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Kosovo: Incidents of multiple rape

“She was crying when she came back. She told us she had been raped by three or four soldiers. She cried for a long time. She asked us why we were lying about it because she said she knew it had happened to us too.”

In Kosovo, the otherwise unbreakable social bond that holds together extended families can be shattered by rape. Both the victims and their families are under intense pressure to conceal and deny what has happened.

Amnesty International has documented an incident of multiple rape of several women held hostage by Serb forces in a single village in the municipality of Suva Reka for three days from 21 April 1999.

Three of the women testified that they had been raped. Testimony from them and other witnesses strongly suggests that several other women were also raped.

On 21 April, the young men of the village fled following a warning from the KLA that Serb forces were approaching. The approximately 300 women and children, and 11 elderly men, who remained behind, gathered in a nearby meadow.

The men, who were between 50 and 90 years of age, were separated from the other villagers and have not been seen since. Some witnesses report hearing cries and shooting or Serb forces talking about killing the men. Several women reported seeing the dead body of one of the men.

The women and children were confined to three houses. According to witnesses interviewed by Amnesty International, several younger women were taken out repeatedly by their captors, over a period of three days.

In addition to those who admitted being raped or who had heard admissions of rape from others, several witnesses described women returning with clothes askew and in serious distress. According to the witnesses, these women said they had been beaten or did not talk but simply wept.

Amnesty International has not named the women or village involved in order to protect the women concerned.

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