



# *The Human Rights Advisory Panel*

Building D, UNMIK HQ Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo | E-mail: hrap-unmik@un.org | Tel: +381 (0)38 504-604, ext. 5182

## **OPINION**

**Date of adoption: 6 June 2013**

**Case Nos. 168/09, 169/09 and 312/09**

**Snežana MILENKOVIĆ and Momčilo MILENKOVIĆ**

**against**

**UNMIK**

The Human Rights Advisory Panel, sitting on 6 June 2013,  
with the following members present:

Mr Marek NOWICKI, Presiding Member

Ms Christine CHINKIN

Ms Françoise TULKENS

Assisted by

Mr Andrey ANTONOV, Executive Officer

Having considered the aforementioned complaint, introduced pursuant to Section 1.2 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 of 23 March 2006 on the establishment of the Human Rights Advisory Panel,

Having deliberated, makes the following findings and recommendations:

### **I. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE PANEL**

1. The complaints of Mrs Milenković (case nos 168/09 and 169/09) were introduced on 9 April 2009 and 30 April 2009, respectively, and registered on 30 April 2009. The complaint of Mr Milenković (case no. 312/09) was introduced on 21 September 2009 and registered on 23 September 2009.

2. On 10 December 2009, 23 December 2009 and 6 June 2011, the Panel requested further information from the complainants. No responses were received.
3. On 20 December 2009, the Panel decided to join the cases, pursuant to Rule 20 of the Panel's Rules of Procedure.
4. On 18 April 2012, the Panel communicated the case to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)<sup>1</sup> for UNMIK's comments on the admissibility of the case. On 28 May 2012, the SRSG provided UNMIK's response.
5. On 17 August 2012, the Panel declared the complaint admissible.
6. On 7 September 2012, the Panel forwarded the decision on admissibility to the SRSG, inviting UNMIK's observations on the merits of the case. On 4 March 2013, the SRSG provided UNMIK's response.
7. On 18 April 2012, the Panel requested UNMIK for investigative files. On 28 May 2012, UNMIK responded. The Panel repeated its request on 10 September 2012. UNMIK responded on 4 March 2013.
8. On 29 April 2013, the Panel requested UNMIK to confirm if the disclosure of files concerning the case could be considered final. On 2 May 2013, UNMIK responded affirmatively.

## II. THE FACTS

### A. General background<sup>2</sup>

9. The events at issue took place in the territory of Kosovo after the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in June 1999.
10. The armed conflict during 1998 and 1999 between the Serbian forces on one side and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other Kosovo Albanian armed groups on the other is well documented. Following the failure of international efforts to resolve the conflict, on 23 March 1999, the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) announced the commencement of air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

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<sup>1</sup> A list of abbreviations and acronyms contained in the text can be found in the attached Annex.

<sup>2</sup> The references drawn upon by the Panel in setting out this general background include: OSCE, "As Seen, as Told", Vol. 1 (October 1998 – June 1999) and Vol. II (14 June – 31 October 1999); quarterly reports of the UN Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo; UNMIK Police Annual Reports (2000, 2001); Humanitarian Law Centre, "Abductions and Disappearances of non-Albanians in Kosovo" (2001); Humanitarian Law Centre, "Kosovo Memory Book" (<http://www.kosovomemorybook.org>); UNMIK Office on Missing Persons and Forensics, Activity Report 2002-2004; European Court of Human Rights, *Behrami and Behrami v. France and Saramati v. France, Germany and Norway*, nos. 71412/01 and 78166/01, decision of 2 May 2007; International Commission on Missing Persons, "The Situation in Kosovo: a Stock Taking" (2010); data issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (available at [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)) and by the International Committee of the Red Cross (available at <http://familylinks.icrc.org/kosovo/en>).

(FRY). The air strikes began on 24 March 1999 and ended on 8 June 1999 when the FRY agreed to withdraw its forces from Kosovo. On 9 June 1999, the International Security Force (KFOR), the FRY and the Republic of Serbia signed a “Military Technical Agreement” by which they agreed on FRY withdrawal from Kosovo and the presence of an international security force following an appropriate UN Security Council Resolution.

11. On 10 June 1999, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 (1999). Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the UN Security Council decided upon the deployment of international security and civil presences - KFOR and UNMIK respectively - in the territory of Kosovo. Pursuant to Security Council Resolution No. 1244 (1999), the UN was vested with full legislative and executive powers for the interim administration of Kosovo, including the administration of justice. KFOR was tasked with establishing “a secure environment in which refugees and displaced persons can return home in safety” and temporarily ensuring “public safety and order” until the international civil presence could take over responsibility for this task. UNMIK comprised four main components or pillars led by the United Nations (civil administration), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (humanitarian assistance, which was phased out in June 2000), the OSCE (institution building) and the EU (reconstruction and economic development). Each pillar was placed under the authority of the SRSG. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) mandated UNMIK to “promote and protect human rights” in Kosovo in accordance with internationally recognised human rights standards.
12. Estimates regarding the effect of the conflict on the displacement of the Kosovo Albanian population range from approximately 800,000 to 1.45 million. Following the adoption of Resolution 1244 (1999), the majority of Kosovo Albanians who had fled, or had been forcibly expelled from their houses by the Serbian forces during the conflict, returned to Kosovo.
13. Meanwhile, members of the non-Albanian community – mainly but not exclusively Serbs, Roma and Slavic Muslims – as well as Kosovo Albanians suspected of collaboration with the Serbian authorities, became the target of widespread attacks by Kosovo Albanian armed groups. Current estimates relating to the number of Kosovo Serbs displaced fall within the region of 200,000 to 210,000. Whereas most Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanians fled to Serbia proper and the neighbouring countries, those remaining behind became victims of systematic killings, abductions, arbitrary detentions, sexual and gender based violence, beatings and harassment.
14. Although figures remain disputed, it is estimated that more than 15,000 deaths or disappearances occurred during and in the immediate aftermath of the Kosovo conflict (1998-2000). More than 3,000 ethnic Albanians, and about 800 Serbs, Roma and members of other minority communities went missing during this period. More than half of the missing persons had been located and their mortal remains identified by the end of 2010, while 1,766 are listed as still missing by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as of October 2012.
15. As of July 1999, as part of the efforts to restore law enforcement in Kosovo within the framework of the rule of law, the SRSG urged UN member States to support the deployment within the civilian component of UNMIK of 4,718 international police personnel. UNMIK

Police were tasked with advising KFOR on policing matters until they themselves had sufficient numbers to take full responsibility for law enforcement and to work towards the development of a Kosovo police service. By September 1999, approximately 1,100 international police officers had been deployed to UNMIK.

16. By December 2000, the deployment of UNMIK Police was almost complete with 4,400 personnel from 53 different countries, and UNMIK had assumed primacy in law enforcement responsibility in all regions of Kosovo except for Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. According to the 2000 Annual Report of UNMIK Police, 351 kidnappings, 675 murders and 115 rapes had been reported to them in the period between June 1999 and December 2000.
17. Due to the collapse of the administration of justice in Kosovo, UNMIK established in June 1999 an Emergency Justice System. This was composed of a limited number of local judges and prosecutors and was operational until a regular justice system became operative in January 2000. In February 2000, UNMIK authorised the appointment of international judges and prosecutors, initially in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region and later across Kosovo, to strengthen the local justice system and to guarantee its impartiality. As of October 2002, the local justice system comprised 341 local and 24 international judges and prosecutors. In January 2003, the UN Secretary-General reporting to the Security Council on the implementation of Resolution 1244 (1999) defined the police and justice system in Kosovo at that moment as being “well-functioning” and “sustainable”.
18. In July 1999, the UN Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that UNMIK already considered the issue of missing persons as a particularly acute human rights concern in Kosovo. In November 1999, a Missing Persons Unit (MPU) was established within UNMIK Police, mandated to investigate with respect to either the possible location of missing persons and/or gravesites. The MPU, jointly with the Central Criminal Investigation Unit (CCIU) of UNMIK Police, and later a dedicated War Crimes Investigation Unit (WCIU), were responsible for the criminal aspects of missing persons cases in Kosovo. In May 2000, a Victim Recovery and Identification Commission (VRIC) chaired by UNMIK was created for the recovery, identification and disposition of mortal remains. As of June 2002, the newly established Office on Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) in the UNMIK Department of Justice (DOJ) became the sole authority mandated to determine the whereabouts of missing persons, identify their mortal remains and return them to the family of the missing. Starting from 2001, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNMIK and the Sarajevo-based International Commission of Missing Persons (ICMP), supplemented by a further agreement in 2003, the identification of mortal remains was carried out by the ICMP through DNA testing.
19. On 9 December 2008, UNMIK’s responsibility with regard to police and justice in Kosovo ended with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) assuming full operational control in the area of the rule of law, following the Statement made by the President of the United Nations Security Council on 26 November 2008 (S/PRST/2008/44), welcoming the continued engagement of the European Union in Kosovo.
20. On the same date, UNMIK and EULEX signed a MoU on the modalities, and the respective rights and obligations arising from the transfer from UNMIK to EULEX of cases and the related files which involved on-going investigations, prosecutions and other activities

undertaken by UNMIK International Prosecutors. Shortly thereafter, similar agreements were signed with regard to the files handled by international judges and UNMIK Police. All agreements obliged EULEX to provide to UNMIK access to the documents related to the actions previously undertaken by UNMIK authorities. Between 9 December 2008 and 30 March 2009, all criminal case files held by the UNMIK DOJ and UNMIK Police were handed over to EULEX.

## **B. Circumstances surrounding the abduction and killing of Mr Dimitrije Milenković and Mr Aleksandar Milenković**

21. The complainants, Mrs Snežana Milenković (case nos 168/09 and 169/09) and Mr Momčilo Milenković (case no.312/09), are the widow and brother, respectively of Dimitrije Milenković. Mrs Snežana Milenković is the mother of Aleksandar Milenković.
22. The complainants state that on 16 June 1999, Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković were abducted, along with four other men, on the road between Obiliq/Obilić town and Mazgit village in Obiliq/Obilić municipality. On 19 June 1999, the bodies were found in a drainage ditch in Mazgit village. KFOR troops transported the mortal remains of the six bodies to the Prishtinë/Priština hospital morgue and the mortal remains were later buried in the “Dragodan” cemetery in Prishtinë/Priština.
23. The complainants state that the abductions were reported to UNMIK, KFOR, and the ICRC.
24. The name of Dimitrije Milenković appears in the database compiled by the UNMIK OMPF. Likewise, the ICRC opened a tracing request for him on 5 June 2001. The entry in the online list of missing persons maintained by the ICMP<sup>3</sup> with regard to Dimitrije Milenković reads, in relevant parts: “sufficient reference samples collected” and “ICMP has provided information on this missing person on 04-19-2004 to authorized institution. To obtain additional information, contact EULEX Kosovo Headquarters.”
25. The name of Aleksandar Milenković appears in the database compiled by the UNMIK OMPF. The ICRC published his name in its publication “Persons missing in relation to the events in Kosovo”, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, February 2004). The entry in the online list of missing persons maintained by the ICMP<sup>4</sup> with regard to Aleksandar Milenković reads, in relevant parts: “sufficient reference samples collected” and “ICMP has provided information on this missing person on 04-19-2004 to authorized institution. To obtain additional information, contact EULEX Kosovo Headquarters.”

## **C. The Investigation**

26. On 4 March 2013, UNMIK presented to the Panel the documents which were held previously by the OMPF and EULEX Police. On 2 May 2013, UNMIK confirmed to the Panel that all files in UNMIK’s possession have been disclosed.

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<sup>3</sup> The database is available at: [http://www.ic-mp.org/fdmsweb/index.php?w=mp\\_details\\_popup&l=en](http://www.ic-mp.org/fdmsweb/index.php?w=mp_details_popup&l=en) (accessed on 6 June 2013).

<sup>4</sup> The database is available at: [http://www.ic-mp.org/fdmsweb/index.php?w=mp\\_details\\_popup&l=en](http://www.ic-mp.org/fdmsweb/index.php?w=mp_details_popup&l=en) (accessed on 6 June 2013).

27. Concerning disclosure of information contained in the files, the Panel recalls that UNMIK has made available investigative files for the Panel's review under a pledge of confidentiality. In this regard, the Panel must clarify that although its assessment of the present case stems from a thorough examination of the available documentation, only limited information contained therein is disclosed. Hence a synopsis of relevant investigative steps taken by investigative authorities is provided in the paragraphs to follow.
28. According to the information provided by UNMIK, family members identified the bodies of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković after British KFOR personnel presented them with photographs of the victims; the mortal remains were scheduled to be released to the family on 29 June 1999 for burial. However, the complainants did not receive the mortal remains at that time. It appears that KFOR unofficially informed the complainants that the mortal remains had been buried in "Dragodan" cemetery in Prishtinë/Priština, but that thereafter KFOR neither contacted the complainants to confirm the specific location of the mortal remains, nor made further arrangements for their transport and handover.
29. The CCIU opened an investigation in 1999, upon receiving the case from British KFOR, and established an initial list of witnesses who it was interested in questioning. According to a CCIU document dated 1 October 1999, the CCIU recommended that the investigation locate the family members who had identified the bodies, as well as the two persons who had found the bodies. It is not clear from the documents in the file whether this investigative strategy was pursued at that time. On 4 October 1999, CCIU recommended that "the case be placed on inactive until further information is obtained." A handwritten note written in the file stated that on 1 November 1999, the case was apparently closed.
30. On 13 July 2000, the mortal remains of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković were autopsied by personnel from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and then numbered and reburied in an unmarked grave in the "Dragodan" cemetery in Prishtinë/Priština. According to the documents provided by UNMIK, in 2000 the MPU also opened an investigation regarding both Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković.
31. In 2002, the WCIU took further investigative steps, including filing an initial report, taking a witness statement from Mr Momčilo Milenković, examining the area where the bodies were found, carrying out canvass interviews to locate persons who could remember the incident and requesting KFOR to release a video tape that British KFOR personnel had allegedly made documenting the crime scene in June 1999.
32. According to the documents provided by UNMIK, on 3 December 2002, a WCIU investigator requested assistance from UNMIK in facilitating the investigator's travel to Serbia to take statements from the complainants. However, from the documents presented, it is not known if this deposition ever occurred.
33. From the record provided by UNMIK, it appears that on 27 March 2003, a WCIU investigator requested further information from the MPU on where the mortal remains of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković had been buried.

34. According to information provided by UNMIK, on 19 March 2004, based on a general review of the DNA analyses conducted by the ICMP, the ICMP confirmed the identities of the mortal remains as those of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković.
35. On 13 May 2004, the Office of the Medical Examiner of the DOJ issued death certificates for Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković. The death of Dimitrije Milenković was stated as caused by “gunshot wounds to the head and chest”. The death of Aleksandar Milenković was stated as caused by “two gunshot wounds to the head.”
36. On 17 May 2004, MPU re-exhumed the mortal remains of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković, and on 26 June 2004 the mortal remains of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković were returned to the complainants.
37. No further investigative material was presented to the Panel by UNMIK, except for case registration numbers and documents indicating that, at least through 2004, UNMIK had carried out a criminal investigation. Additionally, UNMIK submitted one further document dated 23 August 2007, which was labelled “confidential”.

### **III. THE COMPLAINT**

38. The complainants complain about UNMIK’s alleged failure to properly investigate the abduction and killing of their husband/brother and son. In this regard, the Panel deems that they invoke a violation of the procedural limb of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

### **IV. THE LAW**

#### **A. The scope of the Panel’s review**

39. In determining whether it considers that there has been a violation of Article 2 (procedural limb) of the ECHR, the Panel is mindful of the existing case law, notably that of the European Court of Human Rights. However, the Panel is also aware that the complaints before it differ in some significant ways from those brought before that Court. First, the respondent is not a State but an interim international territorial administration mandated to exercise temporary responsibilities in Kosovo. No suspicion attaches to UNMIK with respect to the substantive obligations under Article 2 of the ECHR. Second, as in a limited number of cases before the European Court, those suspected of being responsible for the alleged killings and/or abductions are in all cases before the Panel non-state actors, mostly but not exclusively connected to the conflict. These are factors for the Panel to take into consideration as it assesses for the first time the procedural positive obligations of an intergovernmental organisation with respect to acts committed by third parties in a territory over which it has temporary legislative, executive and judicial control.
40. Before turning to the examination of the merits of the complaint, the Panel needs to clarify the scope of its review.

41. The Panel notes that with the adoption of the UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/1 on 25 July 1999 UNMIK undertook an obligation to observe internationally recognised human rights standards in exercising its functions. This undertaking was detailed in UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/24 of 12 December 1999, by which UNMIK assumed obligations under the following human rights instruments: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Protocols thereto, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
42. The Panel also notes that Section 1.2 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 of 23 March 2006 on the Establishment of the Human Rights Advisory Panel provides that the Panel “shall examine complaints from any person or group of individuals claiming to be the victim of a violation by UNMIK of (their) human rights”. It follows that only acts or omissions attributable to UNMIK fall within the jurisdiction *ratione personae* of the Panel. In this respect, it should be noted, as stated above, that as of 9 December 2008, UNMIK no longer exercises executive authority over the Kosovo judiciary and law enforcement machinery. Therefore UNMIK bears no responsibility for any violation of human rights allegedly committed by those bodies. Insofar as the complainant complains about acts that occurred after that date, they fall outside the jurisdiction *ratione personae* of the Panel.
43. Likewise, the Panel emphasises that, as far as its jurisdiction *rationemateriae* is concerned, as follows from Section 1.2 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12, it can only examine complaints relating to an alleged violation of human rights. This means that it can only review acts or omissions complained of for their compatibility with the international human rights instruments referred to above (see § 34). In the particular case of killings and disappearances in life-threatening circumstances, it is not the Panel’s role to replace the competent authorities in the investigation of the case. Its task is limited to examining the effectiveness of the criminal investigation into such killings and disappearances, in the light of the procedural obligations flowing from Article 2 of the ECHR.
44. The Panel further notes that Section 2 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 provides that the Panel shall have jurisdiction over complaints relating to alleged violations of human rights “that had occurred not earlier than 23 April 2005 or arising from facts which occurred prior to this date where these facts give rise to a continuing violation of human rights”. It follows that events that took place before 23 April 2005 generally fall outside the jurisdiction *ratione temporis* of the Panel. However, to the extent that such events gave rise to a continuing situation, the Panel has jurisdiction to examine complaints relating to that situation (see European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Grand Chamber, *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, nos. 16064/90 and others, judgment of 18 September 2009, §§ 147-149; ECtHR, *Cyprus v. Turkey* [GC] no. 25781/94, judgment of 10 May 2011, § 136, ECHR 2001-IV).

## **B. Alleged violation of the procedural obligation under Article 2 of the ECHR**

45. The Panel considers that the complainants invoke a violation of the procedural obligation stemming from the right to life, guaranteed by Article 2 of the European Convention on



Human Rights (ECHR) in that UNMIK Police did not conduct an effective investigation into the abduction and killing of their husband/brother and son.

### 1. The Parties' submissions

46. The Panel deems that the complainants allege a violation of Article 2 of the ECHR through the lack of an adequate criminal investigation into the abduction and killing of their husband/brother and son.

47. The SRSG argues that, in general, when considering whether UNMIK has satisfied its procedural obligations under Article 2 of the ECHR, the Panel must take into consideration the special circumstances in Kosovo at the time. This was especially the case in the initial stage of its deployment, the period during which Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković's abduction and killing occurred.

48. The SRSG further observes that when determining applications under Article 2, consideration must be given to not imposing an impossible or disproportionate burden on UNMIK. In this regard, the SRSG recalls the judgment of 15 February 2011 rendered by the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, stating at paragraph 70:

“The Court takes into account the complex situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, notably in the first ten years following the war. In such a post-conflict situation, what amounts to an impossible and/or disproportionate burden must be measured by the very particular facts and context. In this connection, the Court notes that more than 100,000 people were killed, almost 30,000 people went missing and more than two million people were displaced during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Inevitably choices had to be made in terms of post-war priorities and resources.”

49. In the view of the SRSG, UNMIK was faced with a very similar situation in Kosovo as the one in Bosnia in the aftermath of that conflict. The SRSG states that thousands of people were displaced or went missing. Many of the persons who went missing were abducted, killed, and buried in unmarked graves inside or outside Kosovo, which made it very difficult locating and recovering their mortal remains.

50. In June 2002, UNMIK created the OMPF with the mandate to determine the fate of the missing; however its work was faced with many challenges at the beginning of the operations, due to the work previously done mostly by actors independent from UNMIK. In particular, the SRSG states that the collection of evidence of war crimes began with the arrival of NATO in 1999 with independent teams from several countries operating under the loose coordination of the ICTY. A lack of standard operating procedures or centralisation led to problems with the evidence gathered in this phase. In 2000, the ICTY launched a large, centralised forensic operation, based at the Rahovec/Orahovac mortuary, with standard operating procedures for all forensic teams except the British one, which operated independently out of Prishtinë/Priština. The SRSG states that, in the effort to demonstrate that crimes were systematic and widespread, the ICTY teams conducted autopsies on as many bodies as possible, carrying out little or no identification work; moreover, unidentified bodies exhumed in 1999 were reburied in locations still unknown to the OMPF. After the

ICTY closed their operation in 2000, the UNMIK Police MPU continued small-scale investigations on missing persons “*ex-officio*, without any broader prosecutorial strategy”. As a consequence, a large amount of unstructured information was collected. The SRSG states that, taking into account the difficulties described above, “the process of dealing effectively with disappearances and other serious violations of international humanitarian law has been understandably incremental” in Kosovo as it is reflected in the *Palić* case referred to above. The SRSG concludes that the work of the OMPF contributed greatly to determining the whereabouts and fate of the missing from the Kosovo conflict; however it was not possible to locate all the missing within the timeframe and resources available at that time.

51. The SRSG further argues that fundamental to conducting effective investigations is a professional, well trained and well-resourced police force and that such a force did not exist in Kosovo in the aftermath of the conflict. In the policing vacuum following the end of the conflict, UNMIK had to build a new Kosovo Police Service from scratch, a long and challenging task which, according to the SRSG, is still in progress. The SRSG also states that UNMIK Police faced numerous challenges in exercising law enforcement functions gradually transferred to it by KFOR in 1999-2000. In this regard, he refers to the UNMIK Police Annual Report of 2000 describing the situation as follows:

“UNMIK Police had to deal in the aftermath of war with dead bodies and looted and burnt houses. Ethnic violence flared through illegal evictions, forcible takeovers of properties, the burning of houses and physical violence against communities all over Kosovo. Tempers and tensions were running high amongst all ethnic groups, exacerbated by reports of missing and dead persons. It became imperative for UNMIK to establish order and to quickly construct a framework to register and investigate crimes.

All of this had to be done with limited physical and human resources. Being the first executive mission in the history of the UN, the concept, planning and implementation was being developed on the ground. With 20 different contributory nationalities at the beginning, it was very challenging task for police managers to establish common practices for optimum results in a high-risk environment.”

52. The SRSG states that UNMIK international police officers working on cases of missing persons had to adjust to conducting investigations in a foreign territory and country, with limited support from the still developing Kosovo Police. He further states that these investigators were often faced with situations where individuals holding relevant knowledge on the whereabouts and fate of missing persons did not want to disclose this information. According to the SRSG, all these constraints inhibited the ability of the UNMIK Police to conduct investigations according to the standards that may be expected from States with more established institutions and are not faced with the high number of cases of this nature associated with a post-conflict situation.
53. With regard to this particular case, the SRSG specifically argues that “based on the reference number given by MPU for the disappearances of Mr. Dimitrije Milenković and Mr. Aleksandar Milenković, it can be asserted that UNMIK OMPF and MPU became aware of their disappearance some time in 2000.” The SRSG highlights the various investigative steps undertaken by UNMIK to locate the mortal remains of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković, including the autopsies performed by an OMPF pathologist in 2000

and the DNA analysis performed by ICMP. “UNMIK therefore asserts that all the necessary investigative efforts were made to locate the mortal remains of the missing persons and establish their identity”.

54. With regard to the investigation aimed at identifying and bringing to justice the perpetrators who are responsible for the abduction and killing of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković, the SRSG specifically argues that such an investigation was conducted by UNMIK. “In the War Crimes Unit Case Analysis Report, dated 23 August 2007, the investigator in charge of the case made a recommendation stating that ‘this case has elements that may constitute a Crime of War, therefore this case should be further investigated by an Investigator from the War Crimes Unit’. It is further pointed out that there are no known suspects in the case.”
55. The SRSG finally argues that “it is evident that UNMIK Police did conduct reasonable investigative efforts in accordance with the procedural requirements of Article 2, aiming at bringing the perpetrators to justice.”

## **2. The Panel’s Assessment**

### *a) Submission of relevant files*

56. The SRSG observes that additional and conclusive information may exist beyond the case file submitted to the Panel concerning the investigation into the case of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković.
57. The Panel notes that Section 15 of UNMIK Regulation No. 2006/12 states that the Panel may request the submission from UNMIK of any documents and that the SRSG shall cooperate with the Panel and provide the necessary assistance including, in particular, in the release of documents and information relevant to the complaint. The Panel in this regard refers to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights that inferences shall be drawn from the conduct of the respondent party during the proceedings, including from its failure “to submit information in their hands without a satisfactory explanation” (see ECtHR, *Çelikkbilek v. Turkey*, no. 27693/95, judgment of 31 May 2005, § 56).
58. The Panel notes that UNMIK was requested on at least three occasions to submit relevant documents in relation to the case. In response to the latest request from the Panel, on 2 May 2013, UNMIK stated that the disclosure of files concerning the case could be considered final.
59. The Panel also notes that the proper maintenance of investigative files concerning crimes such as killings and disappearances, from the opening of the investigations to their handing over, is crucial to the continuation of such investigations and failure to do so could thus raise *per se* issues under Article 2. The Panel likewise notes that UNMIK has not provided any explanation as to why the documentation may be incomplete, nor with respect to which parts.
60. The Panel itself is not in the position to verify the completeness of the investigative files received. The Panel will therefore assess the merits of the complaint on the basis of

documents made available (in this sense, see ECtHR, *Tsechoyev v. Russia*, no. 39358/05, judgment of 15 March 2011, § 146).

b) *General principles concerning the obligation to conduct an effective investigation under Article 2*

61. The complainants state that UNMIK failed to conduct an effective investigation into the abduction and killing of their husband/brother and son.
62. The Panel notes that the positive obligation to investigate disappearances is widely accepted in international human rights law since at least the case of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) *Velásquez-Rodríguez* (see IACtHR, *Velásquez-Rodríguez v. Honduras*, judgment of 29 July 1988, Series C No. 4). The positive obligation has also been stated by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) as stemming from Article 6 (right to life), Article 7 (prohibition of cruel and inhuman treatment) and Article 9 (right to liberty and security of person), read in conjunction with Articles 2 (3) (right to an effective remedy) of the (ICCPR) (see United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment No. 6, 30 April 1982, § 4; HRC, General Comment No. 31, 26 May 2004, §§ 8 and 18, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 13; see also, among others, HRC, *Mohamed El Awani, v. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*, communication no. 1295/2004, views of 11 July 2007, CCPR/C/90/D/1295/2004). The obligation to investigate disappearances and killings is also asserted in the UN Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances (A/Res/47/133, 18 December 1992), and further detailed in UN guidelines such as the UN Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal Arbitrary and Summary Executions (1991) and the “Guidelines for the Conduct of United Nations Inquiries into Allegations of Massacres” (1995). The importance of the obligation is confirmed by the adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2006, which entered into force on 23 December 2010.
63. In order to address the complainants’ allegations, the Panel refers, in particular, to the well-established case law of the European Court on Human Rights on the procedural obligation under Article 2 of the ECHR. The Court has held that “[The] obligation to protect the right to life under Article 2, read in conjunction with the State’s general duty under Article 1 of the Convention to “secure to everyone within [its] jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in [the] Convention”, requires by implication that there should be some form of effective official investigation when individuals have been killed...” (see, *mutatis mutandis*, ECtHR, *McCann and Others v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 27 September 1995, § 161, Series A no. 324; and ECtHR, *Kaya v. Turkey*, judgment of 19 February 1998, § 86, Reports 1998-I; see also ECtHR, *Jasinskis v. Latvia*, no. 45744/08, judgment of 21 December 2010, § 71). The duty to conduct such an investigation arises in all cases of killing and other suspicious death, whether the perpetrators were private persons or State agents or are unknown (see ECtHR, *Kolevi v. Bulgaria*, no. 1108/02, judgment of 5 November 2009, § 191).
64. The European Court has also stated that the procedural obligation to provide some form of effective official investigation exists also when an individual has gone missing in life-threatening circumstances and is not confined to cases where it is apparent that the disappearance was caused by an agent of the State (see ECtHR [GC], *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, cited in § 44 above, at § 136).

65. The authorities must act of their own motion once the matter has come to their attention, and they cannot leave it to the initiative of the next-of-kin either to lodge a formal complaint or to take responsibility for the conduct of any investigative procedure (see ECtHR, *Ahmet Özkan and Others v. Turkey*, no. 21689/93, judgment of 6 April 2004, § 310, see also ECtHR, *Isayeva v. Russia*, no. 57950/00, judgment of 24 February 2005, § 210).
66. Setting out the standards of an effective investigation, the Court has stated that “beside being independent, accessible to the victim’s family, carried out with reasonable promptness and expedition, affording a sufficient element of public scrutiny of the investigation and its results, the investigation must also be effective in the sense that is capable of leading to a determination of whether the death was caused unlawfully and if so, to the identification and punishment of those responsible (see ECtHR [GC], *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, cited above § 191; see also ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, no. 4704/04, judgment of 15 February 2011, § 63). This is not an obligation of results but of means. The authorities must take whatever reasonable steps they can to secure the evidence concerning the incident, including, inter alia eye-witness testimony, forensic evidence and, where appropriate, an autopsy which provides a complete and accurate record of injury and an objective analysis of the clinical findings, including the cause of death. Any deficiency in the investigation which undermines its ability to establish the cause of death or the person or persons responsible will risk falling foul of this standard (see ECtHR, *Ahmet Özkan and Others v. Turkey*, cited in § 65 above, at § 312, and *Isayeva v. Russia*, cited in §65above, at § 212).
67. In particular, the investigation’s conclusion must be based on thorough, objective and impartial analysis of all relevant elements. Failing to follow an obvious line of enquiry undermines to a decisive extent the ability to establish the circumstances of the case and the identity of those responsible (see ECtHR, *Kolevi v. Bulgaria*, cited in §63above, § 201). Nevertheless, the nature and degree of scrutiny which satisfy the minimum threshold of the investigation’s effectiveness depend on the circumstances of the particular case. They must be assessed on the basis of all relevant facts and with regard to the practical realities of the investigative work (see ECtHR, *Velcea and Mazărev. Romania*, no. 64301/01, judgment of 1 December 2009, § 105).
68. Specifically with regard to persons disappeared and later found dead, the Court has stated that the procedures of exhuming and identifying mortal remains do not exhaust the obligation under Article 2 of the ECHR. The Court holds that “the procedural obligation arising from a disappearance will generally remain as long as the whereabouts and fate of the person are unaccounted for, and it is thus of a continuing nature” (ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, cited in § 66 above, at § 46; in the same sense ECtHR [GC], *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, cited in § 44 above, at § 148, *Aslakhanova and Others v. Russia*, nos. 2944/06 and others, judgment of 18 December 2012, § 122). However, the Court also stresses that this procedural obligation “does not come to an end even on discovery of the body .... This only casts light on one aspect of the fate of the missing person and the obligation to account for the disappearance and death, as well as to identify and prosecute any perpetrator of unlawful acts in that connection, will generally remain” (ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, cited above, at § 66; in the same sense ECtHR [GC], *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, cited in § 44 above, at § 145). While the location and the subsequent identification of the mortal remains of the victim may in themselves be significant

achievements, the procedural obligation under Article 2 continues to exist (see ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, cited in § 66 above, at § 64).

69. On the requirement of public scrutiny, the Court has further stated that there must be a sufficient element of public scrutiny of the investigation or its results to secure accountability in practice as well as in theory. The degree of public scrutiny required may well vary from case to case. In all cases, however, the victim's next-of-kin must be involved in the procedure to the extent necessary to safeguard his or her legitimate interests (see *Ahmet Özkan and Others v. Turkey*, cited in § 66 above, at §§ 311-314; *Isayeva v. Russia*, cited in § 65 above, §§ 211-214 and the cases cited therein).” ECtHR [GC], *Al-Skeini and Others v. United Kingdom*, no. 55721/07, judgment of 7 July 2011, § 167, ECHR 2011).

c) *Applicability of Article 2 to the Kosovo context*

70. The Panel is conscious that the abduction and killing of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković occurred shortly after the deployment of UNMIK in Kosovo in the immediate aftermath of the armed conflict, when crime, violence and insecurity were rife.

71. On his part, the SRSG does not contest that UNMIK had a duty to investigate the present case under Article 2 of the ECHR. However, according to the SRSG, the unique circumstances pertaining to the Kosovo context and to UNMIK’s deployment in the first phase of its mission shall be taken into account when assessing whether this investigation is in compliance with Article 2 of the ECHR. In substance, the SRSG argues that it is not possible to apply to UNMIK the same standards applicable to a State in a normal situation.

72. The Panel considers that the SRSG’s arguments raise two main questions: first, whether the standards of Article 2 continue to apply in situation of conflict or generalised violence and, secondly, whether such standards shall be considered fully applicable to UNMIK, in particular during the first phase of its mission.

73. As regards the applicability of Article 2 to UNMIK, the Panel recalls that with the adoption of the UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/1 on 25 July 1999 UNMIK undertook an obligation to observe internationally recognised human rights standards in exercising its functions. This undertaking was detailed in UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/24 of 12 December 1999, by which UNMIK assumed obligations under certain international human rights instruments, including the ECHR. In this respect, the Panel has already found that it is true that UNMIK’s interim character and related difficulties must be duly taken into account with regard to a number of situations, but under no circumstances could these elements be taken as a justification for diminishing standards of respect for human rights, which were duly incorporated into UNMIK’s mandate (see HRAP, *Milogorić and Others*, nos. 38/08 and others, opinion of 24 March 2011, § 44; *Berisha and Others*, nos. 27/08 and others, opinion of 23 February 2011, § 25; *Lalić and Others*, nos. 09/08 and others, opinion of 9 June 2012, § 22).

74. Concerning the applicability of Article 2 to situations of conflict or generalised violence, the Panel recalls that the European Court on Human Rights has established the applicability of Article 2 to post-conflict situations, including in countries of the former Yugoslavia (see, among other examples, ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, cited in § 66 above, and

ECtHR, *Jularić v. Croatia*, no. 20106/06, judgment of 20 January 2011). The Court has further held that the procedural obligation under Article 2 continues to apply in “difficult security conditions, including in a context of armed conflict” (see ECtHR [GC], *Al-Skeini and Others v. the United Kingdom*, cited in § 69 above, at § 164; see also ECtHR, *Güleç v. Turkey*, judgment of 27 July 1998, § 81, Reports 1998-IV; ECtHR, *Ergi v. Turkey*, judgment of 28 July 1998, §§ 79 and 82, Reports 1998-IV; ECtHR, *Ahmet Özkan and Others v. Turkey*, cited in § 65 above, at §§ 85-90, 309-320 and 326-330; *Isayeva v. Russia*, cited in § 65 above, at §§ 180 and 210; ECtHR, *Kanlibaş v. Turkey*, no. 32444/96, judgment of 8 December 2005, §§ 39-51).

75. The Court has acknowledged that “where the death [and disappearances] to be investigated under Article 2 occur in circumstances of generalised violence, armed conflict or insurgency, obstacles may be placed in the way of investigators and concrete constraints may compel the use of less effective measures of investigation or may cause an investigation to be delayed” (see, ECtHR [GC], *Al-Skeini and Others v. the United Kingdom*, cited in § 69 above, at § 164; ECtHR, *Bazorkina v. Russia*, no. 69481/01, judgment of 27 July 2006, § 121). Nonetheless, the Court has held that “the obligation under Article 2 to safeguard life entails that, even in difficult security conditions, all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that an effective, independent investigation is conducted into alleged breaches of the right to life (see, amongst many other examples, ECtHR, *Kaya v. Turkey*, cited in § 63 above, at §§ 86-92; ECtHR, *Ergi*, cited above, at §§ 82-85; ECtHR [GC], *Tanrikulu v. Turkey*, no. 23763/94, judgment of 8 July 1999, §§ 101-110, ECHR 1999-IV; ECtHR, *Khashiyev and Akayeva v. Russia*, nos. 57942/00 and 57945/00, judgment of 24 February 2005, §§ 156-166; ECtHR, *Isayeva v. Russia*, cited in § 65 above, at §§ 215-224; ECtHR, *Musayev and Others v. Russia*, nos. 57941/00 and others, judgment of 26 July 2007, §§ 158-165).
76. Similarly, the HRC has held that the right to life, including its procedural guarantees, shall be considered as the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted even in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation (see, HRC, General Comment No. 6, cited in § 62 above, at § 1; HRC, *Abubakar Amirov and Aizan Amirova v. Russian Federation*, communication no. 1447/2006, views of 22 April 2009, § 11.2, CCPR/C/95/D/1447/2006). Further, the HRC has stated the applicability of Article 2 (3), 6 and 7 of the ICCPR with specific reference to UNMIK’s obligation to conduct proper investigations on disappearances and abductions in Kosovo (see HRC, Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Kosovo (Serbia), 14 August 2006, §§ 12-13, CCPR/C/UNK/CO/1).
77. The Panel appreciates the difficulties encountered by UNMIK during the first phase of its deployment. The Panel notes that the appropriate importance attached to the issue of missing persons in Kosovo meant that UNMIK had to take into account both the humanitarian and criminal dimensions of the situation. In particular, the Panel considers that the importance attached to the criminal investigations and the difficulties in Kosovo that limited the abilities of investigating authorities to conduct such investigations, as described by the SRSG, made it crucial that UNMIK establish from the outset an environment conducive to the performance of meaningful investigations. This would involve putting in place a system that would include such elements as the allocation of overall responsibility for the supervision and monitoring of progress in investigations, provision for the regular review of the status of investigations, and a process for the proper handover of cases between different officers or units of UNMIK Police. Such a system should also take account of the protection needs of

victims and witnesses (see, *mutatis mutandis*, ECtHR, *R.R. and Others v. Hungary*, no. 19400/11, judgment of 4 December 2012, §§ 28-32), as well as to consider the special vulnerability of displaced persons in post-conflict situations (see ECtHR [GC], *Sargsyan v. Azerbaijan*, no. 40167/06, decision of 14 December 2011, § 145; and ECtHR [GC], *Chiragov and Others v. Armenia*, no. 13216/05, decision of 14 December 2011, § 146). While understanding that the deployment and the organisation of the police and justice apparatus occurred gradually, the Panel deems that this process was completed in 2003 when the police and justice system in Kosovo was described as being “well-functioning” and “sustainable” by the UN Secretary-General (see § 17 above). (see 112/09 para 78)

78. The Panel further notes that its task is not to review relevant practices or alleged obstacles to the conduct of effective investigations *in abstracto*, but only in relation to their specific application to the particular circumstances of a situation subject of a complaint before it (see, ECtHR, *Brogan and Others v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 29 November 1988, § 53, Series A no. 145-B). The Panel thus agrees with the SRSG that the nature and degree of scrutiny to determine whether the effectiveness of the investigation satisfies the minimum threshold depends on the circumstances of the particular case. For these reasons, the Panel considers that it will establish with regard to each case if all reasonable steps were taken to conduct an effective investigation as prescribed by Article 2, having regard to the realities of the investigative work in Kosovo.
79. In response to the SRSG’s objection that Article 2 must be interpreted in a way which does not impose an impossible or disproportionate burden on the authorities, either in the context of policing activities or that of priorities and resources, the Panel takes into account that the European Court has established that what amounts to an impossible and/or disproportionate burden must be measured by the very particular facts and contexts (see ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, cited in § 66 above, *Brecknell v. The United Kingdom*, no. 32457/04, 27 November 2007, § 70).

d) *Compliance with the requirements of Article 2 in the present case*

80. Turning to the particular circumstances of this case, the complainants state that Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković’s abduction and killing was reported promptly to UNMIK, KFOR, and the ICRC. Lacking specific documentation in this regard, the Panel considers that UNMIK became aware of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković’s abduction and killing at the latest by 1 October 1999 (see § 29 above).
81. The SRSG states that an effective investigation was carried out in relation to the Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković’s abduction and killing, however, due to minimal information and available leads, no concrete results could be achieved.
82. The Panel notes that there were obvious shortcomings in the conduct of the investigation from its inception, having in mind that the initial stage of the investigation is of the utmost importance. However, in light of the considerations developed above concerning its limited temporal jurisdiction (see § 44), the Panel recalls that it is competent *ratione temporis* to evaluate the compliance of the investigation with Article 2 of the ECHR only for the period after 23 April 2005, while taking into consideration the state of the case at that date



(ECtHR, *Palić v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, cited in § 66 above, at § 70). The period under review ends on 9 December 2008, with EULEX taking over responsibility in the area of administration of justice (see § 19 above).

83. The Panel notes that, according to the documents provided by UNMIK, from the moment UNMIK became aware of the matter until 23 April 2005, the majority of actions undertaken by UNMIK relate to the exhumation, identification and handing over of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković's mortal remains, which were carried out between July 2000 and June 2004. Although this must be considered in itself an important achievement, the Panel recalls that the procedural obligation under Article 2 did not come to an end with the discovery of the mortal remains, especially as they showed signs of possible violent deaths.
84. There are indications that UNMIK Police took some investigative steps with respect to clarifying the circumstances surrounding Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković's abduction and killing in this respect such as: interviewing the complainants and the family members of the other four victims whose bodies were found in the same drainage ditch as Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković's bodies were found, canvassing and interviewing potential witnesses among neighbours, searching the location where the bodies were initially found and interviewing the persons that found the bodies, and requesting KFOR to release a video tape that British KFOR personnel had allegedly made documenting the crime scene in June 1999 (see § 29 and § 31 above). However, since the report that details that the police undertook these activities is missing many of its attachments, the Panel cannot verify to what extent these investigative steps occurred. For example, only three witness statements have been provided; there is no record that the statement of the complainant Mrs Snežana Milenković was ever taken, despite references in the file to a WCIU investigator requesting assistance from UNMIK in facilitating the investigator's travel to Serbia to take statements from her (see § 32 above).
85. Coming to the period within its jurisdiction, starting from 23 April 2005, the Panel notes that there is no evidence that basic investigative steps had been carried out, such as interviewing both of the complainants and all of the other possible witnesses to any abduction that may have taken place. For example, a case analysis report provided in the file from 2007 mentions that some but not all of the witnesses had given statements. After 23 April 2005 the failure to conduct the necessary investigative actions persisted, thus, in accordance with the continuing obligation to investigate (see § 44 above), bringing the assessment of the whole investigation within the period of the Panel's jurisdiction.
86. In addition, the Panel considers that, as those responsible for the crime had not been located, UNMIK was obligated to use the means at its disposal to regularly review the progress of the investigation to ensure that nothing had been overlooked and any new evidence had been considered, as well as to inform the relatives of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković regarding any possible new leads of enquiry. However, besides this one document from 2007, there is no indication that any such review was ever undertaken.
87. The apparent lack of any adequate reaction from UNMIK Police may have suggested to perpetrators that the authorities were either not able, or not willing to investigate such criminal acts. Such an attitude of the authorities towards the gravest crimes in any society, and especially in post-conflict circumstances, inevitably creates a culture of impunity among

the criminals and can only lead to a worsening of the situation. The problems which UNMIK had encountered at the beginning of its mission, which were discussed above, do not justify such inaction, either at the outset or subsequently.

88. The Panel therefore considers that, having regard to all the circumstances of the particular case, not all reasonable steps were taken by UNMIK to identify the perpetrators and to bring them to justice. In this sense the Panel considers that the investigation was not adequate and did not comply with the requirements of promptness, expedition and effectiveness (see § 81 above), as required by Article 2.
89. As concerns the requirement of public scrutiny, the Panel recalls that Article 2 also requires the victim's next-of-kin to be involved in the investigation to the extent necessary to safeguard his or her legitimate interests. In this regard, the complainants claim that they were never informed about the steps taken by the investigators. The Panel notes that the complainants only communicated, with the exception of one interview in 2002, with UNMIK in regard to the recovery, handover and burial of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković's mortal remains; the last communication in this respect took place in June 2004. As the Panel has already noted, the file contains the record of only one statement that was taken from one of the complainants and no information was ever given to either of the complainants concerning the status of the investigation.
90. The Panel understands the complainant's view that the extent of the information received was unsatisfactory. The Panel is also aware that in all cases, the victim's next-of-kin must be involved in the procedure to the extent necessary to safeguard his or her legitimate interest (see ECtHR [GC], *Tahsin Acar v. Turkey*, no. 26307/95, judgment of 8 April 2004, § 226, ECHR 2004-III; ECtHR, *Taniş v Turkey*, no. 65899/01, judgment of 2 August 2005, § 204, ECHR 2005-VIII). The Panel therefore considers that the investigation was not accessible to the complainants' family as required by Article 2.
91. In light of the deficiencies and shortcomings as described above, the Panel concludes that UNMIK failed to carry out an adequate and effective investigation into the abduction and killing of their husband/brother and son. There has been accordingly a violation of Article 2, procedural limb, of the ECHR.

## V. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

92. In light of the Panel's findings in this case, the Panel is of the opinion that some form of reparation is necessary.
93. The Panel notes that enforced disappearances and arbitrary killings constitute serious violations of human rights which the competent authorities are under an obligation to investigate and to bring perpetrators to justice under all circumstances. The Panel also notes that pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) UNMIK from 1999 to 2008 had the primary responsibility to effectively investigate and prosecute the abduction and killing of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković, and that its failure to do so constitutes a further serious violation of the human rights of the victims and their next-of-kin, in particular the right to have the truth of the matter determined.

94. The Panel notes the SRSG's own concerns that the inadequate resources, especially at the outset of UNMIK's mission, made compliance with UNMIK's human rights obligations difficult to achieve.
95. It would normally be for UNMIK to take the appropriate measures in order to put an end to the violation noted and to redress as far as possible the effects thereof. However, as the Panel noted above (see §19) UNMIK's responsibility with regard to the administration of justice in Kosovo ended on 9 December 2008, with EULEX assuming full operational control in the area of rule of law. UNMIK therefore is no longer in a position to take measures that will have a direct impact on the investigations that are still pending before EULEX or local authorities. Likewise, following the declaration of independence by the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government on 17 February 2008 and subsequently, the entry into force of the Kosovo Constitution on 15 June 2008, UNMIK ceased to perform executive functions in Kosovo, this fact limiting its ability to provide full and effective reparation of the violation committed, as required by established principles of international human rights law.
96. The Panel considers that this factual situation does not relieve UNMIK from its obligation to redress as far as possible the effects of the violations for which it is responsible.

**With respect to the complainants and the case the Panel considers it appropriate that UNMIK:**

- In line with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights on situations of limited State jurisdiction (see ECtHR [GC], *Ilaşcu and Others v. Moldova and Russia*, no. 48787/99, judgment of 8 July 2004, § 333, ECHR 2004-VII; ECtHR, *Al-Saadoon and Mufdhi v. the United Kingdom*, no. 61498/08, judgment of 2 March 2010, § 171, ECHR 2010 (extracts); ECtHR [GC], *Catan and Others v. Republic of Moldova and Russia*[GC], nos. 43370/04 and others, judgment of 19 October 2012, § 109), must endeavour, with all the diplomatic means available to it *vis-à-vis* EULEX and the Kosovo authorities, to obtain assurances that the investigations concerning the case at issue will be continued in compliance with the requirements of an effective investigation as envisaged by Article 2, that the circumstances surrounding the abduction and killing of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković will be established and that perpetrators will be brought to justice; the complainants and/or other next-of-kin shall be informed of such proceedings and relevant documents shall be disclosed to them, as necessary;
- Publicly acknowledges, within a reasonable time, responsibility with respect to UNMIK's failure to adequately investigate the abduction and killing of Dimitrije Milenković and Aleksandar Milenković and makes a public apology to the complainants and their family in this regard;
- Takes appropriate steps towards payment of adequate compensation of the complainants for the moral damage suffered due to UNMIK's failure to conduct an effective investigation as stated above.

**The Panel also considers it appropriate that UNMIK:**

- In line with the UN General Assembly Resolution on “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law” (A/Res/60/147, 21 March 2006), takes appropriate steps, through other UN affiliated entities operating in Kosovo, local bodies and non-governmental organisations, for the realisation of a full and comprehensive reparation programme, including restitution compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition, for the victims from all communities of serious violations of human rights which occurred during and in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict;
- Takes appropriate steps before competent bodies of the United Nations, including the UN Secretary-General, towards the allocation of adequate human and financial resources to ensure that international human rights standards are upheld at all times by the United Nations, including when performing administrative and executive functions over a territory, and to make provision for effective and independent monitoring.

**FOR THESE REASONS,**

The Panel, unanimously,

- 1. FINDS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A VIOLATION OF THE PROCEDURAL OBLIGATION UNDER ARTICLE 2 OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS;**
- 2. RECOMMENDS THAT UNMIK:**
  - a. URGES EULEX AND OTHER COMPETENT AUTHORITIES IN KOSOVO TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE STEPS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE ABDUCTION AND KILLING OF THE COMPLAINANTS’ HUSBAND/BROTHER AND SON IS CONTINUED IN COMPLIANCE WITH ARTICLE 2 OF THE ECHR AND THAT THE PERPETRATORS ARE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE;**
  - b. PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGES RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS FAILURE TO CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ABDUCTION AND KILLING OF THE COMPLAINANTS’ HUSBAND/BROTHER AND SON AND MAKES A PUBLIC APOLOGY TO THE COMPLAINANTS;**
  - c. TAKES APPROPRIATE STEPS TOWARDS PAYMENT OF ADEQUATE COMPENSATION OF THE COMPLAINANTS FOR MORAL DAMAGE;**
  - d. TAKES APPROPRIATE STEPS TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF A FULL AND COMPREHENSIVE REPARATION PROGRAMME;**

- e. **TAKES APPROPRIATE STEPS AT THE UNITED NATIONS AS A GUARANTEE OF NON-REPETITION;**
- f. **TAKES IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL AND TO INFORM THE COMPLAINANTS AND THE PANEL ABOUT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS CASE.**

Andrey ANTONOV  
Executive Officer

Marek NOWICKI  
Presiding Member

**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**CCIU** - Central Criminal Investigation Unit  
**DOJ** - Department of Justice  
**DPPO** - District Public Prosecutor's Office  
**ECHR** - European Convention on Human Rights  
**ECtHR** - European Court of Human Rights  
**EU** - European Union  
**EULEX** - European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo  
**FRY** - Federal Republic of Yugoslavia  
**GC** - Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights  
**HRAP** - Human Rights Advisory Panel  
**HRC** - United Nations Human Rights Committee  
**IACtHR** - Inter-American Court of Human Rights  
**ICCPR** - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
**ICMP** - International Commission of Missing Persons  
**ICRC** - International Committee of the Red Cross  
**ICTY** - International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia  
**KFOR** - International Security Force (commonly known as Kosovo Force)  
**KLA** - Kosovo Liberation Army  
**MoU** - Memorandum of Understanding  
**MPU** - Missing Persons Unit  
**NATO** - North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
**OMPF** - Office on Missing Persons and Forensics  
**OSCE** - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe  
**SCIU** – Serious Crimes Investigation Unit  
**SRS** - Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
**UN** - United Nations  
**UNHCR** - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
**UNMIK** - United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo  
**VRIC** - Victim Recovery and Identification Commission  
**WCIU** - War Crimes Investigation Unit