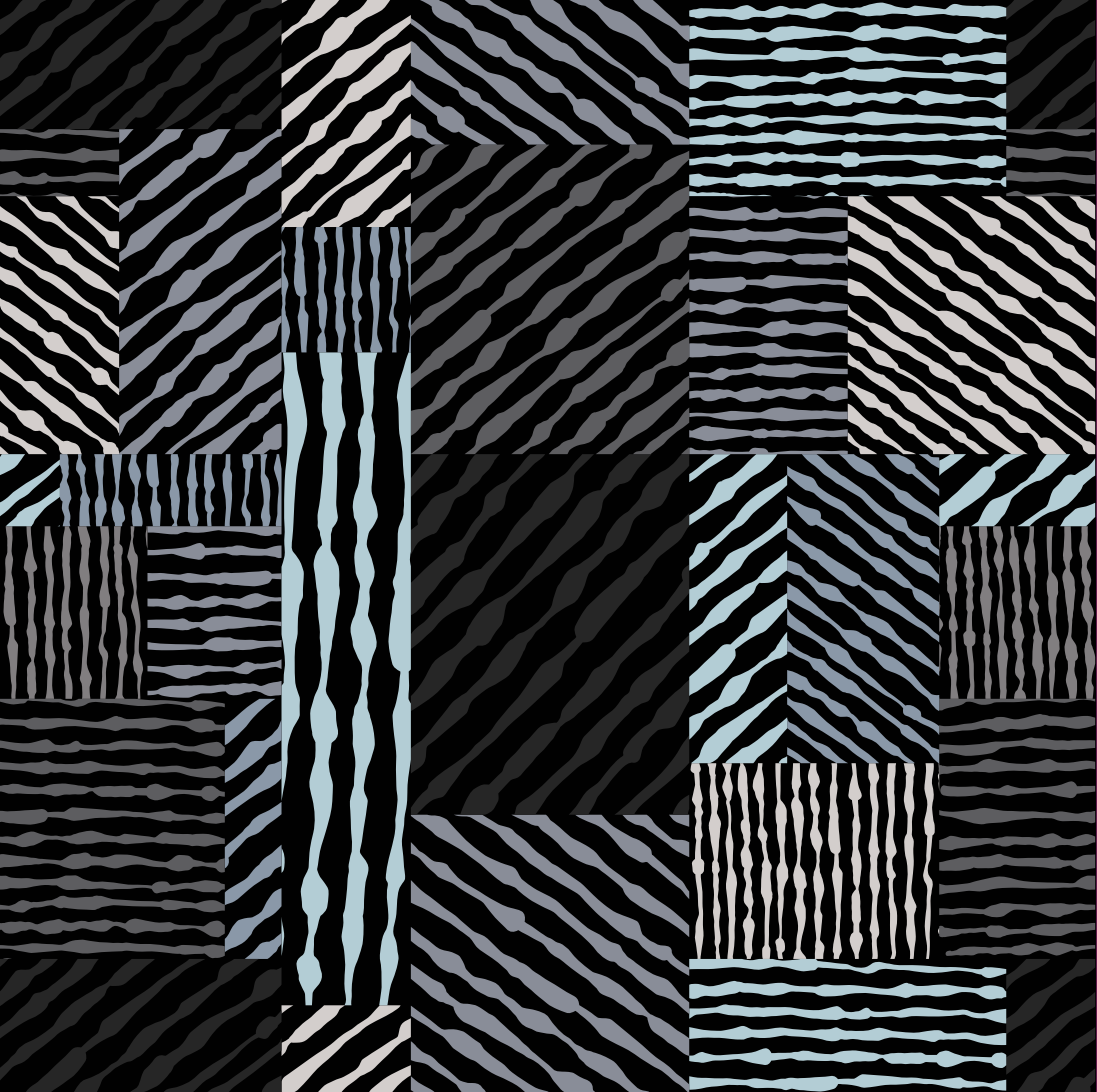


# Human Victims and Detention Sites 1991-2001



**RECOM**  
Reconciliation Network





# HUMAN VICTIMS AND DETENTION SITES 1991-2001

**Research**

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## Research

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## HUMAN VICTIMS AND DETENTION SITES 1991-2001 RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

Starting in December 2019, the RECOM Reconciliation Network (formerly the Coalition for RECOM) resumed documenting war victims in a political climate where it no longer has the support of leaders and institutions for the establishment of an interstate commission for creating a list of victims and war crimes (RECOM). In the past year, our focus has been on the documentation of human victims in the war in Croatia, of abductions and disappearances in Kosovo, and of detention facilities in BH, which are listed in various sources, but have not been encompassed in the trials before the ICTY and national courts; as well as on the creation of a record of the detention facilities whose existence has been established in court judgements.

In the past year, Documenta has conducted its research in Osijek-Baranja County, where around 2.100 persons died. It has gathered relevant information about the circumstances of the deaths or disappearances of 1.391 victims, by taking statements from family members and eyewitnesses, and statements based on second-hand knowledge.

In 2020, the Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC) and Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo (HLCK) decided to restrict the scope of their research into the human victims in Kosovo to persons who disappeared between 1998 and 2000, for three reasons: to use data on each individual missing person in order to demystify the political story about missing persons as being solely about the number of ethnic victims; to arouse public solidarity and compassion with the families of all the missing persons, both in Serbia and in Kosovo; and additionally to apply pressure on institutions to disclose the locations of mass graves and information related to the relocation of bodies. The results of the research show unambiguously that the basic reason why the number of missing persons has not decreased in recent years- especially in cases of group disappearances - is political in nature: currently in power in Serbia are political parties (the SNS and SPS) that are concealing information about mass graves, and thereby protecting from criminal liability VJ and MUP generals - members of the SNS and SPS, or with close ties to those parties - in whose zones of responsibility mass crimes were committed during the NATO bombing; whilst in Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, who was indicted for war crimes by

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<sup>1</sup> The results of research into human losses in Osijek-Baranja County were presented by Documenta on January 29, 2021 on press conference in Osijek and in the form of webinar; while HCL, TJAR and CDTJ organised online presentation of the research into detention sites in BH and missing persons related to the war in Kosovo on February 25, 2021.

the Prosecution of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in November 2020, has until recently been president.

By mapping records of detention facilities, the Transitional Justice, Accountability and Remembrance in BH Association (TJAR) and the Centre for Democracy and Transitional Justice (CDTJ), determined that multiple sources state that, during the war in BH, there were around 1.500 camps, prisons and other detention facilities where civilians and soldiers were detained. Court judgements have established the existence of between 300 and 350 detention facilities, which includes pre-war prisons, investigative detentions, as well as different public and private facilities that were turned into detention facilities. Through field research, the TJAR and the CDTJ have additionally documented the conditions at the 300 detention facilities that were the subjects of trials before the ICTY and national courts, as well as the existence of around 200 more detention facilities that were not the subject of war crimes trials, and the conditions in them. By taking statements from former detainees and respondents who possessed relevant information about the detention of civilians, the TJAR and CDTJ researchers have established that more than 100 facilities mentioned in various sources as detention sites were not detention facilities but, rather, were used for interrogation; that detainees were taken from detention to some facilities in order to provide forced labour; and that certain facilities were mentioned under two or three different names.

## I HUMAN LOSSES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

As part of a study that was conducted over a period of several years, the Documenta team identified 19.963 victims on the basis of 31.371 documents, of which 7.726 were questionnaires filled out with statements made by witnesses or family members.

In 2020, the subject of research was the territory of Osijek-Baranja County, with 2.119 identified victims who were residents or were killed in the territory of this county. Researchers succeeded in completing the information on 1.391 victims. The missing information was primarily related to persons with a military status or persons who are still considered missing persons. A total of 2.895 documents were analysed for the subject territory: questionnaires about the victims, monographies and lists, rulings establishing rights and statuses, indictments and verdicts, photos of graves, etc. A total 545 interviews were conducted. The lists include, among other names, that of Željko Krstić, the son of Štefica and Tomislav from Sarvaš, a Croatian defender who was killed on 20 November 1991. Thanks to the great efforts made by this mother Štefica, his mortal remains were exhumed in Ernestinovo and identified. The lists include the name of Josip

Reihl-Kir, who headed the police in Osijek, and who on the day of his murder, 1 July 1991, had gone to negotiate a peace. We remember him as a person who was on a mission of peace and who took steps towards the other side, because he wanted to establish dialogue. We also remember Čedomir Vučković, who on 31 August 1991 was forced to drink battery acid and was later killed. The number of victims in his region includes 141 citizens of the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, mostly members of the former JNA, whose identities were determined by the Humanitarian Law Centre.

Establishing the facts about victims and missing persons is the documentary foundation of our public advocacy for the creation of a comprehensive institutional framework for the civilian victims of the war, for a dialogue on the past, and strengthening the requirements for developing a sustainable peace. Common remembrance can help heal open wounds and promote reconciliation.

## II RESEARCH INTO MISSING PERSONS RELATED TO THE WAR IN KOSOVO

### **PREDRAG MILETIĆ: SOURCES**

The Kosovo Memory Book database contains around 50.000 documents on 13.500 killed and missing persons related to the war in Kosovo during the 1998–2000 period, of which around 5.960 documents related to 1.642 missing persons are among those collected. As of the end of 2020, HLC and HLCK researchers have taken 1.960 statements and around 1.000 additional statements by family members and witnesses regarding their family situation and the clarification of the circumstances of their disappearance. In addition to statements, the researchers also collected court documentation, certificates, personal documents, rulings by institutions and authorities, reports and records. The authors of the documents are the ICTY, courts in Serbia and in Kosovo, KFOR, UNMIK, the Human Rights Advisory Panel (HARP), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI), while orders, combat reports and other VJ and MUP RS documents were obtained through the ICTY database. The relevant court documentation pertaining to the missing persons consists of 33 rulings and 147 transcripts of testimonies in war crimes trials before the ICTY and courts in Serbia and in Kosovo. The database includes relevant publications, letters from families, and statements by family members and witnesses given to institutions and government bodies. A total of 1.114 photos of missing persons have been collected. Also, there are identity cards, driving licenses, passports, and decisions declaring persons dead. The database contains 325 media reports on missing persons, in the Serbian and Albanian languages. A smaller number of relevant documents

and information on missing persons were obtained based on the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance. The most important documents on the activities of certain VJ brigades, such as the 549<sup>th</sup> Motorised Brigade, are not available because they have been declared state secrets.

A comparison of the sources indicates that there are significantly fewer documents and items of information about missing persons than about the mortal remains which have been found and identified. There is also significantly less court documentation on missing persons, and in certain cases the ICTY Trial Chambers did not address the issue of missing persons. For example, in the judgement in *Milutinović et al.*, in connection with the crime in the villages of Meja/Mejĕ and Korenica/Korenicĕ, which took place on 27 April 1999, the Council states the following: “on the basis of the forensic and additional evidence relating to the Reka/Caragoj valley operation discussed above, the Chamber finds that the following 275 individuals named in Schedule H of the Indictment were killed”; while according to the HLC research and local sources, 240 people were killed in this operation, and the mortal remains of 15 more persons, who were separated at the same time as others whose bodies were discovered in mass graves in Batajnica, Serbia, have not been found to this day. Therefore, not all the persons who are still on missing persons lists have been the subject of court deliberation.

### **NATAŠA KANDIĆ: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The research into the abductions, illegal arrests and disappearances related to the war in Kosovo, between 1 January 1998 and 31 December 2000, indicates that the majority of missing persons were last seen in larger groups at specific locations, and controlled by certain armed units.

This included 32 men, unarmed farmers, who were last seen by their families on 29 March 1999 in Xhafer Zukaj’s house, in the village of Beleg/Beleg in Dečani/Dečan. Judging by the available VJ documents, it would seem that the information about the fates of these men is held by the units that were deployed in this region at the time of the event: from 2 March 1999, a manoeuvre support company from the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> detachments of the PJP MUP and a territorial company from the 72nd Detachment of the PJPJ were in the territory of Dečani/Dečan; and as of 27 March 1999, the 177th Military Territorial Detachment, in coordinated action with the forces of the 12th Motorised Brigade of the VJ and MUP forces, were tasked with “protecting the Serbian population in the city of Dečani, establishing combat control of this territory and closing the Dečani-Peć communication links.”



The residents of the village of Goden/Goden, which is located 3 km from the border with Albania, were forced out by members of the 53rd Border Battalion of the VJ on 25 March 1999, who kept hold of 20 men, none of whom were armed. On their return from exile, the residents discovered that the houses in front of which the Serbian soldiers had detained the 20 men had been torched, and that a few bones were to be found in their vicinity. International forensic pathologists determined that the bones belonged to four men whose identities they could not determine. The village buried the bones that were found and erected a monument with the names of the 20 men. But there has still been no explanation as to what happened to the mortal remains of the 16 other detained men. The mortal remains of 48 civilians, mostly from Klina/Klinë and the surrounding villages, have still not been found, even though there are serious indications that they are still in Lake Perućac, from where the bodies of 19 victims, last seen on 4 April 1999 in the village of Kraljane/Kralan, were recovered. On orders from the Joint Command for Kosovo and Metohija and the Priština Corps, dated 1 and 2 April 1999, the 5<sup>th</sup> Combat Group of the 125<sup>th</sup> Motorised Brigade of the VJ was tasked with “occupying the broader region of the [village of] Kraljane,” as well as “to support the MUP forces in smashing and destroying the [Šiptar terrorist forces] between [the village of] Kraljane and [the village of] Jablanica.” The 24th Detachment of the PJP was supported by the 5th Combat Group. The research also showed that the missing persons include a large number of persons over the age of 60. The attack by the Serbian forces on KLA positions in the city of Dečani/Dečan on 19 May 1998, was followed by an attack on the villages in the municipality of Dečani/Dečan along the border with Albania. The population fled, but around 50 elderly persons remained in the villages of Pobrđe/Pobergjë, Loçane/Lločan, Vokš/Voksh, and Huljaj/Hulaj. After entering the villages, the police rounded up some of them and put them in Sylë Cacaj’s house, where they were kept in inhumane conditions until their families collected them. But the fates of 30 elderly men and women are still unresolved. In the Serbian village of Dojnice/Dojnicë, which is located 5 kilometres from Prizren/Prizren, it was only older people who remained in the village after the NATO forces entered Kosovo. KLA Commander Ekrem Rexha - “Drini” -, who grew up in the neighbouring village of Skorobište/Skorobishtë, called a meeting with them and in the name of good neighbourly relations invited them to stay. However, a group of members of the KLA from the surrounding villages raided Dojnice/Dojnicë on 27 June 1999 and killed 15 older persons whom they encountered. The UNMIK unit for investigating war crimes investigated the event in 2005, but failed to determine what had happened to the bodies of the slain Serbs.

Significant findings on missing persons include evidence that at least 40 Serbs over the age of 60, including ten women, and some 10 Roma or more, and around ten refugees from Croatia, disappeared in the city of Đakovica/Gjakovë after the arrival of NATO forces. The city headquarters of the KLA had full control of the city until at least September 1999. This is therefore the first place to inquire about the locations of the mortal remains that have still not been found.

The Streočke planine/Bjeshkët e Strellcit mountains, which are located above Peć/Pejë and Dečani/Dečan, still conceal secrets related to what happened to the more than 20 civilians who on 7 April 1999 fled the village of Raušić/Raushiq before the VJ units, and took refuge in the mountains above the village.

The research by the HLC and HLCK shows that government commissions, of both Serbia and Kosovo, have not checked information on the missing persons whose disappearances have been reported by their families to the ICRC. The ICRC records include several persons whose disappearances are not related to the war. And at least 15 persons for whom it is no longer possible to obtain reference blood samples because they have no living relative, and the records do not contain the names of missing persons whose families are still afraid to report their disappearance, as well as of a large number of Roma whose families are scattered across Europe and still fear to deal with the past in Kosovo, which has brought them nothing good.

The RECOM Reconciliation Network will publish the results of the HLC and HLCK research in the form of a special edition of *The Kosovo Memory Book*, containing narratives on each individual victim, which will certainly help trace possible locations of mass graves, as well as contribute to the development of a remembrance of those victims who do not have a grave as a physical symbol of their existence and death.

## **BEKIM BLAKAJ: MISIDENTIFICATION OF MORTAL REMAINS**

Twenty years after the end of the war in Kosovo, a great obstacle to resolving the fates of missing persons is the fact that the morgue of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Priština/Prishtinë houses the mortal remains or parts of the mortal remains of more than 300 persons whose bone samples do not match the blood samples of family members that are available to the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). There is, in addition, a general lack of political will to reveal the locations of individual graves and mass graves. According to data from the Institute and the Kosovo Government Commission on Missing Persons, between 240 and 250 sets of mortal remains belong to men, and around 90 belong to women.

There are several reasons why it is not possible to determine the identity of the mortal remains:

- It is presumed that not all the bodies belong to persons who died in connection with the 1998–2000 war in Kosovo; some belong to people who disappeared before the war, and possibly even during the Second World War;
- It is presumed that some of the mortal remains in the morgue belong to persons who were not victims of war crimes, but died of disease or old age; it is possible that residents of retirement homes who died of old age were buried during the war at the cemetery in Dragodan in Priština/Prishtinë, as is the case with patients who died at the Clinical Centre in Priština/Prishtinë of disease or physical injury before coming for treatment; there are indications that there had been cases after the war where families removed from the cemetery bodies that did not belong to their members;
- On the basis of information on the locations where the bodies were found, authorities can determine the identity of a certain number of people whose mortal remains have been found, but there are families who refuse to provide blood samples, because they still believe that their missing members are being held in some secret prisons.

However, the most common reason why the mortal remains at the morgue of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Priština/Prishtinë cannot be identified is the fact that, from the second half of 1999 almost until 2003, identification of mortal remains was carried out using the traditional method. During this period, individual and mass graves were exhumed, sometimes without the presence of experts, and families identified bodies by recognising clothes, shoes and personal items found in the grave. This was the case when the bodies could not be identified on the basis of physical appearance because they were at an advanced stage of decomposition. This is why it is known to have happened that families took possession and buried the body of a different victim. Convinced that they had buried their own member, the families did not report the disappearance; whilst if a person had already been reported as a missing person, they requested that they be removed from the list of missing persons that had been compiled by the ICRC immediately after the war. This is why the families never provided blood samples and were never contacted by the authorities.

HLCK researchers also came across cases where a family would receive a body that did not belong to its missing member. One example was a prison inmate who had been wounded at the Dubrava prison, between 19 and 23 May 1999, when members of the PJP killed more than 100 inmates and wounded several dozen. The dead were buried in the village of Rakoš/Rakosh, in individual graves marked only with numbers, and the wounded were moved to the prison in Lipljan/Lipjan. Those with serious wounds were

taken from Lipljan/Lipjan to the Clinical Centre in Priština/Prishtinë. One of the wounded inmates died in hospital from his wounds, in June 1999, but his burial place was unknown. The deceased inmate's family, who lived in Switzerland, returned to Kosovo in November 1999 and learned that the dead from the Dubrava prison were buried in the village of Rakoš/Rakosh. They opened a grave at the village cemetery and, on the basis of the clothing, "they recognised" their missing relative. They took the body and buried it in his birthplace. The family did not provide blood samples at the time, but it is very likely that they retrieved the wrong body.

A pilot project, involving the ICMP, determined that in the region of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë alone, 14 families took possession of and buried someone else's mortal remains, believing that they had identified their missing relative. This pilot project was launched together with a petition by the Zeri I Prinderve (Voice of the Parents) family association from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë that certain cases of identification using the classic method be verified using DNA analysis. This association convinced 78 families to provide blood samples, and DNA analysis showed that the blood samples matched bone samples from 14 mortal remains at the Institute of Forensic Medicine. This was proof that 14 of the 78 families had buried bodies that did not belong to their missing members. Similar cases, where there are indications that they may be cases of misidentification, have been recorded in Kraljane/Kralan, Pusto Selo/Pastasel, the Tusus neighbourhood in Prizren/Prizren, and Ljubenić/Lubeniq.

The chaotic situation after the end of the war contributed to such misidentifications. There were cases where up to 14 teams of forensic pathologists worked on exhumations, but without any coordination or communication between themselves. These teams consisted of KFOR members from multiple countries, ICTY experts on the former Yugoslavia, as well as experts from other international organisations and from countries that had sent their forensic experts.

It is my opinion that all the identifications using the traditional method should be reviewed, and in all cases where there is any suspicion that misidentification might have occurred, the families should be asked to provide blood samples, so that the identity of the buried person can be verified using DNA matching. This is the only way to resolve the "secrets" of the mortal remains that are being kept at the Institute of Forensic Medicine, which would significantly contribute to resolving the fates of missing persons related to the war in Kosovo.

### III DETENTION SITES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

#### **MIRNA ALIBEGOVIĆ: DETENTION FACILITIES IN THE BRČKO MUNICIPALITY**

The largest detention facility for Muslims and Croats was the Luka camp, which was in operation from 7 May to 9 July 1992. Around 3,000 civilians – men, women, and children, as well as elderly persons – and a small number of BH Territorial Defence members passed through the camp. Goran Jelisić was the camp warden until 27 May 1992, when he was replaced by Kosta Simonović – “Kole”. The detainees were housed in three hangars. The second hangar alone had around 70 women and 50 children. They slept on cardboard boxes, their clothes or concrete, and they relieved themselves in buckets in the room where they were being held. They were not provided with sufficient quantities of food and water. They were kicked and beaten with fists and guns. The women were raped and in other ways sexually abused. Hundreds of Muslim and Croatian civilians were killed. The last group of detainees were relocated to the Batković camp on 9 July 1992, under pressure from the ICRC, at which point the Luka camp was shut down. Most of the detainees were exchanged after October 1992. The ICTY sentenced Goran Jelisić and Ranko Češić to 40 years and 18 years in prison, respectively. The Basic Court of the Brčko District sentenced Kosta Simonović to 6 years in prison, Pero Rikanović to 5 years and 6 months, Dimče Ivčev to a year and 8 months, and Dražen Urošević and Branko Pudić each to a year in prison. Monika Karan Ilić was sentenced to 2 year and 6 months in prison.

Judgements passed down by the ICTY and national courts have established the existence of eight other detention facilities for Muslims and Croats: the Partizan sports hall, the public security station, the healthcare centre, the JNA barracks, the Laser Bus Company, and Hotel Galeb. The TJAR and CDTJ research determined the existence of 24 other detention facilities for Muslims and Croats, among them Brezovo Polje, three mosques, the Westphalia Restaurant, the Interplet Textile Corporation, Hotel Bosna, and other facilities. The research also established that Hotel Posavina was not used as a detention site, but as a crime site. It was also established that the local social centre in the village of Ulice, private houses in Donji Tahić, as well as the reading room at the Palanka village social centre, were not used as detention sites.

Detention facilities for Serbs were formed after 14 September 1992, when members of the 108<sup>th</sup> Brčko Brigade of the BH Army and the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) attacked 19 Serbian villages in the vicinity of Brčko. Judgements passed down by courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina established the existence of 11 such facilities, and research carried out by the TJAR and CDTJ provided 13 more, including the social centre in Gornji Rahić, where

around 300 Serbian civilians and members of the Army of the Republika Srpska were detained from 14 September to the end of September 1992. Due to a lack of space, in the early days they had to sleep on the concrete on their sides. They were used as forced labour, which most often consisted of digging trenches.

Galib Hodžić and Nijaz Hodžić were sentenced to three years and one year in prison, respectively, by the Basic Court of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the crimes committed at this detention facility.

### **BENJAMIN SABLJICA: CAMPS AND OTHER DETENTION FACILITIES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF MOSTAR, ČAPLJINA AND LJUBUŠKI**

The trials before the ICTY and national courts have established that there were 15 detention facilities in the municipality of Mostar: eight controlled by the HVO, five controlled by the BH Army, and two controlled by the JNA.

The largest detention facility in the Mostar region was the Heliodrom camp. It was opened on 3 September 1992, and the largest number of detainees there were Muslim civilians and Muslim members of the HVO, as well as a small number of Serbian civilians. The largest recorded number of detainees at this facility was around 6.000. The Heliodrom camp was located within the former JNA complex, south of Mostar, in the Rodoč neighbourhood. It consisted of four buildings and several hangars. One of the buildings contained two gymnasiums, where some of the detainees were held, while others were placed in the hangars. Some of the rooms were overcrowded, so the detainees took turns sleeping. They were not provided with sufficient quantities of food and water. They were taken to the front line on Šantićeva Street and used as human shields. The facility ceased to exist after the signing of the Washington Agreement between the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at which time the last detainees were released, on 18 and 19 April 1994.

The Vojno camp existed from August 1993 to January 1994, and it was run by the HVO. The facility was used to hold members of the BH Army and Muslim civilians – men, women and children. It was located in three private houses and a garage. The detainees were forced to kneel, place their hands on their backs and lower their heads, after which the guards hit them with truncheons on the head, hands and legs until they passed out. Mustafa Kahvić was beaten and killed with a firearm. Female detainees, including two underage girls, were raped daily. The facility ceased to exist in late January 1994, when the last detainees were relocated to other detention facilities – most of them to the Heliodrom prison.

The largest detention facility for the Croatian population was the IV Primary School. The facility was operated by the BH Army. Between late June 1993 and 19 March 1994, at least 200 Croatian civilians, men, women and children, as well as several captured members of the HVO, passed through the facility. The detainees were held in the basement, in a gymnasium that had been damaged by shelling. They were taken daily to the front line, between the BH Army and the HVO, where they were made to build bunkers, dug trenches and covers. The facility ceased to exist following the signing of the Washington Agreement.

The judgements by the ICTY and national courts have established the existence of 12 more detention facilities in Mostar, the largest of which were the Đuro Salaj factory, the Vrapčići stadium, the Čelovina prison, the Tobacco Institute, and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, as well as some smaller facilities. The study by the TJAR and the CDTJ research have established the existence of nine other detention facilities, including the Zalik nuclear shelter, the student dormitory, the SDK building, the basement of Hotel Ruža, and Nikola Filipović's house, as well as other smaller private and public facilities.

The judgements by the ICTY and national courts have established that there were four detention facilities in the Čapljina area: the Dretelj barracks, the prison in Gabela, Silos, and the Municipal Hall.

The largest detention facility, the Dretelj barracks, held more than 200 Serbian civilians and members of the JNA between May and August 1992. Between April and October 1993, Dretelj held around 2,500 Muslim civilians, mostly men arrested in the region of Čapljina and Stolac, as well as women and children. The camp consisted of four hangars and two tunnels. The detainees were gravely abused, not only by the guards but also by individuals who visited the camp on occasion. They were kicked and beaten with shovels and iron bars. The ICTY ruling established that during July and August 1993 six detainees were killed: Plavuškić, Omer Kohnić, Emir Repak, Hasan Duvnjak, and two other detainees whose identities are unknown. The last detainees were moved to the Gabela prison in the Čapljina municipality in early October 1993, when Dretelj ceased operation as a detention facility.

The prison in Gabela functioned as a detention facility from August to December 1993, and at any given moment it housed around 1,000 detainees, Muslims civilians from the territory of Čapljina, Stolac and Ljubuški. It consisted of four hangars and several solitary confinement areas. It ceased to exist in December 1993, when most of the detainees were moved to the Heliodrom, while others were released.

There were two detention facilities in the territory of Čapljina: Silos and the Municipal Hall, whose existence was established by the judgements of the ICTY and national

courts. Furthermore, research by the TJAR and the CDTJ determined the existence of two more facilities: the police station and the Heljić private house in the village of Lokve. There were two detention facilities in the Ljubuški municipality: the prison in Ljubuški and the Vitina-Otok facility, which were used to hold Muslim civilians and members of the BH Army. The prison in Ljubuški functioned from April 1993 to March 1994, while the Vitina-Otok facility functioned temporarily, during July and August 1993. The TJAR and the CDTJ have documented the existence of two more facilities: the Old Prison in Ljubuški and the primary school in the village of Lipno.

### **ZLATICA GRUHONJIĆ: DETENTION FACILITIES IN THE KONJIC MUNICIPALITY**

The establishment of detention facilities in the Konjic municipality started in April and May 1992, when units of the HVO, TO (which was later transformed into the BH Army) and MUP carried out a joint operation for disarming the majority Serb villages in the vicinity of Konjic, during which a large number of Serbian civilians from Bradina, Donje Selo, Bjelovčina, Brđani, Cerići and other villages were detained. Judgements by the ICTY and national courts have established the existence of three detention facilities where mostly Serbs were held: Čelebići, Donje Selo, and the Musala sports hall – which from 1993 was also used to detain Croatian civilians and members of the HVO –, as well as a detention facility for members of the HVO at the Maksim Kujundžić Primary School in Čelebići. TJAR and CDTJ researchers have determined the existence of six detention facilities for Serbs: the primary school in Bradina, the “3. Mart” Primary School, Motel Konjic, and two private houses in the villages of Bjelovčina and Cerići. The research also determined the existence of 19 detention facilities for Croats in private houses in the villages of Višnjevice, Buturović Polje and Parsovići. The study also determined that some of the facilities that are listed in the records of associations of detainees and other sources were actually not detention facilities, but rather sites of processing, interrogation, forced labour, and even crimes.

The Čelebići camp, in a former JNA barracks, served for detaining Serbian civilians from April to December 1992. The warden was Zdravko Mucić, and the deputy warden was Hazim Delić. Not all the barracks space was used for detention. It is a very large military complex. The camp consisted of a smaller reception and larger administrative building, the water pumps room, Building No. 22, the underground tunnel, Tunnel No. 9, as well as the very large Hangar No. 6. The detainees slept on concrete and received little food and water, and it was known to happen that they would not receive food or water for up to three days. There were up to 240 detainees in Hangar No. 6, and up to 80 detainees in Tunnel No. 9. The detainees were beaten daily with rubber batons, cables,



chains, baseball bats, and rifle butts. The guards poured gasoline on some detainees, and then set fire to their arms and legs. Medical treatment was provided by two detainee doctors – when they were allowed. Around 400 Serbian detainees, mostly male civilians, but also women, passed through this camp. At least 14 detainees were killed: Slavko Šušić from Čelebići; Simo Jovanović from Čelebići; Željko Klimenta from Konjic; Šćepo Gotovac from Konjic; Gojko Miljanić, Milorad Kuljanin, Miroslav Vujičić, Petko Gligorijević, Boško Samouković and Pero Mrkajić – all from Bradina; Željko Čeček from Donje Selo; Željko Milošević from the village of Ovčari; and Slobodan Babić from the village of Homolje. At least two female detainees were raped. In December 1992 a number of detainees were exchanged, others were released, and the remainder were moved to the Musala sports hall.

The ICTY sentenced Zdravko Mucić to 9 years in prison, Hazim Delić to 18 years in prison, and Esad Landžo to 15 years in prison, for violating the laws and customs of war, with crimes including murder, torture, cruel treatment and illegal detention of civilians. Eso Macić was sentenced to a prison sentence of 11 years by the BH Court.

The Musala sports hall was used to detain Serbs and Croats. More than 400 Croatian civilians, members of the HVO and 108 male Serbs passed through the camp. The Serb detainees were housed on the upper floor, while the Croatian civilians and members of the HVO were on the ground floor and in the locker rooms. The warden of this detention facility was Edhem Žilić. The detainees slept on the floor, they were allowed to use the latrines only during the day and at certain times, and they were often out of order. The prisoners received only one meal per day, consisting of undercooked rice and a slice of bread. They were bathed once, together, with cold water. They did not receive any medical assistance. The detainees were abused in various manners. The guards beat them with water pipes, set parts of their bodies and genitals on fire, and forced the detainees to have sexual intercourse. The detainees were used to dig trenches on the front line, in between the warring sides. The Croats were held at Musala until 19 October 1993, when they were freed, while the Serbian detainees were held until 6 October 1994, when the last group of 80 detainees was taken to Sarajevo and exchanged.

Edhem Žilić and Ibro Macić were sentenced by the Court of BH to six and ten years in prison, respectively, for the war crime of cruel treatment of the civilian population. The Supreme Court of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina sentenced Ramo Žilić to four years in prison and Esad Gakić to a year and six months.

Field research has established that the HVO held around 50 Muslim men at the bank in Buturović Polje. The detainees were held in a room that was 5 by 5 meters. They slept on tiles, and received one meal per day – cooked rice, which they ate with their fingers.

They would defecate into a bucket and urinate into a jerrycan, and then be ordered to empty the bucket and jerrycan by the guards, who were members of the HVO, and who then forced them to run with the buckets, making them trip, fall and spill the content on themselves. Detainee Salem Šteta, who was wounded when he was captured, was taken to an infirmary, but instead of his receiving treatment, soldiers and members of the HVO pulled bandages through his gunshot wound, causing bleeding and great pain, as a result of which the detainee passed out. The detained Muslims were freed on 7 July 1993, after the BH Army took control of Buturović Polje.

### **NATAŠA KANDIĆ: WE ARE CONTINUING THE WORK ON THE LIST OF VICTIMS AND DOCUMENTING DETENTION SITES**

The RECOM Reconciliation Network is continuing the process of documenting the human losses and detention sites, believing that some new leaders will understand that it is an obligation of the states, the successors of the former Yugoslavia, to jointly list the 130.000 victims in the 1991-2001 wars: those who lost their lives, as well as missing persons. We are prepared to hand over to new leaders everything that we have done and to assist them in carrying out the census, and until then we will continue fostering remembrance of the victims. We will soon open the Voice of the Victims digital platform, with victim testimonies before the ICTY and national courts, through which we will oppose the denial of court facts, attempts at revisionism, and keeping quiet about victims.



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