



Kosova Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRISHTINA

**RE: KRUSHA E VOGEL INCIDENT WAS *NOT* INTER-ETHNIC,
Citizens Reacted against UNMIK Police Violence, Krusha e Vogel Women Said**

UNMIK Police failed to inform citizens and democratic institutions of their visit in advance.

The incident in Krusha e Vogel on 25 May was not inter-ethnic, Krusha e Vogel citizens said. Krusha e Vogel women emphasized that they *did not throw stones at Serbs*, but rather at the UNMIK police who had physically assaulted them.

Local activists argued that the violence used by UNMIK police against women and children in the village have caused psychological trauma in a letter sent to UNMIK SRSG Soren Jessen-Peterson and UNMIK Police Commissioner Kai Vittrup Friday.

"I saw the exact same expressions on their faces yesterday as I saw the day that their homes were burned and their family members were killed," Marta Prekpalaj, Motrat Qiriazi activist who has worked closely with Krusha e Vogel citizens since 1999 said. "The UNMIK police have re-traumatized them," she said.

Vittrup told Krusha e Vogel citizens that it was not democratic to use violence towards people who came to conduct an investigation at a meeting with citizens in the village that evening. He repeatedly stressed that they should act "democratically" and remember that their actions would influence "final status talks."

"The final status talks cannot justify gender-based violence." Igballe Rogova, Executive Director of Kosova Women's Network emphasized. "Nor can status talks excuse the failure of UNMIK Police to inform citizens and local institutions about their visit or to involve citizens in democratic processes such as investigations and returns."

Despite news broadcasts to date, more than 30 personal testimonies collected from Krusha e Vogel citizens at the scene showed that the following actually occurred:

Twelve UNMIK police armored vehicles arrived at in Krusha e Vogel at 09:15 on 25 May to collect information for The Hague, according to Commissioner Vittrup. The convoy arrived completely unannounced, without informing elected officials, public institutions, the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), or anyone in the village that they were coming.

Kosova Women's Network

+381 (0)38 245 850

St. Hajdar Dushi C-2 II/8 Prishtina, Kosova

On the web: www.womensnetwork.org

Email: info@womensnetwork.org



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After seeing who they believed to be Bora Cvetkovic and Gordana Djordjevic, two citizens who lived in the village before the war, inside one of the vehicles, Krusha e Vogel women requested to speak with them. They wanted to ask the passengers what had happened to the bodies of their husbands and children, missing since the war. The UNMIK police officer refused their request.

The women sat in the middle of the road, preventing the UNMIK vehicles from moving forward. UNMIK police officers physically grabbed the women by the shoulders and arms, forcibly moving them from the road. When the women struggled, the police officers began to use riot batons. Women responded by throwing stones at the UNMIK police officers and their vehicles.

In the meantime, men came to protect the women. When they came, some UNMIK police officers started their vehicles, while others continued to hit villagers with the butts of their guns and riot batons. Then, all of the officers jumped in their armored vehicles. As they drove away, they threw tear gas from their moving vehicles at the citizens until they reached the edge of the village. They also threw tear gas near the school where children were playing during recess.

According to Prizren hospital records, 36 people were admitted that day, including three men and 33 women. Of the three men, all had physical injuries. Twenty children were treated for wounds associated with tear gas. On 26 May, 14 people remained in the hospital. One boy had a broken arm, and 13 women suffered from psychological trauma, tear gas injuries and light physical injuries resulting from the UNMIK police. One woman was treated for serious injuries to her kidneys after being hit in the back with a riot baton.

The letter sent to SRSJ Jessen-Peterson and Commissioner Kai Vittrup yesterday also emphasized that the fact that Krusha e Vogel women requested to *speak* with the Serbs being transported in the vehicles is a sign of democracy. Through proper planning with local activists, organizations and institutions, UNMIK could have fostered a peaceful discussion and visit to this community, the letter said.

It went on to describe the actions of the UNMIK police as undemocratic: "they failed to inform any of the democratic institutions about their visit; they used unnecessary violence against women and children; and, they refused for the women to communicate with the people they were transporting."

They concluded by emphasizing that processes of justice must involve local institutions and citizens in order to be successful.

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For more information, please contact:

Kosova Women's Network

Igballe Rogova, Executive Director

E-mail: igo@womensnetwork.org

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+381 (0)38 245 850

St. Hajdar Dushi C-2 II/8 Prishtina, Kosova

On the web: www.womensnetwork.org

Email: info@womensnetwork.org