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TITULLI	Why do war crime victims remain in the shadows?
ADRESA	https://albeu.com/english/why-do-war-crime-victims-remain-in-the-shadows/1030306/
BURIMI	albeu.com
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KOHA

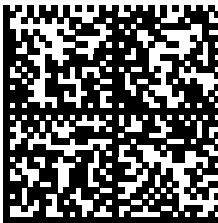
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ZINXHIRI I PROVËS

KJO HYRJE	2eaa1845c23dcf29e3e41693bf09d92a5ca2c332d60b4fc92d21baf7adfc8a78
E MËPARSHMJA	—
RRËNJA MERKLE	2fad39eb4a5630a03d13ec48550b069ca76ccbe736c7b94b7af60112a505f929
ANKORIMI	submitted — dërguar, ende pa bllok <i>Deri te blloku, kjo provon integritetin, jo kohën.</i>



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Why do war crime victims remain in the shadows?



Chained in basements and barns, covered in mud and surrounded by human and animal excrement. Some were hung upside down, beaten, had their fingernails ripped out or their limbs broken.

During Kosovo's last war, in 1999, hundreds of people identified as opponents of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were arbitrarily detained and mistreated. According to reports, they included teachers, farmers, foresters, ordinary workers and, in some cases, women and children.

On September 16, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague convicted four former KLA leaders of these war crimes: Hashim Thaçi, Jakup Krasniqi, Kadri Veseli and Rexhep Selimi.

The ruling is a first-instance decision. The lawyers for the four convicted men have announced that they will appeal.

Since the verdict was announced, thousands of people have gathered every evening in Skanderbeg Square in Pristina. They chant "Not in my name" and oppose the conviction of those they call "heroes" and "liberators".

Amid the speeches and songs at the rallies, little attention is paid to the victims. Why is that?



të fundit /



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Këmbimi valutor/ Me sa blihen e shiten dollari dhe euro, çfarë ndod...



Pse viktimat e krimeve të luftës mbeten në hije?



Procesi gjyqësor ndaj 21 personave për dëbimin masiv të...



Seancë plenare në Kuvend, në fokus Deklarata për vendim...



Shirat e rrëmbyeshëm shkaktajnë 68 viktima në Indi dhe Nepal,...



Trump i propozon Kinës të blejë armë amerikane për të zbu...



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Agon Maliqi, a senior nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Europe Center and an expert on developments in Kosovo, says the verdict has been viewed as a blow to the legacy of the liberation war and the country's history.

According to Maliqi, the discussion should refocus on the individual responsibility of those who committed the acts, rather than on constructing a narrative that the KLA leadership had criminal motives.

"We need to ask honestly: are the convicted men the people who carried out and ordered the acts, and does this kind of verdict deliver justice?" Maliqi told Radio Free Europe.

He believes the ruling has brought justice neither to the victims nor to the convicted men, because responsibility was assigned to the command level without being established individually in each case.

The Trial Panel linked the responsibility of the four former KLA leaders to the existence of a joint criminal plan targeting people considered opponents of the KLA.

According to the court, the accused helped create and implement the plan and did not act to stop it. Area commanders, the ruling says, were "zealous implementers" of this criminal objective.

The summary of the judgment describes this as a joint effort: "Although the responsibility of the accused is individual and personal, what they did could not have been carried out by a single person. They did it together, with determination and with the help of others."

The use of the term "joint criminal enterprise" has sparked reactions from citizens who believe it tarnishes the KLA's war.

Several citizens who spoke to Radio Free Europe said they did not believe the charges were supported by sufficient facts and evidence. They called them speculation and unacceptable to the people of Kosovo.

"Who established that? Where are the facts? Where is the evidence? It's all just speculation," said Milaim Llugaxhiu from Suhareka.

"Those charges are ridiculous, a joke at the expense of our people," said Liridon Sheholli from Podujeva.



"It's not true; we all know that," said Qemajl Hasani from Vushtrri.

Bajram Beqiri, also from Vushtrri, said: "There are absolutely no facts, and as such they are unacceptable to us and to the people of Kosovo."

The full judgment in the case has not yet been made public.

Maliqi says that, besides the debate over the KLA's legacy, the lack of attention to the victims is also linked to their anonymity and doubts about their profile.

"The existence of suspicions that many of them may have been spies, or collaborators and witnesses manipulated by Serbia, leads many people not to see them as victims, but simply as legitimate collateral in a war," he said.

The summary of the judgment says that the detainees were personally accused of being spies and traitors and of collaborating with the Serbian regime.

However, the judges said that, "with limited exceptions", they found no evidence that the victims had committed criminal acts, taken a direct part in the fighting or posed any other legitimate security threat to the KLA.

Maliqi added that the charges were not the discussion well-founded with the Serbian authorities. He said:

Maliqi acknowledges that there were people at the time who collaborated with the Serbian authorities. He adds that there is a consensus that, "in wartime circumstances, at least, detaining suspected individuals is a legitimate practice".

But, he says, it is known that people were targeted without cause and arbitrarily because of distrust, political disagreements or personal grudges.

Except in the case of Behajdin Allaqi, the names, faces and stories of the victims have not been made public, fueling distrust toward them. Radio Free Europe contacted Allaqi's family for comment after the verdict but received no response.

Maliqi says it is understandable that victims and witnesses chose anonymity "to protect themselves from public judgment". However, he says, this has created the impression that they are guilty or have something to hide.

"Especially knowing that opposite these abstract victims in the dock are not the actual perpetrators, but figures of historical importance who are being tried on the basis of command structure logic—which automatically shifts empathy toward them," Maliqi said.

According to the judgment, among the victims were people detained simply because they were called "Rugova's soldiers" after supporting the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (FARK).

Radio Free Europe sought a statement from the LDK regarding its mention in the conviction of the former KLA leaders but received no response.

On September 16, the party issued a statement opposing the Specialist Chambers' ruling. According to the statement, "the KLA remains the proudest part of the modern history of our people" and it merely "defended the doorstep of its home".

In that statement, as in most public reactions following the verdict, attention was devoted to crimes committed by Serbian forces in Kosovo.

That same day, Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti also reacted, describing the ruling as "unacceptable injustice, a grave and harmful punishment".

"In these difficult moments, we stand by the families of the former KLA leaders and all their fellow liberation fighters," Kurti said. In his reaction, he did not mention the victims, while he called the findings that the accused had targeted people considered collaborators of the Serbian regime "unfair conclusions".

Kurti later pledged to provide all possible support through a state strategy aimed at assisting the defense teams in appealing the ruling.

Political analyst Ilir Deda told Radio Free Europe that support for the appeal "must not turn into a denial of the victims' suffering".

"Respect for the victims does not weaken the defense; on the contrary, it strengthens its credibility," Deda said. He stressed that the criminal responsibility of individuals must not be turned into collective guilt for the KLA or the state of Kosovo.

Most organizations in Kosovo dealing with justice and human rights also opposed the verdict without focusing on the victims.

On September 25, 11 organizations responded to Amnesty International, objecting to its connection between the judgment and "thousands of war victims in Kosovo" without mentioning the crimes committed by Serbian forces.

Amnesty International said the convictions "give hope to thousands of war victims in Kosovo".

The organizations called on Amnesty to distinguish the victims and crimes addressed in the case against Thaçi and the others from the other victims of the war, most of whom were killed by Serbian forces.

The Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, meanwhile, focused on the victims in the case against the former KLA leaders.

The center's response says that Kosovo's political elites have turned the narrative of the KLA's heroic war against Serbian forces into "almost the only permissible interpretation of the war" but that narrative cannot

against Serbian forces into "almost the only permissible interpretation of the war", but that narrative cannot change the facts established in the judgment.

However, the center acknowledged that dissatisfaction in Kosovo stems from the "almost complete lack" of criminal prosecutions of Serbian officials from that period in Serbian courts.

The organization insisted that facts established by the court cannot be relativized by labeling the victims "collaborators". Radio Free Europe contacted the center to discuss the place of the victims in the debate following the judgment but received no response.

According to the ruling, at least 385 people were unlawfully or arbitrarily detained, 303 were tortured, 49 were subjected to cruel treatment and 96 were killed.

Shtuar më 28.09.2026 08:11

Tags: [crimes](#) , [Kosovo](#) , [victims](#) , [War](#)



Trial proceedings against 21 people over the mass expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo



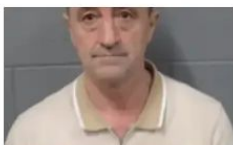
Plenary session in the Assembly, focus on statement regarding Hagia Sophia



Weather forecast for September 28, 2026: Clear skies and passing clouds



Tragedy in Athens/ What caused the explosion that claimed the lives of young people



56-year-old Albanian arrested in the US, faces charges of sexual abuse



Further releases of political prisoners in Venezuela, opposition calls for free elections



Middle East conflict/ Hezbollah: Israel failed to break the resistance in Gaza



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