

## **Albanian Guerrilla Wanted by All**

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Presevo Albanians on edge as Serbia and UNMIK tussle over captured guerrilla leader.

As rebel leader Shefket Musliu begins a second week under arrest at a NATO base in Kosovo, a diplomatic row has erupted over his custody.

The UN Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, and the Serbian government both want to question him over the recent resurgence in violence in Presevo.

But the UN, which instructed KFOR troops to make the arrest on April 22, has said it will not hand Musliu over to the Serbs because there is no legal basis for extraditing him.

Aside from the legalities, analysts say this is simply not an option for the UN, as such a move could shatter the fragile peace in the Presevo valley by adding insult to the injury which many Albanians feel his arrest has already caused.

Skender Destani, the local administration chief in Presevo, told IWPR, "Shefket Musliu's arrest will not contribute to the improvement of inter-ethnic relations and is obviously not helping stability in the region."

Musliu was a commander in an ethnic Albanian guerrilla force, the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac, UCPMB, which fought Yugoslav troops in the region in 2000-2001. The UCPMB disbanded after NATO brokered a peace deal with Belgrade.

More damagingly, Musliu is suspected of being involved with a new breed of guerrillas, the Albanian National Army, ANA, whose activities and rhetoric are causing concern amongst Serbian authorities and international bodies alike.

He was arrested by NATO troops last week after Interpol said he was wanted on charges of carrying out armed attacks and robberies and illegal possession of firearms.

The latest UN charges accuse Musliu of presenting a threat to peace and security in Kosovo. The UN chief in Kosovo, Michael Steiner, has labeled the ANA a terrorist outfit, and Musliu is named on an American blacklist of people banned from entering the United States.

The Serbian interior ministry last week issued a warrant for Musliu's arrest, saying he had helped establish the ANA. He is also accused of involvement in the killing of Selver Fazliu, an ethnic Albanian employed by Serbia's security police. Fazliu was murdered on February 4 in Bujanovac.

Just hours before his arrest, Musliu told journalists that he had no links with the ANA.

He has been living in the town of Gjilane, southern Kosovo, since February apparently to evade the Serbian authorities, who arrested his brother and other former UCPMB members following the killing of Fazliu.

Serbia has long accused Musliu of intimidating moderate Albanian politicians in Presevo in an effort to regain the popular following that slipped away after the UCPMB downed weapons in 2001.

Although staying in Kosovo may have shielded Musliu from immediate prosecution, it landed him on the UN's doorstep and prompted demands from Belgrade for his extradition.

In a letter sent last week, Serbian deputy prime minister Nebojsa Covic asked Steiner to hand Musliu over.

The UN's response was simply to ask Belgrade to send UNMIK all the information it held on Musliu's alleged criminal links. Covic increased the pressure by saying that a refusal to hand him over would be seen as a sign of "support for the activities of organized crime in the region".

However, UNMIK reiterated its stance that extradition could only take place where there was an agreement between two states - but UNMIK was neither a state, nor did it have any special agreement with Serbia.

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**Location:** Serbia  
Kosovo

**Focus:** Balkans: Regional Reporting & Sustainable  
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**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/albanian-guerrilla-wanted-all>