

## Former Kosovo “Freedom Fighters” charged with war crimes

By [Global Research](#)

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European prosecutors charged two former top Kosovo Albanian guerrillas with war crimes during the 1998-99 conflict, according to a definitive indictment obtained by AFP Friday.

The former commander of the military police for the guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) Sabit Geci, 52, and Riza Alija, 50, were charged with “war crimes against (the) civilian population” committed in two KLA camps in neighbouring Albania, the indictment said.

The indictment, seen by AFP in its Albanian version, was issued by EULEX, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

It was filed for EULEX by US prosecutor Robert L. Dean, said the camps in the northern towns of Kukes and Cahan set up by the KLA were “logistic, training and supply” sites.

However, the two accused used them to detain “civilians and persons who were not taking part in the war,” it said.

It was not clear when the trial would start.

The war between KLA guerrillas and Serbian forces loyal to then Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic ended after the June 1999 NATO air campaign ousted Serbian forces from Kosovo.

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in February 2008 and has so far been recognised by 72 countries, despite Belgrade’s strong opposition.

The 3,000-member EULEX mission was launched in December 2008 to enforce the rule of law in the newly declared country and supervise its police, customs and judiciary.

EULEX has the power to step in and take on cases that the local judiciary and police are unable to handle because of their sensitive nature.

The indictment comes at a time when Pristina is still reeling from allegations of atrocities committed by the KLA in a report by the Council of Europe’s envoy Dick Marty.

Marty linked Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and other senior KLA commanders to organ trafficking and organised crime.

Thaci has denied the allegations, condemning them as a smear campaign.

One of the indicted men, Geci is mentioned in Marty's report as suspected of the "killing of a civilian in Kukes who was beaten and shot."

According to Dean's indictment, the two men accused allegedly detained Kosovars who fled the conflict and were suspected of collaborating with the then Serbian regime or had "political views that differed from the KLA."

Geci and Alija were "directly involved in ordering and took part in mistreating persons kept in these detention centres," from the end of March or beginning of April to June 1999, the document said.

Civilians "were beaten regularly and were hit with batons and nightsticks (truncheons), kicked, mistreated and verbally abused," it added.

"They were kept in filthy and... unhealthy conditions.... They were denied food, water and medical treatment," the indictment said.

The indictment described an incident in Kukes where two detainees were ordered to put on bulletproof jackets and afterwards "were shot by a firing squad" as a way of torture.

A EULEX pre-trial judge has already decided that the Kosovo judiciary has the jurisdiction over the case despite the alleged war crimes having taken place in Albania.

Geci had been arrested by European police in May and Alija in June.

The EULEX prosecution provided testimonies of around 20 detainees — whose identities were not revealed — who had said they has suffered great physical and psychological trauma "because of the conditions they were being kept and as the result of beating and torture."

Their names are coded in a special, confidential annex of the indictment as a way for the court to keep their identities secure.

Following the release of Marty's report, Thaci warned that those "fake patriots" in Kosovo who had cooperated with the Council of Europe envoy in his investigation might face consequences.

"These names are known and they will be made public very quickly," Thaci said in a weekend interview with Kosovo private TV station Klan.

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