



Fondi për të Drejtën Humanitare Kosovë
Fond za humanitarno pravo Kosovo
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THE PROPER ALBANIA WITTIM

VERMICA

THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA

VERMICA, PRIZREN

During the war in the 1998-1999, the expulsion of the Albanian population from the territory of Kosovo was organized based on a special plan through the use of violence, measures of intimidation and through the creation of an unsafe living environment. The forced expulsion of the Albanian population from Kosovo was carried out with a degree of coordination and control that undoubtedly leads to a conclusion that there was systematic forced deportation. Such a conclusion was also confirmed by the trial of Sainovic and others in the case of establishing the counts of indictment which stated that "The forces of the FRY and Serbia, systematically, and forcibly deported and relocated hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians from their homes throughout the province of Kosovo. To facilitate these deportations and displacements, the FRY and Serbia forces deliberately created an atmosphere of fear and oppression through the use of force, threats of force and acts of violence".

The eviction of the Albanian population from Kosovo started at the beginning of the 90s, as a result of violent measures, dismissal from work and discriminatory measures in education, healthcare and other basic rights. At the beginning of the armed conflict, a more violent form of expulsion started which was forced removal from homes, which significantly intensified after the beginning of the NATO intervention on the former Yugoslavia.

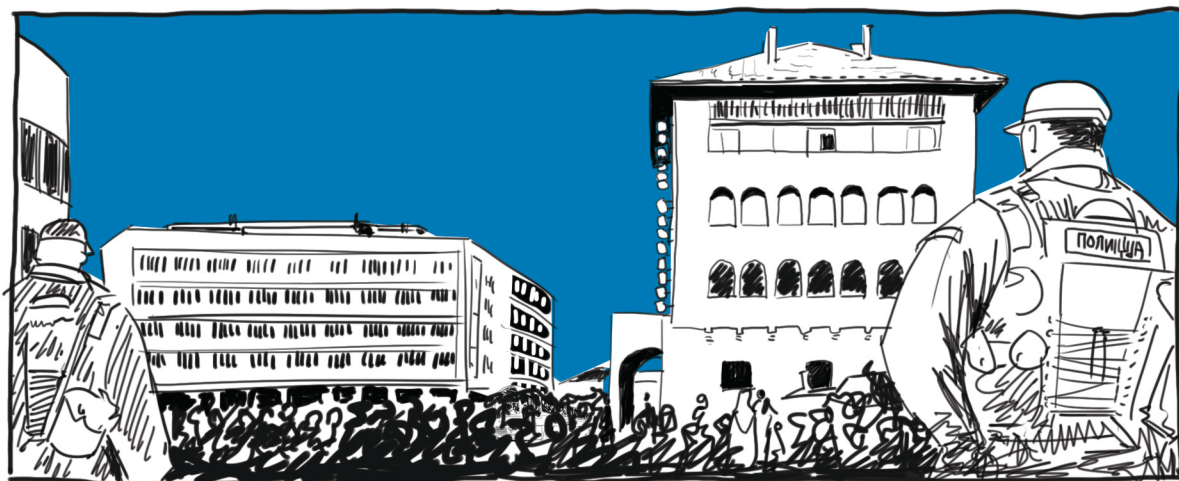
According to the UNHCR report, "The refugee crisis in Kosovo, an independent assessment of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response", over 1 million citizens of Kosovo were expelled from the country and only during the first 9 weeks after the start of the NATO intervention - more than 860,000 citizens were sheltered in the countries of the region. Of which 444,600 were sheltered in Albania, 344,500 in Macedonia and 69,900 in Montenegro.

During this period, the deportation reached such a level that the Serbian armed forces would go house to house in different settlements and would forcibly expel residents from their homes, ordering them to leave Kosovo. The population was ordered to leave Kosovo in the direction of different countries through different

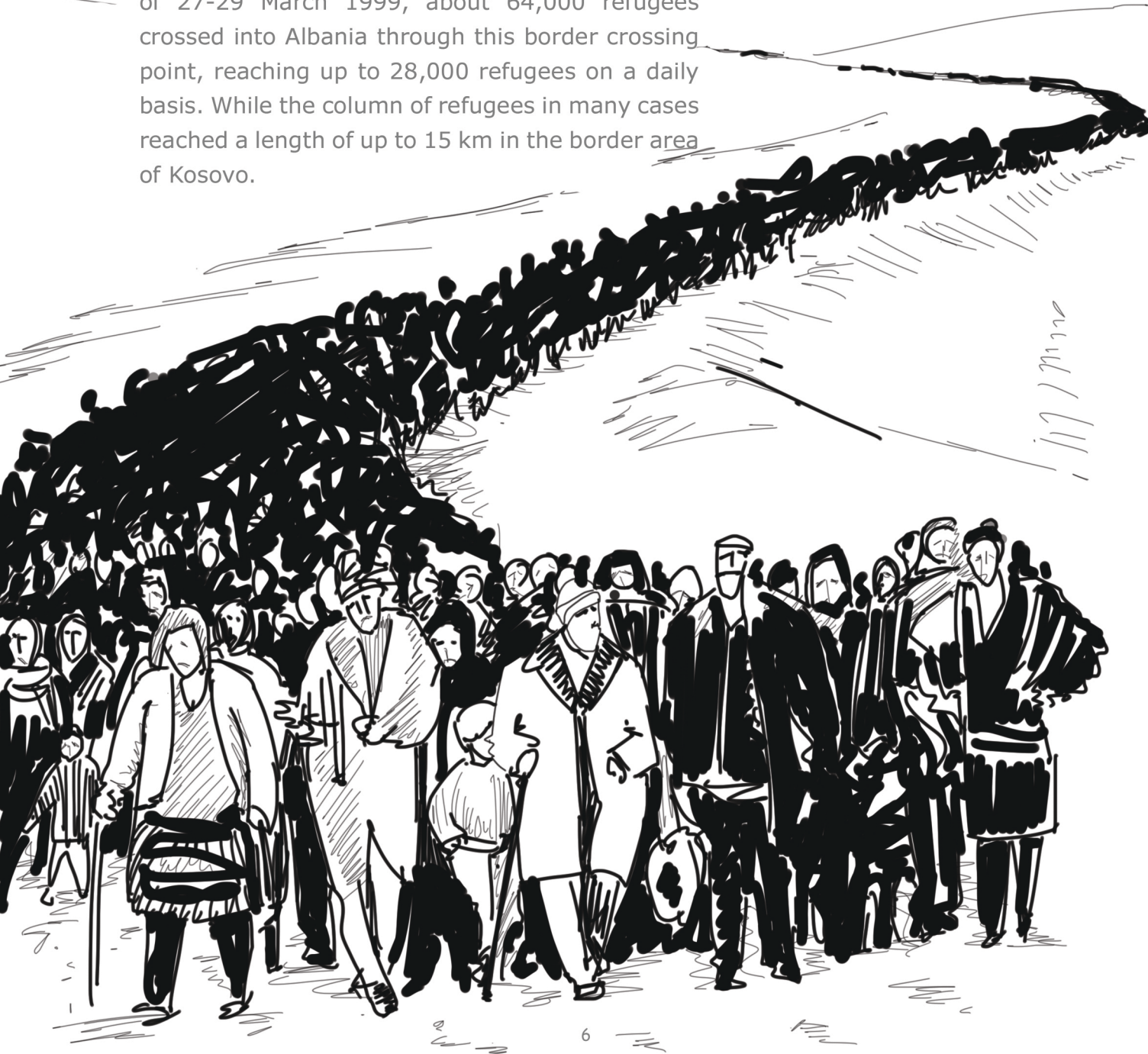


border crossing points. Usually the expelled population was directed to the nearest borders. Most of the population from the western half of Kosovo was directed to the southwestern border with Albania, while the eastern half was directed to the southeastern border leading to Macedonia. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn and other areas with Albanian population in the north of Kosovo were generally sent to the border with Albania. A large part of the residents of Peja/Pec and Istog/Istok crossed the border to Montenegro, while a number of residents from the easternmost municipalities of Kosovo first entered southern Serbia and then crossed the border to Macedonia. But there were also areas that were characterized by smaller number of population evictions, such as the Drenica region in central Kosovo, from which few residents left Kosovo, except for the residents expelled from the town of Glllogoc/Glogovac in early May 1999.

The majority of population left by using their own means of transportation such as cars, tractors or carts, but also on foot. However a relatively large number also left through the transportation organized by the Serbian forces, gathering the population at certain points and then using buses and military vehicles to transport the population to the designated borders. The ethnic cleansing of the City of Peja/Pec during the period covering 24-29 March 1999 is a concrete example of the organization of transportation for the purpose of deportation of the population. During this period, the Albanian residents of all neighborhoods of Peja/Pec were forced to leave their homes and gather at the collection points in the center of the city. The Serbian police would then organize buses to transport residents to Prizren/Prizren and then to Albania. On March 29, almost all Albanian residents were forcibly expelled from the city of Peja/Pec.

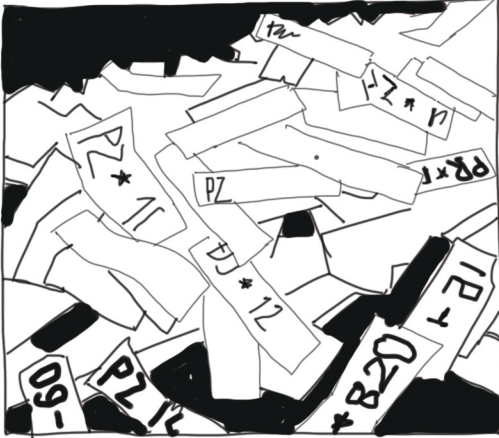


As emphasized above, the border with Albania was the busiest with refugees who were leaving the territory of Kosovo and most of the citizens expelled from their homes, close to half a million, crossed into Albania through the border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica. Only during the period of 27-29 March 1999, about 64,000 refugees crossed into Albania through this border crossing point, reaching up to 28,000 refugees on a daily basis. While the column of refugees in many cases reached a length of up to 15 km in the border area of Kosovo.



The population groups that were leaving Kosovo, from their homes to the border crossing points, were subjected to constant abuse by the Serbian forces, looting, insults, desecration of cultural-national symbols, and in many cases many people were even executed. The violence and mistreatment went to such extent that many people were asked for certain sums of money in exchange for their lives and those of their families.

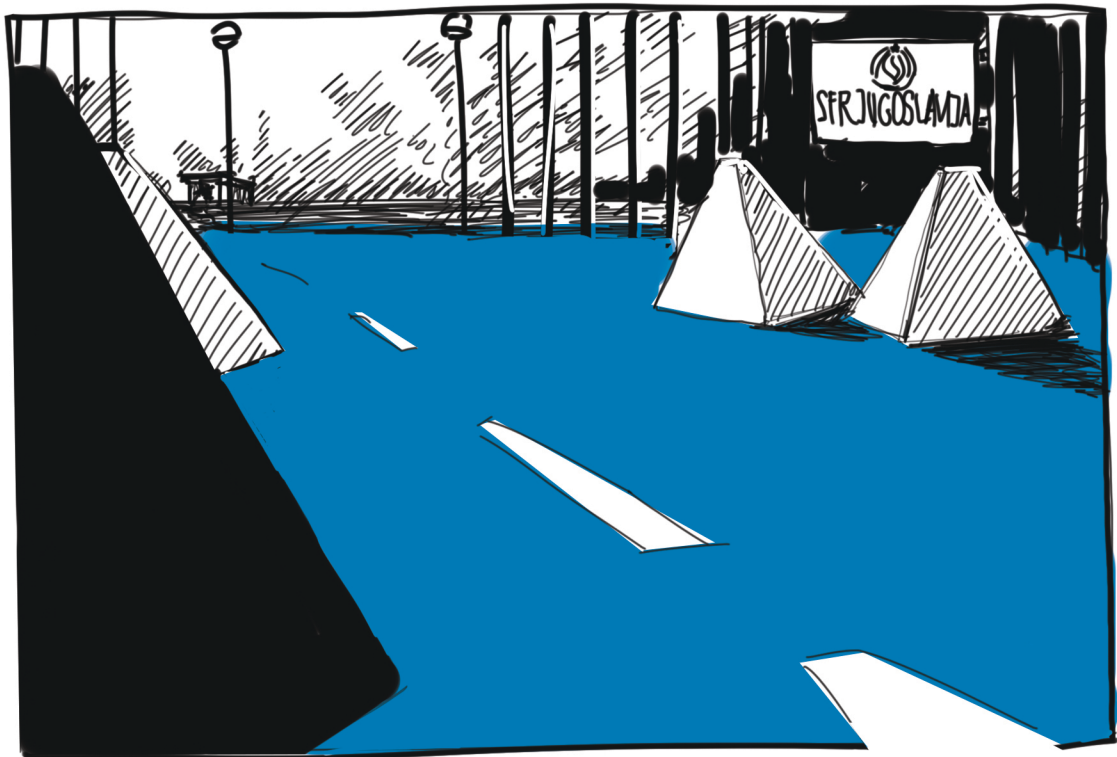
Hundreds of refugees who were deported to Albania said that before they were allowed to cross the border, they were forced to hand over their passports, identity cards, driver's licenses, vehicle registration documents and birth certificates, which were often torn in front of them. On the other hand, those crossing the border by car were given screwdrivers and ordered to remove the license plates from their vehicles. However a completely different practice was used for refugees who were deported to other countries in the region such as Macedonia and Montenegro, who were generally allowed to keep their documents, even after they were checked by Serbian police officers.



Such a practice of identification documents confiscation was used to achieve the goal of stripping the deportees of the citizenship of the former FRY thus preventing them from returning to Kosovo afterwards. This way, the border procedures were used as complementary means for the ethnic cleansing of the territory of Kosovo. The widespread confiscation of identity documents and car license plates by Serbian police and border guards also demonstrates the systematic nature of deportations.

THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA WHAT WAS IT?

The border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica has been one of the main connections that connected the Albanian state with the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo of the former Yugoslavia. During 1945 - 1990, as a result of the communist government policies in Albania, this border crossing point was closed. The same was opened again in 1991 after the fall of the communist government in Albania.

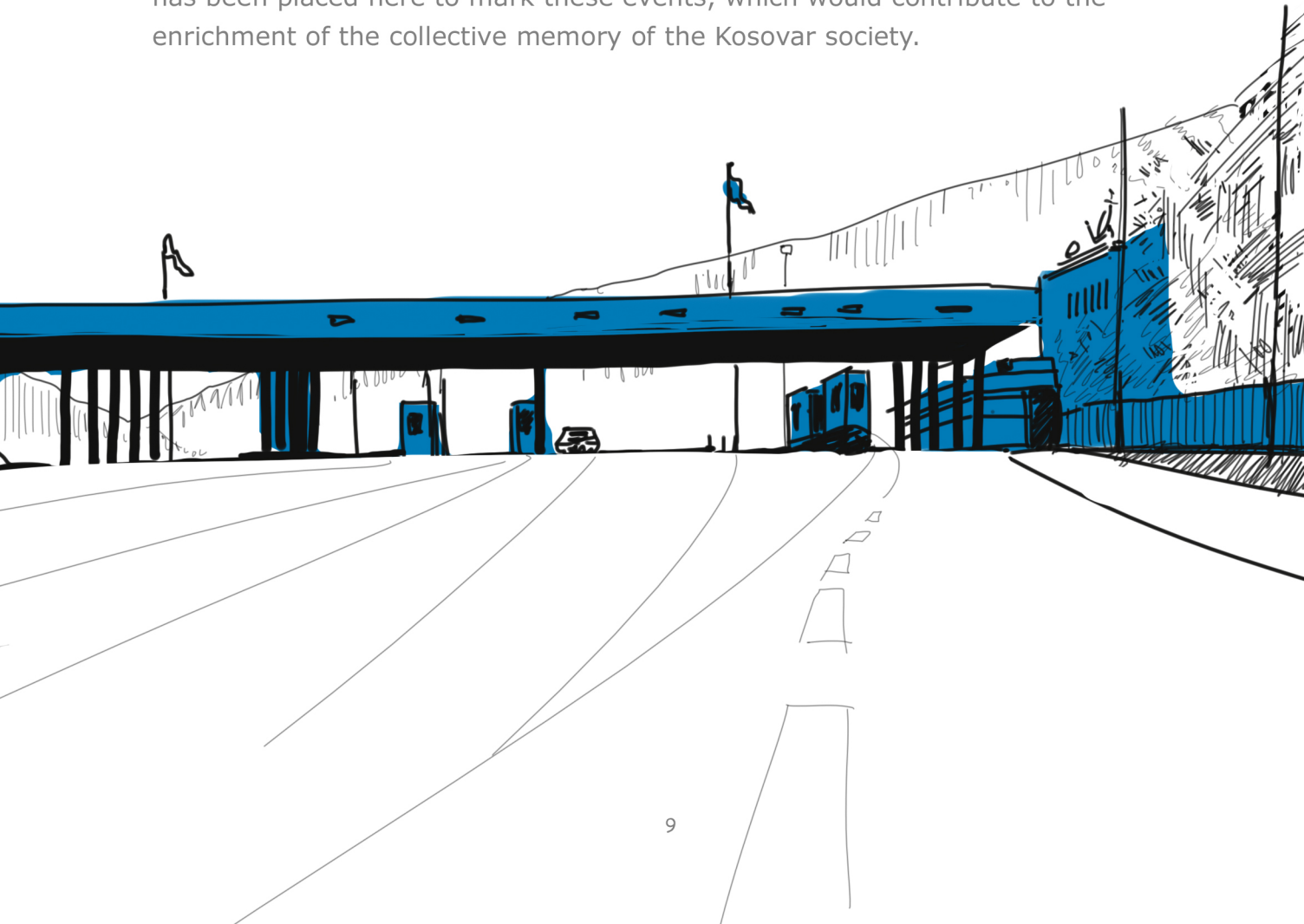


THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA

WHAT IS IT USED FOR TODAY?

The border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica is one of the official international border crossings of Kosovo and serves as a link between Kosovo and Albania. This border crossing point is now used for circulation of passengers, goods, means of transport, cars, as well as customs clearance and control of goods and passengers. The border crossing point in Vërmicë/Vermica with its own geographical position is the only border crossing point that serves for the circulation of commercial goods and is the point with the largest circulation of citizens, who go to or come from Albania.

Despite the facts that hundreds of thousands of refugees passed through this border crossing point from Kosovo to Albania as a result of the war in Kosovo and the many mistreatments they have suffered at the border, no memorial has been placed here to mark these events, which would contribute to the enrichment of the collective memory of the Kosovar society.



THE BORDER WITH ALBANIA

MAP

