

Serbia jails police for Kosovo war crimes

by UPI

BELGRADE, Serbia -- A Belgrade court sentenced four former Serbian policemen to jail terms from 13 to 20 years for killing 50 Albanian civilians in Kosovo in 1999, officials said.

The Serbian court trying war crimes convicted the four of massacring 48 members of the Berisha family, most of them women and children aged from 1 year to 100 years, and two others, Belgrade's B92 Web site said Friday.

Operating in Suva Reka, southern Kosovo, the four officers herded the Berisha family, who were Albanians, into the courtyard of their house and opened fire with a machine gun. Prosecutors told the court that any survivors of the courtyard massacre were taken to a nearby pizza restaurant and killed with hand grenades.

The killings occurred March 26, 1999, two days after NATO forces began air raids on Serbian military and security forces to drive them out of Kosovo.

The bodies of the Berisha family were among 800 Albanian victims who were taken from Kosovo to a mass grave outside of the Serbian capital of Belgrade. Their remains were exhumed in 2001 after the regime of former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic was toppled in October 2000.

In February 2008, Kosovo, which is 90 percent Albanian ethnicity, unilaterally declared independence. Serbia has refused to recognize the new state.

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