

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE PROSECUTION
OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMITTED IN THE TERRITORY
OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1991

WITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS INFORMATION:

Name: BERISHA Shyhrete
Last First

Nickname/Alias:

Father's name: Brahman SHALA

Address: 

Telephone: Date of Birth: 05/12/1961 Gender: Female

Ethnic Origin: Albanian Religion: Muslim

Current occupation: Unemployed Former:

Language(s) Spoken: Albanian and serbian

Language(s) Written: Albanian and serbian

Date(s) of Interview(s): ^{Saturday} Friday 15/05/1999 to ^{Monday} Sunday 17/05/1999. Tirana, Albania

Interviewer: John ZDRILIC

Interpreter: Vilma SHABANI

Language(s) Used in Interview: Albanian and English

Names of all persons present during interview(s): AS ABOVE

Signed/Initialled: SHYHRETE BERISHA



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WITNESS STATEMENT:

My name is Shyhrete BERISHA and I am 37 years old, born on the 05/12/1961 in Mushtisht, Suva Reka. I lived in Suva Reka with my husband Nexhat BERISHA 43 years old, with our two daughters Majlinda BERISHA born 26/05/1983 and Herolinda BERISHA born 26/12/1985 and our two sons Altin BERISHA born 06/01/1988 and Redon BERISHA born 23/05/1997. Our home was across the road from the headquarters of the Suva Reka police.

The house had two entrances one on the left and the other on the right hand side. I lived with my family on the left side of the house and Nexhat's nephew Faton BERISHA lived on the right hand side of the house. Faton lived there with his mother Fatime BERISHA 48 years old, his sister Sherine BERISHA born 02/1982, his wife Sebahate BERISHA 25 years old and their two sons Ismet BERISHA born 09/09/1996 and Eron BERISHA 10 months old born 1998.

In 1998 the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) came to the Suva Reka area. They stayed in and worked from the Boss Hotel in Shiroko, Suva Reka that is less than 3 kilometers from where we lived. Late in 1998 the OSCE approached my husband and Faton, asking if they would be interested in renting the house to them. They agreed and the OSCE rented our homes.

The OSCE used our side of the house as their headquarters and operations room while they used Faton's house as sleeping quarters for three staff. The boss was called Rufus and there was a lot of staff that worked there including a number of security guards that were local staff. They moved into our house on the 26/12/1998 and my daughters and my husband would go there three times a week to clean the house. Our house was only one of a number of houses in the Suva Reka area used by the OSCE but my house was the only used as an office. Our family moved in with my parents in Mushtisht, which is about 9 kilometers away and Faton moved his family to his uncles.

The OSCE evacuated from the area of Suva Reka on the 20/03/1999. They took some computers and other things but they also locked two rooms on the second floor, which they were using, as offices and they did not leave the keys behind. The OSCE had paid the rent in advance for the month of March and they also paid the security guards in advance to guard the house but I am not sure to when the guards were paid exactly.

My husband went to the house and he later told me that the security guards were there. Although the security guards were supposed to guard the house around the clock they told my husband that they were afraid. The security guards left the house at 3pm. My husband remained there until 10pm and then he went to the right of the house and slept in Faton's house. The OSCE had moved out of the sleeping quarters about 3 weeks earlier so Faton and his family had already moved back.

About 12pm on Sunday the 21/03/1999 my husband called me on the telephone to come back to our house with the children. My father Brahman SHALA drove us to the house in his car. On the way we drove past the Balkan Hotel which is the hotel where serbian refugees from

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Bosnia stay and the police were out the front of there all the time. I told my father that I thought a police car was following us and he drove slower to see if that was the case and the police car also drove slower. I remember thinking that the police might think that it was my husband driving because he had been using my father's car for the last three months. I can't really explain it, I just felt fear because while the OSCE were in the area the serbian police were not so bad but now it was different since they had left. We all knew that the serbian hated the verifiers from the OSCE.

My father dropped us all off in the courtyard of our place and drove home. He later told me that the same police car followed him till the village of Shiroko which is the first village out of Suva Reka. He told me that they shot at the car but he would be able to explain what happened better than I would. We went to Faton's side of the house for 1 to 2 hours and then my daughters and I went to our house and started cleaning. There was a guard out the front of the house who was an Albanian gypsy called "Zeqa" and he told me not to be afraid if the police come to the house because they had already been twice that day. He said that the police were only concerned as to whether we were being bothered by the KLA. I just think the police came to the house to find out if we had moved back to the house. The police didn't come that day.

On that day or the next day, I am not sure when, one of the security guards employed by the OSCE, spoke with my husband. He is the brother of the man they called "MISKOVIC" who was the owner of the Boss Hotel, in Suva Reka. The guard asked my husband where the OSCE photocopier was and he told him that he had moved it so that the kids would not play with it. My husband had moved it to the basement of Faton's house. This was a strange question for a security guard to ask.

We cleaned the house and took the curtains down to wash them because we wanted to move back in soon. We were staying with Faton and his family and everyday we would continue cleaning. On Wednesday the 24/03/1999 we heard that the serbians had entered the house of Murat SUKA and stole the personal belongings left by OSCE verifiers which had been staying at SUKA's house before the evacuation. I told my husband that I was scared because I thought that the serbian police would come to our house.

During Wednesday there was a lot of movement of serbian police and serbian vehicles. My husband and I were sleeping in the front room of Faton's house and I woke a number of times throughout the night and saw that there was a lot of serbian police and serbian military movement. Throughout the day and night I saw tanks, buses full of policeman, "Pitzgauers" and military vehicles. Some of the tanks were a straight green colour and some of the tanks were camouflage green. This was the case with the "Pitzgauers" and the other military vehicles. They were going all night. During the day a bus full of men drove past and they had red headbands around their head. My children were with me and I remember my son Altin saying that he thought they looked like "Ninja's". I think they were wearing camouflage green or camouflage dark blue. I remember seeing a black jeep with no registration plates and darkened windows. I remember people were saying that the men in these jeeps were called the "Black Hand."

Whenever this convoy would stop during the day I noticed that the men with the red headbands on would be making lots of noise and standing in the bus and things like this.

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There were other buses of what looked like soldiers who seemed to sit there looking very serious and much calmer.

During the first serbian military offensive on the area of Suva Reka which was in July 1998, I remember seeing about two hundred serbian men near the house. At the time there were villages in the Suva Reka area burning and some of these men later burned houses in the area where I live. I remember some of the men had black and red headbands around their heads and camouflage uniforms. I think the colour was green. They were drinking from bottles and yelling and making noises like cows.

About 5am on Thursday the 25/03/1999 there was a knock at the front door and I got out of bed and opened the door. There was three serbian policemen standing at the door and they were pointing their automatic weapons at my chest. There was a very tall policeman who seemed to be in charge because he was doing all the talking. They were wearing camouflage green uniform with a plain white patch on their left shoulder. There may have been a red/blue symbol somewhere on the patch but I can't remember. If I saw it again I would recognise it. I do not think these police were from Suva Reka because I did not recognise them. One of the police was wearing black gloves.


The tall policemen was poking my chest with the end of his weapon and yelling at me in serbian, "Where are your guests? Where are the Americans? Where is NATO?" He was acting very aggressively and swearing a lot. Then he asked me where my husband was and told me to call him immediately. My husband came to the door and the police took him outside and they walked towards our house. They told me not to move and not to leave the house. I saw that there was a large tank parked about 20 meters away pointing straight at the house.

They went to our house and my husband later told me that they checked all the draws and cupboards and found some photos taken by the OSCE of burnt houses. My husband told me that they started to yell at him about the Albanians calling America to defend them. The police could not open the locked doors of the OSCE offices upstairs so they kicked the doors in. When they broke one of the doors they found some body armour and helmets in the room and so they then started to beat my husband with their guns and with chairs. The police were swearing and screaming at my husband and they were hitting him as hard as they could. I could hear the police from where I was and my husband later told me what had happened.

While my husband was being assaulted one of the police came to Faton's house and started searching through draws and cupboards. He asked if we had anything there but I told him that there was only children's clothing. After a while he was leaving when near one of the doors he found Sebahate's bag, which he searched and found her wallet and medical supplies for the children. He took these things and saw that there was nothing in the wallet so he threw it and the medicines on the stairs. He called me over and we went down to the basement. He told me that my husband's life was in danger and he asked me if I had any of "these". He was indicating with rubbing fingers that he was talking about money. I knew that he was talking about money and I went and got 1000 deutsche marks (DM) from Sebahate and gave it to him. He was asking for more but I said that we do not have any more so he left the house.

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After he left, I stood at the front door looking for my husband, to see what they were going to do to him. A short policeman who I had not seen before was standing there with his shirt open and I saw that he had strapped across his chest about five or six knives in a line. I did not know him but if I saw his face again I would recognise him. He started to run towards me saying in serbian, "Let me see this woman who is beautiful." He said this in a provocative way. The policeman with the knives was running towards me and I ran to get away. The policeman who I gave the money to ran after him and grabbed his arm. Two more steps and he would have caught me. The policeman who got the money said to the policeman with the knives, "Zarko. Zarko. Come over here." He pulled him by the arm and they went to our side of the house were my husband was still.

I remember all the police except for the tall one (who seemed more normal), seemed to move their eyes in a strange way like they were the devil or something. It was like they had taken some stimulate or something because a human being would not act that way.

I sat down for a while because I was really scared and then I went back and stood at the front door. I saw that the tank was still there and there was now a truck in the courtyard. Police were loading things into the truck from our house. The police stole a lot of valuable equipment like televisions, computers and the heater, everything they could carry. While I was watching, one of the police motioned for me to go inside. I went upstairs with the children who were crying. They were very afraid and they were saying, "Mum, they are going to kill our father."

My sister-in-law, Fatime and I went towards the front door when we saw the first three police with my husband walking back towards Faton's house. The policeman with black gloves on hit my husband with the back of his automatic weapon in the back and he fell to the ground near the door. This policeman then kicked him. My husband stood slowly and they walked into the house. I could see that my husband had been beaten and his face was all black.

The tall policeman told us all to sit down and he said in serbian, "Give us money, otherwise we will kill you and burn your house with your children. See the tank, we'll blow your house into the air." At that point I remember hearing the children upstairs crying. My husband said to me that they wanted money, and that they thought we had a lot because the OSCE had been there. My husband said that they want money otherwise they will kill us all.

Fatime had some money on her chest and she tried to pull some notes out but the policeman with the black gloves put his hands on her chest and grabbed all the money. I remember the policeman with black gloves say in serbian something like, "Wait. Wait. I'll get the money." In my opinion he was not serbian because he seemed to have trouble speaking serbian. He seemed to be Russian. I used to be able to speak Russian but I have since forgotten most of it.

I had 3000 DM on my chest and I gave it to the policeman with the black gloves because I was so scared he would want to undress me. He counted the money and said to the tall policeman in bad serbian, "Hay chief, come and look at this." I think there was about 50,000 DM all together. The tall policeman then told Fatime to stay there and told my husband and I to go upstairs. We went upstairs and Fatime told me later that the policemen went to the

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basement and took the photocopy machine and some other things. They left and I saw all the police in the courtyard were throwing OSCE papers into the air so that the courtyard was covered with white paper. I think there was least 15 police there all together and I remember thinking that they were all quite young, between 18 to 30 years except for the policeman with the black gloves who was a bit older and the most aggressive. They were yelling out in serbian things like, "Now NATO will come and save you." and "Now, daddy Clinton can come and save you."

I did not know any of the policeman other than the ones I have mentioned and a blond policeman who worked at the Mushtisht police station. My father, Rrahman SHALA, knows his name because he lives in Mushtisht. I know my oldest daughter knew that policeman as well because she told me that he was the policeman that used to catch her bus everyday. I think I would recognise the others if I saw them again. They finally left about 6.30am to 7am but it felt like they had been there much longer.

We were all afraid to stay in our house so we went to my husband's uncle, Vesel BERISHA's house, which is about 30m behind our houses. We wanted to escape but throughout the night we heard gunshots and we were too afraid to leave the house. We became so scared because we realised the situation we were in. We felt trapped and all we wanted to do was get out of there and go to another area. In the house was my whole family, all the people from Faton's house and the following people I will also list. So all together there was myself and the following people;

Nexhat BERISHA 43 years old, my husband,
 Majlinda BERISHA born 26/05/1983, our daughter,
 Herolinda BERISHA born 26/12/1985, our daughter,
 Altin BERISHA born 06/01/1988, our son,
 Redon BERISHA born 23/05/1997, our son,
 Faton BERISHA about 27 years old, my husband's nephew,
 Fatime BERISHA 48 years old, Faton's mother,
 Sherine BERISHA born 02/1982, Faton's sister
 Sebahate BERISHA 25 years old, Faton's wife,
 Ismet BERISHA born 09/09/1996, Faton's son,
 Eron BERISHA 10 months old born 1998, Faton's son,
 Hava BERISHA 60 years old, Vesel's wife,
 Sedat BERISHA 44 years old, Vesel's son,
 Bujar BERISHA 40 years old, Vesel's son,
 Nexhmedin BERISHA 37 years old, Vesel's son,
 Flora BERISHA 38 years old, Bujar's wife,
 Lirije BERISHA 24 years old, Nexhmedin's wife who was 8 months pregnant,
 Vjollca BERISHA 37 years old, Sedat's wife,
 Dafina BERISHA 16 years old, Sedat's daughter,
 Drilon BERISHA 14 years old, Sedat's son,
 Gramoz BERISHA 9 years old, Sedat's son,
 Vlorjan BERISHA 17 years old, Bujan's son,
 Edon BERISHA 14 years old, Bujan's son, and
 Dorentina BERISHA 4 years old, Bujan's daughter.

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The landlord of the house, Vesel BERISHA decided to stay in town and so did not spend the night in the house. We were going to join him but the shooting throughout the night prevented us from leaving. Only three people that slept in the house that night survived what was about to happen.

In the morning we saw that two tanks had parked above the house and both guns were pointing directly at Vesel's house.

About 12.20pm on Friday the 26/03/1999 I saw a large number of people leave the police station from across the road. I remember the time because I asked Sedat and he told me 12.20pm from his watch. There was about 30 of them, some were in civilian clothes and some were wearing police uniforms. The police wore either dark blue camouflage uniforms or camouflage green uniforms. There were also some men that looked like paramilitary reservists. The paramilitary were dressed in dark blue camouflage uniform. All the men wearing uniform were wearing hats the same colour as their uniforms. They were all carrying automatic weapons. They ran in an aggressive combat stance holding their guns out in front of them to Ismet KUCI's house and they were screaming things out. I remember Sedat's son, Drilon said to his father, "Look there is Zoran in the group, the fat one." Sedat looked out the window and he said, "They are all from Suva Reka. Zoran is there with his two brothers." Everybody, man, woman and child became very afraid. I was about to faint so Sedat gave me a tranquilliser to calm me down. It may have been this that saved my life. They ran into Ismet KUCI's house but I was pretty sure that the house was empty.

Faton's mother Fatima told us that there was police at our house and she was going over there to open the door. She left and I saw her go in the back door of the house and go inside. A short time later I heard about 3 gun shots and Sebahate and I started to scream because we thought that Fatima had been shot. I looked and I could see the flames coming out of our house. I went and checked on my son Redon who was sleeping.

The next thing I remember I heard a serbian man yelling out in Albanian, "Bujar, where are you?" I recognised the voice as being a serbian man called Zoran. This is the man that Drilon and Sedat were talking about. Zoran spoke very good Albanian and he used to drive the Albanian bus. I think his surname was something similar to "POPOVIC". His father's name was Laza and his mother's name was Vera. I knew his mother quite well, she is tall has blond hair and is a big woman and she was often call "Vera of Laza". Zoran lived in an apartment in Suva Reka.

I remember an incident that my husband told me about where all the serbian women of Suva Reka walked down the main street carrying automatic weapons in protest for the killing of three serbian policeman. It was January or February 1999. Vera broke the window of an OSCE vehicle and climbed onto the roof. The driver of the vehicle who was a German man by the name Jimmy or Frank, I am not which one, drove off and Vera fell off the car breaking her nose. Jimmy used to sleep at uncle Vesel's house.

Zoran then yelled out in serbian, "Where do you have your Americans? Get out here." He was screaming and swearing. First, Bujar's mother Hava walked outside to speak to Zoran. All the men and children went down into the basement of the house. I was heading towards

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the front door and I heard Zoran scream out in serbian, "Where is Bujar? Get him out here now." He kept screaming this and swearing in serbian.

Sedat and all the other men in the basement were saying we have no other way other than to get out because they will burn us alive in this house. Hava came into the house because they were telling her go away and Bujar walked outside and asked Zoran in Albanian, "What do you want?" We were still coming out and I was looking for my children and everyone was saying, "Hurry, hurry." I heard two gunshots and Bujar's wife Flora cried out, "They just shot my Bujar." It was worse than the movies. Everybody was running for the back door and there was a lot of confusion. We were all barefoot as there was no time to put shoes on.

We ran out the back and towards our house, I saw that we were surrounded by police, civilians and gypsies everywhere. There were a lot more than the 30 that ran to Ismet KUCI's house. They stopped the men. I recognised the man who stopped my husband Nexhat was the man called "MISCOVIC", the owner of the Boss Hotel. He was wearing an all black uniform. He is short, fat and has a moustache. He was standing at the front door of our house.

One of the policemen grabbed Faton by the hand and Faton's mother Fatima was trying to stand between the policeman and Faton. The same thing happened when they grabbed Nexhmedin, his wife Lirije, who is pregnant tried to step between them. Sedat started to run but the police chased him but I did not look anymore to that side. I heard "MISKOVIC" yell to Nexhat, "Let NATO or the Americans come now and save you."

I was on the street and I could see what was going on. "MISCOVIC" and Zoran seem to be the men in control. I remember the two brothers of "MISCOVIC" were there, one of them was the security guard for the OSCE which asked about the photocopier and the other brother I think worked in the auto school, I am not sure.

I remember seeing an empty yellow truck parked out the front of our house and on the ground in front of the truck was the body of a large man laying face down. The body had a khaki coloured pullover on and I do not know who that was. There was gypsies standing around the truck in civilian clothes.

At that moment, I was holding my eldest son Altin by the hand and my daughter Majlinda was carrying my youngest son Redon. I heard "MISCOVIC" say to Nexhat, "Raise your hands in the air." When he did, "MISCOVIC" shot him in the back three times. I think it may have been with a pistol but I am not sure. My daughter Majlinda screamed out very loudly, "Daddy." Because my children they loved my husband even more than they loved me. At that moment I remember Nexhmedin and his wife Lirije started to run when they saw what had happened to my husband Nexhat. Nexhmedin was pulling his wife by the hand and one of the civilians was yelling out in serbian, "Shoot. What are you waiting for?"

I later heard that the brothers Agron BERISHA and Bardhyl BERISHA saw the whole thing happen from their house. They had been locked in their house by the police. It is very close to the house, only about three meters away. I heard this from Reshat BERISHA and also from Bardhyl wife's sister, Shasena ZHURI who came and saw me in a village in Kosovo when I was recovering from my wounds.

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At that moment the shooting started without stopping and there was a lot of confusion. We started to run in all directions. Majlinda with my two sons went one way and I went another way. We stopped at the place, which used to be an Albanian coffee shop and there we found three other BERISHA families. They were the families of my husband's cousins. I recognised them all but I am not sure about their names. They were standing in front of that coffee shop which is about 70 meters from my house. The women and children from our house were there and within a minute Majlinda and my two sons arrived from another direction. I saw that Altin was bleeding and I asked him what happened. He told me that they shot him in the hand and leg but not to worry. The serbians were shooting at my children while they were running away. His heart was beating so fast and his face was all pale.

Bujar's son Florijan said to his mother Flora, "Mum did you see how they killed daddy?" Flora said to him "What can we do? I hope that I will have you at least." At that moment Lirije, Nexhmedin's wife arrived. She said to me, "Come because uncle Nexhat is calling for you to help." She was referring to Nexhat, my husband. Then she said to Hava, "Come because Nexhmedin is almost dying." She told us that when she was running away with her husband Nexhmedin, they shot him and he fell to the ground. She said that she pretended to be dead and then later ran away. At that moment I said to Lirije, "I can not come because they will kill me and I can not let my children be without a father and mother as well."

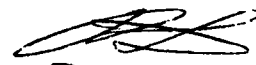
Lirije and Hava went to go and help the wounded men but the police had arrived and screamed at us in serbian to go inside. I did not see them because I was behind the crowd but I am pretty sure it was Zoran's voice that was screaming and swearing at us. He said, "There will be no Albanians alive. We will eliminate them." We went inside and sat down when they walked in and started shooting us. It did not stop. I don't know how many were shooting but it did not stop. I did not hear the children screaming at all. I was near the back of the group and there was a table in front of me and my son Altin was near me. I was shot in the right shoulder and I fell to the ground. When they had finished shooting they walked outside and I could hear them speaking but I could not tell what they were saying. Some of the people were still alive, not even wounded. I don't know how they survived. There was about 40 to 50 people there, mostly women and children, there was only four men. In the mean time Vjollca was lying in front of me with her youngest son Gramoz. Hava and Edon were lying near Vjollca. They were all still alive. Hava was moaning.

Edon said to Vjollca, "They killed mum and Dorentina." Drilon wasn't wounded either and he said to his mother Vjollca, "Dafina was sitting and they killed her." Vjollca said to me, "Shyhrete look at my Dafina, how she is moaning." When I looked behind I saw her lying on her back moaning. She was a very tall girl. My children Majlinda and Redon were not wounded and neither was Sebahate, or her sons Ismet and Eron.

At that moment Redon was saying to Majlinda, "I want to go to mum." I was lying with my legs between Sebahate and Majlinda. I took Redon from Majlinda and I took a bottle of milk, which I had in my trousers, and I gave it to Redon. After I gave him the milk Majlinda took Redon and said that she would look after him and I look after Altin. Majlinda then said, "Mum look how they killed Herolinda." When I looked Herolinda was lying face down and I

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could see five to six bullet exit wounds. She was very healthy and I could see the flesh sticking out.

They must have heard us speaking because they came to the door and threw something like a handgrenade into the room. I can not remember any explosion but I turned to look at my children. I saw my son Redon was sitting there with blood all over him and he was still holding his bottle of milk. I saw Majlinda and half her head was missing. I saw Sebahate and half her head was missing as well. I only remember hearing Majlinda and Sebahate once say, "Oof." I slowly touched my youngest son Redon with my feet but he was dead. From the door they were throwing something and they were precise because they were hitting the heads. They did not come in they remained at the door. The two children of Sebahate, Ismet and Eron were still alive, they were crying. Ismet the 3 year old was crying and calling out everybody's name and asking for water. He was saying, "Mum my leg is hurting."

After throwing those things the serbians moved away from the doorway. I was lying head to head with the engineer Hajdin BERISHA and his wife who we called "Lika". They did not have any children. They told me that they were not wounded. I asked "Lika" to place Eron between my legs because I could not move right arm and I wanted to protect him. She placed him in between my legs and I think that Ismet had died because I could not hear him anymore. I saw Eron's hand was half gone and there was flesh hanging off it.

I heard the serbians talking and one of them said something about placing our bodies into a truck. Vjollca and Altin's heads were close to mind and I told them that they were going to place us into a truck and that they should not move and act dead. Vjollca was wounded in the leg. Then the serbians came again. They hit Eron with that thing they were throwing. It hit me in the right thigh and went straight through my leg and hit Eron. Eron did not move anymore, I think he died as soon as he was hit. I don't know what they were throwing but as soon as they hit someone they died.

I later realised that I had been hit in the stomach as well but I did not realise it at the time. I know when I was in the Italian camp in Kukas they removed sharnapel from my stomach and took photographs of it and said that it was from a grenade.

They walked into the room and started to load the bodies onto a truck and I remember that I could still hear people moaning. The engineer lifted his head and said to them in serbian, "Please, I will give you as much money as you want, because my wife and I are the only survivors of our family." I felt "Lika's" body jump like she had been hit by one those things they were throwing. I heard her moan and I did not hear either of them again. Why should they let them live, they took the money and now they were taking the spirit?

They got Altin and dragged his body along the ground and one of them said he is still breathing and I think they threw one of those grenade things. I heard him make one sound and that was it. They dragged my body by the leg and by the arm while I kept my eyes closed and mouth slightly open so I could breath. I remember that while they were dragging my body one of the men say in serbian, "Fuck life. What kind of life is this? I can't handle this anymore." The other one that was dragging me was just saying, "Hurry, hurry. We have got to clean this place." I did not recognise their voices.

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They placed my body on a stretcher and removed two gold chins from around my neck by finding the latch and unlocking them. They threw my body onto the back of the truck. I wanted to scream, "You fascists. You chetnicks. I am still alive. Hit me one more time." But I was not ready to give up.

I landed on a number of bodies and I noticed that the body of Sebahate was underneath me and above me they threw my oldest daughter Majlinda. When they had finished they pulled the curtain of the truck shut and the truck started to move. I couldn't breathe from the smell of the blood and bodies. When I looked I saw the body of my son Altin and called out to him to see if he was alive but then I saw that his head was divided. His eyes and mouth were open.

At that moment Vjollca must have heard me and raised her head and said, "Shyhrete, are you still alive?" I replied that I was still alive but that they had killed my Altin. I asked if Gramoz was still alive and she answered, "Yes." She said, "Poor us. There is nothing left to lose for us. They killed everybody." After a while the truck stopped and I heard a woman voice say, "My son, did you finish the business?" He replied, "Yes." She said, "Have a nice trip." The voice sounded familiar and I think it was "Vera of Laza", the mother of Zoran. I mentioned her earlier when she broke her nose. When the truck started moving again Vjollca said, "Did you hear that? That was Vera, the wife of Laza." Vjollca knew her very well because they grew up in Suva Reka together. The male who said, "Yes" sounded like Zoran. I am not sure because I was very angry and upset but I think it was him.

My father told me that a day after a serbian from Mushtisht was telling people about what the serbians did to the Albanians from Suva Reka. I am not certain about this conversation but I father could tell you better.

I looked for my husband in the truck but I could not see him and I said to Vjollca, "Maybe Nexhat is still alive." I suggested to her that we jump from the truck. She said, "No we shouldn't jump because the truck is going to fast but when they bury us we should escape form the dirt." I said, "If they bury us, all the these bodies will be above us and then they will place dirt on top and there is no way that we will be able to get out." I found my daughter Herolinda near the back of the truck lying near the edge and facing her was a topless lady and all I could see was that she had red underwear on. I could not see this ladies head or legs because of the other bodies on her.

Vjollca asked me how we should jump from the truck. I told her not from the sides because they would see us in the mirrors but from the back. There was a rip in the truck curtain at the back so I checked to see if there was anyone following the truck. I was so injured that I did not think about it, I just jumped. I injured my forehead in the fall. I later realised that I had jumped out in the village of Malsia E Re and I was on the main road from Suva Reka to Prizren.

An old man I later met in Kukas told me that he had seen me fall from the truck and he told two young men to run over and place me into a car. I could hear them saying in Albanian, "She is wounded. She is wounded." They drove me to a house nearby and placed me in the courtyard of the house and a woman placed a blanket over me. These three men spoke to my

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brother-in-law, Xhelal BERISHA in the camp at Kukas. I recognised the woman as being someone that I grew up with in the village of Mushtisht, but I can not remember her name.

The young men drove me to another village called Grejkoc where I received medical treatment. I felt very cold like a fever. The doctor was from the village of Dushanova but I do not know his name. A drip was placed in my arm. Later two cars of KLA soldiers arrived and they transferred me to the village of Budakova. The doctor who treated me there recognised me because we used to catch the same bus. The doctor asked who was responsible for my injuries and I told him, "Look what the serbians did to me. Not only me, but they killed all my children." This doctor stitched my arm and eyebrow. He treated my wounds and there were twelve on my body. While I was here I met up with my father and mother.

My injuries are as follows; a bullet wound to the right shoulder, grenade shrapnel in my stomach which was surgically removed but I think there is more there, grenade shrapnel went through my right thigh, and nine other lighter wounds on my legs and one on my back. There are a lot of pieces of grenade shrapnel all over my back that is still there. Stitches to my right eyebrow.

When the soldiers picked me up in Grejkoc, I asked them if they would follow the truck I rolled off and find out where they bury the bodies of my family. Five days later a soldier came and told me that there were two mass graves in the area of Ljubizhda and that the soldiers had marked the graves. I recently found out that my father knows about the graves but he did not know that I also knew.

I lived in the Kosovo area for the next month and a half and I finally crossed the Albanian border at Morina on a Tuesday in May but I can't remember the date.

Many terrible things happened to me during this month and a half. Life was very difficult and there was very little food. We moved around a lot to avoid the constant shelling and we were always surrounded.

I remember a particular day when I had to walk a lot and I was very ill. We were at a river called the Small River of Vraniq and it was raining all day. We stayed there all day and in the evening we went to a house. The next day we got into tractors and went to a river near the village of Buzhala. We stayed there for about two weeks and we experienced some very bad days. We were often shelled and I remember a 16 year old girl died of fear. I remember some babies died in that place as well. My uncle's (Avdyl) daughter Vjollca KOLLGECI went crazy at that place. She is twenty years and now lives in Albania with her father but there is nothing left of her.

I had another very difficult day, it was the day we intended to cross over to Albania. The men decided to surrender to the serbians and they placed a white sheet across the front of the tractor. So we went past the villages of Buzhala, Vraniq and arrived in Bukosh where the serbian police that were at the school in the village came out and stopped us. There was a lot of shooting and shelling going on around us. There was a lot of confusion and the police were yelling and I almost had a heart attack. I could not stand it any more and my heart was racing. People were pouring water on me and that day was a very hard day for me. It was as

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hard as the day that they killed my children. Then one of the policemen approached the tractor and asked what we were doing here. My mother was hiding my face so that they would not recognise me. My mother recognised the policeman as being the doctor from Mushtisht, with a policeman's uniform on.

They started to scream at us and they were demanding money and gold. They screamed at the men asking where the KLA was. They took my uncle Isuf KOLGECI who was driving the tractor together with some of his friends. They also took some young men and women and they took them into the school. There was a lot of shooting coming from the school. We thought they had killed them. My father was the driver of tractor behind ours. A policeman grabbed my father by the arm and asked for money but my father told him that he did not have any because he was retired. In the tractor my father was driving there was a young bride Zelfije KOLGEC who had a 2 year old child pulled out 100 DM and said, "Leave him alone. I can not drive the tractor." They let my father go. All the women and children were screaming.

The sister of the bride Vlora GASHI, was in my tractor and she was crying because they were going to take her. Vlora paid them 100 DM so that they would release her sister Zelfije. I later heard that women were taken into the school and stripped down and their money and gold was taken and then they were released. I saw a lot of women handing over hands full of gold.

The police grabbed a 13 year old boy from our tractor and put him the driver's seat and told him he would have to drive. He did not know how to drive the tractor and so my father showed him how. He almost drove the tractor off the edge of the road at one stage but my father jump on and saved us. The bride knew how to drive a tractor and so she took over.

When we arrived at the village of Sopija there was a man dressed in a straight green uniform and my father later told me he was from that village. He asked my father where we were going and my father told him that we did not know. The man then told my father to go to Albania and if we came back they would, "...take our heads off."

We continued down the road and after a while my uncle and his friends, who were taken into the school at Bukosh arrived. They said that the older men were released but the young men and women were taken into the school and they did not see them again.

We continued to the Albanian border, arriving at Morina and the serbian police stopped us and asked where our men were. The policeman then said, "Now I will show you." He ordered the other police to prepare their weapons and ordered us to hand over our identification cards. At that moment one of the older ladies fainted and the police threw water on her face and speaking to her in Albanian saying, "Why are you afraid? We will not hurt you. See the gun does not do anything." They let us go through into Albanian.

The serbians erased history by taking entire families away. They did not even leave photographs of our children. Our men and our children were in their prime and they did not want to die. All our men were educated, they were intellectuals and so all our children were excellent students. I would like to move back home to Kosovo but not if there are serbians living there.

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People have told me that Vjollca and Gramoz did survive and are still in Kosovo in the village of Caparc. My father spoke to them a week after they jumped from the truck.

Initials: SHYHRETE BERISHA


ZORIC

WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This 14-page statement has been read over to me in the Albanian language and is true to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I have given this statement voluntarily and am aware that it may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, and that I may be called to give evidence in public before the Tribunal.

Signed: SHYHRETE BERISHA

Dated: 17 05 1999

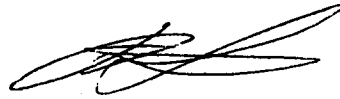
INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION

I, Vilma SHABANI, Interpreter, certify that:

1. I am duly qualified and approved by The Registry of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 to interpret from the Albanian language into the English language and from the English language into the Albanian language.
2. I have been informed by Shyhrete BERISHA that she speaks and understands the Albanian language.
3. I have orally translated the above statement from the English language to the Albanian language in the presence of Shyhrete BERISHA who appeared to have heard and understood my translation of this Statement.
4. Shyhrete BERISHA has acknowledged that the facts and matters set out in her statement, as translated by me, are true to the best of her knowledge and recollection and has accordingly signed her signature where indicated.

Dated: 17/5/1999

Signed: Vilma Shabani



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