



Spring 5-18-2024

Menstrual pads on parliament: Women's activist strategies in challenging conservative gender ideologies in Kosovo (2020s).

Djellza Pulatani

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.library.fordham.edu/international_senior



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Menstrual pads on parliament: Women's activist strategies in challenging conservative gender ideologies in Kosovo (2020s).

Djellza Pulatani

dpulatani1@fordham.edu

B.A. International Studies, Global Affairs Track

Fordham University

Thesis Advisor:

Dr. Sarah Eltantawi

Seminar Advisor:

Dr. Katherine Wilson

January 2nd, 2024

ABSTRACT

Two decades after the gender-based violence weaponized in the Balkan Wars, women in the region have acted as catalysts for social and political change. In Kosovo, the journey of women in challenging patriarchal ideologies exemplifies this broader movement. This study examines one feminist NGO, QIKA, tracing its multiple strategies ranging from protests to menstrual product distribution to respond to aspects of violence against women and girls. The cultural qualities in Kosovo reflect both Albanian and Islamic influences, embodying conservative patriarchal norms. In this research, I explore the ways in which women activists employ certain strategies in addressing gender inequalities within this conservative context. This case study highlights the underrepresented contemporary activism of Kosovar women, often overshadowed by existing scholarship focused on the Kosovo-Serbia War and post-war advocacy related to war crimes. Therefore, my research bridges the gap by examining the advocacy of current Kosovar women in confronting the social fabric that continues to aid in their oppression. To do so, I utilize the gender-analysis framework with a feminist lens to focus on the theme of the othering of women's bodies; including menstrual stigma (and tax), physical violence and sexual violence against women. The project analyzes gender in social, religious, and political ideologies to adequately understand the obstacles faced by QIKA, and how they strategize around them. Based on direct field observation and reflexive recollection from over 9 months in Kosovo (2019-2023); social media posts; informal interviews with NGO representatives, political figures, and civilians, I was able to assemble my data for research. Upon completion, this case study unveils the formidable challenges faced by women's activism in Kosovo, stemming from diverse sources within the home, the country's Muslim influences, and the ethnic conservatism of Albanians. Notably, the perceptions of women's bodies remain a continuous

target of societal attacks. QIKA's strategic response to these structural inequalities highlights that feminist action in Kosovo operates on a collective level, advocating for the emancipation of all women in the country. The study underscores the intricate interplay of societal, religious, and cultural factors that shape and impede feminist movements in conservative societies like Kosovo. While particularly pertinent to Balkan and Muslim-majority societies, the research also addresses broader global resistance movements. It underscores the transformative power of collective action in fostering enduring social and political change. Additionally, it explores the interconnectedness of feminist movements worldwide, examining their mutual influence across historical, contemporary, and future contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to those who have played a pivotal role in supporting and assisting me throughout the completion of this thesis. Foremost among them are my seminar and topic advisors, Dr. Katherine Wilson and Dr. Sarah Eltantawi. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in shaping what stands as the most meaningful project of my college career. I am profoundly grateful for their continued guidance, care, and patience, without which I would have encountered significant challenges in bringing this thesis to fruition.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to my parents, Milazim and Vjosa, both immigrants from Kosovo, whose tireless efforts have afforded me every opportunity I have been granted. My father, a former KLA soldier, has imparted the values of resistance to me, serving as a driving force behind my engagement in International Studies. My mother, steadfast in her support, has been a constant source of encouragement, even in the face of limited opportunities. Her experiences have fueled my commitment to women's rights activism, and she remains the focal point of my dedication to this cause. I am equally grateful to my siblings, Dardan, Dafina, and Dea, whose unwavering support has been a constant pillar throughout my academic and advocacy endeavors. Their encouragement and solidarity have been invaluable, contributing significantly to the successful completion of this thesis.

Additionally, I express my gratitude to my partners from The F'Oda Summit: Alma Stafa, Erza Gashi, Afrdita Dreaj, Greta Rustani, and Dora Nano. Their collaboration was instrumental in shaping the theoretical framework of this thesis. Together, we engaged in collaborative activism that epitomized the collective effort to instigate change.

Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to the generations of Albanian women who have ardently fought against gender inequality within our culture. Their tireless efforts have been

enlightening, providing me with a profound understanding of the significance of collective activism. Without their pioneering endeavors, I would not have grasped the vital role that collective action plays in advocating for change.

I express my sincere gratitude to all those mentioned for their unwavering support and assistance, without which my research would not have been as fruitful and engaging. I thank them wholeheartedly for their invaluable contributions to the formulation of this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	4
Introduction.....	8
Methodology.....	14
Review of Literature.....	15
Kosovo Society.....	15
Political Violence & the Balkan War Crimes.....	16
Sexual Violence.....	17
Women’s Activism.....	20
Background.....	21
General Background.....	21
Historical Context of War.....	21
The War Crime of Rape.....	24
The Composition of the Albanian Identity.....	26
Post-War Context.....	30
International Involvement.....	31
Reactionary Islam.....	35
Women After the War.....	42
Case Study.....	53
QIKA Organization.....	53
QIKA Media Strategies: New & Old.....	56
Menstruation in Culture & Activism.....	61

Menstruation & Direct Action.....	65
Strategizing Gender-Based Violence.....	69
QIKA Fighting Against Femicide.....	71
The Silence Around Sexual Violence.....	74
QIKA as the Feminist Killjoy.....	77
QIKA & F'Oda.....	79
Conclusion.....	82
Works Cited.....	86
Appendix.....	101

INTRODUCTION

Almost ten years ago, when I was 12 years old and had just returned to my homeland, Kosovo, a place I visited every summer, I strolled through the city of Gjakovë with my sister. Our destination was a coffee shop in the historic old town square called *Çarshia Vjeter*.¹ It was a scorching July day, prompting me to dress in jean shorts and a tank top. The *Çarshia* had transformed into a hub of coffee shops, bars, and hookah lounges. In the summertime, the outdoor seating areas were bustling with hundreds of patrons, predominantly men. As my sister and I strolled along this strip, we found ourselves the subject of scrutiny from numerous men. Some even went so far as to whistle and shout explicit comments about our bodies. I recall this being the first time I was cat-called; it left me with an intense sense of discomfort and anger within myself. Soon after, we reached the coffee shop situated beside a butcher shop. Taking a seat at a corner table outside, I started expressing my frustration to my sister about the unpleasant experience we had just encountered. However, our conversation was unexpectedly disrupted by a young woman who joined us at the adjacent table. In Albanian, she offered an apology for interrupting and continued saying, "Forgive me love, but you see those animals hanging up in the butcher shop, stripped, vulnerable, and exposed? That's precisely what it feels like to be a woman in this country. Our bodies have consistently been and will continue to be objectified."

Thus, illuminating the construction of women's bodies in the psyche of Kosovo. The perception and treatment of women's bodies often serve as a focal point for the expression and reinforcement of patriarchal ideology in Kosovo, as in many other societies.² Within this context, societal attitudes and practices frequently reflect traditional gender norms that contribute to the

¹ Bublaku, Përparim. "Historia e Çarshisë Së Vjetër Të Gjakovës." Arbresh.info, June 26, 2021. <https://www.arbresh.info/lajmet/historia-e-carshise-se-vjeter-te-gjakoves/>.

² UN Women – Europe and Central Asia. "Kosovo," n.d. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/kosovo-under-unscr-1244>.

objectification and control of women. In this patriarchal framework, women's bodies become symbolic battlegrounds where power dynamics are played out. The association of women with vulnerability, as expressed in the analogy to animals in a butcher shop, underscores the systemic objectification they endure. This objectification is not merely a personal experience, but a manifestation of broader societal structures that perpetuate unequal power relations.

Therefore, this thesis embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the transformative journey undertaken by current Kosovar women in their relentless pursuit to mobilize, challenge, and reshape the narratives and mentalities deeply ingrained within the conservative, patriarchal and Islamic Kosovo. Drawing inspiration from the courageous women who paved the way before them, the current generation of Kosovar women is actively challenging the very fabric of a society that has long perpetuated gender inequality. This advocacy manifests in diverse forms, with particular emphasis on the pivotal roles played by non-governmental organizations, protests and demonstrations, social media platforms, political engagement, and academic contributions. Through these multifaceted avenues, women in Kosovo are actively engaging with and reshaping the discourse surrounding gender norms, striving to dismantle the structures that have historically marginalized them. By delving into these various forms of advocacy, this thesis seeks to unravel the nuanced strategies employed by current Kosovar women in their collective pursuit of a more equitable and inclusive societal landscape.

The thesis concentrates on the impactful endeavors of a women-led advocacy organization that stands prominently at the forefront of challenging societal norms in Kosovo – QIKA, or *Qendra për Informim, Kritikë dhe Aksion* (The Center for Information, Criticism, and Action).³ Established in 2020 as a direct response to a myriad of social justice violations, QIKA

³ QIKA. “About QIKA - QIKA,” July 20, 2023. <https://qika.org/en/per-qika-english/>.

(ch-ee-ka) emerged as an alternative feminist organization dedicated to reshaping the narrative around gender norms and societal injustices in Kosovo. The choice of the acronym "QIKA," meaning "girls" in Albanian, is symbolic, emphasizing their expressed mission to the welfare of women and girls in the country. Beyond its gender-focused mission, QIKA is driven by a broader dedication to advocating for all people in Kosovo, particularly those within marginalized groups (Roma people, the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, etc.)

The organization employs a multifaceted approach to advocacy, encompassing research, reporting, active participation in protests, and the initiation of impactful initiatives that aim to instigate positive societal change. This study aims to cast a spotlight on the pivotal role QIKA plays in reshaping societal norms and fostering a more equitable future for the people of Kosovo. At its core, the multi-pronged mission of QIKA is a strategic response to the intricate web of challenges facing women in Kosovo. The conservative culture, Islamic influence, international intervention, subjugation of women, attacks on women's bodies, economic stressors, and limited access to resources and education collectively contribute to a complex societal landscape. QIKA maneuvers these social-cultural obstacles with a keen awareness of the deeply ingrained perceptions of women, the strict cultural norms, and claims of purity that often restrict the agency and freedom of women in Kosovo. By understanding the nuanced interplay of these factors, QIKA tailors its initiatives to address the complex nature of the issues at hand. Their initiatives range from reporting on violations and injustices to providing tangible support, such as the allocation of resources like menstrual pads, and conducting educational and training programs. QIKA's engagement extends beyond individual actions, demonstrating the effort to facilitate collective collaboration with women's NGOs across Kosovo. By doing so, QIKA seeks not only to effect change on specific legal fronts but also to influence the general attitude

towards women's rights in the broader societal context. The organization recognizes that achieving lasting change requires addressing the roots of the issues at multiple levels and strives to make a meaningful impact on the legislative landscape and societal perceptions alike.

These deeply ingrained societal perceptions, embedded within the core of the Albanian identity, have historically relegated women to secondary roles and perpetuated a gender hierarchy. Albanian hegemonic masculinity requires that women are protected by the men of their kinship. This protection comes along with power and places men into the roles of authority.

Within the context of Kosovo, a nation characterized by its conservative values and Muslim-majority demographic, these norms have taken on a particularly pronounced significance. Kosovo's history has been extremely tumultuous with a number of conflicts ranging from over five-hundred years of Ottoman occupation to the Kosovo-Serbia War of 1998.⁴ It is to say that the people of Kosovo have faced oppression to the fullest extent, and have preserved their cultural foundations and continue to reproduce them. These productions become a culmination of conservative Albanian ideals and Islamically charged ideas. Consequently, resulting in a national identity enveloped in moral righteousness and strict conditions. Specifically for women, the conservative nature of Kosovo has led to the continual repression of their thoughts, ideas, and place in society.

Against this backdrop, the harrowing experiences of the Kosovo War, marked by the egregious war crime of rape of Kosovar women by Serbian forces, laid bare the severe consequences of these entrenched gender dynamics. In a society where pride in the protection of women has long been a source of identity, the profound impact of the Kosovo War, marked by over 20,000 reported rapes against Kosovar women, cast a stark and unsettling shadow on that

⁴ "Kosovo History – Be in Kosovo," n.d. <https://www.beinkosovo.com/kosovo-history/>.

narrative.⁵ The disheartening reality unfolded when, in a time when women desperately needed advocates for the heinous crimes committed against them, the silence of their male counterparts shattered the trust in their anticipated support. The aftermath of the war witnessed a collective effort by the men of Kosovo to divert attention away from the sexual violence inflicted upon their women. Focused on repairing the widespread destruction caused by Serbia's aggression and eager to move forward, addressing the harrowing experiences of sexual violence seemed, to many, an unnecessary disruption to the broader process of recovery and reconstruction. The issue of sexual violence, despite its magnitude, was relegated to the periphery of priorities, leaving a painful void where the anticipated support and advocacy from men should have been. This silence not only reflected a failure to confront the profound injustice suffered by Kosovar women but also laid bare the complex intersections of gender, pride, and societal priorities in the aftermath of conflict.

Yet, amidst the ashes of conflict, a resilient movement emerged as women in Kosovo boldly took up the mantle of advocacy, seeking justice for the survivors of sexual violence and challenging prevailing narratives. In a historic shift for Kosovo, women found themselves at the helm of their destinies, steering the course of their own narratives. Empowered and resilient, they embarked on a journey of self-advocacy, not only for their individual rights, but also for the collective empowerment of women. This newfound agency was not without its challenges, as the advocacy efforts faced significant pushback, from publicly shaming by Imams and governmental negligence of women's issues. Undeterred, women persevered in the face of adversity, determined to challenge deeply ingrained norms and demand justice for the violations they had endured.

⁵ "Rape as a Weapon of War: A Conversation with Former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga," January 31, 2019. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rape-weapon-war-conversation-former-kosovo-president-atifete-jahjaga>.

A momentous turning point came when the highest echelons of power in the country were reached. The inauguration of the first female President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, marked a historic occasion, and she prioritized sexual violence activism as a cornerstone of her leadership. This commitment from the highest office not only symbolized a seismic shift in societal priorities, but also amplified the voices of the resilient women who had been advocating tirelessly. Their work became a catalyst, inspiring a new generation of women and breaking down barriers, opening doors for the potential of further transformative endeavors led by and for women in Kosovo – precisely like the work of QIKA.

In examining the endeavors of QIKA, this research aims to articulate a compelling thesis: the organization serves as a catalyst in reshaping societal norms in Kosovo, working towards a more equitable future. QIKA's multifaceted strategies, from direct confrontations such as protests against violence to collaborative efforts with other organizations, showcase the efficacy of addressing issues head-on and fostering collective action. The continuous dissemination of information through various channels reflects a strategic approach to shift mentalities and promote awareness. Central to QIKA's efforts is the recognition of the body as a nexus of action, an arena consistently under attack and in need of reclamation. By prioritizing the protection and empowerment of women and girls, QIKA challenges patriarchal ideologies deeply ingrained in the culture. This strategic shift from prioritizing superficial happiness or societal norms rooted in shame to safeguarding women and girls signifies a transformative approach in the fight against entrenched sexism. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, blending ethnographic research and social media analysis, this research aims to illuminate the dynamic interplay between entrenched societal norms and the feminist NGO, QIKA, and their actions and challenges to discourses surrounding women's status in society. Through this exploration, the thesis seeks to contribute to

a better understanding of the ongoing social transformation and the active mobilization of women in reshaping deeply ingrained cultural paradigms. By intricately tracing developments from post-war responses to weaponized rape in Balkan war, up to 2020s activism led by the QIKA organization, this study offers a nuanced perspective on the multifaceted efforts underway to challenge and transform gender-based norms in Kosovo.

METHODOLOGY

In this research paper, I adopt a qualitative mixed-methods approach, incorporating elements of ethnographic study, social media analysis, and historical sources to comprehensively investigate the multifaceted dynamics surrounding the QIKA organization in Kosovo. My immersion in this research is not only grounded in scholarly methods but is also deeply personal, as I am a dual citizen of Kosovo, possess a cultural Albanian heritage, and maintain an active role within the QIKA organization. This unique positionality provides me with access and insight into QIKA's initiatives and actions, positioning me as a firsthand witness to their endeavors.

The ethnographic research component of this study involves an in-depth exploration of QIKA's activities through my direct involvement with the organization. I focus on the period of 9 months of my time in Kosovo, spanning from 2019-2023. This portion offers first-hand observations, with the nuance of personal cultural experiences and encounters. Complementing the ethnographic study, the social media analysis aspect of this research scrutinizes the online presence of QIKA. Through a systematic examination of various social media platforms, I evaluate the nature of posts disseminated by QIKA, the frequency of their publication, and the socio-political context surrounding each post. This analysis aims to unravel the nuances of QIKA's communication strategy, shedding light on the organization's efforts to engage with the public and influence societal perceptions. Delving into the historical context of Kosovo, I

employ archival materials such as news articles, policy briefs, and penal codes to provide a comprehensive backdrop for understanding the socio-political landscape. These historical sources serve as valuable tools for contextualizing QIKA's contemporary initiatives within the broader historical trajectory of Kosovo, offering insights into the organization's evolution over time.

By weaving together these diverse methodological approaches, this research paper seeks to offer a holistic understanding of QIKA's role and impact in Kosovo. The combination of ethnographic insights, social media analysis, and historical context aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive examination of the organization's activities and contributions to the socio-political fabric of Kosovo.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kosovo Society

The perceptions of Kosovo's conservative society are developed in Reineck's work in the *Anthropology of East Europe Review* (2000), wherein she covers the time period following the 1980s. Reineck presents that Albanian societal identity in Kosovo is mainly expressed using symbols originating from history. She delves into the structure of these principles that she argues has led to cultural conservatism because of the rigid sentiment. Specifically, Reineck presents ideas of patriarchal notions woven into the fabric of Albanian culture. She claims that these ideals create a collective identity found within the Albanian culture, wherein people do not view themselves individually, but as a part of a whole. This conformity, Reineck argues, has created a hesitancy to accept new changes to their society.⁶ She delves into this reluctance by examining the relationship between culture and religion. As a majority-Muslim society, Reineck discovers

⁶ "View of Seizing the Past, Forging the Present: Changing Visions of Self and Nation among the Kosova Albanians," n.d. <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/aeer/article/view/593/695>, p. 103.

that Albanians argue that their resistance to change derives from a devotion to Islam, and that their observance of customary behavior is a religious mandate. She acknowledges this, but contends that Albanian habitual culture is not merely religious as non-Muslims also present this behavior.⁷ Reineck's research stands apart from the majority of studies on Islam in Kosovo, as it refrains from promptly linking cultural conservatism to their Muslim faith.

Similarly, Hoxha deploys the same rhetoric as Reineck in his dissertation at the University of Gothenburg (2015). He argues that instead of the traditional thought that asserts that Islam is the sole influencer for Kosovo's patriarchy, that the *Kanun*, the oral set of traditional Albanian laws, is deeply responsible for the perpetuation of gender inequality. Hoxha highlights that even though the Kanun is not used in a formal capacity, it continues to persist within the Albanian consciousness.⁸ The scholarly works of Reineck and Hoxha are incredibly important in understanding the nuances that have created the cultivation of cultural and religious practices of patriarchy in Kosovo.

Political Violence & the Balkan War Crimes

In exploring the topic of war crimes, Valentino reviews political science literature on political violence against civilians. He argues that political violence has continuously been researched through its "origins", the foundations of ancient conflicts, rather than creating new theories regarding its "incidence". These ideas heavily saturated international scholarship and the trajectory of political thought.⁹ After the case of Yugoslavia, Gagnon examines the need for scholars to reimagine these theories because of the complexity surrounding the Balkan nations

⁷ Reineck, p. 105.

⁸ Hoxha, Ideal. "Women's Rights in Kosovo: Cultural and Religious Barriers." *Uib*, May 22, 2017. https://www.academia.edu/33140208/Womens_Rights_in_Kosovo_Cultural_and_Religious_Barriers, p. 8.

⁹ Valentino, Benjamin A. "Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1 (2014): 89-103. https://www-annualreviews-org.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-polisci-082112-141937#_i3

which transcends the notion of “ancient hatreds” as the culprit of violence.¹⁰ Most of the literature on violence against civilians is interested in governmental mass murder like genocide and ethnic cleansing as a means to annihilate as many “enemies” as possible. Therefore, Valentino synthesizes the many perspectives on violence in the field that add nuanced additions to the violence perpetuated onto Kosovars: a scholarly cultivation of a pre-1990s perception of violence and the post-1990s complexity of annihilation.

Lesley delves into the violence of the Kosovo-Serbia war in the journal of *Development in Practice* (2003). She underscores that the prevalence of “small wars” led to the proliferation of post-conflict reconstruction efforts by international bodies. Lesley explains the efforts made by the UN and OSCE to stabilize and rebuild Kosovo’s infrastructure after the devastation of war. The scholar critiques these efforts by highlighting their inadequacies due to the lack of motivation within the interim government to effect change.¹¹ Moreover, Lesley analyzes the significant absence of women in senior roles within the OSCE and UN missions in Kosovo. This imbalance, coupled with a lack of gender awareness training among senior male officials, contributed to the chaotic and costly outcomes in civilian reconstruction efforts. Despite documented calls for women's inclusion in peace-building and reconstruction, this imperative was consistently overlooked. Lesley emphasizes the urgent need for a shift in mindset, advocating for active involvement of women in decision-making processes and providing gender awareness training for senior officials to enhance effectiveness in promoting peace and security.

Sexual Violence

¹⁰ Gagnon, V. P. “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia.” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 130. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539081>.

¹¹ Lesley Abdela. “Kosovo: Missed Opportunities, Lessons for the Future.” *Development in Practice* 13, no. 2/3 (2003): 208–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4029592>.

Political violence manifests in a multitude of ways, but one that Alison, in the *Review of International Studies Journal* (2007), delves into is the prevalence of sexual violence amidst conflict. She examines the complex nexus of women's human rights and masculinity, particularly in the context of wartime sexual violence in Yugoslavia. Her work illuminates how prevailing gender norms and constructs of masculinity contribute to the perpetration of such crimes. By shedding light on the socio-cultural dimensions, Alison's study enriches the scholarly understanding of the challenges confronted by Kosovar women as they strive to transform societal attitudes and perceptions through their activism.¹² The advocacy exhibited by Albanian women, as examined by Di Lellio in the *Journal of East European Politics and Societies* (2016), was reactionary to Yugoslavian propaganda that revitalized rigid traditional gender roles. Di Lellio's work links to the work of Alison, by delving into the gendered roles of this particular society. The scholar presents that after the forced removal of Albanians from public and professional spheres by the Serbian regime, women no longer had access to freedom. The scholars both research the ideas of gender in Kosovo, but Di Lellio presents the nuances of Serbian propaganda that reintroduced enforced roles of gender which are often overlooked by the majority of literature. Di Lellio goes further in exploration of how women's activism came to the forefront of advocacy in Kosovo as a result of the blatant negligence of women's issues following the war.¹³ Thus, presenting the importance that the shifting gender roles played in setting the foundation for women's advocacy to flourish in Kosovo.

Scholarly works like those of Alison and Di Lellio are affirmed by later legal and governmental provisions. In her article in the *ISLA Journal of International & Comparative Law*,

¹² Alison, Miranda. "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity." *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (2007): 75–90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097951>.

¹³ Di Lellio, Anna. "Seeking Justice for Wartime Sexual Violence in Kosovo." *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 30, no. 3 (February 22, 2016): 621–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416630959>.

Vulaj (2019) provides a legal perspective, reflecting on the international court's enforcement of legal remedies for war crimes, including murder, torture, and sexual violence. Her analysis evaluates the progress made in bringing perpetrators to justice and highlights the lingering obstacles faced by victims. The study emphasizes the importance of legal frameworks in supporting the activism of Kosovar women, who seek not only justice but also the recognition of their rights.¹⁴ Vulaj provides context that connect the efforts of women's grassroots activism in Kosovo to the stalled prosecution of the war crime of rape. In another of her scholarly works in *Kosovo and Transitional Justice*, Di Lellio delves into the reactions of women towards the suppression of sexual violence in Kosovar society. She reveals the stark disparities in how conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is addressed in scholarly, journalistic, and legal spheres compared to other war-related consequences. Building on this insight, she explores the grassroots advocacy efforts of Kosovar women, emphasizing that they were never mere victims. Di Lellio traces how these local women took the initiative to bring this issue to the forefront, effectively becoming the architects of their own path towards transitional justice. She underscores that it was through the activism of these groups that narratives underwent transformation, both socially and politically, ultimately granting survivors a newfound sense of empowerment through widespread recognition and solidarity.¹⁵ Her contribution stands out significantly from the prevailing literature on Kosovo's conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) survivors. Unlike

¹⁴Vulaj, Elizabeth. "Twenty Years Later: A Look Back at the Kosovo War and Enforcing Legal Remedies for Murder, Torture, and Sexual Violence War Crimes." *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law* 26, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 129–45.

<https://search-ebscohost-com.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=144915983&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁵ Hehir, Aidan, and Furtuna Sheremeti. *Kosovo and Transitional Justice*. Routledge eBooks, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003079781>.

many works that portray them as passive and submissive, awaiting justice from the men in society, her work places these survivors at the forefront of seeking justice for themselves.

Women's Activism

As seen specifically in relation to war-time sexual violence, women's activism in Kosovo was intrinsically important to push forward justice efforts. Chao and Gusia discuss the idea of feminist resistance in *Feminist Conversations on Peace* (2022). Chao and Gusia's examination sheds light on the nuanced dynamics surrounding women's activism in Kosovo during a period marked by wartime sexual violence. Their research underscores the significance of local women's efforts in seeking justice and highlights the interconnectedness with broader feminist movements worldwide. However, they also highlight the unique challenges faced by women in Kosovo due to the pervasive impact of systemic ethnic violence on the region.¹⁶ This intricate interplay between global and local factors demonstrates the complexity of women's activism in Kosovo, making it a crucial area of study for understanding the broader landscape of feminist resistance and justice-seeking efforts in conflict-affected regions.

However, Chao and Gusia's analysis goes beyond a mere examination of the relationship between women's activism and global initiatives; they delve into the "unfinished" aspects.¹⁷ They emphasize that the advocacy displayed by women in post-conflict Kosovo played a pivotal role in the ongoing development of Kosovar society. They assert that the women's movement in Kosovo aligned with the civil resistance movement, both expressing a shared resistance against the systemic violence ingrained in the status quo. Additionally, they highlight the importance of recognizing collective experiences of violence rooted in the legacy of colonialism, oppression,

¹⁶ Chao, Itziar Mujika, and Linda Gusia. "Unfinished Activism: Genealogies of Women's Movements and the Re-Imagining of Feminist Peace and Resistance." In *Feminist Conversations on Peace*, edited by Sarah Smith and Keina Yoshida, 1st ed., 47–60. Bristol University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2rr3hcn.8>.

¹⁷ Chao, Mujika, & Gusia, p. 54.

and occupation. This perspective diverges significantly from much of the existing literature on Kosovo, which often downplays the colonial dimensions of Serbian occupation. In contrast, Chao and Gusia's analysis emphasizes the enduring nature of activism, stressing that all movements must embody a spirit of continual resistance.

BACKGROUND

General Background

Situated in the Balkan peninsula, of Southeastern Europe, is the landlocked country known as the Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo shares its borders with Serbia to the North and East, North Macedonia to the South, Albania to the West, and Montenegro to the Northwest.¹⁸ “With an area of 10,887 km², it is somewhat larger than Cyprus (island) or slightly larger than the US State of Delaware” .¹⁹ The nation possesses an estimated population of over 2 million people, with over 92% of the population identifying as ethnically Albanian; the remaining ethnicities include Bosniaks at 1.6%, Serbs at 1.5%, Turks at 1.1%, Ashkali at 0.9%, Egyptians at 0.7%, Gorani at 0.6%, Romani at 0.5%, and others/unspecified at 0.2%. Kosovo’s main languages are Albanian and Serbian.²⁰ While being a secular nation, this country boasts an overwhelmingly Muslim population, with 95.6% of its citizens adhering to Islam. Other religious identities include: Roman Catholic (2.2%), Orthodox (1.5%), other (0.1%), none (0.1%), and unspecified (0.6%).²¹

Historical Context of War

Kosovo, with its remarkably intricate and diverse history, has been entangled in ongoing conflicts with Serbia. This protracted struggle between the two nations has endured for centuries

¹⁸ John R. Lampe, Antonia Young, and John B. Allcock, “Kosovo | History, Map, Flag, Population, Languages, & Capital,” Encyclopedia Britannica, December 4, 2023.

¹⁹ klaus kastle - nationsonline.org. “Kosovo - A Country Profile - Nations Online Project,” n.d.

²⁰ klaus kastle - nationsonline.org.

²¹ “Kosovo - the World Factbook,” n.d. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kosovo/summaries/>.

over the right to the land of Kosovo. In 2008, Kosovo officially declared its independence from Serbia, a move that followed the violence of the Kosovo-Serbia War of 1998-99. The conflict between the two had been brewing for centuries, but ultimately came to a breaking point during the war as a result of Albanian exhaustion under Serbia occupation. To grasp the origins of the war, it's essential to delve into the intricate and multifaceted roots of the conflict. The West often simplified it as an age-old dispute over territory, overlooking its nuanced complexities. In the sixth century, Serbians settled in the Balkan peninsula, an area of the world already inhabited by ethnic Albanians.²² Following the Serbian establishment in the Balkans, Kosovo became the focal point of the Serbian regime under Nemanja. In 1389, the Battle of Kosovo marked the onset of contentious violence, pitting Serbian Prince Lazar's forces against the Ottoman Empire for Kosovo's control. The Ottomans emerged victorious, asserting their rule over Serbia for over five centuries.²³ Consequently, this triumph initiated Islamic beliefs among Kosovars and exacerbated Serbian nationalistic sentiment.

The Ottoman Empire's influences were tangible all throughout Kosovo, both socially and culturally. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans in 1912, Kosovo's status was decided by the Treaty of London in 1913, assigning Kosovo as a territory within the Kingdom of Serbia. Subsequently, Kosovo evolved into an Autonomous Province within Yugoslavia, granting it the right to self-determination. "The 1960s and 1970s were decades of tremendous social change in Kosova wrought against a backdrop of poverty, widespread illiteracy, a population explosion and a deepening national economic crisis."²⁴ Evidently, these problems were representative of the greater issue: the failure of the Yugoslav State.

²² Steven Woehrel, "CRS Report for Congress - Sgp.fas.org," p. 2.

²³ Di Lellio, Anna, and R. Elsie. "The battle of Kosovo 1389." *An Albanian epic*. London: IB Tauris (2009), p. 2.

²⁴ Reineck, p. 102.

Nevertheless, Kosovo remained under Serbian control even after the disestablishment of Yugoslavia. This time was categorized as highly tense with issues arising as a result of Serbia's continual rejection of Albanian legitimacy in Kosovo. In 1989, under the Serbian regime led by Slobodan Milosevic, over 100,000 Albanians were displaced by Milosevic in Kosovo's healthcare, political, governmental, educational, and media sectors.²⁵ This mass replacement resulted in ethnic Albanians being rendered jobless and devoid of influence within a regime openly antagonistic to their interests. Milosevic's strategies extended beyond mere job dismissals; they included the promotion of a distorted Albanian nationalism specifically aimed at the ethnic Albanian population. Serbian police, under this regime, engaged in ruthless massacres against individuals accused of "advocating" for the Albanian cause during nationalistic activities.²⁶

Following the insurmountable efforts by Albanian leadership in Kosovo to advocate against the oppression and human rights' violations exhibited by Serbia, the conflict reached a turning point. In 1998, an armed struggle broke out between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Republic of Serbia. As the tensions between the two states became unbearable, the international community took action in March of 1999. This was categorized as NATO's Operation Allied Force, wherein airstrikes were dropped on Serbia for a 78-day period. On 10 June 1999, the Federal Republic of Serbia accepted the withdrawal of its military, police and paramilitary forces and the deployment of an effective international civil and security presence.²⁷

The decision to launch airstrikes against Serbia was unexpected, reflecting a shift in NATO's role from a regional defense organization to a force capable of intervening in internal

²⁵ Woehrel, CRS Report for Congress, p. 5.

²⁶ Reineck, p. 103.

²⁷ Cottey, Andrew. "The Kosovo War in Perspective." *International Affairs* 85, no. 3 (May 1, 2009): 593–608. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2009.00816.x>, p. 594-97.

conflicts to prevent humanitarian crises. The bombings aimed to halt the violence and secure the autonomy of Kosovo. The campaign, though controversial, ultimately led to the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo and the establishment of a United Nations administration in the region.²⁸

The U.S. led NATO intervention in 1999 marked a turning point for Kosovo's relationship with the international community. Following the conflict, Kosovo was placed under United Nations administration, Kosovo was granted a distinctive status through "UN Resolution 1244," leading to the formation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).²⁹ While this period saw the implementation of essential state-building measures, it also brought about challenges and complexities in Kosovo's relationship with the West. The interim government faced the task of navigating political and economic issues amid a delicate balance of local and international interests. The lasting impact of this intervention has left Kosovo in a position where its ties with the West, though significant, are often nuanced and shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The international involvement, while providing crucial support in certain aspects, has also been a source of contention within Kosovo's political landscape.

The War Crime of Rape

The justification of violence in Kosovo accounted for heinous crimes that were in violation of universal human rights. The consequences of the war were felt through the more than 13,890 ethnic Albanians who were murdered; the 863,000 civilians that were forced to seek refuge outside Kosovo, while 590,000 were internally displaced; and more than 20,000 people

²⁸ De Wet, Erika. "The Governance of Kosovo: Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Establishment and Functioning of Eulex." *American Journal of International Law* 103, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20456723>.

²⁹ De Wet, p. 87.

who were systemically raped.³⁰ All of these crimes are underscored in the notion of political violence against civilians researched by Benjamin Valentino in “Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians”. Valentino suggests that violence against civilians is interested in governmental mass murder like genocide and ethnic cleansing as a means to annihilate as many “enemies” as possible.³¹ Evidently, forced displacement, assault, and murder were all outcomes of efforts by Serbia to ethnically cleanse Kosovo. However, the war crime that is consistently forgotten and ignored is that of sexual violence perpetrated by Serbia. According to the *Encyclopedia of Women’s Health*, “the motivation to rape during times of war includes revenge, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.”³² Hence, the foundations of rape during war-time are identical to that of murder, assault, and displacement. In the Kosovan context, the rape of over 20,000 ethnic Albanians speaks to the blueprint that Serbs used to degrade and humiliate Muslim Albanians.

The rapes that occurred during the Kosovo War became catalyst for significant changes within the international community. The widespread and systematic sexual violence committed against Kosovar women by Serbian forces drew global attention, sparking outrage and a collective call for justice. The shocking accounts of brutality underscored the urgent need for accountability and intervention to address the grave human rights violations. In response to the atrocities, the international community, including the United Nations and various human rights organizations, mobilized efforts to document, prosecute, and prevent sexual violence in conflict zones. The heinous crimes in Kosovo played a pivotal role in shaping international legal and

³⁰ ReliefWeb. “The Kosovo Report - Albania,” October 23, 2000. <https://reliefweb.int/report/albania/kosovo-report>.

³¹ Valentino.

³² Bronson, David L., Kathleen N. Franco, and Mohammed Alishahie. "Rape." In *Encyclopedia of Women's Health*, edited by Sana Loue and Martha Sajatovic. Springer Science Business Media, 2004. Accessed September 9, 2023. <https://search.credoreference.com/articles/Om9va0FydGlibGU6MjQ1NTk2Mw==>.

policy frameworks, leading to the establishment of tribunals such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and influencing the development of norms aimed at preventing and addressing sexual violence during armed conflicts.³³ The tragic experiences of Kosovar women became a rallying point for the global community, serving as a stark reminder of the imperative to protect human rights and promote justice in times of conflict.

The Composition of the Albanian Identity

Kosovo's relationship with Albanians is documented in Greek and Roman history strengthening the legitimacy of an Albanian Kosovo. "Historians say that Albanians are descended from the ancient Dardanian and Illyrian inhabitants of the region."³⁴ The Albanian people of Kosovo are a part of a greater community of Albanians in the region. They share linguistic and cultural ties with other Albanian communities across the region. This collective identity has been a cornerstone of their resilience and unity. Throughout history, the Albanian people have held their culture in high regard, prioritizing its preservation. Their historical narrative proves elusive to trace, for Albanians have relied on oral tradition as a means of recording and safeguarding their heritage. According to Janet Reineck, this Albanian identity is encompassed by the following:

Personal and collective identity among Albanians has been forged primarily in terms of symbols derived from the past. The Yugoslav political regime discouraged the masses from eliciting their identity from a contemporary political agenda. Instead, the Albanians seized upon tradition as the guide to personhood. They appropriated history as a repository of sacred, ancient, "uniquely Albanian" values: honor (*ndera*), the oath (*besa*), hospitality (*mikpritja*), right conduct (*sjellja*) and identification with one's clan (*fisi*). The "perceived past" has been a vivid canvas in the collective memory painted with martyrdom, heroism, dignity and sacrifice, a past which serves to ennoble the race, constructed according to an agenda of the present. Albanians engage in what Royce has called "an

³³ Christin B. Coan, "Rethinking the Spoils of War: Prosecuting Rape as a War Crime in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia," *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 183, <https://scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1688&context=ncilj>.

³⁴ Woehrel, CRS Report for Congress, p. 3.

anesthetizing process of retreat into an all-absorbing, all forgiving identity." (1982:229). Customs are considered valid and indisputable simply by virtue of being of the past.³⁵

The principle of *besa* dictates that when an Albanian gives their word verbally, it carries the weight of a binding commitment, obviating the need for written documentation. Evidently, the lack of physical evidence has led to the denial of Albanian legitimacy to the land. Nonetheless, Albanians refrained from establishing precise state boundaries due to their adherence to the clan system known as the *fisi* system that governed their society. Each clan covered a specific area of the Albanian land, the 12 original clans spanned across the Albanian territories.³⁶ The clan system essentially functioned as a tightly-knit social fabric, weaving together families and clans into a cohesive unit. The culture of Albanians is deeply entrenched in family values that compounds their shared identity. Within this framework, individuals found security in their shared history, traditions, and common values. In times of adversity, the bonds forged through the *fisi* system served as a steadfast support network.

Moreover, an essential element of one's identity is their spiritual belief. In Kosovo, the overwhelming majority of citizens are Muslim, making it the most predominantly Muslim country in all of Europe. Hence, the national identity becomes infused with the religious identity. Throughout history, the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo have frequently regarded Islam as an integral part of their culture, employing it as a framework for guiding their principles in life rather than solely a matter of faith. Functioning as an ethnic symbol, Islam distinguishes the Albanians from their Slavic, Orthodox Christian neighbors. For Muslim Albanians, there is no sharp delineation between being Albanian and adhering to Islam; "We cannot say which customs

³⁵ Reineck, p. 103.

³⁶ Zhelyazkova, Antonina. "Albanian Identities." *International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR)* 21 (2000).

are more important, Albanian or Moslem. It is one thing, and we must maintain both."³⁷

However, since achieving independence from Serbia, there has been a noticeable change in the sentiments surrounding Islam. Islamic leaders now enjoy greater recognition than in the past, and imams have embraced the use of the internet and social media to spread their religious messages. This has led to a notable growth in the number of followers and the popularity of Islam.³⁸

Furthermore, a crucial aspect deserving scrutiny when considering the intersection of Albanian culture and Islam is the presence of patriarchal norms within its framework. Within the *fisa*, “the heads of the clans, as well as of the smaller social units such as a group of extended families living together in brotherhood, or the extended household itself, were all men.”³⁹ Thus, while Albanian culture boasts the importance of collectivity, gender plays an enormous role in which voices and perspectives are represented. The male figure of the family continues to be head of the household in contemporary society, while women are perceived as extensions of their male counterparts.

The differentiation between genders manifested in various ways, with one tangible expression being the construction of the *Oda*. The *Oda*, known as *oda e burrave*,⁴⁰ was a structure built outside of the family home. It was a singular room with a specialized purpose: to host men and men only. A place where only the men and boys of society were given the privilege to enter, and the door was closed to women and girls. The *Oda* served as the epicenter of Albanian authority, the transfer of knowledge and brotherhood. Within this space, men engaged in political discourse, sang songs of patriotism, shared historical stories, and much more. The

³⁷ Reineck, p. 105.

³⁸ Hoxha, p. 39.

³⁹ Whitaker, Ian. “‘A Sack for Carrying Things’: The Traditional Role of Women in Northern Albanian Society.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (July 1, 1981): 146. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3317892>.

⁴⁰ The men’s chambers.

traditional Albanian *Oda* is both a physical and symbolic space for the exclusion of women and girls from both knowledge and decision making in Albanian society.⁴¹

Moreover, an additional manifestation of the intersection between Albanian conservatism and Islam is the *havale* system, marked by the semi-seclusion of women and stringent restrictions on contact with individuals outside their kinship group. “This seclusion is symbolized in the garden wall which confines her domestic life, in the scarf and overcoat she wears outside the house, and for the rural and urban woman, in the invisible veil of self-control which circumscribes her behavior, projecting an image of impenetrability.”⁴² Strikingly reminiscent of the Arab world's *harem* system, one can argue that the *havale* system in Kosovo evolved under the Islamic influences propagated by the Ottoman Empire. In the Arab sense, “the term *harem* primarily denotes a principle of spatial organization [and] a system of female seclusion.”⁴³

Another fundamental tenet within this system is the concept of *marre*, or shame, as a powerful mechanism for strictly regulating behavior. In the context of village life, it is considered *marre* for a woman not to have the fire stoked and the courtyard swept before her father-in-law rises at five in the morning. Similarly, for a man, it is *marre* to contradict his father, resist an arranged marriage, or evade filial obligations. *Marre* permeates itself into every level of interaction ranging from intimate relationships to professional duties.⁴⁴

This notion of *marre*, intertwined with the *havale* system, contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequality in Albanian society, particularly in Kosovo. The *harem* and *marre* become

⁴¹ Kamberi, Mois. “Chambers Were the Place Where Men Decided the Fate of the Nation.” *DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals)*, September 1, 2021. <https://doaj.org/article/f432184b02f247af8614183fc37ecd7a>.

⁴² Reineck, p. 104.

⁴³ Booth, Marilyn. *Harem Histories*. Duke University Press eBooks, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393467>, p. 69.

⁴⁴ Reineck, p. 104.

integral components of the cultural identity, discouraging women from engaging in various activities and reinforcing traditional gender roles. The intricate ties between harem, marre, and Albanian gender inequality underscore the complexity of cultural dynamics in Kosovo, reflecting the enduring influence of historical and religious factors on societal norms.

POST-WAR ERA CONTEXT

In the aftermath of the war period, Kosovo underwent profound transformations that significantly impacted both the territory and its people. The conflict left the country and its inhabitants in disarray, compelling them to contemplate new avenues for rehabilitation and reconstruction. The challenges posed by the aftermath of the war prompted a collective effort to envision and implement strategies for rebuilding the nation and fostering a sense of resilience among its people. However, amid this post-war period, a multitude of conflicting ideologies emerged, each vying for priority in shaping the national identity and structure of Kosovo. The diverse array of perspectives and visions clashed as the nation grappled with the complex task of defining its path forward. This ideological discord added another layer of complexity to the already challenging process of rebuilding and redefining the country in the aftermath of conflict. Moreover, in the endeavor to rebuild the country, significant oversights occurred, particularly concerning transitional justice for survivors of sexual violence. The challenges and complexities of post-war reconstruction inadvertently led to gaps in addressing the specific needs and justice-seeking efforts of those who had experienced sexual violence during the conflict. The oversight in prioritizing transitional justice for survivors of sexual violence highlights the importance of comprehensive and inclusive approaches to rebuilding societies after periods of conflict. In this section, I will explore the ways in which the international community became

involved after the war, the phenomenon of "reactionary Islam," and the activism of women in the post-war period.

International Involvement

The Kosovo-Serbia War marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of international responses to conflicts and humanitarian crises. The NATO intervention, led by the United States, in 1999 was indeed unconventional, as it deviated from established precedents of international law regarding interventions in sovereign states. The shock it generated was partly due to the departure from traditional norms. Unlike previous interventions, the NATO action did not receive explicit approval from the United Nations Security Council, a departure from the established procedures for endorsing the use of force. This lack of UN authorization raised concerns and intensified scrutiny from the international community. The intervention was justified by NATO on the grounds of preventing widespread human rights abuses and atrocities in Kosovo, a departure from the traditional understanding of the use of force in international affairs.⁴⁵ It brought to the forefront the idea of humanitarian intervention, where the international community could justify the use of force to protect civilians from atrocities, even without UN Security Council approval. After the intervention, the international bodies came together to establish an interim government in Kosovo. This became known as "UN Resolution 1244," which placed Kosovo under special status leading the implementation of the UN interim administration mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on June 10th, 1999.⁴⁶ Due to the country's total collapse of infrastructure, the international community came together in establishing this government to rebuild Kosovo's institutions.

⁴⁵ Brookings. "NATO, the UN, and the Use of Force | Brookings," May 10, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/nato-the-un-and-the-use-of-force/>.

⁴⁶ UNMIK. "United Nations Resolution 1244," January 19, 2016. <https://unmik.unmissions.org/united-nations-resolution-1244>.

This period was documented by many scholars due to its unprecedented nature. One specific scholar that delves into the procedures put in place in Kosovo is Lesley Abdela in “Kosovo: missed opportunities, lessons for the future,” which serves as an analysis of her time as deputy director for democracy at the Organisation for Security & Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).⁴⁷ The article encompasses the shortcomings of the international community’s efforts in truly enacting change. More specifically, the most critical issue of the international community was neglecting to recognize the male-centered hierarchy in the country. Women were completely excluded from the ongoing negotiations and peace-building process, leaving the roles of authority reserved to their male counterparts. This environment led to a woman Bosnian leader to state “women came last-after everything else came women.”⁴⁸

Abdela states that “the men in the UN and the OSCE missions were deeply imbued in an old-fashioned, male-as-leader culture that was clearly ignorant of the female majority and therefore particularly ill-suited to face the imposing challenges ahead.”⁴⁹ Clearly, the mechanics of the interim government mimicked the patriarchy that found itself all around the world. An initiative that had been directly geared towards democratization, somehow alienated the majority of its citizens. Consequently, creating the conceptualization to the women of Kosovo that the government is an “invited space,” and one where they are not welcome.⁵⁰ Paradoxically, despite its original intent to serve as a catalyst for international peace-building, the international government falls prey to the blind spots inherent in conventional International Relations theory. This results in a power hierarchy that selectively elevates certain perspectives while

⁴⁷“Men with a Mission: No Women.” *The Guardian*, July 18, 2017.

⁴⁸ Abdela, p. 209.

⁴⁹ Abdela, p. 210.

⁵⁰ Miraftab, Faranak. “Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation: Neoliberal Citizenship and Feminists’ Expanded Notion of Politics.” <http://www.rojasdatabank.info/neolibstate/miraftab.pdf>.

marginalizing others as illegitimate; in this case prioritizing the presence of men in positions of power rather than women.

Additionally, the interim government was keenly aware of the gender inequality prevalent within this corner of the world. This awareness was precisely part of the impetus to establish procedures and strategies to counteract the gender bias inherent in Kosovo's culture. Abdela, upon reflecting on the mistakes made in Bosnia, urged her colleagues to institute a "special stipulation" in the elections in Kosovo to ensure that a third of the candidates were women. This request was met with total disregard by the OSCE men; they justified the lack of women employees by stating that it was 'complicated enough without having to think about representation of women as well', and that women in leadership posts would be "alien to local culture and tradition."⁵¹ Therefore, highlighting the ways in which this administration failed in its original intent to rebuild the country with *democratic* ideals. It persisted in the patriarchal sentiments of Kosovo's society, completely *othering* the women of the country.

The juxtaposition of western, modern, and *civil* ideals in Kosovo during this period was very interesting as it advanced society in a plethora of ways, but fell entirely short in regard to the rights of women. The genesis of this underscores the deficiency of intersectionality within the realm of international politics. Given its failure to effectively include women in politics, they were compelled to take matters into their own hands.

However, the issue of gender inequality was still being pushed from all angles. In July of 2004, Kosovo enacted the Law on Gender Inequality—informed by UNMIK Regulation 2001/9. It aimed to establish gender inequality as a fundamental and core aspect of society, which would hopefully provide equal opportunities, regardless of gender. This provision led to the creation of the Gender Equality Agency in 2006. The Agency implements and monitors the Law,

⁵¹ Abdela, p. 211.

collaborating with public institutions, the EU, international governments, and NGOs to promote gender equality through partial project financing.⁵² Despite all of these adoptions, the government still endured insurmountable obstacles in evolving the status of women. The sociological impacts of the patriarchy and male-dominated roles had severe implications that would not be changed by simply instituting a law. “Laws alone are not enough to improve gender equality; factors at play include not only their implementation and enforcement, but also social, cultural, and religious norms.”⁵³ Therefore, in approaching the issue of gender inequality, the international community completely underestimated the power that cultural sociological workings held on the people of Kosovo; rendering any gender equality policy ineffective.

Nevertheless, the international community was directly responsible for aiding in Kosovo’s road to freedom. The country’s constitution was drafted by a commission of leading figures in the international community. The result of their work was produced by late 2007 and adopted by June of 2008, which was synonymous with the Ahtisaari plan.⁵⁴ While all of Kosovo’s society was enthusiastic to finally be a sovereign state, the country’s most notable scholars were hesitant to accept the very liberal and progressive constitution based on the demographic of their state. They argued that its effectiveness could be halted due to the postwar ramifications and the cultural environment which did not agree with modern ideals.⁵⁵ However, these concerns were ignored and the constitution went into effect. Following the government of Kosovo’s agreement with the international community, and the support of democratic nations

⁵² Holzner, Bernhard. “Engendering Governance after Armed Conflict: Observations from Kosovo.” *Frontiers in Sociology* 6 (May 17, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.574225>.

⁵³ World Bank Group. “Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don’t Have Same Economic Rights as Men.” *World Bank*, March 8, 2022.

⁵⁴ “Summary of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement,” n.d. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/101244.htm>.

⁵⁵ Hoxha, p. 9.

and specifically that of the United States, the Assembly of Kosovo declared its independence on February 17th, 2008.

Kosovo's independence was rejected by many nations, especially Serbia. Serbian President Boris Tadic stated, "Serbia will never recognize the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo."⁵⁶ Tensions with Serbia persist, due to the unrelenting unwillingness to accept Kosovo's sovereignty. In contrast, the United States has emerged as a staunch ally of Kosovo, firmly supporting its independence. This long standing alliance has earned Kosovo the reputation of being "perhaps the most pro-American country in the world."⁵⁷ However, this close affiliation with the U.S. has also led to a perception of Kosovo as an epicenter of American influence in the Balkans, raising questions about the alignment of Kosovo's international politics with American rhetoric, even in the face of differing opinions among its citizens.

Reactionary Islam

As a country with a Muslim-majority population, Kosovo, despite being a secular nation, holds a distinct Islamic identity and universality. The faith of a nation stands as one of the most influential factors shaping its cultural norms and ideologies. Religion permeates both the political and legal systems, playing a crucial role in defining the national identity. While many Albanians see Islam as an integral part of their cultural heritage, its influence extends beyond cultural aspects and significantly shapes societal functions. In the context of Kosovo, Islam carries a special significance, particularly due to its role during the Kosovo-Serbia war. The Serbian occupation, driven by the nationalistic vision of "Greater Serbia" as a Christian Orthodox nation encompassing Balkan states, weaponized religion.⁵⁸ This direct assault on the

⁵⁶ Army University Press. "The Liberation and Independence of Kosovo," n.d.
<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2018/December/Liberation-of-Kosovo/>.

⁵⁷ Sullivan, Stacy. "Kosovo's America Obsession." TIME.com, n.d.

⁵⁸ Anzulovic, Branimir. *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (Annandale, N.S.W.: Pluto Press, 2000).

Muslim identity of Albanians in Kosovo intensified their connection to Islam. Unfortunately, the West's oversight of the foundation of religious imperialism during the conflict led to additional complications. One of these complications being that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was designated and popularly thought of as a terrorist organization.⁵⁹ The experience of the weaponization of religion by Serbia left a lasting impact, compelling Albanians in Kosovo to hold onto their Muslim identity more steadfastly.

Following independence from Serbia, perceptions surrounding Islam have changed drastically. There has been an increase in people's engagement in Islamic activities in the country. The Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK) is the guiding voice for the Muslims of Kosovo; they follow the *Hanafi* school of Islamic law.⁶⁰ This occurrence is known as a "resurgence of religiosity", which is the return or revival of a specific belief or faith within a population. In a collaborative study conducted by the Journal of *Nature Human Behaviour*, the researchers conclude that "war-related violence increases religious engagement and ritual participation."⁶¹ Hence, the newfound interest and engagement with Islam is a direct result of the fallout of the war. During this time there was a considerable amount of financial support from Arab nations and organizations—specifically from Saudi Arabia— to reconstruct the Islamic entities destroyed as a result of war.⁶²

Nevertheless, the resurgence of Islam in Kosovo after the war became a source of significant controversy. Accompanying this revival was a rise in extremist sentiments. These sentiments were associated with a faction commonly known as *Wahhabis* or, as they frequently

⁵⁹ Pokalova, Elena. "Framing Separatism as Terrorism: Lessons from Kosovo." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 5 (April 9, 2010): 429–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576101003691564>.

⁶⁰ Hoxha, Ideal. "Women's Rights in Kosovo: Cultural and Religious Barriers." *Uib*, May 22, 2017.

⁶¹ Henrich, Joseph, Michal Bauer, Alessandra Cassar, Julie Chytilová, and Benjamin Grant Purzycki. "War Increases Religiosity." *Nature Human Behaviour* 3, no. 2 (January 28, 2019): 129–35.

⁶² Tarnoff, Curt. "Kosovo: reconstruction and development assistance." Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2001.

prefer to be identified, *Salafis*. This group opposed international influence on Kosovo, advocating for a boycott of the international community. They understood international involvement as a direct threat to Islamic values and norms that were present in Kosovo.

According to the Washington Institute, *Salafism* is defined as Islam that seeks to purify the religion from the influences of the West and the deviance from what they consider to be *true* Sunni Islam. Scholar of Middle Eastern studies, Jacob Olidort, delves into what exactly is underscored in true Islam:

Salafists define Islam as anything that was explicitly condoned by Muhammad and that was upheld by his first three generations of Sunni followers (until the ninth century). This view is based on a hadith, a statement of Muhammad's, in which he allegedly said that "the best of my community is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them." By extension, anything that appeared after that -- and anything Muhammad did not explicitly condone -- is considered un-Islamic, an extremely broad category.⁶³

In this context, it seems apparent that any secular state infused with Western ideologies, political parties, and non-religious identities is perceived as inherently anti-Islam. Evidently, the *Salafi* perceptions of Islam are extreme in nature. Consequently in recent history, *Salafism* and *Wahhabism* have been associated together because of their fundamentalist mission to cleanse the modern world from unauthentic Islam. *Wahhabism* represents the majority Islamic identity in Saudi Arabia. Which is notable in understanding the intersections of Saudi-backed funding to the reconstruction of Islamic communities in Kosovo that might have led to the rise of *Wahhabism*.⁶⁴

The presence of a particular strain of Islam, distinct in its strictness, posed a source of confusion for the country, especially considering that the majority of Albanians in Kosovo adhere to a much more lenient interpretation of Islam. Journalist Michael J. Totten captured this paradox succinctly when he wrote, "Kosovo's brand of Islam may be the most liberal in the

⁶³ Olidort, Jacob. "What Is Salafism?" The Washington Institute, November 24, 2015.

⁶⁴ Shabani, Adelina. "Kosovo after the Conflict The influence of Religion in Politics." (2015).

world."⁶⁵ This observation highlights the unique and nuanced religious landscape in Kosovo, where divergent interpretations coexist, adding a layer of complexity to the cultural and religious fabric of the region.

To comprehend the impacts of these ideologies on Kosovo, it is essential to delve into the factors that contributed to their emergence. Many scholars attribute this development to the challenging economic conditions prevalent in the country. In the aftermath of the armed conflict, Kosovo underwent a transition to a free-market economy. This economic shift brought about significant repercussions, particularly among youth groups. A report by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in 2016 shed light on the severity of the economic challenges faced by Kosovo, revealing that a staggering 55% of the country's youth remained unemployed.⁶⁶ This economic hardship was compounded by pervasive governmental corruption, creating a discouraging environment that dissuaded people from seeking employment altogether. In this vulnerable situation, the people of Kosovo became increasingly susceptible to the allure of religious extremism. The confluence of economic distress, high youth unemployment, and a sense of disillusionment with the government created fertile ground for the acceptance of radical ideologies. Religious extremism, in this context, provided an alternative narrative and sense of purpose for individuals grappling with economic hardship and a perceived lack of opportunities. Understanding these socioeconomic dynamics is crucial for comprehending the complex interplay between economic conditions and the rise of religious extremism in Kosovo.

⁶⁵ Totten, Michael. "The (Really) Moderate Muslims of Kosovo | City Journal Civil Rights." City Journal, season-03 2008. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/the-really-moderate-muslims-of-kosovo>.

⁶⁶ Brodmann, Mihail Arandarenko and Stefanie. "Job Opportunities for Youth in Kosovo: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?" *World Bank*, March 26, 2019. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2019/03/15/job-opportunities-for-youth-in-kosovo-two-steps-forward-one-step-back>.

Following the establishment of religious extremism in Kosovo, its mission extended to a de-westernization campaign, with a particular focus on women. During this extremist era, influential imams openly expressed their disapproval of the *modern* woman. The role of women became a primary target for those promoting a more conservative and rigid interpretation of Islamic values. The targeting of women became apparent through public humiliation, the silencing of women's journalism, and condemnation of women's activism.

With access to technology, Imams following the *Salafi* school of law began to host lectures on digital platforms. Their online presence was captured by question and answer styled videos where viewers would pose theological questions about daily life to the Imams. This digital engagement with the audience demonstrated an adaptability of extremist groups to modern communication channels. By utilizing the internet as a platform for dialogue, these Imams were able to reach a broader audience and disseminate their conservative interpretations of Islam. The use of online spaces for religious discourse also highlighted the evolving nature of radicalization, leveraging technology to propagate ideological views and influence public opinion.

On various occasions, Imams have addressed inquiries concerning the role of women. In a YouTube video, Imam Bedri Lika was asked whether men are permitted to prohibit their wives from working. He responded affirmatively, asserting that men have the right to decide whether their wives can work and are advised not to allow it, emphasizing that women should focus on household responsibilities and serving their husbands.⁶⁷ Another prominent Imam, Shefqet Krasniqi, who oversees Kosovo's largest mosque in Pristina, was questioned in a YouTube video about the permissibility of a man hitting his wife for disobedience upon his return from work.

⁶⁷ "A Hyn Në Gjynah Burri i Cili Nuk Lejon Gruan Të Punon." Bedri Lika, May 31, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ufw_E0n-zE8.

While Imam Krasniqi discouraged physical violence, he expressed sympathy for husbands, suggesting that wives should understand their spouses' expectations before their return. His remarks subtly positioned the husband as a victim of the wife's disobedience.⁶⁸ In a separate YouTube sermon, Imam Irfan Salihu gained national attention by addressing the issue of female fornication. He cautioned his audience against associating with women who engaged in premarital sex, stating that, “You must stay away from women who have committed squalid acts of fornication, these harlots and whores. Every female who has engaged in a sexual act before marriage is a harlot and a whore.” In response to Imam Salihu's actions, women activists protested against him, advocating for his removal from his position within the Islamic community. This reaction underscores the concern and discontent within the community regarding the impact of such views on women's rights.⁶⁹ The push for the removal of Imam Salihu suggests a collective effort to challenge and counteract interpretations of Islam that are perceived as harmful to the well-being and rights of women in Kosovo. Certainly, this emerging strain of Islam in Kosovo appears to impose stringent views on the role and status of women in society in comparison to the prevalent type of Islam. The examples provided, though differing in severity, collectively pose threats to the protection of women and girls' rights, potentially contributing to their marginalization. The influence of these religious leaders is significant, given their roles as sources of counsel and guidance within the community, making their responses especially impactful on women's rights.

The case of investigative journalist Arbana Xharra exemplifies the real-world consequences of the described form of Islam in Kosovo. Xharra, former editor-in-chief of the

⁶⁸ Dr. Shefqet Krasniqi. “Vi Nga Puna i Rraskapitur Por Gruaja Nuk Livrit Vendi Pastaj Un Nervozohem Dhe e Rrahi ?,” April 1, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqvD1jsGTwM>.

⁶⁹ Qafmolla, Ervin, and Petrit Krejziu. “Kosovo Imam in Trouble for Pro-Ottoman Sermon.” *Balkan Insight*, May 22, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2016/02/16/kosovo-chauvinist-imam-faces-nationalist-indictment-02-16-2016/>.

Pristina-based newspaper, *Zeri*, actively investigated Islamic religious radicalism in the region. Faced with continuous threats, including a red cross painted near her apartment, mentions of her children by ISIS members, and hundreds of death threats through social media, she transitioned from journalism to politics out of concern for her safety.⁷⁰ Xharra's goal in addressing extremism led her to enter politics with an agreement to run the Anti-Terrorism Office. However, only three days after officially starting at her position, she was brutally attacked by unknown assailants on May 12, 2017. Recounting the incident, she explained that she had been in Albania, discussing the rise of radicalism in Kosovo on live television. Upon returning home, she was ambushed in her parking garage and subjected to a violent assault, resulting in immediate hospitalization due to her injuries.⁷¹ It highlights the very real and threatening environment that some women in Kosovo encountered as they worked to uncover and confront radical elements within their society. This event underscores the need for increased awareness, protection, and advocacy for the rights and safety of women who engage in addressing the issue of extremist beliefs that affect their place in society.

The emergence of this particular strain of Islam alongside liberal Islam and contemporary political sentiments created a complex and perplexing dynamic in the Albanian cultural psyche. The intersection of religion and politics resulted in a politicization of religion, turning it into a tool for political dissent. Simultaneously, external forces were actively engaged in reconstructing the country in alignment with the international community's ideals of democracy. As mentioned earlier, both of these forces had explicit negative consequences for the perception of women and their treatment in the aftermath of the war. The lack of prioritization of women's rights by these

⁷⁰ Morina, Die. "Crusading Journalist Defies Threatening Climate in Kosovo." *Balkan Insight*, May 18, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/04/13/over-a-decade-on-journalism-facing-threats-04-12-2017/>.

⁷¹ Rfe/RI. "Kosovar Journalist Beaten, Hospitalized after Turning to Politics." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, May 13, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-journalist-xharra-beaten-hospitalized/28484960.html>.

dual influences led the women of Kosovo to perceive the need to take charge of their own pursuit of justice. Consequently, this scenario gave rise to a new wave of women's activism, marking the first of its kind in the country.

Women After the War

Faced with persistent neglect of women's rights by the institutions of Kosovo in the wake of the war, women took matters into their own hands and initiated justice-seeking campaigns. Feeling alienated by existing avenues, they recognized the need to forge their own initiatives to bring about change in the status of women in their country. Undertaking such a mission was undoubtedly challenging, given the numerous obstacles that women's activism encountered, spanning from religious backlash to unequal work opportunities. The women involved in these campaigns demonstrated resilience and determination in the face of adversity, striving to overcome the barriers that hindered progress in achieving gender equality. Their efforts underscored the urgency and importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by women in Kosovo and the necessity for a grassroots approach to drive meaningful change. In navigating through religious and societal constraints, as well as economic disparities, these women sought to reshape the narrative and create a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in Kosovo. This section will explore various instances of Kosovar women challenging the status quo through engagement in politics, scholarly pursuits, advocacy within non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the broader impact of their efforts on the collective feminist movement.

As stated previously, women in Kosovo fell victim to the brutality of Serbian armed forces amidst the war. The bodies of over 20,000 women became battlefields, targets of conflict-related sexual violence used as a weapon of war and instruments of systematic ethnic

cleansing by Serbia. Despite this fact, the experiences of women were overlooked and essentially silenced by the complete lack of acknowledgement by their people and the international community. To understand the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence, it is imperative to first develop its foundations.

One of the driving forces behind wartime rape is rooted in the concept of hegemonic masculinity, shaped by the system of heteronormativity. Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by scholar Miranda Alison, revolves around the “norms and institutions that seek to maintain men’s authority over women and over subordinate masculinities.”⁷² Alison further asserts that this form of masculinity is established through the construction of societal hierarchies, cultural mediums, and even through coercion. It is characterized by a specific type of aggression, manifested through the display of physical and sexual strength. The perceptions imposed on male identity force men into societal roles that emphasize aggression, such as in the police and military. In these positions, men often operate within homosocial environments, fostering a collective masculine identity. The tension between this environment and heteronormativity prompts a perceived need to reaffirm masculinity.⁷³ In the context of the Kosovo war, the rape of Albanian women by Serbian soldiers served as a tool to assert and reaffirm their heterosexuality within the framework of hegemonic masculinity.

Moreover, the intrinsic connection between power dynamics in male-female relationships is evident in wartime rape. The consequence of a patriarchal system is the imbalanced power position that men wield over women. Consequently, rape is perceived as a manifestation of male desires to exert control over women through force and violence. Men employ rape as a "conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" to

⁷² Alison, p. 76.

⁷³ Alison, p. 77.

maintain dominance.⁷⁴ Susan Brownmiller, in her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, contends that wartime rape is not an isolated occurrence but rather a continuation of sexual violence that permeates peacetime, rooted in misogynistic inequality towards women. She further argues that "rape in war is a familiar act with a familiar excuse. [...] War provides men with the perfect psychological backdrop to give vent to their contempt for women."⁷⁵

However, while gender inequality undeniably stands as one of the strongest drivers of sexual violence during conflict, attributing it as the sole cause creates a misunderstanding of conflict-related sexual violence. This oversimplification neglects the complexities involved in the cultivation of ethnic and gender identity. In situations like the Kosovo war, rape is employed by specific individuals as a violent tool against particular women, making it, by definition, a discriminate act. During periods of ethno-national tension, the constructs of masculinity and femininity are shaped by drawing parallel distinctions between the nation groups. Martin van Creveld goes to the extent of asserting that 'protecting women against rape has always been one of the most important reasons why men fought' and that, since the rape of enemy women is used to symbolically demonstrate victory over enemy men, who have failed to protect 'their' women, 'rape is what war is all about.'⁷⁶ Additionally, women are especially targeted because of their biological potential to reproduce a specific ethnic group. Thus, the female body is attacked not as a *singular* entity, but rather as the *collective rape* of the ethnic group.

In the case of the 20,000 rapes of ethnic Albanian women by Serbians during the war, the identified drivers of sexual violence are glaringly evident. Heteronormative and patriarchal

⁷⁴ Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will : Men, Women and Rape* /[by] Susan Brownmiller. Secker and Warburg eBooks, 1975, p.15.

⁷⁵ Brownmiller, p.32.

⁷⁶ Bunker, Robert J. "Martin van Creveld on Men, Women & War." *Military Review* 82, no. 6 (November 1, 2002): 102. <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-282616941/martin-van-creveld-on-men-women-war>.

behaviors are prevalent throughout the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore, the motivators of heteromascularity and gender inequality are recognized as responsible for the widespread rapes. The utilization of sexual violence as a tool of ethnic cleansing is particularly significant in this context, as the war emerged from the Serbian desire to occupy Kosovo and negate any Albanian claims to the land. Understanding these foundational factors is crucial because the repercussions of the rapes are intricately linked to these underlying issues. The neglect of the victims underscores the pervasive impact of heteronormativity, gender inequality, and the prioritization of the state over the protection of women.

Following the end of the war, the UN mission, as previously mentioned, significantly halted women's access to political involvement. The exacerbation of patriarchal and misogynistic behaviors further intensified challenges for women. The complete lack of accountability and justice for war crimes related to sexual violence in the country left women with minimal space to participate in the reconstruction of their nation. In every aspect, whether to the state, society, or family, women found themselves relegated to a secondary position. This profound sense of alienation compelled women to take on the role of leaders in their own emancipation.

President Atifete Jahjaga, the country's first female president, emerged as a pioneer in this liberation movement. Atifete Jahjaga is the first female President of Kosovo and served as Head of State from 2011 to 2016. Former President Jahjaga is the youngest female world leader to be elected and the first female head of state in modern Balkans.⁷⁷ During her presidency, President Jahjaga brought the issue of war-time sexual violence to the forefront of her administration. Early on, the President was called on by dozens of victims of sexual violence to an undisclosed location where they shared their experience with her. In an interview, Jahjaga

⁷⁷ Council of Women World Leaders. "Atifete Jahjaga," n.d.
<https://www.councilwomenworldleaders.org/atifete-jahjaga.html>.

reflected on this saying: “When I asked, ‘What can I do for you?’ the survivors would say, ‘There’s no money in this world that can repay for what we’ve gone through. We just need recognition that our bodies were turned into battlefields against our will.’”⁷⁸

Following this interaction, she allocated significant resources to empowering women and supporting the survivors of sexual violence during the war. In 2012, she hosted the International Women’s Summit "Partnership for Change — Empowering Women", attended by 200 leaders from Kosovo, the Wider Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East. The summit led to the creation of the *Pristina Principles*, a set of fundamental guidelines and recommendations which affirmed the rights of women to political participation and representation, economic resources, and access to security and justice.⁷⁹ Those present at the summit urged the implementation of these principles in every government around the world. President Jahjaga mobilized public opinion in support of the socially stigmatized survivors of sexual violence, included Kosovo in global initiatives on the prevention of sexual violence as a tool of war, and helped to create and establish the necessary legal infrastructure for survivors in order to guarantee survivors their rights.

President Atifete Jahjaga's tenure as the first female president of Kosovo marked a significant turning point for the women of the country. Her role was not merely symbolic for the status of women in politics, but it served as a tangible catalyst for change. She actively brought to light injustices that had been silenced for years and worked tirelessly to assist victims in obtaining justice. Through her advocacy, she played a crucial role in breaking the silence surrounding war-time sexual violence and creating a platform for survivors to seek

⁷⁸ Verel, Patrick. “Former President of Kosovo Urges More Recognition and Care for Sexual Violence Survivors.” Fordham Newsroom, May 17, 2022.

⁷⁹ Fstovall. “International Summit in Kosovo Produces ‘Pristina Principles’ to Increase Women’s Empowerment.” National Democratic Institute, n.d. <https://www.ndi.org/kosovo-summit-pristina-principles>.

accountability for the atrocities they endured. Her efforts were instrumental in challenging the impunity that had allowed such injustices to persist and in fostering a culture of recognition and justice for victims of sexual violence during the war.

President Jahjaga's advocacy took an intersectional approach, amplifying the voices of various women in Kosovo, particularly those involved in women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In March of 2014, she established the National Council on Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War.⁸⁰ The council was created to address the needs of survivors, spanning from recognition, justice access, and an end to stigma surrounding sexual violence. The council was composed of institutional and civilian representatives to cover all perspectives in approaching the pervasive issue of war-time sexual violence.

In the realm of government action, the National Council for Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War achieved significant milestones. The Parliament modified the Law on the Status of War Veterans and Families of Civilian Victims, extending its coverage to individuals who had experienced sexual violence during the conflict. This crucial amendment, enacted in the same year, expanded the scope of the law to include survivors of sexual violence. Subsequently, in 2015, the Government of Kosovo passed a regulation to establish a special commission dedicated to facilitating the distribution of individual benefits for survivors of sexual violence.

Operationalizing in 2018, the Government Commission on Recognition and Verification of the Status of Sexual Violence Victims During the Kosovo Liberation War meticulously reviews each case brought before it. Collaborating with four licensed organizations to assist in the application

⁸⁰ Kwn_Admin. "National Council on Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War Prepares Awareness Campaign." Kosovo Women's Network, n.d. <https://womensnetwork.org/national-council-on-survivors-of-sexual-violence-during-the-war-prepares-awareness-campaign/#:~:text=This%20Council%20was%20created%20by,as%20foreseen%20by%20Law%20Nr.>

process, the Commission strives to provide overdue recognition and reparations to survivors of sexual violence.⁸¹

The organizations played a crucial role in driving changes for survivors of sexual violence through their multifaceted approach. One notable representative among them was Vepore Shehu, the Executive Director of Medica Kosova, an NGO based in Gjakovë. This organization adopted unconventional methods to initiate a dialogue on sexual violence. In June 2015, they organized an art exhibition titled "Why Me?" featuring paintings created by survivors that vividly portrayed their experiences. Medica Kosova collaborated with art therapist Flutur Kumnova, who noted that each painting encapsulated "[...] a woman's soul, experience, a pain [...] and a call for the women that they are not alone."⁸² This innovative approach contributed to breaking the silence surrounding sexual violence and providing survivors with a platform for expression and solidarity. The medium of art served as a powerful tool for many women activists in Kosovo, challenging the stigma surrounding sexual violence.

Another notable example is the "Thinking of You" art installation created by Kosovo-born conceptual artist Alketa Xhafa-Mripa. Collaborating with sociologist Anna Di Lellio and with the support of President Jahjaga's council, these women conceived the installation, which took place on June 12, 2015.⁸³ In the football stadium of the city of Pristina, thousands of dresses hung on washing lines as part of this installation, paying tribute to the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Kosovo. The initiative aimed to break the silence surrounding the war crime of rape and combat the stigma associated with sexual violence. Over

⁸¹ Krasniqi, Jeta. "Kosovo Women's Political Activism for Greater Representation." IAI Istituto Affari Internazionali, November 7, 2023.

<https://www.iai.it/en/publicazioni/kosovo-womens-political-activism-greater-representation>.

⁸² "Medica Kosova - Survivors-of-War-Rape-Break-Silence-through-Paintings," n.d.

https://medicakosova.org/publications_post?p_id=65.

⁸³ UN Women – Headquarters. "Dressing up a Soccer Stadium for Survivors in Kosovo," July 10, 2015.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/7/kosovo-dressing-up-a-soccer-stadium>.

5,000 skirts and dresses were donated by people across Kosovo for the installation, with President Jahjaga being the first contributor.⁸⁴ Alketa Xhafa-Mripa explained that the skirts symbolized all women and those who fell victim to war-time rape. The deliberate placement of the skirts in a stadium symbolized both the patriarchal culture of Kosovo and the broader global context. Together, the installation conveyed a powerful image of women standing tall in the face of gender inequality. Xhafa-Mripa further emphasized that "to 'Air dirty laundry in public' is a way of saying 'Talk about your private issues in public,' but in this case, the laundry is washed, clean, like the women survivors who are clean, pure – they carry no stain."⁸⁵ (see figure 1.)



Figure 1. Photo of the art installation by Isabelle Jost for UN Women Kosovo.

Due to sustained advocacy efforts led by figures such as President Jahjaga and numerous women's organizations, survivors of war-time sexual violence have become more inclined to share their stories. Vasfije Krasniqi Goodman emerged as the first survivor of war-time rape to

⁸⁴ UN Women.

⁸⁵ Tran, Mark. "Dresses on Washing Lines Pay Tribute to Kosovo Survivors of Sexual Violence." *The Guardian*, October 19, 2022.

publicly recount her experience. In a special broadcast by Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) in 2018, Krasniqi-Goodman delved into her abduction and subsequent sexual assault that took place in 1999 in the village of Babimovc in Vushtrri. Recounting the event, Krasniqi-Goodman revealed that at the age of 16, she was raped by two Serbian men, one of whom was an officer in Slobodan Milosevic's regime, and the other, a civilian. During the assault, she pleaded with the officer to kill her, but he refused, stating that she must pay for her KLA father and brothers, ensuring her suffering would endure. She proceeded to narrate the aftermath of the assault, including her forced displacement, seeking refuge in America, reporting the crime, and the subsequent apprehension of the perpetrators.⁸⁶

Krasniqi-Goodman underscored that her current well-being is a result of the robust support system around her, comprising family, friends, and neighbors. However, she highlighted that this was not the case for the majority of sexual abuse victims in Kosovo. There were a overwhelming amount of experiences where wives and daughters were ostracized from their homes after their families discovered they had been raped.⁸⁷ Stressing the importance of support, Krasniqi-Goodman urged all Albanians to emulate the backing she received from her family, emphasizing that survivors need such support to share their experiences and that any silence on the matter equates to complacency with the enemy.

Vasfije Krasniqi-Goodman became a trailblazer in challenging the pervasive stigma attached to sexual assault. By openly discussing her traumatic experience, she not only reclaimed her narrative but also inspired and empowered others to break their silence. Krasniqi-Goodman's willingness to share her story transcended personal catharsis; it became a rallying point for

⁸⁶ "For the First Time, This Woman Confesses as Two Serbs Raped during the Kosovo War," *Shqipëria*, October 17, 2018, <https://www.anabelmagazine.com/news/38464/for-the-first-time-this-woman-confesses-as-two-serbs-raped-during-the-kosovo-war/eng/>.

⁸⁷ Plesch, Valerie. "A Dark Legacy: The Scars of Sexual Violence from the Kosovo War." *POLITICO*, April 18, 2019. <https://www.politico.eu/interactive/a-dark-legacy-the-scars-of-sexual-violence-from-the-kosovo-war/>.

survivors, fostering a sense of solidarity and encouraging a collective voice against the shadows of silence and shame. Addressing stigma on sexual violence requires intersectional approach that encompasses personal experience, advocacy, political accountability, and academic pursuit.

A prominent academic figure who played a pivotal role in addressing gender inequality post-war was Dr. Linda Gusia, a Sociology scholar at the University of Prishtina. Her extensive research has delved into various aspects of gender, nationalism, activism, representation, public space, memory, and violence.⁸⁸ In her doctoral thesis, she critically examined the intersections of nationalism and gender, exploring the women's movement in Kosovo and the use of sexual violence as a war strategy. Her focus extended to the visual and textual politics of gender representation. Dr. Gusia's contributions to gender studies in Kosovo have been groundbreaking, culminating in the establishment of the University Program for Gender Studies and Research.⁸⁹ She introduced the concept of "unfinished activism," which she defines as a continuous resistance inherent in feminist endeavors—challenging patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism for the sake of survival.⁹⁰ By aligning the women's movement in Kosovo with the broader global liberation movement for women, Dr. Gusia introduced a revolutionary perspective. This shift was significant as discussions about Kosovo's women had historically been framed in the context of Serbian subjugation. Through her work, Dr. Gusia created a space for individuals in Kosovo to position themselves within a larger narrative, drawing parallels with universal movements in academia.

⁸⁸ Changing the Story. All Rights Reserved. "Linda Gusia (University of Prishtina) | Changing the Story," n.d. <https://www.changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/profiles/linda-gusia-university-of-prishtina/>.

⁸⁹ Balkansocietytp. "Linda Gusia | Balkansocietytp," n.d. <https://www.balkansocietytp.com/copy-of-eli-krasniqi>.

⁹⁰ Gest, Gró. "Podcast with Linda Gusia." GRÓ GEST, n.d. <https://www.grocentre.is/gest/media-gest/news/podcast-with-linda-gusia>.

In the aftermath of the war, women in Kosovo, despite pursuing diverse paths, united under a shared objective: the collective emancipation of women. This unified movement aimed at challenging the conservative cultural norms that persisted in their society in the aftermath of the conflict. Albanian women, in particular, experienced a profound sense of otherness, marginalized across all levels of their community. This circumstance compelled them to take charge of their own liberation. The surge in women's activism following the war marked a groundbreaking development, unprecedented in its scale and impact. This burgeoning movement, the first of its kind in Kosovo, laid the essential groundwork for subsequent generations. It not only sought to address the specific challenges faced by women but also contributed to a broader resistance against entrenched societal norms, fostering a transformative wave of change.

CASE STUDY

After the war, the advocacy demonstrated by women activists, like Atifete Jahjaga, Vassilje Krasniqi, Linda Gusia, Alketa Xhafa-Mripa, and Vepore Shehu inspired the work of a whole new generation of women. While the post-war period left little room for the advocacy of women rights', figures like these women not only challenged the status quo, but effectively demanded justice for the effects of gender inequality. For most women and girls in the 21st century, these women were the first tangible examples whose work the people of Kosovo had access to. Therefore, their efforts stood as the foundation to the emergence of women-led advocacy in the country.

The contemporary mobilization of ethnic Albanian women in Kosovo is evident across various platforms: Civic engagement in the form of protest, demonstration, and action; Political participation, according to the Borgen Project, approximately 40% of seats in Parliament are reserved for Kosovo's women⁹¹; Academic Research, the rise of scholars like Gusia; Social Media presence, advocating for feminist causes through accessible channels like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Tiktok, etc. Finally, and most importantly to my research is the creation of NGOs specifically suited to the protection of the rights of women and girls in Kosovo.

QIKA Organization

Notably, Qendra për Informim, Kritikë dhe Aksion - QIKA, meaning The Center for Information, Criticism, and Action, stands out as one such organization. Established in 2020 by Executive Director Leonida Molliqaj ⁹², QIKA represents an alternative feminist organization in the Republic of Kosovo. The organization's description of "alternative" is derived from their differing approach from mainstream NGOs in the country. QIKA uses a more intersectional

⁹¹ Thelwell, "5 Improvements for Kosovo Women in Politics."

⁹² QIKA. "Leonida Molliqaj - QIKA," February 3, 2021. <https://qika.org/authors/ipsum-lorem/>.

strategy in tackling the complexities of modern patriarchal inequalities in the country, whereas other organizations tend to focus primarily on the consequences of the war. The organization emerged in response to pervasive gender inequality affecting women across all strata of Kosovar society. QIKA tackles the issues of inequality spanning from public to private spheres; including: cultural-sexist behaviors and rhetoric, gender-based workplace discrimination, LGBTQ+ rights, motherhood and many more. They especially emphasize violence against women that reflect the Albanian conceptualization of the female body. This analysis will research the following issues pertaining to women's bodies: menstruation stigma, sexual violence, and femicide.

QIKA employs activism and journalism as unifying tools to address gender equality and hold institutions accountable. As their endeavors encompass a wide range of gender injustice issues, QIKA ensures a comprehensive commitment to addressing diverse facets of gender inequality in Kosovo. To do so, QIKA tackles these societal challenges by engaging in public discourse in multiple ways: research, reporting, actions, and discussions. While much of their strategies overlap with those of their priority cause, gender violence advocacy, QIKA maintains unique approaches to each issue. These tactics can be seen through a plethora of examples, but certainly in QIKA's intersectionality. More specifically, one of the foremost approaches taken by the organization is that of community engagement and partnership. QIKA understands how important their proximity to the community is. Their grassroots efforts are pivotal in assessing the needs and concerns of the people of Kosovo. Forging relationships with community members allows for a mutually beneficial and accessible means to information.

As a result of this, QIKA makes it a priority to meet with individuals affected by issues of inequality in Kosovo. One particular issue present in Kosovo's society intersecting the rights of women and racism is the experiences of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women and girls in the

country. The “othering” of these populations has been long-standing and continuous in Kosovo. The status of these groups is documented by the Minority Rights Group International, wherein they state the following:

For Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in general, and women in particular, low basic education and high levels of illiteracy also continue to be a problem, compounded by poverty, a lack of resources and long-held cultural views on the role of women. They also face particular disadvantages as they lack political influence and do not, unlike Kosovo's Serbs, have the backing of a kin state. Poverty amongst this group is widespread. Though Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians have a total of four reserved seats in the Kosovo Assembly, they remain excluded from real participation in political life and discussions on the future status of Kosovo.⁹³

As an organization intrinsically linked to the protection of human rights, QIKA's mission accounts for every person of Kosovo, not merely the ethnically Albanian. Therefore, to address the issue of discriminatory sentiments against these groups they felt it necessary to speak directly to the girls who experience this in their daily lives. QIKA met with Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian girls on November 1st of 2023.⁹⁴ To facilitate this, QIKA collaborated with The Ideas Partnership Kosovo, an NGO focusing on tackling the issues within the educational, environmental, and health systems of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities of the country.⁹⁵ Their shared work allowed for feminist activists, Luljeta Demolli and Besarta Breznica, to discuss the many avenues and forms of activism that address gender inequality with the girls. In an article published by QIKA's newsletter, it states that the girls were very curious and engaged, showcasing their willingness to work towards a more equitable society. It goes on to state that “Angazhimi i përbashkët kundër të gjitha formave të diskriminimit është detyrë e secilës prej neve” ; meaning the common commitment against all forms of discrimination is a shared duty of all people.⁹⁶ QIKA's collaboration with The Ideas Partnership exemplifies their

⁹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “RefWorld | World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kosovo : Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.”

⁹⁴ “QIKA Mbanë Takimin e Radhës Me Vajzat Rome, Ashkalike Dhe Egjiptiane - QIKA.”

⁹⁵ “Facebook,” n.d., <https://www.facebook.com/NGOtheideaspartnership/>.

⁹⁶ “QIKA Mbanë Takimin e Radhës Me Vajzat Rome, Ashkalike Dhe Egjiptiane - QIKA.”

dedication to collective action in addressing the complex issues that plague their communities, while also amplifying the voices of other organizations. Most importantly, their strategy of grassroots advocacy makes it much easier for the victims of discriminatory practices to share their experience and concerns in a safe and intimate setting.

QIKA Media Strategies: New & Old

The organization actively maintains accounts on four digital platforms: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and, more recently, YouTube. Similar to many other organizations in Kosovo, their Facebook page stands out as the most frequented social media platform. Operating under the name @QIKA, the page boasts over 7,100 followers and has accumulated more than 6,400 likes.⁹⁷ Moving to their Instagram presence, the account @qikaorg has garnered a substantial following of 3,923 users, while following 25 accounts.⁹⁸ The account showcases an extensive collection of content, with a total of 955 posts. On Twitter, their profile, identified as @orgqika, maintains a following of 279 individuals and follows 61 accounts.⁹⁹ The profile has shared a total of 190 posts. Their most recent venture into YouTube, with the handle @InstitutiQIKA, is still in its early stages, collecting 3 subscribers and presenting only 3 posts. Despite the nascent stage, each post averages a total of 62 views.¹⁰⁰

The Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook profiles exhibit a consistent pattern in the content they share. Each profile features a vibrant and attention-grabbing image or graphic accompanied by a compelling statement highlighting the discussed issue. These posts are complemented by detailed and informative captions that delve into the subject matter, providing a comprehensive understanding of the highlighted issue. Furthermore, the posts across these profiles serve as

⁹⁷ “@QIKA.” *Facebook*, n.d. <https://www.facebook.com/qikaorg/>.

⁹⁸ “@qikaorg.” *Instagram*, n.d. <https://www.instagram.com/qikaorg/>.

⁹⁹ “@orgqika.” *Twitter*, n.d. <https://twitter.com/orgqika?lang=en>.

¹⁰⁰ “QIKA n’ekran.” @InstitutiQIKA, n.d. <https://www.youtube.com/@InstitutiQIKA>.

regular updates, keeping followers informed about new initiatives and providing updates on the progress of specific projects that the organization is actively involved in. The engagement levels vary from post to post, with the number of likes ranging from single digits to over four digits, showcasing a diverse spectrum of interactions across the organization's content. Posts tend to garner higher levels of interaction when they are in response to specific incidents occurring in Kosovo. For instance, the case of 18 year old Marigona Osmani outraged all of Kosovo society. In August of 2021, Marigona was brutally raped and tortured for over 24 hours by her husband, Dardan Krivaqa and his friend, Arbër Sejdiu. According to the Albanian media outlet, *Sot*, “After raping the 18-year-old for 24 hours, [they] threw her at the door of the hospital in Ferizaj, where she lost her life, due to her injuries”.¹⁰¹ Marigona’s death sparked protests all over Kosovo, calling for the protection of women by the state.¹⁰² As an update to the crime, QIKA shared the post to their Instagram and Facebook pages on August 4th, 2023 (see figures 2 and 3).

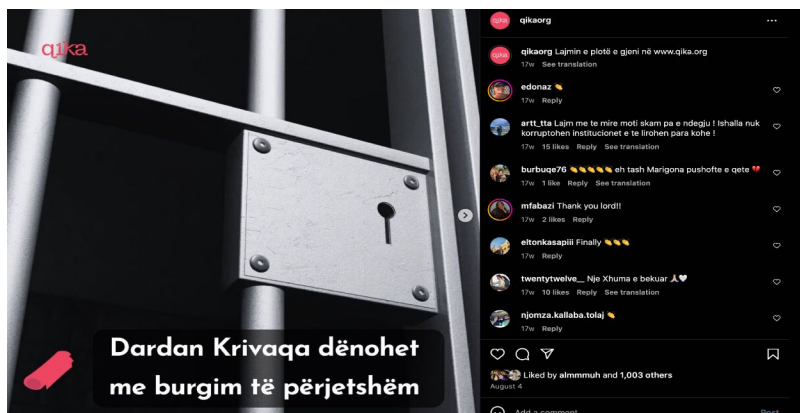


Figure 2. QIKA’s post announcing the imprisonment of Dardan Krivaqa on Instagram.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ “The Murder of Marigona Osmani That Shook Kosovo / Medical Experts Revealed the Shocking Facts: 18-Year-Old Suffered Polytrauma, Broken Limbs, Violence That Caused Her Death,” Aktualitet, n.d., <https://sot.com.al/english/aktualitet/vrasja-e-marigona-osmanit-qe-tronditi-kosoven-ekspertet-e-mjekesise-z-i459568>

¹⁰² Euronews. “Is the Brutal Murder of Marigona Osmani a Tipping Point for Kosovan Society?” *Euronews*, September 2, 2021. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/09/02/is-the-brutal-murder-of-marigona-osmani-a-tipping-point-for-kosovan-society>.

¹⁰³ “@qikaorg: Lajmin e Plotë e Gjenerit Në WwW.Qika.Org.” *Instagram*, August 4, 2023. Accessed October 8, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/p/CvhMSL6IpVW/?img_index=1.

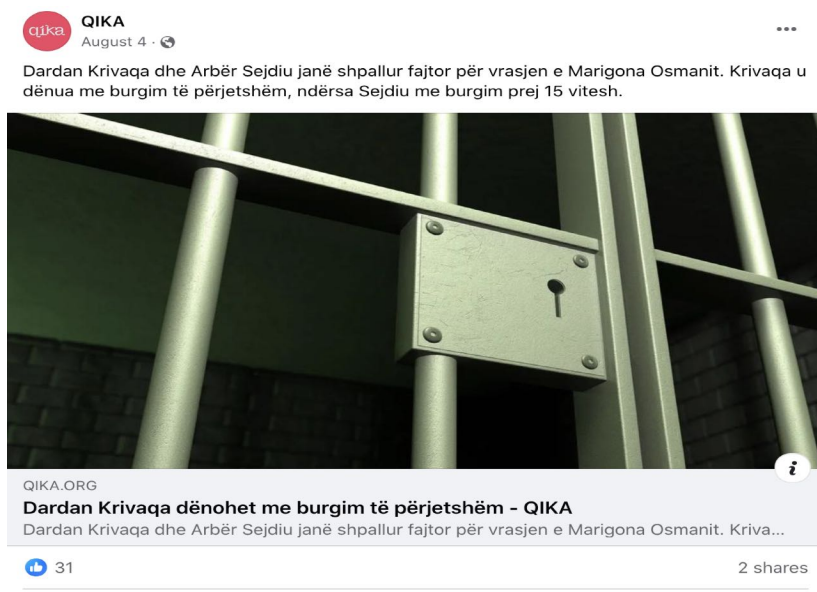


Figure 3. QIKA's post announcing the imprisonment of Dardan Krivaqa on Facebook.¹⁰⁴

QIKA strategically adapts social media tactics to engage with ongoing cases in efforts to make current events accessible to the public. The first image is a screenshot of the content posted on QIKA's Instagram on 08/04/2023. The post makes use of the carousel format¹⁰⁵ – a collection of photos in one post – to present 3 slides presenting powerful statements: "Dardan Krivaqa sentenced to life in prison."; "Dardan Krivaqa and Arbër Sejdiu have been found guilty of murdering Marigona Osman. Krivaqa was sentenced to life imprisonment, while Sejdiu was sentenced to 15 years in prison."; "Krivaqa and Sejdiu were accused of a number of criminal offenses including rape, aiding in the commission of rape and aggravated murder in complicity." The caption of the post hyperlinks that the entire article is available at QIKA's website. The over 1000 "likes" indexes the wide engagement their strategies are reaching. The second image is a screenshot of the Facebook post QIKA made about this case, totaling 31 likes and 2 shares, with

¹⁰⁴ "QIKA: Dardan Krivaqa Dhe Arbër Sejdiu Janë Shpallur Fajtor Për Vrasjen e Marigona Osmanit. Krivaqa u Dënua Me Burgim Të Përjetshëm, Ndërsa Sejdiu Me Burgim Prej 15 Vitesh." *Facebook*, August 4, 2023. Accessed October 8, 2023. https://www.facebook.com/qikaorg/posts/615596564049436?ref=embed_post.

¹⁰⁵ Buffer: All-you-need Social Media Toolkit for Small Businesses. "What Is a Carousel Post?," n.d. <https://buffer.com/social-media-terms/carousel-post>.

a direct clickable link to the full article on their website. Importantly, they reflect the justice-oriented content prevalent on QIKA's social media channels, with a focus on amplifying the stories of victims, such as the tragic case of Marigona Osmani.

Simultaneously championing social advocacy, the YouTube page adopts a popular approach by presenting content in a podcasting format. Each video-styled program, lasting 40 minutes, engages in comprehensive discussions on overarching topics, delving into the intricacies of the highlighted issues. The inaugural episode, aired on November 5th, 2023, delves into the significance of safe spaces for women in the media and underscores the vital role of feminist journalism.¹⁰⁶ Featuring guests Besa Luci and Naile Dema Selmani, this medium allows viewers to immerse themselves in the discourse of gender inequality and gain insights directly from QIKA and other experts, presenting a departure from their previous content formats. This form of media establishes a virtual space for women and girls in Kosovo, providing a journalistic platform for them to engage with and share their experiences and hardships. This is a significant aspect often overlooked in traditional Kosovo television journalism. The YouTube podcast format allows for a more inclusive and participatory approach, offering a platform for voices that might not find adequate representation in mainstream media.

While QIKA maintains engagement on mainstream media platforms, they also maintain a traditional information strategy by incorporating a newsletter into its communication methods. This classic approach allows them to disseminate updates, news, and relevant information directly to their audience in a more formal and structured format. This method provides a curated and comprehensive overview of their activities, ensuring that subscribers receive a regular and organized source of information from the organization.

¹⁰⁶ QIKA, "QIKA n'ekran - Hapësirat e Cenuara Të Grave Në Media," November 5, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGQzCU6OLsE>.

The newsletter is accessible to all on their webpage and covers a wide array of topics. Some examples of QIKA's articles include Medinë Dauti's article published on April 29th, 2022. The article titled "Në emër të lirisë – Unë jam LAVIRE" challenges the implementation of patriarchal norms in society. The text argues that societies often view women who resist subjugation and oppression as deviant, categorizing them as non-human and fanatical. Dauti challenges these norms by reclaiming the word "lavire," meaning *shut*, as a symbol of resistance and the deconstruction of oppressive norms.¹⁰⁷ Within an extremely conservative society, the reconstruction of a derogatory term like *lavire* has a powerful potential to change the narratives and understandings of so many minds. Another article from their newsletter written by Executive Director, Leonida Molliqaj, on March 19th of 2021, is "38 Burra". The piece underscores the severe underrepresentation of women in Kosovo's local politics, where none of the 38 municipalities are led by women. It highlights the alarmingly low participation of women in local elections, both as candidates and councilors. Molliqaj emphasizes the unequal distribution of campaign funds and the economic disparities faced by women candidates. Additionally, the text contends that even after elections, men predominantly assume leadership roles within municipalities, perpetuating gender imbalances. Advocating for a more political approach to address these issues, Molliqaj stresses the importance of women's participation in shaping inclusive public policies.¹⁰⁸

Evidently, QIKA aims to keep followers well-informed about their activities and ongoing events. They also challenge patriarchal oppressive ideologies, as seen in their direct action

¹⁰⁷ QIKA. "Në Emër Të Lirisë – Unë Jam LAVIRE - QIKA," April 29, 2022. <https://qika.org/en/perspective-post/ne-emer-te-lirise-une-jam-lavire/>.

¹⁰⁸ QIKA. "38 Burra - QIKA," March 19, 2021. <https://qika.org/en/perspective-post/38-burra/>.

campaigns. Their intent is clear through consistent and timely posting across all platforms, ensuring a comprehensive and up-to-date engagement with their audience.

Menstruation in Culture & Activism

One of QIKA's noteworthy advocacy initiatives is the #PecetaNukEshtLuks campaign, translating to "menstrual products are not a luxury."¹⁰⁹ Launched in 2021, this project emerged in response to the enduring menstrual stigma prevalent in Kosovo. To fully grasp the strategy, it is necessary to first contemplate the intricate position of menstruation within the broader cultural context. In Albanian culture, talking about menstruation is often considered a sensitive and uncomfortable subject, commonly referred to as "ato të grave" (those things of women.)¹¹⁰ As a Muslim-majority country, Kosovo's menstruation stigma can be traced back to the impurity ideals perpetuated by many Muslim societies. For example, menstruating Muslim women are exempt from praying and fasting, and are not allowed to engage in sexual intercourse.

The convergence of culture and religion in this case are particularly important as menstruation stigma illuminates the justification of the subjugation of women on the basis of perceived religious ideals. Middle Eastern Studies scholar, Atiya Aftab, corrects the theological view: "A menstruating woman is not seen as dirty or lesser due to her menstruating status. As developed by the media platform, *Muslim*, menstruation in Islam is not seen in any way as a divine punishment."¹¹¹ During the holy month of Ramadan, menstruating women are extended the same mercy that is given to those who are ill, showcasing the comprehension Islam has

¹⁰⁹ "Qikaorg: #PecetaNukEshtLuks 'Java Kundër Varfërisë Menstruale Dhe Stigmatizimit Të Menstruacioneve' Realizuar Nga QIKA Mbështetur Nga Butterfly." *Instagram*, May 24, 2021. https://www.instagram.com/p/CPQHJAdLm5c/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdlMjRlYjZlMQ==.

¹¹⁰ University of Tetova, "Euphemisms in the context of the Postribe region are integral components of the national ethnolinguistic property. - Universiteti i Tetoves," n.d., <https://eprints.unite.edu.mk/822/>.

¹¹¹ Syeda Khaula Saad and Syeda Khaula Saad, "The Stigma of Menstruation in Muslim Households," *Muslim*, August 13, 2021, <https://muslim.co/the-stigma-of-menstruation-in-muslim-households/>.

towards menstruation. Moreover, in regard to prayer, the notion that only menstruating women are “impure” is a falsehood. The Quran (6:145) addresses the impurity of blood:

Say, “I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything (out of the cattle under discussion) prohibited for anyone who eats it, unless it be carrion or blood that pours forth, or flesh of swine - because it is impure - or there be an animal slaughtered sinfully by invoking on it the name of someone other than Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity, neither seeking pleasure nor crossing the limit, then your Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.”¹¹²

Hence, it is explicitly mentioned that “flowing blood” is considered impure or najis, signifying ritual uncleanness.¹¹³ There is no specification that this impurity is exclusive to *vaginal* blood.

This highlights the challenging aspect of interpreting religious scripture to align with cultural biases. Despite this, menstruation contends as a taboo topic in both Muslim and Albanian societies. Culturally and religiously, Albanians have marginalized – realistically completely isolated– the female body due to their reluctance to challenge the stigma surrounding menstruation. Consequently, the topic of menstruation is regarded as a source of shame, making it challenging for individuals to openly discuss or express it verbally by its name.

The impact of the menstrual stigma extended beyond societal consequences to economic and political repercussions. This stigma materialized in the government's decision to designate menstrual products as luxury items, subjecting them to an 18% luxury tax in Kosovo.¹¹⁴ *Prishtina Insight*, the magazine of independent organization BIRN Kosovo, reports on the history and development of this menstrual tax: “Importing period pads on a large scale only became common in Kosovo after the war. Prior to that, many women resorted to using old clothes to create

¹¹² Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*. DigiCat, 2022.

¹¹³ “Taharat & Najasat: Ritual Purity & Impurity,” Al-Islam.org, October 5, 2012, <https://www.al-islam.org/code-practice-muslims-west-sayyid-ali-hussaini-sistani/taharat-najasat-ritual-purity-impurity>.

¹¹⁴ Xhorxhina Bami, “Petition Urges Kosovo Govt to Cut Period Products Tax,” Balkan Insight, May 11, 2023, <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/05/11/petition-urges-kosovo-govt-to-cut-period-products-tax/>.

makeshift pads, a practice that persists today.”¹¹⁵ Because the state deems that menstrual products are non-essential goods, even women who can afford them must adhere to the value-added tax (VAT). VAT in Kosovo is reduced to 8% for items considered essential, from food and water to medicine and educational materials (see figure 4.)¹¹⁶

- Supply of water, except bottled water.
- Supply of electricity, including transmission and distribution services, with central heating, waste collection, and other waste treatment.
- Grains, such as barley, corn, maize varieties, oats, rye, rice, and wheat.
- Products made from grain for human consumption, such as flour, pasta, bread, and similar products.
- Cooking oils made from grains or oilseeds for use in cooking for human consumption.
- Dairy and dairy products intended for human consumption.
- Salt used for human consumption.
- Eggs for consumption.
- Textbooks and serial publications.
- Supply, including lending, of books from libraries, including brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, children's picture books, drawing and coloring books, music printed texts or manuscripts, maps, and hydrographic charts, and similar.
- Information technology (IT) equipment.
- Supply of medicines, pharmaceutical products, instruments, and medical and surgical devices.
- Medical equipment, ambulances, aids, and other medical devices to facilitate or treat inability for exclusive use by the disabled, including the repair of such goods and supply of children's vehicle seats.
- Live animals and poultry.

Figure 4. List of essential items that are given a reduced 8% tax created by Worldwide Tax Summaries.

Evidenced by the chart, the reduced 8% tax goes to items that are necessary as the most basic experiences of life.

Arguably, however, menstruation is a biological experience undergone by all women and girls, therefore it is inherently an essential good. An August 2022 BIRN report revealed that the average Kosovar family spends about 10.3 euros monthly on period products, creating a financial strain, particularly given the low 14 percent official employment rate for women. Data from the Kosovo Statistics Agency, last updated in 2017, indicates that 18 percent of the population lives in poverty, with 5 percent in extreme poverty. A 2020 study from the same agency emphasized the economic hardships, stating that nearly 60 percent of Kosovo families couldn't cover an

¹¹⁵ Blerta Begisholli, “Activists Advocate for Lower Taxes on Menstrual Products in Kosovo - Prishtina Insight,” Prishtina Insight, May 25, 2023, <https://prishtinainsight.com/combating-period-poverty-activists-advocate-for-lower-taxes-on-menstrual-products-in-kosovo-mag/>.

¹¹⁶ Worldwide Tax Summaries. “Kosovo: Corporate - Other Taxes,” August 3, 2023. <https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/kosovo/corporate/other-taxes>.

unexpected 100-euro expense.¹¹⁷ Thus, the increased tax on these products are inherently gendered and unjust as the financial instability of people also hinders their purchase of these goods.

In response to the "luxury" tax, QIKA initiated a new campaign related to menstruation. Their action both mobilized against the tax, and at the same time, rallied against the broader stigma. Collaborating with Butterfly, a menstrual product company—a subsidiary of the Pakistani corporation Santex—QIKA designed decorative boxes to distribute pads throughout Kosovo.¹¹⁸ The boxes are the same shade of pink as the QIKA logo, with images of menstrual products and the phrase “Peceta nuk është luks!” (see figure 5.)



Figure 5. QIKA’s post showcasing their new menstrual box distribution. ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Bami, Xhorxhina. “Kosovo Women Seek End to ‘Period Poverty.’” *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network*, August 15, 2022. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/08/15/kosovo-women-seek-end-to-period-poverty/>.

¹¹⁸ “Butterfly – Se Ndjem Mirë...,” n.d. <https://butterfly-rks.com/>.

¹¹⁹ “Qikaorg: Sot Fillojmë Shpërndarjen e Pecetave Menstruale Falas Nëpër Shkollat e Qyteteve Të Kosovës. 🧡.” *Instagram*, May 25, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd-UVjoI2Lz/>.

These dispensers were strategically placed in school restrooms across the country. The initiative aimed to enhance the accessibility of menstrual products and reduce the stigma associated with their use. Deliberately focusing on school restrooms, QIKA's initiative seeks to dismantle the stigma associated with the menstrual cycle among young people.

QIKA amplifies the effect of its campaigns with its social media strategies. Adhering to their expressed commitment to their campaigns and social media, QIKA documented the progress of the menstrual campaign on their Instagram account.

Menstruation & Direct Action

In 2022, the organization elevated their initiative with a direct action campaign. This action took weeks of planning and theorizing in trying to realize several goals of their long-term work against menstrual stigma. QIKA's posts demonstrated a keen focus on international feminist movements, translating this awareness into tangible actions that underscored their engagement with broader feminist initiatives. During this time, they made the decision to demonstrate directly on the government all while invoking shock value. Additionally, QIKA's demonstration served as a response to the complete absence of government responsibility or accountability regarding menstruation. Notably, the tax is inherently sexist, as it places a financial burden on a natural biological process specific to women. By taxing menstrual products, the government is, inadvertently, imposing a financial barrier on women for an essential aspect of their reproductive health. The lack of advocacy from political leaders prompted QIKA to use their demonstration as a call to action, urging all members of Kosovan governance to address this issue urgently. Following that period, in October of the same year, QIKA expressed their opposition to the government's luxury tax on menstrual products by placing menstrual pads and tampons covered in red paint on the steps of governmental

buildings.¹²⁰ Amidst the products lay a placard proclaiming, "Shteti po takson menstruacionet!" which translates to "The state is taxing menstruation!"

Staying in line with their intention to social media transparency, the action was posted to all of their accounts. The Instagram caption of the post boasts that in Kosovo, the general population comprises 858,043 women and girls, 591,150 falling in the 10-50 year age range. When calculating the total expenditure on menstrual products for menstruating women, considering the average monthly cost of 3 euros, the annual spending by Kosovo women amounts to 21,281,400.00 euros. Within this total, 3,246,315.25 euros are attributed to Value Added Tax (VAT). The post strongly denounces the inequitable nature of the tax, underscoring the hardship faced by many women living in poverty who are unable to afford essential menstrual products.

I became aware of the event through my connection with the organization. I have long been a supporter of QIKA's work and have actively sought ways to contribute. The event, unlike others, was not widely publicized, as organizers aimed to preserve its shock value. In the day leading up to the action, I visited the QIKA headquarters and assisted in assembling materials. Alongside some members of the QIKA team, I participated in painting menstrual pads and tampons with red paint. Upon arriving at Prishtina's town square alone, I was kindly greeted by a group of 25-30 people, some familiar faces were the QIKA members. I observed some of the attendees were journalists reporting on the action. As we began to place the materials around the steps of the government buildings, police officers inched up ensuring that we would not enter the building.

¹²⁰ "Qikaorg: Shteti Po Takson Menstruacionet!" *Instagram*, October 13, 2022.
https://www.instagram.com/p/CjpzDh4ICaQ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdlMjRIYjZlMQ==.

Being an eyewitness to the demonstration, I couldn't help but reflect on the direct quotes that encapsulated a larger theme entrenched in Albanian culture—the prevailing menstrual stigma. As we, a group of women, faced derogatory remarks during the demonstration, being referred to as "budallica" or stupid girls, it underscored the societal discomfort surrounding menstruation. Older generations, with their swift resort to offensive comments, exemplified the deep-seated challenges in challenging established norms. Younger individuals, expressing genuine curiosity about the initiative, revealed a generational gap in awareness. The surprising lack of knowledge about the existing tax on menstrual products emphasized the necessity of initiatives like QIKA's to bring these issues into the spotlight. The dismissive attitude from police and security officers further contributed to the sense of being undervalued and highlighted the urgency of confronting menstrual stigma within Albanian culture.

To solidify their work in a traceable and effective way, QIKA's advocacy became a tangible document. To fight against menstrual stigma and consequential tax, QIKA created a petition for Kosovo citizens to sign demanding the removal of the luxury tax on menstrual products. The petition was started on May 8th, 2023 on the Change.org platform. The petition has a total of 7,484 signatures; and a number of reasons for signing the petition. The comments vary, but represent an overwhelming support of the initiative. One user under the name Loreta Hasani commented "*Sepse grate sduhet te paguajne per diçka biologjike qe ndodh ne trupin e tyre*" meaning: because women shouldn't have to pay for something biological that happens in their bodies. Another user, presumably a male user by the name of Artan Alidema, commented "*Besoj eshte me e pakta qe mund te behet per vajzat dhe grate;*" which translates to I believe it

is the least we can do for our girls and women.¹²¹ Notably, highlighting that this initiative is in line with the wants of the people and that the luxury tax is inherently biased against sex.

The petition attracted media attention and interest in QIKA and the work they are doing. In an interview with BalkanInsight –a website of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network¹²²– Leonida Molliqaj shared the goals of the petition: “After we have a considerable amount of signatures, we will sit with representatives of institutions to request the removal of the tax.”¹²³ Against a backdrop of complete disregard from political leaders who have remained silent on the issue of menstrual tax, Molliqaj made their stance known.

Hence, QIKA's strategy to combat menstrual stigma manifests in a myriad of ways. Ranging from social media campaigns to the donation of menstrual boxes, the organization actively opposes the perpetuation of menstrual stigma on both cultural and social fronts. Their advocacy extends to scrutinizing institutions and highlighting the lack of political awareness concerning this widespread issue. The tangible repercussions of menstrual stigma on the women and girls of Kosovo are evident. It subjects them to economic challenges, compelling the use of unsanitary alternatives like old clothes in lieu of proper menstrual products. Moreover, it contributes to gender disparities by marginalizing women and girls and burdening them with the responsibility of managing a natural biological process. QIKA's approach is comprehensive and noteworthy, addressing the multifaceted aspects of the problem. Their strategy aims to confront societal discomfort around menstruation, dismantle the associated shame, and simultaneously critique and hold political institutions accountable for perpetuating policies that lead to period poverty.

¹²¹ Change.org. “Supporter Comments · Nënshkruaj Peticionin Për Heqjen e TVSh-Së Për Produkte Menstruale · Change.Org,” n.d.

¹²² BIRN. “BIRN - Balkan Investigative Reporting Network,” July 5, 2023.

¹²³ Bami.

Strategizing Gender-Based Violence

QIKA's advocacy persists as it confronts one of Kosovo's most urgent challenges—the issue of gender-based violence. This problem arises from entrenched gender-biased beliefs deeply ingrained in the country's culture. Before delving into the effects of gender-based violence, one must fully understand what is meant by this phrase. According to the United Nations Foundation, gender-based violence (GBV) is “defined as harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender, GBV is a constant threat for girls and women around the world regardless of their age, race, or socioeconomic status.”¹²⁴ Researcher Ardita Macastena emphasizes the association of women with violence: according to the Kosovo Police, women are the most at-risk group in regard to all kinds of gender-based violence. The majority of perpetrators in cases involving female victims are husbands, ex-husbands, partners, fathers, and brothers.¹²⁵ In 2022 alone, women represented over 84.8% of the 2,700 domestic violence (GBV) cases in Kosovo.¹²⁶

The current prevalence of gender-based violence in Kosovo is intricately linked to the historical context of the lack of justice received for wartime victims. The silence surrounding war-time rapes during the conflict has cast a long and dark shadow over the issue of GBV in contemporary times. The failure to address and prosecute perpetrators of wartime sexual violence has created a culture of impunity, perpetuating a cycle of violence and silence. The unresolved trauma of war-time victims, particularly survivors of sexual violence, has created an atmosphere where the perpetrators faced little to no accountability for their actions. This lack of

¹²⁴ unfoundation.org. “Stand With Her: 6 Women-Led Organizations Tackling Gender-Based Violence,” November 21, 2022.

¹²⁵ Macastena, Ardita. “Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo.” Questa Soft, 2019.
<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=799293>.

¹²⁶ Birn. “Share Your Experience: Domestic Violence in Kosovo.” Balkan Insight, March 13, 2023.

justice not only denies closure to the survivors, but also sends a disturbing message to society, implying that acts of violence against women go unpunished.

GBV is a product of a gender-biased system that takes many forms: sexual, psychological, economic—and especially physical. Physical violence is widely recognized as the primary form of gender-based violence, a status that has prompted extensive discourse and discussions surrounding this issue. Physical violence can be categorized from mild arm-twisting all the way to the most severe consequence, murder. In Kosovo, physical violence towards women and girls has been especially prevalent. NGOs have been especially active in addressing this issue by protesting, lobbying the government, and demanding justice for victims in the legal system. Among these organizations, QIKA remains steadfast in its advocacy against all forms of physical violence directed at women, with a particular emphasis on addressing cases of femicide.

QIKA Fighting Against Femicide

From 2021 to 2022, three landmark cases of femicide occurred in the country that QIKA worked on. The first was the case of a woman named Sebahate Morina, who was murdered on March 14th, 2021 by her ex-husband, Lulzim Sopi. This occurred only 11 days after her daughter had reported the abuse to the Kosovo police.¹²⁷ Not only had Sopi been reported right before he killed his wife, but he had also been reported in 2019. As per the Kosovo Law Institute (KLI) and the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), Morina's ex-husband faced domestic violence allegations in 2019 when he was detained, leading to Morina being placed under police protection at that time.¹²⁸ Given the time limits on protection orders, these measures lapsed in

¹²⁷ Vllahiu, Emirjeta. "Disciplinary Proceedings Initiated against Prosecutor in Femicide Case - Prishtina Insight." Prishtina Insight, April 5, 2023.

¹²⁸ Sermaxhaj, Gresë. "KLI and KWN Publish the Investigation Report Regarding the Murder Of Sebahate Morina: Justice Institutions Neglected This Case." Kosovo Women's Network, April 2, 2021.

December 2020, almost three months before her murder, leaving her in an incredibly vulnerable position.

Consequently, following her murder, QIKA mobilized by organizing a protest. Their strategic approach involved calling for the initiation of disciplinary procedures by the State Prosecution of Kosovo and the dismissal of Kujtim Munishi, the prosecutor handling Morina's case. The banner QIKA held at the protest read “the state is guilty for the murder of Sehabate Morina.”¹²⁹ Following the organization's action, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo made a verdict, which found that justice institutions had failed to protect the life of Morina. Consequently, leading to the Chief State Prosecutor initiating disciplinary action against the prosecutor handling the case.¹³⁰ While this was a tremendous step in the right direction, there has yet to be dismissal of the prosecutor, indicating ongoing difficulties in addressing femicide within this societal and cultural context.

In late 2022, within a mere five days, Kosovo was shaken by two additional cases of femicide, prompting QIKA to intensify its activism in response. The first incident involved the murder of Sadije Godeni, a 63-year-old elementary school teacher, by her husband on November 25th. The assailant, Izet Godeni, brutally took his wife's life by repeatedly slashing her with an axe. The second case occurred on December 30th, 2022, when 35-year-old pregnant woman Hamide Magashi was murdered by her ex-husband, Sokol Halili, directly outside the hospital of gynecology. Magashi, who was expected to give birth the following day, had her life, along with that of the fetus, abruptly ended after being shot three times.¹³¹ The severity and proximity of both incidents ignited a wave of anger among the women of Kosovo.

¹²⁹ Zeqiri, Ardita. “Protest in Prishtina after Pregnant Woman's Murder in Hospital Courtyard - Prishtina Insight.” Prishtina Insight, December 2, 2022.

¹³⁰ Emirjeta Vllahiu, “Disciplinary Proceedings Initiated against Prosecutor in Femicide Case - Prishtina Insight,” Prishtina Insight, April 5, 2023.

¹³¹ Zeqiri.

One day after Magashi's murder, QIKA responded with a direct action in the form of protest. In collaboration with the Collective for Feminist Thought and Action, they announced their protest on Instagram. Declaring in a graphic post, "*Protestë: Vrasja e grave nga burrat të trajtohet si urgjencë kombëtare!*" which translates to "Protest: The killing of women by men should be treated as a national emergency." The event included the feminist tactic to make references to the conservative ideologies in their respective societies. The accompanying caption, articulated in Albanian, emphasized that women are at risk of murder simply because of their gender. Furthermore, it highlighted that the men who commit these acts are products of a system that perpetuates the notion that women are their property and should be subjected to violence. The protest held on December 2nd, 2022 in Prishtina's Zahir Pajaziti square held hundreds of protestors, demanding that the state issue a state emergency towards the violence against women.

A protester displayed a poster depicting weapons. (see figure 6.)

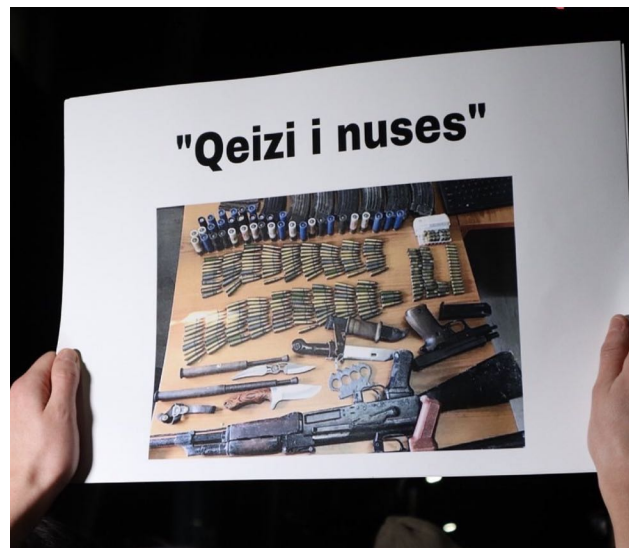


Figure 6. Photo taken by Kolektivi për Mendim dhe Veprim Feminist during the protest.¹³²

¹³² "Kolektivifeminist: VRASJA E GRAVE NGA BURRAT TË TRAJTOHET SI URGJENCË KOMBËTARE." *Instagram*, December 1, 2022. https://www.instagram.com/p/ClozVcjooHK/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdlMjRIYjZIMQ==.

The poster reads “*Qeizi i nuses*” which is representative of an adaptation of the Islamic provision of *Mahr* in Albanian culture. In Islam, marriage is essentially a contract between the bride and groom which states that women will be financially provided for. The definition of *Mahr* is discussed by scholar, M. Afzal Wani, in which he writes:

Mahr is basically a 'gift', which becomes due from a Muslim husband to his wife on marriage as a token of respect symbolizing his sincerity and love for her. The subject matter of gift can be money or any other thing having value, without a higher limit, depending upon the acceptance of the wife.¹³³

In Albanian culture this manifested as gifts the groom gives the wife before the wedding which encompass makeup, shoes, bags, dresses, traditional dress, jewelry, and gold coins. The photo, evidently, showcases a different reality where the *mahr* of women is an arsenal of weapons foreshadowing their doomed fate in the hands of partners who will potentially kill them.

Through the dissemination and reporting of these abuses, they disrupt the foundational underpinnings of the patriarchy. Additionally, they aim to prevent the names and narratives of victims from being silenced, empowering other women and girls to openly address and unite against this form of violence.

The Silence Around Sexual Violence

Though physical violence against women remains pervasive in the country, the female body continues to be targeted by another insidious form of violence: sexual violence, which is arguably the most silenced type of aggression against women. In Kosovo, a notable cultural resistance exists to open discussions about sex, rendering it a closed and taboo subject within the society. The discourse on sexual matters is exceptionally limited, with a lack of comprehensive sexual education that is not mandated or enforced by the government. The discretionary right of

¹³³ Wani, M. Afzal. “Muslim Women’s Right to ‘Mahr’: An Appraisal of the Statutory Laws in Muslim Countries.” *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 43, no. 3 (2001): 388.

teachers to refrain from addressing the topic further contributes to its marginalized status in educational settings.¹³⁴ Moreover, the cultural aversion to discussing sex extends to family dynamics, where it remains largely unspoken and considered incredibly shameful. This collective silence creates an environment where open dialogue on sexual topics is notably absent.¹³⁵ In this context, the pervasive silence around sex within the society becomes a significant barrier when addressing issues of sexual violence. The lack of discourse and education contributes to a general ignorance or avoidance of the topic, making it challenging for individuals to recognize, discuss, or combat instances of sexual violence.

QIKA has been actively addressing this pressing concern, particularly within youth communities, through strategies that raise awareness about instances of sexual violence, provide education on the nature of sexual violence, and actively work to break the stigma surrounding victims of such acts. As organizers, QIKA advocates on behalf of survivors of sexual violence. In August of 2022, QIKA continued their advocacy against sexual violence by launching their “1≠1” campaign. “1≠1” is a digital platform that makes the data of gender-based violence from public institutions in Kosovo accessible to all. In an Instagram post on August 22, 2022, QIKA shared the campaign in collaboration with Judicial Dig Data Challenge powered by Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK) and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).¹³⁶ A part of this campaign was that QIKA conducted research on sexual violence statistics in the country, the post’s caption states: “only in the past 7 months, 24 cases of sexual violence and 71 cases of sexual

¹³⁴ Gashi, Donika. “‘I Didn’t Even Know How to Ask for the Right Contraceptives’ - Kosovo 2.0.” Kosovo 2.0, October 18, 2023. <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/i-didnt-even-know-how-to-ask-for-the-right-contraceptives/#:~:text=Aspects%20of%20sexual%20and%20reproductive,education%20beyond%20the%20biological%20elements>.

¹³⁵ Slater, Victoria. “Teachers, Advocates Trying to Change Attitudes about Sex Education | Kosovoalive,” July 10, 2014. <https://www.kosovalive.org/2014/07/10/teachers-advocates-trying-to-change-attitudes-about-sex-education/>.

¹³⁶ “Qikaorg: 1 ≠ 1 Is Part of Judicial Dig Data Challenge Powered by Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK) and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).” *Instagram*, August 22, 2022. https://www.instagram.com/p/Chjwn1boRWh/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdlMjRIYjZlMQ==.

harassment have been reported to the Kosovo Police.” This example highlights the organization's persistence in reporting and ensuring transparency in the country's institutions regarding the levels of violence against women and girls. This accessibility fosters a dialogue on sexual violence by confronting people with the issue, preventing them from overlooking this pervasive problem.

After initiating a general campaign on sexual violence, QIKA found it necessary to mobilize additional tactics following another incident of sexual assault. On August 29th, 2022, an egregious case of sexual violence caused uproar in all of Kosovo: on this day, an 11-year old girl was gang-raped by 5 men for 7 hours in Prishtina.¹³⁷ After posting that this heinous crime occurred, QIKA made a separate post publicizing a protest advancing 3 demands: “1. State protection and security for girls and women; 2. Fair treatment of cases of violence against women and deserving punishment for rapists; 3. Legalization of the use and distribution of self-defense irritating gas (pepper spray).”¹³⁸ This protest would serve as a call to action for all people in Kosovo to take a stand against sexual violence towards women and girls. In Prishtina's main square, hundreds of individuals rallied with QIKA, chanting and advocating for justice regarding the crime forced upon her.

In the patriarchal climate of Kosovo, there was, however, a backlash against the advocacy demonstrated when speaking out against the child's sexual assault on a Facebook news report. This was accompanied by response comments that were unsympathetic to the girl. A regular Instagram user responded to those hostile comments. The user, @feminism.ks, posts on all types of violence against women, and has garnered a following as well as critics. @feminism.ks

¹³⁷ “Qikaorg: Policia e Kosovës Raporton Se 5 Persona Dyshohet Se Kanë Dhunuar Një Të Mitur Në Prishtinë.” *Instagram*, August 29, 2022.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch10rS-oSd0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdlMjRIYjZIMQ==.

¹³⁸ “Qikaorg: PROTESTË: MBROJTJE PËR VAJZAT DHE GRATË.” *Instagram*, August 29, 2022.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch2y4QFolW1/>.

compiled a carousel of screenshots of 4 men commenting on this case, which blamed the victim or society's loosening values, and maligned victims as "whores."

Kurkush me forc nuk te shtin mrena pa ja lujt bishtin (No one forces you inside, without you wagging your tail) (Liridon Shala). *Shum e let mos me ndodh kjo veq mos me dal gati cullak gjinija femrore jopo edhe fmit ne klas te par jakem nis mej eduku qysh mu gjvesh* (It's very easy for this to not occur, if the female gender did not go out nearly naked, but we have even started to educate children in first grade how to undress)(Arsim Lakna). *Veshtja provokuese e gruas dhe kshtu vjen pasoja* (With the provocative dress of women, comes consequence (Leutrim Hazbi Tafallari). *Askush nuk mund asken me forc ta fuse ne makin, kurse laviret (kurvat) futen vet dje e nese pak kuptojet me par te them se me forc mendja e lavirev kshtu asht* (No one can force anyone into a car, but prostitutes (whores) get into cars themselves, and if you don't understand this, I can first say that they enter forcefully, the mind of the prostitutes is this way) (Imer Saqipi).¹³⁹

These comments starkly demonstrate the disturbing backlash that unfolded following the revelation of this crime. Furthermore, they exemplify the ease with which men in the country publicly engage in victim-shaming without concern for the consequences. This highlights the prevailing culture of impunity in Kosovo, where individuals feel emboldened to act without facing accountability for their harmful actions or words towards women and girls.

QIKA as the Feminist Killjoy

They also reveal another reality: how difficult it is for women in Kosovo to advocate against *any* cause. Because they are women, they are immediately met with anger and belittlement. Women who question the status quo in Kosovo are deemed as the enemy, their disobedience is viewed as a betrayal of their cultural heritage. In the words of feminist scholar and author Sara Ahmed:

In speaking up or speaking out, you upset the situation. That you have described what was said by another as a problem means you have created a problem. You become the problem you create[...] The ones who point out that racism, sexism, and heterosexism are actually charged with willfulness; they refuse to allow these realities to be passed over. Even talking about injustices, violence, power, and subordination in a world that uses

¹³⁹ "Feminism.Ks: When i Say Men, i Mean Men like Them." *Instagram*, August 30, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch4USqxopYi/>.

"happy diversity" as a technology of social description can mean becoming the obstacle, as the ones who "get in the way" of the happiness of others.¹⁴⁰

Ahmed aptly captures the paradoxical nature of speaking out against injustices. Ahmed's concept of *affect theory*, as reflected in the quote, emphasizes that emotions and affects are not merely individual, private experiences but are deeply intertwined with the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. In the case of women advocating for change in Kosovo, the emotional reactions and backlash they face are not isolated incidents; instead, they are manifestations of a broader cultural and social fabric that resists challenges to the existing power structures. Speaking up, as Ahmed suggests, disrupts the comfort of the prevailing narratives, making those who address injustices susceptible to becoming the perceived problem rather than the solution. In a society that sometimes deploys the facade of "happy diversity," the act of challenging this facade can indeed position individuals as obstacles, hindering the perceived happiness of those who resist a critical examination of the status quo.

One of the obstacles to activism is the ideology of shame. Within the Albanian psyche in Kosovo, the idea of *marre* (shame) is still as tangible as it was hundreds of years ago. There are things that are inherently shameful that should never be spoken about openly. The thought remains that *as Albanians*, they will handle issues in the sanctity of their own home. *Advocating against topics like gender-based violence in Kosovo is perceived as a direct attack on Albanian identity*. It is seen as a form of shaming not only individuals, but the entire nation in the eyes of other countries. Essentially, the prevailing mindset is that as a nation, they have struggled significantly to achieve independence and gain acceptance worldwide. Consequently, any advocacy that challenges societal norms is viewed as tarnishing the reputation of the country. Thus, such expressions of dissent are deemed entirely unacceptable. This mindset forces women

¹⁴⁰ Willmington, Lizzy. "Sara Ahmed: Willful Subjects." *Feminist Legal Studies* 23, no. 2 (August 1, 2015): 235–39.

activists to completely embody the role of the “feminist killjoy”. Anyone in this position refuses to accept the status quo and disrupts the prevailing norms that may perpetuate discrimination or harm. By doing so, she challenges the idea that happiness should be prioritized at the expense of addressing and dismantling oppressive structures.¹⁴¹

Undoubtedly, QIKA embodies the role of the feminist killjoy within their societal and cultural contexts. As a collective, their resolute commitment to not relinquishing joy underscores their unwavering dedication to addressing injustices, particularly those faced by women and girls. This commitment goes beyond personal happiness, emphasizing a readiness to disrupt even joyful moments when necessary to confront and remedy systemic injustices. QIKA recognizes that their work is part of a broader movement aimed at dismantling the roots of patriarchy on a global scale. Prioritizing justice-seeking, they reflect this commitment back into society.

In the aftermath of the 11-year-old victim's case, QIKA's protests inspired other women, including myself, to mobilize and take a stand against sexual violence. Their advocacy sparked protests in solidarity with victims in various locations, such as Tirana, Albania; Skopje, Macedonia; and Manhattan, New York. Despite the numerous obstacles in QIKA's path, they persevered and ensured their voice was heard in advocating for all victims. The direct reaction to their advocacy empowered others to do the same, highlighting the interconnectedness of their movement.

QIKA & F'Oda

As a witness to the myriad advocacy efforts led by QIKA, I found inspiration to embark on my own initiative. Alongside five other young Albanian women, we established The F'Oda Summit, marking the inception of the first female *Oda*. Held on July 15th, 2023, in Kosovo, this summit aimed to empower high school-aged girls. The project came to fruition through

¹⁴¹ Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press eBooks, 2010.

collaboration with QIKA and AMC Kosovo - Action for Mothers and Children. The F'Oda Summit served as a platform for high school girls to delve into the complexities of gender inequality in Kosovo. It provided an educational experience equipping them with resources to prevent, combat, and overcome barriers to gender equality in their lives while also fostering their ability to thrive in the community. The summit covered an array of topics, with the primary themes focusing on girls' empowerment, sexual education, and career development.

The day's events commenced with a general session on gender inequality led by Leonida Molliqaj, the executive director of QIKA. During the planning stages of this event, extensive discussions took place on how QIKA could contribute their expertise. Through collaborative efforts, it was determined that while the organization would fulfill various roles throughout the day, their leadership in the crucial general session was paramount. Recognizing a gap in awareness of gender injustice terminology, a deliberate decision was made for QIKA, an organization led by fellow women citizens of Kosovo, to shed light on this important aspect of the summit. Having personally witnessed the presentation, I observed the girls' remarkable receptiveness to the information. They were attentive listeners, engaging with the material and posing a myriad of questions. It became clear to me that the majority of the students had not been exposed to the diverse topics encompassing gender inequality in their traditional education.

Later, Leonida participated as one of four panelists in a discussion focused on career development in the country, each panelist offering distinct perspectives. Interestingly, among the panelists, the students appeared to resonate more with insights from the fashion industry than those from an advocacy standpoint. Nevertheless, they demonstrated a keen interest in Leonida's perspectives, particularly regarding her work in journalism and advocacy. Following the panel, many students approached Leonida, seeking guidance on how to become involved in QIKA's

efforts. The day's final collaboration involved QIKA leading a workshop on sexual education, in partnership with the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and AMC Kosovo. The three organizations delved into crucial topics such as STI prevention, safe sex, healthy relationships, consent, and sexual violence awareness.

The summit served as a catalyst, bringing together organizations and activists to empower young women in the country. It provided a crucial forum where girls could not only identify injustices in their lives but also establish a support system with peers and professionals. This collaborative effort is a necessary step in preventing ongoing injustices. QIKA's active involvement in our initiative underscores their efforts in challenging archaic mindsets prevailing in the country. The organization sees the fight against these narratives as a collective responsibility and an act of resistance.

QIKA strategically utilized a comprehensive approach, recognizing that meaningful change requires not only challenging existing narratives but also actively educating and empowering the younger generation. Their approach in providing resources and knowledge to these marginalized girls showcased a proactive strategy to address societal issues. For meaningful change to take root among younger generations, there must be a concerted effort from current women and girls advocating on their behalf. QIKA's strategic deployment of resources and education reflects their dedication to being a driving force in this larger movement. This event highlighted that everyone involved was part of a larger movement, transcending individual interests for the collective cause.

The foundations of this project emerged from a deep concern for the pervasive issue of gender-based violence affecting women and girls in the country. Witnessing the alarming number of cases, it became clear that action was needed. Understanding the transformative power of

education, I felt compelled to pass down the knowledge acquired through the work and activism of inspiring figures, such as those associated with QIKA. In crafting this initiative, it was paramount for us to employ purposeful tactics in addressing the critical issue of gender-based violence, a topic that has often been historically ignored by Albanian society. Our approach aimed not only to raise awareness but also to spark meaningful conversations, challenge societal norms, and foster a sense of solidarity among women and girls. By leveraging education as a catalyst for change, we sought to empower individuals with the tools to recognize, combat, and ultimately eradicate gender-based violence. The project embodies a dedication to breaking the silence surrounding these issues, creating a platform for dialogue, and fostering a culture that actively rejects and addresses gender-based violence.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in conceptualizing this paper, my thoughts harked back to that moment at a Gjakovë coffee shop, where the silence of every Albanian woman resonated as a consequence of a culture that deems them disposable. The deep entrenchment of patriarchy in Kosovo's cultural fabric became especially evident to me. The pervasive grip of patriarchy in Kosovo's culture prompted contemplation on the constructed perception of women's bodies and how they become manipulated to become the hosts of their own subjugation. With these foundational thoughts and queries, I aimed to research the impact on current women's activism in the country in dismantling sexist ideologies within the background of cultural and religious conservatism and the prior activism exhibited by women after the war. Specifically, the research focused on the QIKA Organization, whose strategies intricately confront patriarchal values, with a particular focus in addressing the targeted oppression of women's bodies on multiple levels.

In this research, I found that QIKA's comprehensive approach, demonstrated through its multifaceted strategies, stands as a powerful illustration of challenging societal norms within an exceedingly patriarchal backdrop. The organization grapples with obstacles rooted in the enduring conservatism of Albanian society, which continues to shape the collective psyche. Additionally, Kosovo, still viewed through a post-conflict lens, struggles to address deeply rooted issues, with the aftermath of war leaving the societal landscape in disarray. In navigating this challenging environment, QIKA encounters a societal path that has historically overlooked the rights and representation of women. The fallout of the war has left a void in the socio-political landscape, with women facing minimal political representation, the marginalization perpetuated by conservative Islamic figures, and a stark lack of accountability for the war crime of rape of over 20,000 Kosovar women. The lingering tensions between

extremist ideologies, such as *Salafi* Islam, and the push for total westernization contribute to a confusing environment for the people of Kosovo. Caught between conservative Islamic expectations and the pressures of embracing extreme modernity, the population grapples with conflicting narratives, leaving them uncertain about their identity and societal direction.

Amidst these tensions, QIKA endeavors to address injustices that are compounded by a socio-cultural attitude that contradicts the rights of women and girls. Topics directly related to the experiences of women are often overshadowed or silenced due to the shame built into Albanian culture. In this intricate context, QIKA confronts a myriad of external factors, navigating a complex landscape to advocate for justice and equality. The organization's multifaceted strategies not only challenge societal norms, but also work to dismantle the barriers and misconceptions that impede the recognition of women's rights in Kosovo. From direct action campaigns confronting societal discomfort around menstruation to advocating for justice for victims of gender-based violence, QIKA's efforts transcend mere activism; they aim to reshape societal norms in Kosovo towards a more equitable future. Through consistent and timely communication on various platforms, QIKA ensures comprehensive engagement with their audience, effectively challenging oppressive ideologies. Their tactics are not disparate elements, but interconnected layers working in tandem with one another. The activism on social media serves as a crucial bridge, connecting the broader ideological battles to tangible actions. It amplifies the impact of QIKA's direct confrontations and other campaigns by fostering a real-time dialogue with the audience, engaging with attitudes and ideologies that perpetuate gender inequality.

One exemplary demonstration of QIKA's impact I delved into was their campaign, #PecetaNukEshteLuks, which challenges societal discomfort around menstruation. The

organization actively critiques political institutions, calling for the abolition of policies leading to period poverty. By protesting a specific tax and sparking broader conversations about menstruation, QIKA aims not only to seek justice, but also to dismantle deeply ingrained societal taboos surrounding the idea of purity. Another facet of QIKA's impact lies in their efforts to address and combat gender-based violence in the forms of physical and sexual violence. Beyond advocating for governmental intervention, the organization actively strengthens the discourse and dialogue surrounding violence against women – which is continually silenced by the cultural normalization of this type of violence. This includes persistently reporting and ensuring transparency in the country's institutions regarding the levels of violence against women and girls.

In examining the QIKA organization, I utilized a mixed-methods approach that analyzed qualitative data from my first-hand observation and the analysis of historical events and the organization's social media presence. It is essential to recognize the constraints inherent in this research, notably the limited availability of studies focusing on current women NGOs in Kosovo. This scarcity poses a challenge in fully contextualizing and comparing the impacts and strategies employed by these organizations. Despite these constraints, the findings from this study lay a positive groundwork for subsequent research endeavors. The insights derived from examining QIKA's strategies offer a solid foundation for future projects to build upon. As researchers embark on subsequent studies, there is an opportunity to expand the scope, augment sample sizes, and integrate additional original material. This approach aims to not only address the existing gaps in our understanding of women's activism in Kosovo, but also to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive view of the challenges and triumphs faced by these organizations. In

doing so, future research can contribute significantly to the evolving discourse surrounding women's rights and activism in Kosovo.

In conclusion, this study finds that the advocacy spearheaded by the QIKA organization has played a pivotal role in dismantling gender-biased ideologies entrenched in Kosovo's society. Navigating through the complexities of patriarchal beliefs, QIKA has effectively addressed crucial issues concerning women and girls. By conceptualizing the woman's body as the epicenter of oppression, QIKA confronts these challenges head-on through campaigns that break down stigma around menstruation, physical violence, and sexual violence. The organization's activism takes varied forms, always remaining accessible to the people of Kosovo through multiple media channels.

QIKA stands prominently at the forefront of the feminist movement within the country, acknowledging its role not only in local advocacy, but also in global initiatives aimed at collective and collaborative efforts to dismantle the patriarchy. The findings of this study illuminate the transformative impact of QIKA's endeavors, emphasizing their significant contribution to reshaping societal norms in Kosovo and advocating for a more balanced and just future. The intellectual value lies not just in dissecting strategies, but in envisioning a future where projects like this contribute to a more just, equitable, and compassionate society. As we reflect on the findings, we are prompted to imagine a world where the collective efforts of organizations like QIKA become catalysts for lasting societal change, challenging entrenched norms and fostering a more inclusive future for all.

References

- “A Hyn Në Gjynah Burri i Cili Nuk Lejon Gruan Të Punon.” Bedri Lika, May 31, 2014.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ufw_E0n-zE8.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press eBooks, 2010.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822392781>.
- Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*. DigiCat, 2022.
- Alison, Miranda. “Wartime Sexual Violence: Women’s Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity.” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (2007): 75–90.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097951>.
- Anzulovic, Branimir. *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (Annandale, N.S.W.: Pluto Press, 2000).
- Army University Press. “The Liberation and Independence of Kosovo,” n.d.
<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2018/December/Liberation-of-Kosovo/>.
- Council of Women World Leaders. “Atifete Jahjaga,” n.d.
<https://www.councilwomenworldleaders.org/atifete-jahjaga.html>.
- Bami, Xhorxhina. “Kosovo Women Seek End to ‘Period Poverty.’” *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network*, August 15, 2022.
<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/08/15/kosovo-women-seek-end-to-period-poverty/>.
- “Petition Urges Kosovo Govt to Cut Period Products Tax.” Balkan Insight, May 11, 2023.
<https://balkaninsight.com/2023/05/11/petition-urges-kosovo-govt-to-cut-period-products-tax/>.

Balkansocietytp. "Linda Gusia | Balkansocietytp," n.d.

<https://www.balkansocietytp.com/copy-of-eli-krasniqi>.

Begisholli, Blerta. "Activists Advocate for Lower Taxes on Menstrual Products in Kosovo - Prishtina Insight." Prishtina Insight, May 25, 2023.

<https://prishtinainsight.com/combating-period-poverty-activists-advocate-for-lower-taxes-on-menstrual-products-in-kosovo-mag/>.

Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press eBooks, 2011.

<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394716>.

Birn. "Share Your Experience: Domestic Violence in Kosovo." Balkan Insight, March 13, 2023.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/13/share-your-experience-domestic-violence-in-kosovo/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20over%20%2C700%20cases,women%20were%20domestic%20violence%20victims>.

BIRN. "BIRN - Balkan Investigative Reporting Network," July 5, 2023. <https://birn.eu.com/>.

Booth, Marilyn. *Harem Histories*. Duke University Press eBooks, 2010.

<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393467>.

Brodmann, Mihail Arandarenko and Stefanie. "Job Opportunities for Youth in Kosovo: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?" *World Bank*, March 26, 2019.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2019/03/15/job-opportunities-for-youth-in-kosovo-two-steps-forward-one-step-back>.

Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will : Men, Women and Rape* / [by] Susan Brownmiller. Secker and Warburg eBooks, 1975. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA81870884>.

Bublaku, Përparim. "Historia e Çarshisë Së Vjetër Të Gjakovës." Arbresh.info, June 26, 2021.

<https://www.arbresh.info/lajmet/historia-e-carshise-se-vjeter-te-gjakoves/>.

- Bunker, Robert J. "Martin van Creveld on Men, Women & War." *Military Review* 82, no. 6 (November 1, 2002): 102.
<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-282616941/martin-van-creveld-on-men-women-war>.
- "Butterfly – Se Ndjehem Mirë...", n.d. <https://butterfly-rks.com/>.
- Changing the Story. All Rights Reserved. "Linda Gusia (University of Prishtina) | Changing the Story," n.d.
<https://www.changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/profiles/linda-gusia-university-of-prishtina/>.
- Chao, Itziar Mujika, and Linda Gusia. "Unfinished Activism: Genealogies of Women's Movements and the Re-Imagining of Feminist Peace and Resistance." In *Feminist Conversations on Peace*, edited by Sarah Smith and Keina Yoshida, 1st ed., 47–60. Bristol University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2rr3hcn.8>.
- Coan, Christin B. "Rethinking the Spoils of War: Prosecuting Rape as a War Crime in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia." *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 183.
<https://scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1688&context=ncilj>.
- Corrin, Chris. "Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Gender Analysis in Kosova." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 78–98.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/146167401750187651>.
- Cottey, Andrew. "The Kosovo War in Perspective." *International Affairs* 85, no. 3 (May 1, 2009): 593–608. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2009.00816.x>.

- “Crimes of Sexual Violence | International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,” n.d.
<https://www.icty.org/en/features/crimes-sexual-violence#:~:text=The%20ICTY%20was%20also%20the,following%20a%20previous%20case%20adjudicated.>
- De Wet, Erika. “The Governance of Kosovo: Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Establishment and Functioning of Eulex.” *American Journal of International Law* 103, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20456723>.
- Di Lellio, Anna. “Seeking Justice for Wartime Sexual Violence in Kosovo.” *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 30, no. 3 (February 22, 2016): 621–43.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416630959>.
- Di Lellio, Anna, and R. Elsie. "The battle of Kosovo 1389." *An Albanian epic*. London: IB Tauris (2009).
- Dr. Shefqet Krasniqi. “Vi Nga Puna i Rraskapitur Por Gruaja Nuk Livrit Vendi Pastaj Un Nervozohem Dhe e Rrahi ?,” April 1, 2014.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqvD1jsGTwM>.
- UN Women – Headquarters. “Dressing up a Soccer Stadium for Survivors in Kosovo,” July 10, 2015.
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/7/kosovo-dressing-up-a-soccer-stadium>.
- e-flux, <http://www.e-flux.com>. “Sara Ahmed on Feminist Killjoys.” E-flux Conversations, June 25, 2015. <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/sara-ahmed-on-feminist-killjoys/1952>.
- Euronews. “Is the Brutal Murder of Marigona Osmani a Tipping Point for Kosovan Society?” *Euronews*, September 2, 2021.
<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/09/02/is-the-brutal-murder-of-marigona-osmani-a-tipping-point-for-kosovan-society>.

“Feminism.Ks: When i Say Men, i Mean Men like Them.” *Instagram*, August 30, 2022.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch4USqxopYi/>.

“For the First Time, This Woman Confesses as Two Serbs Raped during the Kosovo War,”

Shqipëria, October 17, 2018,

<https://www.anabelmagazine.com/news/38464/for-the-first-time-this-woman-confesses-as-two-serbs-raped-during-the-kosovo-war/eng/>.

Fstovall. “International Summit in Kosovo Produces ‘Pristina Principles’ to Increase Women’s Empowerment.” National Democratic Institute, n.d.

<https://www.ndi.org/kosovo-summit-pristina-principles>.

Gashi, Donika. “‘I Didn’t Even Know How to Ask for the Right Contraceptives’ - Kosovo 2.0.”

Kosovo 2.0, October 18, 2023.

<https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/i-didnt-even-know-how-to-ask-for-the-right-contraceptives/#:~:text=Aspects%20of%20sexual%20and%20reproductive,education%20beyond%20the%20biological%20elements>.

Gagnon, V. P. “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia.” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 130. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539081>.

Gest, Gró. “Podcast with Linda Gusia.” GRÓ GEST, n.d.

<https://www.grocentre.is/gest/media-gest/news/podcast-with-linda-gusia>.

Hehir, Aidan, and Furtuna Sheremeti. *Kosovo and Transitional Justice*. Routledge eBooks, 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003079781>.

Henrich, Joseph, Michal Bauer, Alessandra Cassar, Julie Chytilová, and Benjamin Grant

Purzycki. “War Increases Religiosity.” *Nature Human Behaviour* 3, no. 2 (January 28, 2019): 129–35. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-018-0512-3>.

- Holzner, Bernhard. "Engendering Governance after Armed Conflict: Observations from Kosovo." *Frontiers in Sociology* 6 (May 17, 2021).
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.574225>.
- Hoxha, Ideal. "Women's Rights in Kosovo: Cultural and Religious Barriers." *Uib*, May 22, 2017.
https://www.academia.edu/33140208/Womens_Rights_in_Kosovo_Cultural_and_Religious_Barriers.
- Kamberi, Mois. "Chambers Were the Place Where Men Decided the Fate of the Nation." *DOAJ* (*DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals*), September 1, 2021.
<https://doaj.org/article/f432184b02f247af8614183fc37ecd7a>.
- klaus kästle - nationsonline.org. "Kosovo - A Country Profile - Nations Online Project," n.d.
<https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/kosovo.htm>.
- "Kolektivifeminist: VRASJA E GRAVE NGA BURRAT TË TRAJTOHET SI URGJENCË KOMBËTARE." *Instagram*, December 1, 2022.
https://www.instagram.com/p/ClozVcjooHK/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdlMjRIYjZlMQ==.
- UN Women – Europe and Central Asia. "Kosovo," n.d.
<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/kosovo-under-unscr-1244>.
- "Kosovo - the World Factbook," n.d.
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kosovo/summaries/>.
- Worldwide Tax Summaries. "Kosovo: Corporate - Other Taxes," August 3, 2023.
<https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/kosovo/corporate/other-taxes>.
- "Kosovo History – Be in Kosovo," n.d. <https://www.beinkosovo.com/kosovo-history/>.

Krasniqi, Jeta. “Kosovo Women’s Political Activism for Greater Representation.” IAI Istituto Affari Internazionali, November 7, 2023.

<https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/kosovo-womens-political-activism-greater-representation>.

Kwn_Admin. “National Council on Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War Prepares Awareness Campaign.” Kosovo Women’s Network, n.d.

<https://womensnetwork.org/national-council-on-survivors-of-sexual-violence-during-the-war-prepares-awareness-campaign/#:~:text=This%20Council%20was%20created%20by,as%20foreseen%20by%20Law%20Nr>.

Lampe, John R., Antonia Young, and John B. Allcock. “Kosovo | History, Map, Flag, Population, Languages, & Capital.” Encyclopedia Britannica, December 4, 2023.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Kosovo>.

Lesley Abdela. “Kosovo: Missed Opportunities, Lessons for the Future.” *Development in Practice* 13, no. 2/3 (2003): 208–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4029592>.

“Leonida Molliqaj - QIKA,” February 3, 2021. <https://qika.org/authors/ipsum-lorem/>.

Balkansocietytp. “Linda Gusia | Balkansocietytp,” n.d.

<https://www.balkansocietytp.com/copy-of-eli-krasniqi>.

Copyright (C)2023 Changing the Story. All Rights Reserved. “Linda Gusia (University of Prishtina) | Changing the Story,” n.d.

<https://www.changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/profiles/linda-gusia-university-of-prishtina/>.

Macastena, Ardita. “Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo.” Questa Soft, 2019.

<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=799293>.

“Medica Kosova - Survivors-of-War-Rape-Break-Silence-through-Paintings,” n.d.

https://medicakosova.org/publications_post?p_id=65.

Morina, Die. “Crusading Journalist Defies Threatening Climate in Kosovo.” *Balkan Insight*, May 18, 2018.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2017/04/13/over-a-decade-on-journalism-facing-threats-04-12-2017/>.

Munt, Sally R. “Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame.” *Choice Reviews Online* 45, no. 11 (July 1, 2008): 45–6380. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.45-6380>.

Brookings. “NATO, the UN, and the Use of Force | Brookings,” May 10, 2017.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/nato-the-un-and-the-use-of-force/>.

“Në Emër Të Lirisë – Unë Jam LAVIRE - QIKA,” April 29, 2022.

<https://qika.org/en/perspective-post/ne-emer-te-lirise-une-jam-lavire/>.

Olidort, Jacob. “What Is Salafism?” The Washington Institute, November 24, 2015.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-salafism>.

“@orgqika.” *Twitter*, n.d. <https://twitter.com/orgqika?lang=en>.

World Bank. “Overview,” n.d. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>.

Plesch, Valerie. “A Dark Legacy: The Scars of Sexual Violence from the Kosovo War.”

POLITICO, April 18, 2019.

<https://www.politico.eu/interactive/a-dark-legacy-the-scars-of-sexual-violence-from-the-kosovo-war/>.

Pokalova, Elena. “Framing Separatism as Terrorism: Lessons from Kosovo.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 5 (April 9, 2010): 429–47.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10576101003691564>.

Qafmolla, Ervin, and Petrit Krejziu. "Kosovo Imam in Trouble for Pro-Ottoman Sermon."

Balkan Insight, May 22, 2018.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2016/02/16/kosovo-chauvinist-imam-faces-nationalist-indictment-02-16-2016/>.

QIKA. "38 Burra - QIKA," March 19, 2021. <https://qika.org/en/perspective-post/38-burra/>.

QIKA. "ABOUT QIKA - QIKA," July 20, 2023. <https://qika.org/en/per-qika-english/>.

"QIKA." *Facebook*, n.d. <https://www.facebook.com/qikaorg/>.

QIKA. "QIKA n'ekran - Hapësirat e Cenuara Të Grave Në Media," November 5, 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGQzCU6OLsE>.

"QIKA: Dardan Krivaqa Dhe Arbër Sejdiu Janë Shpallur Fajtor Për Vrasjen e Marigona

Osmanit. Krivaqa u Dënua Me Burgim Të Përjetshëm, Ndërsa Sejdiu Me Burgim Prej 15

Vitesh." *Facebook*, August 4, 2023. Accessed October 8, 2023.

https://www.facebook.com/qikaorg/posts/615596564049436?ref=embed_post.

QIKA. "QIKA Mbanë Takimin e Radhës Me Vajzat Rome, Ashkalike Dhe Egjiptiane - QIKA,"

November 2, 2023.

<https://qika.org/en/activities/qika-mbane-takimin-e-radhes-me-vajzat-rome-ashkalike-dhe-egjiptiane/>.

"QIKA n'ekran." @InstitutiQIKA, n.d. <https://www.youtube.com/@InstitutiQIKA>.

"@qikaorg." *Instagram*, n.d. <https://www.instagram.com/qikaorg/>.

"Qikaorg: 1 ≠ 1 Is Part of Judicial Dig Data Challenge Powered by Millennium Foundation

Kosovo (MFK) and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)." *Instagram*, August 22,

2022.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Chjwn1boRWh/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdIMjRIYjZIMQ==.

“@qikaorg: Lajmin e Plotë e Gjeni Në Www.Qika.Org.” *Instagram*, August 4, 2023. Accessed October 8, 2023. https://www.instagram.com/p/CvhMSL6IpVW/?img_index=1.

“Qikaorg: Policia e Kosovës Raporton Se 5 Persona Dyshohet Se Kanë Dhunuar Një Të Mitur Në Prishtinë.” *Instagram*, August 29, 2022.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch10rS-oSd0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdIMjRIYjZIMQ==.

“Qikaorg: PROTESTË: MBROJTJE PËR VAJZAT DHE GRATË.” *Instagram*, August 29, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch2y4QFolW1/>.

“Qikaorg: Shteti Po Takson Menstruacionet!” *Instagram*, October 13, 2022.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj pzDh4ICaQ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdIMjRIYjZIMQ==.

“Qikaorg: Sot Fillojmë Shpërndarjen e Pecetave Menstruale Falas Nëpër Shkollat e Qyteteve Të Kosovës. 🧡.” *Instagram*, May 25, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd-UVjoI2Lz/>.

“Qikaorg: #PecetaNukËshtëLuks ‘Java Kundër Varfërisë Menstruale Dhe Stigmatizimit Të Menstruacioneve’ Realizuar Nga QIKA Mbështetur Nga Butterfly.” *Instagram*, May 24, 2021.

https://www.instagram.com/p/CPQHJAdLm5c/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MTdIMjRIYjZIMQ==.

“Rape as a Weapon of War: A Conversation with Former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga,” January 31, 2019.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/rape-weapon-war-conversation-former-kosovo-president-atifete-jahjaga>.

Reporter, Guardian Staff. "Men with a Mission: No Women." *The Guardian*, July 18, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/mar/02/balkans>.

Rfe/RI. "Kosovar Journalist Beaten, Hospitalized after Turning to Politics."

RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, May 13, 2017.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-journalist-xharra-beaten-hospitalized/28484960.html>.

Saad, Syeda Khaula, and Syeda Khaula Saad. "The Stigma of Menstruation in Muslim Households." *Muslim*, August 13, 2021.

<https://muslim.co/the-stigma-of-menstruation-in-muslim-households/>.

"Sara Ahmed | S&F Online | Polyphonic Feminisms," n.d.

https://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/ahmed_01.htm#:~:text=In%20speaking%20up%20or%20speaking,you%20up%2C%20cut%20you%20out.

Sermaxhaj, Gresë. "KLI and KWN Publish the Investigation Report Regarding the Murder Of Sehabate Morina: Justice Institutions Neglected This Case." Kosovo Women's Network, April 2, 2021.

<https://womensnetwork.org/kli-and-kwn-publish-the-investigation-report-regarding-the-murder-of-sehabate-morina-justice-institutions-neglected-this-case/>.

Shabani, Adelina. "Kosovo after the Conflict The influence of Religion in Politics." (2015).

Slater, Victoria. "Teachers, Advocates Trying to Change Attitudes about Sex Education | Kosovoalive," July 10, 2014.

<https://www.kosovalive.org/2014/07/10/teachers-advocates-trying-to-change-attitudes-about-sex-education/>.

unfoundation.org. “Stand With Her: 6 Women-Led Organizations Tackling Gender-Based Violence,” November 21, 2022.

https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/stand-with-her-6-women-led-organizations-tackling-gender-based-violence/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA7OqrBhD9ARIsAK3UXh1sSxtCTz1n6BFpGlBvCbEbyY8B2DbAaFaNNeXje9E4ko5qj4B0wYYaAsvpEALw_wcB.

Sullivan, Stacy. “Kosovo’s America Obsession.” TIME.com, n.d.

<https://time.com/kosovo-independence-america-obsession/>.

“Summary of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement,” n.d.

<https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/101244.htm>.

Change.org. “Supporter Comments · Nënshkruaj Peticionin Për Heqjen e TVSh-Së Për Produkte Menstruale · Change.Org,” n.d.

<https://www.change.org/p/n%C3%ABnshkruaj-peticionin-p%C3%ABr-heqjen-e-tvsh-s%C3%AB-p%C3%ABr-produkte-menstruale/c>.

Al-Islam.org. “Taharat & Najasat: Ritual Purity & Impurity,” October 5, 2012.

<https://www.al-islam.org/code-practice-muslims-west-sayyid-ali-hussaini-sistani/taharat-najasat-ritual-purity-impurity>.

ReliefWeb. “The Kosovo Report - Albania,” October 23, 2000.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/albania/kosovo-report>.

Aktualitet. “The Murder of Marigona Osmani That Shook Kosovo / Medical Experts Revealed the Shocking Facts: 18-Year-Old Suffered Polytrauma, Broken Limbs, Violence That Caused Her Death,” n.d.

<https://sot.com.al/english/aktualitet/vrasja-e-marigona-osmanit-qe-tronditi-kosoven-eksperimentet-e-mjekesise-z-i459568>.

- Tarnoff, Curt. "Kosovo: reconstruction and development assistance." Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2001.
- Thelwell, Kim. "5 Improvements for Kosovo Women in Politics." The Borgen Project, May 13, 2021. <https://borgenproject.org/kosovo-women-in-politics/>.
- Totten, Michael. "The (Really) Moderate Muslims of Kosovo | City Journal Civil Rights." City Journal, season-03 2008.
<https://www.city-journal.org/article/the-really-moderate-muslims-of-kosovo>.
- Tran, Mark. "Dresses on Washing Lines Pay Tribute to Kosovo Survivors of Sexual Violence." *The Guardian*, October 19, 2022.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/11/kosovo-sexual-violence-survivors-art-dresses>.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "RefWorld | World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Kosovo : Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians." Refworld, n.d.
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cf730.html>.
- UNMIK. "United Nations Resolution 1244," January 19, 2016.
<https://unmik.unmissions.org/united-nations-resolution-1244>.
- University of Tetova. "Euphemisms in the context of the Posttribe region are integral components of the national ethnolinguistic property. - Universiteti i Tetoves," n.d.
<https://eprints.unite.edu.mk/822/>.
- Valentino, Benjamin A. "Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1 (2014): 89-103.
https://www-annualreviews-org.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-polisci-082112-141937#_i3

- Verel, Patrick. "Former President of Kosovo Urges More Recognition and Care for Sexual Violence Survivors." Fordham Newsroom, May 17, 2022.
<https://news.fordham.edu/politics-and-society/former-president-of-kosovo-urges-more-recognition-and-care-for-sexual-violence-survivors/>.
- "View of Seizing the Past, Forging the Present: Changing Visions of Self and Nation among the Kosova Albanians," n.d.
<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/aer/article/view/593/695>.
- Vllahiu, Emirjeta. "Disciplinary Proceedings Initiated against Prosecutor in Femicide Case - Prishtina Insight." Prishtina Insight, April 5, 2023.
<https://prishtinainsight.com/disciplinary-proceedings-initiated-against-prosecutor-in-femicide-case/>.
- Vulaj, Elizabeth. "Twenty Years Later: A Look Back at the Kosovo War and Enforcing Legal Remedies for Murder, Torture, and Sexual Violence War Crimes." *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law* 26, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 129–45.
<https://search-ebscohost-com.avoserv2.library.fordham.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=144915983&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- "Disciplinary Proceedings Initiated against Prosecutor in Femicide Case - Prishtina Insight." Prishtina Insight, April 5, 2023.
<https://prishtinainsight.com/disciplinary-proceedings-initiated-against-prosecutor-in-femicide-case/>.
- Buffer: All-you-need Social Media Toolkit for Small Businesses. "What Is a Carousel Post?," n.d. <https://buffer.com/social-media-terms/carousel-post>.

Whitaker, Ian. “‘A Sack for Carrying Things’: The Traditional Role of Women in Northern Albanian Society.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (July 1, 1981): 146.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/3317892>.

Willmington, Lizzy. “Sara Ahmed: Willful Subjects.” *Feminist Legal Studies* 23, no. 2 (August 1, 2015): 235–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-015-9290-8>.

Woehrel, Steven. “CRS Report for Congress - Sgp.fas.org,”.

World Bank Group. “Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don’t Have Same Economic Rights as Men.” *World Bank*, March 8, 2022.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/01/nearly-2-4-billion-women-globally-don-t-have-same-economic-rights-as-men>.

Zeqiri, Ardita. “Protest in Prishtina after Pregnant Woman’s Murder in Hospital Courtyard - Prishtina Insight.” *Prishtina Insight*, December 2, 2022.

<https://prishtinainsight.com/protest-in-prishtina-after-pregnant-womans-murder-in-hospital-courtyard/>.

APPENDIX

The following appendices are organized thematically, presenting a collection of photographs, laws, and posts that correlate with women's activism in Kosovo and the QIKA organization. This arrangement aims to enhance the conceptualization of the research by providing a comprehensive view of the subject matter.

Appendix A:

A collection of photographs taken at the F'Oda Summit showcasing QIKA's involvement in collaborative activism in challenging the status quo in Kosovo's gender inequality. [Note: All of these photographs were taken by me during the event, thus are my own.]



Appendix B:

A collection of excerpts from Kosovo's gender equality laws created as a result of women's activism in Kosovo. [Note: All excerpts have been taken from documents cited on page

33.]

Prof. dr. iur. Haxhi Gashi

COMMENTARY OF THE LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY

LAW No. 05/L-020 ON GENDER EQUALITY, Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, no. 16, dated 26 June 2015.

CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Purpose

1. This Law shall guarantee, protect and promote equality between genders as a basic value of democratic development of society.
2. This Law determines the general and specific measures to ensure and protect the equal rights of men and women, and defines the Institutions responsible and their competencies.
3. This Law is in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); Directive on establishing a general framework for 2 equal treatment in employment and occupation (Directive 2000/78/EC); Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (Directive 2006/54/EC); The Directive on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women on issues of social security (Council Directive 79/7/EEC, of 19 December 1978); Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC (Directive 2010/41/EU, of 7 July 2010); Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services (Directive 2004/113/EC).

Comment, Article 1

1. *General Review.* The Law on Gender Equality is a legal basis that aims to create legislative and institutional mechanisms to establish and regulate equal

Prof. dr. iur. Haxhi Gashi

establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, Article 1 also sets out the objective that States lay down a general framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation as regards employment and occupation, with a view to putting into effect in the Member States the principle of equal treatment.⁵⁰ For the purposes of this Directive, "equal treatment principle" means that there will be no direct or indirect discrimination for any of the reasons mentioned in Article 1. For the purposes of paragraph 1, direct and indirect discrimination have been listed: a) *direct discrimination shall be taken to occur where one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation, on any of the grounds referred to in Article 1;* b) *indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons having a particular religion or belief, a particular disability, a particular age, or a particular sexual orientation at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons unless: (i) that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary, or (ii) as regards persons with a particular disability, the employer or any person or organisation to whom this Directive applies, is obliged, under national legislation, to take appropriate measures in line with the principles contained in Article 5 in order to eliminate disadvantages entailed by such provision, criterion or practice.*

- 1.3.d) In the content of Article 1 of the Directive is given the framework within which the states should create the conditions for equal treatment of all persons, genders, etc., with some reasonable exceptions, but which cannot be extended so as to pose a discrimination form.

- 1.3.dh) In addition, Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, which has amended the previous Directives with regards to this matter, has foreseen in Article 2: "Equality between men and women as a fundamental principle and the principle of Community law under Articles 2 and 3(2) of the Treaty and the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice. These provisions of the Treaty declare equality between men and women as a 'task' and a 'purpose' of the Community and impose a positive obligation to promote it in all its activities.⁵¹ This Directive also provides in Article 3 that the Court of Justice has found that the basis of the principle of equal treatment for

convention stipulates: "For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field".⁵²

- 1.3.b) In the abovementioned sense, all bodies/authorities while implementing specific laws should have regard to this convention and this law is also interpreted in conjunction with the articles of this convention. Article 2 of the convention also foresees the obligations of States to include in their legislation certain measures to prevent discrimination, such as: the inclusion of equality between men and women in their constitutions, to envisage legal measures and sanctions, to impose legal and judicial protective measures, to take measures to prevent discrimination against women in any organization and enterprise, to abolish any legal provision, including criminal offenses representing discrimination against women.⁵³ The Convention envisages not only the formal-legal aspect of the protection against discrimination, but also the *de facto* aspect, that is practical application of these standards laid down in the convention.⁵⁴

- 1.3.c) In the provision of Article 1, paragraph 3, it is envisaged the compliance of the law with the Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (Directive 2000/78/EC) and the Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (Directive 2006/54/EC). In the sense of this norm, particular emphasis is set on the fact that the law itself should be in compliance with these directives. In fact, the law is in line with these directives, as far as it is written and harmonized by specific articles. However, the meaning of the norm should be expanded so that when interpreting the provisions of this law, but also other laws referring to the employment matters, they are consistent with these directives and to eliminate the forms of gender discrimination they should foresee equal treatment between men and women.

- 1.3.c) In the Council of Europe Directive, known as Directive 2000/78/EC⁵⁵ for signature, ratification and accession by the General Assembly, through its Resolution 34/180, dated 18 December 1979, and which has entered into force on 3 September 1981.

⁵⁰ See CEDAW, Article 1.

⁵¹ See CEDAW, Article 2.

⁵² See CEDAW, Article 4.

⁵³ Directive of the Council 2000/78/EC, dated 27 November 2000, on establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, Official Gazette L 303, 02/12/2000 p. 0016 – 0022 accessible at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0078:en:HTML>.

⁵⁴ For more with regards to general measures, see Article 5 of this law and the commentary part on these measures.

⁵⁵ For more with regards to specific measures, see Article 6 of this law and the commentary part on these measures.

⁵⁶ Regarding the responsibilities of the responsible institutions, see Articles 7 to 14, as well as the commentary part on these articles.

⁵⁷ See the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), approved and open

Prof. dr. iur. Haxhi Gashi

Paragraph 2

- 1.2 In paragraph 2 of this article it is explained that this law determines the general and specific measures to ensure and protect the equal rights of men and women. Also, this law defines the Institutions responsible and their competencies to ensure and protect the equal treatment between genders.

- 1.2.a) Article 5 of this law sets out general measures to ensure equality between women and men. In this regard, several general measures are listed, such as: analyzing the status of women and men in the respective organization and field; adoption of strategies and action plans for the promotion and establishment of gender equality in accordance with the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality; gender mainstreaming of all policies, documents and legislation, etc.⁵², while specific measures are foreseen in Article 6 of this Law.⁵³

- 1.2.b) Paragraph 2 of this article also defines the responsibilities of the institutions that should care for and ensure equal treatment between genders, respectively between males and females. This is the part that should be considered in connection with other relevant articles of this law, where the responsible institutions, in particular articles 7-11, which define the Agency of Gender Equality as the responsible institution, Article 12 for relevant officials in ministries and municipalities, Article 13 for the Ombudsman and Article 14 for political parties.⁵⁴

Paragraph 3

- 1.3 Paragraph 3 of Article 1 stipulates that this Law is consistent with a considerable number of international conventions and EU Directives for the protection of human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination. Not only is the law consistent, but the emphasis in this paragraph is determined by the fact that all that is set forth in this law must be interpreted in connection with these international standards and the practice created by the relevant bodies for the implementation of these acts.

- 1.3.a) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter "CEDAW") is an international act that aims to oblige states to develop mechanisms that do not discriminate women, as the most discriminated category in many societies.⁵⁵ Article 1 of this

⁵² For more with regards to general measures, see Article 5 of this law and the commentary part on these measures.

⁵³ For more with regards to specific measures, see Article 6 of this law and the commentary part on these measures.

⁵⁴ Regarding the responsibilities of the responsible institutions, see Articles 7 to 14, as well as the commentary part on these articles.

⁵⁵ See the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), approved and open

principle of non-discrimination and equal treatment. The Courts should assess situations and apply this principle in all cases.³⁸

1.1.c) Also, the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo has guaranteed equality between genders under Article 24, referring to equality before the law. Article 24, paragraph 1, stipulates: "All are equal before the law. Everyone enjoys the right to equal legal protection without discrimination".³⁹ Non-discrimination and equal treatment before the law also includes equal treatment when it comes to equal rights between genders. However, Article 24, paragraph 2, specifically guarantees equal treatment before the law, including non-discrimination on grounds of race, colour, **gender** ... etc.⁴⁰ In this way, the Constitution has established fundamental principles, on the basis of which through specific laws, should be ensured equal treatment of all individuals regardless of differences, including equal treatment between genders, respectively sexes. The Constitution has left no room for any particular law to have more or fewer rights for a particular gender, in any area. The principle of equal treatment between genders falls within equal treatment before the law, as a general principle that is applied also in the EU law, which implies that there should be no lesser rights for one gender than the other.⁴¹ When reference is made to equal treatment before the law, this means that each law regulating certain social relations should also contain specific articles in the form of principles that will guarantee equal treatment before the law.

1.1.d) "Protection" of gender equality, as a special expression in paragraph 1 of Article 1, should refer to the application of legal norms, that is, what is guaranteed to be protected. It would be pointless that human rights and equal treatment between genders should only be foreseen by law, but have no mechanisms to protect these rights guaranteed by legal acts. Thus, the purpose of this law is to provide for law enforcement mechanisms, in particular to pay attention to the mechanisms that ensure the protection of equal treatment between genders. This includes administrative, judicial, prosecutorial and self-governing bodies in private institutions or private legal entities. This is also stated in paragraph 2 of Article 1, defining the mechanisms guaranteeing gender equality.

³⁸ Nuria Elena Ramos Martin, Positive Action in EU Gender Equality Law: Promotion of Women in Corporate Decision-Making Positions, Labour Law, Economic Changes and New Society, 2014, p. 20-33, p. 23.

³⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 24.

⁴⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 24, paragraph 2: "No one shall be discriminated against on grounds of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, relation to any community, property, economic and social condition, sexual orientation, birth, disability or other personal status".

⁴¹ Christopher McCrudden and Sacha Prechal, The Concepts of Equality and Non-Discrimination in Europe: A Practical Approach, European Network of Legal Experts in the Field of Gender Equality, European Commission Report, 2009, p. 4.

treatment and protection of women's and men's rights (women and men, girls and boys) in all spheres of life. The law has used the expression "equal treatment of males and females (alb. "meshkujt dhe femrat") and we comply with this terminology, even though there are dilemmas regarding the expression, with opinions that the term "women and men (alb. "gratë dhe burrat") should be used".⁴² It should be added that the term "sex differentiation" and "gender differentiation" are often used in literature, as well as in legislation. However, it must be underlined that, while the term "sex differentiation" is primarily used as a biological criterion to make distinction between man and woman, the term "gender" is much broader encompassing social differences between men and women, such as the relevant ideas for their role in family and society, namely a social category.⁴³ The issuance of such a law in conditioned by the lack of implementation of specific laws, when it comes to equal treatment of all citizens, taking here in consideration gender-based treatment. In other words, the legislator wanted to ensure equal treatment between the genders and to eliminate the possible forms of gender-based discrimination by a special law. If the question arises as to what situations the law is required to be applied, then we may say that the law should be applied in all areas. However, in particular, the law has also counted some areas that may be more specific for ensuring equal treatment and achieving effective equality between genders.

2. It should be noted that many reports and analysis of the situation in Kosovo have shown that the Law on Gender Equality is not properly implemented, because in many spheres of life there is a significant lack of female involvement in different institutions and organizations of the private and public sector. These data were also found in the Report of the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons and Petitions, through which was conducted monitoring of the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality of Kosovo no. 2004/2.⁴⁴ Thus, although there are specific laws that provide for equal treatment between genders, through this report it was concluded that there is a negative relation in terms of involvement of female gender in different areas, such as in employment, education, health, property issues and other sectors.

⁴² There are many debates with regards to the proper terminology in this law, as to whether the term "males and females" or "men and women", "girls and boys" should be used. However, for the purposes of this commentary and of law implementation, the terminology used in the law will be preserved - i.e. the expression "males and males".

⁴³ Susanne Burri and Sacha Prechal, EU Gender Equality Law, updated in 2013 at: European Commission, European Network of Legal Experts in the Field of Gender Equality, Directorate-General for Justice Unit JUST/D/1, January 2014, p. 1.

⁴⁴ See the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, IV-4th Legislature, and Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons and Petitions, Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Law on Gender Equality of Kosovo no. 2004/2, July 2013. Also, see research "Participation, the role and position of women in central, local institutions and political parties in Kosovo, carried out by AGF and in the Kosovo Assessment Program for Gender Equality 2008-2013.

Racial Discrimination; (6) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; (7) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (8) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

1.1.c) Each of the international conventions or instruments contains provisions guaranteeing human rights and freedoms, but some of them the equality between genders in particular. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereinafter UDHR), Article 2, par. 1 says: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status";⁴⁵ The European Convention on Human Rights, namely Article 14 which prohibits discrimination, stipulates: "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status";⁴⁶ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), in Article 2, paragraph 1, guarantees rights without discrimination, including non-discrimination, as follows: "1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to ensure to all individuals within its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status";⁴⁷ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in Article 1, has given impetus and guaranteeing of gender equality, eliminating any including discrimination on grounds of gender (see "For the purposes of the present Convention, the phrase 'against women' shall mean any distinction, exclusion, on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of their equal rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field". While in Article 2, in a more precise manner states shall take all measures to condemn the discrimination in EU law, the Charter of Fundamental Rights

⁴⁵ See UDHR, Article 2.

⁴⁶ See ECHR, Article 14.

⁴⁷ See ICCPR, Article 2.

⁴⁸ For more, see CEDAW.

Comment, Article 1, paragraph 1

1.1 In paragraph 1 of this Article, the purpose of the law is emphasized. This purpose is focused on guaranteeing, protecting and promoting gender equality. This paragraph contains three basic expressions "guaranteeing", "protecting" and "promoting" gender equality, by setting the gender equality as a fundamental value for the democratic development of the society.

1.1. a) "Guaranteeing" equality between genders, as an expression, refers to some mechanisms which ensure equality between genders, because without guarantee, other actions will not be possible. Firstly, guaranteeing of equality is ensured by law, implying here the establishment of the necessary legal infrastructure in all segments of life, as a basis to achieve equality. If a right is not guaranteed by law, it cannot be required to be implemented; even law enforcement mechanisms may not succeed, if they are not based on legal grounds. The right of gender equality in Kosovo is guaranteed by the highest legal act of the country, the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. Article 3 guarantees equality before the law for all individuals, as well as respect for human rights, thus including equality between genders.⁴⁹ Precisely and expressively, guaranteeing of gender equality is provided in Article 7, which refers to the fundamental values, contained in the Constitution. Paragraph 2 explicitly stipulates the equality between genders, as follows: "The Republic of Kosovo ensures gender equality as a fundamental value for the democratic development of the society, providing equal opportunities for both female and male participation in the political, economic, social, cultural and other areas of societal life".⁵⁰

1.1.b) With the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo some of the most important international agreements and instruments are directly implemented

ing human rights, some of which are listed in the

Among the instruments provided are the following: (1) Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (2) European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Optional Protocol; (3) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol; (4) European Framework Convention for the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities; (5) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; (6) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (7) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; (8) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; (9) Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families; (10) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (11) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (12) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (13) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (14) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (15) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (16) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (17) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (18) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (19) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (20) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (21) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (22) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (23) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (24) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (25) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (26) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (27) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (28) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (29) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (30) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (31) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (32) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (33) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (34) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (35) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (36) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (37) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (38) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (39) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (40) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (41) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (42) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (43) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (44) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (45) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (46) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (47) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (48) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (49) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (50) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (51) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (52) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (53) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (54) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (55) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (56) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (57) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (58) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (59) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (60) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (61) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (62) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (63) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (64) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (65) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (66) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (67) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (68) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (69) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (70) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (71) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (72) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (73) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (74) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (75) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (76) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (77) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (78) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (79) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (80) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (81) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (82) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (83) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (84) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (85) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (86) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (87) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (88) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (89) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (90) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (91) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (92) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (93) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (94) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (95) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (96) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (97) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (98) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (99) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (100) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (101) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (102) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (103) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (104) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (105) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (106) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (107) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (108) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (109) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (110) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (111) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (112) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (113) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (114) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (115) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (116) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (117) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (118) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (119) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (120) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (121) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (122) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (123) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (124) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (125) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (126) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (127) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (128) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (129) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (130) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (131) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (132) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (133) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (134) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (135) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (136) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (137) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (138) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (139) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (140) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (141) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (142) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (143) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (144) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (145) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (146) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (147) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (148) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (149) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (150) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (151) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (152) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (153) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (154) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (155) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (156) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (157) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (158) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (159) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (160) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (161) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (162) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (163) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (164) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (165) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (166) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (167) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (168) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (169) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (170) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (171) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (172) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (173) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (174) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (175) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (176) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (177) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (178) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (179) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (180) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (181) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (182) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (183) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (184) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (185) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (186) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (187) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (188) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (189) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (190) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (191) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (192) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (193) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (194) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (195) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (196) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (197) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (198) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (199) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (200) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (201) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (202) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (203) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (204) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (205) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (206) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (207) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (208) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (209) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (210) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (211) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (212) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (213) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (214) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (215) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (216) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (217) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (218) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (219) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (220) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (221) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (222) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (223) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (224) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (225) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (226) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (227) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (228) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (229) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (230) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (231) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (232) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (233) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (234) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (235) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (236) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (237) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (238) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (239) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (240) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (241) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (242) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (243) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (244) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (245) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (246) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (247) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (248) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (249) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (250) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (251) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (252) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (253) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (254) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (255) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (256) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (257) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (258) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (259) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (260) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (261) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (262) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (263) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (264) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (265) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (266) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (267) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (268) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (269) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (270) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (271) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (272) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (273) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (274) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (275) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (276) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (277) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (278) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (279) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (280) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (281) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (282) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (283) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (284) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (285) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (286) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (287) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (288) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (289) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (290) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (291) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (292) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (293) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (294) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (295) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (296) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (297) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (298) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (299) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (300) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (301) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (302) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (303) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (304) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (305) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (306) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (307) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (308) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (309) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (310) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (311) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (312) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (313) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (314) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (315) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (316) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (317) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (318) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (319) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (320) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (321) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (322) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (323) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (324) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (325) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (326) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (327) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (328) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (329) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (330) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (331) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (332) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (333) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (334) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (335) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (336) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (337) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (338) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (339) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (340) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (341) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (342) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (343) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (344) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (345) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (346) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (347) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (348) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (349) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (350) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (351) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (352) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (353) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (354) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (355) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (356) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (357) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (358) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (359) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (360) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (361) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (362) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (363) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (364) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (365) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (366) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (367) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (368) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (369) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (370) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (371) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (372) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (373) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (374) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (375) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (376) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (377) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (378) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (379) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (380) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (381) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (382) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (383) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (384) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (385) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (386) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (387) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (388) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (389) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (390) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (391) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (392) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (393) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (394) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (395) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (396) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (397) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (398) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (399) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (400) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (401) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (402) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (403) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (404) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (405) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (406) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (407) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (408) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (409) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (410) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (411) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (412) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (413) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (414) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (415) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (416) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (417) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (418) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (419) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (420) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (421) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (422) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (423) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (424) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (425) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (426) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (427) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (428) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (429) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (430) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (431) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (432) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (433) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (434) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (435) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (436) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (437) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (438) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (439) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (440) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (441) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (442) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (443) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (444) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (445) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (446) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (447) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (448) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (449) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (450) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (451) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (452) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (453) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (454) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (455) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (456) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (457) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (458) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (459) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (460) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (461) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (462) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (463) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (464) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (465) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (466) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (467) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (468) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (469) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (470) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (471) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (472) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (473) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (474) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (475) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (476) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (477) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (478) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (479) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (480) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (481) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (482) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (483) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (484) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (485) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (486) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (487) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (488) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (489) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (490) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (491) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (492) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (493) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (494) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (495) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (496) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (497) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (498) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (499) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (500) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (501) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (502) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (503) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (504) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (505) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (506) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (507) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (508) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (509) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (510) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (511) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (512) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (513) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (514) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (515) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (516) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (517) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (518) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (519) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (520) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (521) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (522) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (523) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (524) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (525) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (526) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (527) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (528) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (529) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (530) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (531) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (532) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (533) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (534) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (535) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (536) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (537) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (538) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (539) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (540) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (541) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (542) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (543) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (544) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (545) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (546) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (547) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (548) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (549) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (550) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (551) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (552) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (553) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (554) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (555) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (556) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (557) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (558) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (559) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (560) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (561) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (562) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (563) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (564) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (565) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (566) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (567) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (568) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (569) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (570) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (571) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (572) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (573) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (574) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (575) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (576) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (577) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (578) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (579) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (580) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (581) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (582) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (583) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (584) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (585) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (586) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (587) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (588) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (589) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (590) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (591) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (592) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (593) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (594) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (595) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (596) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (597) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (598) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (599) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (600) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (601) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (602) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (603) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (604) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (605) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (606) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (607) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (608) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (609) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (610) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (611) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (612) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (613) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (614) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (615) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (616) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (617) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (618) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (619) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (620) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (621) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (622) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (623) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (624) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (625) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (626) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (627) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (628) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (629) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (630) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (631) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (632) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (633) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (634) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (635) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (636) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (637) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (638) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (639) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (640) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (641) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (642) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (643) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (644) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (645) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (646) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (647) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (648) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (649) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (650) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (651) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (652) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (653) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (654) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (655) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (656) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (657) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (658) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (659) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (660) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (661) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (662) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (663) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (664) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (665) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (666) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (667) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (668) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (669) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (670) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (671) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (672) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (673) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (674) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (675) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (676) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (677) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (678) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (679) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (680) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (681) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (682) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (683) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (684) Convention on the Rights of the Child; (6

Appendix C:

A collection of posts from the QIKA Instagram of various actions they have led against violence against women. [Note: All posts have been derived from the QIKA Instagram which is cited on pages 56-76.]



