

# Balkan PERSPECTIVES

*A magazine on Dealing with the Past*

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# EDIT- ORIAL

Dear readers,

Violence, conflict and war do eventually end. However, the events from the past still haunt those who experienced violent conflict. In our newest issue of *Balkan.Perspectives* we are therefore focusing on the psychological effects of war and conflict. We want to draw attention to those who are still affected by the past. How do people who have been traumatized cope with their experiences? What kind of support do they get from their societies and where have they been neglected?

Furthermore, since every dark cloud has a silver lining, we also want to explore how people maintained their daily routine during war in order to protect their mental sanity and how they reacted when life around them fell apart. Some of them stood in opposition to violence and tried to fight against their own and other people's traumatization.

The voices of those who were present during the violent events of the past and who are still dealing with their experiences should be heard by us all. All of us should acknowledge their situation and be dedicated to a better future, a future in which we prevent violence and hatred and are aware of the importance of our mental health. It is crucial to reflect on how to take care of yourself and what we need in order to feel stable and secure.

The first article offers us a general introduction into the concepts of trauma and resilience and describes which circumstances can help individuals to deal with traumatizing situations.

In addition, we present the work of Medica Kosova in Gjakova, the Foundation for local democracy in Sarajevo and the Center for War Trauma in Novi Sad. They have all been working with and for traumatized people since the conflicts of the 90s and continue to do so until this day. Their work is crucial for a lot of people who, thanks to the efforts of these organizations, are now able to now live a healthy and stable life despite the horrors that lie in their past.

Furthermore, a report about the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims in Kosovo sheds light on the aspect of secondary trauma and explores how those who want to help people with trauma deal with the difficult stories they hear every day. Professionals who have not directly made traumatizing experiences can also suffer from secondary trauma if they don't take care of their own mental health.

Besides those who are dealing with trauma today there are also individuals and organizations who have tried to create an environment that would allow people to maintain their mental health and dignity during the war. A wonderful example are certain media outlets in Sarajevo who, at the time of the siege of the city, did not play the role of an agent of propaganda but tried to fight one-sided and biased reporting. Even in times of fear and danger they chose to offer peaceful resistance.

The Oral History Initiative Kosovo collects narratives of numerous individuals who are willing to share the stories of their lives. The initiative offers a platform for those stories "which are often ignored, erased, deemed unimportant" and gives room to stories that are often not included in official history books.

As usual, we are looking forward to receiving feedback from our readers. For further questions, remarks and subscriptions please send us an email to [balkan.perspectives@forumzfd.de](mailto:balkan.perspectives@forumzfd.de).

I hope that you will benefit from reading our newest issue and wish you a wonderful autumn season.

Sincerely,  
*Maïke Dafeld* / Editor in chief

# Can you recall a situation in which you were under great stress? How did you cope with that situation?

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Whenever I waited for the results of tests or exams at university, I used to comfort myself with the phrase "I survived four years under shells, I will survive this, too."

**Adnan O., 25**

"The greatest stress for me was short deadlines at work, but then I gave up on multitasking, started solving issues one by one and breathing deeply."

**Dijana B., 26**

"I am frequently exposed to stressful situations, especially in a country such as ours, where almost nothing is functioning the way it should. It has an impact on both my private life and my career. Several years ago, I was in a particularly stressful situation when I lost my job at an international organization. That is, when another person was employed in the position that I had held, which was fully unjustified in legal terms. Although that whole situation was very stressful for me, as I had successfully performed in my job for years, I told myself that I would not give up and that I would try to exercise my rights by lodging a complaint because I trusted in righteousness. Upon having lodged a complaint, I received a bland and bureaucratic rejection without any explanations. The body responsible seemed to simply have forgotten one of the basic principles advocated by the organization they represent, namely the rule of law. In any case, this was my way of coping with such a situation: I refused to keep silent. I wanted to say that something was wrong, irrespective of the outcome."

**Zlatica G., 58**

## Kosovo

"Bearing in mind that I spend most of my day in the office and at work, it is usually work that causes most of the stress I experience, especially when everything needs to be done at once because of so many requests. So I often get stressed. The way I try to overcome this situation is by re-organising my tasks by their importance, so that I can get them done based on the importance of the request."

**Rezearta Zh., 32**

"I usually get stressed by unplanned situations - something I don't expect, or that catches me unprepared. I can usually calm down by shouting and annoying other people. It's a bit bad, but I feel I can handle the pressure better like this."

**Valentina S., 29**

"It's not that I often have to deal with stressful situations, but when I find myself in an uncomfortable situation, I usually do get stressed. What do I do in order to overcome this pressure? There are occasions when I need to be around optimistic and good humoured people and there are other cases when I need to drink and yell."

**Valon M., 32**

## Serbia

"Problems are part of our daily lives and although they cannot be avoided, they most certainly can be overcome. There are different ways of tackling problems and they vary from person to person. In my opinion, it is all about attitude. I see problems as some sort of challenge or test, even a lesson, in order to progress as a human being. If one is armed with a positive view, attitude and an awareness that no problem lasts forever, any obstacle can be overcome!"

**Nikola K., 27**

"I have a terribly irritating colleague at work, who always has something to add. He knows it all, and for me it is very stressful to share the office with him. Other colleagues, even though they have been working with him for longer than me, have never said anything to him. I approached him and told him that I was unable to do my job and that I do not need daily preaching from him or anyone else. Luckily, he understood the message loud and clear and stopped harassing me and my other colleagues. One should not be afraid and should face a problem at the very start."

**Dragana M., 33**

"I remember that I was really stressed the year my son was born. It was 2004, a year after Djindjic had been killed and only a couple of months after the unrest in Kosovo. Me, my wife and everyone around us was very afraid that war might break out again and I did not know how I could provide for my child, for my family, if that happened. I called friends who lived abroad and put together some sort of escape plan, in case we had to leave Serbia. Luckily, that wasn't necessary. I guess what helped me best was keeping busy and taking the initiative, making sure I was prepared."

**Predrag M., 46**

## Macedonia

"I felt under great stress when the violence erupted in Kumanovo, Macedonia in May 2015. On the one hand I was afraid that this could turn into violence on an even larger scale, but seeing how people from different ethnicities coped with it, I was encouraged. People trusted each other and knew they were not going to let anyone manipulate them."

**Filip Z., 24**

"Life is stressful and very often we just have to deal with it! It can be caused by different problems, mine is mostly caused by work. Horrible colleagues... What can I do? I can't change them... So to deal with the stress they cause, I need to understand that I can't change them, that's the reality. So I've started to ignore their impact on my mood and do more of what makes me happy at work!"

**Besa Z., 29**

"I try to get out for lunch at least once during the week to clear my head. I also have a personal rule that stops me from reacting to a problem until I feel calm about it. I think, then act - but I've learned to do that over time."

**Kimete B., 32**



**M**edia Organisations in Sarajevo during the war are often remembered as the war instigators, institutions who fuelled the conflict and spread hate speech. However, there were other media outlets who refused to play that role and dedicated their work to fighting for freedom of speech and dignity.

Speaking recently at an international conference on media freedom, journalist Roy Gutman said that journalism was sometimes "the only hope for people in war". Examples of this type journalism, one that gave hope by putting up resistance to the frenzy of war, could be found in war time Sarajevo. In print there was *Oslobođenje* and *Dani* magazine whilst radio Studio 99 or radio Zid gave hope to the airwaves.

Their very existence and survival – although they operated under circumstances that are difficult to imagine today, even for those who were part of it all – kept us sane and helped us fight the evil that surrounded us. Being able to read newspapers or listen to the radio every day was some sort of psychological resistance. Everyone who lived in the city under siege (where every minute was maybe the last, where we turned parks into vegetable gardens in order to survive, made fire using old shoes, slept in basements, bathed with rainwater, were continuously afraid and deprived of human dignity) was kept lucid by this journalism. We were reminded of the fact that we were nevertheless civilized people, even after we had completely lost any sense of it.

In addition to this, one newspaper did not give in to the invasion of rabid nationalism, but rather managed to stay civil all the time, and thereby preserve both its own and our dignity. Even before the war had begun, the newspaper *Oslobođenje* started the fight for freedom of speech and dignity, both human and professional. The journalists and editors refused to be megaphones of war and nationalism and obedient party followers, clearly discarding the possibility of any political influence on the editorial policy. Many would envy them for such courage even today.

Radio stations that survived in the city offered another type of resistance, but equally brought encouragement to the citizens of Sarajevo. Spending at least a short time roaming through a completely different world with Karim Zaimović, listening to the same music as someone who knows what peace and dignity are, having the opportunity to listen to people laughing, but also seriously contemplating all the horror surrounding us, sometimes meant more than having the greatest riches in the world. Because it meant that we were alive.

Unfortunately, today when we speak about the role of media during the wars in the countries formed by the dissolution of Yugoslavia, we most frequently remember the role of the war instigators. The strength of such media, whose editorial policies were determined at political cabinets and implemented by obedient followers disguised as journalists, soiled this profession for good. It is even more soiled by the fact that the people who engaged in such practices have never been processed, and some of them still work in the media or are still present as public figures. Today, they are more frequently remembered than the heroes of journalism who worked in the interest of the general public, risking their lives in the process.

They managed to present alternative views, which was not always easy in Sarajevo under siege and often upset people in power. Furthermore, in some areas of the press, the magazine *Dani* especially, we can find attempts at investigative journalism, truly a miracle given the conditions. However, the stories uncovered by journalists still maintain the honour of Sarajevo, Sarajevans and journalists. They were the first to talk about the killing of non-Bosniaks in Sarajevo, street gangs, crime, corruption among governing structures, etc.

The importance of the media is best reflected by a quote from a young writer, Haris Jusufović, who wrote the text "I want to know what happened to my Serbian neighbours in Sarajevo". When asked how he fought the nationalist frenzy in which he grew up, he says: "Because I grew up reading *Dani*, *Oslobođenje*, *Slobodna Bosna* and other newspapers that taught me that there is no "but".

*Nidžara Ahmetašević, PhD, is a journalist and publicist living and working in Sarajevo. Nidžara received her PhD from the University of Graz in the field of the International Intervention in Media Space after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to this, as a researcher she deals with the role of the media in the democratization process, development of the media sector in post conflict societies, the role of political propaganda and the process of facing the past in the Balkans. Her research has been published in several scientific magazines and two books. In addition to domestic media, she has also had her work published in numerous international media, including The Observer, The Independent on Sunday, International Justice Tribune, Balkan Insight, BBC, NBC, etc. She currently works as a journalist for the magazine Slobodna Bosna.*

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**L**iving in a region afflicted by war or ethnic conflict often results in having to experience very grave, even traumatic events. Among those events are direct consequences of the war or conflict, such as the loss of one's home, being part of a battle, or lack of water or food. Other consequences refer to the loss of a beloved person, a family member or friend, through acts of war, which may even be witnessed in person. A third kind of traumata directly threatens individual boundaries or aims to destroy one's physical as well as mental health, such as sexual violence or torture. Scientific studies show that among all possible traumatic events, it's this third kind that has the strongest negative impact on health.

Nevertheless, for many people, experiencing any traumatic event causes strong impairment in terms of somatic symptoms, such as pain or numbness in injured body parts, or in mental health. Scientific studies show that people who experience several different traumatic events are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems. Among the most frequent negative consequences of trauma for mental health are depressive or post-traumatic stress disorders. People suffering from one of these disorders are frequently and repeatedly very sad and lack energy, have unrefreshing sleep or nightmares, or suddenly relive the traumatic event in flashbacks, among other symptoms. In such cases, a psychotherapeutic treatment may be prescribed.

However, one should not forget the resources that can help to reduce the negative impacts of traumatic events and enable a person to maintain a normal daily life. Indeed, scientific studies show that five to nine out of ten people experiencing a traumatic event do not develop a post-traumatic stress disorder but remain relatively healthy in terms of mental health. This phenomenon is called resilience.

One of the most important resources of resilience comprises social support. Social support can be given in different forms, such as emotional support (e.g., listening to a person's problems, comforting someone, or giving someone a hug), practical support (e.g., buying groceries when someone is ill, taking care of ones pets or plants when he/she is not at home for a longer time), or by giving someone a sense of belonging (e.g., by being part of a club, having regular meetings with someone, or sharing a hobby). Scientific studies underline the protective power of social support and particularly emotional support when dealing with a traumatic event. Thereby, the strength of social support may even outweigh the negative impact of a traumatic event, especially in instances when the traumatic event was experienced more than three years ago.

Another important resource factor for resilience is religiosity. Religiosity comprises all sorts of religious acts, such as praying at home, regular visits to church services, praying together, or observing religious traditions. In regard to the latter examples, religiosity may be a source of social support and may thereby influence mental health positively. In addition,

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# Trauma and resilience – a short introduction







strong religious faith may help to attribute the cause for experiencing a trauma to an external source, such as the will of god or fate, instead of attributing it to own actions. Thereby, it can relieve any assumed individual blame that is often perceived by victims of sexual violence, but has also been found in survivors of shipping disasters or natural disasters. However, scientific studies differentiate between positive and negative kinds of religiosity. Positive religiosity means believing in a religion based on faith and support. In contrary, a negative religiosity associates god with anger, anxiety, and doubts. Whereas a negative religiosity can be associated with stronger mental health problems after the experience of a traumatic event, a strong personal belief in a positive religion may reduce the negative impact of a traumatic event.

Another important personal resource is the belief that challenges in life are meaningful (independent of one's religiosity) and important to deal with, and the conviction that one has adequate resources to do so. These resources are called 'sense of coherence' and

'self-efficacy'. Both develop during childhood and adolescence and are assumed to be quite stable by adulthood. They result in a persistent pursuit of individually important aims and reduce the susceptibility for possible obstacles. People with a high self-efficacy and sense of coherence continue to believe and invest in their aims and are less easily discouraged than persons without these resources. However, it is possible to strengthen one's resources even in adulthood and after experiencing a traumatic event. To attain that, it may be particularly important to set small aims at first, and to focus on what one has achieved, independent of results and without scrutinising what did not work. To use a metaphor: when you want to improve your fitness and choose to go jogging, start with small realistic distances at a slow pace instead of a long distance run under a time limit. In addition, reward yourself with things you like after each run.

In conclusion, traumatic events interfere with one's health and can cause impairing mental disorders. Nevertheless, social and personal resources can help reduce such negative effects. Some of them are easy to provide, such as giving a hug or listening to someone's problems, while others may need a bit of time, exercise, and support. However focusing on one's resources and supporting each other helps us to remain healthy and to overcome the partly long-lasting negative effects of war and conflicts.

**Dr. Ricarda Nater-Mewes**

*is the head of a junior research group in the Department of Psychology, University of Marburg, Germany. She holds a Diploma in Psychology at the Heinrich-Heine-University Duesseldorf, Germany, and a PhD at the Philipps University of Marburg and Dr. rer. medic. at the University of Duisburg-Essen (both in Germany). Since 2012 she is a licensed Clinical Psychologist.*

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# Who is Medica Kosova?

*Medica Kosova is a non-governmental organisation that was established in August 1999 in Gjakova. The organisation supports women who experienced violence during the war in Kosovo. Their services include psycho-social services for dealing with war trauma; group and individual legal assistance; socio-economic support in the agricultural sector and advocacy for women who have been affected by violence during the war.*

*Medica Kosova is led by Mrs. Veprora Shehu. She actively advocates and lobbies for women who survived violence during the war, ensuring their problems are addressed. She also fights for the representation and participation of women in public policy.*



## **How many women have received help from your organization and what age do they tend to be?**

Since 1999, over 6,500 women have used the services of Medica Kosova, everything from gynecological to legal help. In addition to this, 130 women from the Dukagjini area who work in farming have managed to make an average of 300-400 Euros a month after receiving trucks, bees and cows from the organisation. The age of the women who benefit from our services is generally from 14 to 65, but there is also a small number of women over the age of 65 who experienced trauma during the war.

## **What challenges do and did these women face?**

A good example of a woman who needed our services is Besa (her name has been changed). She experienced sexual violence and torture while she and 40 other women were imprisoned in a location, which was turned into a “rape camp” by the Serbian paramilitary and police forces for three consecutive days in March of 1999.

Besa was in a very bad condition when she approached the organization in 2004 asking for psychosocial help. She isolated herself at home and often attempted to commit suicide. She was scared of the darkness and any sudden movements in her garden.

## **How did you help Besa?**

The intense psychosocial treatment was focused on her capabilities, mainly on raising her self-esteem, and confronting her with her rape as part of her past. She was often asked how she would help a woman who had experienced sexual violence, and what she believed such a victim needed most.

While fighting the feelings of guilt and shame, the individual counselling sessions included the presentation of information related to rape and why it is used as a war tool in order to break the stigma she and her family members had surrounding war rape. By doing this, Besa gained more support from her husband and children and she was also able to tell her story to the media.

## **Which methods do you apply to offer those services?**

The organization applies empowering methods for women with heavy trauma symptoms. We start by building trust between those women and the professional staff and build up to creating trust towards other members of the community.

In our work we try to cover 4 important aspects of trauma work: creating personal security; confronting trauma and identifying symptoms; restructuring the traumatic event;





and connecting women with family members and other members of the community by returning trust and strengthening their personal and professional skills.

**How does the organization conceptualize rehabilitation and trauma, and which mechanisms do you believe help people to deal with their past?**

The re-occurrence of traumatic symptoms, or the so called re-traumatization, depends on both the external and internal factors which influence the women in their life. This can, for example, depend on the duration of the psychological support, or the existence of support from the family, or the socio-economic status of the woman. External factors, meanwhile, are linked to political circumstances, the level of security or the state stability.

Any potential risk of new conflict or political destabilization creates a lot of space for re-traumatization. The coping mechanisms of trauma are created by psychosocial counselling. They are established once a woman tells her story without shaking or showing any signs of anxiety such as uncontrolled and unexpected crying. The counselling process also enables a

woman to manage her emotions and challenge patriarchal structures in order to regain her dignity and respect.

**What do you aim to achieve with your work?**

The aim of our organization is to achieve social and legal justice for women raped during the war, and to institutionalize the organization as a professional centre. One which offers social and legal services for women who have been victims of sexual violence, or other gender based violence during and after the war in Kosovo.

**Last but not least, let me ask you: What is Besa doing today?**

Currently Besa helps other women by encouraging them to speak up about what has happened to them, and to ask for professional help from the organization. Besa was one of the first women to use legal mechanisms provided by EULEX's mission in Kosovo to document the sexual violence she experienced. She also encouraged two other women to do the same. By doing this, she changed the culture of impunity in Kosovo and made a historical change in the sad chapter of sexual violence committed on Kosovo's women during the war.



*The interview was conducted by **Vjollca Islami Hajrullahu** from forumZFD.*

# S P E A K U P !

*Edina Kmetas has learned how to deal with traumatic events in her past. The key to her wellbeing was her ability to speak about her experiences and building up a successful business with the association Gerc Sumeja.*

The Foundation of Local Democracy (FLD) in Sarajevo includes in the majority of its program activities a gender component. Proof, if needed, that the protection of female victims of war represents an important part in the activities of the organization. Since the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina recognized the status of female victims of war under the Law on Social Protection, the FLD has worked a lot in this field, leading to the formation of a network of 19 non-governmental organizations. This network supports, both psychologically and legally, women who became victims of war, before, during and after their testimony at trials for war crimes.

The FLD is supporting programs in the field of psycho-social rehabilitation and the economic sustainability of women affected by war and violence. This long term program, supported by the UNHCR (and in the last year also by the EU), allowed the associations of victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help potential beneficiaries through individual and collective assistance.

The program's success was presented in Sarajevo on International Refugee Day, June 21st 2015. Organized by the UNHCR, the event enabled beneficiaries to present the successes they have achieved thanks to this truly meaningful project.



**Lejla Šadić** (assistant on the project of support to women victims of the war of 2007, far left), alongside **Edina Kmetaš** and other members of the Gerc Sumeja association.

**A**t a UNHCR organised event recognising International Refugee Day, Edina Kmetas, alongside other members of the 'Gerc Sumeja' Association, is presenting a range of dairy products, mainly cheese. She proudly states that through her work she is providing for her family. Last year, their cheese received an award at an Austrian cheese fair.

When she is asked how she became involved in the program she says: "We started with the production three years ago, when the FLD and UNHCR program started in our region, the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. At first, we received 14 cows in the Prozor area. Later on, we received even more support; for the tillage machines, a lawn mower and so on. One woman suggested to buy a milk cooling tank. Today she is one of our members and works at the milk cooling tank: every morning and evening she receives milk which is then bought by a dairy purchaser. Our milk is used for the production of the cheese. It is a very successful project which helps us not only economically but also in psychological terms.

When asked what kind of advice she would give others when it comes to the question of how to deal with traumatic experiences, she says: "The best way was to make very clear to myself that I am not to blame for what happened to me, I had not asked for it and I had to leave it chained behind me. This path has not

been easy. Especially 22 years ago, I thought that I would kill myself, that I would not be able to live this way. I was traumatized, of course. For six years I did not sleep at night, I woke up at 5 in the morning. I felt that my body could no longer withstand the collapse, the fall and that I had to turn to someone. Then I started to go regularly to the therapeutic treatment in Mostar where we had a therapy session every Saturday. Dr. Alma Bravo, and the deceased Dr. Senaid Ljubović worked in group therapy with us. They helped us to deal with the trauma. I believe that these doctors were really quite successful with us.

I advise women who have survived traumatizing experiences to speak up and share what happened to them. For a lot of them it will be easier afterwards. I can say this from my own experience. I could really feel it on my skin: After sharing these things with members of the association, after being with the doctors, when I left for home, I was a completely different person. I felt that it frees the body.

What is also important is the support of the family. I had a husband who gave me support and told me when I was at the most difficult stage, 'Edina, our children and I need you'. I had two daughters of four and one year old at that time. After the war, I gave birth to another girl and now that I have raised my three beautiful girls, I can say that I am very happy after all that has happened to me. It has all been and gone, I'm happy when I see my children."

*Edita Pršić was born in 1966 in Sarajevo, where she also lived during the war. In 1996, she found employment at an international humanitarian organization, the Embassy of Local Democracy Barcelona-Sarajevo, where she worked as a cultural project coordinator. Since 2003 she has been working at a local NGO, the Local Democracy Foundation as a PR officer. The Local Democracy Foundation is the legal successor of ELD Barcelona-Sarajevo and it is a professional organization that is successfully implementing human rights projects.*

*In this interview Nikola Rakočević, star of "The Sky Above Us", reflects on the Nato bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999 and describes his very personal reaction to the situation at that time.*

*About the actor*

*Nikola Rakočević was born in 1983 in Kragujevac, where he also started his career as an actor. Since 2002 he has starred in numerous films, television series and plays. His most well-known roles are in the films "Šišanje" directed by Stevan Filipović and "Krugovi" from director Srđan Golubović. In 2014, he was proclaimed as one of the ten best young actors in Europe at the Berlin Film Festival. In his latest film, "The Sky Above Us", he plays the character of Bojan.*



“ Such a situation does not allow you to think rationally.”

- *About the film*
- *"The Sky Above Us" is directed by Dutchman Marinus Groothof and depicts the fate of three characters, Ana, Bojan and Slobo. The film is set in May 1999, the period of NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia. The film tackles their fears and the process of overcoming them.*



**How did you become a member of the team behind "The Sky Above Us"? What drew you to the plot or the role you ended up playing?**

For me it was interesting that the plot dealt with something that truly happened, that it was something that people really did. I also found it interesting that a Dutchman wanted to tell the story of what we went through, but from his perspective. The director is, of course, not as vehement as someone from this region would be, either in terms of nationalism or suffering. He saw all of this in a somewhat more unbiased way than we do. I thought that it was interesting that someone from abroad thought that the bombing of Serbia is something that should be discussed.

**In the film, your character, Bojan, somehow gives off the impression that he has no interest in anything happening around him. Was this a way for you to show how people dealt with the situation at the time?**

Yes, it was a way for both old and young people to try to forget what happened, especially after the first several days, when they understood that it would not be like the bombing of Belgrade in 1941 by the Third Reich (ed. note), but that this humanitarian bombing, if it can be called that, would last longer, for the purpose of achieving specific goals. Once people understood that they were not directly endangered, they started to relax a great deal. People were trying to act as normally as possible, with as much humour as possible. In this way they collectively defended themselves. Bojan is thus a representative of a whole group of young people that refused to express any opinion at all, because they thought both options were stupid.

The regime was stupid, but the bombing as a reaction was stupid as well. I mean, it was very stupid, especially in the 20th century. People tried not to express any opinions at all. Some of them were very vehement, of course, which

is understandable. If someone attacks you, you defend yourself, because you do not have too many other options. Bojan was one of those who were trying to get out of it with minimum losses.

**Do you remember where you were and what you were doing on the first and last day of bombing? Where exactly were you during the bombing?**

I remember the first day. They were showing "The Battle of Kosovo" on TV, to raise the morale of the people. It was truly terrible. Everyone became afraid, because they did not know what would happen. It was a strange, gruesome atmosphere. Everyone escaped to a basement and there were numerous scared people taking sedatives, because they did not know what was happening. Many did not believe that it would happen, because they were asking themselves why someone would bomb them now, given that there were other ways to solve things. They were not aware that this would indeed happen. All these people around me had nothing to do with what had happened in Kosovo and it simply made no sense for them to assume any responsibility. Especially the working class, who were trying to make ends meet for their families, to survive and were not interested in what had happened in Kosovo. Their main goal was survival. That may be animalistic, but it was their main goal, rather than national or state interest.

After this first day, everyone went to the countryside. We did not go anywhere, because we had nowhere to go. In addition to us, there were maybe five people who stayed, and for me it was gruesome, because all of a sudden there was nobody there, literally nobody. I was alone. This emptiness, this loneliness was one of the most horrific things for me. I somehow became afraid. The bombing was no longer important, it was the extreme loneliness that mattered. There was nobody to talk to. I was completely alone. Everything had been erased. I do not recall the end of the bombing at all.

**Two characters in the movie, Ana and Sloba, are strictly following their daily routine, whereas Bojan is roaming from one part of the city to the other, from one party to the other. What was your daily routine like back then?**

You find something to do in order to make time pass. I was creating some wooden items with my grandfather. When people came back from the countryside, where they had escaped to during the first days of bombing, they started drinking, socializing, etc. Everyone would gather at houses. In addition to this, the main task was to procure what was needed for daily life.

**Did anyone back then explain to you why Serbia was being bombed?**

There were no explanations as such. Back then we had no free media, the only thing we had was media propaganda. My parents did not give me any explanations at all. During

those moments there was no need for them to explain to me why Serbia was being bombed, the only important thing was to protect the family and for all of us to survive. At that moment it was unimportant who was waging war and for what reason, because if you lose a child, you lose everything. A victory of any party or anything can hardly make up for that. It was in a way fleeing for your life.

**Do you remember any particularly beautiful moments from that period?**

There is no particular moment as such, you simply experience things in a much more intense way all the time. Everything is fuller, more beautiful. There is need for being near people, for communicating. Every joke is five times funnier than usual. All the time you have the feeling that you "are present", because this feeling that you will die, although it does not have to be now, but one day, makes you live in a bit fuller way, a bit more beautiful way, to experience everything in the right way. It was an incredible life energy, and everyone wanted everything to be normal, to be okay.

**When you look back – are some types of behavior from back then applicable in the current society of Serbia?**

I do not think so. This is a small, poor country that has people just like Germany, too. Both stupid and smart people, both like this and like that. You cannot generalize. Of course, there are many consequences for the people. This causes depression, it also causes war trauma, but there are also people who are functioning in a perfectly normal way. But this depends on the extent to which a person is able to adapt to a situation.

**In an interview you said that man was made to survive and thus to adapt to circumstances. How can a person adapt to war, primarily in terms of emotions?**

Well, as I said. The most important thing is to curse the Americans, to drink brandy, tell jokes and go to parties. Something along the line "the NATO and Americans are fools and we are cool because we make jokes in spite of everything", but that is a natural reaction, like when you are laughing during a funeral. It is something trivial and stupid when you see it as an observer, but it is actually very natural. It is a defence mechanism and a way for a person to protect themselves from all those negative forces. If you are sitting now and thinking "Why are they bombing us, what kind of war is that" etc., then you enter a situation in which you either shoot yourself in the head or you shoot someone else. Such a situation does not allow you to think rationally.



# Centre for War Trauma



The Association for the Protection of Mental Health of War Veterans and Victims of the 1991-1999 Wars began operations as an informal group of experts; neuropsychiatrists and psychologists who volunteered and provided counselling services to the citizens of Novi Sad during the bombing in 1999. The association was formally registered in August 1999. It later became known as the Centre for War Trauma as a result of a project with the same name that started in September 2002. The project saw the association start to focus on supporting war veterans and members of their families, with the mission of mitigating psychological war consequences for individuals, families and the society.

The Centre for War Trauma has developed over time. Today, alongside the programmes it implements, the Centre sees its mission as peace building in the Western Balkans, achieved through both the mitigation of the psychological consequences of war and the use of war experiences in a constructive and educative manner.

In addition to providing direct services to its users, the Centre also deals with recognizing and acknowledging the psychological consequences of war for citizens and society as a whole. Consequences of war that have been recognized and mitigated help a post-war society guarantee sustainable peace as a perspective for all its citizens. The experiences of the Centre show the enormous potential of using war experiences for social development and sustainable peace building, if they are used in a constructive manner.

The center's fifteen years of work on the psychological consequences that people in this region suffered as a result of wars has not been sufficiently acknowledged by society. Most services and organizations have focused their resources on socio-economic support for persons that have gone through war experiences, ignoring their psychological well being. Veterans who come to the counselling centre often state that they have not talked to anyone about problems they face for fifteen years, sometimes even longer. There is still a certain stigmatization that presents a serious problem in overcoming all issues related to a person's mental state.

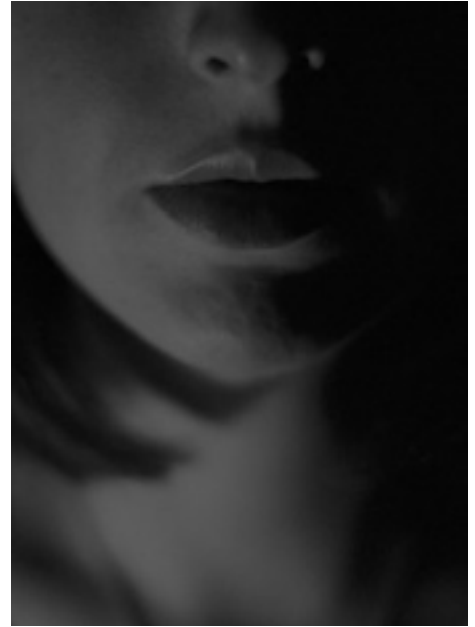
While working on overcoming such problems, the centre also faces the fact that almost every person who is an inhabitant of Serbia has some form of war experience related to the 1999 bombing. As a result, the work on war trauma is peculiar, because it involves a collective handling of traumatic experiences. Today, there are still many people that have never asked for psychological support. This is part of the reason that Serbia is one of the leading countries in Europe in terms of the number of people suffering from cardiovascular diseases.

The work of the Centre for War Trauma is implemented in a different manner today, focussing on prevention and awareness raising of suffering from psychological war consequences as much as treatment.

**Branislava Stević**  
works as a  
psychologist at  
the Center for  
War Trauma in  
Novi Sad.

# ... Don't forget those who suffer from trauma

*In Macedonia, prisoners who deal with severe traumatization deserve more support and should no longer be ignored by Macedonian society, Shpetim Pollozhani argues.*



Shpetim Pollozhani, Head of the Organization of Albanian political prisoners in the Republic of Macedonia

The Organization of Albanian Political Prisoners in the Republic of Macedonia supports former political prisoners who deal with severe traumatization. The organization, which deals with protecting the rights of political prisoners, is constantly in touch with former prisoners and also those who remain imprisoned. It is also in close contact with their families since they are also affected by the situation of their relatives.

The living conditions for prisoners in Macedonia are very poor, which affects not only the physical but also the psychological health of prisoners. The organization tries to keep track of the number of people who suffer from trauma due to their imprisonment or the violent conflict in Macedonia. Unfortunately, these victims are often left alone due to the lack of institutional help that could assist their special needs and situations. This has not only psychological but also economic consequences for them since they have to rely on the help and support of their family. Besides the basic needs for nutrition and clothing, people traumatized due to their imprisonment or the war, need regular health care. It is necessary to monitor the psychological and emotional condition of these people in order to determine adequate therapy and eliminate post-traumatic problems.

So far, one could have the impression that state institutions have ignored the problems of this specific group of people who suffer from trauma. A traumatized individual has a higher cost of living than a normal person. Hence, the family of a traumatized person spends double the amount of money on living costs than an 'ordinary family'. Since the prisoners and their families are quite often left alone with these issues, the risk that the trauma is transmitted to the children increases.

It is high time to establish a state institution in the Republic of Macedonia, which would take care of people who suffer from trauma caused by either their imprisonment, or participation/inclusion in an armed conflict. The organization can offer help by delivering the documents where traumatized people who need help are listed or by supporting the drafting of a regulation, which would categorize the most emergent cases.

People suffering from traumatic experiences need and deserve more support and should no longer be ignored by Macedonian society.



# Wounded Healers

## How to deal with dealing with trauma

As a consequence of the war in Kosovo still today lots of citizens are suffering from traumatization due to the traumatic experiences they were going through during the war in 1998/99. NGOs like the Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) are providing psychological, social and legal help for traumatized people. But how are the therapists themselves dealing with the disturbing stories of their clients they are hearing on daily basis?

One consequence of the armed conflict in the Balkans – and, indeed, of every armed conflict – is the severe damage that is done to the physical and mental health of civilians, as well as those directly involved. During times of war and conflict many people experience events that can cause such extreme emotional stress that the psyche is not capable of coping in an adequate way. Exposure to traumatic experiences can lead to severe physical and mental problems which don't disappear automatically in the aftermath of the war. On the contrary, health problems such as the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can last for years, even decades after the end of the traumatic experience, and psychological and medical treatment is necessary to give hope of recovery. Over the last century, a lot of progress has been made to develop adequate therapeutic

methods to help patients with PTSD. Medical personnel can be trained and educated to conduct such therapies.

In Kosovo, the Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) was already working with traumatized people during the war in 1999. Since then, the Centre has been working with survivors of war and torture, and until today is continuing to provide medical, therapeutic and legal support for people traumatized by the war in Kosovo. The main part of their work is the treatment of victims of torture with an interdisciplinary team of doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and lawyers. The special challenge of working with traumatized people from war or armed conflict - as opposed to other kinds of trauma such as domestic violence - lies in the fact, that with war, usually a whole society is affected. The psychologists and doctors were also part of Kosovar society and as such were also exposed to traumatic experiences, be it as direct victims, as witnesses or as family members.

Sebahate Pacolli Krasniqi, medical doctor and head of rehabilitation at KRCT, emphasized in an interview that some of the staff members were already working for this organization since its establishment in 1999, when they were located in

Albania and working with refugees from Kosovo. As natives of Kosovo, she mentioned, all the staff that now work with traumatized people, were somehow affected by the war, making the work “not easy at all”. Every day these therapists are listening to devastating stories from their clients, to help them start the healing process. But how are the healers themselves dealing with what they hear?

Selvi Izeti has worked as a clinical psychologist with a specialisation in trauma therapy for KRCT since 2007. During the war she was living in Kosovo, but luckily she did not experience any direct traumatic event. Today she remembers how hard it was for her to work with traumatized people from the war when she first started. On her first day at work she was confronted with a very disturbing story. “That was very traumatic for me, it was like a secondary trauma. Then I started experiencing the war, any client that told me about any experience in the war, how they were in the mountains or used as human shields, I was dreaming about that.”

Other therapists have similar experiences and problems. To develop strategies to deal with working with trauma and to discover how their own staff experience this problem, KRCT conducted a pilot study on the

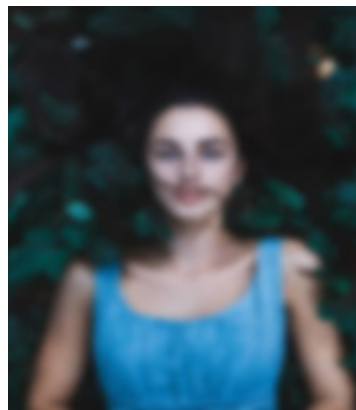
experience of therapists working on torture and trauma to analyse the psychological processes in the background. In trauma therapy and psychotherapy in general the empathic capacity of the therapist is his most important 'working tool'.

But, 'secondary traumatization', the technical term for the phenomenon of "wounded healers", therapists that themselves get psychologically affected by their work, has a huge impact on the therapist as well as on the therapeutic process. It causes direct consequences for the relationship between therapist and patient, causing either empathetic disequilibrium, enmeshment, over-identification with the patient, or in the other direction growing distance and withdrawal from the patient. Maintaining empathy however is crucial, as it is the most important contribution the therapist makes to successful trauma therapy. Secondary traumatization is also very risky for the therapist personally as it can cause burn out effects and depression. That is why it is vital for every therapist working with traumatized people to have a range of coping strategies, and methods for stress reduction.

Selvi emphasizes the importance of talking. "It helps a lot when we talk with colleagues that work here at KRCT. When we have any problem caused by dealing with clients we talk to each other, we are teaching each other, and this helps me a lot." Also the use of relaxation methods is widespread. For Selvi and her colleagues it is also important to work part time, so that there is

still enough time to balance the difficult stories with more positive input.

When she started her job in 2007, Selvi needed supervision from her professor and even 6 months of therapy for herself to get healed from her secondary trauma and to cope with her work. For this kind of supervision and outside help for themselves, the staff of KRCT mostly relies on the support of international therapists and organizations. The institute for psychology in



Prishtina was only founded in 2001, meaning Selvi and her colleagues belong to the first generation of trauma therapists in her country. All their teachers were from outside Kosovo and maintaining contact with them via email to get help and support in difficult therapeutic situations is critical. Sebahate Pacolli Krasniqi describes their situation simply but clearly: "We are surviving. With the support of international organizations we are surviving."

But far from only receiving, the KRCT staff also give support. Selvi and her colleagues also work as trainers for stress

management, conducting workshops with medical personnel across Kosovo on how to recognize traumatised patients as well as how to deal with them. They also teach methods of stress reduction in the workplace, helping people to deal with wounded souls without getting wounded themselves.



**Kathleen Zeidler** studied history, media science and psychology and focused during her studies on Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Today, she works at the Department for history and culture of Eastern Europe of the University of Leipzig.

# I will never forget, but I learnt to live

“How do you feel about it today?” I ask R., a young man who came to visit me. He thinks about my question for a while.

“You know it is strange, in my dreams I go through that situation quite often. I will never forget that day in June 1999, when they came and burnt down our house. We managed to escape, but it changed my life completely. In one moment we lost everything. The only thing we still have is a picture of my grandfather. We lost our house, our friends, our security, and ever since we have been refugees in Macedonia.”

“Do you know who did that to you and why?”

Again he thinks about it for a while. “You know, we were just in between the two parties in conflict. We did not do anything. Maybe it was just because we are Roma.”

R. emotionally tells me how it felt to be refugee; he talks about humiliation, fear, insults, and prejudices. But he faced this challenge head on. He fought for his right to education. He finished school, has learnt languages, has taken the chance to make music, has established international contacts and supports other refugees in fighting for their rights.

“I am so thankful for all the help I got, mainly from international NGOs”, he says. But all his achievements, he is married and has good professional prospects, he reached himself. A complete turnaround in life, but he had the strength to make the best of it.

“You know what I would like to do? I want to organize an photo exhibition that shows the world that Roma people are just like everybody else. They want to live with dignity, they learn and work and want to have a family. That would be helpful.” I am sure he will be successful!



## Scattered minorities?

# The Kosovar Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities

*Eli Simon is currently supporting forumZFD in Pristina. Recently she has been involved with the Berlin-based Roma and non-Roma youth NGO Amaro Foro e.V. in the fields of public relations and further education. She is a student of the Masters Programme Sociocultural Studies at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt Oder (Germany).*

The Roma community is often said to be the biggest minority group in Europe. Sadly, as well as being considered the biggest, they are also the group which is thought of as suffering the most from poverty and social exclusion. Tracing back the causes of this, it is impossible to evade racial discrimination.

In Kosovo, there are a range of different minority groups known under the name Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE). They differ in their language, religion, customs and origin and are estimated to amount to between 35,000 and 40,000 people. Until the violent conflict started in the 1990s, around 200,000 lived in Kosovo. The majority were displaced during that time, but over the last 15 years people have been returning, either voluntarily or by force, back to Kosovo.

Stories told by members of the RAE communities regarding this time tend to feature expulsions, violence, loss and flight. They had to face massive acts of violence at the beginning of the 1990s at the hands of Serbian nationalists and then again during the war. Considered as collaborators with the Serbs, they were threatened by Kosovo-Albanian fighters. For the RAE communities, the fear of the NATO bombings only added to the fear of getting between the UCK and the Serbian militia. As a consequence, a large number had to flee to other countries within the region or to western and central Europe.

More than a decade after the war, the majority of RAE communities is still confronted with persistent discrimination which leads in most cases to living at the edges of society. Verbal and physical assaults occur on a daily basis and disadvantages in the areas of education, housing and the job market are prevalent. Discrimination, poverty and traditional family structures are considered the main obstacles when it comes to education. To enter the local job market, one which is already marked by deficient economic structures, is for someone belonging to the RAE communities even more complicated. As a result, less than 10% of RAE people have regular work and consequently, most of them face poverty. To get out of this vicious cycle is a challenge for RAE members, especially if they are constantly being stigmatized.

Regarding the current situation of most of the people belonging to the RAE communities, it rarely happens that they are mentioned without reference to unemployment and poverty. This again makes it extremely difficult to draw another picture of the minority. And yet, those things are the result of a long history of racial discrimination rather than any essential characteristics. Unfortunately, this distinction is often not made and outstanding successful members of the group - or those, who simply manage to live in mainstream society - often get ignored.

For the time being, talking about RAE communities still includes the need to talk about racial discrimination – but this cannot go without self reflection and examining one's own mindsets and prejudices.

# My father, the Spanish Civil War

## Collecting oral histories in Kosovo

- **L**uljeta Myftati Bajri still lives in her father's house in the centre of Peja. We went there
- to interview her as part of the Oral History Initiative. Luljeta told us about her father, a
- volunteer in the Garibaldi Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, who was murdered by the Yugoslav security forces.

She also told us about her own activism in the 1990s, about her experiences during the war and about her life. This, in short, is what we do: we record personal stories that intertwine with history, often in tragic ways, as people remember and tell them. Reclaiming these histories from the past, we honour the narratives of our speakers and their experiences.

By treating our speakers with respect, and telling their stories as they want them to be told, we let the subjectivity of the individual express itself.

Many of our speakers have experienced tragedy and have been affected by wars, but by narrating their life stories (in their entirety and not only specific traumatic events) they manage to reassess their own role and position in both great and small historical moments.

For our speakers, this is both a touching and joyous experience, as they get to see their life recorded and archived, as a contribution to the education of others.

Our objective is to build a “live archive” which will enlarge the understanding of Kosovo's history beyond official, collective narratives.

*Lura Limani is a writer and researcher based in Prishtina. She is the research coordinator of the Oral History Initiative.*

Luljeta's story is no different from many others. For example, the narrative of her father's adventures and execution (see excerpt below), brings to light one of the many stories, and memories, that exist beyond the official histories of the Second World War in Kosovo - whether it's the heroic resistance against Nazism on behalf of the idea of brotherhood and unity, or the heroic resistance against Communism, in the name of a nationalist cause.

Now an organization, the Oral History Initiative (OHI) began as a project undertaken by the New School for Public Engagement and Kosovo Women's Network. As a methodology, oral history offers a unique perspective into history by including personal narratives which are often ignored, erased, deemed unimportant.

For more than a year, the OHI have been conducting interviews and building an online platform ([oralhistorykosovo.org](http://oralhistorykosovo.org)) where the general public, and especially researchers, have access to full interviews and transcripts in three languages: Albanian, English and Serbian. This “live archive” includes family and personal pictures, as well as written family stories.

Stories like Luljeta's show that many stories that are excluded and forgotten by official history, which is written by the victors, have the power to question the absolute authority of a certain version of history, and illustrate the complexity and variety of narratives that shape any given event.

# Civil War volunteer: in Kosovo

- This is an excerpt from an interview conducted with Luljeta Myftari Bajri on March 31, 2015 at her home in Peja.

Bajri was born in 1943 in Peja, where she has lived for most of her life. A law school graduate, she used to work in the '8 Marsi' elementary school. In the 1990s she joined the Democratic League of Kosovo's Women's Forum. She is retired and lives in Peja with her family.

My brother Kujtim and I were unfortunate, we lost our parents at an early age, because my father was executed in... sometime at the end of 1944, or in the beginning of 1945, he was executed and shot in Pristina in a place called Streliste, somewhere in what is today Tokebahce... I was about more than a year old when father died, and my mother was pregnant and four-five months after my father's execution, she gave birth to a son, my brother Kujtim, whose name was my father's amanet, because he foresaw what was going on and expected that something would happen to him.



[...] My father was the third brother, the youngest. There were also two other brothers, Sherif and Xheladin, the middle brother, and my father Emrush. My oldest uncle Sherif was a man with very progressive ideas [...] He had a friend, a professor in Peja's gymnasium, a Serb, an old professor who also had progressive ideas about national equality and other things...he noticed that Emrush had a natural intelligence [...] So he prepared him, and saw that he registered at school, I mean, after elementary school he went to the gymnasium, in the gymnasium he distinguished himself as the best student in faculty. [...] Veli Dedi and my father went to the lyc ee in Kor a. [...]

They met many personalities of that time and, as my father's friends told me, he was the same generation as Enver Hoxha. So, they knew each other from the lyc ee in Kor a. After he finished the lyc ee in Korca, then it was King Zog's time in Albania. Since military staff was needed, then he and Veli Dedi went to military school, which was a sort of military academy during Zog's time and they finished it successfully [...]

In 1937, the war in Spain broke out. It is then that my father, Veli Dedi, Xhemajl Kada, Shaban Basha, went to the Spanish war as volunteers and Justina Shkupi who also had finished a

special school I think in Italy or France, not sure, [went] as a medical nurse and she was friends with Mother Theresa, they finished nursing school together. [...]

They were organized in the Garibaldi Battalion, whose secretary or leader was Luigi Longo, a famous Italian personality, who after the liberation was the head of the Italian Communist Party, I think, if I'm not mistaken. There they had contacts, I mean, because they were within the Garibaldi Battalion, they also met there many people who came from across Europe. For example, there were also famous writers such as Orwell, later Hemingway was there, there were many personalities of culture, art, writers. I think there they had very close contacts with great people. [...]

My father had leftist ideas, in other words, he supported the idea that Albanian people would come out of WWII as equal to all the other nations of ex-Yugoslavia, of Yugoslavia actually. This was when the Conference of Bujan was held, they began noticing his ideas, and naturally the Serb and Montenegrin communists who had known each other since the Spanish war, also had an impact. They had been trying to put Albanians in second place, I mean, to ignore them completely. On that aspect, since Spain, my father had a lot of confrontations with the Serb and Montenegrin communists. When they capitulated, I mean the Spanish War, they passed [the border] to France.

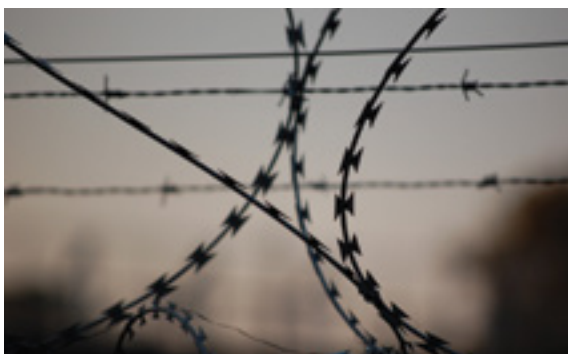
In France everyone had come together, I mean, in France there were many Albanian students who were studying there. Then, there was this Ali Kelmendi as a member of the Comintern, I think, of the Communist Movement. In France, they met with Zeqeria Rexha, also a famous Albanian intellectual, who studied in France, in Lyon. They met in Paris and decided to publish a newspaper in Albanian, the newspaper was called Sazani. I feel bad because I had those newspapers here, but during the war, when the house had been burned, a lot of materials burned with it. We managed to save very few of them, very few.



[King] Zog did not accept their return to Albania from France, since they were ideologically communist, so then father went to Turkey, he went to Palestine, I mean, he went to these states in the East. In Turkey he started a campaign against the displacement of Serbs... that Serbs (laughs), I am sorry... against the displacement of Albanians to Turkey. He then returned from Turkey and naturally, he joined the Communist Movement here in Peja. He was respected as a qualified cadre, as an educated cadre, he could speak five-six languages. However, he was always feared, because from the start he presented his idea that Albanians should come out of the war, as a nation on their own, have rights just as any other country. That, of course, did not please everyone. So, [he stayed] in a while, and then he withdrew from the Movement and opened the first bookshop in Peja. The bookshop was called Libraria Skënderbej – Vllazën Myftari; Skenderbeg Bookshop – Brothers Myftari.

Initially, however, he ran the bookshop and later joined Ilegalitet [Illegal Albanian National Movement]. Italians always tracked him and they imprisoned him, he was in Tirana's prison [...]

When my father was executed, my mother was left, I mean, with me as a child and... she then gave birth to my brother. The house here was raided and they took my uncle in the yard here to shoot him. Since they were looking for a radio they needed an excuse to shoot him, and the excuse, the excuse for the execution was that he was a member of the Intelligence Service, since he knew English, plus he had an English friend, someone [called] Flavia Kingston, I think, who used to live in Zagreb and when she came here, a few times she was here at our family's in Peja. So they confiscated father's wealth.



# news & updates

## Conference on trauma and resilience in Kosovo

'Diakonie Kosova', the Mitrovica based Psychosocial Centre for Trauma Therapy (which helps strengthen the capacities of professionals who deal with mental health, as well as offering trauma therapy) will organize Kosovo's first conference on trauma and resilience later this year, on November 27th and 28th 2015.

The conference aims to gather professionals from both Kosovo and the rest of the Balkan region that work in the field of mental health and other areas. They will be working towards understanding the various elements of coping with trauma as well as elaborating the psychological concepts of trauma and resilience.

Further information available at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/539299702885916/>

Vjollca Islami Hajrullahu

## A regional website on dealing with the past

A new website (<http://www.dwp-balkan.org>) that focuses on topics related to Dealing with the Past in the Western Balkans was officially launched on September 21st, International Peace Day.

The website is a platform for all activities, organizations and individuals who are engaged in the process of Dealing with the Past in the region. The website serves as regional database and as a resource and networking platform.

Until now, 21 actors from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia, are presented in the website, which is translated into four languages (Albanian, BCS, English and Macedonian).

In order to preserve the important working heritage of organizations, initiatives and individuals from the Western Balkans on topics related to Dealing with the Past, Forum Civil Peace Service (*forumZFD*) decided to develop an online resource platform and offer this platform to all interested stakeholders to use.

We invite all those who are interested to visit the new website, to become involved in this online platform and to send us materials and news for publication on the website. Please contact Sunita Dautbegović Bošnjaković ([bosnjakovic@forumzfd.de](mailto:bosnjakovic@forumzfd.de), [info@dwp-balkan.org](mailto:info@dwp-balkan.org)) if you would like to contribute to the website by publishing your materials, or if you need any additional information.

Sunita Dautbegović Bošnjaković

## NEXT ISSUE

To mark the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Dayton agreement in Bosnia, the next issue of *Balkan.Perspectives* will be dedicated to treaties and negotiations for peace. We will explore the impact of different agreements and treaties in the region and also discuss their limitations.

### CORRECTIONS:

In Issue 02, "Unknown heroes", we incorrectly captioned the pictures of the two interviewees in the article "The notion of heroism in cinematography in Serbia today" (p.8-9) in both the Serbian and English versions. Gordan Kičić is on the right of the picture, Nikola Pejaković on the left.



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In the Western Balkans, the focus is on projects in the field of dealing with the past and on fostering dialogue between opposing parties. This includes school mediation projects, the support of civil society, or enhancing media capacities for a more constructive approach to dealing with the past.

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## **EDITOR IN CHIEF:**

*Maike Dafeld*

## **EDITORIAL TEAM:**

*Milica Cimesa, Sunita Dautbegović-Bošnjaković, Nora Maliqi, Johannes Rueger, Nehari Sharri*

## **AUTHORS:**

*Nidžara Ahmetašević, Sunita Dautbegović-Bošnjaković, Vjollca Islami Hajrullahu, Lura Limani, Silke Maier-Witt, Dr. Dr. Ricarda Nater-Mewes, Shpetim Pollozhani, Edita Pršić, Johannes Rueger, Eli Simon, Branislava Stević, Kathleen Zeidler*

## **LAYOUT:**

*Kokrra*

## **PRINT:**

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## **TRANSLATION:**

*Merita Fejza (Albanian), Bjanka Osmanović (BCS), Reis Kjerim (Macedonian)*

## **PROOFREADING:**

*LBG Communications (Albanian), Silvana Krzovska (Macedonian), Zinaida Lakić (BCS), Jack Robinson (English)*

## **CONTACT:**

*Balkan.perspectives@forumzfd.de*

## **PLACE OF PUBLICATION**

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Forum Civil Peace Service | Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V. (*forumZFD*)

Kosovo office: Sejdi Kryeziu 8 - Pejton 10000 Prishtina	Serbia office: Prote Mateje 17 11000 Belgrade
---	---

Bosnia and Herzegovina office: ul. Branilaca Sarajeva 19 B 71000 Sarajevo	Macedonia office: ul. Borka Taleski 11/4 1000 Skopje
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