



# THE BYTYQI BROTHERS

*Justice delayed. Justice denied.*

## **Statement by Ambassador Robert Barry**

*Embargoed for Release on July 7, 2014*

It has been 15 years since Serbian government officials executed Ylli, Agron and Mehmet Bytyqi, knowing that they were US citizens. Their bodies were thrown into a mass grave where other bodies of war crimes victims were already hidden.

Since the Bytyqi brothers' bodies were identified in 2001 the US government has insisted at the highest level that the murders be investigated and the guilty parties be prosecuted. To date, no individual has faced criminal charges or been found guilty of these murders.

The person who had command responsibility over the special forces training camp where the Bytyqi brothers were killed was Goran Radoslavjevic, then a Lieutenant Colonel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Although he denied any knowledge of the crime when called upon to testify, he was present at the camp at time of the killings and thus is clearly responsible for actions carried out there. Though he has left the government, he remains in Belgrade where he plays an influential role in Prime Minister Vucic's Progressive Party

We have been told on several occasions by Serbian investigators that Radoslavjevic and others responsible for crimes against humanity during the Kosovo war have been protected by the Serbian government with a wall of silence. A new government is now in place under Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, who has committed to the US government and the Bytyqis to resolve this case by prosecuting those involved.

The US Government wants to see improved relations with Serbia, but has pointed out repeatedly that lack of progress in the Bytyqi case will have a significant impact on the further development of ties. Likewise the US supports Serbian accession to the European Union while noting that adherence to the rule of law is an important qualification for membership.

The Bytyqi family and I have been told that even with a new government in place in Serbia it will take time to resolve this case. We say that 15 years is enough time. We want action now. Unfortunately our sources report that the investigation remains stalled to date.

*Robert Barry is a retired US Ambassador and a pro bono advisor to the Bytyqi family. His last appointment was as head of the US Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina*

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