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Fond za humanitarno pravo Kosovo  
Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo



PRISTINA

PRISTINA HOSPITAL

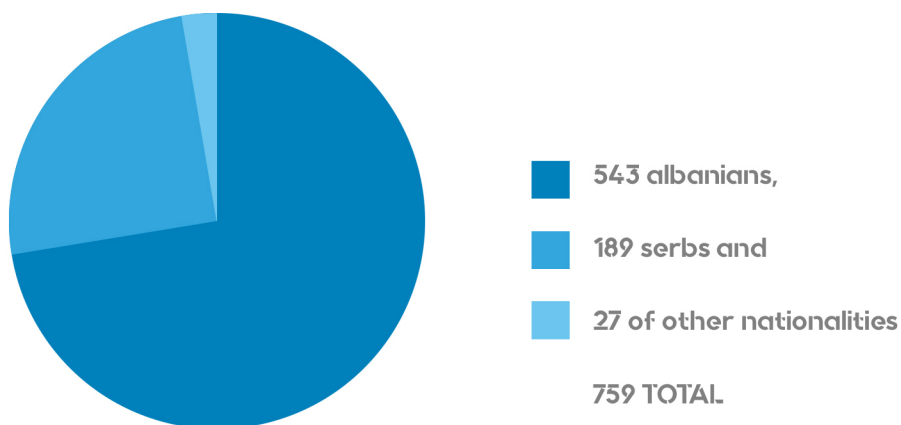


## PRISTINA HOSPITAL

### PRISTINA

The municipality of Pristina at broad had a population of 225,388 inhabitants while the city itself had about 162,800 inhabitants, of whom about 80 per-cent were Albanians. There were also approximately 20,775 Serbs and 12,568 members of non-majority communities living in Pristina.

In this municipality, throughout the years 1998 - 2000, 759 people lost their lives and/or disappeared as a consequence of the war. Of these, 543 were Albanians, 189 Serbs and 27 of other nationalities. In the city of Pristina 320 people were killed and/or went missing while the surrounding villages that suffered the most were: Koliq/Kolić, Makoc/Makovac, Grashticë/Graštica, Keqekollë/Kaçikol and Marec/Marevce.



Being it a capital city, Pristina was the administrative and institutional centre of Kosovo in which all central institutions were located. Pristina had its University since 1970, as well as the public institution of Radio Television of Pristina.



When in 1989 Kosovo's autonomy was abolished, discrimination against Albanians took on drastic proportions. Albanian-language university and high schools were closed, Albanians were expelled from their jobs in public institutions, and police repression increased. A serious consequence of these measures was the dismissal of many Albanian doctors and staff in the public health system. This forced Kosovo Albanians to respond to these measures by creating parallel, self-funded institutions in health and education.



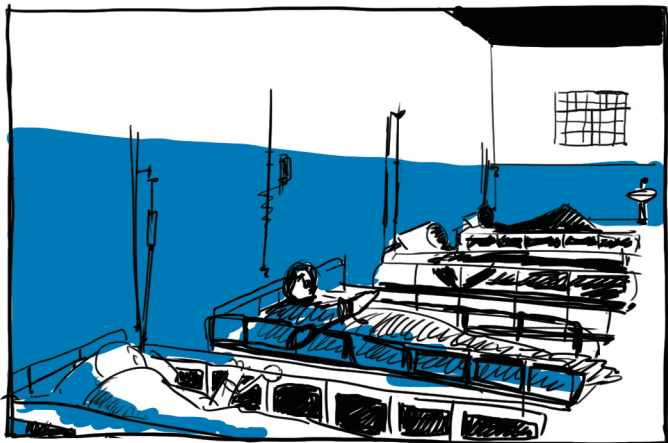
During the 1990s, many Albanians in need of non-urgent health services were treated in private clinics of the parallel system, supported by the Mother Teresa charity. However, such a system could not replace a state health program, and this was reflected in the health status of the population, where according to a report of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), during that time, maternal and child mortality of Albanians was the highest in Europe.



This already aggravated condition worsened even more by mid-1998, with the needs for medical assistance exceeding the capacities of private clinics of the parallel system. The victims of the war, which had just begun, were sent to Pristina Hospital to be treated for bodily injuries and wounds from firearms and explosive devices.



During the 1998-1999 period, cases of patients being physically abused were documented, and the most at risk were people who were coming from conflict areas, who were KLA fighters or supporters, or for whom Serbian authorities believed to be so. They were handcuffed to the bed even in cases when they were unconscious. There were cases when they were mistreated and treatment was denied to them. Pristina Hospital was constantly under police surveillance which made Albanian patients and doctors feel insecure and increased the risk of ill-treatment. Albanian doctors were also afraid, and during this period the Serbian medical staff dispersed them and did not allow more than three Albanian doctors to be together, with the idea that they might prepare some plotting.



Citizens from all over Kosovo were hospitalized in Pristina Hospital with an urgent need for intervention. In the chaos created there, the denial of proper provision of medical services was not the only violation committed against Albanian patients.

KLA members had an atrocious treatment in Pristina Hospital. During July 1998 there was a room in Vascular Surgery Department where 5 Albanians were hospitalized, three of them members of the KLA, and two others were civilians. All five were treated as terrorists, and besides being handcuffed to the bed or room radiators, the police was constantly guarding them. During their stay in the hospital, they were tortured on daily basis; mistreated by the police but also by Serb patients who were in the hospital. Health care was denied to them, they were fed little, and not provided water regularly. Yet, they would often let drinking water running into the faucet, as a form of torture. Late at night they were being beaten, their wounds were exposed and they were hit with rifle stocks, threatening to kill them. After about a month, they were released from the hospital, while some of them were sent to different prisons.

There were also cases of ill-treatment of patients suspected of having family ties to members of the KLA. Such an experience happened to a 19-year-old civilian girl. She was wounded in the abdomen by Serb forces in the village of Pllaqicë/Pločica, and due to the need for surgery she was hospitalized in Pristina Hospital, in late August 1998. Since her arrival in the hospital, she was mistreated, both by medical staff and police, on suspicion that she was a relative of a KLA soldier. She was being questioned about her family's involvement in the war and police was guarding the room in which she was placed. In addition to the physical abuse, she was denied proper medical treatment, and due to her wounds she died at the hospital, on August 5, 1998.



The overall situation in Kosovo was reflected also in the conditions in hospitals. From March 24, 1999, when the NATO air campaign began, Albanian doctors had heard that they could be held hostage by Serbs, and so a large number decided not to go to work anymore. The movements of patients were also dictated by the daily news, thus with the start of the bombing all patients who did not urgently need medical services, left the hospitals. This also happened at the Pristina Hospital; on the morning of March 25, 1999, military vehicles were parked in the hospital compound, while armed Serb soldiers and police patrolled the hospital premises, and snipers were stationed at the roof to monitor entrances and exits. This situation further exposed the violation of medical neutrality where most of the incidents at Pristina Hospital occurred after March 1999.

The trial of Nikola Šainović and others at the ICTY shows that at least one young girl was sexually assaulted in the basement of the Pristina Hospital in May 1999. During an attack by the Yugoslav Army and police in a village in Kosovo, with the aim of expelling Kosovar citizens from there, the soldiers took the young girl together with her brother, who was wounded, and brought them to Pristina. During that trip the girl was handcuffed, interrogated, threatened, beaten and sexually assaulted by one of the soldiers. While accompanying her injured brother to the Pristina Hospital, the girl was picked up and taken to one of the hospital basements, where there were 10 to 15 other women, all Albanian. She was then beaten, drugged and raped by three Yugoslav Army soldiers. The next day, she returned to the room where her brother was being treated, and stayed there until mid-June 1999, when they left the hospital. For this rape case, the court panel convicted defendants Nikola Šainović, Sreten Lukić and Nebojša Pavković.





## PRISTINA HOSPITAL

### WHAT WAS IT?

The Hospital Clinical Centre started its work in December 1958. After the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Pristina, on November 7, 1973, the Faculty merged with the Hospital of Pristina, as a United Labour Organization. From December 29, 1977, until 1991, it has operated as a working organization of the Faculty of Medicine.



## PRISTINA HOSPITAL

### WHAT IS IT TODAY?

Since June 1999, it is renamed to University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK), part of the Hospital and University Clinical Service in Kosovo (HUCSK). In addition to health activities, UCCK also offers educational and research-scientific activities. HUCSK is organized in clinics, institutes, centres, services and administrative units.

From the war until today, although there are evidences of massive human rights abuses during the period of 1998-1999, there are no records of the events of that time in the hospital premises.

# PRISTINA HOSPITAL MAP







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