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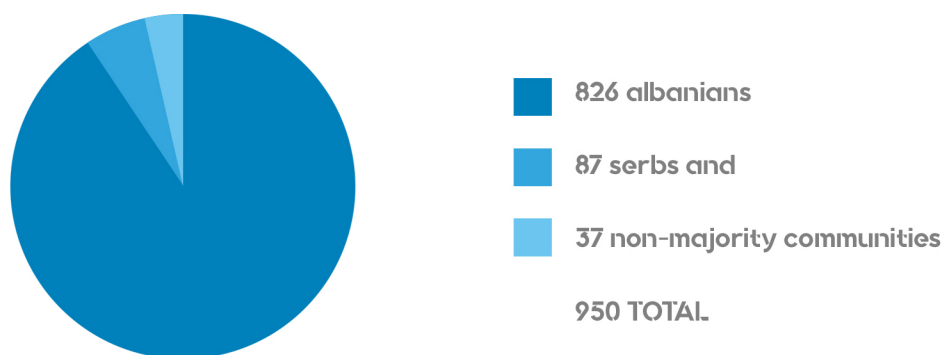
# THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE / VELIKA KRUŠA

RAHOVEC  
ORAHOVAC



## THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA RAHOVEC/ORAHOVAC

The Municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac is one of the districts of Kosovo most affected by the war during 1998-1999. During the 90ies, about 60,000 people lived there, with an Albanian majority of above 90%. In the period 1998-2000, 950 people lost their lives and/or disappeared in this municipality, of which 826 Albanians, 87 Serbs, 23 Ashkali, 9 Roma, 3 Montenegrins, 1 Turk and 1 Bosniak.

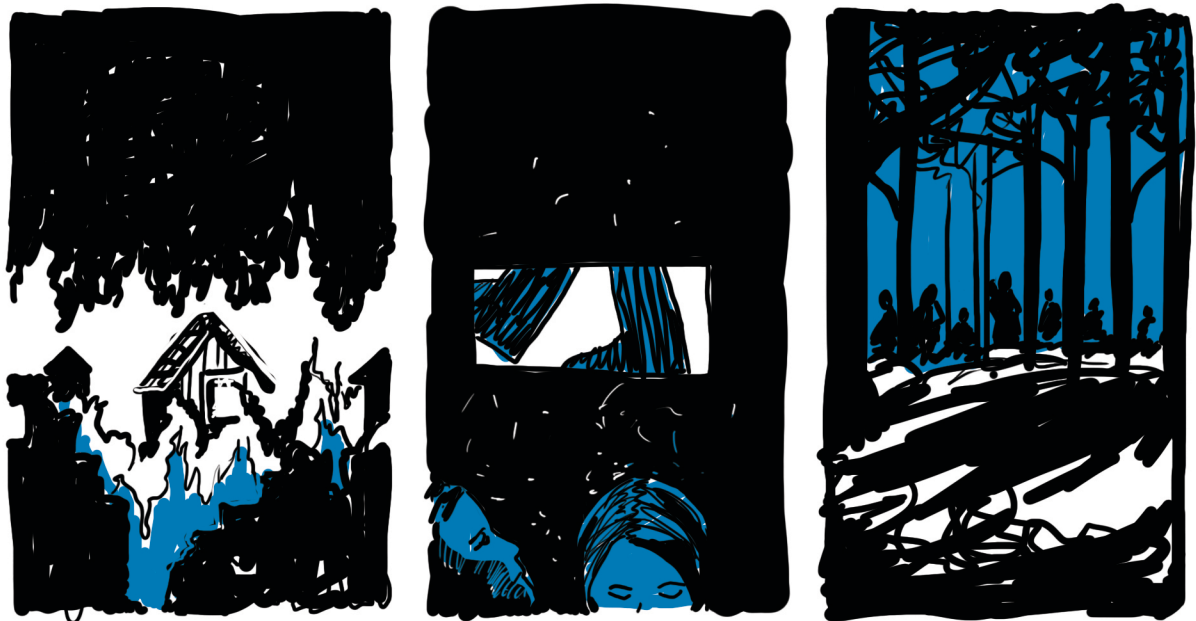


With the start of NATO bombing, attacks and persecutions of Serbian forces against Albanian population got evidently intensified. The highest number of massacres happened in this period, when also the forced displacement of the Albanian population to Albania started. The parts of the villages of Rahovec/Orahovac that border with the Municipality of Prizren where the most affected, and among them the village of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša was marked with the biggest losses in human lives, in which one of the largest massacres of the war in Kosovo happened there.

The village of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša is located in a geographical area between the Municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac and Municipality of Prizren. Before the last war in Kosovo, Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša had a population with majority Albanians, of about 2000 inhabitants, that mainly engaged in agriculture and livestock farming. The other part of the population was of Ashkali - about 20 families, and Serbs – about 4 families.

In this village, as a consequence of the war in Kosovo, 208 people lost their lives and/or disappeared, of which 194 were Albanians and 14 were Ashkali. Immediately after the start of the NATO intervention in Kosovo on March 24, 1999, throughout 3 days, the village of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša was under siege by the Yugoslav Army, Serbian police, paramilitary groups, as well as individuals from the local population that got involved in this siege.

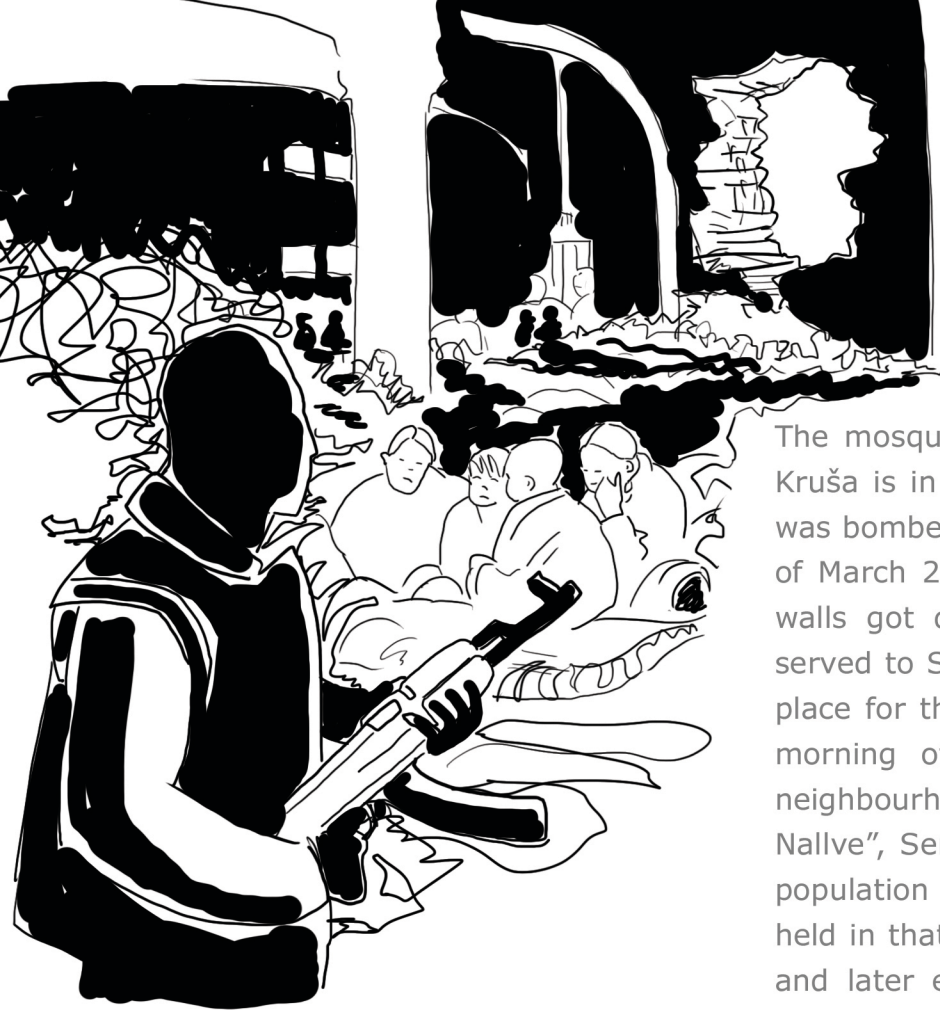
In the early morning of March 25, 1999, the village got bombarded, and the houses of its inhabitants got looted and burned by the Serbian army, police and paramilitary groups. As a consequence of these developments, the population initially got displaced in the surrounding mountains, from where it could monitor their houses being looted and burned. In the evening of March 25, a bigger



number of the population returned in the village and hid in the basements of the houses, while the other part of the population continued staying in the mountains around the village.



On March 26, Serbian forces started to gather the civilian population from different locations where they were hiding in their houses or mountains around. Men and boys were separated from the crowd, and then got mistreated in different localities, and later also executed. Most of their bodies were later burned. Women, children and the elderly were forced to leave for Albania, under the uproar of the armed Serbian forces: "Go to NATO!". One part of this population though, consisting mainly of women and children, were forced to go to the village' mosque.



The mosque in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša is in the centre of the village. It was bombed during the Serbian attacks of March 25, 1999, when a part of its walls got destroyed, and later it also served to Serbian forces as a detention place for the civilian population. In the morning of March 26, 1999, in the neighbourhood known as "Lagjia e Nallve", Serbian forces split the civilian population in two groups, men were held in that neighbourhood, got robbed and later executed, while women and children were locked inside the village mosque.

The local population inside the mosque, consisting of women and children, were robbed of all the belongings they were carrying, such as jewellery, cash, and other valuable items, and, according to the testimonies of the women that were inside, from these robbing a huge sack was filled with gold and money. Violence was applied against women that had nothing to give to Serbian forces, or in the cases when they could not remove rings from their fingers, and to a big number of these women their



ears were ripped off, while their earring being violently taken. Further, the OSCE report "Kosovo as seen, as told" mentions that members of Serbian armed forces took away by force a number of girls from the mosque, and returned them there at a later stage.

After these events, in the afternoon hours of March 26, 1999, the civilian population that was locked inside the mosque got released and forced to flee the village and go to Albania.

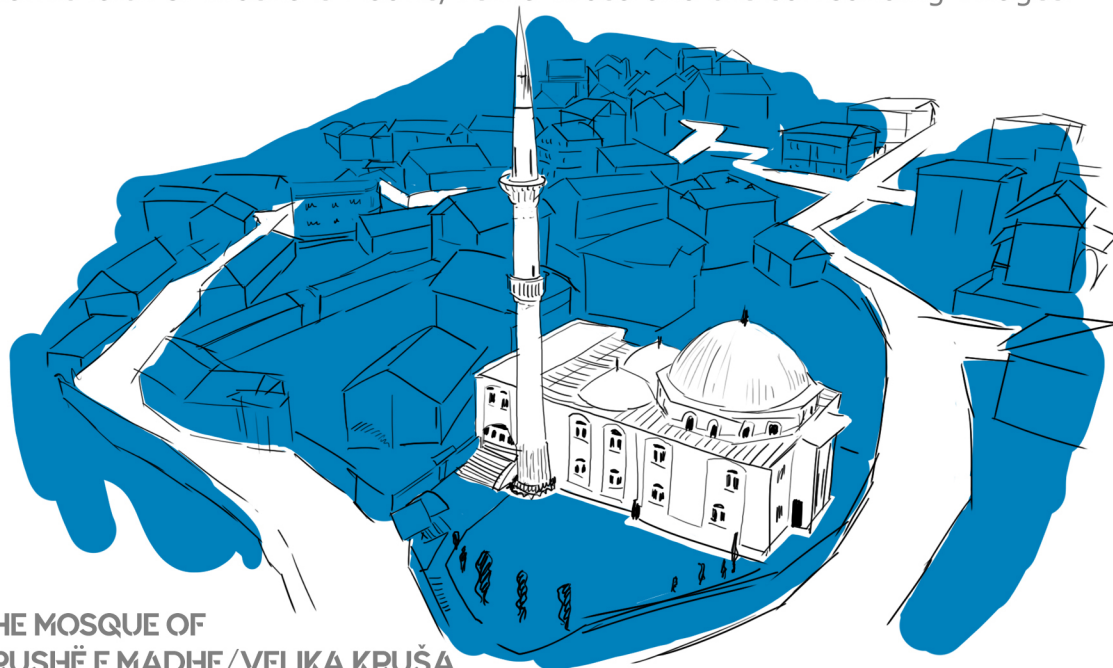
The crimes committed in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša are mentioned in the indictment against Slobodan Milošević and in the indictment against "Šainović et al" by the former International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia. The trial against Slobodan Milošević was halved due to his death during the trial. While in the trial of "Šainović et al", the trial panel treated only the point of the indictment regarding the destruction of the mosque as a cultural property and the same was rejected due to lack of direct evidence to prove how the damage was caused, and by whom. So far no one has been indicted with a final judgment about the crimes committed in this village.



## THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA

### WHAT WAS IT?

The mosque in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša was built in 1780 and rebuilt in 1974. In March 1999, it was bombed by Serbian forces and suffered heavy damage. Since its construction, the Mosque in Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša has served as a place for performing religious rites for the population of the Islamic faith of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša and the surrounding villages.



## THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA

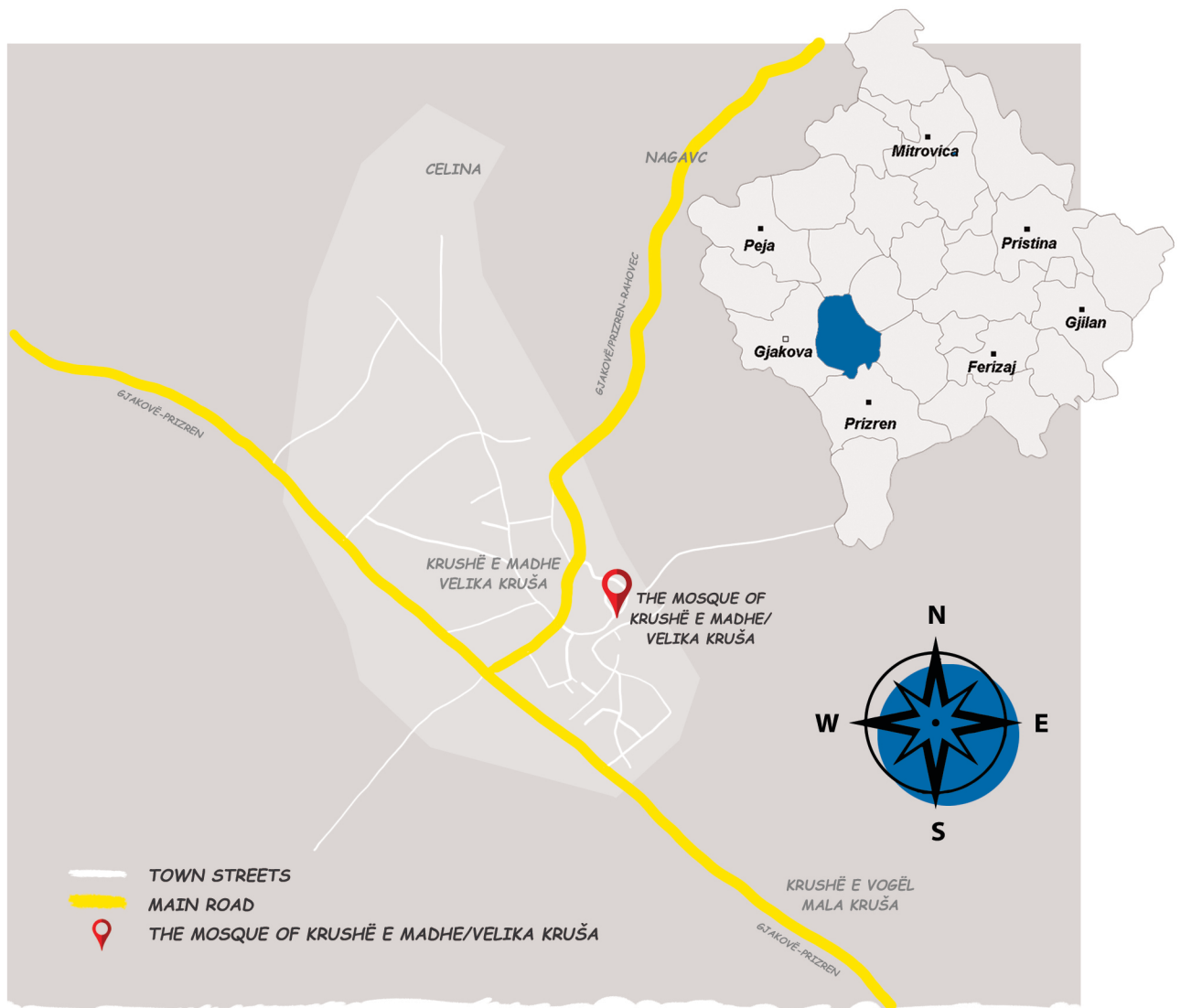
### WHAT IS IT TODAY?

After the end of the war in Kosovo, the Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša Mosque was renovated in 2001. The mosque is under the management of the Islamic Community of Kosovo and continues to serve as a place for performing religious rites for citizens of the Islamic faith. An annex is currently being built, to be used for organizing funeral ceremonies for the villagers.

Despite the data and living witnesses who were victims of abuse inside the building of the Mosque of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Kruša during the war in Kosovo - in the extent of the building of the mosque no record is placed that would tell about the events of that time.



# THE MOSQUE OF KRUSHË E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA MAP







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