

## FORENSIC MONITORING PROJECT REPORT

Dabar-Ilići Well and Miljevci Cemetery Exhumations  
Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing  
(22 September 1998)

### FINDINGS

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## DABAR-ILIĆI WELL AND MILJEVCI CEMETERY EXHUMATIONS

### Summary of Events

On 22 September 1998, the Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing recovered the remains of two individuals from a well near Veliki Ilići. The bodies, one male and one female, were bloated and saponified. These individuals had allegedly been killed in 1995.

The team also searched for human remains that might lie in unmarked graves at a cemetery near Miljevci. Nothing was found at this site.

A Forensic Monitor from Physicians for Human Rights was present for all work conducted at both of these sites.

At the time of this report, no information was available regarding the postmortem examination of the two bodies recovered from the Dabar-Ilići well.

## DABAR-ILIĆI WELL AND MILJEVCI CEMETERY EXHUMATIONS

### Participants and Observers

#### Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing

|                     |                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| KARAN Dr. Željko    | Forensic Pathologist, Banja Luka |
| KRČMAR Goran        | Member                           |
| MARIĆ Milko         | Crime Technician                 |
| MAKIVIĆ Aleksandar  | Morgue Assistant                 |
| VESELINOVIĆ Slaviša | Morgue Assistant                 |

#### State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak)

|                  |        |
|------------------|--------|
| DRAGANOVIĆ Kemal | Member |
| ODOBAŠIĆ Jasmin  | Member |

#### Office of the High Representative

|                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| CHILVERS Peter | Exhumations Officer, Banja Luka |
|----------------|---------------------------------|

#### Physicians for Human Rights

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| KENNEDY Brenda | Forensic Monitor |
| LIVADIĆ Mirela | Translator       |
| ŠTIKIĆ Sandra  | Translator       |
| YORK Heather   | Forensic Monitor |

### Site Description

The Dabar-Ilići well can be found on the Ključ topographic map at grid coordinates 33T XK 274E 562N (Sheet 2484-II, Edition 6-DMA, Series M709, and Scale 1:50,000; Figure 1). The site is named according to the photo labels used by the R.S. team. It may be accessed by driving south out of Sanski Most on the one-lane road that runs parallel to and approximately 0.5 km west of National Route 15. A track branches off of the west side of this road at about 4.5 km south of Sanski Most. The track winds in a generally northwest direction for approximately 3 km before it passes near the well. The well itself is a concrete-lined hole that extends approximately 3 m into the ground. There is an above-ground cement structure that sits on the surface with an opening of about 0.5 m<sup>2</sup>. Upon the team's arrival at the site, about 2 m of water stood in the well. At least two bodies were visible on the water's surface. The remains were somewhat more disarticulated than they had initially been at the time of the reconnaissance visit (1 September 1998) because on that day, a witness had used a long stick to prod the bodies in an attempt to count them.

The cemetery at Miljevci can be found on the Bosanski Petrovac topographic map at grid coordinates 33T XK 140E 562N (Sheet 2484-III, Edition 6-DMA, Series M709, and Scale 1:50,000; Figure 2). The cemetery is nearly midway between Lušci Palanka and Miljevci, less than half a kilometer east of the main thoroughfare passing through both of these towns. The investigation took place in an area away from any marked graves in a section of the field that looked as though it had been used as a garbage dump. Prior to clearing, the terrain was covered with large rocks and tall weeds uniform with the surrounding area.



### **Site History**

The witness who accompanied the Commission team to the Dabar-Ilići well site on the reconnaissance visit claimed that there were at least three bodies inside the well. These individuals had all allegedly been killed in 1995.

The Commission team expected to find an unspecified number of unmarked burials at the Miljevcı cemetery site. No other information was provided to the Forensic Monitor regarding the history of this site.

### **Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains**

A generator-driven pump was used to drain most of the water from the Dabar-Ilići well (Photo 1). The bodies seemed to remain fairly intact throughout this 30-minute process (Photo 2). With approximately 7 cm of water remaining in the well, morgue assistant Aleksandar Makivić climbed down a ladder through the narrow opening and began cleaning out the pump's filter and preparing to remove the bodies. Dr. Karan and the Forensic Monitor (York) then joined him inside the well to place the two bodies into heavy body bags. The first body, a female, was found face-down in the water. The dorsum was mostly skeletonized, but the submerged ventral portion of the body was saponified. The remains were held together by clothing. The legs of the second body, a male, had detached from the torso. This body was also mostly saponified. Both individuals appeared to be dressed in civilian clothing.

The torsos stayed mostly intact as they were lifted into the bags. Bones not contained within clothing, particularly the hand bones, tended to fall away as the bodies were moved. The body bags were hoisted up by a rope that was tied through their handles (Photos 3 and 4). When the others had emerged from the well, two laborers were sent down to recover the small, disarticulated bones that remained in the well.

The two body bags were opened and photographed with the labels "1" and "2" attached (Photo 5). They were then placed in the Commission's truck for transport to the Banja Luka morgue facility.

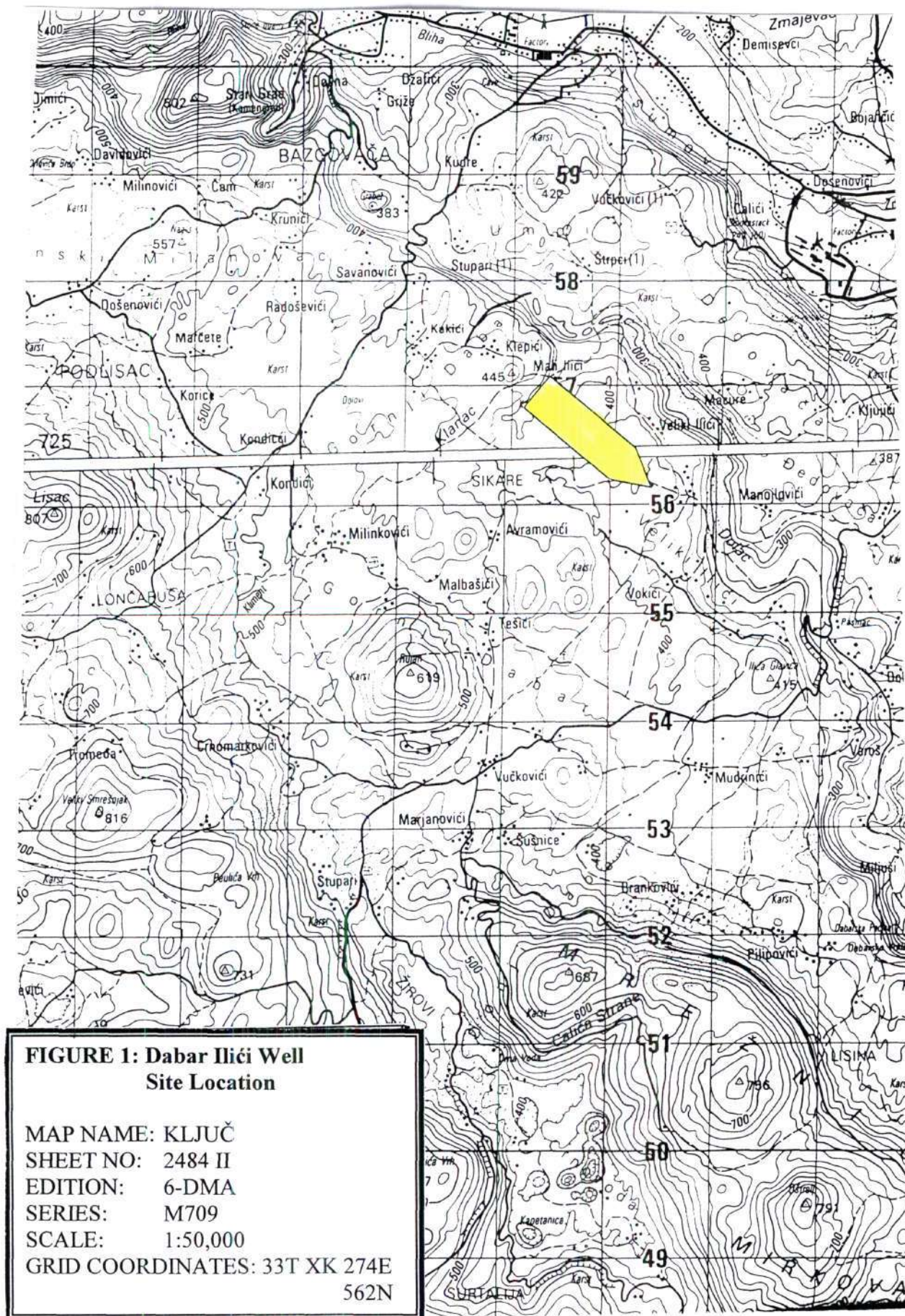
At the Miljevcı cemetery, shovel tests were made in an area of approximately 10 m X 3 m (Photo 6). There was a great deal of garbage on the surface and mixed in with the soil. No human remains were encountered in this cursory examination, and the decision was made by the Commission members to return to the site when better witness information could be obtained.

### **Postmortem Examination Findings**

At the time of this report, no information was available regarding the postmortem examinations of the two bodies recovered from the Dabar-Ilići well.

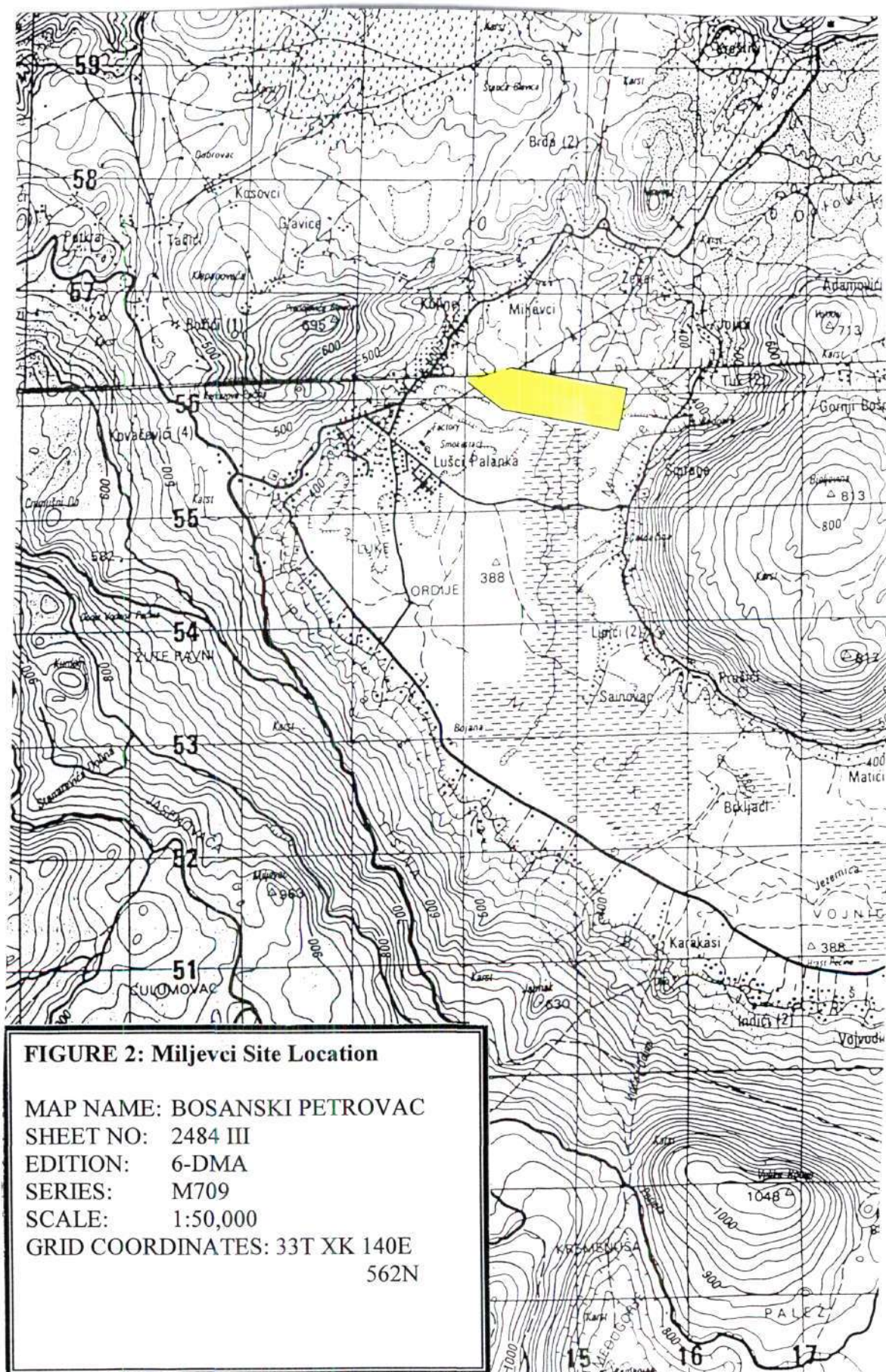


# DABAR-ILIĆI WELL AND MILJEVCI CEMETERY EXHUMATIONS





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Photo 1. Preparing to pump water from the well at Dabar-Ilići. (Roll HY-023, Exp. 2)



Photo 2. A body visible on the floor of the Dabar-Ilići well after the water had been pumped out. (Roll HY-023, Exp. 6)



Photo 3. Body 1 ready to be lifted out of the Dabar-Ilići well. (Roll HY-023, Exp. 11)





Photo 4. Body 1 being hoisted out of the Dabar-Ilići well. (Roll HY-023, Exp. 12)

## DABAR-ILIĆI WELL AND MILJEVCI CEMETERY EXHUMATIONS



Photo 5. Bodies 1 & 2 after removal from the Dabar-Ilići well. (Roll HY-023, Exp. 21)



Photo 6. View to the south of the investigated area of the cemetery at Miljevci. (Roll HY-023, Exp. 23)



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We use medical and scientific methods to investigate and expose violations of human rights worldwide.

We work to stop violations of human rights.

We demand the perpetrators of human rights violations be held accountable for their actions under international law.

Since its founding in 1986, PHR has carried out forensic investigations, including exhumations and autopsies, of alleged torture and extrajudicial executions in Afghanistan, Brazil, Israel, the former Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Iraqi Kurdistan, Kuwait, Mexico, Panama, Somalia, and Thailand. PHR has also devoted considerable energy and resources, under the auspices of its Chicago-based International Forensic Program, to assist the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (and its predecessor the U.N. War Crimes Commission) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, to collect evidence of genocide in those nations.

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