



SHORT BIOS AND ABSTRACTS

Transitional Justice in Kosovo: Taking Stock of Its Trajectory in the Period 1999-2023

Dr. Nita Luci is Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of Norway. She holds an MA and PhD in Anthropology from the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor. She has over fifteen years academic experience at the University of Prishtina, also having chaired the Department of Anthropology and the University Program for Gender Studies and Research. Her teaching and research practice, as well as activism, has focused on issues of gender, political movements, memory, public art and the state. Her most recent publications are: *Tangible User Interfaces for Enhancing User Experience of Virtual Reality Cultural Heritage Applications for Utilization in Educational Environment* ([JOOC: 2023](#)); *Epistemic justice and everyday nationalism: An auto-ethnography of transnational student encounters in a post-war memory and reconciliation project in Kosovo* ([Nation and Nationalism: 2020](#)).

‘The Past Is the Past’: The Potential of Critical Art Practices and Cultural Heritage for Transitional Justice

It is not uncommon to hear that the Western Balkans are steeped in history and rich in cultural heritage however the ‘persistence of the past’ prevents it from moving forward. The ubiquitous anthropological observation ‘that the past is a foreign country’ aptly applies here. However, the past also holds a creative and potentially transformative potential in how the region can recon with past violence and imagine a more just future. In this brief presentation, I will map out some examples of arts and cultural heritage practices – the research, public engagement and pedagogical practice – that have engaged Kosova’s recent past and thus contributed to a broader social understanding of transitional justice. While Kosovo faces many challenges in bringing to life its cultural heritage strategy and further processes of transitional justice, it would be greatly aided if its UNESCO membership application were to be supported. Kosovo citizens, and its institutions, continue to engage and commit to inclusive, participatory, and creative solutions for Kosovo’s rich cultural heritage. As such, it can become a space for developing sustained peace.

Dr. Remzije Istrefi is a Judge at the Constitutional Court of Kosovo and Associated Professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina. She holds a L.L.M from University of Notre Dame, S.B, USA, Law School, and a PhD where she researched: “The Responsibility of International Organizations for Human Rights Violation – Kosovo Case”. In 2008, Remzije Istrefi was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship at Duke University, North Carolina (US). She is Hague Academy for International Law Alumni and currently she is an Honorary



Fellow at the Law School and Social Justice, Liverpool University, UK. From 2014, Remzije Istrefi has conducted research in the field of transitional justice (post-doctoral studies) at the International Law Institute of the University "Karl Frances Universitat" in Graz, Austria. In February 2018, Remzije Istrefi established "Center for Transitional Justice" within the University of Pristina. Currently she is researching in the field of constitutionalism and transitional justice.

Recognition of the Status of Sexual Violence Victim of War in Kosovo

This presentation focuses on the Kosovo's efforts to address the effects of sexual violence that occurred in the 1998-1999 conflict. While internationally there has been an increase in awareness on sexual violence as a war crime and the need for the victim reparations, the official recognition of the status of victim of the war related sexual violence at domestic level and establishment of the reparation modalities for the sufferings that the survivors endured remains a challenge. The article analyses the process for recognition of the legal status "Sexual Violence Victim of War" and the adequacy of procedures for obtaining reparation benefits in Kosovo. As sexual violence remains an acute threat in many current conflicts, it is important to explore the Kosovo experiences as lessons learned in establishing the legal framework and reparation mechanism that are rapidly deployed, as well as, effective and just.

Besnik Beqaj is from Kosovo. He holds an Advanced Master in Transitional Justice, Human Rights and Rule of Law from the Geneva Academy for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. Currently, Besnik is a PhD student of International Law, at the South East European University in North Macedonia. Here in Oslo, he is completing his stay as a guest researcher at the Norwegian Center for Human Rights as part of the Erasmus+ Global Mobility project.

Besnik works at the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo as a Programs Manager. Additionally, he is engaged as a Researcher at the Human Rights Center of the University of Prishtina.

Reconciling through Criminal Justice: The Case of Kosovo

Utilizing the theories of Robin Antony Duff and making a practical connection in Kosovo experiences, this paper offers some views of how Kosovo society can further progress on the reconciliation process. Can criminal trials contribute in such a process? The paper argues for further reliance on domestic trials and proposes an adaptation and contextualization of the last to offer better outcomes in the reconciliation process. The paper also recommends a more communicative approach during the trials where a stronger voice is given to victims and defendants on offering space for communication between them and suggesting that through domestic trials defendants are called to account to their victims and also to their fellow citizens



Egzona Bexheti is from Prishtina, Kosovo. She currently holds the position of acting director at the Jahjaga Foundation, while also serving as an adviser to the 4th President of the Republic of Kosovo, Madam Atifete Jahjaga. With a background in law, she has obtained a Master's degree in International Law from the University of Prishtina. As part of her Master's studies, she pursued an exchange program in Ankara, Turkey. Throughout her studies, Egzona actively participated in various projects within the Erasmus+ program, focusing on promoting and receiving training in human rights and peacebuilding, both within the region and beyond. In 2021, she was engaged as a legal intern at the Office of the Prosecutor at the UN International Residual Mechanism of Criminal Tribunals in The Hague, Netherlands. Currently, she is conducting research as a visiting researcher at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights. Her research revolves around the topic of "Integration of International Human Rights Standards through Peace Agreements: A Comparative Analysis of North Macedonia and Kosovo."

Here for Heroines: The Role of NGOs in Supporting and Empowering Survivors of Sexual Violence During the War in Kosovo

"It is now more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern conflict (Maj. Gen. Patrick Cammaert, 2008, former UN Peacekeeping Operation commander in DR Congo)"

Throughout history, armies have used different forms of rape as a tool to destroy, humiliate, and exert power over specific ethnic groups or communities. Unfortunately, sexual violence was considered inevitable and remained silent, just like its victims. Conflict-related sexual violence has been documented since at least 1990 in Kosovo, and it intensified during the NATO air campaign from March to June 1999. By the end of 1999, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission (OSCE-KVM), along with international and regional NGOs, had documented widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence as a means of ethnic cleansing. Now, 24 years after the war's end, 1,406 survivors of sexual violence have been identified, and it is estimated that the number of survivors is around 20 thousand. What happened to those survivors, remained a taboo for years, a "public secret" that everyone knew about but nobody openly discussed. Institutional attention was only given to the survivors starting in 2014, with legal recognition, comprehensive reparations programs, and financial assistance. The civil society, along with women's and human rights NGOs, played a crucial role right after the war by taking on key tasks and making enormous efforts to support and empower the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.