

## **Impact of EU Peace Policy on Regions in Crisis and Conflict**

K O S O V O

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The Kosova Women's Network (KWN), established in 2000, was originally an informal network of women's groups and organisations from various regions in Kosova. Since its inception, KWN has developed into a network that advocates on behalf of Kosovar women, at the local, regional, and international level. Representing the interests of 85 women's organizations of all ethnic groups from throughout Kosova, KWN is a leading network in Kosova and the region. Several of KWN's network members have over ten years of experience in community development.

In relation to gender and conflict, KWN has undertaken numerous advocacy efforts both locally and internationally to advocate for gender equality, which usually means greater involvement of women in post-conflict decision-making processes.

#### Kosovar Women's Leadership before 1999

Before the war in 1999, women and men in Kosova shared leadership responsibilities politically, socially, and economically. Kosova had a woman president from 1989 until its autonomy was revoked. During the decade of oppression of Kosovar Albanians by the Serbian regime, women participated in all sectors of the parallel system.

They were doctors and nurses, journalists and politicians, deliverers of humanitarian aid to places under siege, and vocal protestors against violence and war both in the region and internationally. Under the parallel political system, a woman acted as Kosova's Minister of Foreign Affairs, meeting regularly with officials abroad and participating in peace talks. Throughout this period, women worked alongside men towards a free and peaceful Kosova.

#### The United Nations Enters Kosova

On June 10, 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted Security Council resolution 1244, which provided the United Nations Mission in Kosova (UNMIK) with the mandate to govern Kosova until its final political status could be decided.

At first, most Kosovar women activists were excited to have UNMIK in Kosova. We expected that such remarkable international institutions like the UN and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would bring with them higher standards for gender equality and women's participation in political decision-making.

We were eager to work with the international agencies in developing effective strategies for responding to the pressing needs of Kosovar women and men.

We assumed that the UNMIK would consult with local women regarding their political preferences and in making decisions regarding the reconstruction of Kosova. We were wrong.

Instead of bringing an inclusive model for democratic decision-making, UNMIK imposed a patriarchal system in Kosova.

Let me give one of many examples. In September 1999, the OSCE organised a meeting between civil society and OSCE staff under the pretext of increasing communication between the international governing administration (OSCE and UNMIK) and local people.

However, not one woman from civil society was invited to the meeting. When asked why, the top OSCE official replied, "Kosova is a patriarchal society." Although women had been inclusive in decision-making in Kosova before the war, it was OSCE representatives that decided not to bring them into discussions.

All but one of the UNMIK Special Representatives to the Secretary General (SRSG) have completely marginalised women, failing to involve or consult with them on key decisions. Rather than supporting development, the leadership of these international institutions imposed a patriarchal system, setting a poor example for new Kosovar leaders.

Instead of dedicating our energy to the reconstruction in Kosova, women activists expended much time and effort fighting to be heard by international decision-makers. It meant undertaking numerous efforts to prove to UNMIK that we were experienced experts and knew what was best for our communities.

We had to prove to them time and time again that women in Kosova were not just victims waiting to be helped – we could help ourselves, as we did in the past, and we could be effective actors in building our own future.

### Kosovar Women's Efforts towards Implementing UNSCR 1325

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on Women, War, and Security. The resolution "*urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict*".

Resolution 1325 provided a legal mechanism that Kosovar women could use in advocating for their voices to be heard in political decision-making. Since Kosova is governed by the United Nations, the government is that much more responsible for implementing the UN Security Council resolution.

Kosovar women activists immediately began to increase awareness about the resolution and how it could be used in Kosova. We utilised resolution 1325 both directly and indirectly to make our voices heard.

Let me provide you with some examples as to how we have used the resolution:

In 2001, a United Nations Security Council delegation came to Kosova. UNMIK representatives preparing the delegation's schedule said that the delegation did not

have time to meet with Kosovar women. We noted that resolution 1325 gave us the right to meet with the delegation.

Ambassador Chowdhury (Bangladesh) who was leading the delegation agreed to meet with women at 9:30 p.m., after the delegation's other scheduled meetings.

In December 2002, a second United Nations Security Council delegation visited Kosova. Once again, UNMIK failed to inform or invite local women to meet with the delegation.

When Kosovar women became aware of the visit, we advocated for a meeting. We succeeded in securing a meeting with the delegation, once again, after hours. During the meeting, we began by discussing issues related to Kosova's final political status.

The UN Ambassador interrupted, saying, "Status is an issue for political parties. Let's talk about women's issues. For example, let's talk about resolution 1325." We were insulted and also surprised at the Ambassador's obvious lack of knowledge that according to resolution 1325, we should be involved in negotiating Kosova's final political status.

We asked him, "Don't you think that status is an issue that affects women? This is directly stated in resolution 1325."

During our first meeting with UN Special Envoy Ambassador Kai Eide in 2005, Kosovar women activists started the meeting by discussing the issue of including women in talks concerning Kosova's final political status. Ambassador Kai Eide replied jokingly, "Do not talk to me like men." Again, we were shocked and responded by saying that resolution 1325 gives us the right to speak about Kosova's final political status.

As these examples show, rather than international institutions supporting the inclusion of Kosovar women in decision-making, we had to fight to be included in the process. Even then, we were accused by UN representatives of "speaking like men" when we brought up key political issues, such as Kosova's final political status.

Despite the barriers that we faced from international institutions such as the UN, we have continued to advocate for women to be included in decision-making.

#### Women's Peace Coalition:

In the last decade, the women's movement in southeast Europe has become oriented toward promoting peace and stability in the region, improving women's positions in all spheres by achieving respect for their rights, as well as the rights of other marginalized groups, and has waged a strong fight against militarism.

These women have undertaken a difficult path; from the wars waged throughout the land, to the end of the last war in Kosovo, now with international mechanisms installed in order to ensure peace in the region, as fragile as that peace may be.

For these activists, it is clear that the only way to ensure the welfare of their people is through supporting a sustainable peace as well as economic prosperity for their countries. This peace can not be achieved solely through political speeches and

decisions. Countries within the region must try to make reconciliations between their nations.

After the wars, the suffering, and the brutality exerted on innocent civilians, as well as the huge economic losses, the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation in order to achieve a sustainable peace is difficult to come to terms with. This fact was best recognized by activists for peace.

This was the very reason why women from Serbia and Kosovo cooperated and supported each other, both during, and now after the war. These women consider mutual cooperation and regional networking as their topmost priority.

Based on these reasons, in May of 2006 the Kosovo Women's Network and the Women in Black Network from Serbia have, established the Women's Peace Coalition as an independent citizen initiative, based on solidarity between women, which surpasses ethnic, national, and religious barriers.

The Women's Peace Coalition, works to achieve a just and sustainable peace by including women in the peace-building process as equal partners and by emphasizing that women are not victims, but survivors of war who are dynamic and prominent actors in movements for peace.

The Women's Peace Coalition strongly advocates implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, on the advancement of women in politics, economy and society, and opposes those processes which are damaging to society at large.

Since its inception, the Women's Peace Coalition has initiated large scale activities primarily related to monitoring the status of the Kosovo talks and presenting alternate views regarding this status from a humanistic, rather than political, view.

These perspectives were expressed by the WPC in two press releases. The first statement addressed the failure of the decision-making factors, both Kosovo and Serbia, to include women in negotiating Kosovo's final political status. The second statement was aimed at informing the Kosovo and Serbian public about the Coalition's perspective on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, an issue which was being discussed in Vienna ([www.womensnetwork.org](http://www.womensnetwork.org)).

Along with monitoring these talks, the WPC has undertaken and developed other activities aimed at fulfilling the objectives set by coalition members.

These activities included organizing the Coalition's first conference on the subject "United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security", which was held in Struga, Macedonia on September first and second of 2006.

The conference was organized by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) in cooperation with the Women in Black Network (WiBN) from Serbia, and was supported by UNIFEM.

We believe that the inclusion of women in post-conflict decision-making is not only a requirement of resolution 1325. It is also essential for the future functioning of inclusive, democratic processes in Kosova as well as other countries.

Failing to include women in such important processes jeopardizes future stability as well as it misses opportunities to incorporate women's knowledge, experience, and expertise into important decisions.

For post-conflict decision-making processes are not only about resolving the conflicts of the past – they also lay the foundation for the future, a future to which women can, should, and must contribute.