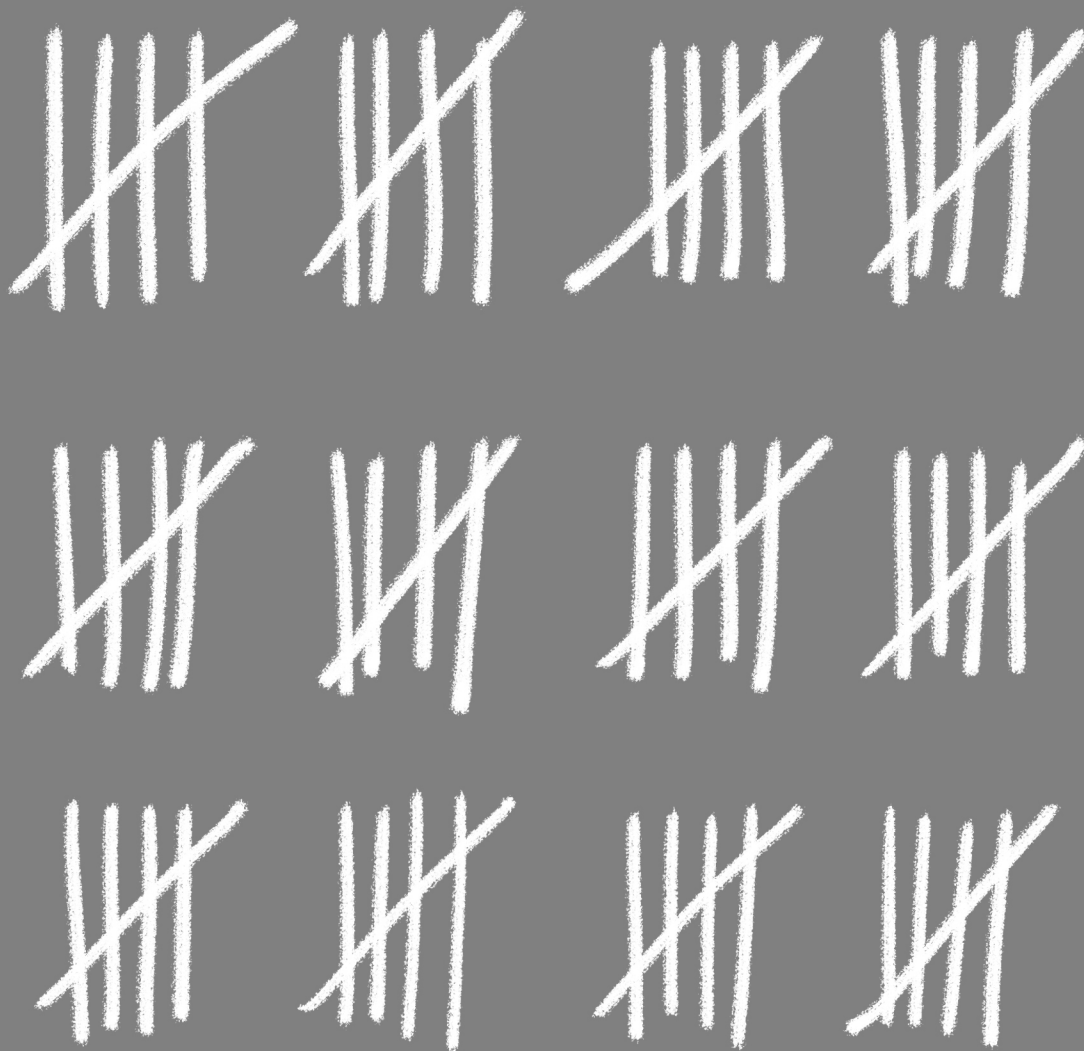




Fondi për të Drejtën Humanitare Kosovë
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SMREKOVNICA PRISON
SMREKOVNICA

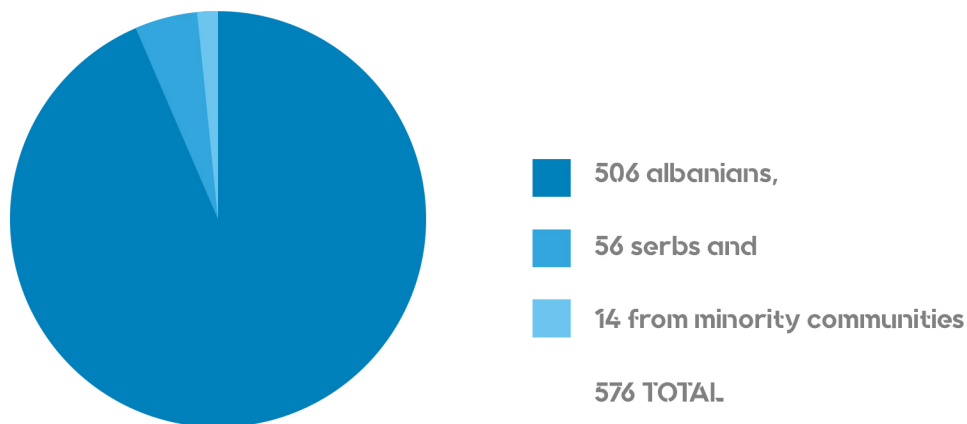
VUSHTRRI
VUÇITRN



SMREKONICĚ / SMREKOVNICA PRISON

VUSHTRRI / VUČITRN

The municipality of Vushtrri/Vučitrn is one of the areas most affected by the war. Approximately 90.000 inhabitants used to live there, around 90% were Albanians, while Serbs were settled mainly in the town of Vushtrri/Vučitrn and some surrounding villages. There, between 1998 - 2000, 576 people lost their lives / went missing as a result of the war. Of these, 506 were Albanians, 56 Serbs and 14 from minority communities.



The day NATO bombing began, on March 24, 1999, the town of Vushtrri /Vučitrn was shelled by Serbian forces and thousands of Albanians were forced out of their homes. Violent displacements intensified by the end of April, and consequently, tens of thousands of residents gathered in the Shala region until the offensive began, which broke the crowd in two directions: towards Podujeva/Podujevo and along the Sllakoc/Sllakovc River.



Escorted by the armed forces, a caravan of 30.000 refugees headed towards the town of Vushtrri/Vučitrn. In the evening of May 2, 1999, the convoy of people was stopped between the villages of Studime e Epërme/ Gornje Studimlje and Studime e Poshtme/ Donje Studimlje as it was the time of the curfew they decided to spend the night there. Suddenly, Serbian forces began attacking them from all sides, penetrating within the civilian caravan and torturing the citizens gathered there for hours. Amid looting and severe beatings, around 100 people were killed and many more were wounded.



After midnight, the caravan was ordered to move towards Vushtrri/Vučitrn. The survivors continued their way throughout the night, until the morning of May 3rd, leaving behind their killed family members and their belongings. Under the supervision of police and some soldiers, the crowd headed towards the agricultural cooperative near the Vicianum motel.

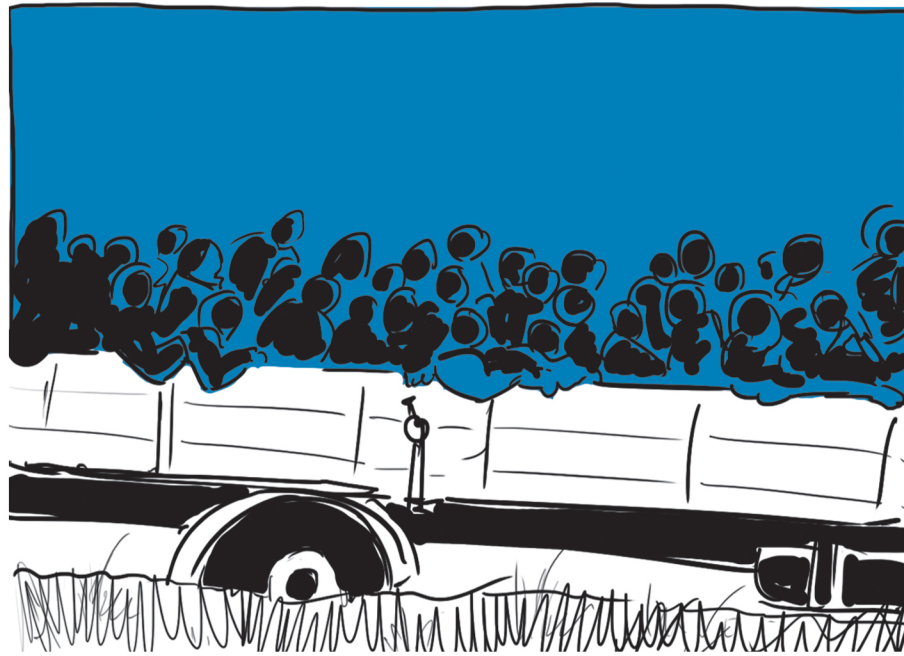


After staying there for a while, the police started to separate the men on one side while the others were ordered to get on the tractors and carry on to Albania.



While the convoy of tractors was leaving, two trucks with trailers came to the cooperative, where, the remaining men were hit and forced to get on the trucks and then drove them to Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison. Trucks had made this route several times, thereby transporting hundreds of prisoners.

In the prison yard, after collecting personal data, they started beating and dividing the men in different spaces/facilities of the prison. The prison rooms were empty, there were no beds, nor blankets. Tens and hundreds of people were put in small rooms without eating or drinking for three days in a row.



After three days, the prisoners were given some bread and water, which seemed contaminated as many prisoners got ill. The prison was overcrowded, there were prisoners staying both in the gym and in the corridors. They were constantly abused and sent in groups to the prison yard or near the television room and beaten until they lost consciousness. After a few days, during the torture, they were interrogated and given a letter to sign, that they had been accused of terrorism. In addition to the prison guards and the regular police, the prisoners also noticed the presence of the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit.

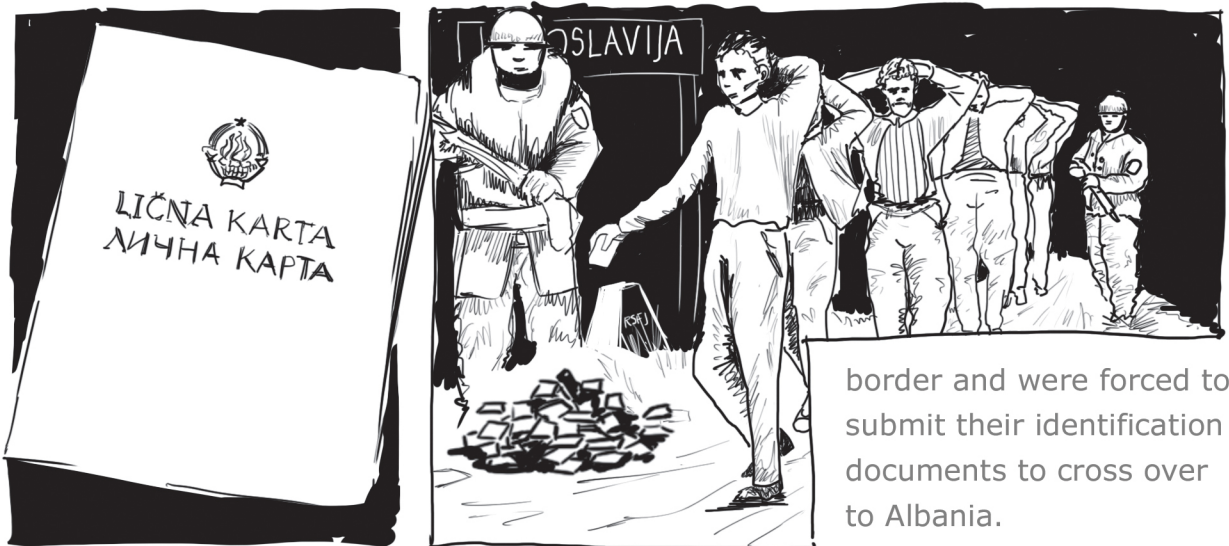


The situation of the prisoners deteriorated after May 16th, 1999, when another 830 prisoners from Mitrovica were brought to prison. Prisoners were then kept in bathrooms and basements whereas those in the rooms had no space, not even to lie down on the concrete floor. Food rations were reduced and very often prisoners had nothing to eat. Beatings and ill-treatment occurred on a daily basis, with prison guards and police officers occasionally loading two trucks of prisoners and sending them to the Mitrovica Medical High School and Technical High School. They were held there all day, where they were 'interrogated' and ill-treated and then returned to the Smrekonicë/Smrekovnica prison. The health condition of the prisoners was aggravated. From the constant beatings they suffered serious injuries to the head, body, as well as broken limbs and teeth. From the statements of the witnesses, it is known that at least one person was beaten to death while two others died later as a result of ill-treatment in prison.





Around 3,000 prisoners were held in these circumstances, until 23rd of May 1999. On the morning of 23rd of May, the prisoners boarded the bus and were taken, under police supervision, to Shtime/Štimlje from where they were escorted by the Yugoslav army to Zhur/Žur. There they got off the buses and walked to the



border and were forced to submit their identification documents to cross over to Albania.

The crimes in the Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison were also confirmed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the Basic Court in Mitrovica in the case against Zoran Vukotić, who was sentenced to 6 years and 6 months in prison for inhumane treatment, and causing of great suffering through torture, beatings, violation of the bodily integrity and health of a high number of Albanian civilians detained in the Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison.



SMREKONICË/SMREKONICA PRISON

WHAT DID IT USE TO BE?

In 1978 in the village of Smrekonicë/Smrekonica, near the chicken farm in an area of 18 ha, a parallel division of Mitrovica prison was built for convicted returnees from prisons in Serbia (Požarevac and Niš), as existing prisons in Kosovo no longer had any free capacity.

On January 1, 1981, in Smrekonicë/Smrekovnica, all those persons for whom no special measures were needed, began to serve their sentences. During this time, the prison in Smrekonicë/Smrekonica had a capacity for 180 prisoners, and 1 year later this institution was transformed into a Correctional Facility, accepting convicts sentenced to six months to one-year prison sentences, from all over Kosovo.

After the demonstrations of 1981, the number of prisoners reached 700 even though the conditions in the facilities could not cope with this number, in different areas of the facilities (farm, reception room, ambulance and block) more beds were added.

By another decision in 1987, all men convicted of minor offenses as well as political prisoners were admitted to this Correctional Facility.

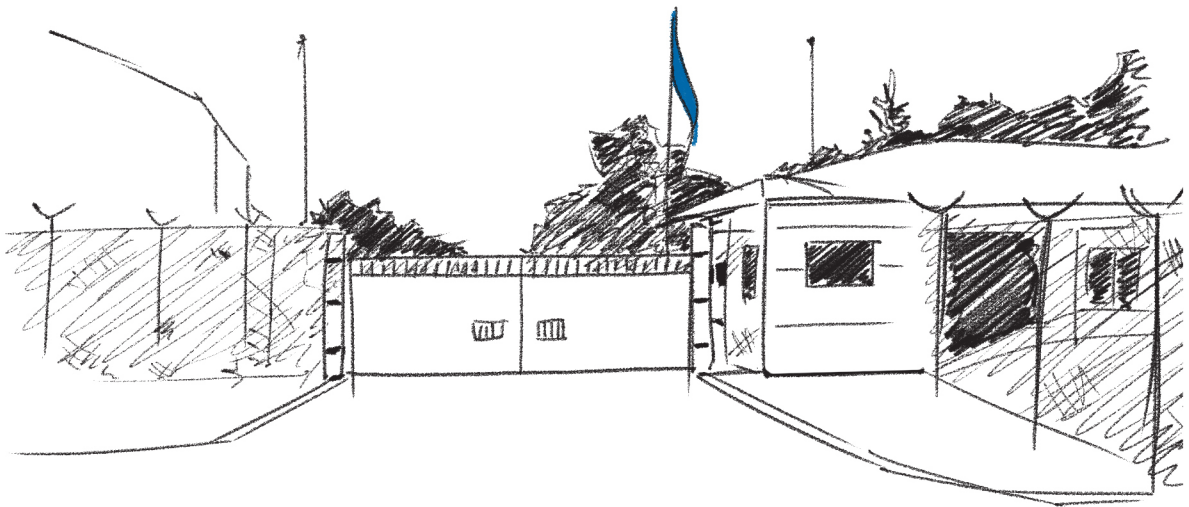
Between 1980 to 1999 the prisoners in Smrekonicë/Smrekonica prison were over 70% Albanian. While serving their sentences, the prisoners were engaged in agriculture, livestock breeding, and canal opening.

SMREKONICË/SMREKONICA PRISON

WHAT IS IT TODAY?

Since the end of 1999, Smrekonicë/Smrekonica Correctional Center has been an open prison with a capacity of 200 inmates for sentences of up to 3 years. The facilities of the Correctional Center are the same, they have only been renovated. Prisoners in Smrekonicë/Smrekonica are engaged in the cultivation of agricultural cultures.

Although there is a lot of data on the crimes and suffering caused in the premises of this prison between 1998-1999, to date there is no record that shows the events of that time.



SMREKONICA / SMREKONICA RIVER MAP



