

216 Missing Identified in Kosovo

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Kosovo and Serbian authorities have solved another 216 cases of people who went missing during the 1998-1999 war in the province, the Red Cross said Thursday.

"We have managed to clarify the fate of 216 persons" whose remains were handed over to their families, said Francois Stamm, representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Stamm told reporters 2,557 people, most of them ethnic Albanians, were still listed as missing from the conflict.

"Out of this number, the fate of 440 people is known to the families but the bodies have not been found," Stamm said.

He was speaking immediately after a working group of Albanian and Serbian officials met under Red Cross auspices as part of an ongoing process of accounting for the missing.

At a meeting in June the two sides successfully identified more than 200 other people who disappeared during the war. Their next such meeting will be held in Pristina on December 7.

The Kosovo war ended in June 1999 after a NATO bombing campaign forced Serbian forces under then Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw from the province.

Top Serbian and Kosovo politicians held their first post-war direct talks in Vienna in October 2003, agreeing to launch an ongoing dialogue on practical matters including energy, communications, missing people and refugees.

Talks on Kosovo's future status are expected to start by the end of the year. Kosovo, which still remains a southern Serbian province, has been under UN and NATO control since 1999.

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