

# **FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA**

## **ABUSES AGAINST SERBS AND ROMA IN THE NEW KOSOVO**

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## INTRODUCTION

Kosovo has undergone profound changes in the seven weeks since the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) entered the province and Yugoslav Army and Serbian police units withdrew. After a decade of repression that culminated in a three-month killing spree by Serbian security forces and the expulsion and displacement of more than half of the ethnic Albanian population, Kosovo's Albanians are finally able to live without fear of discrimination or violence by the Serbian state. Life is returning to Kosovo as refugees return from Macedonia and Albania. Yet for the province's minorities, and especially the Serb and Roma (Gypsy) populations, these changes have brought fear, uncertainty, and in some cases violence. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 164,000 have left Kosovo altogether. Many others have moved to Serb or Roma enclaves under KFOR protection within Kosovo. A wave of arson and looting of Serb and Roma homes throughout Kosovo has ensued. Serbs and Roma who remained have been subjected to harassment and intimidation, including severe beatings. Most seriously, there has been a spate of abductions and murders of Serbs since mid-June, including the massacre of fourteen Serb farmers on July 23.

Prominent among explanations for these abuses is the desire of some ethnic Albanians to take revenge for atrocities committed by Serb security forces prior to KFOR's entry into Kosovo. While the Serb minority is the most obvious target of this retaliatory animus, the Roma too are at risk, as they are commonly perceived by ethnic Albanians as having been willing collaborators in Serb abuses. Another related motivation for the abuse is to drive members of these minority groups out of Kosovo. Indeed, numerous Serbs and Roma have told Human Rights Watch that they have been directly warned by ethnic Albanians, under threat of violence, to leave Kosovo and never return.

ETHNIC ALBANIAN CIVILIANS HAVE TAKEN PART IN MUCH OF THE BURNING AND LOOTING OF SERB AND ROMA PROPERTY, AND, IN A FEW INSTANCES, IN VIOLENT ATTACKS ON THEIR NEIGHBORS. RETURNING REFUGEES, MANY OF WHOM LOST THEIR OWN PROPERTY THROUGH THEFT AND ARSON PRIOR TO JUNE, HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPLICATED IN THE EXPULSION OF SERB AND ROMA FROM THEIR HOMES. THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY MEMBERS OF THE KOSOVO LIBERATION ARMY (KLA). ALTHOUGH THE KLA LEADERSHIP ISSUED A STATEMENT ON JULY 20 CONDEMNING ATTACKS ON SERBS AND ROMA, AND KLA POLITICAL LEADER HASHIM THAQI PUBLICLY DENOUNCED THE JULY 23 MASSACRE OF FOURTEEN SERB FARMERS, IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER THESE BEATINGS AND KILLINGS WERE COMMITTED BY LOCAL KLA UNITS ACTING WITHOUT OFFICIAL SANCTION, OR WHETHER THEY REPRESENT A COORDINATED KLA POLICY. WHAT IS INDISPUTABLE, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF SUCH ABUSES MAKE IT INCUMBENT UPON THE KLA LEADERSHIP TO TAKE SWIFT AND DECISIVE ACTION TO PREVENT THEM.

The response of KFOR and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to abuses against minority populations has been belated and uneven. To a large extent, the frequency of abuses against Serbs and Roma directly reflects the lack of a police force and the concomitant lack of law and order in Kosovo. In the absence of a fully deployed international police force, KFOR contingents have attempted to fill the security gap with military police operating police stations in major towns. Some contingents have stepped up patrols and deployed peacekeepers to protect populations at risk. Yet concerns about the safety of KFOR's own troops, a lack of experience in law enforcement functions and, above all, a shortage of available personnel have frequently rendered KFOR units unable and unwilling to take the initiatives necessary to build confidence among Serb and Roma communities. On the civilian side, UNMIK, UNHCR, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have recently established an Ad Hoc Task Force on Minorities to coordinate protection efforts in the field. As of the date of publication, however, this mechanism remains largely untested. Although UNMIK, KFOR, and NATO governments have publicly condemned abuses against Serbs and Roma, there is little evidence of a firm commitment to a new and tolerant Kosovo in which Serb and Roma minority populations can live without discrimination.

The need for immediate corrective action to prevent further abuses, including, most notably, the deployment of an effective international police force, cannot be overemphasized. The situation in Kosovo is presently in flux, and current developments will have a significant long-term impact on the region's ethnic balance. As the situations in Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia have demonstrated, once ethnic minorities have fled a region en masse it is extremely difficult to establish conditions conducive to their return. Particularly in light of the stated justification for NATO's military intervention in Kosovo—the need to put a stop to “ethnic cleansing”—it is imperative that the

international community defend the existence of a multiethnic Kosovo, one in which members of all ethnic groups enjoy equal claim to security and protection.

In the meantime, protection must be provided to those ethnic minorities forced to flee Kosovo for fear of persecution. Measures should be taken to ensure the protection of displaced Serbs and Roma who flee to the provinces of Serbia or Montenegro, and international refugee protection should be provided to those who flee to countries in the region, and elsewhere in Western Europe. Human Rights Watch is deeply disturbed by reports that some West European countries, including Italy, have refused to consider asylum applications from Serbs and Roma fleeing persecution in Kosovo, and have detained and turned back asylum seekers from Kosovo. Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity, and European countries must ensure free access to a full and fair asylum determination procedure for all those forced to flee Kosovo during the post-war period.

In order to assess the current situation of at-risk minorities, Human Rights Watch conducted fact-finding missions to more than a dozen villages and towns—including those in the municipalities of Lipjan (Lipjan in Albanian), Istok (Istog in Albanian), Kosovo Kamenica, Prizren, Klina, Pec (Peje in Albanian), Kosovo Mitrovica, Pristina, Obilic (Obiliq in Albanian), Orahovac (Rahovec in Albanian), and Urosevac (Ferizaj in Albanian)—all of which housed mixed populations prior to the outbreak of armed conflict. *THIS REPORT IS BASED ON DOZENS OF INTERVIEWS THAT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH RESEARCHERS CONDUCTED WITH VICTIMS, EYEWITNESSES, AND LOCAL OFFICIALS OF THE ETHNIC SERB AND ROMA COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO, AS WELL AS WITH PEACEKEEPING TROOPS OF THE KOSOVO FORCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TASKED WITH THE PROTECTION OF MINORITIES. EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE TO INTERVIEW WITNESSES SEPARATELY AND IN CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WOULD PROTECT THEIR IDENTITY. WHERE POSSIBLE, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPRESENTATIVES ALSO VISITED THE CRIME SCENE TO OBTAIN CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE. IN SOME CASES, RESEARCHERS VIEWED THE BODIES OF VICTIMS AND EXAMINED OTHER PHYSICAL EVIDENCE.* This report attempts to evaluate the status of at-risk minorities in Kosovo, the role of the KLA and Kosovo Albanian civilians, and the response of the international community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **To the International Community:**

- Immediately deploy all the remaining 1,800 civilian police and 1,000 special police who have been authorized by the United Nations;
- Consider expanding the size of the international civilian police force;
- Make clear and repeated public statements that a multiethnic Kosovo in which the rights of all its inhabitants are respected is one of the principal objectives of both UNMIK and KFOR;
- *DEMAND THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE KOSOVO LIBERATION ARMY TAKE ALL MEASURES TO DETER ATTACKS ON SERBS AND ROMA, INCLUDING COOPERATING FULLY WITH CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS BY INTERNATIONAL CIVILIAN POLICE AND KFOR;*
- Instruct national KFOR contingents to ensure that its public order functions and the protection of minorities are carried out effectively in all KFOR sectors in Kosovo; and
- Provide international protection to ethnic minority groups forced to flee Kosovo for fear of persecution. In particular, put in place measures to secure the protection of Serbs and Roma who flee to the neighboring provinces of Serbia and Montenegro; and ensure that those fleeing to neighboring countries or elsewhere in Western Europe have access to a full and fair asylum determination procedure and are treated humanely with full respect for their human rights.

**TO THE WORLD BANK, THE EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT, THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, AND OTHER DONOR INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENTS:**

- Give priority in the allocation of reconstruction aid to those municipalities that protect and prevent violence and discrimination against ethnic minorities, encourage ethnic minorities to remain in the region, and take concrete steps to facilitate the return of those ethnic minorities who are refugees or displaced persons;
- WITHHOLD FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS LOCATED IN KOSOVO ANY RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN AID, THAT CANNOT BE ADEQUATELY AND METICULOUSLY TRACKED TO ENSURE THAT THOSE IMPLICATED IN WAR CRIMES AND/OR SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES DO NOT BENEFIT POLITICALLY OR ECONOMICALLY FROM THIS ASSISTANCE UNLESS THEY HAVE BEEN CLEARED OF SUCH ALLEGATIONS. AS THE LOCAL POPULATION TAKES ON GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS IN THE PROVINCE, INSIST THAT ALL ASSISTANCE TO MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES IS CONDITIONED ON THEIR FULL COOPERATION WITH THE ICTY, RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AND CONCRETE ACTIONS TO ASSIST MINORITY POPULATIONS TO REMAIN IN AND/OR RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. DONORS SHOULD INSURE THAT ASSISTANCE BE DISBURSED IN A NONDISCRIMINATORY MANNER, TO ALL NEEDY PERSONS REGARDLESS OF ETHNICITY OR GENDER. FURTHER, WITH RESPECT TO ASSISTANCE CHanneled THROUGH PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT OR NONPROFIT ENTERPRISES, DONORS SHOULD INVESTIGATE THE OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF COMPANIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS PRIOR TO MAKING LOANS OR GRANTS OR AWARDING CONTRACTS, TO ENSURE THAT PERSONS IMPLICATED IN WAR CRIMES OR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES DO NOT BENEFIT; AND
- AS PART OF THE VETTING PROCESS FOR ALL FUTURE AID PROJECTS, SEEK INFORMATION FROM THE ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KOSOVO PEACE AGREEMENT CONCERNING THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORDS OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING POLICE OFFICIALS WHO MAY PLAY A DIRECT OR INDIRECT ROLE IN THE PROJECTS.

**To the NATO-led Kosovo Force:**

- Improve and standardize complaint mechanisms and improve response times in security incidents involving public order;
- Ensure uniformity of response by all national contingents to security incidents;
- Investigate all murders, abductions, and "disappearances," until such time as the international civilian police force is fully deployed;
- Fully cooperate with the international civilian police force in providing security and other public order functions as required; and
- Increase the frequency of patrols in areas with at-risk populations; where security conditions allow, use jeeps rather than armored personnel carriers and smaller teams for patrols.

**To the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe:**

- Prioritize protection and prevention of abuses in all activities in Kosovo. As a matter of urgency, UNHCR should deploy additional protection officers to and OSCE should station an adequate number of human rights monitors in areas with at-risk minority populations;
- GIVE PRIORITY TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF STAFF AND OTHER RESOURCES TO AREAS WITH AT-RISK MINORITY POPULATIONS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE STAFF OF THE MISSIONS ARE FULLY DEPLOYED;
- Where possible, emphasize protection in place rather than relocation;
- Coordinate closely with each other and KFOR personnel to prevent, monitor, and report on abuses against minority groups; and
- Produce timely and detailed public reports on abuses against minorities in the framework of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Minorities and intervene in individual cases where possible.

**To the Kosovo Liberation Army:**

- Investigate KLA commanders and soldiers suspected of involvement in attacks on minorities and inform KFOR and UNMIK of the results of those investigations and the identities of those believed responsible for such attacks;
- Fully cooperate with criminal investigations and prosecutions by military and civilian police in cases of killings and abductions;
- Suspend from active duty personnel under investigation by KFOR and/or UNMIK for crimes against the civilian population pending the conclusion of inquiries; and
- Meet with Serb and Roma leaders to work out strategies for the reconciliation of the Serb, Roma, and Albanian populations of Kosovo, and publicly condemn all acts of violence or harassment targeting Serb and Roma civilians.

## **BACKGROUND**

Any understanding of current abuses must begin with the atrocities that Serb security forces recently inflicted on ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. The brutality and systematic nature of the war crimes committed against Kosovar Albanians has understandably created an enormous reservoir of anger and resentment. In interviews held in refugee camps in northern Albania prior to KFOR's entry into Kosovo, Human Rights Watch researchers found many Kosovar Albanians to be deeply pessimistic about future possibilities for peaceful coexistence with Kosovo's Serb minority.

Indeed, some ethnic Albanians claimed that Serbs from neighboring villages or even the same village had actively participated in violent abuses against them. With refugees returning to devastated villages and burned and looted homes, it is understandable that anger and desire for retribution has increased. In addition, in at least two municipalities (Novo Brdo and Kosovo Kamenica), violence appears to be linked to ongoing conflict between armed Serb civilians and local KLA units.

Albanian anger extends to members of the Roma minority, whom many Albanians perceived as willing collaborators in Serb atrocities.<sup>1</sup> With the Roma, current tensions are reinforced by historic discrimination. In a telling example of the low esteem in which Roma are held, ethnic Albanians watching Serbian forces retreat from the Kosovo-Albanian border on June 13 cursed the troops with one word repeated over and over again: "Gypsies!"

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<sup>1</sup>The near-lynching of a Roma family in a refugee camp in northern Macedonia in early June is a clear example. Members of the family were reportedly suspected of complicity in abuses against Albanians in Kosovo. See "Pullout talks in trouble," BBC News, August 1999.

It is also important to note that the KLA has been linked to earlier abuses against Serbs, Roma, and Kosovar Albanians during 1998 and during the first three months of 1999. Specifically, reports by the Humanitarian Law Center, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Human Rights Watch's own research indicate that dozens of Serbs, and a smaller number of Roma and Albanians, were detained by the KLA between mid-1998 and March 1999.<sup>2</sup> At least 130 Serbs went missing during this time and are presumed dead.

## DISPLACEMENT

Although estimates vary, it appears that well over 100,000 Serbs have fled Kosovo since early June.<sup>3</sup> Most have gone to Serbia proper or Montenegro. In addition, there has been substantial displacement of Serbs within Kosovo. Most of the Serb populations in the municipalities of Pec, Prizren, Urosevac, and Istok have fled their homes, as have large numbers from Pristina and the town of Gnjilane. In the town of Obilic, which had a pre-conflict Serb population of 5,000, only some 1,000 Serbs remain.

Serbs displaced inside Kosovo are mostly concentrated in Serb majority villages and towns such as Kosovo Polje, Dobratin (Lipljan/Liplan municipality), Gracanica (Pristina municipality), Velika Hoca (Orahovac/Rahovec municipality), and Gorazdevac (Pec/Peje municipality). Others have taken shelter in Serb areas of major towns, including approximately 3,000 in the northern part of the town of Orahovac, and several thousand in the section of Kosovo Mitrovica north of the Ibar river. Significant Serb populations remain in Kosovo Kamenica, Leposavic, and Zubin Potok municipalities. In addition, fewer than one hundred of the 6,000 Serb refugees from Croatia settled in Kosovo remain, according to UNHCR, after two collective centers for such refugees were burned.

No reliable estimates exist for the total number of Roma who have left Kosovo since early June, but there has clearly been significant displacement.<sup>4</sup> The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), a Budapest-based Roma rights organization, which conducted field research in Kosovo in early July, has reported that none of the Roma communities it visited holds more than half of its pre-conflict Roma population. Between 150 and 200 Roma have abandoned the Pec-Klina-Istok area for Montenegro since the beginning of July. In Zac village (Istok/Istog municipality), 200 Roma have moved to the center of the village for safety. In mid-June, approximately 4,000 Roma from villages around Pristina took shelter in a school in Kosovo Polje.<sup>5</sup> As of mid-June, 350 Roma had taken shelter in a UNHCR camp near the cemetery in Djakovica (Djakova in Albanian) and some have requested evacuation, although another 1,000 Roma in the town wish to remain. Roma families have also been evacuated from Pec by international organizations.

The first wave of fleeing Serbs and Roma, who left as KFOR entered Kosovo, appear to have left the province out of generalized fear rather than threats or intimidation. Many later evacuees, however, fled for more concrete reasons. N.K., a Roma man from Obilic, said he and his family abandoned their town on June 20 when Albanian civilians came to their house and told them to leave. As described below, KLA members are also alleged to have forced many Serbs to flee.

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<sup>2</sup>Human Rights Watch, *Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo* (New York: Human Rights Watch, September 1998), pp.75-84.

<sup>3</sup>On July 16, Reuters reported that some 75 percent of Kosovar Serbs—approximately 150,000 people—had fled the province. "Italian Troops Find 748 Bodies In Kosovo So Far," Reuters, July 16, 1999. On July 20, the UNHCR's Belgrade office reportedly estimated that the number of Kosovar Serbs and Roma who had fled to Serbia and Montenegro had reached 169,824, while the Yugoslav Red Cross estimated the number in Serbia at about 100,000. Beti Bilandzic, "UNHCR Warns of Critical Refugee Problem in Serbia," Reuters, July 20, 1999; see also Chris Hedges, "Tardy Kosovo Rebels Force Extension of Arms Deadline," *New York Times*, July 23, 1999 (estimating that 80,000 of Kosovo's 200,000 Serb residents had left the province since June).

<sup>4</sup>A recent *New York Times* article gives a rough idea of the dramatic decrease in Roma numbers: it estimates that some 6,000 to 7,000 Roma remain in Kosovo, compared to 1991 Yugoslav census numbers of 30,000 to 40,000 for the province. Carlotta Gall, "Kosovo War Over, Gypsies Are Left Amid Vengeful Neighbors," *New York Times*, July 11, 1999.

<sup>5</sup>On July 21, the center's remaining population of around 2,000 was transferred to a tented facility with better conditions five kilometers away. Despite security guarantees from KFOR, many of the remaining Roma were reluctant to move to the new Human Rights Watch location and reactions from surrounding Albanian villages. August 1999, Vol. 11, No. 10 (D)

One important issue with regard to the outflow of both Serbs and Roma from Kosovo is that of their reception in Serbia proper. Already swamped with hundreds of thousands of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, and in the midst of an economic crisis and the aftermath of the NATO bombing campaign, the Yugoslav government is ill-equipped to feed, clothe, and house an additional group of displaced persons. There are reports that displaced Serbs from Kosovo have been prevented from entering the city of Belgrade, and some Kosovo Serbs have been returned to Kosovo by the Serbian authorities. The presence of Kosovo Serbs, many of whom feel betrayed by the Serbian government, would also serve as a potent symbol of the government's failure in Kosovo.

Given societal hostility in the former Yugoslavia toward the Roma, their treatment in Serbia is likely to be even more problematic. The European Roma Rights Center claims, in particular, that Roma fleeing Kosovo have already been forcibly returned by Yugoslav authorities.<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch has received similar reports from Roma leaders in Kosovo Polje.

Moreover, the protection of minority groups who flee into neighboring countries, and elsewhere in Western Europe, can also not be guaranteed. In a worrying development, the Italian government announced on July 20 that it would treat anyone who entered the country from the former Yugoslavia without a visa as an illegal immigrant and would return them to their country of origin. The announcement came during a week in which 1,200 Roma from Kosovo reportedly entered Italy.<sup>7</sup>

## KILLINGS

Numerous Serb civilians fleeing Kosovo during the initial days of KFOR's presence in the province expressed fears of being killed. "We're in a panic," one Serb said candidly as he readied his family to depart Prizren for Serbia. "Our defense forces are leaving, and we'll be at the mercy of the KLA. I have two children; what can I do?"<sup>8</sup>

A rash of killings of Serbs since mid-June has shown that such fears are not unfounded. While some of those killed may have been implicated in abuses against ethnic Albanians during the armed conflict, many of the Serb victims were innocent civilians. Indeed, in many areas of Kosovo—the southern town of Prizren being a notable example—practically all military-age men have already fled. Those left behind are typically the oldest and most vulnerable members of the Serb community.

The most recent killings of Serb civilians took place on July 23 near the village of Gracko, in central Kosovo. Fourteen farmers were shot dead as they harvested hay in the single biggest massacre since KFOR entered the province. The farmers were reportedly shot at close range at about 9:30 p.m. As of this writing, it was unclear who was responsible for the attack. On July 25, the BBC reported that KFOR had promised to station peacekeepers in Gracko in response to requests for protection from villagers, but that the peacekeepers had not been deployed in the village at the time of the killings, despite requests from the Serb population.

Another egregious example of ethnically-motivated violence in post-conflict Kosovo was the brutal murder of two elderly Serb residents of Prizren on June 21. Marica Stamenkovic, seventy-seven years old, and Panta Filipovic, sixty-three years old, lived in neighboring homes on Markovic Svetozar Street, in what was until recently a majority Serb area of Prizren. Both victims had lived with their spouses in Prizren for decades; Filipovic was born there. Having decided to stay in Prizren while other Serbs fled the city, the two victims and their spouses became the target of KLA harassment. Within days of KFOR's entry into Kosovo, uniformed KLA members began appearing at their homes demanding money and arms. WHILE KFOR HAS FOUND THAT SOME PERSONS ARRESTED IN KLA UNIFORM HAVE PROVEN TO BE CRIMINALS UNAFFILIATED WITH THE KLA, NOTHING INDICATES THAT THESE PERSONS WERE NOT KLA MEMBERS.

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<sup>6</sup>European Roma Rights Center, "Press Statement: The Current Situation of Roma in Kosovo," July 9, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Philip Willan, "Italy bars the refugee route for fleeing Kosovan Gypsies," *Guardian*, July 22, 1999.

Human Rights Watch interview, Prizren, June 14, 1999.

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Filipovic's wife Maria, fifty-nine years old, told Human Rights Watch that two separate groups of armed and uniformed KLA members visited her house on June 15, writing down her and her husband's names and identification numbers, and telling the couple that they would be permitted to remain in Prizren. A few days later, on June 18, a group of four men in KLA uniforms appeared and told Panta Filipovic to hand over his arms. When Filipovic said he had no arms to give them, one of the men hit him in the stomach with the butt of an automatic weapon.

That same week the Stamenkovic household was also visited three times by the KLA. On June 14, a single KLA soldier visited. According to Trifun Stamenkovic, the husband of Marica Stamenkovic, "He asked for arms and he threatened to kill me."<sup>9</sup> Later that week other armed KLA members came by the house asking questions about the Stamenkovics' sons in Serbia and stealing money from the couple.

The murders occurred in the mid-morning of June 21. Both Marica Filipovic and Trifun Stamenkovic were out of the house when their respective spouses were killed; both had gone into town to shop. Trifun Stamenkovic, eighty-five, told Human Rights Watch:

I left at about 10:00 a.m. and when I returned at 11:00 a.m. I couldn't find my wife. When I came inside, I saw the broken windows and everything broken. I was in the doorway and I went back outside and saw a German patrol, two jeeps. I told them my wife was missing, that she wasn't in the house. When I entered the house with them I saw only my wife's knees. Her knees were bloody. I didn't see the rest of her body; the Germans took me outside. They saw her dead; they didn't let me inside to see her.<sup>10</sup>

A half hour later, when Maria Filipovic returned from shopping, German KFOR troops had already discovered that her husband had been attacked as well, and was dying from his stab wounds. As Maria stood in front of her home crying, her Albanian Catholic neighbors told her that KLA members had committed the killings. Both victims had their throats cut. German soldiers told Human Rights Watch that Marica Stamenkovic had been nearly decapitated.

With the deaths of their spouses, Maria Filipovic and Trifun Stamenkovic abandoned their homes, taking refuge in a local theological seminary under the protection of German KFOR troops. When interviewed by Human Rights Watch three days after the killings, neither one had plans for the future.

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<sup>9</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Prizren, June 24, 1999.



Another set of killings took place on June 19 in the village of Belo Polje, near Pec. Visiting the village a day later, a Human Rights Watch researcher viewed the bodies of three ethnic Serb men, each of whom had been killed by a shot between the eyes at point-blank range.<sup>11</sup> The men were Radomir Stosic, fifty, his uncle Steven Stosic, sixty, and their forty-six-year-old friend Filip Kosic. Serb villagers who claimed to have witnessed the attack told Human Rights Watch that ten uniformed KLA soldiers entered the village and “executed” the three men at approximately 5:30 p.m. One man was killed in the street in front of the Stosic home; another was killed by the front door of the house, and the third was killed inside the house, on the second floor. A fourth Serb, Milco Stosic, Radomir’s brother, was seriously injured in the attack. He was reportedly taken by helicopter to a hospital in Pristina, but Human Rights Watch was unable to ascertain his condition. Local ethnic Albanian villagers interviewed by journalists claimed that the men had belonged to a paramilitary Serb gang that had burned Albanian homes in the area. Ethnic Serbs from Belo Polje denied the allegation, claiming that no paramilitaries lived in their village.

According to the Serbian Orthodox Church in Pec, approximately thirty Serbs were killed in the Pec municipality in the months of June and July, although the circumstances of their deaths are mostly unknown.<sup>12</sup> Malica Miric, twenty-six, was allegedly killed by two men, one in KLA uniform, in Belo Polje on June 26. Milena Vujsevic was allegedly killed by unknown assailants in her Pec home on June 27. Human Rights Watch has not been able to confirm these allegations.

There have also been reported murders in the eastern part of Kosovo, where substantial numbers of Serbs remain. In the village of Pones in Gnjilane municipality, six cowherds were abducted by KLA soldiers on June 19, at around 8 a.m. According to one of the cowherds, the men were questioned and beaten (see section on abductions, below). Two of the cowherds, Momcilo Dimic (approximately sixty years old) and Cedomir Denic (approximately fifty years old) were later found dead. In the town of Kosovo Kamenica, thirty-year-old Nenad Arsic and fifty-year-old Milovoje Simic were killed on June 19. Relatives of the dead men told Human Rights Watch that the two were abducted at gunpoint and later murdered by KLA soldiers.<sup>13</sup> The circumstances of Simic’s death may be more complicated than his relatives suggest, however. According to a KFOR officer familiar with the case, Simic was involved in an ambush of KLA vehicles by armed Serb civilians in the town which left Simic and three KLA soldiers dead. In addition, a number of Albanians claim that Simic was a known paramilitary. KFOR officials in the town had no information about the death of Arsic, however, and Human Rights Watch has no reason to dispute the version of events provided to its researcher by his widow.

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<sup>11</sup>After witnessing the funeral of the three Serbs in Belo Polje, Human Rights Watch accompanied a group of Italian KFOR soldiers to the village of Drenovac, about forty-five minutes’ drive away, where two other Serb civilians were reportedly killed on June 18. The bodies of the two civilians, Bosana Javanovic, seventy-seven years old, and her son Vojslav Javanovic, forty years old, had been found by Bosana’s other son. But when the KFOR troops arrived in Drenovac along with priests brought in to conduct funeral services for the two, they discovered that the bodies had disappeared.

<sup>12</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Father Jovan, Pec Patriarchate, Pec, July 17, 1999.  
<sup>13</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Biserka Arsic and Goran Simic, Kosovo Kamenica, August 1999, No. 10 (D)

Human Rights Watch has received additional reports of the murder of Serbs in Kosovo. Eight Serbs have been killed in the town of Obilic since early June, according to KFOR officers in the town. The most recent killing occurred on June 30. According to KFOR officers in the area who have investigated the incidents, the killings were organized attacks rather than spontaneous reactions by returnees and KLA units were implicated in the killing. In Lipljan, a Serb male was decapitated in the middle of the town's busy market on Monday, July 9, sometime between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., according to KFOR military police in the town. As of July 16, no witnesses had come forward. There are numerous reports of killings where it has been difficult to identify the perpetrators because so many Serbs have fled or are afraid and Albanians are unwilling to speak.<sup>14</sup> Serb residents of Dobratin village told Human Rights Watch that Dragan Madenovic, a forty-year-old night watchman, was killed in the village of Donja Gusterica (Lipljan municipality) on June 23.<sup>15</sup>

There have been multiple killings of Serbs in Kosovo's capital, Pristina. On June 23, the body of Milenko Lekovic, a Serb professor for the economics faculty, was found in the faculty's basement, along with the bodies of Miodrag Mladenovic, a Serb guard in the building, and Jovica Stamenkovic, a Serb waiter from a cafe in the building. Lekovic and the other men had been shot and beaten with a blunt instrument.<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch has also received a report about the killing of four elderly men from the village of Slivovo in Pristina municipality. According to their relatives, the four men, Zivion, Zivko, Trajan and Mita Simic, were reportedly abducted and later killed sometime during the third week of June.

There are also reports that Roma have been murdered since early June. Relatives of thirty-four-year-old Bajram Berisha and twenty-four-year-old Vesel Berisha told Human Rights Watch that the two men were killed in Mitrovica in the third week of June by unknown assailants. Roma in Djakovica told Human Rights Watch that Ibish Beqiri, sixty years old, was abducted by unknown assailants in the beginning of July, and his body was later discovered in Gramocel.<sup>17</sup> The European Roma Rights Center reports that three Roma from the town of Djakovica are believed to have been killed in the town since early June.<sup>18</sup> There are also unconfirmed reports about the murder of three families who were burned in their homes in the village of Dubrava (Istok/Istog municipality).

### **ABDUCTIONS, DETENTION AND ABUSE**

Abductions of Serb and Roma men have been reported throughout Kosovo since early June. In most cases, the men are detained, questioned, and beaten, often very badly. While most are subsequently released, some of those abducted remain missing and are presumed dead. Human Rights Watch interviewed numerous Serb and Roma civilians, many of them men over the age of fifty, who described being abducted and detained by members of the KLA.

Almost immediately after the entry of KFOR troops into Kosovo, KLA forces occupied local police stations in Prizren and Orahovac, using them as detention centers. Although KFOR has since expelled the KLA from these buildings, former detainees have also described being held prisoner in houses, barns, and basements. On July 19, CNN television reported that Italian KFOR troops had discovered an illegal jail in Porosevac, a village in southwestern

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<sup>14</sup>With some killings, such as the brutal slaughter of four middle-aged men found near the village of Bela Crkva in southern Kosovo, even the ethnic identity of the victims may never be known. A Human Rights Watch researcher viewed the remains of the four men on June 21, which, judging from the bodies' condition, was less than a week after they were killed. At that time, it was not known whether the men were among the very last ethnic Albanians killed by departing Serb security forces, or whether they were ethnic Serbs. Local villagers said simply that they did not recognize the men, who had been executed at close range. If indeed the victims were Serbs, it is likely that their bodies would never be identified, given the large-scale Serb exodus from southern Kosovo and the understandable reluctance of remaining Serbs to travel outside of protected areas.

<sup>15</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Dobratin residents, June 24, 1999.

<sup>16</sup>David Rohde, "Three Serbs Found Slain at University in Pristina," *New York Times*, June 25, 1999.

<sup>17</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Djakovica, July 24, 1999.

<sup>18</sup>European Roma Rights Center, "Press Statement: The Current Situation of Roma in Kosovo," July 9, 1999.

Kosovo. The facility was operated by several men wearing KLA uniforms who had apparently beaten an ethnic Albanian man detained there.<sup>19</sup>

Most former detainees told Human Rights Watch that they were beaten severely while in KLA custody. The deep purple bruises, black eyes, and knife wounds exhibited by former detainees support these allegations. Two old men who were held for several hours by the KLA in Orahovac, but were quickly rescued by German KFOR forces, said they were not physically mistreated. The testimony of seventy-one-year-old S.B., however, is more typical:

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<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Kosovo: Prisoners find illegal jail, beaten prisoner," CNN, July 19, 1999. August 1999, Vol. 11, No. 10 (D)

[KLA soldiers] grabbed me, brought me down to the cellar and took turns hurting me. There were several of them, all in uniform.... While they were beating me they insulted me, called me "Chetnik," and told me to leave forever.<sup>20</sup>

S.B. told Human Rights Watch that on June 14, the day he was taken prisoner, he was preparing to leave Prizren, the city in which he had lived all his life. At about 1:00 p.m. that day he returned to his home to pick up his medicine and identification papers; it was there that the KLA detained him. Soon after, S.B.'s brother-in-law, who was worried when S.B. hadn't returned, went over to S.B.'s house. He too was detained. The KLA soldiers did not physically abuse the brother-in-law, presumably because he had assisted Kosovar Albanians who had fled the province and convinced them of this. The soldiers did, however, detain the brother-in-law for nearly two hours and beat S.B. in front of him. According to his brother-in-law, KLA soldiers kicked S.B. and hit him with the butts of their weapons.

The brother-in-law told Human Rights Watch:

They took the old man's pants off and threatened him with a gun. They told him that they'd rip his eyes out of their sockets. Then they took the blunt end of a knife and gave him these two black eyes. They asked him: "Whose country is this?" When my brother-in-law answered that it's for everyone, they weren't satisfied. They said it belongs to the KLA, and they forced him to say this.<sup>21</sup>

The soldiers allowed S.B.'s brother-in-law to leave the house in order "to find them a weapon," holding S.B. hostage. They released S.B. at about 7:00 p.m. that evening in exchange for a valuable handcrafted pistol that S.B.'s wife brought to them as ransom.

S.B. told Human Rights Watch that during his detention a young ethnic Serb man was brought into the cellar by KLA soldiers. The man's hands were tied behind his back with an electric cord. According to S.B., the young man was beaten even more severely than he was. KLA soldiers demanded that he too give them weapons.

Human Rights Watch interviewed four ethnic Serb women who claimed to have been detained by the KLA. Fifty-six-year-old B.U. said she and her husband were abducted by the KLA from the village of Lutogllava, near Prizren, on June 14. Four uniformed KLA members entered their home, forced them into a car, and took them to a barn in the Albanian village of Grejkoc. There they beat B.U.'s husband. B.U., who had deep purple bruises on her right inner thigh and left upper arm, told Human Rights Watch: "I saw them beat him. I tried to defend him so they hit me. They kicked me with their boots."<sup>22</sup>

B.U. and her husband were freed several days later. They said that the KLA released them after obtaining favorable information about their wartime conduct from their Albanian neighbors, with whom they got along well. According to B.U.'s fifty-six-year-old husband: "But we can't go back [to our village] because of the KLA. The KLA told us, 'Go to Serbia, go to Milosevic—never come back.' We want to go to Serbia because we're afraid; we want to stay alive."<sup>23</sup>

Y.K. is a seventy-seven-year-old ethnic Serb woman who was also held prisoner by the KLA. She was freed from detention on June 18 when German KFOR forces expelled the KLA from the Prizren police station they had occupied. Her arm in a make-shift sling, she described being beaten by the KLA during one day in their custody. She stated:

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<sup>20</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Prizren, June 14, 1999.

<sup>21</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Prizren, June 14, 1999.

<sup>22</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Prizren, June 23, 1999.

One guy hit me with a police baton. Another big guy, in uniform, told the guy who was beating me, "enough, enough." That made him stop. I was leaning on a table, standing up, and he hit me three times: in the back, in the legs, in the arms. After that, I didn't really know what was happening.... When I was released, others were released with me. They were bloody.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to Y.K., Human Rights Watch interviewed several men who had been held by the KLA in the former police station. A total of fifteen detainees—including several Roma—were released from the building after KFOR intervened. The badly beaten corpse of an elderly Serb male was also found there, according to KFOR.<sup>25</sup>

Representatives of humanitarian organizations providing medical care in Prizren told Human Rights Watch that they had treated nearly twenty-five civilians for injuries said to have been received in KLA detention, including severe bruises and apparent knife wounds. They noted that most of the victims were old men.

In the village of Pones, Gnjilane municipality, KLA soldiers reportedly abducted six cowherds on the morning of June 19. Four were questioned and badly beaten while in custody, according to B.V., a seventeen-year-old boy who escaped after several hours with two of the others. As noted above, the two other men, Momcilo Dimic and Cedimir Denic (the boy's uncle), were later found dead. B.V. described what happened to him:

I woke up in the morning and took the animals out into the hills....At around 8 a.m., people with guns arrived; two of them had uniforms with the KLA symbol. They began to beat me and kick me. They started asking me questions about some guys who had been arrested by the police and where they were. I couldn't answer them, so they began to beat me again. Then they took me to some other place, some Albanian houses, and some other guys from the KLA came.... Then I heard some shots.... We went to an Albanian village called Rudatsi. On the way, they beat me.... This guy came with three of the [other cowherds] who had been arrested, [so] they ordered me to stand up and took us to Rudatsi village. When we arrived there, they told us to lie down on the grass. Three guys in KLA uniforms arrived and started to beat us with rifle butts and sticks.... They beat us for half an hour... Some other guy, around thirty years old, was taken away, so it was only me and two others. We went through some bushes and started to run. They started to shoot at us. We ran over the hills and got home. When I arrived in the village I saw the body of a guy who had been killed. I came back to the house and I could still hear shooting.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the accounts of persons released from KLA custody, Human Rights Watch has interviewed numerous ethnic Serbs in Orahovac and Prizren who said that male members of their families have been forcibly abducted by members of the KLA, their whereabouts and condition remain unknown. In some cases, the men have simply disappeared—no one witnessed their capture—but Human Rights Watch has also interviewed several eyewitnesses to KLA abductions. Officials from the Serbian Orthodox Church in Pec told Human Rights Watch that thirty Serbs from the Pec area have gone missing and are feared to have been abducted since June 16, 1999.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Prizren, June 24, 1999.

<sup>25</sup>The group of detainees also included a number of ethnic Albanians whom the KLA reportedly suspected of collaboration in Serb abuses. These men had all been beaten, many severely.

<sup>26</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, B.V., Pones village, June 29, 1999.

<sup>27</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Father Jovan, Pec Patriarchate, Pec, July 17, 1999; Human Rights Watch interview, August 1999, Vol. 11, No. 10 (D)

Disappearances have also been reported in Lipljan municipality and Pristina. During an visit by Human Rights Watch to the village of Slovinje on June 22, relatives of twenty-year-old Zoran Stanisic reported that he had gone missing that day and were desperately looking for him. Extensive inquiries by KFOR have so far proved fruitless. As of July 20, Stanisic remained missing, presumed dead. His relatives were the last Serbs to leave the village. According to information from the Belgrade-based organization Women in Black, Petrija Piljevic, fifty-seven years old, and Zoran Djosic were abducted from their apartment building in Pristina at around 4 p.m. on June 28, 1999, by three armed Albanians in civilian clothing.<sup>28</sup>

Roma have also been abducted, detained and abused by KLA units and Albanians in civilian clothing in the municipalities of Pristina, Kamenica, Istok, Orahovac, Prizren, and Djakovica. In addition, more than a dozen Roma have disappeared, according to reports received by Human Rights Watch and the European Roma Rights Center.<sup>29</sup> On July 20, Human Rights Watch visited the school in Kosovo Polje which served as a makeshift collective center for hundreds of displaced Roma families. H.G., a forty-seven-year-old Roma man from Pristina who worked as a street cleaner, fled to the center with his family after being beaten, abducted, and detained by Albanians in civilian clothing. His family fled their own home and were later forced from his aunt's apartment in Pristina. A month earlier, on June 20, fifteen men in civilian clothing armed with rifles and sticks entered his home accusing him of "disposing of bodies" and theft and beat him severely. He was then abducted:

They put me in a car and took me somewhere for four or five days. They beat me constantly. During the time [that I was detained] they brought five of my friends and beat all of them. One of them was beaten in the early morning and then disappeared. We have had no news since then. On the Thursday, the fifth day I was kept there, they brought me back to my neighborhood and let me go.<sup>30</sup>

Extensive bruising and a swollen knee a month later supports his account of the beating. H.G.'s wife, X.G., who was interviewed separately, indicated that her husband's clothing had been "covered in blood" when he returned. In his absence, the family had moved for safety to an apartment in central Pristina belonging to H.G.'s aunt. According to H.G., on the day after his release, between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., armed Albanians in civilian clothing ordered his family and others in the apartment building to leave. When interviewed, his family was living in a plastic shelter in the Kosovo Polje collective center. X.G. would like to go home, but indicated that her husband was afraid to do so.

Roma in the Djakovica camp told Human Rights Watch that eight Roma men had been abducted by men in KLA uniforms in the end of June and July. Bekim Mazdreku and Syl Golluba were taken on July 20 from the bridge just outside the Roma camp. Four men from the Rexha family, Avdyl, fifty, Besim, twenty-eight, Zeqir, seven, and Raza, fifty-five, were reportedly abducted on approximately July 7, and the Roma in the camp have no information about their whereabouts. Another Roma man, Bashkim Imeraj, was reportedly abducted in the end of June from his Djakovica home by three men in KLA uniforms, according to a family member who was present. His whereabouts are currently unknown.

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<sup>28</sup>Letter dated July 16, 1999 from the Women in Black, Belgrade (received via email).

<sup>29</sup>Human Rights Watch has been given the names of six Roma men whose whereabouts are unknown as of July 20, 1999. Four are from the Duka family in Stanovic village in Vucitrn municipality and two are from the Busaku family in Pristina. The two Busaku men went missing on June 30, 1999. The European Roma Rights Center report "The Current Situation of Roma in Kosovo, July 9, 1999," lists eight additional Roma men whose whereabouts were unknown as of July 6, 1999.

<sup>30</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, H.G., Kosovo Polje, June 29, 1999.

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One Roma man, S.A., aged twenty-three, who has an Albanian father, told Human Rights Watch that he was abducted by KLA soldiers from Djakovica in the first days of July and held in a house near Qafa e Prushit for five days. He was interrogated about his relationship with Serbs and beaten during this time, but was eventually released with an apology.<sup>31</sup>

Human Rights Watch also interviewed F.F., a twenty-three-year-old Roma man from Pristina, who was beaten and abducted by KLA soldiers on June 21 in the Pristina neighborhood of Vranjevci.<sup>32</sup> Having heard that family members in the neighborhood were having difficulties, F.F. went to their home to investigate. When he reached the house he was prevented from entering by Albanian civilians armed with knives and baseball bats, who threatened him, chased him and then beat him. He was then abducted. He told Human Rights Watch:

A red Opel Ascona came and took me to the KLA base in Dragodan. [When we arrived] they beat me until I fainted. Then they put water on my face and when I woke up they beat me again. They were asking me where I stole things from. I kept saying, "I didn't steal them." Then they asked me who was in uniform and which ones did some killing.... They asked me if I was in uniform. After that they brought photos with names on a piece of paper. They would show me a picture and say, "do you recognize this man" all the time beating me. After that the KLA commander came saying, "I don't have any of my family now—you are the one who killed all of them." He told me, "I am the commander for Dragodan and Pristina." He was tall and slender, clean-shaven, without much hair.... He and his friends in KLA uniforms began to beat me again. Then he took his gun which was empty and said, "Kill me." I said, "I don't know how to use it." He hit me in the head. Someone [else] began beating me with a baseball bat. The KLA commander and two others and two women took me to another room. He had a pair of scissors and told me, "We're going to cut your fingers and ears off." After that they threatened to cut me with broken glass.... They kept saying, "Now you're going to tell us who was in uniform."<sup>33</sup>

F.F. was subjected to further beatings and humiliation. He also claimed he had been sexually abused in detention although he was too traumatized to provide details. He was dropped on the stairs of his apartment building late in the evening of the same day. A week later he said he and his family were evicted from their apartment by men "from Albania" with automatic weapons. When interviewed they were living in the collective center in Kosovo Polje.

The European Roma Rights Center has documented three cases of rape of Roma women by persons in KLA uniform. The ERRC interviewed an eyewitness who reported that his sister and wife had been raped by four men in Djakovica on June 29. They also interviewed the relative of a woman from Kosovo Mitrovica who had been raped on June 20 by six men in KLA uniforms.<sup>34</sup>

## HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION

The intent behind many of the killings and abductions that have occurred in the province since early June appears to be the expulsion of Kosovo's Serb and Roma population rather than a desire for revenge alone. This explanation is borne out by more direct and systematic efforts to force Serbs and Roma to leave their homes. Human Rights Watch has documented the harassment of elderly Serb women in formerly mixed communities in Prizren and Gnjilane municipalities, for example, and has received reports of widespread efforts to remove Serbs from their homes in Pristina and Lipjan. As noted above, Roma have been driven from their homes in Pristina and elsewhere by fear, intimidation, and harassment.

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<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch interview, S.A., Djakovica, July, 24, 1999.

<sup>32</sup> In order to protect his identity, the witness' real initials have not been used.

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch interview, F.F., Kosovo Polje, June 29, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Watch, Roma Rights Center, "Press Statement: The Current Situation of Roma in Kosovo," August 1999, Vol. 9, 1999, p. 10. (D)

Human Rights Watch visited the village of Ljubizda outside Prizren on June 30. Only three elderly Serb women remained in the village from the previous population. Two of the women who live together in the center of the village, both close to seventy years old, complained that they were being threatened by villagers from nearby Korisa. The women claimed that they had been threatened with a gun and asked to hand over weapons. Both women also said that they had been robbed. They praised their neighbors (who are Muslim Slavs) for trying to protect them. Their circumstances were preferable to that of their friend, G.G., an woman in her eighties who lives on the outskirts of the village.<sup>35</sup>

When a Human Rights Watch researcher was taken to meet G.G., a blue Lada car without license plates was observed parked outside the door to the woman's yard. Upon seeing the researcher, the four occupants of the car, who were speaking Albanian, drove away. After her friend pleaded with G.G. for five minutes to open the door, G.G., who was extremely distressed, told Human Rights Watch that the occupants of the car had been threatening her and were visiting the house on a daily basis.<sup>36</sup> Given the isolated location of the house, G.G. is understandably afraid, but she has no family in Serbia and nowhere else to go. Human Rights Watch later observed the same car parked in the center of the village.

Several security incidents in the town of Lipljan appear linked to efforts to force Serbs to leave. Exactly a week after the decapitation of a Serb in the town's market on July 5 (see section on killings), there were four grenade attacks on Serb homes in Lipljan in the early afternoon, killing one person. The attacks, which all occurred in the space of one hour at regular intervals, appear to have been coordinated. In Pristina, Serbs and Roma have received threatening telephone calls and visits by armed men in civilian clothing and KLA uniforms. An independent journalist from Serbia was forced to leave, after he was placed under surveillance, and persons he interviewed were questioned by KLA officials.

### **ARSON, LOOTING, DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, AND TAKEOVER OF HOMES**

The extensive destruction of civilian property in Kosovo began with the 1998 spring offensive in the Drenica region, when Serbian security forces deliberately targeted homes, schools, and mosques for destruction. The rampage continued at an accelerated pace following the departure of OSCE verifiers from the province in early 1999. Looting and arson has continued since the withdrawal of Serbian military and police units in early June. However, it is now Serb and Roma homes that are the targets. Orthodox religious sites have also been targeted, with monasteries in Vucitrn and Musutiste destroyed and a church demolished by explosives.

During June and July, Human Rights Watch made several visits to the village of Slovinje (Lipljan municipality) and the town of Lipljan itself. In Slovinje, most Serb and Roma homes had been looted and burned. On a July 16 visit, Human Rights Watch photographed the smoldering ruins of a Serb house three hundred yards from the KFOR post in the village. The house lies across from the rubble of the village's Orthodox church, which was destroyed by a fierce explosion at 1:20 a.m. on July 15.<sup>37</sup> According to local KFOR officials, many of the Serb houses in the village had been burned in the three days preceding the Human Rights Watch visit. Most of the village's Roma population and all of its Serb population have fled. There have also been frequent arson attacks against Serb homes in Lipljan town, with four incidents reported to KFOR military police on July 15 alone. In addition, KFOR military police told Human Rights Watch that vacant Serb and Roma homes in the village of Magura have been repeatedly prepared for burning, with rags and furniture piled up for easy combustion.<sup>38</sup>

In Klinja municipality, Human Rights visited the villages of Dolac and Drenovac on June 28. Both had significant Serb populations prior to March 1999. Eighteen Serb homes in Dolac had been looted and burned, and there were no Serbs left in the village where seventy Serb families had lived before the conflict. A local Albanian

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<sup>35</sup>In order to protect her identity, the witness' real initials have not been used.

<sup>36</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, Ljubizda village, June 30, 1999.

<sup>37</sup>Photographs of the destroyed church are available on the internet at: <<http://www.decani.yunet.com/slovinje.html>>.

<sup>38</sup>Human Rights Watch interview, KFOR military police officer, Lipljan, July 16, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 10 (D)



resident indicated that the Serb population had fled on or around June 17. The nearby village of Drenovac was empty of Serbs and mostly destroyed. There was a heavy KLA presence in the village.

Human Rights Watch also visited the villages of Brestovik and Vitomira in Pec municipality on June 28. Having been warned by a Pec resident not to go to Brestovik because "it was dangerous," Human Rights Watch arrived to discover the village in flames, several tractors loaded with furniture and kitchen appliances, and some twenty Albanians being detained for looting by Italian KFOR Carabinieri police officers. According to an Italian officer, the village's Serb and Roma populations had left several days earlier. The detainees were later taken to Pec in three police trucks. In Vitomirica, which housed a Serb majority population prior to the conflict, there had clearly been considerable arson and looting of Serb homes. Houses with "Albanian house" written on the side were left untouched, while other houses had clothing and detritus strewn about in front lawns and doors left open. Some Serb homes were being occupied by Albanian returnees. One man told Human Rights Watch, "We are occupying Serb houses because they burned ours."<sup>39</sup>

Human Rights Watch also visited the town of Istok and several villages in the Istok municipality the same day. In the town itself, a Human Rights Watch researcher witnessed the looting of recently abandoned Serb homes, some of which were still ablaze. Clothing was hanging on washing lines, doors were open, and pigs and other farm animals were untethered. No Serbs remained. In an area where looting was clearly taking place, two men in what appeared to be KLA uniforms were seen helping a third man to load furniture onto a tractor trailer. When asked what was happening, a male resident of the town in his forties said that the fires had been started to burn dead animals which would otherwise constitute a health risk. There was no evidence to support this assertion. A Human Rights Watch researcher also observed a large KLA presence in the town, although not in the quarter where the burning and looting was occurring. The picture in the Istok villages of Belo Pojle, Veric, and Srbobran was similar, with widespread arson and looting and few, if any, Serbs remaining in the area.

Human Rights Watch observed extensive arson against Serb homes in the town of Obilic. The current spate of arson combined with earlier attacks against Albanian homes by Serbian security forces has left most of the town in ashes. There has also been widespread looting and burning of Serb and Roma homes in neighborhoods throughout Pristina. Similarly, the Roma neighborhood in Pec was almost entirely burned and looted in late June, just after the departure of its inhabitants.

The takeover of Serb homes by Albanian families, many of whom lost their own homes during the conflict, has also been reported throughout Kosovo. In Prizren, for example, the historically Serb neighborhood of Pantelija is now nearly empty of its previous residents, with many formerly Serb homes currently being occupied by ethnic Albanian returnees.

According to Roma interviewed in Djakovica, about thirty Roma homes in the Brekoc neighborhood were burned within three hours on July 12. Men in KLA uniform told them to leave their homes a few days before the burning took place. Human Rights Watch visited the Roma neighborhood on July 24 and saw the charred remains. Approximately 600 Roma from Brekoc and other areas in Djakovica are currently in a UNHCR camp in the city guarded by Italian KFOR troops. The Roma are free to leave the camp, but told Human Rights Watch that they fear to do so because of retaliatory attacks by the KLA. "All of the Rom who worked with the Serbs have left," said one man in the camp. "And we are trapped here even though we did nothing." None of the Roma interviewed wanted their names to be published.<sup>40</sup>

## THE RESPONSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Overall, the response of the international community to attacks on minorities in Kosovo has been belated and inadequate. The withdrawal of Serbian police and Yugoslav military units, while bringing a welcome end to widespread abuses against Kosovo Albanians, left a security vacuum for Serb civilians that has only been partially filled by KFOR peacekeepers. As of July 22, few of the 1,800 regular international civilian police and the 1,000 special international civilian police authorized by the U.N. had been deployed, although a number of officers from the International Police Task Force (IPTF) in Bosnia and Hercegovina have been temporarily seconded in the interim. In their absence, KFOR has attempted to perform civilian policing functions, through the use of their own military police in the case of the German and British contingents, and through the deployment of French Gendarme and Italian Carabinieri paramilitary police units in the French and Italian sectors. More than 200 suspects have been arrested by KFOR for criminal acts, most of them Albanians, and are being held in the Lipljan detention center. These arrests are mostly for looting and arson, but also include some cases of beatings and murders. A Human Rights Watch researcher witnessed the arrest by Italian Carabinieri officers of a group of Albanians suspected of looting in the village of Brestovik on June 28. KFOR has recruited some Albanian lawyers to serve as defense counsel, and trials are expected to take place under the Yugoslav penal code.

Despite these efforts, the findings of this report make clear that the current ad hoc arrangements for policing are woefully inadequate to meet Kosovo's public order requirements. KFOR's concern about protecting its own forces, differing interpretations of the mandate by each national contingent, and lack of experience in civilian policing result in an uneven response to attacks and threats against minorities. In some areas, such as Gorazdevac, Podujevo, and Kosovo Polje, KFOR is providing direct protection to at-risk Serb and Roma populations. In others areas, local KFOR units have been unable or unwilling to intervene to prevent displacement or destruction of property.

KFOR's overall record on preventing the abduction, detention, and murder of Serbs and Roma is also poor. A KFOR officer in eastern Kosovo told a Human Rights Watch researcher that his unit did not even try to keep track of the abductions because of their frequency. In many cases, KFOR officers from all contingents expressed the view that the commission of such crimes was inevitable. Efforts by a Human Rights Watch researcher to report an incident of harassment in Ljubizda village on June 30 to the German KFOR contingent required multiple visits to local posts and then to the contingent headquarters in Prizren, where a civilian-military implementation cell (CMIC) officer appeared uninterested in the details of the case.

While the urgent deployment of international civilian police officers is a first requirement for addressing the security concerns of the Kosovo population—Serbs, Roma, Gorani, Turks, Muslim Slavs, and Albanians—KFOR has an immediate responsibility to maintain public order and provide a secure environment. Even given its own limitations of mandate and expertise in civilian policing functions, a more uniform and proactive response and, above all, a force-wide commitment to make protection for vulnerable persons in Kosovo a mission priority would make a substantial impact on the confidence and security of Serbs and Roma.

Primary responsibility among the civilian agencies for the protection of displaced minorities in Kosovo rests with UNHCR as part of its protection functions, and the OSCE, which is the lead agency under the international administration charged with monitoring and protecting the human rights of all of Kosovo's people. In recognition of the special difficulties faced by Serbs and Roma, the two agencies, together with UNMIK, have established an Ad Hoc Task Force on Minorities to coordinate the protection response of international civilian agencies. The Task Force released its first assessment report on the treatment of Serbs and Roma in order to assign tasks and coordinate monitoring and interventions in the field.<sup>41</sup> At this stage, however, it is too early to assess the effectiveness either of the Task Force mechanism or of the performance of UNHCR and the OSCE themselves. It is clearly critical that both agencies do their utmost to avoid further displacement and violence against minorities, and that until such time as both missions are fully staffed and deployed, the deployment of protection staff and opening of offices in areas with at-risk populations takes precedent over other deployments.

Finally, it is incumbent on the special representative of the United Nations secretary-general and head of UNMIK, Bernard Kouchner, KFOR commander Sir Mike Jackson, and the representatives of the United States and other leading NATO governments not only to condemn attacks on Serbs and Roma in Kosovo, but to make the treatment of minorities an urgent priority of the international community in Kosovo. In addition to more effective security arrangements, this means a willingness to condemn whoever is responsible for such abuses, and to press the leadership of the KLA and other Kosovo Albanian leaders to take action to prevent them.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was researched and written by Human Rights Watch. The report was edited by Holly Cartner, executive director of the Europe and Central Asia division, Mike McClintock, deputy program director, and Dinah PoKempner, deputy general counsel at Human Rights Watch. Invaluable production assistance was provided by Patrick Minges, publications director, Alexandra Perina, associate in the Europe and Central Asia division, and Fitzroy Hepkins, manager at Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch would like to thank all of the individuals who were interviewed for this report.

*Human Rights Watch  
Europe and Central Asia Division*

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