



Kosovo Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

Press Release

1 August 2019

Civil Society Organizations Demand that Qehaja Be Held Responsible for Justification of Sexual Violence and Homophobic Views

Only six days have passed since Kosovar pathologist Dr. Nazim Qehaja caused a scandal by openly justifying sexual violence, which he said occurs because a girl/woman dresses in a way that is “immoral and anti-national”.

Even after numerous reactions appeared on social media by activists for human rights, women's rights, girls' rights, and LGBT persons' rights, Dr. Qehaja continued defending his view that sexual violence is justified in some cases and that rapists should not be punished nor held accountable before the law.

Referring to his profession as a doctor, he said that *“not only humanly but also professionally and psycho-medically, rapists of such women, extremely provocative in public, should not be held accountable”*. Further, to justify this statement, a few days later he added that only persons with “mental disorders” commit rape.

Moreover, following activists' reactions, he said that a nation is in danger *“when whores, fornicators, homosexuals and others with similar psychosomatic disorders speak for morality!”*

Through this letter, we, the undersigned, remind Dr. Qehaja that if sexual assault were specific to persons with mental disorders, then our state, through laws in harmony with those of democratic developed countries, would not define sexual assault as a criminal offense, punishable with 2-10 years in prison, but as a mental health disorder. Therefore, this view is ungrounded and contrary to the law.

Justifying such criminal acts, including by blaming the victim for “provocative” clothing, is a form of public incitement to hatred, which is punishable by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo by fine or imprisonment of up to five years.

We also remind Dr. Qehaja who made a homophobic statement, that international medical professionals since 1990, through the World Health Organization, confirmed that homosexuality is not classified as a disease, much less a psychosomatic disease, as he defined it.

For lack of basic knowledge and incitement to hatred, in a democratic country, a person like Nazim Qehaja would have his diploma revoked and be banned from practicing duties as a medical doctor.

Recalling that medical profession in principle has equal and dignified treatment of all without distinction, we demand that the Doctors Committee publicly distance itself from the hate speech that Dr.

Qehaja has used against women, girls and LGBT persons; and that they condemn his language and his lack of medical professionalism.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo guarantees freedom and security for every citizen, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nation, race or religion. According to the law,

any person inciting hatred and disunity must receive the deserved punishment. Therefore, we also demand that the State Prosecutor's Office urgently take action against Dr. Qehaja.

Signed by:

DokuFest

Lumbardhi Foundation

Kosovo Civil Society Foundation – KCSF

Cultural Heritage without Borders Kosovo Foundation – CHwB

Community Development Fund – CDF

INTEGRA

Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development – KIPRED

Kosovar Youth Council – KYC

Equal Rights for All Coalition – ERAC

Youth Initiative for Human Rights – YIHR

Organization for Increasing Quality of Education – ORCA

NGO Consumer

Centre for Equality and Liberty of the LGBT Community – CEL

Center for Social Group Development – CSGD Kosova

Art and Community Center – Artpolis

Advocacy Training and Resource Center – ATRC

European Center for Minority Issues – ECMI Kosovo

Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development – CLARD

Kosovar Gender Studies Center – KGSC

Kosovo Women's Network – KWN

Syri i Vizionit

Shkëlzen Maliqi

Lawyers Association – Norma

Numismatic Association – Demastion