# **Kosovo Country Profile**

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| **Fast Facts**  **Population:** 2,000,000 **Capital:** Prishtina **Area:** 10,887 square kilometers (4,203 square miles)  **Language:** Albanian, Serbian, regional languages **Religion:** Muslim, Orthodox Christian  **Currency:** Euro **Life Expectancy:** 64 **GDP per Capita:** U.S. $1,409  **Literacy Percent:** Males: 98; Females: 90Map: KosovoFlag: Kosovo |

Kosovo became a nation when its government declared independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. The United States and many European countries recognize that Kosovo is now its own country, but Serbia and some of its **allies**, most notably Russia, feel that it is still part of Serbia.

Kosovo, which was part of the former Yugoslavia, had been run by the **United Nations** and **NATO** since 1999, when Serbian army was forced to surrender after a U.S.-led NATO air war was launched to end Serbia's crackdown on ethnic Albanians who wanted their own country. About 10,000 people were killed, and nearly one million others had to leave their homes during the conflict.

Located in southeastern Europe, Kosovo is landlocked and roughly the size of the U.S. state of Connecticut. Its name refers to a place outside the capital, Prishtina, and loosely translated it means "field of blackbirds." Much of Kosovo's terrain is mountainous, with the highest peak, Gjeravica, rising 8,714 feet (2,656 meters) above sea level. Kosovo has two main **plains** and several notable rivers and lakes. The climate has warm summers and cold and snowy winters.

About 90 percent of Kosovo's two million people are have ancestors who came from Albania, and most of these people (**ethnic Albanians**) are Muslim. The remaining 10 percent are mainly Orthodox Christian Serbs living in northern Kosovo, near the border with Serbia.

Kosovo was the site of a famous battle between Serbs and Turks in 1389 and is often described as the birthplace of Serb identity. Ethnic Albanians say they are the descendants of the ancient Illyrians, Kosovo's first inhabitants. When Kosovo's parliament first declared its independence, in 1990, Albania was the only country to recognize it.

—Text adapted from *National Geographic Atlas of the World, Eighth Edition*