
KOSOVO COMMEMORATES ANNIVERSARY OF DUBRAVA PRISON MASSACRE

23.05.2019

Balkan Transnational Justice (22 May 2019)

A memorial ceremony was held on Wednesday at Dubrava prison to mark the 20th anniversary of the mass killings between May 19 and 24, 1999, during the war in Kosovo.

More than 100 ethnic Albanian prisoners were killed and many more wounded, although the exact death toll has not yet been established.

The speaker of the Kosovo parliament, Kadri Veseli, described the killings as part of what he called a genocide by Serbian forces during the war.

Gathering all the Albanian prisoners in one place [to be killed] * is a good reflection of this genocide, Veseli said, Kosovo public broadcaster RTK reported.

During its air campaign against Slobodan Milosevics regime, NATO bombs struck the prison twice, on May 19 and 21. It was a target for the Western military alliance because Yugoslav Army and Serbian police forces were based right next to the jail.

The day after the second NATO strike, around 1,000 prisoners were assembled on the prisons sports field and Serbian police and prison guards opened fire and threw grenades at them.

In the hours that followed, prisoners who had hidden themselves in various places inside the building were also hunted down and killed, according to eyewitnesses quoted in a Human Rights Watch report.

The Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms in Kosovo, which said it filed a criminal complaint to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 2002, noted that no one has yet been convicted of the killings.

Rasim Selmanaj, who now is an MP in the Kosovo Assembly, was in the prison during the attack.

When they [Serbian forces] started shooting, I lay down. I was covered with dead bodies and I did not know if I was wounded, because I was in panic, Selmanaj told newspaper Telegrafi on Wednesday.

We know all the names and surnames [of the perpetrators] and 20 years later, nobody has been held responsible, he added.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2019/05/22/kosovo-commemorates-anniversary-of-dubrava-prison-massacre/>

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