

Kosovar Refugee Assessments in Montenegro and Albania

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Abstract

Following NATO bombings on the 24th of March 1999, Serbian armed forces provoked a massive population exodus of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo, an autonomous province of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In June 1999, UNHCR reported that 600,000 Kosovars had found refuge in neighbouring countries. In order to assess the situation of Kosovar refugees, two surveys were carried out in Rozaje, Republic of Montenegro, and in Kukes, Albania, in April 1999. The main goal was to assess human rights violations. This paper describes the results of these surveys.

Résumé

Suite aux bombardements de l'OTAN du 24 mars 1999, les forces armées serbes ont déclenché un exode massif des populations de souche albanaise du Kosovo, une province autonome de la République Fédérale de Yougoslavie. En juin 1999, le Haut Commissariat de l'ONU pour les Réfugiés rapportait que 600,000 kosovars avaient trouvé refuge dans les nations avoisinantes. Dans le but d'évaluer la situation des réfugiés kosovars, deux enquêtes ont été menées à Rozaje, République du Monténégro, et à Kukes, Albanie, en avril 1999. Le

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but principal des enquêtes était de prendre la mesure des violations aux droits humains. Cet article décrit le résultat de ces enquêtes.

Introduction

Following NATO bombings on the 24th of March 1999, Serbian armed forces provoked a massive population exodus of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo, an autonomous province of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In June 1999, UNHCR reported that 600,000 Kosovars had found refuge in neighbouring countries¹.

In order to assess the situation of Kosovar refugees, two surveys were carried out in Rozaje, Republic of Montenegro, and in Kukes, Albania, in April 1999. The main goal was to assess human rights violations. Specific objectives were :

(i) to obtain demographic data and information on basic needs of refugees and corresponding coverage by humanitarian organisations.

(ii) to describe the history of the exodus.

(iii) to assess the impact of the forced migration on mortality amongst Kosovar Albanians.

Methods

Study Sites

Rozaje and Kukes were the main refugee entry sites to the respective countries. At the time of the survey, Rozaje had an estimated population of 25,000 refugees, 6,500 of whom were lodged in collective centres. At Kukes, the estimated total was 86,000 refugees among which 36,000 were in camps and in collective centres, 10,000 were in tractor camps and 40,000 living with host families.

Sample Size

Due to highly insecure working conditions, there was no choice but to rely upon a small sample size. A minimum sample of 200 families, providing a presumed total of 1600 persons (8 persons/family) was therefore retained for each survey in Rozaje and in Kukes. The surveys covered the events that occurred from March 24 to April 15, and March 24 to April 25, 1999, in the two respective locations.

Sampling Methods

In Rozaje, 3 out of 10 collective centres, representing 3,000 refugees, were selected by convenience. In each of the 3 centres, one out of two families was randomly selected by systematic sampling.

In Kukes, the survey was limited to the refugees hosted by Albanian families. A modified cluster sampling technique was utilised. A sample of 100 buildings and houses was randomly selected from a map depicting all existing physical structures in the town. Each selected structure was visited. Whenever an apartment building was found, a random sample of two apartments was selected, and Kosovar families living there were interviewed.

A household was defined as all close relatives living together under the same roof in Kosovo when the aerial bombardment began on March 24, 1999. A standard questionnaire containing information on date of arrival, household composition and hosting conditions was addressed to the head of the Kosovar family. For each household, the details of the exodus, the number of missing members, the number and cause of deaths, and vital needs (blankets, mattresses, and food) were recorded. General food distribution was assessed in Rozaje by asking to the fami-



lies the amount of bread received in the last 24 hours.

Results in percentage were expressed with 95% Confidence Interval [95%CI], calculated with the exact interval estimation method and based on two stage cluster sampling.

Data was entered and analysed using Epi-info 6.04b software.²

Results

A total of 406 families were interviewed on the 15th (Rosaje) and on the 25th (Kukes) of April 1999. Males aged 15 to 54 were under-represented in both places (table 1). The average duration of exodus to reach Rozaje and Kukes were 7.6 and 2.7 days (range: 1-23 and 1-30 days), respectively. The majority of the refugees (88%-357/406) came from rural areas, from more than 80 different villages, located in Rugova and Prizren regions. Ninety-three percent (187/201) of the families in Rozaje arrived by walking. In Kukes, among 70 families from which information could be obtained, 62 (89%) had come by vehicle, mainly tractors.

Amongst both populations, 79% (321/406, [95%CI : 73-84]) of the families reported direct physical threat by armed men or by attacks as the main reason for leaving Kosovo. Others left to avoid attack or due to fear of repression. In Rozaje, 46% (92/201, [95%CI: 36-56])

of the families reported no longer having any identity cards. Refugee cards were not provided to the families on their arrival in Rozaje or in Kukes.

Thirty-one percent (126/406, [95%CI: 25-38]) of families reported "at least one family member left behind". For the two samples, this amounted to a total of 310 persons, representing 9% [95%CI: 8-11] of the total number of persons [310 / (3,047 + 310)]. Among the 141 "left behind" in Kukes, 42 (30%, [95%CI: 20-42]) had been separated by force or detained, 45 (32%, [95%CI : 22-44]) were Kosovo Liberation Army fighters, 29 (20%, [95%CI : 12-32]) stayed voluntarily, and 25 (18%, [95%CI : 10-29]) reported other reasons (i.e. lost along the way, away from the family at time of exodus, etc).

A total of 13 deaths occurred during the recall period among the 3,047 persons in both sites. Six in Rozaje, from March 24 to April 15 1999, and 7 in Kukes, between March 24 to April 25, 1999. Among the 13 deaths, 7 (54%, [95%CI : 17-87]) were due to violence, caused by bullets, bombs or grenades. Other deaths mainly concerned young children and elders who died from "exhaustion" during the exodus.

Concerning basic needs, 8.5% (17/201, [95%CI : 4-16]) of the families in Rozaje had no blankets and 43% (87/201, 95%CI : 34-54)) had no mattresses.

Families had received an average of 200 grams of bread per person per day (compared to the 300 grams/person/day which had been planned to be distributed). Twenty percent (41/201, [95%CI: 13-30]) of the families had not received any bread. In Kukes, only 22% (46/205, [95%CI : 15-32]) of the families had received a blanket, and no mattresses had been distributed. Twenty percent (41/205, [95%CI : 13-29]) of the families had not yet received any food parcel. Only 52% (107/205, [95%CI : 42-62]) had received soap. Sixty-two percent (126/205, [95%CI : 51-71]) of the families selected in Kukes paid an average rent of 250 Deutch Marks per month (about 180 USD). Others were accommodated for free or by relatives in Albania.

Discussion

The surveys conducted in Rozaje and Kukes targeted two different refugee settings in two different host countries. Despite these differences, the refugees' demographic characteristics and history of deportation were similar in both surveys. Based on such evidence, we think that our results could be representative of the populations who sought refuge in Albania and Montenegro.

The history reported by the families surveyed, mainly from villages, confirm the reports of forced deportation orchestrated by the Serbian military forces during this time period. Physical and

Table 1 : Demographics of Survey Population (refugees) in Rosaje, Montenegro and in Kukes, Albania, 15th - 25th of April 1999.

| Category | Rozaje | Kukes | Total |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| # persons | 1537 | 1510 | 3047 |
| # households | 201 | 205 | 406 |
| # persons/household | 7.6 | 7.4 | 7.5 |
| Male : Female ratio (M :F) | 1.00 : 1.01 | 1.00 : 1.24 | 1.00 : 1.11 |
| M :F ratio : 15-54 yrs | 1.00:1.14 | 1.00:1.67 | 1.00:1.35 |
| % males: 15-54 yrs | 46.8% | 37.6% | 42.5% |

psychological threats were the main reason reported by families for leaving Kosovo. This forced migration resulted in an unacceptable number of violent deaths among civilians, as well as the creation of many "missing persons"—primarily men of fighting age.

The large number of absent family members (i.e. "those left behind") is concerning. Among these absences, 60% were young male adults, which meant that many families had heads of households who were women and/or elderly. This finding was consistent with the under-representation of males between 15 to 54 years old in the study population which was found in both surveys.

At the time of the survey, the refugees' basic needs had not been adequately covered by relief aid. Many households were lacking such basic items as food, mattresses, blankets, and soap.

In part, this shortcoming may be due to the absence of an organised refugee registration system, which would make

it difficult to ensure that each family received complete food rations and basic non-food items.

Conclusion

These two community surveys in Montenegro and Albania confirm systematic violations of human rights of the Kosovar Albanians by the Serbian military and paramilitary groups, which are consistent with other reports obtained by individual interviews^{3,4,5}. These studies suggest that assistance to the refugees in Montenegro and in Albania have not met international standards.⁶ This failure is especially egregious due to the massive mobilisation of the international community. The protection of the refugees and coverage of their basic needs, including individual registration, remain a high priority during the early stages of such emergencies. ■

Notes

1. Kosovo Crisis Update. UNHCR Press Briefings, www.unhcr.ch/news/media/kosovo.htm, 1999.
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3. War Crimes in Kosovo, A Population-Based Assessment of Human Rights Violations Against Kosovar Albanians, Physicians for Human Rights, August 1999, USA, Library of Congress Catalog Card No 99-075785 (www.phrusa.org).
4. US State Department. Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo: an Accounting. http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/kosovoii/homepage.html #exe: US State Department., 1999.
5. Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe: Report on Human Rights Findings of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/reports/hr/part2/index.htm> ed: OCSE, 1999.
6. The Sphere Project, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, First Edition 1998, Geneva, <http://www.ifrc.org/pubs/sphere>. □

PATHS TO EQUITY:

Cultural, Linguistic, and Racial Diversity in Canadian Early Childhood Education

By Judith K. Bernhard, Marie Louise Lefebvre, Gyda Chud, and Rika Lange

Toronto: York Lanes Press ISBN 1-55014-277-1; 112 pages, size 8.5x11; \$18.95

Paths to Equity is based on an extensive nationwide study of 77 childcare centres in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver on the cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity in Canadian Early Childhood Education (ECE). The report presents the results this study on how the ECE system is responding to the increasing diversity of contemporary Canadian society.

In this ground-breaking study, the authors have addressed teachers' views on diversity in the education programs; parents' difficulties in collaborating within the current education system; teachers' difficulties in understanding many "ethnic" parents; desire of many parents for better communication with staff, preferably in their own languages, and for more information about their individual children, and chances for effective input; and the evidence of some continuing problems with racism, irrespective of the good intentions of centre staff.

Paths to Equity will be of interest to ECE faculty, policymakers, centre supervisors and staff and others interested in the inclusion of diversity content in professional education programs.

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