

**MASSACRE OF CIVILIANS IN RACAK**

On 15<sup>th</sup> January the KVM reported a serious deterioration of the situation in the Stimlje area. Racak, Malopoljce, Petrova and Belince villages (south and west of Stimlje) were all affected. VJ and police forces prevented KVM patrols from entering the area but late in the afternoon a KVM patrol did get to the village of Racak. Verifiers saw one dead Albanian civilian and five injured civilians including a woman and a boy suffering from gunshot wounds. The KVM also received unconfirmed reports of other deaths in the area. Residents of Racak claimed that men had been segregated from women and children and that 20 males had been arrested and taken away. The verifiers took the details and evacuated the casualties before the onset of darkness.

The verifier's reports indicated a wholesale violation of the ceasefire by the security forces. KVM Headquarters protested this action to the FRY authorities in Pristina.

On 16<sup>th</sup> January, KVM teams, including human right verifiers went to Racak village. EU KDOM teams also sent patrols. By 1250 hours, the first confirmed reports were received of civilians having been killed.

The accounts of surviving residents said that the killing had taken place on the 15<sup>th</sup> January. They said that following VJ and police attacks, security forces had entered Racak. Some were dressed in police uniforms, others in black uniforms and balaclavas. They claimed these forces had executed some residents and detained others.

The first KVM teams to arrive in Racak on 16<sup>th</sup> January found 11 bodies in the village houses. A further 23 male victims were found on high ground behind Racak. Survivors said these victims were those reported to the KVM patrol on 15<sup>th</sup> January as having been detained by the police. Five bodies had been removed by families to Malopoljce. The remaining victims were in the vicinity of Racak.

Based on initial KVM reports the Head of Mission went to the village himself accompanied by two Deputy Heads of Mission. Having seen the site of the killings Ambassador Walker wrote the following account:

“On arrival villagers guided me to a site where I saw, much to my horror and shock, the bodies of over twenty men who had

obviously been executed where they lay. I do not have the words to describe my personal revulsion, or that of all those who were with me, at the sight of what can only be described as an unspeakable atrocity. Although I only saw the bodies of twenty, mostly elderly men - many shot at extremely close range, most shot in the front, back and top of the head - KVM verifiers moved about and counted an additional number.

In all, 45 bodies were observed, including three women and one child. They were all in civilian clothes; all looked like humble village inhabitants. Although I am not a lawyer, from what I personally saw, I do not hesitate to describe the event as a massacre, a crime against humanity. Nor do I hesitate to accuse the government security forces of responsibility.

The FRY Government must produce the names of all involved in the police and VJ operations around Stimlje. Who gave the orders, who executed those orders. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia must come in, with visas at the invitation of the FRY government, or without, to investigate this atrocity. That must be accomplished in the next 24 hours".

The facts as verified by KVM include evidence of arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings and the mutilation of unarmed civilians of Albanian ethnic origin by the VJ and police. This constitutes clear violations of both international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Furthermore, these gross violations constitute clear violations of the commitments of the FRY under the 16<sup>th</sup> October Agreement and Security Council Resolutions 1199 and 1203.

Ambassador Walker met with KLA representatives from the area. The KLA articulated their frustration and anger at the attack and expressed a desire for revenge, but said that KLA Headquarters orders were for continued restraint. The Head of Mission urged that no actions be taken. Specifically, in order to avoid an escalation in violence, he urged that nothing be done in Pristina as had earlier been indicated as a possibility.

KVM verifiers will maintain a 24-hour presence in Racak for the immediate future.

End