

**LIVING**  
**WITH**  
**MEMORIES**  
**OF THE**  
**MISSING**

Memory book with stories of family members of the missing from the last war in Kosovo

PRISHTINA 2019





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### **Interviews with:**

**FETIJE MIRENA** Fushë Kosovë / Kosovo Polje, 2018

**OLGA STOJANOVIĆ** Shtërpce / Štrpce, 2018

**NEZIR I HAMIDE AVDYLI** Mitrovicë / Mitrovica, 2018

**MALIC KRYEZIU** Bubavec / Bobovac, 2019

**FATIME QERKINI** Mitrovicë / Mitrovica, 2018

**MILORAD TRIFUNOVIC** Mitrovicë / Mitrovica, 2019

**NEBIH MORINA** Samadraxhë / Samodraža, 2019

**JASMINA ZHIVKOVIQ** Shtërpce / Štrpce, 2019

**HALIL, SADRI I ZYLE UJKANI** Mitrovicë / Mitrovica, 2018

**KUMRIJE MAZREKAJ** Drenovc / Drenovac, 2019

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Living with

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memories

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of the missing

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Memory book with stories of family members of the missing  
from the last war in Kosovo



## Living with memories of the missing

*Memory book with stories of family members  
of the missing from the last war in Kosovo*

Under 'normal' circumstances, a missing person is an individual whose whereabouts are unknown and who is being searched by one or more people. The term missing person acquires a formal meaning when a person is reported as missing or when an unidentified body is discovered. From the perspective of war crimes justice, "missing person" is, first of all, a common characteristic of persons who may belong to a group of crime victims<sup>1</sup>.

With the end of armed conflict in Kosovo, 6.063 people have been reported missing, while, currently (May 2019) the number of missing persons is 1653<sup>2</sup>. In the absence of co-operation between governments in Pristina and Belgrade and with a fragile normalization dialogue, efforts to uncover the fate of missing persons have come to a standstill. Despite the fact that missing persons are a social phenomenon which encompasses vast areas of interest, relatively little is known about those who go missing, what happens(ed) to them while they are missing, and what can be done to uncover crimes of such nature.

Encouraged by this and the grave importance of involving the issue of missing persons in the mechanisms of Dealing with Past and Transitional Justice, at the beginning of 2018, Integra and forumZFD program in Kosovo have started with the collection of personal stories and memories of family members of the missing, with the primary aim of giving them voice, of diversifying narratives for the missing and increasing pressure on the institutions, responsible for uncovering war crimes and the fate of the missing.

*"Living with the memories of the missing"* unfolds stories of 10 families with about 33 members missing from the recent war in Kosovo. 20 bodies, mostly found in mass graves in Serbia and in Kosovo, though not entirely complete, were returned to their relatives for (re)burial.

Of the families interviewed for this book, 7 are Albanian and 3 are Serbs. The Ujkani family was interviewed in conversation with two brothers Halil and Sadri, and Halil's wife, Zyle, who jointly miss five boys. This interview was conducted in March 2018, and in February 2019 we sadly learned that Sadri had passed away; In the Avdyli family, we separately interviewed Nezir and Hamide (husband and wife) who, apart from a still missing son, have found the body of the other younger son, considered

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<sup>1</sup> ICMP

<sup>2</sup> ICRC

missing for a while; The Mirena family had missing 16 men whose bodies were found in a mass grave in Serbia. Although with many missing limbs, their mortal remains were returned to the family for the last honors; Families Stojanovic and Zivkovic from Strpce / Shtërpçë, seek the husband, respectively the father, who were together on the critical day. In an effort to return the school files and documentations from Ferizaj / Orusevac, they left their families to no longer see the again; The Mazrekaj family from Drenovc / Drenovac had disappeared the son and head of household who were captured together and were captured by Serbian forces. As the boy manages to escape, he gets injured and dies. His body is thrown into the well where it is extracted and identified eight years after the end of the war. The fate of the head of household remains an enigma; The Kryeziu family had their boy forcefully separated from the column that fled from the flames that had gripped the village. The father of 18-year-old's missing finds no peace even 20 years after the end of the war; In the village of Samadraxhë / Samodraža, the Morina family lives in the hope that the body of their daughter Mevlyde, will find rest in the tomb that was left empty between her sons, Genc and Granit, who at the time they were killed were 5 and 3 years old. The bodies of the little nephews of the Morina family were found in a mass grave in Serbia; The Qerkini family is still searching for their son Reshat, who at the time of disappearance was 27 years old. The mother of Reshat, Fatime, tells how she hears her son's voice as he calls the name 'Nime'; While Milorad Trifunovic, who together with Reshat's father, Bajram Qerkini, is engaged in working on uncovering the fate of missing persons, tells how his brother was taken by people wearing black masks to never see him again.

The memory collection was carried out through oral history research method, while pictures of the interviewees, the house environment and other story-complementing locations were taken. Interviews were further transcribed and sent for editing and proofreading. It is of ethical and professional importance to note that the transcribed material from the interviews has been converted to that of a narrative in the first person, removing questions and frequent interventions from the interviewer. In order for the narratives to be fluent, double information have been reduced and the presented narratives were systematically arranged in a coherent structure. The primary focus in this process was to preserve the authenticity and dialectical nature of the language of narratives.

*"Living with memories of the missing"* is a memory book about the missing from the last war in Kosovo and about people who are searching for them. It is a collection of life histories of 10 families of missing persons, with detailed narrations about the challenges and horrors of war, and the critical moments of the disappearance of their loved ones. The stories you find in this book articulate the agony through which these families live and the powerlessness to learn about the fate of their loved ones.

The book, moreover, revisits the memories about the missing, bringing their stories into a format that overcomes their constant reduction to statistics, as it was the case in the last 20 years. The book narrates stories of missing children, young, men and women, forensic and investigative difficulties, stories about war and survival, stories of resilience and trauma coping mechanisms, through the lens of their dearest and loved ones.

This book provokes empathy and expands the understanding of variety of important topics related to the issue of missing persons, through lived experiences and narrations of those who live waiting.

**Korab Krasniqi** —————  
*Project manager and researcher*

*The language used and the views expressed in this publication are those of family members of missing persons interviewed for this project, and do not reflect those of the organizers and partners, associates or supporters of this project.*

## Reflection on Stories of the Missing: Possibilities for Epistemic Justice

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To speak of the missing of war, to research, to interview, transcribe, read, to remember and experience the loss relived in the everyday, is to bring back the political in situations that otherwise normalize the ruptures created by war. As Naravo-Yashin proposes in her ethnography of subjectivity under an authoritarian regime, the collection of interviews here, also, “invite reflections on the abnormal qualities of ‘normal’ states that are recognized by the international system” (2003: 107). In post-war protectorates and post-war state building, such as Kosovo, confronting the normalization of unrecognized pain, loss, and absence, is to bring back the political in the narratives of missing people, histories, memories and experiences. It is also a possibility for creating a deliberative space for epistemic justice.

Our first encounter with this collection of interviews brought about a response that was overwhelmingly emotional. The affect they resounded was first one of sorrow and then numbness. The recollections, however, challenged an initial feeling of powerlessness when one is faced by tragedy. The stories that are told here have continued to haunt and demand recognition and need for an emotional and intellectual architecture required to engage with the imposed liminality of “missing persons.” Within the current political and legal apparatus surrounding efforts for dealing with the past – where justice is not delivered – these stories emphasize the immediacy for reflecting on what we need to learn and unlearn in order to acknowledge what makes orchestrated and systemic violence possible.

The collection here can potentially be used in two ways. First is the manner in which it might close conversations and spaces of engagement, as has been characteristic of post-war memorialization in Kosovo. Such has relied on remembrance almost exclusively focused on martyrization of fighters and a linear masculinized narrative of nationhood, normalising the double disappearance of civilian victims of war. There are other alternatives, and this collection holds the possibility for keeping “things open and to remember the traumatic moment as a political moment of openness” (Edkins 2006: 108). Edkins has also argued that the:

demand that the missing be traced inevitably challenges the production of the person as object, and it can be seen as something more: it can be seen as a demand for a different form of politics, one in which the person-as-such is acknowledged (2011: viii)

Nebi Morina's Balad for the Missing (2004) dedicated to his grandsons Genc and Granit, to whom he refers as his sons, is a call for recognition and for vernaculars outside of current epistemic and political idioms: "Do you hear me power holders/Where have my boys gone /Alive or are they dead/Do not call them missing" (A më dëgjoni pushtetarë/Djemt ku më kanë mbetur/Janë të gjallë apo të vdekur/Mos mi quani të pagjetur).

Stories about the missing are recollections and continual remembrances of moments when people were taken away, of that last moment, words or interactions before they were never seen again. These recollections in themselves have no means of being understood under current collective memorialization that dominate political and social space in Kosovo. Rather, we must engage in creating spaces that do not just invite participation but are created out of a substantive inclusion in deliberation towards social and epistemic justice.

The recollections of missing persons in war are not rare histories requiring arduous excavation but an important reminder and possibility for collective social and institutional transformation and commitment. The missing cannot speak for themselves, they cannot tell us of their experiences, and therefore this and similar narratives require a deep commitment to ethical deliberation on what can be potentially learned by the telling of these histories.

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“ *The son of my brother-in-law, Safet, he was 16 and was selling cigarettes, he spoke Serbian and he was the seventeenth in line to be taken. Suddenly they put behind the railway, his father Hakif, shouted on him: “send him back, he is a child, he knows nothing’. Through window I have seen Safet coming back. But when he came, he was lost, crying and screaming [...] said: “oh, you don't know but men will not come back anymore.* ”

## **Fetije Mirena**

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In the evening of 21 April 1999 in Fushë Kosova the train unloaded a group of paramilitaries who came from Serbia. They were dressed in black, armed and with masks, entered in the houses where lived different members of wide family Mirena, from whom they gather not less than sixteen men – brothers, uncles' sons and their sons.

The remaining women with children got terrorized by their Serbian neighbors, forcing them to leave their country. The houses got robbed and later burnt. The remained with four children, Fetije Mirena, a wife of Nezir who was kidnapped that day, tells her many sufferings during and after the war.

In 2006 the remaining of Nezir and all other kidnapped men were found in Serbia. Their burials do not cover the tragedy of this family.





*Narration in first person:*

## ***His whole foot is missing***

*Fetije Mirena*

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My name is Fetije Mirena, I am born in village Trovc of Vushtrri in e very good family. I have had my father, mother, two brothers and we have been four sisters. Primary school I have completed in Strovç. I could not go on in secondary because parents did not allow females to go to school. It was so before in villages. I wanted like all others to go but the circumstances were so, we couldn't. Our village was there close to Prelluzha with Serbs. In Vushtrri we had no road to travel as females. We had to go on foot for one hour up to the train there in Prelluzhe, and a group of young ladies, they did not let us. I have completed the exercise in Mitrovica. Serbs called us for exercise, I was for six weeks in Mitrovica, they have taken us to Shipol and then in villages.

Even though I did not go to school, we were many cousins who had good relations, we went down to other neighbours, and we have had a very healthy family. We were around seven-eight young girls of same age that weren't allowed to go to school, however after our time things have changed and my sisters went to school. It was good, we went to other friends, weddings. We have had good time in our village.

I got engaged with Nezir Mirena. My father knew his family a bit. My auntie was married in his family in Hade. Family of my husband were displaced to Fushë Kosova long time ago. I met my husband at my auntie but when we got engaged, he wasn't here. He was soldier in Pozharevac of Serbia, I think. We were engaged for one year. Seven months after our engagement he came back from army and after three months we got married.

At my father I have arranged my wedding ceremony, lunch and everything. We have invited men, women, and the ceremony was nicely done. The wedding guests came to pick me up with cars, bus, there were many guests. They are of very good family, all were educated. When I came at my husband's, they welcomed me. It was Sunday when I got married, on Monday as our tradition requires, we have had a ladies' day, and we gathered and had fun. The day I got married it was 28 September 1986. In '87 my son was born, on 10 September, just before I had one year of marriage. After two years of my first son, my daughter was born. The other daughter after six year and the other son after two years of my little daughter. It means I have two daughters and two sons.

My children are here. The oldest son is graduated in faculty but currently he is doing nothing, but he must take care family and he is working as taxi driver to have some incomes because he has a wife and a daughter. He has 16 years of school but when he knocks on the doors there is no job for him. He completed his faculty in AAB, with our own efforts. My daughter is married in one village close here. She is fine, she has a very good husband, and she has a daughter and a son. She completed faculty of Bank and Finances. Currently she is working for Bajram's organization, Resource Centre for Missing Persons. She has worked for four years in Terranova but then her children are born, and she had to quit because she could not work in her profession. The second daughter is awaiting for the diploma of Albanian Literature and Grammar in University of Prishtina. She is 25 years old, but she is postponing the diploma thesis for one year now. The professors are postponing 'today, tomorrow'. She has prepared everything, and they said is fine but still... she is not working anywhere, she never worked, for some days she took care for a child every day for 3 hours per day. I hope she will get a job in her profession. She has completed the internship in a school in Fushë Kosova but without diploma she can't do anything. The youngest son completed secondary school, he is enrolled in faculty and is working in restaurant Garden. At the beginning he was a waiter but now he is manager for waiters. He is 23 but he only enrolled in faculty. He says "Look at my siblings that completed the faculty? He is not much interested in faculty as he says "there is no benefit from faculty. For how many years my brother is working privately where ever he can."

We have had a Serbian neighbour who had a son after seven daughters. I was owning a cow and he used to come and take milk from us. He said: "I don't want to change the milk for my son, I am always taking from you." Once my father was here, may his soul rest in peace, that Serb came and he said: "what did he want in your yard?" I replied: "Father, he comes to take the milk for his son." He said: "listen to your father I am giving you a word: you should never trust to e Serb. You feed with your own bread and at the end he comes and kills you like a thunderstorm. Keep these words in mind." I kept these words even though I was young, but I never thought in this way.

After, when we took our children to the doctor, the hospitality by Serbian doctors in Fushe Kosova was very bad, humiliating us. How do you carry children like that, you have no conditions, this and that? Seven days before the war started in Jashari family, my father-in-law died, and four days before the condolences period we had to quit that ceremony because many people were incoming and Serbs notices why there are many cars at our house. The railway is close, they were coming Serbs from Belgrade, the wagons were full of people pointing with three fingers, and we had to quit the condolences time because we were afraid.

All our men used to work in KEK, in-laws, my husband and all. Four days before they have taken our husbands, a house of an uncle is at the beginning of the neighbourhood, the Serbian neighbours entered in his house and forced to lay down and told: "You have to give everything you have money and gold or we are taking Fatlum." The only son. There was a brother who had no children whereas the other one had two sons and a daughter, and the one that have taken the only son. And them everything had in both houses, three women have given all the gold they had and money just to let the son free. I have seen these Serbs later running, their heads were completely shaved and with crosses. They were without masks, civil. Since that happened, we have said to our men "Let's go!" Where to go? Whole Fushë Kosova was full, you could not go and buy anything, neither cigarette, and we did not dare.

They did not go to KEK anymore, they couldn't go to work because they killed son of our uncle on 24 March '99. He was working for Social Institution in Prishtina. My little son was very sick. We were coming back from health centre and told to my husband that we need to buy flour because the crises already started. A Serbian lady approached to my husband and me: "Take the child and run, run, run!" my husband was very insisting and said: "Why should I run? What did I do? I went to the shop!" there was a big shop at the train station, I said: "I want to take some flour, why should I run?" she said "I am saying as to my brother, take your wife and child and run home." He was very insisting and I said, "Let's take the son and go!"

When we reached here, just before we entered, we have heard three shootings. My husband's brother came and said: "They killed somebody. Things are going bad." That uncle's son came with taxi. They have killed the taxi driver and that cousin. The plaque on his name is there, Mehdi Mirena. There it started and we knew nothing who was killed because didn't dare to go and see. Around evening I have asked his wife "Did uncle Mehdi came home?" She said "No, I don't know what happened, he did not come from work." That night they didn't dare to go, the next day they woke up before morning went to check and his body and that taxi driver from Fushe Kosova, both of them have been thrown under the bridge. They have taken the car. We have taken the cousin and we have buried him in Kryshevc cemetery. From that event we have tried to open the ceremony for condolences, but it was impossible. NATO attacked the same night that they were killed but we couldn't. We started that ceremony, people started coming but Serbs from train were shouting: "Serbia, Serbia, and Serbia." We quit.

After one month they came and have taken our men. It was 21 April '99, I will never forget. I went together with my husband to milk the cow that day. The dog was on leash there and I was coming, he remained behind me to take care for it, because he was at work but for a month no one could go. The well was in our yard and I put the

bucket with milk close to the well, suddenly I saw the railway was completely black. Two trucks stopped on the other side of the railway, they landed, they all were dressed in black and with masks, and each of them was holding a green ribbon on the arm. I shouted to my husband and said "the railway is dark and I don't know what they are." They were laying on that side, they were just raising their head up. And I said: "I run to the children, you run where ever you can, don't go inside." He insisted "No, I will never leave my children here." And we went inside.

They shot from the railway. My brother-in-law wasn't hearing well. I remember, they said "Stop", he didn't. He did not hear well and they shot from the railway and wounded him here on the yard. They entered in the uncle's house from that side. They have taken two of his sons, they were three and one sister because their parents went to Germany. From there they went and got my oldest brother-in-law, Nazif. His wife was taking shower to their children. It was evening, 7 and a half in the evening. Nazif was wounded and they caught him. They caught also the other brother-in-law Hakif. He came in here: "Nezir, come out because they came just to see if we are refugees or we are in our homes." The second floor of our house was not completely arranged and I said "go up there!" he said "No!" My oldest son was 11. He said: "I cannot because they will take my son, I better surround myself."

They gathered all the men. When they took my husband, that Serb with mask came until here, children were screaming loudly and my husband said to me: "turn the back of the children this way." When we saw the brother-in-law wounded, just before the Serbs came in, my husband fainted, I run to sparkle with water, children were screaming. When he stood up, the Serbs have taken him and brought him inside and they took him out again. Hakif came. The Serb said: "Let's go out!" He replied: "With wife and kids?" he said: "No, we are gathering only men." The sons started to run after him: "Daddy, daddy." I just grabbed my son from hand and brought him inside. He was saying to me: "Take the son away from me."

Latter my daughter Enchilada grabbed her father from leg, she was screaming and screaming. Serbs grabbed her by force. I was saying to her: "Come honey, let's go inside because they are just going to question your father and will come back." She was grabbing him up to the stairs. It was hard to take her from her father. That Serb told to my daughter "ne boj se" – (don't be afraid), fondling her hair. There they have taken the sixteen man from our neighbourhood and lined up. I took my little son outside allegedly for toilette just to see. They were around twenty people, but I didn't understand Serbian what they were saying.

Son of brother-in-law, Safet, was 16, he used to sell cigarettes and he spoke Serbian and he was the seventeenth in line. They put them behind the railway and his father

Hakif shout on them "turn him back because he is a child and he knows nothing." The young boy knew Serbian. I have seen from window that Safet was coming back. But when he came, he was lost crying loudly, said: "I hear everything what they said: "don't turn your head otherwise we shoot you immediately." The night fall, we gathered in my house all together with my sisters-in-law. We were waiting their return but nothing. Children were screaming and we were trying to calm them down. To tell you the truth that night I pushed down my daughter Gentiana from the bed because of the nervousness. Our men did not come back that night.

And old lady, who died, together with my sister-in-law from Kaçanik went to a Serb to ask. They were close to us. "Please, we have been neighbours forever and we had good relations, can you tell us where they took them?" they have taken four sons of that old lady. That Mehdi was killed earlier and other three were taken that day. When they came back, they told what that Serb has told to them: "You take your children and go to Albania because you have nothing here, we don't know who took your men." They said: "you, as our neighbours can go at police station at least to know where they have taken them. Did they kill them or where have they taken? But no, the old lady came back crying.

At 3 o'clock, a Serbian neighbour holding a gun on his belt came in and said: "take your children because you have no men anymore! Go to Albanian or Macedonia, wherever you want!" he was our neighbour. Then all of us, women and young girls. To young girls we put kerchiefs on their heads because the train station was full of people. The station is not far from us; 15-20 min on foot. One of the young girls took one of my children another one of my in-laws to look like ladies and not as girls, to protect from Serbs. We left and went to the train station. When we went, a civil Serb with an automatic on arm approached and said: "Why did you come here?" my sister-in-law replied: "we are going because they expelled us from our houses." He said: "you can't go anywhere tonight. Go away because there is not train for Skopje or anywhere. Take your children and don't stay here as tonight NATO is going to attack the station."

We stayed there for three hours in betony together with children waiting for the train but nothing. After another one came and said: "I know you. Take your children because tonight here they are going to slaughter you together with your children." We took the children and went back home. When we came home it was a mess. Our neighbours Serbian and Roma have broken doors and windows, have taken TVs, stoves, everything they could find in our property. For three hours they have emptied the neighbourhood.

The children were screaming. My mother-in-law was still alive, she was grieving. The sister-in-law prepared some food for her. My youngest son was three, he started

crying and I put in the cradle. While I was cradling someone said that "A car arrive." my son woke up. Zoran together with his son has taken the car of uncle's son. He was wearing a suit and an automatic on his arm, his son with bucket of fuel on his hand. My four children, sister-in-law Shemsie with three sons, Safet who survived from first group, two other young boys and I lined up us all to wall of the annex of the old house. And he said: "You have survived from all others?" only he remained, young boy of age 16. He said: "you have nothing here anymore. Why didn't you go to Albania? You love Albania. Go to Albania."

They lined up us all, me and sister in law, this Safete and wanted to kill us. I have shouted: "auntie Shema take your children close to you." I have taken all four of my children and said to him: "kill me together with my children. I will never leave my children with you to play with them, and after dogs to eat us across the fields." He said: "Take the children away!" I said: "I will never!" But suddenly I weakened, I sat down to avoid falling and said to my children "stay here close to your mother!" they were loudly screaming. The sister-in-law from Kaçanik went out from her corridor, the one who was preparing food for mother-in-law and her child, and in Serbian said to Zoran: "you should be ashamed, you are our neighbours, and we grow up here together and now coming to burn children and women."

He returned, removed the automatic from arm and his son said: "Take your children for a minute and go where ever you want." I have had a cow in the stable, sister-in-law brought two cows from across the railway because she was afraid to keep them there. I went inside, I thought my children escaped to continue through meadows that lead to Kryshevc. I was totally lost; I thought my son is in the cradle. I took the empty cradle and when I went out the Serb told me "put the cradle down and go and unleash thee cows, take them outside." When I went in the Serb pulled out a big knife and said to me: "unleash them." "Don't you see that I cannot" I said, because they were jumping. He said: "Get out!" I lost completely thinking "Now he is going to cut my head and leave me here."

The dog was barking all the time. He pulled the automatic and shot the dog in the hovel. I saved the dog's leash. Children started to shout because they thought that their mother is killed. He said: "Get out!" he went and cut the leash of the cows with that knife and cows went out in the meadows. All the ladies run but a daughter-in-law of a brother-in-law came back, and I said: "Stay with me because I am going crazy." He didn't let me go. I said: "I am going crazy because I don't know where my children went." In such cases you lose your mind. He told me: "you go!" we didn't look back anymore and when I went out I just grabbed the cradle because I thought that my son was in. Then I saw my daughter, she was 8 and half, was holding my son on her back and said to me "mum come because I have the brother." I dropped down the cradle.

That night we went to Kryshevc, and there we stayed for five days, they were barely sheltering us. They said: "we don't dare to have refugees." We came back and took care for houses hoping that they are releasing our men. We came back twice and entered carefully.

My husband's uncle was left alone at home because he was paralyzed, and his daughters-in-law could not carry him. When we came on the next day, they brought that uncle to the house of Mehdi Mirena, placed in a living room, undressed him completely. Serbs and Roma's brought the dog inside with him. The dog didn't touch him because it was a home dog. When his daughter opened the door, the dog jumped on her. When she saw her father like that, she got terrified. She was 19. She screamed very loudly and we run after her. They let the uncle like that intentionally to be bitten by dog, closed the door with purpose that when dogs get hungry to eat him. He was confused, just saying "Aaauuuuu" as he could not talk, he was paralyzed and unmovable.

We covered him with a blanket, but we could not find anything to carry him out because he was big. We went out to search for any handcart. We found and put the uncle on it and took to Kryshevc. Kryshevc is close. We have stayed there for other two days. They: "We wouldn't like to house refugees because police from Obiliq are coming at our homes also."

One morning we decided to leave. The train was coming from Belgrade, we got in the train and went to Bllaca. When we reached there, we were dropped down by Serbian soldiers or I don't know what they were. They forced us together with children to walk through some garbage. A lady there gave me two breads and some cheese to take with me as she said: "Children will starve".

My hand was swollen because the son was little, the other daughter five, another son was ten and half and the other daughter eight and a half. It was difficult with four children because no one could help you, everybody was looking to save their selves. I had to carry some clothes for four children. While walking on the garbage, a piece of glass crammed into foot of my son. He started "Ouch mother! I replied "Walk, don't talk! Just walk and don't talk!" I have pulled out that glass after six months in Prishtina, when we came back. I didn't know while we were there because my son didn't mention anymore.

So we went like animals, we have waited and they crossed us to Stankovec. We were waiting for any news from our husbands but nothing. Some who were released from prisons were coming but for ours nothing. In Stankovec we stayed for two months, until June. I was asked to go to Australia together with my children but children were very young, I was afraid then. It was a time when we women were not so much

civilized because to whom I mentioned this, used to say "Australia is far from Europe, you go there and will be lost together with your children." Children were very young. When you have no men close to you is different. Some of my sisters-in-law went to Germany to their sons but we remained lost. I refused to go to Australia and I had to come back.

When we came back, it was a mess. The house was abounded. Even the taps were broken, it was completely burnt. Two years ago, we entered to live in that year but it was burned to ashes. Even the other house was burnt and after we have destroyed that house. When we came back from Stankovec the grass was grown to two meters and children could not go in there.

I had no place to go and I was told: "We are taking to some place to Germia." I told them that my brother-in-law is in Dardania and "take me there" because I did not know where to go. I went at my brother-in-law, he was there with his family, two other sisters-in-law with their children who were returned before me and me. I stayed there for 2-3 days and I told to my brother-in-law, only he survived, "I want to go and see the house." He said, "You don't have to go." I replied, "I want to go because my oldest son is insisting". There was no place to go, it was like abounded, burnt to ashes, taps were broken and was flood everywhere.

I went to a cousin, we left from brother-in-law and gave us an apartment, which belonged to a Serb. All three sisters-in-law were living in the same apartment; there with children from three families it was hardly: four of mine, four of Sherife, three of Shemsie, all in an apartment with two rooms. Eleven children and three ladies in one apartment. The son of sister-in-law pushed my little son and the heavy heater felt on him and he fractured his head. We were close to emergency unit. Behind that heater was hidden 7-8 automatic guns but we removed from there and handed over to KFOR. I have taken my son to the emergency unit. They told me "Urgently to the hospital" they have taken him there with their own vehicle and he was shouting: "daddy, daddy." A doctor there was from Bellaqevc and said: "do you love more your daddy or mummy?" I said: "He does not know where his father is. He has been taken during the war and we don't know where they have taken him." He said: "How come you don't know?" "I am from Bellaqevc and your men, all the sixteen were killed in Pomozotin." I said: "No way!" than he replied "Yes, how come you don't know?" I said: "Believe me, we don't know, maybe my brother-in-law knows, but they did not tell this to us, women."

I have taken my son crying and went to Sunny Hill, at my husband's uncle and asked: "Uncle Kamer, do you know if our husbands are killed or they are alive?" I have told what the doctor has told me, that one who treated my son. He said: "A work



permission of Elmi was found. Around 16-17 graves were found in Pomozotin. Some signs are found but we don't tell you because we don't know exactly, and we don't want to upset you." He said: "this was a war; you never know they might be alive." As I was young, I trusted him, I was 30 that time. I trusted him.

A mother in-law came, and I said: "See if there is any apartment available until I reconstruct my house at least, because I have no other place to go with my children." She said to me: "Just tell me if you can because a Serb has abandoned his apartment and you can come in it." I replied: "How is possible a lady to usurp an apartment on her own?" Two people from KLA came and they arranged. There were two apartments, but they break a door of one and placed me in there with my children."

I entered there but some neighbours have told to the Serb in Belgrade. The next day the lady came and said to me: "what do you want here? I didn't kill anyone neither..." I said: "I know that you haven't kill my husband, but I have no place to stay, I am homeless." The Serbian lady came together with KFOR just to pull me out. "Get out" she said. I said: "I have no place to go, I am not touching you and you don't touch me. I have no place to take four of my children just to sleep on the street." I said: "I am not usurping forever neither taking but it is temporary solution. Your apartment is here, you will come again in it, and I am not taking it forever. My purpose is to shelter myself and children because I don't know where my husband is."

That night the Serbian lady slept in the other room. She did not sleep all night, me neither. The kitchen was full of knives, I was afraid that she will wake up during the night and stab my children. The neighbour had informed her, not because her husband was abroad, but the purpose of the Albanians was to take that apartment. The Serbian lady slept overnight and next day another Serbian lady came, who was married to an Albanian, who she spoke Albanian clearly and was translating for me. I said: "my intention is not to buy neither to live here, because things that don't belong to me will never be mine." I said I have my house, my land but I have no place to go because everything is burnt. I don't have my husband and I said that I don't have any help from anyone. Both of my brothers in Albania, none of them were here. I said none who could help me did not survive and I said: "as soon as you have any chance to sell your apartment you can sell it because I might reconstruct my house and make a solution. Somebody will help me." The other lady said to her: "Let this lady live in it because I am here, and I will see what she does." And since KFOR came with her have told that the next day will take to a place where they take women and children. The next day when KFOR came the Serbian lady told to them "I am going to Belgrade, let this lady live here but don't you dare to sell it." I said: "I am giving my word that I will only shelter myself with my children here until I make a solution with my house."

The Serbian lady left and after a week she came back with her men. She has taken a truck and took all of her things, she took everything. When she left from there, one of my brothers helped her to lift all the items down, and I said: "Let her take all because we can sleep in mattresses just to have a shelter somewhere." I had no stove, nor heating plate or anything where I could cook for my children. KFOR stayed there until they removed all the items and then KFOR told me that: "They are going to bring all the items and you stay here. I signed to KFOR that I am not going to usurp the apartment, I will use it as shelter with my children."

The Serbian lady has left the key at one of her neighbours whom she worked together in Gračanica. The Serbian left and later KFOR brought me mattresses, some quilts, dishes, forks, spoons, knives and some food. KFOR used to come often and they brought a bag of toys for my children.

The next day as soon as I put two of my children to sleep at midday, it was June, two men knocked on the door and said: "Mam, why did you enter in this apartment?" I said: "because I have no place to live, I was out in the street with my children and the Serbian lady in accordance with KFOR allowed me." He said: "Do you know that this apartment is ours?" I said: "No, I don't". He said: "look the key!" he put the key in the door and said: "you see the key. This is ours." My son was sleeping, the other three went out to play in front of the building. I put my hand on the door to push them go out. He: "sister takes the hands off because we are going to cut your hands." I said: "Cut them but I am not going to leave. My son is inside sleeping." He said: "we are going to give you your son." I said: "Now I am going to call KFOR because they give me their number." He said: this apartment is ours, you are in wrong apartment." I said: "I know I am in someone else's apartment." Both of the men pushed the door and I said to them "you should be ashamed. A lady with four children, instead of helping her you are doing to me this."

My brother came. They attacked him, but I said: "You go away. I will deal with them in my own." They went down the stairs and said: "While we are alive, we are not going to let you here." They did not come anymore. That neighbour has made up this issue.

I lived in that apartment until and associating helps me to reconstruct my home. I lived there for two years. I stayed up to June 2001 upon children finished the school because they were enrolled in "Ismail Qemajli" school. My uncle was in Sunny Hill and with an agreement he bought it from the Serbian lady. The uncle told me: "You stay as long as you want." However, I reconstructed that floor of my house and children wanted to go back. I also wanted to go back at my home, where my husband left me and children because things that don't belong to me will never be mine. I returned, we have suffered, poverty, children were all young, school was far away. They went to

school walking, on snow and cold. Later, in 2003 I found a job. The salary was low but it helped me a lot because I could take to school my children and I did not beg to anyone. The pension for husband – at the beginning I used to receive 300 DM until we found them and buried. When we found them they gave us this pension.

The first one to be found was Idriz. They all were in the same group in Batajnica, in Serbia. They have withdrawn from Pomozotin. There we have seen 17 graves, because it was a guest in our family, uncle of these guys. He left his wife with a daughter. They all were found at the same time. They are all buried.

But they were not completely buried. This was not told to us that are missing... in 2017 they brought an arm of my husband. They have told this only to my brother-in-law and his son. To us, women, no one has told this. I don't mean that this should have been told to children also. I came back from work and I met a guest of us, Sokol, he received also a part. When they told me this, I felt that whole Kosovo felt on me, it was very hard. I said: "what are you talking about?" I was told: "it was Ahmet Graiçevci, and a remaining of Nezir came. I said: "But we have buried him." Because we knew that we have buried. I went in my room crying, blood pressure was high, and I told this to my daughter-in-law and daughter. The daughter said: "Yes mum, Ahmet Graiçevci was in our yard." they did not tell this to children but to my brother-in-law who came from Prishtina.

My oldest son came back from work in the evening, but I have told to the daughter-in-law: "Don't you tell him before he eats his dinner!" He was tired; I said "Kushtrim, my son, there were missing some part of your father's body." He walked around the dining room for around twenty times saying: "This is not true, this is not true." I told him the Ahmet Graiçevci was at our yard. "You are guilty. You did not let me to see the body!" we hardly have seen the body because you had nothing to see, bones only. But they did not let the boy because he was 19 that time. He was saying: "The house remained on women. You did not know, that is not body of my father." He was shouting and crying "Where did I go, to whom I have paid courtesy, it was not the grave of my father at all." I said: "Honey, I will call now Ahmet Graiçevci because you are driving me crazy. When a coffin of your father arrived, I identified his clothes." I did not recognize his bones but all the clothes in front of his coffin were his. Inside were bones. I did recognize all of my husband's clothes.

My husband was killed with seven bullets, as is written in the papers. One on head, one on arm and one on heart. The sweater had several holes but not down, the sport trousers and jeans that he had. We were keeping things ready to leave. Underneath he had a pair of sport pants and had a zipper inside where he kept 100 DM to have in any case. They found that pocket and took the money.

The body was found in 2006 but the part of the arm arrived in 2017. We did not know, and I immediately have phoned my brother-in-law. He said: "Yes, it's not complete." I said: "You should have told to us women at least to prepare our children." Now my son is 31 years old. When he became 20 or 23, I would have told him because I am today, but I may not be the next day. Why children to be surprised and think that "Mother did not tell us." I phone the son of my brother-in-law and said: "to Veton just came six months ago but I did not make it big and Red Cross have issued there." I said "You should have made it a big deal because if only a finger is missing is yours. Why should we leave it to Serbia?" I want to bring his remaining and have the whole body." My son was completely mad, he was insisting "I am going to take the body out and make the analyses on my own, once more." My son gave blood twice for analyses, the daughter, mother-in-law and sisters.

When they found the arm, I was invited and went there to sign and met Teuta, who works for UNMIK. She said to me: "Talk to you children because it might happen that after seventy years to be found another remaining and you can bring your son at us." I have told to my son "to go to Red Cross." He went there told "I want to know everything" they have told that those are all bones of your father because this was verified through analyses, but some bones were mixed. The son was calmed little bit. Now complete foot is missing and two of his knees' covers. The arm was buried with other bones. The Red Cross came and did with their tools. I have signed at the municipality. But the knees' cover may not be found, as Red Cross said to us. But for the foot I have told to my son, of course because he is his father and my husband, and we should know.

My husband was very good man, wise and lovely, for his children and wife, and for his close family. Once my daughter was hospitalized in Belgrade because of an infection in intestine, when she was still a baby. We were so happy when doctor told us that she is very well, and we had to come back home. When we came home our sisters-in-law cooked a dinner. Whole family of my husband was happy family. I considered my brothers-in-law like my own brothers, they were very good, they were educated, with culture, they never insulted me, I could never complain.

I will never forget our last moments, I have had pie with spinach for lunch – since then I don't like it anymore, we have eaten it for lunch, but he again said: "Oh my God I am so hungry." I said: "I am going to milk the cow and we go and eat dinner. This is our last conversation we have had in the yard. When we entered inside, I don't remember any words of him.

He could not eat that night anymore. Since that day I cannot eat pie with spinach anymore, I just make it for my children, as I feel sorry, he could not eat his last dinner in his house.

Sometimes I dream him, but he just turns his back and tells me: "Stay there, you are fine!" he says to me only these words. When I talk to my colleagues, they say to me "it means stay as you are fine, take care for your children." But I cannot know. A night before our men were taken, my oldest son has dreamed and when he woke up said: "I have dreamed that they are going to slaughter us like at Adem Jashari." I told this to my husband and he said: "It's good to leave from here somehow." We remained here, only this neighbourhood. When I went to the brother-in-law I said: "Kushtrim dreamed" he replied "Leave it he is only a child." Whatever children dreams that becomes reality, as they came in the evening and have taken our men.

My message is to find all the killed persons and not to forgive this to Serbia before finding them, because Serbia knows all who killed our people. If sixteen potatoes get spoiled, you will be without lunch and let alone sixteen men.

The tax is very good, we agree with Ramush. Let the Serbia tells who have killed them, one by one, because it knows, let confront this people and when they get the punishment we will agree for our children, grandchildren to have a better life. But currently we would not like and there is no need that Hashim, Ramush either Fatmir Lima or anyone else to give land to Serbia. Serbia has taken a lot from Kosovo. I don't know what is requesting more. They left women with small children to suffer, children aren't going forward.

Because our children are with traumas. Hashim did not say any word and never came to visit for anniversaries. We all know what happened to Jashari family, there is nothing worse, but they never remembered the orphans, they never had advantages for schools, faculties neither jobs.

All men were working in KEK. None of our children is hired in KEK to work in their parents' places, at least to have jobs in state institutions. This is my wish, let our politicians know what they are doing, let them take the wish of the fallen people as they shed blood for this freedom that today they are enjoying, and our children are suffering.



“Americans had taught Albanians how to kidnap the Serbs wherever they found them and send them to the collection point assigned by the Americans. And the Albanian who kidnaped a Serb knew how to take him from the kidnaping place to the point where he handed him over to the Americans. After that, he no longer knew what happened to that Serb.”

## Ollga Stojanović

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Marko Stojanovic was the director of a primary school in Ferizaj at the time of NATO bombing. Convinced that the war would soon be over and that the collective would return to the disrupted teaching, he thinks there is no need to distribute the work documents to the employees. With the end of the bombing and the war, Albanians are placed in that school, while many Serbs of the city are displaced in the villages around Štrpce. There they organize the teaching of the adult Serbian community of the area. Accompanied by members of Polish KFOR, on September 1999, Marko went to his former school in Ferizaj to request from the Albanian colleagues the remaining documentation of teaching in Serbian language.

His wife, Olga, is full of doubts about his disappearance. She did not trust KFOR efforts to help him, and even believes that the American colonel is somehow involved in Marko's kidnapping.





*Narration in first person:*

## ***My life has become a living hell***

*Ollga Stojanović*

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I was born here in Štrpce, in 1950. I was the only child of my parents. I was educated here, in the primary school in Štrpce. I can say that my parents had educated me without problems. My father was a simple worker, but his salary was enough for us. I lived in a family with the uncles, their wives, our grandfather and grandmother. It was a good and modest family. Such was life then, we all lived in a community. When time came to go to high school, my parents decided to enroll me to a teaching school, which was the only one in Ferizaj. I was enrolled in it, and since I was a single kid, my parents decided to come with me so I would not face housing problems, as I was a common village girl, with no life experience. We found a flat to rent. I lived with my father and mother while I was in school. I finished the teaching school.

During schooling, I met Marko Stojanović, my future husband. The other secondary schools lasted for 4 years, and the one I did, the teaching school, lasted for 5 years. So, I finished school sometime around 1969–70 or 1970–71, I do not remember exactly, and since I was alone, my parents had to decide to go somewhere to take me to a college or a high school. But they decided not to leave me, afraid for my future. They decided that I should try to get a job, with my high school.

At that time, I wanted to go further, because I was ambitious. The dream of my life was to complete the music school. Even today I consider it an unfulfilled dream, and certainly not only the faculty, but I would have done all the music-related education, as I would very much like to go to music school. But my parents would not let me go to Prizren, to the music school.

I finished school in Ferizaj, and after my parents decided to discontinue my schooling, I married Marko in 1970. We made our vows in Ferizaj. We did not have a wedding, because my parents were against our marriage. We found a private apartment in Ferizaj and I started my life with Marko. But that time and today cannot be compared. The law in schools was much stricter; we were not allowed to go out in the evenings after work. As for the young boys, there were many prohibited things and we only met them in a flash. Marko was from a large family, while I was a single child; he must have liked that about me. We lived in a rented place and only Marko worked. He was a teacher of the Serbo-Croatian language and at the peak of his

career he won the gold medal as the best teacher in the municipality of Ferizaj and the surrounding municipalities. At first, I was at home alone. However, later I also started work. Since at that time it was difficult to find work in the city, I worked in the surrounding villages. For years I traveled. In 1971 I gave birth to our first son, Slavisa. We were still renting, life was difficult. Later, in 1975, Srdjan was born. Then, in 1978, Igor was born, also in Ferizaj. The boys attended school in there. We had a very modest life for a family of teachers. Teachers were fewer then, but since I was an only child and had my parents in Ferizaj, they helped us a lot. They took care of the kids while we were at work. I did not enroll the kids in kindergartens because my mom cared for them. This was great help because we did not pay for caretakers and we managed somehow to cover other expenses.

Marko before me had gone to town to work and understandably, tried to get a job in town for me too. I went to town, to "Tefik Çanga" school. We worked with Albanians and we went along very well with them. We had many Albanian family friends and we visited them for Eid and other holidays. Then, on the school day, March 7, we all celebrated together. Life was really beautiful, very good. We never separated. It was the 1970s. As a family, even when Yugoslavia was destroyed, we still had strong reports with the Albanians. My husband had many Albanian colleagues, whom he helped. The Albanian families were far bigger than the Serbian ones and had difficulties educating their children. At that time, my husband helped them a lot, in any way he could. Whether they had to get married or renovate their homes and so on.

The children had already grown up, Slavisa completed his high school, with very good success. However, at that time the law was such that he had to stop schooling to complete his military service. He completed his military service in Macedonia. So, due to circumstances, Slavisa completed only high school. Once he completed his military service, he started studying at the high technical school in Ferizaj. The second boy, Srdjan, finished his high school later on too. Then he decided to go to Pristina to attend computer high school.

But one day when he had just returned from Pristina, together with a friend of his, who was of the same age, and they had just descended from the bus, he crossed the railway going through the city. He was then stuck between the tracks and a train crushed him to death. It was April 5, 1997. After something like this, what can one say about life. Life became living hell for me.

The situation was already fragile, the Albanian and Serb schools were divided. Us Serbs found ourselves in a situation that we did not know how to explain what was happening, we did not know what was going on, why should, for example, Albanian children go through poisoning just because they tried to attend schools. So, there

were many such bad situations. We Serbs, of course, could not do anything, because this thing was happening only to Albanian students. We could not understand what was happening, who were those Serbs who were able to do such things. Because it was logical that Serbs were poisoning Albanian children, Albanians would not do that to their own children. However, the situation was unfolding so fast that because of the consequences for the children, the teachers themselves began to not attend work. Hence, the situation was very tense. However, when we met at work, because we still held lessons in the same facilities, we all communicated with the Albanians. And there was nothing inside our collective that made the tension felt. Later it came out that the Serbian directors did their job, and then the education of the Albanians was stopped. In that period, my husband was not yet a director of the school, but a teacher in it. Later he became a director and a decision was made to divide the schools. So, the facilities were divided between Serbian students and Albanian students. It was very difficult for us who went along well with the Albanians.

In all honesty, we took the end of 1990s as a very hard blow. Serbs had begun selling their homes in Ferizaj. An Albanian colleague and friend of Marko's, an extraordinary man, made us a proposal to sell our house to him. But my husband did not want to sell it. He said, "I do not have to sell it. No one is expelling me, no one is harming my children, I do not intend to sell, and I will stay here." The children went out to night clubs, to nightlife, and somehow the tension could be felt in the air, but not so much. Then the tragedy with our boy happened. The schools had already stopped work, it was difficult. Marko's' mother was left alone in the village and we took her to live with us because she was old. When bombing began, she was experiencing the third war in her life. She was born in 1914, that is, she was 84-85 years old and it was affecting her terribly. She was ill and had had a stroke here in Ferizaj. The doctors told us that she would not make it, and advised us to send her to the village, because at that time the situation in Ferizaj was not such as to bury her there.

There was panic amongst the Serbs at school: how would we manage, what would we do, where would we go? In order to avoid panic among the school staff, Marko as a director decided not to give them their work certificates and their personal files. So, he said, "Go now, the situation will calm down and you will pick up your work certificates, and your personal files, without any problem." We later left the school without documents, without a work certificate, without anything, because of my mother-in-law, who was ill.

Marko was not engaged in the war. He would go to school to visit the facility to see what the situation was like and return home. When my mother-in-law became very ill, we decided to come here, to their home in Beravce, a village 1 km from here, because of the mother. Igor and Slavisa remained in Ferizaj. The boy was buried in

Ferizaj. In 1999, I do not remember exactly since I was sedated then most of the time, and because of the old lady we came to the village. We got nothing from home, we were convinced that we would return to our home in Ferizaj to continue with our lives.

Two weeks after we came here, my mother-in-law died. Life here was terrible. The shops were closed. We were not able to perform none of the customs that are customary at someone's death. With many difficulties, Marko had to go to Ferizaj and only half an hour before the burial he managed to bring the coffin in which we buried his mother. Life was already becoming difficult, there was no food, no shops, nothing. Since neither I nor Marko worked, we had no salaries. We did not know then whether we would have this work in the future or not. It was terribly difficult. Then Marko decided to go to Belgrade, to the Ministry of Serbia, to implore them to allow him to open the primary school here in Zupa, so he could hire his formers staff. There were also many families and students that came here. It was easier for them to come here for school than to go to Serbia.

At that time we had convoys followed by the Polish members of NATO located here in Ferizaj. They followed people during such trips. Finally, the Ministry allowed Marko to open a primary school in Bitinje, one and a half miles from here. The school staff from our school that were found here did not have any job or documents because they were left in the school. Marko encountered many problems while trying to establish the school, hiring people here, engaging the students to attend regular classes, and because of the situation inventory was needed, but it was very difficult to secure it.

At that time, our house in Ferizaj was burned and looted, everything was taken. Then we heard that they were beginning to break the stones on the graves. That seemed the worst to me. What were we to do, where were we to go, the house was already burned, but it was not important at all. Consider the saying, "What you can build is no problem, let it go." Our only aim at that time was keeping the stones and the grave of our son intact.

As far as work was concerned, they had difficulties accepting us in this environment, even though both my husband and I come from here. The Ministry of Serbia had decided that the employees in the schools would receive the minimum wage of 11 thousand dinars. I was assigned to Primary School "Staja Markovic". Then the Ministry decided that we teachers would get our tasks assigned by the director according to our skill assessments, so that we would be assigned to teach art, music and physical education, and the other subjects would be taught by the teacher here from the village. But none of the directors wanted to do that. And so, we were out of

work. Then Marko tried to go to High School "Jovan Cvijic" to complain, with a certification that he was the best teacher.

Slavisa got married in 1993 and had a son while another child was already in his wife's womb. She was from Skopje. They decided to live in Skopje, sometime in 1994 or 1995. No, no, it was later. I am mixing up the years. But they are not important.

Looking at the situation created here in Zupa, we realized that it would be difficult. But from the experience of older people we knew that Zupa was never attacked by Albanians, it was never harmed. So Marko and I decided to stay here, to bring our bride and grandchildren from Skopje, here at the family house of Marko's. But immediately afterwards we heard that the house had been burned down, and that everything was looted. For us, the house was not so important, but our boy's grave was. He had died in 1997.

So, after the Serbian Ministry of Education allowed Marko to open a school in Zupa, he had to get the work certificates and employee files. He decided to go to Ferizaj, for work certificates and documentation, because he had left them all at school. He did not want to touch them. We were convinced that everything would remain as we were leaving it, and that the situation would calm down and in the end even if we could not return to workplaces at home, at least we would get the staff's documents so that they could continue to live, look for work, and so on.

But then my mother-in-law died. It was a difficult time. What were we to do? Marko had been looking for a job at the high school, and we were waiting to see what would happen. Then he continued with the efforts and went to Ferizaj for the documentation of his employees. The date was September 28, 1999. So, he went to Ferizaj to retrieve the Serb employee's documents. With him went our neighbor who was also a friend of ours, and four women. So, six people in total.

At that time the Polish KFOR was settled in Brezovica, and they agreed to take them to the school. Accompanying Marko was the professor of mathematics here, Nikolcevic. Then Svetlana Zivkovic, director of the economic school, Paun Zivkovic and two other women, I do not remember which ones. They started out here with jeeps, escorted by the Polish captain and the soldiers. On the road they agreed to go visit their homes and apartments one by one, and also the schools where they worked, in order to obtain the documentation.

Later I realized that the whole thing was organized in order to kidnap them. The only motive behind the kidnappings would be that Marko was the director of the elementary school, this Zivkovic Paun was the technical school director, while Svetlana was the director of the economic school. The directors were kidnapped

because allegedly they were the ones who had driven Albanians out of work and poisoned the Albanian students. It was not exactly revenge, but something resembling it closely; what is important is that it was something.

The Polish Colonel and the army had said to them, "From the Jeep, you will get out in twos, while the others will remain in the jeep." During the visits to all schools, this rule has been respected. But when Marko had to go to his school, he had started with the math professor, Nikolcevic, and had gone inside the school. Initially Nikolcevic had been in his apartment. So, they also visited their apartments. Then they went to the school. Everywhere they went was fine, trouble-free, without any problems. Everyone had withdrawn their documents or had explained why they had to go to the school and obtain them.

When they went to Marko's school, the Albanians were stationed there and they were attending school, so it had already become an Albanian school. They were well received, for I have a witness; who is this neighbor, Nikolcevic, who speaks of how well they were received in the office without problems. Marko had told them that they had come for their work certificates and files, they told them they could take them without problems because they did not need them.

However, Svetlana had left the jeep in order to enter the school and started making a mess. From trustworthy sources I heard that she as a director had to be kidnapped, but that the Albanians made a deal with her, and in turn she would not be kidnapped. She is originally from Doganjevo, a village three kilometers away from Ferizaj. She then staged the story that she would like to visit her family home to see if the house was burned and asked the Polish soldiers to take her there. I do not want to talk about her any more. But Marko and Paun had remained in school with the Albanians. Nikolcević had been taken out of the school and taken by jeep to the village of this Svetlana to visit her house. When they returned to Ferizaj, Marko and Paun were no longer in the school.

What had happened? The reason given was that there were some Serbs who heard that Marko and Paun were in school and had come to get them for a coffee, but we know that no Serb was at that time in Ferizaj. Naturally, it became immediate to learn where they were, what had happened to them. We had implored all those that were there to help us understand what had happened. Time passed; after some hours the American KFOR came with a Colonel who was later responsible for Marko's and Paun's case, by the name of Michael Elerby, who was an American. They allegedly searched the school, searching for them, but they found nothing. The others who were in the jeep were already back home.

Then life became real hell. From the life we had as teachers – living and working in the city, regardless of everything, with many friends, Albanians, Serbs and others– we suddenly lost our son, our house, our work, we lost everything. Then I had to fight to find Marko. I was convinced that I would definitely find him, that he could not have vanished just like that, as if the earth had opened up and swallowed him. Then we began efforts with the American KFOR, namely with this colonel. Every day they would visit our house, place listening devices. The nephews, Slavisa's children, were still very little, and were terrified when they would see ten American soldiers, heavily armed entering our house every day.

Then, I could move around in a seven-kilometer diameter. That is how much freedom of movement we had in Zupa. However, I managed to find enough information that Marko was alive, that people had talked to him, since he had taught Serbian language to Albanian children as well in the school. He was a very good teacher, he was not strict. I got information that Albanians were helping, giving food, medicines and everything else. That is what I found out. I dare not tell from whom. Not because of my safety, but because of the safety of those people who had told me these things. I got information that he was here, I went to the American colonel and told him about it, but in the end, in order not to prolong the story, it turned out that he had a duty to not find out where Marko was, but to just pretend that he was helping me. I found this out in the end.

I also found out this: Albanians, if they killed a Serb, left him where they killed him or her, so that the family could find the body and burry it, since Albanians know about our traditions. But when the Americans came, and of course they cooperated with the Albanians, it became a real hell, when they taught Albanians how to kidnap the Serbs. Why? Because the Americans had taught Albanians how to kidnap the Serbs wherever they found them and send them to the collection point assigned by the Americans. And the Albanian taught this way knew where to send the kidnapped person to a point where this person was handed over to the Americans. After that, that Albanian had no idea what happened to the kidnapped Serb. This is the real truth.

Paun, who remained with Marko, was also kidnapped. Nothing is known about him either. Same goes for Marko. They never came to get DNA samples, nor have they told us anything. Neither whether he was alive or dead. Nor that he was killed, or tortured. Nothing at all. Simply, they both disappeared. But four or five years ago, I still have the document, a French organization came here to Brezovica and handed me confirmation that Marko was killed. Then they called us somewhere between Pristina and Kosovo Polje, where KFOR is located. We went to talk, holding that letter with us, and with the announcement that it was brutal murder. There a Polish

judge, a state attorney or a judge, drew me aside, since Polish army had direct responsibility in the case of Marko and Paun.

What have I not experienced with this KFOR army? There were Poles, French, Italians, Americans, I communicated with all of them. So, I was on the outskirts of Pristina there, with a woman dealing with human rights. The Human Rights Convention applies the same all over the world, right? Regardless of nationality, or whatever, the human rights anywhere in the world are the same. I kept asking things from that woman, and from this colonel, from the Italian Carabinieri, there were some Indians there too, it was terrible... I was living in very severe conditions at that time. Slavisa's wife was already here, Igor was married. I did not know where she would give birth to her baby, I did not know what to do. Only two words I asked of them: Is Marko alive or dead? I did not want to know anything else. If he was alive, where was he, if he was dead, I had to know where his remains were. Only these two words, so that I knew what to do with the family, to make up my mind. Slavisa's wife was on the verge of birth, I did not know where to go, and we had very poor conditions. Nobody ever told me anything. Then, I went to Klaus Reinhardt, KFOR Commander, here in a place near Pristina. There is also a document of things that I requested from him. Everything was lawful, everything. I prayed to him to help me, since I had a big family, a granddaughter, I did not know what to do, where to go. But he just got out of the seat, he was nervous, because I had gathered a lot of information, while I was with the Colonel. I immediately told him to replace that colonel, because everything was clear to him, but again, I had had many difficulties in coming to beg him to help me. But he did nothing. I told this American colonel that I would go on a hunger strike, if he did not tell me just two words: alive or dead? However, he never said anything to me.

The last day I saw Marko was when he left for Ferizaj, September 28, 1999. At that time, I used to take a handful of medication pills, because of my son who died in 1997. After two years they kidnapped my husband. So, I was alone with the pills. And life was too hard, real hell. That day he told me: "I have to go to Ferizaj because of the teachers and the staff. I was wrong that I did not distribute work certificates and files to workers." He also told me, "Listen Olga, I did not do anything to anyone. I hope that nothing will happen to me and that I will be back, but if I do not come back, please take care of my family." He was in mourning for his mother, wearing black clothes, a shirt, in remembrance. His mother had died in April. In other words, he disappeared five months after his mother died.

I said, "Do not, it's a tough time. You do not need to go." "Nothing will happen to me – he said – do not worry." And he went. A couple of days later, on September 29 and October 1, I told the colonel to take me to the police station in Ferizaj to call my



former Albanian colleagues. There was a Pinci, the famous physical education teacher at Ekrem Çorolli, deputy director, we were friends. They would visit us for the main Serbian holidays. It was a special honor for an Albanian to come to a Serbian party, or for us to go to theirs. It was a horrible situation, I a Serb, with the American colonel, surrounded by the US military, calling Albanian colleagues to the police in Ferizaj, talking to them, to the deputy director, a really good man. I think he still lives in Ferizaj. He came and communicated with me very kindly, no matter that the times were hard and I was a Serb, and he an Albanian. He said to me: "Aunt Olga – because he is much younger than me – I'm sorry, if I knew where he was, I would not only tell you, but I would this instant go and bring him here, but my brother's son was also kidnapped" . I asked, "What, how?" He said, "I do not know." I said: "Why didn't you come to us to ask for help. We would help, Marko and I, we would look for him." His nephew was kidnapped in the period when Serbs were in Ferizaj. I said, "Why did not you come for help?" He just kept silent, without saying anything. But this Pinci, who is also in Ferizaj, when he came, he was a bit suspicious to me. He was trembling and this was noticeable. We talked, but he would not look at me at all. I said: "Please, we are friends, why won't you look at me? You seem suspicious to me, and I don't want to blame you for Marko's disappearance."

I got different information that he had not heard that Marko was kidnapped or had heard about it in the cafe. Yes, the people there were intimidated by the US military, with the American colonel next to them, and of course they did not feel well. I begged him to help me. "No, no, I cannot." – he said. I also called a teacher, Refki Bytyqi. The American Colonel informed me that he was not there, that he had fled to Skopje after his son had been a member of the KLA and was killed.

As a spouse, Marko was extremely good. Of course, he was the head of the family, working tirelessly for the family, which was normal. Everyday life was very difficult. We had many problems. Always, like all the teachers, we had small salaries and barely managed to make ends meet, but somehow we survived. However, life was fine. He was really a great man, very wise. What I liked most about him was that he was not a nationalist, nor did he divide people into rich and poor. First and foremost, he helped everybody. He was a teacher, but he knew everything about handy work at home and house construction, he was helping people around their houses and was not ashamed to do that as a teacher and director, which he was, but he would mess up his clothes to help people. He once even organized his colleagues at the primary school "Tefik Çanga", placed the scaffolding and they had the building façade ready with the work of only the teachers in the school. He always said that one should never be ashamed of work, because work is work, and profession is profession, it is not important whether you are a professor with a faculty, a director or anything else. Man is valued by how much he knows, how much he is involved, and how much strength and will he have to help someone.

He believed that a man should always strive, no matter what he experiences, and that he must be courageous and guide the family. His words and perseverance have helped me much in my life, in order that I do not give up. For this I miss him a lot, because of course, in years, humans forget and become more senile, but such words remain. To me it was a tremendous shock and I would not make it after my son died.

He had phoned people himself to tell them to come after we lost our boy. He was that courageous, since he too had suffered a lot as a child. They lived in a large community of peasants, who lived off agriculture alone. They did not have jobs, lived very hard, but at the time there were many dreadful situations because of the way of life, since life was not like now, with medical care, but there were times when the sick were waiting to die, only because they had no opportunity to get treatment. He had lost three brothers. When he lost his last brother, he was very frustrated, he took up to drinking, which is a vice you cannot escape from that easily. His brother tried hard to overcome the disease but did not succeed. His death touched him deeply. His brother left behind two sons, and Marko had to care for them, educate them, marry them off, prepare them for life, and now these two brother's sons are very famous. Doctor Ilija Andrejevic in Kamenica, in the Novi Sad hospital, if I'm not mistaken. The other one lives in Kragujevac and is an economist. They are very wise people.

For a long time, I was convinced Marko was alive. Initially, I know he had taught Albanian children. They loved him dearly. He had many Albanian friends. In my soul I felt that they would help him, that they would not kill him, until I learned that there was that yellow house in Albania and that many people were taken there for internal organs. On learning this, I was slightly shaken. He was weak, not big or heavy, but still very powerful. I was convinced that he would handle everything and that he would manage with the Albanians there. No matter where, if they sent him somewhere, captured him, or whatever it was, that he would find a common language with them as he was wise, very skilled, persistent in reaching his goals, and in preserving himself. Somewhere in the dungeon, in jail, he would volunteer to work, to save himself because he knew in what situation he had left the family. First, we lost our son, we lost the house, which was later burned. When he had gone to the cemetery and saw that the stone on his son's grave had not been touched, he said, "I do not care about the house. I do not care about anything, since the most important thing is that the stone is intact."

For a long time, I hoped that he was alive. Igor worked in Bondsteel, spoke English, and had contact with American soldiers. They told him, "Do not be nervous, what if your dad was sent somewhere outside and is working, but he has to sign that for 10, 15, and 20 years he is not alive to his family, but is working somewhere and might be back ". But when they brought me this confirmation to sign, that it was a cruel

murder, plus when I received information about the yellow house, though he was a bit older, born in 1946, and kidnapped in 1999. So, he was 53 years old. So, whether he was suitable for organs or not, I do not know. I'm convinced that they did not kill him, but that he was sent there. I have information that he was in Albania, in Kukës. Everything that I have thought of, I have achieved. Except ... I was planning to go to Kukës, but I was not able to go. Because, Albanian friends would help me, but I did not know the language to cross the border and so I did not go.

I do not have any help from the Government of Serbia. I was here for six years without a job. I did not have the means to feed the family. I even have a much smaller pension because these six years I have not worked. That was the only help they gave us. I failed to gain Marko's pension from Serbia too. I only have my pension from the Kosovo government of 130 Euro. I never got any help for the house, nothing ever.

I have already given up trying to find him. Otherwise, I've always been engaged and attended every meeting. One year in Gracanica when we held the meeting, I proposed to establish an association of Albanians and Serbs, because mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters mourn alike. The lament is the same. There are no Albanians or Serbs. Let's get together. Let's work together in looking for our people. If Albanians come to understand that the Serbs killed their relatives and learned where they were buried, I would go to the Serbian authorities to cooperate, to help them. But then they did not want to hear about it, they all laughed. It was terrible, what a disgusting approach they had.

I was in Pristina, at the meeting organized by the OSCE with the Serbian and Albanian family organizations. The Serbian organizer was an old man. When I saw that rally, I was amazed that we were together. What happened, happened. What were we to do? Neither you nor I, and maybe no one we know was involved in this. But let's move on. It's the nineteenth year for me without Marko and I have no word, I have no connection, I know nothing. Furthermore, my life is hell. Out of three boys, I now live alone at home. I am worried about both their families, for myself. One son was forced to leave.

The experience of my life, and I guarantee that there are such Albanian families, is that we forget everything. Will we learn where our people are, the ones who disappeared? Will we be able to achieve the basic conditions for living, work, education, healing, all of it? It is up to us. It seems to me that the government cannot stop here, and if the people so wish, the government is irrelevant. I would be happier if the relations in Kosovo were to go back to normal.

The territory of Kosovo, the territory of Serbia, the territory of Albania, the territory of Montenegro, are territories that may exist. Whose are they? It's land. It's real

estate. Life is important, human life, mind, children, family, and home. Territories are not at all important. Will I live here in Štrpce, or will we live in Pristina, what difference does it make? It is important for you and me to exist. Will you be above or below me that does not matter. If you are honest, righteous, it does not matter if you are Albanian and I am Serbian. I think this needs to be achieved. I do not like it when people are stubborn. I do not want to name people, but stubbornness in life can only lead to bad things. Nothing else. Here is what is important.

It was a difficult time in Kosovo, it still is. And I see this clearly because I have three boys and I am left alone. I have two grandchildren who are eager to work. Igor, the youngest, has been in Afghanistan. He worked, made money, bought wood processing machines worth two hundred thousand. He bought the house where he wanted to open the factory, to work there with his big brother and other cousins. Maybe it's not human, it's not good for me because I'm older, I know the value of the words I'm going to say, but unfortunately, this is the truth: the mayor, the present one in Štrpce, hindered everything. He did not allow him to sign a contract with any organization. Not one. However, they wanted to produce icons, to produce whatever was ordered. But they hindered him. We did not vote for him. We were not for him, since because of him my boys had to leave Zupa in search of bread.

So, this is my life, troubled, quite hard. When I go back to the past, there are good years, but ... If I were able to have my boys here to work, care for their families, and live here, I would be delighted. It is difficult, even impossible now, but it is my desire. I also want to meet an Albanian colleague and talk to her. Maybe, if anyone who hears this will blame me, but someone is bound to understand me.

I wish everything would be forgotten, even my husband. These are human fates; it was a period of life. I would like to learn from both my Serbian and the Albanian governments where the bones of the deceased are so to bury them according to customs. Their graves should be known. He might have died from a stroke or a heart attack, which would mean that he did not die by a bullet. I would have remained alone all the same and I would have to look after the family, in any case. But I might find it easier to know that he died a natural death. Maybe I would go with the children to Serbia, why should we stay here? I could not find a job. For six years I was not able to find a job, they barely accepted my 29 years of work experience. I almost remained without a pension, which is more like charity that I receive, and which is barely enough for my medicines, nothing more. Let alone enough to care for my grandsons, who are already grown-ups, and want to go out with friends, and I am not able to give them anything.

I do not blame anyone, I have no one to blame, because he was hard headed. If he would not go to Ferizaj, this would not have happened. But he believed in people, he

said, "What can they do to me, I have not done anything wrong to anyone." It was such a time, he is now gone, that was his kismet. What now? Why do my boys have to go to the end of the world because of this, why? Here is where we lived, here in Ferizaj. Here is Pristina. Gjilan, we are all here. Why? He had bought the machinery, the house, had built the factory, but still, he had to leave and let me suffer here.

I have so many experiences that I sometimes regret not having written them down. I would have published a book. What I have experienced with the colonel, where I went, what I did, it is a sin I did not write all that down. But I am so burdened now, tired of life. I so much want to forget a few things. Why should I remember these? There are moments that send me back; I cannot move forward because of them. The boy's grave is in Ferizaj. I do not want to move his remains here, nor to Serbia. I expect my children to work somewhere, either here or in Serbia. And they are scattered throughout the world. What to do with the boy's remains? Where should I move them to?

This is my destiny, my life, and I would not want to let the children suffer because of it. Let them advance, so that in the last days of my life I could fight for them and help them in order to ease their lives, to make them easier. Whether I will be able to, I do not know, because I do not have a big pension. I do not have anything special to do even though I'm old. I would work so that they did not have to leave. Unfortunately, there is nothing to do. Life is such. I have no one who could resolve my issues. Nobody to ask whether what I am doing is right, or whether I am wrong. But it's not important, I move on.

My message to all Albanians and all Serbs is not to use lies, because this suffering must end. If I lost my husband, and another woman lost her son, I know what pain she feels. Simply, let them return their remains to us. I will not react at all, I will not say anything, nor will I complain. But really, I also ask for help from my government and from the Albanian government. Let's close this suffering and have no deceptions. I have information that over 400 mortal remains are held in sacks by an entity in Pristina. Why do I have to suffer this much and for this long, if the bones are in Pristina already? We do not want to be lied to.

Marko had a tattoo of a rifle in his left hand, from the army days. Military service was mandatory in his time. On the form I had not listed this, to be sure, since I had heard people were being given – it is painful, but I must be honest – the bones of the animals, and the case was 'resolved'. In order to be convinced that I would take my husband's bones, I did not tell them the fact that he had a tattoo in his left hand, which Marko told me runs all the way to his bones. I thought it was possible to see that rifle in his bones and then I would accept his remains.

Hence, I implore the Serbian and Albanian governments to help us, and not hide things from us, they have no reason to. I am without my husband for 19 years. A mother suffers for her son. She wants to know once and for all where his grave is. Be it an Albanian or a Serbian mother. There is no difference at all. People are people. But I really want somebody's help to try and solve this problem. The gap between us, Albanians and Serbs, is our missing family members and relatives. Let's do it once and for all. There is no other way.







“ Serbia knows very well where the remains of missing persons are. Serbia shall tell if they have been burned, put them in the water, or they are somewhere in a massive grave. Serbia knows very well where they are. But, does not want to tell.”

Nezir Avdyli

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“ Fadil said to me, 'what will they do to you, mother? We go with the KLA, even we will die for this land, for freedom, is nothing! What about you? You are with this boy, who you will carry on your back! 'This is last time I saw Fadil, here at these stairs, he said me these words and I did not see him anymore.”

Hamide Avdyli

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## Nezir e Hamide Avdyli

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The parents of eight children, Nezir and Hamide Avdyli, remember the time when the war broke away from their two sons and they have never seen since. Three of their boys, Fadili (24), Fatmiri (18) and Kujtim (16-year-old), were separated from the family to join the convoy of people being deported. Kujtim together with some of his cousins managed to hide in a hut. The other two were in the group who had withdrawn from the convoy to a yard of one house. There Fatmir was killed while Fadil managed to run, but he was injured in his arm. One of his neighbours who met him has bandaged the wound. He is the last one to report seeing Fadil alive.

Today, after twenty years, the family knows nothing about his destiny, despite the efforts to find him made by father Nezir and brother Kujtim. Hamide tells that Fadil often comes in her dreams saying: "Come on, mother, come with me because I don't have time! You come with me, also!" The parents are living with the hope that at least they will find their remaining while they are still alive.



*Narration in first person:*

## ***Something happened, don't cry!***

*Nezir Avdyli*

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I am from Ofçar, there I am born and grown up for some time until we were taken as soldiers. I was young and jobless. That time we were cultivating the land, just to survive, as people says. Now, somewhere in 69 I have served one year in the then military force. My father was having heart issues, he couldn't work, and my mother was old. My mother is still alive, she is 100 years old. Yes, she is abroad, she is there at her sons.

When I was back from military, I got a job and got married while I was still in the village. Trepça was hiring employees. I have worked in Trepça for twenty years. I was hired in 1971 and I have worked until 1989 when Slobodan Milosevic fired us all from our jobs. In February 1989, I was in strike for eight days and eight nights we were sitting inside, without going outside at all. When we went out of the mine, we went to Prishtina walking. Then were often protests and events... we were also punished because we did not appear to work. We were requesting our rights. But it was well known who did not give us our rights. We were attending protests, we were coming to Mitrovica.

My marriage was arranged by middleman. Then no father let his daughter to meet a guy. One of our relatives has told to our next of kin: "I found a good guy; will you give your daughter? He thought for some days and it was the destiny and I got married with her. Before I was engaged to military we were engaged; as soon as I came back from the military, I got married with her and that time I got a job in Trepça. I stayed in Trepça for 12 years, we had our own apartments because Trepça was away from Ofçar about 4-5 hours walking. Then we had no cars. The roads were not good. After I have bought this place here, in 77th. In 78th I have built this house with all my efforts. In 80th I have taken my family here. When we moved here, I was going to work singing. Because then when we were working, we have suffered but when I got the job things became better.

We had the wedding, there were singers who sang when you paid them. There were also drums. But then the women were staying separately from men. The wedding ceremony preparations started a week in advance. There were also some of old ladies, 5-6 ladies, who prepared the layers for pie. Then, there were some persons called

chef, 2-3 persons who knew how to cook, 3-4 big pots, they were cooking all kind of foods. The guests were coming on Saturdays. If the summer was good and you had no enough space, people were sitting outdoor also. They were having fun, dancing. The wedding ceremony started a week before but those daughters, guests, it took a week after until they went back to their homes. However, it was very fun then. Even now days it is fun. Then this was the way of engaging two people, without meeting each other before. For someone was not a good deal. They would never be fit to each other, maybe one of them was much older, or something like that. However, these days, young people are seeing each other, like each other, dating, living together but sometimes they say, they are getting broken and this how they are ruin little bit.

Our first child was born after one and half year. Now I have six children, 4 boys and 2 girls. But Fatmir and Fadil are not among us. The war was tough for us. He has suffered a lot. We are still suffering. Not only some, but a lot. Here at our house they sometime let us stay but sometimes not. It happened that during the night we had to move somewhere else, in Tavnik to any of our relatives, because we were here around, river Iber is close and even the road was close. But them, were coming every minute, different kind, police, military, with masks, no masks, with beard and no beard, with axes and without axes, armed. We had suffered a lot. I don't know how is more difficult what we have experienced.

If I did not forget, the day when we were deported from Mitrovica, it was 15 April '99. We were deported from our houses. It was also on 16 and 17, I guess, these 3 days were huge war, big storm. For those 3 days, whatever it was inside Mitrovica, they deported everybody in three parts and who ever had the possibility left for Albania.

I did not, at my gate I have split with my sons. Two days before. And I did not see them anymore. I remained in this side, at Zhabar's road with my wife and my youngest son, two daughters and sons in-law. My married daughter had two children. There were we have split up because my sons told me: "We will go with some friends of our neighbours where God sends us or to mountains or we will go somewhere but you father go with mother, sisters and children where ever you can". But I have told them not to split, let them go together because if something happens, we don't know what will happen. "Yes – told me the other guys at the gate, we are going with some friends because if something happens, it is better not to be all together".

This is how I split with them lastly. On the last day I was split with them, here at my gate I have seen them. When they reached there to the uphill, my sisters told me, because three of my sisters were in the same convoy, some of my nephews, seven or eight and some other relatives. However, there the first one was stopped Bedri Muja from Kovaçica, my youngest sister was married to him. He had two children. As I

remember one of the children was two years whereas the other one six or seven months old, or one year old. I am not sure.

I have been told that the police were with masks that time. One tall police, his face was seen, he was white and blue eyes, and he asked Bedri Muja: "Are you Bedri?" he replied: "yes I am" and he said: "come here, give the child to someone and come here!". He has told for three-four times but Bedri did not leave the convoy. Then the police approached and took that child and told: "Someone take this child!" The mother of the child approached, my sister, and took her child. Bedri was stopped there. Then they have stopped Fadil, Fatmir and my sister's nephew, his name was Mehdi, he was 20 or 19 years old, he was not older. There they have stopped also some other from Mitrovica neighbourhood; this is what I was told. They were as group, eight or nine people, something like that. This is how a witness has told, they placed in a yard of one house and have killed them there. But how Fadil managed to run from there, only God knows. But he left wounded.

The old man told me, he was close, a neighbour: "I have met Fadil. This neighbour was in the convoy. But he was very old and exhausted, and his wife was old too. They could not walk in the convoy. They left behind the convoy. They have met my son Fadil. The exchange quickly some words, they could not talk longer because the forces came closer. They have told me that "he was wounded in his right hand. We have torn apart the shirt a bit and tied the hand quickly". But Fadil has told them: "everybody inside are killed". Fatmir was inside with that group.

Fadil has told to this neighbour: "Now I am split from the convoy, I am injured but my concern is where to go". There is a road which leads to uphill. To that part there connects with Vagrancies. Then KLA and Bajram Rexhepi have been there, the doctor has had his own headquarter, for the people who need aid. This neighbour has told him: "go that way, I hope you will be seen by KLA and they will take you there immediately". Fadil left in that direction. He left immediately and this is all what I know as my neighbour told me. Since then, 19 years have gone, and we don't know anything about his fate.

So, Fadil knew about Fatmir. But how he left from that yard, that fire, those killings, I don't know. If he left from door or window, I don't know. But to this neighbour he has told another one. When they were put inside that house, to this brother-in-law, Bedri Muja, he has told: "Shall we escape from window, if we survive good but if not, we are dead anyway". He replied: "No, we are not going to escape because we did nothing, we don't own anyone. They might let us go." But as Fadil has told, they have let them outside and there they have fired on them.

We knew nothing. We were running up to our home and sometime to some of our relatives. Somedays we could not sleep, we stayed awake and dressed. One day a guy came at our gate and told me: "who are you?" I replied "I am Nezir". I was smoking in balcony. I have seen some people, many women and men, they were coming from Iber and walking in direction of Tavnik, there at a curve, while I was passing through a yard, I have seen around eight or nine young men, dressed, handsome, with bags, made you believe they are smiling, but they could not talk. But I did not dare to look at them because police were there at the station. Above them was a house full of police. I was afraid they will kill me if I look at them. And I told to myself, poor their mothers and fathers, that our young men are going, I felt a lot of pain for them. I did not know who they are, but I felt pain for them."

After one week, another guy came at my gate. He was another. He asked me who am I. I told him. And he replied: "be strong men, because your son Fatmir, I knew him, he was player. One of your nephews also, I knew him also, and Bedri Muja from Kovaçica, and some other friends there with them". This is how he expressed condolences. He said: "We had difficulties to take them two nights before together with KLA, for seven days and seven nights they have stayed there in that yard". They could not take them; they did not dare because of police forces. "We have taken them during the night in two parts and moved to Vaganica, there they are buried, and they have a cloth in the upper part". In addition, he told me: "Whoever we knew, we have printed their names". On 16 April my sons were killed.

I suffered and suffered a lot, not eating or drinking at all, on rain, running to the house, up and down. A lot of suffers. We were here sitting and a person from behind came and told: "police came a we put some people to a field, I have been asked to tell you to go there, you go in direction of Tavnik". I don't know who that man was. Moreover, we took a shortcut here through some houses, because we didn't dare to go down the road because they could shoot on us from the castle. We went to the health house, as there was an open place. There were many people, old, young, women, a lot. I don't know where these guys went anymore. There they have kept us until 11 or 12. Police came on that day also, military, some with axes, with beards but I do not know to tell because they were criminals, chetniks from Serbia.

From there they have taken us to bus station. It was raining whole day long. When I left from there, I could not wear my shoes, but I had a pair of "opinga", traditional shoes, and I went to prison and later in Albania. With those opinga, no socks at all. We had nothing, just to run as fast as you can. There they started around 12 midday until 5 in the evening, to separate men in huge mass, only a very old man was left with women.

When a truck arrived, it was like we were potatoes, the truck was filled with people. The last ones were beaten with edge of the gun. We did not know where they are taking them. The last remaining people were around 150 or more. It was around 5 o'clock in the evening they have put us in that truck. When we reached at the market the driver purposely drove fast and we felt on each other. The swop platform broke and three to four people felt down. What happened with them further I don't know. If the climbed back to truck or not I don't know anything. I felt in the truck's base. How many people felt above me, I don't know but I felt breathless. There is nothing worse than when you have no breath. With God's help I got little up, holding on my hands and my throat was released. I could have died there on the truck.

Then we went at Sjenica Bridge, there where the barrier is. There they have brought one truck covered with tents. They have approached the trucks close to each other and we left that truck and got into the other truck where they have closed the tent, we did not know where are we going anymore. However, we were drove to Mitrovica's prison. When the first ones left out, police were standing in both sides and they were armed, and they had big black sticks. Half of the stick was black and the other half yellow. They were beating us with them, and people started shouting: "oh mother, oh mother". They put us inside the prison there was a huge yard. Before I entered the prison's gate a police officer has beaten me as much as he could between my arms, I almost felt down. I still have the feeling of that pain in my shoulders, and I cannot walk straight, I walk bended. My back is in pain, because with that stick he has beaten me as many times as he wanted.

As soon as we entered, they have placed us with face towards the wall. Our hands were cuffed. Then there one by one: "you come, you come, you come" were taking us to the prison. As much as I remember, it was first floor. There is a circle, police were standing there, and you could not enter or leave from there anymore. When my turn came, they told me "you come", but we did not dare to look anywhere. In my left side was another one but I did not dare to look, I did not know that he left. The police came speaking in Serbian said to me: "What were you waiting?" he swore on my mother and hit me for around four time, with as much force as he had. I barely straighten up.

They have taken us to prison's offices to interview us. There was a commander, I don't know who he was, but he was young. There were three police in his left and other three to his right and two or three behind. I was surrounded by them. When I entered, he said "Do you speak Serbian? I replied "I don't know". "Is it easy for you to speak Albanian or Serbian, because we know all". He told me. The he asked me "where are you from"? I said: "I am from Ofçari." "How is your name?" "My name is Nezir. Nezir Avdyli". And he said to me: "look, if you lie or make a mistake and you do not tell the truth, we will beat you here". I said: "I have nothing to lie because I did nothing".

However, I forgot to tell that when we entered in the corridor there were seven or eight people washed in blood, hands were tied behind their neck and face towards wall, but some could not stand on their feet. Two or three of them were sitting but I did not dare to look. Some were standing naked and they were totally undressed. They were totally in blood. We felt that something is going on. We had water mill before in the village. When we were grinding in dry, when there was no corn, the mill had very hard noise. We felt that something weird will going to happen. When I have seen these people like that, I said to myself: "they are going to do the same to us, they will just ask those questions and then will take us there to grind".

In that office that have taken me to say the words, I already told you. He said "Where do you live?" I said: "I live at Aradha e Shalës". This is how this street was called then. One of the police officers took a stick to hit me on the head and said to me: "you are lying, it's not called like that". Another police officer told him: "don't hit him because he is not lying. Two weeks ago, I was there and is called so, but he said I am surprised because we are here in Mitrovica for long time, but I never seen this man". He said: "Do you ever go out?" I said: "Whenever I need to go and buy something for the house. When I do not need, I work at home or stay there". The other police that was interviewing me said: "two days ago we were at Ofçari, looking for you. We stayed there for two days and two nights. We went there because of you. I said: "I don't know for who you went there but I am telling you where I live in Mitrovica and I am not aware I have done anything. You have taken us and now we are on your hands, you have the possibility and now you can do whatever you want with us". "He told me do you know how much is 99%? I said: "Yes I know," he said: "I am swearing that 99% you will not go out alive, but 1% yes".

They gave us some documents; someone is from Vaganica and some others to some other places, someone there, documents that we were in KLA. "Do not lose these documents!" There we stayed for two weeks. We were around 150 people. They gave us water. But we could not just drink without eating. They used to give us a very tiny piece of bread, old, God know for how long it was there, and also was something like soup, I do not know exactly what it was.

There they have kept us for two weeks. On 16th of May they have taken us there whereas on 29th or 30th May they moved us from there. The day when they let us go, it was around 8 in the morning. A police officer came with bunch of paper in his hand and said: "whoever I call by name, shall take its own clothes and go out in the corridor, and to back on the wall with their hands behind the neck". We left out but there was no space and they let us go out in the yard. There we have stayed until everybody came out. When we left out with our hands behind our neck, they were



calling: "you come, you come, you come!", but we didn't dare to look. As soon as I looked up, I have seen Kosovatrans's buses were at the door. I have seen two buses, I don't know if there were more or not. There we handed over all the documents that we had with us. The person who was taking the documents I don't know if he was police or soldier. The documents that they have gave to us, we handed over there.

When I entered in the bus, a police officer was there, I did not know him before, he was staying there whilst we were in the prison and he was beating as often as he could. Someone told that he has no children or anyone else. When I approached at the bus's door, he hit me as much as he could, even though I was walking bended. He has beaten me up until it was enough for him, but I held on the door otherwise he would have broken my jaw and face. We entered in the bus until it was full and these two police. They were very young. Even the driver was young. We, who were in the bus, and another bus, have taken to the bus station. When they took us there, we were kind of happy. We thought: "they are letting us free". When we reached there, they turned to gas station and they were supplied with fuel. As soon as he came in, we understood that there is chance to take us home, but we did not know what was expecting us.

Then, as soon as they filled the bus with fuel, the police have told us: "we cannot open the doors but open the windows and if you see any relative, neighbours ask them about your families". Some have seen someone and asked. I have seen a man whose house is close to old school. He did not know us, and I could not talk to him and ask "if my family is alive, or where they are?" And he was far away. The bus left, all the buses and directed to Prishtina. These two police officers, they were young, somebody said that they are from Suhadoll, driver and the police officer. Whoever wanted they gave a cigarette. I did not smoke, because I was smoking that time, but I did not smoke for two weeks and I did not take from him. I told him: "I don't smoke". It was a girl there when we left; I don't know who she was. Who was her brother or father there, I don't know, but has asked about her relative, who was at the front door "can you tell me where are you taking them and what will happen to them?" He said: "at four o'clock in the evening you come here, I will tell you where I left them". I don't know who she was, but she was speaking in Albanian.

We left in direction to Prishtina. When we reached in Millosheva, the bridge was destroyed. The bus went down to that road and we went somewhere in Fushë Kosova. Where ever we go there were police, soldiers, with and without beards and armed. We were thinking when they are going to shoot us... we were just listening what will happen with us. He drove us directly to Zhur. When we reached there, the bus stopped. While we were going the Serbian police told us: "we know where you are coming from. You are coming from prison. If someone wants to have water, take it

and said you are free to go". They said to us "your border is 4-5 km away from here. If yours will let you cross the border, it's your business. Our job was up to here, we can't go further. We are just telling you something to be aware. The road, on the left and right, is mined. Don't you dare to go out of the convoy or anything else because you will fall in mines". Further he said: "the houses around are full of police and soldiers, you do not see them. As soon as you step out, they will kill you". We did not split, and we went. "They told us to go with tied hands".

When we left out, we went in colon, like guests when they take the bride, one by one. We have gone quiet far and I could not hold the arms up. I told to one man before me: I cannot hold my hands anymore". The voice was going to each other and speaking if there were any police or not. Someone said no. "We have no one. No more police". While we were going down to the road a man became nervous with some women and children and said: "they will turn you back, because they turned me back at the border". No one has stopped us anymore. We were safe. We went to Albania. There were not much police. However, we could not look much, but there were not much police around.

Then, we enter Albania's border. As soon as we crossed the border, there came some vans to help us. Thanks to our brothers there in Albania. They have helped us as much as they could. They came with cars and vans to pick us up and took us to Kukës. There were many refugees. There I sat and had some rest. People were coming to ask about their relatives from Mitrovica.

There came a young boy, he was here close on rent, he found me. And he told me: "Nezir, your sister and nephews are at this place. And he said to me "We have seen on TV that your sons, nephew and brother-in-law have been killed. Is this true? I said: "yes, everybody was found except Fadil". Later came another brother-in-law, he is still alive, he found me there and brought some packet with cigarettes. I have stayed with them. The young boy who was living close to us, said: "I will take you to your sisters and nephews". However, I did not go walking because it was quite far, and I had no money to pay a taxi. While I was in the prison, they have taken 100 DM from me. He said to me "You don't need to pay anything. I will pay for you". He took me there. It was quite far. During that way there were a lot of people. There I found two of my sisters. There was also the one that her husband has been killed and the one that her son was killed. They were crying, grieving. They asked me about the ones that are killed. They were asking for my sons, for her son and the other sister for her husband. I told them: "don't worry about them because my sons, my nephew and brother-in-law have gone with KLA. They will not leave them alone, they will stay with them, don't worry". However, they were dead already, but I should not tell them. The sister with two children was crying all the time. She was swearing telling to me

"You know but you are not telling". No sister, don't you worry because they are alive, but they are with KLA, they are with our military".

There we have stayed for one month, until the end of June. When I went there, I found my family, they said to me: "Children are having cold here, we will go to Tirana, and we found a house for rent there". They asked me: "Are you coming with us?" I said: "I will try to find a connection, if someone can take me and go home because I don't know what happened with others".

My wife, the married daughter and my youngest daughter were in Albania. I had also three sons, because one of them was abroad. However, things were not as I was thinking. Somebody said to me: "Don't you dare, because you might not go alive there, but come with us". We then went to Tirana. We have rented a house close to the road. We all contributed to pay the rent. They have welcomed us. I cannot express how much. There was a taxi driver who took me every day "Come with me and let's sooth the boredom", and we were hanging around.

It was one month when NATO entered. We have had a brother-in-law; he had a van and also car of my nephews. I wanted to go back immediately, and I had no means. We came with them together. I had many sisters there. I had many difficulties to tell them what exactly happened. We came with that van just before the sun set. When we reached at a place called Lushnje, beyond bus station, my oldest sister is married there. She left there. A lady from our neighbour, she is quite old, but maybe she thought that my sister knew about her son, as soon as she left out from the van, she entered in the house yard, she greeted by hand and said to her "I am sorry" expressed the condolences for her son. She started shouting, screaming "Brother, why you didn't tell me?" the other sister found out about her husband. Those days were very tough for us, very tough.

I forgot to tell you that when we went to Albania, they prepared the phones, meaning that they found out that we entered in Albania, because we reported there. There was a person who was mentioning the names who ever came in Albanian. This is done in purpose that other family members to understand about their families. All my brothers and my son who was abroad found out that I am in Albania. For the other part of family for a time we did not know they are alive, because phones were switched off. For a period of time I did not know where my mother, my wife and children are. I did not know if they are still alive. I did not know. After a while I got connection with my brothers and they told me "they are alive but exhausted, they are at home but not home". When I came here, I found my mother, wife, one of my sisters, the youngest one, and whoever I left alive a found the alive.

When we came back from Albania, we went to Vaganica cemetery, there where Fatmir was buried. I am very thankful to KLA, our brother that they have taken him,

regardless if my son was with uniform or not, Serbs could have taken him, and God know where that would have taken him. I am thankful to whoever have taken him, so, we went there to see where they are buried. We went there with my brother-in-law, the one that his son was killed, my sisters and family. The whole group that was taken together were buried in row. There everybody was crying. You did not know which one to calm down first. It was hard. I don't know how I stood. They left their clothes above the grave. We found Fatmir's jacket above the grave. He was wearing same jacket when he left home, and sport pans. Whoever buried him there, they put his jacket and new sneakers above his grave. We did not find the sneakers, but the jacket was there. We could recognize him from his clothes and whoever was known by KLA, they printed the names. We knew exactly that ours are there.

After six months a commission with some doctors came from Hague Tribunal. They were exhumed there. They invited families, parents, who ever had their family members there. We went there for 4-5 days until all that row was completed. Each that was exhumed they called the family to see that body. They put them into plastic bags and zipped them. When came the turn of my son Fatmir, they exhumed. At the beginning they didn't let me see but my brother-in-law stayed there. Then he called me. "Come because they pulled out your son". When I approached he was zipped in plastic bag. They were taking to doctors to see. I opened the zipper by one of foreigners told me in his language "don't you open it!" however, I opened and seen my son. I have seen all his body was with clothes. Even his sport trousers were like new. His socks were on. Only his flesh has fallen. They took him, checked him, they did whatever they needed to do and brought back. Then we have taken these planks in Zhabar, each for his own family member.

Fatmir used to have good ring in his finger. That finger was removed. I think maybe criminals did it. When body of my son was exhumed, I have checked myself, trousers were dressed, socks also but face and head, the flesh felt. For parents this is very hard. For the family, for mother and father is very hard. The young men grows up, get married and create his family and they get something. For them is little easier but for father and mother is very difficult. I pray to God "Allah, this was a war, I hope will never happen again. I hope we will not experience same again".

We reburied in the same place, they just took them out and we put these planks, as our tradition requires, even these doctors, the commission, said: "for how long we are here, you should not take them". They told us when they finished their job there. They took some days there. They further said: "we have to go to Suhadoll and they will be done for that year, because weather is changing and we cannot look anymore".

Afterwards, we went there every time we need some peace. But we missed a lot, my wife and me. I don't know to describe how hard it was, because of tears..... I have no force to tell because I grieve a lot. Now days we go during the year to check is the grass is grown or anything. We did not build something big there. We were told that is not good to build at the graves. We have fixed somehow just to identify his grave, his name, reason he gave his life. When their anniversary is, we go with all families. Our grief is awoken, same as on the day when this happened.

Regarding Fadil, we never heard anything anymore, except what this neighbour has told us. But he is not among us anymore. For some time, we thought he is in the prison, somebody said they are there, somebody else there, but probably because he was injured and was not found there were the KLA had the health station in Vaganica, I didn't believe much that he is there. God knows. Serbia knows very well because it committed the massacre. The criminals from Serbia, Miloshevic he gave the order to do these, they know it very well. But they do not want to tell. Serbia knows very well where the missing persons are. Serbia shall tell this, if they have burned them, put them in the water or they are somewhere in any massive grave, somewhere in a hole. Serbia knows very well where they are but it does not want to tell.

I remember Fadil and Fatmir, not because they are my children, to praise them, but they were very good, wise, and capable, they had friends, they had everything. At the yard's gate Fadil has told me: "if something happens, I will die with this worry, that I could not wear the military clothes". I replied: "I hope nothing bad will happen to you or anyone else, none of the sons of Albanian mothers, I hope nothing bad will happen to anyone". Fatmir said to me: "Look if something happens, don't cry because I am going to play football". He mentioned names of two police officers. He said Ratku and Saviq" I did not know them who they are. But my son told me: "while I am going to play through Tavnik and the way back, maybe they saw me I am playing good, and I am making them jealous, kind of hate me, however I did nothing". But he said: "if something happens don't you cry because I don't care for my life nor spirit to die for Kosovo. The war is war. There is no war without blood. Further he said I hope whoever survives let enjoy the life in Kosovo, because if we run, we cannot live, daddy. Running to go to play, with fear to go to school, fear to have coffee, we cannot live like this".

So, he pledged me. For me this is very hard, it is very big deal he left me and told me "don't cry". Both of them pledged me "If something happens, don't cry for us!" but when I think I am proud, I hold myself, struggle myself and I tell to my family: "We should be strong and not to grieve because they gave life and blood for Kosovo". The ones who died, who were engaged in military and others who were not,

the blood is same. All of them are painful. They gave their lives, spirit for this freedom that we are enjoying today.

As soon as we came back from Albania, I have put the chair, I opened the door for condolences. Then was set for 15 days. After 15 days I removed the chair. Whoever wanted, had the possibility or felt pain, they came and expressed their condolences. However, the state, government could come just at my yard and say to me: "Nezir, do you grieve for your sons who gave their lives for Kosovo? Do you have any income, or are you holding? For me this would be enough. Last year this association of Bajram Qerkini, thanks to him, they have taken us 3 persons to the spa in Klllokot. Even this year, month ago, I went to that spa with three friends. Some of their relatives are killed, too. We stayed there for ten days, but nothing else.

I would plea to this state, our government, to make more efforts and find the missing persons, together with internationals who are here and claiming that they came here for justice, to help us, make pressure to Serbia, criminals of Serbia, and the ones who committed these crimes to face the justice.

I am saying one more thing, all the young boys; the youth in Kosovo let them love

*Narration in first person:*

## ***Two of my sons are disappeared; we found body only to one of them***

*Hamide Avdyli*

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I had good time at my father's. We were ten children. Five sisters and five brothers. I shortly went to school; I had no possibility. I should have attended four years, but it was short. My mother was not well, she had migraine. My oldest brother was two years older than me, all these children, these things have been done by me. Mother most of the time was laying on the bed. We were living only with our parents. I was like second mother for my siblings. Only God helped me.

My father died two years ago. My mother is 90 years old. My father used to work in agriculture, land. He was not employed and we were ten children. I have taken care for them like this. Most of the times I was engaged helping at my father's rather at my husband's. We did not attend the school that time so much but we did house work, fields.

I have good relations with my siblings. We are very much connected. Now I have four brothers. The oldest one died. Now we are five sisters and four brothers. But in my

village, I did not go for 22 years because my son is with Down syndrome. They have taken him there to play because he cannot stay without me. My family is in Prishtina and for one year, I did not go to visit them. My son does not let me. He is my son, he needs shower, everything in my own, to help him and everything.

With my husband, Nezir, we got engaged through a middleman, not like now days, they meet each other, get married and split in their own. We first got engaged. Nezir's sister is married to one of my brothers. Me with her brother, Nezir. Both of us through middleman. I was engaged for seven years. We never met. We never dated. I didn't dare from my father. My father was very tough, I didn't dare even to look in the eyes, or anything. Neither my sister-in-law. This how it was before. Later both of us got married. We have taken the bride for our brother, good wedding, and for us. I had had good time with my husband. He is very good.

We had enough people for the wedding, but it was not like nowadays, fun. Then was lesser. Now they are having more fun. Because you have your own family and you have more will.

I was 18 when I got married, when I became 19 my oldest daughter Hafize was born and after five sons and after one girl and other two boys. I was 11 when I got engaged. This is how they engaged you before and sometimes while you were still a baby in the cradle. After Hafize, was born another boy Fadil, the one that is disappeared. Halim is the third, Ali the fourth, Fatmir, the dead one, is the fifth, Kujtim is the sixth. Then we got Ardiana and Gentrit. Gentrit is the eight. They are all good, everything is fine, healthy and no problems. We have never taken them to doctor. I don't remember I have ever visited doctor.

We have always lived in this house. Even during the war, I was always at home. My husband and sons have escaped but me with my oldest daughter Hafize, son-in-law, children, and all here. We left the house for short time when they come, to avoid not to happen what we heard. We went there uphill and we came back here again. I have worked, cooked, and welcomed many refugees. They were coming from Mitrovica surrounding. Believe me they were above twenty people. I have cooked on my own. The brick ovens were burned. I did all, even though I have my own grieving for my sons. I am very patient, you can never notice me, and this is what is keeping me strong. I grieve for my sons, but I am very proud to have had such sons to give their lives for Kosovo, for our blood, but still the youngest son, Gentrit, is over it. He is over it. I have problems with him.

My husband has been in spa with them from association. I could not go. My husband is going for two years now but I don't know what the spa is. I am grieving a lot, but I have patience, maybe I am praising, but I am neat, I have moral because for me is difficult.

When military came in, because they were here located in Mitrovica, down to the mosque, and they pulled and some roma Serbian came with masks. They were scary. They came in and addressed to the bride: "Come with us!" The asked her "is your husband killed in KLA?" More or less we knew that these two were married. They came in and took her by the arm. We have had a kitchen here, they went holding her by the arm. I pulled out 300 DM and gave to them. I said to them: "go! You have killed enough, you did a lot of bad things, take these and go!" they said: "give money and gold, you have foreign money!" I replied: "I have no money nor gold, you have killed my sons, take these 300 DM and go!" they left. I saved the bride. I had to take the daughter and bride. God might accept this. Then, we left with headscarf on our heads. Stupidity, why we should have worn the headscarf? War!

Two of my sons were disappeared in the war. After nine days, we found a body of one of them. Three of my sons, Fadil, Fatmir and Kujtim where going to join the convoy because we have been deported from our houses.They expelled us to Albania. But I was not with them. Telling the truth neither my husband. They turned them from water supply and brought them to a road here, which is called road to Zhabar, above Mother Theresa there. The oldest son, Fadil, was wounded in the hand. Someone has seen and told to my husband that he met Fadil on the way and was wounded in the hand. Fatmir was killed together with his aunt's husband, aunt's son and a friend. They were in convoy, when they reached to water supply... the placed in one yard and there they were killed, they back to the wall and killed them four.

Since that day we are waiting because I want to know about Fadil's fate. If I know where he is. The grief for me is same if they find him or not, but at least to know something. For the other one we know where his grave is. Yes, we know and we visit him. The grievance for me is same as long as I am alive. What should you do? It was a war. We should accept. All of them are of someone's mother, sisters, fathers or brothers.

When they went at the door of the third yard, my son Kujtim, he lowered the head. He was then 16 years old. He was just looking. Fadil and Fatmir have said: "What shall we do with you, mother? You are with this son (Gentrit is with syndrome Down), what shall we do with you, because we will go with KLA with our friends. We are ready to die for this land, for this country, for freedom, this is nothing! What shall we do with you? This boy that you will carry on the back". The boy is not well. The last time I saw Fadil it was here on the stairs. When they expelled us from our houses, Fadil together with Fatmir have told me these words. I didn't see him anymore. We split from them. They went to his uncle, three of them. We left on Wednesday. We slept there overnight to one of our nieces, together husband and children, Hafize, with son in law. Fatmir, Fadil and Kujtim slept over at my brother in Zhabar. They were



expelled on Friday. They were killed on Friday ... Fatmir was killed. It was Friday. But Kujtim survived. They called them by names, both of them called. Fatmir attracted them. They said "you come also!". They swore on Fatmir. They hold him by arm. Kujtim was with one of my brothers in a hut, with his aunt and grandmother and said: "uncle they killed our guys!" he replied: "no, no they just shoot in the air".

I split up from them five days in advance. I did not see them anymore. For nine days we stayed in Lubovec. We were sheltered there. Upon our return – they said the situation is better in Mitrovica – and we are going back. They were killed nine days ago, from Friday. Some guys from KLA came to tell us. My husband was not here, they did not tell me. Later they have told to my husband. He told me after two weeks.

I had refugees in my house, my brother was also with his wife and children. I did not know anything for two weeks, for none of them. After two weeks, I woke up in the morning to make bread, baked around twenty breads for all the refugees. My husband was sitting and smoking and said to me: "Hamide, could you have any rest?" "Yes, enough." He further said: "Yesterday, when the brother –in–law came, his son is killed". Son of one of the brothers–in–law was killed together with Fatmir. He said: "Why you did not tell to Mursel that his son died, that he was killed?". He was going around. I said "I did not know anything". I said: "What about Fatmir who was with Fadil and them in the convoy?" he said: "Fadil was wounded in the hand, someone has seen, and told, he survived there. But Fatmir is killed".

At that moment I backed to balcony, bars and I went to the kitchen where I was cooking. To avoid my oldest daughter and I went to that kitchen. I thought to avoid them hearing me crying, to blow at least. My daughter came, I stood up to wash my face and not see me, it is a war I said, they will be surprised, you don't know how they will come and what will do to us. The daughter said: "Mother, what's wrong, why are you grieving? This is a war, everybody is split up". I said: "I am having head ache, my sons are split up".

She plead, she said: "I swear in God, in my brothers, why are you crying? I said: "oh Hafize! Your father said that Fadil is wounded and Fatmir is killed". She... I have seen her pulling her hair. She loved him so much. They were too much connected. No one ever said any bad word for them, I have educated them and spoke about everybody. Mother's role. I did many things for them, I still do. Maybe is not good to praise myself, the son with syndrome ... wets on the bed, I take him, wash his clothes and everything else with other house works. My grievance, work, other engagements. As long as we are is very fine. But when we are not anymore, where he will be? Fatmir would have been 19, in eighth month. He was killed on fourth April '99. Fadil was 24. He wanted to go abroad but the circumstances were not good. I cannot ever take him out of my heart. We were not in the situation to pay for him as he wanted

to go abroad. He wanted to go in Europe. Fatmir was playing football. They were good. The war is so...

Fadil completed secondary school. He worked after completion of school. We owned some cows then. He was taking care of them. He worked privately also, he helped to his father. Others were still young and at school. Halim, who is abroad, he completed forth class of the secondary school. They started to go in the school also, in Vaganica we call there. They were stabbed with knives, scissors ... but we don't know who they were. And we have taken off from school.

Fatmir was in secondary school and he loved to play football. One day before they joined the convoy, Fatmir was stopped by two Serbs at the school. They were playing at the sports hall and said to him: "Are you done?" he was Ratko Slaviq, from here. And they stepped out. A day before they joined the convoy.

Fatmir, that was the last time I have seen, and said to me: "mother, I am only 16 otherwise I would go to take my sister because there down town they are burning and killing. I would go to take Hafize but I don't have identity card". Hafize was staying here as refugee but she went at her home. Her house is close to the army. Opposite the tunnel, almost in Bajr.

That day I said nothing to my sons. Nothing at all. I just steered on them. Kujtim was holding his head down and almost crying, he was young. They left, three of them split from us and went to my brother. This is last time when we have seen each other.

Nowadays when I think, I say to myself, why I have split from them? Why? Why I did not stay close to them, why I split from them? My life is nothing without them. They were mine. I loved them so much and they loved me also, there is any kind of children, any kind of mother. They were very much connected to me. I suffered a lot for them. It was not easy to take care for eight children! I mean, at that time it was difficult. They were very happy with me, I stayed day and night for them, to continue schooling. To help them go forward, not backward. To be literate. For example, I do any kind of work but I have no school, very little. Back then they did not allow you to go to school.

Their sibling experienced very badly. Adriana, the youngest daughter, she was 13 but she was beautiful as God created her, she was looking like 20, she was shouting and shouting saying: "oh they might come and take us". The oldest one was having same behaviours. They forgot about the death. They were very crazy. Serbs, roma, or whoever they are. We have experienced a lot of evil things from them, we have suffered a lot. Since we remained here, we have suffered a lot, many grieves. What shall we do?

Fatmir was found by KLA. He was killed. They buried him. After one week they came and told us. They found here up, there is a place. At the place where he was killed together with the son of his aunt, husband of his aunt and a friend, they stayed for nine days. Fadil is not know which way he went. Here, at the hospital, there or they were three people. We searched everywhere at the imam up to the graves (exhumations), we were looking for his clothes or anything. But no, we never got any news.

For the last time Fadil was seen by one of our neighbours. He torn his underwear shirt and tied that hand, because he was bleeding, he said. He went to that bridge that leads to Mitrovica, Fadil entered there, he crossed the convoy. The old man told only few words they exchanged, as he said "Police came, soldiers came". They met the daughter of the old man. Fadil has told to him: "I really climbed a wooden fence there at that yard, I got wounded and them, they have killed, Zene". He has told to Zene and his daughter that other have been killed. After, if he is found, someone said this and someone that, we have not exact information. For 19 years.

The grave of Fatmir is there where he was buried by KLA. There are the aunt's husband, aunt's son, Fatmir and his friend. At a village is called Vaganice. Fatmir was not in KLA, but they had to take the dead bodies. I said to my husband: "bring him here because I miss him! Bring him here". Here we had only a garden, 12 acres of land. I said "bring him here to bury". He said: "no, he should be buried with his friends". Then I agreed to bury him there.

For the first time I paid a visit to his grave I was with my oldest daughter, one son-in-law and Kujtim. It was for the first Bajram (Eid al Fitr). I cried and tried to hold myself. It was because of my daughter and Kujtim. Kujtim became ill. He was crying and crying, and he found his clothes. All his belongings in the pockets of the jacket, shaving foam, and tooth paste, socks, shoes on his grave. Then he cried, shouted and he lost his consciousness when we brought him home. We had to take him to the doctor. Kujtim never talks about this with anyone. He just stays like that. Kujtim is the sixth child. Since that he is like that, he even does not work. He used to work before the war. Before the war he took care for the whole house, because the wife left long time ago. He was taking care for whole home; I was taking care, prepared food, to wash the children ... Not anymore, now he just sits. He is not even working neither married. He is 34.

My husband was taking care to find Fadil. He gave statements. My son, Kujtim, was looking everywhere in the graves to see if he could find at least a sign of him. He went everywhere together with his friends. He could not get any information. Just before end of the war we had a hope that he is in the hospital, there were rumours,

they have taken from hospital, he is cured, they are still healing him, he is in the prison, they are three of them... nothing for 19 years at all. We are still waiting but nothing.

All of my family supports me, they help me a lot to relieve the grief, and they do their best. I have these two nephews, I pray to God. Fadil is not found, we are waiting for his fate. I know Fatmir is killed. However, I pray to God for these two nephews, they are good, I love them and they love me, they relieve my grief little bit. They hug me, they love us, one comes and sits here and the other one sits here, and I feel like two of them are here in the house. We are so much connected. My husband is very good also.

The oldest nephew holds the name of Fatmir, the other one is born after him. I was waiting for Fadil's fate, that he will be found. The other one is called Fijon. This nephew Fatmir, he is in my heart. I don't know if he loves me as much as I love him. Whatever I buy, work, he does not want anything from his mother. I am the only woman in the house, days and nights. When some from my side comes, because I am alone, and the house is full of men, then I feel that my grievance is relieved for a while. I say: "Oh God, I have nephews, husband, and other sons". The God has predicted this for us, it was their death. This was a war. We have to accept because they are mothers of heroes. There is worse and worse. Do you see that lady in Suhareka, when she appears on TV, I cry for her together with my sons. She is all alone. Shyhrete, who is left alone. Now, with justice, for her is harder than for me. Fadil was very wise boy, I remember only the good things. He wanted to go to Germany, where the other son Halim is for 7 years, he left since he was 16, he went there to give us some help because that time we were poor. My husband was fired from Trepça. Children needed schooling, they were growing. They loved to go forward. Halim went abroad to help us. He wanted to go to Halim, to work and get married. He was 24. I think about these issues and we could not afford to them.

Fatmir loved to be football player. My daughter has taken the photos he took with his friends. Before the war he managed to be one of the best players. She has taken these photos because I was holding on my hands whole daylong. She has taken them to Belgium. I just remembered as I wanted to go and look them. I was hospitalized twice because of the grievance. In Mitrovica was for five weeks and in Prishtina same also. I fainted, I could not wake up, stress, I was dreaming them very often, I was talking to them, and I remembered them everywhere I went.

Fadil always comes in my dreams and says: "mother come, come with me because I have no time! Come with me you, also!" I see Fatmir also, but him rarer. They just say to me: "mother come with us!". I remember their clothes, how I took care of them, I remember their words. I remember everything even their socks, how I took care of them.

On that day, on the stairs, both of them were wearing jeans, both of them with leather jacket, shirts, shoes, white socks, like they wore them for Bajram. I still keep their socks. My daughters have taken some of their clothes. "Give them to someone" they say to me. Their clothes I have given to a poor family in Rahova, I gave to a cousin of our son-in-law, and they were ironed. That day was harder for me than the day I found out they are killed.

I have given away all their clothes. Also, the imam has told to my husband to give away because is not good to keep them. The son, who is with us, he didn't want to wear them. The other one is abroad. Also, the other one that is here didn't want to wear them. One day my husband said to me: "the imam told me to give away because is good". I gave them all. My sons did not want to wear them because they were very much connected. They grieved a lot.

Fadil enrolled in KLA but they did not hire. He went to that village Bajgora, Shala of Bajgora. He went after KLA, we followed him and I was worried. KLA then was in front line, they did not enroll him because they claimed that they do not have uniforms. They told go home and if something we will call you, but they didn't. It was better to get the guns, get enrolled and get killed there. Fatmir was young, they wouldn't take him at all. Fatmir didn't even had the ID card, he was not entitled yet. But he was grown.

They had many friends. They played football, they enjoyed playing together with friends. His aunts were close. With their children they enjoyed a lot, like brothers. They still love each other. They went down town together. Now when is Fatmir's anniversary, after two days, we go. The read in internet about Fatmir, how they played together. I don't know where to read. His friends come for visit. He has two friends who are twins, they come often to visit me. They were good friends and they loved him. But for a period of time they are not coming. Because they say: "when we see mother and father that they are grieving..." they are avoiding. I am very glad when I see their friends coming. I have had such son, to expect their good attitudes from them. Us, as parents, to have the feeling that he was good. His friends, the ones I know, they all survived. One of his friends is living here close. He comes for every Bajram. He is good, he was grown at his uncle because his mother was divorced, but he is very good, very good friend. I love and respect him, he accepts me like a mother. We don't own a car, I go walking to withdraw their pension, for both of them 203 €, because the fate of Fadil is not known yet. As soon as he sees me walking, says: "Hamide, where are you going?" I say: "I'm going down town". He knows, I cannot explain that I am going to take the money of my sons". He says, "I am taking my car and drive you there, like my mother". Next Bajram I will buy a shirt for him, as much as I can, a pair of socks to give to him, for the sake of Fatmir. I never leave him without a gift for Bajram.

Fatmir's friend is married and he has two daughters. Good enough, but when I see his children, I think "If Fatmir or Fadil would have had son or daughter, maybe they would look alike". I have grandchildren but what to do, this is how life is. I accepted it now just to make efforts for the ones are alive. Mother is same as for daughter and sons. But these ones were the best ones.

I remember ones Fadil was taking care for cows, because when we came here it was only a field, only trees were. Golden earrings he found covered with the paper, some fallen golden earrings. That time they were wearing such earrings, full of gold. He came home and said: "I found some golden earring, as soon as I set to eat my food, I found them there". What did you do, son? How did you find?" "I just cover because there were other children around and I did not tell, I just brought them home". "OK, I said, my son, this how you should do. Someone will take them. This is why you brought" But – I said – nothing even a lighter you find, don't bring it home. If I have a lighter, I will start the fire but if not, your father is working and he can buy. Because this will remain your vice. Once, twice and you forget about good things and take the bad things, when you do bad thing, you will find yourself under the bridge and then is harder to get up". This is not going by lesson but by blood. You must help through advices and also as much God gives you.

To tell you the truth, I grew them up with many people, we were living together with fifty people here. I have had seven sisters-in-law, my husband's sisters, two of his aunts. Now days before they come, they call you on the phone to ask you if you are free or have any plan. But then, they were staying for three weeks, one month.... One of them had nine children. Myself working on my own, never said any word. I made by 15-16 breads, three times a day. Then we did not have much. Mitrovica was always not developed. It was not completely poverty. Before, no one would buy a bread for you. Only with my hands. No one ever heard a word from me. Their children respect me like a mother. But to tell you the truth, my children were suffering. I gave to them only the left overs. I told to them "this is what has left, my son" if there is not enough bread for you, I will make it again". I remember these.

I see now children of my sons. My son now works, ta make them better life, from whom are running, from their mother and father. What kind of mother and father? Why to run from sisters-in-law, I am not surprised, now no sister-in-law loves the sister-in-law. Is it so? Very rare, rare. Only if is from very good family. To run from mother, father. Just to suffer.

Nezir, on his own is trying to find Fadil. Some internationals were twice, to tell you the truth, they did not understand. Twice with one foreign police. They were foreigner, black. They asked: "Did you find?" "Look in graves (exhumations) you might suspect in his clothes" but ours never ever.

When was New Year, because my son with syndrome becomes 24 on 5th of May, he has seen everything, chocolates, and things. He said: "Mother, are we going to the shop to buy something? Come with me!" I said: "I am coming also". He said "Why they did not bring chocolates as gift for me? I have seen taking to everyone else". He is very nervous. I keep him calm only with tablets [murmurs]. Whatever he needs we have to save the last cents to buy for him because he does not care? We receive 75 euros for him. What he wants? He drinks only juices whole daylong. He does not ask whether you have or not. Whatever he asks we have to buy. We have to make conditions for him. When he wakes up in the morning, I gave one and half of tablets to keep him calm. And to keep him sedated, sleeping and not to go out during the day. My husband cannot go, he was beaten in the Mitrovica's prison, during the war. He is really tired.

About Fadil, I would like to know about his fate, where his bones are, our grief is in half, because we didn't find. Even when he is found we will still have grief. But still is better to know about his fate, some have been found. If we find him while his father and I are alive, this is what I would like. I plea to whoever has the power, for Fadil's fate, in Prishtina. Prishtina has, because Mitrovica has nothing. It's useless to talk in Mitrovica. There is nothing. Whatever you speak here, Prishtina will fix it. Whoever is taking this interview, let it take, otherwise, this is God's will.

We know that it was a war, for 19 year few hopes. I give a will to myself, I lay on Allah will to help, I always pray for this, for everybody. What shall you do? This who the destiny is. To have some will.





“One of them noticed that the son held me from the arm, and he caught Mentor in the other arm. He faded, no blood remained in his face. Another one put the automatic on my stomach. I was the last one in the convoy to Albania, Mentor the last one for the other way, which was later confirmed that it was one-way street.”

## Maliq Kryeziu

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The family of Maliq Kryeziu was forced to leave the house when Serbian military forces came to attack the village with over thirty tanks. Striving to their families and with them to gather in the village Kralan, with at least ten thousand displaced people from Kijeve, Klina and Drenica. There they split some grown men who were bleeding from tortures.

For two days they remained starving, outside and cold nights. Although Serbs have taken their money and golden jewelries as a retaliation to release them for Albania, but the promise was not fulfilled.

They selected around eight men, among whom Mentor, the 18 years old son of Maliq, who were not allowed to go to Albania but they have directed to the massacre of Krelan, as is known nowadays.

After the war, the Kryeziu family returned from Albania to find not only the house burnt by Serbs. While researching for the son, they found also carbonised human remains in Kralan.



*Narration in first person:*

## ***We found pieces of bones in finger size***

*Maliq Kryeziu*

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My name is Maliq Kryeziu, of parent Lah and Tahire Kryeziu. I am born on November 25, 1954 in the village Bubavec. I lived in a big family because my father has had other four brothers. I was the first child on that big family and the only son of my parents. In big family we have lived until 1976 and then we split with other uncles. My mother died when I was 7. Father got married again. I have only one sister from my mother. I always missed my mother. The wife of my uncle, Halime, raised me and I always called her auntie.

I got married in 1975, in that time through middleman and after my marriage five daughters have born, one of the daughters died, and three sons, one of them Mentor who was taken. Now I have two sons and four daughters. In 1976 we have moved to here. In 1975 I completed my secondary school in Kijeva and then enrolled to the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, branch of geography and in 1984 I got the job. Before I started there, here it was a branch of orchards. I worked there for two years and then I was transferred to a school as teacher for geography, since I am qualified as professor of geography and I always was focused in teaching the pupils.

In 1981 there were organized students' demonstrations in Pristina where was plead to recognize the Republic of Kosova. We as students, have been mistreated by Serbian forces. Police used hot water against us, batons but even rubber bullets; we have experienced very tough moments.

Even during the time, I was working in Kijevë as a geography teacher, it happened often I had been mistreated by Serbian police officers, since police station was only 50 meters away of the school. There before used to live Serbs also. Some were working in our school and later they were dressed in uniforms and became police. It happened often when they searched us while we were going to school and requested daily plan that we prepared to teach our pupils. For me, it happened to get stopped by police on the street by one Sllagjan Ristiq from Kijeva. Even other police have stopped us and requested the curriculum. The police from Kijeva knew that I was a geography teacher and maybe he was interested to know what I was preparing for teaching session.

We as Albanians and the schools have experienced very tough moments. Once we were in the meeting of teachers' council, Serbian police came and took us out of the meeting. They have taken teacher Sheremet Morina, now deceased. When Sheremet was returned, had bruises all over because of the beating. It was very tough moment for me because I thought that we are going to have same fate even though we did nothing wrong. No one knew why they have taken Sheremet and beaten him like that.

Even later, it was May 20, we were in protest in Kijeva together with gymnasium students. It would have been 1981 'or 82' – 83. A number of teachers were prosecuted and imprisoned. They were our professors. Among prisoners was also one doctor. In that protest, Serbian police took pictures of protesters and then were inviting people one by one.

Once they came at our home, this Sllagjan who used to work with us in school, together with his colleague, with bullet proof vest, protection tools and automatics on hands. Then we were afraid of them. My wife went out at the door and I was at second floor. They asked for Arben, my oldest son. Arben was not even a student at that time but according to them he caused a problem in Prishtina. Fortunately, they did not find Arben at home. I didn't dare to confront them because I thought that they are going to use the chance and pick me.

In 1989, President Rugova has established a parallel system of education. So, we did not recognize Serbia's curriculum anymore because we started to work with our Albanian curriculum. In eighth grade we taught the geography of Yugoslavia. From the moment when President called for boycott of Serbia system, we started to work with the curriculum of the Republic of Kosova, as much as we could work on our own. I have asked from the secretary of Kijeva school – there were lost some documents in Kijeva, but aren't burnt, just to find one of my recorded session of 1989 where I wrote not anymore "geography of Yugoslavia" but of "Republic of Kosova." A witness for this I have the teacher Hasan Toplana, then he was student of high school in Gjakova, who at that time was as intern for two weeks. I have had instructed him: "from now on you search and use literature only for Republic of Kosova!" because we were learning for a country that we did not love, and we were aiming Republic of Kosova. I have asked the secretary for several times to find me such recorded session, to take picture of it and keep as evidence that I have contributed in that direction.

Then in 1990 the protests began. I remember, on January 30, 1990, I was also present in Malisheva when a son of my cousin Ali Din Kryeziu was killed, now he is announced martyr, then Qerim Haxhi Kryeziu and Murat Rexhep Kryeziu were

wounded. I remember that event clearly; one armoury vehicle left to Rahovec whereas a jeep in direction of Baja. I was on the bus station's side. They fired and Ali was there and was caught by bullets from armoury vehicle. Within a short time, he passed away in Malisheva. Qerim is still alive whereas Uncle Murat is later killed by Serbian forces.

I survived without getting any bullet, even though, as we heard, there were real bullets and not only rubber bullets. I was lucky and survived. Then we were engaged in Democratic League of Kosova all the time and we were giving our efforts for national cause.

To tell you the truth, I didn't expect the war because we have worked with Serbs in the same school until 1989, moreover we were teaching English together, combined the classes. In '89 we split up. The school had two entrances, in one side Albanians were entering and in the other one Serbs. It was a Serbian teacher Radosh Spasiq who was leading Serbs whereas our director was Shaban Thaçi.

Should be thanked a then director, Gani Zogaj, from village Llozicë. I was warden with one of my cousins, Manush Kryeziu, now deceased. The children called us to run because a Serbian technician, Istreta Gjukiq, attempted to kill a pupil. He pulled out the gun and running after the pupil in the class. Manush and I run – unfortunately we could not take a picture to use as evidence and show what kind a human he was – caught him a stopped. This Istreta every time when children went home, he used to go to director Gani, because then we were still together, complaining that Albanian pupils wrote on the blackboard "Kosova Republic". One day the director told to him "You are doing this and after claiming that Albanian pupils are doing. You are doing these shits" so, there are many unsatisfactory moments for us Albanians. Then I was thinking that God might see that this is enough and to us Albanians to give a better way, but today we are still me these problems.

Since 1981 the organized people used to write on walls, whether the mosque, or other places "Republic of Kosovo". Since then there were people from our village who were political prisoners, like Bilal Kryeziu, Mehmet Kryeziu, Isen Kryeziu... Then Shefqet Kryeziu, Fetah Kryeziu and others where then were organized different meeting also; where requested to enlighten those murders. Those meeting were organized by Communist League. Many people were hurt spiritually and where imprisoned and mistreated. It was known that Serbs did not choose the right way, but they were aiming that with huge mistreatment to fear the people to the marrow.

In the village, in '97 it was said that Kosovo Liberation Army was established, but in that year, I was in Germany. I came back home between two offensives in 1998. I

arrived in Skopje and after with a driver I continued to here. Then a check point was in Komaran but we survived, we came here and in Lozica at the pine tree it was another check point but we did not go that way and went to another road fearing what will happen with us. I already had informed the family and it was Mentor who came to pick me up with tractor. It was night and very dangerously that time. We left from Lozica not through the road but through villages all around, Vermice and Drenoc to come to our village. A vehicle was driving behind us and was turning the lights on and off, sometimes we didn't dare to turn the lights on, but we continued in dark. I still remember Mentor's condition, he was 18 then, in the fourth year of secondary school. Fortunately, we arrived alive at home.

While serving in the army during 1981–82 I served as mine-thrower. When I came, Avdyli Kryeziu, here he was kind of commander. The Kosovo Liberation Army's headquarter was established. I have said: "If you are in need for this kind of genre, I am here." It was a break between two offensives; I don't know who interfered OSCE or someone else. Then the KLA headquarter was established in our village also whereas Serbs were in Kijeva. Mentor have told me that it was Nuhi Kryeziu, a professor of engineering, who collected some young boys for exercises and among them Mentor was also. However, he was not a military and often he did not know how to protect himself, but he helped as much as he could. I remember when they said that he met in the entrances to the mountain a person who has co-worked for the Serbian forces and reported in headquarter. He didn't dare to go that way anymore.

During the first offensive, the family was here, in 1998. Then it was a withdrawal and on March 24, 1999 NATO attacked. From the fields that were cultivated by state, we have seen the planes clearly. The first attacked over Serbian forces on 24 of March were in our zone.

We stayed at home for other four days. So, on 28 we had no other solution except leaving the village. Around thirty Serbian tanks arrived, there were the restaurant is – then was belonging to Latif, and today belongs to the son of his brother – there they lined on the way to Kijeva and attacking with tanks. Then we have taken our families and left to Drenoc. From there we continued to Turjakë. We had some rest at the Turjaka's school. The bombings started not only from our village but also from the side of Ceralluka, from both sides. Then the village was emptied on 28 March 1999. I think we stayed there for couple of days but when the bombings started, we have taken our families. In Turjaka only a part of our village was, not all, we took the families and left to Llapqeva, where my acquaintances (in-laws) are. They own a three floors tower, because it is a historical monument, under state protection. We were stabilized there for couple of days. I had the tractor, food and clothing. They started to attack again, Serbian police and army came from Panorc and attacked in direction of Llapqeva.

We were in the family of my in-laws, when they attacked with a grenade and hit the corner of the house. The walls of the tower are around one and half meter wide but the attacked was very strong so the corner of the wall, that is stronger, was destroyed. That day one person was wounded during these shootings. I have taken my sons and two nephews and went to the forest. They were attacking the village and we were around two km away but even there where we were pieces of stones were coming, the land was shaking. Meanwhile the Serbian forced entered in Llapqeva and caught our families. They have said: "Go to Albania, we don't want to see you here." The families left for Albania. Whilst I was in Llapqeva, one of the Serbian leaders gave a piece of letter to an inhabitant from Llapqeva and told to show that letter to anyone who stops, and no one will interrupt, and so he went to Albania.

When my wife with my in-laws arrived down there in Mrasor, at the asphalt –as she told and also my father-in-law while he was alive – they met with the displaced from Klina, since Klina escaped from Llapqeva organized all together. Some of the displaced from Klina proposed to return to Kralan that until now was burnt twice by Serbian forces. Apparently that someone from soldiers have told that they may return to Kralan and not to go to Albania because the army will protect them and so they were returned. My wife's brother who was in uniform, is called Fehmi Hasanaj, came to the forest and found me. He told me that the families are safe and that they are in Kralan. We had just to cross the river Drin to go to Kralan. I said: "Can you help us because you know this area?"

I left with him but nephews and sons remained in the forest. When we approached a railway, a small dog barked at us. I thought we are done now because they will hear the noise and then will shoot on us. Luckily, we managed to cross the Drin, found my family and after two or three hours my sons came, Mentor, Arton and two nephews. They got the information and found us.

We slept for a night in Kralan on fodder, burnt houses, but Kralan's residents I don't know if they were around two or three because they escaped. In Mrasor arrived four tanks, which in airway with Kralan are around 1000 meters. They have turned the muzzles in our direction. As soon as we saw like that, all said let's go to Albanian because we have no other solution. Now I don't exactly remember the name of that soldier, in black uniform, military police then were called, who said to me: "No, you cannot go to Albania!" I said: "I went through the people, son." He replied: "Do you know what kind of responsibility you are taking?" At least there were ten thousand people, from Drenica, Klina and other around villages who came to Kralan. I replied: "here are ten thousand people, don't tease them, let them find a solution." "No, it can't" he said, and we returned.

The next day tanks came down towards us. When they came, our soldier went in front of them, you can stop the tank with an automatic? Our soldiers had no other solution except to go in front and be crushed by tanks and all to be killed or to withdraw within the population. People have seen them crying: "Poor us, what did we do." They run to forests and we were looking the way out.

A group of Serbs were positioned in Variak with tanks and observing the area with binoculars. Wherever we intended to go, they were shooting before us with grenades. When a grenade fell in front of us, people use to say: "Don't go that way because you are done." We remained going around the school of Kralan, from eight in the morning until in the evening. At the darkening, Enver Hoti, a professor of defence in Klina, who was leading the convoy, said: "We surrender, someone pull out white kerchiefs!" the families pulled whatever they had. He said: "I am first, you come after me!" We left for Albania. I was with my family, sons and daughters even though I have told to my sons "run!" Once Mentor decided and said "It would be better to run than caught us here, they will not let us leave alive." However, he didn't like to leave alone. Arton was little younger.

We walked together, when we were coming off the path in Kralan, one of them picked from the arm, I don't know if he was soldier or police and split me from the convoy. I was wearing a jacket, recently bought in Germany, he said: "Take the wallet out! He took all the money I had. We were ready for travelling and my wife had some money with her. I had also another small radio I used to hear news. He took and broke it down. He did not touch the documents, left it there and told: "Go!" when the police stopped me, my wife and children stopped also but I waved them to go, not to stop with me because I already understood that I am done there.

I catch the family again but when we arrived at the place where the crime happened, they have opened three alleys. In the first one I was ordered to go. I said "Five minutes ago one of yours stopped me; I am done." He punched me in the face. There I saw bunches of clothes and in Serbian he said to me "Undress!" I took off my upper part and left my clothes there. Luckily with that beat I was done with them, didn't happen anymore.

One of my in-laws was there close, young boy of Sali Jahë Llapqeva, he was totally in blood because they have beaten him on face. While we were there, a tank drove in our direction to crush on us, the ones that were in two lines. Someone from officers shout on him "Hey, where are you going? Go back!" He went back and we were safe from the tank but all the time scaring when they are going to fire us rapidly. After two hours they called Enver because he was leading the convoy and said: "Tell ten people that you have five minutes to dress your clothes, don't search for yours!" I



knew where I left my clothes, dressed and came back there but we were starving, tired, freezing, and dying.

In the other alley Mentor was stopped. I saw him on the next day in the morning, approached him slowly and said "Mentor, come close to me." He came. He was wearing a red shirt, different from other clothes. As if I knew, I said: "Mentor, see who has your clothes." We found and he put them on. Meantime Enver told us: "They are asking for money to let us go! they got a kerchief and collected huge amount of money and we gave to them.

We were waiting and waiting and just before the evening Enver said that two truck are coming to take us to Albania. But didn't come two, only one came and said: "Once let the old people go and we will come later for younger once." They loaded the truck with people and took to Albania. We were left waiting. Sometime in the evening they let us start a fire to heat us up because we were freezing. We heat up as much as we could.

The next day we were still waiting if something is moving and they said to Enver: "We cannot let you go because Gjakova's garrison commander should come, commander Govriq." We were still waiting. Around 9 that commander Govriq came with military uniform of former Yugoslavia. A short man with ranks in the uniform and he started to swear in America, Thaçi and Rugova, all of them: "They brought us here, we shouldn't come to the war."

Whilst he was talking a group of 7 or 10 soldiers came and started to split us: "you, you, and you!" as soon as I saw that I knew that things are going bad. I said to Mentor: "Keep your head down and don't look at them!" because as soon as you looked at them, they split you. Mentor put his head down, I was close to him. They have taken around 77 or 78 and said: "Other to go to Albania!" when we stood up, Mentor caught me from the arm. One of them noticed that the son held me from the arm, and he caught Mentor in the other arm. He became pale, no blood remained in his face. Another one put the automatic on my stomach. I was the last one in the convoy to Albania, Mentor the last one for the other way, which was later confirmed that it was one-way street. I will never forget his look. I couldn't do anything else except to go with them, to join that road also.

This is my last moment I have seen Mentor. Never ever. Except some words we have heard that they are somewhere, have taken them to work. I could never see him anymore, no trace of him I could find.

Then we continued to Albania. For a week I slept in Albania military base waiting for them. People were coming "Did you hear anything about Kralani case?" someone said they have been killed and someone released.

Briefly, there has been committed a terrible crime, a macabre murder. Very often KTV before the evening news used to present all the massacres committed in Kosova but why Kralan's I have never seen? It was mentioned e.g. Pastasel, Reçak, Izbica and all other but I did not see ever at least writing "Massacre of Kralan." In Kralan have been killed over 80 people in barbarian way and as long as I remember Louise Arbour was in Hague that time. When he visited Kralan, there were some equipment containing fluids for burning bodies. Since we came back from Albania, we have noticed that their bodies are burnt. We found pieces of bones in finger's size.

Even Arton for several times has been in danger. The family went to Albania, as my wife told several times Serbs have lined Arton to be killed. Some of the girls from my in-laws covered him with their long hairs and thus he survived. However, during our travel they were searched again and split male from them. Once I was told by my wife that they laid him down on the asphalt but some women from my in-laws defended him and especially some ladies from Gashi family. The Gashi's ladies have thrown gold and whatever they had: "Don't!" I have a married daughter in Likovcë. She tells that my wife bit a Serb on his hand when he caught Arton.

I have waited for a week for any news for Mentor. After one week I started to search for my family in Albania. After ten days I found them in Shkodra, at Sport's Palace. Then, we have stayed there. An Albanian family offered us its own apartment and there we lived for three months. My oldest daughter-in-law was with us and I had to take her to Germany, because her husband was there since '91st. I left my family there, my wife, Artor and my daughters.

Then they had arrived in Kosova with a van. When they returned, they saw the house was completely down burnt and they had no idea where to go. A house across ours, first cousins, had lasted. Uncle's son told: "come in until you find a solution!" Whilst they were still there, I came back and I have seen my house down to the ground. I didn't know what happened with my family. Then, here it was an open whole where Serbs stayed there. I have had a corn cage, as the old ones. They went in there, slept, have taken mattresses and whatever they found. The house was down to the ground. When I saw the situation like that, I was terrified. Maybe I am mistaken but very often I don't call Serbs as human beings because the people who surrender you should not destroy to that level. Our people were unarmed. The military had had armoury but it was not that strong to defend from Serbian forces.

However, I found my family at my uncle's son. The life started again. Then, the Swiss Caritas together with the one from Luxemburg were helping to our village. I have asked for a tent and lived in it there where those fruit trees are. I spent a winter there together with my family in very terrible conditions, inhuman.

We had some hope that something might happen. We've got different information that they are alive. Mostly we have communicated with people from Klina because they have taken many people from Klina in that group of disappeared. A Serb from Kijeva, Nikolla Stoshij, based on my information, he was dishonest together with his son, Zoran Stoshij, in uniforms. I have known him, maybe also Nikolla was there, but we didn't dare to communicate with them. Then, Shaban Elezi from Gjurgegjevik I Madh, who we met in Shkodra, tells that his two sons and nephew have been taken in Kralan by two Serbs, brothers Zoran and Mikjo Juksimoviq, their neighbours. One of them, when they unloaded the old men from the truck, has said to Shaban: "Do you want to go back to your sons and nephew in Kralan?" Shaban replied "No" because his wife and daughters-in law were with him. If he would have returned, he wouldn't be here today. They wanted to take him since they knew him, but he could not split as the plan was to load in the truck and send to Albania.

My worry is that with the government and internationals here do not intervene and to come out with facts. Here didn't happen something that was secret, somebody knew these people. At least to give the deserved punishment even though the blood of my son will not be paid even they are going to give me millions now. Then, suffers that my wife and I had, no one can pay neither.

Mentor has been 18, in the fourth year of secondary schools. In that year because of safety issues, the secondary school ended their program earlier, in April. He was distinguished even educated and behavioural, respect and love towards his parents. For a period of time he was the oldest one in the family because my oldest son was in Germany and he led the family here. He was good student. I never had any case when someone pointed on him saying: "Mentor insulted us." He was very much connected with my oldest daughter, the one who now is married in Likovc. The daughter is one year older than him but in school they were with same generation. I have taught my daughter and Mentor in Kijeva. In the family mostly he was associated with Arton, because Arton was going behind him always. For me he was a special boy, very lovely, wise, he never made upset anyone. He was tall, not too big. Not because he was mine, it was difficult to find a guy with such behaviours.

Even the uncle's sons Afrim and Tahir ... All three of them have been and remain to be the best guys in our neighbourhood. Even Afrim and Tahir have been special, but perhaps their particularity and their close relationship in this world and the other one has allied them together. God's willing to pay the blood of these people. May God revive the Albanian people, let the Government, too, and to work for the benefit of our country. I have only one worry, and I am very sorry that even we aren't working fairly for ourselves either.

Mentor has completed high school and probably those notes are somewhere ... I see that Malisheva can solve this issue, but they never sat even though they know that Mentor was a fourth-grade student. At least why not to issue a diploma to the one who has finished high school ... just to have it. Legally, the lessons they have completed in April. On April 4, Mentor was taken. He himself couldn't get the diploma. I have little hope that Mentor will be found alive and I have little hope of finding something from his body. If I find something from his remaining and convince myself that it is really part of his body, I would be better, and I would have it easier.

I do not remember the name of a person in the Kralan, whose yard these people were killed. He says he has been in the nearby mountain and has seen all the bad things that occurred during the night. There split into groups and in all those places there were signs of blood, watches, and clothes in a room where one group was killed. Surely Mentor was not in that group, otherwise I would have known. We have lost hope since Louise Arbor has stated that the case of Kralan is a special case because they have been killed and burned with a kind of fluid that helps burn the body of humans. However, if the Serbs would honestly declare that Mentor and all others were burned, still there would be some relief. But bigger relief would be if we would find something that really belongs to Mentor.

We have collaborated with family members who have missing persons. For some of Klina, it is said that they have found the remains in Çabrat of Gjakova, for which I doubt a lot. Hysen Krasniqi, a guy from Carralluka who escaped the massacre at Kralan, probably age of Mentor, had told us how that happened. He was injured in six places, but he had fate. It went out dragging, found by KLA, they have taken him, have treated him and today he is still alive, lives in Klina. He had started to tell the story but somehow it seemed that somebody drew attention, because there were many just married people, had left young women, maybe one child or two, and thus just to slow it little bit. I suspect that someone has shut his mouth to not give information, and not from the foreigners, but from our people for reasons that they may call justifiable, but for me it would not be reasonable even if my son would have been married.

This boy did not know Mentor, but in the general aspect he started giving some information. I have talked to that boy and when he disclosed his body, I saw that he was really wounded.

We were then oriented to the International Red Cross in Prishtina, we started talking about those issues. Then were established Associations for the Missing Persons. Here we have had the "Kujtesa" Association, led by Hysen Kryeziu. Several times we had meetings with the Government organized by Prenk Gjetaj, then we had meetings organized by Bajram Qerkini. Representatives of both KFOR and EULEX and the

European level representative participated there, but we have not received any accurate information. It was not the essence of the matter. Even UNMIK and FOR have shown little interest for this group of people.

We have been more oriented in the group of Dushi from Klina, because I was in touch with Sefer Manaj. His son had a leadership post in Prishtina. Sefer had grandsons, sons, daughters, and friends who were disappeared, and we have made our efforts through them.

Earlier, they said that Kolë Soshiqi is saying, "The ones from Kralan are alive, and do not hurry, we slowly are going to find them, find out ...". It lasted for seven-eight years. Once we heard about a nephew of Sefer Manaj who was a doctor, Ylli. I met Sefer in Klina. I said, "Sefer, we heard about Yll." He said, "It's done, tomorrow is verified, he is alive." I was happy, I thought at least if someone comes alive, perhaps Mentor could be also. But it did not look like that.

Words were coming from many people. There were cases when people have come to me because they got misinformation like: "Go to Maliq, because he received a letter from his son." Different kind but nothing real we have found. We have made another effort also. Atifete Bytyqi in Klina is interested about the missing persons and had talk with a lawyer, it seems to Brussels. We thought something will happen. We brought us some forms to complete, also for financial compensation. The form was well prepared, and we thought something good will be done, but nothing was done. I was also with a team in Raska, Serbia. It was said that there is a mass grave. We talked to a representative, I think it was KFOR, I do not remember, but they were foreigners. They told us, "We will make our efforts and find them." In the end it was zero.

Mentor was also involved with electrical appliances, televisions. Even for tractor, he used to say, "Tractor is mine." When we went to Llapqeva, they had burned our tractor. It was scrappy when we got it, we load to a trailer of another one's tractor, we brought it all in small parts and we managed to fix.

This Mentor's picture is from one of his school friends. We have saved this picture, something else we did not have, because everything has been burned, only the walls have remained.

I was also at Bekim Blakaj, of the International Humanitarian Fund, who is in contact with Natasa Kandic. He proposed me to go to Belgrade. But the family did not leave me. There was a meeting with Serbian and world journalists. I asked Bekim whether there was any chance for me to answer somehow from here. He enabled me, we connected to the screen, even with direct communication with them. I noticed that

not only Natasa Kandić, but also her associate had all the data of the case we are talking about. I don't know how they had, but they had all the data. Even the names of the people who committed these crimes, they had the notes.

As far as the government is concerned, is not only because we are family members of the missing persons, but poor us what kind of government we have. For the missing, neither the previous governments, nor this today have done something serious. Immediately after the war, the international organizations have helped us, to my wife they gave a sewing machine, me a planting machine for corn. Today, 20 years after the war and we see that the missing persons are the most neglected part of the government.

Now the law on salaries: do the blood of the missing persons have any value? Are the martyrs, or the disabled? At least the families to be rehabilitated. In our municipality there are probably over 70 missing persons, why not organizing an excursion for mothers of children or their parents, a walk out, a helping hand, why shouldn't an interest be shown? If our government cannot influence Belgrade, why does not it offer something to the families of the missing? The Belgrade government is one of the cruelest governments that the history of mankind recognizes because it hides the remains of people who have been killed, so I do not believe it can do anything in the human, moral, economic or whatever aspect.

After the formation of the state of Kosovo I thought that there would be another treatment for this people, but I see that people are only interested in their own chair, personal issues, enrichment and nothing else. I would ask the government to be more alert, to take seriously the work of the missing persons, and this to be solved once and forever. Not to be a burden, not worried. Today it would be good to have at least Mentor's grave somewhere. Only if I ever go to the Kralan to remember the events, otherwise I do not see any hope that in the future these worries will be removed from the people. I plea anyone who knows something about Kralan's case, to help them no matter what the situation is: even if they are killed and burned.







“*And as a mother ... twice it happened, just where I am now, sitting down all by myself. His voice came to me "Nimeeee!" I got up, opened the window, there was no-one. I left the window open, I sat down. His voice came to me again, with all its might, called my name "Nime!" Again, I stood up. That's exactly what happened to me in this house where we are now.*”

## Fatime Qerkini

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Reshat, the youngest boy of the Qerkini family from Mitrovica, is involved in the country's defense and begins to often miss from home during the time that the Serbian authorities intensify their terror in 1998 in the Drenica region, sometimes turning up for a short time and mostly late into night, in order to get new clothes. Reshat's activities and locations remain mysterious to his mother, Fatime, remembers the determination of her son in response to his absences from home: "I will be where all the rest are. And where the other's die, I will die too? I cannot just sit here while the youth is being killed."



*Narration in first person:*

## ***I want to go the woods and shout "Reshaat"!***

*Fatime Qerkini*

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I come from the village of Rudnik. My name is Fatime, they call me Nime. My brides, children and grandchildren they all call me Nime. As a girl, I had a very good life. I grew up amongst fifty people. It was a large family, but well educated. Well, it was what it was, times were such, it was a great pleasure, my grand dad had eight sons and eight daughters. Life was fine then. When I was two years old, in order to preserve the in-law relationship, we had entered did not spoil friendship, my husband Bajram's aunt was married to an uncle of mine, and when the aunt passed away, they gave me to him. I was two years old when the families agreed to this marriage, and when I became 17—they married me off to him.

I went to school but I did not finish the whole 8 years. We had a good life with Bajram. When we got married, we had a nice wedding. I even had a girls evening. Before he married me, Bajram lived in Obri with a large family, and his father came here to Mitrovica. I lived in Rudnik too, but mostly here in Mitrovica. I lived well here too. The people I lived with were two parents in law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law. I got along well with them very well too, I was the oldest one.

Bajram worked in the battery factory. We were lucky, he got a flat and we went to live there. For thirty-six years we lived in the northern part of Mitrovica. Our flat was near the police station and the place where the ID's were given, that is where we used to live. We lived well there too. We also had very good relations with the neighbors, we never had a disagreement between us. I raised four children in that flat, my daughter Zahide, then my sons Musa, Isa and the youngest son Reshat.

My daughter Zahidja, is married in Dibër. She has no children. Musa had completed school and worked for some time in Zveçan. But when they started expelling people from work altogether, they went there and took them out while beating them up. I remember when he came home that day and said, "Wow, they took us out of work." Musa is now in Holland. He has two daughters. He is doing well. Isa was in Holland too. He had a son and a daughter there too.

Reshat was here during the war. But he could get no rest. He used to get in and out of the house a lot. After a while, I said, "Reshat, something is not good. Where do you

go when you leave the house? "He said," Just hanging out with friends." I told him, "There are no friends during war." He said: "No, I really found a few friends." I said, "But you already have two friends, I do not remember you having more." He said: "No mum, I found a few more."

I was wheedling, but he wasn't telling. He was going out during the whole day long. I don't know where he went. I said: "Reshat, you cannot stay with friends during the whole day". We had a garden close to Iber. Since Bajram retired, we loved to go there sometimes, and we used to go there often. I say: "Reshat, your father wants to know: "Where does this boy go?" I have to answer him". He never told me, but finally my husband told me: "wheedle him little bit and maybe he will tell you where he is going". I said: "Sit down here and tell me where you are going and what are you doing?" he said: listen what I am saying: "whose sons are the ones are getting killed, I am there". I said: "Reshat don't, my son". He replied to me: "they all belong to their mothers". I asked him "Where have you been last night? He said: "In Prekaz, with some friends we tried to go to Lubavec but they appeared in front of us, we couldn't go". He said: "where everybody is, I will be there also". I replied: "Reshat, my son, I am afraid for you. Look how police have surrounded us". Police surrounded all the north part. However, he was going there. One day he left, he went to village Bare. He said: "They ambushed us in Bare, but we somehow escaped".

When the war was in Reçak, we were watching TV and he started crying. Three of us were crying, Bajram and me. He stood up and went to the kitchen and said: "Look how all of them are killed, and me sitting here". He could not stay calm. He was going everywhere. He was in Albania for three days. There they have taken some weapons to take to who, or what did they do, I don't know. He met Nexhmedin Spahiu. He is my cousin.

Bajram left to go for Friday's prayers. When he left out, he saw full of police in front of our gate. They have taken Bajram and took to the station. It was here close. I didn't know, even he did not know. They have interviewed Bajram. It didn't take long, and bell rang. There were a lot of Serbs in front of the door. They said that they came to take Reshat. I said: "He is not at home". One of them said: "He joined the KLA". At this time, I reacted, I was not afraid at all: "We are Albanian. All from Dudikersh joined the KLA". They went down the stairs.

Reshat didn't take long, he came and said "Nime, where is the old man?" I said: "they came and took him, and they are looking for you". Then, as soon as he understood that they have taken his father, Reshat went to the station. They have asked Bajram about KLA, about war and started to beat him. He went to protect his father. They let Bajram free and started to question Reshat. "Are you KLA?" because they might have seen him.

When Bajrami came back home, he told what they have asked him: "Are you KLA? Do you work for KLA?" he had bruises on his legs, I could not see elsewhere because Bajram did not tell. But he had on his legs, from knees and down.

They have kept Bajram for long time until Reshat went there. Then they kept Reshat. Reshat was beaten by them, also. You could kill Reshat but he would not tell anything. But they did not imprison him. They kept him in the station but the day when they released him, he came here but he never ever stayed at home anymore. Before, even though he was not telling, he asked me for some winter clothes. It was summer and he said to me "I have back pain, find me a jacket". I found the jacket. He left out and he did not come back until nine in the evening. As soon as he came, he said, "I am going because my friends are waiting". I replied "You just came back, son", he said: "I am going and coming back immediately".

One night he has taken a pen and a paper. He came very late. I used to leave the door unlocked. On the paper, he wrote "I will follow the road of Father Sadik." Father Sadik was Bajram's grandfather; he is disappeared since 1945, after World War II.

I woke up. He did not lay on the bed at all. I made the breakfast. I went to his room to invite him for breakfast. When I entered the room, I saw the letter on his pillow. He was not there. I took the letter and showed to Bajram. He said "if they come to search and find this letter, poor us". They used to come and search. I took it, I was afraid for Bajram and not for me, I put it in the stove and burned it.

Reshat did not come that night, even not in the next day, he came on the third day. I was sitting at the corner of the window when I saw him coming. When he came, I said to him "Where are you Reshat, son?" he always used to reply to me "wherever others are, I will be there. When all are killed, I will be also". He stayed for two days and he left again. I did not see what he has taken but he has taken some T-shirts, socks, underwear. He has taken also winter boots. He was going to Prekaz, Lubovec, or Bare, only his soul knows where he went. If I wheedled him, he would have told me.

One day his father told me "Tell to Reshat that whenever he wakes up to come at the garden. Come together to do watering". How to say this to him because Reshat was not at home at all, but I just said OK. Me, as mother, all the time was concerned about him but when Reshat came and said to him "it is almost two months and we did not drink any water or had lunch together. Why you wrote that letter and put on your pillow?" he said "I will also go like Father Sadik. They are belonging to their mothers". He ate and meanwhile a sister-in-law phoned me and asked "tell me how the situation is there? Are you afraid? She said "Come to this side", "No, we are staying home" I replied. I could not say to her that my son is not at home. He ate that food

and dressed up. He said "Find my best clothes". I said "they are all there hanged, take whatever you want, but tell me where you are going." He replied "I have told you once. Wherever everybody dies, I will die there also and wherever all are, I will be there also. Because I cannot stay here and there the youth is being killed, this is not right". I said "you do whatever you want!"

On that day he came four times and changed his clothes. He was taking on and off his clothes. He was taking all his best clothes that his brothers have sent from abroad. I said "Reshat, your father asked you to go at the garden for watering." He never rejected anything. He said: "recently rained a lot". I said "rained or not you have to come." He said "I will". He left and I left in direction of garden. In our neighbour it was a guy at first floor, he requested to come with me. While I was going there, Reshat was with other two friends at "Kivi". I said "Reshat, my son, come." He replied "I will come just to buy a juice you will drink with old man and auntie Valbona." I took the juice and we went there. We were waiting for Reshat, but he was not coming.

The rain started. We have built a cover, just to be protected from rain, and we entered there. We stayed over there up to nine in the evening. But he did not come. I was afraid that police might come. When the clock showed 9,30 Bajram went to bed and said "Reshat is late" I said "he will come, he always does".

I got a nap. I left the door unlocked. When I later woke up, he was sitting in his room. I said "look, it is one a clock in the morning. Where have you been?" he said: "wherever are all, I will be with them. Don't you worry my mother." He mentioned Prekaz, Lubovec, Bare, all the villages. I said "Why are you going there?" "I'm just going." He replied. He was dressed up completely and said "can you look for me the sport pants that Isa brought from Holland?" he also requested the winter shoes and a jacket that Isa had brought for him. He said "I am going out with some friends, and I am coming back later." He dressed up well and said "Lock the door, go to bed because I will not be late." I couldn't stay calm. He left and I said "Reshat, don't be late because is one in the morning." And I further said "maybe there is full of police, as soon as you go out they will get you." "Let them get me – he said – enough are killed, let them get me! You go to sleep because I won't be late." I replied "how to lock when is one in the morning and you are out. I am leaving the door unlocked". "Ok, as you want" he replied and left. Those are his last words.

If I knew that I will not see him anymore, I would have looked until he reached down the stairs. I have waited for him until 4 in the morning. I had no sleep at all. I woke at 4 o'clock, opened the door of his room to check for him, but he didn't come. Usually when he came back home, he did not leave his shoes on the shelf but always in front of his room door. But on that night, I was waiting and waiting. In the morning I told to Bajram that Reshat did not come home at all. He said "he will come latter". I said, "He

is coming and going again, I am afraid." Bajram said "you don't have to be afraid, he will come." I was sad" very much. I said to myself, he never had a rest, for two months his body had no rest. He never slept, ate or drunk enough and he was not calm. He used to say "wherever all are, I will be also. If everybody dies, I will die also. Kosovo is our country."

It was Wednesday that evening. We know nothing anymore about him. There is no friend who can talk about him. No one. Moreover, all the inhabitants that were there, they were asking for him "We did not see Reshat for a time." I lie saying that he went with some friends there where they go camping.

When the war ended, the day that NATO entered, we came from Dibra on the next day, because we were staying in Diber, where my daughter lives. They brought us by buses. We came with old people. I don't know the date and day.

As soon as we came, we went at Bajram's father. Later we went to the apartment. When we left, there were barricades. I did not know anyone even though we lived there for 36 years, there close to MIA. At the bridge they said to Bajram "you cannot go through, only the lady." Bajram got nervous little bit and he started... But I stepped on his foot, then he said to me "are you afraid?" I said "No". Slowly I went to the apartment there up to the north, and on my way, I saw many of them with head kerchief.

When I entered the entrance, I heard some "bam bum". But I was not afraid at all. The doors were crashing because it was windy. Nisada Čalaković came and said "Why you came?" I replied "I wanted to see my apartment." She said "You have nothing to see." I replied "More or less to see if any brick is left." She said "it left but you will be sad." I said "No, I will not be sad." I climbed the stairs and went in. All the facade felt down because it was burned, and the apartment was mess. I checked the documents. They weren't touched. I have taken them and put in my bag. On the ground I also found a cheque of Bajram's pension. I have taken also some pictures that I found there, and I left. I went back at father's apartment. Father, may his soul rest in peace, said to me "How did you come, my daughter? I said "I just wanted but everything is on the ground, father because they are burned!" he said "Are you sad?" I said "No". But my heart knows because there I have lived for thirty-six years, and I was feeling that Reshat will see me. When I went at the bridge, Bajram asked me if the apartment was there. I said "Bajram, it is destroyed completely".

The next day, we woke up at five in the morning. Again, at the bridge they said "The lady can go but not you." Bajram said "Are you afraid?" I said "I said you once that I am not." I went and said to myself I might not come here again. Sejdi Sylejmani was there and said "Where do you stay?" I said: "In my apartment." "How come in the

apartment?" I said again "in the apartment" and I did not go out for five days. I have cleaned all the garbage up to the balcony. It was completely destroyed. I have cleaned as much as I could, and I slept over there. An old lady that was there used to come, she was called Koka, and she said "Don't be afraid." I said "I am not afraid." It is true, I wasn't afraid because all the time I was thinking about my son.

As soon as we came, we have stayed in the north part for two years after the war. There was no Albanian. Only Bajram and me. I was never afraid. Bajram never went out. We managed to fix the apartment. Thanks God, otherwise, we had no shelter. Bajram did not want but we could not live on the road, even if you have hundreds of grieves you cannot live outside.

In an evening three people came. I did not know why they came. I opened the door, they came in. I knew Serbian but I never spoke in my life. Neither `dobar dan` (good afternoon) nor `dobro vece` (good evening), I never wanted to speak. They said to Bajram: "John Kennedy, tomorrow is on magazine." I did not understand what magazine means in Serbian. I though is about the wallpapers that we used to put on the wall. Bajram was talking to them and they said "We are sorry for you and your wife, but you are in the wallpaper also. Bajram shouted on them and said "Go out of my apartment, this is my apartment." I said to them in Albanian "Whoever dares to touch this door, let them come but we are not leaving from our house." Believe me we have stayed there for two years until we received the order. All of them who have been ripped up, they were there. They all were ripped out at our garage, at Bosnians neighbourhood. The committed a massacre. There many of my cousins were killed, oh my God. We all were there.

It's more than ten years that Bajram is looking for Reshat. Usually does not go out, only for his son. For all of them who are missing. He was on TV also, in all media and he stated "I will not go only for my son. I will for everybody." However, up to now no one said to us anything, they even did not come to ask us anything. Only Bajram goes around.

To me, as mother, it happened twice, while I was sitting, I heard his voice "Nimeee!" I stood up, opened the window, but he was not. I left the window open and sat. Again, I heard his voice, he was calling loudly "Nime!" I stood up again. This happened to me twice in this house. Oh, me, what shall I think. I said maybe he is somewhere outside, who knows! I would like to go in the mountains, on my own, and to yell as much as I can: "Reshaaat!"

He was lovely child, very careful, calm, he loved to chit chat, and he did not like to hear people talking bad for anyone. Never. He went to school. He completed secondary technical education. He was good student, he was well behaved, and we



never heard any complaint whenever we were invited for parental meetings, or whenever I went to school. He used to ring on the bell of neighbours and gave their keys because they forgot them outside. During the time that three sons were here, before they exiled, they were selling cigarettes. They went, took, bought and worked with cigarettes. They were badly beaten here close to Feriq. He loved to go abroad to work.

Since he was born, I never saw Reshat happier than the day when his nephew Aid was born. They phoned us and told "Isa has a son". I told him. He started to cry, he was crying because of joy. He said to me "I am so happy, you cannot imagine, I want to say you something". Even my family members never knew what he said to me, but I am saying it now: "Isa was not only my brother, he was like father and mother for me, he was everything in my life." He requested some money because he wanted to celebrate with his friends. He had joyful tears on his eyes whilst going down to the stairs. His biggest joy was when Aid was born.

However, I could never think... this is welcomed for Kosovo, if he gave his life for this country. Maybe, me as mother, I might be mistaken, because mother is never enough with his child. They all gave their lives for freedom of Kosovo. All of them. Thanks to God that everybody is free. But is good not to misuse it. It's good to appreciate the ones that are gone. Should be recognized that this land is washed in blood. However, who was seen by God are safe now.

I want nothing, I just want a good word to hear. My biggest wish while I am alive is to have understanding, firstly with my family because the family is saint. Everything in the world that tries to break a family and interferes, it's a big mistake. You might have everything, the family is complete but when you have no understanding, for me everything else is useless. The ones that are alive to have good understanding among them. Oh, just a good word to spell.

Like Bajram, even I sometime went with families, but I could never speak. Thanks to them in Prishtina, Hashim Thaçi, Isa Mustafa, Hajredin Kuçi, came out and talked to us, they gave us hope. I did not meet Isa Mustafa, but he is mentioning the missing persons on TV. Me, as mother cannot ever take my son off from my mind, but I cannot not blame anyone because only if half of the word does not fit, I will be in very bad position. Maybe they want also, because whoever has children, believes it. But, maybe even they are doing as much as they can. I believe on that.

At the end, I am declaring publicly from my heart, for these 19 years I know nothing about my son. God knows. But thanks to you. Whatever you request from God, let him fulfil. You did a good job to come in this family. I cannot spend a minute without thinking for my son, only when I go to sleep and what I take these sedatives. It's like

a part of my body is cut. However, wherever all others are, my son is there also. They are mothers too. I feel pain for them too. I would like to meet them even I don't know them, just to talk. Conversation helps a lot. In general, they understand the grief of a mother. The family grieves also but not like a mother.

Bajram never stops. He leaves at seven and comes at seven. Bajram does this thing since we don't know where our son is. I am living with him for 60 years. Never in my life I asked or disturbed Bajram about his issues. The only conversation I have with him is: "Are you tired? How are your things?" I don't talk longer. I never mentioned Reshat's name in presence of my husband. Not to make him sad. Never. He never saw my face sad. Never. I never ruined a wedding, joy or grief to anyone, and I will never do. I will never ruin the peace of anyone. People were dancing, playing, believe me I am happy for them. Thanks God they are. I hope God will give to everybody. I am very careful because when a person is in grief might make mistake. However, above everything I say: "God, give me patience, because I am at the edge. I will confront with God. Will this heart be healed? No, until I die. Never in my life my children saw me crying, neither my grandchildren. I don't know if he is somewhere in a guest room, cuffed or somewhere in the fire suffering. Mother thinks about these things, they are all in the heart.





“ We were watching the Yugoslavia–Germany game. Towards the end of the match came a colleague and asked, “Did you receive the salary?” He said, “I did not get it and I do not need it, I’ll get it when I get back. He said, “Why, when you come back, do you see what the situation is like?” He did not really need the money. But he had a car and went to take his colleagues back and forth. ”

## Millorad Trifunović

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Miroslav Trifunović had returned to Kosovo after several years of living abroad. He was 43 and was thinking of marrying and creating a family. He worked in the Belacevac surface coal mining. He even built a floor of the house he would live in when he married.

In June 1998, he was about to go to the beach with his girlfriend, so they would have the wedding when they came back. One morning he was going to work with some colleagues to get the salary before leaving for vacation. His brother Milorad, a member of the Commission for Missing Persons in the Government of Kosovo, shows that this would be the last time he saw him alive.



*Narration in first person:*

## ***If there was a tomb where I could place flowers***

*Millorad Trifunović*

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I was born in the village of Slakovac in the municipality of Vucitrn. There I lived until I was 8 years old. When the village school was closed, I had to live in the village of Plemetin with my grandparents, mother's parents, and until the seventh grade I went to school in Priluzje. Then I came to Vucitrn. We have been displaced from the village in Vucitrn where the mother and father worked. The father was Tito's warrior; he went as a soldier as a minor, and therefore he only completed four years of school. But at that time he was a director of an agricultural cooperative.

I had four brothers, now I have two left. I also have a sister. My father died in 2004 and mother in 2008. We lived in a working family, very happy. I had a grandfather, a grandmother, and two aunts. They have gone their way, and my grandparents died. We have stayed in Vucitrn and were among the most valuable families.

Father was even a jury member in court until we left, as well as at the peace council at the time, where there were five Albanians and a Serb, a kind of closed organization formed by the people of villages to resolve conflicts, largely non-national. He pacified both Albanians and Serbs alike, when they had problems because of their field and land borders. There were sometimes hits with an ax, shovel or broom involved, but people were alive. These were the sort of advice that prevented people from ending up in courts, but solved their problems peacefully.

There was more tolerance among people then. I suffer for those times when we lived happily, worked, went to each other for weddings, religious holidays, Christmas, sacrifices, baptisms, and so on. There have been good times. They will never come back; at least I will not experience them. But I will fight for them to return.

I had a very difficult childhood. I was the first child of my parents and always the victim of everything. I started to work since I was little. In the seventh and eighth grade I went to the farm cooperative, digging the earth, earning money for the family, because families with many members tend to eat a lot.

Then, all the brothers came to work for strong companies. The missing brother worked for Hydro-Montage in Belgrade, and at the Obilic power plant, as well as my wife later, a brother worked for Bellacevac mine, and one was also vice-president of

the municipality of Vucitrn. He has completed the faculty, the high technical school, which at that time was stronger than the faculties today. I first graduated from the school, but I could not get hired, so I did a course for the crafts, then I enrolled into the high technical school and I became an engineer.

I worked in Power Plant Kosova B. as a supply and innovation engineer, and I received the 1st May award. I worked with Albanians and later, in the overhaul I have led, we were 34, of them only 6 Serbs. Another Albanian colleague later received the May 1 reward. Then it was the greatest reward given to Kosovo and Metohija for innovation. This is the stamp that I show to my grandsons, and they look at it with admiration and sometimes they ask me, "Grandpa, you really were a worker." And I'm fine. I have seven grandchildren and I want them all to become workers, to work, to live, not to be ashamed of any work, except for the evils and thefts.

I have assembled the Albanians in the overhaul group and a group of defects I was leading because they were happening in the center, so I was dealing with the biggest problems and we had the best workers and craftsmen. When I was in need, I was released from work for three days and I took responsibility for it myself, but I told them that when I get a break I come to the door of your house, you must come. Then we did not have mobile phones, but we knew the knocking signals at the door, four tapes knew that I was.

I met my wife at work. We were married in 1975 with all the customs: the municipality, church, weddings, and my Albanian colleagues attended it too. My wife stood near me for so long, and I loved going out to pubs, socializing. But in 1972 I bought a car and I did not dare to get drunk because I always drove. My company drank, and I sometimes got two beers, sometime one only. Then there were not many police, but the roads were not good, we were more afraid of the road than the police. Therefore, I still do not overdo it with drinks.

After we all got jobs, we started to live right, we built four houses in Vucitrn, and so we were one of the strongest families. I had a 260-square-foot house in the center of Vucitrn, opposite the church. It is still there, the house that used to be mine. It is not ruined, it is near the road, and the three other houses were burnt. When KFOR came, my father gave them the keys to my home. They have been there and have watched everything fall behind the house, but they have not reacted.

My missing brother was called Miroslav Trifunovic. He was born in 1954. He disappeared three weeks after his birthday. In 1998 he was 43 years old. He had completed the technical school in Mitrovica. Then he completed the courses for welding, electro, aluminum and others. He was an expert on such things, he has had good salaries. Money attracts people, if someone is paid well, they try to learn. He



worked in Belgrade but returned in 1992 to work here. In Belacevac there is a flat place where it worked. He wanted to marry when the war broke out but failed. He had been working for six years, with interruptions, for an international pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe. He was an expert, even got acquainted with some of the English he wielded for, and then twice went to Heathrow, London, where he wound up wielding the aircraft. The salary was incredible.

But my brother decided to return. We had a large parcel of 16 acres that we split fraternally and built our homes there. He also built a large house, had completed one floor, where he could live separately from the parents, and he could not make the other floors. He did not want to work abroad, he wanted to get married. And it was really time for him to get married. He was hired in the Belacevac mine. I had found this job for him, since then I was chairman of the union, not in the mines, but in the power plant. But I had colleagues, we were a joint venture. I also told him that I would transfer him to the power plant because then there was no competition in the power plant, but as an expert I wanted to transfer him, and he would be well adapted to the company. But he did not want it, because Belacevac is also 20 km far from the power plant and on the other side, it takes an additional hour's drive. He had taken friends there and did not want to come. Now I'm sorry he did not come but what is there to do, such was his luck.

He was expecting an annual leave on Monday and Wednesday to go with his girlfriend to the sea, and get married when they return. He was going to work to get his salary then leave for a vacation. He went with a car, and had some colleagues in it. Police blocked the road, told him not to go because there was turmoil there. They waited until two more cars arrived. There were three of my colleagues in the one, while in the other one also a colleague who said, "Let's go, big deal." There were also other kidnappings, but in other cases they kept people for only one night and then released them, but they did not release these ones. Before them, another was kidnapped on May 12, and they did not release them, and these were kidnapped on June 22, 1998, when our government was still here; the Serbian authorities, Serbian police, Serbian army.

The biggest problem is that he did not leave a family behind, nor did he get married. I had another unmarried brother, and two brothers were married, had their own homes. Miroslav lived in the family home with his father, mother, and the other single brother. He was a traveled man, had gone through everything. He spoke English to some degree, but perfect Russian. He had spent a lot of time in Russia, also knew German, which was a bit better than his English. He helped everyone, and had a huge salary to do so, since he worked abroad.

The last time we were together was one night before he was kidnapped, when we watched the Yugoslavia–Germany match. We were delighted with the game. It was a very fierce match, the result was in our favor, and we were screaming, drinking, joking, no one foretold that something bad could happen. The date was June 21, 1998. It was me, he and another of those guys who disappeared, in our cafeteria in Vucitrn, the only Serbian café.

The cafe was managed by my younger brother, as he was in Vucitrn and had not gone out. He was also vice–president of the municipality, but not at that time, before that. Then he left politics because in politics you have to lie and deceive. I apologize to politicians, but I think so and yet nobody has managed to convince me that I'm not right. Soon I will be 71 years old and still none of the politicians have convinced me that I'm not right about what I think.

Towards the end of the game came a colleague from Gojbula village, about three kilometers away from Vucitrn, and asked, "Did you receive the salary?" He said, "I did not get it and I do not have to, I have money, I'll get it when I come back. He said, "Why when you come back? Do you see what the situation is like?" My brother told me, "I'm going to get my salary, I have to report back to work." The state of Serbia has decided on a certain set of rules for work, and they must be respected, because whoever does not follow such rules loses their job. My brother had already made the decision, but money was always needed. He did not really need it. But he had a car and went to bring his colleagues back and forth.

The next morning, his brother's colleagues came at 5:30. He was sleeping; they woke him up. I have not seen him at all, but I know what he was wearing: adidas shorts, adidas sneakers, and an adidas dress. At 9:15 am an Albanian arrived. I had come to town to buy newspapers and go back to the cafe because I had taken a break and planned to go to the sea with my wife and children. He told me what happened to my brother. When they came to the parking lot, they were called upon by some people in KLA clothes and some in civilian clothes who pulled them out of the car. My brother asked them, "What is this?", but they placed a revolver to his head and put him in the back seat. One person was sitting at the wheel and so they robbed the car. This Albanian described it all in detail and told me by name and surname of someone who had recorded it all with a camera. They were prepared for something like that. They told me that they all had a camera. He told me that he then entered the bus. He lived in Pristina. This was the last time that someone saw him alive.

That day I immediately went to the Red Cross in Pristina, to the International Committee and announced the case. The Americans had an information and cultural center in Pristina but were dealing more with political issues. I went to them and reported the disappearance of all whom I knew, then I informed my parents, brothers

and sisters. Then we all went together to the International Committee of the Red Cross, then to the EPS union, then called the Kosovo Power Plant.

We organized bus transport to Belgrade, we went to embassies in Belgrade, because then there were no embassies in Pristina. We have reported to the OSCE Mr. Walker. He has accepted us more to respect the order, but I have to admit he behaved correctly. We went to Belgrade, stayed there for five days, we met the non-governmental organizations and all the institutions that wanted to accept us.

Natasa Kandic admitted us immediately and was very correct with us. When we went to Sonja Biserko, she did not want to accept us. Then I used a trick via someone I know in Belgrade, a former colleague in Obrenovac, who knew Sonja, we went to her and she said to me literally: "What can be done now? They just are not no more, you have to overcome the pain and that is how it ends." I said, "Will you overcome your brother's pain?" And she said to me, "You have deserved it too." "Excuse me? - I asked amazed. She said, "You deserved it." I said, "Way to go!", and rose to me feet. But I did not make any trouble. My friend took me out and I do not know what happened during the day, because I was totally shocked. It's stupid to say something like that, even to your biggest enemy. It is another thing that she deals with politics and does whatever she does, but to say so to someone is stupid. I cannot even say this to anyone today. But there are different monsters and she is one of those monsters as far as I am concerned.

I have met many politicians in relation to this kidnapping, both in Belgrade and Pristina, and they have all promised that this will be the first topic that will be discussed in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It has never been realized so far, and now we have a promise. Personally, Thaci has promised me that the first topic to be discussed will be this, and now he is really involved, but there is no dialogue right now. This is politics. The worse for the people, the best for politicians. Later we have received a variety of information. I have the names of people, all the conversation files, and written statements. Our father was very active on this issue, has gone to the villages. There was also a woman, an Albanian, I know her name, she asked for ten thousand marks in order to tell us what she knew. And the father has agreed to give her the money. We did, because we were three brothers, ten thousand marks then could buy you two flats in Belgrade. She came one day, my father in 1998 worked as chairman of pensioners in Vučitrn, everything was still Serbian and Serbian institutions worked until KFOR came.

Later, different things happened, there was murder on sides, kidnappings, disappearances, things because of which we did not dare to leave our homes. Then Albanians began to leave their jobs. They did not leave the power plant, because there had to be some sort of partition. Belacevac mine that supplied the Kosova B

coal-fired power plant would belong to the Albanians, and the mine that supplied the Kosovo A Power Plant would belong to those working there, meaning that it would be led by Albanian managers, because 8 percent of Serbs, 2 percent of others and 90 percent of Albanians worked in my headquarters, but we never had any problems.

There in Kosovo A the relations were quite different, 40 to 40 percent and nobody did anything wrong, a skilled worker was always appreciated.

Then the bombing began. We did not leave Vucitrn even when there was bombing. We went to work. I was not at work, I was sick, but my wife went to work from Vucitrn to Obilic. I know the plants stopped working when the first bombings began. I was chairman of the union of Kosovo B at that time, and the General Director told us ... his brother was also kidnapped along with my own that day. His brother was called Marijan Buha, but they called him Mirko. He was in the third car alone. In the second car there were three cousins Adjancic from Raskovo and Milosevo, while in my brother's car were Savić Srbolub and Bozhidar.

Half an hour after their kidnapping, they have kidnapped three workers with those small bulldozers so that ten people disappeared within half an hour. When the bombings ceased, the Frenchmen entered Vucitrn, Albanians began to return because they were placed in the Sitnica Muslim cemetery. There were really a lot of them. We insisted that we open the bakery to work just for them, even the flour we gave to our neighbors. Especially civil protection worked, the bakery worked, everything worked. It is true that many of them had gone, but more than 70 percent remained.

Albanians who did not want to go to the KLA happened to be harassed and kidnapped. They asked for money from 10,000, 1 thousand Euro. We know all this, here we have lived side by side. Nor did we forget solidarity, especially those of us that had kidnapped or missing family members. We had Albanian neighbors, even during the war we even broke the wall between our houses, because there were 102 to 108 people in the neighbor's house, mostly women and children. With the brothers we brought milk and bread. We've never done anything bad in life, we just helped. They had no idea what was happening to them there, how they were tortured, how they tormented them. Now we have all the documents, after the war here we bought video tapes registered by members of the KLA. I also have all the books in the office, for the kidnapped and the missing, with pictures and records of all the missing.

When the French soldiers came, they said, "Get away because we cannot protect you. After Vucitrn, beyond Sitnica, in Cicavica, they have put barricades. The army cannot stop the KLA. They want to get revenge. "We said we were not frightened by anyone, we did nothing and the French replied, via the interpreter they had: "You think they can tell who did something and who did not? Those who will come are not from Vucitrn, who knows where they are from. " So, you are a Serb, go to Serbia or you will

lose your head. We removed the women and children, and myself, my youngest brother with the mother and father remained here.

Then the younger brother went to Mitrovica. Took me a lot of convincing him to do so, I gave him my car and said, "Go!" I stayed with the father and mother. I told them to go to the basement. We stayed there for two nights. Everyone left Vucitrn, but we remained. Our Albanian neighbor came to us and said, "Rade, for God's sake, convince your parents to leave too, since there is nothing we can do. They want to force us, your neighbors, to kill you, and you have fed us during wartime." I said, "What?" He swears in his children. I called my father out. He said, "I do not want to leave, let them kill me, but I will not leave."

A Frenchman whom we called Frog called me. Four soldiers took me by car to Jugopetrol pump at the exit for Mitrovica. There was a tank parked there. He said to me, "Get down here!" Further, the crowd was gathered, it seemed to me there were millions of them, I could see them trampling on one another. I saw that picture, and he tells me to go down to them. I went out and immediately climbed into the tank. I was not so fat then, I had 95 to 96 kilograms, not as I am now with 110 kilograms or more. I climbed to the tank that soldier offered me a rifle, and the crowd turned to me, swearing at me. Then spoke a sensible man, I do not know who he was, he said, "Lose that, he is a good man ..." Then a few others, five or six of them, joined him. So, I went up to that tank and some soldier came from downstairs, I do not know his rank. The crowd went through these soldiers trying to stop them, since no one can stop a crowd. He shot up over their heads. The tank left and sent me to Smrekovnica. From now on there was no one.

When you go from Vucitrn to Mitrovica, no Albanian houses are burnt. There were no burned houses in Vucitrn either. I can freely say that all Albanian burnt houses in Vucitrn were burnt by Albanians themselves, because Serbs had no reason to do so. Those who burned them have targeted those who worked in Serbian institutions who did not leave their work, those who did not send their boys into the army, and so on.

I went to Leposavic, and I stopped in a house that had only the walls to shelter us. We calculated that we would return for 15 or 20 days. I came up with a pair of worn jeans, I had a pair of old broken shoes. We did not even have any luxurious outfits, we had sneakers, but who remembered to look for them in such a time. So, I walked slowly from there to Mitrovica, went to the priest in the church, because my house in Vucitrn was opposite the church, so I knew the priests. I phoned my dad, I told him I had arrived in Mitrovica. He was happy to learn that I arrived, but I said, "I spoke to my neighbor, his son will send you to Mitrovica, and I'll wait for you." "No!" he told me.

Then came KFOR, and my father gave them the keys to the house because this neighbor persuaded him to do so. I met my father and mother in the cemetery, took them and brought them to Batacino, where I had an aunt. As a union leader I took a vacation in Vrnjačka Banja, Kraljevo's distribution, and there we put all the families of the kidnapped from Kosovo, where I brought my father and mother with my younger brother, while my wife and I were in Leposavic.

Later I bought a flat in the center of the city, however half of it was paid and the other half paid when the transaction was completed. I bought it from an Albanian who fled to Serbia. He told me, "I cannot venture to make the apartment transaction." So, we did it at the Court of Raska, but I said, "Until I come to Mitrovica to make the transaction, I will not give the money left." He told me, "No problem," because I had given half of the money to him.

Then we estimated that the apartment was worth 20 thousand marks. I had given 10 thousand and then I was left without money. In fact, I borrowed it to give it to him, because I had money in my savings account in the bank, but where would I keep my money at home in time of war? In fact, I do not need to keep them today, I have good life, good pension, good family life, granddaughters, grandsons, everything is super, and I only miss my brother, whose bones I cannot find. If I could find and bury him with dignity as a man, I would place the tomb, I would know where to put flowers ... My father and mother died in Kraljevo and they were buried there, and we went to fire candles for them and weep for my missing brother.

We weep for him, because my senses tell me that he is not alive. The criminals have killed other witnesses, and they would never spare those they kidnapped. They are monstrous. How can someone kill someone for nothing? I could not even kill a chicken, and alone kill someone over nothing. After all, he did not even live in Kosovo, he was out, and he could make no one angry. He really lived with Albanians, Serbs and all the rest. Even now his colleagues, Albanians, especially those two years since I came to Pristina, came to remember him and really regretted his death.

I think that it is in the interest of both Belgrade and Pristina to resolve this issue, as well as for us who have lost our loved ones. For us this is a priority on priorities, we would give everything we have to resolve the situation. I do not have much, but I would give all I have just to see him come back. Would sleep on the streets, just to have him back ... If they could only return his bones, I would give everything, seal everything and rent a place to live in.

But governments in Pristina and Belgrade are also misusing our suffering for their political goals. They have promised us that the first topic of conversation in Brussels would be to uncover the fate of the missing, and to this day they have not even talked about it. They talk about everything, I know that people who live are a priority, their energy, water and supplies are a priority. We really feel blocked, we have no

drugs, and we have to go to Raska. There is no milk, eggs. There is some, but not enough. If you find it fine, but if not ... There should be flour, there is no bread either, but I would say to Ramush Haradinaj: "Come live in the north for a while, but with your family, and see how you will live even though you are a prime Minister! ". Yes, it is difficult to live in enclaves in the south, but we in the north are neither in on earth nor in the sky, we do not know where we are. The biggest problem is the young people; they are our future, our strength, and when they do faculties for different professions there is no place to hire them. If you do not belong to a party, you have failed, you cannot even go somewhere, everything is in vain. We have people with schools working in construction and even there, if they do not work properly, they fail. And what are they working for? For a kilo of flour, and they would not pay them nothing, if they did not need them to come the next day too.

I also told Haradinaj, in a meeting ten days ago in Pristina that I had with him and with Bajram Çerkini. I am also a member of the Commission for Missing Persons in the Kosovo Government, and he came after the meeting, talked with the heads of associations and with us and I said, "Mr. Haradinaj builds factories, or an institution, bring world economists here to help. If not the European Union, then America. It's no help just making the army, we're doing it. Build factories, hire people, because our faculties, our schools are working for Americans, Germans, Swiss, and Belgians. "All of our qualified experts have gone out. We educate people who then work in other countries.

It would be useful for the governments in Belgrade and Pristina to put themselves in the position of the families of the kidnapped. They all talked to us and shared our feelings with us. Whether it is artificial or not, I do not know, but I think they are truthful. Because our feelings are very sad and nobody can act, not even those who talk to us.

I did not get into the subject of our nightmares when we dream that they are with us when we wake up with anxiety. This happens to each of us. So, I say, let them put themselves in our position and let them turn towards peace. All that has happened should be left behind. Do not forget, let them remember but not allow to repeat such crimes and for all those murderous monsters, regardless of their nationality, religion and others, for whom they have evidence, they should put them away. Not because of us, but because of the generations to come, so that they see that crimes do not get old and that all those who committed crimes will have to respond for whatever they have done.

Let's face the future, work for peace, and then all the rest will come, if people agree, if the truth comes to the surface, if we go towards peace. Everyone must go towards peace. It is useless if one party does so and not the other. We must all sit down and

talk about a peaceful future, not about what has passed. As for the past, there are courts, institutions and services that deal with these things, and politicians should orient themselves towards creating a peaceful life for people, with good working conditions, and we should not rely on social assistance, since even that cannot last forever.







“ I have buried both of the boys, one on the left, the other on the right, that when my daughter is found, put it between them. For how long have waited to go to the boys but now when I go, I say, 'I've found boys,' and I'm very constrained when I see these two there and the grave between them empty. ”

## Nebih Morina

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Nebih Morina is the father of five children, three girls and two boys. In the case of Nebih, unlike the others, none of the boys are disappeared, but the oldest daughter, Mevlyde. Married in Suhareka, the mother of two sons, Genc – 5 and Granit – 3, after their house was surrounded by tanks, she is disappeared with ten people, all her children, husband, parents-in-law and brothers' in-law.

A few years after the war, the remains of most family members were found, with exception of Mevlyde and her brother-in-law, Hajdin Berisha. Today, twenty years later, Nebih tells the pain of the missing girl and the murdered grandsons, sometimes puts in rhymes, while comparing the former life with the poverty he has been living since the Serbian forces burned, destroyed and robbed properties and belongings.

My name is Nebih Morina, born in village Samadraxhë from father Nuhi Ali Elezi, on March 14, 1948. My father had seven children, the first was Vehbi, born 1945. Hysnija in '46, Feti and I are twins of '48, Salih was born in '53, while Bahtija and Verijaare twins, born in '56.

We grew up at the father's uncle, Ukshin, then was alive, and grandfather Ali. When I was born, one of them was around 60 years, the other has been 50 years old. Then we have lived together with sons of Ukë and Ali, the two brothers. Later we split with uncle and then lived with father's brothers. Father's brothers were Halit, Sejdi and my father Nuhi. Two of my uncles have had by three children. The oldest brother has completed the elementary school in Samadraxhë, two sisters as well, and I have completed four years, I graduated from the night school. It has been like as today called a high school.

We worked with cattle and agricultural. Especially I, when I was little, guarded sheep and cows.

When I grow up, I got the call to join the army in '66. In Vinkovc I had served the army for 12 months, and I continued in Han Pijesak for other 6 months. It means 18 months I have served in army of Yugoslavia. From the army I came back home and for one year I have worked with my family in agriculture, then we had profit from it. We've had a vineyard and we earned a lot. Two of my brothers went to Slovenia and I went for one year, I worked in a textile factory in Kranj. After a year I worked there, the brother's wife is from Suhareka, and she met me with her sister, Elmaze. I was married when I was 22 years. After my marriage Mevlyde was born. Then other children Ramadan, Nasime, Samir, and then Elham.

As soon as I got married, I got a guaranty from my cousin to travel to Switzerland. I've been working with a gas company "Gas Arbeit", where we had many next of kin. In the first month when I started working, one of my neighbours who was old he went on leave and I was replacing him, because he was a housekeeper.

In the first week I had a dangerous accident. Usually our family and friends were gathering together for breakfast on Saturdays and Sundays. I was young and I used to serve tea most of the time. As soon as prepared glasses for tea, a Spanish man came and said: "change the bottle of gas because it is empty." I immediately stood up, took the key and went to open the old bottle and the filled one was close to me. How did it happen, where the fire was, I don't know? The reaming gas was on fire and the bathroom was in fire. At a moment I tried to go out, but I couldn't, and I put my hands on my eyes and shouted: "Oh God, let at least my bones remain to take them home." I pushed again and went outside. I went there and found them ready to drink tea.

The Spanish man saw me, and he came after me. I said: "I'm burned, the bath is burning." A friend of us, who was working with us, was very brave and quick. He took two extinguishers and unloaded on fire and suddenly the fire was off. They came to take me, and that Spanish man was shouting: "Let me, let me take him to hospital." We were around 50 friends there, they surrounded me: "What happened?" the smoke was going out of me, the shirt was burnt completely. My eyes were safe.

They got me into a firm's car and took me to the first aid centre. That doctor explained where to take me in that condition. I was thinking: "What are you talking about?" Before he finishes his sentence "I will die" They were asking me "How are you?" I heard them all, but I couldn't respond to them.

They put me in a room, I know some sprinkles felt on me. I didn't see any more but after one hour all my friends came to visit me, I was swollen, black cheeks like a black man. I stayed in hospital for 21 days. In Radio Zurich it was reported for a week in what kind of danger I was. For these 21 days they had a very good service, which I don't even know how to describe. If I would have been here, I would have gone probably.

Now, they pulled me off, they took me to the barracks. There was a big banquet there. The whole friends have heard, we were not small number, from another city people came to visit me. Even two or three Germans have been working with us in Switzerland. They were amazed, just looking what we are doing. The old man, my uncle, told them what happened. After they were associated with us, they took pictures, they were surprised.

After one week I requested to go home but the doctor said to me: "If you go home the temperatures are high and your skin will be damaged." However, I have taken the responsibilities that I will take care as much as I can.

When I came back home, my daughter Mevlyde was 2 years old, she was playing with other children, I approached and held her. She was looking at me and after she recognized and said: "It's my father!" when they saw me, mother and others, were terrified. After one hour I went to visit some neighbours to give some of the orders I have been asked to take to them. When I entered in the yard of a neighbour, a lady there was telling her mother-in-law who was 100 years old and couldn't see: "mother Nifa, did you hear? The son of uncle Nuhe, Nebih, is been burned to ashes. I was behind and said: "Here I am!" they were surprised.

The family plead me not to go anymore. We have had a vineyard and father has built kind of hut. I used to go in the morning to take water and bread, the grape was good

there, went down to get the grape and I stayed there for one month in the hut, which means that sun did not touch my face at all.

After one month I said that I will go to Switzerland. And when I went there, I went to see a doctor. He was surprised because I was cured, and he told me that I have taken care. He gave me an accident card, they called 'Unfall Karta', but I'm not even interested. I was told that I will get 160 thousand Franks as compensation, but I was not even interested. I have worked for another year and I wasn't allowed to go anymore.

After I have worked with one of my brothers and brothers' sons. My brothers worked in Slovenia and I have worked agriculture because we have owned five and half hectares. We have had many incomes and from them also. They have worked there for several years; we had a lot of incomes but one of my brothers came and I said: "the cooperative is asking to give us loan, but father does not allow because as he says the loan ruins you." My brother said: "he is wrong, I see Slovenian people here, they are giving loans, go and register!" I went to Studenčan and registered in a cooperative. When I have signed then 2 million and 300 thousand dinars, the hat was not staying on my head and the director said: "Why you are afraid?" I said: "I heard that the loan ruins you". He said: "After one year two water pumps that you are going to take, will have that price." I have taken the loan, bought the stable, a Serb was construction engineer, gave us the project and we built it and put in 57 oxen. They never were suspicions on us anymore because people used to take the loan and lost the money but for us didn't doubt since they saw we are dedicated to work.

We had bought 6600 kilos of meat, which means alive calves, and for 6 months became 36 thousand kilos, meaning we profited 30 thousand kilos for 6 months. We had our own food, so the profit was very big. At that time there were some modern stables drinking water in their own, but they were drinking from different sides.

My father called other brothers crying: "Come back, enough in Slovenia." The stable we have transformed to carpentry, then we have also bought a mill. Life has started getting better now. A guy from village of Astrazup came at us and to go and make phone call in Suhareka. When he entered in the dining room he said to my father crying: "Lucky you, my son is in Germany but I have to come to you sleep over here and next day to go and make a phone call to him in Germany, and all of your sons are here at home." Didn't last long, my father got sick and died.

When the war started, Mevlydja, she started crying bothered, and said to her mother: "Mother, war has started, what you are going to do? Because the war will take someone, it takes people." However, I said to her: "War takes those who fight. You are not fighting, you are in your home taking care of your children, your husband and

parents in-law." This went on for 2-3 months, our army was around. The boys of Mevlyda, Genc and Granit, were very little, one was born in '94 and the other one in '96. They were playing in the yard. The army was far away, they sometimes attempt to go to and see the KLA, around hundred meters down there. There I was a courier. When the first offensive fell, on March 26th, all the points were withdrawn and went there uphill. I went to Pagarusha, and my family went to Medvec. And I was forced to go there because some young boys were there, I stayed over there to some of my nephews, one of my cousins was married there.

I went and talked to Mevlyda by phone, to ask her "How are things over there?" Mevlyde was at home in Suhareka, at Berisha family. She asked me: "What happened with you?" I said to her: "I came the next day." We withdraw and next day before the morning with some soldiers we have enter at my place, in annex, behind the house. It was 45 meters, two floors, there were planks, different kind of materials; wheat for mill were around 200 thousand kilos. When we came nothing was left, no shovel, dust everywhere, nothing left at all. I went and told to my uncle "Your house is safe but ours is burned." He started to cry.

The next day I came again, I went to second floor, when my daughter came with her father-in-law and her two boys, Genc and Granit. They put two fingers in their mouths, they were surprised because four days before the offensive they left "Where are we?" they said crying. My daughter and his father-in-law. I hold up Granit – I loved only God more than him, and said to my daughter: "My daughter, why are you crying for our houses? Since I have Granit, I own the world"

Just before they left, the daughter's in-law told me "Don't worry, I will come and build the roof of the house." Didn't last long and my brothers came from the uphill, they stayed for one month down there, and we entered in the village. The village was half burnt, so they tried to make a kind of shelter here. The brother-in-law of my daughter was very known professor in Prishtina, HajdinBerisha. He came to see if any from international observers sent anyone to help us. A friend from Slovenia came, his house was partly burnt and said: "You are in very bad condition, poor you! Come and take money, I will give you three thousand DM and build the roof!" We built a roof with planks and sheltered in there. The war had some ceases and my daughter had come and gone for several time.

The last time, two or three days before the last offensive came, because some other nephews and nieces came, some with their wives, around 100 people gathered. She noticed that there was not enough space and said: "I want to go." I was so upset and I could not go in front of her sons, she was looking for me: "Where did father go, I want to say him goodbye!" I could stand. Meanwhile they went with buses.

I called them in the phone because there was a check point in Rashtan. "How did you go?" I asked. She replied: "Daddy, only God knows how did we go." Didn't take long and the second offensive arrived. In this time I was only with my uncle here. All the army went uphill, and I slept at my uncle's home. My uncle asked: "Did you talk to Lyde? What did she say?" we have had the phone in our village, 10 DM per minute. I said: "She told that it was very dangerously, they went through garbage." The uncle replied: "Your in-laws are very good." I said: "Uncle if the father-in-law of my daughter dies before me, I will open the condolences for one month."

My brother came from Pagarusha to take me, because everybody was there, no one was here anymore. Someone tried to warn me but somehow troubled because I heard on the radio that Berisha family were pulled out from the house and been killed. This happened after two days of Mevlyde's return there.

I knew they are alive and in the morning I went to the village because we have had 10-12 cows, I put some food and went around the village to see if anyone is there and then to leave. An old lady said: "Should you stay here?" I replied: "Yes, here around but at the stream there are many people and I want to go there and take them out of there because the forces might find them and shoot." I went there and I saw many, many children, women and old people saying to them: "run, run." The last one was an old man with his wife. He was Member of Parliament of former Yugoslavia and for Balkans, he was very responsible. He was old and tired. I said: "Uncle Shaqë, run!" there around 300 – 400 meters away was Njëpërbisht, and automatics where firing ceaseless, Kalashnikovs. He said: "Let them kill me, I have no place to go."

I saw a fellow villager. He was old also and I said: "why did you stay so long?" "I got stuck and now here I am." I said: "will you be able to go through Njëpërbisht now because they are killing there down, shooting a lot." There I saw a family with 10 members and a little boy. They were our fellow villagers. I knew the man but didn't have any contact. I had a package of biscuits and I said: "Run as much as you can because you will have difficulties to cross the ambushes." That old man said: "I will walk in front, and if they shoot me you don't walk. If I survive, you may leave." To that little boy I gave those cookies and when that boy left I remembered my sons. That boy said: "Uncle Nebih, thank you for the cookies."

I have followed them. I know I have cleared all that stream and went down to a stream. There I found other four people. I joined them and one of them went to look at the shore, saying: "They are coming this direction". Some armed military noticed us there. We run and went down to the vineyard to a stream. They were shooting from all sides. Just before the evening a tank came, we were down and them above us, but thanks to God the rain started and them withdraw and we left.



We went out to the village. When we came out with a small mountain, there's a villager. "Where are you going?" "We are going to the village." He said: "There is only dust, it's full of police, army, no one survives there." We are going to look. When we approached the village, in a small street there was our bus that people left and there we saw a white dog. The dog was steering on us but did not bark. We walked for another five meter and saw two dead bodies. I said to them: "wait, because one of them seems like my brother." He was looking like my brother a lot.

When we approach it was terrible, one was missing cover of the head and the other one we did not recognize, he was a guest. We didn't dare to enter in the village, and we went down and found there tractors, cars and all other things belonging to civilians, they were are burnt. There remained only one small tractor and a quilt. Five of us covered with that quilt, it was very wet because it had been raining for one night and one day.

Not to forget, there were four young boys of age 20, three brothers from Retia and one of their brothers-in-law from Samadraxha, they put a fire and were baking sausage and had beers. I said to them: "Hey, don't you see them, they are coming here." Because I have seen them coming from slope since we were in direct air line of 300 meters. One of them replied: "Don't bother me!" He was joking with me: "I will not leave before eating this sausage and drink these beers." When I came back in the evening, we went in the tractor to have some rest, just before falling into sleep, a person from Opterusha came and said: "Is Nebih here? I said: "Yes, what happened?" he replied: "They are calling you down there, three are dead and one is alive and is asking for help." I knew who was because I knew where I left them. I went, they were withdrawn, I called over and over, but I did not hear anymore. Even the fourth one has died, the three brothers and that brother-in-law. The brothers were our friends.

When I went above the village, I saw an old man. I said "come"; he went in and took the rifle but when I looked behind, he was not. Three of my uncles where with me. When we went upper, I looked again, three of my uncles were not, with me remained only one and another villager. Where did they go I don't know? I know that that old man was killed at the graves. When was found dead, they have pulled out the brain and placed it on his hand. Whereas, others have left to Mamusha.

We got thirsty. I was not hungry, but I was thirsty. We said we were going to Mamusha. A night before, people were going in and out, but we did not know how the situation was. Then we found out, they said, "No one is in Mamusha, they are all taken to Albania." We said let's go earlier, we get water and bread and we go back. An old man had wear three pair of clothes and a coat. The uncle was having a bite for himself and next one offered to me, but I couldn't eat, he did a little, it was a pie. He

was saying: "Why are you rushing?" "Oh, walk faster because we want to go and come back." "No, you are scared." "Walk!"

When we approached there, eleven people were killed. There I saw the jacket of my uncle who was with me a day before, but I couldn't tell my uncle: "look your brother", I didn't think about... When we went there, we had some relatives, went in the mosque and I said, "you stay here, I'm going to seek for bread and water." When I went to these relatives, these millers they said: "Did you come here?" I said, "Can I get some water?" "But leave as soon as you can." When I returned to the mosque, they were waiting. "Didn't you get water?" I told them how the situation is. Another old man came and said "Leave from here because now they will come and shoot you. Here are they a lot, don't go uphill because they will not let anyone pass alive to go to Samadraxhë, they will kill you all." He said: "you go down to Albania as are saying no one will touch you." "Come on!" I replied.

Later my father's uncle from Studençan came. "Can I please come because I am with two women, three children and on co-villager but we don't dare to go downhill." "How come uncle". "Come on." A man from Mamusha came and said: If you want, I can take them because I just sent a crowd, I left them at the border, and no one has stopped me."

Some were insisting: "we want to go downhill". When I get in the car, a villager from Samadraxha, who was living in Mamusha was waving me, but when I saw how things are going, I said: 'no'. The uncle from Studençan was saying to his wife: "They will do same as there where they have taken that four years boy, put under knife and taking around the Suhareka."There I was convinced that this happened to my Granit.

When we went, no one has not touched us at all. We went to the border. There my uncle dropped down. There they have told us to remove the registration plates, leave the IDs there and go. "But we have not ID cards." We throw the plates. When we get to the other side, a car stopped "Welcome brothers." "Oh, I have dreamed for 50 years to come and visit you but not in this way." I said.

We entered in Kukës, a guy came in front of us. We were very tired, wet because of rain, he said: "Pa!, I am poor man but to you I am seeing here I will give a dinner and warm you up." That old man who told me "Why are afraid?" asked me, "Do you know him?" "How come I know him, he is not my uncle?" he was saying come at my place to sleep, eat and rest." "Nooo, he said." "Ok, you go where do you want."

We went there, he put some fire in the stove, cooked a dinner, warmed us up and we got dried. In the morning we went to find out about my daughter. I understood that my daughter is disappeared, that all were shot. On the same day, later my family

came with a truck. I went at the city hall and asked: "Where is this family?" an official came out and told: "Look at that building there." Just before I approached two-three hundreds of meters, my daughters appeared. My jaw was dislocated. I felt on my knees and slowly put it back.

My oldest brother with three sons of other brothers, a cousin, adolescent, always happy, have been stopped at the bridge in Suhareka. A police officer saw him and asked: "Are you laughing at me?" he took and lined up to be shot and my brother reacted: "Wait, he is young, he even does not speak your language, and he is not joking with you." Police replied: "Did I ask you?" Come on here!" with three boys, cousin and him lined up to shoot. As my brother said: "I wasn't worried that they are going to shoot us but what will children do behind us?" at that moment some other police came and told to him: "Leave them, come with us!" he left, and they continued walking. My children came, Nasime, Elhame, my wife and all family.

I wasn't worried anymore if they held somewhere because once I got an information that they were held somewhere but they are alive but didn't cross the border. From that night that have that have taken us, he had a garage, he put in both tractors and our truck. They slept on tractors. He gave food. In the morning they walked down to Laç. I have stayed and every day I went to the border. I went there until one week before NATO entered.

My family from Laç went to in Maikë, there they were placed in another house and when NATO entered, and my brother was the first behind the tank and me after him. We entered with trucks and children. When we arrived in the evening in Suhareka, I went directly to Mevlyde's home. When we went there, Granit's shoes, sandals one in one side and other on the other side. I was looking for them, but they were not. Our soldiers were there, have eaten, and left dirty dishes. We've locked the door and came to our home. My brother got an information that they went to Macedonia, in Bllaca, he sought there but nothing.

It has been a week of research in the cemeteries. Eleven members of the family, ten members, because the mother Tixhë was 104 years old. Mother Tixhe is found in the Suhareka's cemetery with a number but them never found until today. We have opened the door for condolences, 49 towels were here all over Samadraxha. I have smoked for some time but after I quit but the day we opened for condolences, I put the cigarettes in my pocket to give to other people but when I sat I smoked and said: "Oh Granit, I lighten a cigarette."

The villagers started to come. Many rumours. Someone was saying that they were taken and shot. But no bones were found. After we started to go protests in Prishtina for 12 days I stayed on the ground, people have mobilized, they understood the case

because 3500 people. People were bringing, coats, breads, blankets, every day. So, there we have urged the internationals to initiate our case. Meanwhile, two years have passed and there is nothing.

We went to Merdare for 13 times when the corpses were brought. When they have brought them to the morgue of Rahovec they were put in row. Before the bodies were found, I was at my neighbour in Batajnica watching TV, and Genc was the first one. I recognized in tooth, face and clothes that he had. And I said: "Oh my boys." But I didn't tell anyone. We went at the Rahovec's morgue and there I have seen bodies of the boys. I have seen grandfather, their father, sister-in-law, grandmother except my daughter Mevlyde.

From 2002 to 2005, they were in the morgue. From there they have taken to Prishtina and after when they have taken DNA and blood from us, they have been identified. How many times did we go to the morgue, how many times did we get those bones in our hands? It was a disaster, initially in some tents until with our efforts we got the refrigerators. However, researches have continued. Where there we have, her brother-in-law Hajdin and my daughter Mevlude are not there.

I've been asked how to arrange their graves. I have written them that since the body is missing, leave the grave in between. Both of the boys I have buried one to the left and the other to the right, with intention that when my daughter is found to put her in the middle. How long have I been waiting for my boys, but now when I go, I say, "I've found the boys," and I am very constrained when I see these two there and the grave there empty.

There are many of rumours, we have asked several times at least the ones that are burnt to publish the names. I have had an interview in Prishtina, they came to Belgrade to take me with someone. We have taken a stand that not to go there because we knew that their court will do nothing, Asdidn't do anything until now. But Anka and Bekim were begging me to go to Belgrade, but I also stated there in Prishtina, even there was a Serb attorney and an American, and at the end I have told them I have told this to whole world about those circumstances. I know that I have never seen an imam or a priest with such hatred to support the war like Serbian clerics. They worked a lot. They turned the academy on their side, and they are responsible for this. That Serb told to the secretary "Write this, you need to publish in newspapers." I said, "Find me and imam who plant hate about the war, even our academy didn't do that. They have urged the war. They did everything and we demand responsibility from them."

We know very well, I knew Nenad, I have seen him every day because he was our neighbour. He committed the massacre. Even that Boban, who was killed. They took it

and let him go, he was convicted for 13 years but released him immediately. They have taken a nomad by Cuba (57:38 min) and have convicted him also. Where are the 48 and even 520 all in Suharekë? One family has 10-11 members who have been killed, seven missing, in another family one is killed, eight missing. In my family two are missing.

When we came in the village, we have grieved a lot but when we were expecting for condolences, in another place played music, they didn't care because they had no one murdered. When we went to Pristina, in strikes and protests, Nysrete and I were beaten. Once we went with Albin, he did not have political party yet, but he was among us. He led us on strikes, we blocked the road, and one man came and said: "Are you out of your mind? Go to your homes, why did you block the road?" I stood up and hold him from the neck, another one reacted and said: "Leave him alone, he is stupid." I said: "No, he is not stupid, why he is coming with us, let him go on his way."

We continued with the associations, so much work has been done, but we will never forget, the International Red Cross and the Red Cross of Kosovo, not only then, in the last twenty years keep us alive. Otherwise, for us no one cares. In the moments when we have no way out, Kushtrim Koci and also Ylber Morina, and internationals who are friends with us, they all the time were with us at the meetings. They go out of beg to ask for us, collect money, and invite us in gatherings.

We attended to a spontaneous gathering at Viktoria in Vermica, a lady name Mihone, her mother is Muslim, father is Jewish and her husband is catholic, and she was saying that she is Albanian speaking. So, she had training for us, sometimes she made us cry, sometimes laugh. We stayed seven days with her there. There we started to develop somehow, eleven of us, still today, after thirteen years, it has changed a bit, we felt little bit better when we gather with associations, telling the stories to each other. I think it was around 2008 we went for a protest at the New Year Eve around 300 people. We couldn't stand on our feet. When the time rang at 12.00, we went to take pictures of fireworks. It was messy, my lady was freezing, and her hands were trembling.

It was Rame Manaj, we went out there, but that day they were very weak, they did not care for us. We were so bad there, we sat, so tired. I laid under a table and slept there. I am hearing that Nysrete, where crying for their sons, daughters. "Did we cry enough?" I heard saying "Yes!" "Shall we laugh now?" how to laugh? Said: "See now we are going to awake Morina!" "O Morinë!"

When I got up, all those women had their heads padded in the pillow with me. I was ashamed and hit the table, all the cups felt down. Then they started laughing. Later

police came and picked us up, took to a bar, gave us food and loaded in the buses. Work has been done by Red Cross and the associations, the Coordination Council. I have told him from Geneva, who was from Human Rights, that we are an example of Kosovo, and an example of the world. Because we had contacts with Greeks, Turks and Bosnians every day. Because of our efforts the number has been decreased, the number was 7700 and now is around 1620. If we would had kept quiet no one would have been found. However, Serbia still knows where they are, because they have had a regular army. We have had it too, but our army has not been prepared as theirs. We got people who just picked the rifle and went out there.

In 2005 I saw a movie how Serbs came to Fushë Kosovo at Milosevic's, when it started its revolution and bombing. The program was going on, I have seen both boys at the bars of the basement of Suhareka and police were there. I said, "There are the boys, they were at the bars, both of them. Behind was pizzeria where they have been killed.

One relative, Ylli Morina, is in France, he was born there. He has funded Rambouillet and I begged him to find that documentary. They say that is in 5th channel but he cannot extract it. I was told that Avni Spahija will extract it.

When Mevlyde became seven she begun the school. I have the book that received the gratitude, she was excellent. When she finished eighth class, she brought the certificate with excellent marks, my father cried: "My son, take her for further schooling." I said, "No daddy, things are going very bad, it's impossible."

She has a friend, now she is a Deputy. Mevlyde has been very smart, but the fate was so. Shortly after she completed the school, she got engaged then married and her children were born. I love all my children but Mevlyde was my heart, she would never say no, always helped. I don't know how I am living without her. I found one of her essays when she was in fourth grade, the description she did about the grandmother of Dini sitting close to the stove and how she used to tell fairy-tale.

I wrote in internet about an event "early in the morning when I wake up, I have seen a dove with two pigeons playing in my yard, but raven surrounded them fast. The eagle came also, but surprisingly only on shadow to save, but they could resist to the raven." So, Albania couldn't save us. The ravens were militaries, and the pigeons were the children with my dove daughter.

When I spoke to Mevlyde on the phone for the last time, it was probably one hour before they have taken them and throw out of the house. She said: "our house is surrounded with tanks, poor us." I said, "O daughter, do not be afraid, you are

innocent, you did nothing." I said, "when they get our army will fight bad, but you don't worry because it will go on the best way." At that time the phone wasn't working anymore.

Last time she came home we have talked about the war, how to survive and she said that is better if you come in Pagarusha. The father in law of her came also, said "Come, he is stubborn", for his son, the one is professor. He said "I don't worry about him at all but what to do for the children?" he was rich. It was even said that they have taken fifty thousand of DM from him and after they have killed him. They couldn't come here up because if they could have come in Pagarusha they would have been alive today. When they entered in their neighbourhood, Berisha, with order of Boban they run into the houses of Vesel and Shaban.

If Mevlyde would have been alive, my life would be longer. She was educator, she had great speeches. She never made upset anyone, she knew how to educate others, and she didn't need any education. I have dedicated a poem for Mevlyde, for the testament she gave to us:

Testament

Will and message,  
Testament to my friends  
Congratulations the independence of half-freedom

When you celebrate Independence  
Do not forget me either  
Just with words remember me  
No place for flowers to take for me

In Suhareka whenever you go  
These cemeteries to visit  
There I have my two sons  
I have Genc and Granit

My grave is empty  
My boys are in the graves  
There they will also be orphans,  
In the absence of my body

A will for my parents  
Don't leave my bones in Serbia

Another one I never published. It's very painful, they say because it's my family. I will not publish. It will make the soil cry. It talks how Granit was following his family until when he was the last one. Maybe I will publish but probably later, maybe someone will sing as tribute song.

When we opened the house on the third day, I screamed when I came out: "Poor me, I will never step in this door anymore." One of their neighbours calmed me down. Now a girl who survived, is married in Suhareka, is living there. She has two sons, one girl and her husband. Every time I go there, she feels like her father went, and I feel that I see Mevlyde there. It's interesting, I love that family so much.

One of my sons worked in KFOR. Thirteen years he stayed at home, didn't work anything. We own the land, it's all field, no technical means to cultivate. The other one is in Prishtina, eight years in primary school, in Samadraxhë, three years technical school in Suharekë, three years of music in Prizren, four years in the faculty and three years in Master. How much it makes? Another one is in Switzerland, with her money, otherwise couldn't afford. My wife cries: "What shall we do now with our son, without work, how many expenses we had for his schooling, now in Pristina without a job?"

Whenever we meet with the Association, I thank. I'm the most modest person there, just an individual. All of them are intellectuals, as well as respect, so much we get along. When we go to the hotels where they do the lectures, when we go with the food, Gjyla accompanies us.

We had a meeting with nine deputies in Suhareka, and a man called Ali Berisha was the chairman of the association, together with him, we have blocked the Assembly. We have forced to vote that there is no dialogue without the agreement of the family members, regarding the fate of missing persons. They've signed up and they've deceived me. I was mostly deceived by Hajredin Kuqi. We went to Skopje for lectures with lawyers, and Hajredin approached me and said: "We have to do something, because you have blocked us, and the work must continue."

And they arranged with Prenk Gjeta and me, five people to meet with Hashim. When Nysrete took the speech, she said, "You have stepped on our blood with two feet, you are not taking care of." The other and the other, they also said, "You have finished the war, created Rambouillet, and you have to take the responsibility." He has taken the responsibility, swear on the children, family, on nation and God that our matter will be taken into consideration.

My message, like everyone else, would have been: "Families seek to enlighten the fate, at least they seek for support, employment." I know, there is a mother in Mitrovica,



who takes care for eleven children and without a husband without any support. What can she do with 170 euros? At the beginning it was 103 but now is 170. I was in Durres for law issues. In Durres was made a decision, all family members were insisting, requesting salaries. I was the last one to talk: "They are correct, I am requesting the most. I don't want to have even two thousand, even this one I am earning, but I am requesting for my son to have a job." Then he said: "You are right, when you come to Prishtina, come to the Ministry." I went to the Ministry: "The last thing I am asking is employment." All that are living today, who are enjoying the life, enjoying on behalf of our blood.

Is the fighting in Syria, the army with the army, is there anybody who will have strikes like us? Not! Here the international world came, and the Americans, all over the world, regarding the 'Kosovo matter'. The independence is gained in the name of our children, never anyone has talked in our name: "wait, there are some people like me." If my son gets employed, because I am dying, leaving, but I am not leaving anything behind. I applaud Ramush, who two days ago accepted that his sister-in-law got the job in Telekom, but I was surprised also. Afterwards I said to myself: "His sister-in-law wasn't employed for twenty years; he had many options and possibilities." But what to do to him? I know Telekom is the biggest corruption, but she got involved there.

Overall, our request is at least to find a bone, a knee, and remains, just to know I have her. For me the important is to put her bones in the grave. Life is life, maybe the poverty will come with everything, but we have to challenge, can't do anything. The son who is living in Prishtina, he cannot pay his apartment and we have to assist him. This is the worst. Further, I apologize for being traumatized, but I have to go with my life.

Nebih Morina

Ballad for the Missing

How many days and nights,  
We waited sleepless  
Who know for hours and moments?  
In an endless waiting,

How much tears we poured for you?  
Since we called you dead,  
No word or address  
You were given the name "Missing".

Twenty years gone without seeing you  
Twenty years gone tears flowed like a river  
Twenty years our souls were killed  
Twenty years of suffering is not over.

Twenty years the time remained hanging  
Twenty years the pain is pending  
Twenty years we nourished hopes  
For twenty years the candles remained lit.

Twenty years of snow has not been melted  
August looks like January.  
The sun releases strong rays  
In our hearts full of frost!

The granny releases the groan:  
-Can someone tell me?  
Where are the boys to make the misery?  
Because I'm leaving this world.

Do you listen, you authorities?  
Where my boys are gone  
They are alive or dead  
Do not call them Missing.

For twenty years I'm waiting desperate  
I do not enjoy the costly freedom.  
The pledge will leave on me if I die  
If I don't put the bones in the grave.





“When I am alone at home, I sometimes feel like I can hear his voice. Or, when I'm on the road, I often stop and go back, then I realize it's impossible. Or sometimes in the crowd, when someone resembles him, I follow them in the hope that it is him.”

## Jasmina Zivkovic

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Paun Zivkovic in June 1999 withdraws his family from Ferizaj to the Štrpce area where Serbs feel safer by being more homogenous. The family bids farewell to life and work in the city, leaving the house with all the possessions behind.

With the organization of the new school year that September in the new settlement, files and all the documentation from the schools that many of the Serbs had went to in Ferizaj until few months ago, had to be filed in the new school. Six of the principals and teachers ask the Polish KFOR to provide escort to get documentation from the schools they had abandoned in Ferizaj. Among them, is Paun Zivkovic, technical high school principal, one of the two directors who went to Ferizaj that day but never came back.

His daughter, Jasmina, says that his family members, although aware that for twenty years they are unaware of his whereabouts, and despite the fact that in EULEX and UNMIK they claim that none of the kidnapped Serbs have survived alive, can still not imagine their father dead, bringing life to a strange kind of feeling, which always stays present, but can hardly be described.



*Narration in first person:*

## ***We never light a candle for my father in remembrance of his death***

*Jasmina Zhivkovic*

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My name is Jasmina Zivkovic, born on October 26, 1977 in Pristina, but I lived in Ferizaj with my family. I am the oldest sister; I have two younger sisters. My father was called Paun Zivkovic, while my mother is called Bozidarka Zivkovic. We lived in Ferizaj where I finished primary and secondary school, mathematics branch. In 1996, I enrolled in the law faculty in Pristina and until 1999 I finished all my exams in the due time. I was finishing the faculty and in Pristina I spent three years as a student, but when bombing started I had to stop studying. Until April 1999, we were in Ferizaj, but when the bombing and all the war events started, we were no longer safe in Ferizaj and we came to the village of Gotovusa in Štrpce, since my parents are from here, i.e. from Zhupa.

At that time, since a majority of the Serb population lives here, my father thought that we would be safer in Ferizaj in any case. We left our home in Ferizaj with all the things in it. Ever since we left the city we could not go back, and all the memories of life were left there. To tell you the truth, no one of us had the willingness to return to Ferizaj and I myself avoid Ferizaj because it reminds me of some good but also some bitter moments, since after a while my dad was kidnapped in that city and then disappeared. Since then I know nothing about him.

This happened on 28 September 1999. The father was the director of the technical secondary school in Ferizaj. Bombings ended and unfortunately all Serbs had to leave the town on June 15, 1999, because they were threatened, attacked, and killed. Simply, the city had to be cleansed of all the Serbs. All the IDPs called my father to ask him about the documents of students and professors working in the technical school in order to enroll and continue their education and work in the places they were displaced.

KFOR had already entered Kosovo. Here in the Štrpce municipality were based KFOR from Ukraine and Poland under the command of American KFOR in Bondsteel. Then my dad, together with some colleagues who were directors of elementary schools in Ferizaj, as well as the director of the economic school in Ferizaj, went to KFOR to ask them to accompany them to the city schools to obtain student documents and teachers files so that they could continue life in the places where they had fled. For a

long time, they did not want to accompany them. One morning, on September 28, around 7:30 – 8:00 pm – I know that I and my sisters were still asleep – we heard from the window that a man came and told his father: "Paun, now they want to accompany us and we are going to Ferizaj for documents".

The one who came was a father's friend, was called Milan. That day they went to Ferizaj, accompanied by Polish KFOR: two vehicles and their accompanying soldiers, and we never managed to learn the names of the soldiers in those vehicles. Of course, American KFOR had given permission for two Polish KFOR vehicles with Serb civilians to go to Ferizaj, because that's how the command works, everyone knows that. Together with my father there were also five other Serb people: Milan Nikolevic, Snezana Zivkovic, who came from Serbia as high school economics director, Marko Stojanovic, aunt Olga's husband, director of the first elementary school ... Now I cannot remember the other names, but it seems to me there were two women, Brankica and Zorica. I think these were the six people in two vehicles. They went around 8:00 or 8:30 in the morning to Ferizaj. We were at home with our mother and we did not suspect anything because they went with KFOR to get documents. Then there were no mobile phones to communicate with and we did not suspect something bad happened until it became dark and our father did not return home.

That night both cars came. The time was probably around 7:30 or 8:00. They said Paun and Marko were missing. Initially we and our mother did not know what they were saying to us because they had gone under their companionship. I was 19, the other sister was 17 and the youngest was 10 years old. So, we did not understand what they meant when they said they "are not" with them. They told us this in just ten minutes, returned the vehicles and went to their base in Brezovica. Later we went to them, but none of them wanted to talk to us or show us the names of the drivers that escorted the six Serbs to Ferizaj, nothing at all.

Then Milan Nikolevic, who was with my father and uncle Marko in the car, told us about the whole event. He told us that they were the first to go to the technical school where father worked, received some documents they found, then went to the economic school and there they received the documents they found, then they went to the first primary school that is in the market direction.

They arrived there around 12:30 – 01: 00. The school was filled with students and teachers, and they entered the office where Agim Rexhepi, Halim Salihu and Fadil Sejdiu were sitting. I think that the director, the cashier and the school secretary were their positions. Father and uncle Marko entered, greeted them because they knew them as colleagues from before, asked for the documents and they told them they would give anything they could find. But then, Svetlana, who was with them, wanted to visit the family cemetery in Doganovic, and they said that father and



Marko could be in the office until former Albanian colleagues brought their documents, while both KFOR vehicles left them there and went to visit the cemetery of Svetlana's family.

Later, people who were in the office said that some people came, in black uniforms, and wondered why dad and Marko were there. They took them out and those in the office say they know nothing more. Then we do not know anything for sure; we only heard rumors. KFOR claims to have controlled the school and the city, but it seems no one has seen anything. How is it that, in the middle of the day, when the school was filled with students and teachers, so on a business day, no one saw anything, and two people simply disappeared?

When KFOR jeeps returned, the three people in the office, Agim, Halim and Fadil, first said that they had gone to drink tea, and then that some of their friends came and they went out for coffee, so these are the versions that they have told us. We were not there, but they told us that. KFOR added that the two Polish KFOR vehicles allegedly had looked for them, they tried to find them, but I suspect they did not even look for them because it is impossible, since they did not even stay there. You cannot put two people in your pocket and take them somewhere and that no one sees anything; they could not leave so far, and no one knew anything.

We talked to Svetlana too, but she just did not say anything to us. They came back that day and she immediately went to Serbia. She then returned here and said they were no longer in the jeep with her, so she knew nothing concrete.

When our father disappeared, we immediately went to Breza, because there was a Polish KFOR settled there and we wanted to ask them questions in order to learn something more, but no one wanted to talk to us. The next day we went to UNMIK police and told them all we heard and knew. Most of them assured us they would find them; they would do their best, and so on.

Later, we organized barricades on the Trakovac-Gotovusa road, blocked them with friends and family so that the vehicles could not go through, in the hope that we would urge someone to do something, since at that time we did not have electricity for three months, because they had destroyed the transmitter poles, and we had no telephones, no connections to the outside world, and we were not sure if we left out Trajkovic in Zupa. We were like in a ghetto and we are still in a kind of a ghetto, because no one can come to you and you cannot go to anyone. None of us dares to go to Ferizaj because the same thing could happen to us as well.

Then, American KFOR joined the so-called search. At that time there was Colonel Michael Elerby, who came to our home very often convincing us that he was close to

finding our father and uncle Marko, that they were in Viti, that they were in a building in Ferizaj, that they were very close and this continued for six months that he was here and then his term here was finished, he went to his home leaving us with nothing. Sometimes, someone from UNMIK police came to us to ask us what our father was wearing, they were looking for pictures, and this is the only picture left to me, which is a copy of the ones we gave to them. This is a photo from an ID card. All our other photos are left in Ferizaj, but there were only a few who were left by chance, all the others we gave and we no longer had other photos to give to them. We have also tried to talk to some Albanians who have known my grandfather, some of the elderly, to help us, offered our home in Ferizaj for any information that someone might have, we talked to everyone. Then we went to Pristina to the German commander of all KFOR, Reinhardt, but he had attended us for very shortly and after this conversation Colonel Michael Elerby left the case. Then Couchner came to Strpce, and we tried to contact him but we barely managed to give him a letter so that he would help us as a responsible person for UNMIK; however we only got words, sometimes that they were in Albania, or in 'Zhitopromet' in Ferizaj, or that they were in Viti, but nothing concrete.

To tell you the truth, I still have a feeling that he is alive, since we have not received any other information yet. But this is a subjective feeling and it is very difficult to accept the opposite even when you know that 20 years have passed. My father was born on November 26, 1947, which means that today after 20 years, if he had been at home, he probably would not be alive, but none of us says that. When I speak to my mother and sisters, no one can say that he is not alive.

Even during 2004, when that persecution took place, the most difficult thing was when we thought we were leaving Kosovo when we did not know what had happened to the father. How could we get away when he was somewhere else; maybe a miracle would happen, although most in EULEX and UNMIK say that none of the kidnapped Serbs was alive and that the chances are minimal, since there was no case when any Serb were found alive. Whoever is taken is dead and either found or not found, but even when they tell us, we just do not accept it completely because there is nothing tangible. A month before this, on July 21, my father's brother disappeared on the Štrpce–Ferizaj road. Along with two others from Gotovusa they went missing out of the car on July 21, and we know anything about them two too. So what befall us is that our uncle disappeared on July 21, and father had taken the courage to go to Ferizaj for documents, thinking he did not have to fear whether something could happen to him.

We Serbs have this habit of burning candles for the living and for the dead. No one ever in my family has lit a candle for my father, and I do not even know what it is, just do not know how to describe it. Very often we go to the church and no one has

the power to light a candle, which is not for the living and every holiday it is very difficult. I have two children, my second sister also has two, the younger sister has a son, and all this reminds us of him and it is very difficult.

I remember my dad as a very honest man this day. He was extremely honest, zealous and honored, by both Serbs and Albanians. If you know any one of his peers from Ferizaj, especially from the field of education, you can freely ask them, and I am certain you would get the same response from them too. You would get the same from our former neighbors in Ferizaj too. He helped anyone who could have needed help and never boasted nor talked about it, but only when someone met and thanked him, would we know how many people he helped.

I remember many moments with him. These memories are very vivid even though 20 years have passed. I remember when I went to school, his help about homework, because my dad finished his biology branch in Pristina and knew well about biology and physics, and whenever we got stuck with the lessons, he helped us. Then it was time I went to college and my dad came to visit me in student dormitories. When I sometimes stay alone at home, I feel like I can hear his voice. Or, when I'm on the road, I often stop and go back, and then I realize it's impossible. Or sometimes in the crowd, when someone resembles me, I follow in hope it might be him.

In my dream I do not leave, I do not know why. But simply, time stops, and 20 years are like two days. All us three sisters are married, and none of us had a wedding party, because of him we did not wear our bride's clothes. Simply, you cannot honor your guests and be happy. I can freely say that for ten years no one speaks more specifically about my father, nor about uncle Marko, because normally we expect from EULEX, UNMIK, KFOR, we know we can not to do something ourselves and when EULEX and KFOR say they have no data, it sounds frivolous and a lack of respect for families. And it is impossible, because in the 21st century, with all that technology and all the accessories available to the world, they tell us that they have no data. It is impossible. I, my family and most families of the missing are convinced that those institutions are knowledgeable, but unfortunately I think that politics is involved here and these cases are still unsettled because they are not ready to show responsibility and to present the facts in front of the world. First in front of families and then in front of the world.

My mother was a teacher, for fifteen years she worked in Kaçanik, the oldest in Gërlicë, but within the school of Ferizaj. Mother has simply collapsed, in every sense, physically and mentally. I and my second sister wanted to protect our mother and our little sister, and we went to the barricades, the police, KFOR and we went out on the street, we stopped KFOR to ask for everything. My sister and I we went

anywhere to get more information. We have come to the conclusion that everything is known, and nothing happened accidentally.

In Ferizaj, immediately after the withdrawal of the Serbian army and police and the entrance of KFOR, the KLA fighters entered too. It is well known that everyone has had their area of responsibility in Kosovo. Those people who have been in the office with our father and uncle Marko say that there were people wearing black uniforms, it is known that black uniforms were worn by KLA soldiers, and who was responsible for the Ferizaj area by the KLA needs to have knowledge. I do not know any names and at that time I was a kid, but someone has to know it. I know that Ferizaj was the area of responsibility of American KFOR. In my opinion, the Americans know everything there is, coming here and being equipped with all that technology available to them not only for their area of responsibility, but also for the whole of Kosovo.

The two governments, Pristina and Belgrade, should not include politics here. Unfortunately, I live here in Kosovo and I have noticed that this situation is being used more for political purposes than it is for someone who is concerned for the missing, and it is always stressed that someone works for it, however nobody does anything concrete. This applies to all, not just for my father, but for all missing persons. Simply, politics is very involved here and where politics is introduced, we will remain in the same place.

Bearing in mind that the dialogue in Brussels is confined and no agreement reached there is respected, I doubt that this will be resolved in Brussels. International, military and civilian organizations are found throughout Kosovo and have pushed pressure on those responsible to do something from the outset. We have to put more pressure on them, because with the discovery of the truth about missing persons, the names of responsible people come to the fore. Respondents should be punished for what they have done.

Now, how many are willing to accept what has happened I do not know, I sincerely suspect that there is still willingness, but I still hope. I am sure that KFOR has data because they entered in June 1999 and this happened in September. At that time there was UNMIK and for me it is simply unbelievable, because if there is no data, then those for me are not organizations. But my suspicion is that none of the international organizations have that influence, perhaps the most influential person in Kosovo and beyond, are the Americans, and that was the area of responsibility for American KFOR. Ferizaj, Strpce and Gjilan are still, I do not think that this has changed.

It's very difficult when you have such a family, it's a big burden, and you cannot do anything. This applies to all, Serbs, Albanians and Roma. To all. It has been 20 years and it is very difficult to use it for political purposes, to gain political points and often for material benefits from various organizations. And indeed, nobody cares about this job. Perhaps this is in the nature of man, I do not know, but no one can understand except the other families whose people have disappeared. The most important thing is not to blame each other, since not all Serbs are guilty of something that happened to anyone and not all Albanians are guilty of what happened to my father but the ones who are guilty should be known by name and surname. I know it is difficult to open to one another, but we must try to find the truth together.

Again I say – I am aware that this circle has closed, there is simply no information, because those people could not have disappeared, but there is simply no information where they were sent, whether they were held naked or killed immediately, if so, where were they killed. They have to be here because Kosovo is not large, but people are still closed. When they are ready to open, I do not know. I'm afraid they will probably never be opened, but then it will be even harder. I do not believe in fairy tales and I do not believe things can change overnight. I know it's not easy, but my dad and uncle Marko vanished in the center of the town in the middle of the day. The students, the teachers, and the three of them who were with them, were unable to see anything? This simply is impossible.

We as a family are all here in Strpce. All of us three sisters are married. Mother lives with her little sister. We all manage. I am a deputy in the Kosovo Assembly; my second sister does not work; only her husband does, while the little sister works in a private company where she translates from English into Serbian. We are alive and we do not complain about this aspect, but the memory of the father in every New Year, every holiday, every birthday ... we do not mention him, especially for these festivities we do not mention him because we do not want to cry or become burdensome to others. That burden is carried within ourselves and I never want anyone to put up with what I think about it all the time, because only the one who is tried is taught to live with it and does not forget or pass it, but learns to live without loaded with anyone.

I repeat that families are forgotten by the institutions and tell you the truth when you sent me the interview request to surprise me because nobody wants to talk about it except when there is any political or material benefit. Simply this is so, and when families meet, as I have heard, both in Serbs and Albanians, all have the same story and this is a fact that I do not know if we can change it. Maybe we can try but I do not think we can change it.

Here in Štrpce there are 13 families with missing people, and we all know each other, we have the same stories, but when I hear stories of families from other parts of Kosovo it seems like talking to only one family whether Serbian or Albanian. When I hear the stories of others, they all are summarized in the same way, I have the impression that this seems to have been planned, as if all of us were served the same story. I have to repeat that we could not go anywhere. Only a small number of people wanted to come to us, because at that time you could not venture out of the enclave, as soon as you would, you would disappear or be killed. And after 20 years, you think or have meant that everyone tells us the same story and finally the story of each family is the same. It's been 20 years, this is a very long time, and now that you have come, this gives me a hope that something will move, and someone will react. I am convinced that the larger organizations know, but are they willing to stand before us and the world? I always have a ray of hope, after you came and after what you are going to prepare, I believe someone will be ready to come out to tell the truth.

When someone after 10-15 years comes to you and asks you: "Do you remember the clothes, the coat your father was wearing that day, how did it look?" After all that time, you expect him to say something to you, not to give him the information. I think this is offensive, I do not know how to describe it, it's a kind of humiliation and makes you feel empty when someone comes from where you are expecting answers but he asks you, "What was he wearing that day, what did he look like and do you have any pictures," and since you have provided many times this data and expect someone to resolve the issue. Someone is playing with us. Believe me, the last time EULEX called a family in Gračanica 6 or 7 years ago and told us that it is important and urgent, and we go in the hope that they will probably tell us something when they ask "Do you not have any pictures?", "What was he wearing," then a "thank you" and a "good day".

Now is the time for those who know how to come up with the truth, because families can no longer wait. Now there is a law in the Assembly and of course it has to be worked with, because families feel lost neglected and there are many issues that need to be solved, but we cannot solve them because it is not foreseen by law. I think we're still running. We do not have all that is needed to help the family members. It is said that everyone is willing to provide help, but little is applied in real life. We need concrete actions.







“ Luckily we have had other sons in Germany. Because me two and my brother two, and another boy of my other brother. Five of them. The ones that were in Germany are still alive. But the ones that remained here, they all are gone. We don't know if they are alive or dead. Two of them were of age 17 and other two of age 19. ”

## Halil Ujkani, Sadri Ujkani and Zyle Ujkani

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Halil: I am Halil Ujkani, son of Sinan. I am born and grown in village Vinarc. I have worked for Trepça's Combine for 40 years and 9 months until just before the war, when they expelled us. I am kind of retired. I am married in 1959. I have four sons and one daughter. My oldest son is called Refik, then Shaip is next, and then Ferid and Mahit, whereas daughter's name is Sadete. My sons completed secondary school and got employed. The oldest one was employed in industrial chemistry, there with me. He worked until the time we were expelled. The daughter completed nursing school and she is working in the hospital. Two of our sons, Mahit and Shaip, have been taken, they have lost them. The other two sons who were at home left to Germany. They are there for 20 years. The oldest one is married, and he has two daughters. The second one is not married yet. Here I am living only with my lady. Just before a war we were living together with other brothers, 35–36 family members. Each of us is living in our own houses. I am living here in our old yard. Others are not far from here.



*Narration in conversation:*

## ***For twenty years neither in land nor in heaven***

*Halil Ujkani, Sadri Ujkani, dhe Zyle Ujkani*

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We were four brothers and three sisters. Two of my sisters are alive whereas the other one has died. Even one of my brothers, Zait, is dead. One of his sons is missing also. Zahit died two years ago. My brother Sadri and I are here. The third brother is in Germany. He was engineer, electro-engineer. We all own our houses.

We used to have good life before the war. We had a good living, we were together but our family was full, the youth were working, going to school. We had everything. But during the war everything was destroyed. Both of my sons were working even my daughter was working in the hospital.

My father was retired. After I got little older, he died. My mother never worked. She is dead, too. My brothers are married and they have children. I am married in 1959. Then we used to have good weddings, big ones. When I got married it was gladness. My third brother said: "its relay fun?" because there were around 300 or more guests. My wife's name is Zyla, she is from Drenica, village Prekaz. I have taken her from there and we have had a beautiful life until now. Now is little difficult, only two of us. We have had good conditions, good living. But the war came and destroyed us.

Initially I was expelled from work in 1992. We were all at home, but they have kind of retired us. We all stayed at home. In 1999 when the war started, the president of Democratic League of Kosovo was a professor named Latif Berisha. He was killed in his house in Mitrovica. They have announced that whoever belongs to the leadership of Democratic League to get and shoot. The deputy president of Democratic League, his name is Faruk Spahiu, with two of his friends, I have sheltered in my house for around two months. Until when the war came on 15 or 16 April 1999, when Serbian forces entered in our houses. Just before the forces arrived, our sons left from the house. The ones from League left together with our five sons; two of my sons and three of my brothers. My brother wanted to give them some money. But the one from Democratic League, Adem Pantina, told "we have enough money, no need." The son said: "we are going uphill in Germove, across Iber. If there is nothing, we will come back, we have the binoculars, and we will observe you from there. If you are in troubles and get up, we will continue."

Before the forces arrived, five of villages were collected here in our village, they are called Vinarce, Gushavc, Çaber, and they did not want to leave, just to stay here. Each house was sheltering over forty people. We have sheltered the people who escaped from there. But the next day when paramilitary forces entered in our neighbourhood, there down they have wounded some and two were killed. And to us they have told that we have to go to Albania. We left to Albanian. That road was a bit difficult, we went to Segllobare, whole family that remained. My wife, my daughter and me. My brothers with their children and everybody who was there. We had tractor. There were around 40 members. On tractor were my parents, children, a neighbour with his wife and son, my brother's father-in-law. The tractor was full of people and covered with tent.

When we left to Albanian, we had no clue where our sons are because they left and we did not see them anymore. We left two or three days later. Our sons have noticed that here is no future for them and left to a village called Broboniq. From Broboniq to Kuçiqte and then to Kotorr and there they slept over and had dinner. Over twenty people gathered and later to leave for Albania or join our army, we don't know what happened further. They met Serbian military forces. That place is called Dreth. There they were immediately surrounded and taken. They say that no shooting was heard or anything, but they put in the car, and as they say, from there they drove to a village Velibreg.

I had my apartment in Mitrovica. A Serbian was my neighbour. He told me that Shaip stayed over there with some Albanians. They dropped them out there and have taken to ... they said to Pozharevac. From there if they have killed them, are they alive or in the prison, we know nothing about them. The missing for who we do not know anything are Shaip and Mahit. Refik and Feriz were in Germany. Luckily, we had some of our sons in Germany. Because I lost two and my brother two also. And son of another brother, also. This makes five. The ones that were in Germany are still alive. However, the ones that remained here, five of them are gone. We don't know if they are alive or dead. Two of them were of age 17 and other two of age 19. Shaip was of age 33-34. They left holding a blanket because our house was full of displaced people from all around. Our sons were sleepless, we just gave them blankets to each of them.

Sadri: all of them left from here, because ours were coming to sit with the ones from LDK and talk with them. They sometimes went to downtown but there things got worse. However, this Adem Beqiri from Pontina said: "Uncle Sadri, they came close to our house and burned everything. We cannot go back there. They came here and should go somewhere." Then, they have talked with the guys that they want to go somewhere. That night blew in Çaber. The oldest son, second son Shaip, with their

friends went to help them. Where could they go only with one automatic? Still they went there. We noticed that the hell is coming in our way. I was preparing the tractor. When Shaip came, they already agreed so, they left. We have prepared something, they have taken some cookies, boiled eggs, and blankets, same as military used to have, because it was necessary when night falls. They have dressed some clothes to be warmer and left. They crossed the river Iber and climbed to uphill. They just past, the survived for ten minutes from that black car that was driving around, all of them could have been ambushed there on the street. There is a long road to Germova. From there they went to Broboniq. They slept over there for a night. From Broboniq they left to Kotorr.

Halil: Kiqishtë, then Kotorr.

Sadri: Yes, they went through Kiqishtë, but did not stay there. They went to Kotorr. There they stayed at one Haji. They were around 20 people...

Halil: yes, 24 has said.

Sadri: because there were some others. At that time, they have had cabbages with meat. We are grateful to him, he welcomed them. At 12 and half they prepared to leave but the old man said to them: "Young boys, if you listen to me, don't go because this is war time. It won't be like this forever. Russians and NATO came just to attack them..."

Halil: "run to forests", he said.

Sadri: "go around and then continue." They all decide to walk, because all of them were sought from army. I feel sorry for them who went with others that were sought by government (Serbian government), they all were young, but it happened. Mine were two, Faton and Shkelzen and two of my brothers, Shaip and Mahit. Also, the son of another brother, Zahit. He and Shkelzen were of same age. His name was Nazim Ujkani.

My tractor did not start. I was the last one to leave. I thought they are going to captive me together with children and to kill us all. But it started and left. We thought that all these five villages will be burned altogether, there where TransKosova was.

Halil: In Zhabar.

Sadri: this became very big. It was said that all these five villages are going to enter there. But they have had their own plan. In each curve they were by three-four of them and were saying to us "that way, this way." When we were back from Skenderaj, they have killed three people in Lubovec. I was on tractor, other were covered and could not see. When we reached at Shipol, police have stopped me. Only I on tractor and other were stopped behind.

Halil: he was driving tractor, whereas us behind the tractor.

Sadri: They asked for money, I pulled out my wallet. Three days ago, I have had received my pension. They were a lot of money but worthless. I throw them on hands. They thought they are German marks, they were happy. When he notices, he was waving me, but I did not stop. And we continued like that in rows from Mitrovica to Skenderaj's direction. We drove on the roads as they directed us. Because it was a convoy. But when we reached at Proni i Keq, where splits to Nis, to Skenderaj and the other road takes to Peja, they returned as back. There was a post block. He has a gun, but he did not pull it to shot me, but he took a pickaxe and run into me. What could they do, as soon as he would hit me we could all felt down in the stream.

Halil: we were four families on tractor.

Sadri: man is afraid up to some level but later is not anymore. But God stopped him, and we did not stop the tractor. And we passed. Then we went like that, searching us one by one. It was raining and windy. They send us back to Serbobranë. There was a school. It was full of cars all over. I thanked God that we survived. There we stayed for three days. We thought that they are going to let us go to Albania but why they sent us back, I don't know.

Halil: the border was closed, no more.

Sadri: then, they put three people there, allegedly to guard that place there. They called my brother. A guy from our village, called Muja, one from village down there, called Rasim, to guard and not to let out, police called them three. They were smart, came back. He was there outside with police. I was with old man. He was sick. He felt in tractor. He was 95 years old. Some people came and told me "Sadri, police captured Halil and they are not releasing him." They came in, he remained there. Thanks to God that no police car moved around there otherwise we wouldn't be here. They would have put in the car and God knows where they would have taken him. Then my daughter was five years old, now she is in Sweden, she is married. She graduated in faculty and she has good life. I said to her: "my daughter, go take your uncle and tell him to come inside." She went and cached him. They did not let him. He tried but couldn't. She came back and said to me: "Dad, they are not letting him." I said: "Go and hold him by hand, and don't release his hand. Drag him."

Halil: She was holding me by hand.

Sadri: I heard once when they swore on him. One of them said: "You killed my brother." Maybe his brother was killed during the war and he looked alike Halil with moustache. I don't know anymore because I was a bit far. But thanks to God they let him inside and them went away. Next day we received the order to go back. We went back, I have loaded.

We left for home but they did not let us. At Zhabar, said "Vinarci cannot go." They were killed, as Haji said, father and son, some were wounded. Some houses were burnt but not completely. They wanted to burn others. We returned in Zhabar to a friend, my sister is married. We returned there for one or two nights but we remained for two months in Zhabar. Sometimes we approached our village, my brother saw houses burning. His house was burnt but he was not enough even for his, mine was not burnt almost until the end, and said to me: "at least that one is burnt, we might live on it." I said: "it will be burned also. I hope we are fine because that is not a problem." The next day it burned. When he approached, he cried, he did not cry for his own but for mine yes. I said: "don't you worry my brother because it's not a ..."

Halil: our old man and lady were still young, though they could live there.

Sadri: there we have stayed since. When NATO came, it resulted, the citizens came out there. There was a son-in-law of my brother, the one that his son is missing. He is professor in Tavnik, no one was in his house, and everybody left. We entered in his house. Zhabar was burnt, you could not live there anymore. We went there and settled; we had some things but we were thinking about our sons: "Where did they go? Where are they?" the ones from other brother were calling from Germany: "Anything new? From Albanian also. We used to say "We know nothing". We had no news that they were caught.

I was staying with old man whereas the brother was dealing with investigations, in Mitrovica. He said: "No one heard that anyone is killed. No shootings. They took them, put them in the cars and have taken to unknown place." It was a man called Ismet...

Halil: ...from Mikushnica

Sadri: he was professor, a Bosnian has known him. He told. They let Ismet and Faruk go. They were in group with our sons. They were ambushed. They burned all the reflectors all over. And they surrounded from all sides. They caught. These two were in a bush and did not find. When they left, they did not hear any voice at all, then they got up and went to a village, directly to a house of a Serb.

Halil: In Zubin Potok. In Koloshin.

Sadri: Haji, seems not in Koloshin, little far away. Somewhere in Vokne.

Halil: No, no, they came from Kotorr to Dreth. From Dreth the returned back and they thought that went to Albanian, but they lost the road...

Sadri: No, no, they split from them after ours were caught. They wanted to go back in the same road they came, and they went to a Serb's house. This Ismet together with

the one from Democratic League, Faruk Spahiu. They felt on them. And when they were ambushed, that Bosnian knew Ismet and put them in the car and drove them up to Germova, at Upper Vinarc, there where that restaurant is. He stopped and said: "get out!" The Bosnian was in police uniform. They got out and went to a house in Upper Vinarc. They stayed overnight there until four o'clock.

Halil: in basement because the house was burning... they were in basement.

Sadri: at four o'clock they went to Broboniq and they survived. This is what Ismet told us. They came home, started working and everything runs normally. But ours are missing. This Ismet told that one of them from Democratic League got tired and felt down. Shaip has taken him from arms and took him to that base.

Halil: they held him for two-three hundred meters because he could not stand. They held on their arms.

Sadri: until they were ambushed. They left to that road where the fate took them. Until they felt on army's hands... this Faruk later became mayor of Mitrovica... one day we were standing in front of post office, and said to him: "Faruk, how come you survived and our sons are gone?" he said: "Believe in God I have told them there here is no chance but only the fate we remained there. We stayed there until they loaded, no gun was shot, no noise or nothing. They loaded them in the cars, and I don't know where they have taken them."

Halil: and they say that they have taken them there where I said.

Sadri: my brother knew his neighbour and his wife used to work at us in Lobriant.

Halil: that neighbour is called Aleqki Bole, we lived in same building for 30 years.

Sadri: he went to ask him, he replied: "Halil, I have seen Shaip with a group of Albanians at the school Haxhi Sulejmani" then called "Sveti Sava". There he was. I have tried, I wanted to take them...but I didn't dare. Because I was with them, how could I take? He saw them all there, even others, but he knew Shaip because he was taller and apartments were close to each other. Then he said "I left but I know they said that they are taking to Aleksinac or Pozharevac, but I cannot know where they have taken to."

Halil: the old man from Kotorr, who welcomed them, he has taken them to cross the border to Albanian. He was walking in front and others in the back. Up to when they were ambushed. He jumped in a bush and covered his self like a rabbit. They took them but did not know about him. He said "they did not find me because they came



back and took them with cars." He got up but did not meet them anymore. The one that took care to take them at the other side, came back home. The other two lost the road and went to Zubin Potok. There they got caught and from there they took to Vilibrege. There in Vilibrege the police interviewed them and there that Bosnian who saved Ismet, put them in the car and went to Koshutova.

When we reached in Broboniqë, there we heard in the radio that 25 Albanian are caught.

After the war, we looked for our sons. We have been organised with the association "Zeri i Prinderve", we have an office. There is no place we did not look for them. In Prishtina, all the time, as soon as something happens, we always go. There is nothing. Only words. But God has a great power. Those 19 years will pass, they are somewhere decayed. Believe in God it is hard, I don't think they are alive somewhere. However, as parents we still have some hope. Until we find out something. Recently they found one. He was our friend. They have mixed them. Upon they found one in the grave, the other one was found.

Sadri: I said: "I hope we find them alive, if they are lucky". But only bones, I hope we never find them. They bring different kind. I am convinced that they bring bones from animals also. We don't know how many graves were opened, take one and bring another one.

Once, together with my brother and a man from Pontina we went to a man in Gjakova. Allegedly he has some connections with Serbs and said "we may find where they are alive". We went and entered a contract. Five thousand euros per person, 10 thousand my brother and me ten thousand, five thousand another brother and 5 thousand the one from Pontina. Each of us by 5 thousand for a member. We have waited and waited. We went for several times. Cheatings.

Halil: yes, he is a clerk in Gjakova but he is connected with Serbs. Allegedly he can find them and said: "the Serb is asking for money."

Sadri: when you are in need you go everywhere, even to your enemy. We collected the money and took to him. We have waited for some time. He wanted to have all the money. We said: "Hey man, we lost our men. For God sake it will be on this day, the other day" My nephew from Germany called him from there and said "I have taken your address and everything, don't you dare to be foolish." We let it go for two weeks, three weeks and finally understood that there is nothing. When we went there, he gave us back the money.

Halil: as I thought it was only a cheating. But when you are struggling...or your spirit or money.

Sadri: when a man is struggling, goes anywhere. Someone has told to my father-in-law that a Bosnian can find the missing persons. He went to that Bosnian, we knew nothing. He said: "200 euro per person until are found. He paid 1000 euros for our five sons. That Bosnian came one day as he had a friend in Kçiq. When we went there he said "look, man, there are some in Shac, Reznik. Their last name is Ujkani, too. They have been slaughtered there in their house."

Halil: they are called Ujkani, too.

Sadri: We are not related. That Bosnian made the connections. When we went there, resulted that they are not ours but from Reznik. So, we went everywhere. The association that is here, they can do nothing. They pushed a lot. With photos, every time we have gatherings, we hold these pictures.

Once they came in Koshutovë. There were some women also, the ones are elected by assembly and government. They paid the restaurant in Koshutova. They paid us lunch. We had a discussion. Round table. I spoke a bit latter. I said: "We lost our men, two of them are my sons. Today, if I am asked would you like to find your sons or Serbs to come? I wouldn't want to find my sons only Serbs I don't want to be here. I don't care. But up to date your works was useless." They did not expect this from me. They hugged us when they left.

Regarding to our institutions, shame on them. None of them showed interest. The issue of missing person to go to Brussels. Who is obstructing that is still where it was? Is it more worthy a thing than a human? When you don't care about souls of human beings, how come you think that goods or money are worthy? 1600 are still missing? Likely they are lambs and sheep and not humans.

None of them found some time and say: "thanks to the country, the war for everything." To come and see how we are, do we have incomes? Thanks to God, we never suffered, I hope we will never suffer. We have had our own goods, we used to work, and we never stopped, day and night. All of us worked at Combine. At least, president is nothing, prime minister is same. Should have come and visit is and ask: "how are you, are you missing them?" because they are five men from same home, believe me it is not easy, if they would be birds let alone men! Two of them were students, other in secondary school. The oldest nephew owned a store.

I will not forgive this ever. I hope God will judge because I cannot forgive this and is not right. Even if my brother would be, I would say: "Brother you did wrong."

Zyle: I don't feel that my family is dead. Five children. I always think they are alive because we found nothing for them. We all gave our blood for them. They aren't found anywhere, that blood did not match with any of the bodies found. I always think they are alive but in the prison. But maybe they are working slowly. They are not interrupting their issues even the foreigners. They receive their salaries and don't care if people are suffering. I feel that they are all alive. Because no one said that they are dead. This Faruk Spahiu came. He went there in Koleshinë. When they let him go, we were staying in Zhabar, because we didn't dare to come here. He explicitly said that they have taken them there, they put a light on them and caught. The ones who were in ditches survived. But here no one, they have taken them, loaded and took somewhere. I don't know where. I am still hoping that they have taken to prison all of them. I grief. I pray every time. My heart always feels that they are alive, I pray...

When the war of Shaban Polluzha happened, I was two-three years old. My uncle lost in that war and one cousin. The cousin was back. I don't know for how long they have kept them there. My uncle died.

They are working very slowly. We don't live one hundred years. I am eighty. For these eighty years thanks to God I am fine. My heart is weak, I cannot talk long. My blood pressure goes high as soon as I get mourning. We kind are forced to watch the TV because we need to hear a word. I think is better not to watch because I get sorrowed for all the people, everything I watch is bad.

Halil: on the Independence Day I have seen the parades on TV. I am 83-4, I told to my brother how much I grieved and was struggling. I went to balcony, smoked a cigarette. I thought maybe it will go. I could not stop myself crying, it was so hard for me. However, the parent remembers everything because 20 years have gone. Now if we are alive, they will come, if death did not catch them.

Sadri: the second son Halil was at the store (grocery) working. Shaip, my son, is next. Faton was on second year of Faculty of Machinery. They made some recordings at Mitrovica's Faculty. We thought they are going to complete, because they were capable. To get a job in the institutions. But they were not lucky because they had that experience. Their friends, Emrush Ujkani, he was in same class with my son Faton and Mahit. Today, he is smart guy, politician. They have taken him very soon because the government noticed that he is capable, they educated him abroad, he has experience and practice. He is good guy and hard worker. When we see their friends, it is hard for us.

Faton enrolled in this school in Gushavc. Then secondary in Mitrovica. He loved to have driving licence. But he felt once. He never loved to live abroad. We could have

taken him abroad because we had other guys there, but he did not want. The day he left, he was kind of hesitating but they noticed that it was no life with us here. The last day we saw him, he had a jacket, I will never forget. It was with wool inside, whereas outside like rain protector. Also, he was wearing winter shoes.

But Shkelzen was younger. They, Nazim, my brother's son and son of Haji were on third class in gymnasium. Shkelzen was very friendly but he was not much interested in school. However, our guys did not go on wrong way. The oldest son, who today is in Prishtina, he works. He was unusually capable, he was enrolled for mathematics, but he had to go to Germany because they did not let them here to study in private houses. He requested money for passport and said: "Daddy, it's useless here, they don't let us. On one way we go to school, a man from Maxhera let her house to use as school, the way back they smash us on the face." It's really useless." He was capable. But he managed to get something, thanks God. He was in Germany and then was back. Other are still in Germany. They come only during half semester. Halil: Shaip completed economic secondary school. He got employed in the organization Lux.

Sadri: Shaip completed secondary school but here they built a store and worked there. He was very hard worker. He used to live in the apartment. He came rarely at home. No one ever complained about him.

Halil: Mahit was wise, quiet. He was going to school still. It's not because they were our children, but they were well educated. Upon the school ended they came home directly. On their free time they played football.

Zyle: Up to this year my old man was holding but this year he is weak. He cries a lot. He is grieving. Happy independence to all. I hope we enjoy it. When I see that youth who survived the war, because they are Albanians, Muslims, I am happy for them. He cries a whole day long. He was grieving and couldn't speak and said to me "Call my daughter". I had to call her and she came to calm him down. This is our life. We are hoping on God.

Halil: the day they left, Shaip was wearing a jacket, leather like. Other things, pants, shoes. I don't know.

Zyle: one side was red and the other side was white jacket, woolen like. It was white. It was two sided. I remember this for Shaip.

Halil: I don't know what Mahit was wearing.

Zyla: We gave blankets to each of them. The small ones. We thought they will cover their selves wherever they sleep.

Sadri: For Shkelzen, I have to ask his mother. I know Faton had that jacket, he turned it over. It was woolen. But for Nazim, my brother's son, I don't know what he was wearing, because they left quickly, they just took some belongings. We were concerned here. the house was full of people. That day I did not even say safe trip. Believe me, not, I thought they are going and coming back. I did not even think that I will not see them again. That time his mother hugged him and kissed on both of his cheeks.

However, we are used because during the World War II, in 1946, the old man together with other twelve persons, was place in the line to be killed, no dresses, it was night of orthodox Christmas. The whole leadership of Drenica was there. But when God wants to save you, he can do it. Hey were almost naked. Some with shirts and some only with underpants. They started to beat them. Believe me that when I was taking him a bath, I could notice the mark from automatic behind his shoulder. They put in the line to kill. He said: "before they put us outside, my hands were un-cuffed, I couldn't do myself, but God released them." He was concerned if they see him. The military could have beaten him. He had curly moustaches. He said: "he took me from moustaches and dragged." After the put in the line to kill. The collection of clothes it was almost two meters as they were undressing them before killing. They got each of them to take them outside. "When we went out - he said- they did not notice me that my hands are released because I was holding them tight. When I stepped outside, I pushed him and throw to the other side. They felt down and I run. The snow was up to the knee, no shoes." Now the hospital is built there in Bair. There the prison was. I want to say that we have suffered with generations from them.

However, war has many things. If they are alive, I would say "get a job, or complete school, if you can." Now Faton is over 30 years old. But very often I think that even they would be alive they will be useless because for 20 years they were in their hands.

Halil: At least to see them alive, as my brother said, I would say something else: "God leads you only on the right way." I will not ask from them anything else. If they get a job maybe they can complete the school somewhere private.

Sadri: I hope they are alive otherwise if they don't go to school is fine. They can continue working the field. They are not alive, no way... "Is not laying only that one from Gjakova who is Albanian, but also that Bosnian. To the government to say: "show some interest, look what is going on. Let us know because for twenty years we are neither in land nor in heaven. Let us know something about them, where are they."

We knowing nothing, the government is existing, this is not right.

Halil: we always go when something is going on. We go to Prishtina. I always say: "I will never forgive this to our leadership." Our children are gone but they did not take the measure they supposed to. We are in that organization with Bigram Çerkini, he is efficient activist. Even Xhyla is engaged there, me too. No other organization in Kosovo works harder than ours. We can do nothing more. Whereas, to our government this enter in one ear and come to the other. For twenty years they weren't found, for God sake it is hard.

Sadri: I would plea to government, from the land up to the heaven, just to search for them, because from us they have taken them alive and they have to bring them alive. And we are exhausted of graves and graves. Leave the graves. If they are in graves, where? Nobody says: "We are searching them for alive." Only dead. Why dead? Look for them if they are alive and if they are not alive tell where the dead are.

Halil: in that last meeting we had, they have told us "Why aren't you looking for alive?" they have taken them alive and we are requesting them alive. No, they are not alive. The dead one does not awake. However, they have taken them alive, and want them alive, as my brother said, let's go to Rashka, to Pazar or anywhere...

Sadri: nothing comes out.

Halil: they found massive graves. They work and find some but not others. For God sake, I am a parent, still is better to have his grave rather nothing. But still I don't know what kind of bones are, where from or whose are.

Now is the end. From Serbia, in dialogue, we are requesting them alive. To request them alive. They said: "no alive but here are the dead bodies." It's better to search for them if they are alive because they are looking for dead bodies, but they are not", the Serbs may say this. The one who is dead will not be alive anymore. He is decayed. They are making the conditions for Serbs to have lives with them. We go at the graves, a place at Rashka, they were just looking. I could not go there for two or three time, I couldn't because I cannot stand. Ours were just looking. In Pazar same, but in this way as they are working it won't happen anything.

Sadri: for God sake, I never imagined that our sons but they are gone. As the saying says "there is no wedding without guests". There is no war without casualties. Whoever had to die, died. We have still men and we will not be without men. But for us it's hard because the youth is gone. This makes for us harder. At least to have something enlighten. Now is better but not as supposed to be. Our men are gone, and they are not working properly. If they would have worked properly, we wouldn't be like this, would have been different. This is what concerns me. A lot of money has been invested here. It was taken everything and went everything. We always wanted to have our state. We got it. But now we have border at the bridge of Iber. Can you believe it! Believe me there is no Kosovo symbol in the north, nowhere.







“*The day that they separated us the last word of Arif were: ' My last will is take care for these girls – told me – because we are done!' And Jetmir he just put a pen on my hand, the one that was holding on his pocket and a necklace pulled from his neck and hanged on mine. I keep that pen; I never take it out of the house. Only when I suffer, I open it. And this bracelet, Arif bought for me. So, these two things I never take off my body.*”

## Kumrije Mazrekaj

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The family Mazrekaj- from Drenoc was forced to leave home when Serbian forces came to vacant the village by the Albanian population. They force them to walk a while, once they separate men from women. Kumrija with three girls end up in the camp at Elbasan, while her husband Arif and son Jetmiri remained captured in the village of Beleg, the place in which the whole family for the last time was together.

Jetmiri, as Kumrie found out, managed to escape wounded and shelters in the village Isniq. Many years after the war, his remains were found in a well. For Arif, Kumrija does not know anything of that event either today, twenty years after the disappearance.



*Narration in first person:*

## ***The day I left them; I knew they were gone***

*Kumrije Mazrekaj*

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I am from Maznik, I am born on April 1956. My father died when he was 50 and mother 60. I have two brothers and three sisters. We have had a good childhood; it was not bad. My father was shepherd, but we had good life. I went to school for four years, because it was far away, I should have gone through mountain to another village and then to go to school.

My husband's name is Arif. He was born in 1960. I don't remember in which year we got married. But I know I was 18. We have had five children, three girls and two boys. The oldest son has died. His name was Haki. The next one is Jetmir and then Mirjeta, Agoneta and Shemsie, the youngest one.

All my children went to our school. Jetmir until the day he had to quit. For few days he could not finish the secondary school. The school is in Drenoc but he was going to Deçan. Then they were attending school in private houses.

After one year of my marriage my first son was born. My husband got a job close here just for bread wining. After few days they let him work with saw, but he cut his hand. Since he had that incident – not experienced – didn't work anymore. Sometimes he went to the forest with a donkey to take some woods. His sisters where taking care of him. He has two sisters.

However, Jetmir except studying, he worked with wood in forest. Together with his sister he cultivated the land. With their father, they all went but most of the time they were cutting hay.

My daughters are all married. The oldest has no child. The second one has one boy and one girl and Shemsije has only one girl.

When they started to empty the village, they came here to our house and just told us to stand up. The table was ready as we were eating. We were all there together, my son, husband and daughters. It was still there, the way we left it. Then all the village left and us also. The oldest daughter was 12 years.

We went to Jerznig. The army wasn't following us, they just put us forward. They were shouting in sides. We were walking in the convoy and they were shooting. When we reached at Jerznig, we were sheltered. We have stayed there for some time and after two days we went to Beleg. There in Beleg have told us that isn't safe to go to Isnig. We slept over that night but around five o'clock in the morning they have surrounded us. They have taken us all, young boys and whoever was there. Some they have beaten, and some taken. That night they kept us there but on the next day they split us. They loaded us on trucks and tractors and sent us to Albania. They held the men. That day they split Jetmir and Arif.

Jetmir joined the army but they caught him that day with us, when they have taken. He was going to guard, some older men were taking him with them, but because he was the only son, he was going only for watch.

They were 16 people from Drenoc. I know some of them but I don't know all. When they took them I remained only with my daughters. Together with my daughters they loaded us on a truck and left us to Albania. Then we were taken to Elbasan. There we were send to Turk camp. There we have stayed for two-three months and later I don't remember. I remember when was raining, the rain was coming in the tent. In that gathering I was with my daughters at my husband's uncle. His house is close here, but both of the old people have died now.

There in camp they have put some big TVs and people were gathering there. Tony Blair came to see us at that camp. He talked to the old lady, uncle's wife.

While we were there in camp, we received some news that our men are alive. It was told that they have been taken to Deçan's church. Then my daughters were happy and said: "Mum let's go, let's go." Then the young boys went because I did not go but when they were coming back, I asked them but they were told that: "They are not here." There in church only Serbs were.

Then it was told that they were burnt in Beleg. The body of my husband's but not of the son. When we left in Beleg, after they split us, he jumped from balcony to escape from them. But when he jumped from balcony, two of them have noticed him and shot on him. My son was wounded in the arm.

From Beleg he escaped wounded, trying to hold himself until he reached in Isnig. The people from Isnig where about to leave and he was found by an old man. That old man was taking care of animals and didn't leave his place. He heard him grumbling, took him and healed him. He has said: "I have treated him with cheese, like old times." The son stayed there for other two weeks. "Then they came" said the old man,

entered and took him from me.” They have taken and after dropped in the well. He was found in the well.

About my husband I know nothing after Beleg. Only this boy who escaped from there. From these 16 people only Jetmir is found. There were sheltered around 600 people, but none of them have found their relatives.

When we came back from Albania all the windows were totally broken. I didn't find anything in there. However, people gave me many things and thus I got some of the necessary things. The house was painted inside only but now outside, and the windows were broken same as to everybody. We have slept there in such conditions. I put some packages wherever the windows were broken just to protect from night cold. It was good enough. For around three weeks or a month we lived like that but later someone gave us something and someone another thing, this way we arranged.

I did not know how to seek for my husband and son. They have said: “it's son, no it's husband”, words only. Later only the son was found. Someone from our village has found. Initially they did not tell me. They just brought, buried him without any analyses. One day the second daughter came back from school and told me: “Mum, they are saying that Jetmir is found but they aren't telling us.” The friends went at my family and have told: “the boy is found but Kumrije is not accepting.”

Then, around 10 – 15 people came at my home, my uncle was with them. He hugged me and said: “Honey, be strong!” I said: “My uncle, the day I left them, I knew they are gone.” He pulled out those letters and said: “his ID was found in the well.” When it was found they have brought at me. I said: “Did you come today?” you should have brought the ID, would be known better.” No ID, no nothing. Then the second daughter reacted and said: “I will not accept in this way.” His son reacted and said, you should show the papers.” “Show the papers, let's see if it is our blood.”

The uncle said: “no, I will not show the papers.” The son said: “Show the papers because tomorrow I will go to Prishtina on my own.” He reacted to my uncle: “Daddy, did you come to enlighten this matter for my auntie or leave her in mess?” he replied: “Fine, you do what you want.”

My cousin together with my brother have taken the picture of my son and the papers and went to Prishtina but they said: “We did not check for this boy, didn't receive documents for him. No blood nor anything.”

Afterwards, they came exhumed him and took there for analyses.

After few days he came with other two black people, foreigners. The black people

were crying when they saw the pictures, holding their heads. The daughters were at school. Then they said to me: "Do you accept us now?" I said: "Yes, you have to accept your fate." Then I said to them: "don't bring him for other two days until I tell his sisters!" They supported us, they helped me to grow my children, my husband's hand was cut, and they helped us with bags of flour and many other things.

When they came to burr him again, the son came with garland, likely it was real, and on that poverty was trying to do something for me. It was on 07 June 2007. Thus, we conducted whole traditional courtesy. From all over the village people came. We buried him. The army brought him. I said to the soldiers: "Can you bring him to our yard?" they brought in. We had not gate, half of the perimeter wall was destroyed; they brought and let there for around 15 minutes, then all was done as our tradition requires.

They all gathered, sisters, brothers and whole village and together with people from the village we have taken to the graves, as per our tradition. The soldiers put him in the grave. The soldiers carried on their own up to the place.

But Arif was not found. No one ever mentioned him since he was taken. We never heard anything about him. No one knows anything about him, nothing. At least to be found somewhere and tell us "We found!" or say that "they were burnt and lose our hope!" or something but no, no one anything at all.

The day we split. Arif's last word were: "My last will is take care for these girls – he told me – because we are done!" And Jetmir, he just put a pen on my hand, the one that was holding on his pocket and a necklace pulled from his neck and hanged on mine. I still keep that pen; I never take it out of the house. Only when I suffer, I open it. And this bracelet, Arif bought for me. So, these two things I never take off my body."

We have had some of their clothes, but I gave them away to other people. They were almost new. Some of their clothes I have saved but others I gave away. When we came back all things have been taken, couches, television. All the things have been robbed, quilts, mattresses. When we came back, we were covered with some black quilts that we have taken in Albania.

Both were good. It's not because they are mine but never ever happened any incident in this village, no quarrels or touched anything that didn't belong to them. My husband was in big need, but he never ever taken an apple to anyone. He was two years younger than me. His mother has died, and he remained only with his father, then we got married. My uncle arranged our marriage. It's not like now, they marry each other, exchange their rings. My uncle arranged my marriage within two weeks. We have had the wedding with tambourines. It was good, very good.

Jetmir has had many friends. Here is a guy, a neighbour, who is born ten days before Jetmir. There are also other people, father with two sons, who were taken on the same day in Beleg. One of them was 14 and the other one was 19. Now in their family remained only one boy and one girl.

Now I live all alone. They have cars and sometimes they come to pick me up, my brother, daughters, sisters-in-law and stay at theirs for two-three days, one week but I cannot stay longer. I receive a pension on behalf of Jetmir. My daughter goes to pick it and pays invoices, utilities. But for Arif I don't receive anything. Nor anyone comes to ask me about him. Only that blood when they came to take, never anymore.

My daughters grieve a lot for their father and brother. Before when I came back from my daughters' home, I used to cry a lot. I don't like to talk about this issue. They don't talk either. Lately for the anniversary a son-in-law paid a tribute song for them. The oldest daughter was amazed and said "Mom, have you heard this song?" I said: "No" My brother-in-law has sent the link and then they played. Berat Ozdauti is his name. He also works with the organization for towers.

I don't dream them. Maybe it's better. I would be more grieving if I dream. It happens when I stay awake sitting during the night. I can't sleep, I sit and say: "How could God do this?"

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