

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

“ETHNIC CLEANSING” IN THE GLOGOVAC MUNICIPALITY

*On the way to the bus station...a police officer said to me:
“The war started in Drenica, and we are going to end it here.”*
— Glogovac resident

SUMMARY	3
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
To The International Community.....	4
To The International Criminal Tribunal For Yugoslavia	5
THE TOWN OF GLOGOVAC	6
Forcible Displacement into Glogovac	7
Killing of Civilians	7
Robbery, Extortion, and Looting.....	8
Arson and Destruction of Civilian Property	10
Destruction of Food Stocks.....	11
Detention and Abuse.....	11
Forced Expulsion	13
THE VILLAGE OF POKLEK	16
List of those believed dead in Poklek.....	18
THE VILLAGE OF STARO ČIKATOVO (ČIKATOVË E VJETËR).....	19
Killed in Staro Cikatoovo	22
Missing and believed dead.....	23
Missing in Vrbovac.....	23
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	24

SUMMARY

On June 15, 1999, Serbian and Yugoslav forces withdrew from the town of Glogovac in the Drenica region of central Kosovo, in accordance with the agreement signed by NATO and Yugoslavia's military leadership. Thousands of traumatized ethnic Albanian civilians, as well as members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), promptly emerged from their homes and the nearby hills for the first time since NATO raids began on March 24.

For the previous eleven weeks—since the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) pulled out of Kosovo on March 19—the population of Glogovac and the surrounding villages had been besieged and terrorized by Serbian special police and paramilitaries, as well as by the Yugoslav Army (VJ). As NATO bombs fell throughout Yugoslavia, Serbian and Yugoslav forces launched a brutal campaign of “ethnic cleansing” against the Albanians of Kosovo that involved summary and arbitrary executions, arbitrary detentions, regular beatings, widespread looting, and the destruction of schools, hospitals, and other civilian objects. As a stronghold of the KLA and an area of constant fighting with government forces, the Glogovac municipality was particularly hard-hit.

This report documents some of the abuses and war crimes that took place in the Glogovac region between March 19 and June 15. It is based on extensive interviews with ethnic Albanians while they were refugees in neighboring Macedonia, as well as on interviews with those who returned to the Glogovac area in late June. The testimonies from the two groups, as well as the physical evidence in the region, are remarkably consistent and, taken together, paint an undeniable picture of systematic abuse by Serbian and Yugoslav forces. This report does not, however, attempt to cover all of the abuses that took place in the area, since many crimes, including large-scale killings, are still being investigated. With few exceptions, witnesses and survivors are only identified by their initials in order to protect them from possible reprisals.

The most serious atrocities documented in this report took place in two villages near Glogovac: Staro Cikatovo and Stari Poklek, both places where the KLA was active. In Poklek, the police blocked a group of ethnic Albanians—mostly members of the extended Muqolli family—from fleeing their village and forced them into the house of a relative. After a few hours, the owner of the house, Sinan Muqolli, and another man were taken outside, executed and thrown into the family well. Shortly thereafter, a grenade was thrown into the room holding at least forty-seven persons, including twenty-three children under the age of fifteen. One man in uniform raked the room with automatic gunfire, a survivor said, killing everyone inside except six people. A member of the Muqolli family is a local commander of the KLA, which may explain the killings.

A Human Rights Watch researcher visited Sinan Muqolli's largely burnt house on June 25, 1999. The room where the killing took place had bullet marks along the walls and bullet casings from a large-caliber weapon scattered on the floor. The basement below the room had dried blood stains dripping from the ceiling and walls and a large pool of dried blood on the floor. Surviving family members displayed a cardboard box containing some of the bones allegedly collected from the room and showed the nearby well where they claimed some of the bodies had been dumped.

In Staro Cikatovo on April 17 the police attacked the village and separated the men from the women and children. By the end of the day, twenty-three men from the Morina family had been killed. Another four were still missing as of June 25 and presumed dead by their families. The survivors from Staro Cikatovo insist that none of the dead men were involved in the KLA, although several members of the family are admittedly KLA soldiers, including two who were wounded in the assault. As in Poklek, this may be one explanation for the executions.

Human Rights Watch visited Staro Cikatovo on June 25, 1999. Between 40 and 50 percent of the approximately one hundred homes had been badly damaged or destroyed. Most houses had been burned from the inside, indicating that they were purposefully burned rather than damaged in combat. Several structures had also been demolished by bulldozers. Human Rights Watch has also interviewed a witness who claims that dozens of prisoners were executed at the mine in Staro Cikatovo.

VERY CREDIBLE ALLEGATIONS OF MASS KILLINGS HAVE ALSO EMERGED FROM OTHER VILLAGES AROUND GLOGOVAC, SPECIFICALLY IN VRBOVAC AND ĆIREZ. HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH VISITED ĆIREZ ON JULY 11, 1999. A LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST SHOWED A LIST WITH THE NAMES OF SEVENTY-TWO PERSONS ALLEGEDLY EXECUTED IN THE AREA OF ĆIREZ AND BAKS VILLAGES. IN VRBOVAC, BETWEEN EIGHTY AND 150 PEOPLE ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN EXECUTED.

ALTHOUGH THEY WERE GENERALLY NOT AS VIOLENT AS IN THE SURROUNDING VILLAGES, SERBIAN AND YUGOSLAV FORCES ALSO COMMITTED SERIOUS ABUSES IN THE TOWN OF GLOGOVAC ITSELF. At least five, and as many as nineteen, civilians were reportedly executed by Serbian police or paramilitary forces in the town, usually in connection with looting and robberies. Glogovac's inhabitants, including the large numbers of internally displaced persons from the nearby villages, were subjected to repeated harassment, including detentions, beatings, house-to-house searches, robbery and extortion, as well as the destruction of foodstuffs. In addition, private homes, shops and businesses were deliberately ransacked, looted, and burned. Finally, the majority of the population was systematically expelled from the town over a five-day period in early May and sent toward the Macedonian border.

The actions in the Glogovac municipality were clearly coordinated between the regular Serbian police, the Yugoslav Army, and paramilitaries, whom witnesses identified as having long hair and beards, with colored bandanas on their heads and sleeves. While the police were responsible for many of the beatings in Glogovac, as well as the organized mass expulsion, it is the paramilitaries who are implicated in most of the serious violence, such as in Poklek and Staro Cikatovo. A number of witnesses claimed to have seen what they thought were members of Arkan's Tigers—the notorious paramilitary group run by the indicted war crimes suspect Zeljko Raznjatovic (Arkan), but their presence in the region could not be confirmed.

The only person identifiable by witnesses was a deputy police chief from Glogovac known as "Lutka," which means "doll" in Serbian. A known policeman in the town, residents said that he did not behave brutally, unlike many of the paramilitaries, although he was involved in thefts, and he was a principal organizer of the forced depopulation in early May, telling Albanians that they should "get on the buses or go to Albania by foot."

It should be noted that these abuses are hardly the first war crimes committed by Serbian or Yugoslav forces in the Glogovac municipality. Since February 1998, the Drenica region has been the sight of numerous executions, arbitrary detentions, beatings, and the systematic destruction of civilian objects, such as schools, medical clinics, and mosques. Previous Human Rights Watch reports ("A Week of Terror in Drenica," February 1999, and "Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo," October 1998) document war crimes committed in Gornje Obrinje, Golubovac, Ćirez, Likošane, and other villages in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To The International Community:

This report documents extensive war crimes committed by Yugoslav forces in the Glogovac municipality and calls on the international community to support the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to investigate these atrocities. Specifically, Human Rights Watch calls on the international community to:

- Facilitate and encourage the work of the ICTY and guarantee ongoing financial and political support to ensure that the ICTY can continue to conduct thorough investigations into allegations of humanitarian law violations in Kosovo;
- Put the issue of compliance with the mandate of the ICTY on the top of the international agenda, and in all interactions with the Yugoslav authorities insist on full cooperation with the ICTY;
- Assist the ICTY in identifying witnesses and evidence, and work closely with the ICTY in securing evidence and ensuring the protection of witnesses;
- Provide the ICTY with any intelligence information obtained that relates to the commission of war crimes, including the identification of specific units engaged in operations in areas in which abuses occur, and convey relevant satellite intelligence information to the ICTY;
- Ensure that all evidence relating to Slobodan Milosovic's and other political leaders' responsibility for war crimes in Kosovo, as well as in Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia, is turned over to the ICTY for investigation;
- Send a clear message that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide will not be tolerated by arresting those already indicted by the ICTY for atrocities committed during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia; and
- Raise awareness about the mandate and work of the ICTY and the obligations created by international humanitarian law through a public education campaign in both the Serbian and Albanian languages.

To The International Criminal Tribunal For the Former Yugoslavia:

In addition to its ongoing efforts to investigate war crimes in the region, Human Rights Watch urges the tribunal to

- Dispatch teams of investigators to the Glogovac municipality to interview victims and witnesses to atrocities documented in this report and to gather relevant physical evidence and to coordinate with other international actors currently operating in this area. In particular, we strongly urge the tribunal to seek to locate and interview the police officer identified in this report as "Lutka," both regarding his own war-time activities and regarding any information he may have about the identities of those who committed summary executions and other atrocities in the area;
- Ensure that witnesses are provided with adequate protection; and
- Engage in a public education campaign in the whole of the former Yugoslavia aimed at informing governments and the public about international humanitarian and human rights law obligations and ensuring that civilians are aware of the work of the ICTY and ways to contact the ICTY with relevant information.

THE TOWN OF GLOGOVAC

The largest town in the Drenica region, Glogovac (Glllogofc in Albanian) lies approximately twenty-five kilometers south-west of Pristina. Prior to the outbreak of Kosovo fighting in March 1998, it had a population of approximately 12,000, almost exclusively ethnic Albanians.

Although Drenica, as a stronghold of the KLA, was a focal point of conflict throughout 1998 and the beginning of 1999, Glogovac itself, like most towns and cities in Kosovo, was spared any fighting or destruction. The Serbian police always held the town, and the police station was frequently used as a detention center for ethnic Albanians arrested from the surrounding villages, especially during the large-scale government offensive in September 1998.¹ Police harassment, arrests and beatings were commonplace in the period before NATO began bombing on March 25, 1999.

A notable feature of Glogovac was the nearby Ferrous Nickel plant, called “Feronikl.” The large mine and industrial complex was frequently used by Serbian and Yugoslav forces as a base of operations throughout 1998 and 1999. There were multiple, but as yet unconfirmed, reports that Feronikl was also used as a detention facility for Albanians since March 1998. Likewise, unconfirmed reports speak of a crematorium in Feronikl where Albanians were allegedly deposited once the NATO bombing began. NATO bombed the plant directly on April 30 and later.

Serbian police and Yugoslav military operations against Glogovac’s surrounding villages began almost immediately after the OSCE’s Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) left Kosovo on March 19, 1999. Right away, many ethnic Albanians from the rural areas fled, or were expelled from, their villages towards Glogovac.² By the end of April, the influx of displaced persons had swelled the town’s population to more than 30,000, and residents were sheltering large numbers of displaced persons in their houses.

While the level of violence during NATO airstrikes against civilians in Glogovac was lower than that inflicted on villages in the same municipality, eyewitness accounts indicate multiple violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the town since the end of March 1999. At least five—and as many as nineteen civilians—were reportedly executed by Serbian police and paramilitary forces in the town. Glogovac’s residents were repeatedly harassed by Serbian security forces and suffered detentions, beatings, house-to-house searches, robbery, and extortion. Some private homes, shops and businesses were deliberately ransacked, looted, and burned. Finally, the majority of the population was expelled from the town over a five-day period in early May and sent toward the Macedonian border.

Accounts from residents indicate a large presence of both Serbian police and paramilitaries. Witness testimony repeatedly referred to armed Serbian men having long hair and long beards, as well as bandanas on the heads and arms. One person said that a few paramilitaries even had UCK patches (Albanian for KLA) on their sleeves as a joke.³ Some Glogovac residents claimed to have seen members of Arkan’s Tigers—the notorious paramilitary group run by the indicted war crimes suspect Zeljko Raznjatovic (Arkan)—but their claims could not be confirmed.

¹Human Rights Watch, *A Week of Terror in Drenica: Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998), pp. 42-47.

²Villagers came to Glogovac from Staro Cikatovo, Trstenik, Poklek, Banjica, Domanek, and Gladno Selo, among others.

³Human Rights Watch researchers in Drenica in September 1998 also encountered some soldiers of the Yugoslav Army with KLA patches on their uniforms, clearly as a sarcastic statement. 6

The only person identifiable by witnesses was a deputy police chief from Glogovac known as Lutka, which means "doll" in Serbian. A known policeman in the town, residents said that he did not behave brutally, unlike many of the paramilitaries, although he was clearly involved in many thefts, and he was a principal organizer of the forced depopulation in early May, telling Albanians that they should "get on the buses or go to Albania by foot."⁴

Human Rights Watch visited Glogovac on June 25, 1999, nine days after NATO forces had arrived in the town. Approximately 20 percent of the town had been destroyed. Many windows had been broken, cars burned, and there had clearly been a great deal of looting. There were approximately fifty burned houses in the town, most of them private homes.

Forcible Displacement into Glogovac

The forcible displacement of civilians from surrounding villages into Glogovac began with the departure of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission on Friday, March 19. Refugees from the neighboring villages and from the town itself told Human Rights Watch that Serbian forces and military equipment were pre-positioned prior to the departure of the KVM. A forty-six-year-old man from Glogovac described seeing fifteen tanks in the center of the town and a similar number of tanks moving toward Staro Cikatovo on Saturday, March 20. Military and police operations against villages commenced the same day. Some of the villages contained KLA positions.

A twenty-four-year-old woman from Glogovac described for Human Rights Watch what happened on the morning of March 20:

The police were located in the Feronikl mineral factory. Early on Saturday morning, around 5:30 or 6:00 a.m., a lot of forces came into the town with tanks and military vehicles... Around 7:30 a.m. the forces started to grenade the villages around Glogovac - Staro Cikatovo, Gradica, Vasiljevo and Trstenik....⁵

Accounts from residents of Staro Cikatovo confirm that attacks against the nearby villages began on March 20. According to a twenty-year-old woman from the village who was detained by police for six hours on Saturday morning, "They were shooting from Feronikl with cannons and rockets" (see section on Staro Cikatovo, below).⁶ Another woman from the same village said that, that morning "There were grenades falling into the houses and yards ...a lot of grenades, and incessant gunfire...."⁷

The same day, displaced villagers began to arrive in Glogovac; those who sought to remain in their villages were expelled by force. This was the pattern that continued until the forced expulsion to Macedonia of most of the town six weeks later.

A villager from Domanek, for example, reported that his entire village was expelled by police on March 26. The woman, children, and elderly inhabitants of Gladno Selo were also expelled on or around April 16. Police and paramilitaries forced out the remaining residents of Staro Cikatovo and Poklek on April 17 and then executed dozens of civilians in the two villages (see below). Evidence suggests a similar pattern in other villages in the municipality, such as Vrbovac.

Killing of Civilians

While most of the killings in the municipality occurred in villages, civilians were also killed in Glogovac itself during the month of April. Human Rights Watch interviewed more than fifteen residents of the town, as well as a number of displaced persons from surrounding villages who were sheltering in the town. The majority of the interviewees had knowledge of between four and twelve killings in Glogovac, although one person claimed that nineteen people had been killed. Human Rights Watch has only been able to confirm the killings of Haxhi Selimi, Sokol Saiti, and two men from Banjica village with eyewitness testimony. Most of the killings, witnesses said, were

⁴Human Rights Watch interview with N.B., Stenkovac refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999.

⁵Human Rights Watch interview with J.G., Neprosteno refugee camp, Macedonia, April 29, 1999.

⁶Human Rights Watch interview with "B.B.," Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, April 29, 1999.

⁷Human Rights Watch interview with "D.D.," Stenkovac refugee camp, Macedonia, April 29, 1999. Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

carried out by paramilitaries and police during house-to-house searches and robberies, apparently to create terror in the course of thefts.

Shortly after the March 19 departure of the OSCE from Glogovac (the witness did not know the precise date), the Serbian police killed sixty-year-old Haxhi Selimi and two men displaced from the village of Banjica, according to B.K., a fifty-two-year-old Glogovac resident.⁸ He explained that Mr. Selimi, a displaced person from the village of Negrovce was among forty people sheltering in his house at the time. Three armed police officers wearing green uniforms with white eagle insignia on their jackets, came to his house around 10:00 a.m.. One of the officers, who had a moustache and a dark complexion, demanded 2000DM (Deutsch Marks, approximately U.S.\$1042), he said, while the men in the house were forced to go outside. Mr. Selimi was shot seven times by the officer with the moustache at point blank range, according to B.K.. Two of the shots were fired after Mr. Selimi had already died, he said. The witness also heard additional shots and later saw the bodies of the two men from Banjica, who were reportedly shot by the same police officer in the yard of a nearby house.

Late in the afternoon of March 28, paramilitaries entered the home of Sokol Saiti in Glogovac, demanding money and valuables. A fifty-three-year-old displaced man from Domanek village, A.H., who was staying near Saiti's house, told Human Rights Watch that the paramilitaries had informed local residents, including him, that they were "Arkan's men."⁹ They were wearing black uniforms, with black camouflage makeup on their faces, and had bandanas around their heads. According to the man, the paramilitaries then shot Saiti. He told Human Rights Watch:

They shot him in the leg around 6:00 p.m.. They didn't touch him or let anyone give him first aid until he had bled to death. The paramilitaries stayed in his house until he died at 1:00 a.m.

Although he did not witness the shooting, Saiti's neighbor helped bury the man's body later the same day. This man claimed knowledge of an additional twelve killings, although he had not personally witnessed the deaths or seen the bodies.

One forty-four-year-old man from Glogovac, A.G., told Human Rights Watch that two ethnic Albanians were killed in his apartment building. He did not witness the killings but, as paramilitaries were robbing his apartment, he heard the shooting on the floors above. He told Human Rights Watch:

They [paramilitaries] broke into my apartment about 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 20. Two of them broke in. We were eighteen people. They were wearing green uniforms. They broke in and shot into the ceiling. Then they said, "All of your money, Deutsch Marks, gold, watches — give it all!" They even took our wedding rings.

We were on the fourth floor. In the other apartment they killed Brahim Shala. Two others went there, and we heard one shot. They said they killed him because he was wearing a *plis* [the traditional Albanian white cap worn by older men]. On the fifth floor they killed another — Hysen Morina — because he looked at the policeman. We heard the shooting.¹⁰

Eight other residents from the town (three women and five men) interviewed by Human Rights Watch claimed knowledge of as many as nineteen other civilian killings in Glogovac during late March and April, although they did not witness the deaths or see the bodies. The dead include thirty-four-year-old Hysen Morina, reportedly killed by paramilitaries during a robbery; Qazim Kluna (from Poklek); Sokol Hajrizi; and Rahim Krasniqi. At the very least, their claims strongly suggest that further killings did take place during this period, mostly in the context of robberies. Five of the witnesses specifically indicated that paramilitaries were responsible for the killings.

⁸Human Rights Watch interview with B.K., Senekos refugee camp, Macedonia, May 23, 1999.

⁹Human Rights Watch interview with A.H., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 15, 1999.

¹⁰Human Rights Watch interview with A.G., Stenkovac refugee camp, Macedonia, May 31, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

Robbery, Extortion, and Looting

Within days of KVM's departure, paramilitaries and police began to rob Glogovac residents and displaced persons, entering houses and apartments and demanding money, gold, mobile telephones, televisions and other valuables. Stores and businesses were also targeted. In the words of M.S., a twenty-year-old woman: "After the OSCE left, we became very insecure. Three days later they [the police] started robbing and burning houses and stores."¹¹

The vast majority of refugees interviewed by Human Rights Watch who were in Glogovac either personally experienced or directly witnessed robberies in the period between late March and early May. In some areas, demands for money by paramilitaries were so frequent that residents went to the police on April 23 to request protection, which was provided only intermittently and did little to curtail criminal activity.

Private cars and tractors were stolen and expropriated for use by police and paramilitaries during this time, according to residents. "Almost all the cars were confiscated," one Glogovac resident said. "They didn't take my car because I had an ordinary car, a Yugo."¹² In a pattern common elsewhere in the municipality and other parts of Kosovo since March 1999, the police and paramilitaries used private vehicles taken from civilians as transportation, presumably to make identification by NATO aircraft and satellites more difficult.

The robberies followed a similar pattern: one or two policemen or paramilitaries would break in the door of a private apartment, sometimes wearing masks, but always carrying automatic rifles. The families were physically threatened until they handed over everything of value. A fifty-nine-year-old man from Glogovac, A.H., described what happened when men with "green uniforms and red bandanas on their arms" came to the four-house compound he shared with his three brothers in early May:

Two days before we left, at around 9:00 or 10:00 a.m., they [the police] came into the house and searched us... they pointed their guns at us... They asked me for money... [then] they forced me to strip to my underwear — looking for money. One of them said, "If I find any money on your body, I'm going to shoot you..." They took rings and gold from the women... The next day... they took two radios from my brother and a small TV.¹³

Another man, forty-five-year-old Q.D., told Human Rights Watch what happened in his home on April 20:

I was home with my wife and son. They broke in the door. They said "Marks." It was one man, but others were on the other floors. He was in an army uniform with no symbols. I didn't know him. He had an automatic [gun] and no mask. I gave him 200DM. He pointed the gun at my wife's chin, and I gave him another 300DM. He asked me what kind of car I have. I said I have a Zastava 101, so he left.¹⁴

¹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with M.S., Neprosteno refugee camp, Macedonia, May 23, 1999.

¹² Human Rights Watch interview with thirty-five-year-old man, Neprosteno refugee camp, Macedonia, April 30, 1999.

¹³ Human Rights Watch interview with A.H., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 15, 1999.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Q.D., Stenkovac refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

During some of the robberies, paramilitaries and police reportedly threatened children with knives and automatic guns in order to extort money from their parents. According to H.M., a forty-six-year-old man, from Glogovac: "A week before we left [paramilitaries] started to take very strong action to take money. They would take your daughter and say, 'Give me money or I won't let her go.'" ¹⁵ Another man from Glogovac in his late fifties said that "paramilitaries came, they took children, held a knife against their throats [and threatened to kill them] unless they were given money." ¹⁶

Multiple accounts from persons present in the town during this period strongly suggest that the robberies, extortion and looting that began in Glogovac around March 19 was a systematic attempt to strip the residents and displaced persons sheltering in the town of their property. Given that the robberies were sometimes accompanied by murder or threats to the lives of children and adults, as well as house-to-house searches (see below), these actions also seem to have formed an important part of the organized campaign by Serbian authorities to harass and terrorize the civilian population of Glogovac, perhaps to facilitate their subsequent forced expulsion from the town in early May. As happened in Bosnia and Kosovo prior to March 1999, looting and thievery were also the open rewards for the police and paramilitaries.

Some residents of Glogovac told Human Rights Watch that the police occasionally pretended to protect them from the paramilitaries who, the police claimed, were "out of their control." In particular, a deputy police commander known as Lutka reportedly told residents that he was trying to control the situation as best he could. He even reportedly said on one occasion that he had been "away on vacation," but that order would return now that he was back.

At the same time, a number of residents said that they had seen Lutka taking many private possessions from local Albanians. "He took cars, tractors and money from so many people," said M.K. from Glogovac. ¹⁷ Lutka was also the chief police officer responsible for the deportation of Albanians out of Glogovac in May, numerous witnesses said (see section on forced expulsion).

Arson and Destruction of Civilian Property

In addition to theft and looting, there was some deliberate burning of Albanian homes, stores and businesses in Glogovac beginning on March 27. Two-thirds of the refugees from Glogovac interviewed by Human Rights Watch claimed to have witnessed some arson in the town.

A Human Rights Watch researcher visited Glogovac on June 25 and observed that approximately 20 percent of the town had been destroyed. There were clear signs of extensive looting, while the burning of structures seemed limited to private homes. An estimated fifty homes were burned in the town. Many private cars had also been burned.

A twenty-year-old woman from Glogovac described how her neighborhood and finally her own house were burned by the police:

Within five days of the airstrikes, they burned the stores. Our house was in danger from the fire. We were forced to leave our house at 1.30 a.m... [I]t was very bright because of the flames and we went to my aunt's house...The fire didn't catch our house, so the next day my father, brother and I went back to try and get some food...[but] that night they [the police] burned our house. First they looted it, and then they set it on fire. ¹⁸

In at least one case, a building was set on fire with people still inside. At 8:00 a.m. on April 23, paramilitaries arrived at a house where four displaced families were sheltering. A thirty-five-year-old mother of five from Staro Cikatoovo who was staying there explained what happened:

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with H.M., Stenkovac II refugee camp, Macedonia, May 10, 1999.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with I.X., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 15, 1999.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with M.K., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with M.S., Neprostenovo refugee camp, Macedonia, May 23, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

They broke down the iron door [and] a lot of “Chetniks” with masks entered the house. They took away two old men from Gornje Obrinje. Then they took us from the house and put us in an empty store. They burned the house. [Then] they came to us women and children and sprayed us with gasoline. One of them had matches in his hand and another held a knife against my child and said, “Give me money.” They wanted Deutsch Marks. We collected some money and gave it to them, so they left. Half an hour later, eight others came. They set fire to everything...and they left, taking the keys with them...We wet some blankets and extinguished the fire. [Then] we broke the window and got the children out and got ourselves out.¹⁹

Destruction of Food Stocks

According to Glogovac residents, by mid-April food had become dangerously scarce in the town. The large and visible police and military presence, and the activities of paramilitaries, had confined people to their homes, making it difficult to locate and obtain food supplies. In addition, many food stores had been looted and burned or were simply not functioning. The town’s population had also been swelled by the influx of displaced from neighboring villages. The town was virtually under siege by Serbian security forces, with what one resident described as a “ring of steel” around it, blocking the arrival of food supplies.

Refugees in Macedonia told Human Rights Watch that they witnessed police destroying or stealing food stocks in the town. “In Glogovac they were smashing up the stores as much as they could and taking away the stockpiles [of food],” according to a fifty-nine-year-old man from the town. In some cases, food in private homes was destroyed by police officers during the course of searches and robberies. On April 25, during a police operation in which some men were detained (see below), police searched the home of a fifty-six-year-old man, ostensibly for weapons. At a time when food supplies in the town were in extremely short supply, the police spoiled food in the man’s house. According to the man, “The police didn’t take food away — they just pulled it out...They threw the flour around and poured milk on the floor.”²⁰

Several refugees indicated that food was in such short supply by late April that people were forced to subsist on boiled corn and wheat. A Glogovac resident who was among the first to be bussed out of the town on April 26 said that the food shortages added to the sense of hopelessness among the population. “The bullet [was] not the problem there,” he told Human Rights Watch. “Food [was] the problem.”²¹

Detention and Abuse

Throughout the period between the departure of the OSCE and the expulsion of the population in early May, paramilitaries and police made frequent visits to the homes of Glogovac’s inhabitants and displaced persons. Until the third week of April, most of these visits were connected with robbery, although threats of violence helped to intimidate the population, keeping most inside their homes unless absolutely necessary.

Beginning April 22, however, the nature of these visits began to change. Over the course of a week, the regular police carried out early morning raids against various neighborhoods in the town, conducting house-to-house searches, in which large groups of adult men were separated from their families and forced to the local police station. Almost all of the men were beaten in front of their homes or on the way to the station, and some were forced to sing Serbian nationalist songs.

Although some beatings took place in the police station and in the nearby garage, where many men were held, some detainees also reported that the police in the station generally behaved correctly, and even offered them cigarettes. Most of the detainees were questioned about the KLA and then released after no more than one day in custody.

A thirty-five-year-old man from Glogovac was among the first group to be detained. He told Human Rights Watch:

¹⁹Human Rights Watch interview with D.D., Stenkovac II refugee camp, Macedonia, May 9, 1999.

²⁰Human Rights Watch interview with B.B., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 13, 1999.

²¹Human Rights Watch interview with twenty-three year-old man from Glogovac, Neprosteni refugee camp, Macedonia.

The police came in the morning at 8:00 a.m. on April 22...They brought everyone out of their houses...They separated men aged between fourteen and sixty from the women, children and elderly. They put us against a wall and threatened to shoot us, saying, "Shall we shoot them or not shoot them?" Ninety percent of the men were beaten up as they were searched by the police. Then they said to us, "Go to the police station." They put us in a garage at the station...[and] said to us, "You are not safe here anymore. From now on the military will take responsibility..." Around 3:00 p.m. the last person was released.... We were asked, "Have you been in the KLA?"²²

The searches, beatings and detentions on April 22 established a pattern that would be repeated throughout the week. On April 24, I.X., a fifty-nine-year-old male resident from the center of Glogovac close to the police station, received a visit. He told Human Rights Watch:

In my house, around ten soldiers and paramilitaries came at 8:00 a.m. They knocked on the door. [When I opened it] they pointed their automatic rifles at me and told me to put my hands up. They took me outside with my family and checked all of us...They beat up the men and ransacked the house. They hit me twice inside the house, while they were searching the house. My sons were beaten up on the street and taken to the police station.²³

Although he was not detained, due to his age, and his sons were later released, the message of the visit was clear: "They never let us relax and sleep," I.X. said. "We were always in anticipation of when they were going to enter inside."

Some Glogovac residents received visits from the military as well as the police. On April 25, police came to the house of a fifty-six-year-old man, B.B., in Glogovac around 9:00 a.m. After a weapons sweep, the men were lined up against the wall. The younger men were taken to the police station and beaten. The man subsequently received a second visit from the military. He told Human Rights Watch:

Three or four days after the police came, the military came around 1:00 p.m. and harassed us. They took our identification cards and told us to give 100DM if we wanted them back. After we paid the money they returned them. Then they checked our pockets.²⁴

The raids and detentions continued on April 28 and 29, the day when NATO first bombed the Feronikl plant. A displaced man in his forties from Gornje Obrinje staying in the center of Glogovac described what happened to him during an early morning operation:

²²Human Rights Watch interview with thirty-five-year-old man, Neprosteno refugee camp, Macedonia, April 30, 1999.

²³Human Rights Watch interview with I.X., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 15, 1999.

²⁴Human Rights Watch interview with B.B., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 13, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

The police came on the 28th of April around 8:00 a.m. They searched us and... asked, "Do you have weapons?" They searched our house but they didn't take anything... We [eighty-three men] were taken to the police station at 9:00 a.m. It was a garage. They put us with our faces against the wall and said, "If you turn around we will shoot you."...We were detained until 2:00 p.m. Other people were held there for three days... An inspector from the Ministry of the Interior wearing civilian clothes was asking me questions in Albanian...The deputy chief of police, "Lutka," was also present while I was being questioned. [Lutka] said, "We are leaving and the military are taking our place. If they find you they will execute you immediately."²⁵

Another detainee, R.M., told Human Rights Watch what happened in the police station when the Feronikl plant was bombed. He said:

Around 2:00 p.m. NATO began bombing Feronikl. We were in a part of the station with cars, and one high official with stars on his shoulders said, "You asked for NATO, and look what they are doing to us." He beat some of us with a shovel handle.²⁶

Another man, N.B. who was detained on April 30, explained how he was arrested and how the police responded to his group when the Feronikl plant was struck. He said:

They took me on April 30 around 8:00 a.m. I was in my house, and around nine police surrounded the homes in the center. They took men up to sixty years old, altogether about 150 men. They took us to the police station. They beat us on the way with batons and shovels. It was the normal police. We went with our hands on our heads, and we were made to sing Serbian songs. We were put in the car garage. Most of us were released after about one and one-half hours, but about forty people stayed [including myself].

We stayed until the next day around 5:00 p.m. In the moment when NATO attacked Feronikl, the police got so nervous. They beat some of us. They took me by the hair and slammed my head against the wall. Some people were made to work and clean the station. They were also beaten.

They put us in a room in the cultural center that is near the station. There were forty others there, those who had been taken the day before. They said, "You asked for NATO, and now you've got it." Nine people were taken away for questioning, but they were later released.²⁷

Subsequent events make clear that these operations were the prelude to the mass expulsion of the population, designed to instill fear among the population and to expedite their forced removal from the town.

Forced Expulsion

To some of Glogovac's residents, the objective of the detentions was made immediately clear. A small group of residents in the center of the town was informed on April 24 that buses would be arriving to take them to Macedonia if they wished to go. They were to be the first group to leave the town, which had been effectively under siege since March 19. One of the residents, a twenty-three-year-old man, had the stark choice made explicitly clear:

²⁵Human Rights Watch interview with X.D., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 14, 1999.

²⁶Human Rights Watch interview with R.M., Cegran refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999.

²⁷Human Rights Watch interview with N.B., Stenkovac refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999. N.B. claimed that he spent three days in a field hospital in the refugee camp due to head wounds. Human Right Watch saw a scar on the back of his head where he had been injured by the police.

On Saturday (April 24) the police came into our house and told everyone to get out. They took me while they searched the rooms, forcing me to kick the doors open. The police hit me and my aunt...They took us into the street. The police [in the street] were even worse. They threatened to kill us...They gathered men from the houses and took us to the police station. There they told us, "There is no more safety in the town. We heard on the news that we are keeping you as hostages. We are going to bring buses and take you to Macedonia if you want to go."²⁸

Around 11:30 a.m. on April 26, the police went door to door in central Glogovac, telling residents that there were two buses going to Macedonia and that they were free to stay or go. The police, who reportedly included the commander and deputy commander from Glogovac, known as "Lutka," also reminded people of the nature of their choice. According to M.S., a twenty-year-old woman resident, "The police chief came with another police officer and said, 'We are not forcing you' but, he said, 'From now on the military will be in charge of this place.'"²⁹ Approximately 200 residents were told that their safety could not be guaranteed if they remained, and they were given fifteen minutes to decide whether they wanted to leave. Most decided to go and boarded one of the two waiting buses, paying 50DM per adult. They were then transported to the Macedonian border without incident, arriving around 4:00 p.m. the same day. The buses were clearly organized by the Serbian authorities: Several refugees indicated that the lack of problems en route to Macedonia was explained by the fact that the buses had a special pass from the Interior Ministry authorizing their safe passage through the multiple roadblocks and checkpoints between Glogovac and the border.

The mass expulsion of Glogovac's residents and displaced persons did not begin until five days later, on May 1. The pattern established with the early expulsions continued, with organized buses being used to transport thousands of people out of the municipality over a five-day period. Buses went either directly to the Macedonian border or, in some cases, to a railway station near Kosovo Polje for transit to Macedonia. All adults were required to pay 50DM if they were being taken directly to the border, or 25DM for transfer to the train. Diesel fuel was also accepted as payment for travel. Again, it was the Glogovac police that were responsible for informing people about the buses and ensuring that they boarded them. Multiple witnesses identified deputy police chief "Lutka" as the person responsible for organizing the expulsions and informing residents that the police "could no longer guarantee their security," while attempting to emphasize the voluntariness of their decision to leave.

On Saturday, May 1 at 10:00 a.m., a group of displaced persons from Staro Cikatovo and Poklek paid 50DM each and boarded buses for Macedonia. According to a fifty-three-year-old displaced man from Domanek, A.H., the same day white armored Land Rovers with loudspeakers were announcing further departures on the following day, with the message: "We cannot defend you, but your way to the border will be open, and no one will touch you." The next morning the man made his way to the center of the town and boarded one of an estimated twenty-five buses that left at around 10:00 a.m.³⁰ A seventy-three-year-old displaced man from Gladno Selo told Human Rights Watch that he left on the same day under similar circumstances.

The following morning, Monday, May 3, police visited apartment buildings in the town. According to a seventeen-year-old boy: "Those of us who had apartments in Glogovac didn't want to leave...[but] they entered by force and told us to get out because the military needed the apartments."³¹ When the boy came out of the building with his family, buses were waiting. Two other witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch left the same day.

The clearance of apartment buildings continued on May 4, according to H.M., a forty-six-year-old man from Glogovac. He told Human Rights Watch:

²⁸Human Rights Watch interview with twenty-three-year-old man from Glogovac, Neprosteno refugee camp, Macedonia, April 29, 1999.

²⁹Human Rights Watch interview with M.S., Neprosteno refugee camp, Macedonia, May 23, 1999.

³⁰Human Rights Watch interview with A.H., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 15, 1999.

³¹Human Rights Watch interview with C.C., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 12, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

The police came into the building at 9:00 a.m. They were going building by building. They indicated with their hands that we had to leave. There was a deputy commander with the name "Lutka", who was responsible for the evacuation.³²

A fifty-six-year-old Glogovac resident who was transferred to the train near Kosovo Polje on the same day had a similar account. He said:

They [the police] were going through the streets and shouting around 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. "Go out as soon as possible, go to the bus station to take the bus," they said. So we took some food for the children and some clothes and left the house. At the bus station they were putting us in the buses in lines by neighborhood. The buses were shuttling to Milosevo (near Kosovo Polje), and from there people went by train. We had to pay 25 DM per person for a ticket for adults. We arrived in Milosevo around 5:00 p.m. We were told to get off the bus, and the police put us on the train immediately. They didn't let us go left or right — we had to go straight to the train. We waited for two hours there. We had no problems after that except that they put twenty people in one compartment — it was very crowded...There were police escorts on the train...³³

Statements from other witnesses who left on May 4 corroborate these accounts. A.H., a fifty-nine-year-old man from Glogovac (originally from Domanek) who left the same day, was told by the police: "'Whoever has diesel can go.' I had fifteen liters in my tractor, so they let me go on the bus. Otherwise they wanted 50 DM."³⁴ Another man who was displaced from Gornje Obrinje described seeing "fifteen buses in an open area [in Glogovac]. There were more than 1,000 people there."³⁵

The expulsions continued on May 5, according to those who were forced from the town on that date, although in smaller numbers. By that time, much of the displaced and resident population of the town had been forced out. While some of the population did remain in the town, the actions by the police in the first days of May amount to the systematic expulsion of the civilian population from Glogovac. Following weeks of harassment, intimidation, robbery by paramilitaries and police, as well sporadic killings, a dwindling food supply, and a heavy military and police presence, and the temporary detention of hundreds of men, the population was in no position to decline an offer of transport to Macedonia, especially when they were repeatedly told that their security could no longer be guaranteed.

³²Human Rights Watch interview with H.M., Stenkovac II refugee camp, Macedonia, May 10, 1999.

³³Human Rights Watch interview with B.B., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 13, 1999.

³⁴Human Rights Watch interview with A.H., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 15, 1999.

³⁵Human Rights Watch interview with X.D., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 14, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

THE VILLAGE OF POKLEK

Poklek is a relatively wealthy village with two parts — old and new — located on the outskirts of Glogovac. The KLA has been active in and around the area since at least March 1998. Thus, the village has suffered a fair amount of damage, as well as human rights violations, over the past year. A damage assessment conducted for the European Union by the International Management Group in January 1999, determined that 40 percent of New Poklek's (Novi Poklek, or Poklek I Ri in Albanian) seventy houses had been damaged, while 47.6 percent of Old Poklek's (Stari Poklek, or Poklek e Vjetër in Albanian) 164 had been damaged.³⁶

The most serious human rights violation during 1998 took place on May 31 when an estimated 300 special police forces attacked Novi Poklek. Ten local ethnic Albanians were seized that day during the attack; one of them (Ardian Deliu) was later found dead, while the nine others have never been found.³⁷ Poklek remained a dangerous place up until March 1999 because of the presence of Serbian forces in the nearby Feronikl plant. Many villagers had moved to Glogovac or to the neighboring village of Vasiljevo a few kilometers away. A Human Rights Watch researcher visited Vasiljevo in June 1998 and encountered the KLA.

None of the abuses that took place in and around Poklek throughout 1998 compare to what happened on Saturday, April 17, 1999, in the old part of the village. According to numerous testimonies, including one survivor, at least forty-seven people were forced into one room and systematically gunned down by a single Serbian police officer or paramilitary. The precise number of dead is unknown, although it is certain that twenty-three children under the age of fifteen died in the attack.³⁸

A Human Rights Watch researcher visited the site of the killings — the house of Sinan Muqolli — on June 25, 1999. The house had been largely burned (which was consistent with witness testimony). The room where the killing took place had bullet marks along the walls and bullet casings from a large-caliber weapon on the floor. The basement below the room had dried blood stains dripping from the ceiling and walls, and a large pool of dried blood on the floor. Surviving family members displayed a cardboard box containing some of the bones allegedly collected from the room and showed us the nearby well where they claimed some of the bodies had been dumped.

Human Rights Watch first heard about the Poklek killing on May 8 from a member of the Muqolli family, F.M., who was in the Cegrane refugee camp in Macedonia. The thirty-nine-year-old woman told Human Rights Watch that the police had attacked Poklek on April 17, a rainy day, around 6:00 a.m. She said:

The police were first based in the Gorani family compound. The massacre took place about 150 meters from there. At 8:30 a.m. the shooting began. We were running away in a field toward Glogovac. Sometimes we stopped for the group to gather. The police were in a Zastava 101, white jeeps, and a grey Niva. We made it finally to Glogovac, but a second group behind us was blocked by the police and sent back.³⁹

F.M. stayed in Glogovac for eight days before going back to Poklek. When she returned to her village with a cousin, four members of the group that had been turned back eight days before told her what had happened on April 17: They said that they went into the house of Sinan Muqolli. "You will change your clothes here," Sinan told them. "You will be safe here." The police entered and the children screamed. Sinan said, "Don't scream because they won't hurt you." The police counted sixty-four people and said, "Don't leave the house because we have counted you. If you want to save these people, then bring us four people from the UCK." Sinan said

³⁶"Assessment of Damaged Buildings and Local Infrastructure in Kosovo," International Management Group, January 1999.

³⁷Human Rights Watch, *Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1998), pp. 33-37.

³⁸A list given to Human Rights Watch by Muqolli family members in a Macedonian refugee camp on May 8 had forty-four names and seven unknown victims, while a list given to Human Rights Watch in Poklek on June 25 had forty-eight names. The list presented in this report contains only the names of those who appear on both lists. Media accounts have cited other figures, such as fifty-two (*The Irish Times*, June 18) and sixty-two (*Associated Press*, June 17).

³⁹Human Rights Watch interview with F.M., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D).

he has two sons in Germany and their wives are here. The police asked why all of these women were there. "Where are the men?" they asked.

F.M.'s story is largely corroborated by a fifty-five-year-old member of the Muqolli family who was in Sinan's house and survived the attack. His detailed and damning testimony, as told to Human Rights Watch, is presented here in its entirety:

Something happened that you can see nowhere. I think it was April 17. It was Saturday. They [the police] came from the hill. They had tanks and a car. They just started to shoot. We didn't know where to go, but we tried to go to Glogovac. They saw us and came with three cars to the house there [indicates a house close to the town], and they told us, "Just go back, because nothing is going to happen in Poklek." When we came back, they started shooting in the air.

We came back and gathered together, four brothers. There were seven of us. We wanted to stay together. We stayed there all day. At about 5:00 in the evening they came. Sinan opened the door for them. They told us to get out, all of us. We went outside. They asked us, "Do you have guns?" We said no. Then they told us to go inside. We went inside. Then he [sic] called Sinan and Ymer, and he took them out and killed them. The women started to scream. I was trying to tell the women, "No, no, they are just shooting in the air."

After five minutes they came. There were a lot of us. First they just dropped a bomb, and the children and women started screaming. Then he [sic] started shooting with an automatic rifle. The rifle was firing for a long time. Then I heard someone from outside say, "Come on, leave them, they are all dead," but he saw someone alive and started to shoot again.

I heard him leave and was trying to get out. I got up and saw one of my neighbors, H.M., who was wounded and another woman and a daughter of S.M., who was wounded too. After that I was trying to help those who were wounded, because there was only me and a five year-old child who were not wounded.

Fifteen or twenty minutes later I saw the police forces coming into this house. It's the house of my cousins. So the girls were trying to go to the village, but me and H.M. couldn't go to the village because they were watching us from Feronikl. After that, the police forces came and started to burn.

That night, when it got dark, we went out and saw that they had burned the houses, not once, but twice. We were trying to go to the village Vasiljevo. We stayed that night in Vasiljevo, and after four days we came back and found Sinan and Ymer who had been burned and thrown in the well. There are others who were killed and put in the well. They found the mother of Ymer, killed her and put her in the well. Halim was killed, and they put him in the well too. We were trying not to disturb the remains and to hide them from the police.

... Twenty-three or more [of those killed] were children between six and thirteen. Some old women around sixty years old [were also killed]. I lost a daughter, a three-year-old, two nephews — a three-year-old and ten-month-old — and a big daughter, twenty-one. There are thirty-four victims from the families of two of my brothers. There was a daughter of my cousin and three children and sister-in-law.⁴⁰

In response to a question about the identity of the perpetrator, referred to in his testimony only as "he," R.M. responded:

⁴⁰Human Rights Watch interview with R.M., Stari Poklek, June 25, 1999.

I didn't recognize him, but he was uniformed, like a policeman. It was the same man who told us to go outside and go back home. The same man who dropped the bodies in the well. It was one man who threw the bombs and shot. It was the same person who did all of this.

List of those believed dead in Poklek (all Muqolli family members, unless otherwise noted):

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Sinan, m, 55 | 46. Dr. Ymer Elshani, m, 50, from Korotic |
| 2. Elheme, f, 54 | 47. Halim Kluna, m, 77. Killed somewhere else and reportedly put into a well. |
| 3. Feride, f, 30 | |
| 4. Ylber, m, 9 | |
| 5. Naser, m, 15 | |
| 6. Shehide, f, 14 | |
| 7. Egron, m, 5 | |
| 8. Hyla, f, 22 | |
| 9. Florentina, f, 2 | |
| 10. Liria, f, 7 months | |
| 11. Emile, f, 18 | |
| 12. Elife, f, 16 | |
| 13. Sherife, f, 14 | |
| 14. Hafie, f, 9 | |
| 15. Mehreme, f, 57 | |
| 16. Hida, f, 30 | |
| 17. Mendohije, f, 13 | |
| 18. Mirsad, m, 9 | |
| 19. Mergim, m, 8 | |
| 20. Batihe, f, 32 | |
| 21. Kujtim, m, 15 | |
| 22. Naime, f, 22 | |
| 23. Miradije, f, 57 | |
| 24. Florije, f, 23 | |
| 25. Fatos, m, 4 | |
| 26. Zarife, f, 24 | |
| 27. Arife, f, 22 | |
| 28. Shemsije, f, 42 | |
| 29. Vezire, f, 20 | |
| 30. Fatmira, f, 18 | |
| 31. Rexhep, m, 13 | |
| 32. Agron, m, 9 | |
| 33. Albulena, f, 6 | |
| 34. Hasime, f, 39 | |
| 35. Avdula, m, 13 | |
| 36. Sherije, f, 33 | |
| 37. Vahide, f, 5 | |
| 38. Kushtrim, m, 3 | |
| 39. Qendrim, m, 1 | |
| 40. Nexhmije, f, 25 | |
| 41. Kimete, f, 18 | |
| 42. Sala, f, about 60 | |
| 43. Mervete, f, 24 | |
| 44. Lindita Hoxha, f, 20, from Korotic | |

THE VILLAGE OF STARO ČIKATOVO (ČIKATOVË E VJETËR)

THE VILLAGE OF STARO ČIKATOVO (ČIKATOVË E VJETËR IN ALBANIAN) LIES A FEW KILOMETERS NORTH-EAST OF GLOGOVAC. THE VILLAGE HAD A 1991 POPULATION OF 1,300, ALL OF THEM ETHNIC ALBANIANS. STARO ČIKATOVO IS LOCATED CLOSE TO THE FERONIKL PLANT, WHICH AT TIMES SINCE EARLY 1998 HAS SERVED AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS BY SERBIAN SECURITY FORCES AGAINST KLA INSURGENTS ACTIVE IN THE AREA.

SERBIAN FORCES HAD INFLICTED A FAIR AMOUNT OF DAMAGE ON STARO ČIKATOVO LONG BEFORE THE MARCH 1999 OFFENSIVE. A U.N. DAMAGE ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED ON NOVEMBER 2, 1998, DETERMINED THAT 60 PERCENT OF THE VILLAGE HAD BEEN DAMAGED, 20 PERCENT OF IT SEVERELY.⁴¹ AT THE TIME, ONLY NINETY ALBANIANS WERE LIVING IN THE VILLAGE, MOSTLY DUE TO THE PROXIMITY OF THE DANGEROUS FERONIKL PLANT AND THE ONGOING CLASHES IN THE AREA BETWEEN SERBIAN FORCES AND THE KLA.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH VISITED STARO ČIKATOVO ON JUNE 25, 1999. RESIDENTS SAID THAT THERE ARE 114 HOUSES IN THE VILLAGE. BETWEEN 40 AND 50 PERCENT OF THE VILLAGE WAS BADLY DESTROYED. MOST HOUSES HAD BEEN BURNED FROM THE INSIDE, WHICH INDICATES THAT THEY WERE PURPOSEFULLY BURNED RATHER THAN DAMAGED IN COMBAT. SEVERAL STRUCTURES HAD ALSO BEEN DEMOLISHED BY BULLDOZERS.

ACCORDING TO WITNESSES FROM THE VILLAGE AND GLOGOVAC, GOVERNMENT ATTACKS ON STARO ČIKATOVO BEGAN ON SATURDAY, MARCH 20, FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE START OF NATO BOMBING, WHEN MILITARY OPERATIONS WERE LAUNCHED FROM THE FERONIKL PLANT AGAINST KLA POSITIONS AROUND THE VILLAGE. ONE WITNESS FROM THE VILLAGE TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, "WE WERE BETWEEN THE KLA AND FERONIKL. [SERBIAN FORCES] STARTED GRENADEING FROM FERONIKL TO ATTACK KLA SOLDIERS." ANOTHER WITNESS DESCRIBED "INCESSANT GUNFIRE" THAT DAY.

VILLAGERS TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH THAT THEY HAD BEEN ADVISED BY OSCE PERSONNEL PRIOR TO THE OSCE'S DEPARTURE THAT "IF ANYTHING HAPPENED" THE VILLAGERS SHOULD RELOCATE TO GLOGOVAC. AS THE ATTACKS CONTINUED ON MARCH 20, MOST VILLAGERS FOLLOWED THIS ADVICE. MOST WERE ABLE TO REACH GLOGOVAC SAFELY, BUT ONE GROUP, CONSISTING OF MEMBERS OF THE EXTENDED MORINA FAMILY, WERE DETAINED BY POLICE NEAR THE SCHOOL AS THEY TRIED TO EXIT THE VILLAGE. ONE OF THE WOMEN FROM THE FAMILY, B.B.,⁴² TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH:

In front of the school, we were stopped by the police in tanks. They took our men and put them to one side, asking them if they were soldiers. They put us in the school — women and children in one classroom and men in the other. They kept us from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They told us, "If a bullet is fired by the KLA, we're going to kill all of you." [Then the] police and military left us in the classroom and went towards the mountains, where the KLA was. They were shooting from Feronikl with cannons and rockets.⁴³

⁴¹ UN Assessment, GIS Unit Pristina, January 28, 1999.

⁴² A number of villagers from Staro Cikatoovo requested anonymity in return for their testimony. The letters A.A., B.B., C.C., etc. are therefore used in this section to protect their identities.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch interview with B.B., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

By mid-afternoon, all of them were released and told to return to their homes. The following day, March 21, the Serbian Red Cross arrived around 1:00 p.m. and evacuated some of the remaining women and children from the village. Many refused to leave because, they said, the Serbian Red Cross would only take women and children, and they did not want to leave their menfolk behind. Those who were evacuated to Glogovac stayed there for periods ranging between ten and twenty days before returning to Staro Cikatovo. In the words of one of the women evacuated by the Red Cross, B.B., who later returned to Staro Cikatovo, "We came back ten days later because half of our family had stayed."⁴⁴

Over the ensuing three weeks, the remaining inhabitants of Staro Cikatovo watched as unoccupied houses were looted by the police and paramilitaries. According to several witnesses, Serbian security forces also commandeered civilian cars and tractors, which they used to move around the village. For the most part, however, the remaining residents were left undisturbed during this period, although they were frightened by the threats made during their detention in the school.

A.A., a twenty-nine-year-old woman from Staro Cikatovo, described to Human Rights Watch how on or around April 14, three police officers entered the house of her uncle during the afternoon for what appeared to be a routine check. At 9:00 p.m. that same evening, the three men returned wearing masks made from sheets they had taken from the clothesline outside. Women and children were inside the house as well as an eighty-two-year-old man. According to A.A., who was present, "They harassed the old man, saying, 'Give us money or gold or we will kill you all.'" The three men demanded 500DM. B.B., who was also present, tried to collect the money: "We said, 'Can we go and ask others, because we don't have any money?' So my sister went to look for money and gave them 300DM. They also took our gold." Before leaving, one of the police pointed at a one-year-old child and, according to B.B., said, "It is thanks to this small baby that you are still alive, otherwise we were going to kill all of you."

The April 14 robbery was a precursor of the horror that was to follow. In the early hours of Saturday, April 17, the village was again attacked by Serbian forces. By the end of the day, twenty-three men from the Morina family had been killed and, as of June 25, another four were missing and presumed dead by their families (see list). A seventeen-year-old boy and an elderly man were forced to endure life-or-death negotiations with paramilitaries and police about whether they should be put with the men, i.e. killed, or allowed to leave with the women and children. They were eventually allowed to go. The survivors from Staro Cikatovo insist that none of the dead men were involved in the KLA, although several members of the family are admittedly KLA soldiers, including two who were wounded in the assault.

Prior to the April 17 attack, the Morina family had gathered in a few houses in one part of the village for safety. According to statements from six witnesses, the houses were attacked in the early morning from four sides: "from the direction of Feronikl, the school, the KLA-held area and the electricity generating stations." A.A. described what she saw:

At 6:00 a.m. a lot of shooting started... We didn't go outside. We were afraid because of the shooting, and we had no idea what was happening to the neighbors... At around 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. they came to my uncle's house... When they told us to get out we saw that the yard was full of heavily armed police. We came out -- men, women and children; we women came out behind the men.⁴⁵

Witness D.D., a mother of five children, was in another house nearby. She said:

⁴⁴Human Rights Watch interview with B.B., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 8, 1999.

⁴⁵Human Rights Watch interview with A.A., Stenkovac refugee camp, Macedonia, May 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

They took a very strong action against the village at 5:30 a.m. Our children were still sleeping. There was a lot of shooting from automatic rifles and grenades. Glass from the windows and tiles from the roof were falling on us. We lay down on the floor inside our house with our children...They entered the house, breaking the door and came into the rooms. They took us by our arms and forced us outside. They didn't even let us get dressed....⁴⁶

Villagers describe a mixture of police, paramilitary and military forces in either dark blue or green camouflage uniforms and iron helmets. Some had either a red, blue, black or yellow bandana tied onto their arms, which may have been used to cover the insignia on their uniforms. D.D. claimed that she saw a tiger emblem sewn onto some uniforms and that the troops were wearing black fingerless gloves. If true, the tiger emblem might indicate the presence of Arkan's Tigers, the notorious paramilitary group. WITNESSES ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THE FORCES WERE HEAVILY ARMED, WITH FLAK JACKETS, AUTOMATIC RIFLES (IN SOME CASES WITH BAYONETS), AND GRENADES.

C.C. DESCRIBED HOW THE OCCUPANTS OF THE HOUSES WERE TAKEN OUTSIDE. THE MEN WERE SEPARATED FROM THE WOMEN, HE SAID, AND LINED UP AGAINST THE WALLS OF THE NEARBY HOUSES. SINCE THE HOUSES WERE CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER BUT NOT ADJACENT, THE FAMILIES WERE GATHERED IN SEVERAL GROUPS IN THE VILLAGE, AND THE EVIDENCE POINTS TO A TIME LAPSE BETWEEN THE OPERATIONS AGAINST EACH OF THE GROUPS. C.C. TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH:

THEY CAME TO OUR HOUSE AND SHOUTED, "COME OUT ONE BY ONE." WE CAME OUT AND WALKED INTO THE STREET. THERE WAS ALREADY ANOTHER GROUP THERE. THE FORCES WERE ALL DRUNK AND WEARING IRON HELMETS. THEY WERE ALL RED IN THE FACE AND HAD BANDANAS ON THEIR ARMS: RED, BLUE AND BLACK. WE WERE AFRAID. THEN THAT GROUP SEPARATED US -- MEN FROM WOMEN. THEY DIDN'T LET US TALK OR DO ANYTHING. THEY WERE ANGRY, OUT OF THEIR MINDS. OUR MOTHERS WERE GRABBING US, BUT THEY WERE HITTING THEM. FATHERS WHO HAD CHILDREN IN THEIR ARMS HAD THE CHILDREN TAKEN AWAY. MY SISTER HELD MY FATHER'S HAND. ONE OF THEM SAID TO HER, "LET GO OF HIS HAND, AND GO TO YOUR MOTHER." SHE WOULDN'T, SO THEY HIT HER IN THE HEAD WITH A RIFLE BUTT. MY FATHER'S EYES WERE FULL OF TEARS.⁴⁷

IT WAS DURING THIS OPERATION TO EMPTY THE HOUSES AND SEPARATE MEN FROM THEIR FAMILIES THAT THE FIRST KILLING OCCURRED. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL RELATIVES, THE SECURITY FORCES CAUGHT AVDIL MORINA AS HE WAS TRYING TO SNEAK HIS FAMILY AWAY TO SAFETY. AVDIL WAS STABBED IN THE THROAT AND THEN SHOT DEAD IN FRONT OF HIS FAMILY. B.B., WHO WITNESSED THE KILLING, TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, "HE HAD A BIG WOUND IN HIS THROAT -- THEY STABBED HIM IN THE NECK, PUSHED HIS WIFE AND CHILD AWAY, AND SHOT HIM."

MEANWHILE, THE WOMEN WERE BEING ORDERED TO LEAVE THE VILLAGE. ANOTHER WITNESS, E.E., EXPLAINED:

THEY BROUGHT US TO THE HOUSE OF A NEIGHBOR. FROM THAT HOUSE THEY TOOK FOUR MEN. FROM OUR HOUSE THEY TOOK THREE MEN -- MY FATHER-IN-LAW, HIS UNCLE, AND MY HUSBAND. ALL THE MEN WERE SEPARATED ON ONE SIDE. MY MOTHER-IN-LAW TRIED TO INTERVENE...BUT THEY FORCED US OUT AND TOLD US TO GO TO GLOGOVAC. THEN THEY TOOK THE MEN TO A LOWER PLACE. WHEN WE LEFT ON THE ROAD, THEY JUST STARTED SHOOTING. I DIDN'T SEE WHETHER THEY SHOT IN THE AIR OR ON THE GROUND, BUT I HEARD A LOT OF SHOOTING. WE KNEW AT THAT POINT THAT THEY HAD KILLED THEM. MY MOTHER-IN-LAW FAINTED.⁴⁸

DESPITE THE EFFORTS TO KILL THE MEN OUT OF SIGHT, ONE WOMAN, WITNESS A.A., SAW ELEVEN OF THE MEN BEING SHOT AROUND 9:00 A.M. SHE TOLD HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH:

⁴⁶Human Rights Watch interview with D.D., Stenkovac II refugee camp, Macedonia, May 9, 1999.

⁴⁷Human Rights Watch interview with C.C., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 12, 1999.

⁴⁸Human Rights Watch interview with E.E., Stenkovac II refugee camp, Macedonia, May 9, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

THEY LINED UP ALL THE MEN AGAINST A WALL, AND THEY DIRECTED ALL OF US AWAY, BUT I DIDN'T GO WITH THE REST [BECAUSE] MY HUSBAND HAS ONLY ONE SON. WOMEN WERE SCREAMING AND CHILDREN WERE CRYING, BUT IT WAS USELESS. THEY PUT THE MEN IN THE YARD OF A NEIGHBOR, [SHOTS WERE FIRED], AND I SAW THEM FALL DOWN. THE CHILDREN DIDN'T WANT TO GO AWAY—THEY WERE CRYING. AFTER I SAW THEM FALL DOWN I STARTED TO SCREAM [TO THE OTHERS]: "HEY WOMEN, THEY KILLED THEM ALL." THERE WAS A LOT OF SHOOTING....⁴⁹

SEVERAL OF THE MALE MORINA FAMILY MEMBERS, INCLUDING AN ELDERLY INVALID MAN AND A YOUNG BOY, DID MANAGE TO ESCAPE WITH THEIR LIVES, BUT ONLY AFTER NEGOTIATING POLICE CHECKPOINTS AND THE THREAT OF EXECUTION. THE YOUNGER OF THE TWO SURVIVORS, C.C., EXPLAINED WHAT HAPPENED:

THEY TOOK ME TOO. MY GRANDMOTHER WOULDN'T LET ME GO, BUT THEY KEPT SCREAMING, "GO AWAY FROM HERE, BECAUSE WE ARE NOT RELEASING THEM." ONE POLICE OFFICER TOLD ME, "GO" AND THE OTHER PUT HIS RIFLE AGAINST MY CHEST AND SAID, "WHERE ARE YOU GOING?" IT HAPPENED THREE TIMES. THEN THEY TALKED AMONG THEMSELVES AND DECIDED TO LET ME GO. THEY RELEASED MY GRANDFATHER TOO. AFTER THIS THEY DIDN'T RELEASE ANYONE ELSE...THEN THEY SCREAMED AT US, "GO TO GLOGOVAC." BUT WE DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE, SO THEY STARTED ACTING CRAZY. THEN WE WENT A LITTLE FURTHER AWAY. THEY TOLD THE MEN TO LINE UP BEHIND A WALL. AFTER THEY HAD LINED THEM THERE—THEY HAD RIFLES. I DIDN'T SEE THEM DIRECTLY, BUT I WAS FIVE METERS AWAY. I THINK I SAW THEIR BLOOD SPLASH.⁵⁰

AFTER BEING SENT DOWN SIDE STREETS AND WALKING THROUGH PLOUGHED FIELDS, THE GROUP WITH C.C. AND HIS GRANDFATHER WERE STOPPED BY POLICE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL, WHERE MANY OF THEM HAD BEEN DETAINED ALMOST ONE MONTH EARLIER. AGAIN THE FATE OF THE TWO MALE FAMILY MEMBERS WAS THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION. ACCORDING TO C.C.:

THEY CALLED MY GRANDFATHER, AND THEY ASKED HIM ABOUT ME. THEY SEPARATED ME FROM THE LINE SO I HAD TO GO TO THEM. THEY ASKED ME, "WHY DID THEY LET YOU GO? THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU GO." MY GRANDFATHER SAID, "THE OTHERS DOWN THERE RELEASED HIM." THEY SEARCHED HIM AND SAID OVER AND OVER AGAIN, "WHY DID THEY RELEASE YOU?" WOMEN WERE CRYING FOR ME, MY MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, AND OTHERS. THEY SAID, "LET HIM GO, HE'S THE ONLY ONE LEFT, AND HE'S YOUNG." FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, ONE OF THEM TOLD ME TO GO. SO THEN WE STARTED TOWARDS GLOGOVAC.

THE GROUP WAS STOPPED AGAIN ON THE ROAD TO GLOGOVAC BY MILITARY PERSONNEL AT THE FERONIKL PLANT, AND FACED SIMILAR QUESTIONS BUT WAS EVENTUALLY ALLOWED TO PROCEED TO THE TOWN.

DESPITE AT LEAST THREE SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS BY SOME OF THE OLDER WOMEN TO RETURN TO STARO ČIKATOVO, IN ORDER TO LOCATE AND BURY THE BODIES OF THEIR DEAD MEN, THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO RETURN TO THE VILLAGE. ACCORDING TO A.A., THE WOMEN "NEVER MADE IT FURTHER THAN THE SCHOOL...THE THIRD TIME THEY WENT, THEY WERE TOLD, 'WE CAN LET YOU IN BUT THERE ARE POLICE IN THE HOUSES, AND THEY MIGHT KILL YOU.'"

ACCORDING TO WITNESS ACCOUNTS AND MORINA FAMILY MEMBERS INTERVIEWED ON JUNE 25 IN STARO ČIKATOVO, THE FOLLOWING MEN FROM THE VILLAGE WERE KILLED:

KILLED IN STARO ČIKATOVO:

1.	TAHIR H. MORINA	63
2.	FLORIN T. MORINA	38
3.	BAHTIR H. MORINA	APPROX. 50
4.	AFRIM B. MORINA	34
5.	SABIT A. MORINA	38
6.	KADRI H. MORINA	APPROX. 60
7.	SELIM S. MORINA	APPROX. 30
8.	MUHAREM MORINA	APPROX. 85
9.	ZENEL S. MORINA	APPROX. 85
10.	BEQIR Z. MORINA	APPROX. 50

⁴⁹Human Rights Watch interview with A.A., Stenkovac II refugee camp, Macedonia, May 9, 1999.

⁵⁰Human Rights Watch interview with C.C., Cegrane refugee camp, Macedonia, May 12, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 8 (D)

11.	AVDYL H. MORINA	??
12.	ISUF F. MORINA	49
13.	GONI H. MORINA	APPROX. 50
14.	SYL H. MORINA	APPROX. 40
15.	TAHIR Z. MORINA	APPROX. 40
16.	REXHEP MORINA	APPROX. 60
17.	BRAHIM MORINA	APPROX. 40
18.	SHEREMET R. MORINA	28
19.	DAUT J. MORINA	65
20.	BEGIR J. MORIN	APPROX. 60
21.	ARIF Z. MORINA	85
22.	BAJRAM MAKOLL	APPROX. 80
23.	HAYHI H. DEMAKU (FROM OBRINJE/ABRI) ??	

MISSING AND BELIEVED DEAD:

1.	SELMAN MORINA	50
2.	SOKOL MORINA	45
3.	PETRIT MORINA	28
4.	Emin Morina	40

Missing in Vrbovac:

1.	Bajram Morina	40
2.	Ekrem Morina	15

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was researched and written by Ben Ward and Fred Abrahams, researchers at Human Rights Watch. The report was edited by Wilder Taylor, general counsel at Human Rights Watch, Holly Cartner, executive director of the Europe and Central Asia division, and Cynthia Brown, program director of Human Rights Watch. Invaluable production assistance was provided by Alexandra Perina and Natalia Ermolaev, associates in the Europe and Central Asia division.

Human Rights Watch would like to thank all of the individuals who were interviewed for this report. Now that many of them have returned home, we hope this report will help lead to holding accountable those who committed terrible crimes.

Human Rights Watch Reports on Kosovo:

NATO's Use of Cluster Munitions, 5/99.

A Week of Terror in Drenica, 2/99.

Detentions and Abuse in Kosovo, 12/98.

Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo, 10/98.

Persecution Persists: Human Rights Violations in Kosovo, 12/96.

Human Rights Abuses of Non-Serbs in Kosovo, Sandzak & Vojvodina, 10/94.

Open Wounds: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo, 3/94.

Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo, 10/92.

Yugoslavia: Crisis in Kosovo, 3/90 (out of print).

For further reports and press releases, as well as the "Kosovo Human Rights Flashes," see the Kosovo pages on the HRW website: <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/kosovo98/index.htm>.

Human Rights Watch

Europe and Central Asia Division

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world.

We stand with victims and activists to bring offenders to justice, to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom and to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime.

We investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable.

We challenge governments and those holding power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law.

We enlist the public and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all.

The staff includes Kenneth Roth, executive director; Michele Alexander, development director; Reed Brody, advocacy director; Carroll Bogert, communications director; Cynthia Brown, program director; Barbara Guglielmo, finance director; Jeri Laber, special advisor; Lotte Leicht, Brussels office director; Patrick Mingos, publications director; Susan Osnos, associate director; Maria Pignataro Nielsen, human resources director; Jemera Rone, counsel; Wilder Taylor, general counsel; and Joanna Weschler, United Nations representative. Jonathan Fanton is the chair of the board. Robert L. Bernstein is the founding chair.

Its Europe and Central Asia division was established in 1978 to monitor and promote domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. It is affiliated with the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which is based in Vienna, Austria. Holly Cartner is the executive director; Rachel Denber is the deputy director; Elizabeth Andersen is the advocacy director; Fred Abrahams, Cassandra Cavanaugh, Julia Hall, Malcolm Hawkes, Bogdan Ivanisevic, André Lommen, Acacia Shields, and Diane Paul are research associates; Diederik Lohman is the Moscow office director, Alexander Petrov is the assistant Moscow office director; Pamela Gomez is the Caucasus office director; Marie Struthers is the Dushanbe office director; Alexander Frangos is coordinator; Liudmila Belova, Alexandra Perina, Josh Sherwin, and Natasha Zaretsky are associates. Peter Osnos is the chair of the advisory committee and Alice Henkin is vice chair.

Web Site Address: <http://www.hrw.org>

Listserv address: To subscribe to the list, send an e-mail message to majordomo@igc.apc.org with "hrw-news-europe" in the body of the message (leave the subject line blank).