



Kosovo - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 6 November 2009

Current information on blood feuds in Kosovo among the Albanian population.

According to a response from the *Immigration and Research Board of Canada* it is noted:

“In a 12 August 2009 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a senior official for the United Nations (UN) Development Programme (UNDP) in Kosovo explained that current blood feuds may also be caused by violations of a perceived code of honour; some examples include broken engagements, accusations of adultery, insults, issues regarding property, trafficking of persons, accidental killings, being disrespectful of a woman, or accusing a person of dishonesty in the presence of other men (UN 12 Aug. 2009).

According to the UNDP Official, in addition to these traditional causes, accusations of collaborating with the Serbs in the years prior to and during the war of 1998-1999 can also trigger a blood feud (ibid.). The UNDP Official explained that a man's status in Kosovar Albanian society relates to the position of his family prior to and during the conflict (ibid.); people who continued to work in the state apparatus under Slobodan Milosevic's regime from 1991-1999 are considered traitors and could be potential targets of blood feuds (ibid.). Media sources report that in August 2001, five family members, including two female children, were killed because the father had worked for the Serbian police in the years leading up to the war (Reuters 22 Aug. 2001; The Sunday Times 26 Aug. 2001). Women and children are traditionally not targeted in blood feuds (ibid.; IWPR 14 July 2005; IMIR 2004, 2).

Blood feuds can be suspended temporarily if the victim's family grants the killer's family a besa, a vow of security for a set length of time (IMIR 2004, 12; IWPR 14 July 2005; ibid. 19 Feb. 2004). According to the Sofia-based International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR), conciliators visit the homes of the victim's family and the killer's family to try to secure a besa, which can ensure safety for anywhere between one week and six months (IMIR 2004, 12). Once the duration of the besa is over, the male family members can remain safe only by staying shut at home until another besa is secured (ibid., 2, 12). The Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), a not-for-profit international network supporting local media (n.d.), reports a blood feud case in Kosovo where the male members of a household, including a seven-year-old boy, did not leave their home for over a year for fear of a blood feud reprisal, even though two family members were in jail for the initial killing (IWPR 14 July 2005). Sources indicate that male children as young as seven or eight years can be targeted during blood feuds (IWPR 14 July 2005; UN 12 Aug. 2009).” (Immigration and Refugee Board of

Canada (28 August 2009) *Kosovo: Blood feuds (gyakmarra) and availability of state protection* [KOS103212.E]

This report continues:

“Media sources indicate that there has been a re-emergence of blood feuds in Kosovo since the end of the war in 1999 (IWPR 14 July 2005; AP 4 July 2000; AFP 22 Dec. 2005). However, a conciliator interviewed by IMIR in 2003 suggests that the blood feud is "not as widespread a phenomenon as it used to be" (IMIR 2004, 10). In a 20 August 2009 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative from the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN, Rrjeti Ballkanik i Gazetarisë Hulumtuese) in Prishtina stated that the number of blood feuds has been decreasing since Anton Çetta's reconciliation movement but that blood feuds still pose a realistic danger (BIRN 20 Aug. 2009). According to the UNDP Official, while many ethnic Albanian Kosovars regard blood feuds as "primitive," there are also many who view killings to restore honour as legitimate (UN 12 Aug. 2009). Some sources indicate that Albanian Kosovars who do not seek to avenge killings are seen as "cowards" (IWPR 21 Apr. 2005; AFP 22 Dec. 2005) and can "fall into social disgrace" (IMIR 2004, 2).

According to Agence France Press (AFP) and the UNDP Official, there were an estimated 50 murders linked to blood feuds in Kosovo from 1999-2004 (AFP 22 Dec. 2005; UN 12 Aug. 2009). Although official statistics since 2004 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the UNDP Official estimates that there have been an average of three high-profile cases per year of murders linked to blood feuds in Kosovo from 2004-2009 (ibid.). The BIRN Representative stated that people are increasingly seeking justice through the courts rather than through blood feuds (BIRN 20 Aug. 2009)." (ibid)

The report also states:

“In one example of a blood feud, media sources report a case where a police officer in Peja [also known as Pe?] shot and killed a man during a police interrogation in order to avenge the death of his brother (Reuters 4 Jan. 2006; AFP 4 Jan. 2006; UN 12 Aug. 2009). According to Reuters, the victim's brother had stabbed and killed the policeman's brother six months earlier (Reuters 4 Jan. 2006). In another example of a blood feud, a conciliator interviewed by IMIR in 2003 noted a case in the Karadak region where a blood feud between two families had existed for 80 years and had resulted in 32 instances of revenge (IMIR 2004, 11). Reuters also reported a 2005 case where the brother of former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was killed in a blood feud (15 Apr. 2005)." (ibid)

According to *Freedom House*, it is stated:

“The breakdown in the judicial system has resulted in the reemergence of familial blood feuds in some areas.” (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World 2009 - Kosovo*)

A February 2005 *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network* report notes:

“Peja - known to Serbs as Pec - is a large town in the Dukagjini plain of western Kosovo. In this region, law and order has broken down and shootings have become part of the fabric of life.

Acts of violence are prompted by a variety of motives, ranging from rivalries left over from the politics of the Kosovo conflict, through organised crime and business disputes, to tit-for-tat blood feuds.

It is sometimes hard to tell where one type ends and the other starts, but the overall picture is of a gangland culture holding the rest of society hostage.

Not that Kosovo is short on law-enforcement, with both internationals and the Kosovo Police Service, KPS, on the ground. But neither force has been equal to the task of stamping out the violence. Their apparent inability to resolve a number of recent murder cases has left a sense that the gunmen can operate with impunity.

That sends out a worrying message: as the families of murder victims grow increasingly resentful of the inaction, many come to believe that justice will only be done if they take matters into their own hands.” (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (18 February 2005) *Investigation: Kosovo’s Wild West*)

References:

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (18 February 2005) *Investigation: Kosovo’s Wild West*
<http://kosovo.birn.eu.com/en/1/51/1770/>
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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

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Committee to Protect Journalists
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European Country of Origin Information Network
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
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Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Relief Web
Sudan Tribune
UNHCR
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State