

Written Testimony of **Ms. H.U.**

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on "Kosovo's Wartime Victims: The Quest for Justice"

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When the war in Kosovo broke out, I was staying at my house in the village together with my kids. My husband was a KLA soldier and he was moving around all the time. He would come and visit us periodically, and then he would go and fight. When the war reached a village near our house, it became clear that we had to leave. Together with my family, I moved from village to village for a long time, trying to escape the terror and save ourselves. On relatively calmer days we would try to go back to our house and check on it.

We were in our house when the NATO airstrike campaign began. We were staying there together with many members of our extended family who had come over so that we could all be together. I remember the joy that overtook us when we heard the news. We went out on the balcony. We believed that we were finally safe from harm. Only a few days had passed when our husbands told us that we would have to leave our house again because the situation was deteriorating and it would not be safe for us to stay there any longer.

All of us together went to another village and stayed with my husband's relatives. There were a lot of other refugees from different places in that house with us. The day after we arrived there, we heard loud noises on the streets. I went over to the door because I thought it might be my husband. When I got there, I saw tanks on the streets and a Serbian soldier walking directly through the front yard. When he spotted me, he began to shout at me. I immediately ran inside screaming "For God's sake, the Serbians are here."

A group of soldiers came inside the house. They kicked us out on the front yard and lined us up for execution. Then they decided to send us to an open field, and they kept us there until nighttime. A battle was happening in a village nearby where many Serbians had just died. So the next day, they took revenge on us.

They started burning houses and wanted to burn us all with them. We ran out and tried to escape, all the while being yelled at by the Serbian soldiers. They captured us and beat us up. They punched me in the head and threw me in the meadow where the women and children were separated on one side and the men on the other. I remember when they found a child's notebook and took it. There was a poem written on it about Adem Jashari. The Serbian soldiers read it out loud in impeccable Albanian.

They divided the women into groups of four or five and sent us into the basement of an abandoned house nearby. They took all the money and jewelry that we had. They shouted at us saying "You will give us all that you have, or we will undress you all!" They took all the money and jewelry that we had. After they stripped us from all our belongings, they sent us back to the meadow and left us

there until sunset. At sunset, they brought our husbands so that they could say their last goodbyes. Since that very moment, the fate of those men remains unknown to this date.

After separating us from the men, the Serbian soldiers led the women and children into the room of a house where I found myself with my kids and some cousins. That is when the true horror started. It was dark and nobody knew what was happening outside. The Serbian soldiers would come in with torches and take us one by one. First, they took some young girls, then many older ones. Children were taken as well. Everyone who they brought back would be shaking and crying incessantly. None of them could speak.

Then, it was my turn. I left my children there, in the dark room. I was terrified. I did not know what was going to happen to them or me because they did not tell us anything. A few soldiers took me, all alone, and sent me into a room where one of them was waiting. It was dark, so I couldn't identify him. The men that brought me there stripped off my clothes. I tried to fight but couldn't. I had no strength left.

When they stripped me, they told me "If you scream, if we even hear a peep from you, we will come in too." Then they went out and left me alone with the man who was already in the room. He approached me. He was speaking in Serbian, but I couldn't understand a thing that he was saying. He started to kiss me and bite me. He threw me on the floor, and I could not even scream because I was afraid that the other ones would come in too. He threw me on a mattress that was laying on the floor and started to rape me. There I was, without an ounce of strength, wanting to leave but with nowhere to go. I could not even move.

He kept going until he was satisfied. Then the cops who were outside the room came in and took me. They sent me into the room where I was before. When I went in, I saw a woman who was slamming her head against the wall because they had taken her daughters. The soldiers who took me came back again that same night. This time, they tried to take my daughter. They asked me how old she was. I lied to them and told them that she was eight. They told me that it's ok; there are plenty of other women. They went on with the same routine all night long. Hardly anyone was spared. The next morning, they loaded us onto trucks and deported us to Albania where we waited until the war was over.

I appeal to the United States Congress to address the war crimes committed in Kosovo by taking the necessary actions to claim justice for the victims.