

Albanian Minority in Serbia

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Abstract: The problem of the protection of minorities was raised as an issue in the Treaty of Versailles (1919). Since 1989, with the collapse of communist regimes, Europe has witnessed ethnic conflicts. Whole region was characterized by ethnic conflicts, as was the case in the former - Yugoslavia, which risked stability and unity of Europe. In such circumstances, international organizations, such as the OSCE, European Council, European Union, have coordinated their efforts to develop a coherent system for the protection of human rights - national minorities. Today, the countries of Western Balkan are multi-ethnic societies, and minority rights remain key objectives of the European Union in its foreign policy. European Union at the beginning of XXI century with numerous projects is committed to stability and economic development of the region. It is well known that the position of minorities is one of the main criteria of EU accession to this organization, and within these countries is part also the Republic of Serbia. Now, the Republic of Serbia is in the process of negotiations with the EU. Chapter 23 deals with the issue of minorities, and in the Republic of Serbia is living also the ethnic Albanian minority. The paper deals with the position of the Albanian minority in Serbia. To understand today the position of the Albanian minority in Serbia, we will treat the historical aspect of the ethnic Albanians in Serbia in the political, economic and educational context. After the end of the Kosovo conflict, the position of Albanians in Serbia has been constantly deteriorated. In this paper will be analyzed the armed conflict in the Presevo Valley, as well as the political, economic, educational position of the Albanian minority in Serbia. The results of this research will contribute to shed light on the position of the Albanian minority in Serbia, which is proclaiming hard its democracy and fulfillment of EU criteria's for admission to this organization.

Keywords: Albanian minority in Serbia; ethnic conflicts; ethnic minorities; protection of human rights; EU

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Historical Overview of the Albanian Minority in Serbia

In the southern part of Serbia are three municipalities with Albanian majority population – ethnic minorities in Serbia, in the west bordering with the Republic of Kosovo, in the south with the Republic of Macedonia and to the east with a mountainous terrain that separates from Bulgaria. The area in which Albanian minority in Serbia are living includes approximately 1,250 square kilometers, is strategically important because the railway line passes through this area and even the most important north-south highway, known as Belgrade-Skopje-Thessaloniki highway. (Hinrich Ahrens, 2010, p. 275)

Presevo Valley is located in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, precisely in the area that connects the north valley of Morava and Vardar Valley in the south. These two valleys constitute the most important corridor, through which are linked Middle Europe and South Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Important automobile and railway roads pass through the valley of Morava and Vardar. Through Presevo Valley passes rivers gorges and mountains, important roads with transversal direction, linking the southern Serbian region with the Republic of Kosovo. (Ejupi, 2013, p. 120)

Regarding the area, which is inhabited by Albanians in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the Presevo Valley is the new name. Since 2001, Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja started to use the name as the Presevo Valley, initially by the US diplomacy. Naming of the Presevo Valley begins to be used since the outbreak of armed conflict in the region. This name was embraced from Albanians, but also from foreigners. This name is often used also by Serbian media as well. (Ejupi, 2013, p. 27)

Presevo Valley region is inhabited by the Albanian majority and has since ancient times been part of the territory of Dardania. (Shukriu, 1996, p. 35) Presevo for the first time is mentioned as Zupa in 1381 in the card of Dhespots Evdokia. (Vukanović, 1966, p. 6) Presevo and Bujanovac falls under Ottoman rule in 1455. As in other areas of the Balkan Peninsula in the Presevo Valley also was placed the Turkish administration. Presevo Valley was ruled by the Ottoman Empire since 1455 until October 1912. During this period Presevo was once administrative unit as *Nahyie* and some other times as *Kaza*, (Rizaj, 1966, p. 259) both terms used in Ottoman Empire as townships. Presevo municipality, from 1878 - 1912 were administratively organized in *Kaza* that within it had also the *Nahyie* of Bujanovac.

(Rushiti. 2004, p. 37) Presevo*Kaza* was part of Pristina *Sandzac*. As part of the *Sandzak* of Pristina remained until 1912. (Malcom, 2001, p. 198)

Presevo and Bujanovac with the First Balkan War fall under occupation of the rule of the Serbian Kingdom. Conference of Ambassadors in London (1913) sanctioned the Presevo Valley as part of Serbia. Official records of the Old Serbia say that Presevo in 1914 was the center of the circle and was belonging to Kumanovo region. (Vujićić, 1914, p. 77) Presevo valley during the First World War was part of the Bulgarian occupation zone. (History of Albanian Nation III, 2007, p. 435) Presevo Valley, as part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in administrative view was associated with *zupa* of Skopje. By splitting the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in *banovina* in 1929, Presevo and Bujanovac remained in *banovina* of Vardar with base in Skopje. (Staneci, 2010, p. 37) Based on the agreement of April 1941, the Albanian regions¹ in Yugoslavia were divided between Germany, Bulgaria and Italy. In the above mentioned memorandum, Presevo and Bujanovac were included in the Bulgarian occupation zone. (Abdyli, 1977, p. 221)

But, the main question that intrigued about the Presevo Valley, relates how this region with Albanian majority have remained within the Serbian state. Presevo Valley, respectively municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, along with other Albanian lands, were forcibly integrated into the framework of the Serbian state during two historical processes, with the Russian-Turkish agreement 1877/78 - the decisions of the Berlin Congress (1878) and during the First Balkan War, respectively by decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London, 1912/13. With the decisions of the Berlin Congress, Medvedja, as part of the *sandzak* of Nis was included within the Serbian Kingdom. While Presevo and Bujanovac together with areas of Kosovo *Vilayet* in the First Balkan War, with the decisions of the London Conference (1913) were included within the Serbian Kingdom. (Emini, 2016, p. 37)

Three municipalities with the decisions of the Conference of Versailles (1919), remained within the Serbo-Croat-Slovene Kingdom. Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, after World War II (1945) remained outside the territory of Kosovo. Albanians of these three municipalities were divided in the Administrative terms

¹ In former Yugoslavia, Albanian population was divided in three regions: The Albanians of Kosovo, who were left under Serbia, Albanians from Macedonia, who were left within territory of Macedonia and Albanians from Malësia e Madhe, who part of these territories remained under Montenegro and Albania.

by the Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia. Serbian Parliament, relying on the decisions of the Parliament of Yugoslavia, made the legal regulation of the rights of the province through the “Law for the administrative division of Serbia” and “Law on the institutionalization of the Autonomous District of Kosovo and Metohija”, and according to the administrative division that was made by the Republic of Serbia in 1945, Kosovo Autonomous Region had 15 districts. (Fehmiu, 1992, p. 9) So, with the Law on Administrative Division dated September 1, 1945, municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja were separated from the Albanian territories. For this administrative division were also considered the political interests. (Administrative Territorial Changes, 1955, p. 57) The division of these areas with Albanian majority population by other Albanian territories aimed at changing the ethnic structure in Kosovo and Macedonia. Historical records show that the territory of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja always geographically, historically and culturally was part of Kosovo. (Latifi, 2006, p. 85) After World War II, the Presevo Valley arbitrarily, without the will of the Albanian people, was separated from the Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia.

In the period between the two world wars, the Albanians of the Presevo Valley, as in all other areas underwent the national oppression, terror and violence. Following this strategic policy of ruling circles in Belgrade began to apply the massive expropriation of Albanian lands, along violence displacement and colonization of the lands with Slavic element, aimed at creating the conditions for the overthrow of the ethnic balance as in all Albanian areas as well as in Presevo Valley. (Verli, 1990, p. 274) These politics of colonization and expropriation of land under Albanians ownership has affected a lot the Albanians of the Presevo Valley. (Verli, 1990, p. 110) Ruling circles in Belgrade through the establishment of Serb and Montenegrin colonies intended to ensure traffic nodes and the most important strategic points in the Albanian territories. Pursuant to this goal began establishing the first contingents of colonies. Colonies that were set up in the eastern Albanian areas were more concentrated in the districts of Presevo, Bujanovac, Skopje and Kumanovo. The cause for the establishment of colonies in these parts lay in the existence of the Presevo-Kumanovo-Skopje railway line and the fertile soil of the valley of the Vardar. So the railway lines made very important the lands of Presevo Valley region. Colonies were coming from all parts of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but they mainly were belonging to the Serbian ethnic group. In Presevo came Serbs and Macedonians. According to M. Verlin, in the region of

Presevo municipality by the end of 1929 had characterized an intensive colonization and as a result of this colonization were placed about 400 families. (Verli, 1990, p. 115) Since 1928, Agrarian Gj. Krstic stated that due to this colonization, now the Serbians in Presevo has about half of the houses. (Krstiq, 1928, p. 57)

One of the main projects of the policy of Serbia, and the Yugoslav Kingdom in the annexed territories was the forcible displacement of Albanians. Albanians of Presevo Valley underwent the national oppression, political, economic and social discrimination, up to the process of removing away from their territories. Platform for deportation of Albanians was given by VasoÇubrilloviq in *Premomoir* "On the deportation of Albanians". In 1938 an agreement was signed between Yugoslavia and Turkey on deportation of "Muslims" from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to Turkey. (Shtylla, 1990, pp. 269-271) Various pressures against Albanians aimed their displacement from their homes, which continued after World War II. Forcible displacement of Albanians to Turkey took a large scale after the year 1955-56. Many Albanian families fled from the Presevo Valley, because of unbearable pressures and were forced to go to Turkey (Shtylla, 1990, p. 437).

At that time another problem constitutes the issue of education in schools with instruction in Albanian language in Presevo Valley. With Saint Jermaine treaty of 10 May 1920 was confirmed the obligation to protect minorities, an obligation that had to be applied also by the Serbo-Croat - Slovenian Kingdom. International legal obligation on minorities emanated from the League of Nations system, the Yugoslav state was not exercising in the case of Albanians. (Gruda, 2010, p. 163) This is evidenced by the fact that the Albanians of the Presevo Valley under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia did not enjoy the right to education in their mother tongue. Precisely for these reasons the majority of children were not sent in the school. (Trajkoviq & Mihajllloviq, 1970, p. 105) The development of education in the Presevo Valley was accompanied by specific conditions in comparison with other regions of former Yugoslavia. Schools with instruction in Albanian language in Presevo Valley have been facing major obstacles. The major obstacles were from economic, politic, lack of teaching staff, but above all was the educational and cultural backwardness inherited from the past as a result of a discriminatory policy of the Yugoslav government.

The right to education was defined as a constitutional right, with the constitution of 31 January 1946 in Former Popular Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY). In the above

stated constitution, it was stated that the primary education was compulsory and free, schools and educational institutions were open to all the popular strata. (Ustav RFPJ, 1946, article 37) The first Albanian school in Presevo was opened on 6 February 1945. (Zylfiu, 2015, pp. 205-206) In Bujanovac, the first school in Albanian language was opened on January 3, 1945. (AS, 1945/46, fasc 74) Secondary education in Presevo municipality was not organized in parallel with the primary education. The process of development of secondary education, not only ran slowly, but started late comparing to other municipalities of Kosovo and other Albanian lands in the former - Yugoslavia. This delay was due to the lack of teaching staff, teaching aids and ineffective policy in this regard. In this situation affected also the educational policies of the previous regimes of Yugoslavia, which had prevented the educational development of the Albanian people. Presevo High School – Gymnasium was opened in the academic year 1961/62. (Zylfiu, 2015, p. 207)

Albanian education in the coming periods has been facing numerous problems. In the late 80s, Serb leaders launched a vicious campaign of ideo-politic differentiation. In the Serbian policy was targeted the Educational Center “{Scanderbeg”, which was charged as a hotbed of Albanian nationalism. In Bujanovac was the same situation as well. Teachers in Bujanovac Gymnasium were subject to political differentiation. Consequently from this politic of the Serbian government in Bujanovac was closed the Gymnasium. Campaigns of political differentiation in the Presevo Valley ran parallel with the oppression in Kosovo. (Zylfiu, 2015, p. 209)

Presevo Valley in the Yugoslav Crisis in the 90s

Since the introduction of political pluralism in Serbia in July 1990, Albanians in the Presevo Valley (Serbia) founded their own political parties. They were originally created two political entities: the Democratic Action Party and Democratic Party of Albanians. (Hinrich Ahrens, 2010, p. 275)

On 16 February 1992 the above mentioned two political parties, the Albanian delegates of the municipal assemblies established the Assembly for Referendum for Political Territorial autonomy in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. In these circumstances, the Albanians of three municipalities in southern Serbia launched

an action in order to express their political will. On 1 and 2 March 1992 they organized a referendum and asked the Albanians from the three municipalities if they wanted political and territorial autonomy, with the right to union with Kosovo. According to the data, 96.86% of the population with the right to vote answered the referendum of nearly 45,000 citizens. (Communication regarding the referendum result, 1992, p. 1) According to organizers, approximately 99.93% of the 45,000 citizens with the right to vote gave their opinion. Only 25 votes were not valid. (Result of referendum, 1992, p. 1) In Presevo and Bujanovac citizens expressed their political will. While in Medvedja, the referendum took place in exceptional circumstances, as in some polling stations were seen the interference of people from the MIA. (Communication regarding the referendum result, 1992, p. 2)

On April 27, 1992, the very difficult situation of Albanians from the three municipalities was announced to the European Community and at the same time was requested to be taken into consideration this difficult situation of 100,000 Albanians in southern Serbia. (Hinrich Ahrens, 2010, p. 275)

Albanians from southern Serbia in the early days of the Yugoslav crisis outlined their complaints in three documents: the first document "Information on Civil Rights Violations and National Albanians in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja"; The second document in December 1991 was addressed with a letter to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), where were explained the discrimination to have education in the Albanian language; and third document was dealt with a booklet of 15 pages, which provided information on history ... about the three administrative municipalities. According to Geert - Hinrich Ahrens, "... the complaints of the Albanians in southern Serbia was treated as an exclusively problem of human rights and minorities, to be followed by the Working Group on Minorities. But even the group dealt with it only sporadically". During the Kosovo conflict, in the Presevo Valley has dominated a very tense situation. At the time of the military intervention of NATO, as a result of different pressures by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces, a part of the Albanian population of the three municipalities had to flee to Macedonia. (Hinrich Ahrens, 2010, pp. 276-279)

The Armed Conflict in Southern Serbia

After the conflict in Kosovo (1999), most of the Serb forces were deployed in the Presevo Valley, by further aggravating the situation that already was aggravated. The presence of Serbian military and paramilitary forces started the violence and terror against the local Albanian population. In these circumstances, many places in mountain areas around Presevo were emptied by Albanian residents, while in Medvedja by over 4,000 Albanian inhabitants are left around 500 Albanian inhabitants. (Zejnullahu, 2016, p. 84)

Such a situation provoked the armed conflict. Albanians began to organize itself in self-defense, having formed military formation, the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB). In this circumstances of armed conflict between UCPMB and Serbian military forces the international decision making factors as the UN, NATO, and EU had to be involved, in order to not allow the situation further escalating. Secretary General of NATO appointed its envoy for Presevo Valley, Mr. Pieter Feith. (Document – The integral text of the Koncul Agreement/Dokumenti – Teksti integral iMarrëveshjesë Konculit, 2001) Following consultations with the Albanian as well as Serbians, Pieter Feith managed to make sit in the negotiating table the Serb and Albanian sides. After many meetings that were held, at the end of 13 February 2001 an agreement was reached with eight points, which is known as “Koncul Agreement” between the General Commander of the UCPMB and envoy of the Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Pieter Feith. Koncul Agreement contains eight points, mostly with security character. This agreement ended the war in the Presevo Valley, by opening the road of solutions to problems with political action. In February 2001, Deputy PM of Serbia, NebojsaCovic presented the plan known as “Covic Plan”. The plan had found also the international support and had to provide three measures, which immediately had to undertake: 1. integration of Albanians; 2. demilitarization of the area; and 3. reconstruction of socio - economic development. (Hinrich, 2010, p. 280) If today we analyze the situation of Albanians in the Presevo Valley, we can easily judge that none of the points from Covic Plan have been realized, with the minor exception of the creation of multi-ethnic police in the region.

Structure of the Population in the Presevo Valley

The first written record of the number of population in the Presevo Valley dates back to the Ottoman Empire. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman government implements three censuses in the years 1519, 1528 and 1570. The census is done by religious affiliation and data are only for the number of households. The data derived from these records do not provide a clear picture of the ethnic structure of the population in Presevo Valley. (Rizaj, 1972, p. 107)

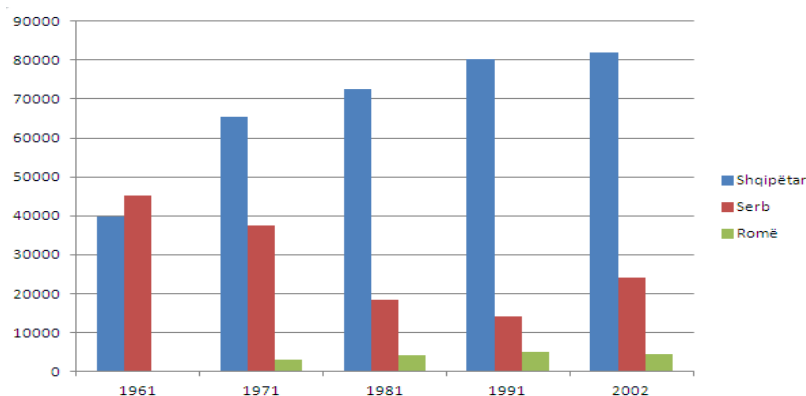
Censuses in the Presevo Valley continued during the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1921 and 1931. In contrast to the Ottoman records, in the censuses of population during the Yugoslav Kingdom was included the religious and linguistic affiliation. Ethnicity in censuses carried out by the Yugoslav Kingdom does not appear with the aim of changing the ethnic structure in these areas. As a result of these policies of the regime, a significant number of Albanian population moved to Turkey and Albania. (Janjetović, 2005, pp. 63, 70) The majority of Albanians from the Presevo Valley moved to Turkey.

After World War II, Yugoslavia carried out seven censuses. The first population census which gives a clearer picture on ethnicity is that of 1948. In the 1953 census also was included the citizenship, nationality, native language and religious affiliation. According to the analysis of the 1991 census in the Albanian-majority municipalities, Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, have lived near 101.549 inhabitants 67% of them Albanians. While according to the 2002 census in this region live near 90,000 inhabitants and 65% of the population are Albanians. Presevo is the biggest municipality with Albanians in Serbia. (Ejupi, 2013, p. 157)

Table 1. The ethnic structure of the population in the Presevo Valley level since 1961-2002

Registration year	1961		1971		1981		1991		2002	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Albanian	39 884	44,3	65 507	53,3	72 484	74,1	80204	79	81 978	73
Serbs	45 229	50,2	37 619	39,8	18 489	19	14268	14,1	24 134	21,4
Rome			3 113	3,29	4 056	4,14	5032	4,95	4 306	3,91

Potpis stanovništva 1961, 1971, 1991, 2002



Graphic 1. The national structure of the population in the Presevo Valley in the period 1961-2002

In the 2002 census it is not included the Albanian minority that is working abroad. Applying of the concept of present population in the time of censure, exempt from registration the Albanians who were abroad at that time).

From analyzes of the ethnic structure in the table above, it can be clearly seen that Albanian population in Presevo Valley for the period 1961-2002 is increasing. From 44.3% in 1961 to 79% in 1991 at the Valley level. The percentage of the small number of Albanians in the census of 1961 is the result of emigration of a number of Albanians into Turkey. Also, it can be seen that the percentage of the Albanian population in 2002, was falling from 79% to 73%. Such a fall came as a result that in 2002 census were not included Albanians, who temporary were working abroad. According to data from the municipal authorities, it is suspected that 23,743 people or 20.8% of the total population of the Presevo Valley are not included in this census. (Hyseni, 2004, p. 1) Albanians in Presevo form the vast majority of the population at the municipal level, with the percentage of 94%. When it comes to the reduction of the Serbian population, this is due to the low birth rate and that a large numbers of Serbian people are leaving for bigger cities in central Serbia for better perspective.

Process of the 2011 census, Albanians of these three municipalities have boycotted. Albanian political representatives had pointed out that the Republican Statistical Office offered no guarantee that in this process will also be included the Albanians of the three municipalities, who are refugees in Kosovo. According to the census of

2011, in Presevo Valley¹ lives around 5805 Albanians, which is somewhere 15 times less in number than the real statistics on the ground. According to the census in question, it shows that the number of Albanians has increased in other areas, excluding the Presevo Valley. 2,251 Albanians live in Vojvodina. In Belgrade lives 1252 Albanians and the number has decreased with 240. In Central Serbia live 1.119 Albanians. (Kamberi, MOS) Implementimi I Marrëveshjeve qeveritare për Luginën e Preshevës, 2016, p. 9)

The Current Position of Albanians in southern Serbia

Although the conflict in the area is over more than fifteen years ago, in the Presevo Valley still has a large military and police presence, which is still creating the feeling of fear. The feeling of discrimination and isolation is very deep. The region has limited access to investment, employment and education, while Albanian leaders have no confidence in the government of Serbia and seek assistance from the international community, Kosovo and Albania.

The Serbian government had an obligation to implement the plan of 2001, which ended the conflict and that means the end of discrimination by taking measures to boost investment, employment, education and demilitarization of the Valley. Albanian citizens of the three municipalities face numerous problems in the political, educational, economic, social, health, and safety aspects. Three municipalities rank among the most economically underdeveloped municipalities in the Republic of Serbia. (Zylfiu, 2013, p. 626)

Number of unemployment in the Presevo Valley exceeds 70%. Currently the problem that is most preoccupying the region is a migration. The causes of this migration are numerous, ranging from lack of prosperity and economic development, the security situation in the region, etc. The presence of Serbian military and gendarmerie forces, the unclear regional political perspective for the

¹ The Census of 2011 was boycotted by the majority of the Albanian Population of Presevo Valley as they did not wanted to participate in this census, due to the fact that Serbian state decided not to include in the Census the Albanians who are refugees in Kosovo from the time of the conflict in Southern Serbia/Presevo Valley, while in Kosovo happened another situation, where all the Serbian refugees who left Kosovo in 1999 and are living in Serbia were registered as population of Kosovo. But in this census Albanians living in other cities in central and north Serbia had participated and were registered.

Albanians of the Presevo Valley, the non-guarantee of economic investments from Serbian government makes this region today with so many serious problems.

Today, Albanians in Presevo Valley face many difficulties in the process of education. In the Presevo Valley today work 11 primary schools and four secondary schools. Schools face different problems, the lack of plans and programs, the lack of textbooks, etc. Only in secondary schools with instruction in Albanian are lacking 140 text books. Since 2007 it has been banned the use of textbooks from Kosovo. On the other hand, the procedure of admission of textbooks from other countries is so bureaucratized that may take several years until they gained their consent to enter in Serbia. There is no higher education institution. In Bujanovac in 2011 was opened a parallel branch of the Economic Faculty of University of Subotica, which was opened at the request of the National Council and the international community. The institution in question most of the learning process does in Serbian language. The issue that requires the urgent solution is the recognition of Kosovo University diplomas. This problem has been included in the Treaty of Brussels and the Serbian government has approved the Decree Law on the recognition of diplomas from Kosovo. But this process has not started yet. (Kamberi, (MOS) Implementimi I Marrëveshjeve qeveritare për Luginën e Preshevës, 2016, p. 39)

Another problem that also faced Albanians in Presevo Valley is health issue. In three municipalities there is no single hospital, except ambulances. Therefore, for any serious health problem most people have to make hundreds of kilometers to receive necessary medical services.

It is not better also the information in the native language, where previously there were two local TV stations. The process of digitalization of media brought local television to an end. Now officially has no television or daily newspaper that would cover the whole territory in order to inform as quickly and efficiently the citizens of Presevo Valley. (Kamberi, (MOS) Implementimi I Marrëveshjeve qeveritare për Luginën e Preshevës, 2016, p. 32)

In the municipality of Presevo, the municipal court has functioned since 1972. With the reforms in the judicial system in the Republic of Serbia in 2014, the municipality of Presevo was left without basic court, it became as unit of the basic court of Bujanovac. So, for any judicial matters, Albanian citizens are forced to go around 30 km in distance. The illogical issue is that in the two municipalities, in

this case in Presevo and Bujanovac there is no basic prosecution, who represents a unique case. Everywhere in the Republic of Serbia where there are Basic Courts, there are also Basic Prosecution. In the judicial system are employed a very low percentage of Albanians and Albanian language is not used as an official language. (Këshilli Kombëtar, 2013, p. 10)

The number of Albanian employees in the police station in the municipality of Presevo can be said that to some extent is satisfactory. But, we should not forget that the police station in Presevo has become as Vranje police unit. (Zylfiu, 2013, p. 627)

In Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, the Albanian language was included in the official use of municipal statutes in 2002. In local self-government institutions, the Albanian language is in equal and official use with the Serbian language. However, another issue is with the use of Albanian language in judicial institutions, public and state services. Law on official use of languages allows the use of language, but are practical problems that prevents the realization of this right. (Zakon službenoj upotrebi jezika i pisama, 2005, p. 1)

Another problem that seeks emergent solution is the problem of high unemployment. In three municipalities the unemployment rate exceeds 70%. Only in the municipality of Presevo the unemployment rate is approaching 80%. The majority of the Albanian population is unemployed. (Kamberi, (MOS) Implementimi I Marrëveshjeve qeveritare për Luginën e Preshevës, 2016, p. 29) Albanians of Presevo Valley have a representative in the Serbian parliament since the elections of 2007. The law on the parliamentary elections is a very big problem for Albanians. To participate in the parliamentary elections a subject or list has to gather 10,000 signatures, which must be verified by the judicial personnel. The request of the Albanians is that the criteria for minorities to decrease. With the help of the international community in early elections in 2008 for minorities was decided to be gathered 3000 signatures, which was a great relief to enter in the electoral race for the seat in the Serbian parliament. (Zylfiu, 2013, p. 628)

The issue of minorities in the Republic of Serbia is regulated by two documents: the law on minorities (Zakon o zaštiti i sloboda nacionalne manjine, 2002) and the law on national councils. With the law on national councils are regulated the competencies of national councils of national minorities in the field of culture, education, information and official use of language and alphabet, the procedure of electing of national councils, their funding and other important issues and work of

national councils. The National Council represents a national minority in the fields of education, culture and information in the languages of national minorities and official use of language and alphabet, participate in the decision making process or decides on issues of these areas and establishes institutions, economic society and other organizations of these areas. (Zakon o Nacionalnim Savetima Nacionalne Manjine, 2014) Presevo Valley Albanians have formed the National Council in the elections of 2010. In terms of legal infrastructure, Serbia is somehow good in this process, but in relation to the Albanians here is no will to implement the above-mentioned laws.

6. Conclusion

From what was elaborated in this paper it can be seen quite clearly that the Albanians of the Presevo Valley are indigenous people in these lands. They have constituted for long time now the ethnic minority in Serbia, which represents the most oppressed minority in the continent of Europe today, where freedoms and human rights are not respected or are respected in a minimum level. This violation of freedoms and human rights, oppression and discrimination against them, it was very well seen that it is not only being made in the new era, but it has continued for centuries, since the days of the Ottoman Empire and unfortunately continues even to this day, even at a time when Serbia is making a very big steps for integration into Euro-Atlantic processes. Therefore, we can point out that if Serbia wants to be integrated into the European Union, it should first take as seriously as possible the fulfillment of basic rights for the minority population - Albanians in the Presevo Valley. And examples of good treatment of minorities we can give more, especially starting from the Republic of Kosovo, where the last for the Serb minority in Kosovo has created a very positive legal infrastructure, providing a good example not only for the region, but even for other European countries, how the minority rights have to be respected, by even going further for positive discrimination in some areas. For this reason, we think that a reciprocity of minority rights of Albanians in the Presevo Valley, as for the minority rights for the Serbs in Kosovo would be indispensable to create a better position of the Albanian population in the Presevo Valley, otherwise the trend of emptying of these areas will be imminent

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