



REPUBLIKA E KOSOVËS - РЕПУБЛИКА КОСОВО - REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO  
GJYKATA KUSHTETUESE  
УСТАВНИ СУД  
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

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Pristine, 11 June 2012  
Ref. No.: RK252/12

## RESOLUTION ON INADMISSIBILITY

in

Case No. KI78/11

Applicants

**Burim Ramadani, Arsim Ramadani, Arben Kiqina and Blerim Kiqina**

**Constitutional Review of the Judgments of the District Court of Gjilan  
Judgment P. No. 162/2003 dated 7 April 2005, Supreme Court of Kosovo in  
Pristina Judgments Ap. No. 393/2006 dated 20 May 2008, Ap. No. 04/2009  
dated 16 September 2009 and PKL No. 30/2010 dated 1 February 2011**

### THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

composed of:

Enver Hasani, President  
Kadri Kryeziu, Deputy-President  
Robert Carolan, Judge  
Altay Suroy, Judge  
Almiro Rodrigues, Judge  
Snezhana Botusharova, Judge  
Ivan Čukalović, Judge  
Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, Judge and  
Iliriana Islami, Judge

#### The Applicant

1. The Referral was filed by Burim Ramadani, Arsim Ramadani, Arben Kiqina and Blerim Kiqina (collectively, the "Applicants") through their authorized representatives, Mahmut Halimi from Mitrovica and Haxhi Millaku from Prishtina.

## **Legal basis**

2. Article 113.7 of the Constitution, Article 22 of Law No. 03/L-121 on the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo of 16 December 2008 (hereinafter: the "Law") and Rule 56(2) of the Rules of Procedure of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo (hereinafter: the "Rules of Procedure").

## **Subject Matter**

3. The Applicants filed the Referral on the grounds that the District Court of Gjilan Judgment P.No.162/2003 dated 7 April 2005, and Supreme Court of Kosovo Judgments Ap.No.393/2006 dated 20 May 2008, Ap. No. 04/2009 dated 16 September 2009 and PKL No. 30/2010 dated 1 February 2011 have resulted in the violation of their constitutional rights, namely Article 30 [Rights of the Accused] and Article 31 [Right to a Fair and Impartial Trial].

## **Proceedings before the Court**

4. On 7 June 2011, the Applicants submitted to the Court a Referral registered under no. KI 78/11.
5. Prior to that, on 25 June 2010 Mrs. Sebahate Shala from Krajkovë Glllogovc had filed a Referral based on the authorization of the Organizational Council "Justice for the Kiqina case" which was registered under reference no. KI 46/10.
6. Also prior to that on 29 June 2010, Arben Kiqina filed a Referral with the Court which was registered on the same date under no. KI-52/10.
7. Also prior to that on 29 March 2011, Jeton Sefer Kiqina filed a Referral with the Court which was registered on the same date under no. KI 43/11.
8. On 13 June 2011, Burim Ramadani and Arsim Ramadani submitted to the Court a Referral registered under no. KI 81/11.
9. On 11 November 2010, the President, appointed Judge Snezhana Botusharova as Judge Rapporteur in Referral, KI 46/10. On the same date, the President appointed the Review Panel composed of Judges Robert Carolan (Presiding), Altay Suroy and Ivan Čukalović.
10. On 19 July 2011, the President, by order BK-46/10, joined all of these separate Referrals KI-46/10, KI-52/10, KI-43/11, KI-78/11 and KI-81/11, due to the relationship of one another as to subject matter and as to the persons making the Referrals. . The Judge Rapporteur and the Review Panel remained the same for all the Referrals.
11. On 14 May 2012, due to the temporary unavailability of Judge Ivan Cukalovic, the President appointed himself, Enver Hasani, as a replacement Judge on the Review Panel.
12. On 15 May 2012 the Review Panel considered the Preliminary Report of the Judge Rapporteur and made a recommendation to the Court on the inadmissibility of the Referral.

## **Summary of facts according to the Applicants' documents filed with the Court**

13. In the evening of 20 August 2001, H H together with his wife and children attended a wedding in the village of Baicë. After leaving the wedding, later that night his vehicle was ambushed and he, his wife, his son and two daughters were shot to death. One young daughter survived.
14. The following day Blerim Kiqina and Jeton Kiqina met Burim Ramadani, Arsim Ramadani, Arben Kiqina and another outside the Era restaurant in Glllogoc. Burim Ramadani told him that the action went very well and that S H had given or was going to give him money. There was a discussion about how to split the money.
15. On 4 July 2002, Blerim Kiqina turned himself into the police station. He was then arrested, advised of his rights and then interviewed. Blerim Kiqina waived his rights to silence and to legal counsel and continued with the interview.
16. On 7 July 2002, when Blerim Kiqina was taken before the investigating judge and he repeated almost verbatim what he had told the police in the interview on 4 July 2002.
17. Notwithstanding the evidence provided on 4 and 7 July 2002, Blerim Kiqina, on 11 October 2002, subsequently retracted his account of events on the basis that he had fabricated the story because he was allegedly manipulated during the interview process.
18. Following indictment and subsequent trial in the District Court of Gjilan (Judgment P. No. 162/03 dated 7 April 2005) Burim Ramadani, Arben Kiqina, Arsim Ramadani, Blerim Kiqina and others were convicted of murdering the five members of the H family.
19. All defendants filed appeals against the District Court of Gjilan judgment P. No. 162/2003 dated 7 April 2005. After a session held on 20 May 2008 the Supreme Court of Kosovo, in the second instance, handed down its judgment (AP - KZ 393/2006) rejecting the appeals of Burim Ramadani, Arsim Ramadani, Arben Kiqina and Blerim Kiqina on the basis of inadmissibility. The Supreme Court supported the first degree judgment in respect of the four appellants. However, the other defendants were released due to insufficient evidence that they carried out the criminal offences with which they were charged.
20. The appeals filed in respect of Burim Ramadani, Arsim Ramadani and Arben Kiqina challenged the judgment handed down by the Supreme Court in the second instance on the basis that there were: essential violations of the provisions of criminal procedure (including substitution of a Judge in the trial panel); erroneous and incomplete determination of the factual situation; violation of the criminal law and the incorrect decision on the punishment. The Supreme Court examined the procedural and substantive aspects contained in the appeals.
21. Unsatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, the Applicants filed a further appeal against the Supreme Court judgment. The Supreme Court, in a panel of third instance composition, rejected the complaints as inadmissible (judgment API.No. 04/2009 dated 16 September 2009).
22. One of the first points raised in that appeal concerned the composition of the trial panel of the District Court (the first instance court). During the trial, an international judge on the panel was replaced by another international judge. The Applicant argued that this would have allowed the other judges to have influence on the new judge and the trial should have recommenced from the start. He argued that the Supreme Court

in the second instance rejected that there was a violation of the Criminal Procedure Code.

23. The Supreme Court, in the third instance, rejected this point of appeal as ungrounded based on Article 305 of the Law on Criminal Procedure and stated: *“At the time the trial panel applied article 305 of the Law on criminal Procedure which in case of substitution of a Judge with the exception of the Presiding of the Panel, offers the possibility to the panel to recommence judicial deliberation from the beginning or to decide to resume it and read previous deliberation minutes. The new Judge has taken all trial minutes and parties accepted and so all the records were read...”*.
24. Furthermore, the replacement of the international Judge on the trial panel was permitted by law and the conditions for replacement were met. In this regard the Constitutional Court refers to the case of P.K. v. Finland, Application no. 37442/97, where the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), sitting on 9 July 2002, decided that notwithstanding the replacement of a Judge during the course of the trial of P.K. *“The Court’s task is to ascertain whether the proceedings as a whole, including the way in which the evidence was taken, were fair. ... Even so, the Court considers that in the specific circumstances of the present case this defect does not alone constitute a violation of Article 6. First, while the presiding judge was changed the three lay judges remained the same throughout the proceedings. Secondly, the credibility of the witness in question has at no stage been challenged, nor is there any indication in the file justifying doubts about her credibility. In these circumstances the fact that the new presiding judge had at his disposal the minutes of the session at which the witness had been heard (cf. Karjalainen v. Finland, application no. 30519/96, Commission decision of 16 April 1998, unreported) to a large extent compensates for the lack of the immediacy of the proceedings. Thirdly, the applicant’s conviction was not based only on the evidence of witness H. Finally, there is nothing suggesting that the presiding judge was changed in order to affect the outcome of the case or for any other improper motives. ... The conclusions drawn by the domestic court in the present case do not appear arbitrary so as to raise an issue under Article 6...”* And further, other case law of the ECtHR indicates that the mere fact of the replacement of a Judge during the course of a hearing, of itself, does not amount to a violation of Article 6 of the Convention (see *Barbera, Messegue and Jabardo v. Spain*, Application no. 10590/83, dated 6 December 1988, *Moiseyev v. Russia*, (Application no. 62936/00), dated 9 October 2008, and *Ocalan v. Turkey*, (Application no. 46221/99), dated 15 May 2005.) Bearing all that in mind this Court is of the view that the Supreme Court was correct in finding no violation of the right to a fair and impartial on account of the replacement of the international Judge.
25. In respect of the appeal of Blerim Kiqina dated 2 September 2008, the Supreme Court determined that the appeal was filed outside of the cases foreseen by the law pursuant to Article 391 of the Law on Criminal Procedure. Furthermore, the Supreme Court considered the legal remedy proposed in the appeal was not permitted under the law. For these reasons, the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal according to Article 383 of the Law on Criminal Procedure.
26. Another substantial part of the appeal of the Applicants addressed to the Supreme Court as a third instance related to the admissibility of the evidence used by the lower courts. Both the verdicts of the District Court and the Supreme Court, in the second instance, largely based the decisions on the statements given by: Blerim Kiqina in the investigating stage, witnesses “MB” and the daughter who survived the shooting. All these sources of evidence were challenged in the appeal (and repeated again in the Referral). The Supreme Court by judgment Ap. No. 04/2009 dated 16 September 2009 rejected the appeal and noted the following:

- a. Having examined the video recordings of the Blerim Kiqina witness interviews, his confession was genuine and there was no reason to believe that he fabricated the evidence. The detailed account of the murders could only have come from somebody who had intimate knowledge of the event.
- b. Having scrutinized the statements of Blerim Kiqina dated 4 July 2002, 7 July 2002 and 11 October 2002, some inconsistencies were identified particularly in relation to Blerim Kiqina's movements on 20 August 2001. It was held that his entire testimony cannot and should not be discounted simply because it is not reliable in part. Having considered the admissible portions of his evidence, it was abundantly clear that Blerim Kiqina was placed at the scene at the relevant time and carried out the offences he confessed to have committed. The credibility of the statement given by Blerim Kiqina given before the investigating judge on 7 July 2002 was corroborated by the motives of his confession, the accuracy and consistency of his statements, the absence of significant discrepancies and the inconsistency of the alibi of the appellants.
- c. The judgments also took into account the corroborative evidence of the confession such as Blerim Kiqina's accurate description of the other accused, the existence of the compound from where the weapons were sourced, the timing of the H family's departure from the wedding, the sequence of events on the bridge and the position of the car at the bridge. It was corroborated by the evidence of the daughter who survived the shooting, witness evidence of "MB", RK, SK, EK, SK, GK, YK and BK, telephone call records as well as ballistics examinations of the bullets which verified Blerim Kiqina's evidence on the type of gun used to commit the crime.
- d. The claim that the evidence of "MB" was inadmissible was rejected on the basis that it was ungrounded. "MB" gave evidence that Burim Ramadani disclosed to her that he had carried out the murders. It was argued in the appeal that: 1) "MB" was not advised of the right not to testify given she had cohabited with Burim Ramadani; 2) the public were unlawfully excluded from her oral testimony during the hearing and the panel did not issue a written ruling regarding the protective measures given to "MB"; and 3) Burim Ramadani was denied the right to put questions to "MB" resulting in a violation of the relevant provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code].
- e. In response to these claims, the court noted that the exemption to testify only applied to spouses and that "MB" was not exempt as she was not the spouse of Burim Ramadani. Pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of UNMIK Regulation 2001/20, the trial panel applied protective measures to "MB" as she was a witness well known to the defendant and had an intimate relationship with him. The ruling contained the decision to exclude the public from the hearing when "MB" was due to provide oral evidence. Lastly, Burim Ramadani was not denied the opportunity to put questions to "MB" during her testimony. Overall, the evidence of "MB" was considered reliable particularly in light of the fact that she was summoned by the police to give evidence, she was reasoned in her account of events and she maintained her evidence despite threats from family members of the defendants.
- f. The appeal contained an argument that criminal procedure was breached by the court in the manner in which the testimony of the daughter who survived the shooting was given. The court held there were no violations of criminal procedure by excluding the public during the testimony of the daughter who survived the shooting given she testified by video link. Also, at the main trial, defence counsel had the possibility to examine her.



- g. The claim that there was an incomplete determination of the factual situation due to the disappearance of important material evidence was rejected by the court on the basis that this did not prevent the correct establishment of the factual situation. The appeals referred to the paraffin handle taken from F K and Arben Kiqina on 21 August 2001 and to the examination of some exhibits collected on the investigated spots which had to be examined in order to find finger prints or DNA samples.
- 27. The Supreme Court, in the third instance, affirmed the judgment of the second instance court in its entirety.
  - 28. The Applicants considered the aforementioned judgment to be “extremely unjust and not based on credible and convincing evidence”. Therefore, they submitted a request for the protection of legality from the Supreme Court. However, by judgment PKL.No. 30/10 dated 1 February 2011, the Supreme Court once again rejected the request.

### **Applicants’ allegations**

- 29. The general complaint contained in the Referral is that lower courts have made only general findings, assessments and conclusions thereby violating the procedural provisions which require the courts to honestly assess each piece of evidence separately and in relation to other evidence. Therefore, on this basis the Applicants claim the judgments cannot stand.
- 30. In summary, the Applicants contest the reliability of the evidence used by the lower courts in formulating the judgments and allege that there was improper consideration of the evidence. The Applicants asserted the following in the Referral:
  - a. The courts did not corroborate the claims of key witnesses with sufficient evidence such as forensic material.
  - b. The witness evidence of “MB” should not have been considered by the courts given she had been in a relationship with Burim Ramadani until the time of his arrest and sought revenge on Burim Ramadani for not marrying her.
  - c. Blerim Kiqina’s evidence, which was given high priority by the courts, was contradictory and flawed because he was minor when the murder occurred, he was enticed by the investigators with the opportunity to move abroad and he was threatened by the police to change his evidence.
  - d. The evidence of the daughter who survived the shooting should not have been taken into account due to inconsistency with other evidence.
  - e. Based on Article 157 of the CPCK, the courts should not have declared the defendants guilty based only one piece of evidence.
  - f. The District Court violated criminal procedure (Articles 354-359 and 403 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo) because after the appointment of a new judge in the panel during the proceeding, the trial did not re-start from the beginning.

### **Assessment of admissibility**

- 31. In order to be able to adjudicate the Applicant’s Referral, the Court needs to examine whether the Applicant has fulfilled the admissibility requirements laid down in the Constitution, the Law and the Rules of Procedure

32. In this relation, the Court refers to Article 113.7 of the Constitution, which stipulates that:
- "Individuals are authorized to refer violations by public authorities of their individual rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, but only after exhaustion of all legal remedies provided by law."*
33. In the instant case, the Court notes that the Applicants have complied with the requirement set out in Article 113.7 of the Constitution.
34. The Constitutional Court also notes that it is not a fact verifying Court, the Constitutional Court wishes to reiterate that the correct and complete determination of the factual situation is a full jurisdiction of regular courts and that the role of the Constitutional Court is solely to ensure compliance with the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and other legal instruments and cannot, therefore, act as a "fourth instance court" (*see, mutatis mutandis, i.a., Akdivar v. Turkey, 16 September 1996, R. J. D, 1996-IV, para. 65, also see Resolution on Inadmissibility in Case. NO. KI-86/11 – Applicant Milaim Berisha – Request for Constitutional Review of Judgment of the Supreme Court of Kosovo, Rev. nr. 20/09, dated 1.3.2011 – issued by the Court on 5 April 2012*).
35. From the facts submitted with the Referral, the Applicants have used all legal remedies available, and that the regular courts have taken into account and indeed answered their appeals on the points of law in relation to admission of evidence and their veracity, determination of the factual situation and the flow of the criminal procedure. The Court, therefore, considers that there is nothing in the Referral which indicates that courts hearing the case lacked impartiality or that proceedings were otherwise unfair.
36. In this regard, the Applicants have not substantiated their claims, explaining how and why a violation has been committed, or furnished evidence to prove that a right guaranteed by the Constitution has been violated.
37. Moreover, the Referral does not indicate that the Supreme Court acted in an arbitrary or unfair manner. It is not within the province of the Constitutional Court to substitute its own assessment of the facts for that of the regular courts and, as a general rule, it is for these courts to assess the evidence before them. The Constitutional Court's task is to ascertain whether the regular court's proceedings were fair in their entirety, including the way in which evidence was taken (*see Judgment ECHR App. No 13071/87 Edwards v. United Kingdom, para 34, of 10 July 1991*).
38. The fact that the applicants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the case cannot of itself raise an arguable claim of a breach of Articles 30 [Rights of the Accused] & 31 [Right to Fair and Impartial Trial] of the Constitution (*see mutatis mutandis Judgment ECHR Appl. No. 5503/02, Meztur-Tiszazugi Tarsulat vs. Hungary, Judgment of 26 July 2005*).
39. In these circumstances, the Applicants have not substantiated their claims nor the violation of Articles 30 [Rights of the Accused] & 31 of the Constitution [ Right to Fair and Impartial Trial], because facts presented by them do not show in any way that regular courts of the three instances had denied them rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Therefore, the Referral registered under no.KI-78/11 is manifestly ill-founded and should be rejected as inadmissible pursuant to Rule 36 of the Rules.

## **FOR THESE REASONS**

The Court, following deliberations on 15 May 2012, pursuant to Articles 113.7 of the Constitution, Articles 20 of the Law and Rule 56.2 of the Rules, unanimously

### **DECIDES**

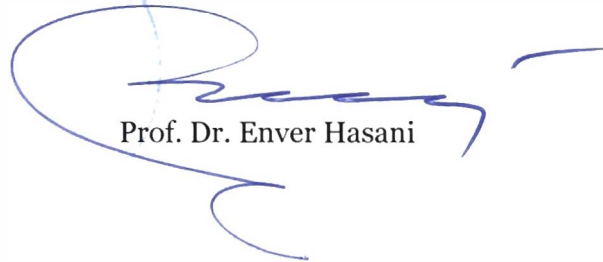
- I. TO REJECT the Referral as inadmissible;
- II. This Decision is to be notified to the Applicant; and
- III. This Decision shall be published in accordance with Article 20(4) of the Law and is effective immediately.

**Judge Rapporteur**



Snezhana Botusharova

**President of the Constitutional Court**



Prof. Dr. Enver Hasani