Leposavić

# MIRROR

The word itself indicates the fixture at home where we look at first as the day begins. In this context, I decided to use this as the title of my work, because literally, the good is reflected in the evil, the advantages in the disadvantages, the light in the dark side ... If we look at our past, regardless in which context of our lives, it will appear in the variable form of our heart beats up and down. In my work I did just that, and tried to show the one and only landscape where on the left side there is a house with vivid and bright colours and the background is the nature, the mountains and the sun with the most beautiful warmth and splendour which we remember.

On the other side, the right side of the image is dominated by dark tones, perceiving the remains of a house, the nature that has disappeared and the sun from which we feel no warmth nor light...

In the middle there is a whirlwind, a tornado. That was my first association for the name of the image that is formed by the collision of warm and cold how really occurs storms in nature, which takes the lives of people dear to us: family, friends...

**MILAN VULOVIĆ**

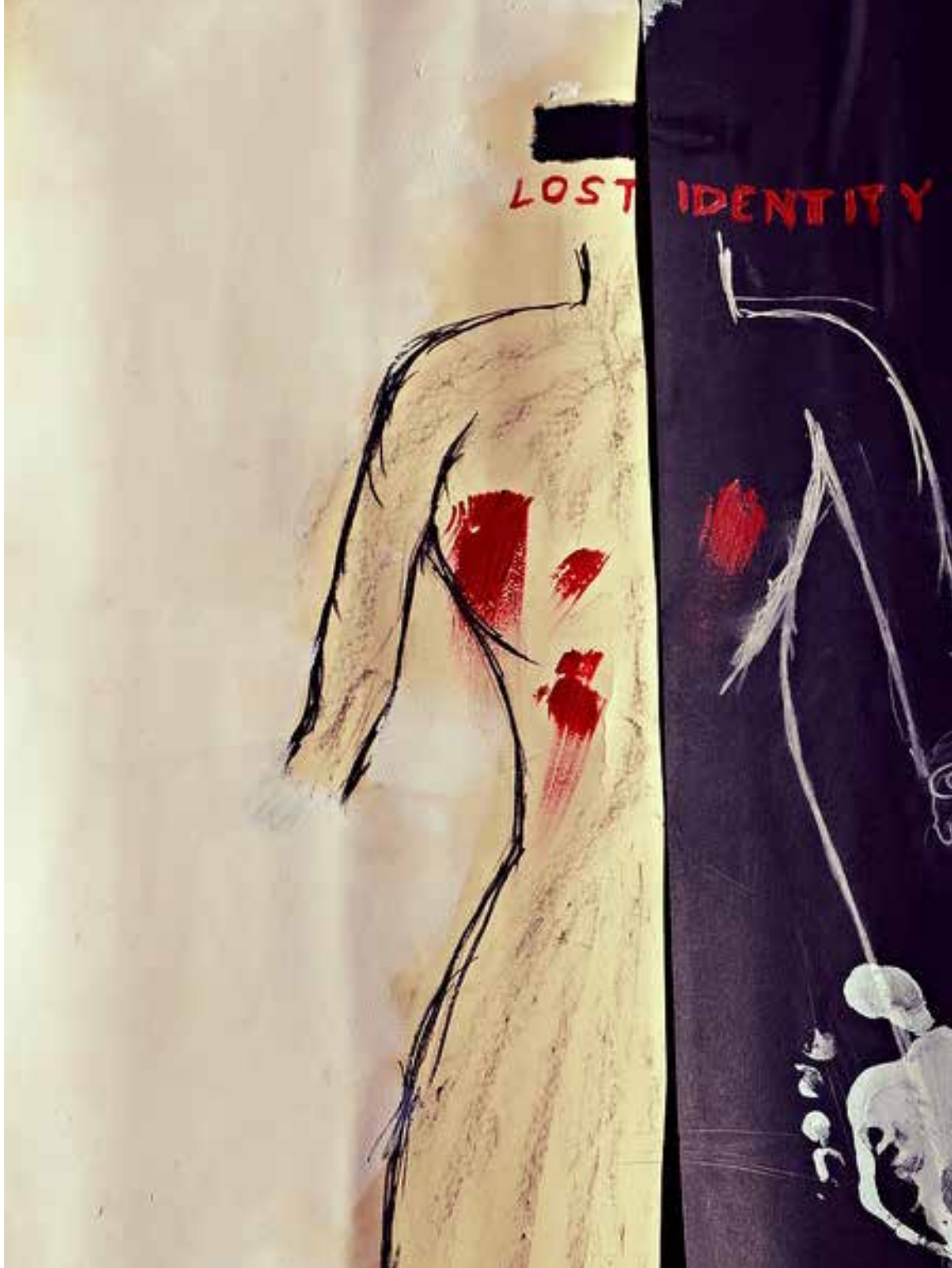




## “Pastasel, 1999”

**Flora Dulaj**

Polluzhë / Polužje, Rahovec / Orahovac



“The Lost Identity”

# BLOODSHOT SPRING

In the last war, I was only seven years old. Still, memories of that time are neither blurry nor far away. These stories remain just as important, entwined in the memories of everyone who passes through them, and hurt deep inside each one of us. These experiences are closely linked to the lives of everyone. It is painful when childhood stories transform in stories of horror, into the ones you will forever carry in your memory. Yet, there is no way to tell the things like they happened because there were things that a human's mind could not grasp and understand. That is why my story today may be flawed compared to the emotions of that time. Yet there are testimonies that will never go away, and those are the memories, the consequences, and those whom we lost.

It was September 1998 when the Serb armed forces started shelling from the hills of Bec, a village near Gjakova. From its hills, you could observe all villages from our side. It was expected that on 02.09.1998 there would be attacks in Polluzhë, Kramovik, Çifllak, Dejn, Ratkoc, and many other villages around us. I remember that on that day, in the afternoon, we began to collect our things. We had brought a lot of things, as if we would never return or as if we were sure that those would be the only things left to us, including memories on photographs, and some other things we deemed too valuable and had to bring with us. How absurd it was: how can one choose among memories, what to bring and what to leave behind? And yet, none of us had asked for that to happen. A little before four in the morning of 3th September, we were on the tractor: my grandfather, Islam Dulaj, at that time he was around 65 years old. He was taking us to Osoja Mountain, a mountainous area of my village Polluzhë, a few kilometers from my home. That journey is still fresh in my memory. We had to pass through a difficult road, of the kind we used for village errands. But we still did not know the other difficulties that would place heavier burdens on us. Once at the mountain, we met many other people from our village. The rest of villagers had found shelter in some nearby mountain area. That night, about 100 houses in the village had been left empty. Throughout dawn we waited there; crowds of people, tractors, cars, and people looking for a place on the mountain to find shelter. We heard moans; curses for the injustice inflicted upon us, and many other words that would make one's blood curdle with fear. That was not a moment to calculate

what was happening. The only thing you thought about was whether you would live another day!

There were eleven children in my family, from nine to two years old, a seven-month old baby. With us were my grandfather and nine women of the family. Everything seemed unreal: sleeping in a mountain, on the mud, with no food, surrounded by danger. You did not know what was happening. All you had to do was to wait. Doing otherwise would be impossible, just as it was almost impossible for us to survive.

That day we stayed in the mountain and we would spend the night there, too. All the time we heard shots from afar. From time to time we heard the shots and shelling sounds getting closer. The entire day and night of 3 September was a hell of its own kind. We needed strength to endure. At moments like that, only God can grant you such strength.

As 4 September 1998 was dawning, armed Serb forces had begun to burn the village. We stayed in the mountain as we felt safer there. There was a stream of water deep in the mountain, by which we stayed during the day listening to the shots and the shelling... That day, in the morning, a local police officer from Gjakova, also collaborator of the Serb army arrived to tell us to return to the village or they (the Serbs) would kill us all in the mountains. Nevertheless, we remained there. I remember a wounded man at that place. He was dressed in something white, and as I remember, in spite of the wounds, he was trying to endure until the last moments with us. I heard later that somehow he escaped the Serbs and for two days, wounded as he was, he hid in the mountains and in the end survived. We continued to stay there although we were all anxious, knowing that something would happen that day; we did receive the warning. A group of Serb soldiers showed up around ten in the morning. They were armed and in tanks. I do not know whether they were police, soldiers or paramilitaries. It looked like there was a mix of each but at that time I could not tell the difference between a regular soldier and what we called paramilitaries. For the later, rumors told that they were the cruelest. I remember one of them took my grandfather's coat off him, and with a very ironic smile, told my grandfather that the coat was not for him but for his father. My grandfather hesitated to give him the coat, so he forcefully grabbed it from his neck and used violence to take the coat off. That is how dirty they played.

From ten to twelve o'clock we left the mountains behind, escorted by the Serb army forces and their tanks who were following us. The crowd was between them. They wanted to take us to a meadow at a village we call Bruk, a location in

the vicinity of the village's cemetery. It was hard for us to walk up the mountain. We were exhausted but you had to walk, otherwise if you were left behind, you would be killed or run over by their tanks. Tired people did fall on their knees, and yet had to move on, or they would no longer live. As we were leaving the mountain, everything we had was put on fire. But none of us cared for the things burning. The important thing was to be safe; nothing exceeds the value of life. As soon as we arrived at a meadow, they divided us up into convoys; men on one side, women and children on the other. We were left there standing for several hours. People prayed to be saved; others said God had forgotten us, another screamed not to accept anything from the hands of the Serb army, not even water as it could be poisoned, we did not know what was going on... I remember a Serb soldier standing in front of the convoy where I was. He was dark-skinned, with a thin face. He cried most of the time. I could not understand why he cried. What kind of mercy an armed person facing a crowd of mostly children could feel?! It sounds as a contradiction between feeling and acting. However, I do not understand even today why I remember so clearly the image of that person. From there, men would be sent to Prizren on a truck. Later we heard from them that they had been beaten brutally and inhumanely. They were left there for three days, and some were sent to the prisons of Kraleva and Nish. One of the men in the trucks was my grandfather. I remember he went off the truck. I did not understand the language they were speaking but it was clear there was tension between my grandfather and them. They were ordering him to get into the truck with the rest of the men but my grandfather managed somehow to escape. The rest of the people were kept there until the evening, and they let us go after it was dark. I remember walking back to the village we saw everything burning. The fires had started earlier and now, it was dark and horrible, a sight that cannot be forgotten.

Once we entered into the yard of our house we saw everything burning. I remember I cried hard then. It seems they had lit the fire late because when we arrived the fire was cracking in a fury. It was not just our home burning; parts of our lives, of our memories and everything else were disappearing.

From there, we walked to a meadow a little further from our home to sleep. There were more than 100 people sleeping under the open sky, surrounded by fire and smoke, by smells from burning animals and stuff. But those were not moments to think of comfort. The important thing was that we were still there. Later, my father joined us. Until then, we had no idea whether he was alive or not. Torrential rains started in midnight. We had to leave that space and spend

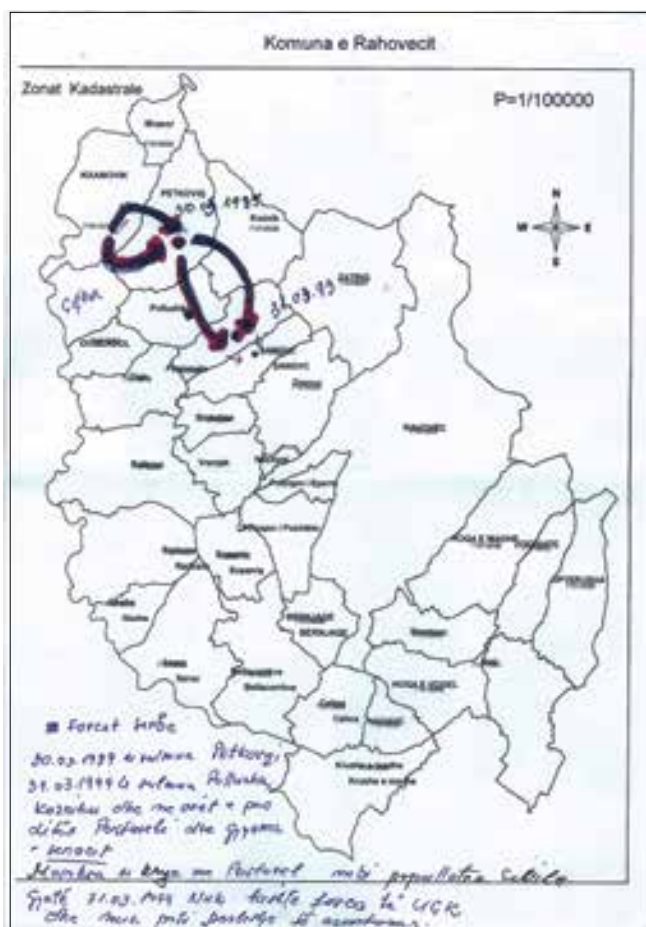
the rest of the night in any of the less burned houses. Tomorrow we start from nothing. That night two young men from KLA were killed. Afrim Bajraktari and Shani Hoti were from our village. From that time until 13 September there would be nearly 1000 refugees in the village.

On 20 September 1998 the village received orders from the Serb army to hand over the weapons; or, as they named it, to disarm the KLA. They threatened us. I remember that a man called Jovanović came to our house. He was around forty or more. He was looking for weapons; he took two from the weapons we kept at home. He asked whether there was anyone from the KLA there. The way how they came into our houses was frightening. By then, we had learned to live with the unexpectedness and fear. From that date onwards there were no more attacks but the Serb forces were observing us all the time. Life was “re-born”, albeit a dreary one but we had to go on living.

From that time until right before 24 March 1999 we experienced a sort of “peace” that does not even deserve to be called such. We barely survived and life was lacking in every sense.

## PASTASEL / PUSTO SELO, 1999

...And everything else began from 20 March 1999 and onwards, when the Serb forces were stationed at points from where they had everything under control, e.g. Kramoviku, a village a few kilometers from us, which they used to never let us rest. Another, crueller period than what we experienced began on 30 March 1999, which took many lives.



*Serbian forces marked with the red arrow*

*On 30.03.1999 village Petkoviq/Petkovič was attacked*

*On the 31.03.99 the villages Poluzha/Polužje, Koznik/Kosnice and in the afternoon hours Pusto Selo /Pastasel and half of the village Senoc/ Sanovac were attacked.*

*The massacre against the civilian population took place in Pastasel/Pusto Selo during 31.03.1999*

*During 31.03.1999 there were no KLA forces and there were no armed support.*

On that date, from the village of Polluzhë we headed in the direction of the village Pastasel. There were refugees from many areas: Klina, Kramoviku, Çifllaku, Guri i Kuq and many other surrounding villages. From 10.00 a.m, of 30 March we left the village and found shelter in the house of my maternal aunt's husband, Fadil Krasniqi. On the night of 30 March we stayed there. The next day, the army and paramilitaries attacked the surrounding villages and our village to reach Pastasel where most of the people were staying. Some of my family members, including my grandparents, had remained behind in our village. My grandfather tells how they were raided; guns were fired but there had been no murders. Only our neighbor Murat Dulaj had been wounded. They were asked if they knew where Smolica was and the villagers had said yes. So they told them "if you do. Go there and from there go to Albania because this place does not belong to you." My father says he heard some people of superior army grades give orders to the soldiers to kill anyone they saw in Pastasel. After inflicting all sorts of torture, they left in the direction of Pastasel thinking that the crowd they left behind would leave for Albania. Around two in the afternoon of 31 March, the Serb forces left the village of Polluzhë to head towards the village of Pastasel.

Later, everything continued from where I was, the valley that later would be named the Valley of Death, and it acquired many other synonyms evoking the feelings of what happened at that place. There were around 3000 persons in the valley from: Polluzha, Çifllaku, Senoci, Kozniku, Kramoviku, Guri i Kuq, Zatriqi, municipality of Klina, municipality of Peja, municipality of Malisheva. Among them there were women, children, old people, and young people. They took positions from several sides and from all sides they were controlling us there. Most of us were hoisting white cloths in sign of surrender. I remember their faces were masked in different ways. How can a person lose control over oneself in such way, how can a person become so crazy?

They looked very filthy and it sort of symbolized their lack of anything human. Tortures, brutality, murders, massacres, what unimaginable things men can do to men! They carried inside them the pleasure of vengeance...

I remember my mother being close to me. She would faint from time to time. She was not tired only physically but also psychically. I also remember a young man dressed in a woman's clothes to conceal the fact that he was male because men were being separated in one side, whereas we were being lined up and each one had to pass under their "eyes" and scrutiny to decide whether we could cross on the other side of the border between life and death. To pass that "border" you had to be a woman, child or a person with disabilities otherwise you could not. We could hear



screams when family members were separated. We suffered watching them being beaten in front of our eyes. The worst part was that we did not believe they would let live the ones being taken away, and that is what happened.

I remember I saw in the convoy of men my aunt's husband, Fadil Krasniqi (36 years old) being beaten right in front of us, in front of his family. Later, he was killed and massacred in a horrific way right on that valley. Once they checked us all and decided who could go and who had to stay behind, we left that valley in the afternoon acting upon the orders of the Serb forces. Once we left they started to kill all the men there. In the last day of March of that bloodshot spring, 106 were murdered. We continued to walk through the mountains for many kilometers, to seek shelter in the village of Ratkoc. That night, we stayed with a family. It was very hard to stay there. There were so many people in one room that we could barely breathe in some air. We were gripped by such fear and did not know whether we had escaped death... In fact, everything was becoming more and more excruciating and the worse part this time was that we did not know what had happened to the rest of the family: grandparents, aunt, father; where they were and if they were still alive?! That day of 31 March 1999, these people from my village Polluzhë were murdered: Xhafer Berisha, 71 years old, Veli Berisha, 63 years old, Zaim Morina, 19 years old, Naim Morina, 50 years old, Ramadan Dulaj, 56 years old!

In the morning of 1 April 1999 my grandfather had found a way to come to Ratkoc. From there, around 40 people would go with him to the Police Station, which at that time was under the command of a Montenegrin called Rada. My grandfather knew him from before, as all from that area knew him. Some insisted not to go but my grandfather wanted to demand some answers from him. Once we arrived there, our fears multiplied. There were armed military men everywhere. My uncle's daughter, only a few months old cried and cried and a Serb police officer came near her and said that the child should stop or I will kill her, God, what a horror...! My grandfather asked the commander where to go and what to do, we had no way out, and he responded: "Go drown in Dri river with everybody here because you will all be killed", and then told my grandfather that the army had killed many people in Pastasel. He also told my grandfather that Ramadan Dulaj, my grandfather's brother's son had also been killed. They let us go to our village. When we arrived at the first house in the village, I saw my father there with a group of men from our village, and that was the best thing that could have happened, he was alive!

We spent that day at a neighbor's because everything we had was burned. On 2 April 1999, as my grandfather heard the news that his brother's son had been murdered he decided to go with a group of people from the village to Pastasel, where 106 had been murdered and 13 witnesses had escaped death, massacre and burning.

The bodies of the murdered had been thrown into a stream, near the place where they had been killed. The bodies had been taken out one by one and massacred cruelly. The corpses were brought near the mosque of the village to be buried. That is where they lay still. Their burial was interrupted several times by the Serb forces. Family members of Fadil Krasniqi say that there were also burned people. There were some 20 bodies, a few in the house and some others in the car trailer outside of the house. They were taken from there to be buried all in one grave. The house was full of water after the corpses had been burned. The Serb army forces would return that afternoon to take many of the murdered and send them to Prizren, Therandë and other location, to lose trail. Some of them are still missing.



*Burned corpses in Pastasel /Pusto Selo, 1999*



*The picture shows the house where the bodies were burned*

From that day until 13 June 1999 the Serb army visited our village very often and they exhumed bodies. On 7 April, these armed forces returned and settled in the village where they remained until 13 June of the same year. During that time there were nearly 1500-2000 refugees in our village, nearly 60 persons staying with my family, mainly from Pastasel. It was very hard to survive and feed everyone.

After 13 June we were liberated. One day, with my grandfather we went to Pastasel to see what was going on. Near one house we found some kind of a game, which they had left behind. Apparently, they had had fun over the blood of the murdered. This increased by rancor against them, they would make fun of the dead... Earlier my grandfather had found an identification document that a Serb soldier had lost while carrying corpses. That was a grim sight. I remember asking my grandfather what had happened there, and he told me that people had been burned. You could perceive the endless gloom; you could smell a disgusting whiff, or so it seemed to us, coming from every side. I remember my grandfather had given me a wrist watch, which had been thrown away carelessly and we did not know who it belonged to: the victims, the Serb forces or someone still alive from our area. While I held it in my hand, it would give me the creeps and lack of desire to hold it. I remember it did not work properly but it seemed it was the only ticking thing among our us, the only thing still living or that ironically,

we had to understand that we needed to go on, to re-live, although everything was already discouraging and there were things among us that could no longer live; we had been through so much and suffered so many losses which could not be redeemed. At that time, I did not give a symbolic meaning to a watch that did not stir any curiosity in me apart from the feeling that it was a found item. But today I understand that the marks remain and they should never be erased or concealed. We have to remember them as part of the sacrifice for what we experience today. We need to carry the marks with us and not to stop living!

#### 106 MARTYRS OF PASTASEL VILLAGE 1999:

(Five of them still not identified)<sup>4</sup>

	Emri	Emri i babit	Mbiemri	Viti i lindjes	Vendlindja
01	JEMIN	ALI	KRASNIQI	1920	PASTASEL
02	SHABAN	ALI	KRASNIQI	1930	PASTASEL
03	SAHIT	MAHMUT	KRASNIQI	1933	PASTASEL
04	PAJAZIT	DANË	KRASNIQI	1946	PASTASEL
05	FERIZ	HAXHI	KRASNIQI	1944	MRASOR
06	HAMDI	ISLAM	KRASNIQI	1929	PASTASEL
07	AVNI	SADIK	KRASNIQI	1929	PASTASEL
08	ALI	SADIK	KRASNIQI	1935	PASTASEL
09	VEHBI	IDRIZ	KRASNIQI	1939	PASTASEL
10	HYDAJET	HYSEN	KRASNIQI	1946	PASTASEL
11	SHABAN	MUHARREM	KRASNIQI	1957	PASTASEL
12	SELIM	MUHARREM	KRASNIQI	1929	PASTASEL
13	FADIL	MUHARREM	KRASNIQI	1963	PASTASEL
14	MUHARREM	BEQIR	KRASNIQI	1935	PASTASEL
15	ABAZ	BEQIR	KRASNIQI	1942	PASTASEL
16	SELIM	QAZIM	KRASNIQI	1935	PASTASEL
17	MAZLLUM	XHAFER	KRASNIQI	1955	PASTASEL
18	SELMAN	SHABAN	KRASNIQI	1935	PASTASEL
19	BAJRAM	SHABAN	KRASNIQI	1942	PASTASEL
20	FEJZULLAH	SHABAN	KRASNIQI	1940	PASTASEL
21	MAHMUT	SALI	KRASNIQI	1945	PASTASEL
22	RESIM	ET`HEM	KRASNIQI	1933	PASTASEL
23	AVDYL	SINAN	KRASNIQI	1920	PASTASEL
24	REXHEP	DESTAN	KRASNIQI	1954	PASTASEL
25	HAMDI	HAJREDIN	KRASNIQI	1937	PASTASEL

4 Krasniqi Pajazit, Valley of Death, Monography, Pristina, 2008

26	MUHAMET	JAHIR	KRASNIQI	1929	PASTASEL
27	VESEL	ISLAM	KRASNIQI	1946	PASTASEL
28	SADIK	PAJAZIT	KRASNIQI	1936	PASTASEL
29	SHABAN	PAJAZIT	KRASNIQI	1944	PASTASEL
30	ALI	SEJDI	KRASNIQI	1939	PASTASEL
31	MUSLI	HAXHI	KRASNIQI	1932	PASTASEL
32	MUHARREM	MURSEL	KRASNIQI	1934	PASTASEL
33	UKË	SINAN	GASHI	1944	SFERRKË
34	ISMET	METË	MAZREKU	1931	PASTASEL
35	ZEQË	METË	MAZREKU	1924	PASTASEL
36	ALI	SYLË	MAZREKU	1935	PASTASEL
37	UKË	ADEM	MAZREKU	1942	PASTASEL
38	MUHAMET	DINË	KRASNIQI	1944	PASTASEL
39	BEHLUL	DINË	KRASNIQI	1949	PASTASEL
40	SHABAN	AVDYL	KRASNIQI	1958	PASTASEL
41	IBRAHIM	UKË	KRASNIQI	1936	PASTASEL
42	MUSTAFË	UKË	KRASNIQI	1943	PASTASEL
43	SALIH	SELMAN	KRASNIQI	1954	PASTASEL
44	JAKUP	BEQIR	RRACI	1945	KLINË
45	OSMAN	HAJDAR	MERLAKU	1947	GREMNIK
46	ARMEND	OSMAN	MERLAKU	1982	GREMNIK
47	TAHIR	ADEM	KALLUDRA	1925	GREMNIK
48	HAXHI	JEMIN	ZENUNI	1924	PANORC
49	XHAFER	ZEKË	BERISHA	1928	PALLUZHË
50	VELI	NEZIR	BERISHA	1936	PALLUZHË
51	ZAIM	HAXHI	MORINA	1980	PALLUZHË
52	NASIM	FEJZË	MORINA	1949	PALLUZHË
53	RAMADAN	JETË	DULAJ	1943	PALLUZHË
54	HAXHI	XAJË	SEFERI	1922	GURI I KUQ
55	BLERIM	AVDI	FETAHU	1984	GURI I KUQ
56	IBISH	MALIQ	FETAHU	1918	GURI I KUQ
57	ADEM	QERIM	FETAHU	1935	GURI I KUQ
58	HAXHI	DESTAN	AVDYLI	1934	GURI I KUQ
59	JEMIN	RAMADAN	MUSTAFA	1927	GURI I KUQ
60	MUSTAFË	SHERIF	MUSTAFA	1945	GURI I KUQ
61	RAMË	ZENEL	ZYMERI	1922	GURI I KUQ
62	SALI	RAMË	ZYMERI	1947	GURI I KUQ
63	VESEL	ZENEL	ZYMBERI	1928	GURI I KUQ

64	SALI	BRAH	FETAHU	1918	GURI I KUQ
65	ALI	UKË	SADRIU	1931	GURI I KUQ
66	ASLLAN	DESTAN	SYLEJMANAJ	1933	GURI I KUQ
67	HAXHI	AHMET	MUSTAFA	1946	GURI I KUQ
68	HASAN	DESTAN	AVDYLI	1931	GURI I KUQ
69	DINË	SYLEJMAN	SALLAHAJ	1948	KOZNIK
70	HASAN	ZENEL	BAJRA	1937	KOZNIK
71	HAXHI	CENË	FEJZA	1937	POTOK
72	SAHIT	IMER	ISAKAJ	1943	KOZNIK
73	BISLIM	RAMADAN	FEJZA	1957	POTOK
74	KADRI	SHABAN	BAJRA	1940	KOZNIK
75	AVDYL	NEBI	ISAKAJ	1941	KOZNIK
76	IBRAHIM	RAMADAN	ISAKAJ	1964	KOZNIK
77	SOKOL	RAMADAN	ISAKAJ	1956	KOZNIK
78	BINAK		THAQI	1952	LLAQEVË
79	ABDULLAH	IDRIZ	KELMENDI	1937	KRAMOVIK
80	RASIM	IDRIZ	KELMENDI	1930	KRAMOVIK
81	IBRAHIM	OSMAN	BERISHA	1941	ZATRIQ
82	MUSTAFË	OSMAN	BERISHA	1936	ZATRIQ
83	RAMADAN	VESEL	KASTRATI	1931	ZATRIQ
84	HAJRUSH	VESEL	KASTRATI	1942	ZATRIQ
85	METUSH	GANI	KASTRATI	1929	ZATRIQ
86	XHELADIN	IBRAHIM	VEHAPI	1928	ZATRIQ
87	SAMEDIN	JEMIN	KASTRATI	1938	ZATRIQ
88	ISUF	NUSH	KASTRATI	1935	ZATRIQ
89	ZYMER	ISUF	KASTRATI	1965	ZATRIQ
90	MURAT	AVDI	KASTRATI	1942	ZATRIQ
91	JAHIR	NUSH	KASTRATI	1925	ZATRIQ
92	RAMËZ	ISLAM	VEHAPI	1939	ZATRIQ
93	BAJRAM	A	SPAHIU	1928	ZATRIQ
94	JANUZ	MYRTË	KASTRATI	1923	ZATRIQ
95	TAFIL	BANUSH	GASHI	1934	SFERRKË
96	BINAK	ISMET	GASHI	1982	SFERRKË
97	NIMAN	DEMIR	MULAJ	1949	JASHANICË
98	HAJZER	HAMIT	HAJZERI	1963	KOPILIQ
99	MURSEL	MURAT	BOJA	1939	KLINË
100	ILJAZ	HYSEN	GASHI	1955	MLEQAN
101	VELI	RRUSTEM	KRASNIQI	1939	ÇIFLLAK



JEMIN A. KRASNIQI SHABAN A. KRASNIQI SAHIT M. KRASNIQI PAJAZIT D. KRASNIQI FERIZ H. KRASNIQI



HAMDI I. KRASNIQI AVDI S. KRASNIQI ALI S. KRASNIQI VEHBI L. KRASNIQI HYDAJET H. KRASNIQI



SHABAN H. KRASNIQI SELIM B. KRASNIQI FADIL S. KRASNIQI MUHARREM B. KRASNIQI ABAZ B. KRASNIQI



SELIM S. KRASNIQI MAZLUM XH. KRASNIQI SELMAN SH. KRASNIQI BAJRAM SH. KRASNIQI FEJZULLAH SH. KRASNIQI



MAHMUT S. KRASNIQI RESIM E. KRASNIQI AVDYLL S. KRASNIQI REKHEP D. KRASNIQI HAMDI H. KRASNIQI



MUHAMET I. KRASNIQI    VESELI KRASNIQI    SADIK P. KRASNIQI    SHABAN P. KRASNIQI    ALI S. KRASNIQI



MUSLI H. KRASNIQI    MUHARREM M. KRASNIQI    UKË S. GASHI    ISMET M. KRASNIQI    ZEQË M. KRASNIQI



ALI S. MAZREKU    UKË A. KRASNIQI    MUHAMET D. KRASNIQI    BEHUL D. KRASNIQI    SHABAN A. KRASNIQI



IDRAHIM U. KRASNIQI    MUSTAFË U. KRASNIQI    SALIH S. KRASNIQI    JAKUP B. RRUCI    OSMAN H. MERLAKU



ARMEND O. MERLAKU    HAXHI J. ZENUNI    XHAFER Z. BERISHA    VELI N. BERISHA    ZAIM H. MORINA





NASIM F.MORINA    RAMADAN J.DURAJ    HAXHI X.SEFERI    BLERIM A.FETAHU    IBKSH M.FETAHU



ADEM Q.FETAHAJ    HAXHI D.AVDYLI    JEMIN R.MUSTAFA    MUSTAFË SH.MUSTAFA    RAMË Z.ZYMERI



SALI H.ZYMERI    VESEL Z.ZYMBERI    SALI B.FETAHU    ALI U.SADRIU    ASLLAN D.SYLEJMANAJ



HAXHI A.MUSTAFA    HASAN D.AVDYLI    DINË S.SALLAHAJ    HASAN Z.BAJRA    HAXHI C.FEJZA



SAHIT I.ISAKAJ    BISLIM R.FEJZA    KADRI SH.BAJRA    AVDYLI N.ISAKAJ    IBRAHIM R.ISAKAJ



SOKOL B.ISAKAJ    BINAK TIHAZI    ABDULLAH I.KELMENDI    RASIM I.KELMENDI    IBRAHIM O.BERISHA



MUSTAFÉ O.BERISHA    RAMADAN V.KASTRATI    HAJRUSH V.KASTRATI    METUSH G.KASTRATI    XHELADIN I.VEHAPI



SAMEDIN J.KASTRATI    ISUF N.KASTRATI    ZYMER I.KASTRATI    MURAT A.KASTRATI    JAHIR N.KASTRATI



HAMËZ I.VEHAPI    BAJRAM A.SPAHIU    JANUZ M.KASTRATI    TAFIL B.GASHI    BINAK I.GASHI



NIMAN D.MULAJ    HAJZER H.HAJZERI    MURSEL M.BOJA    ILIAZ H.GASHI    VELI RR.KRASNIQI

**Witnesses who escaped the massacre  
of Pastasel in 1999 tell:**

**Tahir Liman Krasniqi** born on 13.04.1943 is one of the men who escaped murder and massacre by the Serb forces in the village of Pastasel on 31 March 1999.



*Tahir Liman Krasniqi, witness of the Pastasel massacre*

On 30 March, many refugees came to our village. Our village was full of people, 100 percent of its capacities. Around 60 percent of the village had been burned several months ago during the first attack. On 30 March 1999 many people came from Mleqani, Klina, Gllareva, there were many refugees; 1000 or more. We gave them shelter as we could. When the houses were filled, we opened the village school for nearly 200 people, women and children and we brought them as much food as we could. In the morning of 31 March we brought them food and blankets. Sometime around 12:00 at noon the Serb forces started shelling our village from Guri i Kuq, they hit the mountain of the village. When we heard that the infantry of Serb forces are heading towards Polluzhë, we left our homes and released the

animals. We all dispersed in unknown directions. Most of Pastasel residents, around 600 to 700 women, children and men gathered in a meadow below the school. Another 1600 people joined us. At 15:00 they made it from Polluzhë to Pastasel. There were three to four tanks in the village, shelling in the direction of Senoc. Houses were burning. A part of these forces were coming from the direction of Polluzhë as infantry with five or six tanks, amongst them were police and paramilitaries, in various uniforms, with beards and colored faces. As soon as they entered in the village they began to burn all the houses. They got closer to our place, about 200 meters below the school. We collected some 7000 Deutsch Marks and a group of us, men, went to face them. When they were about 150 meters close we told them we had 7000 Deutsch Marks so that they would not hurt the children. We were there for the first attack, too. This was their second attack. We did not have an easy time even in the first time but at least here were no massacres then. So we based our approach on the first experience. The second time, they would not care even if we had 700,000 Deutsch Marks. They told us to join the rest of the people. We went back. As soon as we did, they ordered us to remove our white traditional caps and to place our heads upon the ground. They separated us from the women and started to ask for money. When we no longer had anything to give they started to beat people up. They cracked open someone's head with the weapon, they chopped another one to death... I heard them say in Serbian to "take someone and massacre him alive because these people know nothing about massacres." I understood them because I understood some 60 percent of Serbian language so I brought out 3,500 marks and gave them to Haxhi Emin Krasniqi, grandfather of the martyr Milaim Krasniqi. At that moment, he was completely lost so he told the Serb forces "here are 700,000 marks". One of them took the money and they started to fight over it. Around hrs17:00 they divided us up into groups of 30 and brought us near a stream of water to shoot us. The first group comprised of a selection of younger men. None of this group survived. Five (5) from this group were almost dead even before the shooting. They had been badly beaten and dragged all the way to the place where they would shoot us. I was in the third group. Four (4) people of my group survived. When they took us to the stream, one of them talked over the radio with someone else and asked "what should we do with these ones here". The order was "leave no-one alive, shoot them all". I heard this with my own ears. We could have flown away somehow but I could not leave behind 28 members of my family

and 32 refugees who had sought shelter with us. So we decided, whatever happened to all, would happen to us. Three of the refugees staying with me had been killed: Haxhi Seferi from Guri i Kuq, his 16-year old nephew and Abdullah Kelmendi from Kramovik. Women and children were told to go to Albania. At the moment before the shooting I placed my hands over my face because a dry rosehip branch was there and I thought it would fall on my face, I placed my hands before my face and felt that branch. I slid away and when I fell, I felt I was alive but did not dare to move for fear of stray bullets. My uncle's son Sylejman Krasniqi was on my right side and Ali Mazreku on my left. One of the men moaned loudly, the other had cramps. They shot at us with a second round. Two bullets caught my leg, slightly wounding me. I heard two voices and I slid further for about another six meters downwards. I fell on water, about a meter deep. There were oaks. I did not dare move because some 20 paramilitaries were behind me shooting. Down there I saw Beqir Krasniqi and Sefedin Krasniqi. They caught me so I would not fall on my head. We all fell on our feet.

When it turned dark, the Serb forces ended the shooting and the massacres. They left. We, the survivors, went about 100 meters further. The next day, the Serb forces took another 20 bodies and burned them in a house in the village. Six of them were completely burnt. You could only tell the skull. We found limb parts, leg or hand or any other body parts. For three days we did not stop trying to bury the victims. The Serb forces would prevent us from doing that from time to time. It was difficult to bury them near the mosque because the ground was hard. We placed them inside graves as well as we could so at least the dogs would not get to their bodies. The Serb forces returned seven days later. We did not return to the village anymore. Two or three weeks later, the corpses were exhumed and were sent to unknown destinations. Of them, 12 to 13 have not been found yet.

### Empfangsbestätigung

Hiermit wird bestätigt, daß der Herr KRASNIQI, Tahir, geb. am 14.03.1943 folgende Gegenstände am 29.06.1999 zum Zweck der Aufklärung des Massakers in PASTASEL (RAHOVEC) übergeben hat:

1. Namensliste
2. 29x Personenfotos
3. 2 Personalausweise

MAZREK, Syla  
Nr. SK 01234821

MAZREKU, Adem  
SK 00057193

4. Dokumentationsschrift
5. Videofilm über Identifizierung der Einheimischen
6. Notizbuch aus einem Haus in PASTASEL, daß die Serben zeitweise als Stab besetzt hatten

  
GRANZOW, OLI GE MP

**Gani Salih Krasniqi**, born in 1934 from Pastasel is also one of the witnesses of the massacre in the village of Pastasel, where the Serb forces killed 106 people on 31 March 1999. Now he is 81 years old. He talks with a lot of emotions about the horror he passed through. Although he is old, Gani can never forget that time.



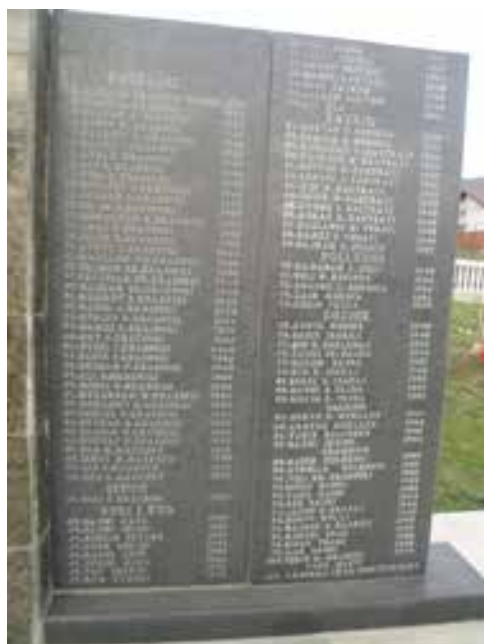
*Gani Salih Krasniqi, witness of the Pastasel massacre*

It was the 31 March 1999 when the Serb forces came from Polluzhë and Guri i Kuq. Two tanks had taken position above the village and started shelling. When they arrived, beastly as they were, we took some white kerchiefs to indicate surrender but they would scream and curse. They started to loot the houses. They tore off gold from our women's ears and started to beat up people. That afternoon, before the sunset they selected young men and put them all in a group. None of them survived. They were constantly shouting "Long live

Serbia". None of us was allowed to speak, they would tell us: "Heads down, look at Serbia's land"! Fadil Krasniqi was next to me. They told him to put his head on the ground and they hit him with the butts of their weapons, with all their might... I remember a certain Jovanović from the village of Zoqisht. He was hitting Fadil on the head with his weapon. Fadil was bleeding so much that his blood fell on me... They beat him to death. They looted us. They kicked me three meters away and said: "Bring out the money". I told them I had none, "do you want me to undress to convince you I have no more money, we never did anything to anyone..." Before they shot us, I threw myself down the stream, under an oak tree. I was with the first group of old men. That day I had taken some sedatives. People had lost their senses, it was not easy for us ... When they started to shoot I threw myself quickly into the water. When they shot at two people, I felt them falling on my. One was Sadik Krasniqi and the other was Murteza Krasniqi. When the guy on me died, I rolled him off. Half of my body was in the water. Murtezani said: "Gani I think you are alive"? I said: "Yes but I cannot move". Then he told me that the first time they shot, I had shouted Allah, and he thought I had been killed so he did not utter a single word because of fear of being caught. They shot the second group, too. They killed them, only a few were let go. A soldier of the Serb forces let them go. With tears in his eyes he said: "Leave with your wives and be gone forever"! Those two survived. The women were looted first, and then they were told "you have no more men". Then Murtezan told me that everyone had left. We stood up and left that place. Murtezani was badly wounded so he leaned on me. I saw Mahmut Krasniqi moving and told him: "Stand up or they'll catch us again". He said: "Forgive me. I cannot see and I cannot stand up". His foot bone was almost broken and he was bleeding heavily. We brought Murtezan to Ratkoc, while we spent the night in Dobiqak. In the morning I could not even speak. I could only bite my tongue and shiver. We headed for Panorc but I noticed the tanks hitting the mountain so I returned towards the place I had come from... Some people from Koznik asked me if I knew what had happened. I told them more than 100 were killed. They asked me about Bislim Fejza. I responded: "Inshallah God saved him for he was with the first group". I went to Polluzhë where I saw killed animals. I met with Haxhi, whose 19-year old son Zaim Morina had been killed. Do not even ask what we saw, I do not know how to tell you... "Hydajet Krasniqi was screaming. His brains were scattered out of his head, there was nothing we could do... Some people were alive but completely maimed. There was no way to cure or save them. They died in a lot of pain and suffering".



Then we came to the village but some 2 or 3 days later we had to leave again. I stayed in Dejn. My brother was killed. After 20 days we brought out the bodies. About 20 people were burned inside a house in the village. They were tied up with ropes, dragged by a tractor, their brains were out of their heads, all sorts of horror... It took us three days to bury them. It is a miracle our minds are not affected. Often I could not sleep. I would wake up every night. I would take sleeping pills otherwise I could not send away the horrible things I had seen. We all have consequences from that time. It was not easy... I was in Belgrade in 2006 to testify about this massacre. I testified what they did. Jovanović was sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment on the basis of my testimony. He would say: "It was not me". I told him: "It was you and you have killed"! At the trial I said: "Damned who has killed innocent people"!



## The Missing Persons

From the last war in Kosovo there are still 1,700 missing persons. There are missing persons from the village of Pastasel, too..



Fidaije Krasniqi, born in Pastasel in 1980, tells about what she went through in spring 1999.

On 31 March 1999 we left our home in the village of Pastasel to join the 3000 people in the valley of the village, a few meters below the village school. The horror started with the arrival of the Serb forces there. We surrendered. I was there with my family: my mother Ryve, brother Fadil, father Selim and uncles Abaz and Muharrem Krasniqi. That is when horrors of all sorts started... They started by separating men from women. First they took my brother Fadil saying he was part of the KLA. I screamed for my brother. He turned his head, looked at me and said: "Lower mother's head as there are bullets flying over her head"! That was our last conversation. The Serb forces were out of control, they were camouflaged and a frightening sight.

Then they ordered the women to go to Albania and they started to head for Ratkoc. My mother Ryva and I hid a few meters from the valley near a fountain. We saw the horror of 106 people being killed on that spot. I saw them dividing people into groups, shooting at them, I saw them falling on the ground... I told my mother they were killing everyone... We stayed there until 20:00. In the evening we left for Ratkoc, once we were convinced that things had calmed down. We went to my paternal aunt's house.

Two days later, with my mother and paternal uncle's wife we returned to the valley to see our family members; to see if anyone had survived. Once we arrived there I saw they had just taken father to bury him near the mosque. There were two lines with killed people, in total 106. As we went there, we saw the water stream was red with blood. I lost my sense of orientation from what I saw and I felt. My mother lifted me up. When she reached me her hand, I saw it was red with the blood of the killed people. Once we got near the dead bodies, the first one I saw was uncle Muharrem. The way he looked was horrendous: the upper part of his head was completely removed! It was terrible to see a man like that; you could not even imagine how any man can do such a thing...! I did not see father at all as he had been taken away to be buried. I looked at all the corpses, looking for my brother Fadil. O God, I could not stand what I was seeing! Each of the corpses was a horror sight: murder, massacre; someone's leg had been removed, the hand of someone else... I recognized Hydajet Krasniqi. His bowels were out. Other victims too had been brutally massacred. You could not tell they were human beings.

When I saw the corpse of my brother Fadil, one of the village men ran to cover a part of his face. He did not let me see him completely. I guess they had removed one of his eyes and I do not know what other kind of brutal massacre he had been subjected to?! I froze, and I was gripped by a terrible headache. I was completely lost. I asked to see my father but they did not let me. I saw the corpse of uncle Abaz but at that moment we heard and saw Serb forces getting near the village shooting at us without pause. We went back home. When we arrived home my uncle's son Adnan said not to go inside because the house was full of burned people. A real horror!

I did not go into the house but in the yard I saw a car trailer with burned victims. I recognized: Behlul Krasniqi, Shaban Krasniqi, Jemin Krasniqi, Shaban Krasniqi, Avdyl Krasniqi, Hamdi Krasniqi, Muhamet Krasniqi, Asllan Krasniqi, Bislim Fejza, etc. The horror kept growing larger... Burned people were in the house, outside in the trailer and on a pile of bodies outside of the house. What I was seeing was a terrible calamity! I suffered; I did not know what to do, I was lost in that pain...

We had to leave because the Serb forces were getting nearer. We could hear the shots. Everyone was leaving. Shocked by what we had seen, my mother and I walked until the evening to reach Ratkoc. I was so shocked I could not locate my aunt's house.

During the five days we stayed in Ratkoc, we went back to our house again. The

house had been cleaned of the burned corpses but in the yard there were still human bones. Around the house, in the trailer you could catch the nauseating whiff of burned humans. I asked a village man to collect the bones and he promised to remove the trailer and the bones on the ground. We stayed home for three days and then for three months we stayed in Polluzhë as refugees.



*Where 106 people were killed in the Valley of Pastasel village  
The pictures below were taken with a camera by the residents of the village  
Imer Krasniqi and Hasan Krasniqi.*

Three months later we returned to the village and we saw that the cemeteries were empty. Rumors had it that the bodies had been sent to Suharekë, Rahovec, Xërxë and many other places. That multiplied our pain. Afterwards we began

the search for the body of my brother Fadil, whom we found later in Xërxë. We also found uncle Abaz. We have not yet found my father, although we have been to many places to identify his corpse. I have seen many corpses in many places, like in Suharekë and Rahovec. I knew what he had been wearing the last time, so I searched for him among many bodies, but in vain. We did not find him anywhere. Apart from being very difficult, it also irritated me because we could not find his body anywhere. He is still missing. After all I had seen, I started to live in anxiety. I still feel the anxiety; I am haunted by everything I have seen and lived through.



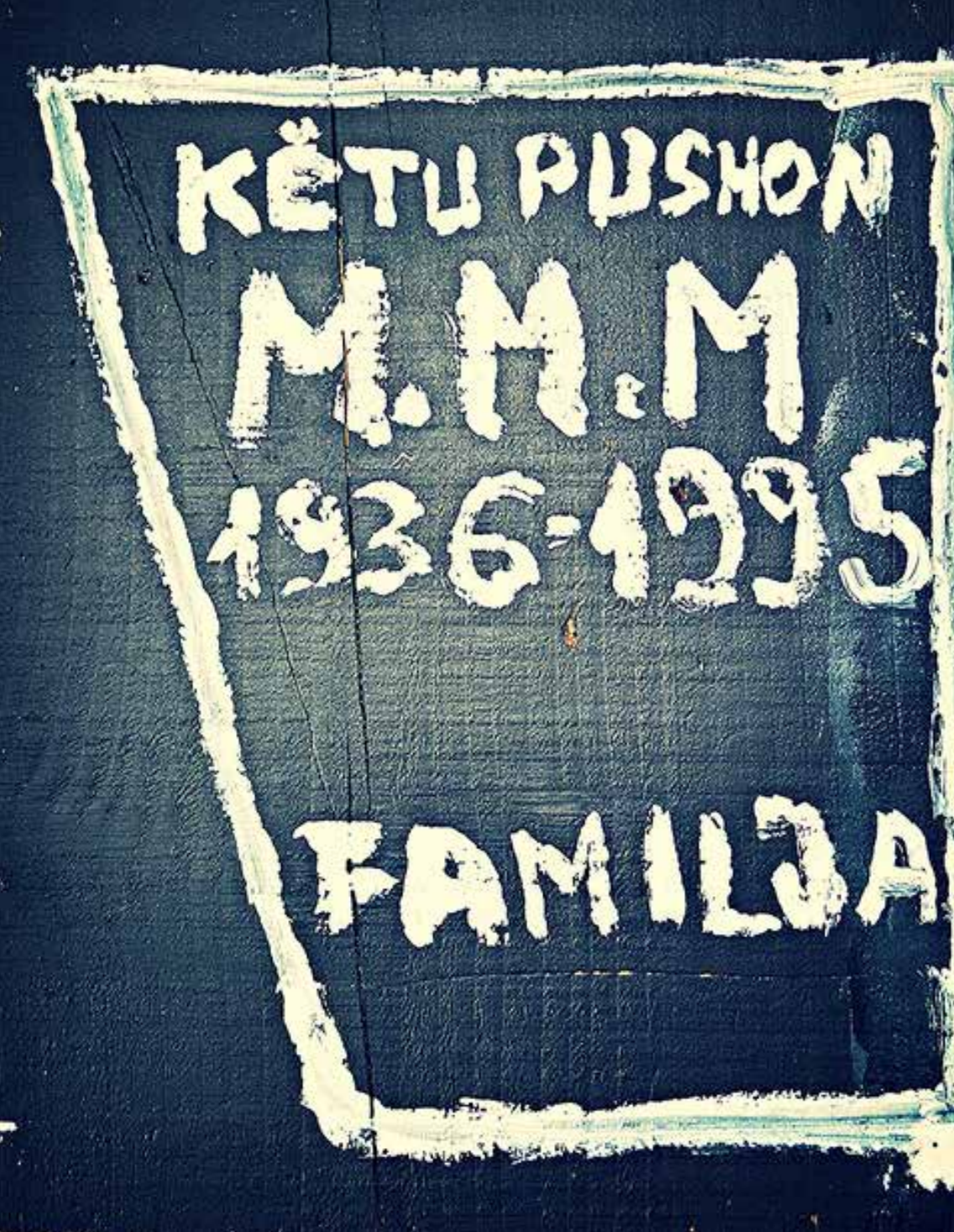
**FLORA DULAJ**

## Without words



“Freedom of movement”

**Slavica Trajković**  
Shillovë, Gjilan/Šilovo, Gnjilane



“Misery, agony, death”

**Bujar Murseli**  
Ferizaj/Uroševac

# SEPARATION

After 17 years of working as radio operator in the military aviation of former Yugoslavia, in 1998 I resigned, thus severing ties with the state where I was educated and where I worked. It was a difficult time, both in the national and individual aspects. In March 1998, after the events in Prekaz and following the start of a brutal and merciless war, and because of the vicinity of the area where war had been unleashed to my working post, as at that time I was working for the military airport of Prishtina, and driven by the personal motive of not being part of an army that fights barbarously against my people, I decided to quit my job.

After my decision to quit my job I faced a lot of challenges; beginning with luring, blackmailing and threats by my subordinates. Nonetheless, this is not part of my story about breaking away. Fortunately, my resignation was approved in May 1998. Although I was not working, according to the laws of that time, my paid annual leave ran through September.

In September 1998 I was invited to go to Belgrade, to the command, for termination of the employment. The offensive in the area of Lapp had already started at that time. The road Prishtinë-Podujevë was closed off for some days. My close family members advised me not to go to Belgrade. But because of the documents, I decided to go and finally break up with them.

In the meantime, the situation in Ferizaj and elsewhere was grim, with many armed forces around the city. At hrs 19:00 everything was hushed: the streets, people, roads, hoping that the next day would bring something better. After crossing the Merdare point I noticed that everything in Serbia functioned: the roads were full of people the bars were open. You could not see anything that related to the war or Kosovo. I arrived in Belgrade in the morning. I saw right away that people lived normal lives. It was still the holiday season and people continued to go to the seaside for holidays. I was wondering whether that was normal: there is a brutal war going on in one territory while normal life goes on in the other one. I had the impression that the advice of my family members and being anxious about my trip to Belgrade were unfounded. But they had been right.

When I arrived at the headquarters, after greeting some of my colleagues, I went



to the administration office. That is where a real drama started to unfold me with a woman who was the officer in charge of contracts and work experience. She had also worked in Sarajevo, and after the Yugoslav Army moved from Bosnia, she was deployed in Belgrade. She did not even greet me although her commander – and my commander until that day, a reasonable man who understood my position, as he had served and worked in Slovenia and who had given his consent for my termination, had sent me to see her.

I did not like her attitude but I said to myself not to even bother over it, as I was trying to an extent to understand her frustration. While I was waiting to start working on the documentation, she did not even tackle my case. After waiting for half an hour I reminded her that I did not have a lot of time to wait, and that this task had been assigned to her by her commander. That is when she assaulted me with insults, curse words, and threats, using such street language, telling me that she would never type up the decision on me, saying “you are a filthy shiptar” (shiptar – derogatory term for Albanians by Serbs) and that “tomorrow you will fight against me” etc. I asked for the assistance of her supervisor in the office but he also proved to be powerless to help me. When I asked for assistance from her boss she was maddened further, so I had to go one more time to see the commander and tell him what was going on. He came with me to the office and ordered her to type up the documents right away. Now she faced two choices: to refuse the order, or to prepare the documents. She started typing. Strangely, her previous aggressiveness was replaced by her crying and typing. From time to time she would curse. In the end, she completed the documents and gave me the papers while hurling more insults at me.

I felt so humiliated, insulted and mad. I was heading outside of that place when, a floor below; I met by chance a former colleague and a friend of mine I had worked with for many years in Kopaonik. He greeted me warmly and sincerely and invited me in his office for a cup of coffee. To my surprise, he called his wife and told her to expect guests that night. It was a done deal. I did not know how to react; whether to accept or refuse the invitation from a normal person. I tried in vain to excuse myself mentioning the bus trip.

Driven by the unpleasant event of five minutes earlier I decided to accept their invitation. While travelling from Banjica to their house in Cerak, I told him what had happened... He felt very bad and said there are fools everywhere.

I told him about the war in Kosovo and my reason for resigning. He supported my decision. In a way, I felt relieved and was thinking to myself: why is this war even happening, why are there both good and bad people in the world?

Everything happened to me in the same time. When we arrived at his place, his wife expressed her grief over what was happening in Kosovo and also supported my decision to resign.

After a wonderfully warm reception my friend's wife gave me a book, with a dedication on friendship and camaraderie we had until then. My friend brought me off to the station and that was my final goodbye to that system and country. All the way I thought about the war, people, friends, and on that day I was convinced that there are good and bad people in this world.

I dedicate this story to Dragan and Ivana. I am forever grateful to them for their kind words and for supporting my decision.

That was Belgrade in September 1998.

## THE BLACK HAND

Following the attack of the armed forces in the mountains of Jezerca and because of the large number of victims, in the end of September 1998 I decided to bring my family to Skopje. My wife is from Skopje and I knew that she would be safe with friends. While staying in Skopje, the agreement for the ceasefire and arrival of OSCE in Kosovo was reached in the beginning of October.

I returned to Ferizaj to stay with my mother and sister, thinking that the OSCE presence would improve things, and hoping that I would run into any problems with the armed forces, considering I had resigned.

It was the beginning of December. People in the streets were talking about a paramilitary formation that called itself "The Black Hand". At first, we did not take such words seriously but from day to day things were changing and people started to disappear or be executed. Once "The Black Hand" appeared, the city "closed down" at hrs15:00 or at the latest at hrs16:00. Nothing worked. There were no people, no life. Everyone locked themselves up at their homes watching every news edition... Usually, after TVSH news of 18:30 and after the main news, a closed-type bar worked in our street. That is where we would spend the evening hours with the neighbors; playing pool, cards or talking, looking for a relief, if being locked inside a closed and hidden bar can be called a relief. One night, on 31 January 1999, after the bar closed and everyone went his way, I headed home. I noticed a yellow car following me. It moved with the speed of a pedestrian. I turned my head to see what was going on. My blood curdled! It

was a yellow car, like the cars of the notorious organization “The Black Hand”. It was not just the color of the car that was the same but everything else matched too. It was a yellow Zastava without plates. It was rumored that people of that organization would go out at night. Everything matched...

I saw four unknown men in the car, all in their 30s. I continued towards home, and showing more prudence than at any other time, I “measured up” with my eyes the distance to my home, trying to locate a wall I could jump over more easily. The car followed me for about 50 meters and at one moment, it just stopped and turned back towards the city center.

At that time I lived in a street populated both by Albanians and Serbs. Maybe the men in the car thought I was a Serb or maybe they recognized me and thought I was still working for the military aviation. Although many years have passed since, this dilemma still haunts me...

I went home, pale and worried. My family noticed that something was amiss... They froze when I told them what had transpired. We all had mixed feelings. We were even afraid to think what could have happened...

Perhaps this story would not have been that interesting if an abduction had not happened on the same night in Street “Emin Duraku”, which is parallel to the street I live in. The abduction occurred at the same time, only 10 minutes apart. According to the witnesses, that night, four men had come out of a yellow Zastava and forcefully abducted a man in his fifties. The next day we heard he had been murdered. The late man was the tailor, Xhavit Avdiu, 54 years old. His dead body was found on 8 February 1999, nearby Kaçanik, at the location called “Krivareka”.



Xhavit Avdiu, 54 years, killed in 1999

## FERIZAJ: NË AFËRSI TË KAÇANIKUT U GJETËN TRUPAT E PAJETË TË XHAVIT AVDIUT DHE SALIH SALIHUT

Prishtinë, 9 shkurt (QIK) - Dje në afërsi të Kaçanikut në vendin e quajtur “Krivarekë” u gjetën trupat e pajetë të Xhavit Avdiut (54) nga Ferizaj dhe i Salih Salihut (1962) nga Talinoci i Jerlive, njofton KI i Degës së LDK-së në Ferizaj.

I ndjeri Xhavit Avdiu nga persona të panjohur është kidnapuar më 31 janar të këtij viti, ndërsa Salih Salihu është zhdukur më 5 shkurt të këtij viti.

Njoftohet se trupat e pajetë të dy shqiptarëve të vrarë gjenden në morgun e spitalit në Prishtinë, ndërsa varrimi i tyre pritet të bëhet sot.<sup>5</sup>

That night I saw death with my own eyes. Luck had it for me to survive. A long time has passed since then but still I have not understood what happened that night. How come I was spared?!

I dedicate this story to the murdered tailor, Xhavit Avdiu, 54 years old. May he rest in peace!

**BUJAR MURSELI**

5 Kosovo Information Center, Archive 1999, Pristina 9 February 1999  
<http://www.kosova.com/arkivi1997/arkivat.htm>



„The Boy Who Never Met His Father””

**Lirija Duleniku**  
Pejë/Peć

# THE BOY WHO NEVER MET HIS FATHER

I am from Peja. My late father was also born in Pejë in 1931. We lived in the city center. The city is located in the western part of Kosovo, at an altitude of 550 meters, the surface area of Pejë city is 601 km<sup>2</sup>.

Pejë municipality is bordered in the west by Montenegro, in the north with the municipality of Istog, in the east with the municipality of Klinë, and in the south with the municipality of Deçan.

According to the census of 1981, which was also the last census until 2011, the city of Pejë had 55,000 inhabitants, while the municipality of Pejë 111,000 inhabitants. Among them, there were 8,000 Bosnians.

According to the recent census held in 2011, the city of Pejë had 48,962 inhabitants, whereas the municipality of Pejë 96,450 residents. Now, there are 3,786 Bosnians.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1975, I work for the municipality of Pejë. I have five years left until retirement. Now I live in “Dardania” quarter, where during the war 70 people were murdered, 13 of them were from my street:

1. Blerim Shala
2. Arben Gega
3. Xhelal Gega
4. Bekteš Saljunović
5. Muharem Kelmendi
6. Rexhep Deçani
7. Sokol Deçani
8. Agron Balja
9. Hajrije Balja
10. Nita Balja
11. Dardan Balja
12. Rina Balja
13. Musa Balja

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<sup>6</sup> Data taken from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics



Stojanović. Nobody suspected that something was about to come up...

Around 11:00 a.m., I was on my way home. I headed towards the neighborhood where I lived. At that time it was called "Brženik". Now it has been named "Dardania". I live at the street formerly called "Dada Dragišić" now renamed to "Sulejman Vokshi" in Pejë. When I approached the building of the elementary school "Dušan Mungoša," now called "Dardania", I saw there were many trucks, army, paramilitary units with hats and masks on their heads in the school yard.

A barrier had been set up on the road leading to my house. You had to stop there and show an ID card so that they could see who you were and what you were.

There I saw everything: mistreatment, ID cards were taken away from individuals, torn, and they were not allowed to go home. They were forced to move in a different direction. Suddenly, I felt fear, sadness, anger and hate. When my turn came, I told them to wait a second since I had two bags in my hands and I needed to put them down in order to show them my ID Card. They immediately looked at each other, I guess since I was talking purely Serbian, they didn't know who I was and what I am.

Suddenly I saw on the right side a neighbor of mine, who lived close to me and he gave them a sign to let me go. The barrier went up and I passed. From the barrier to my house there were about 100 meters. It seemed to me like 100 kilometers. I could barely walk because of all I had just seen.

I came home feeling almost dead because of all that stress. My husband and son were waiting for me. They asked me what was wrong, why did I look so terrified. I started telling them what was happening in our neighborhood. I told them about the army and the paramilitary units with straw hats, masks, scarves around their heads and that I did not know what would happen to us.

That day we did not go out anywhere, not even in our backyard. Somehow the day passed. During the night, I was thinking of not going to sleep but instead to stay awake in case something happened to us. And so it was. The night was so long, or so it seemed to me, while my husband and son slept on. We were all in one room for our safety.

The morning arrived. I heard no one, as if there was no living soul. The silence frightened me. My family woke up. We had breakfast and just remembered that my husband wanted to go to the store, which was only 10 meters from home, in order to buy some items we needed. I did not let my husband go so I went to the shop instead of him. As I left my house towards the shop, a car stopped suddenly



near the shop. Four people came out and said that the shelling of “Zatra” and “Kapešnica” area would start and they had already expelled the inhabitants of those villages that were predominantly populated by ethnic Albanians. And so it was. The shelling started and suddenly I saw smoke and flames, burning houses, because the settlement “Zatra” can be seen clearly from my neighborhood.

Somehow, I gathered my strength. I went into the store and took some items we needed and returned home. My husband and son saw what was happening but they did not go out, as did my neighbors who were all at their homes. Mostly we were looking through the windows and thinking what would happen to us. On the same day, at 2:30 p.m. we suddenly heard gunfire, screaming and wailing. Then we heard a clear voice over a megaphone “GET OUT YOU TURKS! YOU TURKISH MOTHERFUCKERS!” Anxiety, fear, uncertainty overwhelmed us. We did not know what to do and what would happen when we got out. In my head, I was constantly asking myself why we were called “Turks”. Then, with my husband and son we went out. I turned my head and looked. It was not an easy scene leaving behind everything you have created during your whole lifetime, through work and efforts. But life is more important than anything else, than anything you leave behind.

When we stepped outside of the house, we decided to go by car and to take the risk what would happen next. On the streets we saw long convoys of men, women and children. From both sides of the street there were army and paramilitary units.

We were stopped twice. The first time it was at the gas station “Jugopetrol”, which is located in the city center and the second time by the traffic light, which is about 100 meters from the gas station. The first time we were stopped by the army, and the second time by the police. Both times they took us out of the car, and searched my husband, son and the car, but as they found nothing, we were allowed to continue our journey.

As I write this I am faced with great sadness and fear, which is in me, as if all this is happening now and today. However, I tell myself that I must go on and tell everything, because it will help me, and I believe it will be easier when this will be shared with you and others.

On the same day, on Saturday, 27 March 1999 the paramilitary units came to my neighborhood, went into the house of Daut Shala and began to harass his family. Daut Shala had a father who was paralyzed; a wife, two daughters and two sons. One of Daut’s sons was in Germany, while the other, Blerim Shala, was in the house with his wife and baby son, only one month old.

They killed Blerim who was only 23 years old. It is hard to describe, or even write about this true event that is so sad and painful.

të niseshim, diku rreth orës 15,30, një ekspeditë u fut në oborrin e shtëpisë sonë, e për tyra 7-8 hynë Brenda në shtëpi. Në atë moment ndim duke droluar dhe na urdhëruan që menjëherë të dilnim jashtë. Baha ishte i shtrirë në shtrat, kurse Nuxja e djalit shkoi në drejtim të foshnjës 15 muajshe që ishte në djep, e që njëri prej tyre e shpëlmoi shpejt dhe e rrokullisi. Pas kësaj ai që mbëhoqte me çapën, më tha: çfarë do bëjmë me plakun, e unë i thash se do e marrim me veti. Mirëpo, ai më tha le të rrij djali me plakun, duke menduar në djalin tim Blerimin (24). Unë insistova të arbeshta unë me plakun, por ai më thë ti do të na mësosh neve dhe filloi të më realite dhe me axori jashtë., kurse Blerimin e urdhëruan të shëj të këmbët e plakut. Nuxja e Blerimit u nis të dilte jashtë me foshnjën në dorë dhe në atë moment ai që e mbaante automatikun në drejtim të Blerimit, nga afërta që ishte shtëni me të në kokën e Blerimit dhe e vrau, kuse tjetri ishte duke më detyrë mua të me nxjernte jashtë. Kur më nxoren jashtë i pashë edhe rreth 30 tjerë me di hereta, të kuqenë kokë. Shkuaam të dhendri ku e kaluam atë natë e të nesërmen shkuaam në shtëpi për të parë se çka kishte ndodhur. Aty praën shtëpisë sime hasem në dy polic, të cilët lutem që të na lejonin të hynim në shtëpi, e ata na lejuan vetëm një minut. Kur ayam brenda e pamë hirin tim Blerimin të vrarë të këmbët e babës. Baha që ishte me vetëllie në pokët, nuk dihte se Blerimi ishte i varë, por më thoshte se nuk po çohet t'i apellte aje. Unë i solla babës ujë e pastaj e maurem Blerimin dhe e vendosam në mesin e dhomës, por në atë moment policia na urdhëroi që të dilnim menjëherë. Dualim e ary e lumë pa mëshirën e askujt babën e paralizuar dhe Blerimin të vdekur dhe më atë rrugë shkuaam në Rozhajë, ku e kam gjetur dhe ia kam dhënë 2000 DM një mafiozsi për të me sjellur babën. Ai shkoi dhe më 6 prill ma sollu babën e lodhur nga aria dhe etja, që si gjuoqe e pati vdekjen e tij pas tri ditësh.

Në shtëpi kur jemi kthyer i kemi gjetur gjurmët e gjakut dhe të predhava me të cilat ishte goditur Blerimi, trupin e të cilit e kishin marrë vrasësit me një autokombi dhe nuk dihet se ku e kanë dërguar.

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-Përshkruani identitetin e viktimës apo të viktimave:  
-Describe the identity of the victim or victims:

**Blerim Daut Shala**

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-Përshkruani identitetin e autorit-autorëve të krimt-krimëve:  
-Describe the identity of the author or authors of the crime-crimes:

**Nuk i kam njohur.**

---

Vërejtje: Nëse nuk e dini identitetin e viktimës-viktimave, apo të autorit-autorëve të krimt-krimëve, atë orë ata përshkruani në ndonjë mënyrë tjetër.  
Note: If you do not know the identity of the victim-victims, or the author-author of the crime-crimes, describe him or them in another way.

**I kam përshkruar gjatë deklaratimit**

-A e njohni personalisht ndonjërin prej autorëve të krimt-krimëve që i përshkruat?  
-Do you know personally any of the authors of the crime-crimes you described?

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30

Daut, his wife, daughter, daughter-in-law and grandchild were ordered to leave the house immediately, and to leave behind his paralyzed father and dead son; the son who was killed by the paramilitary unit. Daut went, and only him and Allah knows how he must have felt back then. Daut and his other family members went on their way in order to survive, and in particular to save the baby grandchild who was only one month old when his father was killed.

Daut and his family departed towards Rožaje, as did we. There were many barriers in the road to Rožaje, and we faced a lot of harassment. In order to cross the border, in case they let you cross, you had to pay both the military and the police as much as they asked for. You had to pay to get out, get to the border towards Montenegro-Rožaje. We paid on the border which at that time used to be called "Savine Vode". We gave 50 Deutsch Marks, because we told them that we had no more money with us. I do not know how much Daut paid at the border. We finally arrived in Rožaje.

We stayed three days in Rožaje, at my cousin's (my uncle's daughter) place. We decided to go to Ulcinj, but we heard that the road to Ulcinj was full of difficulties. We heard that reserve soldiers were getting nearer to that road. I may say that to me they looked like volunteers... they had military equipment but they were very arrogant. Their uniforms were be unbuttoned and they really looked very frightening. They kept their hands on machine guns. Most of them were in Mojkovac. I remember when we arrived in Mojkovac; a group of soldiers was almost on the road. One of those soldiers pointed a machine gun to our car. We did not stop. We were so scared that we almost went off the road, but dear Allah saved us.

We passed through all of this and we were all very stressed. We arrived in Ulcinj. I had the keys to a house located in the village Štoj, near Ulcinj. The house belongs to my uncle's daughter and we stayed there until our return.

Daut Shala remained in Rožaje. He did not surrender. He sought help from people who could go to Pejë to bring him his paralyzed father and the body of his murdered son. After three days, Daut found people whom he paid. Two people whom Daut had paid finally brought him his paralyzed father. The body of his murdered son, Blerim, had not been found at the house. The paramilitary forces who killed Blerim took his body away. Daut's father was almost half dead and he barely gave any signs of life. For three days and three nights, Daut's father was laying immobile in the empty house with nobody to even offer him some water or feed him. He was immediately transported to the Rožaje hospital where they started to fight for his life.

It was so difficult for Daut but he had to endure. A week later Daut's father died. They buried him in Rožaje. After a while, Daut and his family arrived in Ulcinj. On the very same day they arrived I met him. I was so happy to see him again and I asked him: Are all family members with you? He said: *"Yes they are, but just to let you know about Blerim, he was killed on 27 March 1999. I could not find his body to bury him"*. I felt so horrible but I managed to say to him: *"Thank God you have your grandchild alive"*. Daut replied: *"Yes, from now on, I will live for him, he is everything to me."*

Days passed. We met often. However, none of us refugees believed that we would be back after three months. Finally that day came. It was Sunday, 28 June 1999 when we were told that we would return collectively. Huge columns of us, refugees, followed by the Montenegrin police, returned to the town of Pejë.

The city of Pejë was a city of horror. The air still smelled of burnt houses and shops. Even some of the bigger buildings were burnt. The roads were full of rubble, and it would take time to get it all cleaned up and put in order, like it was before.

There were a lot of burnt houses even in my neighborhood Dardania. Houses had been looted, and were actually completely empty, as was my house. Thank Allah it had not been burned at least. It took us a while to put everything back in order, to be able to live in the house. Our neighbors who had been expelled to Albania started to come back. Most of them found their burnt houses, so they took shelter in empty houses they could find. Then I found out that 13 neighbors of mine had been killed by the paramilitaries and the army.

Daut continued to search unsuccessfully for the body of his deceased son. Daut's daughter-in-law, the wife of his deceased son, who was only 20 years old at that time, left the house and left behind her son Albin, who was about one year old. Albin was left with his grandfather Daut and his grandmother Gjylsime, who raised him. Daut has a grocery shop and he also works as a teacher at the elementary school in Loxhë village.


UNMEK  
IDENTIFICATION CERTIFICATE  
COCUPTINATE E IDENTIFIKIMET  
EUTORRASH IDENTIFIKALMI

Municipality: Komuna Opština	FEJA	MPU Number: MPU Numri MPU Broj	2001-000190 BA 05/405
Identified as: i identifikuar si Identifikovan kao:	SHALA BLERIM		
Municipality where body was found, cause of death: Komuna ku e reket gjetur trupit, shkak i vdekjes Opština gdje je telo pronađeno, uzrok smrti	BATAJNICA (Belgrade). Gun shot wounds on trunk.		
Date and place of disappearance: Data dhe vendi i zhdukjes Datum i mesta nestanja	27-03-1999, FEJA		
Date when body was found: Data kur eket gjetur trupit Datum pronalaska tela	21-10-2002		
Estimated date of death: Vleresimi i dates se vdekjes Procenjena datum smrti	Prior to 21-10-2002		
Place of burial: Vendi i varrimit Mesto sahrane	FEJE		
Gender: Gjinia Pol	MALE		
Date and Place of Birth, or estimated age: Datilindja dhe vendelindja Datum i mesta rodenja	11-10-1974 LOXHE		
Marital Status of deceased (if known): Gendja martesore e sh njezet Braćno stanje umrtog (ako je poznato)	MARRIED		
First name and surname of the marital partner (incl. Maiden name), - (if known) - Emri dhe mbiemri i bashkëshortit-ses Ime i prezime braćnog druga	LULJETA SHALA (Ex wife)		
Father's name: Emri i babes Ime oca	SHALA (IRISH) DAUT		
Mother's name (incl. Maiden name) Emri i Nenes Ime majke	SHALA (JONUZ) GJYLSYME		
Address of residence: Adresa e vendbanimit Adresa prebivališta	STR.FERIZAJIT N° 1 FEJA		

Issued Dati	PRISTINA
Date: Data Datum	20-03-2004

Signature of MPU Representative Nenshkrimi i përkësorit të MPU-së Potpis predstavnik MPU-ovaca


In 2004, Daut received reports that his son's Blerim mortal remains had been found in mass grave in Batajnica near Belgrade. Daut was happy, if I may use that word, when he was informed. From then on, he knew where the grave of his son was and where he could visit him. That was a great wound he was carrying around, one that grew every day and will never heal.



Years passed. Albin grew. He was a good kid, and I watched him every day. The feeling I have in myself now is that of mourning and sadness but still also of joy that he exists and that he gives strength and joy and the will to his grandfather Daut, to live for him.

When Albin went to secondary school, Daut and Gjylsyme were ecstatic. One day, when I was returning home, Albin's grandmother Gjylsyme told me that Albin had started secondary school and she invited me in for a coffee. We had coffee together and talked. She was bright with happiness, and told me: *"Even if I die now, I am not sorry."*

Albin went to school. It was soon time for the parents' meeting at school. The teacher told Albin that his grandfather should come to the parents' meeting. Albin came home and said, *"Grandpa, tomorrow I have a parents' meeting at school."* Daut was surprised as Albin suddenly called him grandpa but did not react, as Albin did not ask for an explanation why so suddenly he was his grandfather now. Until that day, Albin had called Daut "babi", which means Dad.

The following day, Daut went to the parents' meeting. By the end of the conversation about Albin's progress at school, the teacher apologized to Daut that she said to Albin to invite his grandfather for the parents' meeting. She said that she did not speak out of malice. Daut explained that it was not a problem, sooner or later, Albin would have found out. Daut saw Albin did not want to talk about it, and either did he.

I know this, because I was talking with Daut when I thought about starting to write about this sad and true story.

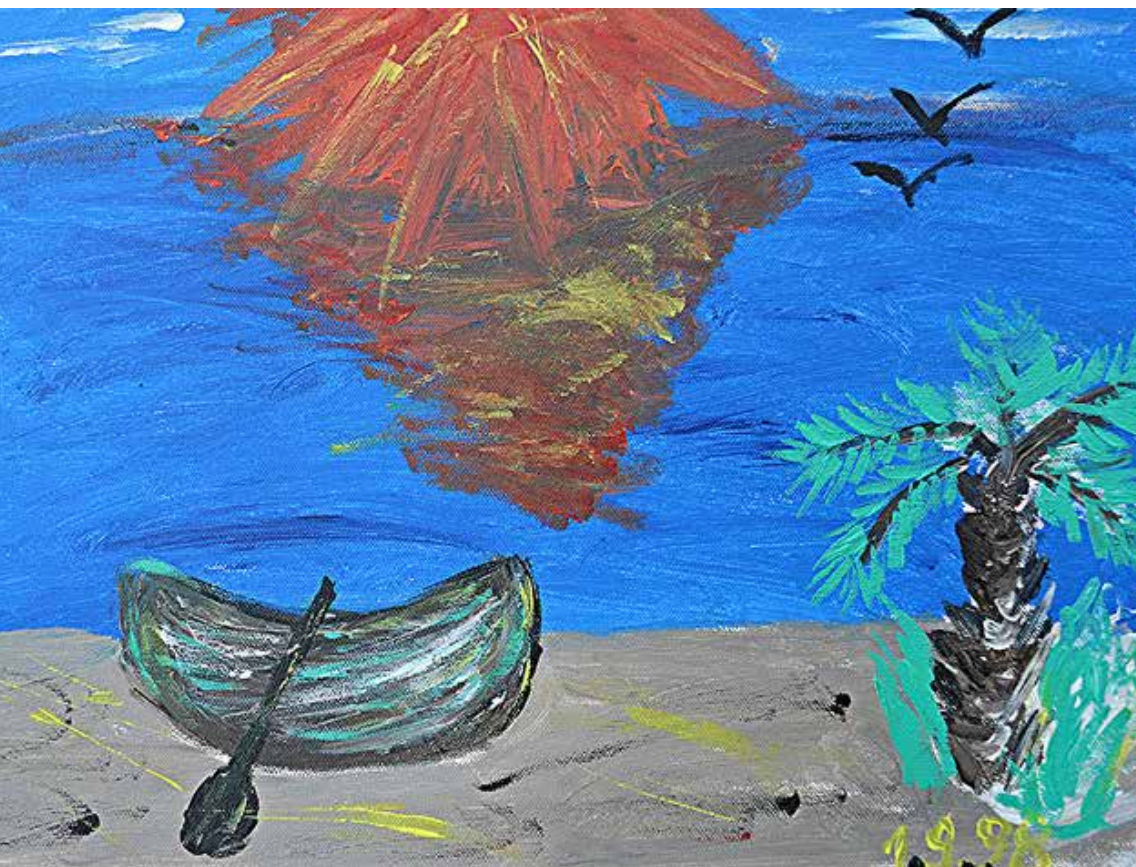
In 2013, Daut's wife Gjylsyme died unexpectedly. She was a delightful, noble, and quiet woman. She was a grandmother at the age of 59. When I heard about her death I felt so sad and sorry for Albin and Daut. The two of them were now alone in their house.

Daut told me that his wife woke up early that morning, as she did every day, to pray. She covered Albin with a blanket and he woke up asking her *“Is it time for school yet?”* She answered: *“No, no, my son, you sleep, I woke up to pray.”* He turned, and she continued to pray and she did not stand up anymore. She died on the praying rug. Daut woke up before his grandson. He saw his wife was not moving and immediately called an ambulance. But it was too late. She did not give any signs of life. She died of heart failure. This is not surprising, considering what she saw and went through; what she experienced. She was a “MOTHER”. It is hard to imagine how the two of them are feeling. Nowadays, they pay a woman who comes every day to clean and prepare food for them. As I said before, Daut has a son in Germany, who comes home during summer vacations and stays for a month. Daut has also two daughters; one lives abroad, the other in Pejë. Both are married and have their own families. The war takes its toll. I hope that this will never be repeated and never forgotten. We shall live in freedom and respect and appreciate each other.

**LIRIJA DULENIKU**







## “The Last Holiday”

**Diamant Gashi**  
Prishtinë/Priština



“The Lifelines”

# LIVING IN ANGUISH

Although 16 years have passed since the war in Kosovo, memories of that time are still fresh in my mind. Childhood is one of the happiest periods in the life of everyone. Every time we reminisce about positive and negative sides of events we lived through.

For me, that period was not so easy because at that stage of my life I had to experience the war and its shocking events, misfortunes, and sights that are not pleasant at all for a child.

The news editions were increasingly reporting shocking news about events that had begun to unfold across Kosovo; events I could not even imagine were happening in the country where we lived. The situation was getting worse by day and the Serb invaders continued to kill, massacre and torture people all over Kosovo.



Just as any other child of my age, it was difficult for me to understand why such things were happening to me and my family. While my four-year old sister had been playing in the yard with her friends, she came across a suspicious looking object that later we understood was a grenade. Because of the explosion she suffered burns of third degree on her left leg. All family was focused on her recovery.

Freedom of movement was becoming harder each passing day and the situation was getting worse. Often, I tried to envisage what we were going through as if it were a movie I was watching and I

hoped everything would be over soon. I was living in a reality of difficult times. I wanted to spend my time playing like my peers all over the world, but the fate decided that I had to experience something very different.

My parents always told me not to worry and that what I had understood was going on, would be over soon. But I could not stay calm. Appeals were heard all over Kosovo to leave the country, to abandon our homes and everything we had, and to take to the road to go anywhere we could. I always thought the events that were unfolding would afflict my family and me. People were abandoning the country every day. Appeals to leave were increasing day by day. Those who did not leave were mistreated by the Serb invaders. There were mistreatments, rapes, murders...

During that period we had to leave our home six or seven times. We went to stay with cousins or other relatives, yet we would return home again, thinking that there we would be safer than anywhere else. We had isolated our home completely; the doors were locked, the windows were boarded and covered with curtains and blankets, hoping to create an impression that nobody was in there. We were isolated the entire time and we were beginning to run out of food. We did not know for how long that difficult situation would go on, and we did not know when we could go out and live in freedom.

During that difficult time of war, one of the events I still remember as if it were yesterday happened in the beginning of March 1999. Considering that my sister Ardona and I were small children back then – she was 10, and I was 8, we thought we could get past Serb forces more easily. So, after many weeks of being locked at home we went out to buy some bread because we were running out of it and in the end there was none left. We would buy bread to create reserves in the home freezer, so at least we had enough of bread. We bought the bread at the minimarket which at that time was owned by a Serb. The shop was about 800 meters from home, at the white buildings in Bregu i Diellit. The shop would only give two breads per person. The event is still fresh in my memory and I recall it as a sad event. It happened while I was going to buy bread at that shop. One of our neighbors from the Serb community whom we knew, his name was Lubisa, was having beers with four or five other persons in uniforms. Their eyes followed us where we were going. Carrying the bread, while we heading back home, the group got into a white Jeep and began following us trying to run us down.

I grabbed my sister's hand and carried the bread with the other, and we started to run away horrified, running away from the car following us even on the pavement; the driver even sped up. We had no other choice but to get inside one of the white buildings that had two exits and we came out on the other side, breathless, and shaking. We barely made it home.

Our hearts were beating like crazy, and our voices were shaking while we tried to tell what had happened. Pale and terrified, we were nonetheless happy to be safe. We did not dare leave the house again.

We were isolated and only father watched with binoculars from the entrance door to see what was going on. All the time we were hearing noises from weapons, bombs and we did not feel safe, nevertheless we continued to stay home. It felt as if we were in a mental and spiritual trance, numbed by fear and pain, which had become part of us. Even our feet were numb but we hoped we could still run if we were in danger...

NATO bombing started around that time, and the Serbs were even more irritated. They did not know that we were still in our home. Almost the entire time we had our shoes on waiting for the worse to happen. But we had nowhere to go to and nothing else to do but to continue waiting...

It was 31 March 1999, around hrs 14:00. We were having lunch when we heard shots. The shots increased and we could hear them nearer to our place. After watching what was going on, Father said that the Special Unit with four or five tanks were raiding the neighborhood. Once they started to raid our neighbor's place, father told us to leave from the window because the Special Unit with their machine guns was demolishing everything that crossed their way.

I had only my socks on and there was no time to put on my shoes. I jumped out of the window, about one and a half meters high, crossed over the neighbor's wall and together we left, afraid that at any moment they would catch up with us and kill us. We walked by the houses tried to be inconspicuous.

That was the most terrible day for my family and me because we did not go back home but kept going on. Fortunately, the entire family reached the train station and together we left for Bllacë in Macedonia. We stayed there in a small tent, one meter high and two meters wide. We could not even sleep properly. We almost went crazy. After a week in Bllacë, we went to Stankovec. People working for UNICEF there helped us and accommodated us in a new tent. They gave us food, drinks and clothes. Right after, my elder brother Besnik started to help the UNICEF team with their work. The team rewarded him by asking him where in Europe we would like to go because such a possibility did exist. He chose Germany as we had other family members there. In the evening he told us that we would be going to Germany, which to us sounded unbelievable. The next day we travelled to Germany. I thank Germany very much for their hospitality and everything they did for us.

We stayed in Germany for two years.

I am very happy my family is intact. Our lives were in danger the entire time. First, my father returned to Kosovo with my brother, and then the rest of us joined them here. The house was in a bad shape as it had been severely damaged by bombing, shelling, stray bullets and even the “usurpers”. Two families, one after the other had stayed in our house. Since we did not return right after the war they must have thought the house had no owner ...

Many years have passed since, however, every time I walk by the memories return... I still see in my mind the car that followed us and I am shocked every time. I catch myself turning my head looking for the white Jeep...

The memories live with us forever, so do the sufferings, the vicissitudes of life. Apart from being witnesses to those times, they also serve as a motivation for a better life in peace and harmony with oneself and the people surrounding us.

**DIAMANT GASHI**



## “Year 1998-99, War in Kosovo”

**Zijavere Bajrami**  
Prishtinë/Priština

# SILENCE OF FEAR

It was 1998. I was a second-year student at the University of Prishtina. I was only 19 years old. Classes were taking place in basements and small places and in homes around Prishtina because the University of Prishtina had been closed down by the Serb regime, like all high schools throughout Kosovo.

The schools had been closed down and no classes were allowed in school buildings. At that time, while we were at class in Bregu i Diellit (Mahalla e Muhaxherëve) part of the town, numerous police forces, heavily armed, had gathered in front of the building where we were listening to the lectures of our professors. We were scared to death. We did not dare leave the buildings after the classes were over. At that time, violent fighting was taking place in Drenica, Kosovo. Occupant Serb forces were killing and massacring the Albanian population there not sparing the children, women, old people, persons with disabilities... They were also burning down their properties and villages.

The world media reported news and horrifying scenes against the Albanian population in Kosovo. The Serb power began with the mass expulsion of the civilian Albanian population from their lands to unknown destinations. This expulsion wave did not spare the capital city of Kosovo. Now, entire Kosovo was affected by war. The civilian population, powerless and innocent, was being killed, massacred, burnt and expelled. Villages were being destroyed, lost in smoke and fire. Hope to survive disappeared; there were fear, panic, and terror everywhere...

Although classes of all school and university levels were being held in privately-owned buildings, houses and basements that did not even resemble school buildings, they had to close down too because of the war and lack of safety across the country. Nothing functioned anymore.

The leaders of the Albanian people of Kosovo were constantly asking the international community to intervene, to stop the war in Kosovo and to save the people from the murders and massacres by the Serb invaders.

Then the world powers were convinced of the unjust war in Kosovo by the Serb power; that it was the people who were suffering and being victimized, so they decided to intervene with NATO air forces in order to stop the attacks of the Serb forces with their military weaponry, and decided to stop the murders,



the massacring of the innocent civilian population, and the destruction of the villages and cities of our country.

NATO first intervened in Kosovo in March 1999 with the air strike against the armed Serb forces in several crucial locations.

The military, paramilitary and police Serb forces were enraged even more and began with massacres, murders and mass expulsion of the Albanian population to unknown destinations.

NATO had to continue with the air strike for seven weeks until June 1999. Their sole purpose was to protect and save the innocent civilian population all over the country.

I was living with my close family two kilometers from the capital city of Prishtina. The armed Serb military and paramilitary forces, with heavy weapons, settled in my neighborhood, no further than 200 (two hundred) meters from my home. They set up their barricades. In fact, the entire neighborhood was surrounded by those forces. Shots and heavy gunfire were heard all the way to the furthest villages of Prishtina. My family, I and the other residents of our neighborhood were going through a nightmare. We did not have any free movement. We did not even dare to go out in the street in front of the house. Our food reserves were running out. We did not have any money, not even a place to buy the basic food items with the little money we had. Silence of fear reigned in our homes. Not one voice could be heard; not only light could be seen on in the evening hours. We had to create an impression that there was nobody in the houses; otherwise we risked becoming the target of attacks, murder or rape by the Serb forces.

The war was getting harsher. The Kosovo Liberation Army protected its lands and the civilian population from the attacks of the Serb power. NATO air intervention aimed to stop the war and bring peace to Kosovo.

In the beginning of April the neighborhood messenger informed the entire neighborhood that we all had to leave our houses because the Serb paramilitaries had made a plan to attack the neighborhood and they had warned to expel us; otherwise, there would be victims among us.

Out of fear and panic, all residents, young and old, men and women, children, sick ones, pregnant women, left towards the mountain villages: Mramor, Busi, Zllash, Marec, travelling on foot for kilometers only to seek shelter from the evil we expected from that regime. It was impossible to make it to the city (capital city) because there were armed Serb forces everywhere that were stopping people, killing them and taking hostages from the innocent people.

Banished from our homes, we stayed for two weeks with an Albanian family in the village of Busi. There were many families there, over one hundred members in one small four-room house. There were people from the region of Drenica who had found shelter there. Drenica has suffered many victims of war. The villages of Busi were facing a flood of people who had been expelled from their homes in other areas of the country, known as critical war areas, where massacres had happened and many victims.

The families of this village showed generosity. They gave us shelter and food for survival. After staying in this village for two weeks, we were informed we had to leave because the Serb forces were planning an attack, as they knew that families from other war-affected areas were hiding there.

In such a state of panic we had to move from there. Having no other choice we decided to come back to our homes and meet our destiny: face death or any other circumstance of the war because we had nowhere else to go to but to our homes.

The information turned out to be true. As soon as the entire village emptied, the Serb forces arrived and burned all houses in the village. News said there were a lot of victims, people murdered in the roads, people who were fleeing hoping to find safety in the villages of Gollak area.

After we returned home, we lived in anxiety and fear that we would face death, massacre, and rape at any moment... as was happening over most of Kosovo. We could not even sleep for fear of being caught in sleep. The Serb forces and their heavy military artillery were still located in the vicinity of my house. Soon news was passed around by the messenger of my neighborhood, who would move around risking his life that all males had to surrender and report to an improvised house by the Serb paramilitaries in Gračanica, otherwise, they and their families would suffer the consequences. According to the news we heard, they suspected that there were "Albanian terrorists" (KLA), as they would call them, in our neighborhood, although everyone knew that the KLA forces were not terrorist – they were the Kosovo forces protecting their ethnic land and the population of their country. Anxiety and fear could be perceived in everyone, in the old and children, in the pregnant women...

The residents of the neighborhood, in fact all the men, had to surrender so as to prevent at least the Serb armed forces from entering in our homes and to avoid their families and children fall prey to panic. Unfortunately, three members of my close family, i.e. my father, 50 years old, and my two brothers, one 25 years old and the other a juvenile, 16 years old, were among those men. Only women,

children and old people were left behind in the houses, so the most vulnerable and unprotected categories.

We were overwhelmed by fear. To show solidarity and to reduce the fear, women and children started to gather and stay together in the houses of the neighborhood. So, women and children came to my house, where only my mother, my pregnant sister-in-law, my young eight months old nephew and I were left.

We knew nothing about the fate of my father and two brothers. We knew nothing about the fate of the other men from the neighborhood. My God, how sad!

The armed forces would go around the street near my house heavily armed. We did not even dare to reveal that we were alive. We had to stop the baby from crying, so his cries would not be heard outside and so they would not notice there were people in the house. We would hear the most horrifying news. We did not expect them to come back alive.

However, in the evening of the same day, some of the people from the neighborhood had been released, including my father and my juvenile brother. We knew nothing about the fate of the other brother. After some time he, too, came back home. The three of them suffered psychological traumas. The important thing was that they were back, alive. We knew nothing about what happened to some other people from neighborhood, for weeks and months even. News from the world reported that men in Kosovo were being gathered in the Serb roadblocks that were targets of the NATO air attacks, whereas the women left back unprotected were being raped... In fact, that is what happened in some areas of Kosovo.

Some of the world's most prestigious media such as BBC, CNN, Deutsche Welle, Euro News, and RTSH etc., which we watched via satellite reported about the war in Kosovo all the time; they reported about hostages, how Albanian men were being killed and women raped.

We could no longer bear the anxiety and fear! Misery overwhelmed every cell of the Kosovo Albanian society. Our pain increased by lack of food for small children and babies, and by their health conditions. There were no doctors, no medication; we did not even have any address where to seek help in case we needed it. We had no freedom of movement.

For seven weeks, NATO air interventions did not have any effect in preventing and stopping the war. However, they were decided in their goal to stop the war and help create an opportunity for peace in Kosovo.

This did not come to happen until their intervention on land.

So, on 12 June 1999 the land intervention of NATO forces in Kosovo started. From that moment, the Serb forces began to retreat towards Serbia. That was the moment when we had lost all hope for survival, for life, let alone for a safe future. But the miracle happened when we least expected it.

The war ended with the assistance of the international community and KLA. It was an indescribable joy. The expelled population started to return to their land and homes. They enjoyed the much-awaited FREEDOM...

Although everything was destroyed; although entire cities and villages were burned, although there were many victims in people, a new life began and Kosovo started to be revived.

Reconstruction started. Government authorities were constituted, the new state of Kosovo was constituted, with a multi-ethnic composition.

In spite of the sufferings and pain, and the losses caused by the times of war in 1998/1999, which I lived through, we continue to go on, each to our own measure, and to work together with the other communities in Kosovo, where each has equal rights as provided for, regulated and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo.

Unfortunately, some regions/areas of Kosovo still are not free and there is no freedom of movement for the Kosovo Albanian population. I hope that in a near future all citizens of Kosovo will be sensitized and will face the past and accept the new reality in Kosovo. Freedom is priceless for all. Therefore, I wish that from now on we all live in freedom, in harmony and we have interethnic and interreligious peace.

**ZIJAVERE BAJRAMI**



“Information in Trying Times:  
March-June 1999”

**Ilir Sejdiu**  
Gjilan/Gnjilane

# Information in Trying Times

**MARCH – JUNE 1999**

It was a time of war. It was the year of 1999. War had swept over most of Kosovo but it had not reached us, living in Breznica of Bujanoc. Seeing the monstrosities perpetrated by the Serbian state apparatus against the innocent population we did not just feel anxiety but also lived with it.

EURONEWS, this prestigious media outlet, would report on everything that went on during that time of war; including the murder of innocent people, the tortures and their mass expulsion from their homes toward the neighboring countries. Those were truly saddening scenes that caused us pain and irritation. The only reason for everything that was happening was that they were Albanians. How is it possible for people to have such visceral hatred for another people, knowing that we are all creatures of God, and nobody has such rights over anyone else? The international community intervened only when massacres spread throughout Kosovo. This intervention irritated Serbia, which responded by intensifying terror and genocide against the innocent population. Thanks to the contribution of KLA and NATO, Serbian forces fled Kosovo for good.

After so many sacrifices, the Albanian people won the FREEDOM they had sought for centuries.

**ILIR SEJDIU**



“For Two Loaves of Breads”

**Shirin Kongo**  
Prizren

# TWO LOAVES OF BREAD

It was the time of war. It was April 1999. We were locked inside our home, and as any other day, on that day too – 20.04.1999 – we were waiting for our father to come back from work. We did not know whether he would come back alive or dead. My father worked as driver for the bread distribution truck for “Zhitopromet” enterprise.



*Prizren*



*Zija Kongo, Shirin's father*

That day he had been distributing bread to the shops. On his way to enter in Prizren, in Arbana neighborhood, a man had jumped in front of the truck gesturing him to stop. My father stopped, lowered the glass and saw a man and two children standing in front of him. The man addressed my father with these words that I now quote: “Master, can you give me two loaves of bread?”



My father went out of the truck right away to give him the bread. At that time, an unmarked black Mercedes had parked in front of the truck. Two men, unknown to my father, came out. One of them asked my father for the truck documents, while the other addressed him in Serbian: "There is no bread in the city and here you are giving bread away?"

Shouting, he ordered my father to go right away to the police station. After they went away in their car, my father gave the man the two loaves of bread and continued to the police station, where the two men from the black Mercedes were waiting for him. They grabbed my father by force, grabbed his arms and pushed him inside the building that was full of police officers. Those two men had ordered the police officer to deal with my father, saying: "Here is the man who is giving bread away in the streets!"

Some of the police officers brought my father to a corridor where they started to punch him. They beat him up mercilessly. They continued to kick him after he fell on the ground. They beat him unconscious. At one moment, a noise was heard inside the station and all police officers began to leave the premises. The alarm had scarred them all so each wanted to save their own skin.

Because of his injuries my father could not stand up right away, he managed to do that only a few minutes later. At that moment, a police officer had gone near him, telling him: "Get away from here before we kill you!"

My father, hurt and covered in blood, had left the police station and first returned to the truck to his working place, and then headed home. God alone and his body know what he went through and how he managed to come back home.

We will never forget the sight of my father that day... I am unable to erase that sight from my mind... How can anyone beat a man so brutally only for giving two loaves of bread to another human being?

My father was a hard-working and honest man. He was humanitarian and he helped people whenever he had a chance to do so, regardless of where he was distributing bread, village or city. I am proud to be his daughter.

I can only say that my family, and many other Albanian families, have gone through difficult times and we experienced horrendous events during that time.

In 2004 I started to work for the Kosovo Police. I became a police officer. I achieved my goal. I am now stationed at the Police Station of Prizren. Every time I pass through the corridors of the station I catch myself thinking about

my father and about the violence he experienced in the same place, during the war... I always try to guess which one is the corridor where he was beaten. I get so emotional...

I still get anxious when I remember what happened to my father and to many other fathers, who were inhumanly mistreated by the Serbian forces. I am a police officer too but I would never do what the Serbian police did at that time. The institution I work for helps people at any time and everywhere. Thanks to God and to the blood spilled by our brothers and sisters, we enjoy the present and we are building the future.  
Praise and glory to all those who sacrificed for freedom!

**SHIRIN KONGO**



## “The Miner – Hope of a Survival”

In memory of all miners of Trepca 20.02.1989

**Besnik Uka**

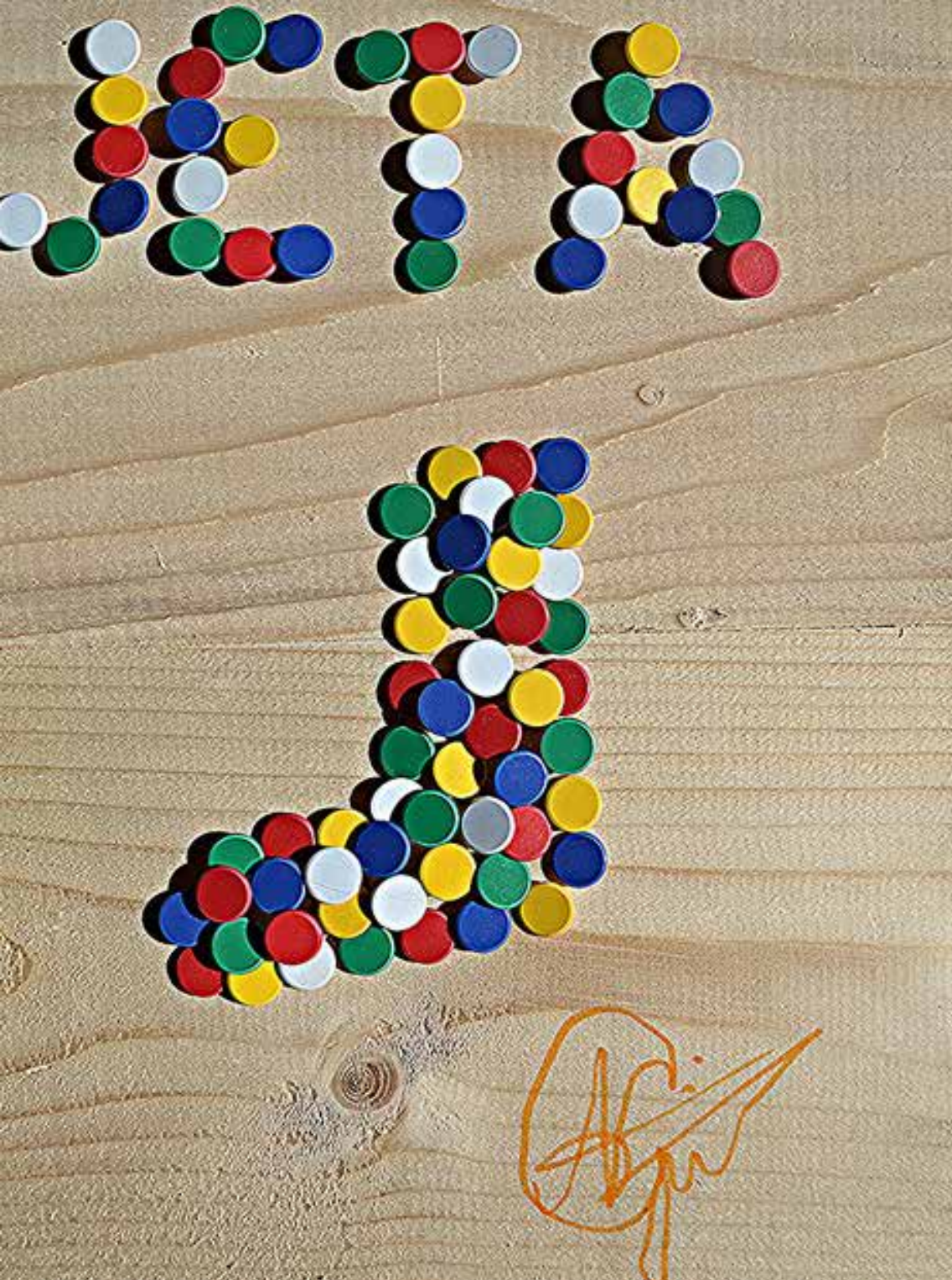
Mitrovicë/Mitrovica

# CAVERN

I was six years old when my father Brahim Uka, on 20 February 1989 entered the cavern with the miners. For the first time they stayed eight days in the cavern, the second time they stayed three days. Miners had their demands...

Although I was a kid, I remember well many horrible things that happened during that period and the suffering that followed until the liberation of Kosovo in 1999's.

**BESNIK UKA**



“Life”

**Nazlije Gërvalla**

Lupçi i Poshtëm/Donje Ljupçe, Podujevë/Podujevo

# THE JOURNEY TOWARDS HOPE

It had been a while since the war had started... We were moving to various locations. With my mother, sister and two brothers, we stayed at my uncles' place in Podujevë for several weeks. My father remained in the village with my third brother, while the second brother happened to be in the school dormitory, Madrasah, and we did not know what had happened to him. We extended our stay at my paternal uncle's daughter for another two weeks, in the village of Ballofc, where we reunited with my brother who had left the dormitory and came to stay with us. Since the Serb forces entered in Ballofc too, we continued to move on in a convoy for several days through the villages of Herticë, Turuqicë...

Given that a large number of people were staying in the village of Turuqicë, the food ran out quickly and uncertainty grew day by day. In the morning after his morning prayer, my brother left for the village Lupç. For a couple of weeks already we knew nothing about my father and brother who remained in the village. The next day my brother returned and told us that they were doing fine, so we decided to take the road to the house starting from Turuqica to Lupçi mountains. It rained all the way... In the evening we reached a village, and as we were looking for a place to find shelter, we decided to enter into a mosque. Once we went inside the mosque, some KLA soldiers arrived and offered us some food. The next day we continued on our way and came to the village of Rimanishtë where we waited for a while until the situation calmed down and the movements of the Serb army stopped. We managed to cross the road and entered the village. Despite all the suffering, insecurity, food shortages, fear of the soldiers, rainy weather and other difficulties, we all managed to gather in our house. We stayed there for a few days, despite the fact that all the time we were seeing smoke coming out in the vicinity of the school ... We found out that the neighborhoods near the school were being attacked on daily basis and that houses were being burnt. They burned down the school also.

On 28 April 1999, the Serb forces located at the military barracks and in the neighborhoods called Humoll and Kaçiu, then attacking our neighborhood.

The entire neighborhood fled towards the woods while being under a barrage of bullets. We stayed there one night, and the next day we continued towards the village of Popovë. It was a long journey on foot. Serb forces hunted us on every step... After a night in Popovë, we were forced to flee to the village of Kozaricë, as the Serb forces were entering Popovë. While in Kozaricë, one family offered us shelter: One room to sleep, a bag of flour, some salt and oil to cook the bread. We could not bring anything with us. After three days in Kozaricë, Serb forces attacked the village. We managed to flee in time. We did not want to fall into their hands. My three older brothers decided to join the ranks of the KLA, while we continued to walk in the convoy with other people. It was a long convoy of people and it appeared to have no end... Someone on foot, someone on a horse drawn carriage, someone with a car or tractor. The Serb army followed us along the way. They would curse, yell, and at times, beating people in the convoy...

I was eleven years old, and I remember very well that on the way we stopped at the crossroads of Besi-Milloshëvë. NATO was attacking and the Serb soldiers were cursing us and screaming: "Here you have your help! They came to protect you ...!"

After waiting for more than an hour at this crossroads, where Serb soldiers checked documents, shouted, cursed and beat people in the convoy, we continued to the train station. I was exhausted. We had walked a long way and my feet were swollen; I got blisters from my shoes. At one point I asked parents to continue without me. My father told me to take off my shoes and took me in his arms to rest a little and to stop the pain I had. We continued our walk towards Prishtina and finally we reached the train station. They took the last penny from us and the women's jewelry, threatening them that their husbands and children would be killed if they did not hand over all the money and jewelry.

We traveled by train to Elez Han, and then continued on foot for 30 minutes until we crossed the border. Again the soldiers were beating people and taking money.

We arrived at Bllacë. There they gave us water and bread, but that was not enough for the entire group of people. During that time the Macedonian soldiers were separating people who would go on and those who would stay in Bllacë. In fact, I do not know whether that can be called separation, considering that a single soldier went from one point on the edge of the road and kept walking until he divided the crowd in half. We settled in a tent for

a week. The days in Bllacë were difficult. We lived in dirty conditions and inadequate space. Although the tents were too big, that was not enough, because they brought many people in the tents. On 6 May 1999 we continued to Çegran where we stayed until 23 June 1999, the day when we took the road back home. We returned by bus, and paid ourselves for that. We were fortunate that our house had not been damaged and was habitable. Many of the houses in the neighborhood were burnt. It was a terrible scene. The courtyard was filled with all sorts of things: clothing, televisions, stoves and other household appliances. It created the impression that they had collected that stuff to bring with them to Serbia, but seeing that there was not enough time, they had demolished the things and thrown them into the well. It took us a while to clean the well and the courtyard. It was exhausting work but the feeling that we were free give us hope for better days.

**NAZLIJE GËRVALLA**





## “Revival”

**Milot Kryeziu**

Mleqan/Mlečan, Malishevë/Mališevo

# REVIVAL

On this cold January day, when a white cape has covered everything, here I am sitting before the computer and began to write a story to share with you about my experiences during the war in Kosovo. While writing, I stopped for a moment and silently thanked god almighty for gifting me the chance to share with you these experiences. Unfortunately, many of my country fellowmen did not have my luck; ***they were taken by war...!***

When I was 10 years old, my teacher used to talk to us about freedom. I remember him saying that “*Freedom does not come with flowers*”, “*There is no wedding without meat or freedom without blood*” ... I could not understand what the teacher was talking about. I could not understand that **freedom** was the most precious thing in human life and had no idea that someone’s freedom could bother another one just because that someone speaks another language, has another color, another religion...

The experience that I am sharing now with you starts in May 1998. I could never imagine that at such time, on the verge of 21st century, something like that could happen right in the heart of Europe. It was even more unbelievable given that every day we would hear comments that Europe would not allow “a second Bosnia being repeated.”

At this moment I am overwhelmed by emotions... For the first time in sixteen years I am sharing my war experiences by writing them down. My heart is beating faster while my tears fall on the keyboard. I do not intend to stop writing this story however difficult it might be.

At that time I had just returned from Prishtina to my village of Mleqan. I had started my studies. I was full of dreams that one day I would become an economist. When I entered the village on 26.05.1998 I saw that the village was gripped by a grim atmosphere and there was smell of war everywhere. I went into the yard where I met my father. I was very happy. I had not seen my father for four months and that was the very first time I was away from my family. But I could not see they joy on my father’s face. Surprisingly, my father did not rejoice that I had come to the village because it was the eve of war. He did not want me to experience the war and to see what was going on.

A few days later, on 18.07.1998, in the evening, the Serb army and police

positioned in the village of Kijeva and began shelling my village with mortars and rockets. The whole village was there. The shelling took lives. A few meters from my house, Vlora Zogaj aged 15 was killed in the house yard. Her aunt Hajrije Zogaj aged 21 was badly wounded in the head and her uncle's wife Sevdije Zogaj aged 41 was wounded too. In another house, the 9 year old girl Atifete Gashi and her uncle Ymer Gashi were badly wounded. All of them were all unarmed civilians.

The shelling did not stop. We sought shelter in house basements in order to escape the shelling. You could hear children and women screaming everywhere... During the shelling, along with some men from the village, we took the victim and the injured, and brought them to the nearest village. There was no way to help the survivors. There was no doctor, no medication. For the first time in my life I saw a dead corpse with its abdomen torn apart by shrapnel. It was the body of Vlora who had just turned 15 years old.

As soon as it became dark, gripped by fear and panic, the entire village was emptied. The next day I took a part of my family: mother, two sisters, younger brother and grandfather, and we left the village, leaving behind everything we had. We went to the village of Rud, to the house of my aunt Fitije, thinking it would be calmer there. We did not manage to bring anything with us when we left, except for the clothes on our bodies. My father and my second brother who was younger than me stayed behind in our village. They stayed there to look after the house and the animals.

Later, in July 1998, a heavy machinery of tanks, armored vehicles and war cannons of the Serb army and police, accompanied by paramilitaries, after they had shelled the village, went into the village, looted the house, and then set fire to the village. They burned 60 percent of houses in the village. This time is known to us as **“the first attack.”**

***On 25.07. 1998 in the village Cerovik, during an attack by the Serb army and police, , members of Azem Bashota's family were assaulted while they were trying to leave in the direction of the village of Kijevë. The shells hit Azem killing him. The shrapnel hit Shpresa Kryeziu, aged 21 and pregnant, who died. Ali and Sabit, (Azem's) sons were injured seriously.***

Three days later, on 28.07.1998, Sherif Kryeziu returned home to get some things for his family, which had fled to the mountain. That day the Serb army and police, accompanied by paramilitaries, had entered the village and were

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7 <http://www.liberkujtimiikosoves.org/>The Kosovo Memory Book 1998-2000, page 199, (Humanitarian Law Center)

burning the houses that were not burned during “the first attack.” Sherif did not manage to leave the house. From that day until October nobody knew anything about his destiny. After returning to the village in October 1998, the corpse of Sherif was found. ***He had been strangled with a rope and on his neck there were signs of stabbing.*** With hands and feet tied up he had been thrown into the well of his house<sup>8</sup>. Sherif Kryeziu, aged 38, was an unarmed civilian.

It was horrifying to see your village in such conditions, and even harder to see your own house burned, where along with all that was inside also memories and childhood was burned: toys, photographs, books and everything else.

From that moment I lost hope that I would soon return to my house, even if war conditions would have permitted. I had nowhere to return to.

Later, while we were staying at Aunt Fitije’s house, the same fate followed us there too. On 3.09.1998, the Serb army invaded the village of Rud. They shelled the pines of Volljak. All villagers fled their homes under the shells. Many people from other villages had sought shelter in Rud leaving behind their homes in other villages that were more in danger. Once we left the houses we settled in the valley of Rud, a few meters from the village school. We were surrounded from all sides. We stayed in this valley about three hours. When the Serb army and police, with military vehicles, headed towards the civilian population, I fled together with some other young people from the village towards the west side of the village, which was part forest. We fled in order not to fall into the hands of the Serb army and police because every day we heard that they massacred Albanians if they caught them alive. The army surrounded the civilian population. There was no hope for survival. Our fate was in the hands of the Creator. The Serb army separated the men from the women. Women were allowed to return home, while men aged from 15 to 70 years were apprehended. It was such a terrible situation and scene to see how they parted fathers from children, children from mothers and sisters, husbands from their wives...

The school was too small to fit all captives. Many of them were left in the schoolyard. My father Isak Kryeziu was among them. They all went through physical and psychological torture. Their money, gold jewelry and watches were taken from them. The school was transformed into an inhumane torture camp.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.liberkujtimiikosoves.org/The Kosovo Memory Book 1998-2000, faqe 222](http://www.liberkujtimiikosoves.org/The_Kosovo_Memory_Book_1998-2000_faqe_222),  
(Humanitarian Law Center)



*Comment: This picture was taken from the video recording of Serb media showing how they had captured soldiers of the Kosovo Liberation Army*

One day later, the captives were released, taking with them the memory of the horror and torture they experienced. It was said that the captives were released due to political pressure of a US official who had visited Belgrade that day, and who saw a video-recording showing the arrest of unarmed civilians and that had nothing to do with the arrest of KLA soldiers. Later we realized that the Serb army did not release all captives. They took four men with them.

After this attack, the village returned to normal. But the result was many burned houses.

After all these experiences, for a moment it seemed to me that a slight hope for survival had raised its head. It was October 1998, when the Serb government of that time made an international agreement known as the “October Agreement”. This agreement was signed in October and allowed international observers (OSCE) to visit the war zones and to ensure a sort of “peace” in those areas, even though that mission was civilian. We called this mission the “Orange Mission” because that was the color of all their cars.

According to this agreement, all displaced persons were allowed to return to their homes. The international mission led by William Walker would guarantee

and supervise the international agreement with Serbia, in order to provide a chance for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

One day in October we also returned to the village, although the house had been burned completely. Of all the animals and birds that we had left behind, we found only our dog in the backyard. It may seem incredible, but when I saw our dog in the yard, I was so thrilled that tears came rolling down my cheeks. Even as I remember that time I have tears in my eyes. Then I understood how much a dog can be faithful. The dog has not left our house. It was very interesting to look at the reaction of the dog when he met my family after this long separation. It seemed like the dog would start to talk to us of joy and happiness by seeing my family after the time of separation. He was running around the yard with such joy that I cannot describe by words, the joy of an animal.

We settled in a makeshift room four times five meter, which before the war was used as a shop. It had a concrete floor and only the walls, because the roof had been burned. Eight members of our family lived in this makeshift room.

After returning on 10. 28. 1998, we realized that the village had been burned a second time. Those few standing houses from the first time had been burned also.

We started to live by placing our trust on the October agreement. On 12. 11. 1998, two armored vehicles of the Serb army entered the village in broad daylight firing machine guns in all directions. They killed Xhafer Gashi aged 48 on his doorstep. Xhafer Gashi was the brother of Ymer Gashi and uncle of Atifete Gashi (9 year old girl) who were badly injured during the July shelling. Rexhep Shala, a KLA soldier, was injured in the schoolyard.

Given this situation, I moved my family again from the village and we found shelter at my aunt's house.

Winter found us in village Rud. The winter was really harsh. We lacked the basics for life. One day, on 14.12.1998, two more victims were added to the victims of our village. Beqir Gashi, aged 32, and Hazir Kryeziu aged 43 heroically died on the military battlefield. Beqir Gashi was the brother of Ymer and uncle of Atifete (who were in July 1998), and also brother of Xhafer Gashi who was killed on his doorstep during the October agreement.

This situation continued until March 1999. Through all that time we lived in anxiety and fear. Occasionally, after the spontaneous shelling, we would leave the houses of Rud and spend the night in the mountain, to return again to our aunt's house.

The situation did not improve. Every day innocent people were being killed and massacred.

I cannot continue without expressing the joy of 24 March 1999. Around hrs 20:00 we started to hear the sounds of NATO bombing, targeting the Serb army and the police. That was the greatest joy in my life. But the joy did not last long. It is said that "A beast is more ferocious on the verge of death." On 29. 03. 1999, the Serb military and police launched the biggest attack we had ever seen. The army went from village to village killing, massacring, burning houses, and expelling the population from Kosovo.

During this attack, at a place called Pastasel in the municipality of Rahovec, the Serb army accompanied as always by the paramilitary forces, first separated men from women and then killed and massacred 106 people. Among them was Professor Ilaz Gashi aged 44. The victims were buried by the villagers. Then, in order to hide the evidence of crimes committed against the civilian population, the bodies were exhumed by the Serbian army and police. Many of the bodies were not found until after the war. One of them was the body of Professor Ilaz Gashi, re-buried in his place of birth in the village Mleqan.

Now the strategy of the aggressor was known: "**separation of men from women and massacre them**". That is what happened in the village Kralan, municipality of Klinë. On 04. 04. 1999, 87 civilians were killed, and many other are missing to this day; their fate is unknown. Among them were Hidajet Kryeziu, aged 22 (son Hazir Kryeziu's brother who was killed on 14.12.1998). Later, Hazir's wife Raza was also killed, as was Sebedin Kryeziu aged 18 years old, whose fate is still a mystery to this day.

Again the village Rud was the target of shelling. The entire population was in great panic and left the village. All other surrounding villages had the same fate. The entire population of that area was concentrated in the Mount of Garaqa. That is where we spent the first night. The next day, on 03. 30. 1999, around hrs 15:00, the army, police and the paramilitary forces surrounded the civilian population. All adult males were hiding in a place called "Gropa e Orlave". This mountain is located in the triangle between the towns of Rahovec, Malishevë and Klinë.

They took civilians. My mother, two sisters and grandfather aged 86 were there. We did not know where they were being brought or what would happen to them. Four unarmed men were killed there.

On 02. 04. 1999 we received information that the population had been deported to Albania. They had no other information: who had survived or who had been killed.

During this attack that we call the "**Third attack**" the village of Rud was almost entirely burned. The house of Aunt Fetije, who for many months had sheltered

many families, was also burned. Other villages were burned during that time. My village was burned for the third time, up to 90percent.

From that day on, my father, two brothers and I and all the other men from the village Rud found shelter in the mountain.

In the beginning, in the first seven days, we took refuge in a cave in the western part of the village Rud. The cave had been discovered by one villager some months earlier.

We brought to that cave the older people: Vesel Rudi, Osman Rudi, Malush Rudi, and Amrush Rudi. I was there with my father, my two brothers, and five young men from the village Rud. Inside the cave it was dark. You could not tell whether it was day or night. The cave was underground and was very humid. Seven days later we left the cave and settled in the woods, in the eastern part of the village Rud a part known as "Rakovica". There were twelve families from the village Rud that had managed to detach from the village population.

We lived in the woods. We slept on the ground. We had no food, or anything to cover. No one had any clothes to change. Life was hard. Even today I cannot imagine how we even survived.

March and April were very cold. There was a lot of rain which made our lives even more difficult. Our clothes would dry on our bodies.

It was not just the war and the cold rainy weather that made life in the mountain difficult. We lacked everything there. We lived in the "house of wild animals", in the woods. We were threatened by forest animals. This put our survival to risk. My brother Said, aged 16, was bitten by a snake on the ring finger of his left hand. That was the last straw for us. There were no doctors or medicine.

You, who are reading this experience of mine, imagine a man living in the mountain, under such conditions as I mentioned above, watching his 16 year old brother fighting death in front of my eyes, and not having any chance to offer him help. That sight was harder for my father. I gave him first aid, as much as I could, using a razor. I was lucky that in elementary school we had learned how to give first aid under extraordinary circumstances.

We were anxiously waiting for the worst to happen. His condition was getting steadily worse. There was not much left to do other than pray for his survival. His arm was so swollen that his hand looked like a shovel.

But God almighty heard our prayers. He survived!

We continued to live in the mountain during those days of war. During that time, the number of victims from my village had increased. From the shelling in the mountains of Turjaka, Raze Gashi-Kryeziu, aged 38, was killed (she was wife of



Hazir Kryeziu, aged 38, killed in the front line on 14.12.1998). Others who were killed were: Hajdin Shala, 50 (deaf), Skender Kryeziu, 57, Hanife Dubovci – Kryeziu, 75, Hasan Gashi, 87 (he was burned in his daughter's house in the village Marali).

In the honor of the war victims, the village has erected an obelisk to honor their work and blood shed for the freedom that we enjoy today.



The obelisk is missing the name of Sebedin Kryeziu, 18, who disappeared in Kralan village. We hope that one day his remains will be found to somehow alleviate the pain of his parents, brothers, sisters and to have a grave to visit, to shed tears and lay flowers.

In this life, not everything is gloomy. The horror came to an end one day. On 06. 09. 1999 the Kumanovo Agreement was signed between NATO forces and the military forces of Yugoslavia. On 12.06.1999, KFOR forces started to arrive, while the Serb police, military and paramilitary forces began to leave Kosovo. We lived through these developments in the mountain. What we had been waiting for centuries was now becoming true. Kosovo was being liberated. Nobody could stop us to return home and continue the life that we had interrupted a year ago. But the consequences were grave, many people were dead or missing, women were raped, widowed, there were orphans, people who had lost parts of their bodies, burnt houses ...

But, above all, the most important was freedom. I was breathing in the first moments of freedom.

Everywhere you could see the withdrawal of the Serb army, police and paramilitary forces from Kosovo. You could see as well that KFOR forces were entering Kosovo.

On 16.06.1999, together with my father and my two brothers we returned to our village. This time we returned without fear that we would again leave our land, although everything had been destroyed by war.

We made work with what we had to continue our life.

My mother, my two sisters and my grandfather were in Albania. We had no other information about them from the time we were separated. Also, they did not know what happened to us, whether we were alive or not.

Two days later, just before the sunset, the rest of my family returned from Albania. The joy of returning home was associated with great fear and anxiety, because my mother and my sisters did not know if we were alive or not. They did not know what awaited them when they would open the door of our yard.

I remember that moment ... suddenly the door of court yard opens. I could not believe my eyes ... I thought I must be dreaming and I did not want to wake up. I got up on my feet and started to rub my eyes. I watched the "guests" who entered in the court yard. They arrived!!! – I yelled. Screamed loudly! I was stunned at the sight. It seemed to me that my legs betrayed me. I started crying when I saw my mother and sisters who were crying too. Those were tears of joy. None of us said a word. It was the first time in my life that I was crying for joy. We looked at each other disbelieving our eyes. The tears of joy just flowed... But the joy did not last long. Having gone with my mother and my sisters, my grandfather, aged 86, did not returned. Mother told us that while they were leaving Prizren towards Albania, my grandfather's health deteriorated. He was

tired by the harassment of Serb soldiers. They even broke his breathing device (he used that for years to make his breathing easier). Grandfather could not endure the road or walking so my mother and my older sister carried him in a blanket not leaving him behind. Once they were so tired that my mother asked a man who was driving a car, accompanied by a woman, to take my grandfather in his vehicle. My mother said: ***“For God’s sake take this old man in your car so he does not die on the road and bring him beyond the border.”*** The man took my grandfather in his vehicle and brought him to Albania. My mother failed to find out the name of the man with the vehicle. Also during the whole time staying in Albania and after many searches she failed to find my grandfather. Shortly thereafter, we began the search for my grandfather for three months, we looked for him everywhere in Albania. We could not find him. We lost hope that we would see him alive. The only hope now was to find at least his body. While we had lost any hope that grandfather could be alive, after three months of searching for him in Albania, after all those experiences, separations, sufferings, killings, massacring, burning houses ... that we experienced in Kosovo, one day in September of 1999, and the light of good luck shone on my family... A KFOR helicopter, accompanied by a medical team brought my grandfather, aged 86, home. He was in the same condition as when he left home about a year ago. In his wrinkled face you could read all sufferings which he bore on his shoulders, surviving wars.

All this experience described in this story and in addition to the sufferings, has given me moments of joy and made me even cry for joy. One such joy was the return of my grandfather. The family was back together never to separate again. I have never seen in my life an old man weeping for joy of our reunion. I wept as well. That was a great day for me and my family. The first words of my grandfather were: ***“My lifetime wish is fulfilled!” My grandfather used to say: “I was born before the independence of Albania was proclaimed. I survived a lot of wars, two world wars, and my entire life I prayed not to die without seeing a free Kosovo”. And now when I see the entire Kosovo is free I can quietly wait for my death.***

***This moment is the revival of my family...***

We continued life with many challenges ahead. Although we had nowhere to stay, we were lucky that the entire family was reunited. Many other families were not as lucky as we were. Winter found us homeless. It was a harsh winter.



The Swiss Caritas gave us a tent, which we installed in middle of our yard. The tent was a new home for our eight family members. We spent our first winter in freedom. My grandfather was not able to survive the harsh cold of that winter. He died on 18. 01. 2000. As he had prayed his entire life, he died calm, among his family, in free Kosovo.

**MILOT KRYEZIU**



*ANP with the participants of the training “Dealing with the Past in Kosovo”*



## **ACTION FOR NONVIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING (ANP)**

Action for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding (ANP) is a civil society organization established in 2002 in Gjilan/Gnjilane with the vision and ambition to contribute to sustainable peace in Kosovo and in the region. ANP as multiethnic organization has implemented various projects in the fields of peacebuilding, peace education, dealing with the past and public policies. Due to the commitment for peacebuilding substantial interethnic relations have been built up to people from all over Kosovo. By providing a “safe space” ANP is bringing people from diverse communities together and through trainings an inter-ethnic dialogue is initiated tackling burning issues about conflicts, prejudices, violence, identity and dealing with the past. By promoting tolerance, peace and reconciliation, through non-formal educational peace programs, ANP is focusing on respecting and accepting the differences between diverse communities and promoting a culture of nonviolence. Our work is aiming to make our participants changemakers for peace and progress in the future. Hereby the culture of nonviolence is the principle and philosophy for change that ANP is using in all their actions.

Since 2014 ANP is implementing the project “Dealing with the past in Kosovo” because this topic today seems to get more relevant, as young generations are growing up in an environment of ethnocentric narratives and political confrontations, which are by far not being solved, yet.

Thanks to the long lasting commitment ANP is embedded in a network of regional and international partners, sharing the same values, goals and mutual trust. Cross-border cooperation and exchange is considered by the organization as essential for a prosperous and peaceful future on the Balkans.



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“THE SOUL’S REMEMBRANCE” IS A COMPILATION OF STORIES WRITTEN BY PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER KOSOVO. THEY’RE SHARING THEIR MEMORIES ABOUT THE HARSHTEST AND MOST HORRIFYING EVENTS IN THEIR LIFE DURING THE WAR IN KOSOVO AS IN THE TIME BEFORE AND AFTER. THE STORIES ARE TELLING THE EVENTS AND THE SUFFERED VIOLENCE OF THE PAST FROM A CIVIL PERSPECTIVE: LOSING FAMILY MEMBERS, NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS, BEING EXPELLED FROM HOUSE AND HOME, BEING CONFRONTED WITH BRUTAL VIOLENCE, STANDING THE UNCERTAINTY OF NOT KNOWING WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE BELOVED ONES AND FEARING FOR LIFE. THOSE ARE STRONG, DEEP AND DARK MEMORIES, PRESSURING THE ONES BEARING THEM. HOWEVER, THE AUTHORS, WHO SURVIVED MISCHIEF AND TERROR, TOOK THE APPROPRIATE STEPS FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE: TODAY THEY’RE BREAKING THE SILENCE AND SPEAKING UP FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION.

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