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# People and Memories Talk

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2010 - 2013

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## **Avni Melenica**

I am from Vushtrri, a town of 346 km<sup>2</sup> on the 26 kilometer of the Prishtina-Mitrovica mainroad, with 106.000 residents and with its surrounding 67 villages. The Melenicajs are a big family originating from the village of Melenica near Mitrovica. We left the village some 130 years ago and moved to the town of Vushtrri where I live now with two daughters, my wife and parents. I was born on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1980, in Vushtrri. This is where I completed my primary and secondary education and then went to university in Pristina where I graduated in English literature five years ago. I used to have health problems so my childhood was a bit different from other children. Our family, as many other Albanian families in Kosova, experienced tragedy on 22<sup>nd</sup> (mungon muaji) 1989 in Vushtrri when we came under siege for four and a half hours by special units of the Yugoslav Army, they were called Yugoslav units although the army itself was Serbian because at the time Yugoslavia had already disintegrated. At 08:00 hrs, troops stormed our street and entered our yard too. In our yard there are four houses and until 1999 my father and three uncles and their families used to live here. In approximately 15 minutes, the troops took 45 members of our family out on the street and did not allow us to take any belongings saying that we would return shortly after. They escorted us to the beginning of the street which is some 500 meters away from the house, and there we met another military unit, I think they were paramilitaries, because they had white eagle insignia and later on I found out they were Seselj's troops. Later on they divided us into groups of 30 people depending on special units forced people out of their homes and stationed us in front of a store. There they robbed us and were then getting ready to gun us down. They pointed their weapons at us but I don't know what happened and they let us go. From our group they took 35 people, mainly my neighbors, including my brother, three uncles and a cousin. They took gold from the women. At one point they wanted to take me too but thank God I am still alive. They let the rest go and told us to head toward the town cemetery which was 600-700 meters from the store. We left some 35 people behind and headed for the cemetery where we met with around 45.000-50.000 Albanians who were gathered in a meadow at the end of the cemetery of Vushtrri. Surrounded by special units, we were constantly joined by other people who were being driven out of their homes. We were surrounded by special units, as far as I could see there were no paramilitary troops there. At one point, came 7-8 policemen from our town, I knew all of them, but right now I cannot remember their names. Later when I read a list I found out it was the emergency headquarters of the town of Vushtrri, and the policemen were led by Vuqina Janicevic who was police commander in Vushtrri and town mayor Slobodan Doknic. They were leaders of the list. Then they took out their weapons and pointed them at our crowd which consisted mainly of women and elderly. They were saying "we will take with us more men because you were all part of the KLA". They started separating men from women, and on my mother's insistence I sided with the women and surprisingly I got away from the large army cordons who were taking away the men. Some were shooting above our heads. Surprisingly I managed to get away from the army cordon and made my way near the cemetery where women and children were being kept. There were around 40.000 women and children there. We waited there for some time before they allowed us to return to our homes but along different routes. The moment we entered our neighborhood we saw that some of the houses were burning and were being

looted so we had to flee again fearing that may catch us again. Until five o'clock we stayed at a different house which was further from the area where we were previously surrounded. Around 5 or 6 o'clock, my father and one of his cousins were released and from the entire group of my family we were back at three men. The rest of the men, who were stopped by the road, we started finding them in 2003 in the mass graves in Batajnica, because up to that point they were considered missing. They are believed to have been killed in a house nearby the store where they stopped us all because later on I found 24 or 25 bullet holes. There was also a lot of blood, because at times I was ankle-deep in blood, there were also body parts, photographs and ID cards of people believed to have been killed. Traces of blood could also be found on the streets where bodies of people killed were believed to have been dragged and thrown on a truck and were taken away. We later found them in Batajnica. We are still searching for 15 people from the group of 68 persons who went missing that day. We are searching for two members of my family, my uncle and a cousin who are still missing. I say missing but I'm afraid they too are dead. The Albanian people are used to great tragedies and are very good at dealing with consequences. My family too is very strong and as far as trauma is concerned we only suffer from slight nervousness and other family members told me that they constantly have nightmares. As a family we do not suffer from any serious trauma. Aid was given by different foreign associations even after the identification process. The greatest aid was after the identification, mainly on May 22nd and the anniversary, sometimes government officials come to visit us. I know there is a sum that is divided to all categories. As far as I know the category of families of missing persons get €130 a month from the state and there is no other aid. After the conflict, I worked many and different jobs, starting as interpreter, then as radio host, I worked with Doctors without Borders, and now we run a radio station in the town of Vushtrri. Recently I also started working as a librarian at the Halil Kelmendi School in Vushtrri. I also run an association of families for missing persons and together we are trying to contribute to shedding light on the fate of the remaining 15 from the group of 68 persons. Certainly there are concerns and family members talk about them on a daily basis, but as far as state support is concerned there is not much room for concern because our state practically cannot do anything in finding them because most of the corpses are in Serbia and we all know what is the policy of the Serbian state. I personally think that this can be achieved through a larger idea of regional cooperation between associations or even countries, but as far as countries are concerned for the time being this idea is up in the air. Associations however can cooperate in pressuring respective countries to shed light on the fate of missing persons. My message to all the younger generations is to try and read history from accurate sources, preferably from people who experienced the recent history, because we see everyday that people are distorting the history that we lived through for their own personal gains; there are many people who are writing history books according to their own interests. Books will remain but the best thing is to remember the past as it was and then move forward. I hope our recordings will remain and will serve someone to tell history the way it was so that the younger generations can move forward and not share the idea that if you are stronger you can take away something from others or usurp a part of the land because this will send them to another war and then they will suffer the same consequences that I did.

## **Imer Deliu**

I come from the village of Upper Obri, Drenas municipality, in central Kosovo. The village is located north-west in Drenas municipality and has around 2,500 residents. I am the first of five children of my parents Sali and Hamide Deliu. Before the war we had 17 members in our family, 2 sisters and 2 brothers. We, the brothers, were all married and children. I had four children, my younger brother had three and the youngest had one child. In 1994, faced with an indictment for weapon carrying and smuggling, I was forced to flee Kosovo and went to Slovenia. Later on, in 1996, I brought my younger brother in Slovenia. Just before the war, my brother and I we worked in Slovenia and helped out our family. To tell you about the case of the Deliu family I will have to go back in time, namely to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1998 when Serbian forces launched their so-called major offensive, in our municipality. It was Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, when KLA groups waged a bitter four-day fight against Serbian troops and on September 25<sup>th</sup> Serbian troops managed to enter the village between the Deliu and Mulliqi families. A bitter battle was fought there and Serbian troops suffered several casualties. Considerable damage was inflicted on Serbian machinery as well. On the night between September 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, witnessing the buildup of Serbian forces, the KLA General Headquarters, the Drenica Zone, ordered the withdrawal of troops to observation posts with the only purpose of avoiding damages on the civilian population. On 26<sup>th</sup> September, together with a group of friends we were observing enemy troops from a 2-mile distance and unimpeded by KLA troops the Serbian forces stormed the village. Around 11:00 hrs they entered the neighborhood and started burning it and from that point on we could not see anything through our binoculars because there was a lot of smoke and fire. They spent the whole day moving through the village and burning it, at the same time, they killed 23 members of the Deliu family and another 8 villagers, a total of 31 people. On the night between 26 and 27<sup>th</sup> September I decided to go into the village and verify the situation. I took two friends with me, a relative Bashkium Deliu and Afrim Hysenaj. However, we ran into Serbian resistance and were forced to take a longer route almost to the village of Likoc where it was somewhat easier to penetrate. We made our way to the neighborhood and the moment we approached my house we found the body of my brother Adem who was gunned down and had 17 bullet cartridges near him. Together with my relative and my friend, we took his body and placed it inside the frontyard and under shelter because it was raining and the corpse had to be preserved. From there we went on to check the other houses, where there was Uncle Fazli, a cousin of mine who was paralytic and had to stay inside the house, he was 94 years old and we had to check his condition. Then we went to see a family who was living in a tent above the neighborhood some XXX meters inside the forest. Horrified, we kept walking and found the third corpse, that of my 45 year-old cousin Zeqir Deliu who was shot from a distance by mortar or RPG or something similar. After we saw the corpse we made our way to the tent where the family was sheltered and some 15 meters before getting there we saw the corpse of my 65 year-old cousin Ali Deliu. He was taken hostage by Serbian forces that cut his throat with a little knife that he used to cut tobacco. After killing him, Serbian forces placed the knife on his chest. He was laying there on his back and the knife was on his chest and his throat was cut. From there we made our way to the tent and when we walked in we saw Uncle Pajazit, who was 69 and a peer of Ali. He was massacred in the head; his brains were taken from the head and put inside his mouth. There were no other traces in his body, no other

injuries, bullets or cuts. 4-5 meters from Uncle Pajazit was my aunt Hava Deliu. A hand grenade had exploded near her and had cut her left leg off and she passed away screaming. Her mouth was wide open as if in tremendous pain. From there I went on to search for other family members although there were no others near and around the tent. 25 or 30 kilometers after crossing the valley I ran into my 10 year-old son Jeton who was killed from an explosion. His jaw was shattered, he was laying on his right side, his left hand was stretched forward and his handwatch was shining. I stopped for a moment and looked at the watch; it read 04:59 hrs. It was foggy and rainy and it seemed to me as if he were giving his watch to me as a memory. I took the handwatch and according to our tradition I hit his face and told him I would keep the handwatch as long as I live, although in 1999 after the burning and destruction I lost the handwatch to fire along with many other things. After saying goodbye to Jeton, 2-3 meters away I saw my mother who was shot on the throat and was lying on her back. Close to my mother was my sister-in-law Luljeta who was nine-months pregnant. Only three days earlier, my sister Hava said the newborn would be named Malsor if it is a boy and Malsore if it is a girl, arguing that throughout her pregnancy she was living in the mountains. She was hit on the head and throat. These were mainly injuries from the explosion of hand grenades; they were not wounds from bullets or automatic weapons. Near Luljeta was Valmir, a one year-old baby, with a biberon in his throath, he had so many wounds from the explosion that it was impossible to count them. In God's miracle, he was smiling when death came to him. A little further was his mother Mihanja so damaged by the explosion that it was hard to identify her. Near Mihane was my wife Lumnije lying on her right side, with Diturie in front of her and Menduh behind her. I initially rolled over Menduh who had lost some of his hair from the explosion. She too had many wounds. After seeing to Menduh, I rolled over my wife and underneath her left arm was six-week old Diturije and as I was rolling over Lumnije, in God's miracle, Diturije was trying to open her eyes and that's when I realized that she was still alive. There was no food and there was a terrible stench. For a moment I stopped looking at the other corpses that were further away, I took Diturije and sent her to Bashkim who was too afraid to help place the corpses. He was standing at the corner of the mountain and sobbing. I cleaned up Diturije, took her clothes off but found no traces of injuries or wounds, we took some milk that the family had brought earlier although she had been in the forest for 3-4 days and I started feeding her and she was drinking. I left Diturije with Bashkim and continued with the corpses. The next corpses were Donjeta and Donika, daughters of my brother Bashkim, there was also his sister-in-law, they were all shot shot in the back and head while trying to escape. They were all lying face-down and their heads were close to each other's legs. I got back from there and saw that four children from our neighborhood were missing, mainly my children. 5 year-old Besnik, 3 year-old Liridona, 2 year-old Albert and one year-old Arlinda were missing. I searched for them in the forest and the valley for an hour and after not finding them I decided to take Bashkim and go back to Afrim whom we left in an observing position. The three of us took the same route back to our friends who were some 2 miles away. We told them what happened and I left Diturije with three female soldiers, Hamide Xhemajli, Rahime Hajdaraj, Lindita Isufi, in fact there were four of them, there was another girl called Leonora, I don't know her last name, she was from Prishtina. Then together with some friends we headed back to the site. After getting close to the neighborhood, on the opposite site of the events that I described, there was another crime against the Deliu family where Uncle Habib, a 60-year old teacher was executed together with his brother who was mentally unfit and could not use his arms and legs. Also missing

were Hysen's two daughters, 16-year old Mihane and 14-year old Antigona. We did everything in our power to find the girls but to no avail. We were still thinking about Hajriz Deliu, knowing that he was with his family, and he was nowhere to be found. Also missing was 65-year old Sherif Deliu and the two girls that I mentioned earlier on, Mihane and Antigona, which we could not find. After going back to the site and after my friends were terrified by the sights, Afrim Hyseni told me "Imer if you are able to we would talk about something". I replied, "One cannot see himself although he can see others, but I am sure I can talk, so tell me". He suggested that although in a time of war and although Serbian forces were only a kilometer away, we should inform the media and let the public know. So we organized ourselves, we decided to guard the bodies until media would come. Afrim went to notify the Council for the Defense of Human Rights, namely Murat Musliu and Arif Aliu. After a while, they came with a digital camera and took pictures of all corpses, we also took pictures of their wounds, and we still have those pictures. The next day electronic media came to the site. There was a BBC cameraman, Vani Vang Smith was his name, he recorded what had happened, and then we started burying the corpses we had found. On Tuesday, date 31<sup>st</sup>, they were alive only for five days, the corpses were at the site of execution, at the same time we requested to try and find the other four missing, Uncle Sherif, Hajriz and the two girls. We found the two girls on October 5<sup>th</sup>. They were taken from the site by Serbian forces and sent to a corner of the forest where they were most brutally massacred with cold weapons. We found Hajriz on October 25<sup>th</sup> exactly one month later, he was taken by Serbian forces and thrown at the village well, and he was massacred and thrown into the well. Uncle Sherif was found on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1999. After being wounded he moved for another kilometre and found a safe place but without anyone there to give him aid he passed away. The four children that I mentioned, which we searched and could not find, were found three days later in the outskirts of the village, namely in the Hysenaj neighborhood, which is one kilometre from the site. Serbian forces had transported them from the site and sent them to Shehide Hysenaj in the Hysenaj neighborhood. All four children were wounded, but 1-year old Arlinda had the worst wounds. The moment they arrived in Hysenaj neighborhood, Serbs met Shehide and her husband and an elderly couple that was staying with them during the war. The two elderly men and the elderly woman were killed with cold weapons, mainly axes. Then they threatened Shehide to clean up the children and change their clothes within the hour. Surprisingly after burning all houses in that neighborhood, the only house they did not burn was the one where they left my aunt and the four children. Serbs never returned to my aunt and children. This was a brief description of the Deliu case. The only one missing in our family was Lirije, and despite the pain I bear I never regret paying them. You experience the trauma later on. I will tell you about one example. Two months ago a friend of my son Jeton was getting engaged and I attended the family ceremony. Everyone was happy, they were dancing, laughing and singing, and I did my best to look happy too. However, from all 150 people who were present there, no one knew that my joy was only exterior because inside I was totally shut down and fixed on memories of the past. I have two messages, first, even 13 years later, if I had the chance to go back in time I would do it all over again, I would go to war and I would sacrifice for freedom. The younger generations should know that living in slavery is much more difficult than death. In 1994, I was beaten by two police officers inside a tractor, one on the right and the other one on the left, they were hitting me in the mouth, I called for death because slavery is harder than death. Second, I would make one plea, the way

we used to love each other and be humane toward each other when we were in slavery, we should go back to loving each other because others do not love us.

## **Kimete Hoti**

Krusha e Madhe is located in Rahovec municipality, between Prizren and Gjakova. The village of Krusha has a good geographical position but unfortunately it suffered a lot. Krusha e Madhe now has 7000 residents. During the war we lost 241 members. 206 of them were from Krusha e Madhe and the rest were refugees who found shelter in villages near Krusha e Madhe where they were executed in the most heinous way together with the villagers. From 241 victims, seven were children, five were women, 13 were teachers, 10 were athletes, 10 were students, 10 were pupils and there were also teenagers and paralytic people who were unable to move. Our main concerns now are the missing because 66 people are still considered missing. Serbs had very ill feelings toward Krusha e Madhe because it was the birthplace of the renowned Albanian patriot Bajram Curri. The goal of Serbs was to destroy everything in Krusha e Madhe. The village school is named after Bajram Curri. The same can be said about Ukshin Hoti, a renowned intellectual, who unfortunately is still missing. 100 members of the Hoti family were killed only because of their last name and the outrage that Serbs had against Ukshin Hoti. I lost my husband and my brother-in-law and I have two children. It seems like yesterday when we suffered war and the horrors and the tragic day when the barbarians came and destroyed the entire village, burned, looted and massacred. It was the morning of March 26th and we did not know where to go so we headed toward the village mosque thinking we would find shelter there. We changed our route and went to the mountain, we stayed there for several hours but it was cold and the children were very young so we returned to the village and found shelter in the house of Bajram Nalli and stayed there for several hours. Our whole family went to the mountain and we saw that another 500 families had gone there so there were around 1,000 people in the mountain. Then came paramilitary troops, masked soldiers and people with scars on their faces. Some of our husbands were members of the KLA and some were civilians. We were separated from the men and were told to leave. We didn't know where to go, they told us to go inside the mosque. For several hours we watched our men with hands behind their backs being tortured in the most hideous ways. They were from 15 to 45 years old. They held them for several hours. We were kept for six hours inside the mosque. Then we left the mosque. They took all our gold and told us "you asked for NATO now go to NATO". We thought they were going to take us to the police station in Gjakova. We walked through smoke and fire, we watched cattle burning, we saw all kinds of things. Our children were barefooted, because we didn't dare take anything with us. My sister-in-law had a newborn son, we left all the diapers inside the mosque, and the baby cried for hours. When we got to Rugova they stopped us and told us to raise our hands and we knew they were going to execute us. Then they told us they would let us go and if we give them 30,000 Deutsche Marks. There were many of us there. I feel bad for an imam from the city of Tetovo who was living in Krusha, he had some money but his son was wearing a pair of boots resembling those of the KLA and they beat him very badly, so the imam had to give them all his money. We stayed three days in Rugova. On March 30th we headed toward Albania, my mother-in-law was 65 years old, my sister-in-law had two children, a newborn son and a daughter, I was with my two small children, all our neighbors and relatives hoped a tractor and headed toward Albania to find refuge. The children were crying and wanted to eat. We did not know what route we were going to take. We went to Kukës where we spent the night. The next day we took the bus to Elbasan and found safe refuge at the sports hall there. I would like to thank the Pacolli family of my sister-in-law, they came to our aid and gave us shelter. We had great

hope that we would find them, we didn't know we would never find their remains but we had great hope. We stayed in Albania for three months. Three weeks later we had no information if there were any survivors. My uncles were all scattered, some of them went to Elbasan. We stayed in Tirana our immediate family, my father-in-law and his five brothers. 13 members of our immediate family were killed and two are missing. Three weeks later a reporter came to us with the list of people who were killed and all my sons were in the list, but my husband and brother-in-law were not in the list so we were hoping that they were alive somewhere. But hope soon died away. I must say however that we found some solace in the fact that we were able to arrange a proper funeral for my husband and brother-in-law after they were found in the Batajnica morgue in Serbia. They were buried in 2006 along with 43 martyrs. Certainly, there is a lot of trauma. People suffer from war trauma and have nightmares of crimes, killings, maltreatment, burning; these are all memories that cannot be forgotten. Why did this happen to us? Why didn't we find a way out? We cannot get these thoughts out of our minds. Every mother, every women, thinks to herself why did we allow Serbs to kill us, why didn't we find shelter? The village of Krusha had many KLA members; there was also a KLA base here. Even people who did not have arms gave their contribution; we provided great assistance to the KLA. We used to run a woodcarving shop and my husband and brother-in-law helped the KLA, everyone gave their contribution although not of them were holding arms. I also want to mention the doctors we had in Krusha, there were many wounded, we had pregnant women on tractors who were in a critical condition. Faredin Hoti, until his last breath, tended to all the wounded and assisted pregnant women, but unfortunately he and his 17 year-old son Kreshnik gave their lives for freedom. There is an association of missing persons in Krusha which bears Kreshnik's name because Dr. Fahredin gave a lot of contribution and the association now is called Kreshniku. A large numbers of us women are unemployed. 268 are widows, 500 children from Krusha e Madhe are orphans. The only compensation we get from the government are €135. The main concern that mothers and women share is about the great injustice that is done against us. How can a single mother with 3 or 4 children survive on €135. This is not great assistance. At the same time, there were several NGOs that helped us because most of us are housewives. Fortunately, some of us, including myself as a farmer, have found work. We have a group of women doing business, such as producing pickles and honey and several other activities. We really face difficult times because our children suffered greatly during the war and they are still faced with problems and concerns. We are driven to give our maximum in order to become strong mothers so that our children can get an education and enjoy freedom just like others. They should not feel the absence of their fathers and have the proper conditions for education. We should beg the government and other institutions to introduce measures and help our children because education really comes first. They can divide scholarships for these children. They can also try to raise pensions. More attention is required into the social state of all Albanians. I would like to thank you "Memories Speak", it should not be only a story, but all mothers, women and youths who have experienced horrors should talk about their sufferings and sacrifices. Our society should know the concerns and problems because it is really hard to live without your loved ones and to remember all the horrors. The key message is to always remember our loved ones and to give evidence to the world because Serbian criminals are accusing the KLA for defending its own country and they are being kept prisoners. They should accuse themselves. All KLA members should be released whereas criminals should be brought to justice and never again enjoy freedom.

## **Lush Krasniqi**

During the war, 15 people were killed or went missing from my village, and around 80 percent of households and houses were destroyed. Before the war we used to live in a very big family. My father had 11 children, 7 boys and 4 girls. My father was a farmer, we enjoyed a relatively good standard of living, we were educated, and lived in relative peace similar to our fellow countrymen. Before the war, before 1998, we had some problems but our life was mainly trouble-free. Our family was targeted by the enemy, I say this because my brother Pashk was killed on April 27<sup>th</sup> and went missing. In 1995 he was arrested and sentenced to prison after a conflict with a Serb. He served his sentence in Peja prison. My other brother Mark was also killed and went missing on April 27<sup>th</sup>. He was maltreated for alleged illegal possession of arms. My father who was 67 years old was mistreated and beaten at the entrance of the city because we had a house up in the mountains and the KLA, as a liberation army, moved around that area. The Massacre of Meja, as it is known in my region, included 27 villages of the municipalities of Gjakova, Junik and Deçan. There were victims from all three municipalities that suffered during this massacre. Before this massacre which occurred on April 27<sup>th</sup>, there was another massacre on April 17<sup>th</sup> in Meja and Bishtazhin. People from my region were also killed. These areas were bombarded. The enigma remains as to who carried out the bombing, but as a result 71 people were killed, including women, children and elderly people, who were running away. 47 people were wounded. This was the April 17<sup>th</sup> massacre in Meja and Bishtazhin. We refer to April 27<sup>th</sup> as the “black Tuesday” because it was Tuesday. On that day, we didn’t know what was happening but we heard gunfire and we saw smoke coming out of some houses. We stayed home until late in the evening together with some neighbors. We were around 100 members. Late in the afternoon, when the sun was setting, we thought about going into the mountains in order to escape the attack. However, from the mountains came out Serbian soldiers, infantry without heavy machinery, and they first caught my neighbors, the big Nikaj family. They caught one of my neighbors and forced him to tell them about the other houses. The moment they got to the house of Uncle Pjetër they kidnapped him and my brother Pashk and then they ordered that everyone in that area should gather and follow them. I was in the front-yard at the time, I heard gunfire and that was when one of my fellow villagers, who was a guest of at Uncle Pjetër’s house, Smajl Marashi, was killed by Serbian military troops. After we were ordered to surrender, I took my son, who was four at the time, dressed lightly, I had some money, took him by the arm and he asked me “daddy, where are we going?” I didn’t want to scare him so I told him “we’re going to see uncle”. When we gathered in a valley which was a property of my brothers, 20 Serbian soldiers were already there. They separated the men who were older than 15. There were 14 of us who were older than 14. They held us there for half an hour and asked for information. In the end, he took out a notebook and wrote down all our names. After writing down our names, the leader of the group asked “who is the head of the family”. Uncle Pjetër stepped forward because my father was not there at the time, he was in another village, and Pjetër was separated from the group. Then they told my brother Pashk in Serbian but I’m saying it in Albanian: “you with the moustache” (my brother had a moustache) “why are you here, who do you have here?” My brother Pashk said, “my family is here”. My brother lived in the city for 20 years, but due to the situation in the city of Gjakova he moved to the village for security reasons. He too was separated from the group. Then he told my other brother,

Mark, who was wearing a suit, “Sir, you too step forward”. They separated the three of them from the group. They ordered us to head toward the village of Korenica. My brother Mark told his wife, my sister-in-law, “take care of the children”. Then my cousin Kola, who was very young at the time, after they took his father away, told me “Uncle, I’m going to tell the soldier to release father and take me instead”. I told him “no because they will take you as well”. Fortunately, he did not say anything. We took off in two tractors, we were around 100 people, and headed toward Korenica. When we got to the village of Orizë, 2-3 people with police uniforms came out from a bush and told us in their language “take out everything you have in your pockets, gold and everything”. Then we continued for another 200 meters, when we reached the final point of the tragedy, we were stopped and they again asked for money and gold. They held us for half an hour and in the horrifying scene I saw all kinds of uniforms, people without uniforms and some wearing blue and military uniforms. I could not identify anyone except for policeman Dimitrije Velija Rasovic from present-day Dardania, formerly known as Piskota, in the municipality of Gjakova. It was dark when we entered the city. At the entrance of the city, to the west are the former Yugoslav barracks and next to them is the Catholic Church. There were no soldiers in the Yugoslav barracks. We saw a group of soldiers and policemen in the basement of the church who were watching from afar. Our immediate family had four members who were not with us when we were kidnapped, and the Nikaj family whose 12-13 members headed to another village for security reasons, so the families were not complete and we could not go to Albania. Plus another three members of the family were kidnapped. My neighbors had a house in the outskirts of Gjakova and as no one ambushed us and directed us to Albania, we used the darkness and went to their family and we stayed in Dardania and in the village of Osek until June 12<sup>th</sup>. On June 12<sup>th</sup> we left that place; we lived a very difficult life for two months, expecting the worst all the time. Then we went home always afraid of mines, and so on. However, no one can stop you from getting home but everything that we had built with sweat and tears in our homes was destroyed. After one week of searching, with the help of a worker of the Çabрати enterprise in Gjakova, who was a gravedigger, his name was Musa, I got news that some three kilometres away he had taken the bodies of four members of my family and under orders by Serbian police and army he had buried them in the cemetery of Korenica village. Musa told me about the vehicle with which they transported the dead. This included my Uncle Pjetër, my brother Pashk born in 1959, Pjetër born in 1946, my brother Mark born in 1962, and Gjergj Sokoli, a grandson and friend of mine who was a professor and brother to eight sisters, a former member of the Kosovo Parliament in 1992. Musa was already telling me a new episode by describing what happened to the people who were killed and those bodies were left in the mountains. This is the vehicle, Lada, with which they transported my brothers, Hysen Rragami and many others. Musa told me how he took them, and that police was with them. 100 meters from the place where my family members were killed, Dragutin Josipovic a.k.a Guta, police commander in the village of Ponashec, killed Daniell Berisha from the village of Korenica and Dedë Berisha from the village of Necë, some 100 meters from where my brothers were killed. My brothers were executed following orders given by Dragutin Josipovic a.k.a Guta. Fortunately, as they were far from one another, the bodies of Daniell Berisha and Dedë Berisha were taken by some fellow villagers who were hiding in the mountains nearby and were buried in one place. So Musa says that when they went looking for them they did not find them and took the four bodies that were left there. At the site I found some cartridges, a shoe belonging to my brother, the sweater who was ripped from his body

and riddled with bullets and bloodied, a tobacco holder, and a pair of plastic gloves used to conduct some sort of autopsy, and a hospital instruction in Serbian. From there, following orders by army and police troops, Musa, who said that police committed all this, sent the bodies and buried them in the village of Korenica along with some 40 other fellow villagers. The epilogue is that 377 people were killed in the Meja Massacre. On May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003, the first group of identified victims from the Meja Massacre, 29 martyrs, were delivered and buried. This was the opening chapter of the identification process, the first 29 martyrs who were buried on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003. After this, we as family members, decided to bury them in one place, in the place where they were killed. We organized this and today at the Valley of Mourning in Meja lie 353 victims of both religions, Muslim and Christian. Another 22 martyrs from the total of 377 are yet to be identified. Following the initiative of some family members, in 2000 the association of missing persons "27<sup>th</sup> April 1999 in Meja" was formed. After constant protests and making appeals to our young institutions at the time to UNMIK and ICTY representatives, we drafted a penal indictment through ICTY investigator Paolo Pastore Stoki. We submitted it on behalf of "April 27<sup>th</sup>" Association in the file against Milosevic at The Hague. As an association we felt obliged toward family members to produce and distribute a leaflet for missing persons which we called "April 27<sup>th</sup>". This is a leaflet containing material exclusively about missing persons and victims in Kosovo. The two girls seen here are 16-year-old Klaudia Mala from Korenica and 17-year-old Yilka Domi from the city of Gjakova. It is very interesting about Klaudia that her ponytail was found in the cemetery in Korenica whereas her body was found in Serbia, this is very strange. Any message that I have to convey comes from the heart and has no national, political or any other background. It is very difficult to lose someone especially a family member. On December 14<sup>th</sup> 2004, I received from Batajnica the bodies of Uncle Pjetër and the older brother Pashku, but unfortunately I still don't have the body of my other brother, Mark. I felt a lot of pain but I did not tell my family hoping that one day we will receive the body of my other brother and we will bury them together. Fortunately, four months later, in April 2005, we received the body of my brother Mark and on April 27<sup>th</sup>, on the fifth anniversary of the massacre, I buried three members of family along with 16 others who had died on the same day. Their flesh and blood had dried in a foreign land. Their remains came here washed and cleaned. They had returned to their motherland. Families living in anxiety today face a very difficult situation and unfortunately the phenomenon of missing persons has not been concluded with total success in any country of the world. Families, which still haven't identified their loved ones, we have families that have 10 missing members and have identified only some of them, face a very difficult situation. Therefore I pray that every family member can find the remains of their loved ones so that they can arrange a dignifying funeral, honour their loved ones who will finally be able to rest in their motherland. I believe that our pain, which grows stronger every year, would be somewhat relieved if we had at least some moral support. There are cases, for example in the village of Dobrosh where children have lost their mothers and fathers, and the society; I'm not saying the government because governments change, but the society pays very little attention to these categories. It is true that they get some funds as compensation, they also enjoy some healthcare insurance but this is nothing compared to their requests for employment, education or at least a little more special treatment in society. My request as a family member would be to assist this category of damaged persons, unfortunately some of them will never find spiritual rest until they find their murdered or missing family members.

## **Vjollca Berisha**

My family had 12 members. We were a happy, quiet and generous family. Our men and women were all educated and intellectuals. Some were doctors, others were professors and engineers. These families were targeted and exterminated by Serbs. I was born in the village of Muhlan near Suhareka in 1962. My father always had senior functions; he was also MP of the Constitution of Kosovo. I grew up in a happy, educated and intellectual family. I would also like to add that before the war I started working at the "Balkan" factory and I am still employed there. The morning of March 26<sup>th</sup> was a tragic day for all Albanians, especially for our family because we lived through terrible things. The NATO bombing campaign started on March 24<sup>th</sup> and I would like to note that OSCE members were living in our house. Their offices were in my cousin's house. On March 24<sup>th</sup> they packed their stuff and left. In the morning of March 25<sup>th</sup> police forces entered the house of my cousin around 5 o'clock in the morning. They raided the house and beat up my cousin Nexhat. They took some money and told us keep calm because nothing will happen. Fearing the worst, they came to our house: children, women and men. We stayed there together. The next day, around 10-11 o'clock, they surrounded our house. Two tanks were behind the house. There were numerous police forces wearing masks. They entered our front-yard. First they asked for our brother-in-law Bujar, our mother-in-law said Bujar should go out. Bujar went out and the rest of the men followed him. They started taking us of the house too. They stopped the men in the front-yard and told us, women and children, that we could leave. They executed the men in the front-yard. We started running but we were surrounded on all sides by police troops. We did not know where to go, all roads were closed. We went out of the house barefooted because we didn't even have time to put our shoes on. I didn't have any of my children, Dafina or Drilon, near me. They took another road because we didn't know where to run to out of fear and horror of what was happening to the men. As all roads were blocked, they forced us into a store at the trade centre. Numerous police forces surrounded us there and that's when they started shooting. They opened the door of the store, it was a pizza place, and sent us inside. We were all close family inside, 12 members of my uncle's family, there were also some cousins who saw us leaving the house and ran to join us. We were only women and children. The men were stopped and executed in the front-yard. My cousin Liria was 8-months pregnant. They didn't spare anyone, neither children, nor pregnant women nor the elders, not even a 70-80-year old women. They forced us inside the store and started shooting with everything they had. We all fell to the ground. Gramos, who was 8 at the time, was near me, so was 16-year-old Dafina, 13-year-old Drilon, my children of my sister-in-law 17-year-old Vlorian, 13-year-old Edon and 3-year-old Doruntina. My uncle's children were almost identical in age with our children, only Sebahate's children were smaller, one was 8 months, and the other was one year old and so on. Inside the store, they started yelling, cursing, firing their weapons and did not stop, while we were only laying on the ground and not moving. The children were asking for help and water, but we could not even give them a single drop of water. Blood was gushing everywhere, I thought they were going to throw gasoline on us and burn us, because our feet were all covered in blood. I looked at Dafina only once when the shooting stopped. I raised my head to see her one more time, and I realized that they had already killed her, but her eyes were still open and I was thinking that she was alive. I told Sebahate to touch Dafina and see if she is still alive, but that's when they started shooting again and I

couldn't get close to her. My son Drilon was covering his head from bullets with a hat. They shoot with all their guns until they killed all. When children were crying, they yelled and approached them and riddled them with bullets. When they calmed down, they started throwing them on the truck one by one. My son Gramos was wounded on the arm, he pretended to be dead and said "I heard aunt Shyhret telling her son Altin 'pretend to be dead' and I did the same. But if they had grabbed me by the wounded arm I would have screamed. But they grabbed me by the other arm and I didn't let out a sound and they threw me inside the truck". They grabbed me first and I pretended to be dead. They throw bodies on top of others; we were some 50 members inside the store, maybe 48, all one on top of the other, bloodied, wounded and killed. They closed the cover of the truck; they washed away the blood and headed toward Prizren. On the way to Prizren, Shyhrete, my cousin's wife, told me, "Vjollca we have to jump off the truck because they will put us in a mass grave and we will die in there". She said "I'm leaving my four children here and I want to jump off the truck". She raised the cover of the truck, looked at the road and close to Malësia e Re jumped off, I stayed there for another couple of minutes thinking what to do, I accidentally turned my head and saw my son Gramos covered with other bodies and his head underneath a jacket. I removed the jacket to see his face once again and realized that he was alive. "Mosi, are you alive?" I asked him. "Yes mother I am," he replied. I looked at the other bodies in the truck to see if the rest of the children are there, I grabbed Gramos and jumped off the truck. The truck was moving at high speed but luckily we hit asphalt and with my son by the hand, blood dripping from our wounds, our clothes torn we made our way barefooted through the fields. My son was asking for water but I had none and then we saw a house in Malësi e Re with several people moving in the front-yard and we asked them for help. When we approached the house we realized they were Serbs. An old woman asked us what do we want, I asked her to give me some water for the child, she went inside and made some sugary water and brought it to him. There was another man sitting in the front-yard, he told me ask for food, but I said no we don't want food. When I realized they were Serbs I was afraid we were going to get caught and that we would meet our end. The old woman however helped us cross the road and sent us to an Albanian house. We walked in, they give us first aid and then sent us to my sister's village Caparc. We stayed there wounded, my son in the arm and I in the leg, for three months. I still have shrapnel in my body and my son is wounded in his arm. We stayed there for three months, without any doctor's help, because we didn't even dare go to the doctor so we received only popular medicaments. The Catholic Church helped us, they came to visit, and we stayed there for three months. Police too came from time to time, we would climb tractors to head toward Albania but they would stop us. We had a difficult time staying there, but we had no choice. In the beginning it was very difficult for Gramos, he would scream and cry all the time, "there they are, they want to kill us all". We stayed there for three months until NATO troops went in. I don't know what happened to the others. Although I saw my daughter and son, but I still didn't want to believe the worst, thinking that like us they too could be alive somewhere. My son is finishing the second year of university studies here in Pristina, in the Faculty of Economy, Management and IT. His studies are going well but the trauma will not go away until we join them. After the day of the massacre and crime, I was never able to return to that front-yard in Suhareka. I find it difficult after what I experienced and saw there, for now I don't think I will be able to go there. I've been living with my parents for 12 years now. They are very supportive and have backed me for 12 years that I'm living in Prizren. I'm the reason they moved from Suhareka because they too

used to live in an apartment in Suhareka. After the war I moved to Prizren where I live with my parents together with my son. My message would be to find the corpses of my loved ones, my children, my husband and the others, as soon as possible, so that we can have a place to visit them on their birthdays, send them flowers and weep at their graves. I like to call on state institutions to do the impossible and find the corpses of my family members.

## **Abdullah Asllani**

Name Abdullah, father Shasivar, family name Asllani, I was born on 05.12.1936 in Zaselle village, while I am residing in Shufkovc village. I am father of 4, one was taken from me, all my children were married, three are alive, two girls and a boy. I reside in Shufkovc, that's where I live, I am retired, I used to work in zinc electrolyzethe and I completed work experience, now I am home with no income and no aid. I saw my son for the last time on 2<sup>nd</sup> of April and he said: father I am taking my wife and going in Bajgora, his wife was from Bajgora, if something happens I will join the army, which never happened. With his in-laws he got out while on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April our village was surrounded and they threw us out of our houses by swearing and cursing us. They gathered us at a neighbor's house. We were, I don't know exactly, but around 500 people. From there they lined us in two and sent us into the road that connects Trepca with Mitrovica, in the asphalt. They were on both sides of the road cursing us and telling us all kinds of things although we were with children and elders that couldn't even walk. You couldn't help anyone because they didn't allow, as soon as you left the row they started hitting us, beating us. They followed us up to Sitnica bridge and the first in line said that they are taking us to the train station, which was not true because we already passed it. We continued the road towards the city, but the same guy said that they are taking us to the stadium to slaughter us. He was distributing the news by listening to what they were saying. We passed the stadium as well and we were taken to the bus station. When we reached there, they surrounded us from all sides and said that everyone should prepare 100 deutsche marks. We reached there and they started beating us and we were not able to help the people in need by cursing and saying all kinds of things to us. They were police or soldiers or paramilitary troops, we found them at the bus station and they surrounded us and said that anyone who wants to get in should pay 100 deutsche marks. They appointed an old man, he took of a white hat that he was carrying and approached everyone accompanied by a policeman. He said: "everyone should put 100 DM's here", but when my turn came I told him "I have no DM, I only have Dinars". He cursed me and said that you will not need money anymore, put them all here cause you won't need it anymore, you are done. I told him only if you want Dinars, because I don't have Marks, he said ok put them here. I gave him 200 Dinars. When he collected the money from everyone, they opened the doors of the busses for us to get in. I saw a neighbors of mine who was used to be a bus driver so he recognized the leader of the busses, and told him Nazif you go to that bus there and collect 40 Mraks per person. We went after him, got in the bus. When we entered the bus, that neighbor came and said, please whoever has money give it to them or they will kill us. I said again if he could ask them if I can give dinars because I don't have Deutsche Marks and he said that he will ask them. He asked them and they said that we can give Dinars. I gave 60 Dinars because that was all I had. From there, around 1100hrs, drove off to Elez Han. We were taken to Elez Han where we were held in a bakery and two or three other shops. We were all locked inside the bakery. Everything that we needed to do we had to do it there. We were there from 7 in the evening till 7 in the morning when a policeman came with two or three others and said that we should go straight to Bllace and that we should walk on the rail road and not left or right. We started from there but those who couldn't walk were helped by who was able to provide help, whoever could carry them on the back and that is how we went to Bllace. When we reached Bllace it was horrifying. Horrible, there were people as much as there was grass; sick, tired, elder, exhausted, hungry, thirsty, without anything. In Bllace we reached a small

hillside and we settled in a place which was a bit further from this population. When we settled there, people started coming from the Macedonian side bringing us tents, food and water. I went and I asked a guy if he could provide me with a piece of nylon so I could build something for my family. He said that he will bring it tomorrow. He brought it and I built a tent for my family and all 28 members got in there no matter who was what and where from. We stayed there for three days; from there we were driven to Qegran, whoever wanted to go there. It was an agricultural cooperative, fields, which was called "Brazda". When we went to Qegran we were given a tent. We mounted the tents, everyone for his family and if someone remained without a tent people were taking them in if they had space. We were three families in one tent. We stayed there for three days receiving food and water from Macedonia. It was hard to come in line because it was unbelievably crowded. After a while, our clothes in Elez han – Bllace were very dirty / filthy. A Macedonian boy came and said "uncle, do you want to come and change your clothes". I went to take off the clothes since I was all dirty from the dust of cement factory, then the guy told me to go back and that he would come and take me. I went back and he never came again so I remained there. Three days later, the news came that we could register for a location where we would like to go. Countries accepting us were Norway, Sweden, Germany, France and some other. I went and waited on the line for 24 hours. My turn came at 7 in the morning to get in and report. When I went in they asked me where would I like to register, there were one Macedonian and one Albanian; I told them that I would like to go to Norway since my neighbors are going there. He said that Norway is full and is not accepting anymore. While I was conversing with them, a man came in with some papers in his hand and said that Norway is accepting 2000 more people. I registered my name there and they told that I was free now and I will see it when the register comes out. I went back to my family and I waited there. Next day my name was not there but the day after I saw my name. I was third or fourth on the register. We got ready; buses came to collect us and sent us to the airport. We went from the airport to Fize in Italy. From Italy we were taken to our destination by NATO airplanes. When we reached our destination the people that were waiting there told us that we should first go to the bathroom and get cleaned up and after that we can get in. there was a room with clothes for our needs. We cleaned ourselves and whoever could, got some clothes that fitted us. We stayed there until 7 in the afternoon. At 7 in the evening we went to Oslo and we stayed there for the night. Next day we were informed that an airplane came; firstly we were taken to a kindergarten where we rested. Next day we went to the airport. From Oslo airport we were taken to Skajdi, Falcum was the name of the city. We went to Skajdi where I stayed for six months. The worst thing was that we had no information for back home. The oldest son was a soldier. Somehow he get in touch with my neighbor that was there with me and says: "Father, Naim was taken.", I said "What?", he says "they took him", I asked him "who did they take him with?", he said "they took him with his brother in law, with a neighbor and another neighbor, but one of them was our cousin". The distant cousin said that Skender was found murdered alongside Sitnica. We totally lost our hopes. We spoke on the phone and he said that there is still no news regarding Naim. I said that I will not stay in Norway anymore, I want to go home. No dad, don't come back because things are not stable yet. I was there for six months already. On 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1999 Naim came back home. As soon as he came back he found his wife, mother and many more refugees that were there. 10 minutes didn't go by, as they said since I was not there, our house was surrounded and Naim was taken with three others: his brother in law, Skender and Mensur. They were taken to an unknown direction for us.

Skender was found on the side of Sitnica, murdered. I couldn't stay in Norway anymore so I came back. I came back to search for him, I searched everywhere, but it was pointless. We went to the Internationals, everywhere, they couldn't do anything. Thanks to this organization "Kujtimi" a girl named Berani came, she was competent for research in this field, and her name was Haxhere. She came and notified Bajram. She said: "Bajram, Naim was found". She informed us on the 22.07.2004. Bajram immediately informed us. Bajram was informed previously but we went back on this date. She said: "you can take the corps". We prepared, and we buried him. Therefore this Government has done very little. My son was found, his brother in law was not found. The son of our close cousin was found, the other cousin was found murdered in Sitnica. Therefore it did nothing in regards to this issue. If not for "Kujtimi" organization, we would still be without any knowledge or any news. Our son was taken to Suhodoll, as we were told by Bajram. He was killed in Suhodoll. NATO did the research in Suhodoll and found the bodies but no one invited us to go and identify our son's or brother's or sister's or anyone's body. He was taken there, where they are taking them to Ferizaj; they informed us from there so we went and took him from there and buried him. My message is: this Government is very bad; 13 years not finding people that are in Kosovo or Serbia or wherever they are. If only people could get rid of the anxiety and worry of knowing if they are dead or alive. It is very bad that today, after 13 years, to search and find your relatives, the loved ones. I think this is very bad; very bad. The people are hanging on, hopping, if they will find them or not, no matter how they will find them: dead or alive. The Government should have researched, reached an agreement as they do for other things; to reach an agreement on finding these people. There are many, many, thousands, whose destiny is unknown, neither if they are alive or dead, while the people are still waiting.

### **Azize Haziri**

I was born in Verbofc village, Municipality of Drenas; in 1950 I got married in Krasmerofs village, Municipality of Skenderaj, now residing in Skenderaj. During the war my father was massacred, my son killed and I got wounded; the suffering and the grief are endless; my son Afrim was killed in war. Before he got killed in war, he, my husband's family, was keeping the army's doctor Naim Badreqin; I was cooking for the army, the doctor and for the wounded soldiers. My son Afrim was helping the doctor Naim Bedriqi to take care about for the wounded. My daughters were also cleaning blood off the sponges and clothes of the wounded; my husband was also taking care of them going from one bed to another asking them if they are alright. We all tried, I was willingly cooking for them. My son Afrim was killed on April the 30<sup>th</sup> in Qikatove; he was killed by the Serbs. He was taken alive during the offensive in Verbofc and he and his friends were taken to the mosque in Qirez village. They were taken in groups with trucks and they were executed in Qikatove. According to witnesses my son Afrim and 37 of his friends were taken on the last truck. Only they know what they did with those boys in that truck, where they sent them; they were killed and then robbed by paramilitaries. He was found dead in the bushes. As the doctors told us he was shot in the leg, chest and head. I received his body after 12 years; we buried him in the day of holy Bajram in Likoshan village. We found my father's bones massacred in Gllobar village where the Serbs had a checkpoint. My father was taken the same way to the mosque and from there he was taken to Gllogofc/Drenas. They were bettering the elders, my father suffered the most; they asked him "why are your sons in the army?" My three brothers were in the army; why did you open trenches for the army because he built the trenches. He was almost beaten to death then he was released. Coming back to Gllobar he was ambushed and killed with the young boy, son of our cousin whom he was holding by hand. My brothers found the bones of our father, placed them in a bag and buried him. My husband is alive, two sons and four daughters. My son and my father were killed. I was wounded during the war; the war that we experienced; we were taken many times; I lived through two or three offensives; during the offensive in Krosmirofc village, the paramilitaries came and gathered us in a field and started shooting on us. Bullets were flying like maze grains. A girl standing next to me got killed, daughter of Sokol from Krasmerofc, she was killed. I had a small boy on my lap; the bullet went through his clothes and burnt them but only scratched his stomach. He is still traumatized. They took us there and sent us to Gllogofc/Drenas. When we reached Gllogofc, whoever had relatives went to their relatives while the rest of us went to the kindergarten. We were inside the kindergarten when they said that NATO bombed them so we better get out of there otherwise they will come and massacre inside there. We went to Verbofc at my family where fighting and all the worst was going on. My son heard that we are in Verbofc. Afrim came with his friends to get us and take us to Qiqavic. He and many of his friends were caught alive. They were taken to the mosque in Qirez; from the mosque in Qirez they were taken alive and executed. Some were taken first and shot; some others were taken and shot after while my son Afrim was taken on the last truck. Afrim was with his friends, 37 young men were left for the end and were told stay here; a Bosnian told them that he will let them go home but the next truck took them and they were executed. My son and his friends were killed in the bushes. 12 years after the war I found his body. I buried my son Afrim on the day of holy Bajram. Leci from Gradice gave me aid, I was wounded twice and Leci from Gradice provided me with aid, may Allah reward him; he was killed too. He

gave me medicine, helped me, cleaned my wound and covered it since it was cold. I went on like that with injections, medicine wounded and in grief. I have my shoulder, my finger; I reported as a wounded person and the boy namely Rifat who got scratched on his stomach, his clothes were burnt by the bullet while he was sitting on my lap while my finger was cut; I only have a half finger. I was wounded on the first offensive but it was Leci who helped me, may Allah reward him. We visit them. It was written by God. I have two sons, four daughters, granddaughters, grandsons and brides, God wanted and I was left with two sons and four daughters and my husband. I have two brides and four grandsons. We are managing to survive somehow. We were given a very small flat provided by the social welfare but we are a big family and we are hardly managing to live there; we are a wide/big family. When I parted from my son, I remember when he left, he greeted me and respected me a lot; he respected his mother father and all the family and he left. He came to get us and take us to Qiqavic, he said goodbye and we never say him again. They walked in front because he was with the army while the women remained behind. He was with his friends, with soldiers and they were armed. In Verbofc it was a catastrophe; it was a vast offensive. To tell you what we saw: all the houses burnt, we had no place to hide, we stayed out in the cold, I was wounded, I was cold; we had to cover in plastic and sheets but still it was unbearable; we were out. My sons are not employed and neither is my husband; nobody is working; we survive on 130 euros that I get for Afrim and 95 euros I receive for myself which are not enough just for my medicine. My oldest daughter got sick on the nerves from the grief of her brother and mine. I have to take care of her with my money; to get her the medicine. I would beg this Government from the ground to the sky to open jobs for the youth and help them; they have suffered and continue to suffer even today. Our children are suffering. How can you maintain your family without jobs, without money; it is hard, I feel sorry for them; my sons are jobless just like all the youth. I feel sorry for them just like I do for my children. Thank you, I am with you until I found my son and until the last missing is found.

## **Bajram Kinolli**

I was born in Gjakova, at home actually, not in the hospital, and 6 days later i was given the name Bajram. I am Bajram Kinolli born on October 1985. In childhood as a family we were of middle class. I was the fifth child and I had a younger sister after me. We were 3 boys and 3 girls. My mom left after two years because she started working because the living conditions started worsening especially around '90. It started worsening from '87, '88. My father was working in "Metalik", the older brother worked in the green market sometimes selling cigarettes and stuff like that. Something else I can say is that during the '90, in '92 and '93 after I started school, when I was in second or third grade I started selling cigarettes because my father lost the job at "Metalik" in '92 because the factory went bankrupt so all the family had to work. Since I started working in my young age, the awareness was much higher than of a usual kid; that I had to work to sustain myself and to dedicate to the family first of all and then to be aware of the reason why you are doing this. I continued selling cigarettes for three years; physically I got developed so I started working in warehouses, small shops but when the war came it was the hardest time. Actually I couldn't understand why the fighting is going on?! I was working for the family; they were all in one ball so to say and nothing else mattered except work and earning so we could eat and drink. Then during the war I got into puberty; it was a crisis for me; the war was very hard for me especially in Gjakova and in my neighborhood. I was in an Albanian school in 1992 and when the war started in was on the sixth or seventh grade. We were beaten by Albanians and by Serbs because I was going to school; I was told that I should go to a Serbian school because their goal was assimilation of Romas, Hashkali and Egyptians regardless; it was their politics. Then the experience I had, going in details, when the bombing started which I remember very well. It was around 0700hrs when the news came on TV saying that we should close our curtains because at 0800 the bombing will start. When the bombing started it was a big surprise, you had a feeling that it will never end and we thought it will never end; you never knew when will the bombing stop. The sky started lighting up, shooting started, the ground and the windows started shaking from the bombing. Actually we didn't know who is with us; from whom to watch out first: from KLS, from the Serbs or from NATO?! We were like in a triangle in the middle of fire and we had nothing to do with their politics; all we cared about was survival, like I said earlier, we were only concerned about work and eating in those hard times. That night we went to my uncle's house which was about 100 meters down the road and it had a basement and we were 8 families that stayed there, about 80 persons, 80 – 100 persons in a room which was about 8m with 7m; it was all covered in sponge rag; we couldn't go out, I mean we had no toilet, it was not built yet. I remember that we had to wait for the daylight to go out for physical needs. It was a really bad experience. After a week we started going to my father's uncle who lives in "Cefa" which is a neighborhood of communities and there we were not harassed that much; it was a little more safe considering that they were not allowed to leave to Albania and most of them remained there; there were also Albanians who were kept safe in there. after a week when Vesa family, who were in my neighborhood, it is now known as Agani family, in the neighborhood that previously was called "Cullaks" neighborhood; "Qerim's" neighborhood and many other names, 27 persons were killed in one house and burnt afterwards. One night before the event we didn't know what is going on in that part because we couldn't see but a strong light was coming from that part and imagine it is about 2km far, it was quiet around 0100 after midnight and you could hear people

screaming, wood crackling could be heard from the burning houses and children crying. Imagine the feeling when you saw people going crazy inside there but I was little younger and I couldn't understand the situation that well. Now when I realize what I saw it is a little bit weird. Next we went to our old house where we were keeping the food. I went there with my mother because we didn't let our father go out since they were targeting males every time. I was young and with my mother, we had a cart to carry the flour and we passed by the bus station. When we passed there we saw half or 70% of that neighborhood was burnt and a very bad smell was coming from there; it was the smell of burnt people; actually in that time I didn't know but now I know that it was the smell of burnt people. My mother was crying all the time and at first I didn't understand why but then I started crying too because I got scared. We saw a large number of police there and we saw people leaving in a row; we asked our neighbors where they are headed to? They said that they were going to Albania. We went, got the flour and joined the row but the police started separating people by their color so they separated us too and didn't let us leave. We wanted to leave because we didn't know what is going on 1km away; we didn't know if they stormed that place as well. It was very hard to understand what was going on. Dead people left on the street; in Gjakova it was horrible, horrible; horrible. Two months later the situation started calming down and we went back to our house. We had to keep a white flag on our house in order to let people know that a family is inside. The white flag was usually a bed sheet or a towel. This was during the war, for two months that we didn't go out and we had to stay indoors all the time. It was horrible, as young kids we needed to play, go to school or read something but there was no chance. I had family members in Mitrovica, actually from the mother's side but one or two years after we found out that they died during the war. My mother's cousins; it was my mother's uncle who was an old man; this happened when the Kosovo Liberation Army and KFOR went in; that's when that neighborhood in Mitrovica got burnt; it was the old Romas neighborhood; we don't know if the Serbs or Albanians burnt it. He was paralyzed inside and they killed his son too. They left him inside to burn and killed his son. This is how we know it happened but we don't know who actually did it; maybe others know better than me. I can say that when the war was over I was happy too regardless of who we were in war with or were not in war with or who harassed us and who didn't. it was a very good feeling at first but then situation started to get irritated; people had anger more than necessary; sometimes the hate was indescribable. They were coming at our house to see if we had something telling us "you Romas have looted the whole neighborhood; we want to come inside and search the house"; this abuse went on every day for three months; people in uniforms were coming every day; they looked like the Serbian army but even the Serbian army didn't enter like they did, at 1200 or 0100 after midnight. Now I think that these were people in rage and people that probably dressed the uniforms after the war; some hooligans I can say. But the relationship got better later on; I started going to school and I was always strong and aware of what I wanted from this place; when I started school I had problems in school every time; I argued a lot when they called me a Roma or when they harassed me and I was always discriminated by the professors. When I started secondary school it was even harder because from 2000 students I was the only colored one and it was very hard; it was a weird feeling although I tried my best to get integrated and every time I had problems I turned to some friends that I had who were close friends of mine but not to that extent to trust them all the way. Maybe I thought that I earned their trust but later on they proved me wrong and I understood that I can't rely on them because their families didn't want to have problems with these kind

of communities; I mean it was hard. After getting integrated for 2 – 3 years, things started getting better and we felt more freedom. I started getting involved more; I started as a musician and later on as a young artist; it was very delightful in the beginning; later on I had, I want to mention the time when I had the first band which went on for 7 months, but after 7 months I understood that their families don't want their children to play music with a colored persons or a person that is a Roma. It was very hard for me because it was very important for me, I always dreamt of having my own Rock band. They came and we played music; I was organizing everything and probably I was giving them the chance to go to Prishtina for the first time or to another local city and play. I was a very lively person and I researched a lot and you have to be three times more ambitious when you are colored or a Roma. You have to be three times more ambitious in order to be equal with the others who for me are just human but there is someone else that treats you differently. Afterwards it was a better situation with NGO's; problems were still there; of course we have problems considering that we live in a country where the majority of people are ignorant, primitive in mentality and I say this very openly because we are the forgotten people and I feel as a Kosovar too. I feel more a Kosovar than a Roma or Ashkali or Egyptian. I say this because the registration of other states left us like this and actually it's our fault as well because as people we are a little lazy; not a little but very lazy; we are traumatized and we are behind in many areas; first of all with feelings and also as mentality. After the war it was pretty harsh, I still have some scars on my body from the fights; fights were mostly because of race than those of teenagers problems. Many times I was afraid to go to school because of some villagers that were more furious wanting to check on you, to have you under control and humiliate you all the time. I will never forget the discrimination at school; there was a professor of Albanian language who was very extremist and I could say very fascist because in that time I didn't know the terms. An actual case was when I learned a poem and when I recited it I had some pronunciation mistakes but instead of trying to teach me how to do it correctly since he was the teacher of Albanian Language, he would say sit down or even hit me and I couldn't do anything about it, I was powerless in that moment. As part of the community life is hard first of all taking into consideration the financial status and the discrimination we experience from the people in Kosovo: they don't employ us because we are Romas and no one would come to your shop if a Roma works for you; this is one of the great issues in Kosovo I might say. Romas can't be cleaners, sewage workers and physical workers forever. There are a lot of positive things to say about us since a large number of youth from our community is being integrated into society and attending schools now; comparing 2001 and 2012, back then 20% of Romas were in schools now the numbers reached 85% according to the international statistics which is a very high percentage and it means that the education amongst our community is very good and equal. Integration is still a problem because of the circumstances in Kosovo meaning that it is yet to be dealt with issues of the people. Personally, for my story, I could say that I see myself as pretty well integrated in the society but I think it is thanks to my skills I managed to stay informed all the time; I want to be equal and feel equal. I don't want to start thinking that I am black and that I always have to feel bad because people want to make you feel that way. There is a sentence which is used in Gjakova but my father told it too me many times, he said "Son, when you go out in the city you should close one ear and one eye; so if you see something bad just close one eye and look in the other direction or if you hear something bad like someone swearing you because of your race, just close one ear and just keep walking but this should never stop you: and

I kept this always on my mind that I should look ahead and walk forward and if they have a problem with you then it is their problem. I am pretty satisfied regardless of the extra effort you have to put in. I would like first of all people to stop thinking emotionally, not to hang on to the past and not to generalize things because as they say every house has a bathroom but they are not all the same; I would simply like to say that things should not be generalized; if you want to study one side, I am talking about communities, you should study more personalities of the community; you can't study them differently from the others. So peace; let's make peace in Kosovo although it is coming, we are getting closer to what we want but we have to work harder first with ourselves and then the relations with other friends.

## **Bajram Qerkini**

I come from Mitrovica, unfortunately divided, otherwise a family from Obria and we live in Mitrovica from 1959, meaning that we came to Mitrovica in 1959. I have finished the education there and I started working at Trepca. I worked in Trepca until we were forcibly thrown out of our jobs. I have finished the high school of Machinery, in the last time I was in charge of the division for battery mounting in the battery industry. I want to say that my family, Zenely Sadiku otherwise known as Sadik Zeneli's family, was always persecuted and is a rare family that has three lost members, unfortunately from 1912, 1945 always persecuted by the Serbian regime and I was persecuted myself, jailed as well, and maltreated as well, not only me but my four children as well. On 1<sup>st</sup> of May and in a lot other Mays we were almost all the time jailed since there was a written file, at that time anticommunism and anti-Serbian. I must say a family suffering from that regime, not to say from Alexander and onwards, since we still know nothing about the whereabouts of my grandfather and great grandfather. The first Zenel, my father's grandfather, was taken from Obria to Vushtrri with the allegation that he has taxes and from that day we don't know about his whereabouts. I would like to say a word for Sadik Zeneli, for whom the Kosovo opinion is still not aware that Sadik Zeneli was taken by Ali Shkuri's order from Sekenderaj with Rexhep Vojvoda, Halil Haxhiun and Isuf Radica, where taken in a meeting, allegedly in Meto Bajraktari, Sadik Zeneli was leading and went inside the army compound. They were told to put their hands up and from that day we don't know where their bones or graves are. Before we jump to the issue that burnt our soles, not only mine but to the most of Kosovo by Slobodan's regime, I would like to say another word for the families that were persecuted since my father after his father died, whose grave is not known and he died with that burden. We were always in the picture or followed by, unfortunately, some Albanians that worked for UDB of that time. In 1970 I received an apartment in the North Mitrovica from the Battery Industry as a distinct employee. I was always under surveillance; I never knew it until Slobodan Millosevic came to power. Now we will jump to the topic, for which unfortunately I don't know where my son is, that is why I emphasized "three generations". We used to live in a neighborhood or street called "Mosha Piada" in that time; I was under surveillance and my kids were too. Attacks and crimes committed, before the war started, in that building we were 50-50, 50% Serbs and 50% Albanians. My sons were followed more than I was; movement Democratic League of Kosovo had already started its activity abroad as well. My youngest son had made some movements and he had been to Tirana for a long time but I didn't know about it. He was always telling me that he is in Austria and sending me letters on his name from Austria. He shared a bed with Nexhmedin Saphiu in Tirana. Meanwhile I was followed all the time by the regime or MUP or SUP as it was called that time while I never thought that the worst was to come. It was one day of May 1998, a morning when Brahim Spahiu died, father of Kadri and Faruk Spahiu, who at that time was the leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo with Latif Berisha. We were about to go and pay a visit with a professor named Sejdi Sylejmani. In the morning, so that rain would not soak Sejdi Sylejmani, who is a history professor and I learned a lot of things from him, I brought the vehicle in front of the entrance of the building. Just imagine, there were 13 policeman but 7 had gone to the apartment and horrified my wife and the missing Reshat who was still sleeping. They took him like that on his pajamas and were bringing him down the stairs. "Are you Bajram?". "Yes". "Put your hands behind; you will come with us, our commander sent us". I knew three of the, no

Albanian was accompanying them, they were all Serbs. I asked if they can leave my family alone and if they can release my son. He said: "I have more business with your sone then with you, but where are your other two sons?". Two other sons were already out, one was in Macedonia and the other in Netherlands and I told them so. He said: "ok, we will tell you inside because you are lying since they are in KLA". We went inside where I saw about 100 of them. I heard the sound/cries of my son so I started to lose myself because it is very hard to hear your son being beaten. I started losing control until they took me inside and started maltreating and beating me more than him. This was May the 1<sup>st</sup> and it went on for 4 hours. After 4 hours they told me to go home and report in every morning. This was Ratko Bozevic, who together with Mesavic and Veban (Boban) was in command of the Serbian police at that time. I tried to walk on my feet so that my neighbors and wife would not see me, since only my wife remained at home but I couldn't step well on my feet. But for her sake, Allah gave me strength and I started walking home. My son came and caught me by my arm and I asked him said "what happened son?". He said: "Nothing. They didn't say anything to me. What did they tell you?". I told him that they didn't tell me anything either. My flat was not far from there and it was on the third floor. An uncle of mine heard what happened so he came and a lot of other family members came, amongst them was Sejdi Ylejmani. Sejdi Sylejmani said that we have a file, that we were followed and that my son was not standing well. I dint want to tell my family and my son what I was told by them. Later on my brothers came and some others that heard. I told my son that I was told that he was not sitting quiet and that he is making some moves. They call me "Bal". he said: "Bal, it is none of your business, you only watch yourself. I want to ask you something. Are sons of mothers those who are not beside their mothers?" I said "Yes". He said: "Do you have the right to tell me to go or stay?". I said "I don't have any right to tell you to stay or go. If I could I would go myself!". Afterwards I saw that my son didn't want to talk about it anymore. He talked more to his mother. He was such a man, about 2 meters. They started checking us more often. On that same night, around 2330hrs, a Serbian resident of our building rang the bell. He also joined the police; he got mobilized in as it was called at that time "Vijezbe", where civilians were mobilized. His name was Drasko Knijezovic. He said: "What did they do to you?". I told him that they haven't done anything. It was after midnight and I was afraid from him as well. He said: "I was told by Ratko that you were ordered to report there every morning. I found him the job but you should never report there because you will be beaten every morning". After three days I went with Sejdi Sylejmani for condolences for Faruk's father and I told my story. I told them what happened and I said that I was scared for my children. Faruk who was the president of the Democratic League of Kosovo – Mitrovica branch, told me to escape as soon as possible because they will not leave me alone. I did not escape. My father was alive so I asked him. He told me "Son, wherever you go they will follow you but pray to God that nothing will happen to your kids. My son moved with them and left a letter saying that he will go to Bare because on 1<sup>st</sup> of July headquarter will be opened there. I forget to mention what happened meanwhile. It was the month of Ramadan, before May and I went to Drenica. I did the Friday prayer in Polac with Vehbi Polac, my mother's brother. We went to Jasharaj family to see them after the first offensive. My uncle told him: "Shaban, you should get away from here. At least move the children." He said: "I will not move but I feel sorry for Bajram since he is in the northern part." They knew much more than I did for my children. Therefore I couldn't and god didn't let me and I didn't want to escape; Reshat didn't want to escape either. He didn't want to and he was never scared. He kept the phone numbers of all KLA

points which I didn't know. When I returned they asked have you been here, here and here as if Bajram told them where I was. They had all the information about my movement. I will get back to where I left it. My son had to report in Bare on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August. He came around 0130 after midnight and took some winter shoes and clothes. His mother told him: "are you out of your mind wearing these clothes; leaving sneakers and wearing winter boots?" He said "mother you don't know how it is in Shala Mountains". My son with 7 or 8 others, I know 7 names, had to be in Bare on that same date. Two females were amongst them as well. He went out of the house, he said goodbye to his mother and only waved at me since we were sleeping at the time. The mother said 'wait son, take another silk shirt since it will never rot'. After this he went away. We never saw Reshat again. On a morning, when I went out for a walk, I met a Bosnian who asked me about Reshat's whereabouts. He told me that Reshat was not talking to him anymore because he wanted to beat a Serbian because he mistreated his father. I asked him if that Serb was Ratko. He said that he was the one. It was Ratko, Savic and Veban and he wanted to hit Ratko telling him that he had beaten his father. So on the same night he split with the Bosnian, around 2300hrs, because Ratko was the godfather of the Bosnian, therefore I suspect on the Bosnian, Ratko or Savic. Later on, the tortures increased in our building and in the Bosnian neighborhood which was not far from me. After a month or so I decided to go to Dibra where my daughter is living. They didn't allow me to leave the first time and the second time. I managed to leave on the third attempt. We managed to penetrate Tamnik neighborhood. My father was almost blind. The massacre already started and explicitly speaking the criminals started rapping as well. They flooded the center and you could see nothing else but police and Serbian criminals. A Bosnian took me and my wife to the border and we went to Dibra. My parents, family and other loved ones headed to Albania with the crowd. This was the period I experienced and saw and since that time I know nothing about my son and his 7 friends. I can say a lot about the consequences. My wife is in the hospital now. My wife has such trauma, for which I am partially guilty probably, because for 1 and a half month after the 24<sup>th</sup> of June when we returned from Dibra, I kept her in the northern part. We saw the same criminals going around. I renovated the flat. My wife says that she can't see and can't imagine that our son is not alive, saying that he is alive. I work a lot with the missing persons organization. Immediately after the war me established this organization which I run today. Apart from the trauma I suffer, I have many more family members which I try to save not to fall on the level that my family fell or where Fatime is. She lost about 50% of her sight and she lost the energy she had. Even giving Kosovo would not compensate our trauma because we saw the criminals that violated, raped and massacred our neighbors. They did what only not normal people do and we saw it even after the war. In our eyes they chased Sejdi Sylejmani three times, to kill him. They have beaten the wife in front of French KFOR. 13 persons are murdered in one night. Everyone called on the phone to ask us if we were still alive saying that there were killings in their neighborhood. These are all crimes that we saw. I have notes of families that that left their just born baby while escaping from Tamnik neighborhood and after the war they came back looking for their child saying that I left my child in a certain place. In Bosnian neighborhood, I can say that our females do not tell about what they saw and what they experienced. We have witnesses that there were such women that kept the Serbs in their rooms and committed such massacres and they were Bosnian women that brought the criminals to Bosnian neighborhood and did the unthinkable to their sisters. I am not saying this incidentally, although I am very frustrated and sad, but they were accomplices of the criminals and slaughterers who

today live freely in Novi Pazar, Rashka, Leposavic even in Zvecan. Now those women, who are not Albanian nor Muslim, because if they were they wouldn't do such things, walk around freely without anyone chasing them to answer for what they did. What can we say about our trauma when a father saw his daughter being raped? This is a case in Bosnian neighborhood known by name and last name. What can we say about a mother that forgot her child; which is her trauma and which Bajram's trauma is? We have these stories taken in our organization; an organization which I can say has such biographies that really won't let you sleep at night. I love Reshat more than anyone but having your baby taken away from your lap and not knowing where your baby is...we have 13 such cases. You probably know, even the general public if someone read Brahim Citaku's book where he wrote that 13 women were raped in Shipol and the army truck went in an unknown direction. Could you remain with no trauma? Could you say that someone might have a happy life in this world? God gives power, God provides health, God can even take my mind, but only my soul knows how I deal with the problems and circumstances in Mitrovica. I very much trust in God, I believe in people too, but I don't believe in those people that are not doing enough in order to reveal the fate of the missing and the second is to see these criminals face justice. If there is something in this world or should I say in the civilized Europe that says: by international conventions you have the right to this and the right to that, but no family member does not enjoy these rights and up to date we have no answer; what bothers me is the level to where the search for the missing has reached?! In the end I would like to say, it may sound emotional, I have huge objections, since this is not the first time I speak in front of the general public / cameras that nothing was done as we expected. Those who are not amongst us, regardless if for father, mother or family members, are deaf and far from us. They can't speak but we have to speak. Those who don't do what should be done while they are obliged to do and have the power to act, locals and internationals, may the almighty God try them as we were tried with our children. May Allah make them think about their son, daughter, and father just as we are striving. There is nothing harder than to say we are free but not to dare speak the truth to the internationals or to the locals. These seats and this wealth did not come without blood. We are aware but why don't they set conditions to Serbia to reveal the fate of the missing?! To put the criminals before justice! I will repeat once again, if there is justice in the civilized Europe, it is very bad to say but I am speaking out of rage, from my soul, that someone who has no feelings for his children and can do something, if someone knows something and doesn't tell, I pray that he knows nothing about his family. This would be my closing word if it falls on an ear that hears, on an eye that sees, if it goes to people that have a drop of human blood, I am not précising Serbian or Albanian, just human being, since we're all humans, my father and grandfather gone through a lot of suffering, it is a great sin to keep on suffering. At least to tell the truth and bring them back to their families alive or dead. Families are living in anxiety since 13 years.

## **Bedri Kukala**

First of all, my name is Bedri Kukala; I come from village Prilep, Municipality of Decan, I was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1978. I have finished the primary school in village Rastevica and I continued the secondary school in gymnasium “Vellezerit Frasheri” in Decan. In April 1998 I joined the Kosovo Liberation Army and I was assigned by the General Headquarters to supply weapons from Albania to Kosovo. I went with soldiers; we were a group of 67 soldiers assigned by the Operational Zone to transport weapons to Kosovo. On 22<sup>nd</sup> of April we headed to Albania. We reached there and waited for weapons; some of it we got from headquarters and some we bought. The fighting had already started in our villages, like in: Prilep, Rastevica, Baballoq and Glllogjan. On 26<sup>th</sup> of April we left for Kosovo. Around midnight of dates 26 – 27, we crossed the border line and we reached village Voksh. We fell on an ambush set by the Serb – Slav army and the fighting begun around 0200hrs in the morning. We were 67 soldiers, not fully equipped since we didn't have heavy weapons. The fighting continued from 0200 in the morning until 0600hrs in the morning. We were lucky because we could have all died in that ambush as it was a very big one; 3 of our soldiers were killed and we were 4 wounded. Our killed colleagues were: Edvand Daviqaj, Sadri Latifaj and Haxhe Tolaj; and the arrested were: I, Hysen Latifaj, Armend Mazrekaj and Fadil Daviqaj. I was wounded with one bullet in the leg and one in the arm. Then they started maltreating us. From 0600 in the morning when we fought, we were kept there until 0300 in the afternoon when their helicopter brought all the Serbian television, some European television to film the scene which according to them was a group of terrorists entering Kosovo. It was the first groups that they faced with so many members. They transported us with helicopters to Nis, at the military prison. We didn't receive any medical attention or anything and 100 days after arriving there we were put to trial. According to them we were a group of 67 that broke the border line. They called us a very dangerous terrorist group and they sentenced us each with 13 years of imprisonment. We were transferred around in all the prisons of Serbia; one month in one place, another month in Nis, a month in Lipjan, then in Pozarevac and so on. After the NATO bombing started in Kosovo, Serbia's intention was to gather all the political prisoners sentenced for heavy crimes at Dubrava prison, since the Serbian Government had prepared a plan to execute all the Albanian prisoners. They started gathering us all around Serbia and in April 1999 they sent us to Dubrava. When we reached Kosovo, we entered Llozi Bridge and the Serbian military – paramilitary forces got attacked by NATO and our way was cut since they bombed the bridge. Our bus was heavily damaged from the bombing. Some of us got wounded on the bus. Then they divided: two buses went to Dubrava and we were sent with two other buses to Lipjan that night. Next morning two buses came and took us to Dubrava prison. In Dubrava prison it was horrible. In every prison in Serbia it was horrible but especially in Dubrava prison because it was surrounded by paramilitary troops and all kinds of weapons was brought and mounted near the prison; not like they were saying that it was hidden in the woods because they were shooting all the time from there. On May 19<sup>th</sup> 1999 NATO started bombing Dubrava prison. It started in sector C1, and continued heavy from sector C1, C2 then A1, A2, B1 and B2. I was in sector B1. Bombing started very heavily. First we were shocked since we didn't know who it is coming from. Three of our colleagues were killed in the solitary cell when C1 was hit. We started running out but our doors were closed. Some prisoners that were in sector B2 were able to get free so they came to brake our doors however they could with any solid metal; they

managed to brake our doors and we ran out. NATO bombing of Dubrava prison commenced on May 19<sup>th</sup> and continued all the time through May 20<sup>th</sup>. Main targets were the towers where the guardians were located; NATO didn't attack the prisoners. Pieces of concrete and grenades caught some prisoners. During the NATO bombing of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> May, about 19 persons were injured; 4 died on the first day; 12 died in total from NATO bombing. On May 21<sup>st</sup> we were all sleeping in the yard, in manholes and wherever we could find a place. All the guardians went out of the prison. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, early in the morning while we were all sleeping although we couldn't sleep waiting for the danger because we knew our execution will follow. The guardians came in. Aca, the prison director came, it was around 0500 – 0530 hrs although we had no watches but approximately we could tell; they told us to get in line near the observation point. Everyone must get in lines of two; we were 950 prisoners and amongst us was Ukshin Hoti who was given the order to be released on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May on a Sunday. The 13<sup>th</sup> was the date of his release but he was told on 12<sup>th</sup> of May at 1100 that he is released. This was a trap arranged for him and ever since nothing is known about his fate. He was on the line with us coming back from breakfast; they stopped him and said Ukshin Hoti from today you are released. We went inside; we followed him until they took him; we saw him until they took him out of the isolation wall, after that his fate is unknown yet. They know what they did to him, starting from Aca, the director, who has to be held responsible. On 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, around 0500 in the morning, we were ordered to get lined up. We had to make lines of two people but since we were 950 prisoners we could stay two in line; the recreation field was like a triangle, we started created lines of two but we were too much so we had to make lines of three and four people. We saw the guardian coming out on the observation tower with a heavy machine gun and he shouted "are you ready?" We were getting in line and waiting; looking to see where our colleagues are because we knew it was a trap but there was not place we could go. On the night between 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of May we heard them all night moving with trucks and trailers placing them there; their intention was to place them near the walls and them climb above them and execute us. I didn't know anything, it was a matter of seconds, the policeman came out on the observation tower again, looking at us and asking us "are you ready?" when he saw that everyone was lined up they first started throwing hand grenades. Hand grenades were flying like if they were birds or bees. The sky got all black from them and they fell on us. Everyone threw grenades in that second, about 200 or 100 soldiers that were there threw the grenades! As soon as the grenades touched the ground, Kalashnikovs started bursting fire from above the walls. From the bursting fire, the people on the first and second row started falling on the ground. I saw the grenades exploding when they touched the ground. I turned around to escape towards the sport ground because after it there is about 1 meter that the ground falls deep. We all started running towards that whole to take cover. In the second I turned around I felt a bullet catching me on my head and I started falling; as I was falling another bullet got me in the stomach. I fell, another colleague fell, he was Ibermetaj from Hereq; we were all caught for crimes; he was immediately hit by a bullet and he fell above me. my life ended there; I don't know how were killed and how many survived; from the moment I was wounded, around 0600 in the morning, until the next day around 0200 or 0300hrs, I can say I was dead. All friends, including: Nahit Hasani, a student from Prizren that gave me medical aid, Gazmend, Tahir, Avdi and everyone came the next day to check for survivors because they were afraid to come out that day because the Serbs had went inside and in manholes and wherever prisoners were hiding to save their lives, they went searching for them, throwing grenades and

executing. Some were hiding in the rooms. They were all with masks and they went inside and executed people. The next day, I don't know what time was it but I assume it was around 1100 or 1200, when I got consciousness back, but I didn't realize that it is the next day; I thought it was the same day; I started moving but when I started moving I noticed that I can't because I had people above me. I raised my head; when I raised my head about 30 or 40 centimeters from the ground I saw everyone on the ground and I thought to myself that no Albanian survived. I lost my consciousness again because of the injuries but from the sadness when I saw all the colleagues killed. 2 or 3 hours later my consciousness was back and I saw a colleague, with whom I was in prisons, staring at me. They were told to go in the kitchen because no one will touch you anymore; "their politics" on one side they say get in the kitchen because no one will touch you on the other side they execute you. They started writing names and attaching them to clothes, shirt pockets in order to identify them in the future. They came to attach it on me. Bislim Bislimi, Bislim Zymeri, Nijazi Kryeziu and some others, which were from the Students Union in Prizren, checked us by looking for pulse in the hand and heart beats but in that time I was clinically dead. 2 hours later when I saw that colleague tagging names to people, I raised my hand. As they told me since I don't remember it, and he noticed me. When he approached me I recognized him very well but I couldn't speak because the bullet caught me here and went through breaking my jaw and everything here. I couldn't speak, although my heart spoke because I remember like if it was today that I said: Halil, did someone survive? But he says that I couldn't speak, I only moved my lips. He went down to Nail, Bislim and Gazmend Ymeri, actually to Gazmend Tahiri because Gazmend Ymeri was killed there, and told them that Bedri is alive. They told him we checked Bedri and we arranged him. Come one because Bedri is alive. They came and took me. When they took me down there I know that I saw everyone laying there and I saw many people so I thought that many have survived; many were wounded. They placed me amongst the wounded and started cleaning my wound. They broke into the space where the first aid was and got whatever they found there and started cleaning my wound. But they were also trying to spare some bandages thinking that my life can't be saved so they wanted to spare them for someone else who was wounded less so they can save his life and not to spend in someone whose life can't be saved. Allah in the sky, I survived everything, they gave me the first aid; they gave me something to drink just to hold my soul; from the 22<sup>nd</sup> until 24<sup>th</sup> of May we stayed there like that. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May they received an order to retrieve us from there saying that there are no conditions for living there anymore, the prison is destroyed, look what NATO did, NATO destroyed you; this was totally their politics. I was sent from there to Lipjan. 180, based on data and names that we have, 180 were killed while 400 were wounded in this occasion. When I was sent to Lipjan they said "this person needs to go to Prishtina hospital". They sent me from Lipjan to Prishtina hospital. 2 hours after I reached Prishtina hospital they placed in the surgery room. They operated on me without anesthetics; my anesthetic was a paramilitary; I will never forget him I still have him before my eyes; when they placed in a bed in the surgery room I heard an Albanian nurse, I don't know her name, saying what about opium / anesthetic; he replied in his Serbian language "I will give him the opium / anesthetic". My head was a problem otherwise for the wound in the stomach I was not feeling it at all. I was about 85% without consciousness, when I felt in the middle of my forehead a punch; my head hit the board of the bed of the surgery room. This was the opium / anesthetic that I received from that paramilitary trooper. The surgery started and ended and just when the surgery was about to end I felt a lot of pain but I was afraid to shout. While I

was coming out of the surgery room, this Albanian nurse, which I would really like to meet, told me “my brother your operation was successful although you went through it without opium / anesthetic, the operation went well. A Russian doctor operated you and you will get better”. They sent me to a room. They didn’t leave me in Prishtina for a minute; they took me back to the prison in Lipjan. In Lipjan prison, they left us there like that. I had my mouth tied since I was wounded and they told me that I must drink only milk and I should have it injected in my mouth. One day we received 1 liter of milk, 3 other days we didn’t receive any. I lived with water and whatever my colleagues could give me, until June the 11<sup>th</sup>. When the international forces of NATO started coming in on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June we were told to get ready since they will send us to Serbia. On June 12<sup>th</sup> they retrieved all the Albanian prisoners that survived and they took us with them. We were placed in buses in the convoys with tanks and everything. All buses were of Kosovo agencies. That night I was taken to Pozarevc. InPozarevc, while coming down from buses it was another terrifying experience. People were killed from the immense abuse. Iber Meta and Bujar Hima of Skivjan were killed while coming down from the bus. We were two wounded and we couldn’t move from our chairs but we were ordered to get down. We crawled to the bus door. About 40 guardians / paramilitaries came and dragged the late Bujar Hima in front of the bus and started hitting him with wooden batons and anything they could find. The poor man died in the spot. I was sitting in the door of the bus watching the whole story. Poor Bujar died there from the maltreatment. I knew that when they finish him I will be next to die. The prison supervisor came and asked them “is he dead” they said yes. Ok, he said, enough because some others inside died from beating; let’s leave it with this death, don’t beat them anymore. When they took me after Bujar, I felt some punches in my back but I was lucky that they didn’t drop me on the ground; two were dragging me by my shoulders while the others were hitting me on my back. They put me in a room and in the afternoon a doctor came and said this person must be taken to CZ hospital in Belgrade. Next day I was taken from Pozarevc to CZ hospital in Belgrade. In CZ Belgrade, I will explain shortly, I was operated 7 times. On one day they took me to Belgrade hospital for operation and after the operation they took me back to my room in prison; on the same day I had operation performed on me, on that same day I was taken back to my room in prison where the maltreatment started. They used to drop me on the floor and started kicking and hitting me with batons in the place where I was operated. Two days later the operation was repeated; this happened for 7 times; after the 7<sup>th</sup> time the doctor in Belgrade hospital gave up on me; he said I can’t work on him anymore; I can’t operate him anymore because he doesn’t have any healthy bone in his face; you broke them all. All his bones are separated and we can’t perform anymore operations on him. They left me in CZ Hospital in Belgrade for 6 months. CZ Belgrade started dealing with Slobodan Milosevic, protests started in Belgrade so they pulled us back from there, for security reasons they said, and they sent us to Stremaska Mitrovica. RED CROSS started dealing with us in Stremaska Mitrovica; they visited us; they took notes about the injuries and for everything. Natasha Kandic with Swiss Red Cross, in cooperation with a lawyer, drafted a request for my recovery. To help this patient before his life is over. Even the new President of Yugoslavia, the new President Vislav Kostunica, didn’t agree to send me for surgery because of the budget; the release form that I received from him says that because of the budget the sanction of this person will be cut until he recovers; after his recovery he must come back to complete the sentence. I was released from prison on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2001. They just came, I didn’t know what is going on, and the Swiss Red Cross came into my room; the guards asked who is Bedri Kukalaj? I said: I am.

All the colleagues in my room, we were about 80, knew that every passing day my life is getting closer to the end. When they mentioned Bedri Kukalaj everyone stood up to see what is going on thinking that they will send me for surgery again. They said: come with us because you are being released. Everyone thought that it is a lie and that they are probably sending me for surgery or in a hospital. When I went out I met a Swiss Red Cross employee who started talking in German and the Serbian interpreter of Red Cross that was with him said: Bedri, here is your release form. I read the release form which was from the Serbian President Vojislav Kostunica saying: this is the secession of your sentence till you recover. After you recover you have to come and finish your sentence. On November 25<sup>th</sup> 2001 I came to Kosovo from Sremska Mitrovica. I started seeing doctors in Kosovo; I immediately went to the doctors the same week because my recovery was impossible in Kosovo because I was a disaster. I arrived through an Albanian – Swiss organization, the wife of the legendary commander Agim Ramadani, a Swiss organization “Monaliza Shneller”. The commander of the operational zone Dukagjini assisted on arranging my documents and I travelled to Switzerland. They asked me to transfer 56 thousand CHF into the hospitals account for the operation. The Albanians living abroad started collecting funds: 80% was collected in Switzerland and every other country in Europe: Germany, Italy collected funds and after 2 months the money was gathered and I entered the operation room in the hospital of Kontreall – Basel. The operation started at around 0700hrs in the morning and lasted until 0800 of the evening. It was a very long operation, lasted for about 13 hours but it was successful although two other hospitals, in Sion and Arahu said that there is no chance we can operate this patient because he is a catastrophe. I was admitted in Kontreal hospital of Basel by the director of the hospital who said in my presence, through the translator, that I will take you with 40% guarantee, not more because it is a very complicated surgery. He gave me 40%, but according to the state I was before and after the operation I said it is 100% done because I got my life back again. Since then I had 4 more operations in Switzerland. On May 21<sup>st</sup> 2012 I have another operation at 1030hrs. My message for the Government of Kosovo is very short for those who understand it. The blood of martyrs, the blood of the war invalids, the work and contribution of war veterans must not be forgotten because we declared Kosovo a state, not the Government of Kosovo. Whatever they speak anyone can read but it was declared by the blood of martyrs, blood of invalids and contribution of war veterans. Where is the invalid today, where are the families of the martyrs, where are the veterans of Kosovo, no one is dealing with them. War invalids are dying from their wounds and Kosovo Government is not helping for recovery abroad; they provide only a small %. I appeal to the Government of Kosovo to contribute more for these people because they are sacred people. Every state puts their veterans, war invalids and families of martyrs puts them in front while here they are forgotten, here they are left behind. I call Kosovo Youth to recognize the contribution of the invalids, veterans and families of martyrs because they are sacred people and they have moved Kosovo from the hand of Slavs, through centuries, for 500 years ruled by every country and lastly by Serbia until they faced the Kosovo Liberation Army. I wish to every family of martyrs the best of health; glory to the blood of martyrs of the nation. I thank you; I might have taken some time from you.

### **Elheme Ferizi**

I am Elheme Ferizi from Qirez, Municipality of Skenderaj. My husband, father in law and two brothers in law were killed. They took away two sons from me: one was 7 years old and the other only 2 years old. My house was burnt; I suffer enormously. I know that the war cannot be won without blood but this was too much. We receive a little help like everywhere; how can you survive on 130 euros; children needs clothes, school and everything. Everywhere we are underneath the dressed ones. He was killed but he had a soul as well. They were killed in Shtutice village. The children and us, we all cried when we heard. They were in the mountains while we were in the school in village Shtutice. We found out very late, just before the war ended. They were killed on April the 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999. They were in the front line, fighting. They were killed by the Serbs. They were killed from a distance while they were sitting. We found them and buried them in Shtutice village first and then we took them from Shtutice and buried them in our village, in Qirez. They told us to exhume and send them to Rahovec. We suffered a lot; i can't realize how but it seems that the mind is made of stone, they don't crash easily. We were in Shtutica, Krasmerofc and in the end in Skenderaj for 6b weeks. Our men were in the mountains without food and water. We couldn't exhume them immediately because there was no one to do that; all our men were killed in the war. Our neighbors did the exhumation and brought them. We were told close to the end of the war and we didn't have what to do. Children and us we all cried. We buried them with the help of our neighbors and my husband's cousins. We receive very little help because they were civilians; so what if they were civilians; does it mean that we should receive only a little income. They say that your men were civilians so they are not a priority. Children are grown now; it was war; we have no house; the mayor provided us with a roof for us. Once they stole all the building material. Now I am alone, two small children: 7 years old and 2 years old. We lost four men, they were not chicken birds! I know that freedom cannot be won without blood but it is too much and people forgot us. I was given a small flat in Skenderaj. We couldn't stay in our houses when we came back. I built a tent and we stayed there; that was our shelter. We stayed and lived there for three months then we received a roof which got stolen; the leader of the village stole it. The village leader stole the building material. I went to the Mayor of Skenderaj and I told him so then he found me shelter, put me in and helped me a lot; I thank him a lot. Now we live in Skenderaj in a flat where we are staying since 5 years now. The graves are in Likoshan at the martyrs' cemetery, all in one place. We commemorate them on every April 30<sup>th</sup>. I have two sons now: one is 21 years old, that time he was 7 years old while the other was 2. I have only 2 sons. My mother in law is 70 years old; her husband and sons were killed so she stays with me now. She is ill, in grief because she was supposed to be here as well but she said that she can't come and stay in front of cameras. My son finished secondary school but we can't afford to send him to school anymore; what should we do with 130 euros; they come to cut electricity, the water bill comes, I don't know where to go. He finished the secondary school and he had to quit while the youngest son is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade; yes he is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. They were killed 13 years ago; about 18 were killed in that occasion when my husband, father in law and two brothers in law were killed. Many of Shtutice village were killed as well but I don't know how many. They came shouting and pulling their weapons out; I was placing the kids here; they were shooting in the sky; we stayed in Skenderaj with Serbs all the time. We were surrounded by them. Sometimes they entered inside. Sadik Ahmeti

was with us; we were all with him. No, we didn't have; only in Skenderaj they counted us and they didn't let us move anymore; only there otherwise we didn't have. They were taking us out sometimes and shouting at us in Serbian but some could understand Serbian and some couldn't. Where are your men; find them or we will kill you. They took away our gold, money; they took everything: the tractor, the house; we had nothing when we came back. No men, no home. Some organizations helped us and I thank them otherwise we would starve to death. We received from them money, food, oil, flour and everything. Nothing, I would like to have a job; we have no priority anywhere and that's what I am saying. I would like to work and educate my children because we can't survive with 130 euros. Children are grown now, they were taken out of the organizations now; they suffer too. I am a mother and they have needs. I keep the family now. I talk to them: the youngest son is more closed while the older one talks less; the youngest son likes to hear everything what happened; he asked me if he can go and see the place sometime. I tell him that we shouldn't go there until we get old. We go to the cemetery for the memorial ceremony. He found a job now in the private sector with "Arjet" company; he is working there for three months now; he worked there for two months then they let him go now they took him back again. He stayed home for two years because he couldn't find a job. The ones that were in the army have priority everywhere. Why? These were killed too, civilians or dressed in the army, they had a soul too. We also like to have what their children have; they killed us too but we have no priority anywhere. They keep receiving help all the time but I don't because they tell me "your husband was not in the army". Just because he was not wearing a uniform there is no help for you. I remember him in Shtutice and I escorted him to the gates at 0500hrs in the morning; he turned once and called me. My father was killed on April the 5<sup>th</sup> while my husband and his brothers were killed on April the 30<sup>th</sup>. I saw him that morning and never again. He went to the mountains to join the fighting and I never saw him again. I would ask them to help us more; like this I don't know how I will survive.

## **Erzen Lushi**

My name is Erzen Lushi from village Qyshk, still living in village Qyshk; I have finished primary school in village Qyshk where I also finished the secondary school because the gymnasiums in Peja were closed; I finished the Faculty of Business in Peja. Now I am taking the Master Degree in Prishtina. On May 14<sup>th</sup> 1999 starting from the early morning, from 0700 or 0730, we heard machine gun shots, burning of houses coming from the city. My family members, father and mother, came to wake me up saying that we got to flee from the house because the shootings are coming closer to our house. We gathered from all neighborhoods, with my uncles, women and children we left our neighborhood, went through the fields to Kelmends neighborhood who were troubled as well about what was happening. The machine gun shots and the houses on flames were getting closer and closer so we decided; Lushi and Kelmends neighborhoods; to go to Gashi neighborhood. We got together with Gashi families and we waited to see what will happen from there. We didn't have any escape route since we are a village in Peja outskirts surrounded by three Serbian villages; starting from Peja town, on the other side of the river is village Gorashdec, populated mainly with Serbs, further down below our village is village Nakull also dominated by Serbs; so we were surrounded and we couldn't escape so we decided to wait in the village. After a period of half an hours or an hour, the Serb forces; police and soldier, some of them were even masked in different ways; came and ordered women and children to be separated from men, meaning that the women and children were alone while all men were lined up in that neighborhood, where the memorial is built now. After we were ordered so by them, the next order was to put in front of us all the valuable thing that we had in our pockets starting from money, gold and other things. Maybe since I was the youngest in that group, I was 17 at that time, one of those criminals ordered me to collect all the money and hand it to them. I started from the first in line; we were about 40 men; including elders. I started from the first one and from time to time my hand was filled with money so I had to hand it to them in a bag. After collecting everything I had to get in line with hands behind my head. This happened three times within that period because they were threatening us that if we don't take out what we had in our pockets they will kill us so I had to go again and collect the money. After a while, the commander that was in charge of that group, showed up; now he is known as Streqko Bovic, maybe at that time we didn't know that name or the person but now we do because he is being tried in Belgrade in the war crimes tribunal. He came and he said that this group should be divided in two groups. Some of us were sent in Ajet Gashi's yard while the other group was left there in the neighborhood. I was in Ajet Gashi's yard with 12 persons, including my father. One of those criminals came and told me to go with the women and children who were also split in two yards. One group was in Hakif Gashi's yard while the other one was in Sali Gashi's yard. I entered that yard where the women and children were and I stayed there for about 20 minutes; there I saw a lot of policeman and soldiers, some of them masked but I can say that they were regular police and army. I saw that they were taking stuff in front of children and women, like syringes / needles and other stuff. Then a masked criminal came and asked me: where is your mother? I said I don't know where my mother is. He took me to Sali Gashi's yard. Another large group of women and children were there. I stayed there for about 20 minutes when a soldier came and asked me in Serbian: what are you doing? I understood their language a little and I told him: your colleague told me to come here. Get out of here, he said; is your

mother here? I said no, she isn't. Where is your father, he asked. I told him that he is lined up with the men. He said let's go to your mother. I told him that my mother was not on the other yard and neither here so she might be home. Our house could be seen from the neighborhood, it was burnt on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April when they undertook an offensive just to burn some houses in the village and our house was burnt as well; so I said it is that burnt house that can be seen. A masked soldier escorted me; we walked through the field passing through Sadik Gashi's yard. Two of them stopped this soldier and told him: take this man with you. The conversation was on Serbian language but I am telling it in Albanian as I understood it. That man was my uncle's son Qaush who at that time was one of the well-known businessmen in our city. They ordered him to bring his vehicle otherwise they would kill his only son. We continued the way to our house; at the house I saw my mother, grandmother and my father's uncle with his wife who are older. There was also a tractor of our guests who came earlier as refugees. He told me to gather my family for 5 minutes, get them in the tractor and drive to the neighborhood where I took you from. In that second we heard shots of machine guns. I asked if these shots could be killings. He said I don't think so (everything was said in Serbian). I took the tractor and drove it towards Gashi neighborhood, from where I was taken. Before reaching Kelmendi's neighborhood there is a small forest and I met the women and children accompanied by some elders that they released to drive the tractors, since the men were separated from us and already killed. The intention was to make us drive to Albania or Montenegro. We came out on Prishtina – Peja main road and drove towards Peja. Before reaching the battery factory there was a checkpoint. The Commander of Kliqin village came; he was the commander for that region. After an hour or an hour and a half he ordered us to go back to our houses. We went back home knowing nothing about the fate of our men; what happened to them. The group that did the Qyshk massacre, on the moment we head to Peja, they headed in Prishtina direction, respectively in villages Pavlan and Zahaq where they committed another massacre. After 2 – 3 hours we heard some tractors and someone came and said that we should join villages Pavlan and Zahaq because they are being sent to Albania. We went out again and joined those villages. Again at the same checkpoint, before the battery factory we were held for 2 hours with the pretention that they are sending us to Albania. Again they made us go back to our houses. Again without knowing the fate of our men, hoping that someone from those neighborhoods knew what happened, because from all three houses where they were executed there was one survivor. We understood the next day from a villager of that neighborhood that the men were executed and burnt. Later we were told also from the survivors of those three houses: Hazir Berisha, Isa Gashi and Rexhe Kelmendi, we understood that the men were killed but we couldn't identify them who is who. We decided to bury them in a mass grave. This is a short version of what happened on May the 14<sup>th</sup>. My father, uncle and 7 sons of my uncle were killed in that massacre. These were killed from Lushi family, close family. Now I live in Qyshk village; our family is helping us, thanks God that we have some members abroad in Switzerland, England and Germany. As far as the state is concerned, we receive very little from them. As civilian victims, it is very hard to survive with 135 euros but I am lucky that I am taking the Master's Degree in "Marketing". My message for the Government is this: first of all I would like to get back to the Qyshk case; we were in Belgrade and in Sweden because a criminal was caught there, approximately 2 months ago and he was sentenced to life in prison. As far as the help from Government is concerned, we had no assistance at all from the Government. 1. I would like to emphasize that when we went to Belgrade, we had no experience what

happens in a court room especially for war crimes which is even more serious and we had to face 9 of their lawyers; we didn't receive any legal advice from the Government or from the Ministry of Justice. This would my message and the message of the whole village for the Government. Why didn't they take any action regarding this case? One legal advice! To dedicate at least one hour for us! They only came for 5 – 10 minutes to tell us that we have to testify against them. We needed some legal advice because none of us had experience with court; to tell us what the prosecutor is. For the youth and a large number of the people of Kosovo, a large % of these events is forgotten. It is not forgotten by those whose families were touched, whose souls were burnt. This would be my message to remember the past, not a little but a lot because it has not happened a long time ago, it was only 13 years ago but it is forgotten. Thank You!

### **Fahrije Neziri**

I am Fahrije Neziri, born in Krasmerofc village, father Sheqir; I got married to Imer Goxhuli from Makermal village; mother of 6 children, 5 of them alive and the oldest son who was killed in war. He was a soldier. My brother in law was killed, two sons of our neighbors, my husband's uncle and an aunt of our neighbors was burnt inside the house. My husband was wounded and stayed wounded in the mountain all day long. He cooked food for the soldiers all night and after the sunrise he headed to the mountains where he was hit by a grenade and got wounded. My husband's uncle died after 5 minutes. The soldiers found the boy; the soldiers found my husband in the woods and took him to some houses above where Fadil Beka gave him the first aid; he still has pieces of the grenade of that day in his lungs. For two weeks I took care about my husband with my own hands: cleaning his blood with paper, giving him water, carrying him in a cart; sometimes tying my hands with my daughter and carrying him until we reached Albania. OSCE got him there and took him to the hospital in Kruma. He stayed there 3 – 4 days. I didn't know where they took him but I spent a night in a mosque there. I asked if there is a hospital nearby and the next day I found him there, wounded. I stayed there with him. Then they took him with a helicopter to Tirana. I thought they lost him, I didn't know. My husband's uncle came from Germany and I told him that I want nothing else but to find Imer wherever he is, wounded or dead. We asked for the military hospital and my husband's uncle took us there. He paid the taxi and when we reached in Tirana we met him. He was very tired; he stayed there for a month but he was very tired. He was released after one month and we came to our family in Krume. We heard that our neighbor's son was killed. He said let's go back; he couldn't walk because they told him at the hospital not to walk and not to lift even 1kg from the ground. Our neighbor heard about his son, his second son that was killed and they told us when we reached there but I didn't hear about my son until we got back. My son and my brother in law were fighting, protecting the civilians. My son was killed in Terstenik fighting the enemy face to face trying to cover the civilian population until they got out of their houses. He was hit on his chest while fighting from a three story house and he lived for one hour. His friends took him like that and sent him to Obria village where they buried him. When I got back I don't know that my son was killed but I couldn't find him. 52 days past since he was buried when we went to get him from Obria and bury him in our village. I said don't make this tragic because I want to come with you and be with him on his journey. Let my mother and my husband's mother know that I am going with the men. We exhumed him and we brought him here. Nasuf was fighting, Zymer was fighting and other soldiers too, Gani, Sahit and Mustaf and a lot of soldiers. We are a small neighborhood but many were killed; we had 2 – 3 members of a family in the army fighting to defend their country and family. They fought in the fields at Goxhul where Nasuf was wounded heavily on his legs. They took him how they could and sent him to the woods but 3 days later he died, Nasuf died on May the 3<sup>rd</sup>. My son died on May 15<sup>th</sup> fighting face to face with the enemy. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, Zymer went to observe the terrain in order to move the civilian population from their houses and he was shot from a sniper and was killed. He remained dead until the soldiers found him while searching for him in the woods. Isuf couldn't be found, he was a civilian, no one knows if he was wounded or taken until the war ended and he was found dead in the trenches in Gojnofc Mountain. He was probably taken wounded and kept like that because his mother searched every checkpoint for him. Faik even when he went for a

visit at his uncles was not happier than that day when he left with a rifle on his shoulder. He fought in Rezalle, Morin, Terstenik and everywhere where help was needed, he went together with Rifat Mziu. He went to Albania to get weapons; they fought in the border exactly where Abeja was killed. Everyone said that he was killed and everyone was in grief. I wanted just to know since everyone one was son of a mother, everyone that dies is son of a mother but everyone was in grief. When my son came from Albania I didn't approach to ask if everyone came back as they left. I didn't cry only for my son. I Albania I heard that my father was killed with the family. My husband told me. I said "Imer, I hope we will be crying only for our elders, I am not saying this only for my sons or brothers but for all our youth". Let the youth survive, it is alright if we have to cry for our elders. Every time I escorted my son I used to wish him a safe journey but he told me mother, don't cry and don't worry even if I die because you have two more sons. He used to say look what happened in Prekaz and in Likoshan where they left no one behind, you will be left with two others. He got very upset when the events in Prekaz and Likoshan took place when many of one house were killed, many of one mother, many of one father leaving no one behind to grief. I have two sons, three daughters and my husband who is wounded. The oldest son has finished school in Prishtina and is now working, his wife is working as well, the other one is working where he can, now he is not but he works privately. He is not in school; he is married and has a daughter. The oldest son has a 4 year old daughter and the second one has a 2 year old daughter. These children make us forget the pain. I am related to the ones killed: Zymer Goxhuli si my brother in law; Faik Goxhuli is my son, Nasuf Goxhuli is a neighbor, Isuf Goxhuli a neighbor but he was a civilian while Nasuf was a soldier of the special unit and they are brothers and both were killed; Hamit Goxhuli is my husband's uncle who was killed when my husband got wounded, they were together cooking all night for the army and feeding them, in the morning they were going to the woods. They stayed there lying on a trench when the grenade fell on his chest and broke his arm and wounded my husband, you could put your hand here. Fadil Beka gave him the first aid. For two weeks I was cleaning blood from his mouth with papers while he was lying here. They brought him to me during the night while we were in Tushil along the river and they came and asked for the tractor. They said give us that tractor. I asked them why they need the tractor. We were laying some on the ground and some in the trailer. They said that they have to get some flour in the mountain; they didn't tell me why they need it. When they brought the tractor in the morning I knew that they didn't get any flour so I asked them to tell me who died. They didn't tell me at first but then they said that they had left Imer wounded in the school of Tushile. The children started crying. I grabbed the son of my brother in law, the one whose father was killed, and I placed him near me in the tractor and we left. When I got there I saw Imer laying in the school benches. I trying to get him up and get rid of his clothes which were all soaked in blood but he was about to faint so I laid him down again. I cut his clothes and I stayed two nights with him in the school taking out pieces of blood out of his mouth because he couldn't spit it out. I used water to wash the blood of his mouth. On the third night we brought him on the side of the river under the tent where we were staying. He came out of the tent feeling a little better. I fixed him in the morning because the wound was still dripping. For two weeks I was using glue used for house roof, cutting it into pieces, and placing it with bandages on his wound with my own hands. It was hurting him a lot when I was changing the bandages. When the Serbian army was shooting, they were throwing a lot of grenades and they were coming closer each time. They asked me if I will stay with my husband because they will go and

surrender there. I said that I will stay with him, I would never leave him alone; while they were throwing grenades, it was like a bank along the mountains and in this side the river bed, a grenade fell from that side on our tent, he was lying on his back when a hot piece of metal hit him. We grabbed him, covered him with a blanket, took a bottle of water to wet his lips and took him with the population. They came and surrounded us and separated men from women. They directed us to the woods; when we reached the mountains in Tushile they separated men from women. When they told me to let go of him I didn't at first. Then again I had to carry him; my shoulder was hurting because he couldn't walk on his own. I placed the blanket and sat him there, I left the bottle of water with him and I said may he be in God hands. I said to myself he is dead anyway. The children started crying again, mine and my brother's in law, so I told them "stop! I don't want to hear a voice again, we are not safe for ourselves, we don't know where they are taking us, he is dead anyway". We reached Kopiliq, there we saw the police every 2 meters shouting at us "come on Albania, Albania". They started firing in the air to scare us off the road. We saw that they released some elder people, they had sent the young men to Skenderaj, I saw two people carrying a sick person in the fields and I said "this is Imer". I went to him and joined him with us. We went in Jashanica for 5 nights; I sat, placed him on my lap and laid him on my chest like if he was dead. I stayed near him for 5 nights in Jashanica cleaning his blood. The police noticed us there in Jashanica and they started shooting at the house; you said that they don't want to leave a brick standing. I had to get him out of there otherwise we would all be killed. We grabbed him somehow and we came out on the street and we surrendered. Serb soldiers, police, with knives, shaved heads; I was holding him like a dead body. They touched him and he said: don't touch me, I am wounded. Why, what happened? He said "while trying to move my family I fell from the tractor and I got injured. They said: we will take you now to Kiev and have you checked". He said: that is exactly what I need". They took us with trucks to Kiev. When we went close to the police station I saw the policemen dancing. There were many brought before us. They stopped the trucks and I thought now they will take down in here. We spoke to the driver, they kept us there for 10 – 20 minutes then they drove us to Valiak. In Valiak they put us down from the truck and left us in the middle of the road and they told us: don't get off the road, walk straight to Albania. Don't get off the road because you will be killed. We carried him like that without a cart because we lost it from the truck, sometimes Mirvet with my daughter. We stopped for an hour to get some rest because we were afraid to go in Gjakova because we were told that there are a lot of Serb soldiers in there and it is dangerous to get in during the night. I placed him on my lap and I laid him on my chest and we continued walking like that, slowly, by taking rest from time to time, only God helped us. I greet the martyr's families wherever they are; the ones in Prekaz, Likoshan, Qirez, Dvojnjk and all around the world. May God send upon you endurance; I hope it all get better, we all want to get better. To see young people working, educated, walking ahead. Their blood to see light; they suffered for this land, freedom doesn't come without blood, we all know that, we just want to see the young people living better because we have lived our lives. We want to see the youngsters happy and employed.

### **Fata Zatrici**

My name is Fata Zatrici, I am Bosnian. I am originally from Rozaje, but I have been living in Kosovo for 47 years now. My husband was Albanian. His origins were Albanian, but as it turned out, we both had to learn Bosnian language. That is something that we have decided. I live in the north in many difficult conditions. I have two sons and a daughter. No one works except my younger son. He works as security for some private company. He sometimes goes to work, sometimes not. I am a member of the club Bosnian women, where I do handwork along with some other women in order to make a living and help my children. I started doing this handwork. Prishtina helped me a lot, especially in times of various festivals. Igbala Rugova has helped a lot in life. I support my children with this job. I was young when I came here. I was sixteen years old when I got married and I was married for 48 years, almost fifty years. My husband was a very good man. We lived in solidarity. I used to work in one Rozaje's company in Mitrovica which was called 'Gornji Ibar'. My husband worked in a hospital for 40 years as a custodian. His father was also working. They came from Orahovac between eighty or hundred years ago and settled here. They came from the village Zatrice, where they got their surname from Zatrici. My husband was a very, very intelligent man, good man. Whole town knew him as a good man. He never did harm to anybody. Whenever he got a chance to help somebody out, he did so. We raised three children. The children were always very kind. They never misbehaved. They all finished high school, they couldn't go any further, they have barely finished high school. The important thing is that they finished it. When they, when they took my husband it was 10<sup>th</sup> of June. It was the night when they signed the End of War. One of my Serbian neighbors, with whom I've been friends for 50 years, came that day and told me that tonight begins the ethnic cleansing. She told me that every Albanian will be removed from the area. I was confused. They have already infiltrated the 'three towers'. My house is right next to the 'three towers' near the bridge of Ibar. Down were a van and two cars waiting. Wherever they found men inside the 'three towers', they took them. One of my Bosnian friend's husband, was standing up, looking to take some medicine, when they took him. She asked them if she may give him something warm to wear because he had only a t-shirt on. They said that it is not necessary, because he'll be home in no time. My husband was home, drinking coffee. It was 21h20 when some men in masks came and took him to an unknown destination. They took them all to Zvecan, at Dudin Krs. They have separated them in three groups consisting of Bosnians, Albanians and Turks. Of those three groups, 3 men jumped in the Sitnica River and they are the only ones who survived. All the rest were murdered, but I didn't know what happened to my husband for the next five years. I have searched for him everywhere, I left no stone unturned. Then I received an anonymous call. Some unknown person called me and told me that my husband was buried in Zvecan. I first went to the lawyer, but he said that he was afraid to go there and that if I dare, I should go there with UNMIK. I told him that I was not afraid and that I will go there. So I went there with UNMIK with two cars. I found my husband. I have also found 7 more graves and a mass grave surrounded by yellow tape next to the rails. Between those graves we found one head. UNMIK lifted that head, put it in the bag and we took it for identification. Identifications took place in Orahovac. After it they were over, they first called me and then they came to my house. They took some drops to help them identify my husband. They asked me whether he was wearing something and what was it. I gave them every information

regarding what he was wearing. After that, they identified him. They gave me his teeth and one of his keys from his work. Later, when we came back, the mourning in buildings began. They went out. We were told and yelled at to stay inside. They started cursing us. Once we were inside, we wouldn't dare going out again. When we went there, it was horrible, just horrible. It is hard to even imagine it how awful it was. To this day, it remained the same. It is very bad, although I live in the north. We have a small bridge which we use to go south. Every night passes in fear. Next to my house was some wooden fence which was later removed, just before the elections. I tried to make them barricade that passage as it was, but they refused. I don't know what will happen next. After that, when they took my husband, they burned down my house. After the war I used to work in IRC and then they gave little of building materials, but in the north they didn't allow me to build. They refused me four times. My younger son and I had to carry the building material piece by piece from the park because I didn't have money to pay the rent. I was the first one who got back in the north, but I was constantly afraid. My neighbors also live in fear. After we saw those graves, we came back. It was very hard for me; I had to take some pills for sedation. I calmed down a bit. And it is still hard, to this day. No, we don't have any consequences. We are living in one house with two rooms. I have submitted a request to the municipality to renovate my house. They said that if there's enough money in the budget, they'll help me out. My son pays a rent and my daughter also lives alone, separately. Only my younger son lives in that house with me. So in conclusion, no, we don't have any consequences. They didn't help at all, nothing, nothing at all. All I have is 135 Euros that I receive from the fond for missing persons. No one else has ever helped me. I tried to find at least one of my boys a job. All I have is promises, nothing more. My message is simple. Please help my sons, find a job, for at least one of them. Or at least repair my house, so I could survive. That's my biggest message. Because I don't have, I don't have anything, that's why I must struggle in order to do something about it. Everybody keeps telling me to sell the house and move away from there. I just won't do that. My husband gave his blood for this place and for as long as I live, I won't move. I will live here. I can not quite remember, I went to a lot of graves, I saw a lot. When I went to my husband that day to pick him up, my husband told me that there were some more buried bodies behind the hospital where he was working. I have begged the UNMIK to go there, I told them what my husband told me, they said no. When we reached the gate, the Serbs wouldn't let us in. Also, the day they took my husband out, our neighbor Janus, who was a Rom, has tried to persuade them to let him go, but in the end has decided to save only his friend. They took Mustafa, and hit him in the head while carrying him. They also marked him for liquidation. They came to take him away only to kill him, because he was a good man and he always helped others. They also looked for me, they were saying: "where is Fatka, we need Fatka". I really helped a lot of people, I took them to Rozaje, I found them places to live and there were more refugees than Rozaje natives. My uncle only, was a host to 110 refugees. We accommodated them all. After all that, these men have still looked for me and they looked for my children. That's just my fate. One day I moved my kids. When we were in Zubin Potok, the police stopped us and asked for my son's ID. I said that these are my kids. And who are you? He replied. I said: I am a Rozaje woman. Then they proceeded and went to a bus from which they took out about 15 young boys. They police then went to an unknown direction leaving those boys in there, in the field, screaming and crying. I don't know what happened to them. To this day, I can't forget that horrible image.

## **Faton Beqaj**

My name is Faton Beqaj, I am from village Rracaj, I was born in village Rracaj, Municipality of Gjakova and I live there. I am from a family called Beqaj. I have finished the primary school in the village, the school's name was "Sheremet", I have finished the secondary school in Gjakova and the Faculty of Education in Gjakova, for the moment I am unemployed. I will talk about war from the day it begun in our region and I will talk more about the events in Meje because it is where we experienced the hardest times. The event took place on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1999. We were home when it started; when the police came that day to allegedly, as Serbs said, send us to Albania. The war came to us two weeks before 27<sup>th</sup> of April when they burnt our houses and threw us out of our houses; they burnt our houses and drove us towards Albania. We were on our way when NATO bombed us; a lot of people were killed there. NATO hit the tractors. We slept there one night, in village Pishtazhin which is on the way to Prizren. When NATO hit us, about 100 people were killed; we saw horrible pictures, people burning; I saw everything from there. They kept us one night on the road and the next day they turned us back home. When we returned to our houses they were all burnt; all the villages in that region were burnt. Two weeks later, on 27<sup>th</sup> of April, the police came and gathered the village. They gave us 40 minutes – 1 hour time to leave the houses and head to Albania. This was the intention of the police. I was with my family; my father just got out of prison; he was in prison. So my mother, father and myself, the close family, on 27<sup>th</sup> of April we were given 1 hour time to leave to Albania. we went out and headed towards Albania and we reached village Meje; there we saw thousands and thousands of Serb police and military, no one knows the exact number; they had set a checkpoint there. My father was old and I was about 13 – 14 years old. I saw the whole event how the Serb military and police stopped about 500 men. From there we walked until they were finished stopping people while they were following us and not letting us see on the sides. We continued to Albania. The people that were spared were all youngsters, women, children and elders and from there we were sent to Albania. I don't know how to describe it in details since I was young at that time. Every second there was a tragedy; wherever you looked and whatever you looked. Everything you saw was horrifying even the appearance of the police was horrifying as well as their attitude and actions when they were stopping people, taking children away from their parent's hands, taking them down and keeping them, taking away children from a man's hand and lining him in Meje where they had already lined up people. It was a tragedy and horrible, everything was horrible. Then it was even harder, the bombing and all the terrible things we experienced; until this age, the worst event I experienced was the moment when NATO bombed us in tractor at Bishtazhin village two weeks before 27<sup>th</sup> of April. it was a tragedy; we saw people in flames, without hands and legs, headless; everything you saw there was exceeding the border of normality for a human being to see. Let alone how it was in their eyes, how could the children see it; I am certain totally when I say that what the children saw there left them with consequences, with trauma; at least trauma if nothing more because people could get even sick from that scene. As a 13 – 14 year old boy I can never forget about that scene: people in flames, headless, without legs, without hands; it was a horrifying moment when NATO hit. What it did to people; removed the cap of their head, people hanging on the wires which was along the road. Parts of human body flying around from NATO bombs; we were about 15 meters not more when NATO hit there; personally I was in a tractor 15 meters; 10 – 15 meters away. Human parts were

flown above our heads; we were in the tractor behind. I never experienced any worst moment then the one there. The bombing went on for about half an hour, maybe 40 minutes, I don't know exactly how long; half an hour later came the Serbian police and army and told us to stay there and wait until a decision is made to go to Albania or to go back home. We waited until the next day as the Serbs told us and on the next day the police came. The Serbs came on the next day and told us different options. They asked if we want to go to Albania, they will kill you in the border; better go back home and things like this. These were their methods prepared for people. In the end we decided to go back home; the police said it is better to go home otherwise they will kill you on the way or at the border; they will kill you on the way to Prizren, therefore we decided to go back. People decided and we went back home. We went back home and for two weeks we lived like that in the yard. We all lived like that wherever we could; wherever we found a corner; we stayed for two weeks but at least we were home. Two weeks later from that day, 27<sup>th</sup> of April happened. The Serbs came and took the victims with some vans which looked like hospital ambulances. They took the victims and moved them from there. We heard that they were taken to hospital, or something. The event of bombing was two weeks before 27<sup>th</sup> of April in Meje. As consequence, for example I don't know now but I was young at that time; now I am older, but I can explain one thing that I happen to see an event, for example I see something happening if someone get's stabbed for example, it might happen that I will remember the horrible experience. It will remind you of something similar. This is probably when you feel pain or something; you can be scared or something. Look, there might be hundreds of cases that happened, but for the moment I am probably not able to explain them in details; I was a little younger and I remember everything as I told it. It is understood that the event was much worse then how I explained it. I can't remember of anything more specifically to be mentioned. I am alive, luckily I have family abroad, my brothers who help me a lot and I live from their assistance. I live solely from their aid. I used to work in a company for 5 years but three months ago it failed and there was no place for me anymore so I am unemployed for the time being. I finished the faculty in Gjakova, I tried to apply for work where I finished the faculty but until today it was impossible; there is no place. My father passed away; now I live with my mother, I am married, with two kids. After the war, I am talking about that now, my father passed away 3 years ago; after the war there were some organizations that helped people with their houses; fixing their houses or even building new houses. People started receiving aid but I am amongst them that never received any help; luckily I had my brothers abroad and actually this was allegedly the reason why I was not receiving any aid. No assistance even to reconstruct the house; I did everything myself with the help of the family. No one has helped so far. My message has to do with this, I have a lot of messages for the Government but one would be to stop what they are doing because people are tired; they can't drown any further. It would be better if they don't explode because I am ready, I am amongst the first ones that would explode; they should not wait for protests like it happened in some other countries; the youth has no employment no nothing. They haven't developed any priority for the youth. I would ask the Government to think about the youth more. You're welcome.

## **Halil Ujkani**

My name is Halil Ujkani, from village Vinarce of the northern part of Mitrovica. I was born in 1935. I used to work in Trepca plant for 40 years. On 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1999, paramilitary forces came to our village, where we were living and attacked the village in their cruel way like you all know. They killed 2 and wounded 3 other. I had five sons with me and four friends and Faruk Saphiu and Beqir. We were forced to go out so we took them with us and we waited what will happen. 2 sons of mine and 3 nephews headed towards a hill which is called Germova to see what will happen to us. We remained locked inside with families. Their fury started immediately. They went to a village called Broboniq; from Broboniq they crossed to Kotorr. From Kotorr they headed towards Montenegro. They were about 24 people and their plan was to reach Albania. After the village called Kotorr they got caught by the paramilitary forces and we were told they they were caught there. Since that day we know nothing about them, if they were executed, if they are alive or deal somewhere. Anyhow we went on searching for them everywhere; to see if they are alive or dead. We were searching to find them alive as they were taken from us but we can't even find out if they are dead or alive. If they are alive then to know that they're alive or if they are dead we would like to know where they are dead. We all thought, still think, from words that we heard, that they are alive. A Serb once told us that they were taken to Pozharevac but we never found out about them. Then they said they are buried in a mass grave. We gave our blood for testing but ever since that day we didn't find out if they are dead or alive. We continued requesting from the internationals and from our Government. But as a parent I think that they are doing very little in regards to the missing ones. We know that there is no good enemy but our enemies are dogs. They say they don't know if they are dead or alive. They say that they are in mass graves, they have uncovered many places but we didn't get results up to date. Speaking about consequences, it is not easy for a man to lose 5 members of the family. They were young: the oldest one was 29 years old, two were 19 years old and two 16 years old. It is hard to lose chicken birds let alone that they were our men. For parents it's hard to know nothing after 13 years, if they are or they are not? We are like a whole in a tree. We are satisfied with this Government and our state that are not putting conditions. We know who the general is. We were notified in that time that he will be part of the dialogue and we were told that he was in charge of clearing the terrain. He knows where the dead or the living are. They don't tell and nobody takes any measures against them. We are the same from that day on. I am retired after 40 years of work at Trepca plant. I used to work as a leading worker. Now I receive 80 euros because Serbia got all our funds. We suffer as a family, we are upset and angry. They never came to ask us how and when and what happened? I don't know what else to say but one: I know that there is no freedom without victims, but someone suffered greatly, someone's houses got the house/door shut; what does such people need freedom. I don't see them doing anything, paying attention, for the ones that still are and for the ones missing; to show more care but not like they left us all alone.

## **Halise Balinca**

My name is Halise Balinca, born in Mitrovica, used to live in Bosnian neighborhood in North Mitrovica. I finished the civilian construction secondary school; we were 7 children with my mother and father. Now I live in North, I rent a house at the place where the massacre occurred during the war. The hardest event for me was in 1998 when my husband and brother were killed leaving me two children. As a widow I stayed with my mother in Bosnian neighborhood. Today it will be 13 years from the massacre that occurred in the neighborhood I live now. 23 people were massacred now it is a museum in Bosnian neighborhood. From what we heard, because we were inside and we couldn't see, they executed and raped women, they burnt houses. On the 15<sup>th</sup> they threw us out of the house, on the 16<sup>th</sup> we couldn't get out because there were no buses so we slept in Tamnik; the next day we travelled to Albania. When we reached Albania, we heard some shots but we didn't see anything, the ones that were massacred in our neighborhood. The neighbors, whom I grew up with, told me that 23 persons were killed; this one is not here, that one is not here. My oldest daughter is now 18 and the second is 13; when my husband left me the oldest was 5 years old and the other was 5 months old. It was very hard for me as a 28year old mother to look after two orphans while unemployed. My brother and husband were killed by the Black Hand, as they were killing two and two before the war. We found out 5 days after when we saw on the news that Shemsi Balinca and Nuhi Rrahmani were killed. My brother and husband were killed together. They went out because this Lulzim Ademi, did you hear about this Lulzim Ademi? Someone shot to kill him and then this Lulzim Ademi, how to say, said that it was my brother. The police came and took my younger brother to jail. When my husband heard that they are looking for him and my brother, they decided to join the KLA so they escaped. Maybe they were caught on their way to join the KLA; they were caught by the Serbian police, they were called the "Black Hand". We thought that they joined the KLA but they are not sending us information since we had no phone. One day while standing in front of TV, DW announces that two persons are dead but their names remain unknown. At 0600 in the afternoon they showed the full names and that they are both murdered in Prishtina. We went to get their bodies. My brother had three bullets in the heart and one behind his ear, according to the autopsy these were Kalashnikov shots; one in the chest from a 9mm handgun. My husband was shot only once. We buried them. Then the NATO bombing started. When NATO started bombing I was in a private house in Bosnian neighborhood, my husband was from Vushtrri but we thought that it would be better if we come to Mitrovica. I took the kids and left the house I was renting and as soon as I got out they burnt the house. I went to my house and while reaching there I heard some television noises. When I went the next I saw with my own eyes two killed persons in there. They were Mani and Nezir, my neighbors. I informed his son but until they went there the bodies were already taken to the other house because I was renting that house and so was the other one. They were both executed there. I went to see them and I spoke to the girl and the boy to bury them but there were too many paramilitaries in Bosnian neighborhood. He was scared to go there too. After the war they asked me to be a witness but they were found, they found them killed. I went at my mother's in a small flat but just to stay there as a refugee and on the 15<sup>th</sup> that massacre took place. We were sitting home when they said that Bosnian neighborhood is being stormed. We heard Kalashnikovs firing. I am speaking from what I heard from a person that was there who said that the women were screaming and these were screams of females being raped and now no one is mentioning these

events. One person lost two sons, one lost 5 family members, and it is Mustafa who I grew up with. We were thrown out of the house too and ever since I remained on the street; I don't have a home. The Government doesn't bother to provide me with housing; I have no husband, no brother. My brother was unmarried, 27 years old; my husband was 33 years old. As soon as NATO started bombing, this massacre took place. The police and paramilitaries came into the house; I recognized one of them since I saw him around there. I told him: I know you, how can you do this? I knew him very well with first and last name. I told him you are Bata Dellic. He said no I am not. He was the one that did the massacre there. They know him but they don't tell him. He threw us out and said go straight to Albania. We walked besides the train station and went to the bus station but that day we couldn't travel, the second day they drove us to Albania, in Kukes. From Kukes they took us to Vlora where we stayed for three months. When we returned to Kosovo they didn't let us get in our houses because there were still paramilitary forces of Serbia. We barely got into our houses but the suffering continued after the war as well in the North. Even today, the boy that was killed there I knew him, in this part we all know each other. Yes, I live in the northern part but I am scared. They can throw a grenade at your window. I live at my brother's because I don't have a house. Always under fear, he was sleeping when they placed the dynamite and he died leaving 5 children behind. When we were in Albania we had already heard that they collected Haki Misini and the others and executed them. One of them survived; also for those in Bosnian neighborhood that were slayed, members of Fejzullahu family. I know that they blasted through their door, the wife was paralyzed but they killed her, her husband and daughter; their son Naim Zhegrova and his friends were found at Dodikersh. In the massacre there was a lady with one leg missing and she was killed too, she was in a wheelchair. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, actually today is the memorial, 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There are 23 in museum, 23 names are written there; those 23; the rapped women went to Albania; today they continue living, they are married. Yes, yes, they are married but they didn't declare it but we know; there was a person that heard the women screaming when the paramilitaries entered their houses. My husband is in Vushtrri and my brother is in Mitrovica, in Shipol. We think of them and we live in stress every day; it is the same with my mother; my father passed away in 2002, he was blind. He was blind when we went to Albania, he had diabetes. We remember them, how can we not; we are in stress we can't find tranquility. I am in depression; I am receiving a therapy to tell you the truth. My brother is the same. My brother stayed for three and a half years in Pozharec because of this Luli who said that my brother shot him. He was sentenced to 6 years but he only served 3. He didn't fire at him but he said so. My brother is in depression too, he is married and he receives therapy. My 5 year old daughter remembers things but not the young one. But even the one that does not remember saw a picture of her dad in the book that "Kujtimi" organization published. Even though she was 5 months she still has her dad in mind, she has his picture in her phone, and the child is constantly in stress. When they took my brother in prison, the last conversation we had, he told me: "I don't believe I will survive and if you remain with these kids I know that I am leaving you without a house and with nothing but find your way somehow because they will probably kill me". He knew it. I said "why would they kill, you haven't done anything" he said "I know they will kill me". My husband escaped as soon as the police came looking for him. We were living close to my mother's. He ran at my brother and told him that "UDB is looking for you", it was Serbian like the special units now, and it was called UDB. They decided to run and when they were about to run he told me "take care about the kids because I am

finished” because he knew they will be killed. Two and two were being killed if you remember in Mitrovica the Black Hand was doing the killing. It was one Jollan Daja, I can’t remember exactly right now, but they were going around in a black jeep so probably they killed them because they were killing two and two; they killed my brother with my husband, like my brother was killed there were two other persons killed in the same way: one from Gushafc and one from Oshlan, whoever was found on the street was killed. It is my brother that was killed, those two; it is one Imer whose daughter is a journalist with Nexhmedin Spahiu, two Romas that were killed like this. For two Romas, I don’t know, but they killed one Dejan Skotic, he was a Serb, who was in KLA and as soon as he joined in KLA he was killed; he was found in the same place where my husband and brother were killed. My brother and husband were thrown if you know where you turn to go to Prishtina at some garbage and they covered them with garbage. A person who I don’t know told me that on such and such date, when going to work he saw two corpses in black plastic bags and he said that dogs started to bite them; they were found by the Serbian police and they were taken to Prishtina. While talking to him I said: they were killed, why you had to tell anyone. But he didn’t know. They were killed and thrown under the bridge. My husband has a brother living abroad and here in Vushtrri he only had his uncle’s sons. He doesn’t have many relatives. They took my husband in Prishtina morgue where he was sent for autopsy and they buried him. They said that they will bury him although his brother was not here, we will bury him. They took him with the hospital’s vehicle to Vushtrri and they brought my brother in Mitrovica. I went with my daughter, although she was very little, at 0600hrs in the morning to see my dead husband. I saw my dead husband, I saw from what bullet he died and I told them that I will say goodbye to my husband because my brother is going to be buried at 1300hrs in Mitrovica. When I arrived I met them preparing my brother. We had our brother all night and in the morning I went to see my husband. I was in great discomfort since I had them separated one in Vushtrri and one in Mitrovica. I was alone with my 5months old daughter. We visit their graves; one is in Vushtrri and the other in Mitrovica. Now I live with my brother but the Habitat gave me a flat now at the train station, maybe you know where the train station is? It is not in north, on that side of the bridge near Jugo Petrol. The flat belongs to a Serb and I pay 100 euro rent, while I receive 135 euros pension. My brother has a flat but it is too small and I did it for my children because he got married and the flat has only one room and the kitchen. I pay 100 euros to Habitat for that flat, I live with two daughters there, I am not employed, I have finished the school. They are giving away flats but nobody came to ask me, let alone the flour and other stuff. I went to the municipality to ask but they say that they don’t have any. I have an 18 year old daughter that goes to school and is a very good student, she speaks English, she is in the technical school, chemical laboratory course and she has excellent grades. My last message is: the Government is not doing anything, first of all for Mitrovica. There is no Police in that side. They can’t go with helicopters to the border customs points because they are based there and I see them. They should take care of us more, to employ us, find us shelter, and provide us with apartments. I am not saying this only for myself; there are many women that are in need and are much younger than me, I am 42 years old but there are younger women. No one is looking after them; I went to the Municipality but they didn’t give me or anyone a flat. They give it to their relatives but I don’t know anyone in the Municipality, I am just and ordinary citizen. They are helping to their villagers, not me; we in the city are left like this. I feel ashamed to give 100 euros to a Serbian who killed my husband and now to pay rent to him while the Government does

nothing. First they should find jobs for the people that are wondering in the north; I am talking about Mitrovica because maybe in Prishtina you have jobs but Mitrovica is dead. The youth is just wondering around and when they are left wondering then problems will show up because they have no money and no jobs. I have finished the technical school and there is no job for me, how can I sustain my kids with 135 euros a month. They promised to increase the pensions but they didn't. There should be no difference if he was killed fighting or as a civilian; he spilled blood for this country. It is unfair to say that he didn't grab the weapons. Someone grabbed the weapons but someone couldn't leave his family; I was alone, I didn't have in-laws or anyone. They kept saying for two years that they will increase the pensions; what to do with 135 euros when you have the electricity bill? They even come and cut the electricity, they don't care that you live from social welfare. They say go and complain to Thaqi. Thaqi can't do anything; the whole Government can't do anything.

## **Hysen Hyseni**

My name is Hysen Hyseni, born in village Gumnishte, Municipality of Vushtrri. I live for 50 years in Mitrovica. I am the son of a participant of Tivar battle; my father was part of the Tivar battle. Since 1971 I worked at the mining plant of Stanterg. For 13 years after the war, my colleagues were the helping hand. I have suffered during the war and even 12 years after it I still haven't found my son. On 9<sup>th</sup> of September I received the news that my son was found, his corpse. I got him and buried him on 16<sup>th</sup> of September. I will start the story from the early stage of war, starting from the house in Bajr neighborhood where I live, from where we were thrown out by the Serbian compulsory means which were imposed in Kosovo. I stayed in Zhabar village for 15 days. On 16<sup>th</sup> of April we headed towards Albania. We travelled on foot for 3 days. We stopped in village Zabllaq. I had one son with me who is still alive. The son that got killed in the war was with his mother three sisters and they travelled with vehicles to the border but were returned back to Mitrovica. In village Zabllaq, where we reached after 3 days of walking, we stayed for 15 or 18 days. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May we were out of food and water; I am talking about myself since I was with only one son. We had no one to prepare food for us. I thank the church in Zllakuqan which kept bringing food and other things for 10 days, carrying it with tractors so they could feed us there. Last three days we had nothing to eat so I boiled corn just to stay alive. On 6<sup>th</sup> of May we were thrown out of Zabllaq, after three days walking, on 9<sup>th</sup> of May we entered Albania. Before crossing the border, my son that was with me got stopped twice by the Serbian forces to be shot. Whenever they stopped him I stopped right beside him. They asked me "where are you going", I said "wherever he goes, I will go". He said "we are not looking for you we are looking for him". It was hard, it was difficult but God didn't want him to be killed like the other one. We reached Albania and we were about 3000 to 4000 residents from Mitrovica municipality. Everyone was crying when we crossed in that side and we thought that we will never go back to Kosovo. From 9<sup>th</sup> of May until 18<sup>th</sup> of June I stayed in Elbasan in an English camp, sleeping in a tent those days. I knew nothing about home until 10<sup>th</sup> of June or 5<sup>th</sup> of June; I knew nothing about my family members. We had no phone numbers. We couldn't get in contact; I was chasing around and asking in cities across Albania. Finally I contacted my family and found out that they are home: my wife, my son and three daughters. The agreement for us to go back was reached. When I came back, on 18<sup>th</sup> of June I think, I asked my wife "where is Mehmet?" She said that they don't know. I said: "how don't you know, was he all the time with you?" she said: "he was with me until 25<sup>th</sup> of May, on the 25<sup>th</sup> he went to Kqiq village. He came from Kqiq at 1200hrs midnight and stayed until 0400hrs in the morning. With a neighbor's son they went out because they were afraid to stay in the city". He was of young age. She said "they went out and I know nothing more. The neighbor told me that he was killed, then that he was wounded". I was told this after I came back home and what my wife was told by the neighbor who did not tell the truth saying that he was killed then he was wounded while I escaped. The friend that was with my son went to Ulqin and after coming back he came to see me. I asked him to tell me the truth and explain what happened. He didn't explain as it was. For 12 years I couldn't find my son and it is very hard not to know about a family member. Every day and every night my brain works, like every other parent's, and you don't know where he is and how he is? This was very hard for me but since the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2011 when I took him by my hands and when I buried his bones which I laid down with my own hands, I felt like a weight was lifted off my back. I feel a little relieved. The pain will never go away till

the day I die but the thought of where he is, how he is, where he went, what he did is now over. These are most difficult situations but my strongest support was my friends, miners, who kept me alive. On 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1999 we were called back to work. When I went there is said that I don't want to work? I told them that you don't know my situation, I still haven't found my son; I can't work. Starting from the director up to the last worker, they all told me that I should go and work, that life must go on for the living. I will never forget this because they were right and I was mistaken. Wherever I needed to go, for example in Merdare when we went for 20 times to get the corpses, about 20-30 of them joined me. When I saw them it was a relief for me. These are difficult things but I trust in God. God has written it to be so; I thank God for saving my mind because living those moments for 13 years a man can lose his mind. I thank God first for giving me the strength and knowing how to keep me. I thank my friends, colleagues and loved ones. But, for these 12 years that I haven't found my son, plus 1 year is adding now for the others that still haven't found theirs, they are always on my mind; there are about 122 – 123 still missing in Mitrovica. 3-4 times a day I think about those people because it is more difficult for them than for me. I have finished something I have settled them, the grief goes to one place. I lost a son but I know where his bones lay. This is a very good sign amongst Muslims. They face a difficult scrape. I worked until 1<sup>st</sup> of March, since then I went in early retirement, three years before time because I am 62 years old but they made it possible to hire my other son and leave me retire. This is a strong support as well for my family, thanking my colleagues. I will never forget them; now I receive 100 euros pension and my son receives his salary which is enough. From the state, since 2-3 years, I receive like an aid of 135 euros or pension, called it as you wish. The victims of war are receiving about 135 euros, but I should say that I have a bigger worry for this leadership, people that are leading us, for 13 years I am talking about Mitrovica Municipality, we are a lot of activists in this organization keeping contacts, nobody visited any family, for example to visit Hysen, see how he is, is he suffering, does he have any income, if he has anyone ill, an elder or a child, if they have needs for school, for a scholarship, if this man has any needs? Nobody ever knocked on his door, plus let alone they never showed up but they are late 13 years. They wouldn't be able to face staying without their family member for 3 hours, like we are. I am not alienated with Serbs, because we never expected any good from them before or now, but the thing is how they are mixing with them. I am angry at our people, at our Albanians that are leading the country and who could do something before, to solve some problems earlier but not to keep on going like this for years. This is difficult and I am afraid as the old people say, which I think is true, if you pray for bad, our worries will fall on them, although I still wouldn't want them to burden what we burden. Not as it burdens me. But they should be careful, because God is the greatest and he has power to bestow this on everyone. I would advise our leadership to open their eyes and return to these people that for 13 years live with tears on their eyes. It is not easy so they should think a little for these people and look at them because they are suffering.

## **Ibish Gervalla**

My name is Ibish Gervalla, born on 03.01.1960 in village Dubovik; I did the primary school in Propoqan, a small village near Dubovik then I finished the secondary technical school in Peja. I finished the faculty of Albanian Language and Literature in Prishtina. After studies I was employed in Education, I worked at the primary school in Propoqan and one year before the war I was working in Propoqan and Krushec as a professor of Albanian Language. Now we live in Dubovik with my family, I am married, with 6 kids, my wife and mother; we live together with my mother. When the war started we had to quit the schools, because until the beginning of war I was working in the school but when the war started I was named as a member of the local headquarter of the village; I was responsible for supplying the population with food in that emergency. After we were engaged I had a satellite phone which mounted in my house and it was used by everyone to speak to their relatives abroad. We had a form of making phone calls, you had to call and give the number so they would call back then to pass the number from one to another and to call the number. We couldn't go out that much because we didn't have time; even during the night we had to go and call people in their houses and tell them that they have a phone call so we couldn't go out in the field that much; only when we had emergencies for food and things we had to supply people with. In brief this was the beginning. When it was over, when the OSCE observers came, we opened the schools again but we had to close them shortly after. We had problems in school too, we had to calm the pupils down although there were no fighting but the police kept coming so the pupils got troubled. We had to go from one classroom to another to calm them down; we were scared for ourselves as well but we had to calm the pupils down and spend some time with them. Later on we had to evacuate to Albania. We stayed in an Italian camp in Roshboll and we kept giving education to the children. We had to improvise schools there because the children were upset and traumatized from the war so they needed rehabilitation. We settled somehow in a school in Roshboll. When the order came for us to be evacuated, a confusion was created because the headquarters was dismissed and we had no where to orient. People were saying we have to leave to Montenegro or Albania. We decided to head to Albania so we got in tractors and we left. Isuf Gervalla's mother was with me, mother Ajshe. Her family was abroad so I had to take her with me. I had another 4 – 5 with, who were helpless and more difficult to get them through. There was no direct harassment but when the war started we were concerned about our families, our children and how to get them out; I didn't have a tractor or a vehicle so I had to wait who will take them. In one occasion, when the war begun in Krushefc, my children were taken by my villagers while I had to stay in the front line. My children went to another village but returned back home again and I was not aware; I couldn't go with them; I had to leave them and stay in war. We were not there so I can't say if there were massacres. When the fighting begun in Loxha village, we received some wounded so I had to transport them from one ambulance to the ambulance we had in our village. We treated them in Isniq, a village near by. That is where we sent the wounded. 8 were killed in our village, 2 were killed in Strelc during the shelling; the others died in the front line. 2 died in the hills during the retreat while the others died in the front line. I noticed that I started forgetting a lot, I see that I forget very fast; I have no perception now when people ask me about the date when a certain event took place. The satellite phone was a problem because people didn't want to take it because people could stay in contact later on but we didn't have it anymore. A cousin, an elder, didn't want to be evacuated and he stayed in the village. After a while he

was found chopped with an ax and his house was the only burnt house in our village. He didn't want to be evacuated and many times when we were on our watch points he used to tell don't watch that part; go watch that other point. So he stayed, didn't want to retreat so he went like a martyr; the only one in our neighborhood. Now I work in Municipality, in the archive as an archive manager. With that salary I take care about one student; my daughter is a student, one is finishing secondary school and one is attending secondary school of pharmacy and I have three others in primary school. We live only with this salary. As compensation after the war my house was rebuild by a foreign organization. Now I see, I started working in archive since 1 and a half year because I used to be an information official, and now I see students and people coming every day requesting compensation for war casualties. It is good if we focus on these war casualties because very little was done. There is not enough gathered material. We are witnessing the other side, the Serbs, are get something out of nothing, they are gathering materials and showing themselves as victims while we do nothing. We are the victims but this is a result of doing nothing or there is an existing material but they are keeping it locked, not showing it. I hear people saying that they have recordings but they are not showing up anywhere. It is good to have them at least in the Municipal Archive. The Municipality is small but we have the historic archive which includes the Municipal archive as well. We must have it there. If a student wants to study them; we had cases of them coming but there is not enough material for war casualties. Research must be made to collect war details so we always remember that we were in war. If a foreigner comes and finds nothing he will ask why are you saying that you had war? There was no war. Also we can't prove the casualties and burnings.

## **Isa Sherifi**

My name is Isa Sherifi, born on 1947 in village Dumnice, Municipality of Vushtrri. Otherwise I am living in Mitrovica since 1960 in the northern part. Resident of the northern part, now refugee in the city. Father of 6. I finished the 4 year school in the village and I continued the 8 year craft school in Mitrovica. I have a higher qualification for a mechanic / machinist. I was an employee of the battery factory from 1970 until 1990. In 1990 we got thrown out of our jobs. We remained as we did and now I am a refugee in my own town. My property is on that side; a house with 50m<sup>2</sup>, the shop, garage and basement. I haven't sold it; I know who is in it, it is a Serb who built a shop in my land while I move in the southern part of Mitrovica from one place to another. Until the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1999 I was home because we were advised not to move from our houses before any forces come. On the 29<sup>th</sup> came the Serbs "wild beasts" and threw us out of our houses. I went from there to the Bosnian neighborhood where my uncle is living. I stayed there till the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1999 with my whole family apart from one son who was out of the country. So we stayed at my uncle's in Bosnian neighborhood from 29<sup>th</sup> of March till 15<sup>th</sup> of April. The arson and looting was guaranteed. On 15<sup>th</sup> of April, around 0915hrs they came at my uncle's. I was there with 5 children and uncle, as we always gathered because of fear. 15<sup>th</sup> April at 0915hrs they surrounded us and took us two houses down in the same neighborhood. When they took us there, a person named Gjeda Bozovic came. Gjeda Bozovic was an ex-policeman of that time but also our neighbor, a bit further from us but he knew us. I didn't know him personally but I understood that he was an ex-policeman and the boys knew him. When they took us there, he had a bigger yard so they surrounded us there. They said "all the money and gold you have, you should place it here" they said "we know you hide it with your females but be sure that we will undress your females here in front of you and we won't leave anything in them". That was not a problem. Everyone gave what they had. The problem was after they took the money because they divided us in two groups: females' one side and males on one side. This was not too hard to face compared to what happened next when they started taking females before our eyes and sending them for about 10-15 meters, not more than 10 meters, away and rapping them. In some way we forgot about the men. They were crying for help and we couldn't do anything as we were only with hands in our pockets. The problem now was that I had my daughters, three of daughters of my sister, my sister in law and there was nothing we could do. The worst was that they made you watch what they were doing. They were saying that everything is happening because we asked for NATO. They couldn't do anything to NATO so they were taking revenge in civilian population. This all kept on going from 0900hrs until 1330hrs. After this, one of them came and said that the elders may go but the youth will remain here. I tried not to leave but one of the boys, the oldest one, said that it's better to go, at least someone to stay alive because it was obvious that no one was to be spared. So before this all was over, they took the car that belonged to the owner of that house and pushed it. Then I parted from them, meaning that I was not with my sons and I also lost the contact with my family. The females were sent with my uncle who was around 75 – 76 years old. They told him that he can take them and proceed to Albania. For a while I lost contact with them. We were about 3-4 persons and we continued our way without knowing where to go but we were on the main road. We had nowhere to go because we were surrounded on all sides, for example it was about 1km journey from Bosnian neighborhood to the bus station and you had persons that were beaten 5 – 6 times until they reached the bus station. We were already nervous

and despite all the cursing and insults we continued. We decided to go to the bus station where luckily there were about 30 members of the close family. When I reached there I didn't know what to do, to head to Albania leaving some members here so I said that I don't want to leave hoping that I will go back from the bus station and find out something about the "boys". A cousin of mine said that if I don't leave then they will be staying as well. We stayed there for an hour or more. While talking to my wife and daughters we decided that it is better to leave than to remain all here. Then I closed both my eyes and decided to get on the bus but the problem was that we had no money on us because we left it all there. They were asking 50 Deutsche Marks per person to get on the bus to Albania. The Serbs had already organized the buses and the check-taker was a Bosnian. He said I'm sorry but this is how it is. The cousin that was with me had some money on him and somehow we managed to collect it but we were short for one person. A Bosnian said that we will arrange something so we headed towards Albania. We reached the border at about 0615hrs in the evening. When we reached Albania, we should thank them for the hospitality, but our hearts were broken. 2 months after the agreement was signed we headed back. While we were still there we found out that Albanians are not allowed to go back to the northern part of Mitrovica although KFOR was present there. I decided to go back and after coming back we stayed for 2 weeks here and there until an agreement was reached with KFOR and we got back home. When I went back, even KFOR was surprised by the picture we faced. A normal person wouldn't do what they did to the house. They have crapped in the rooms and things that I can't describe. I regret that I didn't have something to film it and prove it because even if I tell you know you won't believe me. In some way I said we suffered what we suffered. Now a bigger problem emerged, the life, on the second day I went back with my two daughters, my mentally ill brother and my wife. On the day when they took my sons, they pushed her from the stairs and in some way she remained somehow disabled ever since. A neighbor of mine, named Dragana Ulic, wife of an eye doctor, talked to me since I resided there since the '60 and I never moved and somehow I was more familiar with them, we had more freedom with them. She came the next day and said "I feel sorry about your boys, they were very good but they are not anymore, otherwise as far as you are concerned I would hang you and let you dry in the center of Mitrovica because of what you did here, how many people came in and out from your house." I didn't listen to her and we managed to somehow settle as far as housing is concerned. Then they started entering the houses, looting and scaring people. Their intention was to force people to leave, since it was a large number of people that went back to their houses after the war. One night, around 1800 – 1900hrs in the evening, a group of about 30 people blocked our door but by God's will we survived once again but I forced to leave my house for the second time and go from the northern part to south. This is the beginning of another stage of my life, meaning that my sons were gone, the capital remained; it is an immense capital, before the war I was offered 400thousand Deutsche Marks because of the location. So my sons were gone now, one 18 years old the other 21, the capital where I invested for 30 years was gone, although I never mentioned it, but on the other hand it is painful as well. I decided to go to the southern part since I had no place to go. I found my sons 6 years after. One was found at Suhodoll, the oldest Sherif was found at the mass grave at Suhodoll, while Arsim who is the third, was found in Zvecan although they were taken together. I found them after 6 years, exactly one day before full 6 years; I found them on 14<sup>th</sup> of April and they were taken on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April. I found them and I buried them at the martyrs cemetery in Mitrovica. In some way although I found them, my heart keeps telling me

that it is not them. Now I remained and I was forced to go to Vushtrri, at a friend, and live there in a room 4m with 5m, where I lived for 5 and a half years. For those 5 and half years nobody came to pay me a visit and to see how I am living. It was bothering me that the Serbian lady knew what I used to deal with, while my people don't. Today I was offered a temporary flat until a solution will be found for northern Mitrovica. My problem is that I have a wife with disabilities; she needs prostheses in both knees and both buttocks. She did one leg but needs to do the other one as well. My brother is mentally ill; my income is that small pension and the aid I get for my two children. My daughter is 34-35 years old, I tried to get her employed but I couldn't, I tried to go back to my old workplace at the battery factory but they didn't accept me, now I walk on the street. The worst is that I have needs now, the suffering and the hard financial situation is a catastrophe. My number 1 problem is that they are gone but sometime I forget them trying to heal her; how can I help her? I can't afford it; the Government is covering 50% of the expenses but I don't have the other 50%. My message is, first the leadership should find a common language. Second, let them step in our shoes, for 5 minutes let them feel our suffering because the family members are really exhausted. Exhausted are specially the ones that haven't found their loved one, exhausted are even the ones that found them, they are exhausted from poverty. Let them turn their sight upon these people, the martyrs and the missing ones. Help us...refresh us, if they can't do it materially let them do it orally because we are very, very concerned, we are suffering, our financial situation is a catastrophe. It is very hard now to face one against the other; if we only had one of them it would have been much easier for us. Therefore my message would be to not forget the blood of the martyrs because they gave their life for Kosovo so let's not forget this; they must look after them and do something for them.

## **Ismet Muli**

I was born in Konovik village, Municipality of Vushtrri; I worked at a private organization called "Qiqavica" until 1992 when the Serbs forced us out of our jobs and since then I am unemployed. 6 killings occurred in my family alone, amongst which was a 13 year old boy who was killed near the Hysen graveyard in Vushtrri. Some people saw him there and dragged him into their yard. When me and my brother heard about him we went to get the body. On our way we faced a lot of difficulties; they shot on us to kill us a couple of times but luckily we survived. We got the boy and we placed him at one of my cousins because we were afraid to bring him home. We kept him until the late hours because of the safety when we bury him. When we saw that the situation got calmer we decided to take him to the graveyard in Vushtrri; a lot of people from the neighborhood attended the burial although I told them that we don't want them to be part of the burial because of their safety. My wife came and said "I hope that the last victim of this war in \Kosovo is my son" and we buried him. After a while they came and asked about the victim. They maltreated us physically and psychologically; they had beaten my brother so much that even today he can't hear; his ears got damaged. They came many times and mistreated us; my father was 75 years old and they took his hat and stepped on it and they said now we want to kill all of you. They asked about the other men of the family. My oldest son was in Sicily so he was safe and today I live with two sons and a daughter. We are 11 members of the family; we went through a lot and we are devastated. They took 24 thousand Deutsche Marks from me and they took me to the Stone Bridge in Vestry placed me against the wall and started joking with me asking me whom of us do you want to kill you. I saw a dead body there; they shot two times but fortunately not in my direction so they didn't kill me; they took 24 thousand Deutsche Marks. I had a shop that time but they took everything from the shop. They killed a cousin of mine named Namon Kuneviku with his wife in their house. The 7 year old girl stayed until the morning light with her dead parents. We were expelled from our houses and told to go to the graveyard; their intention at that time was to gather all the population of Vushtrri, surroundings and Mitrovica at the graveyard. My son was scared so he wanted to go to his aunt but he was killed on his way there. On 18<sup>th</sup> of April, after three days, is the anniversary, at exactly 1000hrs. My son was with my nephew but fortunately he survived but my son didn't. Someone from that neighborhood who for the moment are missing, they were two so they dragged him into a yard; I went to get him with my brother. We were told by my brother's daughter and we couldn't go through the road but we had walls so we walked behind the walls until we reached the spot because you were not safe even to go and collect a dead body and this is how it was for my son. As I mentioned earlier the girl who lived with her dead mother and father for one whole night; that girl is alive today. They burnt all the houses and three of my cousins were massacred in Studime village on May the 2<sup>nd</sup> I think. My uncle, my mother's brother, with two sons was massacred in Studime. We have gone through a lot; I am overwhelmed with emotions. Concerning the situation now we are 11 members. None of us is employed. I live together with my wife and these family members. My oldest son has finished studies; my daughter is completing the studies. The state is giving us 130 euros for the ones that were killed. We have buried all our family members that were killed, we don't have anyone missing. I would advise the youth to be united and get educated and to learn from the tragedy that we lived through so this country can go forward in the best possible way. The Government has done very little in regards to the ones killed, for the missing; they should have

watched the families at least; to find jobs for at least one member. Very few of the families that have members killed or missing are employed, at least in Vushtrri. Thank you!

## **Izet Kelmendi**

I am Izet Kelmendi from Rakovina, Municipality of Gjakova. We were four brothers, my mother and my father but the war left us less. Now I live my mother and two brothers in Gjakova because war brought us here from the village. During the war we had to leave that village and since then we live here. On the 5<sup>th</sup> month in 1998 when the war started we were living in Rakovina but when the Serb forces stormed the village we had to flee the village and we went to village Volljak in Klina at our uncle's. We got thrown out of there too because of the shelling and we left for Jabllanice village. They stormed Jabllanica as well, killed some people and burnt some houses so we had to leave to Meznik. We stayed there without food and water and we went back to Rakovina but the Serbs were still there so we went to Volljak; we were chased from Volljak to Panorc in Malishevo Municipality. Over there men were separated from women and they started beating and massacring as much as they could before the eyes of the population. They killed people before the eyes of their families. They chased us from there and we stayed for three days without eating and drinking and then we went back to Jabllanica in Cumnian. My father came to get us because when we were being chased they killed a neighbor / lady from Rakovina in front of us; they took my grandfather to Klina and my father in Gjakova where they had beaten them and they were brought back there. They took us from there to Cermnian at a house there. We stayed there because that was the only house which was not burnt in Cermnian. We stayed there for some time without food but we had to find a solution so my father and two brothers went at my aunt in Jabllanica and on their way back, around 0800 in the evening some shots were fired. I and my brother were young and we stayed with our mother. We stayed for a while and then we left for Rakovina where we met OSCE who didn't let us get in our house. They took us away from there in a taxi and they drove us to Gjakova. We buried them in Rakovine on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1999. Now we live in a flat in Gjakova provided to us by the Municipal authorities and we survive on a pension in very rough conditions but we have to face our destiny and walk forward. When they left they said that they won't be late so when we heard the shots, because the Serbs were positioned under the bridge, we knew that it was our men. We went there immediately but the OSCE didn't allow us to get in and see for ourselves so we left from there and OSCE got them. They were first sent to Prishtina for analysis then we received and buried them in Rakovina. We lived through war very bad in Gjakova. We rented a house from a Serb. We worked wherever we could and we received some aid but it was very bad during the war. It was only I, my brother and our mother. We faced health problems, family problems, food problems and problems with everything. When we came back to Gjakova we had nothing because the war totally destroyed us. During the bombing we were in Rakovina and Gjakova, going from one village to another trying to hide our heads. The police station in Gjakova tried many times, they ambushed us many times because they knew we are the family of a martyr. They ambushed us to shot and kill us too but God wanted and we got away. We were hiding in other villages because they were looking for our family to execute us. We managed to survive somehow by fleeing. Yes, I experienced it in Panorc village of Malishevo Municipality when they took our grandfather and father and had beaten them. The men were on one side and the women with families on the other side and they were beating and massacring in front of our eyes. They killed and massacred men saying that you are members of KLA, they wanted to kill and eliminate KLA members; my father had joined and

fought with KLA but he survived that day. But when he came in Jabllanica to get food they killed and he left us behind. I don't remember that much but people were separated and beaten and families were massacred some that had tractors were even burnt. They wanted to fulfill their plan so they killed without mercy; more than half of the people that were there got killed and the other half that survived live with consequences now. They are all with disabilities. I only know that many were killed because the population of that region, surroundings of Volljak and Fer were caught in that place in Panorc. Now the consequences are present, I face health problems and I miss my parents a lot. I feel pain all over my body. I have a lot of memories on my mind. I asked for help everywhere after the war. Some gave me help and some couldn't. I was helped by doctors Mahmut Lila and many others but I can't remember their names now; they helped me with medicine. Now we live three people in one flat and we only receive that pension that the Municipality / Government is providing for us, we have no other income. I have finished school and now I am searching for a job but it is a crisis for jobs and the municipality can't provide any jobs. My older brother was working for a company but it failed and he is jobless now. Everyone is looking after themselves. I finished the primary, 9 year school, "Zekri Rexha", then I went to business high school "Gjon Nikoll Kazazi", I am willing to study but we can't afford it because money is needed and I don't have it so I will see later. My mother is sick very bad; she has health problems and she faints a lot, almost every day. She remembers the experience and she gets upset and cries. She also gets upset because of the living conditions we are facing nowadays; she is in grief because she lost two children and her husband so she has to be the husband and wife now and to provide for us. The state assisted us with the flat, this pension and nothing else. I don't know if they can help us anymore but God is great and he can. Once, only once 4 years ago they gave us this apartment and this pension that we get. My message for this Government would be not to forget some things; not to look only after themselves and their personal interests but they should turn their eyes to the people and see their interests as well, families of martyrs and those killed. To look after these people and not forget them. My message for the society is not to drift away from these events but remember them and don't forget them; love your people, love the orphans, children without a father, children without a mother and father and don't put them behind your backs.

### **Kefaet Prizreni**

I was born on 1984 in Prizren. I have a bigger brother too. He was born here in Prishtina on 1981. My mother is from the Roma neighborhood "Terzimahalla" in Prizren, she was born there and my father was born in Gjakova. They met each other in Prizren and got married there also. After ten years my bigger brother was born, three and a half years after I was born, on 1984. During 1988 our family in Prizren told us to run away from Kosovo and go to Germany because the situation was worsening and about to get very dangerous for Roma community, so all family members and my parent's friends collected money for the trip to Germany and that was during 1988. My personal history is when we ran away from Kosovo. We already heard that a family member was missing and got killed and just got lost or kidnapped. One of my cousins was lost, they killed him; he had a car. He tried very hard not to get misunderstood or displaced in race or community but anyway they caught him and killed him. He was a young father, married for about a year and his baby never saw the daddy....!!!! My history is a different one because I was born during 1984. We had problems in Prizren; the situation was hard and got worse and worse and it already was boiling and went worse and worse, so we ran away to Germany. My little brother, Selami, was born in Germany; we stayed there for the next 22 years and it was not like my parents were told by people that in Germany you have everything and all people are nice and kind and they give support from every side; and money, healthcare this and that..... When we arrived there we already had enough problems, we didn't know the language my mom and my dad couldn't communicate with people, but time as time passed things were getting better but just for a short time, government people and social workers started questioning us and from all those interviews my mom got psychologically sick and went for a half year in the mental hospital. And they told us to run away from Prizren (Kosovo) so we ran away to Germany!! We went to Germany at the year 88 and my little brother was born there in '89 (Selami) so we stayed there for the next 22 years. But even in Germany was very hard for us, and it was not like people told us: Germany is very good, they have everything, and they are good to refugees they treat them good and there is money everywhere. But when we arrived there we faced hard times and there, we had more than enough problems we didn't know the language and how to talk to them, and my mother didn't know the situation but then it went better and better but when they started asking about our background and tell us your family ran away from there and there and other places, my mother got mentally sick. I don't know how to explain; it was very hard for me even though I was a child I understood what was going; I got scared; we had a house in Dushanova (Prizren) which my father built by himself, with his own hands, and when we had to leave, it was very hard, it was a disaster for us to leave the house and all the stuff we had; the house was just finished and furniture was inside. In Germany we faced a huge problem. The German people didn't know how to treat us; they asked us stuff like where are you from and what are you... my parents didn't know how to explain and at first they didn't want to say that we are Roma so they told them something different; two or three years later they told them the truth and things changed; we received information from Prizren almost every 3<sup>rd</sup> week; neighbors or family were being killed in Kosovo and my mother immediately got sick and was a lot times in the hospital and she was a mental wreck and had no chance of being cured. My parents heard about the bombing attacks and

families being killed and that everyone ran away; my cousin, my uncles daughter disappeared, we had a big family and a lot of girls disappeared and nobody noticed how or who grabbed or kidnapped them; they were afraid to go to school, they just went out for food or other stuff for the house; they disappeared and never came back home!?!? My mother of course heard this and got crazy. When we got old enough, me and my brothers were told by our mother about the situation: why she got sick and why she had to be for a long time in the hospital because she went in a mental hospital for a year, and the doctor didn't allow us to visit her in that time.... My mother told us about the bombing, even TV was showing it on the news and I got scared because I knew what we had there and that we can lose it. My mother told us not to be afraid and not to look at this stuff, but I was curios wanting to know which part of Kosovo they were attacking. When we heard the news, we couldn't handle the situation; my father and my mother started crying because they both had still brothers and sisters in Kosovo; my father lost a lot of family members his father got killed during the war and his mother ran away to Serbia and got married again, one of his brothers ran to Serbia too; It was all a big catastrophe; we didn't know if we are going to stay longer in Germany or are they going to send us back home when the war is over. Years went by and we reached 1999; it was a catastrophe when we heard how they were bombing; my mother got crazy she was throwing stuff around the house; she heard about her family, that they killed her brother, my uncle, she got furious and told my dad: No, I don't want to stay any longer here, my whole family is killed, I want to be there, I don't care about the war. I want to see my family, how they are hanging on and how they are doing. I don't know who died and who is still alive I can't take it anymore. She called home and tried to get as much information as she could, and she sent them a lot of money, clothes and furniture from Germany to Prizren. It was all a big mess. I and my brother were told by my mother: listen, when you hang out with people here in Germany don't tell them what you are, at least for the moment; tell them you are Albanians. You are Albanians!!!! We spoke with each other how could we hide what we are; what is the reason; we talk roman at home how like always; we also spoke a lot of German language; when we started speaking more German than other languages, things were going better for us. My mother told us to not talk too much Roman or Albanian so we spoke just German and if people ask you where are you from don't tell them the truth, hide yourself so they can't find out what we are, because if they do they are going to send you back home, and if you are back there you don't stand a chance. My mother went again for another year to the mental hospital. When the war ended they told us that they can't give our family a status, so we had to run away again... During 1993 we were told that we have to leave Germany and turn back to Kosovo!!!!!! My parents didn't know what to do; they got confused; it was so crazy; we got out of the asylum building, and got a new flat for which we paid rent during this time. It was maybe 4 or 5 months that we had this flat, and the social worker who was working there, told my mother that we had to leave Germany long time ago because of the letter we received that family Prizreni has to leave. My mother got completely crazy, so she gathered all the kids and all what we could carry plus that what we had on our body we got in our vehicle and ran away to Holland where we stayed for ten days. We were afraid that they will deport us back to Kosovo. It was the time when they started to separate people in communities: the Roma, the Serbs and the Albanians .... I didn't understand why all the stress and the running from one place to another, and always the feeling that the police can stop us check us and send us back. When we went to Holland there were some Roma people and they told us that in Kosovo our old Yugoslavia is gone and the new Kosovo is a

huge mess. They are killing all the Romas; killing each other and killing themselves too. Families there don't have the hold, the unity and the trust anymore; it is a catastrophe. When I grew up and when I was able to understand things my mother told me: my son, the time came to say what you are, and where you're from, don't lie anymore. I told my mother: ok it's no problem, so when we, I and my brother went to school, and when my teacher asked us what we are because they never heard this kind of names!! And we told her that we are Roma from Yugoslavia. She stopped me there and said: no, there is no more Yugoslavia, now it's all Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania..... We told them you can say whatever you want but for us it's different; for us it is and always will be Yugoslavia. From that point on we started to say that we are Roma and what we've been through; what happened to my mother and that I was a lot of times from one hospital to another; I was born ill, a sick child, and in Kosovo there was no healthcare and that what we experienced was horrible. My brother did the same. When my mother gave birth to my brother in Prishtina, she had a Cesarean cut surgery, and she was afraid that she will have complications during the birth; that my brother will be born a handicapped baby!! I don't know how to explain. And when I got born, it was the same surgery; also my other brother, the little one, when he got born in Germany she made the same because she was afraid. When I understood what the problem in Kosovo is, I started talking to my brother about it; we started making music about it and to tell our story through music. We are humans too, the romas; there is one world; why should this separation exist: he is a roma, he is that, and they are this. Me and my brother we started just on time, when I turned 11 it was 95, and in that time I was old enough so because of our culture we started playing music.... My father bought us a keyboard, he was also playing on it, and he still is making music on it, so we started also to learn and handle the keys. When my father heard it then he checked what we our lyrics say. He told us: ok you can go on but take care what you say in your lyrics, because there are a lot of people in Germany who don't want to hear about the war and the problems of Roma. During that time there was a lot of Nazi activities; they caused us a lot of problems saying stuff like: why did you come to Germany..... You take our jobs away... your men and sons are taking our women.... And when your boys grow up they will take our daughters away.... And when they fill up the age they take school places and jobs.... They gave us hard times there, we had to change places.... when I started going to school we had to change the place, so I had to change the school a lot of times; I don't know how you say it here.... Elementary school, I started the 1st grade and 2nd grade at one school.... Then we had to change the place, so I had to change school again, after that we went to Holland we stayed there for ten days, after ten days again the same thing, we applied again for asylum in Germany all over again.... Again with the school registration. Only what I've been through, how many times I had to change the school; it was around 6 times 6 schools, until I finished the ten year school. I was for ten years in school there but I didn't graduate. When I was at the 8th grade, I filled up my ten years school. And when I reached ten years of German school my teacher asked me; Kefaet what you want to do now; you reached your ten years and now if you want you can go on with the school and graduate or get out of school and find a job and make money or you can learn a good job if you want for two years. And I was ... how should I say, my brain was not on place so I didn't go to school like I had to. I didn't show up at school because I was afraid that they will cause me trouble because of being Roma... but anyway I had my friends around me, and they were also Roma, from Bosnia, Serbia and we got together; we used to brake-dance and told our stories; when the people in Germany saw us they didn't know what to say,,,... what are you

where are you from??? And when we answered we are Roma they used to say “oh yeah you are from Italy! They didn’t even know what a Roma is. Nothing!! Then we started to explain what roma means, what’s a gipsy, what’s a hashkali, what’s gabel..... There’s a lot off different groups and how they call themselves. We call our self Roma! Roma is the most popular, and the biggest community all over the globe but every country has their own Romas. When I came back, we were for 6 months in Prizren! I got back in 2010, they deported me and my brother; Forced Deportation. They had told us that there is no more war; Conditions in Kosovo now are good; it is an independent state and that we can find work there and this and that.... The situation is good for you now, go there and you have very good chances of becoming something good. But nobody told us that they will come and take us from our house and force us back to Kosovo; that was a nightmare for us, because we knew how the structure is, with the school and we had jobs and we had also flats we paid the rent and electricity we had the money for it, and even if with the crisis in Germany, we still made our money. And the music was running very good very very good; see I was just waiting to sign this contract that goes international; international contract means exclusive ..... We still have the contacts and they still wait for us, to sign the contract and sell the music!!! And they caught me and my brother although he was born in Germany!!! They didn’t have the right to deport us back here!!! But when we came, nobody told us about how the situation is. NOBODY!! And I forgot how Prizren looks like..... Everything got changed, and we didn’t have the house in Prizren anymore; how were we going to survive. When we arrived in Prishtina it was a shock for us, Cultural shock!! We couldn’t and we didn’t know how to talk, and .... How to explain... we didn’t know the language!! When we arrived at the airport, they asked us: who are you??? Who is your father??? Your mother, where are you from, where were you born??? I didn’t know..... It just came through here and went out through here!! And I told them if you want to talk to me you should talk to me in German or English because I didn’t know a word in Albanian. Back home we was only talking romane. My father, of course, knows Albanian language but again there was no interest for us to learn it. So we continued speaking in romane ... when the years went by, we started to talk just German!!! And then we were stuck in German!!! When we came here it was a disaster. We didn’t know where to go so we decided to just go at our uncle to the neighborhood in Prizren. We paid a Taxi 50euros and went to “Terziemahalla”. When we arrived there we were desperate. I never saw my uncle, I only saw him when we ran away in ‘88 and after 22 years, I knew his face only from a picture of him we had on the wall in the kitchen. He is a music professor also, roma and he got still his students and he is still giving classes!!! When we came he didn’t even wanted to see us; he got scared he was afraid, and he knew what the situation is, but he was still like a stranger and told us; you can’t stay here, I have my wife here, and my kid. It may look that we have enough place here, and it may look big, but I can’t afford you guys when it comes to food and all this other stuff!!!! And the love I have for my sister I don’t have for you guys!!! Those words were really heavy; like we are nobody for him. For me it was a shocking moment, I thought I will see my family now but the reality was different; I felt like I was slapped on the face after these words. I was paralyzed; my little brother lost his nerves completely; two days later we found a place; it was just one room, and we paid the rent there. Everyone in the neighborhood told us not to walk on the streets a lot. They told us who we should stay away from. All the Albanians who live here are extremely dangerous, and if I see you hanging with them don’t even walk through the neighborhood!!! And if we see you hanging with tem then you gone have a lot problems, you have to know they

make their money in our streets. And they all have knives, and sometimes they have guns and things like that but we always told them that we are not going to stay here! We are not for Kosovo, we grew up in Germany and we are going to make our way back; we have all our family there and the family we have here is not our family; they don't mean anything to us and the uncle we have doesn't want to know us and not even greet us because all the deportees are Criminals! All the returnees all over Kosovo are criminal; they are coming straight from jail. All Criminals!!! And that's how they treated us also, first they asked us: what did you do in Germany; why did they deport you??? We said: they did a mistake in our case, we didn't know that they will deport us, no letter of notification no nothing!!! They just came around 6 in the morning, and brought us back to Kosovo. I will tell you only one thing, just this thing; it's not a big sentence; when I came to Kosovo, to be honest I became a racist, I became a racist here because when I was in Germany I was against racism!! When I came down here I became a racist!!!! Why?? When I walk thru "Shadervan" they look at us on a weird and strange way!!! Like if we want to steal something. That's why we got away from Prizren. But my message for Kosovo is, I would say to you that you have started a good thing; tolerate the Roma, Hashkali , Egyptian, and give them more possibilities and give them freedom because they are afraid of you; all of them in Kosovo are afraid to get out of their own neighborhood!! They don't want to go even to Pristina. Why??? Because if a Roma guy wants to go out to party he is afraid not to get killed, even if they just dance well, or sing very well, they will kill you. So that's why I say to Kosovo again, watch your cities like you used to. You can't separate people into Serb, Albanian, Roma, Bosnian, Goran. Because Kosovo is again one Culture, that's why I say open your ears, open your eyes, and see that people who got skills or talent get offered a chance because all they have is the talent or the skills. And the whole world knows and Kosovo also that the Roma people are talented. If they don't make music they draw; if they don't draw they are smiths... so give them the opportunity and the freedom to open up a little and don't give them the chance to say: only Albanians are given the chance!!!! It is better for you, for me, him and her; for everybody. And also my message is that today we have the 8th of April.... International Roma day..... Thanks a lot.... And I am telling you I hope you are going to celebrate this day also because we are for the last ten years celebrating this day, 8th of April. So I hope that you also going to start soon and give a chance for Roma maybe like this. I thank you guys that you made me part of this. I hope you will go also further and open minds of the people in Kosovo... what you was doing and what you are about to reach with this. Thanks again!

## **Kujtim Hoti**

I am Kujtim Hoti from Krusha e Madhe and I live in the same village. I am 23 years old and I have finished the secondary school. I was eager to study psychology but the circumstances hindered me from doing so and I couldn't go. Now I work in a business. I will start my story from the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, it was morning I can't remember the time because I was only 12 years old. It was morning and we all came out of the houses. Our house was near the main road / asphalt and we were told that we must flee. We were a 7 member family and we left the house. We came out of the house and walked on the road; we had our 85 year old grandmother with us and as we were walking a cousin stopped his vehicle and me and my grandmother got in. I got in the vehicle and that is where I parted from the rest of the family. We went to a mountain from there, it is like a mountain but we call it a stream and we entered it. Around 1100hrs shots were fired from the road in our direction and I saw an old lady wounded. We were about 100 persons there and we got scared when we saw the wounded lady that couldn't walk. Some soldiers were there so they protected her and got her. In that time we felt a strange silence like it was about to get worse. It was not the first time we fled the village but we used to go back again and having the same idea in our minds we started approaching the village. It was around 0300hrs in the afternoon, I am not very precise about the time but approximately I think it was about 0300hrs when we approached the village; at the place we call the meadow we started calming down and we went to find some water. Large military forces started approaching from Prizren. A lot of soldiers came and we were spread all over. They started shooting from the road from all kinds of weapons. They were in about 2km distance and when they started shooting, we all fell on the ground and we crawled; children and elders were crawling. From there we got to a stream again and we got together again with some other cousins. A lot of people were there including children and babies. Army started coming from above as well; it was evening and we couldn't see anything and a lot of movement of tanks and other things went on for 2 hours but the tanks were being heard mostly. We were a group of cousins and we had an idea that it would be better if we move, we make a group that has no children and we move before something worse happens. We left, about 50 of us or maybe more or maybe less, but all night we searched for the place called "Kusijas ditch". We had some elders with us and we decided to go there but in night time it was impossible to find that place. We walked for a while then we stopped to get rest, sleep for a while and the whole night passed like that. 4-5 times we went one way then we changed to another way. We settled in one place and we slept there; we had gone to a place where some other villages found shelter. It was morning and we saw a lot of tractors but they were abandoned and the population was gone. We entered that place and we met a very old lady whom we knew and we gave her some food. Around afternoon we went back to the stream again. We sat there and we were all somehow calm. It was in the afternoon I think. There was a lot, extremely a lot of military; as a youngster I remember that I was always sitting in someone's lap or in a cousin's lap in order to find comfort and get rid of the fear. But the older persons were afraid for themselves so with a child in their lap they felt protected and we as children felt protected from our cousins. In that moment we were called to come out of the stream. We started going out and I am still surprised how many soldiers were there all geared up; they were lined up waiting for us to come out. They started putting the men on the ground; we saw this only in movies and that was the movie I saw live. They lined up everyone,

our men were about 22 or 23, I can't recall now. We were 5 boys of my age, 12 years old, and they lined those 22 23 men. They placed them on the ground and they told us to leave. We were aware of what is to happen to them; the army was ready with their weapons so we didn't want to leave. I didn't have any member of my family there but we all started crying; the men laying on the ground were pushing us to leave but we refused to go because we knew what awaits them. In that moment we started moving, in fact they forced us to leave because they started shooting at us. First they shot at us and my uncle's daughter and an old lady got wounded and we totally lost it there so we started leaving. Some vineyards were there and I saw an old lady that was wounded on the leg and unable to walk. I removed her headscarf and I tied her wound but I couldn't stay longer because I had my grandmother with me who, as I mentioned, was 85 years old. I tied that old lady's wound and everyone ran for themselves. We started running but my cousin's daughter got wounded so we got disoriented totally. I was 12 years old and running all the time from them. Maybe after 1km we started getting together again; my uncle's daughter was wounded; I found a small source of water and I drank some although it was very dirty but I needed to drink some water. The killing had started in village Krusha e Vogel and in that moment I saw a person coming from Krusha e Vogel, just imagines running all the time and I asked him what happened and he told me that everyone was killed and he is the only survivor; he was totally lost and continued running and I never saw him again. From there all together we went to Nagofc but I was always tied to my grandmother, she was 85 years old. I ran scared for about 500 meters and when I looked I was always behind the crowd because of my grandmother who couldn't walk so fast. I used to run ahead but when I turned and saw my grandmother I ran back to her because I felt sorry for her. The situation changed all the time, in one moment you had to run for your life and then I was going back. We went to Nagofc. It was evening when we reached Nagofc and people of the village took 10 – 15 refugees each into their houses. Over there we saw a lot of killed cattle. I had already seen people being killed but I never saw killed cattle and it was very stressful. We slept that night. We woke up in the morning at a wonderful family; they looked after us and they split with us even their last bite. We had a wounded person with us, that cousin's daughter. A lady doctor came and helped her; 2 – 3 days after, I can't remember exactly, the village was stormed by 30 Serbian troops and they were entering houses; the news was spread that they are coming to massacre us. They came and lined us up with the members of the family where we were staying. They took us out in the yard; as soon as they got in they shot the dog and they asked for gold and they took it. We lined in two or three rows, again I had stuff in my mind so I went in the end of the row always thinking that if they shoot on us I will fall and the people in front of me will fall on me and I will survive but fortunately they only took the gold and left. In the morning we got up and headed to Albania; the journey to there was an experience too; we got very hungry and all the time being afraid that we could be killed because words were going around that we will be killed on the road or that we will have to pay to cross the border, they are asking such and such amount of money per person to cross the border. I was with my grandmother, away from my family and I always felt as a burden on someone else's shoulder and that they will not have money to pay for me. we got very hungry; since the convoy was very long, sometimes the women stopped and prepared food; I will never forget that bread; they would give you a piece of bread and it was something indescribable since we were so hungry and it had a huge impact. I have my father and my brother missing; they were separately. I mentioned that we were 7 members of the family separated in four groups. One brother was at one place

my father, mother and a brother were in another place while I was with my grandmother in a different place; all in different places. My father was found while my brother is still missing. We are living well but with a lot of sacrifice; we always thought that the future will be brighter but also easier. I didn't expect that we had to suffer so much to reach here. My wish was to study psychology but the reason I didn't were the circumstances first and second that we always began from zero. Since when I was 12, although my brother was 15 years old and an older mother, from the beginning when a person starts his life with problems which for me was an obstacle that we my family didn't have money so I said I will not go for studies because they probably don't have money to send me for studies. I know people who finished studies; the conditions were always like a burden on me; always starting from zero; priority was to have a house built. Shortly saying: survival was always a problem. I don't know now, I am so.... One thing I must say; ever since I was 10 or as a child when we started to grow up, not only me but everyone else, when we saw the Serbian police and politicians we were always scared. This is solved; now, thanks to God, you go out on the street and you see an Albanian police officer who greets you "good day", and says "brother". Now we come to politics; we were always lead by foreigners and now I am having suspicions in our politicians, Albanian police and army. Why should we face these problems now; I thought that now it will be easier with Albanians; we would be more understandable and they will lead us properly. My most important message is: the youth starting from 7 years old when they start going to school should study to the maximum. I would ask the others in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the ones in secondary school to study. But you can see that the youth is disoriented; I don't know why. I think that if we want accomplishments we can only do it by studying; we can change life, politics, corruption and everything else. Nobody will be a burden for someone else and we will have more dignified elders. I see elders getting 45 euros pension; this is all work of politics. If we strive for a better education then everyone will live happy: the child, the parent, the disabled person and the whole society will have dignity.

## **Ljiljana Milic**

First I would like to thank you for inviting me and giving me a chance to tell my story. I want all the people who are watching this documentary to know through what has a woman who lived in Prishtina passed. My name is Ljiljana Milic, I was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1965 in part of Prishtina called Vranjevc, Sitnicka 65 St. There I spent my childhood and adolescence. I have graduated the Faculty of Economics in Prishtina. I got married, formed a family and I have two children. Until 1999 I have lived in part of Prishtina called Dardania. After 1999 when my parent and my cousins' father were kidnapped, for safety reasons, we moved to Montenegro where we lived for a year. We decided to wait there for the situation to clear up and to see what will be the course of development. Also, until 1999 I was employed at the Internal Clinic in Prishtina as an accountant until 7<sup>th</sup> of July. After 7<sup>th</sup> of July, I left Prishtina with my family and we went to Podgorica where my family on my father's side was living. From 1999 to 2000 we were in Podgorica, where we lived for a year and where my children finished one school year. In July of 2000, we returned to Babin Most, where we continued to live. I just want to mention that in Prishtina we lived in the part of town called Dardania, from year 2000 when I got married, in a flat as subtenants. Now we are in Babin Most, we live in a house which was given to us as a donation for returnees by the Norwegian Association. So, this is my family and geographical status. It is the municipality of Obilic. It is multi-ethnic Serbian enclave where about nine hundred inhabitants are of Serbian nationality, and about hundred, hundred and fifty inhabitants are ethnic Albanians. It is a multi-ethnic village, but is geographically separated. Houses are not near each other. We are in one part of the village and Albanians, with whom we relatively don't have problems and with whom we have good neighborly relations, are in the other part. Well, it's like this. Until June of 1999 in Prishtina, from the beginning of war on 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1999, I was in Prishtina. All the time, during the bombing and war connected happenings; I lived in our apartment with my children and my husband. All that time I was working in an internal clinic. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1999, I tried to persuade my parents, mother and father, Milic Milos and Milic Leposava along with our friend Toma Tasev to abandon their house in Vranjevc for the safety reasons and come to our place in Dardania. My brother and his wife have also lived with my parents. Toma Tasev was a father to my brother's wife. He went with his car, while we went with ours to our parent's house to persuade them to leave that neighborhood and come to our apartment. Toma went there approximately half an hour before us because it was very hard to persuade my parents to leave. They kept repeating that they never did any harm to anybody there, that they were just a couple of old people and that they have no reasons to leave. Meanwhile, my brother and his wife left that house. Toma drove them to our apartment and then he got back to get my parents. My husband and I also went there to see what is happening, however, meanwhile, I saw certain groups of people that were gathering in front of the gate. My husband and I begged my parents to get out because I knew that it is not safe for them to be there. That was the only Serbian house in the neighborhood; all the other houses belonged to Albanians which were our neighbors. Our first neighbor was Akif Bregaj, who is now deceased and whose children went abroad before the war started. I told my parents to leave the house, but my father said: "no, no, I won't leave, even Akif told me not to leave and promised to keep me safe." Because during the war, Akif lived only with his grandson, so my mother used to take care of them. Everything she cooked for my family, she saved

some for his family. When we went there, no one was home. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June they were kidnapped and taken to an unknown direction. I have been searching for them till this day and I am still fighting in order to find the truth. However, nothing happened. That happened on the 23<sup>th</sup> of June. In the period between 23<sup>th</sup> of June and 7<sup>th</sup> of July we searched for them everywhere. We went to KFOR, international police, wherever we thought we could get any leads, International Red Cross. My brother and I went to report the missing of our parents; however, we haven't found anything. When we got to their home, everything was ransacked and there was no clue of our parents. Because of the safety issues we have decided, as a family, to leave Prishtina on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. In the period between 23<sup>th</sup> of June and 7<sup>th</sup> of July, I never stopped working, because my sister-in-law was also working at the Internal Clinic of Prishtina. We continued going to work because I wanted to take the opportunity to maybe find out something from my Albanian coworkers regarding the disappearance of my parents, however, I didn't find out anything. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July we left Prishtina and we went to Podgorica where we stayed for a year. After one year we returned to Babin Most. In that period, me and my friends and coworkers, which were of the same nationality as me, Serbian, have made the founding assembly and an NGO called Bozur (peony) in Babin Most. I have start working hoping that I will find out something about my missing parents, like what happened to them. I have lived in hope that they were somewhere alive, that someone had mercy on them, because they were just a couple of old people together with Toma, who was also a man in his middle age. They never did anything bad to anyone. They have always supported human qualities and they have always been good to everyone. They never meant to harm anybody. I have started working with the NGO, I had a lot of meetings with UN, KFOR and on every meeting I emphasized the question of missing people, not only my parents, but for all the kidnapped and missing people of the non Albanian community. However, I have never managed to find out anything. Absolutely nothing. Today we are in April of 2012 and I still haven't got any positive information. After the war, the commission for missing people was formed by UN, where lots of people have worked and lots of people were replaced, they had lots of investigative units that were also working on this, but I sincerely doubt that any one of them has really tried to do something regarding this subject. I think that none of them put their souls in the work and unfortunately, no information was gathered. On the other side, the NGO I was working with had a basic goal of searching for the missing people, especially for the kidnapped ones including my parents and my friend. Meanwhile, I was also working strengthening the civil society, strengthening the economic state of Babin Most and around because I understood the importance of helping those people to survive and stay in Babin Most and surrounding villages like Gravce, Priluzje and Plemetina. There I also had a lot of meetings, we had a bit of success and we managed do get some economic projects to the village, but my health begun to worsen because of all the stress and those family traumas and tragedies have resulted in appearance of carcinoma in the bladder which I had to surgically deal with in 2003. I had to go through chemotherapies and fight against this mean and evil illness. But I always kept telling myself that a strong woman like me won't be defeated by one small cell. I have always been strong and knew that I am stronger than this illness. I thank God for being here today with you, I have proven that I have defeated my illness. I have some more diseases, such as disorder of the thyroid gland, auto immune diseases, arthritis; I take some medication that helps me preserve my health, it also helps me to function so I can be a mother and a wife. After that operation, I had two more operations but I mostly thank God for every day of life that

He has given me. I had various meetings with EULEX and International Organizations, I was in the board of Kosovo Women's Initiative, I was on various seminars and trainings and I am trying to spend this life that I have in a way so I can help the environment as well as myself to preserve this little health that I have left so I can keep working. We had problems in Vranjevc, a man has moved into our house. We have reported this to HPD and some more places. His name was Hasan and we could not do anything about it, unfortunately, to get him out of our house. We couldn't even sell the house, because my brother, I must mention it because you have just reminded me, lived in the collective center of Paracin. As for the man who moved in our house, we could not expel him from the house. We couldn't get nor have any buyers because whenever someone came to the house, this guy would make excesses and so on. In 2009 I messaged him, he came to my house, we talked and we agreed that if we find the buyers he will leave the house or I will sue him in the court of law for kidnapping my parents, because I don't know who did it so it might as well be him. It looked like he had a motive. He swore that he didn't do it and that the house was empty when he came. After our conversation I went to see the house. It was very, very hard for me. I also saw uncle Akif who began to cry when he saw me. I asked him, uncle Akif, how could let this happen? I trusted you, my parents trusted you, why did you let them to take them away so that none of us, me nor you, can know what happened to them? He began to cry and he said that there was nothing he could do, the men who came to take them away were not from around here and he didn't know them. They ordered him to get inside and didn't care who were the ones that they were about to kidnap as long as they were of Serbian nationality. I simply couldn't do anything about it. After that, we had to make an arrangement with Hasan because he demanded that I pay him in order to get rid of him. This story about paying someone to leave your house is unfortunately a common thing among Serbs. Albanians who have usurped Serbian property, a great deal of them demanded that they get paid in order to leave the properties as if it was their property. Even though there are documents regarding the ownership and everything. We agreed with him, but there were problems. He demanded five thousand Euros to leave the house even though the house was ruined after the kidnapping of my parents. I don't really get it how that man could even live there. He asked for five thousand Euros to leave the house, we discussed and argued with him and finally in 2009 we managed to make an agreement with him and we paid him. We had to pay him three thousand Euros. This man who bought the house, through this agency which I won't name in order to avoid any kind of problems, had to pay to Hasan first in order to get him out of there. After selling the house, my brother left the collective center in Paracin and he bought an apartment. Yeah, these are the things that are catastrophic. So when we returned after my operations in 2003 we applied, because my father-in-law lives in Babin Most in a house which was getting tight for all of us, 4 families lived there, there was no room for all of us, nor for me, my husband and my two children. I reported the demand for building materials, so that we could build something, just to have a roof above our heads in Babin Most. I encountered tremendous obstacles. Unfortunately, in civil society people often think that people who work with NGOs make a lot of money, but only we who work with NGOs know that that is not true. Especially in my case, because most the work I have done was voluntarily because I had a higher goal in my mind. In Obilic, when we submitted the request, I first had problems with representatives of my own, Serbian community, unfortunately. People like Nikola Tripkovic, Slavisa Djancic and others told me that I'll get the building materials only over their dead bodies, because they feel that I am working against the interests of the

Serbian community, and that is why I can't the materials. Bribery and corruption are still present in Kosovo society, and generally, in my opinion, in many other societies as well. Even I took part in that corruption, but unfortunately, I had to. I found the connection because I had the opportunity to travel, to use the internet and telephones. It cost me two thousand Euros, I gave two thousand Euros to get house of fifty four square meters. I don't feel sorry for the money. The man who made this possible provided my family with life itself. I feel sorry for doing this in this manner but I really hope that the time will come when we will eradicate the corruption. I am looking forward for the day when we can't buy our existential things, our positions, jobs and things like that with money.

Now we live in that house, my husband, my children and me. We have a roof over our heads, we have existence. We are glad. My message... I want to say to everyone that the war doesn't bring anything good to anyone. May never be wars again, let's not shed a single drop of blood on this region ever more, Serbian nor Albanian nor Rom, and may no one ever again be in my skin, to know nothing of his or her loved ones, to search for them in vain. Let peace, happiness and prosperity rule in Kosovo and in Serbia and worldwide. Thank you, thank you very much.

## **Lutfi Hoxha**

I am Lutfi Riza Hoxha born in village Popove, Municipality of Podujevo residing in Vushtrri now, near the graveyard. From 1965 I worked abroad; like everyone else, I got out and started working until 1985 when I got disability pension and then we continued with our everyday life. Personally, like everyone else, I had my share of turmoil and experience with the enemy. We were lied and deceived; they gathered us all and we couldn't move anywhere, we had our plans they had their plans. At the cemetery in Vuhstrri, by my own hands I delivered mine like everyone else delivered theirs to this freedom, I gave them with my own hands; I had my share of suffering with the police. I was with my sons in Sllakofc village because the KLA was in Seceli and Sllakofc village at that time. My sons were sleeping and living in Popov village. I personally got them there. I got my second son very easy but I faced a lot with my elder one because we were caught in Nadakofc village with my uncle's oldest son. We were caught by Serb paramilitaries wearing Serb Cetnik uniforms. They were mobilized civilians that joined the police and with two of his colleagues they stopped us and fired bursting shots above the road. We entered the road but then we had to go back. I had two weapons pointed at me while my son had a bayonet of a 48 rifle on his throat. They started abusing us. My son used to work in the green market to provide food for us and he asked my son because he knew him and my son knew the policeman very well. He asked my son "do you know me?", my son said "yes"; he said lets speak in Serbian but my son didn't know a word in Serbian. He asked my son "who am i?"; my son replied "I don't know you by name but I know you are a policeman because you buy stuff from us and I know you". He said "you are lying". Then I said "can I explain because my son doesn't speak your language, he doesn't speak Serbian. He doesn't know you; he was didn't serve the army, you could notice that when you fired with automatic rifles at us, he is sure that he doesn't know you and it doesn't matter if he knows you or not but I am telling you that we didn't do anything."; he said "can you tell me where are you headed to?"; I said "we are going home to unleash the cattle, I am a disabled person so I took these two so they can unleash the cattle because it is considered a sin if you keep them like that."; He said "do you see that I can kill you now." I said "I am ready to die but I am interested to know why"; he said "thank the Serbian state, God and us that I didn't kill you." I said "I don't know why. We didn't do anything, we didn't kill anyone why are you stopping us, and we haven't done anything." He turned to my son and said "do you know me?" and my son replied "Yes". I said no but he didn't remove the knife from his throat and it didn't puncture him. My son was not scared neither the other boy that was carrying bread. I asked in Serbian if I could say something and he said yes. I said "either shoot or remove the weapons from them" because the boys were shaking because they were young. I had weapons pointed at me in both sides of my kidneys. One of them said "see what's in the bag?" I told them that it was only bread and that was the truth. He said in Serbian that there was bread. He said "ok release him" then he hit my son with the handle of the knife in the head and released him saying "go ahead, walk". My son said "since you said that, here take some Dinars and go drink somewhere, because I only have Dinars and I don't need them." He grabbed us by the shoulder and said "don't give money because you will get killed." I took them to Secili and the youngest one I dent him out with the vehicle. They stayed for three weeks but this one wanted to come and he came to Secili; he spent some time with his friends. His friends appealed him not to come to us but he insisted saying that he saw some bad dreams and that he must go to his parents. On his way, in the entrance of

Vushtrri coming from Prishtina, an ambush was set there; it was around 1030 in the evening. We were like always surrounded; we couldn't move anywhere; we were blocked at the cemetery staying out and listening. Around 0830hrs we heard a round of fire when they executed some; around 0930 another round was heard. My wife, my daughter, I had a lot, I had about 5 – 6 families in my house, they cried "wow, what happened." She said "he fell on his chest – back; I have a son there." I stood for a while and I said they are all sons of someone because whoever is a parent he has a child too. She said "no, he is mine. We stayed out at night watching who is coming but we couldn't notice who he was but we saw that someone was killed. In the morning we went to search amongst the doctors in our neighborhood; one of my neighbors knew but he didn't tell us. I didn't know anything; my wife found out around 1000hrs in the morning that our son was killed. She took the brothers and went but they didn't tell me anything. Disabled as I was, also from the trauma I was very sick. The brothers couldn't get him out because they said only women can go and get the bodies. It was a very hard day, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April; there was a lot of movement of the Serbian police. They came back and said that they couldn't get him because they are constantly shooting. My wife, her sister in law and another woman took the cart and went out. I asked them where they are headed to. My wife said "we are going to get some wood because we are out so I took her to help me and another friend who is pregnant." She tricked me but I didn't make a big deal out of it so I went back in. I began with the afternoon prayer and just when I was about to finish I heard a scream. I went out and asked what happened. They said that someone is screaming. I said "who is screaming? Don't scream otherwise I will kick you all out in the street; we can all get killed so I don't want to hear anyone screaming; we are Muslims and we are true; we know our nation; we should not scream.: my wife came back but when she went out she didn't take her sister in law. He was surrounded by policeman and they didn't let anyone take him and they turned towards my wife to kill her. She knew a little Serbian and she took off the headscarf and approached our son and tries to take the body. They had taken his shoes, money from the pockets and everything else. They asked her "where are you going?" There happened to be a Serbian civilian lady and says "I am going to get my son". They say "how do you know it is your son? Do you know him?" She says "yes". In which part he joined the KLA, they asked. She said "he was born in Popov village but he came to see his family but you killed him". They said "we didn't kill him, the KLA did". She says "no, you killed him." One Roma boy of his age happened to be there and says "look lady they don't know who he is?" and says I know who he is because he was my classmate. A Serb says that nobody can take him. I will kill her too. She says "I will take my child/son or I will get killed too". All this time I didn't know anything; I finished the prayer. She said that she was taken to court and when they take her to court they say "if you only dare kill one Roma or one of ours, we will kill everyone in the neighborhood". My wife replied "we are not the ones killing; you are the ones killing us". They told her "you don't know fear, do you". She said "no, I will never fear you because there is nothing more you can do to me". When she came back I went out at the gates. She says "old man"; I say "yes", she says "you got to be strong". We got him, it was a huge crowd, and he was the best student. He was on his second year in faculty and he was very skillful. I took him inside and my wife said "put him where he used to read, where he prayed every prayer that is where I want him." We were surrounded in every way. All the friends came. In the evening I asked them not to make this a big ceremony because they might bomb us since they were doing it every night. We have to stay strong otherwise we can all die. The time for funeral came. We were surrounded; our

wives were going out for supplies since we couldn't go. We remained like that, never going out; our children in the mountains; one child came to me but he remained here forever. We couldn't move from them. He got killed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, on 2<sup>nd</sup> of May the massacre in Studime took place. Now the worst fear was for the other two and for everyone not just for mine. Our turn came and they took us all and lined us up. Nobody knew anything when suddenly the news came that the paramilitaries and Cetniks stormed the neighborhood; they were all with hats and bayonets. I asked my family members to stay with the crowd. We went out on a field which was about 2 ha, near the cemetery. I used to work in "Kosova e Vushtrrise". When we went out we saw that they got ready to execute us ruthlessly but somehow we already agreed to that and we were equipped with courage and we felt no fear but we didn't know what to do with the women and children who were in large numbers. Two trucks were carrying as much as they could; since 0500 in the morning the executing and cleansing of the city had started and we didn't know who is being killed and who is surviving. We didn't know where to go. When they surrounded us, one of them came and ordered all the paramilitaries to leave and they left after taking the phones from us. When they left I didn't care if they kill me because only policeman and others remained. They started separating men from women and children; when they separated women and children we were hoping that they will be sent back home because we didn't know where they were taking them or if they are executing them or only us. They separated men around 60 in one side, young men were being loaded in trucks and women, girls and children on one side. An unbelievable procedure started and I pray that it doesn't happen to anyone and that no one faces what we saw. You couldn't move; we were in water in a very bad place; a crowd of people; we only waited for the moment to see what will happen next. All kind of news were coming, we saw bulldozers and everything ready to bury us and finish everything ruthlessly; execution of everyone. There were people on wheelchairs and sick. Then it happened. They started executing around but thanks to God not there. Families couldn't see because it was crowded. It was unbelievable; you couldn't count how many were there; I don't believe anyone could count how many were there. We saw another party that was around us being executed. Around 0200 in the afternoon it was a bit calmer. Only the Serbian police remained there. NATO was bombing; one Serb, believe it or not, said: "they are saving you; they will kill you all and us all because of you." He turned and selected some disabled and some in wheelchairs and appealed to go and get relatives who are in wheelchairs and fathers that died from fear. I tried and I managed to escape through the crowd and I approached my house. A neighbor told me not to go inside because they slayed and minced so better don't go inside. I saw that there is no family member of mine but they got a calf and slayed it; I had two dogs: one was shot and massacred in the doghouse but the other escaped. What was unbelievable is that I had cattle in that time and when I opened the door of the stable they screamed more than humans. Each of them cried. It was unbelievable to hear such a loud cry of the animal and then we unleashed them. They kept us like that until the evening hours then an order came, I don't know where from. They took the children and families and directed them into streets. They came and searched the houses. For the moment I didn't have any other victims. My second son who came back when we buried the third son, was caught and beaten ruthlessly but the beating was part of every day now. Important was just to stay alive because we didn't make a big deal when they beat us; we forgot about it very fast. They turned us back and everyone went to their houses and got locked inside. The next day we were told to go and get registered; who and how many remained. How could we register when we

didn't dare go out? They would kill you in every corner that they caught you. They were asking for some cards which we didn't have and to get them we had to go pretty far. We were harassed by Romas too; we trusted them but it had not been so. They organized us in a group and sent us there escorting us as if we were cattle. When we went there, the people working there were all Serbs and I knew one Serbian lady from Sfaraqak and I told her my story. She said I don't know you; I only know the Serbian state; you are nothing for us. There was a very fat Serbian holding a book and he said in Serbian "look, neighbor, you are only being registered so we know who remained otherwise you..." I thanked God that the women and children don't understand Serbian language although my wife knew it a little. We waited for about half an hour standing with one foot on one step. It was not a problem that we waited for hours for the rest. Then one came and said "no more cards will be given"; he stopped it; if you move from your houses we will kill you. We had to go back home escorted. Like everyone else we remained with the support of each other; there was no place you could send even a sick person. We remained like that. This was shortly our story not to go too deep in the subject because you already know it or perhaps not and I pray that you didn't have our luck. But you and all our Albanian brothers shared the pain and everything with us; like the event when we were gathered 50 – 60 or 60 – 70 thousand people; they were all our brothers, sons and daughters. I have nothing to say for the Government because whatever I say I will be saying it to myself because they are ours; we see what kind they are; how careful to us is all visible. Just to tell you what reality is, it is unbelievable that nobody knocked on our door to ask about the situation we are in. they were four but remained three. Today my oldest son is 40; what about the children; 16 family members but not one employed. We have to find our own way to survive. Hard times have come; everything has fallen; there is no more trade no nothing. They always said that the small fish is eaten by the big fish and it seems to be true. New big things are opened and the small ones have drowned. My message to youth would be: don't ever forget that a Serb remains a Serb; once and forever for 100 thousand years he will only change his uniform, his attire but he will never change his idea. Don't ever trust them because you will lose; never trust them. I have worked a lot and I worked abroad with them; the joke has a part of truth in it. I was told by the elders although they were in the mountains but they always said "watch out from the Serb". I would say today that we must be very careful and not to fall under their influence. Don't drop yourself; nobody can be better for me than you and better for you than me. If someone mistreats you I will feel sorry but not him.

### **Maxhun Alimehaj**

I was born in village Lybeniq, Municipality of Peja. I was born on 28.01.1942 in Lybeniq. I finished the primary school in Raushiq, then I went to serve the army, when I came back I finished school and I got employed at the Auto Parts factory “Ramiz Sadiku” in Peja. I worked there for 30 years until 1998; I was thrown out of work but I also didn’t want to continue working because of the situation, seeing that there is no improvement for us. As far as war is concerned, I survived April the 1<sup>st</sup> when our village Lybeniq was surrounded by the paramilitary forces, police and army. It was an extraordinary steel siege. The paramilitary infantry entered houses and threw us out with the intention and even saying that we should leave the houses and go to Albania. We were thrown out at 0715 in the morning. We went out on the street; when we went out every house in village had 3 – 4 paramilitaries / soldiers, kicking us out of houses and out of the village. I was with my brother because I had already evacuated my family seeing the situation and from fear of what my family experienced in 1998 since in that day I was not home; so I was only with my brother. We went out, that morning we were staying at a cousin named Haxhi Alimehaj; we got out of the houses and when we reached close to the end of the village the others told us that we should stop and wait there. They started separating men or the male gender in one side and women, girls and children in the other side. When they separated us, they stopped us there and they surrounded us from all sides and they got positions, I realized that they didn’t want anyone to escape; so we didn’t have any way out. A paramilitary, after separating us, said to the women and children: you can get to the highway now and from there straight to Albania and don’t turn anywhere because we will be following you. They scared the women and children by firing some shots so they started moving and crying. There were pregnant women, old women and small children; they started walking to the other side. He turned to us and said “you asked for NATO, you are the people who are working against the state of Serbia”; one representative of our village that we selected to represent us said “I don’t know why you are stopping us here; this happened in 1998 when people were killed and houses burnt. This is not good; this is a mixed village and we never pressured Serbs. We have Serbs, Romas and Montenegrins in the village and we Albanians that are majority but we never did anything to them”, He told him “you can shut your mouth”. Another person named Adem Haradini from our group asked to say something and he said: “I don’t know what we have done that you killed us even the first time”. He asked “who killed you?” and Adem replied “the police”. He grabbed Adem, pulled him in front of us and executed him there. He had the machinegun, rounds of bullets around his neck, grenades and a rucksack with bullets and he executed Adem on the spot. The representative said “why did you kill him”; he turned the rifle towards him and executed him as well. Then he gave the order “what are you waiting for; these should all be executed” and in that moment all the machine guns turned to us and started firing at once. The ones in front started falling dead. Meanwhile from the shots I got wounded, I remember a bullet caught me on the leg and I fell on the ground. When I fell on the ground I didn’t move at all throughout the bursting shots which continued for about 2 – 3 minutes, although I couldn’t measure the time. I thought that nobody survived while I knew that I was still alive. They stopped for a while, for about 2 – 3 minutes and the order was given “one lower” as I heard it since I know Serbian language very well. He turned to his people and said: check for survivors; no one should survive. I knew myself and I lost hopes for life. They started stepping on the bodies; when someone was heard moaning from the pain

they fired a shot or two and the noises stopped. After this they fired another round of bursting shots thinking that nobody is alive. A bullet caught me on my heel and broke it in two but luckily no bullet caught me on the body. In that moment I heard NATO airplanes flying and I heard footsteps of them running away; at least I thought so. I didn't move thinking that probably they left someone to watch so I decided to keep on laying down. Even breathing was hard because I had dead bodies on and around me; I don't know; I can't describe it. For a while it was all quiet. After about 15 – 20 minutes I heard someone moving on the crowd. I thought to myself that they were back to check our pockets because in that time we were all carrying money. I had about 1200 Deutsche Marks, in a small pocket where I placed them because we needed money in that time. Someone got up, then I moved and I saw that Besim Huski got up wounded and started crawling towards oak fields – as we call it- on a side road and I saw him standing up. I saw another one standing up, he was Isuf Avdullahu. I said these got up but what should I do? I couldn't believe that Serbs are not there and they will catch us or they placed someone to watch and they will probably be executed. I got up after a while, I was tired to tell you the truth because my head was facing the ground and stones were pinched to my forehead. I said that I was meant to die so I started crawling slowly along one wall. I went for 10 meters like that when I came across Muharrem Bobi who was heavily wounded; his leg was broken under the knee and he was unable to move at all. I felt so sorry and it was really hard for me so I approached to help him at least to put him away somewhere to put him somewhere inside. We couldn't go very far like that. I thought of a house which was burnt in 1998 in the first fighting along with 12 other houses and it was near by. I thought of going in that house since it was burnt and I thought that they wouldn't come to search inside it. I pulled that boy and Muharrem and we went into Ali Zogu's house which was burnt. I saw some blankets and I helped him to lay there. He told me to cover him so they won't notice him if they come back. Pile the blankets above me, don't fold them he said. I did that and I went to another room which was burnt and I stood there supported on the wall. I was afraid and worried that they saw us entering there or from the blood that we spilled on the road I said they would follow the blood signs and will find us there. We stayed there, after 15 minutes showed up Muharrem's son. I don't know if he saw us or he just instinctively entered there. He was wounded too. When I heard the door opening I thought I will be executed now; I was mostly worried for what they can do to me. They can abuse with you: first they would cut your ear, then the nose; kill you slowly and painfully. I knew that for sure they would do that if they find us. I entered there and I said; his name is Shefqet. I said Shefqet, he was totally lost, I said Shefqet your father Muharrem is alive, he is covered over there. He didn't recall it so we went in a place in bathroom which was burnt as well. We stayed there until late, somewhere around 1300hrs when they came with vans; we were not able to see them but I knew that they came for the corpses. They stayed there for 1 hour. We saw some suitcases what they did there; it was like a ceremony. They were probably taking pictures sounds of snapshots were heard; they were bragging saying that no Albanian foot will ever step in this village. They stood there, I don't know doing what but after an hour they released another round of bursting shots and they left. We couldn't leave there before dark so around 0930hrs in the evening we checked if Muharrem is still alive. We touched him and we spoke to him. He told us, he got scared, he said two people came and said; I will never forget this; look Muharrem this was the destiny of Lubeniq, this bad luck, otherwise Kosovo is free. When he said these words I knew that there is no man alive but he kept going on with this dream. With his son we tried to tie his wound in the leg with a

sheet, we washed his face with some water. I said to Shefqet: Muharrem is wounded but he is alright. He turned to us and said: if you can get through somehow because he is young you should leave because others or the Serbs of the village can come back any moment. I probably won't live for longer because he had lost a lot of blood and he was tired. We were unable to drag him because both of us were wounded in the leg; we walked on our knees and hands until we reached the hill with Shefqet. If you can find somebody that can come and take and if he finds me alive then OK but if you cant it is not your fault. He was happy that his son survived. Then we went to the hill which is nearby. It was full of snow; we passed the road through the mountain; I was walking on these knees and hands. In that moment I saw that they have burnt some houses; 32 houses were burnt only there. I forgot to tell you this before that prior to the execution he wanted to put me in a yard which was surrounded with walls but the door was locked so they continued in that way; they probably wanted to put us in there and burn us; like they did before. Now, to tell you the truth, when I was in commission I really remained with trauma and all that but it will never go away; I sleep very little; I remember that day; my brother died there; young men died there, older people; I remember very well when they took a 12 -13 year old boy from his mother hands and brought him in our group; he was the only son of the family. There were 6 families that lost their only sons there. 2 of them haven't left any successors; when I think about it wish there could be some way to put myself instead of them for execution and release those young boys that haven't lived their best ages; I say that I would gladly change with them; maybe nobody believes me but that is how I am. What can I say; I get really rebellious when I hear cases what these guys do. They don't care and the Serbs are not being held responsible or to beg for pardon for what they did. They had the weapons, the specialized people for the army, officers. Again I say that I hope we will raise our awareness and we won't forget. I repeat this very often, I say that wealth without strong basement is nothing; let everyone know this. We must work for the state, take care after our youth, future; because if all that we do is to get rich it something that is worth to nobody, let everyone know this. The Serb was our enemy forever; I lived through what our elders lived. We all knew that in every moment all they did was thinking of how to eliminate, abuse, loot and do all the worst to the Albanian people. This is why our Government and every Government should work for the future of our youth so they get education and become experts in different fields in order to achieve something and to show someone that we deserve to be recognized. I had a will but I don't have enough time because I have many things but I would also like to thank you for inviting me; when I see some things I get sick; all the time I am under medication because I feel myself somehow as the ones that died, the only difference is that I still breathe; I have saved the bullet that they took out of my leg and those marks on my leg in order to show them to my children and tell them not to forget what we went through. I am a person that didn't trouble anyone; I like to see development because that is what keeps me going; if I see bad things, I would.... Sorry since I might have gone too far.

### **Mehmet Mehmeti**

I was born and raised in a village called Oshlan, in a poor family, so to say. Since young age I left the village and started working in Mitrovica where I also moved in 1965 and live ever since. I got married in Mitrovica. I have 4 sons, I had actually because one is missing; I have now three. I always lived and worked in Mitrovica. It was really tragic and hard but happened is the truth. I was working for a firm named Kosovservin and I worked there up to the last day. We used to work Serbs and Albanians together. The bombing started and we still continued to work in Mitrovica. Some Serbs were even teasing me that they have prepared me a scarf so better run to Albania. One day, after the bombing had started, I said to the Serb that was teasing me the most, I have prepared what you gave me but now I am returning them to you so you go back to Prepalac to Serbia and that was it. Until 27<sup>th</sup> of April, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March it was 3-4 days after the bombing started I was still working in the company. On the 27<sup>th</sup> everything was stopped; I used to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> category disabled so from driver I was put to work as a courier, carrying the mail, bank extract and certificates to the director's office, when I went to work a policeman was standing at the gate and asked me where am I going? I said that I'm going to work and luckily I had those papers in my hand. He said that no one is there and there is no work. I again said that I want to go and see the director and take the certificate and these papers to him. He told me to drop them there and leave. I dropped the papers and headed back. As I turned I heard a machine gun fire. I stood in the middle of the road not knowing what happened. I got lost; I was just watching where the blood will start coming out. I headed from the trains station to use a short cut. The chief of the train station, whom I knew, heard the shots and came out of the office and saw me. When he saw me he asked me "Mehmet, what happened?" I said that I don't know, I just heard the shots. He said "Go home and go out again because there will be no work anymore." I went through the train station. I guarantee that they thought I was a Serb. Paramilitaries were everywhere, in groups. I walked through them. I got lost and I dint know what was going on. I kept on walking and by God's will I reach home. Since that day I dint go out or to work anymore. We remained in Tamnik. After a couple of days we decided to flee the city and go to my village Oshlan. We stayed for three nights with my children, wife and family. The village was filled from all sides and they started shelling the village. We decided to file from there and to go to Ulcin since we have our house there. My sons said that they want to go to Oshlan since our army is there and we want to join them. I told them not to go. We went to the bus and got the tickets, I remember we paid 100 Deutsche Marks each and we jumped into the bus. Two buses headed to Montenegro. We reached Zubin Potok when the buses were stopped. Knowing the situation in Oshlan, since they were fighting there, I said to myself that as soon as they see that I'm from Oshlan in my Identity Card they will execute me. While we were inside the bus they kept saying that they will cut us, throw us in Iber River and all sorts of things. I was standing on my feet while my wife and kids were seated. They called the ones standing to go out of the bus while the other can remain seated. He started collecting ID's and I thought when he sees Oshlan in my ID, knowing what is happening there, I will be executed. I held the ID and he went around and around, by God's will, I followed the circle and did not give him the ID at all. We were held there for about 2 hours and then told us to get back in the bus. I placed my ID in the pocket. They brought other ID's into the bus and returned the buses to Mitrovica. Two buses were turned back to the bus station where we got out. All Albanians should

come step down they said, while Serb and Montenegrins can remain in the bus. Albanians were not allowed to go out. I, my wife and kids got stuck there not knowing what to do or where to go. I had a brother in law in Turkey and he was calling us on the phone every night asking us to go there. We decided that my wife and kids should leave while I will remain here. I will survive somehow; I will go to Oshlan at my relatives so I decided so. Finally with my son, who is missing, we managed to get them the tickets and put them into the bus and headed towards Macedonia. My wife told me the rest of the story: “we reached Ferizaj and then we were turned back saying that the border is closed. They were two buses.” One of the Serbian drivers was more communicative and he spoke to them and argued with them saying that I got the money from these people so I will somehow take them out. He said that there is no way to cross there so they turned to go through Gjilan. They were sent to Gjilan to Preshevo. During their journey, my wife told me: “2 km from Gjilan there were all kinds of drugged people, all kinds of people. The paramilitary or police, whatever they were, stopped the bus but the bus driver started arguing with them saying that I want to talk to an army officer. They called one which was a Major. He came with a military Jeep. He got into the bus and asked “who is after you, where are you headed to, what do you want?” Nobody spoke as they were all frightened. My wife knows the language pretty well since she worked in the company all the time, so she spoke and said “no one is after us but you see the situation yourself”. He turned us to Macedonia again and said “do you want to go back; no one will dare touch you from me”. We said “we escaped from there, only if you can take us out”. He said “look, I have been to Bosnia and my children have suffered the same way. If you want to get out I will take you out.” We asked if he could just take us to the border because we are eager to get out. He said that there is no problem so he invited a police vehicle and escorted us with two cars, one in front and one in the back. They escorted us up to the border, to Preshevo. There he said “now may God look after you”. That night, whoever had relatives went to them but when they asked us we told them that we are headed to Turkey. They took us to Skopje Airport from where we flew to Istanbul airport, where our relatives were waiting for us.” My wife with three sons, one of them married, went to Turkey. I forgot to mention that the oldest was not married and he said “I will never leave you alone”, so he stayed with me. After one week we found out that they reached Turkey. He stayed with me. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April they dealt with Mitrovica starting from Baje neighborhood by burning. We were watching them all from there. From the hospital side, which is also known as “mikronasel”, they were burning houses and gathering people in Tamnik; all Mitrovica was there. On 15<sup>th</sup> of April the population gathered with vehicles; I was in my house. I stayed on a chair behind the door the whole night because it was overcrowded. The mother of Enver Hasani, President of the court, got killed. They were shelling Tamnik all the night. In the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> of April people gathered from all sides. I had some flour so I told them take anything you find. Some women cooked all night long whatever they could. I told them to take the flour and the stuff and don’t spare anything. The next day we were chased out of Mitrovica. I spoke to the son who is missing now, and we decided to join our cousin who had a son in enlisted in the army in Oshlan. Since his son was there and he was going to Oshlan we decided to leave with him. We thought of taking the kids to Albania first. But it didn’t happen. My son ran home saying “come on father because Muharrem left so there is no chance we can go to Oshlan”. I asked him “what are you saying?” he said “come on, we have got to move because they are shooting in the neighborhood”. We were amongst the last to escape, and about 50 meters away there were two of them, one on one side, one on the other,

just shooting to scare the population. We went out and 1000% they had the chance to kill us, but by God's will they didn't. I had a van; actually no I had the Peugeot while my son got the van. He said I will drive the van because someone might want to join me so you take the Peugeot. He said let's take these two and leave. They directed us towards Zhabar, on a small road in order to go out on the main road. On the asphalt we met our niece, who is old and was not able to walk anymore and her son asked me "uncle can you take my mother because she can't walk anymore". I said yes of course. He went on foot using a shortcut because the people that were walking they were all using the same shortcut. That niece jumped in the vehicle with me; I was driving the vehicle on a row in the main road from Mitrovica. My son was 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> on the row behind me with the van. When I reached the junction where you take a turn to head to Skenderaj, there is a big uphill, I saw 5 policemen. Being a driver in Mitrovica I knew all of them and I knew them real good. Those five were: Ratko, Zvonko, Nenad, Savic and Boban, all five that I knew were there wearing masks. Three paramilitaries that were there I did not know. I had that Peugeot which was old; I still have that car over there in the junkyard. He told me "come on, drive". I was very close to a Golf II; they took this vehicle from him, he was of Beran family living there in Mitrovica. They told me to drive and I had to drive so I drove. I put it on the first gear and I started climbing very slow while my son was driving behind; we were waiting what will happen but we didn't dare stop. In the corner there was a tree, still is there, I saw a man from Gushice village murdered there. I went to Shipol and I was waiting for a while for my son to show up. After a while I saw the van and I was happy with my niece that Blerim is finally coming as well. When the van approached I saw Klensi driving it. I asked him "what happened to my son?" he said that they stopped him. How did they stop him, what happened? He said that they got the vehicle from him and placed his family and Halil Kelmendi's family in this van. They have taken both with my son, they took the Golf 2 from him and they placed these two families in the van. Your son talked to those soldiers, I don't know what he spoke with them. I don't know if he gave them money; Klensi was telling me. He was once released but he was recognized by Ratko, who exercised terror in Mitrovica. He told him: where are you going, come back here, you can't go. But that guy can't drive so let me go because I have to drive. He told him get back here, you can't go. He pointed the rifle at him and told him to drive. They took Halim Kelmendi and my son there. They have kept them at some stairs, which are still today there, at a bakery under Sherif Klinass house; he sold it and it belongs to someone else today. Some people told me that they kept both of them there until a black car came and took them away. We don't know anything about them ever since. Only God knows where they took them and what they done to them. When the van reached Shipol I asked him what happened with my son? He told me as I told you earlier. I lost myself from all the stress; in Shipol there was a person named Islam Shipoli who worked for us and he was still in the house with his family. So I sent my vehicle in his yard, since I left the Peugeot in his yard as well and I left the van there too. This Klensi gave me back the van and said do whatever you like with it. With my son we had concealed, in that van; we had a company named "Marmarabos" in Prishtina near "Qafa". There was a house that belonged to Gica and Dragan and we rented it for 5 years and we stayed there for 5 years. There were about 30 thousand Deutsche Marks and about 2-3 thousand Swiss francs which I concealed in that van with my son. I took that money and the Peugeot. I left the van there. I heard later on that Ratko told the neighborhood if someone touches the van, he will everyone; I don't know what my son told him or showed him, I will never know. Afterwards Ratko took away that van. He kept the van until the

war was over. After I came back from Albania, that van was one or 2 days before in Zvecan, I was told where it was. I went and reported it to the French; I told them everything so they took me with their vehicle to Zvecan to see if we could find the van. When I went there, I met a person named Milovan who used to work in our company and he told me that he saw my van, because it had written on it "Marmarabos" – the name of the company. He said that he was driving there until yesterday and he said that if he sees it again I will tell him to do something. After that I never saw that van again, they sent it for Kralevo and I never found it again. Never mind because it is nothing, it passes as well. I am trying hard; very, very hard; I would like to say this as well, according to people, some unscrupulous people; there was one Nazim Bejler, a goran who had a fast food shop in Prishtina then he went to Shtimlje then he disappeared. He heard that we have our company so he was taking money from people to take them to Merdare, cheating people with all kinds of lies. I knew that they are all lies, my mind told me that they were lies / untrue. One day, my wife was in Prishtina and this Nazim showed up. I told him: look, you are asking for 50 thousand, I will give you 100 thousand just if it is for accurate. He kept saying it is 1000% sure; he kept mentioning names and untrue things. I told him: you are asking for 50 thousand, I will give you 100 thousand just if it is for accurate but I want to go and see myself. I told him that I would go, for my kids I will jump on fire. He said that if I am not afraid to go then I will see him, even talk to him, and see him for myself. I told him that I won't give you any money before I am not sure that what you say is true. He lowered his price to 2 thousand Deutsche Marks, look how dirty he was. He said that the Serbian guy wants 10 thousand Deutsche Marks. I said ok but I will take it to him. He asked me if I dare go there. I told him, just give me his number and I will go there I just want this to be sure. He said that it is for sure. I asked him who is he? He gave me the name of a Serb in Nis saying that my son is at the old airport in Nis. Everything Nazim Bejler was saying was untrue. We had, if you remember, scrapyards Kosovo, Serbia, we had departments all over Kosovo and outside Kosovo: in Nis, Kralevo, Belgrade, Niksic all over the place, I won't mention them all, in Skopje as well, anyway. I knew a Bozo Vitkovic from Nis so I phoned him from home and I tell him the story and that I was told that my son is at the old airport in Nis and I ask him if he has someone there and I told him that there is a man and I gave him the details, name and last named of the person. He said on the phone: O Mehmet, he is not a shy man, he works in SUP and has a high function, he said that he can't talk to him, I never talked to him and I have no contact with him but I know who he is. Ok I said describe him to me because I have to take 10 thousand Deutsche Marks to him in Belgrade and he will let me see my son. He described him to me as the man really was. The day came, I got on the airplane to Podgorica, from there I took a vehicle to Belgrade, I had the phone number and everything with me. When I went to Belgrade, I went to the city by bus and I phoned him. He answered. He asked: did you arrive; I said: Yes, I arrived; he asked: where are you now? I said: I just reached town. He said do you know Belgrade? I said yes I know it very well, I used to work here, I know people here; just tell me where you want to meet. He said can you come to Hotel "Slavia"? I said yes and we set a meeting there. I went straight to Hotel "Slavia"; it was March, pretty cold, with some snow. I had a black coat and a black hat like and I described myself to the guy, as I said with a black coat and a black hat. I told him that I will go inside, sit alone and when you see me you come and sit with me. He said I'll be there in 5 minutes and he came. He was a slim guy, shaved, with some very bad lines and with an ear ring. I saw what time it is, I saw that it was not like the chief in Nis told us. I thought I fell on the trap. He knew I had 10 thousand

Deutsche Marks in me and I knew that he won't let me go alive; he will take my money and execute me. He started speaking, like this and like that, they will bring him in 15 minutes, we need to do it fast, we have to hurry. I left him speak while I was thinking to myself: my son is gone and I am also about to die; please God save me. I will never forget it. When the critical moment comes to a man and when he sees that there is no other way out, I decided to act, whatever happens. It will be done as God wants it to be. I put my hand in my pocket, without having anything inside, just like now, and I asked him to show me his ID card. He jumped from his seat saying who are you to ask for my ID card, do you know who I am? I said I know you are the one that Nazim Bejler told me but I won't get convinced. He said how you dare ask me. I said don't move, right now I can kill, without having anything in my pocket, I told him just one more move and I'll kill you, I came here to die for my son, I don't give a damn. My friends are waiting outside and I started mentioning some names and again I told him just one more move and I will leave you laying here. I didn't bring my hand out of the pocket where I had nothing at all. The Serb got scared. I told him don't move, now I will deal with Nazim, I have some business with him. I left about 5 marks in the table for the waiter and I walked towards the door keeping my eyes all the time on him. He just stood there like a dead body. I went out and God saved me from that danger for the second time. When I came back I went to Prizren where I caught the dog. I caught him right in front of the hotel. I asked him Nazif, you are still alive with the police. He tried to escape but I didn't let him. I caught him and luckily two civilians, policeman, happened to be there, may God bless them with Heaven. They asked me: what happened uncle? I said this guy sent me, took the money for my son and I will never leave it to him, if he had asked for that money I would have given it to him, but for what he took them I will never leave it. I said he sent me to Belgrade where I could leave my head. I said that I want to take him to the police but they said we will do that because they were policeman but I didn't know that. They called backup and a vehicle came and took him away. I know nothing about that man anymore, where they took him or what they did to him. May God never try anyone with the things I have been tried with! I can freely, without hesitation say that very little is being done in regards to the missing persons. Nobody ever made an inquiry on this issue. Not that they are not interested but speaking frankly maybe they have the will but they talk a lot but not work enough. Although I think that the internationals are to blame, they are acting as they are told by the internationals and they make no noise. We are neither in the ground nor in the sky. It is very hard, I don't know how it can be harder; may God not try anyone like this. If only a man could know where he was killed, since we are all sons of death, his time was then, but at least to know where his bones are...

## **Mehmet Rrustolli**

I am Mehmet Rrustolli born in Middle Dumnice village on date 10.12.1943. I came to Vushtrri in 1977. After coming here we started working everywhere because we were a poor family. We worked in Montenegro, Titograd, Bukokotove, and Hercegnovi and finally I settled in the plant. I worked in construction for 7 years and then I passed in Separation from where I retired. When the war started, you know when it started, I was in Vushtrri; somehow we managed to escape and we went to Stanofc village. We stayed there for 2 – 3 weeks then we returned to Vushtrri to find our house burnt. One house was not touched so we stayed there with my son Enver Rrustolli who got killed. We stayed there but we were out of food but somehow we managed to survive. Then we heard that the police are coming and they entered our street. We are from Vushtrri, street “Haxhi Zeka” number 36. I told him Enver please take care of the children, he had three sons; take care of the children and my youngest son Gezim. He said “ok Haxhi but they are going from house to house”. I said even they come to our house please let me do the talking and maybe we will survive! He says “Haxhi they are almost at our house”. I said “where are they now”. They entered Hamdi Sallaqi’s house who was our first neighbor and we heard screaming and cries coming from them. He said “Father I have 1000 DM’s, give me another 5000; listen to their shout and I will go there.” I begged him not to go because he finished the faculty and he started working with foreign currency and he thought that he might know someone because he said “just hear their cry; they are our first neighbors; hear them crying.” Don’t do it son, I said. He said “look father, you are a Haji and you know that it is a sin for us to leave our neighbors gets killed”. I told him “ok Enver but please be careful and don’t argue with them”. We heard noises because they were our first neighbors and everything was heard but we were afraid to get in there. After 20 – 30 minutes or an hour that they were inside someone said that they left with gasmasks. It was one Darlub, I have their names written because I keep forgetting them, and one Zoran; one was working in the post office and the other one in the court. People swear that it was them. I asked where Enver is and they said: Haxhi come inside because all four are massacred and killed”. “Can we go inside, are they still in there”. Nobody spoke because when people get scared everyone looks after themselves and it was not to be made a big deal because it was war. I went inside, my wife was crying, his wife was crying, his children were crying; his youngest son was 7 years old, one was 10 and one was 12 years old. We went in there, his wife and my wife was crying. When we entered we saw everyone lying. There was one Avdullah whom they had taken the eyes out. I saw Enver who after being killed was thrown behind a bed; the wife crying; Allah don’t try anyone like this. I tried to comfort my wife telling her to say shahadah because what’s done is done. Wherever I looked it was boiling from blood; Enver and three others dead. Avdullah was alive for a short while but he died not long after. My God, what to do! I had no relative but my neighbors but I had very good relations with them otherwise if I it wasn’t like that Enver wouldn’t go to help them. My wife said “come one Haxhi, say salavat and don’t drive our children crazy”. I said “I am not driving them crazy, by Allah, but what to do with the bodies”. She said “Haxhi, we can bury them in the yard but let’s not drive the kids crazy”. I decided to go to the police, there was a commander named Vucina. I was accompanied by Mon Galica and Rasim Tarllabuqi. They told me “Haxhi we won’t let you go alone”. I said “let me go alone; I am afraid that you are only going to make things worse and get us killed; if I go after they killed Enver”. I went to the police and got inside. “Good day”, they ask “what?” I said “why did you have come and kill my son and three neighbors;

and how and what". "Who killed them". I said "you, who else, it was your order, you killed them; it was Dragolub and Zoran". They said "you can get out of here". When turned around and walked for about 10 meters when he said "Stop. You two can go home but you Mehmet Rustolli must stay". I stayed. They put me in a car and drove to Gojbul village; three policemen and me. To tell you the truth I got upset after what happened to my son. We came back, they went inside but they locked me in the vehicle for about 10 – 15 minutes. They came out of there and we entered a shop in Vushtrri known as Poloprivreda shop. They got a lady from there and another Serb. They came to our house where women and children of two houses: mine and Avdullah's and Hamdi's, were there crying. They said "leave because we want to take pictures and to find out who killed them. You Mehmet Rustolli, tell us which one is your son". I show them Enver and he says "check their pockets". I said that I will check my son but not my neighbors. I checked my son to find out that the money he had was taken from him but I found 50 DM's. I said "I found these 50 DM's". They said "give them to us because you don't need them". "Don't do this because we won't be able to bury our son". "You asked for this and you found it". I said "what should I do with the bodies". He said "the bodies will stay here and you do grief or do whatever you want". Hamdi's wife came and said: may Allah help you because if Enver wouldn't show up they were about to make us drink our men's blood". We waited there for about 2 hours; it was May the 5<sup>th</sup>, I watched the clock and it was 1315 when they were killed. A garbage tractor came, I don't know if they were Romas or Serbs but they took the bodies in the tractor. Crying and screaming may Allah never try anyone. I was a Haji so I told my wife to bring the shroud so I could cover my son and they let us do so. The tractor left and they said: "you can stay home and grief or do whatever but tomorrow at 1400hrs you can come to the cemetery because the Romas will bury them". It started raining a little. Blood was streaming from the trailer leaving a string behind. My wife and the bride of my son and my 13 year old son shouted "ooo Enver". I told them "Gezim, don't shout because they are only taking them to the doctor because they are maybe alive". The tractor left at 1400hrs. All my neighbors left. We had a tractor which I didn't know how to drive; the boy was only 13 and he still didn't learn how to drive it. The whole neighborhood escaped only our house remained. We placed some things in the tractor and we decided to go to a cousin who lives near Vushtrri cemetery. Just where the cemetery is, 4 policemen stopped us. "Where are you going"? One was from Novi Pazar named Safet. He asked me "Rustoll, where is Enver". I said "Enver was killed, Safet". "Who killed him". I said it was Dragolub and Zoranovic because they were wearing masks and they killed three others. "What about this boy that can't drive the tractor; whose is he?" I said "he is mine and we are going near the cemetery where we have a cousin". They took my son down and searched him. He started crying, my wife started crying, the children, God save us. We drove like that, my son didn't know how to drive but God wanted and we arrived at that neighbor. When we reached there I saw people out and they said "Haxhi?" I said "I am going at this neighbor because my son was killed". "Who did it?" I said "I don't know". I went inside that cousin's house. He asked "why Gzim is driving the tractor?" Smajl is his name and I said "because Enver was killed, Smajl". He started crying and his wife too because they are my first cousins. "What to do" I said. They called inside because the wife fainted. She was very upset. I said to his wife "you told me to be strong; please find comfort and stay strong". His house was full of refugees; friends and relatives. Tomorrow at 1400 I told my wife that I will go to the cemetery but I told her not to say anything to Smajl because snipers were shooting even at the cemetery. When I went there I saw that the bodies were

already there; shots were being fired. I met a Haji from Dushinca family, may God rest his soul. He said “Haxhi Met, you are a Haji, you are Muslim, closer to God, be strong”. We buried them but we only had some bad wooden boards; we couldn’t find good ones since it was war; we buried all four and he gave me a piece of metal to place it near the head because there are no wooden sticks because people were taking them and using them to bake. We tried to perform the funeral prayer; they fired again and they disbursed. I came back at my neighbor’s house. My wife asked me what had happened. I asked her not to mention anything to Enver’s wife Fahrije. Enver’s children were asking about their father but I told them that he will be coming soon. Believe me I felt like I won the world because I was worried how we will leave them in this state of war. On 6<sup>th</sup> of May at 1430 we buried them. We stayed there until the 22<sup>nd</sup>. People started coming; all my brothers, nephews and relatives where in Middle Dumnice. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> they told us to go out. They entered with automatic rifles. My wife told the 13 year old boy to wear one of her dresses so they would think that you are a girl and they will not kill you. We went out at the cemetery where we met a huge number of people. Only Allah knows how many were there but it was boiling from people. We saw bulldozers, trucks; I think there were about 50 – 60 thousand people there and they started asking for our ID cards. My wife was trying to hide my son and my son’s sons. We gave them our ID cards; they checked them and gave them back to us. “Now we know what to do with you”. We stayed there until 1700 waiting to see what will happen. At 1700 they received an order and told us that we can go home. We went back to our neighbor’s house and people started coming to pay their condolences because too many refugees were gathered there but we didn’t have with what to honor them. Tradition was to offer a cigarette or a glass of water but we had nothing. I am 68 years old but it was never harder for me to host people but again it was a state of war. They were comforting me “stay strong Haxhi|. We stayed for 6 weeks with our neighbor then we wanted to turn on the tractor and we couldn’t. They helped us somehow. He said stay here for another day. I said “no Smajl, we will go back home”. “Don’t go because your house is close to the police building and they might have placed mines in your house or they might have burnt your house or they threw something on the grass”. We haven’t been there for 6 weeks so the grass grew big. I told my wife to take the children and go inside while I check the yard with a wood or a shovel to see if they threw anything. We settled somehow but we were devastated. Only the wife of Bajram Kelmendi came to visit us very often, may God rest her soul. She took photos of the room where they were slaughtered. They took out some bullets from the walls; 15 – 16 times they invited my wife because I was not at home since I was going in Dumnice working the fields with my young son. The wife said that they were asking her questions. No one else came to ask about the orphans; the son’s wife is 42 now because my son got married while he was young. Enver was born in 1966, on 01.09.1966; he was 32 years old when he was killed. My life went in grief; I keep on trying for those children but God save us there are even harder cases: Qaza had a son and two daughters killed. I wouldn’t say anything because I haven’t received any assistance from them only from God. Nobody cares about those boys; the wife receives 130 euros. She receives that and raises the kids on that. Children grow up anyway. We thank Bajram for taking care; he came 3 – 4 times two comfort us otherwise nobody else visited us. My son Enver was taking food and cigarettes to the army as much as he could; it was my fault because I didn’t let him join the army but we were alone, old and with children. I have a brother who is an engineer in Kishnica and he found the newspaper where Hamdi’s wife, who died later, said that if it wasn’t for Enver Rrustolli they were about to make us drink our men’s blood.

## **Merita Hoti**

I am Merita Hoti, born in Reti, Municipality of Rahovec, born on 07.03.1970, married in Krusha e Madhe now living in Krushe e Madhe, my husband was killed in war; now I live with three children in Krushe e Madhe. I work for survival. I have finished primary school. On 24<sup>th</sup> of March the NATO bombing started; we got out of the house on 15<sup>th</sup> around 0430 – 0445 because village Krushe e Madhe was in siege from the Serb forces. We couldn't get to the road so we went to the upper village, at the upper houses where the mountains are. We went into the woods and stayed there all day long. During the night we were surrounded there and fired upon. The place was like a hole and bullet sparkles were falling upon us and hurting the children and the children started crying. It started raining. An older man stood up and said to the other men "we are already surrounded so let's save the kids from catching getting cold and let's go to the houses that are near the woods". We got in those houses and we were a lot of people. We were wet from the rain. Next day at 0430 in the morning we were already surrounded and the infantry stormed the village with automatic rifles and weapons that they know what they had. They gathered us all in one yard. Women and children were kept there while the men were taken on the main road that goes down the village near the mosque. Four policemen were standing at the gates of the yard and checked us in details and took everything we had. When they placed us in lines they checked the men on the lower side and the women and children were checked on the upper side. They kept the men and they told us to form lines of two and look at the children because we will wipe out all men. Someone said this in Albanian but I didn't see who was he. They sent us to the mosque and kept the men there and told them to put their hands behind, look down and nothing else. They were men with white stripes here, tainted men and men completely covered but I don't know who they were. There were some that spoke Albanian. They took us to the mosque and kept us there until 0400 in the afternoon maybe from 1000 in the morning when they checked us very early but we were a huge crowd of people. We were inside the mosque and they told us to give money if we don't want our men to be killed. Who had money, gave it but someone didn't have any because they had already taken it when they searched us in the yard of that house. We gave money, again we gave away money; they burnt the houses. The roof tiles were cracking and the sound was very loud so the children got scared. A woman had taken cotton from the house and she said close the ears of the children. We gave money and they took it and went out. When they went out they said for the second time: are you going to give us money or we will kill all of you right here. 5 – 6 men with machine guns came and they pointed the weapons at us; although we were grown up we got scared because as they say the weapon is cold when you see it or when it is pointed at you. One came in and said don't do it because there are too many children and women. He didn't say this in Albanian but in Serbian but there was a lady that knew the language and she said that this Serb saved our lives. He was not a Serb; he had no hat but I don't know who he was and then he went out. At 0430 they told us to get in line of two and go to Gjakova "because you asked for NATO". We lined up for two and came out of the mosque and again at the gates of the mosque two policemen were standing and waiting to check us and they took completely everything we had in our hands and necks. One old lady couldn't get the ring off her finger because of the swelling so she spit on the finger in order to get the ring out. The policeman took it as if she was spitting at him so he hit her and she fell on the ground soaked in blood. I didn't see her again. We took the road down the village to get to the highway and to head for Gjakova. We saw burnt cattle, burnt piles of straw but I don't

know what was inside the house. We headed to Gjakova, women and children; old ladies that couldn't walk sat along the road and stayed behind. Police were standing alongside of the road; the railroad crosses through our village and they were sitting there drinking and singing, tainted; they know what they did. Heading to Gjakova we reached Rogova Bridge. My husband's uncle, an old man who was released to join us said "I have a lot of women and children and we can't walk to Gjakova because we have many young children with us". He said "Yes, you can enter Rogova but you have to pay to cross the bridge". We didn't have any money. A Haji from Macedonia was in Krusha e Madhe who got beaten very badly with his son and they said to him "You are the Imam so you should convince them to pay". He told the: "they were checked two, three times; in the mosque, in the yard and again when we came out of the mosque. We don't have money anymore. What we had we gave". "Either pay or you will not pass the bridge". Whoever had some money, gave it but it was not enough for them so they raised their machineguns and wanted to fire. The old uncle said "please don't. They are all children". They somehow released us to get in Rogova village; we went to our relatives, to unknown people and to whoever opened the doors for us". We stayed for the night in Rogova but the bombing started again and they came to Rogova and shelled the village. Some got in tractors some headed on foot, with whatever clothes we had on our bodies and we went to village Ujez of Has. The shelling began there as well so we escaped to Muhader where we stayed for two days. We heard that the situation got better so we went back to Rogova. When we went back to Rogova, the shelling begun again. Three or four houses near the bridge were burnt and looted. After 5 days we took the vehicles and left but it we didn't have our men with us so we were accompanied by the men of Rogova. They covered the tractors with plastic so that our children wouldn't get wet from the rain. Children were without food and water. What can we do; only the Serb can do this. We headed to Hasi and when we reached Landovica Bridge we took the road to Albania. On our way to the border we saw burnt houses, dead people and all sorts of things but not from close only from the tractors. When we reached the border they asked for money again; they said that they will keep us there and not let us cross to Albania. The men of Rogova talked to them, gave them money and agreed with them to let us go since we didn't have money on us anymore. We went to Kukes; from Kukes they got us into buses and spread us all over Albania. They sent us to Tirana first and from there to Elbasan. My parents were abroad and I found out that I had two brothers, grandparents, two uncles and my aunt's son were killed in war. My father told me on the phone when I spoke to him from Elbasan. My husband was missing until 2011; my brothers were buried because we found them right after the war. My grandparents are missing; two uncles were buried right after the war as well as my aunt's son. They were killed in Agaf and they say that they were killed from the NATO bombing but I know that the Serb bombed that place which was concluded by the analyses of the bombs showing that the bombs belonged to the Serbs. An enormous mass of population was located there. The KLA headquarters was in my village, Reti village, and 8 months before the events in Krushe they fled their houses. My family escaped from houses in Reti, Opterushe and Zeqisht. My family stayed in Hoq e Vogel at my uncles. When they saw in my ID, that I come from Reti they asked me if my husband is involved in fighting. I just shook my head because I didn't understand Serbian although we had Serb inhabitants in the village so I just shook my head. Then one of them asked me in Albanian: "did you send your husband to KLA since you are from Reti village?" I said "No, my husband is here; he goes wherever I go. One villager of mine was in the same group with my husband. We were there when someone shouted

in Serbian “all guest must stand up”. All the guests stood up and they got separated. The one that survived was sent to Switzerland by the Swiss Red Cross and my father went to contact him but the doctors said that he is too tired to speak. He said that the guests were separated and placed in one room where they were killed; then they covered them with corn tree, you probably know what it is, food for animals, and they soaked it in gasoline. The survivor had two bodies above him and they burned the bodies; he got burnt too. He spoke about his group, where my husband was as well, that nobody came out alive. My father in law was in another group of men of 50, 55 and 60 years of age. After we reached Rogova, 3 -4 hours later they were released. When my father in law came he was suffering from blood pressure that was very high. When he came he was almost finished. He said “where did we leave our sons, in whose hands did we leave them”. We have no other information. The survivor tells that he endured until the flames reached his body, until the body started to burn but when the body started to burn he jumped from the window, breaking it with his body, and went out on the street where we were separated; there he saw a lot of dead people and he heard someone asking for water but the survivor replied “I am not able to drink water for myself or to bring you any” but he doesn’t know who he was because it was dark! We have no other information regarding my husband. His group from Krusha e Madhe is almost completely found but from the group from what we call “Romas hills” still nobody was found. As a mother with three kids, housewife and not educated, it is very hard but since I have my kids I believe that everything will be alright. We work a little on the farm we have; we make pickles; we work for our kids because we want to educate them. The kids are growing up and they want to get education. I live in harsh conditions but at least now it is not like when the Serbs were here; it is enough that I am not afraid that someone can murder my children. My message for the Government would be to pay more attention to these children and these mothers because they are not doing anything. For the society to work fairly because there is no future without working hard. I tell to my children that they should sweat for every cent that they make and that they should get education because an uneducated man is like a man with no eyes and no hands. It is different to be educated and different to be uneducated. It was a million times harder for me to go on the street only with the primary school. An educated person has open doors because in the village we don’t understand how important education is like they do in the city. I would say to the youth that they can only go forward if they study. They should study and follow the right path, to stay away from drugs; I pray that God saves everyone from it because nothing good comes of it.

## **Mirsad Dalipi**

I am Mirsad Dalipi, born in Prishtina, born on 1988; I was raised in Ferizaj, primary school in Ferizaj and secondary school in Ferizaj. Afterwards I researched what I want to study; I still haven't decided but probably this year I have to take a decision. I will try to show some values important to be known by those that don't know them considering that I belong to Hashkali community live and struggle with their problems in Kosovo. We had good and bad experiences which are normal for everyone and every country. Truly speaking, I never felt the country I live in but I have no other place where I can go and live because I was born here. I am trying to work, I work a lot. I work with different NGO's; as I said I finished the secondary school in Ferizaj in Gymnasium then I started working at the Social Dance Theatre with different theatrical groups; later on I started playing the drums. For the moment I am playing music a lot, we have a band and we travel a lot in Balkans and Europe. It is interesting because sometimes I think that I am making a mistake spending my life here! There are not many opportunities to get popularity and to offer what you do best but for the moment we will see. I was in Berlin, France and I saw that some things there are so much different than here; although I said that I would like to live over there but maybe it is better to stay in Kosovo because I have more chances to know more people, they offer me to play music and I have to keep this as a secondary profession for me; for the moment this is it. During the war, I was 12 years old, we stayed home in Ferizaj and we didn't go anywhere. I remember one good thing; it was good and bad at the same time, when we saw the first train going to Skopje, taking people to Bllace. Our family went out and wanted to join them but my grandfather who was always a supporter of "Kosovo Republic" decided not to leave; he escorted us to the train station and he said "you go because I am not going". When we saw that he doesn't want to come we came back with him. There are a large number of communities in the neighborhood that I live; there were even more before; I was left alone and I stayed for about 5 hours playing alone; this is what I remember for the moment. The people I grew up with turned out not to be my friends; this is one of the things that I missed the most otherwise remember that we faced difficult moments. Definitely like the rest of Kosovo, life in Ferizaj was not easy during that war. For the moment I think that it was all worth it because now we are a country where the majority is free although we still sometimes face technical problems concerning the freedom of speech but I hope it will change. Some of us are abroad; some have died during the war. Truly speaking, for 13 years, if I go out in the city every day or every two hours I will be insulted by people. Some don't know; they say that he is not Albanian at all or they use the expression Magjupi (gipsy). It is going on for 13 years and I really got tired now; maybe I can handle another day but I am realistic; I know that people talk but I don't mind them. I hope that I will not reach that day when I will be upset from this word because for example if you eat apple every day and you don't change it sometimes with a pear it will be bored, let alone bad words that make you feel bad. The word Maxhup does not exist, it is only an insult; it the same as the Serbs used to call Albanians "shiptari" or another nationalist word. It is not a good word; I simply don't feel good; it's much better to call me Mirsad or Hashkali although it is not necessary to mention what I am. It is simply not good and these things are wearing us. It was a problem to get integrated but I was stubborn; not that I was strong but I wanted to achieve this and I decided to go all the way regardless if I will face consequences or not. Fortunately I never had a problem personally apart from

hearing the insulting word. Before the war, during the bombing we had problems; we were afraid to go out; we stayed without food and water which is the foundation for a human being; we were threatened in our house. We always had to give them something; they were asking for senseless things of no importance; anything just to find a way to argue / fight with our family but my grandfather managed somehow with them sometimes giving them money just to keep the problem away from the family, for my father, mother and sisters. It is very interesting; we live three uncles in one place, three uncles have houses in the same place, in one yard while we are the only one that stayed and they left their houses. Although we lived together in one yard we had food and water; sometimes we had problems because things were expensive so we had to go in Fushe Kosova to buy them. If a bag of 100kg of flour which we consume used to cost 50 Euros, in that time price increased to 500 Euros. Fortunately we had some uncles that helped us a lot. When the war was over, after we survived the war, we had problems again; “Magjups” you were on the Serbian side; but not from the people that we knew but from those that we didn’t know; from those that came from the villages or other places. If one person was on their side it doesn’t mean that everyone was with them or that all families were on their side. I don’t remember the dates but I think it was 4<sup>th</sup> of April, after the war was over in March, some thieves got in our house but they were not our neighbors but people we didn’t know; they came with guns threatening us to leave the house or otherwise...they threatened my father very seriously. We survived one war but now it was war between people that we were part of. And frankly many of the communities that live here have no other place but here because they were born here and I think that they gave their contribution for this country regardless how small it was. Before the war when Albanians needed numbers to get the votes, the Hashkalis were getting registered as Albanians and when the war started many of our people went to war and gave their contribution. I remember my grandfather who was maltreated by the Serbs very often because every time he saw Serbian police he was shouting “Kosovo Republic” in their face or he insulted them so they maltreated him a lot. Unfortunately grandfather passed away three years ago. For the moment my father and mother stay home; I have two sisters: one is married and one goes to primary school, and we have our grandmother who for the moment is in Europe to visit her sons. My father was a Kino operator in the Cinema; also my grandfather used to work in ex-Yugoslavia and a lot in Europe because the film in that time was handcrafted and he was playing the movies in Cinemas. My father works in the sports hall; he has a job which he doesn’t need but he is used to having a job and he can’t stay without one otherwise I work a lot. Frankly speaking, before the war I was younger and my only concern was going to school and playing with children because maybe I was not aware like I am now but it has been a long period since then, already 12 years. I feel very bad in Kosovo sometimes and I say why I am wasting my time here; everything that happens they say “they are Magjup/Romas and that is what they do”. I will never forget one occasion two years ago when I felt very offended and that’s why I can’t talk about it because it made me feel very bad; a theft occurred at one place and I felt very bad for what happened although I didn’t have any direct accusation that I did it because magjup/romas do that all the time. No specific word was said but I felt very bad because people think that magjups/romas steal and beg for money; they are all musicians but time will show and people will understand that it’s not like people think. It happened at home and it was the only thing that made me feel very bad; all this period, although 1 year passed already, I simply don’t have the same relations with a man in whom I trusted a lot and I considered him to be my brother since I have

no brothers but I thought that our relation was like that; he reacted on that occasion and it made me feel very bad and we never spoke again; this happened two years ago. I mentioned earlier that I used to work in a house, I used to work as a waiter, I worked sometimes in Mitrovica with children, I worked with a lot of NGO's and we had projects in different cities like in Mitrovica, Gjakova, Peja etc. after we came home, me and my friend used to sleep in one room which was where this event took place; someone entered in the morning. I felt like someone is waking me up. I was asleep and so was he; I woke up for one moment and I searched for my phone to see if I have battery or to see what was the time, sun was already up; it was 0630 in the morning. I was searching for my phone in bed but I couldn't find it. My friend got up and asked me "Mirsad what are you looking for". I told him that I was looking for my phone and that I couldn't find it. When I stood up I saw that the door was opened and the bed was in a position from where you could see the room door and the entrance door. I went outside and I saw my pants; I had short summer pants and I saw them in front of the door. I went inside to wake him up and I told him that someone had entered inside. We went out, the police came and we told the story. They didn't take much from me: only the phone and small amount of money but they took from him pretty much money and I know he earned it honestly. He lost a pretty large amount of money and the police came and got our statements. I noticed that he was very suspicious of me although there were other people in the flat. I thought everyday why did he suspect on me; he maybe didn't know me well enough or I was not a good friend or what was the reason that he suspected on me?! If I wasn't what I am, probably he wouldn't suspect on me or at least this is what I think. The police tried to find something and they found some pictures but I don't have any information what happened later. I was very depressed from that moment because the house where we were staying was like a second house to me and I didn't expect such bad words. It would have been better if he would say "you're a magjup / gipsy and you did it" but not what he said. He spread the word to other people which makes you feel even worse because they don't know how it happened. I still feel sorry for what happened because I loved that man a lot. Now as Mirsad I am facing a lot of difficulties; now I play music mostly once a week; he tells me "today we will not play music because the plan is changed" and when I go to that place I see someone else playing instead of me; then he says "sorry Mirsad but we had to take someone else, the singer decided so". These are the problems I am facing right now because I am making more music. Another problem is the insult on the street but I believe that it will all change one day and that keeps me from falling into depression. For the moment I am thinking of putting an effort to go to Berlin – Germany because I found a university that I can afford to pay. The course of study is the drums. If I can pass the test I will stay, if not I will come back. As Mirsad I would address this message to minority I belong to: I have the opportunity because they know us because we are not so many in Kosovo; there are not so many active boys or there are but they are having difficulties to come out of their location and I know it is a problem. I would beg you to do whatever is on your mind regardless of the problems you may face; express yourself as you are and be proud of what you are no matter if you are Ashkali, Roma or Egyptian. It is important that you show your skills and set an example for the rest so that people see value in you and to make them understand that not everyone is what you think. I think that there are many talents in many fields. One of our boys won a prize for a film in Balkans, short movies. He is only 16 years old and he recorded the movie on his phone because that was what he had but he managed to make a short feature film. Then we have people that work, that have movie productions, festivals for Romas,

Ashkalis and Egyptians; this is a message that I don't know how else to summarize but as simple as this: do what is on your mind regardless of what people may judge. For the Kosovar society: thank you for giving us the opportunity to show our values and I believe that apart from small problems that we have, other things with people stand very good. Thanks again for treating us this way because we never had this kind of treatment before. My last message would be that the world is very colorful: there are white, black, red and yellow people but in the end we are all human beings. Therefore all minorities are people who are part of this planet which is part of the universe so this is my last message: hang out with each other, work together don't judge because you judge yourself.

### **Myvdete Hoti**

I am Myvdete Hoti, born in Mamush in 1960, married in Krushe, municipality of Rahovec. I am mother of four children, unfortunately I lost the oldest one and now I have three children. I lost my husband too, in war. Now I live in village Krushe e Madhe. Krushe e Madhe is in Rahovec Municipality; it is a developed village, big village and village of wealth. We were working. War started in 1999 and we were unlucky when NATO started bombing; we know when the war started, actually I raised my kids in war. 1999 brought upon us a very bad luck; I lost my husband and my son, but my loss is nothing compared to theirs because they lost their lives but they did it for their country. We decided to stay in Krushe that day; I remember very well, it was Thursday when they said that NATO will commence with air strikes from 2000; we didn't leave the house and around 0400 in the morning, we had already got used to the Serb forces, we I mean Prizren and Gjakova, because they were passing there all the time but they took position close by during the night but we didn't notice that they stopped so close. Our house is close to the main road so the men got up, like every man in Kosovo they were already awoken; we had the kids and one neighbor with us and we decided to leave because tanks and military forces were very close to our house. We got up and we were afraid to stay in our house so we went in Krushe e Madhe on the upper part by the mosque. It was Thursday and we thought that it will be over and something will happen so we decided not to leave. Around 0400 or 0500 in the evening the infantry stormed the village and told us to leave the village. We decided ourselves to leave and snipers and tanks were firing at us from the main road. We were scared so we gathered at a stream, which is called "the stream of Nallva", which is located just above the mosque. The tanks started coming also from above the village and they kept us there and we had no way out. My uncle's son was killed by a sniper shot. We got scared and we stayed until 1000 in the night. When it was 1000 in the evening we had no other way so we decided to climb up and we spent the night there; in the morning they came; I was with my family: my mother in law who was 90 years old, my four children; I lost my mother in law in the dark; my third son Kujtim penetrated but I didn't see him. One of my sons was luckily in Mamushe. I took the two remaining children and I got inside. The son that I haven't found yet, that is missing, took my four year old son and I told him to have him thinking that maybe they will have mercy. But the Serb has no mercy! They separated us from them. In front of my eyes they said to my son "put your hands up". My husband was not there he was a bit further. "Put your hands up and stop here". I asked "where are you taking him?" They gathered us in a yard and they took away the men. I was trying to find out where they are taking them, what are they going to do to them. They took them on the road from above to go to the mosque. They were lined in two with their hands behind and they made them sit. Some gypsies, ugly Serbs, were searching us women for valuable things. Then they told us to pass through our men because we will never see them again. I would never believe that they would do such a thing; we had no idea what war is like; I thought that in war they fight the men; what upset me most was that they were heavily armed and they were playing with innocent children; only the weak does that, not the brave. They wore those new clothes which I will never forget and played with us cats and mice. They searched us; I had my son, before filling 19 years of age, with me; my neighbor's son was named Ilir and from joy that they joined the KLA because they did it for this country, they had a picture taken in uniforms; the Serbs found a picture of Ilir who was friends with my son. While we

were coming on this side, a Shka came, because I can't fill my stomach if I say a Serb, he had taken that picture and said "we found KLA", what KLA when they were only 16 years old and 19 years old and in the end we are all KLA. He came to our face and said "you will see now". Until we enter the earth with that child, we don't know where his bones are but they continue to play with our dead bodies. I swear that my heart still feels that they are somewhere. I will never forget their tears when we passed by them before they locked us in the mosque. In Thursday we spent the night in the woods and it was Friday when they took us to the mosque where they kept us locked until 0230. We thought that whatever happens to our men will find us too. We were in our country and we decided not to leave. Then they came and got up in the second floor which is like a balcony inside the mosque. I thought that they were going to execute us so I grabbed my 4 year old son and protected him like this and I turned my back to them. They were pointing their guns and speaking. They brought one Albanian, his name was Sahit. "If you want to save your men, take out the money". We were powerless, I can't tell you how powerless we were, and so we gave money to them. Sahit was kept forcefully there like a translator. They spoke something with each other and said to let us go. A Serb came and said "come on, go to Gjakova". They want to take us to Gjakova and they ordered them to open ditches saying that they will put us in these ditches. We remained there; I will never forget the screaming and crying but now we work and not give up for the sake of these children; we were very strong, like the elders say "the man is stronger than the stone"; you never know until you try yourself. We stood up, they brought them there and they came down from upstairs; Arkan was shown in television with big sunglasses saying "we won't let go of Kosovo until blood reaches to the knee". I got scared there and I said that probably he is in Krusha. They came down from upstairs and blocked the door. They were robbing and pushing us as we went out; playing with old women; believe me that the soul is sweet and I was afraid; we felt horrible knowing where we left our men; you didn't dare approach your child; but the righteous prevailed and we came back again. The shouting of cattle and children, I will never forget that until I enter the grave. What upset me most was that when we came back from Albania if I knew I would die fighting; may those junkies never be forgiven for killing our men; may they never come out of hell. The life in this world passes anyway, in the end those men died for their country. At exactly 0230 we were told to come out of the mosque and we went out. They gave us the Imam of the village who was 80 years old; he was from Skopje and he was told to escort us and they said "don't look back". Krusha was burning in flames; electricity poles were falling and we passed near by. We thought that they are taking us home but I never thought that they will be forcing us to Albania. When we reached the middle of the village we saw sheep walking while in flames; I said man is the strongest. They took us to the main road and don't know if they wanted to take us to Gjakova; they didn't know how because they were not from here, this was not their country so they directed us to Rogova and they approached us, I don't know him now but I would really like to meet him, and shouted "come here"; he was short; then he said "You asked for NATO, you asked for America; you had electricity, roads, food, water and you asked for America; now we will go to America". By God we didn't dare go in front because all the women and I thought that they were going to kill us there. They didn't kill us so we headed our way. They were on both sides of the road and they had everything: drinks and everything and none of our children reached their hand to take anything; we went like that to Rogova. When we reached Rogova Bridge they were there as well and they stopped us. They split us in three groups just to take money from us again and they said "take out the

money". I sat and I said "you can kill me because we have no more money". They said that they will take our daughters. I had no daughter but I had everyone spread: the four year old son with me, another son somewhere else, one son somewhere else, my husband and son placed against the wall. "Where are you taking me?" I never thought that they will force me to Albania. The rifle was nothing compared to being forced out of your country. On Thursday and Friday they sent us to Rogova, on Saturday we went to Pnish again where we stayed until Sunday. We were almost 10 days without eating and drinking. I went to Rogova where I had my husband's uncles. I decided to go there because we were tired; they can do whatever with us but wherever we go we fall in their hands. They were given an ultimatum to leave Has and go to Albania. That uncle came and told me that we are going to Albania. Just imagine, I was saying to myself how can I go to Albania before asking my husband; I was thinking that my husband is somewhere. I couldn't ask anyone about the fate of our men. When we reached the middle of the village they released some old people, they selected some young men and released some while the men were all detained. Their fate is not known up to date; some say they are in prisons some say different. I asked my husband how can I go to Albania with my husband and son; you can't imagine how hard it is to leave your place, at least if I had all the family with me. We were forcibly deported on a tractor; the Rogovan's said we are living if you want to come than jump in if you want to stay than stay. When I reached Kukes I was lucky to find out that people from Mamusha were there too and I found my son who was in Mamusha village. They had stopped my son because he was from Krusha but when we went in Krusha Halit said that my son is there. I had one with me and I found one in that side so I had two sons with me in Albania. I am surprised because we suffered nothing going out compared to the sacrifice when they opened Kosovo for us to return. The Italians kept us in Albania saying that we can't go to Kosovo because there are mines everywhere. We said that we want to go home. Today we still suffer from Serbia and this is what bothers me. I can't find my son even after 13 years; Kosovo doesn't have 30 million people. Why can't we find the missing? When I came back I didn't stay home; whenever they mentioned clothes, whenever a ditch was mentioned or a grave I was there to see if they are there. We were even misled to believe that they are in Albania because they were not in Serbia. Seven years later, if you can call it luck, I found my husband and I thought I found my son. Your husband is found but not the son, they said. This is it; 13 years later my son is still missing. We turned to life and I am working. Now living is a big concern, when we came back, as if the war victims were not enough, the war civilians, we are being victimized by the way we are living. The capital built from father and grandfather got burnt because I forgot to mention that while we were going to Rogova I saw my house in flames, live cattle burning; we forgot to unleash them so they were burnt alive in the stable where I found their bones. I hope that the righteous finally prevails; this is our country and we came back because they thought that they cleansed it ethnically. Why...why they were throwing us out of our houses and out of our country? War is war but what are we thinking and what are we doing today. I got stuck with "why" for one year; I thank one lawyer whose name I didn't take while they were taking my blood; I spoke and many books I wrote, many clothes and many holes I checked to find him. It is bothering me that a lot is profited from the victims; May Allah declare the victims as martyrs. Sometimes they gave us money; sometimes you are entitled to get it sometimes not. Whenever Serbia plays with us, they opened so and so many graves, you profit again but ask the families how they sleep and how they survive? When we went to give blood they told me that even the philosophy couldn't solve the "why"

question; they told me to take the kids and look after them otherwise you are about to go crazy / mad and people will laugh at you. Thanks to God we have income; I have built the stable, I placed two woods, I found one cow, my shop got built, my brothers helped me a lot, they are from Mamusha; I didn't know where to ask for help, I didn't know that someone can help us. First I turned the stable into a room, then I built another stable for the cow and somehow we got on our feet. I hope that you will come back some day. There are days when I can't sell anything; I made these kids continue their father's job because I had nothing and I was afraid that they can't get education so we started working again with pepper, with corn and with cattle. They fixed the tractors because as you know Krusha is a wealthy village. Now we have a small factory where we produce conserved food; I have gathered a group of women and we are working together. I hope these kids get their own jobs and I wish something happens in Kosovo. My message is to pull you mind together because it is all spread; we forgot about war very fast; I lost Halil who was mumbling the word "Republic" ever since he was 1 year old and before his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday I placed him against the wall; I will never forget his tears and what he wanted to tell me with his eyes. Why all these differences? Why we forgot so fast? Don't forget that they say "water stops but our enemy doesn't" and we still have the Serb close. This is it; I have nothing else to say.

### **Nezir Jahmurataj**

My name is Nezir Jahmurataj, born on 17.07.1964 in village Lybeniq which is a village in Peja Municipality, 6km from Peja on the road to Decan. I finished the primary school in our school, in Lybeniq with excellent grades, and then I continued the school from 5<sup>th</sup> grade in village Raushiq which is 3km closer, also with excellent scores. I come from a poor village Albanian family of that time. After finishing the school in Raushiq I got enrolled in secondary technical school in Peja which I finished in optimum time with excellent scores. I also served the Yugoslavian army in 1984 and I got enrolled in the electro-technic faculty in Prishtina – Energetics course of study. I finished lectures in 1989; time when the events of facing a cruel power which started a massive popular movement against the regime that we couldn't take anymore. In that time, just like all the people of Kosovo we joined the massive popular movement "Democratic League of Kosovo" to fight for a better life and freedom from the cruel regime that at the time imposed very severe measures on the people of Kosovo. In stream of these activities during '89 and '90 with a group of friends, students from the village and surroundings we established the movement for conciliation of families in animosity and we started to organize this political subject to react against the cruel regime of the barbarian. This process continued until the war started in 1998. Village Lybeniq is a village in the western part. It is located between Peja and Decan in the western part of Kosovo. There used to be and still are 1800 residents, village to which I served for a long time as an activist of the village and the structures of Peja surroundings. We tried in those harsh conditions; our village had 1780 residents Albanians, 100 Serbs, Romas and other and we never had problem until the war started. Albanians looked after their business and they looked after theirs. Nevertheless, in those conditions of total captivity that followed us from 1990 through 1998 the Serbs had houses there but they moved and were mobilized with the violent police and were going around carrying weapons and changed even their attitude. We continued are attitude of minding our own business which was education and blocking a parallel authority which we organized starting from school; school, health care and many other things. The war started in 1998, which in Dukagjin region started on 24<sup>th</sup> of March in village Glllogjan of Decan Municipality. From that date onwards, in general in Peja Municipality and in our villages which lay towards Decan the life became very hard and people minimized their movement. Not incidentally there were a lot of good men in our village that were activists for our National Cause. On the day of May 25<sup>th</sup> I was somewhere in Decan territory, in Isnig where I went to see my sister and to see their living conditions in that pre-war state. I came back to my village that day on May 25<sup>th</sup> around 1200hrs and they tell me that an accident took place. Peja – Decan highway goes through our village and someone from the lower part of the village had shot a police vehicle. Civilian which in that time of the Serb regime were engaged for Decan. Probably they harassed someone too much. It was shot by someone from the lower part of the village which is not populated and the vehicle crashed somewhere; I don't know if someone died or not from that accident. When I reached the village at midday around 1200hrs I said that the situation is not good; we were some activists of the village and some people of the village that in that time just before the war had their intuition; I don't know anything but suddenly at 1315hrs I was listening to a program, I think it was DW (Deutsche welle) in Albanian language when on the rear end of the village where the Serbs were living there was a huge army shooting range, where Serb armed forces and the police were located; two

grenades were thrown between our village and Strelc, in a mountain with crunch. In that moment I stood up and went out to see what is happening. In this occasion, my house is in the beginning of the village, while going out on the road I know that 2 policemen showed up in front of me, up on a wall of the village which is there and they fired on me. From that moment I faced the Serb forces since they didn't choose the method but they wanted to vent their anger on us since the other part of Decan was at war. But surely they were not able to fume their anger where the forces were fighting, they stormed our village. We were surrounded that day. I was told by others that I got wounded that day; a magazine, probably of Kalashnikov, was fired towards me and I fell on the ground. I had blood on my face from a hit I received on my head, while in this part I had a bullet but luckily not close to the heart. I was helped by the doctors of our region, I thank one of the older doctors – Syle Broqi from Isniq, and the headquarters in Isniq which had a hospital and they gave me the first aid and got the bullet out of me on the 26<sup>th</sup>. It was raining on the 25<sup>th</sup> and I was unconscious for a while but after they gave me the first aid I got my consciousness back and I could walk for a while. I received information regarding my village mainly since I was the representative of the village. I, personally was assaulted and a family where we used to hold our meetings; in a room of Zeq Misin Hamzaj, in which house the Serbs carried out an outrageous massacre by taking Zeqa and two kids, two sons, his uncle Ibrahim with his brother and another cousin named Imer with two sons and they massacred them in their yards with tools which we identified and have pictures these of them. They did the massacre and removed all of their clothes and were left like when they were born; with all other damages, 7 members of Hama family were killed that day; an outrageous massacre in the beginning of the war in 1998 took place in our village. There was another boy staying in Huskaj family that day, namely Haxhi Cacaj from Decan – otherwise known as Gogaj, was killed in Lubeniq that day just because they caught him. 3 or 4 houses were burnt. An activist who was a patriot, Cenaliqkit house, he was in Germany in that time but he came back; I dint know then; but according to the information he joined the war early mainly in Glllogjan region; he was of my age, we were in the same classroom and his house was burnt that day. Zeqa and his Brahim Hamza were killed in his yard and an old castle of 3 floors was burnt that day; 6 houses got burnt in Lybeniq that day. The whole village, one part tried to escape to the woods but didn't manage; an only boy of a house was shot while approaching the woods; this is how the barbarian assault of the police ended; it was very well organized by the Serb municipal authorities with the assistance of the Serb civilians who were helping the UDB and harassed us a lot. In the end 9 civilians were killed in Lybeniq that day, one survived from Hamza family, the only son that survived in the family now lives somewhere in Germany. This is what happened on May 25<sup>th</sup> of 1998 in my village. It didn't end with this; it was a period of fighting in Dukagjin; after a while I got better; we tried to hold our positions as much as we could but we had an enemy much more prepared but we managed to hold them back and I personally stayed till the end, until all the forces retreated; all the time of fighting in Dukagjin Region up to the end of August, beginning of September. I can recall very well some events that I personally experienced. In the territory of Decan, in that time, we were somewhere between Peja and Decan, in Isniq were gathered on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September about 100000 civilians; the Kosovo army was tired in that period so in order to prevent any outrageous massacre on the gathered civilian population, we decided to pull back the army on one side so the civilians could pass between Lybeniq and Strelc and to reach the mountains. People that I personally saw in the mountains were women, elders and children; it was September the 8<sup>th</sup> and it was

raining. These 2 – 3 days the mountains were completely packed with people. People had no food, some of them ill; I saw some very rough situations. Unfortunately we didn't have sophisticated electronic equipment to photograph the place but I saw sick people, girls and children without food; some trying to cross to Albania which was very difficult; some tried to reach Montenegro. I personally stayed for one day in the mountains of Isniq and Strelc which are closer and then I continued walking on the mountains for another day. I know that on September the 9<sup>th</sup> some fighting occurred between our forces and members of the Yugoslav army; they broke the siege; that day was killed; I personally was not there since I headed towards Montenegro with a large crowd of civilians. I heard later on that on that day one of our villagers was killed in the fighting; today a martyr named Shpetim Bobaj, his grave is not known even today he remained in the triangle of the border between Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro. It was a morning on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September when we were walking in the mountains without knowing where we are when we found ourselves in Montenegro in a territory inhabited by Muslims. We took shelter there for some time. They gave milk and some other stuff and we continued our way. They told us the way to Plave. We saw a lot of people there, mainly from the territory between Peja and Decan. The Serbian army used a helicopter to surround those mountains and I remember a moment between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of September when in village Mete we were gathered about 2000 – 3000 Albanians in a small school. It was raining constantly for two days. In the night they came to separate families; I don't know if any Albanian living in Montenegro knows this case. It was a harsh situation; I imagined from what I read that a second Tivar is about to happen to the population. I was scared since we hadn't eaten or drank for 48 hours and it was raining for two days; skinheads were coming at night trying to separate families saying women and children; fortunately the population stayed unified and didn't agree to get separated; either to kill us all or to stay there together or to deport us somewhere all together. It was a very tough situation but I think the international community reacted but on the third day we were deported to village Vermosh which is the highest in Shkodra Mountains. It was the most horrifying experience of my life since the population was worried that it will all end in a great tragedy. Fortunately many people got through. That day, I was not left any clothes on my body and I got beaten a lot; we were 7 – 8 separated by a specialized army unit and this is how it ended. They were members of the Serbian army in the territory of Montenegro. I can't tell the uniforms but it was not Montenegrin police; this case was never spoken of but it was a horrible event; it could have resulted with victims; people that were present there were from my village, from Strelc, from Isniq, from Prilep and all the villages of that region. It ended like that; I managed to slowly get to Albania and I went to Shkodra for recovery. I caught a deep cold and I had an enormous health complication but I managed to recover. I stayed in Albania for 6 – 7 months and I received information about many events but the most horrifying was when I received the news on April the 3<sup>rd</sup> when I was told that some residents of Lybeniq arrived in Durres in some tents and they are only women and children. That day I was in Qerret of Kavaja; I took some villagers of that place and we went to look for my villagers; we went to a village near Durres where I met only women and children of my village. They walked for two days constantly; on April the 1<sup>st</sup> 1999 all my villagers were gathered by the army, the village was under siege by people wearing all kinds of uniforms as those speaking before me mentioned, witnesses that survived that massacre and are only 10. I spoke to those sisters and women who told me that all of their males were killed. I had many relatives, many friends, my uncles who were old, 2 year old children, pregnant mothers and no one was spared especially

by the Serbian villagers. This whole scenario, it was all organized and preconceived remarkably well by the state authorities of Serbia; this was the only village on the upper side of the road with majority Albanian residents and a minority of Serbs so the scenario was not to leave any Albanian in the village. Those people who survived the massacre of 1<sup>st</sup> of April escaped to the mountains of the village. Again on 7<sup>th</sup> of April two complete families with children and their mothers and old women were executed in the mountains of my village; even today we know nothing about them apart from one woman of which we found some parts of the body we found nothing else. They were executed with their children. One was Shyhrete Ukshinaj, her husband was the only son of his mother and parents with 6 – 7 sisters with a 2 year old baby and one with the mother on the stomach remained in that part which we call Stani I Osnes in the mountains of our village. Later on we tried to find them, and we found something but we didn't have the strength to identify them. They will be identified now by the results of some analyses. An older man of the village who survived, was killed that day, his name is Ali Shoshi and the family of Osman Alimehaj who was killed with his daughter, the 80 year old mother and a 4 year old son. Fortunately that day he gave 2 of his children to a survivor who went to the mountains in snow and rain in that time; the survivor and 2 children, 3 actually are alive of that family, they were taken by a wounded villager and they walked on the mountains trying to overcome the situation. Believe me when I say that all these actions even in the mountains were undertaken by the Serbs of our village who were led by a high rank ex-officer of the Serbian service Ranko Stojkovic, who studied the terrain very well; he was from Peja and had a younger son who, they say, was the chief of police for Peja Region. There were others during the war, I remember a case in 1998 when my uncle and his 2 sons were taken by a Serb from Lybeniq who was burning the houses; his name is Dejan Laza Stojkovic; my uncle's son who is alive today has filed an indictment against him; his father was killed, they were taken to be executed that day but fortunately he survived but my uncle is killed; I don't know if they took money from them but he killed them anyway; an indictment was filed against this Serb of the village but no case was resolved yet. Therefore it is very hard for our village, although it is slowly recovering; it is still in a tough emotional and spiritual state. My personal message is that we, the people and as human beings, should as wisely as possible, present the events that took place in Kosovo; I am talking about my village but I know events that took place all over Kosovo. It is good if, starting from youngsters and elderly, to remain calm and gather material, because Kosovo was powerless and defenseless for 100 years; not having a state is very hard; I would ask them to remember these events, gather material so one day, first of all we can live better because as human beings we gave a lot for the freedom of Kosovo; and to prepare because there are countries that had war for 100 years but they all uncovered the truth. I see that in Kosovo, in the Republic of Kosovo, things are being done very slowly; I am surprised that people are almost dying from hunger; they are only ripping of / stealing and not doing anything in regards to this. Nobody is dying for food but people are living in harsh conditions while a group of people are living like if they are in Germany or America; this is a very mean moment; I read a lot and we should remember the people that suffered greatly; to slowly try and stabilize those families that gave a lot; before we stabilize them we cant stabilize Kosovo. I tried, I have been active in many fields and I don't agree in many cases with people; people have been killed somewhere, somewhere families, someone else is still unaccounted for. We have a lot of missing but the treatment.... I will consider the treatment of the Government: in Lybeniq there are 80 killed persons amongst which 3 – 4 that were in

close relationship with officers or superiors and they were declared martyrs; it is unacceptable that in a place where 60 – 70 – 80 people were executed, the families to enjoy the same treatment. Once I was at the Ministry of Justice for a meeting; I came across a professor doctor from Croatia who was dealing with these issues, investigating crimes committed during the war and he said that he found out that there was a place in Kosovo where 80 civilians were killed and someone got a memorial stone in his grave as a member of the forces; he said please the people that were killed as civilians should be remembered as civilians while those who were killed in fighting should be remembered as ones that faced the enemy; each has his importance. This is maybe because of the lack of experience that we try to include everyone as fighters; all the people were at war in some way; as I learned in school the war is fought in a 100 different ways, there is special war without weapon which much more successful than the one head to head. Everyone should have his place and every family should be stabilized. I have another message regarding the events that we experienced with the authorities during these years when we are identifying the corpses. Our people were not found; two or three years after we started receiving them from Serbia. A person was killed on April 1st in Lybeniq and is located in Serbia; they send back fake documents saying that they don't have him but nobody deals more seriously with this issue. It is unacceptable to say that there are no signs of a man that was killed that day in the mass; someone had two sons executed in front of him and himself got executed there seeing his sons being murdered; a man's heart would fail in moments like that but we couldn't complete the documents; it is obvious that the Serb authorities have falsified them all and we don't have them today. We have a moment when they are releasing corpses from Serbia but not showing all of them; it gives you the impression that it is the Mayor of Peja that is doing the order. There is a case in our village where only 1 son survived and three others were killed and they don't send the corpses of his relatives all together although they were taken on the same day. This is a psychological war that Serbia continues; not that they only killed us but they want to destroy the living ones as well. I remember when I went to a mother to inform her that her son was found and add to that that her son's son a 12 year old boy was also killed. This was the most difficult thing I had to do; I was with an American police officer of UNMIK when we went to give her the result and tell her that her killed son was found; it was harder than being killed; it is very difficult; another case of two brothers executed in the same time but their bodies were not sent back separately with a one year gap; this was done just to keep you constantly in grief. I know 10 cases of deceased people in my village that passed away because of grief, anxiety and waiting and I personally have experienced it very hard; I am not that old but I faced such events too much. Now we are under stress, pressure and health instability. I would attach another request since we are trying for 10 years with our authorities, with UNMIK and now EULEX to find the criminals; they can be found if the international institutions want to and if our Government works harder on this issue and takes into consideration the people and not only their personal issues; we can't find an Albanian in the Government, Ministry of Justice and Courts or Prosecutor that will help us. We have a case when a survivor of the massacre that occurred on April the 1<sup>st</sup> who identified 4 criminals who were part of the massacre in Peja territory in our village. We have been trying for 7 – 8 years but nobody is taking us into consideration until we appealed to the EULEX Special Prosecutor. A Serb was found in Mitrovica, participant of the Lybeniq massacre; he was found as a car thief in Mitrovica, in prison now; he was identified by him, I don't remember the name now; it was Dejan or not; it is not a problem because Emrush Ukshinaj has all the documentation; he

tried very hard with us, with other groups since there are 10 survivors of the massacre of the April 1<sup>st</sup> but we are not getting any help; we couldn't reach anywhere, they are being hidden from us; it is very hard. We can't cope until first all the people killed in war are found and second until the ones that did the killing are faced with justice. Third is to work on the financial part of the people and stabilize them financially. Maybe then they would find time to talk about how they are always deceiving us. We are always being deceived by Serbia. I would also like to add that Albanians have a good heart; maybe not as much for themselves as much as for others. I know a case; returning to village after the war was very difficult, life was difficult, we were looking after the missing ones, trying to stabilize somehow, we had no roof on our heads; more than 80% of the village was burnt and looted. I saw a boy of the village one day; there were no Serbs since they left with their armed forces when the war was over and on the end of the village, in the south-western part we come across a Serbian lady about 60 – 70 years old, her husband left her, her children were in Switzerland, she was mentally unstable and all the Serbs went and left her behind. I didn't know what to do; people were upset and could mistreat her. But again the clean spirit of Albanians, the boy called the Italian KFOR which was responsible for that region and we gave that woman to KFOR. A boy, member of our army handed her over to KFOR so they could treat her appropriately and I think she was taken to the Decan Monastery. We didn't have the destruction rage in our blood; she was left behind intentionally in order to try us; for sure they didn't need her; she was worthless for her family. The Albanians didn't ill-treat her or kill her like the Serbs did to us. I see here a very brave element of Albanians. Not sick people, not like them killing Albanians wherever they came across them. I would again ask our institutions to do as much as they can in helping families find the missing ones and putting the people that caused these killings before justice.

## **Qazim Uka**

I was born in Bajgora on 1942, mover from Bajgora to Vushtrri in 1953. Before serving the army I was working in some private companies but only during summer time because during winter there was no work; until finally in 1966 I got employed in “Transport” in Trepca plant. We can tell some of the event of war because I forgot some since I am old although it is difficult to forget them. We are all aware of the event in 1999 but for me important is April the 18<sup>th</sup> when they threw us out the house and burnt the house. The most important in 22<sup>nd</sup> of May when in Vushtrri during the offensive of the Serbian Cetniks or Serbian paramilitary, call them as you wish. Starting from 0600 in the morning they started throwing people out of the houses; I was thrown out of mine at 0700. They threw us out and they ordered us to go to a field located near the cemetery of Vushtrri. People were gathered from all over the city plus the refugees that came to the city from the villages and we were about 60 – 70 thousand people, at least; nobody could count us, either us or them but we were about 60 – 70 thousand people. We were thrown out of the houses and told to go there at the cemetery which in air distance is about 50 – 60 meters from where I was living. On the way to the cemetery there was a house of Kahrimon Pasumes who is an old man and his sons had set up a headquarter in their house and it was the place where 74 people were massacred in Vuhstrri. On the way to there, they were separating families so I asked who are they taking and they were looking for young people. From my family they took my son, his wife and my daughter. My son was 34, his wife 30 and my daughter 24. They separated the parents, my son and his wife, from three children: the oldest son was 5 years old, the second was 4 years old and the daughter just before becoming 2 years old. They gave the kids to me; I was with my mother and my wife. We were separated and ordered to continue to the cemetery where all those people were gathered and while going there they separated 74 people. Later we found out the names of all 74 and we have the list. We don’t know about anyone else but we certain about these. We found them all and they were all massacred in that house and I received them within 2 – 3 years from Belgrade mass grave located in Batajnice. That was a horrifying day in Vushtrri; the police, fascist gangs and paramilitaries, or call them as you wish, kept us there until 0600 in the evening. Between 1000hrs and 1100hrs they separated men from 14 years old in one side. Then they separated us that were above 60 years old in another side. Finally at 0600hrs in the evening they released us. They pulled back and we started to disperse. Whoever could go home went back home. I was the first one to enter the house where the massacre took place; everyone was afraid to enter that house in that moment. I asked 2 or 3 people to join me but they didn’t want to. I entered and I saw the scene of what happened there. It is a terrible event and very hard to describe; I went in and there was a big living room and a hall. The second floor was in flames from the moment they released us because they had started the fire. The fire was on its bursting stage. I entered and I saw clothes, shoes, hats and some ID cards in some empty wallets. I am no expert of crimes scenes but I can prove that the event that took place in Vushtrri on 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1999, if 7 thousand people would have died from weapons it wouldn’t have been that much blood. The experts can conclude if the event that took place there, when 74 were killed, from all the blood that was there if they were murdered by bullets or the event was 100% miserable death. I went in and I could also see bullets holes in the walls; clothes were there, blood was there; everything happened on the stairs and in a sidewalk that was about 20 meters to the gates. They were all wearing clothes but they tried to burn the clothes there; they probably spilled gasoline in them; some were

burnt but some remained; we know that the truck which was loaded there, blood was spilling out of it and left a trace behind for 50 meters and we concluded that the massacre was there. It was a plastic bowl filled with blood; there was a table with human flesh which they tried to cook in there. These are true and the walls were covered in blood; I entered the bathroom and there was a lot of blood in the bathtub; it was an old fashion bathtub not like the modern ones. This is how our day went staying without drinking, standing in the field close to Vushtrri's cemetery. The Vushtrri police was on watch all the time there and nobody could leave or enter or move until the massacre was over. It is true that they killed another 3 – 4 outside that place before reaching there but Shefki Dallku was killed almost in the end when they released one part of the crowd; when I returned at the stone bridge they were returned back again and that is when they killed Shefki Dallku. During the day there was a person named Zoran Vukotiq who burnt Vushtrri and the village; him 95% and two or three others were leading the burning of the center of Vushtrri, houses in Vushtrri and the villages every day. He was the one that was confirmed. We don't know where he was from: some say he was from Valjevo, some say he was from Kraljevo, some say he was from Belgrade but it is 100% sure that he was from the Serbian leadership. Dragan Mihajloviq was working for the military secret service as I know and he was dressed in civilian that day when 60 – 70 thousand people were gathered in that field; he was carrying an automatic rifle. Around 1400 – 1500 hrs they brought long trucks which can carry loads of 30 tons. From our group they selected people and loaded 4 such trucks and we didn't know where they were taking them to. They were men from the age of 20 up to 50 – 60 as they decided the selection and they were taken to the sports hall in Vushtrri. They gathered about 300 – 400 persons; the next day they released about 50 persons and the rest was taken to Smrekonica prison and from there they were driven to Albania in buses but they know the story better and they can answer your questions. I know how the process went. Dragan Mihajlovic was the leader of the unit at the cemetery that day in in Vuhstrri. There is a lot more to tell but these are the key events; 74 were killed and 11 are still missing while the rest of the corpses were brought back. Most of them came from Batajnica mass grave, some from Llapnasella, or what was the name, but it was also located in Serbia. These corpses were sent back but there are still 11 missing from that group. When I went out searching for my family members I met the commander in the corner of the cemetery who was supervising the retreat of the Serbian police in Vushtrri and after the paramilitaries left I asked him, his name was Simic, "you took away our family members, where are they". He said "I don't know". I told him "you should know because you are the commander of the police in Vushtrri". Few days went by and NATO completed its mission and this was shortly the story of that day. I lost my son, his wife and my daughter. My daughter was not married; the son was married and left three children behind: two boys and a girl. We receive some kind of help for them of 135 euros but since both parents are gone they removed this 130 euro aid and gave me 50 euros per each child since I was their guardian; their grandfather but their guardian as well. Then they increased it into 75 euros but now the oldest son has filled 18 years of age on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December. They have annulled his compensation while I still receive 150 euros for the other two. My wife receives 135 euro for our daughter since she left no successors so my wife takes it. We had no other compensation since 13 years now. We didn't have any debt for the children. It is known how much the expenses are but the biggest worry is of the children and how to get them on their own feet. To tell you the truth, I was working in the factory and I receive a pension of 80 euros. It is very hard; for 13 years we can only count a small assistance we received

for the family members that remained orphans, I lost my son, my daughter and my son's bride while the children lost both parents. It is a great danger that we won't be able to educate them and put them in their own feet as they deserve. Up to date for these 13 years nobody knocked on our door to see what we have or what are we missing. We will see from now on what will happen. I lost my son, his wife and my daughter. If someone would ask me before that moment, I would have probably answered that I would give 5 brides and 5 daughters for my son but the way they took those women and the way they went, now I would give 10 sons for the bride; that is how bad I feel. You would say: Why? The way she was taken is very harsh for a woman. Men are different; women are different but this was done to us by our ancient enemy. I don't know what else to say; these were the most essential moments otherwise there is a lot more to be said. We suffered a lot: economically we suffered a lot, physically we suffered a lot, our soul has gone through too much and it is still suffering. But as a conclusion, the reason for what they are gone, the reason for what their blood is spilled doesn't have even 5% of the importance it deserves to have. They have no value; nobody cares about the; nobody cares about the family members that gave their loved ones. There is no compensation but at least to educate those children. I am 70 years old now, it is not interesting for me anymore but for those children and those family members that gave their lives for this day; to have a treatment that doesn't separate them from others. To find a middle way for a comfortable life and a fair chance of reaching something for those who lost their loved ones. My grandfather was one, my father was one and I was one. I had no uncles and have no brothers or sisters. My father died in Banat war when I was three, Arqibej Tofuz took them during World War II and sent them to fight against the German. I was raised by my grandfather, grandmother and mother since I was three. I had my mother during the war but she died after the 22<sup>nd</sup>, she passed away on the 26<sup>th</sup> of next month; she was a little sick but the trauma that we experienced had an impact on her. Even today we are still traumatized; whoever was 5 years old and above is traumatized and touched. The message for what you are saying is very easy to express but very hard to be brought to life. All the time we were occupied by the Serbs / Shka; because the right word definitely is "Shka", the Albanian word for them is "Shka". If we speak in Serbian we say "Serb" but if we speak in Albanian the word is "Shka" because that is the right Albanian word; in Turkish it is "Gjaur". If they don't like it, it is their problem. We were never more divided as far as we can see. I don't belong to any political party. For me there is no party, for me there is only the Albanian nation for which we have suffered through centuries: our fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers. Today we are still not fully independent. Being fully Independent means controlling your borders. Law should rule here and everyone should have equal rights. We don't need to be divided when it comes to the interests of our nation and state. Parties, hate and anything should exist; we must be united, help each other. We must have good relationship and work hard; without work we won't reach anywhere. We can sit all day long but work will not get done itself. We have to work. Our leadership up to date, they know better because they are well educated but the people are not satisfied with them. I don't want to accuse any specific party; they are all guilty. We need unity, work, development and justice.

### **Sabernetë Nuraj**

I was born in Gjakova and I live in Rracaj village. I have my father, mother and a sister. I had a brother who we lost during the NATO bombing. During the war the decision was taken to flee the village so we left our houses. One of our villagers, also a neighbor, took us in his tractor. While entering Gjakova the tractor got broken and friend of my father from Rracaj took us and we drove up to Bishtazhin in the exit of Gjakova. We got shelled there and it was a very harsh moment. I didn't know anything and it blacked out in front of me. After a while I got conscious and I saw myself in the tractor alone. Everyone else was on the ground, chopped from the grenade. An old man came and got me. I was 9 years old and an old man placed me on the ground; I was horrified seeing people like that but I managed to find my sister who was 8 months old. While looking around I saw my brother whose body was deformed, he was dead. I saw a lot of people and parts of people everywhere but I found my mother who was wounded badly; she didn't know anything was the only one with conscious. Some people helped me drag my mother to a field there. My sister was crying so I took her in my chest in order to calm her down. I was breastfeeding her from my mother while she knew nothing. The wounded people were weeping from pain. I didn't know what to do, I needed help; people were coming because from the bombs they were thrown all over the nearby fields. I saw a man with a black beard and I asked him to help me but he told me to leave him alone. I had no help so I stayed like that. After a while the ambulance of the hospital came and took the wounded people; I was a little injured but I was conscious. They took the wounded and were about to leave for Gjakova. But I got very scared that the Serbs might come and take me so I went to the ambulance and I opened the door. The doctors came out, took me in the vehicle and we went to Gjakova. My mother was in coma for three days and she knew nothing. I had my uncle's daughter, my uncle's 8 month old son and my sister. We were in the pediatric hospital; my mother was in the surgical clinic in a coma and she was the most wounded of all. The doctors helped her a lot and did everything in their power to heal her. There were no good nights or days when I knew that my mom is dying; father was outside of Kosovo but thanks to God, three days later I was told that my mother is getting better so I went to see her. She couldn't move but she was alive. We stayed there for 5 months but the doctors were taking good care of us. I thank also the nurses who did a lot for us. We stayed for 5 months; my mother continued with the therapy. Her back was shattered; we went at our uncles where we stayed for a long period until our house was built from the aid we received and then we went back to Rracaj; my father got back as well. Nobody assisted us except one American from America because our newspaper that was published all around was showing our story. He found us through this newspaper and came to help us; he gave us some money and some other things necessary to survive. We received nothing from Kosovo. My mother gets a pension of 96 euros which was annulled for 5 months because she started walking but she still has pieces of grenade on her back. They annulled the pension for 5 months because they said that she is healthy. My father complained and they continued issuing the pension. Someone says that the bombing came from Serbs, some say he was a French pilot; newspapers say that it was the Serbs; we don't know who did it we only know that we were bombed. My brother was taken from there but I saw that his body was severely damaged. We went to the hospital; after a while they were taken to the cemetery in Gjakova and buried. After we went to the hospital and NATO entered Kosovo and we were free, my uncle that was here went to search from them because he heard that they were

dead. He went to the cemetery in Gjakova and recognized him from his clothes because they were still not destroyed. He came to the hospital and told us that he found his wife, his son, my brother and some villagers. On September 11<sup>th</sup> after we got stronger and my father came we reburied them in Rracaj. My father got out in Albania and from there in Germany. Before the bombing I saw Serbs along the road; we stopped at the place and waited because the convoy was very big but we saw Serbs along the road. I only know that my sight faded and when I got conscious I saw people scattered; I didn't know what happened. I get very emotional; I can't describe the moment when I saw what had happened. Even after the war when we have the commemoration ceremony which is on April the 14<sup>th</sup>, for three – four years as soon as I went to the spot where we were bombed; that moment when the bombs fell appeared in front of my eyes and I was lost. Only that moment stayed in my head. My father didn't allow me to go there for two years because I was feeling very bad but now I got over it. I will never forget it but I feel a little better now. In the beginning it was very bad. My sister that was injured has still consequences. When she hears a noise she gets scared because she was small and it remained with her. I also get scared because I suffered a lot. My mother faints a lot of times; she is very tired, my father who heard about us; we all have a similar fear. Life is better but we still have our hearts torn although we must continue with our lives now but the war left so many wounds. We grief, we have stress but have to go on together and comfort each other for what happened. Thanks to God we are alive now and we must continue with our lives. I finished 9 years of school. I am married, I have no children. I am married for two years. Nothing; some organizations came to interview us and to know what we lived through otherwise nothing apart from the American. He promised a lot but he never came back again; he left his phone number and everything but we couldn't contact him anymore. Our house was burnt and everything else but "samajtanpursi" built a house with two rooms and we live there. I would advise the Government to be better; to help people who suffered damages and do something for the people. Those who died are gone but the living ones must have a future and the injured ones because they suffered a lot. Our Government is too late; at least to give us a push and it would be better for everyone. I would like to find a job and work for them; we should hang with each other and not hate each other. We should be closer with each other because we are a country that suffered a lot. We should stay closer and not hate each other.

### **Semir Macikic**

After the divorce of my parents who lived together in Montenegro, otherwise, I was born in Berane in 1989, I am 23 years old. After the divorce of my parents, my mother along with me and my older sister, Came back to Kosovo where she has lived, where she was born. After that, she had a hard time supporting us and raising us, because she had to work. We were only children. We began going to school, we lived in Obilic in a barrack which was provided for us by some municipality. It was small, but it was enough for us. Um, until 1999, that is, from the beginning of bombardment, we lived in that barrack in Obilic. When the bombardment began, we were there for, let's say, ten days. After that, my mother, out of fear, had to take us somewhere else. We had cousins in Montenegro. One day she said like, let's go to Montenegro, because it was less attacked by NATO aggression. And one morning, we were sitting in a train. In that period, Serbs weren't letting people leave Kosovo. We somehow managed, by some sort of luck, to get to Montenegro. We were there for a year, maybe less, until the situation got better. The conditions we were living in, there, were very harsh. My mother was working; we had to pay a rent. We lived in Podgorica. Those cousins behaved as if they forgot us. So to speak, because now everybody looks only after themselves. So my mother decided, after the bombing, to return to Kosovo. We came to Kosovo, we moved into an apartment in a building in Obilic, which was abandoned. And we started a new life there, so to say. My mother got a job at a school, in our Serbian school as a cleaning woman. My sister and I went to that school. It had about 20 pupils at most. They were all of Serbian nationality and we have always attended school in the Serbian language. Road to school was so dramatic that I will always remember it. Soldiers had to come and pick us up, take us to the school, guard us, and take us back. That was very hard for us. NATO? KFOR, the Norwegian battalion, who were really very kind and good to us, but then again, even though they had all those weapons, we didn't feel safe. We couldn't relax, we couldn't walk normal. We were constantly afraid, even during the lectures because we have been attacked several times by some, let's say, extremists. And, um, we somehow managed to finish elementary school. High school. We started high school in Plemetina, because we couldn't go anywhere else. Plemetina is a village near Obilic. My sister attended medical school, while I was still in elementary school. When I started high school, I had only two choices, economics or a medical school. Those were not my preferred choices; it was more of a compulsion. I began to attend the school of economics. We went there by bus, which was also accompanied by KFOR. The school was in Plemetina so I had to travel every morning from Obilic. It was very hard. We were attacked several times, even though we were guarded by KFOR. We had to deal with this fear every day. We couldn't relax. Um, Otherwise, I don't know. Well, my story isn't any different than stories of my buddies related to that period. I was 10 years old; I couldn't quite understand why it was us exactly that had to go through that. Who could have I done any harm to, I was just a kid. I don't know why we deserved that. Everybody fights for his life and so did we. In fact, my mother fought the most, for us. There are many stories. Thank God, I didn't suffer any human losses in my family, but I did lose some friends and some people I knew. I have also lost that barrack, which is now only dust. I've spent my childhood there, if I might add, a happy childhood, in freedom. But then again, this is nothing compared to what have some other people lost. The only important thing to me was that we were alive and healthy. There are other stories, like, when we moved to that apartment in

that building in Obilic. We had to lock the door of the building, we were afraid to leave it open not only at night, but in daylight as well. One day, well, it was morning, Sunday. Sunday, I remember it was Sunday. My mother and I went to the neighbors, while my sister slept at home in the living room. All of a sudden, we heard some loud noises. We didn't know what it was. When suddenly hundreds of extremists started to throw things at buildings which were inhabited by Serbs and Bosnians like me. They started throwing rocks, banging and yelling. When they assaulted the front door of the building, I wasn't afraid for myself. Even though I was the youngest, I was the only male in my family. I had to behave like a man. I was only afraid for my sister who was in the apartment. By the way, our apartment overlooked the main street. She began screaming. I could feel her fear, but only hers, not mine. My mother ran into the apartment and took her out in the hallway. Suddenly, an even bigger screaming started. All of my neighbors were scared and some old people were, oddly, more afraid for themselves than for the lives of younger people. I don't know, that's how it goes I suppose. Luckily, the members of the KPS police came, allegedly they calmed the situation. How could they have calmed the situation when we were tremendously scared? We were to sleep in that apartment. But what can you do? Life goes on. We had to deal with that. Later on, after a few days, same thing happened. My mother couldn't stand it anymore. She tried to persuade us to leave that place, but it was tough, I have already made friends there and met a lot of people. The school had also a big influence on me. I was really enjoying that school. There weren't a lot of students, but we all knew each other, we were all helping each other because we were the only ones left there. I do not know what to tell you. The worst period in my life was when I lost my friend. It was the 14th of August, but I can't remember the year. We were on some sort of celebration which was organized by the KFOR battalion. I think it was in Prishtina. I don't know, I can't quite remember, it was a long time ago. They were like telling us that we could go out and play with other children; it was some sort of multi-ethnic event after all. They called Albanian kids, Serbian kids, Bosnians and Roma and it was all ok until some raging Albanians attacked us for some reason and pushed my friend. He dropped from some 3 or 4 meters and lost his life. In the end, it was proclaimed an accident, but we all saw that it wasn't. At that moment, I was very even more afraid, but I had to fight it. After that, in the evening, round 9 or 10 PM, some friends of ours called my mother and told her that some Serbs were killed in Obilic. They were massacred, they were... I can't quite explain. And after that, more and more fear began to fill people's hearts. I don't even know. It's indescribable. We were not able to sleep peacefully out of fear that somebody might come and hurt us. Even all this cannot be compared with what, you all know, happened on 17th of March. The 17th of March was definitely the worst day in my life. My mother was at work, in KFOR camp of the Norwegian battalion. My sister and I were home that day, the day that all that chaos started and that when innocent people suffered the rage. It is hard for me to talk about that. I'm really trying to forget it, but it's impossible. It's in my heart. The 17th of March. In my building, there were about 10 people. Mostly, old people. My sister and I were the only children there when it happened. We were attacked by so many people, I don't know how many exactly, I thought that there weren't as many people in this world as there was that day. What did I know? I was just a kid. I couldn't understand. I can't understand to this day why it all happened. What were we guilty of? There was one woman who worked with some NGOs, a Serbian woman, who had some connections with some foreign people. She called KFOR at the time of the attack. She called the members of the British battalion whose camp was in Prishtina. They said they would

come and rescue us as soon as they were available. It was all beat around the bush. We were all on the fifth floor, where we felt a bit more secured because they were breaking the entrance of the building. They started yelling and burning things. In that moment, I don't know how, my mother managed to enter the building with the help of KPS police. She wanted to know if we were alright. Her tan, I can't quite describe, was white. She was about to faint. All of a sudden, one of those British guys called that woman. He said: "we'll be there very soon, be ready." "We'll try to rescue you, but there are a lot of people assaulting you, it will be tough". It was like in the movies. They came in with rifles, they secured the entrance of the building and got us out of there. Somehow we got into one of those big carriers. On the side you could only see the smoke, people screaming and running. I don't even know what else. They started throwing objects at us. I don't even know how we managed to get into that transport vehicle. There were also other Serbs from the other building, but there wasn't enough space for them in that vehicle. They were saying: "where are we supposed to go? What about us?" Luckily, the KPS police came and took them to the police station where they've stayed for a couple of hours, until some other transport vehicle came and took them to this British camp where they took us. It was in Prishtina. The British camp was so...I don't know, small somehow. There were also people from Prishtina, Kosovo Polje, people from surrounding villages like, Caglavica, Bresija and so on. They put us, males, in one big tent. In that tent, there was only dirt and nothing more, but at least we felt safe. There were about a hundred soldiers and our safety was their mission. They wouldn't let anything happen to us. That's why we were able to relax there, but then again, we left our homes and everything, it was tough. I thought that I would never return there. Well, it wasn't just a thought, it was also the reality at that moment. Later on, I saw my friends who lived in the other building coming. They were all happy to be alive. That big hug from my friends meant a lot to me. I felt alive again. I said to myself that if this doesn't break me, it will only make me stronger. After a while, in that camp it was very difficult for us. Food. Food. I can still remember the food, but I'm not sure if that's the right word for it. A slice of bread and some soup, I do not know. I don't know how we survived. Later, they said that they would bring the busses which would take us to Gracanica, and from Gracanica, across the border. Serbia, Montenegro, some better place. Everybody was happy and looking forward to that. It was all great. Those busses came and they took us to Gracanica to some school. They put us in the gym where they have put some sleeping bags. They said that we would spend the night there and in the morning we would head across the border. It was all ok, great. Some journalists came there and we even got some aid. It was a small token of appreciation, it meant a lot. However, when the morning came, those busses weren't even thinking of moving. They didn't want us to leave Kosovo. They didn't want us to leave this place, I don't know why. They tricked us. People were angry and there was hysteria all around. People began to cry, they were concerned about their future, which was normal. Somehow, we survived even that. A friend of my sister who lived in Priluzje, a village near Obilic populated mostly, in fact all, by Serbs, called and said that we could live at her place if we got no place else to go. She said: "my house is small but we'll do our best to make you feel comfortable". We had to take that offer. We had no place else to go. We really didn't have where else to go. We went to that house where we lived for a month. It was comfortable there and all, but we couldn't quite relax there, it wasn't our house. You can't do want in a house which is not yours. I don't know. My mother got fired at work. I don't know why. Apparently, they were moving, decreasing, decreasing workers, soldiers and what not. My mother had

decided to rent a house in Plemetina, which was even more close to Obilic, where my sister and I went to school. An old lady wanted to rent us that house. The house was extremely old, it was more than a hundred years old, I'm sure. I had a feeling that a small wind could demolish it. We lived there for 3 years. My mother got a job at the Ministry of Returns and Communities in Prishtina. My sister finished high school and she continued her education in one of the faculties of Mitrovica. I finished high school, but unfortunately I couldn't continue with my education. We already had one student in the house and my mother couldn't afford to support another. I made peace with that, I didn't mind. I am still living in Plemetina. Luckily, the municipality of Obilic granted us an apartment in which we now live. We live with the members of the Rom community, which I do not mind, of course. For me all people are the same. Thank God. I don't know what else I can say. Well, I don't know. I think that all people deserve to be free. We all deserve the freedom of movement. That something I lacked the most in my childhood. I want to say to the people that provoked the war and did things, that this is not the way. Russians and Indians didn't invent chess, to compete with, in vain. Why with rifles? If you want to solve something, solve it with a game of chess or some other game. Do not make the innocent suffer, the people who are just trying to make a living. Their lives are difficult enough with all the financial and economic problems. War is the last thing they need. I would really love to see peace in the world and that everybody has a chance to live, normally. Thank you for inviting me.

### **Sherife Koca**

I was born in Terrstenik, Drenas Municipality, married in Polac. We came to the city in Mitrovica 50 years ago. I have been living with my husband, mother of 10 children. My son was a soldier. He was taken by Serbs on 05.04.1999. My husband remained home since he had diabetes. My son was a soldier so he sent a friend of his to see if his dad can walk. The friend went and told my son that the daddy can't walk. The son came to take his father and fell on the trap set by Serbians, Serbian soldiers – the worst of them. They released my husband but they took away my son. They didn't kill him on the spot but they took him away and ever since no one knows nothing about him. They directed my husband in the row and didn't allow him to talk about the son. He walked on the row while the son was taken. The bride was pregnant, 3 months; and the daughter is being raised now by my daughter Lumnije, Lumnije Koca. The wife left and abandoned the daughter and my daughter took the 2 months old baby. She is grown now, 12 years old, she is going to school, 6<sup>th</sup> grade and she is a very good student. It is 13 years that we know nothing about our son, just like every other mother that has lost someone. We want to know about our child if they are dead or alive; we are all in sad, with tears in our eyes for them. They told us we saw him here, we saw him there but we have no knowledge about him since 13 years. He was taken alive but after that we don't know anything. Someone said that they were seen lying on the sidewalk near a shop, known as Habibi's Shop, him and two others laying on their stomach, then a jeep came, they were loaded in there and taken away. For 13 years we know nothing about him. No one is interested; this organization uncle Bajram, I thank him, is trying, nobody else. What should be done is not being done. I hope their blood will never be forgotten. For us mothers it's very hard. He was with a friend trying to turn on a vehicle. They had no keys so they tried to do it with wires. In that time, the Serbian soldiers heard them and came out to get them. My son told to his friend Kamir you go out on that side of the yard; because we have two entrances to our house; while he went on the lower side. He came out his way and they caught him. We know nothing about the other boy too. We were thrown out by Serbs from our houses. I went out with my oldest son, with sons, daughter and the bride and we went on the bus to Rozaje. They laid my son in the middle of the road, a Serbian soldier the ones that belonged to Sheshel put his leg on my son's back, we started crying / screaming and then he pointed the rifle in the middle of his head to shoot my son. We were on the bus; the kids started crying and yelling, let alone the kids of my family but kids of other families which I didn't know started crying and yelling when they saw my son laying on the ground. I fainted but they threw water on me and gave me pills but I didn't know where I was anymore. He had told the driver if you stop this bus anywhere you will be dead with all these passengers. We started the crying and yelling when my oldest son was held so I thought they killed at the spot. 10 days after my second son was taken we heard about another son taken. The bus drove away and I said that I will not move until all the buses are finished; I want to see if they threw him somewhere because they said that they are killing them and throwing them near a bridge in Rozaje. Then some women came and said: don't worry sister because your son is coming on another bus. But how, we saw him being killed with our own eyes. Two hours later my daughter Lumnija, who is raising my son's daughter, with her third brother, went out to check every coming bus. When he came I couldn't see or hear, only when he called "mother", I heard the voice otherwise I didn't see and he said "I am alive". I was blinded by all the grief when seeing my son laying on the ground. I suffered a lot with them. First I experienced my oldest son, 10 days after I

heard that the Serbs got the second one. When we went out he said to my daughter Lumnije, who is raising this kid, "Lume, I trust you and God with this child". I didn't hear this, since I was a mother he didn't tell me, but he said to my daughter "Lume, I trust you and God with this child". My daughter took her, is raising her and sending her to school, the child is learning very well.

I don't know where I am for myself, I had a heartache from the grief I lived with; it left us with a lot of consequences. His father passed away three years after the war, but he was not killed he had a heart problem. From the 05.04 when the son was taken, I forget a lot, it affected me greatly, I can't see. 05.04.1999 left us all with consequences. Now it is over but they tell us he is there he is here but we know nothing about him and no one is interested to do what is necessary for them. They sacrificed for this day, for today's freedom, for us; not only my son but the sons of all mothers. We are all sad, in tears. I can't find joy in anything. We are living like we are, with a social aid, unemployed, nothing. There is no work to be found and no one is working. Now I have four sons and four daughters. The missing son who was a soldier, one daughter that passed away and now I have 8 children alive. I pray that they belong to God and I see nothing on them like what I saw on them and on the oldest son, as I told you. As soon as they took him from the vehicle we knew he will be killed. We take for the daughter about 130 – 135 euros since my son was a soldier. To tell you the truth there was a boy that was prisoned in Sremska Mitrovica, if I am not mistaken. He came 6 months or a year ago and told us that he was in prison with our son Kemajl and he kept telling the story. We were wealthy so he says that we must give him money by telling us this story. We didn't announce our son as a soldier thinking that he is in prison and that it might harm him so we couldn't declare him as a soldier. He went to headquarters with my sons and this daughter who is raising the child and he said that I guarantee with my life that he is alive. I met him and I have no reason to lie to you. We took him home again and we played some video recordings to him and before his picture showed up he recognized his voice, my son's voice, the one who was a soldier. I said, instead of taking more for a missing person, for a dead one you will take more; you know how this goes, these cases; do you? What should I say; I am asking you to search more for these that are not found. I want to find him dead or alive, if he is alive to search for him and if he is dead to bring him to us. I want to know where he is. I am grieving all the time. Whenever I hear the bell ring I say it might be some news for my son. My whole heart is with him. To add, only what I said, as far as I am concerned I wouldn't leave the house, but my husband told me to leave, my son told me to leave: mother if something bad happens at least don't let me worry about you. My husband didn't come; he said I am sick, I will stay home and he didn't come. My oldest son told him: dad go with them; don't leave the whole family alone. My husband said I can't, I am sick from diabetes, it is better if you go. The son came through all those ill-treating, crying and sadness! This was no war; the elder speak about other wars, Shaban Polluzha's war I think was the last, but it was nothing like this war. S war that terrified us, took everything from us, they did what they could. I thank this organization for the contribution and I thank you!

## **Sofije Idrizi**

I was born in Krosmirofa and I am 61 years old. I was married in Prekaz, mother of two children: my daughter is married and has a daughter; my son is 26, not married and unemployed. I live in Prekaz. I can talk only about the event when my husband was taken, on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1998 during the first fighting when they attacked Adem Jashari. He was home and he went out to get the salary from where he was working. He went to his place of work and they took him from there sent and it's been 13 years that we know nothing about his fate. He is missing. He went out of the house, I told him "don't be late"; he said "I am only going to get the salary and I will get back home, I won't be late". Imer Kushnici was killed that same day. A Serb named Mark told us that he was taken from the ammunition factory and since then we don't know anything. I heard two gunshots and I don't know anything else. We cried in grief; children got very upset; my daughter was 15 years old; my son was on 4<sup>th</sup> grade. It was only the three of us in the house now. We stayed there up until Adem Jashari came and said "let's hit the ammunition factory". The villagers were not agreeing because they said that all our women and children will be killed so nobody joined him. Rifat Bejta helped us a lot. He brought us money, food. The police came and caught us at my husband's uncle house. They were all masked, covered in green color; firing their rifles and automatics in the sky; children were lying on the ground. They kept telling us "we will slay you we will kill you". I had 500 DM's that my brother sent me from Sweden and I gave those to them just to save my son and daughter. They caught us in a convoy in Skenderaj. They threw us out after the last fighting with Adem Jashari in 1998 and in convoy we were sent to Skenderaj where we stayed for 3 weeks. From Skenderaj I went at my father's where I stayed for 5 – 6 months. They were beaten and abused. They didn't let us turn our heads. One Serb standing in one side another on the other side; there were a lot of Serbs: they were asking for our gold and money but I didn't have any. Children were screaming and crying in the convoy, from the hunger and thirst. We went to a flat of Remzi Ibishi in lower Klinë and we stayed there for a while. Then some soldiers in white clothes came and threw us out; one of them slapped my daughter once. He was about to hit me as well but I escaped inside but the daughter was outside. I took the kids and I went inside. From there I went at my father's. I stayed for 5 hours only with God and my children. On our way Serbs were out and they spoke to us in Serbian but we didn't know what they were saying. I couldn't reply to them in Serbian. When they took my husband I went to the police station in Skenderaj where the Serbs were swearing at me in Serbian and saying all kinds of things. I was asking for Ilia but they told me he is not there. The children were crying and shouting. They told me go to the ammunition factory inside and you will find your husband there. We were afraid to go there but there is a grave there for two or more years and I suspect on it. My son went with his uncle, with two uncles, two open it. Xhafer was the chief of the organization and we told him that a grave is there. They invited EULEX and they came with some equipment and they said that they are suspicious if it is a grave but they never came to open it. In Krosmirofa there was war, shots fired, Serbs stormed in and beaten my father before my eyes and also my mother before my eyes. My brothers were in the mountains with the army. There was one huge Serb, he tied my father's hands like this and hit my son. They asked for money but we had none. My mother was 61 years old and my father was 85. They beaten him and even today he has a broken leg from the beating he got from the Serbs. My mother went to Albania; I remained in Skenderaj. I returned to Skenderaj and then went back to Prekaz. The Serbs stormed

in and caught us there; they kept me with my husband's uncles. We stayed in lower Klina for a while, in Mani's shop. When they brought us food we eat, when they didn't we didn't eat. The house got burnt, we have no house, now it is built but not finished; only one room is finished. They have burnt the wheat and everything that was inside. Our cattle got lost and we couldn't find them anymore. We didn't find anything at home. Everything was burnt with the house. My father remained alone at home; the boys came during the night and took him with them in the mountains. They built a plastic tent and lived in the mountains until the war was over. I stayed in lower Klina until the war was over. Nothing happened there. On my way back my son caught a cold so I was taking him to the doctor. The Serbs were retreating from Prekaz and they were gathering at the pharmacy in Skenderaj in Adem Jashari square. They fired guns in the air and told me to stop. I didn't stop but I entered a building that was near and I waited there until they left. I returned to lower Klina again. We stayed for a while until a cousin of mine came and took us to Krosmirofc. When the war ended I was in lower Klina, from there we took a bag of wheat in our back and went in Krosmirofc at my father's. I stayed there until my children grew up. My son will be 26 on August 19<sup>th</sup>; my daughter will be 30 on May the 8<sup>th</sup>; she was born in 1982. My son finished the primary school; after he lost his father he lost the will to live and nothing is good anymore. We have no water in the house. He speaks but not too much because he gets upset; as soon as I start speaking about him he starts crying. When my husband was taken, my son was in school my husband had to go and clean the classrooms. My brother in law went to get him because Hysen Maxholli was being buried that day. Water was far from the house so on my way to get water I was asking everyone I met if they saw Idriz but everyone said no. When dark fell I prepared food. My son was at my husband's stepmother. I told him "come home son because the school director told me that Idriz will watch the school tonight so he will not be coming home tonight". He said "why are you not telling me that father was taken by Serbs". "Who told you that son"? He said "I know that Serbs got father and they took him to Skenderaj and he didn't come back". We went to search for him at the police station and everywhere. Someone said that he was killed someone said that they took him along but it has been 13 years that we know nothing about him. My daughter got married and has a daughter. I don't know what will happen now. Now, us? Something, actually nothing; ACT reconstructed our house; the bathroom is not finished yet; we have three rooms but not finished. I am living only in one room since even the bathroom is not finished yet. I am receiving the 135 euros for my husband but what to do with it. I can't keep the cow or the calf, chicken or bird because they have to be fed too. I remember but the Serbs did this, not the Albanians. I would advise the youth to open their eyes and work and don't ever feel the need for the Serb; you can see Mitrovica where they are killing people every day. My husband was taken and I still haven't find out if he is dead or alive. We can't find him yet. Every night I go to sleep I think about him; if he is alive; if he is eating or drinking but I can't express this in front of my kids because I feel sorry for the kids. My son mentions him sometimes; we have his picture and he takes the picture, sits out and cries. I tell him "don't do this son; we are not the only ones missing a loved one". To the Government? They don't look at us at all. The Government doesn't care about the salary or the missing ones anymore. We never had a visit from the Government to see where we are living, what we are eating or what we are drinking. No one ever came. They closed our organization. What can you say to a state like that? I have nothing to say to them. They are not interested about the families of the missing persons or the

war veterans or soldiers who gave their lives for this day. I don't know what else to say to them.

## **Velibor Adjancic**

I thank you for inviting me today to attend this recording. Well, I will begin now. I have been preparing for this and I will tell you as much as I know. I was born in Raskovo, municipality of Obilic. That is where my elder have also lived. My grandfather was born there, my mother, father, me, my son and my grandson. All born in Raskovo. It means that we live here, for about hundred, hundred and twenty years, in this Raskovo village. This Raskovo village had only four Serbian houses, all other houses belonged to Albanians, between seventy and eighty houses. We had a good life and we used to get along very well with Albanians, we shared everything, the good and the evil until the 98<sup>th</sup>. In 1989 an unfortunate event happened to me. My son Pera and my brother Dusko went to work, but somewhere between Crkvene Vodice and Blace was some barricade. Some unknown men in uniforms kidnapped my son and my brother and nine other Serbian workers that came across that barricade. Those unknown men are now known. They belonged to Kosovo Liberation Army. They took these men to an unknown destination on the 22<sup>th</sup> of June, 1998. Since then we still do not know what happened to them. I, as a parent, have investigated, I tried to find them. I called the Serbian police in Obilic in 1998, in Kosovo Polje, I went to the U.S. Embassy in Prishtina, I went to the international committee of the Red Cross in Prishtina. They all promised that they will see what they can do and that their men are in the field giving their best to find them and free them, because they were workers, headed for work. They didn't have weapons, nor did they have uniforms. They simply went to produce electricity for the whole nation, regardless of the nationality, origin and all that... Much time has elapsed since 1998 until now. I had a meeting with Christopher Hill, I had a meeting with um... The Head of Bureau of Missing Persons. I cannot remember her real name at the moment. We had meetings with EULEX, KFOR, police and investigative units. We cooperated with everyone just to find out what happened to our loved ones that got kidnapped. I have also, as the President of the Association of Kidnapped and Missing persons, had meetings with Albanian associations in Ohrid, we had meetings in Budva and we also had meetings in Belgrade and in Prishtina. The Association representatives from the Albanian side and us, the representatives of associations from the Serbian side. Our representatives were also in Norway, I was not. There were three representatives from the Albanian side and 3 representatives from the Serbian side in order to find out something about these kidnappings. However, a lot has been done, but unfortunately all negative. We have nothing positive. In fact, we have something positive! In 2003, Hans Haekkerup agreed with Kostunica to release all the Albanians in Serbian prisons which were in Belgrade. We, as an association have been proud that it came so far; we hoped that the Serbs who were kidnapped would be released if the Albanians who had been detained in Belgrade were released. According to my data, maybe I'm not exact; there were about 2,100 Albanians in Serbian prisons, led by Flora Brovina who was sentenced to 15 years. Kostunica has freed them using Hans Haekkerup, he was a civilian administrator in Kosovo. You know him, maybe more than me. However, on this side, in Kosovo, not one Serb was released. We do not have any freed Serbs. We looked everywhere. I traveled a lot with the ICP, which organized meetings. I was in Budva, Montenegro, in Croatia, in Tuzla, in a sanatorium here in Prishtina. Now I also cooperate with Albanian associations, representatives of Albanian Associations in order to come to some information or find out anything. There are about four hundred unidentified bodies in the morgue in Pristina. I am looking for years to identify those who know who they are. Simply stated, I have to say that the international community

is not interested, the Kosovo government is not interested and the Serbian government is not interested. It is time to identify the bodies. I know what to do and it should be done. I swear, for about 6 years I have some information regarding the location of 26 bodies, including nine workers who were kidnapped in Blace in 1998. For 6 years. International community has been trying to discover the tomb for 3 year now and will not discover it. They simply do not want to discover it. Last year they worked... Yes. Last year they started to work and I asked one of my colleagues who is the president of the Association for a favor, I explained the situation to him and I aksed him, because he is Albanian, to take me to where the graves are. He agreed. He said, I will take you there. With him I went straight to the tomb and they began to work. There were some people from EULEX, I spoke with them. They told me that this year the digging will end, they told me that they have already reached 25 meters below ground. I asked them, were there any signs that the bodies were buried there? They told me they have not found any signs of bodies and that they are still working on it. But when they reached 25 feet below ground they stopped, last year. They did not want to go to the end. Now I hear that they will begin to dig that grave again. I bet they will find the bodies for which I have information that they are there. For some reason, they are stalling. We are waiting for so long, why is it taking them so long to start? This needs to be solved. If they are alive, let them live, if they are dead, give us the bodies. What do we do now? The elder once said, marriage cannot pass without meat, war cannot pass without casualties. War is war. There is no war in which no one dies and that is all right. If it wasn't like that, it wouldn't be called War. But all this is somehow stalled and will not solve the problem. As for me, I moved in Priluzje in 1999, in the collective center. I left Raskovo with five family members. In Priluzje, not in Serbia. I will continue to remain in Kosovo. I will not go to Serbia for as long as I live. I do not mind the Albanian people, and I didn't bother them before the war. And now I am free to go with every Albanian who knows me, but with those who do not know me, I do not think so. With those who don't know me, I do not dare to go anywhere, and with those who know me, I am not afraid of anything. We cooperate. I cooperate with these associations. I had a meeting several times with a representative of the Commission for Missing Persons from the Kosovo government. He was a good man, in my opinion he is a good man. I have always been welcome and if sometimes the meetings couldn't take place, I was rescheduled for some other day. He told me, come talk to me Mr. Bora. That is how I cooperate. I like to cooperate. It is important that all associations, Albanian and Serbian cooperate just to get to the truth. What bothers us is this stalling. Simply, the 5 countries that came in 1999 to create peace and security in Kosovo did not create peace in Kosovo for all people. It is true that in 1999 Albanian houses were burned, I know that, I was in Raskovo, I know everything. But I do not know who burned them, and I know all the people there. 20 houses that were near our 4 houses, no one dared to burn. All the others were burned down. I think that our neighbors could have done the same for our 4 houses, they could have saved them. When my neighbors saw their houses burned, they no longer knew anyone, not even me, Bora. I understand that, you know. What to say more about it, I do not know. Maybe I could add something more but enough is enough I think. My message... I would like to greet the president Thaci and the international community. I would like to ask them to create good conditions in Kosovo for the Serbs who remained in Kosovo. You need to build houses, to resolve the status of kidnapped Albanians and kidnapped Serbs and Roms, of all people regardless of their nationality. And to build houses. Albanians have built a lot of houses, and that is pretty good and I'm glad. But if you have enough for yourself, you should give me

something as well. If neither of us has anything, than we both have nothing. I want them to create peace, I want freedom of movement for Serbs in Kosovo and I want them to build houses. There should also be some donations to help the families who have lost their homes and family members. They especially need to help these families and to provide them all the means of life because they have lost a family member or more. As for the material side, I was not a rich man back in Raskovo, but I was a good host. I had two houses, one for me and one for my brother. I had a shed, few garages, an orchard, tractors, various machines and I still have the land. My land is still there. The tractor is gone, mechanical gear, things in the house and all the rest is gone. All of that was destroyed, I have nothing. I sleep on a metal bed in an abandoned Serbian police station in Priluzje. When they left the building, I moved there. I sleep on a metal bed. If you know what I mean. If you don't understand, I hope you will never have to. I do not know what to add more. Ask me a question, if I know, I will answer. Well, I will say this. In 1998 I have sent three Albanians to Adem Demaçi to tell him that I did not deserve this. He received them and so I got the information that Adam Demaçi, spokesman for the National Liberation Army of Kosovo, said that he does not have the control over all these groups. He said, however, he will try to find out something about my son, my brother and my nephew. After a while I went personally with an Albanian from Raskovo to see Mr. Adem Demaci. That day he was not there. That's what they told me, I could not check whether that was true or not. As you know, that requires a lot of procedures. But there was his spokesman, and he heard me. My neighbor and I told him that I have not done any harm to anyone. All of this happened to my misfortune. My son had no weapon, he had no uniform, he was not about to kill anyone and he was not against Serbs, Albanians, Roms or against the Americans, was not against anyone. He just went to work. If my son has committed a crime and was imprisoned of several years, I would understand that, but that for 14 years I know nothing about him that's really a shame for the world and for politicians. It's been almost 15 years and nothing is known about the missing persons. If this continues, it will pass 30 years. It is known who organized all that and who kidnapped them. We live in a high-tech world where everything is known. You only need to ask the right person what you want to know. I cannot know everything, but he, who is educated and who knows how to work, he knows everything. You need to resolve this. Maybe there is truth in what Dick Marty says, but since we are talking, I need this story to end. I remember that Carla del Ponte talked a lot, and now when she has completed her mission, she is looking for some witnesses to be investigated. She spent all the money she had and now she wants more money to apparently carry out some operations in Kosovo and to arrest criminals. All this is stalling for too long now and parents die, some of the pain, some naturally. The wives of our sons, I do not want to offend, each has their own life. Children grow up without parents, unfortunately. We who remained in Kosovo do not have homes, and we have no freedom of movement. I am afraid to go to Prishtina by some Albanian bus. I just can't. If in the bus is at least one Albanian who knows me, I would dare to go, but if no one knows me in that bus, I do not dare. I am afraid, I just do not dare. I need someone to send me a ride to Preluzje to take me, or Ahmet Grajqevci, Committee Chairman, my colleague, to come by my house to take me and take me in Prishtina. Sometimes he sends a driver to take me. We cooperate, however, nothing depends on us. This should be solved by the Serbian government and Kosovo's government with the help of international community. When they solve this, then this will be over. Everything that we do, everything that I do doesn't lead us anywhere. We cannot help ourselves by ourselves only. Thank you for having me. I went to

Tuzla, in the laboratory where they analyze DNA samples, I was in Budva 2 times for 3 days. Natasa Kandic organized that. I was in Belgrade and I was in Grand Hotel in Prishtina. I went the Kosovo government with her. I am afraid to go alone, but am not afraid to go with someone. I like to talk to them, why not. I do not get involved in politics; I just want my son and brother.

## **Gjyla Haziri**

I am Gjyla Haziri, born in village Vllahi, married to Bejtush Haziri of Kaqanoll. Before the war we used to live with my husband and children in the northern part and for a while, until 2001, after the war and we lived through a lot of misery and catastrophes in that part. We were forcibly thrown out by the Serbian soldiers, Serbian criminals. We came to this side with three children: Ajshe, Izet and little Besnik. My husband had four children outside. With my husband we came in Zhabar village at my brother in law. Going around like that sometimes at my brothers in law and wherever we could find shelter, whenever we saw that the situation got calmer we went back to our apartment but again after 2-3 days they were not allowing us since there were Gypsies / Romas were part of those actions. They were together with Serbs breaking shops and looting. Then we saw that it is not safe to stay in that side so we decided to go on the south side and to stay there forever. I stayed there until 2001 but now I live in the southern part. My husband was killed. They forcibly threw us out of our apartment then we went back to the apartment. Then they threw us out again. I went with little Besnik and my husband but the Serbs came and said that we should leave to the southern part. We were somewhere on the 6<sup>th</sup> month, my two other kids were staying with my brother in law in the southern part. I couldn't leave Besnik alone since he was 18 months old. They told us in Serbian "Go to Albania", we will send you again to Albania, I understood this. They tried to kick us but they couldn't. 3 days later my husband was found dead in Shipol / Mitrovica. We lived through a huge catastrophe. He was found at 0600hrs in the morning killed in Shipol. I saw my husband for the last time three days after we were kicked out of the apartment. He said I will not leave the flat and he went out and we didn't know where he went or what he did. He was just found killed. According to some residents there, someone who saw him said that he was killed by a barbarian hand of Serbs. He left us with a lot of consequences; it is not easy to raise a family on your own especially since I was left with a small child but thanks to God my husband has a big family, brothers that helped go through. Now I live in the northern part, I've exchanged my flat in the north with a Serbian that had a flat in south so now I have my own flat because I couldn't live in that side anymore. Until 2001 I lived in that side alone with little Besnik even after I found my husband killed. I saw many terrible things happen; sometimes I stayed up until 3 in the morning watching from the 9 floor what was going on. I saw them beating Albanians, throwing them out of their flats, the horrifying moment when 13 were killed; I lived that terror in my flat. I had my son Izet that night and the next day I sent him with Gani Rexha, who was President of the Court. They tried to kill Gani Rexha with his family and one Ferid from Kqiq village on the seventh floor but they didn't climb higher. We were on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. It was a catastrophe, we didn't dare go out, and we got locked inside like hostages. The next day I understood that they are taking Gani Rexha and some others to the other side; I took my son Izet and sent him with Gani Rexha. I was carrying my son on my shoulder because he was too small and I remained there. I never went out the following 6 weeks. Son Pjeterson was with Xheledin Llaushas daughter and brought us food and other things but when they went out they filled their bags with newspapers so that the Serbs wouldn't notice that they are leaving anything behind. When I went out 6 weeks later it was like coming out of a prison because I was living only with my son for 6 weeks without going out. Now, Thanks to God, no one ill-treated me I went regularly every 3- 5 days to the south side at my brothers in law to see my son Izet and went back to the flat again. In 2001 this came to an end since I couldn't handle it anymore; my son grew up

and started speaking. I was afraid that they might kidnap him so I decided to leave the flat. It was occupied by Serbs but in 2006 I changed it with that Serb. Financially, I work for the missing person's organization as an administrative assistant, we receive help from businessmen, we don't receive regular salary but I receive 135 euros and some aid from the organization, we receive clothes and shoes from the citizens, may God help those who help those who help us. We give aid to some other friends that are there, I lead that organization, I am the secretary while Bajram is the President so we are managing somehow. My son is now 14 years old, on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, a very good student. He is a very polite and discreet boy. To the people and youth I would say that everyone has to accept its fate, have a healthy cooperation between them, have mercy for one another, and have in mind every orphan child. Also Kosovo institutions should do more about these families, about the missing ones.

## **Abide Sejdiu**

That night my husband, the old man, wasn't there. My four sons, my son's bride and two children woke up in the morning, ate breakfast and went to work the land. They took the tractor and went, I went with them. I can't, the soul can't hold it. I went to the field, the first rifle shot on the way to the field. There were some trees. My son asked me to go his way, we didn't know anything, I turned back and they shot again. We entered some kind of runway and went back at home. I told my sons to leave, they told me they have done anything wrong to anyone, why leave?! We went inside, they took us outside and they beat us. They beat me first. They took my youngest son, sent him at garage and hit him in the head. The Serbs told us to sit down but I didn't understand what they were saying. And I asked them; do you have children?! They again hit me with a rifle again. I took my youngest son's hand and helped him; they took him from my hands. They took my four sons, two of them were on the upper yard and two down to the yard, two helicopters were shooting continuously. We just placed the new house slab. Our house slab was covered on bullets. Two helicopters weren't leaving; they only stood upon our house slab. They took our sons, beat them, they also beat us, they broke the hallway and room windows. I had my three sons close to me while one of them was in other room on basement. I had twins, both of them graduated. They took us outside, beat us and then returned us back inside and beat us again. They beat me heavily. There also was my son's bride with two children, daughter and son. We both sat in a room. When they first came, they blocked the door of the house, three bullets hit the door. Then the forces came. When the tank entered the yard door, my oldest son told me "mother the tank entered". I told him "son there is nothing we can do, in God's hands". We had two places; they entered and controlled each, including quilts. They came up and hit the windows of hallway and the room. They entered and took my sons. The others were pulled outside on the yard. They told me to sit down, while when I saw that they crashed down my son and were beating him, I run towards my son. They took my four sons and I knew they killed them. My breath is not working well. I had my three sons there, the other one was in the basement. They also brought some neighbors. My four sons, one from another neighborhood and one of our neighborhoods were killed there. Total six were killed in my yard. I, my two grandchildren and our bride entered another room. I asked the bride "could you hear the tank?" she said yes. I can't do nothing but rest, I can't. We stayed late in the room, we didn't dare to move, it was dark. In meanwhile, some KLA soldiers arrived together with some neighbors. They sent us at some neighbors place. Two of my sons remained inside and two others outside. It's very hard for God's sake. Whoever entered saw 4 corpses in the living room. They were drawn out being hold by their arms because it was hard for them. Then the old man came from the mountain. I told him "they killed our four sons and tomorrow is their funeral. I told them to make place for my grave among them". I can't tell the story from boredom and retirement. Our yard was full of dead people; helicopters were constantly shooting above our house. Two neighbors escaped through a group of animals. The other son, who was in the basement, was killed after coming out to look for cows. My younger son was also killed in the yard, close to him. The oldest son was killed in our new house we just started to build. There were many, 5.000 or 10.000 people, they beat them all. My brother-in-law was holding my hand. I was in front of my son's corpses. He told me to stand up and see how many people came for our sons. It's pretty hard to think on what we went through. They brought the shrouds and grave planks from Vushtrria, but I was alone and I couldn't pay them. How do I

buy shrouds and grave planks, how do I bury them?!After they took my sons, Serbs have not turned back. They entered the yard but not inside the house.In Likoshan they killed 10 people; their houses are in slope, very close to our house, than they worked the whole night on their burial. No one could move. Tomorrow we saw bullets all over the place. We went to a neighbor to hide so they couldn't get us. The next day at 3 o'clock all the tanks left, then everyone started to come, so many people. 150 people were killed. Whoever entered was hard for him to come out. Our place has graves everywhere you go, full of them. We suffered a lot, about everything, about food and water; we had no clothes to wear as they burned everything. Women left while man stayed for three months in the mountain.My oldest son was Beqiri, my twins Nazmi and Bedri, my youngest son Bekimi, all of them young men. Twins were graduated. Only my oldest son was married, he had his wife and a son. The others were not married.

## **Besa Gashi**

I am Besa Gashi. I was born in Skenderaj and I live with my father, mother, brothers and four sisters. My father worked in the municipality of Skenderaj as geodesic. When the war started, he was expelled from work. We have lived a life as usual as everyone else until the war destroyed our lives. I completed primary school in Skenderaj, while I finished my secondary school in the villages as everyone else. My oldest sister has completed primary school and she was working as a hairdresser. My second oldest sister completed high school but due to the war she couldn't continue further education. My oldest brother was living in Germany. He completed primary school education in Skenderaj, same as my second oldest brother. My youngest brother has also completed primary school education. I am going to tell the sad story which the whole Kosovo experienced. It started on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1999. On that day we woke up in the morning. At 8:45 we saw paramilitary forces, dressed up in white uniforms with black masks and lined. Our house was next to the police station. We saw them from windows, everyone was there. We had guests, my uncle's wife with her two children and sons of my other uncle from Likoshan village. At that moment Serbs entered inside, they didn't wait, we couldn't even open the door or speak or answer. They took my father, my brother, my 14 years old uncle's son and my brother 19 years old. They didn't let us ask what do they want or why are they doing this. They just took them outside, while they gathered the rest of us and put in a separate room. My second oldest brother as he them entering he left and went at our neighbor thus escaping at that moment. They took out my father, brother, my uncle's son and than we heard shots continuously. We were trapped in the room; they started destroying the house and break everything, we kept hearing shootings. We stayed in the room for 5 consecutive hours; my mother who was suffering from hypertension was screaming and crying. We kept hearing shootings. Later, I decided to get out and see what had happened there, I opened the door and went outside, you couldn't walk from broken windows. I entered a room upstairs to see out from the window but saw nothing. Than I decided to open the front door of the house, police wearing back masks were guarding in front of the house and when I looked on the other side I saw my father, my brother and my uncle's son lying down on the ground. Then I shut the door and prayed to God for help, I couldn't tell the women on the room what I've seen, I thought mother is suffering from hypertension, she could get paralyzed. I stayed there 10-15 minutes praying, I was afraid to get out and see because police were patrolling in front of our house then I turned back in the room and they asked me what I have seen; I said I have seen nothing, they are only guarding in front of the house and they gave order to stay where we are. My second older sister was holding our mother; we tried to calm down our mother, I couldn't stop my tears. I again approached the window, I could see them but luckily the others in the room didn't wake up and see what has happened. I kept telling them our father, brother and uncle's son will come back inside. I was afraid to tell what I saw outside and as I continued to look out the window I could see how they took out people from their homes. They beat women and children. Closely I saw our deceased neighbor Idriz Kamberi. They took him, his wife and his children out kicking and beating them, they took him out on the main road and then they shot bullets continuously until he fell down on the ground. His wife Hida jumped above him crying. They grabbed her hair and hit a rock with her head. Horror, it was a horror. From there, they lined them in a row, they did not put us there, we were afraid of what will happen to us. It was only us remaining there, everyone else were thrown out of their houses. We kept staying

there until 1:30 pm for five consecutive hours. Before 1:30 pm, I saw the truck charging the dead bodies including my father, my brother and my uncle's son. My mother kept asking me what was going on was. I told her that they are taking some things from the basement and then leaving. They took them, but they didn't know, because seems it was the next police shift. They spoke Albanian saying lets also take this, let's break this. They were not wearing masks. They kicked the door of the room we were staying, they told us "let's go out, out. Go out in the street". We went out from there. When mother saw the blood in the yard, started to scream and was horrified. She kept screaming hysterically, my sister and my uncle's wife too, everyone was screaming. They asked me why didn't I tell them what happened. I told them nothing happened there. Police were heavily pushing my mother, I told them "Are you normal, couldn't you see what has become out of this women", they told me "come on come on bitch". They pushed me from the stairs down on the ground close to weapons. Another police approached and grabbed my hair yelling at the other police "how could you throw her at weapons, she could have killed us all", than grabbing my hair he stand me up. He was young man, a very young soldier. He said "what are you doing, you are not normal". From there, they took us out through main road, between Llausha and Skenderaj. They sent us there; we didn't know where we are going. A neighbor approached and told us to go inside her house because there were some other people who arrived. We entered the house and stayed there for two days. It was a war zone between Llausha and Skenderaj. After that they sent us to join the lines. We didn't know anything about our second oldest brother; we thought they have taken him alive, we kept crying for him. One of our close neighbors told us "Blerim is alive" she said "he escaped, he run at our other neighbor. I saw him. They wanted to throw him in the well but they didn't". After that, we used our neighbor's phone and called our other neighbor; he told us that our brother has survived. After two days, we left the house where we were and joined the lines. On the way we stopped at our house, we were not allowed to stop. We continued the way to the hospital. The hospital street was full of people including a son of our cousin who was waiting for us. We stayed there for three months during the whole war time. After two days I went at our house and other houses around. I entered our neighbor's house where my second oldest brother was staying; I took him as he was in pajamas, entered our house and I took some clothes. I have risked a lot. We have crossed the road and we went to the hospital street. It was a street under a big threat because gendarmerie was monitoring constantly. After three or four days we hide our brother at one of his fellows. After two nights he was in Llausha and we knew that he survived. After three days, I went in Mitrovica to look out for bodies of my father, brother and our uncle's son. There was no return bus for Skenderaj so I remained in Mitrovica. I went to the mosque of Haxhi Veseli and I saw many corpses; there were our dead neighbors. I couldn't find my father either my brother. I visited many advocates to find out the names and if they are alive. I remained in Mitrovica not knowing anyone then I started to cry as I had nowhere to go. Everyone was running for themselves. I sat in the middle of the asphalt. Accidentally, two of my friends saw me and took me with them. I told them to go to the bus station hoping there could be a bus for Skenderaj but they said that the roads were blocked and no one is traveling yet. I couldn't believe, I was separated from the family. I went to the bus station but there was no movement. They told me to go with them and so I did. They hosted me very well. The next day I woke up and I went to the bus station, no movement again. Accidentally, I met my sister who came from Prishtina to Mitrovica. When I met her, she didn't know what exactly happened. Then we met some nurses from Skenderaj. They

expressed condolences for our lost as my sister knew nothing. She asked what is happening here. I replied the nurses “it is still unknown what happened”. I couldn’t tell what really happened. I took my sister and we went at my friend’s house. We stayed there for two weeks. My friend brother said that he will accompany us on the way to Skenderaj. We departure from Broboniq and throughout villages we went to Ternavc close to a checkpoint where police with big trucks were positioned. Our friend’s brother told us “when I sign signal, you cross through Prekaz village. Mountains, everywhere. Soldiers at checkpoints were drinking and singing. In meanwhile my friend’s brother said “go slowly, just keep rolling on the ground”. We rolled and we hardly crossed. We dropped down into a trough. From there we climbed up quickly the mountains to Prekaz. Houses all over were drawn with crosses. Sadness. We didn’t know what was happening, whether or not our family was there. One of my friends, who lived in Skenderaj but originally was from Prekaz, was in the house where she lived before. She invited us over to her place where her father hosted us. We told him what happened. He said come with us because we spend nights in the mountains and days in the house. We spent the night there. Their house was burned, crosses drawn all over the walls and writings “We will come back again”. I couldn’t sleep all night thinking they will come back. The next day we walked. We went through village Klina e Ulet. At a checkpoint they stopped us, we were praying. They asked us “where are you going?” We said “in Srebrica”, because then you couldn’t mention Skenderaj. They asked us for our ID cards on which Serbica figured as the name of Skenderaj and they gave us permission to continue. They were drinking while we prayed all the time. We couldn’t believe we survived. We kept going through the main road up to the house. When we went in the house our mother and sister were surprised because they couldn’t believe we were alive. There we stayed for three months. After a while, again we joined the line from where they sent us at village Kline e Ulet. We were accommodated to a family which hosted us very well. We stayed there for few days until the forces started to enter the houses. The landlord told us “do whatever you want but it is danger for you here”. We didn’t know what to do. We came back again to where we stayed all the time, at the hospital street. Time to time the army has paid us visits, ordinary soldiers. They counted us how many people we were. Some other soldiers wearing scarf were looking if we had gold. It was horror. We were waiting when they were going to kill us. It was a terrible time, three months; it is hard not to remember. Now after many years we live between hope and pain, where we do not even know where their bodies are, at least something, but we know nothing. I have a message for the people; to love and be themselves. I have a message for leaders as well; to do and work more on missing persons because there is nothing known about them and this is a sin. People were scarified unarmed; they were killed in front of their house doors. For many years no one has knocked on our door to ask us how we are, at least to ask us about something.

## **Deshira Mehmeti**

I am Deshira Mehmeti, I was born in Skenderaj and lived in Dashevc municipality of Skenderaj, now after the war I live in Fushe Kosova. We are three sisters and we had two brothers. Now I have a brother, father and a sister-in-law. I only completed high school, I couldn't continue. My mother died very young therefore I couldn't continue further. During the war we were all together when the war happened in Drenica. Our family has always run through mountains. For about three months we run on mountains. After three months, our neighbor wives were staying at their homes, saying "they are not touching women". They were telling my dad "Azem why are you troubling your daughter. She is cooking all night and then she's running on the mountains, leave her with us. Whatever happens to us happens to her". After that my father told me to stay with women. It was Shera and Valdete with us on the mountains; also Shera's mother Qama and two other cousins, old people. In fact one of them was our neighbor and the other was our cousin. There we stayed for a day since we were tired running on the mountains for three months. I stayed as my father told me "stay, you are very tired". That day they took us all and sent us to Qirez. We stayed in Qirez for five days with no food and water. They took my cousin from my hands and I was afraid to see them. They took him from my hands and send him somewhere to kill. We were accommodated in a house. After we stayed there for 5 days consecutively, we didn't know anything about the fate of those people who were with us. They took some young men and some other, they were many and mainly neighbors. Then they sent us in Glllogovc. There they let us stay only for a night then they took us to send for Albania. At some place close to Albania, Serbs asked me for my ID card otherwise, they told me, they were going to kill me there. Then Qama and many other women from the bus came out. At that time, NATO was air striking while we were placed in front of tanks, all lined. Luckily, NATO wasn't striking at that moment. We went there and they took me out of the bus. I started to cry. We stayed for three months in Albania. I didn't know anything about family, if they were dead or alive. Like all refugees, after three months we began returning to our homes. They told us that situation in Kosovo is better so we began our way to Skenderaj. Buses were sending everyone in each municipality. When we arrived, the neighbors came out and told us that our family members are not in Skenderaj but in Fushe Kosova. We were told that the night Serbs took us, our families have been displaced too but no one knew exactly where they are. Half of our cousin's families were in Fushe Kosova because some of them moved to Fushe Kosova before the war. We had no place so I told the driver to send us to Prishtina. A women named Valdete said that she had an aunt in Prishtina and we hoped that her aunt was there. When we went there, we realized that they moved to Albania and we were scared if there are still Serbs. We feared because we waited to long. In Prishtina we took a bus for Podujeva. Shera had sisters in Podujeva and we went there thinking they might be there. Our families were told that we have been killed and thrown on the wells. Everyone, including my sisters living in Germany, heard that we were killed but they didn't tell my father. When my father heard that the war in Kosovo ended, together with Rrahman took a bus and went to Albania to look after us. He didn't find us, we were already in Kosovo. I had a piece of paper where the return date was written, but I forgot to bring it. After five days stay in Podujeva they realized I was there, so my grandfather came to pick me up. He brought me in Fushe Kosova where he had a sister. That night we stayed in Fushe Kosova then I went to Lipjan at my grandfather. There came many refugees whose homes were burned. In the yard of my grandfather they set up a tent and there

stayed a lot of people. My father said there are too many people and proposed to go back to Fushe Kosova and rent a house. We walked out on the rain. My uncle asked “where are you going it’s raining?”, my killed brother was younger so father said he did not want to overload the place because it was already uncle’s place overloaded with people, thus, we returned to Fushe Kosova. When we arrived at Fushe Kosova we found a very good house. My father was a teacher and taught on tents and curtains because the schools were burned. My brothers worked privately after the war in order to provide food, we had no incomes. A person visited us, they called him Spanish, he told us they are calling to build us a house and the family was persuaded to go because we didn’t like that much our stay in Fushe Kosova, we wanted to go back at our place. My brother, two cousins and a nephew went. My oldest brother also wanted to go but he was a sick, while my father stayed with me in Fushe Kosova until they build us a house. After they build the houses he planned to start working again in Qirez as a teacher. My youngest brother went and the neighbors expected him very well. We had very good neighbors, we had problems with nobody, my father had worked for 30 years in education, and his students become doctors. One night my brother, some cousins and our nephew stayed at a neighbors place, I can’t remember well, we had a phone line in Fushe Kosova. He had been told not to return home because the next day they would begin building house and they had to guard the material. That day we talked to our brother on the phone, while the next day he was killed, we don’t know exactly at what time, it was on 08.11. All neighbors have heard the news that 4 ashkali community members have been killed in Dashevc. Everyone thought my father was killed, it was unexpected for us. We wanted to go back at our house because it was difficult for us to adapt at Fushe Kosova. OSCE visited the family of my killed cousin and they were looking for my father. A 12 year old boy came and told my father OSCE were looking for him. I asked him “did anything happen to Agron?!” My father said that he called my brother yesterday and there is no way anything could have happened. I went up there to see what is happening, I almost got it. My brother also came. Firstly they told us that they were injured and are in hospital. My cousin was also murdered. After a week they brought the bodies in Fushe Kosova. We have buried the bodies and we visit their graves each year to remember them. OSCE were interested if they brought all the materials and they found three dead bodies in the tent. My brother had escaped and was killed on the mountains. When television broadcast the footage from the scene, my brother wasn’t figuring on the tent but on the mountains, they were not together. It looks like, when my brother saw them killing the others escaped, he was physically very prepared. I feel bad because he wasn’t killed by Serbs similar as they killed my cousin; they took him from my hands and killed him. Moreover, Serbs asked us to go and identify the dead in Mosque of Qirez. I was looking for the old man who couldn’t walk in mountains and he surrendered. He said the young men are dying and he surrendered. We couldn’t find the old man there but we found him in Cikatova e Vjeter. I feel bad because if it happened during the war it would have been more acceptable for me, but it happened after the war when we free and at peace. We still don’t know who killed them. We were a quiet family. Even though we live in Fushe Kosova I always say that I am from Drenica. I don’t lose my hopes. I have experienced a lot; when they sent us from Qirez to Gllgovc, when we were on the line, the moment when they placed us in front of tanks and Serbs were saying “if they want to shoot let them shoot here. We were hearing that they are massacring and murdering. I was so afraid. I told my brother if they catch me in the mountains what do I do?! He told me not to give up. I couldn’t walk. Except that I told my brother what if they do something to me in front

of you?! He told me if they kill you they will do it in front of me. I told him “than you will suffer after that”. If my brother was killed in the war it would have been different but they did it after the war and everything that remains for me is to find out who did it. We had no problem with neighbors or other residents of the village. My father was working in school of Qirez in very heavy conditions, penniless. The father was paralyzed a year after my brother was killed because he felt very sorry for his death. Now we live only with my father’s retirement fee for invalidity. He is 59 years old and until he gets 65 he is not allowed to receive regular pension. My brother works at EDRA in Fushe Kosova. I am curious who killed my brother and know the reason why because we didn’t owe anyone.

**Fatime Kerolli**

I was born in the village Obria e Eperme. I am married for 37 years. During the war we have been in Polac. From Polac we went to Skenderaj where we stayed for three weeks. There came the Serbian soldiers, they entered inside, we have been 35 persons. My brother-in-law was there with us. They placed him in the middle of the room and two Serbs beat him kicking. They put us back in the room and said to separate man and go outside. There were three men Miftar, Rasim and Fehmi. One of was killed at the window, the next one was killed at the straw and my brother-in-law was killed slightly below. Women were taken outside and they told us "Zivela Srbija" (Long live Serbia), they also wanted money for three days consecutively. When they went out, they kept us for half an hour into the room until the shot men died. The children were crying for their father and all of us were worrying. Than we buried them, in fact children buried them because we were afraid they might throw us on the other side of the slope. Serbs were watching us with binoculars and we could not go out. From Polac we went in Skederaj, street 3, at our uncle. The whole night they came and see if we all are there and told us not to leave otherwise they would kill me. They hit Fehmi in the head, the riffle shot three times. My brother-in-law's brains were outside. They killed Fehmi at the window. We were inside. We couldn't go outside because the door was being guarded by a Serb. My daughter together with some other girls had buried the bodies on the evening so the dogs couldn't take the bodies. Then when we returned home we took the bodies and fled to the mountains. After that, some neighbors came; they wanted to go to Albania. We told them we can not join you and thus we stayed late in the mountains and then we went to a neighbor. He invited us inside so we could sleep. The next day we went to Prekaz. There they came again; they took us and brought us back to Skenderaj. We couldn't change the place as they threatened to kill us. From Skenederaj we went to Klina. Four policemen have sent us there and told us to go around 5 o'clock. We were told to go there in the morning. We didn't go and nothing happened there. They visited us every day. We lived on the neighborhood. A bit here and a bit there. They told us to go from one place to another. In Klina we stayed almost 6 weeks. We were told by Serbs that for a moment we were saved because we had NATO. We were told that after 20 years there will be war again fought by our children. There was no line to go for Albania. We were all women and we couldn't leave alone, there were no men because they were killed and again we returned home. When we came home we couldn't enter, the whole place was burned. We buried the corpses on the street 3 in Skenderaj. Children buried them. They found some shovels at our neighbors. Serbs told us if they see us burying they will shoot us. Then the men went there, opened the graves, took the bodies and brought them in Polac. We buried all the three bodies. They were killed on 16<sup>th</sup> of April; it was Friday 12:00 pm. We almost went crazy, we screamed, when they entered the room we were afraid because we were told not to cry and make noise. My sister-in-law has three children. She gets some aid, they are very sad. We have seen the beating scenes. They also beat my father-in-law. They were asking for coffee and money. My father-in-law's head was covered in blood and he was told that he is old, he could do nothing so they are not going to kill him. His eye was covered in blood. The landlords name from the street 3 in Skenderaj was Rasim, the other's was Fehmi, my husband's cousins. We were assisted by an association. They brought us money and other assistance.

## **Hale Bajrami**

I was born in Resnik, municipality of Klina. I had seven brothers, father and we have all doing good. We had land and cattle and we had a good life at Havolls of Resnik. We didn't move from Havolls, it was very well. I was married in Dashevc. I had three sons and five daughters war was which made us run away and leave the place. We worked the land. During the war we have been in Dashevc. When the war started first of all I looked after the children, I took care of them. We stayed at home then we fled to Reznik. We stayed in Reznik for three days. The houses in Dashevc were burned. After a week I returned back at home, my six months old granddaughter died of hunger and they barely buried her in Prishtina. We came back in the house again. I told my son go at Baks and see what is happening. In Baks he was told to run, to take kids and run and so we left. In the beginning my son went to join KLA and asked to wear their uniforms. They saw his hand is injured and said "no we will wear KLA uniforms, you have horses and you help us with horses". Finally we went, I took the kids and went from Raskesnica somewhere. I had seven girls, one of them died now there were six girls. The old man remained man with his granddaughter. We spent days on the mountain and nights at our house. The girl mixed herself with members of aunt's father. There also was Deshira. From Baks they sent them in Qerez. They walked from Qerez to Gllgovc and back again to Qerez. From there they sent them to Albania. They spent two months on mountains. During the night they stayed at home. Then they sent them to Albania. For two months we did not know if they are dead or alive. After two months they came back. My son made a mistake he went. If you ask Baksi he'll tell you that they loved him so much. He was an angel. He did nothing to anybody. I gathered everyone to work building the house. He went to look out and I don't know what happened to him, we just received the news that he is dead. I didn't eat for 10 days; I only smoked cigarettes and drank water. He was my oldest son and I cannot think what a son I had. He was a boy for everyone. But this is war. My oldest daughter Valdete was in Albania, after she came from Albania she had a toothache. They sent her in Prishtina to visit a doctor. There were too many people and fearing a lot she fainted. The doctors took her and asked her mother if her daughter was in war?! Her mother told them where she was and what happened. The doctors told her to avoid crowded ambient until she gets better. The second oldest girl's name is Sadete, third's is Magbule, fourth's is Hale, my name, fifth's is Shukri, sixth's is Bajramshah and seventh's is Hikmete, she is in 10 grade in school. They built our house but you cannot eat the hose. But we are satisfied again compared on how we've been on old houses. There is no one to work; the old man is 73 years old. Her daughter-in-law gets social assistance for children. We get nothing for my son. Our daughter-in-law went to look for martyrs pensions but they told her he (son) couldn't get. Previously I took 45 euro per month, the old man 45 euro and our daughter-in-law 60 euro. He left his 2 moth old son, now he is 12 years old and is going to school. As 5 years old, his mother sent him to kindergarten and as 6 years old he was registered in primary school. She (daughter-in-law) suffered a lot for his husband, taking care of his son etc. Now her son is on 7<sup>th</sup> grade. At least she remains with her son as all girls go for marriage.

### **Shqipe Feka**

I was born in Dubovc, municipality of Skenderaj. Now I live in Skenderaj on the street no. 3. I finished elementary school and high school of medicine in Skenderaj. Now I work as a nurse in mental health center in Skenderaj. I have two brothers, four sisters and mother. My father worked in a store as a salesman. It was 15<sup>th</sup> of April when Serbian soldiers entered our neighborhood. In our street there were three Serbian army soldiers, the others were waiting at the entrance of our neighborhood and then they went through the houses of the neighborhood. That day they also came to us. When they entered, except our family there were two other families which sheltered with us and together with us there were our grandfather, my father and our uncle. When they entered they took my grandfather, father and uncle. They started to beat kicking and hitting them with rifle. They were looking for money and other valuables. That day we gave them 700 marks, other trimmings and whatever we had, rings, collars watches etc. That day they went saying that they'll come again and if they find us there they will kill us. The next day, on 16<sup>th</sup> of April, on the same hour, the same soldiers came again. They took my uncle Fadil ahmeti, 23 years old, my father Beqir Feka 35 years old and my grandfather Deli Feka 76 years old. Later they took my 13 years old brother, walked out into the hallway of the house. They didn't return my uncle inside. Only my beaten father, brother and grandfather were returned. They threatened them with knife and rifle. That day we gave them 500 marks and other remaining things. When I went inside, I extended my hand and took my brother to the place our mother and sister were staying. Suddenly we heard the shots that killed our uncle. A soldier was standing with us while another soldier was outside who was shooting with rifle. He entered again, he took my father and after few minutes the heard the shots again. We knew they killed out father. Then they took the grandfather, again asking for money and beating him continuously. Grandfather said "I have no more money, you killed my only son I had, you killed the light of my sight". At that time they also took grandfather and while they were killing him we heard the words he was saying to the Serbian soldiers. Later on, they came back inside and started to sing Serbian songs. Pointing their guns at us, they took out knives threatening children and women. Again they asked for money and in Serbian they said "Long live Serbia" and other words we didn't understand. The first soldier who shot, after he put the money into pockets, in his right hand I noticed a name written in Cyrillic "Uraganoc". After killing them they stayed for half an hour and they left saying "if you don't leave until 1 o'clock we will come and kill all of you. They went out of house. After ten minutes shootings were heard again. It was far away from our home. I went out to see what happened down to our house and I saw my uncle. My father was close to the house. I could not see my grandfather. I approached my uncle and saw that he was already dead. Away from his body, I saw his eye which was drawn out by the bullets shot in his head. Quickly I returned in the house, I took a plastic bag and covered his body so when mother and children couldn't see it. Mother, brothers, sisters and all who were inside came out. They approached my already dead father. They didn't stay long as 1 o'clock was already approaching. All residents began to flee from there and go to Lushtaku Street in Prekaz. We went there and stayed from 1 to 6 o'clock in the evening. At 6 o'clock they started shooting our neighborhood again. We turned back to the neighborhood where we were. Not in our house but another one. The next day, on 17<sup>th</sup> of April, someone from our neighbor had reported the case to the police station in Skenderaj.

They told him not to move the bodies because this was done without their command. The next day, some policemen from Skenderaj police station came and were asking for someone to be responsible of telling what happened in the whole neighborhood. Every house which had killed people had a member of the family. There was our cousin Fek Feka. The police began to come. They brought three roma community men to bring back the corpses, to unbury and see where the bullets hit them. They demanded that I and my uncle not communicate. Many times they wanted to kill us. At the entrance to the neighborhood, they were waiting for the tools to do their burial in a massive grave at ammunition factory. We barely made possible to bury them as we wished. That day we worked on their burial. We took some earth at some place and started to dig their graves and bury them. It was difficult for us to return back home to the place where I, my mother and children saw the whole event. I was 18 years old and other children were younger than me. For six days after what happened, we stayed in a neighbor's house because my sisters and brothers could only visit us at the doors and not come in. After six days we returned back home. After some time, police and army began to enter again the street 3. They took us and led us in Klina village close to Skenderaj. There we stayed 3 weeks, after that we stayed at our uncle in Skenederaj and until the end of war we stayed at our grandfather and grandmother. On the day of liberation, on 18<sup>th</sup> we returned back at our house. That day we had a lot of visitors as they heard about what happened. My three aunts also came. My father was their only brother. I was cleaning the house and they were asking me who they killed. They had heard that our grandfather was killed but they didn't know about my father. My oldest aunt asked me where Beqiri is. I slightly raised my shoulders. When she saw that I wasn't talking, she kept my mouth and told me "you never say it, at least don't say it". Even though that happened at our house we never talk about that. Lately, they have started to mention our father a bit. That night we have all been together when we mentioned him. We were all sad and we cried. We never mention him. They don't want to talk about that topic because nobody wants. Now I am married and I have two children. I work as a nurse in the mental health center in Skenderaj. I do ordinary work of life; I do housework, take care of my family and except my obligations I am the oldest. I carry the entire family obligation. I take care of children's education, even though they have grown up and have completed educated. I always feel vulnerable and sensitive when somebody asks me whose daughter you are. I wish citizens to enjoy the freedom as they are free due to their shed blood. As for the others; they should be aware and take more care for family members of those who dyed, on employment they shall have precedence.

### **Shefkije Dragaj**

I was born in Sahagerll, married in Leqina, municipality of Skenderaj and live with my husband. My parents live in municipality of Istog. I have six children, four daughters and two sons, all married and have children. My sons live in Kosovo, two daughters live abroad and two others in Kosovo. Even though 14 years have passed from the time that horrible event happened, I remember it as it happened today. On 26<sup>th</sup> of March we left our home, we stayed for two days in Izbica, the third day we went to a meadow, we sat down. We were informed to leave our homes at 7 o'clock in the morning. We lived close to Serbia border, we thought to gather there. We went there. I don't know the exact number but we were somewhere around 20.000 or 30.000 people, it's been a large number of people. Serbs came out from mountains and burned two bunches of hay. Is there anyone going to react or not?! KLA members were smart because they had no forces to directly face Serbs and no one reacted because we were a big number of people. When they saw no one reacted they came out of woods, you could say no body remained in Belgrade, everyone was there. Each of them was with three rounds of bullets, their faces were painted and we were sitting in a meadow. They shouted the men to stand up. When men stood up they told them "If you want not to burn your houses give us 10 marks each of you. One of my husband's cousins told us not to be afraid because they are only looking for money and they will leave. They took 10 marks from each and they lined them. Then they told them to give more money if they want not to burn their tractors. People saw that this is a play, some of them gave money some not. They lined up the men and they led them between two boundaries upwards sending them in the mountains to cannonade. The women remained sitting. After they headed men, they came at us saying "stand up and give us money". A woman faced them and they asked "where is your husband?" She said "my husband is in Switzerland", they replied "you have money" and they took her 200 CHF. Some women who had, they gave money, some who don't didn't give. We were told to walk for Albania, to Bill Clinton, to KLA and Great Albania. We stood up holding little children. They beat kicking old women. Whose children were on cradles, they untied them. We left cradles there and we took the road. We were thinking we will return back home. We walked for a kilometer then we sat on a meadow. There they killed some men and burned our tractors. Some old women could not walk. We were sitting in a meadow and we were seeing them in front. They killed three women, three were burned and two paralyzed women were burned in tractors; mother-in-law wanted to protect her daughter-in-law but they didn't allow her. A woman was burned inside her house. Once they finished with them they came at us. They were shooting weapons and telling us to walk for Albania. We just walked without knowing what we are doing. When we arrived at school of Vajnik, Koliqi and Turiqevci was burning on fire. They were throwing grenades and we all laid down, a woman was injured, they quickly hid her. When we arrived at Gullubovc of Broj, we took the road for Dushel we wanted to go and join this population. Majority, a large part of women passed. They killed a woman and two other girls. The woman was from Klinë while girls were from Izbica. After killing them, they turned us back. They sent us at the meadow of Broja's Gullubovc, they told us to sit on muck. Four men were with us; Haxhi Thaqi and his uncle and two other men from Plluzhina, young men. From our line no man escaped from Izbica. They joined us on the way. We told him "Haxhi, turn back" as he was our friend. We told him "hide", he said "no, my boys have gone, my wealth too, I won't turn away

from my family. Whatever happens I want to stay with them". Then they called them and asked for their ID's. They saw they were Thaqi's family from Broja and his name was Haxhi, they thought it may be Hashim Thaqi's father. Even if it wasn't, that day they killed everyone from Drenica. We were sitting on muck while these four men were standing attached to the door of the yard. They killed all four of them. We were told to walk to Albania. On the way we saw an old woman and we gave her water. On the way we stopped at Broja's Zhegina where they blocked our road with tanks and dredges. There was a big hole. They put us in this hole full of mud and sat us there. They were taking injections. They had planned to kill us in this group, but thanks God they communicated with the main station and they told them we were a group of people with no man and they couldn't kill us, they almost got crazy. Then we continued, we were beaten and kicked, they took our hand bags to leave us with nothing. During the night we didn't dare to walk as we were afraid we could be massacred and we couldn't see each other. We went under the bridge and we slept at Jashanica mill. During the night they came again saying "come on what are you waiting". After we walked we saw two soldiers on a motorcycle. They took a 5 month old child from our cousin's wife arms. She kept pulling her son, they pulled too. Then they told her "give us money if you want to give you your son". She gave them 50 marks and we continued to walk. When we went to Klina of Beg, they sat us down around a square. There was a small shop open. We wanted to buy something for our children. They closed the shop. They abused and they swore us on father, mother and KLA and they told us stand up. Now they are calling it Mirush, they grind stone at black stone. When we went there, KLA appeared at Kralan. They asked us not to go because, as they said, we will be massacred in Gjakova because we are the line coming from Drenica. We were afraid if they are deceiving us or if they are Serbs, until they swore on Adem jashari. At some point were convinced that they are our army, whom I thank. They put us in a road. We entered there. When we went to a big river, our army crossed the water. They helped us pass the children and old women. Thus we arrived at Kralani hill. When we got to the hill people were gathered, they made their tractors ready and divided us because we were big in number. We were supposed to go to Kosuriq. We went to Kosuriq at a place of some man called Bekim. We stayed there for two days. There were some old men and old women, a 14 years old man whose father was killed in Izbica. They beat him on the way. The boy was terrified. In a church there were several sisters watching, we sent him there and gave him injections. On the third day the landlord removed his family from its home. I told him "Bekim where are you sending them?" he said "a relative of ours has died, we must go". He had nothing to do; he wanted to remove his family out of the house. Kralan, Kosturiq was hit by an attack. 110 men were burned in a room. An old man named Beqir came there. He was crying, I asked him "what is new old man?" he said "they burned our men and they took our people, we have no place to go". I asked "Bekim, what should we do now?" he said "nothing, you stay". Kosuriq side is characterized by large walls so I opened the gate and went on the road. I saw they were prepared with tractors, mattress and bags. They loaded the tractors with their family members and wanted to leave for the church of Gllogjan. As old men said: do not asphyxiate me here but there. We were not familiar with the place, we didn't know the way, we were walking. We went in Gllogjan. There, 100 meters in front of us they killed a family in front of our eyes. As we were sitting in tractor, they burned them all. When we went to Glloghan we saw that they had locked the doors because most of them were Catholics. Our army came and they begged to save the children. I said "why are you saying so?" they said "but why don't you come inside". I said "but

the doors are closed”. They opened us the doors and said “we are worried; if we keep the doors closed we are afraid of KLA, if we open them we are afraid of Serbs”. That night we stayed there. The next morning, the priest called the police and asked if he could open the church door because many people have referred. They said no and the priest didn’t open the door. After 20 minutes police came with tanks, they took us out of there and led us to a road which sent us to a hill. From the hill we knew who was from Drenica and who is not. We knew it because we were walking. Those who were in tractors were allowed to keep going for Albania, while we were turned back. They didn’t let us walk through good roads. They made us walk through a mountain which was full of stones. Our legs were hurting because we had no shoes. That road led us to Guruzhdevc. When we arrived there they were gathered. Two or three of them were holding knives saying “give us money or we butchered you”, we said “butcher us, we have no money”. We were used of anything, we were sad and we wanted to kill us rather give us the world. We passed there. After passing the Klina road they returned us back to the border. When we arrived at a bridge in Klina, we stopped there for rest. They were kicking us and they were looking for cigarettes. We walked 200 meter further and we entered into a meadow, we slept a bit than we continued, we almost went in Gjakova. When we went in Gjakova it was 9 o’clock in the evening. We entered into a house of some Catholics, we started a fire and found some flour and some oil and we wanted to bake kids some pancake. In this case, I am really glad that you invited me in this project because I wanted to thank the people from Istog. That night they returned back 300-400 tractors with people. They told them the border is closed. We were in meadow, 3-4 persons came there. They told us “we saw the fire lighted. We knew you are coming from Drenica. Will you come with us?!” We replied “if you are under attack we will not come because we are tired of that”, they said we are not under attack. We thanked them and they told us “at 7 o’clock in the morning you go for Gremnik. There is some water, a river, you stay there. We will try to prepare food during the night”. When we went there they had come with bread and 200 liters of boiled milk. I thank them so much. From there we kept walking, we arrived at Begu’s Klina. There we met a catholic woman. She said “you are lucky because there were about 40 Albanians. They undressed them and cut crosses on their backs”. She said “you try to pass and not meet them”. When we came at Broja’s Gullubovc they came in front of us. Police were wearing military uniforms. When we faced them they sat us down and said “you will stay here now. We will take care of you”. We worried; we thought we were going to go home. I told them “are you are joking with people and children?” I told them “at that time the war occurred among men”, I said “kill us, we are tired of this”. I took children shoes off. I couldn’t remove their socks as their feet were swollen. They put us in a place; it was like a jail, the exact place where they killed those 4 people. On the way we met an old woman. She was left in a streamlet. They wore her body with KLA uniforms and they placed a dead cow above her head so she could look as she was a soldier. They closed the gates of the yard, searched us all they took our rings and other valuables and told us “you stay here and don’t go out, if you go out you will be killed”. They said “who is with little children to go down, there is straw”. Four people were burned in that house: two from Plluzhina and Haxhi Tutjani with uncle. We were afraid as they separated old and young women. They wore young women with white scarves. As we got there two old women sat at the door to monitor the ground. An old man came one hour before dawn. He asked us if we have any diaper as a child was born and they had nothing to wrap the newborn. I said “Old man, if the child is a boy name him Flakerim (flare, flame), if it’s a girl name her Flaka (fire, flame) as for Albanians was no bigger fire”.

We gave him 7-8 diapers. Police officers came at 7 o'clock in the morning and said "at 9 o'clock you will get out of here" and then they said "no you will get out at 12 o'clock". At 12pm they said "get out of here under our escort". They said "if a gun fires we will kill you". We were told to go to Kllodernica, they said there is food and they escorted us in Kopiliq. When we arrived at Kodellnica, there were a big number of people, nobody knew us. We were barefoot and starving. We stayed there for two nights, next day they sent us for Albania. 400 men and young boys were stopped and maltreated then they sent them in Smrokornica jail. We spent a night in Krusha e Madhe. We were told that whoever goes to Landovica will be killed as there were many soldiers with tanks. We were used to it; we walked and passed through Prizren. In Prizren they led the road. We slept the whole way. On 26<sup>th</sup> of March we left the house while on 14<sup>th</sup> of April we went to Albania. When we arrived at border we were asked for ID's. They thought we were from Lubizhda, they pulled out rubber sticks and asked "who burned your documents?" Two or three of us had IDs, there they saw we were from Skenderaj and told us to move. We walked to Albania. In Kukes a reporter approached and asked me "have there been violations?" I answered "I speak only the truth, we have survived, we had no men as they killed them in Izbica and we were women and children. They have done this to rage men". I have a message for the Albanian people. 14 years has passed and there are still missing bodies. They quickly forgot the war. We should have been unanimous, all together as this place never had a householder. They stepped on us for thousand years. Now we have the opportunity to prosper. Now they made enemies out of themselves. I say we stick together, not hate each-other because we will see no light. We have become a state but we still can not control everything. Thank you for inviting me and I wish no repetition of this in Gods will. Whose family members died, I wish God give them endurance.

### **Arifete Bytyqi**

I'm Arifete Bytyqi from Klina. I am a mother of three children, married but I have a missing husband, Bajram Bytyqi from the last war on 4th of April in village Kralan (Gjakova). I work as Officer for Children's Rights in Municipal Assembly (Kline), once I lead the Association of missing persons to the Municipality of Klina. I live in Klina. As of 28th of March 1999, during the war, as in all other municipalities also in the Municipality of Kline, Serbs forcibly pulled us out of our houses. We could barely get out of the house because there I also had my family from the village Siqueva (Klina); my father, my mother and my brother. I have lived with; my father in law and my mother in law, my husband and our three children. Serbian military and police surrounded us and pulled us out of the house by force. As soon as we got out of house, I took a car which I had but they took it by the top of the road and told us to continue on the way to Albania because we have no place here. They offended us and we had to give some money in order to get free, since I also had my 23 year old brother who was sheltered at my house a year ago, after my family's house in the village Siqueva was burned. At first, we thought we escaped Serbian paramilitaries. Along the way, after they took our car, they let us walk. Those who took our car were Serbians from Klina, I know them, I also sued them, but no one has answered yet, supposedly they couldn't find them. But they live in Montenegro. We continued on our way, it was afternoon, everyone in our neighborhood was pulled out of houses, we were 20 families and we joined the crowd of people coming from Drenica and other parts of Kosovo and we headed on the way to Albania. Around 12 o'clock in the midnight, we reached near the village Kralan and Kramovik (Gjakova), in a spot which separates these two villages. In Gjakova that night was horrible because of the bombing. We were told to shelter on villages Kramovik and Kralan. And so a part of the column of people went to a village Kramovi, another part went to village Kralan village because we could not penetrate to go to Albania. We were sheltered around 10,000 people from municipality of Klina, there were also from Mitrovica and other villages around. That village was burned, so I together with husband Bajram Bytyqi, his parents Rizah and Bahtija, my three children and my father, mother and my 23 year old brother, took shelter in a house that was burned. That night we stayed so. We had no food. In the morning we went out to look at the other refugees some loaf of bread, whenever I found flour, I baked, just so I could feed my children. The next day, Bajram's uncle arrived, expelled from Klina by Serbs as he could not arrive at 12 o'clock in the midnight. Together with his family we were around 17 members sheltered in an improvised stall. The whole time we stayed there we had food problems. My two elderly in-laws had no medical help. On 2nd of April, the army and Serbian police have surrounded us in Kralan village and forced us to go to Albania. Along the way, we were stopped and they separated women and children together and told us you continue. I remember that moment, very difficult to tell, where my husband Bajram was carrying our little boy trying to escape while my brother Nevzat had Elona, my little girl. They were told to throw down the children. They stopped my husband and my brother and threw the children into the ground. I was in front of them, my children were crying but I wouldn't dare to go back and pick them up. They gathered men, Bajram, Nevzat, my uncle's four boys together in a meadow; while women with children were told keep the way to Albania. I took my children, my mother in law, my mother, my uncle's wife and sailed away with the crowd of people from Klina. My father and father in law were told to stop because they had business to

do with them. On the way, I remember it was a very large well. We were forced to enter into the well or go towards the other side where police was checking and taking our properties, such as gold, money and tortured several women. But we went through the well, which was deep to the knees. Better to enter the well than to fall into their hands. It was enough for us that we left our men in their hands. I can never forget that day, that moment. We continued the way; we walked all night, it was heavily raining, I carried my 5 year old daughter in the back all the way as she could not walk. When we arrived in Gjakova, Serbs told us that we were going to walk through the Qafa e Prushit (Kosovo - Albania border crossing, 10 km from Gjakova), some of them threatened they are going to kill us all. We kept walking not knowing what to do, because we were in their hands. We crossed the border with Albania. How we passed only our soul knows, a lot of pain and weariness, but... On 3rd of April, from the group of men who were stopped in the village Kralan, about 4000 people have been released, elders mostly, while the second group was released on 4th of April. Telling them you will have to go, some of them were released, while 86 of them were kept. On 3rd of April my father and father-in-law, who were kept by Serbs, arrived, while they were told that they kept the youngsters to help dig some holes and they will be released later on. My father and my father-in-law came from Kralani. We waited them in a school in Kruma (Albania) expecting for the return of all other men. But on 4th of April, it was Sunday; the remained men were divided into groups on stalls. According to a witness from Klina who escaped, Hysen Krasniqi, he said that they shot them on the stalls. According to some witnesses, after they shot them, it is said that their bodies were burned. We received information in Albania that they are coming, they are going to release them, they will come, will not come... but they shot them. They were not only shot but they burned bodies and 14 years from that moment who do not know anything about them. My father, my father in law and other men that have been held, tell that Serbs took off their clothes and left them stand in the rain, and then they were told to wear whatever they want and go for work. There have kept my husband Bajram Bytyqi, my brother Nevzat, my uncle's four sons, uncles, 86 people, all citizens of Klina. From age of 15, children, up to age 60 were kept. They saved no age; just chose whoever they wanted. There has been a major, Gruiqi as they call him. We made a charge against him but we did not get any response so far. Army, police have been regular. On 4th of April, they say that Serbian paramilitaries arrived and they shot them. They have tried to also lose their track by burning their bodies and then they carried them on the trucks, a part was sent to Serbia another part were buried in the cemetery of Drenovc village (Decan). So far, it is known only about the fate of 36 of them, while for other 50 we do not know a thing. Together with children and the elderly, we had a very hard life in Albania. But we hoped that one day our men will come. When I returned home after the war, it was around 25th of June, now 14 years from that time, I went to the village Kralan, and I've seen the place. What to see? Burned clothes everywhere... I returned home to live, "pretending" to live. My house in Klina was burned. We hoped that our men will return because we had information that they are somewhere, they have hidden them in prisons. The International Red Cross has found some on prisons; they were announced and have been returned home. But we still hoped that they would return, the evil could not be accepted even though we had seen what was done in Kralan. A witness told that the he saw two groups of 15-30 people being shot, he didn't knew anything for others. We had and we keep having a life in distress, very difficult, not only me but all the families in Kosovo that have missing family members. We believe each other most than anyone else... It is difficult. The biggest problem I had is with children is when

they asked about their father, the little girl told me "why is that only I did not have my dad, why is that only my father doesn't come, where is he?" I couldn't tell them while they were small. When they grew and started to understand I told them about the case but I could not tell them "no, dad is not alive", but it can occur because Serbia has done everything. When body identifications took place, children always asked: "Whether our father is alive?" I told them: "Yes, it may happen" I was always easy on them, trying not to put stress on them, to have an easy and calm life, to be educated... But the children, parents, mothers, wives, sisters all have had a hard life for 14 years. It's so hard; I do not know how to describe it for us as a family that does not know about their bones, at least to place some flowers at their graves... I would like to make an appeal to the international community, to our institutions, now that we are a state to do more, to put pressure on Serbia, to resolve the fate of missing persons and to bring criminals to justice. At least to see that some moves are being made, that someone is trying for us, to do more for this category because this is not a two-fold murder but a hundred-fold murder. For 14 year not knowing whether it is alive or dead, is very difficult.

## **Avni Ibrahim**

I am Avni Ibrahim, born on 26th of January 1967. I finished high school alongside with Albanians; Mining Technician in 1986. I am married; I got married at the age of 25. It is not customary for the Ashkali community, because they get married at age of 15 - 16. I have nine children, five girls and four boys, six children are currently attending school. I worked in Bardhi i Madh, Mining Technician since before the war. Now after the war, I work in a school "Pandeli Sotiri" with a separated parallel. After the war of '99, together with Bajrush Berisha, my friend and my colleague, we got integrated. We have seen that education and accomplishment is necessary for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, thus we have decided to open a school since our communities dominated with a large number of illiterates. You know, before and after the war our community was illiterate. They always did manual labor, as a manual worker and such work. Even when working with the Serbs and even with the Albanians, they were not interested in the education of their children. We know that education is primary, without education, we have no life, no development. So, I and Bajrush Berisha decided to open two elementary parallels, from first grade to fourth grade and I think there was a parallel for high school. And so we began to work with children. There was a large number of children, only first grade had about 40-50 pupils. The curriculum was prepared by us. You know that before the war, the term Ashkali was unknown to others but for us it was very familiar. We had no courage to speak freely as a community. I have lived around with the Serbs, and when there was a feast of Eid we were afraid, because we had to go and get back quickly from the mosque so that the Serbs do not see what we are doing. I want to say that we have also been suffering; we have been suppressed by the Serbs. When there was a job, we have been the last to be employed or not at all. And this has been very difficult; I do not know how to describe it! I was employed on 1988, after I finished school. In 1991 I got married, and then the problems started, riots, something unknown to me. I talked to my Albanian friends; I've worked with them also with Serbians with the excavator. They worked separately, Albanians in an object, Serbs in another, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in another. I went to Albanians as I spoke Albanian, I have finished school in Albanian and I do not know another mother tongue except Albanian language. And my six children that go to school learn Albanian. We couldn't speak anything, anonymously, I couldn't understand them. This happened all of a sudden, you know well when it happened. I think it was on 6th of March 1998, when the legendary Adem Jashari was killed it was something terrible that this war happened. We were confused; because Serbs were living all around us and we had no good communication good with them. My father, my grandfather and me, we always said to leave this neighborhood, because it is not the place for us. If they were Albanians, it would have been completely different. But we have seen that fear dominates then we left and went to Plemetina (Obilic), because my people in that village knew my grandfather, he was a shepherd there. We sheltered there into some barracks and we stayed there until the refugees arrived in '99 and a multi-ethnic camp was formed. Here comes the case when I met Bajrush, what will we do with these children, it was a large number. Children fought and swore among themselves. So we created school. We were afraid of them, so that when we got to the train station to leave for Skopje, together with the Albanian community, some Serb policemen who knew my grandfather stopped us and asked "where are you going, whose kids are these?" "In Plemetina, at my sister" I said. My grandfather's sister lived in Plemetina. She died. We feared that they will kill us right there, because they were too harsh. Our wives

were pregnant; my wife has got heavily traumatized because they saw women getting beaten and abused. I was afraid that we would lose the baby. Since this event, my wife is very sick. The reason that she is sick, it is because of the events that she experienced during the war. This is known to the whole Ashkali community in Fushe Kosova, because my wife's family is from Fushe Kosova. She was crossing the road together with her uncle; there were several soldiers, what kind of soldiers were they I do not know, I was told by my wife. At that time we had no hygienic, nutritional material, etc. A roma guy, who was walking on the road, was carrying sugar in hand. My wife's Uncle asked him "where did you buy the sugar?" The roma guy couldn't speak Albanian well, given that Roma community does not speak Albanian, but somehow he told him the place where he bought the sugar. Policemen who were nearby heard them speak and they called them. My wife was a bit farer. Once they approached, police pulled out the gun and killed the roma guy, while my wife's uncle was sat down on his knees and later killed. When my wife saw her uncle lying on the ground, fainted. From that moment, my wife is sick. It is not the about the disease of epilepsy, but whenever she remembers this event she faints. For this reason she uses medicines today. It is very touching, this is an event that we have experienced severely, and my wife has experienced it. Since that day, she does not want to hear the word "Serb". Today Serbian women come for shopping but nobody dares to knock our door. During three months bombardment we have stayed at home. Until on the first month started the wave/euphoria, we thought it was fear, we realized what was going on, people started to leave. We also left and went to Plemetina. There have not been any problems; we kept hearing the NATO bombing. By the beginning of the village Plemetina some Serbs have been settled, they knew my grandfather therefore we had no problems. But we very careful, we were careful when moving, we have turned off the lights, closed the rooms, etc. My mother told her brother, my uncle from Batllava, Podujeva. When the Serbian persecution started in Podujeva, his family fled. My uncle has turned back home, as he forgot the house door open, and there the Serbs found and killed him. He has been working as guardian, Gani Hazir was his name. My mother received this message through my other uncle and they got very upset and grieved. Now I enjoy a great freedom, because I have always worked with the Albanian community and have always had good communication. I have a large number of friends, with whom we have been together in Albanian schools in Obiliq. There are a large number of them living in Plemetina and they are my peers. We have a very good cooperation between us. I visit them in their homes and they come in my house. I now work in primary school "Pandeli Sotiri" a separate parallel; they appointed me as a technical worker. I do not need more. My friend's children come to this school and I have a great love for them.

## **Bahrije Gerxhaliu**

My name is Bahrije Gerxhaliu and I am from the village Studime e Ulet, municipality of Vushtrria. I was born in the village of Studime e Eperme, where i finished high school but due to circumstances I could not finish the last year of studies which I have continued after the war. I was married in 1986 with Imer Gerxhaliu in the village of Studime e Ulet. I am the mother of five children, one boy and four girls, who during the war, the oldest was 12 years old and 2 years 6 months the youngest. I work in the municipality of Vushtrria, in the Library of Municipal Laws. I also work in agriculture due to the low wages. My children are following education. I expect the graduation of my son in Medicine; my daughter won a scholarship in a university of Mitrovica. My two younger daughters are attending in high school while the eldest daughter is married. I have a nephew, whom I greet from the screen. Together with my children, he is my future life. To speak about the massacre of Studime, to talk about the night of 2nd of May 1999, even if you talk for hours, days, weeks, months and years, to those who have experienced that massacre, is not enough. We cannot soothe the pain suffered, they are lost, it is not enough. But it is good that justice show up. On 2nd of May 1999, I have been at my brother in the village of Studime e Eperme. There we went on 18th of April. 18th of April was a horrible day, we were forcefully expelled from the village Studime e Ulet, Gerxhali street, through the tearing village river. There were not only village population but also from municipality of Vushtrria, who were sheltered in village Studime. They sent us all through the river in full 3 kilometers. We were wet and tired. We passed through gunpoint of Serbs who have been placed in Rashivc neighborhood, where snipers were positioned and Serbian army of which have been observed at all times. There, my two young daughters, aged 3 years and 2 years 6 months, were separated from me because we didn't know where our family was going. I took my three older children, my mother in law and we went. I did not know that my younger daughters were divided and remained with my brother-in-law, but fortunately he has taken them. And we kept the way across the river. When we got out of the river, we met with some KLA soldiers. I begged the soldiers to let my mother in law together with three older children with them, so I could go back to look after my two younger daughters. And so I left them with soldiers, as it was the safer area and had no Serbs is that side. When we met with our soldiers, we felt safer. As a mother grieving for her children, not only wet while walking in the river but also in pain for my daughters. When I got back from the way, I saw my brother-in-law; may his soul rest in peace, because he was killed, he was carrying my two younger daughters as they were bags so they could not get wet. When I saw them, I was immensely happy for my girls and that the whole family got together. My husband was separated from us earlier and in the day we were separated again but I worried most for children because they were young. We continued the way for Studime e Eperme at my brother. On the way, a rider on horse carriage was walking at the same direction, I knew him and he was from the village of Studime e Eperme. I begged him to take my mother-in-law, as she was older while I and my children will walk behind them. "No, Bahrije" he said. "Climb kids in the carriage, you too climb if you can", and continued. In my brother's house had just dropped a grenade. There was a tractor that was demolished in the backyard, along with all other things. We sought shelter. My brother told me "doors are open to you and all the people, I cannot guarantee you about safety, you can see though." There we stayed until 2nd of May. They killed people every day in Studime e Ulet. People were migrating every day, coming from all sides, from Shala, because Serbs

were not allowed to go to the Studime e Poshtme. There were many people from each side... At eight o'clock, village heads gathered to discuss the situation. Among them was the current Major of the Municipality, Bajram Mulaku which I salute. And together with other villagers decided to take a white sheet, and go. There was Sabit Kadriu, were many, many... But Serbs did not allow they looked to kill us and not let us surrender. At 20:30 pm the night began to fall, because it was summer. And we left earlier, some on foot, some on tractors, however we could. In the valleys, I saw the Serb infantry coming. I called my sister and my husband, may his soul rest in peace, which came after several days at the home of my brother and I told them "they surrounded us." At that moment, they started shooting rifles. We rode the tractor with mother in law and five children. The husband ran the tractor. Brother in law was in a car with his children. My brother also, along with the refugees that he had in his house, some in the tractor, some in the car. And we started down the road, a long column, we were overloaded we couldn't move. After 15 minutes after we left the house, the shooting, burning began and after few moments also the column stopped. Nobody knew what was going on. At that point, the husband approached the tractor trailer. I said "Imer, what is going on?" He replied "I do not know. Some are saying to stop, some are saying to move". The shots were approaching more and more each time. Around 22:00 in the evening, the children slept. My husband approached the tractor trailer and I begged him "In the name of God, go away". "What about you?" he asked. "I will stay here with the kids" I said. Then three Serbian soldiers arrived. We, who were on tractors, were separated to the edge of the road, while those with cars were told to keep moving. My brother-in-law was driving a car. Coveting, I thought to myself: "Blessed are those who are on cars, they are moving, and where will we remain?" Police officers kept walking. My husband approached me back. I asked "where are they sending these on cars? He said "Those who are on cars move faster and we will go soon". Once again I begged him "In the name of God, go away". And I stayed with the idea that he went away. After 10 minutes, shots were heard, because other Serbian patrols arrived. These were wearing masks. Perhaps, fearing a lot, they seemed big, black and only their eyes could be seen. My eldest daughter Vjollca, who at that time was nine years old said, "Mom, they killed dad." I replied "No, my daughter." She said "Yes for God's name" "No," I said. "I told dad to leave, do not make any noise, so we could not be seen from the tractor trailer." We covered the tractor trailer with plastic bags and carpets because of rain and wind. "Oh in God's name they killed my dad, mom" my daughter told me. At that point, several soldiers approached pulling the carpet from the tractor, and found children. They hit me here with rifle, or whatever it was, it felt like they removed that part of my body. They demanded money. "I have no money, I have only children" I said". In pain, as we, Albanian people are in pain, I told them "I have only children, babies". They replied "babies could also do". I said "I have only a son". Florentina, my youngest daughter was 2 years and six months old; I had her sleeping in my lap. They took it from me. Other children were shouting. "Do not shout" I told them. They demanded money. "I have no money," I told them. They took Florentina in their Jeep vehicle. From the Jeep's lights I saw that the girl awoke from sleep. Not that I was afraid that they would kill me, I was afraid of other things, knowing what they are capable of doing, I did not get off the tractor but I was so sorry about my daughter. In their vehicle my daughter was crying and screaming "Mom, Mom". "Çuti nana" (in Serbian Language - Silent Mom) said the police. They knew what the girl was saying, because they were local Serbs. They came again demanding money. "I have no money" I said. I knew Serbian language, I understood, but I did not speak and I was never interested to learn

the language. I'm not even interested to know that they exist as a nation. Then, I remembered that in the vest pocket I have a sheet of a book. Believe me, that book sheet and the availability of a mother to sacrifice for her child is the savior of my daughter's life that I have today, she turns 17. I picked up the book sheet, folded it and gave it them. If they had the sheet unfold, they would realize that there is no money and would kill me with all my children. He took the sheet and called "Zoran" and they brought back my daughter. With battery light he looked at the other children and stopped at my son. He is the oldest kid, and at that time he was not even 12 years old but physically he looked older, around 15-16 years old. On the other side of the tractor, the Jeep's lights fell on the boy's side; he hit the trailer cover with a knife aiming to kill my son. But God said differently and I still have my son. When I saw the blade of the knife entering on the cover of the trailer, I caught my son and kept him on my lap. At that moment my daughters and his grandmother screamed. She knew nothing of her sons, in that moment she had only him. They hit the cover of the trailer on all sides, and said Gotovo (in Serbian – it's over). He thought he killed him and it was over. The police left. Once I calmed down the kids, I heard the voice of my husband, may his soul rest in peace. I left my younger daughter with my mother-in-law because she was trembled in fear. I told her "Stay here with grandma; Mom is going to look after Dad". I got off the tractor trailer and on my down side I found my husband. "Imer?!" I screamed. "Where are you Bahrije, I have been calling you for long" he said. "Here I am," I said. "Where are the children?" He asked. "They are in the trailer" I said. "So where are you? He asked. "Did they beat you or..." I asked him. "No," he said, "They wounded me and this is my end". "You were not only my wife but also a good friend" he said. "If you want to have my halal in both worlds, help me rise up to see the children again" he said. He had lost so much blood that it was difficult to raise him up from the ground. He was wounded here; bullet penetrated here and entered here. His internal bleeding has heightened his weight. Behind us was a neighbor with a tractor, I approach him and ask "Can you help me pick up Imer to the tractor trailer so as he could see the children?" "I would have helped you, but I was beaten and I cannot move" he tells me. Then I came back and required strength from the Lord and I took my husband and approached him to the tractor trailer. I told him "hold on here with one hand and I will hold you from the other side". There he had his mother and children. He told his mother "my mother, I am leaving you my last wishes. Do not shed a single tear for me. I trust you my wife and children take; care of them as I did". He asked all the children to touch their hands. While to the boy he said "Oh, my son. You were only, I have loved you very much but I'm leaving you many obligations. I feel sorry for my wife, not my children, because I know in whose custody they are remaining. Send greetings to my brother, Skeder Gërkhaliu, which was in the convoy. "Mother, for God's sake, take care of my wife and children". I said "Do not talk, Imer. Now I will go and look for help, someone will help us." "No, there is no salvation for me," he said. "There are times that I wanted this moment; I prayed to God to die for to this land and for this country. And here it is, my wish was fulfilled. I am going and I am leaving you." In those moments, my sister in law Habibe Gërkhaliu with her children is being heard. My brother-in-law was killed. She had come to look after me. She did not know where I and my husband were. Somebody told her that Imer is somewhere on this side and he has returned. The eldest child of her was 8 years old, the youngest 17 months. When she heard the voice of Imer, she thought nothing had happened. Along with her four children, she took shelter in our trailer. She was talking to Imer, but he was swallowing his flowing blood. My husband swearing the name of Rifat (her Brother) says: "Habibe, where is

Seknda (Skender, my brother-in-law)?" "He has escaped" she said. She did not tell the truth that he had been killed. "He has escaped, it is only me that I came here" she said. "Well, now I am relieved" he answered. "Now I am leaving you my last wish, Habibe" he said. "Send regards to Skenda Regards to take care of my wife and children." "Do not worry, my brother" she returned. Shortly before 12 o'clock at midnight, he began to jabber the words. The moment had come; he could not survive the bloodshed. I tried as far as I could to stop the bleeding but it was impossible. He had lost too much blood. In those moments, he said "I would like to know what my wife's name is?" As he was laying in my chest, I said "Imer, I am Bahrija and I am holding you in my chest." He said "Eh, eh I am most sorry for her". When my sister-in-law saw him in that stance, she told him: "Imer, send my regards to Skenda, because he has gone before you." "Well, now you destroyed me" he returned. And in those moments he passed away. Then, his mother, children, sister-in-law yelled while I remained strong. Not a tear did I shed. I put him off the tractor trailer; it was 12 o'clock after midnight. That night moon was warming. Since that night, I never want to see the moon again. I got out off from the tractor trailer and saw three people coming. "Brothers, can you help me" I told them. I said "They killed my husband, my children are very distressed, help me get them off the trailer." He was a fellow villager of mine. The he also died, Sheriff Bujaku, may his soul rest in peace. That night, he had married his son and that night they killed his son. He approached; we put my husband on a blanket. When we put him down to the ground, then I screamed with all my strength. He said, "Can you tell me, who are you?" "I am Bahrije" I said. "Which Bahrije?" he asked. "Selim's Bahrije from Studime e Eperme, married at Gërxfhalu family". I said. "Bahrije, do you know me?" he asked. "I'm Sheriff. Where are your children?" He asked. "In the tractor trailer" I answered. "Do act like that my daughter, return to your children" he said. I returned to the children. I went down again, because there were bodies on both sides of the road. Some were dead, some were wounded, rumbling. Children were young, can you imagine 11 and half years old the oldest, 17 months the youngest. We had nine children remaining to both us sister-in-laws. I came out, I saw a man passing; he was a neighbor of mine from village Studime e Eperme, he was from Pllana family. I begged him "My brother, could you remove the tractor for us, because they killed our men, we have left with the kids only". He took the tractor. Before the war, I knew how to ride a tractor, but at this point I did not remember what to do. He sends us in a street above. We stayed there all night. I was entirely covered with my husband's blood. The next day, I woke up in the morning, came down from the tractor, I washed my hands and eyes and I told my sister-in-law to call the children and go from there. I went back to the murdered body of my husband and I said "Oh Imer Gërxfhalu, you closed your eyes but what place should we go?" People began to come out of mountains where they stayed hidden. A formed a column people and we continued down the road. What could you see on this street paved with white sand? Killed people on both sides, blood.. Horror, horror. There is nothing you could do, it happens just as God said. On way my mother-in-law was tired of sadness. Believe me that we passed on the road and have not told my son where they were killed. A man on horses had a sick person with him. I asked him "Old man can you take my mother-in-law to carriage?" He said yes. I, my sister-in-law and children kept walking on the way. My hands were very tired, my two young daughters, 3 years old and 2 years and 6 months old were close to me. Nearby, by the side of a road, I saw a carriage for carrying various items; it had a blanket over that somebody left. I approached; removed the blanket from the carriage. "Ohh God" I begged, "Do not overload me." I placed two girls in the carriage. My other daughter

was 6 years old, which I took by hand with together with my son, while my older daughter stood nearby carriage. On the way children asked "Mom, look at this man" seeing corpses. We passed the Studime e Ulet, Serbs have been settled at Qiqavica offices, as they were known before the war. These were regular army. They stopped us but caused no problems and gave us direction to enter Vushtria. When we entered Vushtria, the road has been blocked. Throughout the night, columns of people coming from Studime were placed into the Agricultural Cooperative. Men, as much as they remained from the others killed, were separated from women. At "Extra" (NTSH Extra – factory of color), village animals were placed from the upper side while we were placed on Agricultural Cooperative, on the lower side. Gypsies holding knives were moving continuously. They were covered in blood from slaughtering animals or killing people, we don't know. At that moment the boy, 11 years old, says, "Mother, blessed are those who have died. They have died from bullet and we do not know what is waiting for us". "Oh, my son, just as God said would be" I said. We were put in a corner. Men who were separated, were loaded onto the trucks, we did not know where they are being sent. There we stayed until 15:00 pm. believe me, we bought a bottle of water for children for 10 marks; gypsies were selling it to us. It was heat, with no food and water, young children. My mother-in-law fainted. They brought a medical team. "What medical team? You were killing us last night; you killed his sons while today you want to heal her." I told them. "Do not treat her, let her also die." I told them. They allegedly gave her an injection, to kill or heal her?! But the unfortunate mother woke up. We had nowhere to go, and decided to stay there. My husband's uncle was with us. He had killed his 24 year old son. I asked him "Uncle Ahmed, where are they sending us"? "They are sending us to Kçiq, Stanofc and at the entrance of Studime e Ulet" he replied. I said I "I cannot go walking in Kçiq, I have no food for the children." Thus we returned at the entrance of Studime. We were settled at Haki Pllana family, whom I thank for all eternity. My last wish to my children and grandchildren would be to respect this family. He took me with my children and mother-in-law. My sister-in-law slept there only that night and the next day she went to her sister. I and my family stayed there for five weeks. They were very good to me and my children. After five weeks we were expelled also from there. I did not know where to go. He, said (Haki Pllana) "Bahrije you will come with me whenever I go with my family." "I will not become a burden. " I told him. "I am going at sister of my husband at City Cemetery neighborhood, as it was called that time." We had to pass the highway, there were Serbs everywhere. I had no fear anymore, I was all the same. There we stayed for two nights. My husband's uncle's son, Fevzi Gerxhaliu, has heard about us. My daughter had met, Haki Pllana's son-in-law, which has asked her where we are. The girl has told him and he have required to take the family and go to them, because the situation was calmer there. I was told by my mother-in-law no to go out again through bullets because of the children. I told her that we are a lot of people here. At that moment, I was told by my daughters that uncle Fevzi is coming. I was glad to hear this. He took his sister, which helped me with my mother-in-law. He told me "Prepare, I came to get you". There we stayed for 10 days, I felt more secured, perhaps because of masculine presence. There was also the uncle of my husband, who asked every day for our men but we did not tell that they were killed. "How come they did not visit us so we could see them, at least their children," he said. I could not tell that they won't be seeing them again. 10 days after the agreement was signed. I picked up my children and I returned to the village. I was the first family of the victim to be back. I left my son and mother-in-law at Fevziu's home because I was afraid for my son. In the village I returned only with girls. I am

very sad when I returned. My brother had heard that I returned and came to my house that night. The next day we heard shots. These were the shots of joy for the liberation of the country. I did not know that we were liberated. I took my children and got to the doors of the house. A neighbor told me "do not fear Bahrije". Then some KLA soldiers came and told me "do not move from here, do not fear, we are here for everything", because in our village there was no Serbian. The family of Selatin Gerxhaliu lived near us. The whole 12 member family was killed on 31st of May. When I remember that no one from that family is alive and my children have been peer with their children, my pain seemed easier, despite the suffering. At least I have my children alive.

## **Bajram Zylfiu**

I am from Krusha e Vogel village, municipality of Prizren. Son of Ramadan Liman Zylfiu, father, and Azbije Zylfiu, mother. I have finished elementary school in Krusha e Madhe; I live in Krusha e vogel. I have worked at "Unimont" enterprise in Prizren until 24th of March. Today I still work as guard/insurance at the "Security Code" company. On March 24, I left the work in "Unimont" after the NATO bombing against Serb forces in Kosovo. On 25th of March 1999, everyone in the village escaped to the mountains after the siege by Serb forces. In the afternoon we return back to our homes. Some of men returned back on the mountains, while leaving families in houses. In the early hours of tomorrow morning, March 26, Serb forces had blocked the road below the village, the Prizren - Gjakova highway. At 4 o'clock in the morning I returned home from the mountain. At 6 o'clock, the army and Serbian police began to burn the village. The villagers began to flee the village, together with them me and family fled. We all gathered in the courtyard of Sejdi Batusha. They burned houses and gathered people. Some village policemen were masked, some without masks. The police called Aziz Shehu near a house, and told him to call all those who were in a stream otherwise they would shoot them all. In the mountain has been the family of two brothers, Lemon and Nebi Hazeri. With them, they had a disabled, son of brother, Avdyl which was carried by Nebih and Luan Hazeri (father and son). "Are there others?" asked the police. "No, there is no one else" they said. Only some roma people remained. "Leave roma people" they said. Later, an old man comes, Hysen Ramadani, whose house was located in the top of village. 50 meters from his home, village Serbs of Krusha e Vogel shot him dead. Djordje Cfetkoviç did it. He was 100 meters away from us. He was the first they killed. Around 12 o'clock, we were told to separate women, children and men. Women began to cry and scream, to not leave children in their hands. Then they gathered the women and children together, while men remained separately. On the main road of the village, the men were ordered to separate from the group of women. Women were told to, "either go and kill themselves on the Drin River or go in Albania, as they wish". Women crying continued the way down the village. Some Serbs began to separate young men, who were 12 years of age, in groups and brought to us. They told us to remove the things (documents, money) from our pockets; otherwise they would shoot them in front of everyone if they find them anything. So we removed all of the belongings from our pockets. In the red bag of old man Adam Asllani, where he stored his documents from Germany, they put all of our documents, money and other belongings. They told Adem "You collect money for KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) in this bag?" They swore KLA, Clinton, America, everyone. "Look back in your pockets, do not happen to have anything" they told us. We had nothing anymore. "I have 20 RSD (Serbian Dinars) left in jeans" I said. "Put them in the a\*\*" they said. What he could do with 20 RSD, I wondered. Later they told us to stand up all and line up in 3 people. And so we did. They told us to tie the hands back, this way. They told us to walk down the village street. 100 meters from the Sejdi Batusha's place, they entered us into one of his house. We were 109 men. Most of us were in the hallway, while 4 or 5 people were in the rooms. We are six witnesses that saw the whole story, only one of us, Lutfi Ramadani, died 3 - 4 years ago. One of the officers had a rifle-gun, whose box was attached to him. We had an invalid in a wheelchair, Sahit Hajdari, who had been left at the front door so nobody could leave. They started shelling with machine guns until they have emptied the whole of it. They started to shoot from the room with automatic guns and rifles in some cases. Wounded people were screaming. There

were also with no injuries. Then they put us a liquid that burns rapidly, and we started to burn. I and other witnesses have been covered by (under) corpses. I was covered with blood, barely breathing. I was wearing two thick jackets against the wind, prepared to leave the mountain, so I began burn from the back. A village person, wounded, said: "get up whoever is alive, because the police went away." We got out rolling the corpses through fire and smoke. An old fellow, Destan Shehu asked me "Bajram, are you injured?" "I do not know," I say. It was warm. "Go away, at least one of us escapes and tell this story" He said. I'm approached to the door, around 16-17 people, I could say, have come out alive. Having escaped, the police returned and started shooting at us. Out of 17, we remained six living witnesses. Survived witnesses have been: 1. Lutfi Ramadani, deceased, 2. Agim Asllani, 3. Petrit Raska, 4. Mehmet Abdylil, 5. Qamil Shehu and I. 3 nights and 4 days I stayed in a hole above the village, which I found in a stream, with no food and water. Lutfi Ramadani, may his soul rest in peace, accidentally came there and saw me. He asked me "are you injured?" I said "no". "Stay there, the mountain is full of police officers, at least some of us escape," he said. He continued through the stream below, then the next day, at the same hour he came back and said, "Stay there, I am coming too." The hole was too small, but somehow we made room to shelter Lutfi Ramadani. There we stayed until 4pm. At 4pm, Lutfiu says: "come on, let's get out of here." "Where shall we go? They could kill us" I say. "No, let's go". He said. So, together we got out. For the first time in four days I drank water. I got some early spring flowers to eat, just so I could fill my stomach. We walked about 50 meters up the mountain. There, Lutfi Ramadani started to cover his body on mountain oak leaves. "What are you doing?" I asked. "It's cold" he said. "They will kill us" I said. The crime scene was about 300 meters away from us. "They will see us" I say. At that moment, they shot 6 times with sniper thus breaking the tree. We got back into the stream, until dusk fell. At dusk, we went out again climbing in that direction, above, "Sokobert" as we call that place. Lutfi Ramadani says 'we were supposed to meet here with Safet Zylfiu and Gani Berisha in the evening ". But they had not come yet. Lutfiu says: "go ashore and check if you could see anything". "Below that side I could see vineyards and fields." There is a corpse" I said. "Who could that be" he asked me. "I do not know," I say. There were many young men dressed in black. "Say a name" he told me. "I cannot say a name, because I did not look closely at it" I say. "It seems to me like Luan, Luan Limani" he says. "I do not know," I say again. "I think Luan was dressed in black" he says. After 20 minutes Safet Zylfiu and Gani Berisha came. Now we were four men. We hugged with Gani Zylfiu but I could not express my condolences about his killed father and two brothers. Gani, the first one says: "condolences for Baci (his father), two brothers and the whole village". "Condolences" I say. He had met earlier with Lutfi Ramadani, who had told him. Also with Safet. We kept our way out of Krusha e Madhe, through the train railway to go to the Hasi Mountains, ashore of Drini. When we got in the first way which sends to Krusha e Madhe, near a mountain, we encountered the Serbian armored vehicles. So we went back to the mountains above our village, where we stayed for seven days. There we saw the Serbs moves who were taking the villagers' left tractors. After 7 days, in the evening we took the same route back to the Krusha e Madhe. From the fields we have seen convoys of Serbian buses singing patriotic Serb songs. There we hid so they couldn't see us. They were about 150 meters far away from us. Then they stationed in the wine cellar, Krusha e Vogel. We continued the road which separates Gjakova from Prizren, walking through the field to the factory "Unimont", which produced pipes, sand, gravel, etc. We entered inside, I lit the fire while Safet Berisha has cooked some bread. After we eat bread, we slept.

We woke up in the morning; we looked out the windows but there wasn't moving anything. At 11 am, village Serbs came on two cars. They are trying to start excavator and truck, who were housed in the factory separation "Unimont" from Hajdari family. But they could not start them up. We were hiding in factory bunker, which produced pipes. For stayed there for three hours, but it was very cold. I said "Let's go out at least we could die like all others, not from this cold." In the evening we left, we crossed the river Drin, through villagers' houses. That night we slept in the house of Sahit Qollaku. The next day we headed to Zym-Has, to look after someone who could send us to the border, but could not find anyone. There we saw again the Serbian police with some catholic fellow villagers from Zymi. Muslim houses were burned. We came to the side of the river Drin and we saw some families and 3 men. Fron Ukaj, was one of those men whom I knew. I say "Fron, could I speak to you?" "Yes," he says. Among that group was the daughter of Kola, our fellow villager. Lutfi Ramadani told her that her father and uncle were killed. "Yes, I know," she said. "I've heard before." Because one of us (six men), has arrived earlier at the side of Drini. "Fron, since you are heading for Zym, could we come with you to shelter in church" I asked. "No, it's not safe," he says. "Thank you," I reply. "Do not tell that we're here," I added. "No, do not you worry" he said. A bride from the group asked us "do you have bread to eat?" "No," I say. "Stop, wait on there I have something" she said. Then she turned back, brought us some bread, sausage, eggs, cheese, pickles from the refrigerator. "Do not stay here too long, because they can shoot with snipers from Zym antennas" she told us. "Thank you," I say. And we kept our way. We were sheltered in an old house, at Shefki Qollaku on the side of river Drini. After 2 weeks staying there, on 23rd of April we were discovered by someone. It was a rainy day. I returned in the morning, I usually wake up early, and I was told them that it was raining heavily. "Well, let's stay here in the chamber" says Gani. Lutfiu and I moved all the time regardless of weather. So we went to the mountain, and made a little wooden cottage. After 20 minutes, the Serbs of our village came by breaking the doors and shelling the house where we stayed. Fortunately, we were not there. But we could see them; they were 200 meters away from us. That night we went to another house where we stayed until April 28, because we were afraid they mined previous home. On 29th of April we left the Drin Side and went for village Lubizhda where we stayed all day. At 20:00 pm we left the village Lubizhda - Has and headed towards Pashtrik. We walked unexplored places and carefully watched the road all the way to Pashtrik. On 30th of April, at 4:30 in the morning we were 500 meters in the territory of Albania. At 7:00 pm we reached the point of military position, but at the time was the police position. We were sitting in a field, near a water source. I found a shaving machine and started shaving after five weeks on the mountain. Others ate bread. From the point of police position, a police officer came. He approached and greeted us. Now we were 7 men together with him. He asked us where we are coming from. "From Kosovo" I say. "Through which way you came here" he asked us. "Through this way" I say. "You saw mines, Serb police or soldiers?" he asked us. "No, we have not seen" we replied. "God was with you. All of this slope is mined" he said. "Do not know". Then, they took us to the point of police position. They gave us bread and tea. We stayed there for 2-3 hours. Then I wanted to accommodate us somewhere, in any jail or somewhere else to rest. They took us to the village Vlahen (Krumë). There we drank a coffee and we headed for the town of Kruma by car. In Krumë they sent us at Kruma Secretariat, to be provided with documents for movement. There we have given interviews on our experience for International Inspector of Kruma Secretariat.

From Kruma, that night we went to the city of Kukes. The next day we started at 8 am and we found the family in Vlora thus we united with our families.

## **Bajrush Berisha**

My name is Bajrush Berisha. I am married; I have two sons and five daughters. I work in Education, as Secretary of Lower Elementary High School in Plemetina village (Kastriot, former Obiliç). I have a happy family life. I am satisfied with my family, because three of my children, two boys and a girl are following education in the school where I work. I support my community (Ashkali) and in the school where I work, they have priority. Before the war I worked in surface mining in Dobroselo (Kastriot, former Obilic), the self-propelled bar. I had friends from different communities, but throughout my life, before and after the war, I was concerned about fact that the Ashkali community has not been represented. It has been mentioned and talked on the chambers, but we were always called "second mahogany or second hand Albanians." At weddings, funerals and other ceremonies have gone to Albanians and Serbs also. But I see myself discriminated in various aspects. E.g. in employment; before the war employed 10 Serbian, Albanian 5 and 1 Ashkali were employed. However, today a problem related to the past is that there were no distinctions between Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Roma and Egyptians were mostly mentioned. Ashkalis never. Ashkalis were mostly known to Albanians. For Serbs, all were the same, they called us all "Gypsies" and such. Roma's were suited, as the number of their community was growing. Egyptians didn't worry, because of the political situation. Ashkali were always left aside. Albanians were right to say "Ashkali's are second mahogany or second hand Albanians." I am glad for Ashkali community and for myself personally. As part of the Ashkali community, my contribution was when collecting 3% (three percent) at work. This work was entrusted me by Albanians. I know the names. The money was collected, and I handed it over to the designated person for collection of 3% (three percent). Later in the parties, people had secret conversations. I have had a lot of Albanian friends, who helped me during the war, which are still my friends. This is a part of my past, which I have a lot to talk, but nevertheless I am proud that I am Ashkali. Today in free Kosovo, I speak to you publicly, in the media, and I say that I, Bajrush Berisha am Ashkali, who has been before the war, during the war and after the war. If someone likes it or not, as the old popular saying states "farewell"! But during the war, Albanians fought Serbs not Ashaklis. Poor Ashkalis, have always been supportive of the majority community, the today Albanians and have helped them in different ways. During the war, I had Albanian neighbors; if necessary I can even tell you their names, which when displaced from their homes, left their possessions in my house which I have kept. There is a document that paramilitary forces have fired at my house, where my parents and my brothers were placed and who moved to the neighborhood where Ashakali community lived, while, I stayed alone in the house for security manners. After the war, there were some Albanians who wanted to take the assets of others, which I never give them my Halals. But I have not allowed them; I had written all the assets left from Albanian neighbors. Thankfully, my neighbors were back and have solved the problem with them. Today, they thank me for the gesture, and I am pleased when I talk with them. I told you about a justice, an act of valor, because one Ashkali cannot be shown smarter in the majority. But the Albanians, as the majority showed the truth, that not everything is all in gloom. My greatest difficulty was when my parents, brothers and their families left Kosovo. Some went into Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and beyond. I stayed with my uncle in the camp, in Krusevac (Fushe Kosova). There I was only with my uncle Hashim Berisha, without my children and my family whom I thank for the care shown, together with his wife. I

was the most educated person among the Ashkali community in the camp. I finished high school and higher education. So they chose me as Ashkali Community Representative, where, since 2000, I am still Ashkali Community Representative in Plemetina village. Since that day, I have protect the interests of the Ashkali community in the form to convince the majority part, Albanians and others, but especially internationals, with whom I had meetings. For four consecutive years in the Municipal Assembly (Kastriot, former Obiliqi), I met with the highest international authorities, with Bernard Kouchner, in my municipality in Kastriot former Obilic, with Nazif Shala, who was still wearing KLA uniform. There were big celebrations here. I was the only Ashkali who have been there, as there was no other community! Later I will tell where the problem lies. On that time, it was only one Bajrus in Municipal Assembly, there was no Serb, Bosnian, Turkish, no one. It was only I and Nazif Shala and obviously the structure of the Municipal Assembly. Drafters of the Statute of the Municipal Assembly were: Rexhep Kelani, I, Drita Hashani and Ismet Hasani. The greatest difficulty in the Municipal Assembly was when I told them in Albanian, because I neither have a reserve language nor do I have another state, not to confuse the Ashkali community, or in a word, Serbs not be stupid, because they know very well, as the majority part and internationals know, Romi is Roma, he has his language, flag, its traditions. So do the Egyptians. But Ashkalis have Albanian native language; they share the cemeteries with Albanians, what separates Ashkalis from Albanians? Maybe I can say the color of the body, but there are also black Albanians and white Ashkalis. But there are different prejudices. It turned out that Albanians were great patriots after the war, I am saying this freely. They were not here during the war, did not contribute anything, they were somewhere in the Diaspora, working for their own interests, while after the war show heroism or what do I know. I told them that here they are nobodies, for me is a man who lived and fought here and protects me, he knows me, recognizes me. My uncles are from Podujevo, Llap, while my wife relatives are from Drenica, Dashevc village. From my wife's family, there is an uncle of hers missing, a massacred brother, they also had female sex problems, but they know best, do not want to go deeper into this topic. In my close family, we had no casualties. There was a problem during my stay in camp; prejudices. Prejudices have drowned me. Here is one that is unfounded. A concrete example from the times of before the war; I have performed military service in Split, Croatia on 05.05.1985. Like any soldier, who has the desire to make pictures with army clothes to keep them as a memory, some of the soldiers, not me, from the generations of '85, '88, '90 did pictures, which, after being displaced from their homes, people have found those pictures and said "here you have been wearing military clothes!" Slowly man. Fortunately, every army picture tells the year where the picture has been taken. We all know when the war began in Kosovo! But thank God there were some people who understand and have understood what I wanted to say. I am not saying that everything was "white flower", because there were people from Albanian community and also other communities that were not supposed to do certain things. Another case in the camp of Plemetina, when we were living in barracks (one floor house, the boards or other light material, which serves as the dorm, office or shop, etc.) has been a case that I cannot ever forget. We have had difficulties performing religious ceremonies of burial, as there was no Imam, and there were no good relations. When we buried bodies, we had to take one of us who knew more about Islam. I would never forget Shyqri Gashi, he dealt with funerals. It was a death of a child, for which we had no money to buy tomb boards for burial. I went to every house and I looked for money as much as people could help so we could buy boards. And finally it has been realized,

we buried child. This event has forced me to create a fund for cases of death, and I am still working in that direction. There are Ashkalis which before the war, by the Serbian side, have been raped, murdered, disappeared and imprisoned abroad. I got them in a register and one day this data will be published. I do not want to accuse directly, instead I thank them, but our deputies in the Assembly, as Danush Ademi, Et'hem Arifi must raise the voice that also the Ashkali community has raped, murdered and disappeared members. Probably still in prison today. After the war, my wife's brother, was deceived by treachery, after being displaced from the village Dosevac (Drenica). After the war, there were four pillars (government) in Kosovo, UNMIK, OSCE, UNHCR, KFOR, which ensured (guaranteed) the war displaced that they will build houses to those who decide to return to their places. They returned to the village, the villagers hosted them well, initially they were settled in a tent, the next day and they were found massacred. There have been four killings, my wife's brother, cousins, etc. What concerns me most is "I am a minority as long as a Serb, Bosnian, Turkish, Goran etc. is". They always prioritize only Serbian community. Okay, I realize that this is because of the situation, but this is going 13 years now, until when? They talk about many different projects, more than 10 million Euros and the government and international organizations in Kosovo know about this, for a Platform Strategy, for an Action Plan for development of RAE, (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian). Where is the money, what is being done with that money? And for this I feel resentment (anger) most, because they talk a lot and nothing is being done. We know very well that Kosovo is a multi-ethnic and a new state. Ashklis have no reserve state; the state of Kosovo is their home. They must be treated equally, not for someone mother and for someone stepmother. I say again, thank you for the Albanians because in a way they are more open with Ashkalis compared with other communities, because they speak Albanian, have more trust, etc., but what do I need their word when they help others? We, as a golden reserve. We have been enough second mahoganies before the war we should not be the same in the free Kosovo, Albanians know this well. I always say, if you ask an Albanian, but with Kosovo origin "which communities were and are poor?" "Ashkali, Roma, Egyptians, before and after the war" they would say. The same thing would also say a Serbian (in Serbian language: Jeste, ovi Romi, Ashkali, Egipçani naj siromasni) Yes, these Roma, Ashkalin and Egyptians the poorest" because I asked them myself. Why don't they help you when they know this? Finally my message is: free Kosovo has room for all, Kosovo is a multi-ethnic state, a state which promises much for those who understand the new reality in Kosovo. Thank you!

## **Bekim Gashi**

My name is Bekim Gashi, I come from village Term, municipality of Suhareka. I am an economist by profession, I work in Kosovo Tax Administration, unit of Large Taxpayers in Prishtina. I am married. My family consists of my wife, two children and two brothers who live and work in Switzerland. Life has its difficulties, which, similar to me and anybody else, have followed up to year 1999. Today I can say that as of March 25, 1999, my life has completely changed and turned into a real hell. Freedom is the sight of a nation, I don't believe there could be freedom without blood, but really some families in Kosovo, have paid the freedom very expensive. Some images in the human mind, even though stored, they quickly delete, but some do not ever delete, because they deeply touch the spinal cord the bone and human soul. My story is based on the one hundred percent reality. On 25 March 1999, I was at home together with my mother and one of my four sisters, may her soul rest in peace. At night when the bombing started, along with my oldest sister, Luljeta, Teacher by profession, have not slept at all. In the morning, we went out time after time to see if there is any movement, but we have noticed nothing. Around five or six o'clock in the morning, Luljeta went out to get some firewood, since the weather was cold, it was spring. After a few minutes, I have heard noises in the street and I went at the house balcony, where from 1 kilometer distance, I saw the iron Serbian police and regular army cordon on the hill in front of the house. I came back inside the house, to awaken the sleeping mother and three other sisters. Mother, as she had fallen into the sleep of death, even though she used to woke up earlier than us, that day I called several times to wake her up. I told what I saw. They started to scream and cry for me to leave the house, since I was the only male in the house and they were afraid for me. They told me "we are innocent; women and they can do us nothing." I insisted not to leave, on that time I was graduate in the Faculty of Economics, and I returned back home two days before the war began. "Wherever we go, we will go together, even if we die" I told them. Mother told me that this is a war time, we should not look to defend each other, but he who survives, survives. I left the house once but I couldn't go out from the front door just as the police were directed to our house. I went back to the house. My sister told our mother "let's go somewhere to hide." They went to the house of my uncle, Musliu, who shares the same yard with us. I went to another uncle, Bajrami. Upon entering the yard, a grenade dropped on the roof of the house. In houses of our uncles there were some refugees who had come from the village of Studenqan (Suhareka), uncle's relatives, aunt with family, over 45 people. In the chamber of uncle Barjam, we were 14 men. It was a two floor object but only first floor has been completed for living. While in the house of another uncle, stayed women. After shelling the roof of the house of my uncle, weapon shootings began. After 10-15 minutes, they entered into the house backyard, some were regular soldiers, some had head and arm green bands and they burned the animal stall. They continued to burn tractors, which held refugees clothes. They constantly moved in the house backyard. We saw them from the windows curtains. Haki, my uncle's son, insisted that I move out of the window to avoid being seen. In the house where the women were, they have broken the house window with the rifle and threw a bomb inside. In those moments were seriously injured my uncle's wife and his grandson, if I am not mistaken the 47-year-old Shemsia and 7 year old Votim, together with a 9 year old girl, Ema which was injured a bit easier. Then they came into the room where men were staying, and in Serbian they spoke between them "what do we do". "Throw a Bomb" someone said. The bomb doors were broken and the room was filled with smoke. We have

were staying laid down. In the house of another uncle, Nuhiu, refugees tried to escape across the river behind the house, but police have fired in their direction and so fortunately they did not enter the room where we were. There have killed around 8-9 people, among whom was a bride, Behare, pregnant on 9<sup>th</sup> month. So, they did not spare even children or pregnant women! After that, the officers returned to our room to check for alive survivors. In those moments I climbed up to the second house floor to the unregulated ceiling, and I have taken two of my uncle's sons. All our movements could be seen from the hill, in front of the house. We went behind the smokestack crawling and we stayed there for few minutes. I went down to go to my uncle's house, which was burned, where my mother and sisters were staying. While, other uncle's house was not burned. After a few minutes there came a nephew, Nexhat, who was wounded in the hand, while his face was covered in blood. I asked him "uncle Nexhat, what has happened with my family." "I do not know anything," he said. He would not tell me, because once I turned my head, he told my uncle's son "all are dead, but there are also some wounded, who are seeking help, please some any of you help me." The uncle's son, may his soul rest in peace, Haki together with uncle Bajram. They came and told us that my mother is still alive at that moment, she is seriously injured; uncle's nephew, Fisnik 10-year-old also injured and Ismet, another uncle's son was wounded in the head. We could not go to help them. I've gone back to the roof of the house and saw my mother that was once again standing up to go to the well in search of water to drink. At about 15 meters air distance I saw that the house is still surrounded by police, who were guarding the bodies of dead people, located in the middle of the house courtyard. My mother together with and little Fisnik sought help. Ismet, deceased, who died after the war, has pulled Fisnik in the chamber of the house. There they went to visit several times uncle Bajram, but could not move him from there. Uncle Bajram went there a several times to visit, but could not move them out of there. Shemsi and Votim were also seeking help, but we could not do anything. From the other wounded people who were in the yard uncle Nuhi, squeals for help were instantly heard, but at 10 o'clock in the evening, officers once again returned to kill the rest. That night we stayed in the roof of my uncle's house boiling point, together with the son of my uncle, Murat and a cousin Shkëlzim, while uncle has stayed down. Villages in the direction of Rahovec were constantly bombarded from the hills in front of our house. In every moment we expected death. That night, I went again down in the yard, and together with Haki, we went to help my mother and sisters, but I saw that they were dead. Just Fisnik, was alive but we could not pull him. While turning back to the roof of the house, the Serbian police fired on our direction, from the river near the house. Murat, in Serbian language, has begged them "do not shoot, please", but they did not stop and so they have killed Murat, who was 1 meter away from me. Once again we returned to the roof of the house and we stayed there until morning. While in the morning, a part of sheltered refugees, headed for the village of Leshan (Peja). At 1 o'clock in the midday, the Serbian regular army has catch my uncle going to the house where our family members were killed, 15 people. My uncle wanted to shut the door of the house but the Serbian police did not allow that and pointed the gun at his chest asking for money. My uncle, in Serbian has shouted "Ne, Ne," (No, no). In the yard of the house have been some unburned vehicles, and the Serbian police asked him the keys. "I don't have them" my uncle has replied. "What are you doing here?" the police has asked him. "I have some family members killed, I cannot leave them this way" my uncle has replied. "You have 10 minutes to pull the dead bodies" the police added.

"Okay, but wait until the military withdraws" my uncle has said them, because they were regular soldiers. My uncle then came to the roof of the house, where we were and told us to leave. Then, at 3 o'clock we moved from the roof through the animal barn, to another uncle's house, which was not burned. We hid in the haystack. Police has noticed that we moved, has come and yelled "get out". We did not accept, from the horror we saw outside, we thought we better burn inside the haystack. Around 20:00 to 21:00 in the evening we got out on the street, through the body of murdered Haki, across the river and we passed the village of Leshan, inhabited by Albanians and Serbs, but we did not know if there are still Albanians left. Serb roadblocks were everywhere. We have seen a light house, it was the house of Masar Gashi and we went there. He asked "are you Albanian?" "Yes," we answered. He has offered us food and clothing. There we stayed until the next day until 11:00 or 12:00 o'clock. Serbs from our village told us repeatedly that we should not fear, that we were secured and they won't do us anything. But after one or two hours, they began to gather all the people from their houses, to the school yard of the village. From the tragedy experienced, I did not accept to join the villagers but again I kept the way through the river and got to the Suhareka - Prizren highway. While crossing the main road, we climbed in a truck, on which our grandson Abdullah from Leshane along with his family and some refugees had been there. But in those moments, an armored vehicle was coming from Prizren and has started firing in the direction of the truck. They have also fired while we were running through the fields. From the people in the truck 3 persons were injured. We continued to Gjinovc village, which has been fully inhabited by Albanians, un-displaced so far. We went to the house of my uncle, who was living in the village, along with two of my cousins. Still not well settled, a news was spread that Serbian police had entered the village. We join the crowd of villagers and refugees coming from the surrounding villages, in the direction of village Budakova (Suhareka), an area inhabited entirely by Albanians. From there we went to Llanishta village, which lies between the villages Jerzerc and Budakova, and we stayed in a valley of a river, in the open air without clothes and food. After a few days we set up a common tent (canopy) for all unsheltered refugees, where we stayed for 5 consecutive weeks. From the conditions and the cold weather, I was poisoned. I have left my relatives (cousins) there while I headed for villages in search for any doctor who could help me. So I went through the village of Vranic (Suhareka), then back to the village Gjinovc at my uncle's house. In the unburned part of the house some young people were there who have taken me and together with a friend of mine, Rrahmani, who died after the war, I was sent to the village Gelancë (Suhareka) to a doctor, where I was given an infusion and took some medication and I returned back in the village Gjinovc. There we stayed until the end of the war. The whole time, throughout the surrounding villages, Dubrava, Toplican and Grekoc has had constant moves of police forces. Around 25<sup>th</sup> of May, I went to the mountain Kabash of village Korisha (Prizren) where I found an air phone and I communicated with my brothers who were living in Germany who did not know anything about us until those moments. I returned back to the village Gjinovc. At that time, the NATO bombing on Serbian forces have occurred, but mistakenly have hit the population of Korisha village (Prizren). During the time I stayed in the village Gjinovc, I have seen many refugees displaced from surrounding villages. There were also settled the KLA forces, and wounded soldiers who were unable to get medical help. On the way back to my village, which was entirely burned and destroyed, I met some Roma guys from our village who had stayed in their houses during the whole time of war. They asked me where I go, I said I am going back in my house. They told me to hesitate and not to

go, because there may be mines and the road is not safe. I asked them if they had information about the bodies of my family members. "We do not know anything, we stayed closed inside our house" they answered. They told me only about 4 buried bodies, 2 sons of my uncle, Shabani and Hamziu with the grave number 1 and 2, a village teacher Refki Rexha with number 3 and a refugee, whose name they did not know, with number 4. I went to my house, where everything was burned and destroyed. Then I went to my uncle's house where they were killed my mother and four sisters. There I found only the mother's headscarf and a pair of shoes of one of my sister and no other traces. My message for the Government of Kosovo is: to do more on the issue of missing persons, killed and slaughtered during 1998-1999. Because finding and identifying them, gives more value to the fight for freedom, and the freedom which we enjoy today.

## **Hasan Shkreli**

I am Hasan Shkreli from Vushtrria. I have a missing daughter and a son, 18 year old respectively 20 year old. One month before the NATO bombing we were expelled from the apartment at the Army Barracks (cantonment) in Vushtrria and so we had to go to my brother's house, at Sitnica River. During the whole time we sat with fear. My daughter feared the most, from every crack she jumped in my arms and said "Dad they would kill us, I feel sorry for your life, I feel sorry for my soul." They had only these two. My wife died before the war and after the war another daughter died, 28 years old. I stayed at my Brother's house for two months. Close to my brother's house lived my wife's brother, he was also living without wife and had three sons. He told me "Come to my house, because your daughter could cook us food and take care for the house, since we are all men we do not now to deal with such things." And so we went. Suddenly, at 9 o'clock in the evening of 21st of May, it was Friday, Serb forces surrounded us. Each house had 3 – 4 police officers in front of the doors. I didn't told children anything at all so they couldn't be scared. My friend knew some Serbian police and so he freely went to the store to buy food and milk during the day. When he got back, he was crying. He was telling me "stand up because we are surrounded up to the front the door." "Okay, we'll do something," I told him to calm down, even though he was older than me. I woke up the sleeping children to eat bread, at least not to have an empty stomach. So I tell my daughter "wake up my daughter, prepare us something to eat as today is a quiet and a good day." She took some eggs, soup and made us breakfast. Suddenly, the door knocked. A policeman over 2 meters tall and very healthy was knocking. He behaved very well. I wanted to open the door but the friend says to me "No, I am going to open the door, because this is my house." Police said "you should go outside to show some yellow card and that's it". These were the yellow cards that were given to us, allegedly not to worry us, but they served to quickly find the locations. I knew what would happen. So we got out into the column one by one, into the house of Sezai Karimani while police officers kicked behind every man in the yard. They stopped us at the house door to slowly enter inside the house. When my turn came, the police took my daughter and my son from my hands. I had a month without shaving and they thought that I was old. They asked me "where are you going?" "At my children, whenever they are I will go too, no matter even if you kill me" was my answer. I ran for in the direction of my children, they beat me, and so I could not break through to my children. 3 – 4 police officers brought me outside and they told me "you have to go to the cemetery where we made a slaughter we are going to butcher you; "Okay," I said. More than that there was nothing to do. They beat me again. I took the road to Sitnica River, there they were prepared to gather all the citizens of Vushtrria on the way to the graveyard. There has been Dr. Shaban Merovci along with his son and son-in-law, which were preparing to enter. I was crying so much so my face had turned completely yellow and my heart was beating heavily. Doctor Merovci appeared in front of me and he said "Shkrel, why are you fearing, what do you have?" "Doctor please, leave me alone, this is it; they took my children an hour ago." I said. "Where did they send them?" He asked me. "At that house there, I greeted with my children, I am never going to see them again" I said. "But did you see my children, were they first there?" He asked. He had his son and his son-in-law there, but I was sorry to tell him. And I said "no doctor, I have seen everyone from Vushtrria, but not those two." "Well, thank you" he says. He sat down and said "nothing is going to happen here, do not fear." "I'm not afraid for myself, I am old, but I fear for my children," I said. They began with provocations and started

beating, they separated children from parents, sisters etc. In one side young people, elders on the other side. 5 - 6 long trucks, certainly 50 - 60 meters long they loaded them beating and violently. In my mind I thought they are sending them to shoot execute them. But they were sending them in the hall of sports, to separate them and then sent to the prisons. A colleague of mine, who was dressed in uniform, with whom I worked as a guard in "Kosovo" enterprise in Vushtrria, in Serbian he says "I cannot help." I'm not asking to help me, if God said it, so be it" I said. Supposedly to say that I am not giving commands, these are the orders. Some of them were being killed, some of them tortured. They were ready for everything. American planes were flying continuously and photographed everything from the sky. At 18:15 o'clock in the evening, they stopped the torture, they eased somewhat. They said "we must submit a certain number of rifles." "But where do we get these? I never even carried a gun in my hand" I said. "After a week will bring you back here, because you keep the weapons at your houses" they told us. After that, we were released. From joy I ran to my friend's house where we stayed. Together with his two sons they were liquidated at the moment they were taken. I searched everywhere in the house, at the neighbors but nothing. They had some money tailored in their body clothes; they took the money and killed them. Since that day I have not seen nor have I heard from them. I heard empty words as they are in Serbia, Mitrovica, or in prisons, etc. but nothing. A Bosnian from Novi Pazar appeared (Serbia) which was sent by someone, with accurate records of birthdays, their names, my name, etc., and is looking for money to help find the bodies of children. I was told to lie to me, because allegedly I had money. I met him at a coffee bar of Karaqi family he has requested €3000 to find the bodies of children. I said that I would give you the money after I see my children's bodies; otherwise they do not believe the words. This man has taken money from people, from someone € 2,000, € 3,000, € 500 and so on, but he was never seen alive after that. I was told "you had been wise, we were deceived by him." They say that the KLA has catch and killed him. My son's remains returned two years ago, while about the girl I have no information. These are all that I remember, because I am a little shocked. The municipality is has cared for the construction of cemeteries and memorial plaque. We had no obligation towards this. Now I receive € 135 for my two missing children. I am surprised; this is not enough money, not even for food. But I feel rage having no interest by the Municipality or... At least to ask, if we need ANYTHING. We were left neglected, as if nothing has happened. Now I am married, I have a daughter. I opened the house; I couldn't be done without getting married. I got married after the war; my daughter is 11 years old. I live with anxiety every day. I am also sick, but barely came but I expressed the desire to come to you, to remove anger a little bit because I'm too old, almost 67 years. I do not think that we will ever be left aside so. I want to say them to show more interest about everyone, not only for me, because there are many families that have been wiped away or financially they remain very weak. At least to visit as so we could have a conversation if they cannot help us at all. It happened that they said "I have nothing to do with this, nothing happened to me and I do not care for your problems". May god curse you; they have gone for this freedom! The pain is my biggest issue because they are my children. But if you are Albanian, you should be touched by this event. Not to say, nothing happened not so. I thought they would show interest in but not. Now I know they are after the chair, interest, theft, corruption. They are working for their own affairs and so.

## **Mahmut Sylja**

I was born on 20/08/1946 in Bequk village, municipality of Vushtrri. Until year 2000 I have lived in Bequk. I worked for 37 years in "Kosovo" enterprise in Vushtri, and am now retired. I am the eldest of the family, we are six brothers and two sisters. I'm married now 17 years, I have four sons, the youngest son was killed on May 22, 1999, I have a daughter, my wife and three brides. We had a good life in Bequk, I had two houses but during the war they were destroyed and is no longer anyone interested in them. I begin my story which on 21st of May 1999 when the entire municipality of Vushtrri was surrounded by Serb forces. On 21st May at 3 o'clock pm, from the Dobërllukë village, the main Pristina-Mitrovica highway, villages Nadakovc, Bankine, Lllamarine have been surrounded by Serb paramilitaries on 22:00 o'clock in the evening of May 22. No one could enter or get out of there. The next morning people were expelled from their homes on municipality of Vushtrria and sent to the city cemetery. There have been about 40,000 people. They have divided the women, children, the elderly and men separately. They brought a truck with 40 people from Vushtrria transformers (electricity substation) and put them together with us. We were beaten, tortured, our mobile phones were taken, our money and finally they released the women with children and men. Around 22:00 to 22:30, from the house of Karimani, where 74 people have been settled, strong shouts were heard. After 2 minutes two showers of gun shots were heard continuously. Then shouts were heard again and no noise thereafter. They burned the house but they bodies could not be burned because they were wet. Around 23:00 - 00:00 o'clock in the midnight plastic bags, they have loaded them in big trucks with 40 people and sent to the house of Karimani. There were witnesses who saw these events from aside. So they loaded the bodies in the truck, sent to the village Batanicë, because from there we received the corpses, only the body of Hasan Shkreli's daughter was never returned by that group. All others were returned into pieces. On Tuesday, seven families will receive a found bone. And on 9:30 they will be buried with all others findings. On 17:00 o'clock they released us. We were beaten, we were told to go to Çiçavicë as it is called that place, at KLA and bring us 200 rifle and will release you. It was their propaganda. Sezai Karimani's House was covered with blood. The blood of 74 people killed in road was cleaned with tankers of the company "Kosovo" Vushtria. They have torn all their documents apart. They kept giving us some cards, allegedly not to worry us, but these cards served were to find us more easily. But this was not realized. I don't know there is a greater tragedy that happened in Vushtrria. From all 67 villages, 587 martyrs have fallen, they are martyrs and not civilian casualties as they call it. 587 people were killed by Serb bullets and not from any traffic accident or something else. At the city cemetery, they have divided the population of Çiçavica, because they knew that the KLA was in that part, pensioners separately and people of the city separately. In big trucks of the company "Kosovo" from Vushtrria which could carry 20 tons of concrete, they loaded about 400-500 people and they sent them to the hall of sports Vushtrria. There they took nearly 2000 people and then sent to Smrekonice (Vushtri). Only they know how they suffered there. After 15-16 days they sent them to Albania. We who were pensioners were freed, they had beat us and insulted "Where is your America", because that day we have seen American planes bombing. My son has been at our wife's brother, at the old medical house in Vushtrri. He has been married and his wife was pregnant. My son and my wife's brother were taken from his house and they were sent to the house of Sezai Karimani home where they were liquidated.

Bahri Sylja and Bujar Krasniqi. They were taken by two Serbians; one from Fushe Kosova and the other from Vushtrria. All this was done by order of Vuçina, commander in Vushtrria. Their register with 97 names was found in Lllamarina. On 20.04.2005, his remains were returned and they were found on village Batanicë. Our bride (my son's wife) has given birth to a girl in July 2000. She waited for her husband until 2006, because she heard words that they will bring them back, he will return. But it was for nothing. Today she is married and lives in Austria, with our 13-year-old niece. I did not want to separate my niece's from her mother. Her husband has understood her and I wish them all the best in life, because all this has not been the fault of her or my son. For our government this is a shame. Nobody comes to ask us how do, or get interested about the education of our children... Many of them drop out of school due to difficult economic conditions. Here's a case: a student gets accepted in college, they took him 500 euros; they removed him from the university and never return the money. This is a Shame is. I am Chairman of a Association in Vushtri, where people come every day to look for a 25 kg sack of flour or 2 liters of oil. Huge unemployment, what to do with 135€? This is shame for our state. I ask for help only from private businesses. Municipality helps us with a car and 3,000 € per year, thanks from them. While the government nothing. After the war, I was visiting my wife's relatives in Vushtri. There came the brother of my son's (killed) bride and he asked if they brought the dead bodies of Bahri and Bujar (my son and my bride's brother). "Yes, they have brought them" I said. "Now I know what happened to them. Witnesses indicated that on Karimani's house they brought 74 people liquidated them" I said. In that house, Hasan Shkreli's (citizen of Vushtrria) daughter and son were taken from his arms. Since that night I knew that they would not return back alive. We saw the scene. My son did not have documents but we knew he was killed there. It is very difficult, believe me that I still keep the scream of that day in my ears. I never mention this story to no one, I do this just for you. I hope God condemns them, initially Albanians and then Serbs. Still no Serb was convicted for Vushtrria events. I told his event also to KFOR. "We do not know where they (Serbs) are" they said. "They are all in Mitrovica and Prelluzhë (Vushtri)" I said. Zoran Kostic - Çiçavica Area Commander is there. Çiçavica tanks were the last withdrawing from Kosovo. I send this message to the people: do not feel sorry, blessed are they that their children have fallen for the freedom that we enjoy today. Miserable is government in whose blood they live today, who do not worry at all about it. Shame on them! I would like to meet with governors once, to say a few words, so as I agreed to give this interview for you. What I say is true. Ask whoever you want, the same things will say the upcoming respondents. At least they do not cover a travel ticket for Prishtina to come and educate.

## **Naile Kinolli**

My name is Naile Kinolli, I was born in Gjakova on 18.02.1953. I work in faculty of Education in Gjakova. I am married and I have five daughters and two sons. They killed my 22 year old son and still today I do not know who, where or why they killed him. We have been working in the Higher School of Pedagogy "Bajram Curri" was called back then. The school director begged me to get my husband and my son to clean the faculty chimneys. That day we worked until 16:00 o'clock. At 16:00 o'clock electricity was gone and so went out of work to go home. My husband took his working tools and riding a bike he left before us, I and my son were behind. At the bus station, the boy wanted to leave. I asked "where are you going Gazmend?" Gazmend Kinolli was his name, he was born in 1980. "I will be back" he said. "Turn on the boiler to heat, because when I come back I want to take a shower" he said. "You are messy, how would you go this way?" I said. "Until the boiler is heated, I will return" he said. This event occurred on 02.18.2001. I am among those mothers who have their children missing. I feel very sorry for him. But if my son was taken by the Serbs I would have agreed. But I am sorry that this has happened after the war in Kosovo. We have not done harm to anyone. 10 days after the disappearance of my, they came from Region of Peja, and told us to go to Pristina to pick up my son, "he is dead" they said. At first they did not tell me but they do told my husband. "Did you find him?" I was asking. "We are looking if he went to Albania" they said. But as I walked into the backyard, they told my husband. I ask, all those who watch the show right now, if they have information, please call, at least we know, me and my family. I condole all the mothers who protest for the remains of their sons to the Assembly, in Pristina. But where do I look for my son? I was in court, the police, the prosecutor but nothing. I have a letter issued by the Prosecution, "we will see, if we find him we will let you know" they told me. From my son's grief, I had a heart surgery, I had stands. Money for my operation was gathered from the students of the Faculty of Education where I work. I fear for my other two sons. Because I do not know who did it, if I knew I would defend, I would defend myself. I'm sorry to say these words in freedom. My son, Muharram was beaten in front of the doors because he couldn't speak Serbian. With a lot of difficulties we escaped the Serbs, killed to be murdered in freedom it is heavier. Not only my son but also many others. But nobody looks for them. Especially from our community (RAE) there are a lot. But I am in pain for my son. There is no greater pain for a parent. No trace is known about him. The first seven days after the boy's disappearance, home phone has not stopped. People called just to provoke me, they did not speak anything; they just listened. I reported the case to the police in Gjakova where they put the phone on peek. After that no one has called me. A month ago my husband was stepped by a car on the road; it has thrown him for 22 meters away. The causer of the accident has not come to apologize or to visit my husband in the hospital. They were both found guilty; a part of guilty was carried by the causer of the accident the part of guilt belonged to my husband. This happens only because we are Maxhup (Gypsies). I do not care if you call me Maxhup (Gypsy)! Character makes you Albanian, Maxhup (Gypsy) and all other. Wealth does not make you a man, if you do not soul. Nobody cares about us. This worries me most. We have no support from anyone, nor do we have where to complain. I do not know what is happening. We were expecting better days. We have suffered from Serbs but these have turned even worse. I ask anyone who knows anything about Gazmend, to let me know. It would ease my pain a little bit. Because I still live in fear

and sadness. When someone sees me in the eye twice, it seems to me that he has killed my Gazmend. At least I would not alienate with the others.

## **Ramiz Emini**

First of all, good day and I would like to thank everyone for this invitation. I am Ramiz Emini; I come from Priluzje, Municipality of Vushtrri; I have finished the secondary school, technical school in Obiliq; By nationality I am Roma, otherwise I was born in Kosovo Mitrovica, presently living in Priluzje. I am married, with five kids. Concerning the period before and after the war, I will speak in my personal name and my family's name. It is an immense difference from before the war and after the war. Also the consequences are very vast when it comes to Roma community in Priluzje and concerning myself personally; therefore the Roma that remained, before the war they were, let's say in two segments, let's say it was a segment concerning employment, or so to say financially, they were before, so to say in a good sense they had jobs, they had good financial status, they had everything. Now after the war a lot has changed concerning Roma in Priluzje. The present situation of Roma in Priluzje is that about 80 percent are under social aid and they have no income. There are about 20 percent of Roma working for the institutions of Serbia, mainly in schools and they get paid by Serbia. The rest of Roma community are under social aid and receive no income. I will consider the situation of before the war. Before the war, let's say that 100 percent of Roma from Priluzje, which lived in Priluzje, had jobs and good financial status. They could work, they could build, and they could do everything. I will consider the situation now, after the war, the Roma in Priluzje are in very critical conditions. I will take myself as an example: Before the war, also during the year 1999, during the bombing that occurred, I was working in Bellaqefc, in Dobrosello, where the surface mining is located and I used to work there. Not even a single day, considering the war and so on, the work didn't stop for a single day. We were let's say 30 percent of us from Priluzje working there. We were, so to say, on active duty / that had to work. So it means that up to the end of the war we were working. After the war ended, I really don't even know how to describe it, a lot of people were left jobless. I will only use myself as an example. The present financial situation in Kosovo; while still talking in regards to the first segment as I mentioned in the beginning, is poor. Municipality of Vushtrri doesn't have sufficient income in order to help the Roma in Priluzje, as well as wider I think, therefore I can say in my name that Roma were previously, before the war, living in better conditions comparing with the present time in regards to the first segment. The second segment would be in regards to the education of Roma. The Roma's education improved significantly after the war. So this is the first segment, respectively the second segment which improved after the war in regards to education. But it all came thanks to Non-Governmental Organizations, thanks to Non-Governmental sector. They achieved this through workshops, through seminars. Young Roma have all finished; there are Roma that are attending faculties; those that finished faculties and those that finished schools but they have no jobs. The only problem, with the present situation in Kosovo, is that people have no jobs. As far as the war is concerned, Municipality of Vushtrri and the Roma community in Priluzje that didn't have... In the beginning I mentioned that they didn't have any conflict with the Albanian side or Serbian side; they didn't have any problems. Roma community were the only one, actually all Roma, about 65 families from Priluzje, displaced anywhere else; their houses remained where they used to be, people remained in their places, therefore concerning the consequences of war I can say that only about 30 percent of our community that were old, were shocked by the war and the bombing and unfortunately they got ill and some even passed away. Concerning post war conflicts, we didn't have any conflict. As far as that is

concerned, whenever we met Albanians and Serbs; we were living in a Serbian village; therefore when we met them they were very glad and we were glad as well that we meet again, thus we didn't have any problems. Problems didn't exist even earlier but it was war and... Concerning the living Roma and in the name of my family, now since the war ended, we didn't face any problems Prishtina, Peja, Prizren, Gjakova, Mitrovica...I move around everywhere, so other Roma and Serbs don't face any problems with Albanians or Serbs or anyone else. We also cooperate with them. Presently I work for a Non-governmental Organization, presently based in Prishtina, so sometimes when it is needed for a project, I work as a coordinator. Now I will say something in regards to the second segment. Concerning the education for Roma we have had pretty good success concerning the Roma in Priluzje and Plemetina. Roma, I am referring to the youth, we are one step ahead, because Roma started speaking the English language as well. We had classes for English language, we had projects; we had seminars, therefore the education of Roma has really, I might say, improved comparing to earlier. Earlier, before the war, schools existed; you finished the school and you could get employed somewhere. But now even if you finish the school, you still have other classes, which I could say are provided by these Non-governmental Organizations. I might say that this is the vast improvement concerning the education. Roma in Priluzje and Plemetina, I might say that 30 percent didn't finish the 8th grade of the primary school but when they continued their education with the non-governmental organization then they significantly improved. They even started to learn English and to write in English language. Therefore I might say that before the war education existed, but not in this amount that we find it now. Now thanks to the NGO's is on a proper level. One thing that remained in my memory during the war, during the bombing, is when I was at work together with colleagues that were of Albanian, Serbian and Roma community who were on duty, I remember an aircraft that fell on Bellaqefc, falling on a bulldozer, but thanks God it didn't explode. We all started to run. That is the most I remember concerning the war. For the rest of it, mainly concerning my family during the war, I was for the most time working, but all the time my thoughts were with my family. I was wondering how will they get passed this? What will happen? Will a bomb fall on them or will it not? I could hardly wait for the time to get back home, but then again in the morning you had to go for duty and it continued on like this. That is one, I don't know how to describe it, memory that remains in your head. My message to all of us living in Kosovo would be to pay more attention to Roma living in Kosovo, to increase the integration of Roma, to provide more education and also to provide employment for Roma. the present situation is catastrophic, because Roma are not employed and they are only living from the social aid, getting somewhere between 70 to 80 Euros which is not enough considering having 4 or 5 kids that attend school, therefore my message is, I don't know how to put it, but to enable more Roma to find jobs, integration of Roma, also all of us to live free; not just the Roma of Priluzje, Vushtrri Municipality and Plemetina but from all over. When I sometimes hear about Roma and their voice being heard concerning education, documentary films about Roma and other things, that is a great success for Roma of the Vushtrri Municipality, so I expect that we will all be of the same thought and forget everything there was before the war. We should not expect hatred towards Albanians or towards Serbs or towards Foreigners, but we will have to look towards the future. We cannot turn back the time so we could fix some things but we must only walk ahead in order to be united and to improve the situation in Kosovo and we can help each in other in different segments in the end.

## **Seljatin Emini**

First of all I would like to show my gratitude for the invitation to this interview. I would like to apologize for speaking in Serbian language. I would feel better if I could speak in my native language, which is Roma language. I am Seljatin Emini, from Priluzje, Municipality of Vushtrri. I was born there, as my family and my grandparents. Presently I am involved in a Project working as a young Roma, professional Roma. It is a project of European Union implemented by OSCE/ODIHR. Concerning the subject which is pretty much a taboo subject, since it is being discussed very little, before the war I was a teenager but my memories of the period before the war include multiethnic society, there were more of Roma's, more Egyptians and more Ashkalis. As far as I remember the living standard was better than today. Yes, the situation was as it was, but my memories are very much positive for the pre war period, because I could walk around everywhere in that time like all the young people do now. I cannot say, because now we can go anywhere we like, but there was a time when we couldn't move freely. We enjoyed freedom of movement, we could go anywhere we wanted, to hang out, to go for a visit at the aunt, cousins. Today we can also go anywhere we like but unfortunately our aunts and closest cousins are not here. Most of them migrated to Diaspora, some went to Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia; thus my memories, before the war, meaning before 1999, as far as I can recall are mostly positive. Before the bombing started, there were some tensions, which I don't remember quite well; I was not very actively involved as I am involved today, but I know it was very hard. One morning when I woke up I heard rumble of tanks or rocket launchers, now I can't say for sure, but I was stunned because I could only see or hear it in a movie before, but in that time I was experiencing it just like everyone else living in the territory of Kosovo. It really was a horrible event which I wouldn't like to recall, because bullets were flying from all sides. It is really bad that people and families were forced out of these areas. Normally we feared for our own security, our life, for kids, for families and our closest ones. In general this period, for these three months that the NATO bombing and the violent situation lasted, it was expulsion and in that occurrence it was expulsion of Albanians, which I don't support now and I didn't support it back then and not just Albanians but any other people because people are all equal. I generally divide people in good and bad. Concerning those memories, they are very bad, although all wars are cold; every war is accompanied with loosing and consequences; off course war is bad and I would want it to repeat. Concerning personal conflicts or problems, I didn't have any, since, I say again that I was a teenager at that time and my parents looked after me and they paid attention to where I go, what I do and who I hang out with. I have these ugly memories of tanks rumbling, soldiers passing and as they were passing some of the soldiers were behaving aggressively, literally they saw us on the street and they force us to get back inside the house, just because we were not wearing uniforms; they were armed and therefore they felt more powerful. Personally I never had a conflict, but I must say that the place where I come from is village Priluzje, where more than 50 Roma families live and they also didn't have any problems in general or conflicts, but I can't confirm the same for my Municipality that had 250 - 300 Roma resident houses, respectively the Municipality of Vushtrri, where they had problems and I might add from the Serb side, during that time, as well as from the Albanian side after that; they were forced out of their homes, their houses were burnt; most of them are in Diaspora, as I mentioned in the beginning and this

occurred generally all over Kosovo, but speaking of the Municipality of Vushtrri, their houses were burnt; I don't know why they don't come back;

I don't want to comment that, but I think that they still don't feel safe because there is not a single Roma in the municipality of Vushtrri. There are more than 20 houses of Ashkalis; they have a good life there, they got integrated in the society; I am not saying that there are no conditions for them to return, these are my countrymen. Generally everyone in Kosovo is living, not to say equally, but we all share the same problem that is the economical problem. I think they should come back; the war is over since 13 years now and we should live like we used to before; we should turn towards the future. I will repeat myself again, I personally didn't have any problem; so, it wasn't great for me but I didn't have any kind of problems, I didn't have any confrontation or incident with anyone, while I can't speak for everyone. I will mention an incident that occurred in Preoce which is Municipality of Prishtina: this occurred after the bombing; two Romas came to work for a Serb family and help them to load things. These guys came to Prishtina and helped these people to load their things and to move, but these people refused to bring them back to Preoce village and these guys since then are missing. They left behind their families, children and up to this day the fate of these two guys is unknown. This is only one case that I know of, because these guys were my friends; I hang out with their families and this is very bad and I am not saying that this happened only to these two Romas; unfortunately this happened to many people that lived here. In general I want to say that there was pressure and problems in other places; I mentioned that, luckily, in my village we didn't face such problems. Once again I would say that I wouldn't want something similar to occur and I wouldn't like to recall those moments. What would I say for the end is that, it is not recent, but for the last couple of years, I am actively searching for employment and I am active in the Non-governmental sector; I have registered a Non-governmental organization; I participated in different meetings and trainings all over Kosovo, so, I went to Gjilan, Prizren, Peja, Mitrovica, let alone Prishtina where I go every second day, so I must say that the situation is normalized; there are no tensions, there are no incidents, there are no problems. I mentioned that the general issue now is the economical problem, therefore, as far as the security is concerned, I feel safe, free to go anywhere I need all over Kosovo.