

**The Efforts of Serbian Government to Close  
the University of Prishtina through a Mass  
Expulsion of Albanian Students and Lecturers  
During 1991-1992**



**History**

**Keywords:** University of Prishtina, Association of Lecturers, Faculty of Philosophy, Educational Board, etc.

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**Abstract**

The article “The efforts of Serbian government to close the University of Prishtina through a mass expulsion of Albanian students and lecturers during 1991-1992” aims to elaborate the political developments in Kosovo and Yugoslavia, particularly the efforts of Serbian regime to enforce its old and new hegemonic plans and the resistance of Albanian people. Since the both tendencies, the enforcement of hegemonic plans on one hand and the resistance of Albanian people on second hand, reflected a hard confrontation in all areas of social life, therefore this articles is focused only on the field of upper education, respectively on the University of Prishtina, which for many decades had become a seat of national emancipation for Albanians. Therefore, in order to provide a sound scientific argumentation, this article is supported by documentary data about the repressive measures of Serbian government and about the efforts of Kosovo Albanians for survival, which were reflected through the organization of a parallel life in Kosovo as well as in the field of upper education.

**Introduction**

Following the death of Josip Broz Tito the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was involved in a political and economic crises that produced the rise of nationalism amongst people living in this country, particularly of Serbs who displayed their old hegemonic ambitions for prevalence over the Yugoslavia. The use of nationalistic feelings in the late of 1980s brought on power Serbian nationalists who clearly introduced their ambitions. The most important ambition was the reduction of autonomy for provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, and the centralization of Serbia.<sup>29</sup>

In this way the Serbian political, intellectual and ecclesiastical elite drafted various programmes and projects of chauvinistic character which aimed to accomplish Serbian nationalistic objectives, such as the Programme drafted by Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1985.<sup>30</sup>

In the forums of the League of Communists of Serbia and Serbian state and social organizations, and in the mass rallies of Serbs in August-October 1988, and in many Serbian publications, the Albanians of Kosovo and other regions of Yugoslavia have been called “terrorists” and “Fascists”. They were accused of having persecuted the Serbs since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even today are said to be committing genocide against Serbs and Montenegrins.

In a speech delivered in a joint meeting of Yugoslav government in September 1988, the ex-President of Serbia, Petar Gracanin, declared that “terror reigns in Kosovo” and that “the

<sup>29</sup>VladislavljevićNebojša, “InstitutionalPowerandriseofMilošević”, *NationalitiesPapers*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Routledge 2004, p. 183, <http://eprints.Ise.ac.uk/2369>

<sup>30</sup>*Memorandum Srpske Akademije Nauka i Umetnosti*

<http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/memorandum%20sanu.pdf>, last accessed 13.12.2017.

continuous mistreatment and humiliation inflicted on the Serbian minority threatens to turn into an outright national conflict”. The events of 1988-1989 proved that Serbian propaganda about the so-called “genocide” and “terror” by Albanians, was nothing else except an alibi to cover up the violence and the policy of national discrimination being exercised against Albanians in Kosovo.<sup>31</sup>

On the way to enforce such programmes the Serbian government following a policy of violence and repression achieved to suppress the autonomy of Kosovo<sup>32</sup>, and thus usurped the legislative and executive powers of Government of Kosovo. By suppressing Kosovo’s legislative and executive bodies, Serbian government extended its influence in all areas of political and social life in Kosovo. Certainly, amongst other objectives, the Serbian regime was very interested to extend its influence in the educational life in Kosovo, which according to them, the continuous education in Albanian spirit had been a major obstacle to the realization of Serbian aspirations. Therefore, one of the most urgent tasks of the Serbian government was the unification of Serbian educational system, respectively melting the Kosovo education system into that of Serbia. The first step following this directing was change in curricula, with a particular emphasis on the subject of history, geography, Albanian language and music. All these actions aimed to weaken the national feelings of Albanian students.

In response to Serb tendencies for usurpation of Kosovo institutions and following a will for freedom and democracy, the legal parliament of Autonomous Province of Kosovo proclaimed the Constitutional Declaration on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1990, considering Kosovo as an independent and equal subject within the Yugoslav federation.<sup>33</sup>

The efforts of Serbia to subjugate the entire social-economic system of Kosovo and reactions of Kosovo Albanians to defend their rights had created a grave situation in Kosovo in the late 1990s, especially when in Yugoslav regions appeared first signals of armed conflict between the Yugoslav army (backed by Serbian hegemony) and Slovenes, Croats and Bosnians. In such circumstances, when the war broke up in Croatia, the Serbian police under the pretext that Albanians didn’t accept the Serbian curricula, banned the entry of Albanian students in their educational buildings during the new academic year in September 1991.

In fact, the Serbian police only executed the directives deriving from a decision of Serbian Parliament, dated 27 June 1991, for establishment of “compulsive measures” in the University of Prishtina and thus, since the academic year 1991/92 banned the Albanian students and lecturers from teaching in the premises of the University. Furthermore, the Serbian regime paid attention to

<sup>31</sup>Kristaq Prifti, “Who uses violence in Kosova and against whom is directed?”, The Truth on Kosova, The Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, Institute of History, Encyclopaedia Publishing House, Tirana, 1993, p. 277-282.

<sup>32</sup>*Kujtesë: 25 vite nga suprimimi i dhunshëm i autonomisë së Kosovës*, <https://telegrafi.com/kujtese-25-vite-nga-suprimimi-i-dhunshem-i-autonomise-se-kosoves-fotovideo/>, last accessed 12.12.2017.

<sup>33</sup>*Deklarata Kushtetuese e Kuvendit të Kosovës*, Gazeta Rilindja, Prishtinë, 3 korrik 1990, f. 3; *26 vjet nga Deklarata Kushtetuese e 2 Korrikut*, <http://www.gazetaexpress.com/lajme/26-vjet-nga-deklarata-kushtetuese-e-2-korrikut-foto-video-220900/?archive=1>, last accessed 12.12.2017

put under control all other issues within the University of Prishtina, particularly applying measures to secure the rights of self-government and social property of University of Prishtina and its academic units.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, the “compulsory measures” were just a simple precedence of so-called “temporary measures”, which derived from the decision No. 486 of Parliament of Serbia, dated 7 August 1990, enforced initially against the Faculty of Medicine. As a result of such measures the Parliament of Serbia discharged the legitimate management of this faculty, headed by dr. AlushGashi – Dean, dr. Andrija Tomanovic, dr. ZefGjoni and dr. XhevdetRexhepagiq – vice deans, and installed a new management headed by dr. TomislavGjokic – Dean, dr. Alexander Kujuncic, dr. MilovanKnezevic and dr. Ibrahim Behluli – acting vice deans. The Parliament of Serbia continued to issue other repressive directions against the University of Prishtina, concretely dissolved the Board of University, the Disciplinary Commission and Self-government Control Council. Instead of this bodies a temporary commission headed by dr. Vera Lazic was established.<sup>35</sup> The enforcement of those measures gives a clear indication that the aim of Serbian government was to put under control any subject or body within the University of Prishtina, appointing in key positions reliable people for Serbian regime, mostly Serbs. Thus, in all faculties and high schools the Albanian academic staff was replaced by Serbian staff. The Rector, dr. SkenderKarahoda, the Vice-Rector, dr. Dali Emerllahu, and all deans and vice-deans of Albanian ethnicity were fired and replaced with Serbs. dr. RadivojePapovic was appointed a new Rector, whereas dr. Miso Doslic and dr. StanojeDogancic were appointed as vice-rectors.<sup>36</sup>

The Working Association of University of Prishtina was another body affected by “temporary measures” released by the Parliament of Serbia. By the decision of 26 November 1990, the General Secretary of University, DestanHalimi, was discharged and replaced by RankoGjokic. The successive measures played an essential role on ruining the University of Prishtina, whereas the decision of 27 June 1991 marked the establishment of “legal basis” for a full Serbisation of this university.<sup>37</sup> Based on competences provided by this “legal basis” the compulsory bodied installed in the University of Prishtina continued with systematic firings of Albanian staff within the University and replacing them with Serbs. Such measures were exercised in all academic units, especially in the Faculty of Law, Economics, Agriculture, Arts, Philology, Philosophic, Construction, and Metallurgy in Mitrovica.<sup>38</sup> The replacement of staff in faculties was followed by firing of Albanian lecturers. The harsh discriminatory measures marked the last phase of final ruining of education in Albanian language in the University of Prishtina.

Under the pretext of not recognizing the Serbian state, the “compulsory bodies” fired over 140 Albanian employees from the University, whereas only within the Faculty of Medicine were fired over than 180 lecturers of Albanian nationality. The trend of firing of Albanian lecturers was

<sup>34</sup> *Službeni Glasnik SRS*, No. 38, Beograd, 27.VI.1991.

<sup>35</sup> HajrullahKoliqi, *Mbijetesa e Universitetit të Prishtinës 1991-1994*, Prishtinë, 2013, p. 25-26.

<sup>36</sup> H. Koliqi, *40 vjet të tempullit tonë të diturisë*, Prishtinë, 2010, p.40.

<sup>37</sup> H. Koliqi, *Mbijetesa e Universitetit të Prishtinës*, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Op.cit., p. 28-30.

extended even within the High Schools of University of Prishtina, whereas the peak of violence and discrimination was reached on 18 November 1991 when the so-called “Provincial Fund for High Education in Kosovo and Metohija” ceased the financing of Albanian education and lecturers in High Schools in Kosovo. Moreover, an arbitrary decision issued by directors of Serbian nationality banned Albanian lecturers to enter into buildings of High Schools in Kosovo.<sup>39</sup> The University of Prishtina for a long time has been labelled as a nest of Albanian nationalism, particularly social sciences, which according to Serbian regime – were encouraging the wave of Albanian nationalism. In fact the Serbian regime provided working opportunities only to these lecturers who accepted the Serb curricula or who accepted the Serb government when in Kosovo a parallel political system was under establishment. Although, the majority of Albanian lecturers were inclined towards the resistance against the Serbian rule, there were also some lecturers who accepted these measures or who supported the policy exercised by Serbian regime. Amongst 1000 Albanian lecturers within the University of Prishtina the “compulsory measures” of Serbian government were accepted only by few of them. These measures have been accepted by: dr. Emin Pllana and dr. Ismet Dermaku—the Faculty of Philosophy, Sadik Berisha and Halim Hashani—the Faculty of Philology, Vjollca Lila—the Faculty of Math Sciences, dr. Syrja Pupovci, dr. Habib Hashani, dr. Alajdin Alishani and dr. Hamdi Vraniqi—the Faculty of Law; dr. Isak Mustafa, dr. Binak Maxharri—Economics, dr. Xhevat Nurboja and dr. Tefik Shala—the Faculty of Medicine; Nebih Muriqi and Muhamet Shala—the Faculty of Arts, dr. Mustafedauti, dr. Gani Muhaxheri—the Faculty of Agriculture, Abudurrahman Turbedari—High School of Prishtina and Adem Peci—High School of Mitrovica.<sup>40</sup> By other words only 27 lecturers of Albanian nationality accepted the “compulsory measures” and continued their work in the Serbian University of Prishtina.<sup>41</sup> The Students Centre of University of Prishtina was also affected by arbitrary measures. The “compulsory measures” installed in this institution marked firing of 250 employees of Albanian nationality and their replacement with Serbs and Montenegrins during the period November 1991 – June 1992. Such measures followed by a grave political situation in Kosovo, when all Albanian students were evicted from their teaching buildings, caused no any Albanian student to appear for residence in those dormitories, whereas their rooms were occupied by Serb and Montenegrin student or by refugees from other Yugoslav regions.<sup>42</sup> At the time when the Serbian regime was exercising barbaric measures for a final destruction of teaching in Albanian language, the lecturers of Albanian nationality through their associations attempted to challenge the Serbian actions.

The Association of University Lecturers and Scientific Researchers of Kosovo as well and the Independent Syndicate of University, took over the task to organize and coordinate the resistance against the destruction of University of Prishtina (teaching in Albanian), particularly from September 1991. Regardless all difficulties the Albanian lecturers organized enrolling exams for new students in August 1991. In addition, many efforts were made at the political level for the return of Albanian students to their teaching facilities. In the spirit of a peaceful resistance on 31

<sup>39</sup>Op.cit., p. 32.

<sup>40</sup>Bujar Dugolli, *1 Tetori i kthesës – Lëvizja studentore 1977-1999*, Prishtinë, 2013. p. 25.

<sup>41</sup>Op.cit., p. 28.

<sup>42</sup>H. Koliqi, *Mbijetesa e Universitetit të Prishtinës*, p. 33.

August 1991 the Kosovo Education Working Group (Fehmi Agani, Musli Bajraktari and Rexhep Osmani) held talks with the delegation of Serbian government headed by Budimir Kosutic. The Albanian delegation requested the abolition of compulsory measures against the Albanian school. No progress was made from these talks.<sup>43</sup> However, the efforts of Albanians to return to faculty and high school facilities did not stop. On 23 September 1991, the scientific staff of the University of Prishtina organized a protest before the Faculty of Philosophy, attended by about 20,000 citizens.<sup>44</sup> In October 1992, massive student demonstrations were organized against the rule of Belgrade and its educational policies. Demonstrations were organized by the Albanian Student Union. This demonstration was attended by 50,000 demonstrators, who faced fierce Serbian police. The main demand of demonstrators was the withdrawal of Belgrade-designed programs for Kosovo's middle and high education institutions.<sup>45</sup> Having failed to return to the institutional buildings of higher education, Kosovo intelligentsia organized university teaching in private facilities that were recognized as home-schools, which exercised their activity until the outbreak of armed conflict in Kosovo.

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<sup>43</sup>B. Dugolli, *1 Tetori...*, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup>Op.cit., p.28.

<sup>45</sup>Op.cit., p. 28.