

## **Evaluation of the Database of the Kosovo Memory Book**

December 10, 2014

An examination of the database, “Evaluation of the Database of the Kosovo Memory Book,” was undertaken by Dr Patrick Ball and Dr. Jule Krüger, from the Human Rights Data Analysis Group. Their conclusions and recommendations are given below.

### **Conclusions**

“The most important conclusion from our analysis is that the Kosovo Memory Book database documents all or nearly all the human losses during conflict in Kosovo during the period 1998-2000. By “nearly all,” we mean that in our opinion, it is very unlikely that there are more than a few tens of undocumented deaths. This conclusion is based on several analyses and findings, including a comparison with ten other databases in which no new records were found; a statistical analysis in which the KMBD was found to have more records than any other database in every period and for each municipality; and a companion analysis by Professor Michael Spagat which shows that the KMB is consistent with two independent probability-based estimates of the total human losses.

We believe that there is a larger lesson in the final records of ‘potential victims’ in the KMBD. Even with work of dozens of researchers and analysts spanning more than a decade, it is probably impossible to create an exact, precise list which includes only the true war victims, and at the same time all of the true war victims. The stock of social knowledge about the past simply does not extend to every single one of the events in which victims suffered. However, it is indeed possible to get very close to an exact list.

Slight imprecisions in the reporting do not impede our analysis of the larger patterns in the conflict. The KMBD is a rich source for historical memory and other transitional justice reactions, for statistical analysis of the conflict, and most importantly, to be a permanent record of the names and lives of the victims lost in the conflict.

### **Recommendations**

We have a small number of technical recommendations for the HLC and HLC-Kosovo:

- We recommend that KMB staff differentiate dates between missing information and the first day of the month and first month of the year (see Sections 4.7 and Section 4.10). Missing days are currently recorded as ‘1,’ and missing months are recorded as ‘1.’ These should have some other value (e.g., -1 or NA).
- Name information should be further standardized, as noted in Section 4.3.
- The current ethnicity field should be divided into ethnicity and citizenship, as noted in Section 4.6
- We recommend that the KMB staff reconsider the determination of ‘not war’ victims who have only one source document when a victim was not found alive. Perhaps these victims could be maintained on the potential victim list until more information

becomes available that allows staff to confirm or reject the connection with the war in Kosovo.

- Correct information on date of origin, fill in missing information on source language. See Section 5.2 for more discussion.

These are relatively minor improvements and standardizations, and they will contribute to improving an already excellent database.

We congratulate the HLC and HLC-Kosovo on an extraordinary and remarkable project. Few conflicts have received the sustained and professional attention that the HLC and HLC-Kosovo have given to the human losses in Kosovo 1998 - 2000. The world benefits from this knowledge. Above all, we acknowledge the victims who will now always be remembered.”

A separate analysis was conducted by Professor Michael Spagat, of Royal Holloway, University of London, titled “A Triumph of Remembering: Kosovo Memory Book.” Professor Spagat’s conclusions are given below.

### **Conclusion**

“The general shape of the KMBD time series would not change substantially even if more evidence becomes available in the future and a number of potential deaths are transferred from the list of potential deaths onto the list of actual deaths. In short, KMBD passes all the tests I subject it to.

Yet the present paper is positioned within a larger picture of quality and consistency, much of which is documented in the Krüger and Ball Report (2014) and displayed in the Humanitarian Law Center and Humanitarian Law Center-Kosovo Database Methodology of the Kosovo Memory Book (2014b). Together these three papers provide ample evidence of the high quality and near comprehensiveness of the KMB database.

It is very unusual for a project documenting war deaths on a case-by-case basis to progress to a point where it captures virtually every single one of them. The KMBD appears to have reached this point while simultaneously providing quite a wide range of accurate information on each victim.

The Kosovo Memory Book is an extraordinary achievement that stands as a monument both to its victims and to the human spirit.”