



Kosovar Women's Voice

Supporting, protecting, and promoting the rights and interests of women and girls in Kosovo

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KWN Bimonthly Meeting
12 Apr. from 11-15 Hotel Prishtina

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President Creates Council for Sexual Violence Survivors

In another crucial development, Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga established the National Council for Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War on Mar. 7, where KWN is a member.

"Fifteen years after the war, the topic of victims of sexual violence remains a taboo topic to be addressed," President Jahjaga said during the Council's first meeting, attended by local and international actors. "Survivors of sexual violence continue to suffer from serious psychological conditions, as well as social and economic hardships. They require institutional and societal support to cope with their difficult reality."

The Council brings together representatives of key ministries that can support violence survivors, civil society and international stakeholders towards an improved, better coordinated response.

The Council was established in response to concerns and issues raised by women who had suffered sexual violence. President Jahjaga met with women to hear their concerns, in discussions facilitated by KWN. Through the Kosovo Women's Fund (supported by [Kvinna till Kvinna, KtK](#), and the [Austrian Development Agency, ADA](#)), KWN has supported women survivors in advocating for institutions to better address their needs. During the launch of the Council, KWN Executive Director spoke about the role of women's organization played in supporting and advocating for the survivors of sexual violence.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague congratulated President Jahjaga and praised her initiative to establish the Council. He considered the work of the Council essential in supporting survivors and addressing the lack of accountability, radio *Evropa e Lirë* reported.

"It is significant progress since my visit last year when you explained that your country continues to face a number of challenges in addressing the issue of sexual violence during conflict," said Hague.



President Atifete Jahjaga establishes National Council for Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War.

New Law Recognizes Persons Who Suffered Sexual Violence

On Mar. 20, the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo approved Law No. 04/L-054 on the status and rights of martyrs, invalids, veterans, members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, persons raped during the war, civilian war victims and their families. The new Law includes survivors of violence and sexual abuse that occurred during the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo, recognizing their plight in an effort to undermine social stigmatization and return dignity.

The Law's adoption resulted from two years of intensive advocacy undertaken by women from civil society and politics. The Kosova Women's Network (KWN) and its member organizations have been instrumental in this process. KWN effectively brought the plight of persons who suffered sexual violence during the war to the forefront of public discussion via a demonstration organized on 8 Mar. 2012. With the slogan, "We do not want flowers. We want justice for women who suffered sexual violence during the war," the demonstration renewed public and institutional attention to this issue. Since then, KWN together with other civil society groups has written several letters and met with members of the Assembly of Kosovo, among others, urging adoption of this important Law.

"Since sexual violence was used as a weapon of war, women should receive the same benefits as all other victims of war," KWN wrote in its most recent letter, sent Mar. 19 ([Click here to read the letter](#)).

KWN thanks Assembly members for their work and celebrates the adoption of this Law, as an important step towards returning dignity to women who have suffered enough.

Fate of Kosovo's Missing Persons Remains Unresolved

Again this year on International Women's Day, Mar. 8, KWN took to the streets, supporting the initiative of the association *Thirrjet e Nënave* (Mother's Call). Mother's Call and KWN organized a demonstration in solidarity with mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of missing persons with the motto: "We are with you." Approximately 200 people marched from *Zahir Pajaziti* Square to the Assembly of Kosovo, bringing attention to the still unresolved fate of missing persons in Kosovo.

As Kosovars celebrated International Women's Day, women raised their voice and reminded everyone that they do not have family members with whom they can celebrate; after 15 years, their family members remain missing. They also wanted to replace the photos of still missing persons, removed from the gates of the Assembly of Kosova. "For 15 years institutions have neglected and deceived us, while criminals run free," said Nesrete Kumnova, Head of Mother's Call. "Even those who have been punished received low sentences. There has been no justice for the thousands of persons who were murdered, raped and disappeared. We will return the photos of missing persons where they were because the case of missing persons remains unresolved."

Demonstrators re-hung photos of missing persons outside the Assembly, reminding officials of their duty to resolve this issue. Among demonstrators was Mayor of Prishtina Shpend Ahmeti with his children. Dozens of young men and women as well as a delegation from the South Caucasus also joined the demonstration.

Women in Black Serbia Remembers Crimes in Kosovo

On Mar. 26, [Women in Black](#) Serbia held a performance in Belgrade, recognizing crimes committed by the Serbian regime against ethnic Albanian civilians 15 years ago.

Women in Black reminded citizens of the forced deportation of over 800,000 Albanians from their homes and country, the abuse, the murder of civilians, the women raped, the properties burnt and the robberies that occurred.

"We express our deepest condolences and solidarity with the families for their losses, and the endless pain and humiliation that was caused by the Serbian regime in that time," they said.

Women in Black demanded that information about Albanian missing persons be published; information about mass graves in Serbia where the remains of Albanian persons are located be published; to take all actions aimed at prosecuting those responsible for crimes committed against Albanians; and to ensure that perpetrators receive appropriate penalties.

Stasa Zajovic, Coordinator of Women in Black, said that the government of Serbia's statements and promises so far have only been empty rhetoric. She said that the government must demonstrate that it is serious about dealing with the past and in order to break away "from the great burden of crime policy" carried out by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Activists held a banner in front of the monument *Krnjaz Mihaili* that stated: "We remember the crime in Kosovo" in the Serbian language. It also contained the message: Women in Black against the war.



On Mar. 8, hundreds demonstrate in support of mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of missing persons, organized by Mother's Call and KWN.

Government Adopts UNSCR 1325 Action Plan

KWN's ten years of advocacy for creating a National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council [Resolution 1325 \(UNSCR 1325\) on Women, Peace and Security](#) in Kosovo have finally paid off.

On Mar. 7, the Agency for Gender Equality in the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo launched the National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" in the Republic of Kosovo. The Government had officially approved the Action Plan on Jan. 29.

Resolution 1325 calls for increasing women's participation in decision-making, particularly as part of peace processes, and incorporating gender equality in all democratic systems. It also requires institutions to strengthen mechanisms for protecting women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Chief Executive of the [Agency for Gender Equality](#), Edona Hajrullahu, emphasized the importance of the Action Plan, which addresses security issues in Kosovo; harmonizes strategies related to gender equality, women's empowerment and security in Kosovo; and facilitates interactions among actors operating in the field of human rights.

KFOR Officials Learn from Women's Rights Activists' Experiences, Contribute to UNSCR 1325 Implementation

On Mar. 14, the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) Commander, Major-General Salvatore FARINA, welcomed women's rights activists to speak to high officials regarding the position of women in Kosovo. KWN Executive Director Igballe Rogova informed KFOR officials, providing a chronology of women's involvement in peace processes since 1994. This included Kosovo activists' involvement in the former Yugoslavia's Women in Black meetings, which fostered positive relations among all ethnic groups, facilitating post-conflict peace-building processes. "This experience taught us to detest the Serbian regime, but not Serbian people," she said. Rogova also emphasized that money cannot buy reconciliation and that collaboration among ethnic groups must come "in our time and our way." To evidence this, she shared stories from KWN's efforts to (re)build relations among Serbs and Albanians since 2000. Rogova also underlined the importance of men's involvement in furthering gender equality in post-conflict situations.

Aferdita Sylaj from [Community Building Mitrovica \(CBM\)](#) also spoke about the role that her organisation has played in building relations among diverse ethnic groups living in North Mitrovica.

This high level discussion followed a meeting between Rogova, KFOR Gender Advisor Lotta Ekvall and KFOR Commander Major-General Salvatore Farina at Film City, Prishtina on Mar. 14. During the meeting, they discussed political issues, local elections and the situation of women in Kosovo.

KWN welcomes and thanks KFOR for these recent efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 by consulting with women's rights activists about the specific needs of women and girls in Kosovo's post-conflict context.



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KWN Addresses Ministry, KSF on March 8

On International Women's Day Mar. 8, the Ministry for the Kosovo Security Forces (MKSF) and the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) organized a meeting with all civilian and military women serving in the Ministry and KSF at "Adem Jashari" Land Force Command (LFC). Participants included: MKSF Minister Agim Çeku, COMKSF Lt. Gen. Kadri Kastrati, COMKFOR General Salvatore Farina, Deputy Commander of LFC Brigadier General Gëzim Hazrolli, MKSF General Secretary Shkëlzen Sylaj, [KWN](#) Executive Director Igballe Rogova, Member of Parliament Ganimete Musliu, and members of the KSF Oversight Committee.

"Women who work at the Ministry and Force are very active, committed and have constantly provided results in their work and service," Minister Çeku said.

COMKSF Lt. Gen. Kadri Kastrati strongly supported women's engagement, stating, "I feel proud that I am the Commander of a Force that successfully serves women and men without distinction."

COMKFOR Major General Salvatore Farina expressed enthusiasm regarding the role of women in the armed forces and KSF's achievements in recruiting women and treating them with dignity. He noted that the recruitment of women began only recently in all NATO countries; Italy started engaging women in the military in 2000. He congratulated Minister Çeku and General Kastrati for their attention to gender equality issues.

Rogova presented a history of women's involvement related to International Women's Day in Kosovo.

Association for Education and Family Care Offers Sex Ed

The Association for Education and Family Care (AEFC) offers education about sexually transmitted diseases and drug abuse to elementary school children in Gjakova. The workshops provide crucial information in the absence of official curricula on these issues in Kosovo's schools.

In an effort to make learning fun, AEFC organized a quiz at *Fehmi Agani* elementary school on Mar. 15 with pupils from *Mazllom Këpuska* and *Fehmi Agani* elementary schools. They competed enthusiastically, answering questions about HIV/AIDS and drugs. Both competing sides successfully answered all questions correctly. Therefore everyone won in the end. After the quiz, pupils and teachers shared more information.

"It is painful when we have the possibility to protect ourselves from these diseases, but we do not because we lack information about diseases," said Meri Komoni, a pupil. "In the end, a life can be lost because of this."

On Mar. 21, AEFC organized a roundtable with officers from the municipal Department of Education, school directors and representatives from the Family Health Centre. AEFC compiled a strategy, recommending the inclusion of sexual education as a subject in the school curricula in Gjakova.



AEFC educating elementary school children in Gjakova about sexually transmitted diseases and drugs.

"Our next target will be mothers," said Bahrije Deva Vehapi who leads the initiative. "We will engage mothers and children towards overcoming communication barriers, so that they feel free to talk about these issues."

Considering that young women participating in KWN's Young Women's Empowerment Initiative have identified communication between parents and youth as a key challenge, AEFC's initiative is helping to address youth's concerns. AEFC has received support from the Kosovo Women's Fund, supported by KtK and ADA.

Members Begin Drafting KWN's New Strategic Plan

KWN members gathered at Hotel Prishtina on Mar. 10 to begin the process of drafting KWN's new Strategic Plan for 2015-2018. They divided into groups based on KWN's existing programs, discussing future objectives. KWN will hold additional planning meetings in Jun. and plans to approve the new strategy in fall 2014.

KWN Organizes Workshop: "Women Advocate Locally"

KWN organized a two-day workshop in Durrës on 28-30 Mar., seeking better cooperation between women in municipal assemblies and KWN member organizations.

Within KWN's Strategic Plan, an important goal is that women participate actively in politics and decision-making at local and national levels. KWN sees that active participation will be possible only via cooperation and joint advocacy on issues that women consider important at the local and nation levels.

During the workshop, women in politics and women's organizations collaborated to create a joint plan for shared issues on which they can advocate together, towards improving the position of women at the local level.

Fifty women from the following municipalities participated: Prizren, Gjiilan, Novo Brdo, Obilic, Dragash, Ferizaj, Viti, Drenas, Lipjan and Vushtrri.



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