

ORAL HISTORY INDEX AND SUMMARY

Interview with: Amir Lamaxhema

Date: 1/3/15

Location: Kosovo

Total duration: 06.42

Interview by Rrezarta Mulolli and summary by Kelly Bücher:

The interview plays as one long recording.

1.	Start time	Finish time	Approximate duration	Brief description
	00.00	06.42	06.42	Amir talks about his family situation, his wife’s medical evacuation to England during the Kosovar war due to her Leukaemia and his return, alone, to Kosovo to try to rebuild his life with his parents.
<p>Pen sketch</p> <p>Summary of Interview content</p>	<p><i>In 1999 Amir was newly married and living with his young wife, Adriana, and parents. Driven from their home in Ferizaj, Adriana became ill during the forced exodus from Kosovo. She was medically evacuated to the UK by British doctors who examined her in Macedonia. After a brief period in Barrow-in-Furness the family moved to Trafford. Diagnosed as suffering from Leukaemia, Adriana was admitted to hospital in Manchester and tragically died, shortly afterwards, in the UK. Amir talks fondly of the care the family received in Manchester and of the warmth he received from the community. Amir’s parents returned to Kosovo in 2000 to find they had lost everything. When Amir returned to Kosovo for his wife’s burial he decided to support his parents’ attempt to re-build their lives in Ferizaj and they made a new start together. Amir is an interpreter working for the EULEX Law Mission in Kosovo.</i></p> <p>(00.00) Amir talks about his family being evacuated to the Manchester, UK, and his wife being medically evacuated due to having Leukaemia.</p> <p>He describes that there was fighting in Kosovo at the time and a NATO airstrike campaign which drove him and around 8/900,000 people out of Kosovo. He says that he and his family got a bus to Macedonia.</p> <p>He describes meeting a team of British doctors that were helping there and they offered to help his wife and that is how she and his family were flown to Manchester for the medical assistance there.</p> <p>(01.14) Amir says that when they arrived, they were first of all taken to a small reception centre, in Wythenshawe. After all the medical check-ups and necessary information had been given, pictures were taken, IDs were prepared and then they were taken to Barrow-in-Furness.</p> <p>He says that in Barrow-in-Furness, at the centre, there were two rooms of clothes and food donated by local people which they were given items from. They arrived with nothing.</p> <p>Amir describes it not being so difficult to communicate in English because he</p>			

could speak some English already. He says that there were translation services offered right from the beginning ending later, at the reception centre. He says language was no problem whatsoever. Also, his sister, who was with him, could speak English, so for his family in particular, it was no big deal, he says. He says that his parents and his in-laws were there as well.

He describes initially being taken at a school, which had been modified with beds. Then, after two days, they were taken to Manchester.

He describes his first contact with other Kosovars in England. He says that it was after two days because initially he had to go straight to Manchester Royal Infirmary with his wife. It was only later on, at the reception centre in Hale, Altrincham, that he met other Kosovar refugees, who had already been there a week. He says that he stays in contact with some of them, on and off.

Amir describes volunteering as an interpreter to some families once the translation services were withdrawn from the Manchester community. He says that he helped them with day-to-day needs.

(03.20) He says that each family had its own tragic story and so basically, whoever he met, whoever he spoke to, also had really bad moments to talk about and their histories were similar.

He describes making new friends in Manchester and joining a local football club, Altrincham Football Club, thanks to the reverend Bruce Thompson from the Methodist Church. He even trained with the lads for a few weeks but he says that it wasn't meant to be as he needed to attend to his wife at the hospital.

He describes the people of Manchester as being good people. From the very beginning they would attend to everybody. He says that they tried to assist and when people wanted to go somewhere, they would help. He says that everybody was helpful and he simply cannot forget that.

He describes the best thing about Manchester being the hearty welcome that had been prepared for them. He describes the kindness of ordinary people, of the community there. Absolutely everything, he says, was great.

He describes the worst part of being in Manchester as losing his wife. He describes losing the person he had loved, since being a teenager, as being the worst thing. The bitter memories, every time he looks back to that period of time, are the black spot in all his history.

He describes returning to Kosovo. He says that they took his wife's body back to Kosovo for the funeral. His parents were not working and had lost everything. He describes that their flat, had been totally looted and things had been taken away. He says that he saw that there were many opportunities in his home town because there was an American military base there where there were a lot of jobs available to people, like him, who understood English. He says that he decided to return back and start to rebuild his life from the beginning.

(04.49) He says that he returned to Kosovo permanently on 17th February 2000. He describes Kosovo as being quite different. There were no Serbian military or police forces and there were NATO soldiers all over. He says that people were returning from other places. Life was starting to build up slowly and people were getting back so it was a totally different situation to that earlier when they had had to flee on cramped trains and buses. He describes it as a new beginning: a strange feeling but a good feeling.

He describes where he works now at EULEX. He first worked for United Nations

Police Mission until 2009 and then switched to EULEX, Law Mission.

(06.28) Amir describes Kosovo as being his home. He says that he would be in England if it wasn't. Kosovo as his country and it will always be, with all the ups and downs, with the good things and the bad things: it's his country so it is his home. It definitely is his home.