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Fond za humanitarno pravo Kosovo  
Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo

PODUJEVË/PODUJEVO

# ILLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

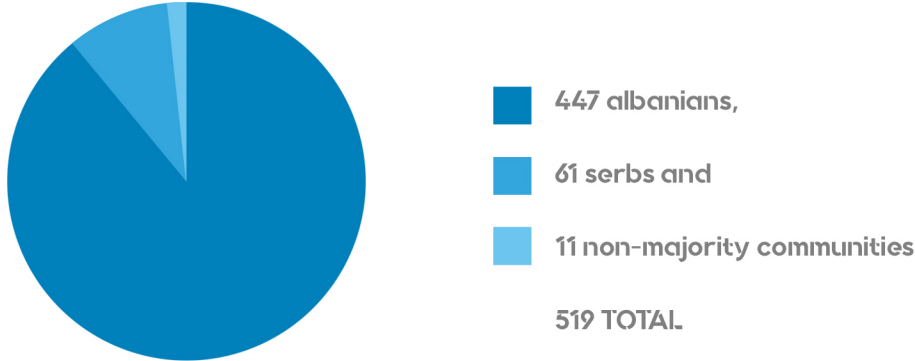


# LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

## PODUJEVË/PODUJEVO

Before the war, the city of Podujeva/Podujevo was predominantly inhabited by Albanians, while about 2.8% were Serbs and 1.4% belonged to other non-majority communities.

In the period 1998-2000, 519 people were killed and/or disappeared in the municipality of Podujeva/Podujevo, of which 447 were Albanians, 376 were civilians and 71 were members of the KLA. Also in this municipality 61 Serbs lost their lives and/or disappeared, of which 28 were civilians and 33 were from armed formations. There were also losses from other non-majority communities; a total of 11 persons lost their lives, 2 of them belonged to armed formations.



During 1998, the municipality of Podujeva/Podujevo was characterized by occasional fighting between the Serbian armed forces and the KLA. On September 15, 1998, Serbian forces shelled the village of Dobratin/Dobrotin, forcing some 400 villagers to flee their homes. While on December 20, 1998, large military and police forces arrived in Podujeva/Podujevo where there was fighting, both in the city of Podujeva/Podujevo and in the villages around, such as Obrança/Obrandë, Gllamnik/Glamnik and Llapashticë e Poshtme/Donja Lapaštica.

The situation became more tense during March 1999, especially in the city of Podujeva/Podujevo, forcing the remaining population to flee to Macedonia or seek refuge in the mountains.

One of the places that suffered the most during 1998 - 2000 was the city of Podujeva/Podujevo with about 100 dead and/or missing people, then the villages like: Lluzhan/Lužane, Dyz/Duz, Obrancë/Obrandža, Popovë/Popovo, Bradash/Bradaš, Pakashticë e Epërme/Gornja Pakaštica and so on.



On May 1, 1999, at around 12:00, over 40 people were waiting for the bus near the Besiana Hotel at a Podujeva/Podujevo crossroads, between two roads; one leading to the city and the other to Pristina.



Around 12:30, the Niš Express bus passed through, coming from the direction of Niš, and the passengers were persons in uniforms. The bus did not stop there, but continued in the direction of Podujeva/Podujevo. After a while, the same bus came back almost empty and stopped to pick up the waiting passengers. On the way to Pristina, as they were crossing the Lluzhan bridge, a NATO plane hit the bus with a projectile.





As a result of the strike, 44 people lost their lives. Among them were 31 Albanian civilians and 13 Serbs, of which 7 civilians and 6 members of the Serbian forces.

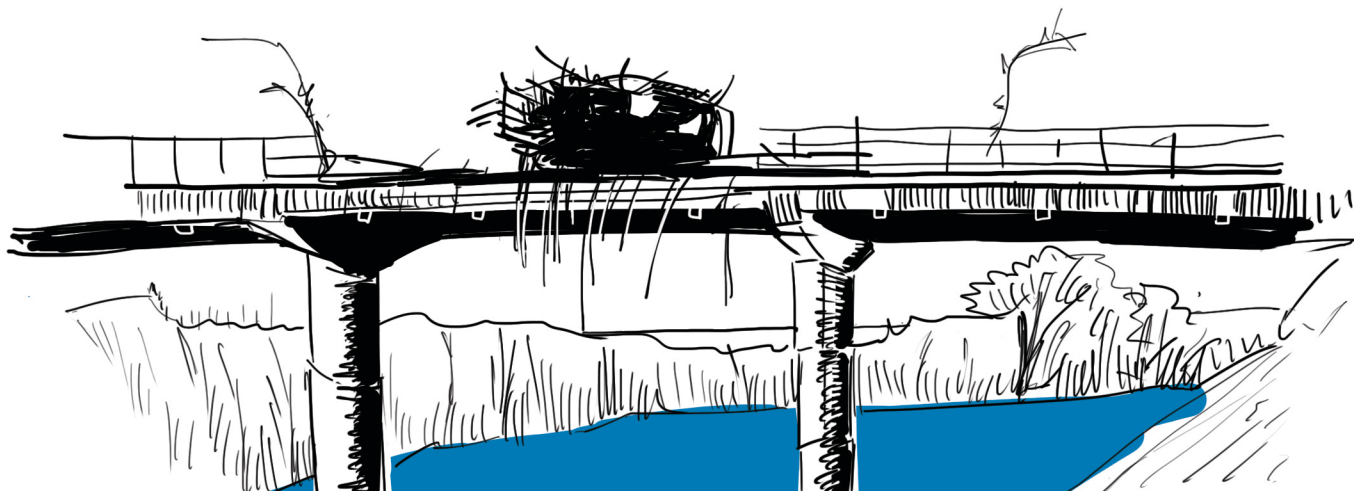
From the collision, the bus split into two parts; one fell from the bridge and the other part remained on the bridge, burnt. The survivors suffered severe burns and bodily injuries, for which they were treated at the Hospital of Pristina; one of them lost his arm, one eye and later had his leg amputated.



NATO Colonel Konard Freytag stated that NATO had claimed responsibility for the attack, arguing that unfortunately the bus, which was crossing the bridge at the time, had not been seen by the pilot, as his attention had been focused on his target, which was the bridge.

According to the findings of the HLC and the HLCK, that day on the Lluzhan/Lužane bridge, the following lost their lives:

Shefqet Ajeti (1945), Kujtim Aliu (1968), Behxhet Bulliqi (1946), Milovan Cvetic (1949), Božur Filipović (1948), Života Grujić (1964), Miroslav Ilić (1961), Vladica Ivanović (1969), Ajeta Jakupi (1958), Ibrahim Jakupi (1935), Miodrag Janković (1950), Vukosav Jelić (1950), Gani Jupolli (1932), Mehmet Jusufi (1960), Arjeta Kopalla (1985), Fatime Kopalla (1966), Fetije Kopalla (1953), Florinda Kopalla (1981), Mirjeta Kopalla (1997), Xhavit Kopalla (1984), Bojan Kostić (1973), Milana Malinić (1950), Drita Musa (1977), Fexhrije Musa (1970), Selman Musa (1973), Marija Petrović (1984), Nikola Petrović (1982), Smiljana Petrović (1933), Bexhet Podvorica (1960), Milazim Potera (1958), Nurije Potera (1967), Ibrahim Qerimi (1940), Besa Ramadani (1991), Besarta Ramadani (1993), Besnik Ramadani (1983), Bislim Ramadani (1996), Fatime Ramadani (1963), Gani Ramadani (1928), Muzafer Ramadani (1986), Rizah Ramadani (1959), Serbeze Rexhepi (1933), Halime Rrahmani (1964), Adem Uka (1947), Zoran Vukadinović (1972).



## LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

# WHAT DID IT USE TO BE?

The Lluzhan Bridge was built in the late 1960s as a bridge between the village of Lluzhan/Lužane and the village of Shakovica/Šakovica of Podujeva/Podujevo over the Llap River, which originates in the Kopaonik Mountains and flows through Podujeva/Podujevo. The bridge is an important structure, because the road artery that connects Pristina with the Podujeva/Podujevo region and further with Serbia passes over it. The damaged part as a result of the 1999 coup was repaired after the war.





## LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE

### WHAT IS IT TODAY?

Until 2021 at the Llužhan bridge there was no mark of the event that took place there, except wreaths of flowers placed on the bridge. However, on the 22nd anniversary of the tragic event, on May 1, 2021, a memorial plaque dedicated to the victims was inaugurated, erected by the Municipality of Podujeva/Podujevo. The names of 31 Albanian victims are written on the memorial plaque and the ordinal number 32, instead of the name of any victim, contained three dots. Thus, the Serb victims who also lost their lives in this event are excluded. Furthermore, the memorial plaque does not provide any explanation regarding the incident that took place on May 1, 1999. This mode of selective commemoration does not contribute to the correct narration of the event and it discriminates victims of other nationalities. Even after the HLCK's reaction, the memorial plaque remained the same, revealing a one-sided narrative. All memorial services in honor of the victims should involve all victims, regardless of their gender, race or ethnicity, in order to empower inclusive narratives.



# LLUZHAN'S BRIDGE MAP





