Research Article

THE RECEPTION OF KOSOVO ALBANIAN REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO AND ALBANIA, 1999

History

Keywords: Kosovo Albanian refugees, internally displaced persons, forced displacement, burden-sharing, humanitarian evacuation, host communities, humanitarian intervention, Blace, Kukës, Kaluđerski Laz.

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Abstract

In 1998–1999, and above all in the spring of 1999, Serbian and Yugoslav forces expelled more than 860,000 Albanians from Kosovo in the course of the genocide committed against the Albanian population, a qualification that the article grounds historically and distinguishes from the judicial record. The expelled were received in Albania and Macedonia as refugees and in Montenegro, then a republic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as internally displaced persons. The article asks how reception was organized and measured in the three territories and what their comparison shows about humanitarian assistance, international burden-sharing and host communities. It applies a comparative source-critical method to five categories of sources, including archival documents, and records every figure by territory, date, population category and measurement category before comparing it with another. Four findings emerge. First, figures of the same category largely agree, and most divergences arise from different objects of measurement, although some sources contain errors. Second, burden-sharing took asymmetric forms: Macedonia, whose government closed the border while demanding that the burden be shared, obtained the evacuation of almost 96,000 refugees to third countries, whereas Albania and Montenegro received mainly funding, logistics and camps, and in all three territories private houses sheltered a large part of the expelled, a contribution that no sharing mechanism counted. Third, the evidence from the camps shows that the expelled had not fled the bombing, while it leaves open whether the bombing accelerated the expulsion. Fourth, the killings at Kaluđerski Laz, attributed by the Montenegrin prosecution to members of the Yugoslav Army, show that those displaced within the same state remained exposed to violence. The article contributes to the historiography of the Kosovo war and to research on refugee protection, humanitarian governance and humanitarian intervention.

1. INTRODUCTION

During 1998–1999, and above all in the spring of 1999, Serbian and Yugoslav forces committed genocide against the Albanian civilian population of Kosovo through mass killings, systematic violence and the expulsion of more than 860,000 people from their country, one of the largest mass expulsions in Europe since the Second World War. According to Human Rights Watch (2001, Executive Summary section), 525,787 people from Kosovo had arrived in neighboring countries and territories within three weeks of the start of the bombing by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and in total Serbian and Yugoslav forces expelled 862,979 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, in addition to several hundred thousand internally displaced persons. The expelled were received along three corridors: in Macedonia, where the Blace border crossing and the Stenkovec and Cegrane camps became the most visible symbol of the crisis; in Montenegro, a republic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) where, in several localities, the displaced outnumbered the local population; and in Albania, which received the largest number, in camps, collective centers and private houses across the country. Section 2.3 sets out the grounds on which the article qualifies these events as genocide and the distinction between that historical qualification, contemporary statements and the judicial record.

The reception sites were documented intensively. Within a few months, human rights organizations, intergovernmental institutions, aid agencies, monitoring missions and, later, public health researchers produced a large body of reports, assessments and statistics, which contains visible divergences: on the number of people in each camp, on the number of victims at Blace and, in Montenegro, on the number of displaced Albanians killed at Kaluđerski Laz. In the sources consulted, these divergences have not been treated comparatively for the three corridors, and the scholarship on the crisis, which has examined it mainly through the Macedonian case and the institutional performance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NATO, offers no common measure for comparing reception in the three territories.

The article asks how the reception of the expelled was organized and measured in Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, and what a comparison of the three corridors shows about humanitarian assistance, international burden-sharing and the contribution of host communities. It pursues three aims: to reconstruct the chronology and scale of reception site by site; to compare the divergent figures by recording, for each, what it counts, where, when and by which method, and to distinguish explicable divergences from errors in the sources; and to read the comparative evidence through the literature on burden-sharing, humanitarian governance, host communities and humanitarian intervention (Section 2.2).

The contribution of the article builds on existing work and extends it in three ways. Empirically, it compares the three corridors, including the Montenegrin one, which the literature has largely left aside, and adds archival voices of the host state, the United States and UNHCR: the address of President Kiro Gligorov to the Macedonian Parliament of 15 April 1999, the memorandum of National Security Advisor Samuel Berger of 15 April 1999, the monthly report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) of 20 April 1999 and the letters of High Commissioner Sadako Ogata of 22 April 1999. Methodologically, it applies an explicit procedure for recording figures produced during a mass displacement and presents them in comparative tables that separate arrivals from stocks, capacity from occupancy, refugees from internally displaced persons, and evacuation from other forms of relocation. Analytically, it builds on the finding that first asylum in Macedonia was made conditional on burden-sharing (Barutciski & Suhrke, 2001; Long, 2010; Suhrke et al., 2000) and on the acknowledgment that most refugees were sheltered in private houses (UNHCR, 2000a; Wiles et al., 2000) by showing, across the three territories, how the form of burden-sharing differed by corridor and how far the contribution of host households remained outside it; it identifies the protection gap of those displaced within the FRY, shown by the killings at Kaluđerski Laz; and it brings the evidence gathered in the camps to bear on the debate over the effects of the NATO intervention.

Section 2 reviews the sources and scholarship, sets out the theoretical framework and defines the terms; Section 3 describes the sources and the method; Section 4 presents the results by corridor and problem, with the reported figures assembled in Tables 1–6; Section 5 discusses what the comparative evidence shows; and Section 6 draws the conclusions. The Appendix classifies the sources.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Sources and Scholarship on the Reception of 1999

The record of the crisis falls into the five categories of sources defined in Section 3. Institutional and operational reports include, from the weeks of the crisis, the reports of Amnesty International on Macedonia and on the road to Albania (1999a, 1999b, 1999c), the report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE, 1999), the updates of UNHCR (1999a, 1999b, 1999c), the analysis of the monitoring mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR, 1999), the fact sheets of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Humanitarian Response, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA, 1999a–1999e) and the updates of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, 1999a). From 2000–2001 come UNHCR's independent evaluation (Suhrke et al., 2000), the evaluation commissioned by the British Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC; Wiles et al., 2000), the study of relations between NATO and humanitarian organizations by the Watson Institute at Brown University (Minear et al., 2000), the World Refugee Survey of the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c) and UNHCR's syntheses in its *Global Report 1999* and *The State of the World's Refugees 2000* (UNHCR, 2000a, 2000b). These documents are at once sources and evidence of how the institutions perceived and evaluated their own response, and their attention falls on camps, evacuations and coordination, the parts of the response that they financed and managed.

Scholarly studies in public health and statistics include an overview of the response in Macedonia (Donev et al., 2002), an account of reception by the Albanian Ministry of Health (Kondaj, 2002), the surveillance of communicable diseases in the Macedonian camps (Brusin, 2000), the vaccination campaign of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 1999), studies of the evacuation by the International Organization for Migration (IOM; MacPherson et al., 2000, 2002; Szilard et al., 2002), the surveys of MSF and its epidemiological branch, Epicentre, in Rožaje and Kukës (Brown et al., 2000; MSF, 1999b), the population-based assessment of human rights abuses conducted with Physicians for Human Rights (Iacopino et al., 2001; PHR, 1999), the statistical analyses of the Morina border registers (Ball, 2000; Ball et al., 2002) and qualitative studies of refugees in southern Albania (Drumm et al., 2001, 2003). They are more precise methodologically than the reports, but they often reproduce the agencies' population figures without measuring them, so that the origin of each figure has to be traced.

Judicial and human rights documentation concerns above all Kaluđerski Laz, reconstructed from the publication of the Centre for Civic Education (CGO) in Podgorica (Vukanović, 2019) and from later reports (Human Rights Action, 2024; Marinović, 2026), together with the judicial record discussed in Section 2.3. Albanian and host-country historiography includes the proceedings of the conference of the Institute of History "Ali Hadri" in Prishtina, published in 2025, with papers on the humanitarian organization El Hilal in Macedonia (Sadiku, 2025), the Albanian-language media of Macedonia (Idrizi, 2025) and the schooling of displaced pupils in Montenegro (Draga, 2025), and a study of the treatment of refugees in Montenegro in the 1990s

(Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025). A paper based on the archive of a participating organization carries the authority of direct access to data and the interest of documenting that organization's contribution, and it is used here as complementary.

In the broader historiography of the 1998–1999 war, the expulsion occupies a recognized place but is often treated as the humanitarian background to the military and diplomatic events, the air campaign, the Rambouillet negotiations and the postwar order; the most extensive international inquiry, the report of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo (2000), assesses it within its analysis of the conflict and the international response. The individual camps, with their own chronology and population, have received less attention than the overall number of the expelled. The institutional evaluations look at the crisis from the agencies and the Macedonian case, the public health studies from the camps they surveyed and Albanian historiography from the solidarity of Albanian society; the Montenegrin corridor is marginal in all of them.

2.2 Burden-Sharing, Humanitarian Governance, Host Communities and Humanitarian Intervention

The theoretical framework draws on four strands of scholarship. The first concerns international burden-sharing in refugee emergencies. Suhrke (1998) examined why burden-sharing had produced much more modest results in the refugee field than in other areas of international cooperation and framed the problem as a tension between collective and national logics of action, and Barutciski and Suhrke (2001) read the Kosovo crisis as a key case for innovations in protection and burden-sharing. UNHCR's independent evaluation concluded that in Macedonia "first asylum was already made conditional by the internationally supported HEP" (Suhrke et al., 2000, p. 95, para. 473), the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP) through which refugees were transferred to third countries, and UNHCR's later review of border closures, which used Macedonia as a case study, found that the decision to open the border "was made conditional upon burden-sharing by the international community" (Long, 2010, para. 238). The legal literature on mass influx has observed that admission in such emergencies is often accompanied by a de facto suspension of all but the most immediate protections (Durieux & McAdam, 2004), and Fitzpatrick (2000) took the HEP as an example of the appeal and adaptability of temporary protection in arguing for its formalization.

The second strand treats humanitarian action as a form of governance. Barnett (2013, p. 379) defines humanitarian governance as "the increasingly organized and internationalized attempt to save the lives, enhance the welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable populations" and asks who governs and through which techniques, and Agier (2008/2011) reads the refugee camp as a site where the care dispensed also serves to control, filter and confine, while camps in time become places of social and political life. This strand makes it possible to read the figures examined in Section 4 as instruments as well as records. The third strand concerns the populations that receive the displaced. Chambers (1986) showed that the costs and benefits of a refugee presence are unevenly distributed within host societies, with the poorer among the hosts

often the hidden losers of refugee programs, and Brun (2010) has shown how the categories of host and displaced, and the rights attached to them, are formed through relationships of hospitality.

The fourth strand concerns humanitarian intervention and international responsibility, a debate for which Kosovo became the defining case. In the words of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), the NATO intervention of 1999 "brought the controversy to its most intense head" (ICISS, 2001, p. VII), and the report in which that Commission formulated the responsibility to protect was written in its aftermath. The legal debate turned on the absence of Security Council authorization. Simma (1999) argued that the threat of force against the FRY in October 1998 breached the UN Charter, while observing that only a thin line separated NATO's action from legality; Cassese (1999) agreed that the action was illegal but asked whether a customary rule permitting forcible humanitarian countermeasures under stringent conditions might emerge from it; the Independent International Commission on Kosovo (2000) judged the intervention illegal, for lack of prior Security Council approval, yet legitimate; and Wheeler (2000) read the interventions of the 1990s as the expression of a solidarist conception of international society whose limits Kosovo exposed.

Within this debate the expelled occupied an ambiguous place. The protection of the Albanian population was invoked to justify the intervention, and the return of the expelled became its declared objective; critics argued that the bombing had led to a rapid escalation of the expulsions it was meant to prevent (Chomsky, 1999), and Roberts (1999) asked whether the bombing had made things worse for the Albanian majority. Strategic studies read the expulsion as an instrument of war. Posen (2000) argued that it served to demonstrate that NATO attacks would produce more refugees and that refugees "could also be used tactically, to influence the attitude of Macedonia" (p. 53), and Greenhill (2010, 2019) analyzed the Kosovo case as coercive engineered migration, an attempt to use mass displacement as a political weapon against NATO. This literature discusses the expelled mostly as an aggregate, the "exodus", and rarely examines what the record of their reception shows.

Read together, the four strands explain how the crisis of the camps was managed and how the intervention was justified and contested, but they seldom examine the record of reception across the three territories. The article uses them to examine four propositions: that the record of reception bears on the debate over the effects of the intervention; that the form of burden-sharing in each corridor depended on the bargaining position of the host state; that the burden carried by host households remained outside the accounting of burden-sharing; and that the protection available to the expelled depended on whether they had crossed an international border.

2.3 Terms: Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and the Qualification of Genocide

Three terms require definition. A refugee, in the sense of the 1951 Convention, is a person who is outside the country of his or her nationality owing to a well-founded fear of persecution (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, art. 1A(2)). Those who fled from Kosovo into Albania and Macedonia had crossed an international border and are referred to here as

refugees, although their status differed: Albania granted them asylum without conditions (Suhrke et al., 2000, p. x), whereas Macedonia, which was unwilling to grant unconditional asylum, gave those registered with host families a "humanitarian assisted status" that protected them against refoulement (Amnesty International, 1999b, p. 4). Those who fled into Montenegro remained within the FRY and were internally displaced persons in the sense of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, persons forced to flee their homes "who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 1998, Introduction, para. 2). Contemporary sources generally called them "refugees", and the term is kept for them only in quotation marks. Macedonia refers to the state that in 1999 was the Republic of Macedonia, referred to in UN documents as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and named North Macedonia since 2019.

The qualification of the events of 1998–1999 as genocide requires four levels to be distinguished: contemporary institutional statements, the legal elements of the crime, judicial determinations and the historical qualification on which the article rests; later political statements form a separate tier. Contemporary statements were made while the expulsion was under way. On 7 April 1999, before the UN Commission on Human Rights, Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared that the Commission was meeting "under the dark cloud of the crime of genocide", that "the signs are that it may be happening, once again, once more, in Kosovo", and that the violence of the Serbian authorities in Kosovo "appears to have one aim: to expel or kill as many ethnic Albanians in Kosovo as possible" (Annan, 1999, paras. 30, 32–33). The statement was a warning, conditional in form and made, as Annan noted, without independent observers on the ground; it records how the purpose of the violence was perceived at the United Nations and is not a finding. The PACE report of April 1999 belongs to the same level (Section 4.1). Later statements express the political recognition of the qualification in Kosovo: the resolution on the genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes of the former Serbian state regime, adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo on 16 May 2019 with 79 votes in favor and none against ("Votohet rezoluta," 2019); the statement of President Vjosa Osmani, on the 25th anniversary of the Reçak massacre, that the intention of the Milošević regime had been "to commit crimes against humanity and genocide against the people of Kosovo" (Associated Press, 2024, para. 5); and the call of William Walker, head of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission in 1998–1999, on the Government of Kosovo to sue Serbia for genocide (Fazliu, 2023).

The legal elements are set by Article II of the 1948 Convention: any of five acts (killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group) "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such" (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, art. II). The destruction must be physical or biological; an attack only on the cultural or sociological characteristics of a group does not fall within the definition (*Prosecutor v. Krstić*, 2004, para. 25). Deportation or displacement,

even by force, "is not necessarily equivalent to destruction of that group", although acts of "ethnic cleansing" may indicate the specific intent behind acts prohibited by Article II (*Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*, 2007, para. 190). Where intent is inferred from a pattern of conduct, the International Court of Justice requires that the pattern be "such that it could only point to the existence of such intent" (*Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*, 2007, para. 373), that is, that genocidal intent be the only inference that could reasonably be drawn from the acts (*Croatia v. Serbia*, 2015, para. 148).

Judicial determinations have not addressed genocide in Kosovo at the international level. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicted Slobodan Milošević for the crimes committed in Kosovo on counts of deportation, forcible transfer, murder and persecutions as crimes against humanity and of murder as a violation of the laws or customs of war, without a count of genocide, which was charged only for Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Prosecutor v. Milošević*, 2001); the proceedings ended without judgment after his death in 2006. In the case of six senior Serbian and Yugoslav officials, the Trial Chamber found that the NATO bombing and the activities of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) "were not the cause of over 700,000 people moving en masse both within Kosovo and then across the border" and that the crimes followed "a clearly discernible pattern" and "a common purpose" (*Prosecutor v. Milutinović et al.*, 2009, Vol. 3, paras. 45–46). The Appeals Chamber held that "the only reasonable inference is that a common purpose to forcibly displace a number of Kosovo Albanians existed" (*Prosecutor v. Šainović et al.*, 2014, para. 654), and senior officials were convicted of deportation, forcible transfer, murder and persecutions as crimes against humanity in that case and in the case of Vlastimir Đorđević (*Prosecutor v. Đorđević*, 2014; *Prosecutor v. Šainović et al.*, 2014). The prosecution's public statements give no reason for not charging genocide, which may reflect a judgment about the evidence of the specific intent of individual accused; none of these judgments contains a finding that genocide did not occur, and no international court has ruled on whether genocide was committed in Kosovo.

Within Kosovo, local prosecutors charged genocide in four cases before the courts operating under UN administration in 1999–2000, and none ended in a final conviction for genocide (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Mission in Kosovo [OSCE Mission in Kosovo], 2002, p. 34). In the case of Miroslav Vučković, the District Court of Mitrovica convicted the accused of genocide in January 2001, and the Supreme Court of Kosovo reversed the verdict later that year on the grounds that the facts established at trial did not support a conviction for genocide (OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2002, pp. 14–15). The decision was reported in the press as a general finding that the violence of 1999 had aimed at the departure of the Albanians rather than at their destruction, but the international prosecutor described it as limited to the evidence concerning three villages, and international judicial officials stated that the court had made no general finding on genocide (Berisha, 2001). The courts that examined the evidence thus read it as showing a purpose of expulsion and control, which the ICTY formulated as a common purpose to displace the Albanian population by force (*Prosecutor v. Šainović et al.*, 2014, para. 654) and, in the Đorđević case, as a purpose of "modifying the ethnic balance in Kosovo to ensure Serbian

control over the province" (*Prosecutor v. Đorđević*, 2014, para. 4); strategic studies read the expulsion in similar terms (Greenhill, 2010; Posen, 2000).

The qualification used in this article is historical. It is offered as a judgment on the weight of the evidence, not as a finding to the standard that a court applies to the guilt of an individual or to the responsibility of a state, and the part of the group concerned is the Albanian population of Kosovo. It rests on three elements. The first is the commission of acts corresponding to Article II(a) and (b), killings and serious bodily and mental harm inflicted on members of the group, recorded in the camps in the weeks of the expulsion (Section 4.4) and established in the judicial record, where the crimes found in a single case included the murder of some 724 Kosovo Albanian residents (*Prosecutor v. Đorđević*, 2014, para. 4). The second is the scale and organization of the violence, which the ICTY found to have followed a common purpose, which the Morina registers show as a sequence of regional waves (Section 4.7) and which the Independent International Commission on Kosovo (2000) described as systematic and deliberately organized. The third is the combination of these acts with the removal and destruction of identity documents (Section 4.5), which made return more difficult for those who survived. A purpose of expulsion and an intent to destroy are not mutually exclusive: the same operations that removed the population from the territory killed and gravely harmed members of the group, and the International Court of Justice has recognized that acts of ethnic cleansing may indicate the specific intent. The courts that examined the question applied the standards of individual criminal responsibility; the historiography that characterizes the violence as genocide (Ronayne, 2004) reads the same pattern as a whole. On that reading, which this article adopts, Serbian and Yugoslav forces committed genocide against the Albanians of Kosovo in 1998–1999. It is stated as a historical qualification and kept distinct from the judicial record, in which no international court has made such a determination.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article follows a comparative source-critical approach, confronting data from five categories of sources that differ in nature, time of production and purpose: (1) institutional and operational reports produced during the crisis or in its immediate aftermath, including the real-time reports of April–June 1999, which have the advantage of temporal proximity and the limitations of estimates made under emergency conditions, and the institutional evaluations and syntheses of 2000–2001, together with UNHCR's later review of border closures; contemporary field reports of the press are grouped with them; (2) subsequent scholarly studies, mainly in public health and statistics, which are more precise methodologically but often take their population figures from the agencies; (3) judicial and human rights documentation, concerning above all the Kaluđerski Laz proceedings and the judicial record on the crimes committed in Kosovo; (4) Albanian historiography and the academic literature of the host countries, which completes the perspective from within without necessarily following statistically controlled methods; and (5) digitized archival documents from the United Nations Archives, the Clinton Presidential Library, the archived website of the U.S. Department of State and the record of the British House of

Commons, read from digital copies with the archive's reference codes, which give the voices of state and institutional actors in real time. The Appendix assigns each source to one category.

A source was included if it was produced by an identifiable institution or author, if it contained a figure or an observation specific to at least one receiving territory or to the evacuation from them, with an identifiable date or period, and if its text could be consulted. Each source was classified by its producer and the time of its production; sources that combine roles, such as human rights reports produced during the crisis, are classified by the use made of them here. Figures relayed at second hand were traced, where possible, to the document that first produced them and are cited as secondary citations. Works used only for the conceptual and legal framework of Section 2 (scholarship on burden-sharing, humanitarian governance, host communities, internal displacement and intervention, international legal instruments, the case law cited for legal standards and press reports of later political statements) are not part of the empirical corpus. Where a study could be consulted only through its published abstract, it is cited only for findings stated there. The reference list gives a DOI or web address for every source available online. Some documents could not be consulted (the protection chapter of UNHCR's independent evaluation, the CDC report on the Fort Dix reception center, the study of the Kavajë camp and Appendix A of the PHR report) and are not cited for data.

Counting a population displaced by force within a few days is never a merely technical process: every figure carries behind it an object of measurement and an actor with a particular interest. Each figure was therefore recorded with six attributes: territory; location (border crossing, camp, municipality, district or whole territory); date or period; population category (refugees who had crossed an international border, or persons displaced within the FRY); measurement category; and source, with the relaying source where the figure is known only at second hand. Seven measurement categories are distinguished. *Arrivals* are the number of people who entered a territory over a period, that is, a flow, marked as registered when they come from a border or administrative register and as estimated otherwise. A *stock* is the number of people present in a territory on a given date, counted or estimated; where a source does not state whether a total refers to arrivals or to a stock, this is indicated. *Capacity* refers to the places planned or reported for a site, and *occupancy* to the number of people counted or estimated in a site on a given date. *Evacuation* refers to departures to third countries under the HEP. *Other relocation* covers transfers within the region under the Humanitarian Transfer Programme, forced transfers by host authorities and onward movement between territories. *Victim counts* refer to persons killed or wounded. Tables 1–6 report these attributes; the population category is given in the notes to each table.

Two rules follow. Two figures are compared only when their territory, date or period, population category and measurement category coincide. Where sources give different figures for the same object, none is silently selected: each is presented with its source, and where a source errs or contradicts itself, this is recorded as an error of the source rather than as an explicable divergence.

4. RESULTS: THE CAMPS BY CORRIDOR

4.1 Blace: The Border Crossing and the First Humanitarian Crisis

From the end of March 1999, tens of thousands of people were held in the no-man's land between the two border posts at Blace, in mud, without shelter, drinking water or sanitation, while access was initially denied both to UNHCR and to most aid organizations (Amnesty International, 1999b, p. 5). The estimates of their number differ in date and definition, from "up to 65,000" (Amnesty International, 1999b, p. 5; USCR, 2000b) and "at least 65,000" in the no-man's land of the border area on 6 April (UNHCR, 1999a, para. 15) to 40,000 people without shelter for a week (Wiles et al., 2000, p. xvii); they share an order of magnitude and are not merged into a single figure here (Table 1). On the night of 3 April, the Macedonian authorities moved 10,000–15,000 people from Blace to Albania and 1,000–2,000 to Turkey, without UNHCR support and with families separated (USCR, 2000b). In the categories defined in Section 3, this was a forced transfer, to be kept separate from the evacuations later organized under the HEP (see Section 4.4), and it was the first episode in which the crossing functioned as a point of departure for further displacement as well as a point of blockage.

The government's reasons were set out by the head of state. In his address to the Macedonian Parliament on 15 April 1999, transmitted four days later to the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, President Kiro Gligorov stated that the government had assessed the anticipated wave of 400,000 refugees as "a destabilizing factor for the national security of the Republic of Macedonia", that the Ministry of Defense had prepared a plan for transferring the refugees through "the so-called corridor to the Republic of Albania, as their nation state", and that this had led to "half way solutions of settling refugees in homes, then refusal to set up refugee camps and ultimately the situation in Blace" (Gligorov, 1999, p. 4). Macedonia, in his words, "was simply unable to take in more refugees and it called upon the international community to take its part of the burden sharing", while the government "did not always agree on building refugee camp, but took to the idea which some Ministers insisted on of accommodating refugees in homes" (Gligorov, 1999, pp. 5–6).

The address has to be read for what it is. Gligorov spoke as head of state in a parliamentary system in which executive power lay with a government whose divisions he described, and he spoke after the events, partly in criticism of that government. Read with this caution, the document still changes the reading of Blace. It places the conditions in the no-man's land in a sequence of political decisions (a security assessment, a corridor plan toward Albania and a refusal of camps) and it links them explicitly to a demand for burden-sharing. That the closure functioned as a means of pressure is an inference, but it is the inference that UNHCR's later review of border closures drew for this case, concluding that closing the border "was a question of political security, not one of material capacity" (Long, 2010, para. 202), and it is supported by the government's decision to close the border again for a short time in early May, when the rate of evacuation slowed (Long, 2010, paras. 208, 231). The plan of a "corridor" also explains the transfer of 3 April as the implementation of a concept prepared in advance, in which the Albanians of Kosovo were treated

as the population of another "nation state" rather than as refugees entitled to asylum where they had arrived.

The number of the dead at Blace remains an open historiographical question, and none of the available figures is a nominal count (Table 1). USCR relays an MSF report of up to 11 deaths by 4 April (USCR, 2000b); Amnesty International noted that a complete toll would probably never be established and that most humanitarian organizations on the ground estimated the number of victims at between 30 and 40 (Amnesty International, 1999b, pp. 5–6); and a 2025 conference paper gives 57 refugees dead, citing the retrospective 2012 publication of the humanitarian organization El Hilal (El Hilal, 2012, as cited in Sadiku, 2025, p. 633). The three figures (a report interrupted on 4 April, an estimate gathered from uncoordinated reporting and a figure published by a participating organization 13 years later) have different origins, cutoff dates and methods, and they cannot be reconciled without a nominal register that the sources consulted do not provide.

The PACE report, drafted while the crisis was under way, described the violations against the civilian population as ones that "appear to aim at destroying its collective identity" (PACE, 1999, para. 64). The formula records how an intergovernmental body perceived the violence at the time. It is a contemporary description, not a legal determination, and the qualification discussed in Section 2.3 does not rest on it.

Table 1

Macedonia: Reported Figures for Blace and the Camp Network, April–July 1999

Location	Date or period	Measurement category	Reported figure	Source
Blace (no-man's land)	End of March–early April	Occupancy (estimate, "up to")	Up to 65,000	Amnesty International (1999b, p. 5); USCR (2000b), for 3 April
Border area (no-man's land)	6 April	Occupancy (estimate, "at least"); other relocation	At least 65,000; some 14,000 already moved to transit centers	UNHCR (1999a, paras. 13, 15)
Blace	One week, undated	Occupancy (estimate, without shelter)	40,000	Wiles et al. (2000, p. xvii)
Blace → Albania and Turkey	Night of 3 April	Other relocation (forced transfer)	10,000–15,000 to Albania; 1,000–2,000 to Turkey	USCR (2000b)
Blace	To 4 April	Victim count (report)	Up to 11 deaths	MSF, as relayed by USCR (2000b)
Blace	Crisis period	Victim count (estimate)	30–40 deaths	Amnesty International (1999b, pp. 5–6)
Blace	Undated (published 2012)	Victim count (estimate)	57 deaths	El Hilal (2012), as cited in Sadiku (2025, p. 633)
Brazda (Stenkovec 1) / Stenkovec 2 / Neprošteno	2 April	Capacity (planned)	27,000 / 12,000 / 3,000	Amnesty International (1999b, p. 11)
Brazda	Morning of 7 April	Occupancy (estimate)	Some 30,000	UNHCR (1999b)
Stenkovec 1 / Stenkovec 2	May	Occupancy (UNHCR data)	About 30,000 / about 32,000	Donev et al. (2002, pp. 185–186)
Cegrane	End of April (approval) / beginning of May	Capacity (planned / reported)	15,000 / up to 50,000	PACE (1999, para. 42); OSCE/ODIHR (1999)
Cegrane	May / June	Occupancy	About 42,000 / 43,000	Donev et al. (2002, pp. 185–186); Amnesty International (1999a, p. 12)
Cegrane	Start date not given, to July	Occupancy (decline)	From 45,000 to 6,000	British Council (2000)
Cegrane	Undated	Occupancy (secondary relay; list of camps)	51,000 in the camp and over 4,000 in village houses; 69,000	Iseini (2015), as cited in Sadiku (2025, pp. 640–641); Sadiku (2025, pp. 640–641)

Location	Date or period	Measurement category	Reported figure	Source
Seven camps and Blace	April–July	Occupancy (peak); total persons passing through	Over 120,000 at peak; nearly 200,000 passing through	Brusin (2000)
Eight camps around Skopje and Tetovo	End of May	Occupancy (peak)	111,500	USCR (2000b)
Macedonia, whole territory	June (peace agreement)	Stock: total, camps, host families	247,000 (108,400 in camps; 148,600 with host families)	Amnesty International (1999a, p. 12)
Macedonia, whole territory	Undated	Arrivals (total of entries); host families; camps; evacuation	379,523 entries; 154,989 with families; 112,434 in nine camps; 92,100 to third countries	Sadiku (2025, pp. 627–628, 637)

Note. All persons listed had crossed an international border (see Section 2.3). Capacities measure places, not people. The two subtotals given by Amnesty International add up to 257,000, not 247,000 (see Section 4.4); the three subtotals of the El Hilal data add up to 359,523, not 379,523 (see Section 5.4). MSF = Médecins Sans Frontières.

4.2 Stenkovec and Brazda: The First Camps Built by NATO

The first organized camps were set up overnight on 2 April 1999 by NATO troops: Brazda, with an initial capacity of 27,000 (later renamed Stenkovec 1); Stenkovec itself, with an initial capacity of 12,000 (renamed Stenkovec 2); and Neprošteno, with a capacity of 3,000 (Amnesty International, 1999b, p. 11). The OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission independently confirms this network of camps, set up "near the border at Blace, on the way to Skopje (Stenkovac, Brazda) and near the FRY border (Radusa), and between Skopje and Tetovo (Bojane)" (OSCE/ODIHR, 1999, Part I, Chapter 2). By the morning of 7 April, some 30,000 people were believed to be at Brazda (UNHCR, 1999b). Within a few weeks the camps became a network of seven destination camps plus the Blace transit camp, with over 120,000 people at the peak and nearly 200,000 passing through them from April to July (Brusin, 2000); USCR counts eight camps around Skopje and Tetovo, with a peak of 111,500 people at the end of May, most of them built by NATO and administered by it until the handover to UNHCR and nongovernmental organizations at the end of April (USCR, 2000b). The difference between seven and eight camps most likely reflects the treatment of Blace as a transit camp, and the difference between a peak population and the number of people who passed through the camps is a difference of measurement category (Table 1).

The camps opened at the pace dictated by the border rather than by a plan, which is why their capacity and population figures moved so fast in the first weeks. Alongside them there was a second network, which the international documentation records only as a problem: the Albanian-language media of Macedonia (the television stations Art and Koha, the radio stations Visari and Fama, and the newspapers Flaka and Fakti) reunited families separated at the crossing points of Blace, Jažince and Tabanovce (Idrizi, 2025). This layer of reception returns with the host families in all three territories (see Section 4.9).

During the visit of the PACE rapporteurs to Stenkovec 1 (Brazda), Radusha and Blace on 21 April, the average space recorded was 10.9 square meters per person, whereas UNHCR recommended about 30 square meters (PACE, 1999, Appendix I, para. 12; Appendix II). UNHCR data summarized by Donev et al. (2002, pp. 185–186) give approximately 30,000 people in Stenkovec 1 and 32,000 in Stenkovec 2 in May, which means over 60,000 people in two fields near Skopje, in about a third of the space that UNHCR's own standard considered necessary.

Stenkovec 1 closed in July, within a few weeks of the June agreement, which shows that for most of its residents the camp was a forced wait for return; Stenkovec 2 then received Roma and Serbs displaced from Kosovo and closed at the end of 1999 (Donev et al., 2002, p. 185). That the first camps were built within a single night by NATO troops, rather than by UNHCR or a humanitarian organization, reflects the military logistics already present in Macedonia. NATO stated, as Amnesty International relays, that its troops were there to implement a future peace agreement and not as part of the air campaign; Amnesty International objected that NATO was nonetheless a party to the conflict (Amnesty International, 1999b, p. 12). The same convergence of military actors and civilian reception appears in Albania (see Section 4.8).

4.3 Cegrane: Rapid Expansion and the "Numbers Gap"

The Cegrane camp, near Gostivar, was approved by the Macedonian authorities as the seventh camp, with a planned capacity of 15,000 (PACE, 1999, para. 42), and within a few weeks became the largest camp of the crisis. Its figures are of different types (Table 1). Two are capacities, the planned 15,000 and "up to 50,000" when it was built at the beginning of May (OSCE/ODIHR, 1999, Part I, Chapter 2), and measure places rather than people. The occupancy figures for May and June, about 42,000 and 43,000 (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 12; Donev et al., 2002, pp. 185–186), are compatible but may derive from the same UNHCR data, and the decline from 45,000 to 6,000 by July (British Council, 2000) has no stated starting date. Together they are consistent with a camp that held some 42,000–45,000 people in May and June and emptied quickly after the peace agreement. Two further figures, 51,000 in the camp plus over 4,000 in the houses of the village (Iseini, 2015, as cited in Sadiku, 2025, pp. 640–641) and 69,000 in a list of camps (Sadiku, 2025, pp. 640–641), carry no date or declared method and agree neither with the dated figures nor with each other; they are recorded as figures of the source, not as facts of the camp. A population moving at speed produces snapshots rather than series, but this explains only differences between dated figures.

The CDC tent-by-tent survey, conducted between 26 April and 10 May for a vaccination campaign, gives independent confirmation of the camp's scale: Cegrane had the largest number of children under four of the five camps surveyed, 3,227, against 2,623 in Brazda (CDC, 1999). Set against the May occupancy figures, these counts correspond to similar shares of the population in both camps, about 8%, so they confirm the size of Cegrane rather than any particular composition of its population.

A workshop of nongovernmental organizations held in April 2000, summarized by Donev et al. (2002, pp. 184, 186, 188–189), retrospectively assessed the water supply in the camps as above the required minimum of 25 liters per person per day and the health care (outpatient clinics in every camp and mobile hospitals for secondary care) as of high quality, while noting weaknesses in sanitation. Minimum standards did not, however, coincide with everyday life as residents experienced it. At the end of May no hot meals were distributed at Cegrane and Stenkovec, unlike Radusha, and women improvised stoves from cardboard and twigs to cook for extended families of up to 25 people because the tinned food of the ration had become wearisome; Amnesty

International described the Cegrane of June as a camp with "extremely hot and dusty" conditions (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 20; McKinsey, 1999). In McKinsey's report, women appear as organizers of the everyday economy of the tent, and aid officials themselves read this activity as psychological support, since it enabled the women to care for their families (McKinsey, 1999).

4.4 Macedonia: Evacuation, Health and Human Rights

A large share of the refugees in Macedonia were included in the evacuation to third countries coordinated by IOM, which carried out 41,652 fitness-to-travel assessments between 5 April and 25 June 1999 (MacPherson et al., 2002). IOM's priority medical database recorded, up to 20 August 1999, 3,946 cases, of whom 1,032 left Macedonia: 891 for 25 host countries and 141 for Kosovo, according to the study's own table, although the authors' summary gives all 1,032 as evacuated. Among the evacuees in the priority categories, neuropsychiatric conditions accounted for 24.3%, the largest diagnostically defined category, while the heterogeneous group "other" accounted for 29.3% (Szilard et al., 2002, pp. 195–198). The sample is selected by priority criteria, but the weight of this category is consistent with the findings on violence presented below.

Amnesty International documented the implementation of the evacuation inside the camps in a second report on Macedonia. The program was conceived as voluntary and informed, with UNHCR priority categories (medical cases, families with children under five, women more than 26 weeks pregnant, the elderly) and priority for the residents of Stenkovec 1 and 2 (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 14). In practice, the report found a "near total lack of official information in the camp about the HEP", notice usually given only 24 hours before departure, no written information on the status refugees would have in the host countries, and governments that set their own criteria or bypassed UNHCR altogether (Amnesty International, 1999a, pp. 14–17). The principle that "under no circumstances should families be separated" was breached in concrete cases: Germany did not accept family reunification cases (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 13), and the report documents the case of a man, Avdi, whom the Macedonian authorities refused entry at Blace while allowing his wife and children to cross; they were evacuated to Germany within two days, without him (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 19).

UNHCR's independent evaluation notes, from its own institutional standpoint, uneven implementation and refugees who used the program according to their own interests (Suhrke et al., 2000, p. viii). Read alongside Amnesty International's findings, the remark describes people forcibly expelled from their homes who were deciding their family's future within an information vacuum they had not created. The camp was thus also the place where, often within 24 hours, the refugees' destination, status and separation from their relatives were decided by host states applying criteria of their own, by the Macedonian authorities at the border and by a UNHCR that was bypassed from time to time. The same report gives some 247,000 refugees in Macedonia at the time of the peace agreement, with 108,400 in camps and 148,600 with host families, subtotals that add up to 257,000 (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 12): even careful organizations were

counting while the population moved, and their figures must be read as dated estimates rather than registers.

A population-based assessment drawing on a sample of 1,180 household representatives (11,458 members), surveyed from 19 April to 3 May 1999 in 31 camps and collective centers in Macedonia and Albania, found that 68% of respondents reported that their families had been expelled directly from their homes by Serbian forces and that 31% reported specific violations against family members: beatings, killings, torture, forced separation, disappearance, gunshot wounds and sexual violence (Iacopino et al., 2001). "None of the 1,180 individuals interviewed reported that they were fleeing NATO bombing" (Ball, 2000, Introduction section). The reported killings and serious bodily harm against members of the group correspond to the acts listed in Article II(a) and (b) of the Genocide Convention (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948); gathered within weeks of the events by international physicians and statisticians, these data are among the first population-based evidence of those acts (see Sections 2.3 and 5.6).

4.5 Montenegro: Rožaje, Ulcinj and the Host Areas

Montenegro was a constituent republic of the FRY, and those who arrived there from Kosovo crossed no international border; in the terms of Section 2.3 they were internally displaced persons, although the international agencies and most contemporary sources called them "refugees". Their numbers are documented by figures of different kinds (Table 2). As stocks, the OSCE monthly report gives 33,000 on 4 April and 70,000 on 17 April (OSCE, 1999, pp. 4–5), and UNHCR estimated about 62,800 on 29 April (USAID/OFDA, 1999a). As flows, a report from Podgorica recorded on 16 April that about 60,000 Kosovo Albanians had arrived since the start of the NATO intervention, and about 100,000 displaced persons in total, including earlier arrivals from Croatia and Bosnia, about 15% of a population of some 650,000 (Borović, 1999); Montenegrin historiography gives 60,000 arrivals from 24 March to April (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 401); and an Albanian study gives 88,962 citizens of Kosovo recorded for 15 March–15 June 1999, noting that mass arrivals had begun in September 1998 (Draga, 2025, pp. 467, 469). Two further figures lack a date or a clear definition: 136,812 "refugees and displaced persons" registered by the Montenegrin Commissariat for Displaced Persons during 1999 and about 45,000 in UNHCR's 2000 synthesis (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 401; UNHCR, 2000b, p. 234). The Montenegrin study gives both 15% and "one fifth" of the population on the same page, without reconciling them (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 401).

Read by category, the April figures are consistent: an inflow of about 60,000 by 16 April is compatible with stocks of 70,000 on 17 April and 62,800 on 29 April. The rise from 33,000 to 70,000 between 4 and 17 April coincided with the weeks in which the Macedonian border was closed and Blace was cleared, although the routes were set above all by the regions from which Serbian and Yugoslav forces expelled the population (see Section 4.7). The remaining figures differ because they count different things: a three-month flow, an unclarified annual register and an undated synthesis. The dual status of the space contributes to the spread: the agencies used the

term “refugees”, while the official categories of the time could register the same people as internally displaced, and no single register covered the whole republic. Beyond April, the history of reception in Montenegro has therefore to be written from the localities.

Rožaje was the main center of reception. The MSF/Epicentre survey, based on interviews conducted on 14–15 April 1999, estimated the displaced population there at about 25,000, of whom 6,500 were in collective centers; the sample of 201 families (1,537 people) was drawn at random in three factories converted into shelters, and those housed with families and in mosques, over 15,000 people, are not represented in it (Brown et al., 2000, p. 43; MSF, 1999b, pp. 3, 9, 11). A report of the same week describes a town of about 12,000 inhabitants that had received more than 25,000 arrivals, where the local authorities set up a tented settlement when factories, mosques and private houses were full (Borović, 1999); the agreement on 25,000 is not independent confirmation, since both may rest on the estimates of the local authorities. Of the surveyed families, 44.5% had left after attacks on their town or village and 46.5% after direct threats or the arrival of armed men; 93% had fled on foot, with an average journey of 7.6 days; 45.8% no longer had identity documents; 27.8% had left behind at least one family member; 43.3% had no mattresses; and the daily bread ration was about 200 grams against the 300 grams announced (MSF, 1999b, pp. 4, 9–10, 12–13, 15). The loss of documents in nearly half the families corresponds to the removal or destruction of identity documents by Serbian forces witnessed by 60% of respondents in the large Albania–Macedonia sample (PHR, 1999, p. 6).

Ulcinj, a town of about 25,000 inhabitants in peacetime, had a total population of over 50,000 by mid-April, with about 1,000 arrivals at a camping site and the rest in private houses (Borović, 1999); for the whole period 15 March–15 June, the Albanian study records 68,442 people in the municipality, 76.93% of its recorded total, of whom 50,332 were in private houses, 10,310 in collective centers and 7,800 moved on to Albania (Draga, 2025, p. 469). The two sources refer to different dates, and the collective centers of the later count are absent from the mid-April report. In both, however, private houses sheltered most of the displaced, whereas in Rožaje, closer to the border, collective centers, mosques and tents took a larger share. One transfer of 180 people from Rožaje to Ulcinj is documented at the end of May (USAID/OFDA, 1999b).

The displaced settled mainly in areas with Albanian or Bosniak (Slavic Muslim) majorities, listed by Draga as Rožaje, Plav, Gusinje, Malësia, Krajina, Ana e Malit, Tuzi and Ulcinj, both with host families and in collective centers (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 401; Draga, 2025, p. 467). Montenegrin historiography adds that by mid-April the displaced in Rožaje and Ulcinj outnumbered the local population and that reception was read politically as a distancing from the Belgrade government, which caused discontent among some Montenegrin politicians (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 401). Displaced pupils continued their schooling in Albanian-language schools under a special program, and the classes were recognized for the following school year (Draga, 2025, p. 467). Movement continued across the republic’s border with Albania: about 6,000 people had crossed at Božaj by mid-April (Borović, 1999), and at the end of April the local police

at Koplik reported 32,000 entries at Hani i Hotit, the Albanian side of the same crossing (Naegele, 1999).

Table 2

Montenegro: Reported Figures for Displaced Persons from Kosovo, 1999

Location	Date or period	Measurement category	Reported figure	Source
Montenegro	4 April / 17 April	Stock (monitoring report)	33,000 / 70,000	OSCE (1999, pp. 4–5)
Montenegro	29 April	Stock (UNHCR estimate)	About 62,800	USAID/OFDA (1999a)
Montenegro	24 March–16 April	Arrivals (estimate): Kosovo Albanians since the start of the NATO intervention	About 60,000 (about 9% of a population of some 650,000)	Borović (1999)
Montenegro	16 April	Stock (estimate): all displaced, including earlier arrivals from Croatia and Bosnia	About 100,000 (about 15%)	Borović (1999)
Montenegro	24 March–April	Arrivals (method not stated)	60,000 (20,000 on 29 March)	Blagojević & Ćuković (2025, p. 401)
Montenegro	15 March–15 June	Arrivals (registered): citizens of Kosovo	88,962	Draga (2025, pp. 467, 469)
Montenegro	During 1999	Registered "refugees and displaced persons" (arrivals or stock not stated)	136,812	Montenegrin Commissariat for Displaced Persons, in Blagojević & Ćuković (2025, p. 401)
Montenegro	Undated	Not stated (UNHCR synthesis)	About 45,000	UNHCR (2000b, p. 234)
Rožaje	14–15 April	Stock (survey estimate)	About 25,000; 6,500 in collective centers; over 15,000 with families and in mosques	Brown et al. (2000, p. 43); MSF (1999b, pp. 3, 9, 11)
Ulcinj	Mid-April	Stock (estimate)	Total population over 50,000 in a town of about 25,000; about 1,000 arrivals at a camping site	Borović (1999)
Ulcinj	15 March–15 June	Arrivals (registered), by form of accommodation; onward movement	68,442: 50,332 in private houses; 10,310 in collective centers; 7,800 moved on to Albania	Draga (2025, p. 469)
Rožaje → Ulcinj	End of May	Other relocation (UNHCR transfer)	180	USAID/OFDA (1999b)
Božaj–Hani i Hotit crossing	Mid-April / end of April	Other relocation (onward movement to Albania; reported)	About 6,000 / 32,000	Borović (1999); Naegele (1999)

Note. Arrivals from Kosovo in Montenegro had not crossed an international border and were internally displaced persons within the FRY; the sources nevertheless refer to them mostly as "refugees".

4.6 Between Refuge and Crime: The Kaluđerski Laz Case

On 18 April 1999, in the village of Kaluđerski Laz, in the municipality of Rožaje, Kosovo Albanians who had just crossed into Montenegro, and who therefore remained within the same federal state, were fired upon. The Montenegrin prosecution attributed the killings to members of the Yugoslav Army, who were brought to trial, and the academic literature follows the same attribution (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, pp. 402, 405). According to the indictment of 30 July 2008, as published by the Centre for Civic Education (CGO), six people were killed and five wounded at Kaluđerski Laz on 18 April, and 11 others were killed at other locations in the same municipality by 21 May 1999, 17 in total (Vukanović, 2019, p. 6). The reasoning of the indictment refers to a crime "committed against 23 civilians of Albanian nationality", a category that may include the wounded (Vukanović, 2019, p. 15). As charged, the case described killings that continued for more than a month against people who had just escaped from Kosovo, in the territory

of the state within which they had sought shelter, although the prosecution later withdrew part of the second count.

Later sources give other figures (Table 3): 17 killed and five wounded in the 2025 academic study, which matches the indictment list (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 402); 22 killed and seven wounded according to a human rights organization on the 25th anniversary (Human Rights Action, 2024) and according to the families' lawyer, Velija Murić, when the verdict was announced (Nikolić, 2013); "at least 15 civilians" and a figure of 21 from the legal representatives of the injured parties (Marinović, 2026, paras. 2, 4). According to court reporting, the initial charge listed 23 deaths, which the court reduced to 15 after finding that eight deaths had occurred earlier (Nikolić, 2013); this account cannot be reconciled with the indictment list of 17 killed in the CGO publication. The six figures (6, 15, 17, 21, 22 and 23) are therefore victim counts with different boundaries (one event, one period, one indictment, one claim), and reconciling them requires a nominal list by date, place and procedural stage that the sources consulted do not provide.

Table 3

Kaluđerski Laz: Victim Counts by Source and Procedural Stage

Figure	Scope	Procedural stage or type of source	Source
6 killed, 5 wounded	18 April 1999, Kaluđerski Laz	Indictment of 30 July 2008, first count	Vukanović (2019, p. 6)
11 killed	To 21 May 1999, other locations in the municipality of Rožaje	Indictment, second count	Vukanović (2019, p. 6)
17 killed	18 April–21 May 1999	Indictment list (both counts)	Vukanović (2019, p. 6); Blagojević & Ćuković (2025, p. 402), with 5 wounded
23 "civilians of Albanian nationality"	Not specified	Reasoning of the indictment (may include the wounded)	Vukanović (2019, p. 15)
23 → 15 deaths	Not specified	Initial charge reduced by the court (eight deaths found to have occurred earlier), as reported in the press	Nikolić (2013)
At least 15 civilians; 21	Not specified	Centre for Civic Education statement; legal representatives of the injured parties	Marinović (2026, paras. 2, 4)
22 killed, 7 wounded	Not specified	Lawyer of the families (2013); human rights organization (2024)	Nikolić (2013); Human Rights Action (2024)

Note. No source consulted provides a nominal list of victims by date and place.

By judgment Ks. br. 1/08, delivered on 6 December and announced on 30 December 2013, the High Court in Bijelo Polje acquitted all eight former members of the Yugoslav Army: on the first count because "it was not proven that the accused committed the acts" (translated from Montenegrin), and on the second count partly for lack of evidence and partly because the prosecution had withdrawn the charge (as reported in Vukanović, 2019, pp. 16–19). The court was unable to establish which soldiers fired and who gave the order, and it did not rule on whether the killings constituted a war crime (Human Rights Action, 2024). The Court of Appeal upheld the judgment on 8 December 2014 (Kžs. br. 20/2014), about six and a half years after the indictment and more than 15 years after the events (Vukanović, 2019, p. 6). No one has been convicted. The families won compensation at first instance, but the Supreme Court dismissed the claims on review; in 2024 human rights organizations recorded that the families had remained without compensation and that no memorial had been erected, and in 2026 the Special State Prosecutor's

Office took over the case and announced an analysis of existing and possible new evidence (Human Rights Action, 2024; Marinović, 2026). Departure from Kosovo did not, in this case, end the violence against the displaced, and the documentation of the victims remains unfinished more than a quarter of a century later.

4.7 Albania: Kukës and the Statistical Puzzle

Albania received the largest number of refugees of the three territories, and its national figures agree in order of magnitude without coinciding (Table 4). The official Albanian registration, according to UNHCR and other sources, gives 479,223 refugees from 27 March to 12 June 1999, with unofficial reports markedly above 500,000 (Kondaj, 2002, pp. 190, 192); the other national figures, which differ in category and date, range from about 426,000 to nearly 480,000. The handwritten registers of the Albanian border guards at Morina, which cover more than two-thirds of an influx estimated at more than 400,000 people by 11 May, show, when analyzed statistically, three distinct waves (24 March–6 April, 7–23 April and 24 April–11 May), each from different regions of Kosovo, a structure that the analysis reads as evidence of an organized expulsion rather than of random flight (Ball, 2000). The OSCE monthly report records the stock of refugees in real time: 204,000 in Albania on 4 April and 340,000 on 17 April, while the stock in Macedonia rose from 121,000 to 135,000 in the same 13 days (OSCE, 1999, p. 4). The Macedonian figure is net of the evacuations that had begun on 5 April and of the forced transfers of 3 April, so the two increases (136,000 and 14,000) are not a measure of arrivals; they show nonetheless that in April the largest part of the expelled reached Albania, as the geography of the expulsion and the closure of the Macedonian border (Section 4.1) both made likely.

Most refugees in Albania were not in camps (Table 5). On 18 May 1999, MSF estimated that about 15% were in tents, 30–40% in collective centers (warehouses, factories and schools) and 50–60% with Albanian families in all 12 prefectures (MSF, 1999a). The Watson Institute study gives 87,000 in tent camps, over 100,000 in collective centers and about 300,000 with host families or in rented accommodation at the peak (Minear et al., 2000, p. 25), subtotals whose sum exceeds the study's own peak of nearly 480,000 and which include paid as well as unpaid hosting; the DEC evaluation notes that over 60% of refugees in Albania and Macedonia were in private accommodation, whereas aid was disproportionately concentrated in camps (Wiles et al., 2000, p. xxi). UNHCR counts close to 300 camps or shelter sites in Albania, holding about 40% of the refugees (UNHCR, 2000a, p. 345), while USCR gives 49 camps and about two-thirds of the refugees with some 29,000 host families (USCR, 2000a); the two counts refer to different objects, the former most likely including collective centers.

According to an account by the Albanian Ministry of Health, the Government Commission was created on 28 March and the Emergency Management Group (EMG) on 1 April 1999, with the OSCE, the NATO force in Albania (AFOR), UNHCR and the Humanitarian Information Centre as its core and over 200 other aid organizations; the group passed through four phases (reception, accommodation, return and rehabilitation) and was closed on 16 December 1999

(Kondaj, 2002, pp. 190, 192–193). The account comes from a participant and should be read as such, but it documents an administrative capacity that the international literature, focused on NATO and UNHCR, rarely records, in a state with few material resources that set no conditions on entry.

Kukës was the main center of first reception, a district with several tent camps and collective centers close to the border (Table 4). Two series of figures exist for it. The EMG reported about 97,500 refugees in the three northern districts of Kukës, Has and Tropojë on 29 April, when 263,000 others had already been moved south (USAID/OFDA, 1999a), and a weekly average of 93,603 for 17–23 May for the prefecture of Kukës, which comprises the same three districts, against 133,764 local inhabitants (Kondaj, 2002, p. 193). MSF estimated the population of Kukës town and its surroundings at about 86,000 on 25 April, of whom 40,000 were sheltered by families (Brown et al., 2000, p. 43), and gave about 93,000 for Kukës on 16 May (MSF, 1999a). Within each series the territory is constant, and both show a refugee population in the north that changed little between the end of April and the second half of May despite continuous transfers to the south; a subtotal of 37,874 in tent camps and collective centers on 1 June (USAID/OFDA, 1999b) excludes host families and does not enter the comparison. In the prefecture, refugees made up 41.2% of all people present: a local population in the northeastern corner of the country was sheltering a number of arrivals equal to nearly 70% of itself.

Table 4

Albania: National Figures and Figures for Kukës, March–June 1999

Location	Date or period	Measurement category	Reported figure	Source
Albania	4 April / 17 April	Stock (monitoring report)	204,000 / 340,000 (Macedonia: 121,000 / 135,000)	OSCE (1999, p. 4)
Albania	Two weeks after 24 March	Arrivals (estimate)	Some 300,000	USCR (2000a)
Albania (Morina registers)	24 March–11 May	Arrivals (registered at the border)	Influx estimated at over 400,000; registers cover more than two-thirds	Ball (2000)
Albania	27 March–12 June	Arrivals (registered, official)	479,223; unofficial reports above 500,000	Kondaj (2002, pp. 190, 192)
Albania	23 March–9 June	Arrivals (UNHCR official figures)	About 439,500 (regional total: 771,900 ethnic Albanians and 30,700 others)	MacPherson et al. (2000, p. 19)
Albania	Whole crisis	Arrivals (estimate)	About 465,000	USCR (2000a)
Albania	Undated	Arrivals or stock (not stated)	Over 470,000 / about 426,000	Wiles et al. (2000, p. xvii); UNHCR (2000b, p. 234)
Albania	Peak	Stock (peak)	Nearly 480,000	Minear et al. (2000, p. 25)
Kukës, Has and Tropojë districts	29 April	Stock (EMG)	About 97,500; 263,000 already moved south	USAID/OFDA (1999a)
Prefecture of Kukës (Kukës, Has, Tropojë)	17–23 May (weekly average)	Stock (EMG)	93,603 against 133,764 local inhabitants	Kondaj (2002, p. 193)
Kukës town and surroundings	25 April	Stock (survey estimate)	About 86,000: 36,000 in camps and collective centers; 10,000 in tractor camps; 40,000 with families	Brown et al. (2000, p. 43)
Kukës	16 May	Stock (estimate)	About 93,000	MSF (1999a)
Kukës	1 June	Occupancy of tent camps and collective centers only (EMG)	35,550 in tent camps; 2,324 in collective centers	USAID/OFDA (1999b)
Tirana / Durrës / Shkodër districts	17–23 May (weekly average)	Stock (EMG)	64,151 / 42,222 / 37,318	Kondaj (2002, p. 193)

Note. All persons listed had crossed an international border (see Section 2.3). Figures are compared in the text only within the same territory and category.

The camp network in Albania takes concrete shape in the sampling of the population-based study of April–May 1999: seven tent camps in Kukës, nine camps and seven collective centers in the Tirana–Durrës–Elbasan area, one camp in Korçë and one collective center in Lozhan (Iacopino et al., 2001). A needs assessment conducted among women in camps in southern Albania in May 1999, about a month after their flight, identified as its main themes dealing with trauma, anxiety and boredom and maintaining the hope of returning home (Drumm et al., 2001), and a related study by the same team found that refugees in the camps expressed a desire for emotional help after trauma, a lack of information about loved ones and a need for activities and self-determination (Drumm et al., 2003). The lack of information about relatives connects with the separation of families at the border (Sections 4.1 and 4.2) and with Rožaje, where more than a quarter of the surveyed families had left at least one member behind (Section 4.5).

4.8 Albania: The Named Camps and the Unfinished Projects

The documentation of aid agencies identifies specific camps beyond Kukës. In the Durrës area, on 3 June 1999, water treatment plants supplied 10,000 refugees in the three camps of Hamallaj, and the two Rushkull camps housed 3,000 people; one of them, Rushkull II, with a capacity of 1,000, had been handed over by the Czech government (UNHCR, 1999c). At Korçë, the French NATO contingent had set up a camp for 5,000 people in a former fish factory, and the British army had set up the Dersnik I camp for about 4,000 (UNHCR, 1999c); MSF attributed to NATO a capacity of 35,000–50,000 people in the Korçë area on 18 May and warned that the camps could not provide sustainable living conditions through the winter (MSF, 1999a). At Shkodër, Austrian soldiers built a camp on the outskirts of the town (Naegele, 1999), and in the town's tobacco factory, a collective center that housed 4,600 refugees on 18 May, the residents preferred outdoor lighting to hot food because it gave them more safety at night (MSF, 1999a), a preference that relates both to the violence they had experienced on the road, where Amnesty International documented attacks, burning of houses, robbery and extortion by Serbian security forces and paramilitary units (Amnesty International, 1999c), and to insecurity in the area itself.

Near Fier, Camp Hope, funded by the United States, with the organization CARE erecting the tents and receiving the refugees, had on 1 June 1999 a registered population of 2,999 according to CARE and 2,990 according to the U.S. Department of Defense, a reported capacity of 14,868 places and a target of tents for 20,000 people by 15 June (USAID/OFDA, 1999b). On 15 April, in a memorandum for President Clinton before his meeting with humanitarian organizations, National Security Advisor Samuel Berger had noted that the Department of Defense "has also recently decided to establish refugee facilities for up to 20,000 people in Albania" (Berger, 1999), a decision to which Camp Hope most likely corresponds. On 22 April High Commissioner Sadako Ogata wrote to the NATO Secretary General, Javier Solana, of "the urgent need for camp construction support, including water and sanitation, in central and southern Albania" and relayed the estimate that inside Kosovo there could be "up to some 840,000 internally displaced people"; in her covering letter to Kofi Annan she added that she had stressed "the imperative need for UNHCR to be totally transparent about its relationship with NATO in Albania and The former

Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Ogata, 1999). The two documents show that the construction of camps in central and southern Albania by NATO members combined national decisions, such as the American one, with requests from UNHCR, which lacked the means to build capacity for tens of thousands of people within weeks and was aware of the cost of depending on a party to the conflict. The concern that the Watson Institute study later expressed, about camps built by each national contingent to its own standards and under its own flag (Minear et al., 2000, pp. 25, 37), was already present in UNHCR's correspondence of April 1999.

The later fact sheets show that the plans were overtaken by the return. Camp Hope counted 3,470 registered residents on 11 June (USAID/OFDA, 1999c), about a quarter of the capacity reported 10 days earlier; it flooded on 20 June, when American military and political officers objected to moving the refugees on the grounds that they would soon return to Kosovo, and the refugees moved themselves to a better site (Minear et al., 2000, p. 29); and by 30 June UNHCR and CARE had begun closing it (USAID/OFDA, 1999d). Camp Eagle, under construction east of Fier on 1 June with 10,000 places planned by 17 July, and Camp Liberty, placed at Fier with 10,000 places planned (UNHCR, 1999c; USAID/OFDA, 1999b), are no longer mentioned in the fact sheets checked for 11 June–19 July, and the sources consulted do not confirm that they were completed. By 30 June UNHCR estimated that 171,700 refugees remained in Albania and that some 272,900 had returned since 15 June (USAID/OFDA, 1999d); by 19 July returns had reached 399,800, 27,600 refugees remained and the camps of the Korçë area had emptied (USAID/OFDA, 1999e). International planning was calibrated for a long exile; once Yugoslav forces withdrew in June, the refugees returned faster than the planners had expected.

4.9 Burden-Sharing on the Ground: The International Response in Albania and Montenegro

In Albania, UNHCR, the World Food Programme, some 180 nongovernmental organizations and NATO worked together on food, water and shelter, with NATO directly engaged in building camps (UNHCR, 2000a, p. 345). In Montenegro, the international aid that had arrived by mid-April was estimated at about 5 million German marks, mainly food coming from Albania, while tensions between the naval command and the port administration of Bar threatened the supply routes (Borović, 1999); the International Rescue Committee distributed hygiene kits in the factories of Rožaje that housed the displaced (USAID/OFDA, 1999a). In all three territories private houses sheltered a large part of those received (Table 5): about two-thirds of the refugees in Albania (USCR, 2000a), 148,600 against 108,400 in camps in Macedonia in June (Amnesty International, 1999a, p. 12), and in Montenegro, where only local figures exist, most of the displaced in Ulcinj and a large part of those in Rožaje (Borović, 1999; Draga, 2025, p. 469). What distinguishes the corridors is the form of international support: in Macedonia it also took the form of transferring people out of the region, in Albania and Montenegro mainly that of funding, logistics and camp construction (see Section 5.3).

Table 5

Forms of Accommodation in the Three Receiving Territories, April–June 1999

Territory and location	Date or period	Camps and tents	Collective centers	Host families and private accommodation	Source
Macedonia	June	108,400	—	148,600	Amnesty International (1999a, p. 12)
Macedonia	Undated	112,434 (nine camps)	—	154,989	Sadiku (2025, pp. 627–628, 637)
Albania	18 May	About 15%	30–40%	50–60%	MSF (1999a)
Albania	Peak	87,000	Over 100,000	About 300,000 (host families or rented)	Minear et al. (2000, p. 25)
Albania	Undated	About 20% (49 camps)	13% (public buildings)	About two-thirds (some 29,000 host families)	USCR (2000a)
Albania and Macedonia	Undated	—	—	Over 60% in private accommodation	Wiles et al. (2000, p. xxi)
Albania, Kukës	25 April	36,000 in camps and collective centers; 10,000 in tractor camps	(included in camps)	40,000	Brown et al. (2000, p. 43)
Montenegro, Rožaje	14–15 April	Tented settlement (no figure)	6,500 (and mosques, see note)	Over 15,000 with families and in mosques	Borović (1999); Brown et al. (2000, p. 43); MSF (1999b, p. 3)
Montenegro, Ulcinj	Mid-April	About 1,000 (camping site)	—	The rest of the arrivals	Borović (1999)
Montenegro, Ulcinj	15 March–15 June	—	10,310	50,332	Draga (2025, p. 469)

Note. A dash indicates that the source gives no separate figure. Percentages refer to the refugee population of the territory at the date indicated. The Watson Institute subtotals exceed the study's own peak figure. In Rožaje, the source does not separate persons with families from those in mosques, which were collective shelters. In Montenegro, the persons sheltered were internally displaced persons within the FRY.

4.10 From Evacuation to Emigration: Routes to Third Countries

From early April 1999, UNHCR and IOM transferred refugees from Macedonia to third countries that had agreed to receive them temporarily under the HEP. UNHCR's table gives 95,931 departures up to 31 October 1999, and some 1,400 people were transferred from Macedonia to Albania under the Humanitarian Transfer Programme (HTP); the report mentions 28 host countries in the text but shows 29 in its table (UNHCR, 2000a, pp. 345–346). The other totals range from about 80,000 to 92,100 (Table 6). The cutoff dates, where known, are consistent with a total that grew over time, but not entirely: the U.S. Congressional Research Service gave over 91,000 resettled by its update of 1 September and stated that the program had been suspended on 30 June except for a few hundred cases with special medical needs (McHugh & Vialet, 1999), which leaves a difference of several thousand people with UNHCR's October figure unexplained. The number of host countries (28, 29 or 40) may depend on whether only receiving states or also those that offered places are counted.

The distribution by country is documented by three sources (Table 6). For Germany and Turkey, they agree closely, and for Italy the two that give a figure agree, whereas for the United States they give 14,050, about 13,000 and 9,700, against an initial American announcement of up to 20,000 (McHugh & Vialet, 1999; UNHCR, 2000a, p. 346; UNHCR, 2000b, p. 238). The difference may stem from the dual structure of the American program, direct admission from the camps and family reunification, which the sources may count differently. For the United Kingdom, the government reported to the House of Commons on 2 July 1999 that 4,346 evacuees had been airlifted under the UNHCR program, 424 of whom were no longer resident in reception centers,

and that none had yet returned, although over 100 had inquired about return (House of Commons, 1999, cols. 309W–310W); the figure is 36 higher than UNHCR's later table (4,310), possibly because UNHCR counted departures from Macedonia and the government counted arrivals, including medical cases brought outside the program's flights.

Table 6

Evacuation and Transfer from Macedonia: Reported Totals and Selected Host Countries, 1999

Item	Date or cutoff	Measurement category	Reported figure	Source
HEP total	31 October 1999	Evacuation (departures from Macedonia)	95,931 (almost 96,000); 28 host countries in the text, 29 in the table	UNHCR (2000a, pp. 345–346)
HEP total	1 September 1999 (report update)	Evacuation (resettled outside the region)	Over 91,000; 200,000 places agreed	McHugh & Vialet (1999)
HEP total	End of June 1999	Evacuation	Nearly 92,000 to 29 countries	USCR (2000b)
HEP total	June 1999	Evacuation; places offered	About 90,000; 135,000 places; 40 participating states	Amnesty International (1999a, p. 12)
HEP total	Undated	Evacuation	About 80,000 to 28 countries / 92,100	Wiles et al. (2000, p. xvii); Sadiku (2025, pp. 627, 637)
Priority medical cases	To 20 August 1999	Evacuation (medical database)	1,032 left Macedonia: 891 to 25 countries; 141 returned to Kosovo	Szilard et al. (2002, pp. 195–198)
HTP	1999 / end of June 1999	Other relocation (transfer within the region)	Some 1,400 / about 1,300 to Albania	UNHCR (2000a, pp. 345–346); USCR (2000b)
Germany	1 September / 31 October 1999 / undated	Evacuation by host country	14,689 / 14,690 / 14,700	McHugh & Vialet (1999); UNHCR (2000a, p. 346); UNHCR (2000b, p. 238)
United States	1 September / 31 October 1999 / undated	Evacuation by host country	About 13,000 / 14,050 / 9,700	McHugh & Vialet (1999); UNHCR (2000a, p. 346); UNHCR (2000b, p. 238)
Turkey	1 September / 31 October 1999 / undated	Evacuation by host country	8,340 / 8,340 / 8,300	McHugh & Vialet (1999); UNHCR (2000a, p. 346); UNHCR (2000b, p. 238)
Italy	1 September / 31 October 1999	Evacuation by host country	5,829 / 5,830	McHugh & Vialet (1999); UNHCR (2000a, p. 346)
France / Norway / Austria	1 September 1999	Evacuation by host country	6,339 / 6,072 / 5,080	McHugh & Vialet (1999)
United Kingdom	2 July / 31 October 1999	Arrivals (government) / departures (UNHCR)	4,346 / 4,310	House of Commons (1999, cols. 309W–310W); UNHCR (2000a, p. 346)
Canada	1 September 1999; 1999 operation	Evacuation; family reunification	5,438; 5,051 evacuated and 2,292 by family reunification	McHugh & Vialet (1999); Raska (2020)
Australia	From 7 May 1999, about six weeks	Evacuation	3,920	Bennett et al. (2000)

Note. HEP = Humanitarian Evacuation Programme; HTP = Humanitarian Transfer Programme. The House of Commons figure counts arrivals in the United Kingdom; the UNHCR figures count departures from Macedonia.

UNHCR's independent evaluation describes the program as a refugee movement of unprecedented speed and scale which, by relieving pressure on Macedonia, allowed the entry of further refugees and improved protection overall, while recording uneven implementation among states, opportunistic use of the program by some refugees, the undermining of the alternative of transfer within the region and competition among host states to receive refugees (Suhrke et al., 2000, p. viii, para. 50). The transfer within the region was built on the same principles (informed consent, family unity, registration before departure and no pressure), with particular care for unaccompanied minors and female-headed households (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Department of International Protection, Standards and Legal Advice Section, 1999), but

it attracted only about 1,300–1,400 people and did not significantly improve protection (Suhrke et al., 2000, p. viii).

Temporary reception became permanent migration for part of the arrivals, at least where this is documented. In Canada, 21 chartered flights brought over 7,000 Kosovo Albanians, 5,051 of them evacuated (Operation Parasol) and 2,292 under family reunification, between 4 and 26 May 1999; the first return flight left on 7 July, but by 2001, according to Canadian officials, nearly 70% had decided to remain (Raska, 2020). Australia received 3,920 evacuees in 11 flights from 7 May 1999, housed in eight centers on military bases in five states (Bennett et al., 2000); at Leeuwin Barracks, 384 arrivals of 27 May found a program of early education, counseling and activities designed to prepare them for going home (Bayman et al., 2000). Turkey, separately from the HEP, had received the group transferred by force from Blace (see Section 4.1); by 10 June it housed 7,301 people in the Gaziosmanpaşa camp near Kırklareli, out of some 18,000 Kosovo Albanians who entered that spring, and UNHCR later recorded 8,534 returns from the camp, a figure higher than its June population that the source does not explain (USCR, 2000c). For the other host states the sources consulted give no comparable return–stay ratio, so the Canadian figure indicates, for one host country, how an evacuation designed as temporary turned into migration.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Counting a Population in Motion

Compared within the same territory and category, the figures of different sources agree: for the north of Albania in the two series for Kukës (Section 4.7), for Cegrane in May and June (Section 4.3) and for Montenegro in April, where an inflow of about 60,000 is compatible with stocks of 62,800–70,000 (Section 4.5). Where territory, date or category differ, a divergence can be explained only when these are known, and otherwise it has to be recorded as such; several sources also contain internal inconsistencies (Tables 1, 3 and 5). The divergences are, in addition, evidence about how the response was organized. Capacity figures accompanied the planning and funding of camps, as the 20,000 places foreseen for Camp Hope and the 10,000 for Camps Eagle and Liberty show (Section 4.8); occupancy counts accompanied the distribution of food, water and vaccines; and evacuation totals were reported by host states and agencies as measures of their contribution (Section 4.10). For people sheltered in private houses, the sources consulted contain local registrations and occasional shares but no series comparable to those for camps, and the international evaluations acknowledge that this majority received a smaller share of aid (Wiles et al., 2000, p. xxi). The pattern is consistent with the attention that the literature on humanitarian governance gives to the techniques through which displaced populations are made visible and managed (Agier, 2008/2011; Barnett, 2013), although the sources do not allow the purpose of each count to be established directly.

5.2 Intervention, Expulsion and Reception

The record of reception settles one of the questions raised in the debate on the intervention and leaves another open. The first is whether the Albanians of Kosovo fled the bombing. In the camps, 68% of the families surveyed had been expelled directly by Serbian forces and none of the 1,180 respondents reported fleeing NATO bombing (Section 4.4); the analysis of the Morina registers, which compared the departures from each municipality with the timing of NATO attacks and of reported mass killings, concluded that "only a small fraction of Kosovar Albanians fled Kosovo as a direct result of NATO bombing raids" (Ball, 2000, Executive Summary section); a later analysis prepared for the ICTY found the hypotheses of NATO and KLA activity inconsistent with the observed patterns of flight and killings (Ball et al., 2002, p. 1); and the ICTY Trial Chamber concluded that, although the bombing and KLA activities were factors in the situation on the ground, "they were not the cause of over 700,000 people moving en masse both within Kosovo and then across the border" (*Prosecutor v. Milutinović et al.*, 2009, Vol. 3, para. 45). On this question the camp evidence and the judicial record agree. The second question, raised by critics of the intervention, is whether the bombing triggered or accelerated an expulsion that would otherwise have taken place later, more slowly or not at all (Chomsky, 1999; Roberts, 1999). The record of reception cannot answer it. The waves at Morina begin on 24 March and are consistent with both readings, and Posen (2000, p. 53, n. 30) noted press reports that the planning of the operation antedated the air attacks while stressing that the evidence on this point was lacking.

The same literature explains part of the dynamics of reception. Posen (2000) argued that the expelled "could also be used tactically, to influence the attitude of Macedonia" (p. 53), and Greenhill (2010, 2019) analyzes the Kosovo case as an attempt to use mass displacement as a political weapon against NATO. Read together with the Macedonian documents (Section 4.1), the closure of the border at Blace appears as the response of a state targeted by that pressure, and the evacuations organized through UNHCR and accepted by host states as the means through which it was relieved (Section 5.3). Albania, which kept its border open, bore the same pressure without turning it into a bargaining position. The intervention itself defined its objective in terms of the expelled: on 25 May 1999 President Clinton described the aim of the air campaign as "returning the people of Kosovo to their homes with security and self-government" (Clinton, 1999, para. 1). The return took place after the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces in June and was carried out by the refugees themselves faster than the planners of the camps had expected (Section 4.8). For the debate on intervention and the responsibility to protect, the camps provide what aggregate accounts of the "exodus" do not: dated evidence of who fled, why, where they were sheltered and when they went home.

5.3 Burden-Sharing Reconsidered: The Border, the Evacuation and the Uncounted Burden

The Macedonian case confirms what the evaluations of the crisis established: first asylum in Macedonia was made conditional on the evacuation of refugees to third countries (Suhrke et al.,

2000, p. 95, para. 473). According to UNHCR's later review, the United States accepted the arrangement on 3 April, agreeing that the refugees "could therefore only be granted conditional first asylum" (Long, 2010, para. 212), and the arrangement nearly broke down in early May, when the slowing of evacuations led the Macedonian government to close the border again (Long, 2010, para. 231). The documents read here add the voice of the host state and the sequence of its decisions: Gligorov's address of 15 April links the blockade, the corridor plan and the demand for burden-sharing (Section 4.1), and the HEP transferred almost 96,000 refugees to third countries within months (Section 4.10).

What this literature, built on the Macedonian case, does not provide is the comparison with the other two corridors. In Albania and Montenegro, international burden-sharing took the form of funding, logistics, camp construction by NATO contingents and a small transfer within the region of about 1,300–1,400 people, without a comparable transfer of people out of the region; evacuations from Albania, such as the medical evacuations whose need IOM assessed (MacPherson et al., 2000), did not reach a comparable scale in the sources consulted. Albania, which set no conditions on entry and received the largest number of refugees, was therefore the territory in which burden-sharing took its least redistributive form: the state that closed its border obtained, in addition to camps and funding, the transfer of refugees to third countries, while the state that kept its border open received camps and funding. The HEP also had a legal afterlife: the uneven treatment of the Kosovar evacuees in the member states of the European Union showed the need for harmonization that led to the Temporary Protection Directive of 2001 (Genç & Şirin Öner, 2019, p. 6), whose recitals refer to the Council's call on the Commission and the member states "to learn the lessons of their response to the Kosovo crisis" (Council Directive 2001/55/EC, 2001, recital 6). The finding bears on the current framework of refugee cooperation, which calls for "more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, while taking account of existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States" (United Nations General Assembly, 2018, para. 1). In 1999 the largest contribution came from a state with very limited resources.

5.4 Host Communities and Everyday Life in the Camps

That most of the expelled were sheltered in private houses was acknowledged at the time: UNHCR recorded it for Albania (UNHCR, 2000a, p. 345), the DEC evaluation noted the concentration of aid in camps (Wiles et al., 2000, p. xxi), and UNHCR's later review noted that most Kosovar Albanians in Macedonia were accommodated with host families, "effectively self-settling" (Long, 2010, para. 202). What the comparison adds is a source-critical quantification across the three territories (Table 5). In Macedonia and Albania, the figures support the conclusion that private hosting exceeded camp accommodation, although the El Hilal data, whose subtotals for host families (154,989), camps (112,434) and evacuations (92,100) add up to 359,523 rather than to the 379,523 entries the same source gives, cannot be read as a complete breakdown (Sadiku, 2025, pp. 627–628, 637). In Montenegro they support it only for the localities documented. "Private accommodation" also includes paid arrangements (Minear et al., 2000, p. 25), and the

costs borne by hosts, which studies of other displacements show can fall unseen on the poorer among them (Chambers, 1986), are not documented for 1999 in the sources consulted. Hosting relationships also shaped reception beyond shelter (Brun, 2010): in Macedonia, Albanian-language media reunited separated families (Section 4.2), and in Montenegro, Albanian-language schools continued the schooling of displaced pupils (Section 4.5). This contribution of households and local institutions remained outside the accounting of international burden-sharing.

The few sources on everyday life in the camps point in the same direction. Operational reports measure the camps in square meters, liters and calories; the Cegrane report (Section 4.3) and the needs assessments in southern Albania (Section 4.7) show what these measures leave out: waiting without information about relatives, the boredom of days without activity and the tinned ration that women turned into cooked food. In these sources women appear as organizers of the everyday life of the tent. The evidence is too narrow to be generalized to all the expelled women, but it indicates that coping with the wait, where it is documented, fell largely on women.

5.5 Protection Beyond the Border: Displacement Within the Same State

The killings at Kaluđerski Laz (Section 4.6), attributed by the Montenegrin prosecution to members of the Yugoslav Army, raise a different problem. Their victims had left Kosovo without leaving the FRY. As internally displaced persons they did not have the international protection that refugee status provides, and they remained on the territory of the state whose forces had expelled them, the state on which the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, presented in 1998, place "the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance" to such persons (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 1998, Principle 3). The literature on internal displacement has long noted that such persons lack a legal and institutional basis for protection comparable to that of refugees (Cohen & Deng, 1998; Phuong, 2004) and has debated whether they should be treated as a distinct category of concern (Mooney, 2005); the Montenegrin case shows the consequences of that gap in a war whose victims were received on both sides of international borders. The reception offered by the Montenegrin authorities, which Montenegrin historiography reads as a distancing from Belgrade (Blagojević & Ćuković, 2025, p. 401), did not prevent these killings, and the judicial process that followed acquitted all the accused without establishing a nominal list of victims. A framework of burden-sharing, concerned with the distribution of refugees among states, has no place for this situation: for part of those displaced within the FRY, the end of flight did not mean the end of danger.

5.6 The Camps as Evidence: The Historical Qualification of Genocide and the Judicial Record

The record of reception adds a specific kind of evidence to the qualification set out in Section 2.3. The operational reports of 1999 described the violence in the vocabulary of their mandates, mainly that of human rights violations, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, while the Secretary-General warned of genocide in real time (Annan, 1999). The population-based surveys conducted in the camps added systematic, quantified evidence of killings and serious harm against

members of the group (Section 4.4), and the Morina registers added the regional sequence of the expulsion (Section 4.7). Together with the victim counts of Table 3, these are the parts of the record of reception that document acts within the meaning of Article II; capacity, occupancy and evacuation figures do not. Since no international court has ruled on genocide in Kosovo, the historical qualification rests on such evidence and on the reasoning set out in Section 2.3, and the task of historiography is to reconstruct the acts with the precision that a judicial determination would require.

5.7 Limitations and Further Research

Access to UNHCR's operational archives would allow the registration methods behind the figures in Section 4 to be verified internally, since later studies, including the epidemiological ones, reproduce those figures without measuring them. Systematic cross-checking of Albanian oral testimonies against the institutional data would deepen the understanding of the experience of reception, all the more so as the generation that lived the expulsion is passing. For Kaluđerski Laz, access to the court file would allow the nominal list of victims to be constructed by date and place. Research in the internal archives of the operational agencies on why they did not use the term "genocide" in real time, while the Secretary-General warned of it, would clarify the relationship between humanitarian mandate and the naming of the crime. Finally, the sheltering of the displaced by families, documented here only through aggregate figures and local registers, needs its own study at the level of households and municipalities, including the costs it imposed on the hosts.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Read by territory, date and category, the figures of the 1999 reception agree more often than their divergences suggest, and where they do not, the discrepancy can usually be traced to what was counted. The record is nonetheless uneven. It measures with care the camps and the evacuations, which institutions managed, and records the larger population sheltered in private houses only through shares and local registers.

The comparison of the three corridors shows that international burden-sharing took asymmetric forms. Macedonia, whose government closed the border and demanded that the burden be shared, obtained the transfer of almost 96,000 refugees to third countries; Albania, which kept its border open and received the largest number, and Montenegro, which received the displaced as internal arrivals, obtained mainly funding, logistics and camps. The conditionality of first asylum in Macedonia was known; the archival documents read here give it its sequence and its actors, and the comparison shows where the larger burden lay: with the households of the receiving societies, which no sharing mechanism counted.

The record of reception answers one question in the debate on the intervention: those who reached the camps had been expelled and had not fled the bombing. It cannot settle whether the bombing hastened an expulsion that had already been prepared. For part of those displaced within the FRY, as the killings at Kaluđerski Laz show, the end of flight did not mean the end of danger.

The surveys and border registers gathered in the camps in April and May 1999 document killings, serious harm and the organized character of the expulsion in the weeks in which they occurred. On this evidence, read against the legal elements of the crime and kept distinct from the judicial record, the article qualifies the violence of Serbian and Yugoslav forces against the Albanians of Kosovo in 1998–1999 as genocide.

Two implications follow for research on displacement. An account of burden- and responsibility-sharing that counts only camps, evacuations and funding leaves out the largest contribution, that of the households that sheltered the displaced; and an account of protection that ends at the border leaves out those displaced within the same state.

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Appendix

Classification of the Empirical Sources by Category

Category	Sources
(1) Institutional and operational reports, 1999	Amnesty International (1999a, 1999b); Annan (1999); MSF (1999a, 1999b); OSCE/ODIHR (1999); PACE (1999); UNHCR (1999a, 1999b, 1999c); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Department of International Protection, Standards and Legal Advice Section (1999); USAID/OFDA (1999a–1999e); McHugh & Vialet (1999); field reports of the press: Borović (1999), McKinsey (1999), Naegele (1999)
(1) Institutional evaluations, syntheses and reviews, 2000–2010	British Council (2000); Independent International Commission on Kosovo (2000); Long (2010); Minear et al. (2000); Suhrke et al. (2000); UNHCR (2000a, 2000b); USCR (2000a, 2000b, 2000c); Wiles et al. (2000)
(2) Scholarly studies	Ball (2000); Ball et al. (2002); Bayman et al. (2000); Bennett et al. (2000); Brown et al. (2000); Brusin (2000); CDC (1999); Donev et al. (2002); Drumm et al. (2001, 2003); Iacopino et al. (2001); Kondaj (2002); MacPherson et al. (2000, 2002); Raska (2020); Szilard et al. (2002)
(3) Judicial and human rights documentation	Amnesty International (1999c); Berisha (2001); Human Rights Action (2024); Human Rights Watch (2001); Marinović (2026); Nikolić (2013); OSCE Mission in Kosovo (2002); PHR (1999); *Prosecutor v. Đorđević* (2014); *Prosecutor v. Milošević* (2001); *Prosecutor v. Milutinović et al.* (2009); *Prosecutor v. Šainović et al.* (2014); Vukanović (2019)
(4) Albanian historiography and the academic literature of the host countries	Blagojević & Ćuković (2025); Draga (2025); Idrizi (2025); Sadiku (2025), with El Hilal (2012) and Iseini (2015) as cited there
(5) Digitized archival documents	Berger (1999), Clinton Presidential Library; Clinton (1999), archived website of the U.S. Department of State; Gligorov (1999), OSCE (1999) and Ogata (1999), United Nations Archives; House of Commons (1999), Hansard

Note. Sources that combine roles are classified by the use made of them in the article (Section 3). Works cited only for the conceptual and legal framework of Section 2 are not listed. CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; MSF = Médecins Sans Frontières; OSCE = Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; ODIHR = Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; PACE = Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; PHR = Physicians for Human Rights; UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; USAID/OFDA = U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance; USCR = U.S. Committee for Refugees.