

The hidden crimes of Kosovo

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Americans should feel betrayed by the contents of the [Council of Europe's report](#) on organized crime in mostly Albanian-populated Kosovo, a country that owes its existence to the United States. The report, authored by Swiss prosecutor Dick Marty, includes allegations that Kosovo leaders have committed heinous crimes and [allegations that American and European diplomats](#) and U.N. officials in Kosovo overlooked wrongdoing to preserve "political stability."

Kosovo's leaders have waged an [ugly media campaign](#) to discredit Marty and his findings and have threatened to launch a witch hunt against Albanians who aided the inquiry. Washington's voice is needed now to stop the incitement in Kosovo and to turn public opinion toward an international criminal investigation and, if necessary, prosecutions.

The report draws upon Albanian eyewitnesses and insiders as well as Western intelligence and police agencies, and not upon the Albanians' foe, the government of Serbia. The findings speak of the trafficking of drugs and women. They include accounts of the abduction in Kosovo of almost 500 Serbs, Albanians and members of other ethnic groups; the delivery of these kidnapping victims to secret camps in Albania; and the murder of almost all of those abducted, including some whose internal organs were allegedly sold for profit. The report alleges that these killings occurred from mid-1999 to mid-2000, after NATO's bombing campaign drove Serbia's forces from Kosovo. The report names Prime Minister [Hashim Thaci](#), who has for years been America's golden boy in Kosovo, and a number of Thaci's former comrades in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an amalgam of local insurgencies that rose against Serbia.

Washington knew of the kidnappings weeks after NATO occupied Kosovo in June 1999. U.S. diplomats quickly responded to Serb appeals for help by demanding that KLA commanders halt the kidnappings. The abductions tapered off. But nothing was heard of the victims. Afterward, political stability became the top priority in

Kosovo for the United States and the United Nations, which refrained from launching criminal inquiries into the kidnappings. According to Albanian and U.S. sources, during the spring of 2008 - after a former U.N. war crimes prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte of Switzerland, published a memoir that mentioned these killings and reported credible assertions of organ harvesting - senior U.S. diplomats in Kosovo advised Thaci and other Kosovo leaders to do nothing except wait out the storm. Kosovo's and Albania's governments have since issued only blanket denials of wrongdoing.

Marty's report does not attack Kosovo's legitimacy. Many, if not most, Albanians know this but are too terrified to say so in public. This is in part because corruption and violence are so prevalent in Kosovo and in part because Thaci and other leaders have condemned the report as an [assault on Kosovo's sovereignty](#), the Albanian people and the KLA's legacy. On Christmas Day, Kosovo's press reported a threat by Thaci to name every Albanian who assisted Marty. In a land where witnesses to crimes are killed to silence them, Thaci's words could incite attacks on members of minority groups, political opponents, journalists and foreigners.

This danger and the long-term need to foster rule of law in Kosovo and Albania make it incumbent upon the United States to make a forceful public statement and conduct tough closed-door diplomacy. The United States should question every detail of the Council of Europe report and demand a briefing with Marty to discuss the sources he cannot publish for security reasons. If it finds the evidence and sources to be credible, the United States should join the European Union in establishing an entity capable of carrying out a criminal investigation and, if necessary, prosecutions; this entity should be capable of protecting witnesses. Washington should demand that Kosovo and Albania cooperate fully. If they fail to, the United States and its allies should use their leverage to force the resignation from public office of those responsible for the lack of cooperation. Washington should also ensure that Serbia, Russia and other countries do not misuse the Council of Europe report to undermine Kosovo's legitimacy.

Chuck Sudetic reported from the Balkans during the 1990s and worked for the U.N. war crimes tribunal for Yugoslavia from 2001 to 2005. He co-authored Carla Del Ponte's memoirs, "Madame Prosecutor."

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