

## Skenderaj/Srbica

September 2009

### 1. Area and population

Skenderaj/Srbica municipality is located northwest of Prishtinë/Priština and south of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica with a total area of 378 km<sup>2</sup>. The municipality consists of a town and 52 villages organized in 12 districts. Basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water, and telecommunications are in poor condition, though many roads have been asphalted recently. The estimated total population is 72,600. The vast majority are Kosovo Albanians. Other communities are present in small numbers: approximately 310 Kosovo Serbs reside in the northern villages of Suvo Grlo/Syriganë and Banja/Bajë, 50 Kosovo Ashkali, and 25 Kosovo Bosniaks reside throughout the municipality. Although the municipality has been more cooperative recently in supporting returns process through activities such as go-and-see visits to Runik/Rudnik area, no member of a non-Albanian community has returned so far. (UNHCR)

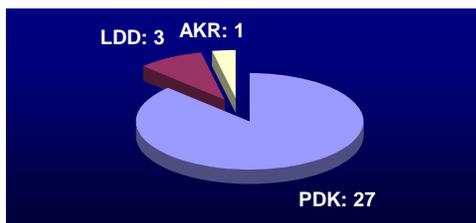
Skenderaj/Srbica constitutes the core of the Drenicë/Drenica region, which has a long history of Kosovo Albanian resistance to Serbian authority. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was founded there by Adem Jashari and the place was considered its stronghold.

The municipality hosts a Serbian Orthodox religious and cultural site, Deviç Monastery, located near Skenderaj/Srbica town. The Monastery's Church is believed to have been built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The site was damaged during the 1999 conflict and the March 2004 riots. Reconstruction of the Monastery is ongoing. KFOR guards the premises which are inhabited by six nuns.

### 2. Governing structures

#### • Legislative

The municipal assembly has 31 members elected in the 17 November 2007 municipal elections. The PDK dominates. The mayor is Sami Lushtaku, a former KLA general. The chairperson of the municipal assembly is Ismet Salihu, from the PDK, too.



PDK - Democratic Party of Kosovo  
LDD - Democratic League of Dardania  
AKR - New Kosovo Alliance

#### • Executive

The civil administration is composed of nine departments: economy, finance, and development; education; culture; urban planning and environmental protection; geodesy, cadastre, and property; health and social welfare; public services; agriculture and rural development; and administration and personnel. It also includes municipal community office in the majority Kosovo Serb village of Banja/Bajë. The mayor has appointed eight directors. The chief of administration and personnel was selected in conformity with the procedure of recruitment of senior civil servants. Currently, 202 civil servants work in the municipal administration.

#### • Judiciary

Skenderaj/Srbica has municipal and minor offences courts with a total of three Kosovo Albanian male judges. The municipality falls under the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica district court and district and municipal public prosecutors' offices, that were following the 17 February 2008, relocated to Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipal court premises and now function with limited capacities.

#### • Security presence

The police station has 106 Kosovo police (KP) officers. Following the departure of UNMIK Police, three EULEX police officers were deployed to the police station and work in monitoring, mentoring, and advising capacity. In March 2005, the police station and all operational competencies were handed over from UNMIK to the KP. In 2006, KP opened a police substation in the mixed village of Suvo Grlo/Syriganë. The sub-station currently has only 11 Kosovo Albanian officers. Danish and French KFOR troops cover the municipality and, among other things, conduct mobile patrols in the Kosovo Serb villages of Suvo Grlo/Syriganë and Banja/Bajë. French KFOR maintains a check point near Deviç Monastery.

### 3. Political overview

Since 1999, PDK has been by far the dominant political power in Skenderaj/Srbica. Since LDK party elections in November 2006, the party split and almost the entire Skenderaj/Srbica branch joined the newly created LDD. A parallel Skenderaj/Srbica municipal assembly was formed in Suvo Grlo/Syriganë following the 11 May 2008 municipal election organized by the Republic of Serbia. The assembly meets irregularly.

### 4. Economy

Skenderaj/Srbica is historically the poorest municipality in Kosovo with little investment made since Yugoslavia times. Agriculture is the cornerstone of the municipal economic, but the municipality still has not fully developed the existing arable land. Currently, apart from the financial support from the Kosovo Albanian Diaspora, other sources of income include small enterprises such as family-run shops and restaurants. Two privatized factories, a brick factory and a flour mill, employ a few hundred people. The other major sector of employment is the municipal civil service.

### 5. Public services

#### • Health

According to the municipal health director, the centre for family medicine in Skenderaj/Srbica town is the major medical institution for the local population. It is currently staffed by 26 doctors, 117 nurses, and other support staff. It provides first aid and general medical services. Urgent and difficult cases are often referred to hospitals in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica or Prishtinë/Priština. Besides the centre for family medicine, a network of five family medicine centres and health care units covers all villages in the municipality. In the two Kosovo Serb majority villages primary health care is provided by two small health care units, one in each village. Residents from these villages travel to the hospital in northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica for any serious medical issue.

#### • Education

According to the municipal department of education, 23 schools function in the municipality - 21 primary schools and two high schools. Many schools have poor infrastructure and two of them still operates in containers. There are 15,322 students in total - 11,438 in primary schools, 3,038 students in secondary schools education, 821 preschool students, and 25 students with special needs. In total 943 people work in the education sector including the administration and support staff. There is one kindergarten/preschool in Banja/Bajë. Both villages populated by Kosovo Serbs have primary schools. There is also a secondary/technical school in Suvo Grlo/Syriganë with approximately 20 students. These three schools follow Serbian curriculum.

### 6. Map of the region

