

[English version]

Demolli: History will prove the role and importance of women in the war and in state building in Kosovo

Dafina Halili: Hello, I am Dafina Halili, a journalist at Kosovo 2.0, and thank you for joining us for Kosovo 2.0's podcast. This is one of our last podcasts as a part of a two-year series of podcasts by Kosovo 2.0, in cooperation with the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, and with financial support from the European Union.

We are exploring various aspects of transitional justice in order to cover as many angles as possible.

In most wars and conflicts it is women and girls who lead protests, who are hit hardest by gender-based violence and the lack of resources, yet they are at the forefront of the fight for freedom and human rights.

Despite this, transitional justice often fails to adequately address the multidimensional issue of gender justice. Once the war is over, women are expected to return to their normal roles.

With this in mind, and after a long political war, in 2000, the U.N. adopted Resolution 1325. The aim was to make gender equality and the circumstances of women an integral part of international peace and security.

The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts, wars, peace negotiations and in rebuilding countries post-conflict.

How much has this resolution been implemented in post-war Kosovo, and how much has a gendered perspective been included during important political processes, such as the dialogue for the normalization of relations with Serbia, will be the topic of today's podcast in conversation with Luljeta Demolli, executive director at the Kosovo Center for Gender Studies.

Dafina: Luljeta, thank you so much for being part of Kosovo 2.0's podcast.

Luljeta: Thank you for the invitation.

Dafina: When we talk about Resolution 1325, like when we talk about U.N. resolutions in general, and other various conventions and declarations, they often sound unintelligible, except to those who work in the field of human rights or are part of the non-governmental sector. Even

when we try to break down Resolution 1325. What exactly does it mean and what legal framework does Kosovo have to implement this resolution?

Luljeta: In fact, Resolution 1325, which is named "Women, peace and security," calls all states, not only those that are part of the United Nations, but also countries which are not part of the U.N., to affirm women's rights, of their role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in peace negotiations, peace building, in countries where peacekeeping structures such as NATO are present. The resolution invites these structures in during a humanitarian response, for reconstruction, but also to include all structures that the state possesses for diplomacy. In all countries this plays an important role for representation, both representation in decision-making and representation in diplomacy.

Resolution 1325 can be considered a pole star for the women of Kosovo, meaning that it is like a constant follower, a reference point to where Kosovo should be directed. All organizations in Kosovo that work for women's rights, feminist organizations, those working for gender equality, peace, construction and security, all of have Resolution 1325 as a reference point.

The state of Kosovo considers Resolution 1325 an important document, as a main foundation. The resolution is included in the state program for gender equality and the national program for gender equality and it is an important one. Also, Resolution 1325 is considered a special document which has its own plan on how it should be implemented. For the state structures that are responsible and accountable for gender equality issues, Resolution 1325 is extremely important.

It is part of legislation, strategies and programs. Even the simplest workshops can have this resolution as a point of reference. As well as international representatives and agencies operating in Kosovo, embassies, and all who are seeking democratization, incorporate the implementation of Resolution 1325.

Certainly, we will now discuss how the implementation of Resolution 1325 is going, since it is a reference point for all work done in the field of women's rights.

Dafina: In fact, as far as I remember, you were part of the 2006 protest. It was when preparations for negotiations for the final status of Kosovo began, which led to Kosovo's independence in 2008. The failure to address the needs of women, during the negotiation process, and to answer the demands of feminist activists, caused great dissatisfaction among non-governmental organizations, various groups of women and feminist activists. I remember, in 2006, on March 8, during the organization of the protest, and the protest itself, the famous slogan "I no longer want flowers" was used for the first time. Instead of flowers, participation in negotiations was demanded. What has changed since 2006?

Luljeta: I actually remember the protest and we as an organization participated. But the demands made by women's organizations and the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Kosovo, should not be credited only to women's organizations, but also to activists, media representatives and female journalists. For example I remember very well, even in 2000 before

these initiatives existed, women such as Aferdita Saraqini, Xheraldina Vula, Luljeta Vuniqi, Igballe Rugova, Vjosa Dobruna, Edita Tahiri and other activists, all had the singular demand that women should be involved in the whole implementation process, in the process of state building, peacebuilding and to be included in the negotiations.

I remember the Ahtisaari Plan, a letter was sent to Ahtisaari demanding that women should be at the table, for peace building, for dialogue, for negotiation. It was demanded they include experts, organizations of women and women who have contributed to the creation of the state of Kosovo, but who have also contributed to both war and peace.

That protest was followed by many letters that were sent to international representatives for every issue that was raised at a national level, for dialogue, negotiations, it was requested that no case be ignored and that the issue of women's participation should not be addressed just as a number. They always told us that, for example, it is Edita Tahiri or two or more women. It was never requested by feminist activists, or from women and university professors and the other groups that have contributed, that women should be included only as a number. But instead that their expertise was a necessity, that female representation should be made a priority, because the Resolution calls for women to be included in decision-making for their countries, and Kosovo should have them due to expertise and as a necessity.

Dafina: How do you see it now, because since 2011, Kosovo has been part of the dialogue process with Serbia, and depending on successive governments, the negotiating teams have changed constantly. In terms of representation in numbers, the same situation as 2006 is still repeated, it is constantly reported and we have always seen a certain number of men at the table in Brussels, almost in all cases, without women being present. But, except for quantitative representation, all these years, how much have the needs of women been taken into account and how much is gender perspective included and what does this mean? What issues should be up for discussion, given the gender perspective that is required by Resolution 1325?

Luljeta: The feminist and activists' requests, mainly from Kosovo... it should be mentioned that there was a dialogue, and an articulation from Serbian women, feminist women, where they came together and had meetings, both sides are working on the ground. The request from the beginning was that women should be part of the discussions, and the issues and needs of women should be presented in the most dignified way, not by leaders that mainly are men, but the women that have expertise and have played important roles, should be those parts of tables.

There were three core ideas, all three were articulated by feminists and activists in Kosovo. Initially it was an apology for war crimes. This apology has been a constant demand, a request that has been sought since the beginning, an apology from the Serbian state and for this, even the feminist activists who are known in Serbia have said that it should be done, for the state of Serbia to take responsibility for what happened in Kosovo.

The apology should not be considered as a part of the negotiations, not that the state of Serbia apologizes and then Kosovo has to give something in return. Apologizing was considered a basis for starting the whole dialogue and initiating discussions.

The second request, which has been demanded by the women of both Kosovo, Serbia and feminist activists in general, has been that the issue of rape should be addressed and articulated more because rape was used as a means of war. It should not be discussed at the table because this is a humanitarian issue, but before entering the dialogue. It is not a technical issue, it is a serious issue, and punishment and justice must be done.

To find the criminals, to find perpetrators, to persecute, and to punish, in order that every victim has the justice they deserve.

The third issue, which is also extremely important, is the issue of missing persons.

Without returning to the issue of those who remain missing, I think that the peacebuilding process will be very hurtful and incomplete because people need to remember their families. When it comes to peacebuilding, things should be resolved so that hearts can be full, can be healed, in the sense of returning the missing, because without this I think peacebuilding will last for as long as the issue of the missing is delayed.

It is extremely important for women not to be just a numerical representation but also as a quality, with an expertise, to be equal at the tables where all issues are discussed, because the role of women in war, in conflict, in peace building, in negotiations, is extremely important. Even Resolution 1325 guarantees that women need to be a part of these discussions. It says that women's issues should be affirmed at these tables, and it is extremely important and has been shown that the role of women, especially in Kosovo, has been demonstrated to be a unique and extremely important contribution.

There exist women that deserve... that are good at communication in diplomacy, at all levels, they are extremely vocal, and why are they not involved? I have reflected a lot on this. Why doesn't this happen? Is it a cultural issue, is it a matter of emancipation, what is it that prevents men, the Kosovar leadership, from having women at the table discussing important issues?

Dafina: What do you think is the problem, because it is still left up to activists to tell and to document the contribution of women?

Luljeta: I think in all countries in post-conflict or post-war situations, men, because they are closer to public and political life, are expedited towards state-building and to occupy the tables, and maintain that brotherhood, that patriarchy. This idea is held very strongly and they do not want to share these benefits with women. It is typically patriarchal, I think it is based on patriarchy, but I have never been able to understand why some intellectuals in Kosovo never acknowledge women for their contributions, because women were those who, especially in protests, put Kosovo in the headlines, worldwide. All the protests are documented and there you can see the very noble role of women in the liberation of Kosovo, in state building, and bringing global attention to the Kosovo issue.

And I don't understand why but I feel, even now, that among feminist activists that there is a desire to not give women the credit they deserve. This should end and history should not know only men, the leadership of men, but instead recognize women's contribution as well. It is all very unfair. I think that history will prove that the role and importance of women in war, in peace building, in state building, has been very important in Kosovo and women have worked hard for this and I hope that one day they will be recognized with the significance they deserve.

What I expect from the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, is to shed more light on this field, to recognize the contribution of women, in state building and in the war because it is her responsibility, as the most voted for woman in Kosovo. Because she knows what happens in politics, in public life, it's up to her to come out first and recognize the contribution of women, it's up to her to decorate women, to create monuments for women as much as possible, it's up to her to give women the space where they can be recognized for their contributions.

It is up to her to take the side of women because for years the support was on the side of men. To stand with women means to implement Resolution 1325, because this resolution recognizes this affirmation, as a result of oppression, of patriarchy, The resolution recognizes this affirmation, and I expect our President to recognize the contribution of women and everything they have done for Kosovo and to shed light on the struggles women face.

Dafina: Lule, thank you very much for being part of Kosovo 2.0's podcast.

Luljeta: Thank you for the invitation, it was a pleasure.

Dafina: Thank you very much.



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