

# *Forensic medicine examinations of some Albanian victims after the end of the Kosova war of 1999* \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

**Introduction:** *After the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, forensic medicine examinations of Albanian victims began to be carried out, mainly by foreign teams, but a part of them also by two teams of forensic medicine doctors from Albania assisted by Kosovar forensic doctors.*

**Methods:** *As it is known, forensic medicine is a science that is more involved than other disciplines in the events that occur in any period of time, having a close relationship with criminology (the science of the scientific study of criminal phenomena), where the latter receives data highly valued by forensic medicine.*

*Precisely, in such a broad perspective, are also analyzed the forensic data of the cases examined by us. At the beginning of this study, the impressions of the situation in Kosovo after the war are given with pictures of the corpses killed by the Serbian*

army and paramilitaries, followed by the results of the examinations of many corpses or their remains by us during our stay there.

Then some other forensic documents are analyzed, including the book: “Quai des ombres” (Paris 2012) by Professor Lecomte, director of the Medical Institute of Paris, in which, among other things, she shows her memories of the examinations she carried out, of the corpses of Kosovar victims immediately after the end of the Kosovo war.

**Results:** From everything that was seen and examined by us, as well as from the analysis of other materials, the idea was reinforced that the tragic events that preceded the war in Kosovo can be considered as one of the most culminating points of the genocide murders to the Albanian people from its neighbors. But in contrast to all the previous genocidal murders, accurately proven by the numerous forensic examinations of the Albanian victims, the Albanian people reacted more decisively and persistently by creating the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) that fought with the Serbian army and paramilitaries. On the other hand, these massacres were recognized and shocked the entire civilized world, especially the USA, which quickly intervened and freed Kosovo once and for all from the Serbian yoke.

**Conclusion:** It is concluded that: Forensic medicine in its broadest sense constitutes very important evidence for the detection of genocidal murders. In the recent genocide against the people of Kosovo, the forensic evidence, undoubtedly invalidates forensic arguments of Serbia in an irrefutable manner, the completely unimportant, often even false, according to which the Albanians were who have killed the Serbs.

**Keywords:** Kosovo, forensic evidence of genocide, Serbian genocide against Albanian of Kosovo, Kosovo war.

## 1. Introduction

After the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, forensic examinations of the Albanian victims began to be carried out. They were mainly performed by foreign experts, but some of them also by two forensic teams from Albania that went there one after the other during the month of October 1999, to perform some of these examinations together with Kosovar colleagues.

As far as I remember, during our one-week stay in Pristina, we noticed the difficulties caused by the lack of regular electricity and water supply to the citizens, when several months had already passed since the end of the war and the liberation of Kosovo from Serbian yoke.

Kosovar forensic doctors showed us many of the city's buildings, damaged during the NATO bombings, as well as houses and apartments left empty by Serbian citizens, from which they had quickly left or sold during this time.



These images immediately reminded us of the events of many months ago in Albania, in Kukës more but also in Tirana and in all other districts, where the inhabitants of our country sheltered with love and compassion in their homes several hundred thousand Albanians, a large number of children, women and the elderly, violated, tortured and massacred, who had left Kosovo because of the brutal violence against them.

But what affected us the most were the still fresh traces of criminal murders committed by the Serbian army and paramilitaries, mainly against the civilian Albanians population of Kosovo.

During our stay there, our Kosovar colleagues introduced us to cases of dismembered, rotting corpses, of calcined or carbonized skeletal parts, corpses discovered inside wells, some with limbs cut off, of raped women, etc., all of this with the aim of their disappearance, as well as numerous mass cemeteries, some of which were mined that required great care during exhumation. We observed all these in many areas of Kosovo.

Also, we learned about numerous cases of missing persons, who were kidnapped and sent to Serbia, as was the case of a relative of one of the Kosovar forensic colleagues, kidnapped by the Serbian army and who turned out to be missing.

This study will describe some data from the forensic examinations of the corpses of Kosovar citizens killed by the Serbs, carried out by us during that week of our stay there.

Then some other forensic documents will be analyzed, including the book: "Quai des ombres" (Paris 2012) by Professor Lecomte, director of the Paris Medical Institute, in which, among other things, she tells the memories of the examinations performed from her, of the corpses of the Kosovar victims immediately after the end of the Kosovo war.

Ongoing, all the above forensic data are analyzed, in a broad criminal, criminological, ethical, historical, or political perspective, followed by the relevant conclusions.

## **2. Data of some forensic examinations of the remains carried out by us on 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27.10.1999**

- **On 23.10.1999**, around noon, in the cemetery of the martyrs of the village of Kleçkë in the municipality of Gllogovci, an examination of an unknown corpse was carried out by us. This corpse was thought to belong to the Kosovar Albanian citizen, G.H., aged 45, with a teaching profession, who on 14.12.1998 in the village of Pashtrik on the border with the Republic of Albania, was killed by the Serbian army and paramilitaries along with several other KLA fighters.

After the identification and opening of the grave, the corpse was taken out, which was presented in an advanced state of decay in the stage of liquefaction and partially saponified, indicating that the death had occurred no less than 6 months ago.

Afterwards, we performed the forensic examination with the external and internal examination, odontological examination and age determination.

In the end, it was concluded that the descriptive and measurement data completely matched those of the murdered person G.H.

Several gunshot wounds were observed on the corpse: one such contact wound on the head and directed from top to bottom and from left to right and three other wounds on the body and left arm, directed mainly from back to front.

The cause of death must have been contusion of the brain.

From these findings, it is clear that the victim was not attacking the aggressors, as he has been turning his back or moving away from them. In this position, they most likely shot him in the body from behind, seriously injuring him, and then when he fell to the ground, but still alive, they approached him and ended him immediately by contact shooting on the head.

-On **24.10.1999**, in the morgue of the Medical Institute of Prishtina, we examined the remains of the four Albanian victims Sh.M., R.M., A.M. and H.G., found in four separate places in the village of Krushev Obeliq in Kosovo.

From their careful examination, each of the four plastic bags in which each of them was placed were taken out. What was immediately noticeable in these few bones remains was their very dry condition, with a dark colored surface, here and there with a lighter color, made like porcelain, with numerous cracks and breaking when touched. and their coercion. These are features of bones burned to a significant degree (calcified bones).

The determination of their human origin was mainly based on the method of their anatomical description, but also on the use of the medullary index, which is determined by the ratio of the minimum diameter of the medullary canal to the minimum diaphyseal diameter. It resulted in the figures 0.44 which speaks in favor of the human origin of the bones.

Even in these cases, the examination of these few and calcined (burned) bone remains proves the efforts made by the Serbian aggressors to eliminate any traces of the murders of the Kosovar civilian population committed by them.

-On **October 25**, 1999, in the village of Sllatin e Madhe, we took part in the inspection of a massive cemetery in a quadrangular shape with dimensions 6.7 x 4 m, bordered by several houses and several plots. About 15 m further on is another massive cemetery, surrounded by red ribbons tied to four trees at its corners, with the surface at the plot level, covered with herbs and bushes. In these two cemeteries, the corpses of many Kosovo Albanian citizens killed by the Serbs were buried.



In these two cemeteries, we were not able to carry out any action, because they were mined, and for this reason, their control and demining had to be carried out first.

**On 26.10.1999**, we exhumed seven corpses of Albanian citizens of Kosovo from a mass cemetery near the Roma cemetery in the village of Miradie e Lartë in the municipality of Fushë Kosova. This cemetery was located on a barren agricultural plot, located between the railway Pristina - Skopje and the river Graçanica. It consisted of two quadrangular parts, one larger, measuring 14 x 4 m and the other smaller, measuring 4 x 1.5 m.

In the examination of one of their corpses, consisting of several separate remains, with the phenomenon of decay present, it was determined that they belonged to a male person, over 50 years old, with multiple injuries mainly from the action of high temperatures.

**On 27.10.1999**, in the morgue of the Forensic Medicine Institute of Prishtina, we performed the forensic examination of another corpse exhumed from the above cemetery of the village of Miradie.

The corpse is male, presented in an advanced stage of decay, with phenomena of mummification and saponification. From the examination of the clothes and other identifying marks, it was proven that it belonged to the Albanian victim, Sh.A., 71 years old, resident of Fushë Kosovë, killed by Serbian military forces in May 1999.

From the external and internal examination of the corpse, where the soft tissues and internal organs were dissolved and only their debris was visible, two severe gunshot wounds were found: one in the head from back to front and the other in chest from front to back.

Cause of death: severe injuries to the brain and chest organs.

So, this is a pure case of shooting death of a civilian Albanian resident, where apparently, the head wound was done to immediately end the life of the victim.

### **3. Other forensic medicine documents of the disappearance of victims and murders discovered after the war in Kosovo**

Regarding the disappearances of Albanian victims and their murders discovered after the war in Kosovo, there are countless documents and testimonies, most of which show the serious crimes committed by the Serbian army and paramilitaries, mainly in 1998 and 1999 (Demaliaj,2020; Krisafi, 2022).

As such, the studies of Naim Haliti and Jusuf Osmani can be mentioned, from which these main data are summarized:

“During the period February 1998 - June 1999, 19,440 Albanian citizens were mistreated in Kosovo; 9183 others were killed, 700 people were taken hostage and

126 women were raped. Also, 987,000 people were forcibly displaced from their lands, and another 500,000 were forced to leave their homes. So, more than 1.5 million people became victims of various and inhumane crimes of the Serbian forces”.

The corpses of many killed Albanian Kosovars have been moved outside Kosovo in order to eliminate the signs of the crimes committed. This is proven by the opening of many cemeteries in Serbia.

It is also suspected that many corpses were burned in ovens, as in the one in Zverçan etc.

Other documents prove that when the Serbs left Kosovo due to the NATO bombing, they took with them all the documentation loaded on trucks or simply destroyed it.

It should also not be forgotten that some of the Albanian victims of these crimes were not accompanied by forensic examinations immediately after the occurrence of these murders. This is the reason that they have not been reflected in some studies carried out, based on the examination of forensic acts of that time, at the Institute of Forensic Medicine of Pristina (Halitii, 2017).

According to a 2016 Wikipedia document, Serbian crimes against the Albanian population in Kosovo can be summarized as:

- persecution and ethnic cleansing,
- destruction of settlements,
- rapes of women,
- the destruction of mosques, monuments and buildings with traditional architecture,
- disappearance of identity, through the confiscation of identity cards, passports to make it difficult or impossible for displaced persons to return to Kosovo,
- numerous massacres of civilians: Racak, Imeraj, Pemishte/Cerkolez, Suva Reka, Drenica, Izbika, Bela Crkva, Meja, Orahovac, Dubrava prison, Vučitern, etc.
- hiding the corpses by sending them to other places, such as the Trepce mine, in Serbia, or by burning them.

But it should be added that during this time, from some pro-Serbian, anti-Kosovo and anti-Albanian European circles, many false accusations were raised against the KLA, the most important of which are those of Karla del Ponte, the general prosecutor of Switzerland, who was appointed chief prosecutor of the Hague Tribunal in war crimes in Yugoslavia. In her book “The hunt: Me and War Criminals in 2008”, she claims that after the end of the 1999 war, the Albanians



of Kosovo and those of the KLA used to traffic human organs from Kosovo to Albania, of 100 to 300 Serbian and other minority citizens. In support of it, Dick Marty, Swiss senator of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, raised a serious but untrue accusation, which he compiled in his report: “Illegal treatment of organs in Kosovo and Albania” that he presented in the Council of Europe in 2011. But more than 10 years have passed and none of the claims raised in this report have been proven. For this reason, the Parliament of Albania in July 2022 submitted to the Council of Europe a resolution against Dick Marty’s report (Dita Gazeta, 2022).

However, in the period from January 1998 to June 12, 1999, 281 unarmed Serbian civilians were killed (211 males, 70 females), 123 Serbian civilians disappeared (99 males and 24 females).

Despite of these documented data, an undeniable truth is that in the overwhelming majority, the victims killed and massacred were those of Albanian Kosovar citizens.

However, it should not be forgotten that forensic medicine examinations of serious crimes are usually very shocking. This is because we forensic doctors, as Albanians, Serbs or even from other countries, who have encountered brutal murders and massacres, regardless of the nationality of the victims: Albanians, Serbs, etc., we have been touched by them, showing us a heavy feeling of suffering and despair (Kuka G, 2021).

On this occasion, we are mentioning the memories of Prof. D. Lecomte, who was at that time, director of the Medical Institute of Paris. Immediately after the end of the war in Kosovo, she participated in the forensic examinations of the Kosovar victims killed and massacred by the Serbian army and paramilitaries.

In her book: “Quai des Ombres” (Platform of Shadows), published in Paris in 2003 and 2012, she states among others the following (Lecomte, 2003):

“I have the impression that this post-war mission surpasses all the horrors I have seen during the 20-year practice of my profession...”

“... In a field, the corpses of men, most likely residents of the cities, because they are well-dressed, have been buried in a disorderly manner, put in green sacks. Almost all show signs of torture. His wrists and ankles are crushed. So everything to destroy, to sow terror...”

“... In another place, a resident tells us that at the bottom of the water wells there, women are found inside. After the excavation, well-preserved female corpses are taken out of them, but a forensic examination must be carried out immediately, because the decay process occurs quickly in these cases. We undressed the victims, whose clothes were overflowing with water. Their examination has been very severe; these women were first raped and then thrown alive into the well, where they drowned...”

“.....In a village everything has been flattened, the men of the village have been gathered together and shot in front of a wall where numerous bullet holes have been found. A resident tells us that they are buried in a confined space at the edge of a cemetery. We go there. But beware of mines. Before each mission, we are given an instruction on the different types of mines we may encounter and ways to detect them. Every time we go to a place to examine it, another team carefully explores the terrain.”

“In another village, all the members of a family were killed in a house. Blood is scattered everywhere. Women and children were killed in front of the men, who were then shot in the street with a bullet in the back.

“...I remember another case where all the houses were destroyed. A resident shows us the bullet marks on the walls and a heap of ashes in the yard, explaining that the elderly person guarding the house was shot dead and burned in the house fire. From house to house we are shown the same scenario....”

#### **4. Analysis of the above forensic medicine data, in a broad penal, criminological, ethical, historical, etc. perspective**

From everything that was seen and examined by us, as well as from the analysis of other materials, the idea was reinforced that the tragic events that preceded the war in Kosovo can be considered as the most massive murders of Albanians by their neighbors.

Their examination from a forensic medicine point of view is very important, because, as it is known, Forensic Medicine is a science that is involved more than other disciplines in the events that occur in any period of time, having a close connection with criminology (the knowledge of scientific study of criminal phenomena) (Çipi, 2018; Çipi, 2020).

Precisely, in such a broad perspective not only forensic - criminological, but also penal, ethical, historical, or political, the forensic data of the cases examined by us are analyzed.

These murders have been horrific and very brutal, dismembering corpses, drowning in wells, raping women, killing children, burning them to death and many other unimaginable ways, as mentioned in this material.

In order to justify these serious crimes and to invalidate their very bad effect on world opinion, on the part of certain pro-Serbian European circles, false accusations were raised, that allegedly the Albanians of Kosovo have committed serious crimes against the Serbs by killed and take those bodies to carry out their illegal traffic. In addition, Serbia, taking advantage of the weaknesses of the new state of Kosovo, has tried to amplify the murders of Serbs that may have been committed by the KLA during this time (Prifti, 2020).





First, the data presented were much less and therefore their comparison would be completely inappropriate and worthless.

Serbia has committed a brutal genocide for a century and a half against the Albanian people. The feeling of hatred has been imprinted in the Albanian mind, due to historical massacres committed by the Serbs.

Genocide constitutes what is called the intentional complete or partial, gradual, or immediate destruction of an ethnic group or people, mainly through murder, disintegration of language, culture, national feeling, followed by removal from the land where it lives etc. (Çipi, Sinamati, 2023).

As its most typical manifestation against the Albanian people, it is worth mentioning the savage Greek genocide against the Cham population followed by the annexation of their lands by the Greek state, the Serbian massacres against the Albanians in Kosovo, Montenegro (Tivar massacre) and Macedonia that brought the expulsion and departure of the Albanian population from the provinces where they lived for many centuries.

The documents of this genocide, with the aim of expelling the Albanians from their centuries-old lands, are countless (Islami 2020; Martinsen, 2006).

It is worth remembering in this study, the massacres against Albanians in the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, by the Serbian and Montenegrin armies, from which 10,000 to 25,000 Albanians were killed or died, among them many children, women and the elderly, where many of them had their noses and mouths broken, and others in Kosovo were buried alive. Many others with the removal of ears, nose, and tongue by means of their incisions, with the removal of eyes or even with the removal of the head (decapitation) as well as another part of the victims: burned. So great was the fear that these monstrous crimes of the Serbian army brought, that 40 thousand Albanians were forced to abandon their homes, while some Albanian women killed their children so that they would not fall into the hands of the Serbs (Demaliaj, 2020; Krisafi, 2022; Zhiti, 2022).

Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and an opponent of Stalin, in interviews as a correspondent of the most widespread newspaper of Southern Russia, "Kievskaya Misl (Kiev opinion)", after visiting the Albanian territories, showed his indignation, for the Slavo-Serb violence and genocide against the Albanians in 1912-1913 (Çipi, 2020).

He wrote: "I ran away terrified that any attempt to defend the Albanians would have been useless... I ran away terrified not to hear the screams caused by the pain... I was not even able to help them".

Meanwhile, addressing one of the Slavophile political figures, he says: "What do you have to say about these methods to ensure the victory of the Slavic element... doesn't that make you complicit in these animalistic acts, which leave black marks for the whole era".

Unfortunately, these genocidal actions and behavior continued even afterwards, even more so in the 1990s.

To show the humiliating attitude and contempt of the Serbs towards the Albanians, in those years, enough to mention the sign that was placed at the entrance of the “Grand” hotel in Pristina: “Dogs and Albanians are prohibited from entering” (Martinsen, 2006).

But in contrast to all the previous unpunished genocides, this time in this last wild and massive genocide, accurately proven by the numerous forensic medicine examinations of the Albanian victims, the Albanian people reacted more decisively and persistently by creating the KLA, which he encountered the Serbian army and paramilitaries. On the other hand, these terrible massacres were recognized and shocked the entire civilized world, especially the USA, which quickly intervened and freed Kosovo once and for all from the long and hated Serbian yoke.

## 5. Conclusions

Forensic medicine in its broadest sense constitutes a very important evidence for the detection of genocidal murders.

In the recent genocide against the people of Kosovo, the forensic evidence of the brutal and ugly crimes against the Albanians, undoubtedly invalidates in an irrefutable manner the completely irrelevant, often even false, forensic arguments of Serbia, according to which the Albanians were who have killed the Serbs.

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