

Press Office

Press Release

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UNMIK



United Nations Mission in Kosovo

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-UNMIK Countdown #4-



In search of the missing

PRISTINA - A total of 5,206 people were reported missing in Kosovo after the conflict in 1998-99. By the end of November 2006, 2,150 persons (Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic minorities) were still listed as missing according to ICRC figures. Between 2002 and November 2006, the Office on Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) succeeded in reducing the number of missing persons by over 50%. However, concerns regarding those still missing are one of the most pressing issues in Kosovo.

OMPF was created in 2002 as a division in the UNMIK Department of Justice. Today, the office consists of 55 staff members who work to clarify the fate of the missing persons. This office is also responsible for all forensics work dealing with homicides. OMPF is building up the capacity of local staff to carry out forensics activities after the end of the UNMIK mandate.

“It is of the highest priority to find the missing persons and identify the bodies,” said UNMIK Director of Justice Albert Moskowitz, *“Up to date, there are around 530 individuals whose remains have not yet been identified. To clarify the fate of the missing is a long and sensitive process and it is of special importance for the families affected. It is also essential to find the missing in order to help stabilize the region.”*

As of 1 December 2006, 1,807 missing persons have been pronounced dead and have had their remains returned to their families. In addition, about 100 missing persons have been identified, but the families have chosen not to accept the bodies until other members of their families or communities are found so that they can be buried together. Currently, only four sets of remains are yet to be accepted by their respective families.

OMPF has developed the Memory Project which aims to create a public record of the experiences of the families of the missing. The first initiative used theatre to explore the painful issues facing the families and was compiled into the publication “Voices”. The second oral histories initiative, video records interviews with the families of the missing in order to build a historical archive. The publication “Hear What We Are Saying” provides sample interviews.

On 29 November 2006, the OMPF won the UN 21 Awards for its activities regarding missing persons and forensics medicine.

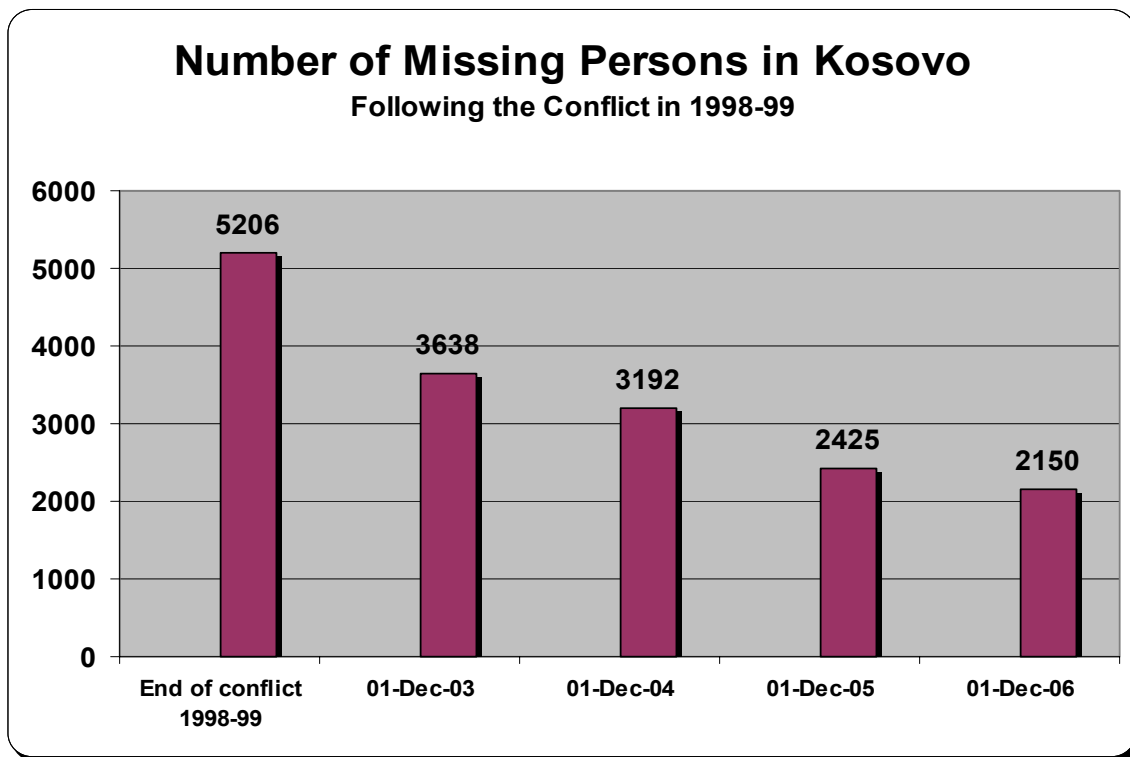


Chart: 1

Source: UNMIK

The numbers reflect the work the Office of the Missing Persons and Forensics.

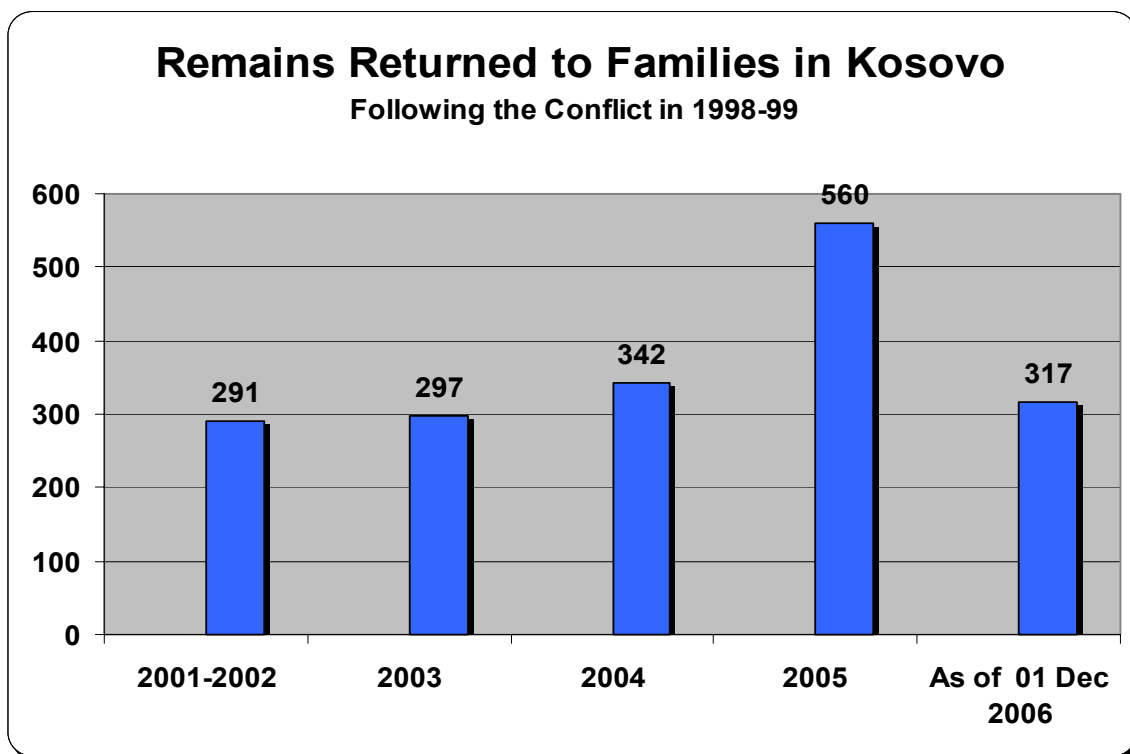


Chart: 2

Source: UNMIK

So far, between 2001-2002 and 2006 (as of December 2006), in total 1807 remains have been returned to their respective families.

Remains Exhumed by the UNMIK

Office of the Missing Persons and Forensics

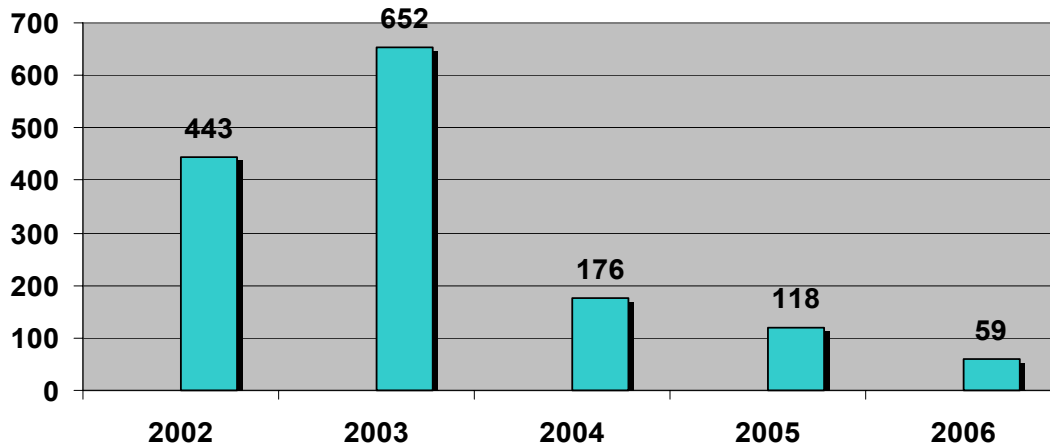


Chart: 3

Source: UNMIK

In total, 1448 exhumations have been conducted since 2002 by the Office of the Missing Persons and Forensics.

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***Note to Editors:** With UNMIK in its final phase before status resolution, the Division of Public Information senses an increasing historical focus by local and international media on Kosovo. Therefore, in this special series of weekly press releases we offer news and information about the UN Mission in Kosovo during the past seven years. The press releases seek to provide useful information about UNMIK, including quotes from officials as well as photos and web links.*