

Balla FAMILY

Balla Destan 🌟📄

Balla Lime, WIFE 🌟📄

Rescue Story

Balla, Destan

Balla, Lime

A short time after the Germans invaded Priština, the capital of Kosovo, in southern Yugoslavia, in April 1941, many local Jews were sent to forced labor, including 22-year-old Mordechai Lazar. Two months later, the Italians took control of the area and the Lazars, who were afraid that the Germans would return, decide to flee the city. A Turkish family friend arranged for papers as Turkish Muslims for the Lazar family, which included the parents; sons, Mordechai and Shlomo; married daughters Rachel and Leah and their children; and other relatives – 18 people in all. Equipped with these documents, the family fled from Yugoslavia to Albania, where they settled in Elbasan, south of Tirana (Tiranë), which was under Italian control. When the Germans entered Albania in September 1943, the Jewish refugees there feared that their false identities would be discovered. Thus, with the help of their Muslim friend, the Lazar family fled to the mountains, where they found shelter in Shëngjergj, a small, isolated village in the district of Tirana. In Shëngjergj, the Lazars met Destan and Lime Balla who, despite the absolute prohibition against hiding Jews, welcomed some members of the Lazar family into the shelter of their modest home. The Ballas also ensured that the other family members found shelter with other villagers. When the Lazars' money ran out, the villagers continued to share with them the little they had, treated them as friends, and warned them of approaching German patrols. Whenever danger loomed, the refugees were relocated temporarily elsewhere in the mountains. While in hiding, Sara Navon, Mordechai's aunt, gave birth to a baby boy and Lima Balla helped deliver the child and to look after him. Looking after Jews was an especially perilous task because it was a small village and the extra residents were hard to conceal. Nevertheless, the Jewish family remained in the village until December 1944 and then returned to Yugoslavia. In 1948, they all immigrated to Israel. Many years after the war, the Lazars renewed contact with the Balla family. On October 4, 1992, Yad Vashem recognized Destan Balla and Lime Balla as Righteous Among the Nations. [\[Show less\]](#)

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Biçaku FAMILY

Biçaku Mefail 

Biçaku Njazi (1925 - ?), SON 

Rescue Story

Biçaku, Mefail

Biçaku, Njazi

In March 1943, on the eve of the major deportation of Jews from Macedonia, Rafael Faraggi from Bitola managed to escape and he found temporary refuge with a Christian friend. Faraggi soon felt compelled to move on and decided to head for Albania. He was caught at the border and sent to prison. One month later, Faraggi was sent to the transit camp in the town of Kavajë, Albania, where the Jews had to report daily to the local police, but were otherwise left alone. In September 1943, after the Germans entered Albania, Faraggi fled to Tirana, where he acquired false papers from the Albanian underground. When the roundup of Jews commenced there in March 1944, Faraggi fled in the direction of the Yugoslav border with his friend Jakov Aroesti. On their way, the two escapees entered the yard of a home in Elbasan. The owner of the house gave the two men water and, when he then discovered that they were Jews, suggested that they turn to Mefail Biçaku who lived in the village of Qarrisht-Librazhd, and was known as someone who afforded help to Jewish refugees. Faraggi and Aroesti then left for Struga, where they made contact with a person whose name they had been given in Elbasan. He then escorted the two Jewish men to Biçaku, who was already hiding 17 Jewish refugees. Biçaku and his 19-year-old son, Njazi, took care of all their wards' needs, bringing provisions from Struga purchased with money provided by the Jews. They hid the group of Jews in huts outside the village that had been especially constructed for this purpose. Each hut was guarded by one of the Biçaku sons, armed for their protection. During the bombardments, many Albanian villagers also fled to the nearby forests and sheltered themselves not far from the huts. One day, the Jews saw the Albanians light a fire, and then they heard shots and saw some men approaching them. The Jews were certain that they were about to be caught but it transpired that the men were local Muslims who were bringing them some roasted lamb that they had prepared in honor of a religious festival. These Albanians knew that Biçaku was hiding Jews and they wanted to show their solidarity with the refugees. Apart from Faraggi, the Biçakus rescued Simon Aroesti's family of three; Maja Aroesti's family of three; and

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Hoxha FAMILY

Hoxha Nuro 

Rescue Story

Hoxha, Nuro

Nuro Hoxha lived in the village of Tërbaç, near Vlorë, where he was a respected teacher. Hoxha was known for his anti-fascist views, which were similar to those of most of his fellow villagers, many of whom were involved in the fight for the liberation of Albania. In September 1943, when the Germans entered Albania, Hoxha went to see his long-time friend Ilia Solomoni and informed him that the Germans were nearing Vlorë and that they planned to arrest the Jews. He replied that he had nowhere to go and did not know what to do. Hoxha then offered to hide Solomoni and his family in his two-story house in Tërbaç. Ilia Solomoni told Yad Vashem that Hoxha had told him: "You have my Besa [Albanian code of honor]". Thus, the Solomoni family – Ilia, his wife Sarika, and their baby daughter Mirela (b. 1943) – moved to the storeroom in Hoxha's cellar, underneath the staircase. The opening to this was in the floor, which Hoxha covered with a rug, and there where two exits. When the danger outside intensified, more family members joined them in the hiding place: Ilia's sister, Fortunata; his brother-in-law, Eliezer Negrin; Sarika and Negrin's mother, Aneta; In spring 1944, the Nazis' Albanian accomplices arrested Ilia and threatened to hand him over to the Germans. Hoxha then appealed to these men and told them that the entire village would take revenge on their families if Ilia was not released. Two days later, Ilia was set free. Hoxha waited for Ilia at the prison gate and accompanied him home. In September 1944, Ilia was arrested again, and was released again thanks to the intervention of Hoxha. Throughout the period from September 1943 until November 1944, Hoxha and his family did everything they could to provide for the members of the Solomoni family without receiving any remuneration. Their motivation was friendship and their Besa honor code.

On May 5, 1992, Yad Vashem recognized Nuro Hoxha as Righteous Among the Nations.

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Kadiu FAMILY

Kadiu Besim  

Kadiu Aishe, WIFE  

Rescue Story

Budo, Shyqyri

Budo, Xhemile

Meçe, Sulejman

Meçe, Zenepe

Myrto, Abdulla


Myrto, Ije


Kadiu, Besim

Kadiu, Aishe

Shyqyri Budo, who sold essential oils, lived with his wife Xhemile and children, Vera, Drita, Liri, Bujar in Tirana, the capital of Albania. Budo was a good friend of Haim Batino who lived in Durrës, on the west coast of Albania, with his wife, Eftiqia, and their three children, Jakov, Sandra, and Moise. In September 1943, after the German occupation of Albania, the Batinos moved to Tirana as they felt they would be less conspicuous in a big city. Budo visited the Batinos, and offered them shelter in his home in Tirana. The Batinos accepted this offer and the five-member Batino family as well as Haim's brother, Menachem, his brother, David and his wife, Ester, moved to the Budos' home. The Jews were given two rooms, at no cost. Despite the risks involved and the ever-present fear, Shyqyri, his four children, and in particular his wife, Xhemile, managed to make the Batinos feel at home. They lived under Budo's roof for about three months and then, with the increased risk of discovery, it was decided that the family should look for shelter elsewhere. The adults – Menachem, David, Esther, Haim and Eftiqia – and 14-year-old Moise, were moved northwards to Krujë, a town in the mountains in northern Albania where they hid with Sulejman Meçe, a well-to-do farmer, his wife, Zenepe, and their children Ije and Ismail. Meçe gave the Batinos a room in their home and took care of all their needs. One day, Meçe discovered that a local resident was planning to inform on his wards. He thought of shooting this traitor but his family persuaded him not to. Instead, he spoke with the potential informer and threatened to avenge any



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Kasapi FAMILY

Kasapi Zyrha  

Kasapi Hamdi (1918 - 1989), SON  


Rescue Story


Kasapi, Zyrha

Kasapi, Hamdi



Zyrha Kasapi, a widow, lived with her five young children and Hamdi, a grown-up son, in Tirana. Their financial situation was difficult and Hamdi was the only family member who was earning an income, working for a local radio station. In 1942 and early 1943, many Jews arrived in Albania from Yugoslavia. Albania was under Italian control at the time and the authorities tolerated Jews. In Albania, the Jewish refugees looked for lodging and work. Kasapi decided to rent out one room in her apartment to some Jews from Skopje, Macedonia – Mois (Moshe) Frances, his wife, their two children and a grandmother. From the day in April 1943 that they arrived at the Kasapis, the Frances family felt at home. The two families ran the household together, ate together, the children played together, and the two families became close friends. The presence of the Jewish family in the Kasapis' apartment was known to the neighbors and to the authorities. After the surrender of Italy to the Allies in September 1943, the Germans arrived in Tirana and began to search for Jews. They posted notices everywhere stating that Jews had to report to the police and that it was absolutely forbidden for local families to hide Jewish refugees in their homes. Mois Frances soon decided that the members of his family had to disperse. A friend of Kasapi's agreed to take in Mois's wife, Vinka, and daughter, Eni (Esther), to help with her housework. Eight-year-old Marcel was afforded shelter by another Albanian family, and Hamdi took Mois and Grandmother Esther, to his friends in the nearby village of Babrru where he hid them and provided for them. For a time, young Marcel was the intermediary between all the family members. The prohibitions against Jews and the threats against local residents increased. The woman that had welcomed Mois's wife and daughter into her home soon asked them to leave because she did not want to risk her own life. Also, Marcel did not want to remain hidden on his own and returned to the Kasapis. Hamdi suggested that the three of them join Mois and the grandmother. Before moving the mother and her two children to the village, the Kasapis arranged a farewell meal for the three members of the Frances family. While they were eating, they heard loud knocking at the

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Kocerri FAMILY


Kocerri Kasem (1915 - ?)  

Rescue Story

Koçerri, Kasem Jakup

Kasem Jakup Koçerri was a farmer and a shepherd in the village of Beshisht with business contacts in the city of Vlorë, about 180 km southwest of the capital city of Tirana, near the Adriatic Sea. There, he became acquainted with Jakov Solomoni, with whom he had commercial relations, and his wife and their four children. One of them, Moshe, was a young storekeeper, who on July 4, 1943, married a young Jewish woman of Greek origin, Janet. Four months before their wedding, her family had been sent from Salonika to Auschwitz. After Italy's surrender and the occupation of Albania by the Germans in September 1943, the Germans began to apply their racial policy against the Jews. One day, when the anti-Jewish measures became harsher, Moshe's father met urgently with his friend Kasem Jakup and asked him to help to hide the young couple, Moshe and Janet. One day in March 1944, when Vlorë was surrounded by the Germans, Kasem Jakup Koçerri came to the Solomoni home in order to collect the couple. He left the horses in the forest, near the city, and under cover of darkness and winter, the three rode for hours until they reached the Koçerri home. Their house was located on a hill from which it was possible to observe what was happening in the vicinity. The arrival of the two "guests" was kept secret by the Koçerri family since they knew that the Germans and collaborators were carrying out searches for hidden Jews. Moshe and Janet Solomoni hid with them for four months, relying on the kindheartedness of their friend Kasem Jakup, until the Liberation. The other members of the Solomoni family also survived. After the war, Kasem Jakup remained in contact with the couple that he had rescued during the period of the German occupation of Albania. Moshe and Janet Solomoni remained in Albania, and only in 1991, after the fall of the communist regime, were able to immigrate to Israel. On August 8, 2000, Yad Vashem recognized Kasem Jakup Koçerri as Righteous Among the Nations. [\[Show less\]](#)

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Pashkaj FAMILY

Sheqer Ali  

Rescue Story

Sheqer, Ali

In 1941, most of the Kosovo region in southern Yugoslavia became a part of Italian-controlled Albania. A year later, under German pressure to hand over Jewish refugees from Kosovo, the Italians decided to move the Jews to the towns of Berat and Kavajë in Albania, south of Tirana. Among these Jews was also Yeoshua Baruchowic, b.1919, from Priština, and his brother Baruh, b.1915. They moved first to Berat and subsequently they settled in Skodra. Yeoshua served as an assistant to the dentist Xhevat Bekteshi and was active in the anti-Fascist underground. His brother Baruh joined the ranks of the Albanian partisans and fell in battle. With the German occupation of these territories in September 1943, Yeoshua was arrested by the Gestapo because of his political activity. The Germans sent their political prisoners to Germany in four trucks. Yeoshua, who was the only Jew, rightly assumed that if his identity was discovered, he would meet a bitter end. He jumped from the truck and began to run until he reached a small square in the town of Leifize at the foot of the mountains, and there entered the canteen of Ali Sheqer. He told the owner that German soldiers were pursuing him, and the owner hid him temporarily in the canteen shelter. In the evening, Ali Sheqer took him to the mountains and found him a hiding place there. Yeoshua told him that he was an escaped political prisoner seeking a hiding place and protection. Ali Sheqer did not say anything but in the morning he came back and took Yeoshua to his home in the village of Lifize. Ali Sheqer lived in a small house with his family of ten. They all warmly received Yeoshua as a guest and for three months they shared the little that they had with him. In times of danger when a German patrol came near, they found alternative hiding places for him and they all kept the secret. From there he went on to his friend in Skodra until the Liberation in November 1944.



On March 18, 2002, Yad Vashem recognized Ali Sheqer as Righteous Among the Nations [\[Show less\]](#)

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Qoqja FAMILY

Qoqja Beqir (1914 - ?)  

Rescue Story

Qoqja, Beqir

Beqir Qoqja (b. 1914) lived in Tirana, where he owned a tailor shop. Qoqja's friend introduced him to Avram Eliasaf Gani, a Jew from Vlorë who had moved to Tirana immediately following the Italian occupation. Qoqja and Gani became good friends. In September 1943, when the Italians surrendered to the Allies and the Germans entered Albania, Gani and his brother rented a place on the outskirts of Tirana where they thought they would be safe. However, one day, on his way home, Gani met a neighbor who told him that the Germans had arrested his brother and two other Jews. Gani went immediately to the shop of Beqir Qoqja and appealed to him for help.

Despite the great risk involved, he welcomed Gani into his home, where Qoqja lived with his wife and five children. Gani hid there for a month and then, because of the increasing danger of discovery, Qoqja dressed his Jewish friend in traditional local farmer's garb and took him to the nearby village of Mukja. There, a friend of Qoqja's agreed to harbor Gani and Qoqja sent him food and other necessities every week. Gani lived in this hiding place, under the care of Qoqja, for another five months. When the Germans left the area, Gani returned to Qoqja's home in Tirana, from where he headed back to Vlorë. Gani and Qoqja remained in contact with each other after the war. In 1991, Gani immigrated to Israel with his family.

On July 6, 1992, Yad Vashem recognized Beqir Qoqja as Righteous Among the Nations.

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Shpuza FAMILY

Shpuza Esheref 

Rescue Story

Shpuza, Eshref

Eshref Shpuza worked as a clerk for the municipality of Kavajë, located south of Durrës. In late March 1943, when many Jewish refugees arrived in Kavajë from Yugoslavia, Shpuza's parents, who also lived there, rented out an apartment to 23-year-old Rudi-Refael Abravanel and the four members of the Konfino family – Marko Konfino, his wife Matilda and their daughters 21-year-old Bojana-Rachel and 12-year-old Ruth – who had fled from Macedonia. At this time, Jews could live legally in the town, where they could shop and work, but they were prohibited from leaving town and were obligated to report to the local police once a day. In September 1943, when the Italians surrendered and the Germans entered Albania, the situation for Jews changed. Shpuza, who was living with his parents at the time and had become friendly with their Jewish tenants, offered to help them in their escape. He stole blank identity papers from the municipality and gave them to Abravanel, the Konfinos and two Jewish brothers, Solomon and Nisim Pelosof, who wanted to join them. Shpuza helped them fill them out with genuine Albanian names, with authentic seals and stamps. Shpuza then arranged transport for the Jews, dressed them in traditional Muslim garb, and escorted them to Shkodër, about 130 km from Kavajë. There, Shpuza found hiding places for the Jews in the Christian quarter, where the residents did not notice if their new neighbors (with borrowed Muslim identities) were keeping Muslim laws and traditions. When Shpuza was certain that his wards were safe and settled, he returned to Kavajë. In February 1944, the Konforti family and Abravanel joined a group of 40 Jews and together they rented a small boat and escaped from Albania to the already liberated area of southern Italy. Rudi married Bojana in May 1944, and they immigrated to Eretz Israel. In 1990, the survivors renewed contact with Shpuza.

On March 31, 1993, Yad Vashem recognized Eshref Shpuza as Righteous Among the Nations.


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Veseli FAMILY

Veseli Hamid (1918 - ?) 

Veseli Xhemal (1929 - ?), BROTHER 

Rescue Story

Veseli, Vesel

Veseli, Fatima

Veseli, Refik

Veseli, Hamid

Veseli, Xhemal

In 1943, 25-year-old Hamid Veseli and his 17-year-old brother, Refik, arrived in Tirana from their native village of Krujë. Hamid opened a clothing shop and Refik started working as an apprentice in a photo studio. Refik's mentor was a Jewish refugee from Belgrade, Moshe Mandil, who lived with his wife and two young children in a small apartment belonging to the studio owner in Tirana. Refik and Mandil became friends. In the fall of 1943, after Italy surrendered to the Allies, the Germans occupied Albania and the Jews began to look for places to hide. Refik asked his parents for permission to shelter Mandil and his family in their home in the village of Krujë. His father, Vesel Veseli, agreed immediately and even traveled to Tirana with some donkeys in order to bring Moshe Mandil, his wife Ela, and their children, seven-year-old Gavra and five-year-old Irena, back to his home. The journey took several days. During the days they hid in caves and forests and at night they would continue along their way until they arrived in Krujë. The Mandils were hidden in a small room above the stable and the children were allowed to mingle with children of the villagers. A few days later, 14-year-old Xhemal, one of the Veselis' children, brought the three members of the Ben Joseph family to his parents' home. Joseph Ben Joseph, his wife, Ruzhica and his sister, Finica, had found shelter with Hamid Veseli in Tirana. They joined the Mandils in the room above the stable. All seven refugees stayed in the Veselis' home until the liberation. Throughout this time, the entire Veseli family, in particular Vesel and his wife, Fatima, ensured that their wards were safe and provided them with all their daily needs. After the liberation on November 29, 1944, the two Jewish families returned to Tirana and later moved back to Yugoslavia. The Mandils immigrated to Israel in 1948, and the Ben Josephs eventually moved to Brazil. Contact was maintained between Refik Veseli and Gavra Mandil, which later led to the establishment of an

The Righteous Among The Nations



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Veseli FAMILY

Veseli Vesel  

Veseli Fatima, WIFE  

Veseli Refik (1926 - ?), SON  

Rescue Story

Veseli, Vesel

Veseli, Fatima

Veseli, Refik

Veseli, Hamid

Veseli, Xhemal


In 1943, 25-year-old Hamid Veseli and his 17-year-old brother, Refik, arrived in Tirana from their native village of Krujë. Hamid opened a clothing shop and Refik started working as an apprentice in a photo studio. Refik's mentor was a Jewish refugee from Belgrade, Moshe Mandil, who lived with his wife and two young children in a small apartment belonging to the studio owner in Tirana. Refik and Mandil became friends. In the fall of 1943, after Italy surrendered to the Allies, the Germans occupied Albania and the Jews began to look for places to hide. Refik asked his parents for permission to shelter Mandil and his family in their home in the village of Krujë. His father, Vesel Veseli, agreed immediately and even traveled to Tirana with some donkeys in order to bring Moshe Mandil, his wife Ela, and their children, seven-year-old Gavra and five-year-old Irena, back to his home. The journey took several days. During the days they hid in caves and forests and at night they would continue along their way until they arrived in Krujë. The Mandils were hidden in a small room above the stable and the children were allowed to mingle with children of the villagers. A few days later, 14-year-old Xhemal, one of the Veselis' children, brought the three members of the Ben Joseph family to his parents' home. Joseph Ben Joseph, his wife, Ruzhica and his sister, Finica, had found shelter with Hamid Veseli in Tirana. They joined the Mandils in the room above the stable. All seven refugees stayed in the Veselis' home until the liberation. Throughout this time, the entire Veseli family, in particular Vesel and his wife, Fatima, ensured that their wards were safe and provided them with all their daily needs. After the liberation on November 29, 1944, the two Jewish families returned to Tirana and later moved back to Yugoslavia. The Mandils immigrated to Israel in 1948, and the Ben Josephs eventually moved to Brazil. Contact was maintained between Refik Veseli and Gavra Mandil, which later led to the establishment of an

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Zyma FAMILY

Zyma Bessim (1901 - 1983) 

Zyma Higmat, WIFE 

Rescue Story

Zyma, Bessim

Zyma, Higmat

Kilica, Mikel

Vjera Matusewiez (later Kilica), from Minsk Mazowiecki in Poland, fled with her family to Yugoslavia in 1940. When the Germans conquered Yugoslavia in April 1941, the family escaped to Albania, where they rented an apartment from Mikel Kilica in Tirana. Kilica knew that they were Jews from Poland. After the Italians surrendered to the Allies in September 1943, the Germans entered Albania, and the search for Jews began. Kilica decided to rescue the seven Jews living under his roof. He took six of them to the small village of Kamëz near Tirana, but when he realized that this place was not safe enough, he moved them to the Ardenica monastery in Lushnjë, where they stayed until the liberation in November 1944. The seventh tenant living with Kilica, Lew Dzienciolski, in his 50s, was unable to make the journey with his relatives because he had a problem with his eyesight. Kilica turned to his friend, Professor Zyma Bessim, who was an otolaryngologist, and asked him to see Dzienciolski in his clinic, which was on the first floor of their home in the capital. Bessim received the Jewish man and swathed his face in bandages, to prevent his being identified as a Jew. Bessim registered him as a patient under a false name and Higmat cooked for him and tended him according to her husband's instructions. Dzienciolski remained in the clinic from October 1943 until April 1944. He then managed to join his relatives hiding in the monastery.

On July 25, 1999, Yad Vashem recognized Bessim and Higmat Zyma and Mikel Kilica as Righteous Among the nations.

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