

Introduction

This is the first volume of *The Kosovo Memory Book, 1998*. It lists the name and surname of each person killed during the Kosovo conflict because of his or her nationality: the men, women, and children, the sick, the old, and the helpless. It is to their memory that the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) and the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo (HLC Kosovo) dedicate this book. *The Kosovo Memory Book, 1998* is the monument on which we have inscribed the names of all those who, during the war, lost their lives or disappeared by force¹ in the period between 1 January and 31 December 1998. By the end of 2012, we will have published five more volumes of the *Kosovo Memory Book*. They will commemorate all those who lost their lives or disappeared during the armed conflict of January to June 1999, and in the period between the end of June 1999 and the end of December 2000. The analysis of the existing documents has made clear that, prior to 2001, the number of murders and forced disappearances of Serbs, Roma, and Albanians in connection with the armed conflict was significantly higher than in the period after 2000. This is why 31 December 2000 has been made a cut-off date in the book. We should not, however, forget the murders of Serbs and Albanians during the ethnic violence of March 2004.

There were some suggestions that we should separate civilian victims from military casualties. We have not done so, because this would have meant reducing or eliminating the circumstances and the context in which a civilian, soldier, or police officer disappeared or lost his or her life. We also took note of well-intentioned warnings concerning our current political reality: that Albanian and Serbian families whose members lost their lives or suffered forced disappearance still perceive one another as belonging to enemy sides, and that it might have been wiser to make two books, one for the Albanians, another for the Serbs and others. However, we have decided to adhere to our own belief, which perhaps runs contrary to those which are currently widespread: namely, that stating the facts will eventually help to bring about a climate of solidarity and fellow-feeling among all victims of the war, and to overcome these sentiments of enmity, particularly between the families of the victims of war crimes, whatever their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

¹ The term “forced disappearance” has been taken from the Draft Statute of RECOM (Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about the War Crimes and other Gross Violations of Human Rights Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia), according to which the “missing person” category may include persons who had been disappeared by the forces that fought the official ones (i.e. formations that did not represent any official government, nor act on behalf of the state).