

Kosovo 'organ trafficking' exposed

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Five people including doctors and a former senior health official are charged in connection with international network. Last Modified: 12 Nov 2010 18:45 GMT Email ArticlePrint ArticleShare ArticleSend Feedback

A private medical clinic in Kosovo called "Medicus" was allegedly used to carry out the kidney operations [Al Jazeera]

Five people, including a former senior health ministry official and a surgeon, have been charged in connection with an international organ trafficking network.

Eulex, the police and justice mission in Kosovo, said the group were charged with offences of trafficking in human organs, organised crime and abusing official authority, while two others had also been charged with unlawful exercise of medical activities.

"The defendants include a number of doctors and one individual who previously worked at a senior level in the ministry of health," it said in a statement on Friday.

In an indictment seen by the Associated Press, the group of suspects are accused of trafficking people into Kosovo for the purpose of removing "human organs for transplant to other persons".

Some 20 foreign nationals "were recruited with false promises of payments" in 2008, Jonathan Ratel, the EU prosecutor wrote in the document.

It said the victims, some 20 foreign nationals, included people from Moldova, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkey who lived in "extreme poverty or acute financial distress".

Private clinic

They were promised up to \$20,000, while recipients were required to pay between \$110,000-\$137,000.

The group of suspects includes five Kosovan nationals and a Turkish doctor and an Israeli citizen who are both wanted by Interpol. None of the suspects are in custody.

The Turkish doctor named by the indictment, is said to be the subject of several criminal proceedings in other countries for human trafficking and removal of organs.

It also alleged that a Kosovo surgeon was one of the five charged with trafficking human organs, saying that he had carried out the operations in a private medical clinic called "Medicus".

In 2008 investigators closed down the private health clinic where the doctors worked as part of the initial investigation.

Kosovo police launched a raid triggered by suspicions that a Turkish man had sold his kidney to an Israeli recipient after he appeared fatigued at Pristina airport trying to board a flight to Turkey.

The man told Kosovo police at the airport he came to the Balkan country to donate his kidney on invitation from the private clinic.

When police searched the clinic in November 2008 they found an Israeli citizen in post-operative care, according to the indictment.

EU officials said the indictment was filed in a local court, and a preliminary hearing is expected to be held by the end of the month.

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