



Kosovar Women's Voice

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

Join Us!

KWN Bimonthly Meeting

2 Jun., 11-13 Hotel Prishtina

Next KWF applications due

30 May.

Femmes Fatales

27 – 31st May, Prishtina

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Top Channel Examines Unpunished War-time Rape of Kosovo Women

In its program *Exclusive*, Top Channel TV screened the two-part documentary “*Krimi i padënuar që flet*” (The Unpunished Crime that Speaks) on Apr. 20 and 27, created by journalist Valdete Osmani. It revealed rare testimonies by women and girls who suffered sexual violence during the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo. Their testimonies have not been used sufficiently in litigation against former leaders of Yugoslavia, according to [Top Channel](#).



Valdete Osmani Feride Rushiti, Time Kadriaj, Igballe Rogova, Albana Gashi and Veprore Shehu spoke about the documentary on “Shqip”.

Although the sensitivity of the crime has prevented women from coming forward, thousands of women and girls are believed to have suffered sexual violence at the hands of Serb forces during the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo, according to the [Center for Protection of Women and Children](#) (CPWC).

Rape is considered a war crime, a crime against humanity and a basic act of genocide, according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence against Civilians in Conflict. However, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has yet to hand down a single conviction for persons committing this crime in Kosovo.

A day after Top Channel screened part I of the documentary, TV show “*Shqip*” organized a discussion on the same topic. Igballe Rogova, Feride Rushiti and Veprore Shehu represented civil society, Time Kadriaj spoke as a member of the Kosovo Parliament and Valdete Osmani appeared as the Top Channel journalist who authored the documentary.

“It took us about one year to convince women to speak,” Osmani said. “We convinced them that their voices would not be identified.” Women feared speaking as other women had suffered consequences, she said. “Once I started to interview the victims I learned many sad stories. Just being interviewed was a psychological torture.”

As Top Channel concluded, “Today, their memories are more vivid than their scars of rape. The war is not over for them.”

Other speakers commented on the challenges of realizing justice so many years after the war. Witnesses and evidence are more difficult to secure. Further, women's rights activists have accused the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) of losing evidence of these crimes that women's groups had collected immediately after the war.

Kosova Women's Fund Awards Eight Grants

The Kosova Women's Network ([KWN](#)) awarded grants to eight member organizations through the Kosova Women's Fund in April. Altogether, 13 organizations applied for grants. This round encouraged initiatives involving advocacy, towards realizing KWN's Strategic Goals identified by its members in the [KWN Strategic Plan](#) for 2011-2014. KWN members proposed several advocacy initiatives targeting local and national institutions.

Funding decisions were made by the [Kosova Women's Fund](#) Grant Review Committee, elected by KWN members. The organizations awarded grants and their initiatives include the following:

1. [Active Women of Gjakova \(AWG\)](#) will organize information sessions for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Gjakova about the law on domestic violence and how they can use this law for their protection. AWG also will monitor the implementation of this law and organize a debate where findings will be presented. (€2,780)
2. [Vita – Jeta](#) will advocate to health institutions for 600 women pensioners to receive free check-ups for osteoporosis. Meanwhile, they will prepare women pensioners for advocacy related to the implementation of the law on retirement and the law on healthcare and health insurance, set to be adopted in 2015, which should provide free check-ups for osteoporosis in the future. (€2,812)
3. [The Foundation for Education and Development](#) will teach and involve women of Novobrd in advocating for the municipality of Novobrd to provide free transportation for its residents. (€2,665)
4. [Violete](#) will promote Roma girls from Prugovc village in Prishtina Municipality who are successful in school, making them leaders and role models, and motivating other girls to continue their education. Leaders will be part of an advocacy initiative, "Balkan Spring," where they will present handcrafts made by girls' parents to raise funds that support girls' education and improved integration into the Kosovo educational system. (€2,780)
5. [Shqiponjat e Dardanës \(Eagles of Dardana\)](#) will organize women of Graçanica to be politically active by informing them about their political rights, creating women's village councils, organizing meetings between them and all political parties and creating a clear strategy for the functioning of the village council for one year. (€2,804)
6. [Visionary Woman of the XXI Century](#) will raise awareness in Has of Prizren Municipality and Has of Gjakova Municipality about breast and cervical cancer using local media. They also will advocate for mobile health units to visit these two regions and organize an action to support 10 women from the region who are suffering from cancerous diseases. (€2,885)
7. [Partners Kosova](#) will organize meetings between women and men, gender equality officers and representatives from local judicial institutions in Skenderaj, Drenas, Lypjan and Ferizaj to discuss women's right to property inheritance. (€2,880)
9. [Norma](#) will conduct research in five municipalities, monitoring the implementation of the law on contentious procedure in 2013. (€2,810)

This fifth grant round received funding from [Kvinna till Kvinna \(KtK\)](#) and the Ipko Foundation, totalling €22,416. The Fund also receives technical support from the [Austrian Development Agency](#). The deadline for applications for the sixth round will be 30 May.

Citizens March for Resolve of the Fate of Missing Persons

Every year on 27 Apr. citizens gather in the village of Meje in Gjakova Municipality to solemnly remember the 376 women, men and children civilians who were massacred by the Serbian military on 27 Apr. 1999.

This year *Thirrjet e Nenave* (Mother's Call) organized a march from Gjakova to Meje, which they led together with the Mayor of Gjakova, Mimoza Kusari-Lila. Hundreds of officials, political party representatives, civil society actors and citizens marched the six kilometres to bring attention to the fact that the issue of missing persons remains largely unresolved.

KWN and its member organizations also demonstrated their solidarity by marching.



Citizens march for resolve of the fate of missing persons, 27 Apr.

Women in Politics, Civil Society Strategize for Advocacy

Fifty women from 10 Kosovo municipalities met in Durres, Albania on 28-30 Mar. to empower each other and identify advocacy initiatives on which they will cooperate in 2014. The meeting brought together women municipal assembly members and civil society representatives who are involved in Gender Equality Advocacy Groups in the municipalities of: Prizren, Gjilan, Novo Brdo, Obilic, Dragash, Ferizaj, Viti, Drenas, Lipjan and Vushtrri. These groups serve as a platform across political party and sectoral divides, uniting women in joint advocacy for women's priorities at the municipal level.

The meeting began with a discussion on the importance of continued collaboration between women in civil society and politics. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to GEAGs, particularly in the context of the recent municipal elections, after which some GEAG members have changed. GEAGs offer a space for women to empower each other, participants agreed.

"It's not easy being a woman politician, but if you work hard you can succeed," said Valentina Bunjaku-Rexhepi, Chair of the Assembly in Gjilan, in her speech, empowering women to continue their work.

GEAG members then divided into working groups to identify women's priorities within their individual municipalities. Each group identified a list of three priority issues on which they plan to advocate for together in 2014. They then identified joint advocacy strategies.

Participants thanked KWN for creating a space for them to recuperate together from the recent municipal elections, to reflect on lessons learned from the elections and to build solidarity across political party divisions.

"While here, we never once thought who is from which political party," a participant said. "Rather we all worked together in solidarity and had a space to speak as women. It has been so empowering."

In the evening, KWN screened the film *Iron Jawed Angels*, which tells the story of women's struggle for the right to vote in the United States. The film contains important messages about women's solidarity across political divides, women's empowerment and strategies for advocacy. Participants were so empowered by the film that they requested support from KWN in screening the film in their municipalities.

Since then, the film has been screened in Lipjan, Vushtrri and Prizren municipalities to audiences including women and men assembly members, officials and citizens. Municipalities have kindly donated spaces for the screenings. Dokufest graciously offered its theatre, usually rented for €150, free of charge. The film will travel to seven more municipalities during May.

Meanwhile, during organization meetings for the screenings, KWN continues supporting GEAGs in each municipality in strategizing for their planned advocacy initiatives, identified in Durres. KWN's work with GEAGs has received support from the Austrian Development Agency.

Activists Learn Techniques for Video Activism

As a part of its project "Active Girls for Equal Society," the Association of Women Sandglass from Kruševac in cooperation with the Alternative Girls' Center organized a video activism training for young women from the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). The workshop received support from [Kvinna till Kvinna](#).

The training brought together more than 20 participants in Vrnjacka Banja from 10-13 Apr., building the capacities of young women to contribute to the women's movement. It also fostered connections between young women from the region. [KWN](#)'s Public Relations Assistant Donjeta Berisha was among the participants.

"It is always a unique experience to work with young women activists because of their great positive energy, motivation and efforts towards the promotion of women's rights," said Aleksandra Nestorov, a facilitator. "The training in Vrnjacka Banja was also special for me because I had the honor of meeting young women from Kosovo and Albania."

On the first day, participants learned about video activism, filming methods and how to shoot footage. The second day participants divided into groups to make short movies. They filmed in different locations. Afterwards, they edited materials with support from facilitators.

"I have never captured on video a compelling story that I wanted to tell to make a difference," said Aleksandra Bujchevska, a participant from Macedonia. "Now I am able to put my creativity and consciousness to good use."



Nada Pleskonjic, facilitator, explains the importance of video activism at a regional training in Vrnjacka Banja from 10-13 Apr.

KWN Supports Institutionalization of Gender Budgeting

In April 2014, [KWN](#) began a new initiative in close collaboration with [GIZ](#): piloting the integration of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) into budgetary processes of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) and the Municipality of Kamenica.

This initiative aims to introduce gender-specific indicators into the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and the Kosovo budget. KWN has collaborated with international expert Dr. Elisabeth Klatzer and governmental officials to develop a practical guide for introducing gender responsive budgeting into the budget process for both MLSW and the Municipality of Kamenica. As a first step in utilizing this guide, KWN is working closely with MLSW to conduct a gender audit of this ministry's budget. KWN will also support the Municipality of Kamenica in piloting this approach. Findings will seek to inform the MTEF and Kosovo

Budget for 2015 towards ensuring that the budget of Kosovo better addresses the needs of both women and men equally. This initiative contributes to the realization of KWN's [Strategic Plan for 2011-2014](#). It also builds on KWN's prior experience related to GRB, including KWN's 2012 research on [budget allocations for the implementation](#) of the law and strategy against domestic violence.

80 Women from 15 Countries (Re)Define Success

The "[Invest for the Future](#) (IFFT) #Success: Defining It in Her Own Terms" conference welcomed approximately 80 participants, including women entrepreneurs, advocates, activists, policy leaders, researchers and educators from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, the United States and the United Kingdom. Ten [women attended from Kosovo](#), including a KWN representative: Nertila Qarri-Gërguri. The event took place on Mar. 7-9 in Zagreb. The [Zagreb School of Economics and Management](#) organized the event with support from the [U.S. Department of State](#) and the Croatian [Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts \(MINPO\)](#).

"Attending the IFFT's conference was a very good experience as all women had information and successes to share," said Nertila Qarri-Gërguri. "I also had the chance to share my experience working with a women's network of 77 organizations: KWN."

The conference identified common challenges and potential solutions. This included ways to mobilize non-financial resources towards sustainability: networking to share know-how, space for events and in-kind donors. The event resulted in a new mentoring initiative, involving new country coordinators and the joint aim of promoting women's entrepreneurship through showcasing members and their economic, cultural, political and social impact on society.

Students from Amsterdam University Visit KWN

Students studying Human Rights at the University of Amsterdam in Holland visited KWN's office on 28 Apr. They were interested to learn about the experiences of women's rights activists in Kosovo.

KWN Executive Director Igballe Rogova among other topics informed students about KWN's work, the history of the women's movement in Kosova, women activists' involvement in implementation of the United Nation Security Council 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the situation of women's rights in Kosova and education in Kosova.



Students from the University of Amsterdam visit KWN on 28 Apr.