

## **REGIONAL REPORT: Kosovars Underwhelmed by Milosevic Trial**

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Kosovo Albanians say they have little reason to get excited over the trial of their former tormentor

Kosovar Albanian reaction to the trial of Slobodan Milosevic has been surprisingly muted because they believe that even if he is convicted justice will not have been served.

There's anger that others responsible for the murder of 12,000 Albanians and the disappearance of some 3,900 have yet to be brought to justice, fueling a belief here that the international community has left Yugoslavia off the hook.

Kosovo Albanians want the former president's accomplices and henchmen to be tried as well and believe that they will only be given up to The Hague if the West puts greater pressure on the Belgrade authorities.

According to Fatimir Sejdiu, vice president of the Assembly of Kosovo and law professor at Pristina university, "Milosevic was the central figure, the planner and the executor of the genocide in Kosovo" but "a wide circle of people" ensured that his orders were carried out.

The new Serbian leadership is held in high esteem by the international community, which provides it with generous amounts of financial aid, despite the fact that it is failing to extradite remaining indicted war criminals.

Whether intentional or not, Kosovo Albanians believe the international community was remiss in its decision to omit from the Milosevic Kosovo indictment alleged crimes committed in the violent and repressive prelude to the outbreak of war in March 1999 - which effectively means that many criminals will escape justice.

Ymer Delijaj saw the Serb police in the village of Abria, Drenica, kill his entire family: a wife and four children aged between eighteen months and nine years in September 1998. "Slobodan Milosevic will get what he deserves but others who followed him and executed his orders should go to The Hague after him," said Delijaj.

But no one is standing trial for the murder of the Delijaj family. The Hague takes into account only crimes committed from January 1, 1999 to June 30, 1999 - the duration of the Kosovo conflict. For these that tribunal prosecutor Carla del Ponte has indicted Milosevic, Nikola Sainovic, Dragoljub Ojdanic, Vlatko Stojiljkovic and Milan Milutinovic.

Crimes committed by Serb troops in Kosovo between February 1998 and 31 December 1998 - such as the Abria massacre - are not included in the indictment.

Kosovo Serbs also complain about The Hague's limited scope, saying that its deadline of June 30 1999 for the prosecution of crimes in the region means that crimes committed against them after the end of the conflict will be neglected.

Following the democratic changes in Serbia, Kosovo Albanians are concerned that the international community has sought to play down Serbia's policy to ethnically-cleanse the region, in an attempt to win

Belgrade round to cooperating with the tribunal.

They see the West's decision to make 100 million US dollars of reconstruction aid for Yugoslavia conditional on Milosevic's transfer to The Hague as evidence of this. Kosovars are under no illusion that the extradition of Milosevic was the beginning of a serious bid by the authorities in Belgrade to root out war criminals.

Behxhet Shala, secretary-general of the Pristina-based Council for Defence for Human Rights and Freedoms told IWPR, "The main imperative for Serbia was to get rid of Milosevic in order to get Western aid, and then close the Kosovo file once and for all."

Arsim Bajrami, professor of law and a member of the Assembly of Kosovo, said, "The Hague has a responsibility to try not only Milosevic, but all those who took part in genocide in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. "

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**Location:** Serbia  
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