

Tirana Calls For Ground Troops

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While terror increases in Kosovo, and the number of refugees mount in Albania, Tirana appeals for NATO to intervene with ground troops to halt the violence.

NATO air strikes were intended to bring Belgrade to its knees. But Belgrade has responded by building an iron curtain around Kosovo and launching a wave of terror against the Kosovars. In the past two days, up to 30,000 refugees have crossed the border into Albania, into the towns of Kukës and Hasane.

The stories they tell are of extreme violence, and immediate expulsions from their homes. Key figures in the Albanian elite have been killed, gone into hiding or escaped Kosovo. Others are reported to have been detained.

According to Gazmend Pula, President of the Kosovo Helsinki Committee, "Twenty thousand people have been detained by Serb forces, but it is not known what has happened to them. Also, criminals have been released from prisons to assist the Serbian forces with their anti-Albanian campaign."

Speaking from Kosovo, Pula added, "We know that 20 people were killed in front of students. . . . As to the journalists, activists, and political leaders, Belgrade has put a death warrant on their heads. Yesterday, the actor Hadi Shehu best known for portraying Albanian patriots, was killed in Pristina by the Serbs."

Since the beginning of NATO air strikes, not only have the Serbian forces increased their activity against the Kosovars but also against Albania proper. Serb forces have launched bombs in the northern village of Tropaj, destroying four homes, while in the nearby village of Kamnic, Serb forces entered the village and began shooting indiscriminately. There were no reports of any serious injuries.

Rexhep Meidani, the president of Albania, has appealed to the West to intervene with ground troops in Kosovo to stop the killing. At a press conference with journalists he stressed that there was "only one war going on in the territory of what has remained from Yugoslavia and this is the inhuman war of Slobodan Milosevic regime against an undefended population, against Albanians." Arguing that the terror in Kosovo will not end without NATO troops, he stressed, "It is essential to accelerate NATO actions and find a way . . . to intervene on the ground."

Fron Nazi is an IWPR senior editor.

Location: [Albania](#)
[Kosovo](#)

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