

FORENSIC MONITORING PROJECT REPORT

Ramin Grob Glumina Exhumation
State Commission on Missing Persons
(6-11 October 1998)

FINDINGS

Report by:
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Tuzla, Bosna i Hercegovina
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ICMP
*International Commission
on Missing Persons*

Summary of Events

During the period from the 6th to the 11th of October 1998, the State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak) exhumed the remains of 274 individuals from a mass grave located in a cemetery in the town of Glumina. The decedents were believed to be Bosniaks who were killed in 1992.

Two hundred eight of the recovered bodies were buried in body bags. The remaining 66, all of which were in the southern half of the grave, were not bagged. All remains were arranged in two parallel rows, with heads oriented to the south. One hundred eighty-two bodies, including all 51 from the northern half of the grave, were buried in a single layer. Sixty-four bodies in a segment of the grave located along the mid-south border had been placed in the grave in two to three layers. In the southwest corner, 28 other bodies had also been deposited in multiple layers.

The remains were transported to the Tuzla Commemorative Center for family viewing. Postmortem examinations were later carried out at the Tuzla Clinical Center. The examinations commenced in mid-December. All 274 individuals have been autopsied. Two of the decedents were adult females, and 272 were adult males. The identified decedents ranged in age from 14 to 80 years. All wore civilian clothing. The cause of death determined by Forensic Pathologist Dr. Zdenko Cihlarž was gunshot wounds in 246 of the 274 cases. In the remaining cases, blunt trauma was suspected for 16. There were two cases of unspecified cervical injuries and one of cervical laceration. Cause of death was not determined for nine of the cases. At the time of this report, 147 individuals had been identified on the basis of recognition and/or identification papers.

Forensic Monitors from Physicians for Human Rights were on site for the duration of the exhumation and portions of the family viewing process. PHR staff members also collected antemortem data from family members to assist in the identification of the decedents. No monitors were present for the postmortem examinations.

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Participants and Observers (Not Exhaustive)

State Commission on Missing Persons (Bosniak)

ALIĆ Sejo	Crime Technician, Tuzla
BEKTAŠEVIĆ Dževad	Senior Crime Technician, Tuzla
CIHLARŽ Dr. Zdenko	Forensic Pathologist, Tuzla
ČOTA Anto	Crime Technician, Tuzla
HALILČEVIĆ Emin	Judge, Tuzla
HURTIĆ Murat	Member
KARABEGOVIĆ Sejfudin	Member
KEŠETOVIĆ Dr. Rifat	Forensic Pathologist, Tuzla
KULAŠEVIĆ Muhamed	Driver
MAŠOVIĆ Amor	President
MUJKIĆ Muhamed	Archivist, Crime Scene Investigator
SINANOVIĆ Kadrija	Guide
Laborers from the Tuzla Commemorative Center	

Republika Srpska Commission on Missing and Tracing

MAKSIMOVIĆ Maksim	Member
PELEMIŠ Svetislav	Member

Physicians for Human Rights

CONNOR Melissa	Forensic Monitor
FORD Douglas	Deputy Director
GOULD Dr. Jill	Forensic Monitor
KENNEDY Dr. Brenda	Forensic Monitor
SPAHIĆ Lejla	Translator
THOMAS Dr. George	Forensic Monitor
YORK Heather	Forensic Monitor

Office of the High Representative

JOHANSSON Agneta	Head of Exhumations Department
KLEIN Jacques	Principal Deputy High Representative
KULJUH Klaudija	Special Assistant and Translator

Other International Organizations

International Police Task Force (IPTF) Personnel (Occasional)	
MOST Lt. Craig	Stabilization Force (SFOR)
ROBERTS Capt. David	SFOR
SIMMONS Lt. Patrick	SFOR

Various members of the press

Site Description

Ramin Grob Glumina is located in the town of Glumina, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Grid coordinate: 34T CQ 474 182, as determined using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit; Map Name: Zvornik; Sheet Number: 2883 I; Edition: 7-DMA; Series: M709; Horizontal Datum:

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WGS84; Scale: 1:50,000; Figure 1). The site is on a hill just south of National Route 4. It is accessed by turning south off the highway down a small, one-lane gravel road for approximately 200 m. The road turns back to the north and again turns sharply to the south. A small, overgrown pathway intersects the gravel road at this southern turn and leads north towards an established cemetery. The cemetery is located to the east of the terminal aspect of this pathway (Figure 2).

The cemetery consists of a plot of ground measuring approximately 12 x 60 m. It is bordered to the south and east by forest and to the north by a hedgerow of trees and open pasture. The entrance is located along the western perimeter. Upon arrival at the site, approximately ten tombstones were visible in the southwest portion of the site. A 4 x 4 m depression was visible near the entrance to the cemetery. This area was overlain with an irregular layer of foul smelling mud (Figure 3). The surface of the cemetery was overgrown along the northern and the southern borders by expanding patches of blackberry bushes, and in the center by tall grasses and other vegetation.

Site History

According to the State Commission, more than 700 persons were reported missing from Glumina and several nearby villages in the early part of 1992. Commission members suspected that these individuals were killed and buried in the vicinity.

Witnesses reported to the State Commission that during a two to three week period in April 1992, several large trucks were seen coming to the Ramin Grob cemetery, and numerous large, dark colored bags were removed from these trucks. Their description of these bags was consistent with body bags. One informant reported seeing at least 26 such bags deposited at this site. Witnesses also reported seeing earth-moving equipment at the site and hearing subsequent earth moving activity.

Exhumation Process and Condition of Remains

The site investigation began on 5 October, 1998 with a reconnaissance visit by members of the State Commission on Missing Persons, Forensic Monitors from Physicians for Human Rights, and an Exhumations Officer from the Office of the High Representative. The ground was core probed at various points to a depth of 2 m. Numerous core samples yielded decomposed organic material and fragments of clothing and plastic.

The exhumation team returned on 6 October, led by Amor Mašović, President of the State Commission on Missing Persons. Five days were devoted to the exposure of the remains. One day was spent removing the remains for transportation to Tuzla.

The team began the exhumation process by cordoning off the site with crime scene tape and clearing away vegetation (Photograph 1). An 8 m backhoe trench was dug along the eastern perimeter of the site, extending from the southeast corner of the cemetery to the northeast corner. Examination of the soil profile along the walls of the trench revealed two areas of gray discoloration consistent with decomposing organic matter, separated by 2 m of unremarkable soil. There was a distinct odor of putrefaction associated with these areas.

The soil over the area northwest of the test trench was carefully removed by backhoe, with the procedure monitored and directed by either Mr. Mašović or Mr. Bektašević. Body bags were found at a depth of 1.5 m. The soil over these body bags was removed by trowel. Drs. Gould, Kennedy, and Thomas of PHR provided assistance to the team. The team's archivist, Muhamed Mujkić, recorded the procedures using both video and still cameras.

At the end of the first day, at least 50 bodies in body bags had been uncovered. By the end of the second day, approximately 120 bodies had been exposed. These bodies were arranged in two rows, separated by approximately 2 m of uninvolved soil, with the heads oriented to the southwest. The body bags were side by side with occasionally overlapping edges (Photograph 2).

The third day of exhumation yielded 52 more bodies buried in two sections of the grave, each below the first layer of remains. Along the mid-southeast border of the site was a section of 38 haphazardly layered bodies (Individuals 237-274; Photographs 3 and 4; Figure 4) underlying the first layer (Individuals 154-179; Figure 4). A similar area of 14 layered bodies (Individuals 223-236; Figure 4) was encountered along the southwest terminal border underlying the first layer (Individuals 207-220; Figure 4). These 14 deeper remains were in a very commingled state.

On Saturday, 10 October, additional assistance in fully exposing the remains was provided by forensic pathologist Dr. Zdenko Cihlarž, and PHR Forensic Monitors Melissa Connor and Heather York. Careful attention was given to collection of small bones of the hands and feet, cranial fragments, and to association of elements with the appropriate individual (Photograph 5). The excavation process continued until approximately 6:30 PM on the evening of 10 October, 1998.

Two hundred eight of the recovered bodies were buried in body bags. The remaining 66 (Individuals 157, 160, 162, 167, 168, 171-173, 175, 176, and 181-236; Figure 4), all in the southern half of the grave, were not bagged. The remains of the unbagged individuals were skeletonized and civilian clothing was sometimes apparent (Photograph 6). Individuals 181 through 236 were also buried slightly deeper than the other remains. However, there was nothing definitive to indicate that these bodies were buried in an event separate from the others.

In the early afternoon of 10 October, journalists from the Associated Press, British Broadcasting Corporation, local and national newspapers recorded the exhumation activities. Ambassador Jacques Klein, Principal Deputy High Representative, also visited the site at this time (Photograph 7).

With all the remains exposed (Photograph 8), each individual was given a number (Photograph 9; Figure 4) and appropriate photographs were taken. This process was completed on 11 October. The bodies were placed in new plastic body bags, sealed and removed in an orderly fashion (Photograph 10) by stretcher to a small tractor-trailer. The tractor-trailer carried them from the cemetery to a truck on the gravel road. The bodies were then transported from Glumina to the Tuzla Commemorative Center. The process of removal was complete at approximately 6:30 PM. The last truck left the site with an American Stabilization Force (SFOR) escort led by Lt. Patrick Simmons.

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The gravesite was backfilled approximately 10 days after removal of the decedents. Security was maintained throughout the exhumation by the Zvornik police force.

Postmortem Examination Findings

During the week following exhumation, Drs. Cihlarž and Kešetović opened the body bags at the Commemorative Center. They removed dirt and extraneous material from the remains and clothing and searched for identifying items such as jewelry, driver's licenses, and passports. No Forensic Monitors were present during these procedures.

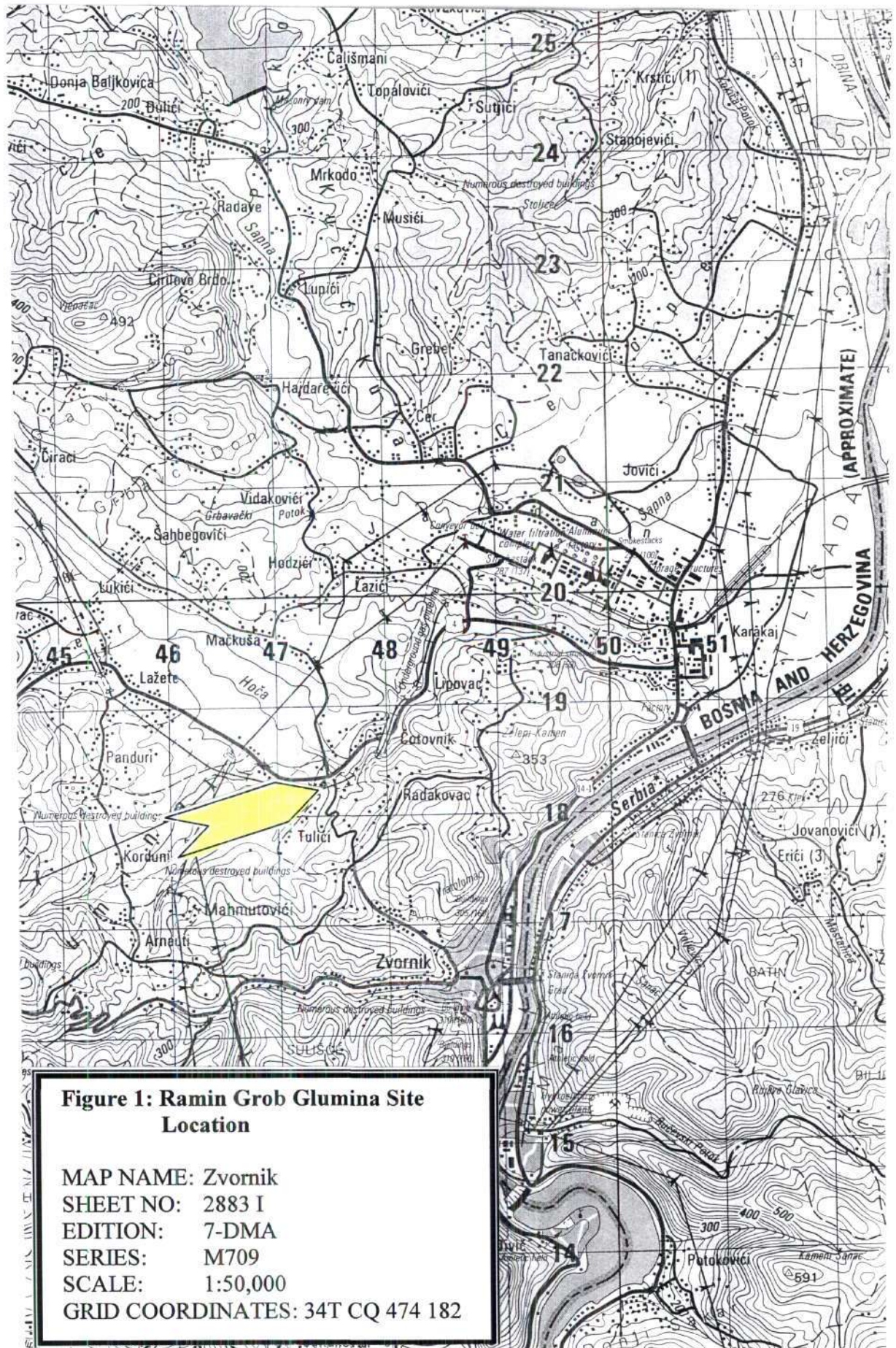
The public viewing process continued for approximately six weeks, during which time hundreds of individuals examined the open body bags. During this process, PHR staff collected antemortem data from family members and witnesses to aid in identifications. Claims of recognition were filed for more than one half of the 274 decedents during this time.

Postmortem examinations began in December 1998, and all 274 have been completed. While no PHR representatives were in attendance at these examinations, Drs. Cihlarž and Kešetović have provided a summary of the information gathered to date.

One hundred and forty-seven individuals had been identified at the time of this report, all of whom were adults. All the decedents, two females and 272 males, wore civilian clothing. The ages of the identified decedents range from 14 to 80 years. The identified decedents came from the villages of Drinjača, Kostijerovo, and Musići, in addition to Glumina.

Cause of death was determined by Drs. Cihlarž and Kešetović in all but nine of the 274 cases. Of the remaining 265 cases, cause of death for 246 was determined to be gunshot wounds. Of these, 95 had gunshot wounds to the head only. Fifty-eight had gunshot wounds to the torso only. Fifty-four had gunshot wounds to the head, torso, and extremities. Thirty-five had gunshot wounds to the head and torso. Four had gunshot wounds to the extremities only. Sixteen individuals were victims of blunt trauma to the head. For two individuals, cause of death was determined to be unspecified cervical injuries, and there was one case of cervical laceration.

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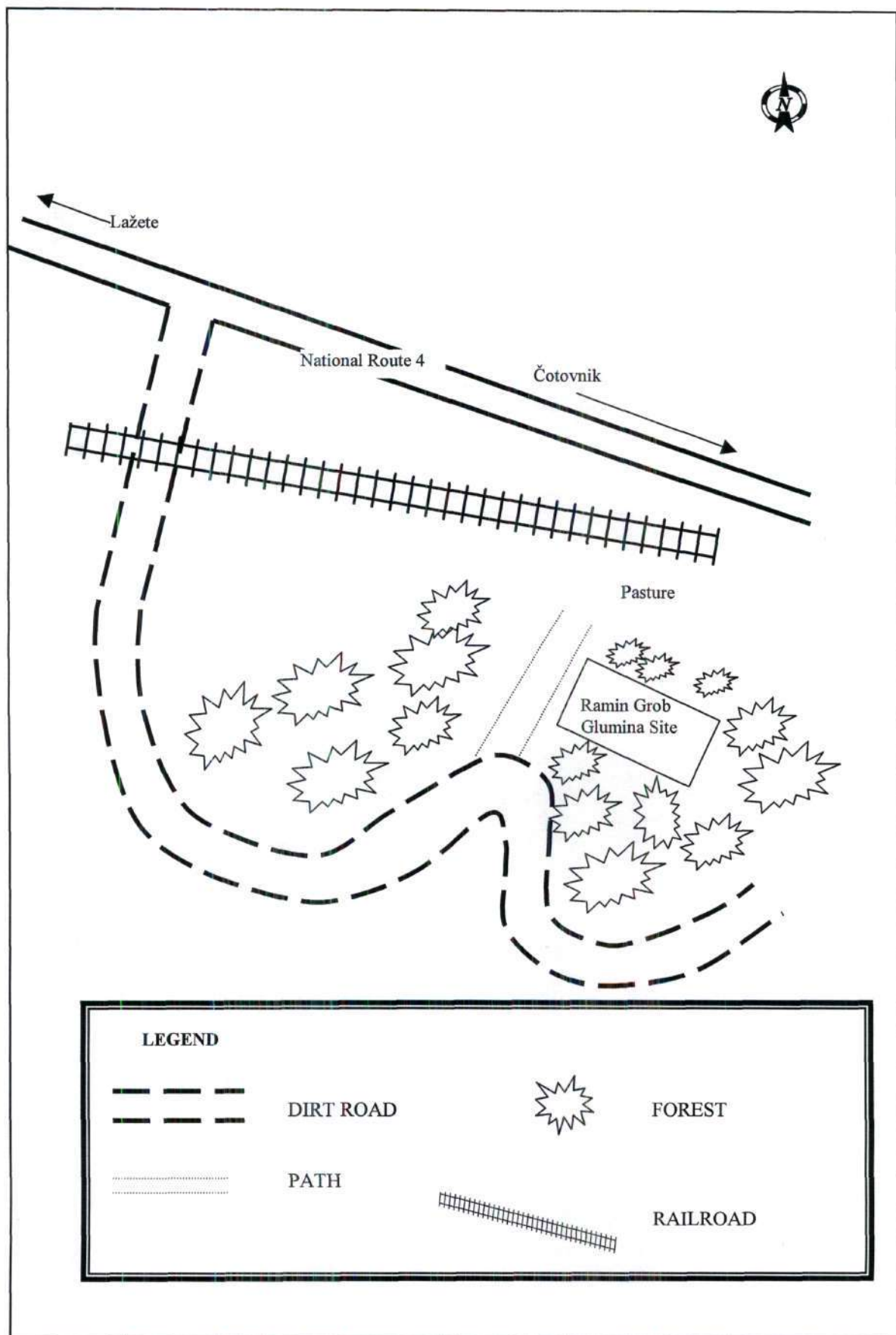


Figure 2. Ramin Grob Glumina Site Area Map (not to scale).

RAMIN GROB GLUMINA EXHUMATION

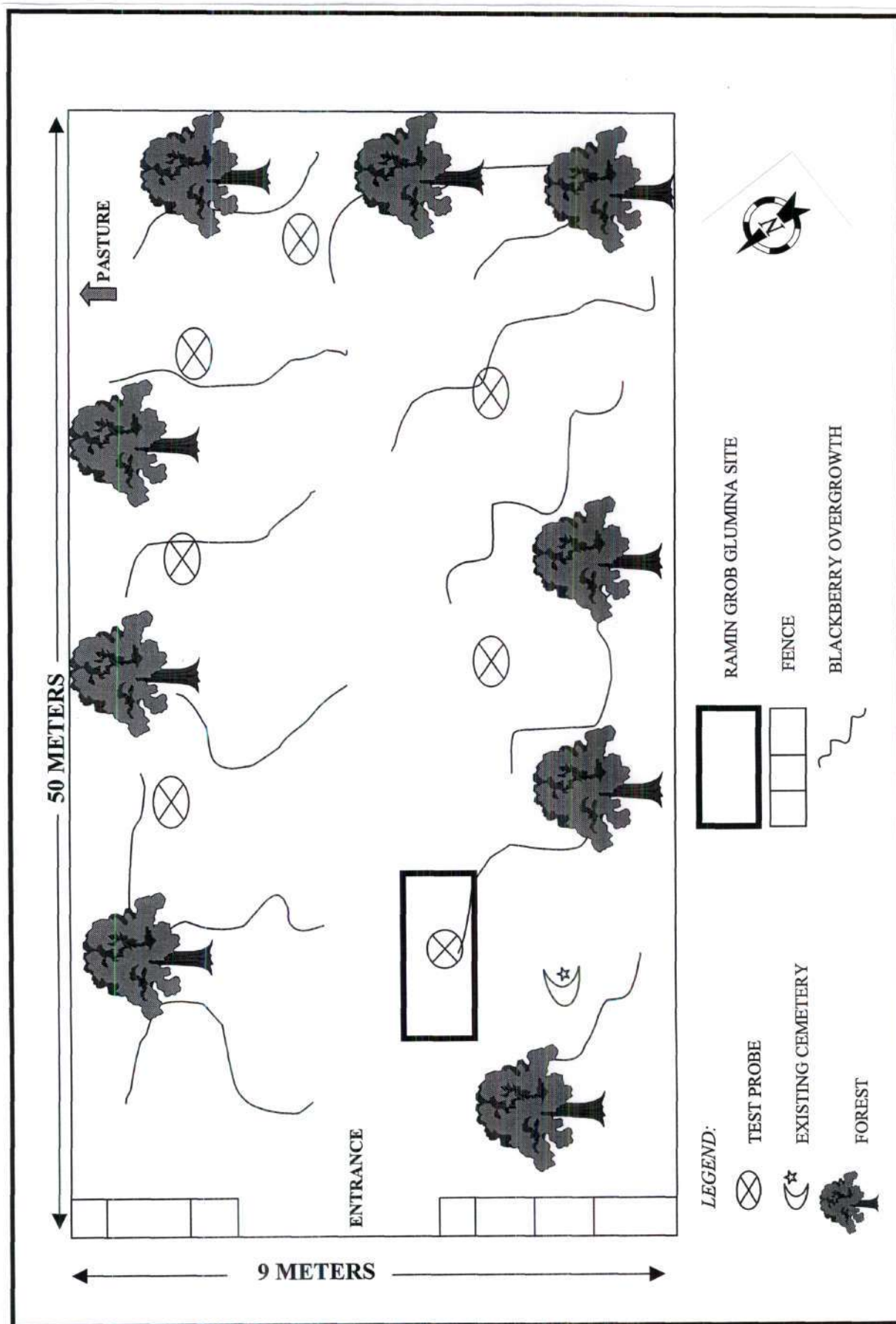


Figure 3. Ramin Grob Glumina Site Sketch Map (not to scale).

50 Meters

8 Meters

2 Meters

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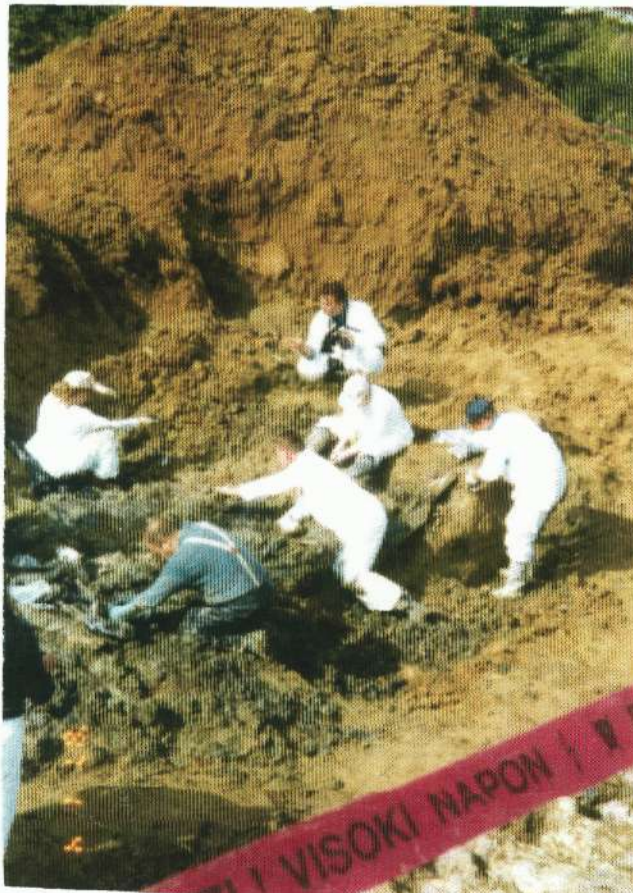


Photograph 1. Laborers clearing vegetation from the site area on 6 October, 1998.



Photograph 2. Exposure of bodies in two rows.

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Photograph 3. Exposure of multiple layers of remains.

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Photograph 4. PHR Forensic Monitor Dr. George Thomas clears soil from area of layered remains.



Photograph 5. PHR Forensic Monitors Dr. George Thomas and Heather York collect small bones in a plastic bag.

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Photograph 6.

Skeletonized remains, without body bags, at the southern end of the trench.

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Photograph 7. Ambassador Jacques Klein visits the site.



Photograph 8. Complete exposure of 274 bodies.

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Photograph 9.

Dževad Bektašević and Dr. Rifat Kešetović of the State Commission team number the exposed remains.



Photograph 10.

Directed by Amor Mašović, State Commission team laborers place remains in new body bags for transport to Tuzla.

PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) mobilizes the health professions and enlists public support to protect and promote the human rights of all people.

PHR believes that human rights are essential preconditions for the health and well-being of all members of the human family.

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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