

The book "I am Anemone" contains true stories of survivors of sexual violence of the last war in Kosovo.

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Medica Gjakova
Gjakovë, 2019

I am

ANEMONE



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ANEMONE

When a storm approaches her, SHE picks up her petals to make her feel safer, so that no part is cut off, so that no petals are lost. Day-by-day storms strengthen her...

Light winds heal the wounds caused by storms. She is purple and yellow, pride and hope. SHE believes in a better life.

SHE feels free amidst the light flying winds that wave and bring freshness to her early mornings, in the early days of spring, in the most beautiful season.

She carries a lot of love in her, at the same time she is fragile and beautiful because only SHE sees the world differently.

SHE hopes to live her love like on those other beautiful days of spring, by reliving those mornings once again.

SHE is afraid of the dark and closes herself in search of light, until she reaches morning. SHE expects the sun to rise again and again...

SHE is best defended when she fights on the battlefield, amidst the blurry thoughts that unwittingly come to her and her bitter fate, which sometimes slams her to the ground. SHE stands up again because she loves white, light mornings.

SHE IS THE GIRL OF THE WIND

Mirindor Factor

Introduction to Medica Gjakova

The war in Kosovo left many consequences. There was talk of people being killed, missing, injured, burned down homes and properties - but one thing fell silent. The crime of sexual assault was silenced. The crime against 20,000 women and girls, men and boys, who have experienced sexual violence during the Kosovo war, was silenced.

Shortly after the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, Dr. Monica Hauser, founder and leader of *medica mondiale*, with courage, solidarity and a sense of responsibility, opens the first center for interdisciplinary counseling in Gjakovë, where for the first time *medica mondiale* mentions the crimes of sexual assault before and after the war. At that time, with *medica mondiale* we came to realize how important is to talk about sexual rape, how important is to support survivors, how important is to not leave them alone and excluded.

Medica Gjakova as a local organization started working in 2011 with a staff of highly experienced professionals, all of whom have been working together since 1999. The organization's commitment extends to various fields, and is currently focused on providing support and assistance to traumatized, abused and raped women and girls during the war in Kosovo.

Something that started out as an immediate help through psychosocial counseling and gynecological treatments turned into a larger group of supporters for these women and girls. Today *Medica Gjakova* is an open door for thousands of survivors of gender-based violence, and in

particular of sexual violence during the war throughout Kosovo, who have found and continue to find unparalleled support to face the trauma of the past through holistic psychosocial, health (gynecological) support, legal counseling and economic empowerment. This organization provides to all of those who need other activities at the social and political level in order to sensitize the society at local and national level, with a special focus on developing a sensitive approach, empowering them, protecting them from re-traumatization. All this help and support is done in order to integrate them into all aspects of life.

Through individual and group psychosocial counseling, *Medica Gjakova* managed to build mutual trust with hundreds of women and girls, managed to treat their trauma, create a sense of solidarity for them to create self-supporting independent groups, lead them and work together effectively.

Medica Gjakova has a gynecological ambulance, which in addition to providing gynecological treatment, visits, PAP tests, counseling and combined education and health sessions, also serves as the gateway to psychosocial treatment of thousands of women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence and sexual violence during and after the war in Kosovo. This service has a great positive impact on improving their health and self-care.

The stigmatization and social isolation of survivors of sexual violence who speak out against the crime committed against them made the legal sector work in *Medica Gjakova* necessary. The legal sector is not only about sexual vio-

lence, but also about the rights of women and girls in general. Through educational sessions, legal counseling, their representation in institutions and up to the relevant courts in Kosovo. This is how access to justice can be achieved, that one day the survivors will see the perpetrators of the sexual violence, who will be prosecuted, sentenced as perpetrators of these offenses and will receive justice which was denied for 20 years.

Medica Gjakova has now developed projects and strategies to assure survivors to earn a living and ensure their well-being. This has been achieved through the sector for economic empowerment. Women and girls members of *Medica Gjakova* through entrepreneurship training have increased their entrepreneurial capacities and started their own personal and family businesses, which are now increasing day by day. Women are empowering themselves in personal, family and community aspect. To increase the viability of women entrepreneurial businesses, women will organize and work together in a social enterprise that will be led by women entrepreneurs which are members of *Medica Gjakova*.

Until 15 years after the end of the war, survivors of sexual violence during that war have been denigrated, isolated and even ignored by state institutions. This rejection lasted until the law on the reparation rights of survivors of sexual violence during the war was enacted and initiated. Today *Medica Gjakova* is one of four licensed organizations working together with government institutions and relevant ministries for a human approach to verifying and doc-

umenting trauma and spiritual consequences, to realize the right of those women and girls to material compensation and enforcement of the reparation law.

If to date nearly 1,000 survivors of sexual violence have applied, it shows how many more need support, how many children and men should not stop their mothers/sisters from appearing and impede them in treatment. During the work we find that they too need help because trauma has been passed through the generations. So it is not enough to work only with survivors, because sexual violence is as much an individual wound as it is a wound to society. Society should have a better approach, understand their suffering, feel responsible, solidarize and not stigmatize them. *Medica Gjakova* has called it very necessary to deal with trauma across generations, therefore, with the continued assistance of *medica mondiale*, it increased the capacity of its professional psychosocial staff, making psychosocial treatment in Kosovo for the first time in couples, in families and with young people.

Medica Gjakova has begun implementing the transnational project along with *medica mondiale* Germany, *Medica Zenica* Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Medica Afghanistan* and *Iraq* (KRI), on improving services and health care for trauma and stress sensitive access for women and girls affected by gender-based violence and sexual violence. The goal of this project will be achieved through the qualification of healthcare professionals, the institutionalization of stress and trauma-sensitive health services, international networking and advocacy.

I am ANEMONE

The *Be my voice* campaign is a public awareness campaign about the link between sexual violence during the war in Kosovo, gender based violence in general and gender roles. The campaign particularly emphasizes the reintegration of survivors of sexual violence into society, community and family, and the fact that the perpetrators of the crime of rape, not survivors, are to blame. The campaign contributes to restoring the dignity of survivors.

Fighting stigmatization and prejudice, raising awareness of support within the family, community and society is the moral responsibility of each of us! *Be my voice* is a powerful call to all of society for inclusion and support for survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. As part of the campaign, *Medica Gjakova* has organized many activities at local, national and international level.

The launch of the book *I am Anemone* is part of the campaign *Be my voice* and the 20th anniversary of Kosovo-German cooperation and friendship.

The purpose of this book is to provide a greater opportunity to recognize survivors of sexual violence during the 20 years after the official end of the war by giving them more voice.

The book *I am Anemone* is the first of its kind written in Kosovo. The book includes the stories of 24 women and 1 man raped during the Kosovo war by Serbian soldiers, policemen, paramilitaries and their accomplices.

Each story contained in this book is true, unique and special.

These accounts refer to cases that have occurred in different parts of Kosovo, which are separated from each other.

The preparation of this book took a long time until it was finalized. That's because the content of the book itself is an untold tragedy.

The book presents a side of the horror that has happened in Kosovo, the horror of raping women, mothers, daughters, sisters, boys and men. A horror that has been silent for many years after the war. Now, we will bring the survivors' stories through this publication, aware of the historical weight it will have.

The book contains exclusive narratives of 25 clients of *Medica Gjakova*, provided by *Medica Gjakova's* psychosocial counselors and written by author-journalist Salie Gajtani-Osmankaq.

Mirlinda Sada
Executive Director
Medica Gjakova

Foreword

War means violence, terror and destruction. Furthermore, for women and girls, war entails rape, humiliation, and indignity by warmongers and war profiteers. The perpetrators are soldiers, paramilitaries, policemen. Perpetrators are former neighbours, friends, and relatives. Perpetrators are men.

For women and girls, war very often also means being alone and isolated *afterwards*, being abandoned by one's own family, by the village community, by one's own society.

We mostly hear heroic stories in relation to a war, rarely those of the victims, and certainly not those of the women. This means that half of humankind's history does not occur! Yet it is essential that women's experiences become visible, that women tell their own stories, and that their suffering and trauma, but also their resistance, their strength and dignity, and solidarity with each other get noticed - so that we can consequently appreciate and honour them.

This book fills a historical gap and points out the blind spots of official historiography. The stories help us approach the unimaginable and express our compassion for the victims. However, our empathy must not stop there. We ourselves must feel the outrage that gives us the necessary strength to fight against exclusion and violence today. In Kosovo and worldwide!

It becomes clear in the stories that women were the ones who ensured the survival of families, they were the ones who had to go back to their homes to organise food in order to do so - well aware of how dangerous that was for them as women in particular!

“On that day of war...”: The storytellers recount their martyrdom in a moving manner. Often the house in which they had grown up in a loving environment and had spent their childhood and youth – sometimes only 5 minutes away from their hiding from marauding Serb militias – turned into a trap and place of horror. A horror that keeps grabbing them even many years later. "Suffering makes us close companions": The older women tried to protect the younger ones. How unbearable and terrible that must have been, when they could not do so because they were violated themselves. Yet what precious relationship could evolve once they shared their suffering, finding support in a fellow woman who was able to soothe their own wounded soul.

“I wasn’t worth anything”: Although the family and village community could not prevent the crimes, their behaviour was and is crucial with regard to the way life continues for the women after that, or whether they are doomed to merely survive. The return of women to life, to the centre of community, depends on their community’s support. It is vital that a community avoids making women feel that "they are to blame for what happened to them"; it is essential not to ostracise them, not to isolate them, not to get rid of them as "damaged" parts of the community. Without support, they remain hopelessly trapped in their trauma, even face the risk being re-traumatised, withdrawing to complete isolation, developing psycho-somatic disorders: they might only survive days and nights with high amounts of painkillers.

On the other hand, if communities manage to provide caring help and support to women and show them – through empowering and accepting behaviour – that they continue to be honoured and respected, they are seen as individuals with all their strengths and weaknesses. For

many survivors that would have changed everything. They could have slowly learned to accept their fate, and built up confidence in themselves and others, strengthened their self-esteem and developed new courage for life. In order to be able to continue living in their ill-treated bodies, some still would have needed professional help - but the pre-conditions would have been different.

"He found them bloody, lying on the floor ... he hugged them, ... thank God you are alive ...". There were supportive fathers and husbands, who were initially glad that their daughters and wives were still alive. How could their survival have progressed if empathy and understanding for their deeply traumatised loved ones had been a priority and not, ultimately, the adherence to patriarchal traditions and structures that exclude and even despise women? Public recognition would have been needed also much sooner after the war to avoid the social stigma that had such devastating effects on women!

In patriarchal societies, many myths have developed around the phenomenon of sexualised violence; they degrade victims of sexual violence and excuse the crimes committed against them. The function of such myths is that perpetrators will be relieved and society, too, will not have to take over any responsibility for these crimes. The attitude of "blame the victim" is such a myth that continuously seeks to blame the victim and not the perpetrator. The fact that such myths exist even in post-conflict contexts is all the more tragic, as they have nothing to do with the reality of the survivors. However, survivors also often use such myths themselves - such as that a victim must be beautiful in order to have been raped. Such myth then serves as an explanation as to why this happened to them: It creates a coping strategy, which brings them back some sort of pre-

dictability and thus control, so as not to have to surrender to a completely unpredictable world.

After any armed conflict, (almost) everyone is a loser. Women in particular are, although they have suffered cruel violence, furthermore marginalised by their own community. This only confirms and contributes to the perpetrators achieving their ultimate goal: the fragmentation of society and repeated traumatising of the victims. In any case, women cannot be separated from families and communities. Women are a vital part of both!

It is the reports of the courageous storytellers that we owe gratitude to; they make women's stories visible, both by describing the terrible experiences, and also by stressing the strength with which women have survived and continue to support each other. Last but not least they also point out clearly what women would have needed from their family, their community, and politics, in order to be able to do more than just survive.

At best, this book can help increase understanding among all people, and, although late, take responsibility today and contribute to a more just society. In doing so, the culpable perpetrators would not have reached their goal; humanity would have won.

*Dr. Monika Hauser,
founder and chair of the executive board of medica mondiale e.V.*

Foreword

The Book *I am Anemone* is no ordinary book. The stories contained in the book are not ordinary stories. To you, who have opened this book and are reading this, I invite you to read it very carefully, for you will read about one of the most horrific forms of crime that Serbia committed against our people during the 1998-1999 war.

You will read about the darkest chapter of modern history of Kosovo presented from the perspective of one of the most marginalized groups in post-war Kosovo - survivors of sexual violence during the war.

The book, which contains 24 stories of women and 1 story of a man who were raped by Serbian forces during the Kosovo war, is a living proof of the crimes that Serbia committed against our people! It is an important book for the proper understanding and writing of our history and for the preservation of our collective memory.

To read all the narratives presented in this book, you will need tremendous courage and strength to cope with the anxiety caused by reading the truth full of suffering, pain, terror, and horror of the survivors of violence during the war in Kosovo.

In this book, SHE - the woman raped by Serbian forces is an innocent civilian, unarmed and unprepared for what happened to her on a typical day in 1998-1999. Found in times of war, SHE expects murder, expects death, but no physical or spiritual rape by a Serbian soldier, paramilitary, policeman or group of soldiers, paramilitaries and policemen. But SHE becomes a target of a cruel campaign of individual and social dishonor that Serbia was waging against

our people with the aim of ethnic cleansing of Albanians from Kosovo.

SHE could have been any of us - she could have been you, your mother, your sister, your daughter!

SHE remains anonymous in this book because she does not yet have the strength needed to appear before the world and seek justice for the crime that Serbia has committed on her body!

Over the years I have heard hundreds of sad stories - similar to those contained in the book - about the gruesome and bitter reality that thousands of survivors of sexual violence during the Kosovo war have and continue to face. I have been emotionally affected by each case, but I have always found the strength to give the survivors the courage needed to come forward with their truth.

I hope the book will awaken a sense of solidarity with survivors of sexual violence during the war by encouraging readers to think and seek new ways and paths to support survivors in overcoming trauma and their sublime demand for justice.

Women and men who were sexually assaulted by Serbian forces during the Kosovo war can only find peace when justice speaks its word!

This book is a request to be heard and a request for justice!

Atifete Jahjaga

President of the Republic of Kosovo (2011-2016)

Foreword

A book like this is more than literature, more than history, because it encompasses strength, resistance, and survival against the pain, tears, and open wounds in the souls and bodies of women and men who survived the sexual violence of war.

We titled it *I am Anemone* - the name of the flower that symbolizes the promise of happiness, the contrast of the symbol between separation and abandonment, and the striving and perseverance for another rebirth.

This book is the first of its kind written in Kosovo. It includes the stories of 25 women and men raped by Serbian soldiers, policemen, paramilitaries and their accomplices during the war.

Each story that has become part of this book is true, unique and special. The authors of the confessions are living witnesses. They will always live in my mind and heart, just as their stories will remain eternally alive for those who will have the opportunity to read them.

In each word of their confession you will pour out tears as they did. You will feel pain as they did. But you will also find your strength through the strength that you will see in these men and women. You will find your courage in the face of their courage.

This is the uniqueness that ensures that this book will survive through the times, as did the women and men who survived the worst human torture, rape, an inhumane

weapon used by Serbian criminals of the recent war in Kosovo.

Its content is an untold tragedy. There are stories of rape that have been silenced during the past 20 years, but we will bring them through this publication, aware of the historical weight of this book. It is us, together: I and Medica Gjakova Association, which has made possible the publication of these exclusive stories of raped women.

Co-Author of the book: Salie Gajtani - Osmankaq

I.

Another day of war. Most of the women, children and old people remained in the village. The men, almost all of them had fled to the mountain. The families knew nothing about them, whether they were at war or had found refuge somewhere in the woods.

Perhaps, this was the only way for them to stay alive, since the village had been for long a target of Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries.

The villagers even knew their uniforms. Divided into groups, they were easily identifiable. The name of the well-known Serbian war criminal, Arkan, was written around the arm of one group. The other formation was that of Seselj, both of whom were known for their crimes that they did everywhere they had fought. Everyone in Kosovo knew these two infamous names, children, old people, women and men.

Visits of these military and paramilitary formations became frequent throughout the village in that spring, as NATO bombed Serbia and Serbian criminal targets in Kosovo. In May, they visited the village every day, where SHE had turned 17 that year, living alone with her mother and sister-in-law, who had two children. Her only brother had gone up the mountain while her father had died a few years ago.

Visits by Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries were disturbing the village. Therefore, one day in May 1999, the women of the neighborhood decided to get together in HER uncle's house, convinced that they would overcome fear from Serbian forces if they stayed close with each other. Among them, SHE definitely stood out.

Young and of tender age. Grown beyond her age, she looked older than she looked.

Therefore, girls like HER would be protected by everyone in the village. They were afraid, but they could not tell each other. They were afraid of rape. Whenever Serbian criminal formations visited the village, SHE would be placed somewhere far behind the group of the residents, neighbors.

She always kept her head down, covered with her long loose hair.

...But even staying together like that in one house had lost its strength to remove the fear that was coming from the threat, when Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries began to accurately count the inhabitants of that location every day. HER uncle was one of the few elders in the village.

However, women and children would find repose by his presence in the house in which they have been living for some days now. They had never thought of this imposed form of coexistence. But fear united them and sometimes

closeness filled their hearts with hope that the war would end soon and all would be safe and sound.

But the dark story begins one morning when the criminal Arkan's army entered this house. From that day on, Serbian criminals did not stop harassing the villagers.

"I know they were Arkan's criminals, because my family told me so. They had red ribbons on their arms, with 'Arkan' written in yellow letters. They came several times and counted us, then told us if you take more people or if one of you escapes, we will kill you all" says SHE.

Whereas, she remembers it as if it happened today, because it was the first day of endless suffering that had begun for her and which would last twenty years after the war, until one day she found a way to seek help in "Medica Gjakova".

She confesses how on the day when the rape occurred, the Serbs had just entered the house where they were staying together. They had insulted, humiliated and threatened all the residents there, about 30 people.

"They came several times during a day, they mistreated us a lot. One of them whom I remember had a short body, with a black beret sideways, with black short gloves with open fingers, with automatic rifles and knives around the waist, with green striped clothes, army brown, with a vest and red tape that read 'Arkan'. The other two were tall, with masks on their faces and only their eyes were visible, armed with knives and machine guns. All dressed alike, with vests and green clothes with brown stripes, with red tape like the others" says SHE.

That day, they stayed in the house for hours, until it was night.

And during those hours, they did their best to subjugate mothers, wives, by offending them. Some of them be-

gan to trample on women's toes with their heavy boots. Apart from the boots on the women's fingers, their weight was even heavier with their threats and inhumane looks, and the harshness of their voices who sounded like crazy animals around the room full of women. The children had already been taken out of the room. They had told the women they would look at the little boys, whether they were circumcised or not.

Not all the women and girls in the room understood this, as some of them did not know a single word in Serbian.

But this part of the tragic story, SHE had heard after the war, when they had gathered with some of those women to talk about those nights of hell.

That night, the Serbs had left the house sometime in the late hours only to come back in the morning. They felt anxiety and hoped that they would not return. But it didn't happen. They returned again, and even more aggressive this time... with screams going through the roof and the rooms of the house, which had suddenly turned from an image of a rescue shelter into an abyss of sadness.

They were about 15 of them. Of all the words they said as they were screaming like crazy, there was only one word that the women, who were stuck in that room, understood. That word was KLA.

They began robbing the women and yelling at them at the same time. They took all the gold ornaments, some snapping them from their necks and others through threats that if they didn't give them, wherever they hid them, they would cut their necks and fingers.

They also seized the documents and everything else the women had taken with them to keep. Things that they thought were more valuable and needed to be preserved.

And then, another form of torture had begun. Punches!!!

The first punches were given to HER mother. As if they knew she wouldn't feel the punch at that moment, because there was something else that was crushing her soul. There were the kids, the girl who was hiding her tender face under her long hair. Her mother feared she would no longer be able to hide her from the greedy robbers.

And that is exactly what happened. They brought HER out of the back where they were hiding her all this time. They told her to come in front of them. At that moment her mother begged for HER, knelt down, saying, "Please no, I have raised the children orphaned."

Her mother didn't know how she was begging him, where she found the strength to do so. How could a mother know that the beasts would stop, because she was touching their hearts?

The mother is hit again. Every time she begged, she was struck. As she continued to keep her head down while trembling, some other paramilitaries took another young woman out. They took her brothers' wife, a mother of two young children. That day they only took this woman with them.

After a few hours, when they returned her into the crowd of the women, she was bloody. Her feet were barely holding her. The messed-up hair fell on the bloody face and on the bruises that seemed to be swelling more and more by the second.

They threw her in a corner. They threw her by pushing, slamming to the ground like garbage. That day she did not ask for the children to hold them close as she did other times. She was already a dead, soulless, emotionless shell. She didn't say a word. She would only sigh. When the Serbs

threw her in front of the house, they began to withdraw, saying they would come again to kill them all.

It's not that these words broke the silence in the hearts of those women, because it had already happened. But they could no longer cope with the fear that was creeping through their souls, increasing every minute and second of their lives.

Serbian paramilitaries became their daily sorrow. And what they feared the most, rape, was already happening.

The next morning, they selected other women from the house where they were staying together. They took them, dragging them among the screams of the women crowd, telling them that they had to tell them where the KLA was if they wanted to save themselves.

They grabbed HER by the arm, two of them. They dragged her from the arms of her mother trying to save her from their clutches. Others fired at the ceiling of the house. They made it with holes everywhere.

The others grabbed her sister-in-law, the one they had raped a day before. Behind the two, there was the armed group of paramilitaries holding automatic rifles ready to fire on all sides.

"When they moved us outside they pushed us into a jeep and then we left. A car was following us from behind. We rode for five minutes. They stopped, grabbed us by the arms and pushed us outside" says SHE.

Some of them stood in front, some behind the two, as they walked towards a large house. They were pushing them to walk the path of endless suffering. Towards an act that would change their lives forever, suffocate their dreams, and open wounds to their hearts for eternity

Their bodies stiff as wood. A house full of Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries was waiting for them. There were

hundreds of them. Drunk after murder and rape. Sights from hell.

When they got inside, they wanted to send them to separate rooms. But her sister-in-law said to them "do whatever you want with me, but please don't separate me from this girl."

Her sister-in-law and she were both alone in this world. Both, facing each other, in the face of the storm from which they knew there was no escape. In front of a scene, that we could have never imagined it in our lives. Facing worse than death.

Sitting on a bed, they felt like they were in the same grave. And they were being buried alive. Whereas the heavy, rude hands of criminals were touching their hair. Those hands, removing hair from their faces, then pushing the knives to their throats. Caressing their throats with those blades. How much they wanted the blade to penetrate their skin and die with dignity. To die, and to end the drama. That was the only thing they wanted more than anything else in those moments.

But no, they were also forced to drink coffee. SHE objected, refusing to drink that coffee. She was convinced that they had "put something in it".

But the criminals brought the cups of coffee to their mouths and emptied them into their mouths. They drank it... tasted their poison.

Among the group of criminals there was one who was called "commander". Nicknamed "the Russian". He was a little older.

He sat in front of them. He stared at HER as he removed his companions' hands and the knives that were near her throat. He had a picture of his daughter in his hand.

He had talked about her even in those moments. He had said that "this girl is in the picture is the reason why he is behaving nicely, otherwise..."

SHE did not know his language, but the words were being translated by her sister-in-law, forced by criminals who understood that she knew Serbian. She had been forced several times to translate the words-commands that were directed at the girl.

And after a few minutes, they were separated. They were sent to other rooms. They... split up, wishing they were anything but women.

Two criminals, with masks and gloves, took HER into another room of a large house in a village in Gjakova.

"They took me away and took me to a room. One stood at the door, the other started to undress me. He pulled my hair, he beat me with all of his force because I would push him away. He pushed me to the ground" says she.

The world was crumbling beneath her feet. Her life suddenly empty, there was nothing left for her. It was entirely empty, just as that room.

Her soul was being torn into pieces, like the clothes on her body. The beating and the horror had left her with no force. They removed her sweatpants, untorn, because her hands weren't working anymore in the face of this violence.

Her voice wouldn't turn off. That tender voice seeking help was being heard far away, but no one would answer. The masked criminal would shut her mouth from time to time until she remained without air, and without her mind. So much pain. How hard, how difficult... SHE was experiencing her first time.

She had dreamed this moment differently. Quite different and with someone her heart would have loved. And to

day, she was dying alive from the pain on her soul and body upon which a man with a mask was looking.

A criminal who wore his mask up to his nose because he was enjoying the kisses and bites of the body of the 17-year-old victim who had caught her on a spring day of war.

"I was a girl! He would grab my chest with force, he would lick it and pull my by the hair. He saw that I was a girl, but still did not stop, he did his job. He started to rape me... I screamed so loud... I had so much pain, as if I was giving birth. He would close my mouth, and slap me in the face, he talked Serbian non-stop, but I couldn't understand. Then the bleeding started...". So much suffering.

The suffering was going on. When he left, the other came. SHE had gathered her strength to try and protect herself. Naked, bloodied. But, the criminal in line vented upon her body his animal rage.

"He molested me very much, I have no words to describe it. He raped in all forms, I can't even imagine them. He would order me how to stand, and then punched me on the back. He did was he wanted..." says SHE.

When he got out of the room he had left the door opened. SHE would never experience this much hell in her life. She stood up to dress the torn clothes. She got out of the room with haste, with broken body and soul, holding her stomach.

When she got out, she had met her sister-in-law, who had also been outside. She was crying loudly, beaten and bloodied all over her body. She could barely see her when she said, "oh no, they did a lot more to you than to me".

The two were reunited. But this time they were different. Crushed, bloody, raped.

They were ashamed to look into each other's eyes. Perhaps they would like to never meet again.

The criminals put them back in the jeep, pushing and slamming them. In the same car that brought them to the house of hell. To get them back to where they were taken.

And as they were getting out of the car, they did not forget to threaten them that if they did not tell where the KLA was, they would do the same to all the women who were there.

They were leaving. The women approached the two victims of the latest violence. Wordless. Terrified at what they were seeing. HER mother fainted, she fell to the ground as a soulless shell when she saw her daughter and her daughter-in-law in that state.

Everyone understood what had happened. They did not need to talk, they already knew they had been raped.

They both never confessed to the other women, the horror they had experienced that night. When her mother woke up, she took her slowly, put her in a bath to clean her. She was washing and crying. She prayed that her suffering would become poison for the criminals. She prayed that her tears would become bullets for them.

Life and war continued. After a few days, the residents were again dispersed to their homes. They were convinced that even staying together was no longer a lifeline.

Serbian criminals were doing what they wanted to do. The village had been visited by paramilitaries with masks many other times. Their faces couldn't be seen.

Whenever they came, they looted something in the village houses. Different things. This was no longer news. Residents no longer asked each other what they had been robbed today. It became the new normal.

One day, the criminals told them they were Seselj's soldiers. They had another ribbon around their arms, with the Serbian bird.

I am ANEMONE

Both of THEM with their children and uncle stayed in Kosovo throughout the war. Twenty years have passed since those horror days, but their bodies, souls and minds were not at rest until one day they learned that they could seek help from Medica Gjakova. Only then did they speak freely about the horror they had experienced, and thereafter, as if they found rest and spiritual peace.

But they pray every day that criminals be punished, even though justice is delayed.

II.

SHE had never thought that one day she would share the greatest pain of her soul only with her. With the woman that once her heart could not accept, since she had taken her mother's place. It was her stepmother. But war changed their story.

On that day of war, SHE and her stepmother had to return home to get the food left over since the time when they abandoned the house, and went out to seek shelter somewhere else.

Dozens of members of the extended family, mostly women and children and some three to four aged men, were placed in the basement of a relative's house to hide from Serbian criminals wandering around the village.

For some time, the sheltered ones were no longer counting the days as they once did because the war was going to last. And the food was being consumed.

Women had to bring food for the children. They went to their houses orderly, occasionally to pick up even those few food items left on their shelves. Rice, salt, flour, or onions...

SHE, along with her stepmother, was in line to provide food.

They both left for their home, which was not so close to where numerous members of the extended family living in that village of Gjakova were sheltering.

On the way home, they had both fallen into the eyes of Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries wandering around the village, seeking daily to find new victims among Albanian residents.

They were following both of them to see where they were going. And when they went inside the house to get the food, they saw that they were surrounded by criminals.

While THEY had begun collecting some of the food that Serbian criminals had thrown all over the house during their raid earlier, the house was already surrounded by them.

The criminals were firing automatic weapons from the outside, and then they went inside.

Suddenly, the nest where she had grown up to the age of 16 and the other had found the shelter of love and started a family, turned into a crime scene.

Serbian criminals slammed them against the wall, forcing them to enter separate rooms. A new prey for them. They had locked up a young girl and a young mother waiting for the children to send them food.

And for that mouthful of food THEY paid it with blood, suffering and terror. A horror that is haunting them even twenty years after the war.

"The event was horrible..., I lost my virginity by rape. I lost my feelings, and I don't remember very clearly how the horror ended. I just remember not feeling my body at all, in the meantime I prayed for this to be a dream. I remember there were three Serbian paramilitaries and nothing more..." says SHE.

Her stepmother, meanwhile, explains that the reason they had left the house to seek refuge in the basement of a family relative was precisely because the house was so close to the road.

"We didn't dare stay there for long because the Serbs were very close to our house, and we were afraid they would kill us" says the stepmother.

SHE says, that day, she did not know if they had been inside for five minutes when they noticed that criminals had surrounded the house.

"They entered the house, which had four rooms. They started screaming and grabbed us... My husband's daughter was taken to one room and me to another. SHE was only 16 years old... I was pregnant, I was expecting a baby boy, and I was mother of two girls" says the stepmother.

She recounts how she heard the screams of her husband's daughter from the pain she was experiencing. She had heard her cries, she had seen the shadow of her death alive. She had felt pain for her. From that moment on, she was no longer her stepmother. She was someone who would want to save her from rape if she only could.

But she was unable to do so because she herself was experiencing the same nightmare.

"I could hear from the other room her voice screaming, and calling. I couldn't save her..." says the stepmother.

She remembers being raped by some Serbs. There was more than one.

"I remember three of them raping me, one after another. One came out, the other went in... oh my God, it was horror. There is nothing worse. I know I was in great pain. The bleeding started, and I couldn't stand up", says the stepmother.

The criminals left them lying on the ground, and after the rape they threatened both of them.

They had been told that they would return for them. That it wouldn't end with this.

"I don't know how I stood up... but I managed to get to the girl. When I saw her, she was a mess, same as me. We were each doing worse than the other" says SHE.

However, they both tried to hide the suffering under the blood-soaked garments. They couldn't find words to tell each other. They were no longer the husband's daughter and stepmother. In their hearts, they felt compassion for one another. The shock had aligned them with each other since then, never to be separated again. To never feel hatred. To find support for each other.

The basement, which family members saw as a safe haven, now was turned into a nightmare for both of them. It didn't matter to them if the Serbian criminals would find them, nor if they die. They had already killed them.

"The war was over... Serbian criminals were no longer here physically, but traces of their violence left scars on our souls and bodies. They left us forever in pain and with many tears in our eyes" says the girl now.

She never found peace. Her health was getting worse every day. She had lost weight, and could not sleep.

Months went by with sleepless nights. She slept during days to escape the eyes of the world. It seemed like everyone was watching, judging her...

She lived without hope, and her headache became part of her daily routine.

"I started to like the darkness more than the light. I used medication uncontrollably and in very large doses to try to relieve headaches and body aches. There have been times when I haven't woken up for two or three days" says SHE.

Although relatives had begun to send messengers to ask for her hand in marriage, SHE felt as if she had lost her former beauty, and marriage was unreachable to her.

"It seemed to me that I wasn't worth anything. My long hair had already become loose, I would forget to brush and comb them. I felt tired ..." she says.

But it was the father who had supported his daughter, and his wife, though he himself had found it very difficult to cope with two horror stories that had happened to two of his most beloved persons.

He knew the whole truth, because on the day they went to get food, the father went out to look for them, because they were late.

It was he himself who had seen with his own eyes what had happened to them, for he had found them bloody, lying on the floor. He hugged them, saying "Thank God you're alive..."

And suffering, made them friends, it embodied them. They got closer to each other, so much so that they couldn't imagine anyone being closer with.

One relation: orphans and stepmothers, which mankind recognizes as a natural disharmony, no longer existed between them. HER father's wife was no longer her step-

mother. She was her only friend. They would cry together, whenever others left the house to go on with their daily lives, someone to work, others to school.

Only to her, could she could express her heartache and suffering of the open wounds of the rape that they had experienced together on a spring day of war.

They both loved each other. They both comforted each other. Until one day, her stepmother helped her think of marriage, accepting her father's decision as to who her husband would be.

"My father, for fear of being unmarried, betrothed me to a man 20 years older. For a man who could simply be my father because he was only three years younger than him" she says.

And accepting her father's decision to marry made her feel like she was paying back the "guilt" she hadn't done. She was willing to pay, if she wanted to have children, family.

"I agreed to marry, though with great suspicion, with much hesitation and with many tears in my eyes ..." she says now.

However, their suffering has been eased very much since they sought help from the Association "Medica Gjakova". This door helped them look the world in the eyes, without fear of being judged by others when they found out that they were raped women. They already feel very liberated in spirit. And their minds are not only with despair and revenge, but with work and family care, as they found this path through the help they received from "Medica Gjakova".

III.

Almost all the men had left the village, elderly and young. Most of them had joined the KLA. They knew that the village would be targeted by Serbian soldiers and criminals, as was the entire region of Drenica.

Only women and children were left at home. They had decided to stay together, going from house to house. United, perhaps less afraid. They were convinced that by staying together, they would better protect and defend their children.

SHE was a mother of four. Her husband had long gone to the mountain, not to run away, but to fight with his comrades in the KLA brigades. She would feel very proud for this. But she never told the children where their father was. She told them that he went somewhere far away from the village to work, because under the occupation the men found it difficult to find jobs.

Her home, meanwhile, had opened the door for refugees fleeing from other villages in the Dukagjini and Drenica regions. She shared food, bedding and covering with them.

But on a day of war in 1999, they noticed how Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries had besieged the village. They had chosen three houses in the center of the village to stay there forever.

Moving from home now had become impossible for women and children. Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries had begun "visits" to village houses.

Every noise of their footsteps in the backyards brought fear and anxiety to the residents.

The criminals had already pillaged the village. Everything the women had had, gold ornaments or money, had been handed over to them in exchange for life.

Nothing else was worth anymore, when facing of captivity. And when the spoils were over, and the villagers no longer had anything to give to the criminals, they launched a new phase of torture against them.

A torture that turned into a bitter refrain of life. It was a horror that no one would even want to see in a dream. A horror that changed the dimensions between life and death, making the latter more beloved (death).

They began to force women to cook bread. And then they were raped. Each in their own way.

"All of the women were taken in order, allegedly as if they had to cook for the Serbs who had settled in our village in three different houses. They got me in the beginning. I was forced to cook bread while they had fun touching my chest and intimate parts ..." she says.

And SHE..., still prepared their bread. Between the touches and the inhumane treatment that hurt her more

than the blade of a knife, they occasionally held the knife to her throat, or the barrel of a machine gun that touched her back.

"I've been cooking for them for two days. I did not dare talk, and besides of being afraid for myself, I was more afraid for my children being killed because they would always ask me where my husband was. I told them I don't know ..." she says.

And on the third day, she was beaten and put unconscious as she fought to save her thirteen-year-old daughter from their clutches.

With a mother's power, she had overcome the fear of opposing the criminals when she saw that they were headed towards the girl. She had been fighting until she had removed the girl from them.

"She would say 'Mommy don't let them get me'. I barely saved my girl from them, despite being threatened that they would kill me..., oh my God, we barely made it" says she. But she "repaid" this war with extreme violence on her body.

As they were dragging her, she had left her children for safekeeping to a neighbor who was seeing all that horror.

"They sent me to another house. They pushed me into a room and told me they would kill me. But instead of machine guns bullets, I saw the face of a Serbian paramilitary approaching me. He was also at my house when we handed him the gold and the money" she says.

And he, the same one who had eaten bread from her hands, was now tearing her clothes and beating her. He laid her on the ground... He bloodied and raped her. And then, it was the turn of the others. Five, one after the other, released the animal instinct upon her body.

"This is what we are going to do to all Albanian women... We will make Serbian men with Albanian women ..." they told her.

So, they had brought her in a state of misery, and after tortures, they had return her home again. There, where she had many guests, refugees from other villages, who had found refuge in her home.

"I met the women there and... I told them that they didn't take us just for cooking... I remember hugging the kids, and I remember their cry. They were very young ..." she says.

The next day, the criminals had forced the residents to get out of their houses, women and children. Under the barrels of the machine guns, they had gathered them at the village school.

They were waiting for death there, which for them had already become a game of life. They had heard again, many times, that they would slaughter them. And they were already counting the minutes of their lives. Their only guard was hope, that maybe someone can save them.

That evening, NATO had begun bombing Serbian targets in Kosovo. The splinters of school windows, broken by the power of bombs, were falling somewhere on the village, they had fallen on the bodies of young children.

The Serbian criminals had withdrawn, but the inhabitants did not know this for sure. They had been locked up inside the school for two days and two nights. Without eating or drinking. Until two buses had arrived, taking them to the border with Albania.

The snake road to Albania was a long one. But not as much as her suffering and pain, which followed her throughout the postwar years. She often blamed herself for telling to the women the truth about her rape. How much

she wishes they had not known this truth, which had held hostage her freedom of movement. Not wanting others to see her on the street, it seemed like everyone was looking at her.

But she has changed her mind about herself, when she was offered professional help. She no longer thinks she was guilty of being raped. Now she knows that she has been a victim of war.

She does not feel guilty anymore, she does not deny herself, as in the days when she said she lost her beauty. And now she says, "I am as I was before, because it was not my fault, I had no power to defend myself."

IV.

On that spring, birds and butterflies had left the village just like its inhabitants, who had been forced away from their homes by Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries.

The smell of gunpowder and flames of burning houses were poisoning everything in the village. The most beautiful season of the year had turned into a nightmare, and the mountains were screaming and shouting at the homeless inhabitants.

Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries had besieged the village and were emptying it. In the long columns, where residents from many villages lined up, SHE and her husband were also there, her children, mother and sister. They were lined up in a string of innocents fleeing from death, leaving behind everything they had created in life.

They kept walking silently, without address, without hope... it was enough for them not being seen by the criminals. They had left them, had escaped from them. Along the

way they had stopped in several other villages, but no one felt safe anywhere.

As they stopped to rest in one of the villages, Serbian soldiers and paramilitaries again surrounded them with tanks and heavy war equipment. They were many, they were standing in groups. Reflecting harshness, aggressiveness, they seemed tall-statured. Many had tattoos on their bodies, neck and hands. They had bandanas on their heads, dressed in army uniforms and long boots.

The citizens were experiencing trembling knees and heavy heart beats. Machine gun barrels pointed at them stopped their breath. They were seeing death in the eyes.

Suddenly one of the criminals ordered the column to be divided into two groups, a group should head to Albania. Others could stay in the village.

So, most of the crowd headed for Albania. Even in this crowd, there SHE was again. Travelers with no address prayed for some luck to save their heads and keep their families alive while making their way on foot, for a day and a night. They had forgotten to feel the fatigue of the feet and shoulders on which their children were being carried, because the pain in their souls was heavier.

And in a moment, as if all that pain was not enough, an armored war-vehicle entered in the middle of the crowd, full with criminals inside.

Again they ordered the crowd to be divided in two. Half of the crowd to continue with the road, the others to go back. They had to be split in half, just as the armored vehicle had split them.

And that vehicle had not only split the crowd in half, but also her heart. Because on one side of the crowd SHE was left with her mother and sister, and on the other side her husband and children.

It seemed to her as if the sky closed above her head. The world spun around for a moment. She could not believe that she was standing next to her loved ones, unable to approach and join them. Black clouds went through her head in a moment's notice. She was completely lost.

She awakened from stagnation by the threatening screams coming from the criminals, who ordered the columns to continue their journey, on two opposite sides. An inner voice said to her: come, go on, and let them escape. At least, they would remain alive!

The husband and children continued their journey with the column that was to go to Albania. SHE turned her head back to see her little angels, perhaps for the last time. As if she felt their doom, their misery. It was so hard to turn away from the children and to be separated from them. The parting was burning her heart, the pain piercing her chest so much that she became completely lost.

And again she would wake up, when her mother and sister pushed her to go with the column that was returning from where it came from.

As the columns reached the village, all the women gathered in one house. As if they had found rest and protection while staying together.

But the criminals forced them to scatter, each to their own home. They knew that doing so would make it easier for them to commit the crimes that lay in their souls, and then lose their tracks.

SHE, her mother and sister left for their home, devastated in spirit and body. They arrived at their hearth, once warm and filled with love. But on that night, that was not the case. The fatigue and fear that criminals would kill them at home made it so cold, so empty. This was a house

where once they knitted the dreams of life, that night they felt as if they were in a grave.

There was almost nothing left of the food, though they were very tired and hungry. Her sister had thought of making some cookies. But as soon as she baked them, and sat down to eat, a powerful knock was heard at the courtyard door.

The sister had set out to open the gate, but her mother stopped her and went to see who had been coming towards their house, abandoned for days.

But when she opened the courtyard door, the uninvited "guests" came in without asking for permission. There were four Serb policemen. They entered swiftly, with the savagery of beasts slamming the courtyard door and everything they saw around themselves.

They asked many times in a threatening voice, "Where is the KLA", "Is KLA here?" - And the mother had only one answer: "No, there is a KLA here."

Unsatisfied with the old mother's answers, one of the policemen slapped her in the face. The other forced her to sit on the trunk of a cut tree in the yard.

Her daughters seemed as if they had been swallowed by the ground, when they saw her mother being tortured by criminals. The beatings to her mother were striking their souls. It was terrifying to see an old woman trying to withstand beatings of criminal hands.

And SHE could not remain indifferent to the violence being inflicted on her mother. How could she quietly look at the face of her mother blackened by the heavy blows of the criminal, who was wearing a police uniform. She ran towards her. But that run was stopped by criminals.

"I ran towards my mother to save her from their hands. But they left my mother outside the house, and they ran in-

side. They charged towards me and my sister like wolves. Oh my god, it was a horror to see them charging towards us" says SHE.

And... they went into the house before SHE could get out. They grabbed the white handkerchief with which SHE had wiped her tears of craving for her children, just shortly before she was getting ready to eat the cookies prepared by her sister.

A savage hand threw the handkerchief to the ground, and placed both of his hands on her chest. Her voice rang out loud, but no one came to her aid. Because fellow criminals had well organized the sexual assault on vulnerable women in that house.

She gathered all her energy to defend herself. She groaned as much as she could, her screams touched the sky. She did her best to escape from their hands, to save her body and honor. She was trying to get out of herself.

"I wanted to run away, to escape from their hands. But they were two of them.... they would shut my mouth and drag me" she says.

But her reaction would be short-lived. The criminal struck her so hard in the left eye that her blood started to flow.

The blood that spilled on her clothes made her filthy, but no more than the filth she felt on her body from the rape that the criminals did.

The cracks on her soul were much greater than that of the eyebrow. Her pain in her soul was much greater than the pain of her eye, where she had been struck.

Her clothes were torn, while the fun of the criminals was reaching peak. There were two. The two were having fun with the rape as they talked and laughed as they queued up on her. SHE didn't understand a word of them,

though she couldn't hear them anymore because she was losing consciousness.

She does not remember what the criminals had done to her body anymore. She only knows that when she regained consciousness, she saw her mother over her head trying to wear to her the torn clothes.

"I remember my mother sitting near my head crying... she was dressing me up with my torn clothes. Eh... how I wish I had never woken up again" she says.

They were both crying, ashamed of each other. They felt like they had made a mistake. The mother, why she couldn't save her daughter from rape, and the daughter, why the mother knew she was raped.

Then they both got up and searched the house for the sister. They found her in the next room. Naked and covered in blood and tears.

"They raped her too... You couldn't look at her body" she says.

Poor sister, she was still a young girl, unmarried, untouched by any man's hand. She was screaming and shouting a lot, she was venting, while SHE and her mother helped her get dressed. She wanted to die, begging them to leave her there, saying her life was no longer worth it. She would say "I'm in a lot of pain...!"

How much she wanted to comfort her sister! But she couldn't find a word. And what could she say... when she herself was hurt and destroyed in body and soul. They both stood opposite each other in torn clothes, bloody and beaten. They were crying at each other, comforting each other, saying words that they probably couldn't tell themselves that they needed to find strength to rise.

Her children and husband came to her mind for a moment. How could she look them in the eyes? Her heart

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turned to ash would probably live just to meet them again. How many days and nights without sleep had continued under that anxiety, after which she no longer loved life. But she lives only for her children, because her world was turned upside down 20 years ago.

The husband had learned the truth... she had told it herself. He had accepted it as it is, never blaming her. But she had long judged herself, blamed her for being alive, for being a woman. Many years of her life were spent under this anxiety, until professional women helped her, after which she felt resurrected. She feels like she's been reborn.

V.

That beginning of that year the days were beautified only by the visit from time to time of her husband in the family. Everything else had lost the meaning of life at that time of war when fear and nightmare from the killing were all in the village.

My husband returned from time to time from the mountains where he had joined the lines of KLA. But then these visits were rare because the inhabitants started to move from a village to a village together with the children and all other family members trying to get a shelter in a place more secure in order to survive from the war.

But at the night when the NATO bombing started in Kosova over the Serbians' targets, she happened to be at her house together with many husband's family members and the neighbors.

They were looking from the balcony the NATO's bombs and they celebrated for each of them. An un-

described happiness had covered the inhabitants because the hope was returning, the one of being survived from the war.

Every fallen bomb over the enemies increased a bigger hope for them. But their joy and celebration did not last a lot.... The information started to get spread in the village that the men should leave their houses because a great danger was coming because of the war getting harsh and the Serbia's police and army was aggravated exceedingly.

Her entire family has decided to leave their house. They had gone to a village to a relative of her husband.

Where she was settled with her family, there were already many refugees that came there from other villages.

But only a day after the village was surrounded by the Serbian criminals. There were a lot of bangs and noises in the street.

Somebody has knocked loudly on the house door. She thought that her husband was coming for a visit as he usually did for a few months. Her heart was beating quickly and she did not know if she was being happy or she should be afraid of it.

"When I went out to the entrance door of the house, I saw an armed Serbian with an army uniform entered. As soon as he saw me, he started to swear at me but I did not understand what was he saying. I ran inside and said I swear on God the Serbians entered!", she pointed out.

But her volition to save her relatives remained half, it remained just a desire. The Serbia's soldiers had forced the inhabitants of the village to get out in the yards.

They lined them one by one and ordered them to walk in order to get them together with the other inhabitants in the lawn of the village. Probably in order to shoot them.

They were looking at the barrels of the guns that were pointed to them while the other criminals were still bringing inhabitants from other houses.

The bunch of innocent Albanian inhabitants was increasing very fast. As large as it became the criminals' song exploded.

Their harsh voices got silent somewhere between the mountain trees that surrounded the lawn. And the inhabitants were seeing how the death was coming from the barrels of the Kalashnikovs. Each of them has already died for thousands of times in their spirits. They died thinking that they could not survive.

They waited there until the sunset standing in front of the death without daring to talk to each other, without being able to eat or drink, at least for the last time in their life.

They knew that they will be shot, that they can not be saved. They knew exactly because many criminals were shot in another village yesterday, in a battle with the liberators. The beaten criminals in the war battle there had rushed to get revenged over the unarmed, empty handed and innocent civilians here. They gathered Albanian inhabitants all day in that lawn.

First, they robbed them and then they started the rape of the women and girls.

"They took our gold and all the money that we have had. They took 4-5 of us and sent us in a basement of a house that was empty. They told us to take out everything that we had because they will undress us", she pointed out.

But the tortures were not ending because they gathered the women and the children and sent them in another house. And for the men no one ever knew anything about them since then.

“They got us in a room, and there I was with my children and some relatives with their children. Then the terror started for us”, she pointed out.

They started to enter into each room. They entered where ever they wanted took any woman or girl that they wanted.

“They came and took us with lamps because it was night. They started from young girls then with women. There were also kids that they took”, she pointed out.

And those that returned to the room looked terrified. Bleeding with torn clothes, ... and they could not speak.

They also took her. They sent her in a room by pushing her behind by force. It was night. Dark, as her life in those moments. She felt only the force of the crime over her shoulder. She could not even recognize the face of the one that was undressing her by force and who she was fighting and objecting.

How weak were her hands against the wall, the ironed violence, and the criminals’ threatening?

“There were some of them. They told me if I scream, they will come too...this was all I understood. Then they left me alone with only one of them”, she pointed out.

And he got close to me...started to talk, to ask something. She did not understand and did not answer.

“He started to bit me through my body, I tried to keep him off, but...”, she pointed out.

While she was hating herself that she did not have more strength, why she could not find a possibility to disappear from there, why she could not become a poison for his bites.

But he did what he wanted to do. And then he called his friends to remove his prey from there. They returned her back where they had taken her by dragging her.

... and how big was the pain becoming at every moment that she passed after the rape. The pains went through her body and soul. She shed tears in the silence of the grave because she did not dare to speak up. She was afraid even to cry although her soul was languishing. One thousand questions in her head...why could she not run, why could she not die there...

"When I entered in the room, I saw a woman hitting a wall with her head because they had taken her daughters...", she pointed out.

Oh, how sorry was she for her, for herself, for all those that they got in that house. But the suffering and the terror looked like were not getting over.

"They came that night to take my daughter too. They asked me in Albanian how old was she. I told them that she was only 8 years old. They said: it does not matter, there are a lot of others", she pointed out.

Here the night saved her. In the dark without lights, she saved her daughter from the rape by reducing her age. Although, you could not believe the criminals. She was scared that in any moment they could come to take her daughter.

"They continued all night like that, and almost nobody was saved...", she pointed out.

They made them leave for Albania tomorrow morning, where they stayed until the end of the war, after what she is not the same person anymore. The pain of the body and the soul of that night had followed her always and everywhere. Nothing and nobody could take that shame off her so she could look at the people at their eyes. She suffered that pain for a long time and saw it infinitely in dreams...and visualized everywhere.

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The nightmare of this fear had followed her for many years. She saw it in her dreams as they were taking her daughter from her hands, and she was not being able to save her. She saw herself being raped in the dreams. She woke up with this nightmare in countless mornings for years. Until she took the courage to ask for assistance in the proper address, in the organization that was assisting the victims of the war sexual assault. And after that she felt relieved, although she did not forget the crime of the rape.

But now she is convinced that nobody is judging her for the tragedy that she suffered over her body and soul. Although she never found a cure to remove the memories of that terror, she did never find it.

VI.

She was still with only one child. She was still having her toys that preferred more near her head every night while she slept. When she heard the grown ups talking about the war it looked to her like they were talking about a passed and a far away history. She did not never even imagine that the war will come in her village too. But she learned this one morning while the village was full of Serbia's policemen and soldiers.

Her father has decided that day to get separated from the family, and to send his wife and the children in a house of another relative, where they probably be more secure than in their house.

The farewell with the father was very difficult for her. She could not stop hugging him. How could she get separated from a man who offered her happiness, protection...? She had cried a lot; she had cried loudly when she gave her father the last hug. She got scared to get separated from

him and she asked herself who would protect them if somebody would scare them, if someone will come on their way?!

Then she was also sorry for her mother that remained alone to take care of all the children.

“We took some clothes with us and pictures too because mother said that having them is to remember if we do not see each other again”, she points out.

On the road to the village she saw her mother with gloomy face, pasty from the fear no matter how much she was trying to hide it from the children.

They chose to walk through the paths of the village, not the main road because that way was ascertained that the risk was bigger from the Serbians.

“My brother told us the way. Although he was younger than me, he knew the roads better”, she points out.

But along the road they came across those from whom they were running. They met a group of Serbia’s policemen, who stopped them and asked who they were and where were they going.

Her mother told them that they were going to a relative, who invited them for lunch.

And they were making jokes with them. They were teasing them, but they did not say any word in the response of these teasing. And they were pretending like they were good and left them to continue the road. They opened the road because they knew where will they meet them in a while. They opened the road there because they were preparing a trap a little further.

They continued that road that later returned in a death nightmare for them. Bangs were heard from all the sides.

“There were gun shootings and the bullets passed by our faces. I remember that I saw my mother crying there.

There were no people in the street just a few here and there who were escaping”, she pointed out.

Although, they almost got to their limit, in the house of a family relative where they were heading.

But few meters near that house they got themselves in front of a bunch of the policemen. They were the same ones that they had met before along the road. But this time they were behaving differently. They ordered them to stop and not to move from there until they will do another thing – the ill-treatment of two young men that they had stopped before they reached that corner of the village.

And then they got close to them. They asked them again where were they heading. Although, mother knew their language (Serbian), it looked like she had forgotten it in those moments and did not know how to respond them. And they ordered them to go with them, in an address that they did not know where were they taking them, but not daring to object their orders.

And she was still a child, so young that she could not even imagine what was the raping or what was the meaning of that word.

“They got us in a house of few stories, it was all empty, without people. I was separated with my mother in a room, and they put the other children in another room. I had no idea that something like that could happen to me”, she pointed out.

But they had ordered both of them to get undressed. None of them did not do that. And they will not do this with their volition, with their own hands.

But their objection brought loud voices and wilderness at the criminals. They got close to both of them quickly, few of them got to the girl and few of them got close to the mother.

How harsh and crude were the hands of that criminal that hold her hands of a child tight from behind. How merciless and out of any forecast were those of the other criminal's hands that were keeping a child's mouth closed so her objected screaming against their touching will not be heard.

And out of any human feeling, out of any imagination could have been for the one that started to undress a child. He was preparing her to rape her.

"They did not take off my blouse just the under ones. From that moment I have never seen my mother because I lost my control. The terror started there...They started to do the thing to me as they were doing it to my mother...", she pointed out.

She, ... until that minute of her life was a child growing up. A child that did not still entered the puberty or adolescence age.

And without force, soft, without knowledge, not grown, although, she was suffering the act of hell in the criminals' hands.

Oh, how many pains she felt while she was bleeding on the sides of her thighs. That blood that fed pleasure to the criminals who took turns on softening their savagery over a body of a child.

Her screaming was a song melody for them. Her pain was a pleasure for them. For those crude people that at least were human who really stink on alcohol and sweat. Their smell was barbarity and death. She was terrified by their looks, who would had never premeditated that life would bring her in such moments.

She was very young to know how to protect herself, how to be able to protect herself. She was a kid that would experience hardly even a slap on her face. And now she was experiencing the rape. She was experiencing a pain

that she would have never premeditated, that she had no ideas that it would be so big, so heavy, so terrible...!

“They through me in the bed once in one side then in the other side. I had felt a lot of pain, I screamed but they closed my mouth with their hands. I had terrible pains. They were swearing, and they talked and laughed...I did not understand what were they saying”, she pointed out.

...She remembered the moment when she understood that they had left, then when their laugh stopped in the room. But she continued to stay with her eyes closed. As she was trying to say to her mother that she has not been there, that she has not seen anything, that she has not experienced the end of the world over her head of a kid.

She was still keeping her eyes closed because she did not want to see the traces of the crime, the traces of blood that they did. Or because she wanted to think that all of this has been just a bad dream. She could not admit that her life has changed forever since that day..., that the suffering and the nightmare would become a part of each day and night through her life.

She did not want to know that the traumas of that day she could never make them disappear...

But she had to open her eyes in order to see that mother was there. In order to see that she was alive and was calling her name. She stood up to give her hand to her. She stood up to escape from the reality.

She got dressed in order to hide the traces of her blood. So, this crime will not be seen by her sister and her little brothers.

Even now she does not know how could she manage to walk to the house of her family relatives. They walked that road without exchanging any words between them.

I am ANEMONE

During many days of that spring of the war her family had spent the nights once in one house and then in another one by searching more secure shelter in order to save their lives.

Until they joined a line of refugees that were heading to get to Albania, where she had stayed until the end of the war. She was told that the war has ended in Kosova. But for her this war has not ended even after 17 years, and during this time she has fought with the traumas of the day she was raped.

She fought with a hope that one day the dawn will come without the fear of the night and she can live without being afraid that she would be abducted as soon as she goes outside by harshly hands. Or that someone will rape her again. She has lived not believing that it is worth to be born and live as a woman until she took an address where she could freely speak about the traumas, the pains of the body and the soul. And now, she feels relieved because she told her story without being afraid about her suffering.

Now she believes in somebody, in something and she believes in future.

VII.

The war found them at home, in the village that was in the verge of the mountain and was surrounded by the constructed houses not very near each other. The inhabitants adored this distance between their houses because it looked like they could breath freely. But during the war the distance set the fear. The inhabitants of the villages were taking the road to get settled all in one place.

She also went in another village together with her children, where they said is more secured, and where the Serbia's army and criminals were not seen in these areas.

Her husband, who for a long time has joined the KLA also accompanied them on that road. And, when the fighting was stopped for a few days, the inhabitants returned to their houses.

She went to the town few times to buy food together with other women of the village for the family and children.

They passed few villages on foot and in the last stop they took a bus to get to the town.

But that spring she found out that she was pregnant. She was expecting another child, the fifth one. She was so enthusiastic because she was becoming a mother again. But together with this enthusiasm a fear was present if the baby in her belly was all right. And this fear often was returned to a worry because while she was pregnant, she was very often afraid of the war and very scared!

She wished so much if the doctor would confirm only once that her baby was okay.

One morning together with her neighbor she left for the town in order to make a visit at the doctor, and through the way to buy some food.

But the criminals cut their road. There were four Serbia's policemen, dressed in blue clothes with hats. They stopped the bus full of passengers.

This stopping put all of them in anxiety because they knew about the tortures that the police did to the Albanian inhabitants during these stops.

The criminals were tall, and she remembered one them with dark face because he had forced her to get off the bus.

"They told us in Albanian to submit the IDs. As soon as he saw my ID, he looked at me and said in Albanian: Your husband is in KLA, is not he?", she pointed out.

He asked her the same question a few times, although he took the same answer, which was: "No, my husband died". Her neighbor was standing behind her, the one that was travelling with her. She stayed by her side although the policemen did not ask anything from her.

It looked like the policemen recognized the woman. As they knew, they knew her from her surname, from her

origin. They were knowing who were the men lined in the KLA.

“The one that took my ID told me: Why are you lying that your husband died? He is KLA. I remember his face as today. He was dark, he had a large e birthmark on his cheek, black mustache and rare hair. His clothes were blue, black gloves, armed and you could see the knife on his belt”, she pointed out.

This policeman particularly looked like knew her husband very well. And when she had answered again that “my husband died”, he slapped her with his entire force. That hit made her face bleed.

“I do not know what did he have on his hand that it made me bleed and caused me so much pain that I started to cry loudly”, she pointed out.

They ordered the bus driver to continue the road. And the two women remained out of the bus. They left them outside because the criminals stopped them in order to start their ill-treatment.

They started to laugh with them. They were swearing and offending them... And as an answer all they had was the women’s silence. They were quiet and shivering from fear, and felt disgust from them. The thoughts that they will kill them have overtaken their heads. And they wanted more to be killed than massacred, as they have heard what the criminals did in other neighboring villages.

And again, they found a hope that this silence was protecting them. But, no. She felt the heavy hand that grabbed her shoulder pulling her toward him.

She objected and he started to drag her. He was getting the prey near to the place where he drank brandy and drugs before he blocked the road to the passengers in the bus.

He was stinking and this was suffocating her. He was stinking on brandy and tobacco...he was stinking more than that place of the crime, where you could see uncountable brandy bottles, syringes and needles thrown everywhere. He sent her there. In that house on the roadside.

"There were tables, drinks, meat, knives, syringes, there were a lot of things...I was terrified", she points out.

Oh, how much she desired to be somewhere else in those moments. Anywhere, just not there because there she felt an insobriety smell beyond death.

"The room was large without a door. The floor was with planks, blue walls and the windows were some opened and some closed. He grabbed me on my coat and torn all my clothes in half. He knocked me down on the ground", she pointed out.

...And she was resisting. She resisted until she could not face at all his punches over her face and body. This was an entire entertainment scene for the policemen and soldiers that were staying in that house.

They were having fun with her pains.

"Once they entered laughing and talking in Serbian, but I do not know what were they saying, and then they went out. And he broke my teeth with fists", she pointed out.

After the beating he started to rape me. He was biting her body like a hardy wolf that bites the prey after being hungry for a long time.

Her pain looked like it was touching the sky. But she was confused how this sky did not fall over her head and stop the burst and save her...

And when he finished, he stood up talking in his language. Her neighbor heard him calling his friends by saying "does anybody else wants to...".

The neighbor who dared to get in that house, in that hell's room helped her to stand up, get dressed and leave from there.

She was dragging. The torn clothes were bleeding and going through her legs. She heard the voice of the violator while he was calling "bitch".

But she was not such a person. She was alone and a number added to the victims, whose body the criminals used in order to leave traces of their crimes even 20 years later, so they will hurt her in order for her not be capable to raise her children as she wished. And to take care of the family as Albanian mothers do.

They knew that the pain in her body as time passes would increase. And that pain that started that day looked to her like it was stabbing her stomach. It looked to her like the blood wanted to clean the sin, for what she felt guilty.

She wanted not to go back home and not to live anymore. She was also hurt by the silence of the mountain because life has injured her by bringing her so much pain in the body and in the soul.

"We arrived home after the sunset. She lost her baby at night", she pointed out.

It was a hard experience for her loosing her baby, who she was hardly waiting to take in her hands, to hug and raise with love as she had raised the other children, and feel happy that her family was getting bigger.

The big pains in the body were not stopping, they were so strong as they were stopping her breath, they were taking her soul. Those pains that were even bigger than those that she experienced while giving birth to her four children. She knew that her baby inside of her has suffered as much as she did. They have both suffered together until the baby died in the mother's belly, but not for her fault.

Her husband came for a visit that night. She did not say anything about the terror that she experienced. She just told him that she was sick and she could not even sit or stand. She was afraid to tell him the truth.

She covered her head with a quilt and cried underneath. She was ashamed to look at him in the eyes. She was afraid that he will blame her and abandon her. And she said to the children that she was sleeping and she was all right but tired. She could not even think about facing the punishment of her husband because he could make her leave the house and the children. Her life was becoming a real hell in her head!

But her husband has now already learned the truth. He was told by his neighbor who had been with her that day.

“My husband has supported me a lot and told me: we have four wonderful children. There I understood that he knew. But he never mentioned it to me”, she pointed out.

Although, the feeling of guilt toward her husband had always followed her, and she became even more stronger in the dawns when she woke up with a nightmare from the dreams where her baby showed up from a rape that she could not give birth.

She avoided the closeness life with her husband and she had already forgot what was the care of a mother for her four children. She was not cooking lunch or dinner at home for them anymore as she used to. She did not get the children ready for school anymore, by hugging them and following them by looking at them while they were leaving until she could not see them.

While trying to escape from the suffering and the traumas of the raping she was escaping from everybody. She was also making her family suffer with her.

She was seeing her baby in her dreams trying to reach her with her little hands in order to hug her and asking to be saved. But the mother got deep in the abyss just before she could touch her hands. She could not even achieve it in her dreams to touch her soft hands that were sleeping within her soul and mind, although she has four other children that she saw growing up over the years after the war.

She felt guilty for a long time about not being able to escape from the criminals or to protect her baby in her belly. This feeling that could not go away made her stay away from the children that were alive. It made her stay away as much as she could not experience their growth because she was living with the dreams that were heading her to the baby that she lost before giving birth to her.

But these dreams together with the pains and the shame toward her husband are avoided since she began to talk about them in the treatment and the assistance that she was offered by professionals. Her life is better now but she never forgets the terror that she experienced and the lost that she has had. But she is better and she has many happy moments from the successes of her children now in the freedom.

VIII.

It was very difficult for her to raise her children on her own because her husband was living very far from Kosova. How many times she needed him to share a joy, a fear about the children's health, a wish of hers, or a sorrow for the life far away from each other. But he was not there. Even the telephone calls with him were very few because she lived in a village where there was no network for the telephone-set. She had to go to town in order to call her husband. But even it was difficult, they had made plans for the future.

She was dreaming so much of the day when she will join her husband in a country where he had migrated for years. They have already made plans where would they sent their five children at school. How would they separate their rooms, how would they assist on the education, and how would she wait for her husband at home with a cooked lunch when he comes back from work?

But the war found her at her husband's house without him. One morning they woke up with news that the Serbians have surrounded the village.

She dressed her children very fast with the thickest clothes that she had and left to go to the mountain together with her husband's parents. They have stayed there for four days together with many other inhabitants of the village.

They changed the mountain in a shelter house. Although they did not have a roof over their heads, they felt more secure because they did not hear the bangs of the war, and the bullets did not fly over their heads. But they counted their food bites. They saved them for the children, and ate themselves just to say that they had eaten something.

But...the criminals found them there too.

"The Serbia's criminals caught them in the mountain on the fourth day. I do not know maybe they saw the smoke; they saw something while they came there. All the men ran away, anyway the men stayed in the mountain anyhow", she pointed out.

All those that they caught there made them return to the village from where they came from. But initially they have robbed them by taking everything they had, like documents, photos, money that they saved for the bad days and all the valuable jewelry.

"They got us in three villages houses and told us not to move from there", she points out.

And there they started the terror and the dismay. They forced by threatening with guns and knives all the women to get undressed without any clothes on their bodies, dishonoring them in front of the children, in front of the husbands' family members and neighbors.

They dishonored and humiliated them. That shame, which she then never forgot. That shame that followed her

everywhere, which held her heart a hostage for so many years.

“They undressed us as when we were born. And then they took us one by one. They also took me and put me in another room. I remember very well because I left my children crying”, she points out

While they were pushing her to walk holding the barrel of the Kalashnikov behind her, she said to her mother-in-law that she was leaving the children to her as her last will because she did not hope that she would be back alive. She was walking and praying for them silently. Undressed, terrified...She was trying to fight the hands that were touching her breasts. She hated them and herself. She hated those breasts with which milk she had raised her children. She hated them because now the criminals were having fun with them.

“I tried to run away, I screamed and tried to escape from their hands, but everything was useless...they started to touch my breast, touching and beating me. They closed my mouth. There were five of them, and me alone between them”, she points out.

Even at that bad moment she thought of the children, if they had killed them, or if they are torturing them too. You never know about the criminals...and from those thoughts the caused pains stopped her. Her life looked so worthless, so painful was her pain in those moments.

“Five persons have raped me. They were just taking turns, and turned me once in the front then in the back. Until I lost my consciousness and fainted without feelings”, she points out.

When she was awakened from the fainting, she saw that she was in another room together with other women. She was dressed. She wanted so much to know who had

brought her in the room, but at the same time she was scared of the person that helped her! – She wanted to know if they understood that they saw her undressed or what happened to her. She did not know how to respond to the women when they ask what have they done to her.

She could not tell them the truth because there were also their children. And the other children of the other village women.

“I told them that they just beat...”, she points out. While, the beating was just a little part from that history, of that terror that she went through.

Since that day, she was a sick mother that was taken care by the little children. Since that day, they changed the roles in the family, the children took care of the sick mother and not the mother instead as she did once.

She felt pain on her entire body. The stomach was like this pain was cutting it and it did not stop for a long time. Her head was exploding from the pain. She did not like the sun and the spring as she used to, even though the spring had come as always as this year in their village.

She was hiding from the sun and from the moon. She hid herself during the night and day. She walked away from everybody; she did not want to meet anyone. She ran away from everybody for many years wanting to escape from herself, until one day she took the courage to ask for help in a proper address. And, now she does not run away from anybody, she loves the people, she wants to meet them and to yearn with them. As she wants to catch every minute of the life value, also for the lost years that she has spent alone and isolated.

IX.

How proud and praise the entire family felt when two boys have joined the soldiers of KLA. They did not hide this joy in the village where other boys from other families had joined the KLA too. But the joy and proudness sometimes are replaced in the family by fear and the dismay of the family members that they could be killed in the line. This fear got bigger and bigger every time they heard that the fighting was taking place everywhere in the region.

A heavy ghastly and unacceptable news for them had arrived on the 5th of February, 1999 to three sisters from a village in Dukagjini area. As in the old legends when sisters sacrifice everything for the brothers because they could not accept the information that their two brothers were killed in the war. They went out to look for them in order to find them alive or dead.

Their mother begged them not to take that road because she felt a sadness in her heart. But the love for the

brothers have overcome for them the fear from the Serbia's criminals.

Although, the war in Kosova started early in 1998, the biggest suffering for the families of those areas started in 1999.

Brothers of these three sisters now had joined long before the KLA, and they visited their families very rarely as they took very rarely any information about them.

"It was February, the weather was very cold-it was winter. The information came that our brothers were killed. But in the war the information came different from time to time. Once they inform us that they had been killed, and then that they are alive...", she pointed out.

The family was informed two or three times that the boys were killed in the war, but only after a few days they came for a visit again.

But they could not face the doubt if their brothers were killed. They decided to go out and find out the truth about them.

"I remember that day was Monday the 5th of February. I took my sisters and went out to look for our brothers. I was 20 years old; one sister was 15 and the little one was 10 years old", she pointed out.

Their mother has begged them not to leave the house with a fear that they will shoot them too. But the sisters could not be stopped because the doubt had opened a path to the heart and did not leave them in peace. They wanted to know the truth about their brothers.

Although, this was not the first time that they have received an information that their brothers were killed in the war, and then they returned after a few days again alive from the mountain, but this time was different because a

long time has passed and they did not make a visit in the family.

“I told my sisters that morning that we are leaving for the KLA headquarters to ask there for our brothers because they have the best information for our brothers..., if they are killed, we would be as a disappeared family with no heirs. We were very afraid on the road; we were dressed as boys so we would not be noticed that we were girls. One of my sisters returned on the half of the way because she was very afraid. I continued the road together with my little sister”, she pointed out. We both took the road down the mountain. A cold wind was blowing. You could smell the winter and the gunpowder everywhere. By holding their hands, they went along the snake road that looked nobody walked on that way for a long time.

“In a moment my little sister said: Oh, my God they saw us...We did not dare to go back from where we came because we were afraid if we run, they would kill us”, she pointed out.

So, we quickly exchanged our opinions if it would be better to start and run or to get close and ask for a permission to go that way with a justification that we are going to a family relative.

But as soon as we got close to them, the criminals noticed that we were girls. And that they were so young that did not mean anything for them. The age did not contain any limit. They rushed to the bigger girl in front of the little girl that was just a kid.

They attacked her and started to undress her there in the road, there where they stopped them. Without asking almost anything. She died thousand of times in those seconds. Her body got warm and cold at the same time for mil-

lion of times. She would have liked to be killed but not to undress her...

She was shaking but not from the cold....and they took her, closed her mouth and got her behind a bush that was at the end of the road.

"They caught me first, closed my mouth and started to undress me there in the street, and they just went to a bush so we will not be seen entirely. They took off all of my clothes that I was wearing and started to rape me. They were two Serbia's soldiers..." , she pointed out.

Oh, how much she tried to be saved from their claws. She tried to scream too but it was useless. Every movement was stopped to her and the mouth was kept shut. She was out of breath from the terror, from the pain..., from the blood that started bleeding on the thighs. That blood dirty the white snow of that winter.

That pain and that blood left traces over the wordless whiteness snow.

But a big screaming of the sister was heard instead of her. Although her screaming went quiet, quickly by closing her mouth too, yet was heard beyond the mountain.

After that scream gun shots were heard that were coming beyond the hill, where the girl was being raped.

"When my sister screamed, we heard some gun shots. Even today I believe that they were the KLA soldiers...then they left me and ran away. I got dressed somehow among the terrible pains that I had" , she pointed out.

In that pain and terror, she felt a joy for a few moments. She was happy that at least the criminals did not touch her. But this happiness lasted very briefly because she could not manage to calm the scared sister from the terror that she had seen. And she was crying too.

Her tear got frozen in the eyelid. She was freezing, as her heart, because her life had stopped for her. She had never thought that she would lose her virginity like that! - She felt lost, beaten, dirty... she desired to die. She was praying to die right there!

But when she saw her sister crying next to her, she stood up again. She took her hand and started to go back home to their mother. The road home looked to them longer than ever. Her body was dropping blood...her heart was crying more than her eyes.

"When we returned home, mother asked us if we had heard anything about the boys?! - We told her that they said that they were alive...", she pointed out.

Their little brother was killed in the war three days later. And the big brother had survived from the war. Now, he is married and has three children.

She got married too after the war with his little brother's best friend. That boy has loved her a lot for a long time. He has also sent a few time people to ask for her hand.

She decided to meet him before he would request her hand again. She wanted to meet him to tell him the truth about the raping, for her pains and suffering. And he was steadfast in their love, he had understood her, he never judged her, but he had supported and protected her in order to pass this pain.

"He returned the faith to life for me. He had never mentioned that event. He had never in our lives discussed my event, he never opened my wound. But my sister is a live witness of my suffering", now she points out.

She overpassed the pain for her body, for her suffering, but she never overpassed the sorrow for her killed brother in the war and the guilt that she feels for the trauma that she left to her little sister from the terror of her raping. No

matter how proud she feels for the contribution that her family provided for the freedom of the country, she feels that the terror of that day has destroyed the childhood of her little sister and left traumas in her mind and soul.

She felt guilty when her little sister could not sleep because she was afraid from the nightmare that came in her dreams. She would do anything to help her sister forget that terror, which although was getting softer with the years passing.

In the meantime, she already created her family. She has two daughters that she takes care of them a lot, but she could not take it from her mind that she has to protect them from somebody. And her husband understands very well the source of this concern, so he asked her to leave to him the care of them when they are outside the house. But this feeling has also started to relieve her since she took assistance and professional treatment.

X.

On that day of the war, the families did their best for their girls to look like boys. They dressed them men's clothes, cut their hair and mask them in different ways from the fear of being raped.

Nobody in those neighborhoods would not think that even the males would be raped.

That morning he went to have his first coffee of the day with his neighbor with whom he divided the good and the bad things. He left his wife and his children at home by saying to them that he will not stay long at the neighbor's place.

His mother and her wife begged him not to leave the house, although the neighbor lived very close to them because in his place that day the police actions had started. Early in the morning the Serbia's army and police had surrounded the neighborhood. The actions caught him in the neighbor's house.

He did not know how to react, should he go back home to his wife and children or go somewhere else between the flames that the criminals had started to put into the houses.

“There were many killed people, burnt houses, there were injured ones..., the news was spread that we should leave where we can”, he pointed out.

There were many people in the street, in the houses, everywhere. Except the inhabitants in many houses there were many refugees from different villages. Some of them have stayed in his house too for a long time, but at the first night of the NATO bombing they ran away because they were afraid that they will be burnt together with the houses.

The fire of the houses was touching the sky. Everything was burning. He decided to hide in the ceiling of his neighbor’s house. He watched from there the terror that was done to the neighborhood, and he saw the army and the snipers killing the Albanian inhabitants. His heart and eyes were crying for those that he had been seeing. He wished he could be blind than seeing what he was seeing.

He saw that the location around the house where he was hiding was surrounded by them.

“I did not know how to react, should I get down or should I stay! – Then I said to myself, if I stay here, I would die after they put fire in the house, so I decided to escape, maybe I would survive”, he pointed out.

Then, together with some other neighbors that we were hiding in the ceiling decided to try to leave from there.

“We started to run by jumping the wires and over the yard’s walls of the houses. I turned my head back and I saw the Serbia’s army on the walls of some other houses, where they took their positions in order to fire with Kalashnikov”, he pointed out.

But he managed to run away up to a place where he had to cross the main road of the neighborhood.

“As I was going out, I saw them. They caught me. I could not see them at all. When they saw me... they stopped me immediately”, he pointed out.

There were Serbia’s policemen, soldiers and paramilitaries ... all formation forces in the neighborhood.

He was stopped by two policemen. One of them was taller and dark, and the other one was shorter. He remembers their faces very well.

He thought about everything else through that second when they stopped him! He remembered the family, the wife, the children... He wondered where were they! He thought that they will kill him right there, and he will not be able to protect them. He was very scared about them, but what the criminals did to him he will never remember!

“They asked me where do you think you are going? - I told them that I was looking for my family because I do not know where they are”, he pointed out.

And they started to swear him, to offend him with banality words. And then they ordered him to walk in front of them.

So, he started to walk toward the road of death...He had no other desire except to be saved somehow. He was never afraid so much of the death.

After a while they had stopped him and ordered him to get undressed. He was confused with this request, but soon he remembered that he had heard that the criminals were undressing the inhabitants to massacre them by cutting their limbs.

...And he refused to get undressed. But they hit him so hard that he fell down on the ground. His lip was cut from their fists. His face was bleeding and his heart was bleeding

too. They made him take the trousers off and turn him back.

It was such unbearable for him, so difficult, so dishonest...! - Something was happening to him that he could never had imagined.

The first on that started the rape was the short policeman...He started to rape him from behind while he resisted with his entire force. He was refusing, screaming, objecting while they were threatening and ordering him to stay in a position as they were saying. Their weapons' barrels were stuck in his body. And the other one broke a glass bottle that was near him. He started to scratch his hands with it slowly. They were bleeding. He was sweating on the forehead...and he had terrible pain in the stomach.

Two of them raped him and dishonored him! - And he did not feel the pain of the body as he felt the pain of the soul. He could probably heal the body wounds but he could never heal the soul one.

"They raped me until I fainted. My mouth was dry from the fear and the discomfort. I thought it was better to kill me!", he pointed out.

He was fainted..., he could not remember that the criminals had raped him. But what he remembered were their words that told him "you tell your mother how strong we are", "we would do the same thing to all the mothers, wives, and your sisters" ...

He does not know how long this terror had lasted. It looked to him like it lasted the entire life because he never could take it off his mind.

"How long did it last, I do not know for sure..., but I know I recovered myself slowly, I managed to go home. My wife saw me that I was beaten, cut, and bleeding", he pointed out.

He forgot the suffering and the pain for a moment. He was happy that his family was alive. They were very well.

He washed his body but not the shame in the house that was not burnt that day. It could not be washed from the water being poured on his blackened and wounded body.

He was ashamed to look his wife at the eyes. He was terrified when he looked at the children. The hugging that were given to him looked so unfair. He felt that he did not deserve them. He felt guilty because he could not move away. Why did he not had enough force to make them kill him, but he left them rape him!

He felt guilty because he remained alive, why did he go back home...!

While the morning was coming that day, the criminals were finishing the ethnic cleansing in the neighborhood.

He also took his family and left. They have walked through the bloody streets.

“What a view to see-the entire place was burnt. We have walked through live-coats... We have passed through the killed people along the roads”, he pointed out.

We joined the row that was headed to Albania. He had sheltered his family there but not his heart.

The terror of that day had followed him forever. He spent his days under the feeling of the body, and the nights under the nightmare that came to him as soon as he closed his eyes. He saw dreams like they were raping him and screamed loudly. He needed few minutes to understand that he was dreaming, and even when his wife woke him up.

He was changing day by day. He was withdrawal escaping from the world. He wanted to stay alone. Even

when he was with the others he stayed in his memories and lost...!

He felt alone in this world. He thought about the suicide many times as a solution in order to get rid of the feeling of guilt and shame. But each time he thought about the suicide the love for the family and now for his free country changed his mind...

His wife asked him many times what was bothering him. She had noticed that he had changed a lot. But he had no courage to tell her the truth.

"Hereafter his family does not know what happened, although I was bleeding and with torn clothes. It is difficult to tell your family that they did what they did. I will never have a power to tell them that, and because of the mentality", he said.

He does not have the courage to tell them the truth because he does not know how will they expect this or what would they say? - What would they think about their father, how would they treat him?!

But at least he had taken the burden conscious for the guiltiness from himself because he was offered assistance from the specialists of that field. He now feels more relieved. He understood that he was not guilty by being raped. He understood that his life has values, and that he was just one victim against the raping military forces. He is still influenced by the ideal for a different Kosova, free...

And he is immensely happy for the recognition of the status for the victims of the sexual violence during the war. He understood this thing as a reward for the sacrifice and the resistance against the terror that he has experienced.

XI.

Fear from the killing and massacre by the Serbia's criminals was spread everywhere during that year. They were not news for anybody. But everybody that felt more in danger ran from this nightmare, people from different villages and cities. They ran and got shelter where ever they thought it was more secure.

But, she with her husband felt secure in their house. There was no talking about the killings by the criminals yet. Maybe, it was because there were Serbian people living around their village.

She was a young bride that loved her husband and wanted to stay by him. She was only 26 years old. She never thought about getting away from him, not even if the war will be spread in their village, although they did not have any children yet. Albanian inhabitants had limited their movements exceedingly being scared they would be ill-treated by the Serbians.

One day, while she was sitting in the balcony of the house together with her husband, they saw a bus with some passengers passing by.

“I saw the bus passing by and I told my husband: how it was possible for those busses to pass by in this situation? - My husband said: they are going up and down because they are not bothered at this side. Maybe, because we are living with Serbians as neighbors”, she pointed out.

As she was foreseeing that some of her relatives were in that bus. Her family was living in the city, there where she was born and grown up. And that day, she kind of felt that someone was coming for a visit.

The instinct did not cheat her. Her father was travelling with that bus. He came to visit his daughter at that terrible time.

“When I saw my father, I just waited what would he say to me. I was scared that someone from my family could have been killed. My father said that everyone was alive, but it looked like mother was dying and was looking to see me”, she pointed out.

A fear that can not be described got her, which meant that she could lose her mother. She started to cry.

Her husband told her to go to her family, and in a few days, he will go and get her back home.

On her way to her house she saw many checkpoints, sacks filled with sand, Serbia’s armed forces with heavy artillery were staying behind.

You could smell the war everywhere. You could smell death. Views of terror that terrified her.

“Just me and my father were in that street. No one else could be seen. I had a scarf on my head that I carried all the time because my father told me to carry it so I would not be attracted by the Serbians”, she pointed out.

She had stayed at her parents' house for a long time waiting for her husband to come and get her. But he was not coming.

She had cried so much for him. She has missed him so much. So many doubts flew through her mind as far as his fate was concerned. She was afraid if he left to go to her, but the Serbians had stopped him and had...Oh, she did not dare think what could have happened then!-Here, the breath stopped, the thinking stopped because she did not want to think about something bad could have happened to him.

In the meantime, the secure situation in the town was getting worse and worse. The war was spreading everywhere. People started to run away leaving their houses. The inhabitants everywhere were ready to run at any moment. They were sleeping with the clothes and shoes on. One March night, the NATO bombing started over the Serbian's targets in Kosova.

"We had seen a lot of people running away. It was very noisy, you could see people running, crying and screaming. So, we joined them too and went to a village. Then we moved through three or four villages, staying two to three days in a village, and then ran away again", she pointed out.

As days were passing by the longings and the fear for my husband were increasing. And one day she asked her father to accompany her to their house because she wanted to clean up. Many days has passed since she could take care of her hygiene. She felt uncleaned, her hair not being combed for a long time falling on her shoulder, even though she tried to cover them behind her head. Her clothes were dirty.

Her father did not really like her request but he had approved it. And this was a ghastly way for them.

That road changed the direction of life. It was the road that sent her toward the unlimited sufferings. On that road near a lawn there was a crossroad. There the Serbians took a position

in a car. There were five of them, masked, with black masks on the head, black gloves also, and armed with Kalashnikov that they held continuously on their hands, always ready to attack. They held them pointing the barrels toward the lawn.

“They stopped us, I did not understand what were they saying because they were talking in Serbian with my father, who then they started to beat until he fell down on the ground”, she was pointed out.

And she started to scream. Her screaming was heard as high as in the sky. Pain for her father was unlimited. And except the pain, at the same time she felt guilty about him, because it was her that made him take that road. She felt desperate and responsible because her father was dying because of her. She could feel his pains in a way. Oh, how much she desired if this could not happen. How much she wanted to help him somehow. To save him from that pain, from that cruelty of criminals that was taking her soul.

But she was powerless. Her feeling for her father could not be measured and could not be compared with the power of the crime. The only weapon to object them was her voice. But with that voice like she evoked the devil. She turned it toward her.

“I has screamed so much that I thought my father had passed away. I said that they killed him. And now one of them came and pulled me through my hair so hard that I thought my skin got ripped from my head. He dragged me to the car”, she pointed out.

They got her in the car to send her in an abandoned house in that area that was very near her house. They had injured her in her body and limbs until they got her in the car, and now they will hurt her in the spirit, in the mind and in her heart.

“They got me in a house there nearby, two of them, and three of them stayed outside. They started to beat me by

punching and kicking me because I did not let them undress me”, she pointed out.

The criminals got entertained by her resistance, while she was fighting with her entire strength of her spirit aga-*inst* them so they will not undress her. They were laughing.

They kicked and punched her to make her fall. And with the torn clothes they opened wounds with the knife-blade on the legs and hands.

And they started to rape her...without stopping hitting her body. They hit her on her face and head while her hands and legs were bleeding. Her blood was feeding the instinct of animals to them.

“They punched me on the eye and it looked to me like my eye had gone deep inside. They torn my shirt and the buttons fl-ew away. It was day but it was dark to me there”, she pointed out.

They raped her, bit her, and ill-treated her. They took off their masks, they bit her everywhere and changed their positions over her body.

“The first one started to touch me by biting my breasts and by ill-treating me. The same thing did the second one, and the others... they just took turns. They took off their masks”, she pointed out.

They did what they wanted to, they got fed up with her suffering, and left. They left her to get mad, to suffer, to cry, to scream... To cry about herself and her father that she remembered she had left him being beaten by the criminals.

“When I went outside, I did not know where was I. I could not see where I was walking from the pain in the stomach and the wounds that they had made them with the knife on my hands and legs”, she pointed out.

The place where they raped her was not very far from her parents’ house. Although she had big pains and injuries she achieved to get to the house.

She had ensanguined the road, she left blood traces everywhere. She left traces of suffering everywhere until she reached the house.

As soon as she got there, she met her father sitting in the garden, beaten, blackened but alive.

For a moment she was happy when she saw him. She was happy because he was breathing, she was watching him staying there waiting for her daughter in the garden, although, he did not know if she would come. He was waiting for her not knowing if she should appear alive. Not knowing that she was raped, they had even broken her hands and legs, they had scratched her body with the blade of the knife. He waited for her and took care of her, as a parent knows how to take care of the children.

“We looked at each other and started to cry. My father told me not to tell anybody because he knew what had happened to me. He started to massage my broken hand covering it with oil and cabbage and tied it with a wet towel. He put some sugar on the cut hand to stop the bleeding”, she pointed out.

And then when they returned in the village where they were staying up to that day, father told the others that the Serbians had beaten them brutally. He did not tell anybody what had happened to his daughter.

So, father and daughter had decided to keep it a secret. To keep a secret the rape and the terror that had happened. They decided so because they fear from the gossiping of the people. They fear that the world would mock them and they would make them suffer more. They did not hide the beating; they hid the rape. They did not even tell her mother who was still alive.

She listened to her father and agreed with him to keep the secret and not tell anybody. She managed to hid that suffering from everybody, but not from her mind and her heart because that terror followed her everywhere.

It followed her in the street, in the house, day and night, in the sleep, in the dreams...it was the suffering within her that did not leave her heart in peace. It was a heavy burden to live with such a secret in the spirit and in the body. The most difficult thing when she thought about it was of how was she going to tell her husband that she was raped, when she will meet him.

Although, within her spirit she was convinced that he would accept her as she was, and he will love her the same as he did before, but she was still afraid and depressed, which pulsed her heart. She was afraid that this event will hurt him and that he would not be ready to continue the life with her.

Those thoughts were killing her. Except the pain of the traumas from the rape, now she had another dilemma. This dilemma was killing her if it would be better, if she would not tell her husband at all what had happened to her. But how would she live with him by keeping such a secret.

It was very difficult to hide that reality between the pain and the suffering. Among the need to separate this pain with somebody. And who would be closer than the man of her heart in separating this pain with her. But if she would not separate it, how could she hide it from him.

The war ended and the inhabitants were returning in their burned and destroyed houses. She also returned from Albania, where she managed to escape together with her family and had stayed there until the end of the war.

But she was not happy about the freedom as she should be because her soul was burnt from the past, the rape and the doubt if she was going to tell her husband. She was looking at the others how they were reviving the life, but her life was getting even heavier. She had met her husband as soon as she was back home. They have talked about of the reason that he did not come to take her in the family she was staying, and he told

her how the criminals had caught him and have beaten and ill-treated him to death.

So, he had told her the truth, but she did not. She felt powerless to tell him the truth. She felt lost and unfaithful.

The days were passing and the effort in hiding the truth was burdening her soul. Her husband had noticed that she was not the same as before. He asked her why was she like that, but she did not tell him. Until in the late hours of one night she told him everything.

She told him and took the burden off that was like a heavy stone in her heart. But another suffering was added to her that was not ending. Her husband did not love her as before. He was afraid to get close to her. He was afraid of the prejudgment of the surrounding where he was living, family, friends, neighbors... when they understand that his wife was raped by the Serbians.

So, he avoided it. He slept alone far away from her. He had even made her leave the house for some time, and she had lived with her family. But he took her again, but he had totally changed his behavior toward her. He was not a perfect person any more, her lover that loved her so much. He was mentioning so many times the traumatic event to her. She was dying a bit by bit every day. The trauma from the rape and the ignorance by her husband was killing her for years. She thought many times to end her life. She went to take the rope to hang herself, but she returned with a hope that things would change. And, she was right because her trauma from the rape and the ignorant behavior of her husband have started to disappear when they both took the courage to ask for a professional treatment. Now, they are treated as a couple, and their relationship is better. They started to love each other more, and themselves.

XII.

On that day when the war was spreading all around, she was still staying in her house together with the two children and the husband. But, her family was living in another city of Kosova, and one day she was informed that a son was born to her uncle's son. As it is a tradition among Albanians to go and congratulate when there is a birth of a child in the family, they did the same this time, too.

Although, the war was going on, sisters and brothers got together and went to the house of my uncle's son to congratulate the birth of his son. There were Albanians and Serbs living in his neighbourhood. They had always lived together side by side, not ever having any incidents among them, until the war began in Kosova. Both her uncles lived in that neighbourhood. Each of them in their own house. The guests had stayed few days there in both houses.

When they decided to go back, she went to take her things that have remained in the other uncle's house. She took her two children with her.

There were only the children of her uncle's son, a 12 years old boy and a 8 years old girl. Their parents were at work. She decided to stay with the children until their parents were back from work, and in the meantime their son asked to go out and play with friends.

She let him go out, but, in the meantime, his mother phoned from work saying that he should be called inside immediately because she heard that the situation was pretty bad in the city.

She went out at once to take the boy, but she had seen KLA soldiers in the street. They told her to get inside and that nobody should move from the houses. And, the bull-ets started to be heard before he finished his sentence. I saw my sister while waving at me running fast and getting inside my other uncle's house".

In the meantime, she had remained alone with the children in the other house, opposite them. Those houses were only separated by the city street in the middle. She had remained there with four little children, two of his uncle's son and two of her own.

The phone and the electricy were cut. The life in the city got paralyzed, while the bangs were heard from all the sides.

And she had remained alone with a heavy responsibility on her shoulders, not in her house with four children. Two of them were not her children, so she felt a large responsibility for them, too.

This agony lasted two days for her. She was really terrified and scared not knowing where to go. Among other things, she had to feed the children, too.

I am ANEMONE

She was preparing the food to the children with those that were available in that house, and she was cooking with the agony of the rifle bangs, with the agony of the war. She had to cook and protect the children. "The bangs of the cannon and the repeating rifle were heard, and the burning houses were seen". The second day, suddenly I heard the noises of the yard door being broken. The children started to cry, and I got closer to them in order to calm them down.

She told them that they should not be afraid, and then she got closer to the window to see who broke the door, if it was the host of the house or the KLA.

But that was none of them. She saw that the door was being broken by the paramilitaries of the famous criminal Arkan. She knew them very well, she had heard and read a lot about them.

Many of them were with black colored faces and with black headdresses. Some of them were wearing black clothes, and some with dark blue clothes. And, two or three of them were not wearing anything from their waist up to their heads, and had a lot of tatoos on their bodies.

They climbed the stairs of the of the house in the second floor quickly where she was staying with the children. She was totally lost. She did not know where to go. She was more scared for the children than herself. She was terrified by a feeling that she had two children that were not hers. She was loosing her mind, being terrified, when one of the criminals approached her quickly.

He grabbed her cheek with his two fingers saying to her "Kassandra" (a character in a serial that was shown in Serbia's TV for a few years). "Two of them came after him and grabbed me on the shoulder and put me in another room. One of them knocked the children and started to swear them

in Serbian”, she pointed out. Two paramilitaries stopped with the children, and two others got her in another room.

“One of them told me to get undressed”. He talked in Serbian, and I understood a little bit of Serbian. I objected and said ‘no, never’ in Serbian. He slapped me, and the other one hit me with something strong on my head, and then I fell down on the ground’. They have torn my clothes with their hands, and then they started terrifying her and started raping her. In that horror, she heard a noise of a bullet outside the house nearby. At that moment, she forgot herself and her suffering because she thought about the children. She thought if they have murdered them! But, she heard their voices again, and their cry.

While she was fighting with the feeling of the two criminals that were playing with her body. They were both entertaining themselves with her at the same time. They raped her, they bit her, and they pulled her hair... Then, they left the turn to the other two that were “guarding” the children. “Those two went out, and the other two came... my body was blackened from their bites, she pointed out.

The others did the same. They beat her, they bite her and swear her “bitch”. They stopped only when one of the criminals opened the door and called them. She remained in the room, lying down on the ground, blooded, terrified among the torn clothes thrown everywhere. She was hurt in the soul and in the heart. Her body was broken by the stomach ache, bitten breasts and thighs. But, she had to stand up and go to the children. She had to see them, where were they and how were they... She was so scared of how would she find them, if they terrified them too, if they had done something bad to them, too. “I hardly got up, I found something of the bride’s clothes to wear and went to the children. It took me a lot to calm them down because they were terrified.

When they were calmed a little bit, I took the other children and went out to go to the other uncle's son, she pointed out.

She saw some blood and cut electric wires on the ground in the street that separated those two houses. She told the children to hold their hands, to walk together on the way that she showed them.

And, she achieved to get inside, where there were a lot of family relatives. They were so glad seeing them alive, and asked her where were they staying those two days. But, instead of the words, her difficult state spoke sufficiently. The tears and the cry of their children said enough.

She could not respond, because she fainted. And, when she was sober she could not lie to anybody about what had happened to her.

"I could not lie to anybody at all, because they have all seen what they did to me", she pointed out.

They stayed a few more days at that place until the Serbia's police came and counted all of them and got them into the tractors and trucks. There were other Albanian families, too. All together they were sent to the building of the city court.

Everybody was expecting death there, although the policemen were not threatening them. In the meantime, her health condition was getting worse. She was feeling a lot of pain and fainted from time to time. This was noticed also by the city policemen, who then had sent her to the hospital.

She stayed there for a few days, took medical assistance, but she did not feel herself secure even there, because the entire hospital staff were Serbians. There were a lot of Serbia's policemen and soldiers outside. She managed to run away from there and return to her husband's house. The children had already gone home and said that mother was sick.

She found a lot of husband's relatives there, who were staying together, but she did not tell them about her situation. She told them she was scared from the fighting, and that was the reason she fainted.

Days were passing but her pain would not stop. The dreams disturbed her sleeping. She woke up terrified and asked to be alone. She did not let her husband get near her although he was trying to calm her down, even though he did not know the truth.

And, after a few weeks, she understood that she was pregnant. How terrible was this for her, knowing that a baby is being grown in her body caused by the criminals' raping. This was like a top of her suffering. But, she did not know how to act. She would abort this baby, for sure, even though she knew that inside of her an innocent being was being created.

"When I found out that I was pregnant, I secretly went to the doctor and aborted. I was never okey from that day and on", she pointed out.

She could never calm her body and mind down. She lived among the feeling of shame and blame, because she was a woman and she could not tell her husband the truth. Why is she living with him by keeping a secret all that terror that she experienced. But, she was afraid of separation, she was afraid of loneliness... sometimes she thought about the suicide. But, the love of the children stopped her by seeing them growing up. At the time when she was raped they were very little. They did not know anything of what could have happened to their mother that day in that house. But, now she feels better because she was offered a professional assistance, where she continues to be treated. Now, she began to like the life more, talks more about positive things, tells about the successes of the children and is happy about them.

XIII.

Her family was leading a quiet life in a village far from the city until the time of war. But then, like most residents in Kosovo, SHE along with her children, husband and two brothers-in-law, fearful of fighting, had fled their home in the village. They had moved to the city to a family that was sheltering refugees from different places.

They had stayed there for several months, and had returned to their home in the village. All the time they had been considering opportunities to go abroad, go somewhere, where there was no war, and where they would raise their children by sending them to school without fearing for their lives. But that was just an idea, because on the one hand they had no passports, no financial means to travel. On the other hand, her father-in-law was old and had difficulties walking, also her husband would not agree to leave them alone.

Meanwhile, the village was being filled with Serbian policemen and soldiers.

"One day some Serbian soldiers came home and counted us. They told us to stay here, but don't hide anyone else in the house. They didn't do anything, and they left" she says.

After that day, everyone in the house was staying quiet. They spoke softly and did their best not to let the children cry. At night the windows were covered with blankets, so that nothing could be seen. Whereas, they turned off the lights and lit only a small lamp, around which all the members of the family gathered. Thus, they had stayed for weeks and months. They had received the threat that if even a single ray of light is seen, they would kill them all.

Some Serbian families lived near their home. And one day, one of them was a guest.

"One of our Serbian neighbors came and told us: all Albanians are leaving, you must leave too, because we as neighbors will not harass you, but we cannot guarantee anything about the others!" said she.

After this, they had decided to go to another village, settling in a house where there were many other people who had fled their homes, just like them.

But a few days later, they were told that they had to leave that village, because the war was raging there. All the refugees had made their way to Albania. But during the road they had returned because they had been told that the war was over.

"We were told that everybody should go back to their homes. We went back to our house, though I was very scared because there was actually no safety in the village. We had a well in the yard, and I was very afraid that they would throw my children in it. I had lots of things on my

mind, and I was angry at my husband for not listening to me and leave" says she.

And one day, as she was getting ready to cook something for the kids, there were bangs at the door. My husband was about to open the door, but they didn't wait. A group of six Serbian soldiers entered forcefully inside the house.

They spoke in their own language, Serbian. But she couldn't understand anything. Her husband had told her that he was accused of being a KLA member, although he wasn't one.

SHE remembers that all of them were dressed in military uniforms, with green stripes. They wore military hats, and short boots, armed with automatic rifles. Their faces were not camouflaged, nor were they wearing masks.

Two of them started to talk to her. But SHE just raised her arms, making them know that she couldn't understand what they were saying.

Her husband had told her that "they want to interrogate you, only you alone."

So some soldiers stayed with the husband, and some sent her to the next room of the house. Another was guarding outside the house.

"When they sent me there, they told me something, but I didn't understand. Two of them stood inside the room near the door, the other approached and started to take off my clothes. I was crying and screaming, asking for my husband! - I was begging for help, because I knew what was happening to me" she says.

But no one came to her aid. Her husband was beaten and tortured in the other room, and his wife was being raped in the other room.

The house where they had created a family, where their children had grown up and shared their joy, that day became a place of horror. In a place where they could no longer approach each other, they could not see or help each other. That day, in that house, her cries for help were in vain.

"He tore my shirt, stripped off my pants, and shoved me on the ground. He started touching me, placing his hand on my mouth, because I started screaming. I saw the soldier undressing he raped me in front of their eyes. They were talking and laughing at each other, but I didn't understand anything" she says.

And her efforts to escape were in vain, though she did her best to dodge them, to avoid them for at least a minute, to disappear from there, and to be freed from them. But no, they were dehumanizing her in her house.

"I struggled to escape, to be saved, because I was in desperate state of soul, and without strength. I was in a lot of pain and fear. I know that I lost consciousness, and I don't remember what happened next" she says.

She says her husband had confessed that when he entered the room, he found her completely naked. He had covered her body with a blue sheet, and had tried to wake her up from the blackout. By then, SHE had realized what had happened. She had felt pain, and couldn't overcome fear.

"My husband was giving me pills to calm down, because I couldn't calm down. I cried all the time, because I was afraid that they might come back" she says.

Her husband had been beaten, severely tortured. He had confessed to his wife how he had heard her voice calling for help, thundering in pain, that he had no way to save her. He had told her that while his woman was being raped, he was being beaten by them, and they were even

ready to kill him. During all that time, they had kept the machine guns pointed at his head.

They had stayed in the same house until the war ended. There, they cried, suffered and remembered what happened to them.

For a long time, they have healed the wounds they have experienced that day. They have calmed each other and swore that no one would confess about the rape. His parents and children were told that they had just been beaten and abused. But no matter how much they had each other's support, the trauma they had experienced made it difficult to forget. She was suffering from insomnia every day. She was afraid to sleep because her dreams were tormenting her. Now, SHE feels calmer since she started receiving professional treatment. However, she will never forget what she has experienced.

XIV.

How much she had dreamed of the days of motherhood and raising children. She had knitted her plans, how she would do everything to support them every time when they call her “mother”. And now, she wished with the most blessed words a mother knows to tell her baby every time she nurses. He was only five months old, and SHE enjoyed his growth. But there was a worry on her mind if she could now protect him and his three-year-old brother from the bullets of war.

As happy as she was enjoying their growth, she was equally afraid of them. Because she was raising them in times of war, and at home she no longer had the father of the children. He had gone up the mountain, gone to help the KLA soldiers.

She lived alone with her husband's mother at home, and these two children of hers. And they had not even thought of leaving home.

On that night of March of a spring of war of 1999, at midnight, the bride and mother-in-law heard heavy cries near their home. SHE pressed the sleeping children tightly to her chest.

Her breathing stopped by dark thoughts running through her head like lightning. Her mind was at her children, the joy of her life.

And at one point, she heard the banging on her door, nearly breaking it. It was midnight. She saw from the window three Serbian soldiers, armed while they were breaking the door, smashing everything on their way.

SHE was trembling all over, unable to gather herself out of fear. She did not know where to go, and what to do. In the meantime, she heard her mother-in-law's cry, "Bride close the door because they can kill you and your children, as for me, it doesn't matter!"

But that evil moment came for her and just for her, not for her mother-in-law or her children.

"I tried to close the door with a table, a chair and everything I had in the room. The key didn't close it because the door was old, and I even pushed the door myself because I was afraid they would kill my children... I wasn't caring for myself at all. I covered my eldest son with a blanket, so that they could not see him. My little boy was in the cradle" she says.

But the criminals broke that door. Two persons entered her room ... and soon SHE realized that her children were not the target, but she herself. Both of them were tall-statured. Dressed in army uniforms, hats and long boots. Machine guns were in their hands, and they had no masks, no bandanas. She remembers their faces well.

As they entered the room, they approached her and grabbed her by the arm. As she was standing, one of them tried to undress her, and the other watched with a smile.

"They broke the door when they entered the room. One of them grabbed me and ripped my clothes and started biting me. I pushed him away with all my strength, but he told me: take the baby to the breast because you will have other little Serbs. You will do as I say or I will kill the boy too" SHE says.

She took the little boy in her arms, hoping that he would be saved by waiting for him to have mercy on seeing her baby in her arms. But he pushed her down to the ground with the baby. SHE was being raped, with the baby on her chest.

"... like that, with my boy on my chest they raped me. They did not spare my body at all. They finished and told me: No one will ever know, Loxha was hit today, and no one will know about you" she says.

While leaving, they told her another word: "Remember that I will be coming again." SHE remained naked and sad in the room.

For a moment she forgot the pain of the violence that was inflicted upon her, and as if she were glad that her children were saved, that they did not touch them.

She looked at her son on her chest, the other who knew nothing but slept quietly under the thick blanket with which SHE had covered in order to hide.

She tried to stand up, but she was in a lot of pain. More hurtful than the pain was the message that he gave to her while he was leaving the room.

Meanwhile, her mother-in-law ran towards her, to the crime room.

She had been running to see what had happened in that place, where just a few years ago her son became a man in that same room. She had enjoyed that place, that house, and that room, because there her son would build a new life and a family. Her son would sleep there with his loving wife.

But on that day, the mother-in-law with fear in her soul and saddened was walking towards that room. She didn't know what to expect when she got there. She did not know what she was going to see, because the criminals made their "stay" there, they committed a crime there.

She approached, and found the door broken into pieces, open. She became sad. She stopped for a moment. But then she heard the little boy's cry. His mother, her bride, also sobbing.

She hugged them both, caressed them both because she was glad they were at least alive. The daughter-in-law told her everything, instantly. She told her and cried so much, telling her that she was ashamed, regretful, that she could not escape, that she could have never imagined this...

Her mother-in-law told her the shame was not hers but the criminals'. She said that the most precious thing about her is SHE and the kids. She said that the rape done on her would never diminish the pride she has for her, or the respect she had cultivated for years.

However, she was suffering it every day, every night, every minute. She could not get out of her head the message of the criminal, who had told her that he would come again.

"Days went by, and the word 'I will come back' was stuck in my head. Nothing could get it out my head, though my mother-in-law used to say: My dear, they will not come back" she says.

But deep inside her, SHE felt that he would come again. Her instinct was telling her that he had not uttered that word in vain. SHE felt that she could not endure that violence one more time.

She believed that she could not survive such dehumanization again, and resist his bites, his violence.

At times, she even hoped that she would be rescued by her neighbors who lived very close to her home, where SHE, her mother-in-law and children took refuge when they heard numerous gunshots in or around the village. The mother-in-law had always given her the courage to dispel the fear that "he would not come".

But he came back again. He had entered her home, as the first time, with his buddies, armed and kicking the doors and belongings in her home.

"I saw two people enter the house. And one of them was the one who raped me. I knew him as soon as I saw him" she says.

Then, her legs were shaking. Her heart beat hard. She did not know how she did not die on that moment. She was going crazy for fear because she knew he was back for her, just as he had said then.

"He came into the room, he found me. He told me to get ready because now you are going to be my wife" she says.

Behind him, his mother-in-law had come, begging and bowing to him to leave her daughter-in-law alone. He slammed her mother-in-law to the ground, pushing her very hard. In the meantime, he again addressed her with the words, "did you hear what I said."

She too begged him, telling him that she has young children that she had to nurture and care for them. He was

fluent in Albanian, understood exactly what both of them were saying, and he always spoke Albanian.

But her prayers were no longer being answered with words. He grabbed her by the hair and pulled her out. She was begging him again, this time begging him to let her take the little boy who was still being breastfed.

"I don't even know how I grabbed my boy while he was pushing me by the arm and insulting me. My eyes started dripping tears ..." she says. He had put her in the car, and was sending her somewhere. Along the way the boy was crying loudly. They both were crying.

"He told me to either shut up the child, or he would kill me and my boy and then throw us in the river Bistrica. Then he sent me to a strange house, put me in a room and closed the door with the key" she says.

There, she had been locked up for three days, raping her as many times as he wanted.

Those three days, seemed like three years to her. She was living in a locked cage until she found a way out of that house, going out the window when she noticed that criminals had gone out of the house.

That afternoon she took the boy in her arms, first she threw the boy out of the ground floor window, and then she got out. She threw the baby on the grass surrounding the house, though she feared that it would hurt him. But his injury will not be greater than the fear of what her abuser would do to both of them.

She left without a trace and headed to her home, which was not far from the place where she was being held hostage.

Upon arriving there, she had not even sat down to change her clothes, but had told her mother-in-law that she had to take the other boy and leave together.

Initially, she had gone to the house of a neighbor which was slightly on the inner side of the village. Then they had fled to another village. All the while, SHE was dying of fear that he would find her again. She was dying of shame for what they had done to her, she no longer loved herself. She didn't want her body because it looked dirty, unclean. Some women had given her their clothes to wear.

She had cut her hair which once, she loved them long just as when she was young. She had made every possible change in her appearance in order to become unknown to him. She had made every change to flee, not only from him but from herself as well as from the past. She was suffering, afraid and scared of what her husband would say to her when learned that she was raped. And one day in June, the war in Kosovo was over. But for her, the suffering was not over. In addition to the traumas of rape, insomnia and body aches, SHE was now confronted with the husband's refusal to be his wife.

He did not believe her words, that the criminals had forcibly taken her home and held her hostage. She could not convince her husband that her words were true.

On one side, she was confronted with her husband's accusations, and on the other, with the words spreading throughout the village about her.

How unbearable her life became, how worthless and unjust everything seemed to her. How often she thought about suicide... but her mother-in-law was always close.

She had even appeared before everyone who had spoken about the case and had spoken about her daughter-in-law. She had told them that she was a living witness about the sufferings of her daughter-in-law, which she had seen with her own eyes when the criminals forced her out of the house. She had heard her screams, she heard her cries. Yes,

it was the mother-in-law who managed to persuade her son to return his trust to her daughter-in-law because she had not done anything wrong. Her only fault was that she was a woman and powerless to protect herself from criminals.

Her husband now stands by her, he loves and cherishes her, just as much as the mother-in-law who had seen how much she had suffered. However, the horror she had experienced from the rape, trauma and suffering caused by the lack of support from her husband and the circle where she lived has left a scar on her life. She already feels more relieved after receiving professional treatment, but she will never forget the past.

XV.

Every bang of the gun disturbed her soul, trembled her heart and scared her very much. That spring of the war she happened to be four months pregnant. She was expecting her second child. The first child, a boy now is already four years old.

Although, the fighting had begun for a long time in those areas she continued to stay in their house together with the boy, her husband and his family. Her parents were living just a village further in Dukagjini region.

The noises of the fighting and the various bangs of weapons were heard very often from there, she was scared, she was totally terrified.

The fear got bigger from a day to a day, maybe because she was also feeling responsible for the little soul that was growing inside her body. She wanted the baby to grow peacefully there without the bangs of the gun or the noises of the killing.

Each time she heard bangs she ran to find a place at home where they probably would be less heard. Seeing this condition of hers, one day her husband said that it would be better to sent her to her parents, she would probably feel calmer near them.

They both decided to leave and go to the neighboring village where her family was living. But at the same time, they took another decision, very hard for her that her four years old son should be left home.

“I did not take the son with me because I was wondering if something happens to me and my husband on the way, at least our son would be safe. I know what kind of fire was inside of me when I got separated with my son, when a mother leaves her son and goes somewhere and does not know if she would be back...”, she pointed out.

When she turned her back to her son it looked like her heart broke into pieces. The tears that she was hiding when she kissed him for the last time now were burning her face. Her husband was trying to calm her down by saying that he would take care of him as she was there.

They passed some of the road talking about him. She left one hundred advices to the father who would return to the son after he had escorted her.

She was requesting how to clean up the boy in the evening before sleep, how to feed him in the morning...

They decided to do the road on foot through the mountain because on the asphalted road was not secure any more. Only the tanks of the Serbia's army were passing there. But the dark made them lose their road through the mountain. There were really no roads in the mountain. There were only bushes and tall oak trees that covered the moon's light and the darkness ruled over the silence of the night.

“We left late at night. We have walked through the mountain where it is very dark at night and I do not know how we lost our way, just when we saw a little tent. Some Serbians got out and as soon as they saw us, they caught us immediately”, she pointed out.

They were convinced that a husband and a wife were KLA soldiers and we were carrying weapons, or we were checking the area in order to find out where were the Serbians.

“When I saw them, my whole body gave up. The oaks became as heavy shadows over my head. I remembered that I prayed to God not to kill my husband because then they will do everything to me. I was praying if they have to kill us let them kill both of us, but then I remembered the child that I was carrying in my belly”, she pointed out.

The criminals had caught without many words both the husband and the wife by dragging them that night in the darkness of the mountain.

“Two criminals caught me and two others caught my husband. They pulled us like animals. I saw my death there with my eyes, my life there was miserable and I have never seen one fine day”, she pointed out.

So, they dragged them for a few minutes until they arrived to as it looked like a bigger headquarter that they had in the mountain. Then they got them inside a building. They separated them in the hall in order not to let them meet again.

“They put my husband in another room not so far from me because I could hear his voice so loudly while they were beating him. I heard his screaming and calling my name. I heard him saying to them: do not kill my wife because she is pregnant. And they were beating him so much as I did not hear his voice any more”, she pointed out.

She had thought that they had killed her husband. But they let her hear the hits that they give to her husband and his screaming with a purpose. They let her intentionally to hear them so she would be destroyed spiritually and she would suffer in the other room of that headquarter.

She had cried and moaned. She had tried to ask them to release him. She had tried to talk to them. But they just looked and laughed at her while they were chain-smoking sitting on the side of a table that was filled with empty brandy bottles. They were soldiers dressed with black clothes and long boots, without hats, no masks and no gloves. But armed with Kalashnikovs and hand-grenades on their belts.

They were watching her suffering while she was dying bit by bit. She could not hide her sadness by being terrified from the fear and pain for her husband. She was crying and sobbing in the corner of the room where they had thrown her when they brought her there. The thoughts were blowing her head. They were heavier than the bullet that she was expecting to be given by them to her too.

But they were saving her from the bullet by giving her the suffering that will last her entire life. There were three of them that took her and lied her down on the table where the empty brandy bottles were, which they push from the table and broke them down to pieces.

They lied her and started to undress her...She was crying loudly and she was crying with heart tears...She was begging them to let her go by saying that she was pregnant and that she did not know anything about KLA.

But her requests were like they encouraged them to rape her in all the ways. While one was raping her the other was beating her. They made her bleed and they burnt her body.

“There were two of them. One of them undressed me and the other one took his belt off his trousers and got totally undressed. Then he beat me with that belt by hitting me mostly on my head. He turned the belt on the side of the tarpaulin and hit me...I was bleeding everywhere. And the other one burned my shoulders and my body with his cigarette that he was smoking”, she pointed out.

How heavy was her soul from the pains, from the fear, by not being able to do something in order to save herself and the child that she was expecting with impatience to bring in this world. She really wanted that baby, and in the moments that she wished to die and when she could not bear the torture, that wish was killed by the love that she had for the baby in her belly. She wanted to live in order to bring that baby in this world because it was her soul, it was the baby of her love.

And again, that dream was stopped by the criminals. Over her bleeding and burnt body now they were having fun, over a body where another human being was being grown that still has not seen a light of this world.

“One of them started...and the other one took his turn. They just changed their turns, they were smoking and drinking beers and then came again and raped me. It was a long night...until I fainted...”, she pointed out.

She can not remember anything else, except that when she woke up from the hibernation of a night before she saw herself being in the middle of the mountain, alone under the tall oaks that looked like they were trying to cover her, and clean her dried blood over her body and the burnt wounds through her limbs...

She was half naked and half dead. She had unbearable pains that looked like she was giving birth...

But that child has had a life. She had managed to survive the pains from the rape, and to give a birth to a wonderful boy. Her husband who she thought should have looked for his grave in the middle of the mountains was returned alive after the war.

She was so happy about these surviving moments, but she had cried many times for him, and for her suffering body that was never cured. Although, she took the proper treatment and since when she is feeling relieved in the mind and in the soul, but the event that she went through continues living in her life.

XVI.

There were uncountable mornings that came in the village only with women, children, and old people. The escaping of the men from their houses during the first hours before dawn had become a routine for the inhabitants of that village. They returned home after the darkness and then again went to the mountains in the morning.

Her husband did the same thing. She was a young bride and the couple did not have children yet. The war had left them half a way the dreams on creating their family, and the desire to look at their children while playing in their big garden that they had in front of the house. There, they had together planted flowers, nice trees, where when the children grew up, they will put a teeter-totter.

But that beginning of the war, the place of the desire in order to increase the family and raise children, there was another desire in their heart - to survive the war.

The families in the village were visited very often by the Serbia's soldiers. In each visit, they count the inhabitants in the houses by even keeping records about that. They told them that nobody can move from their houses, not even for a visit and not to bring any visitors home. But the fighting in the village was becoming harsher. The bangs of the guns were terrifying the inhabitants.

So, one morning about four o'clock before the sun shines the women and children ran away from the houses. She went to the mountains together with her mother-in-law, sisters-in-law and the children in order to find a shelter somewhere where the bangs of the guns could not be heard.

They stayed there for two days and two nights without anything to sleep on or be covered with. The roof was the sky and the mud were their floor. Women, children and old people were soaking wet and dried the clothes in the sun rises that came out few hours a day.

But the criminals had noticed where were the ran away inhabitants from the village being sheltered. They surrounded and caught them in the morning of the third night.

"They had surrounded us that night. There were many soldiers that scared you just by looking at them, and then we were terrified when they approached and started threatening us. They were big (tall). All their bodies were painted, with long hairs and red ribbons on their heads and shoulders...they terrified you just by looking at them", she pointed out.

They got them all from the mountain. They made them walk in front of them and they were walking behind them with their barrels of the Kalashnikovs directed toward their wet bodies, tired and sleepless.

"The dawn of the other day found us in another village near not a regular school without doors and windows. There they separated us in the classrooms, and I knew that we were

many of us in one classroom, as many as we were not able to sit or lie down there. There we stayed one night until tomorrow", she pointed out.

And that long night nobody could take a nap. Each of them was waiting for the death, although no one said it to each other. They have stayed without eating and drinking but they did not feel hungry or thirsty. They have forgotten about it because their mind was concentrated on how to find a way to escape, to survive. The hours were passing and the hope was disappearing. Until in the dawn they heard the noise of the vehicles that was getting close from outside, and someone took the courage to peek from the window. She saw down there that two-three buses have arrived. They knew that there was no place for all of them, but each of them was thinking that they will be lucky to get in one of those buses and save their soul.

But then each of them knew that the selection of who was getting in the bus would be done by the criminals and not them. Then they lower down their eyes and looked at each other peeking as they were saying goodbye to each other forever.

"But they filled the buses with children and old ladies. And separated us the women and the young girls through different classrooms of that school", she pointed out.

That separation as it was saying the reason of what was going to happen to them. For that they would be destroyed for their entire lives. For the terror, that they would suffer there and forever.

She was thinking that it was better if she jumps through the window. It was better to suicide because this would be nicer than what was going to happen to her. Now she and her friends already knew what was going to happen.

"I knew and the others knew too if they would not kill us, they would do everything with our bodies. So, they were guarding us at the door and down the windows in case we try to escape. We were about 10 women and young girls...and then they just entered in the classroom. They told us to get undressed or they will shoot us all. No one wanted to get undressed...", she pointed out.

Although, even after refusing they did not kill them. But they laughed with their screaming, cry, and their shivering.

They were a lot of them, much more than the number of the women and the girls that they had separated from the crowd the last night.

Each of them was approached by three or four of them. They started the terror. Screaming and shouting were heard, then the tearing of the hostages' clothes that was silenced from the noise of the criminals' laughing and uncontrolled screaming.

"One of them torn my blouse and by force took off my trousers. I tighten my legs so he will not touch me, but they were stronger than me. One of them started to bite my body by turning me once on the back and once in the front, he bit me like a dog bites the meat. They beat and raped me until I lost my consciousness and fell down on the ground", she pointed out.

The criminals held them hostage by raping the women and the girls until the morning. Then they got into their trucks by leaving them behind bleeding, killed alive, hopeless, and crazy from the suffering and pains.

Each of them knew about her friend, but they could not find words to console each other.

And since that night she was never cured. Since then, she suffers from insomnia and has heavy psychic problems. The pains were increasing from a day to a day. The dreams of hav-

ing children has disappeared. Their place was substituted by the wish to have a day without pain.

For a lot of years, she did not want to meet the women of the village, the old-time neighbors whom she shared the good and the bad moments. She did not have any force to be faced with their pains because she has experienced that too...While there were a lot of talking about the terror of that night in the village. There were also such words as judging the women in different ways by those that were survived from the terror of that night. She could not put up with this thing. So, she decided to stay alone, closed at home.

She was terrified by looking at her body in the mirror. She felt worthless and dirty. Her desire was getting bigger every day on doing the suicide because the terror of that night, in the school without doors and windows was following her everywhere. The nightmare of that night was becoming a disease. She asked for a doctor's assistance many times without telling the truth ever because she was afraid that even outside of her village there will be gossiping about the raped women of that night, and for her too.

While one day she found an address, an organization where women were seeking assistance without being scared that those who will hear their stories would judge them. Since then she is feeling calmer, although she could not accomplish a lot of visits and individual treatment because of being put in a psychiatric hospital. She asked assistance many times from a doctor until now, and many times she stayed in the hospital for days by asking to be cured from her "remembering" of that terror night.

She applied for a pension and is waiting that her resistance in the war would be awarded because even her life conditions are not good at all, and the cost of the medications that she has to use regularly are very high.

XVII.

She did not grow up as all other children, she did not take part in any competition with the children of the same age who would run faster and get the first in the finish line, and she did not cry why she did not take an excellent mark at school.

She did not go to school and rarely became a part of a game with the children from the neighborhood because her parents did not allow her, not for once to go out alone in the street, in the neighborhood or anywhere else. Not because they did not want to do this, but because her health condition did not allow it.

She had a health problem since she was a baby, which left her with consequences in the aspect of the mental and body the development. That was why the parents took care of her as she was a child although she was 40 years old now, the time when in Kosova the war had begun. As so

she managed to talk, to remember few things, and to know her family very well.

In that time, the war found both her parents sick and so this was the reason why her family was staying in the house, although gun bangs were heard out of their walls, and burnt houses could be seen.

They will not be able to escape. Not because they were not afraid from the war, but because they knew they would not be able to face the escape because of the healthy conditions.

“We stayed home for the entire war, my mother and father were sick. I was not very healthy either because when I was little the high temperature damaged my brain a little bit, so I can not talk very well, and I have few obstacles in my brain. But with all these obstacles I know all the things and I know my parents, and my family”, she pointed out.

She was the only girl in the family, but she has two other brothers, who happened not to be at the house that day. They went somewhere from time to time but she did not know where. And that day they went somewhere too and were not at home.

That morning of the war, she was having breakfast while both her parents were still in bed. When suddenly loud noises were heard on the hall door of the house. And while she was wondering if she should go and open the door, she noticed that the door got broken from the kicking and the Kalashnikovs’ butts that a group of the Serbia’s soldiers were holding in their hands.

They broke the door and got inside. They were armed with long rifles and dressed in the army uniforms. They had no masks and she did not remember if they had tattoos on their bodies.

“When we saw that they entered we knew that we were finished”, she pointed out.

As soon as they got in the house, they started to look for the family members. They had met the parents and the daughter in two different rooms.

“Two Serbians entered in the parents house where they were sleeping, one of them guarded at the door, and two of them came toward me in the kitchen. I know that one of them grabbed me and put me down on the floor, and the other one started to take my clothes off”, she pointed out.

She has never seen anything like that before, she has never felt a fear like that before, and a danger like that for her life and her body. As it was not enough the life within the limits that were determined by life, and now the fate was trying her out with something that she did not think about, or tried ever before.

Being in front of a terror that came as fast as a storm she was trying to protect herself by screaming and by saying to the criminals that she was sick. And she was telling the truth, but that would not stop them. On the contrary, they asked her just to be calm, and to accept the terror in silence that was fun for them no matter that they were raping a person with specific needs, whose condition could be seen even by her appearance.

“I was screaming not to touch me because I even was 40 years old, I was still a virgin. I have never met a man in my life. That was the first and the last time that I had a contact with a man. So, I was very afraid and I screamed. I know that one of them said to me: if you scream, we will kill your parents, you should do what we say”, she pointed out.

But she could not bear the pains that they were causing to her. She felt like she was dying in the criminals’ hands,

she had a pain that she had never felt before. She could not face another pain because life had brought her enough difficulties to her life until then. The only weapon that she had to fight was the screaming, and the praying to let her go. But they were making the criminals mad so they started to hit her.

“One of them closed my mouth with one hand and slapped my face with the other one. I know that my nose started to bleed and I felt vomiting”, she pointed out.

They had fun over my untouched body of a girl as she was. Oh, what they did to that body without being concerned for her health with problems. And when she begged them to let her go by saying “that I am sick”, they told her “if you are sick stay calm”.

“They did all the things on my body. They raped me one by one. Laughing and raping me. They were screaming and taking turns...once behind and once in the front, and once they put their organs into my mouth. Oh, God it was so difficult for me”, she pointed out.

She felt terrible pains in her body because they had beaten her and bit her and make her bleed. She felt exhausted, overthrown and broken. She was ashamed from her parents and from herself.

When the criminals had left the house, she asked her parents why did not they save her. Her father did not know how to answer it, and her mother told her that she heard the entire story, she had suffered together with her, she felt her pain in her soul, but it was impossible for her because the criminals were guarding her with Kalashnikovs and they did not let her move by ill-treating and screaming at her.

And she had understood the parents could not do anything in order to save her, and stay by her side as they did

always before that. She has never forgotten the pains and the memories from that traumatic event.

She had asked for the doctor's assistance endlessly, she had taken medicaments, but she did not find anything about the traumas. Now that she is receiving professional assistance, she is feeling calmer and more relieved. Fortunately, she got the pension and she was recognized the status of the "survived of the sexual assault during the war". This information has returned the hope for life by removing her tears, the big suffering and the sadness from the soul. Now she is feeling valuable.

XVIII.

The inhabitants were having a quiet life in that pretty village far from the city. They built their houses far away from each other, wishing that each of them will live their life in peace without being bothered by the neighbors. It looked like they were having a kind of competition who would have the best well-ordered yard and the garden with more plants, which they used for their food until the freeze came in those areas.

But in that spring the gardens were not planted as always. The war that was going on in many parts of the country has alarmed the village too. Many of the men have joined the KLA, and even those that remained in the village did not think on working on the land but how to save their families from the war. They gathered together during the day in order to make the plans of how would they guard on protecting their village during the night.

None of the families did not escape from the village. Nor her family did. She was living with her four sisters, two brothers who stayed more in the mountains than in the house, and her old father that had raised the children alone because her wife had died many years ago.

One morning, just at the sunrise around five o'clock she heard a noise around the house, where she was alone with his old sick father and her four sisters. She was the first who heard the noise around the house and then woke her sisters up quickly. She told them to hide where ever they can.

Her three sisters climbed to get to the house ceiling through a hole that they left over the ladders, and masked it pretty well so it will not be noticed and destroy the beauty of the house.

She and her little sister did not manage to climb up because the criminals got inside very fast. The two sisters remained scared and terrified. They were waiting for the moment when the bullets will fly over their soft bodies.

"Me and my little sister were not able to climb at the roof because they had already broken the door and got inside. I remember my father's voice when he said: Oh, God I hope I will die before you, and I will not see you...", she pointed out.

But the criminals did not fire on them. As soon as they got inside, they rushed to the girls. One of them caught her sister, closed her mouth because she started to cry and scream while he was dragging her through the house. And the other one was approaching her.

He started to ask her where were her brothers, speaking in Albanian. Although, he did not pronounce the words properly, she understood what was he saying.

Based on his questions, she understood that he was knowing how many members there were in the family, how many brothers and sisters were there.

He had threatened her that if her two brothers had gone to the KLA they will massacre all the girls and their old father. And she had responded that the brothers had gone to look for work and that they were not KLA soldiers.

But he did not last his conversation any more, he slapped and kicked her knocking her down on the ground. He had beaten her in order to rape her later.

She was only sixteen years old being able to face a criminal who looked as old as he could be his father. A criminal that was practicing a beast force over her soft body that no hand of a man has ever touched her before.

That criminal who was smelling on tobacco and sweat, she remembered his face, his eyes that terrified her as often as he looked at her.

“He beat as much as my breath stopped from his hitting. Then he took off the lower clothes by tearing my trousers”, she pointed out. And there was no one to save her from his claws.

She tried so many times to get far from him, and run away, but he had beaten her more and more. It looked to her like she was dying in his hands from the big pains and the injuries that she took from his hitting. Oh, how much she desired to give up the ghost, to die right there because she could not bear those pains any more.

Tears were coming from her eyes and her body was bleeding...! – Her prayers were useless. He was taking her freedom, he was hurting her pride, he was taking her honor and he was weighing her soul. He was leaving her without breath. She has never premeditated this thing. She was

thrilled and without force to protect herself from a man with a force and an animal feeling.

She had heard war stories about killing, about bullets, about the massacre against children and women, but about these things nobody ever talked to her. Her mother died when she was very young. Her sisters were just a little bit older than her.

And he was not getting fed up with what he did. He wanted to sent her body to his friends that were somewhere else. He grabbed her in a condition of beaten and bleeding with a force of a beast and put her on his shoulder, took her out of the house and put her in a car that he left in front of the house.

It was a dark color large car. She remembered that very well. He put her inside and blocked the ironed doors. He drove fast the car and sent his victim, unprotected, and innocent in an old house somewhere in another village from that area. There was another soldier like him in the car.

“And from there together with another criminal they had sent me to another village that was near ours, in an old house. They locked me in a toilet there, and many of them had raped me at the same time”, she pointed out.

She had suffered in that toilet, in that house as nobody could suffer for the entire life. She had suffered and bore the raping one by one. They rape her all together then one by one. There were so many, so many that she could not count them. Maybe because she was not in a condition any more to look at them. Her suffering and pains blind her, made her view white. That suffering left her fainted, lost, bleeding, terrified...

“I do not know how many were there, I could not count them...I just know that there were many and they just took

turns. They raped me until I fainted. When I woke up, they started again", she pointed out.

This terror has lasted few days for her, until they were sure that they had hurt her enough, that they had left eternal traces of crime on her body and her soul.

She remembers just a little bit how did they return her back home because she was lost in the agony of the suffering and pains over her body.

She only remembers the moment when she was sober after a few days, when she saw herself that she was at home. She had felt a moment of happiness when she learned that her sisters and her father were alive.

But she was not the same as she was before. Her smile was lost, and its place was taken by the endless suffering. The pains on her body became a part of the every day life.

She was closing herself in and she did not want to meet anybody. She felt ashamed, dirty, and humiliated. The entire village have found out that she was raped and was kept hostage for days.

That was why she felt abandoned, forgotten, and judged by all. She was staying alone, not leaving the house, hiding from the world, from the eyes that looked at her with prejudice. There were words exchanging through the village about her that she was not like other girls, that she was dirty and besmirched.

Those words did not let her forget the sadness of that event. She heard such words many times and each time those words attacked her heart like an arrow. They did not let her forget the terror that she went through, but made her suffer more. Those words did not let her suffering disappear, as all things disappear in the world. It did not go away because she could never forget that terror, that sadness, that raping that interrupted her youth, and that had

left her dreams in half. That violence that left her without making a family, left her without becoming a mother and without enjoying the life.

Oh, how many times she dreamed the marriage, how many times have the other mentioned it to her, but she was afraid from the men. She has never accepted any meeting with them. She has decided to stay alone, to suffer alone until the end of her life, and take care of her father, now very sick, the only man she loved very much. She thought a lot of time to suicide, but the love for her sisters and brothers stopped her, who were the only ones that never judged her. Now, when she took courage to ask for a professional help, she is feeling much more relieved, even though the past continues still to live in her mind. She looks beautiful, although she says that she lost her beauty. She looks young although she says that her youth was taken...But, at least now she has understood that they made her suffer, but they did not take her honor.

XIX.

They had been raised with her uncle's daughter, although their houses were not close to one another. They were the same age and they share everything together, every joy and every thought. The secrets that they could not tell to the others, they shared only to each other. In that year of the war, they were 14 years old still growing up. But the war had separated them physically, because the inhabitants had already limited a lot of their movements outside their houses because of the often controls by the Serbia's police.

And one day she heard that her uncle's daughter was sick. She really wished to visit her, to be beside her, perhaps she wanted to remind her one of their past humbugs in order to make her laugh and forget the disease.

The family members have followed her to the uncle's house where she would stay for a couple of days. But her stay was broken by the war. But those days the Serbia's army and police had started to track down the Albanian inhabit-

ants from their houses, by threatening them under the guns' barrels. They were chasing them for the ethnic cleansing all around the country.

She was settled in the mountains around the villages together with her cousin, family members and many inhabitants from that area. Nobody liked the rain of that spring because those drops gathered with the tears of the chased ones, with the tears of the little children whose sleep and food were disturbed. That was falling upon the tears of the escaped ones that were looking for a roof over their heads. And in the absence of a shelter their roof was an open sky, so the rain and the tears became one on their faces.

Yes, the shootings began also in the mountains. The men got away because they knew that they were the first target for the enemies. Only the women, the old people and the children remained in the mountain that were very fast traced by the criminals.

They found them there in the mountain among the trees. They found them and forced them to walk in front of them by behaving with them as they put the animals in front of them and chasing them.

They also look horrible as their behaviors were. They have painted their faces in order not to be recognized. They were wearing black headkerchiefs and they had tied red ribbons on their shoulders. They were a group of about 20 people. They were stinking on sweat and alcohol. They had taken it as a mission of the torture of the innocent and unprotected inhabitants. Somewhere in the middle of the road they separated the women apart. They left the old ladies and the children in the mountain.

They immediately started the torture on the hostages. They were dragging them out through the hair and beat them until they arrived to a military truck.

They tied their eyes with different kerchiefs there. She managed to peek through the kerchief to see what was happening. She saw women in the truck being guarded by some criminals in the front and in the back. She saw terrified women. Women were shaking in a tremendous way by being so scared of what would happen to them, from not knowing where were they being sent, what would they do to them...!

“I once slowly moved my kerchief a little bit over my eye in order to see where were we and who were we with. One of the criminals noticed that I touched the kerchief and came and tied my hands, too. Then we travelled with that truck about an hour more. Nobody dared to talk”, she pointed out.

And when the truck stopped, they started to get the women down from the truck by grabbing them not on their shoulders but through their hair. Although with eyes closed, we noticed that they were putting them in a house. They took off their kerchiefs from their eyes just after they separated them into the rooms.

“They put me in a room with four other women that I did not recognize. I saw my cousin through the door while they were taking her in another room of that house”, she pointed out.

She was too young to know what was expecting her. She thought that they sent them there in order to question them about the KLA, and if they do not know anything then they will beat them or might even kill them. She could not even imagine of another thing. She was very young and did not hear about the raping. She did not know what are the love-making relationships. She was born and grew up in the village. The Internet and the cellular mobiles were not available

yet, not even in the cities. For the human body parts, she had learned once in the biology class...

That spring she was supposed to go to the seventh grade in the primary school. But instead of being in the school, she was standing with closed eyes somewhere, where she did not know even where it was.

She remembered when they took off their kerchiefs and then she had seen that she was in a room without furniture. There were only some carpets laid down there. Then seven or eight persons entered in the room.

“They were coming toward us, and as we were standing there we started to go back. They told us in the Serbian to get undressed. I did not know Serbian, but I understood because they were showing it with hands”, she pointed out.

And when the women refused to get undressed, they started the violence, they were undressing them by cutting their clothes with knives that they took from their belts.

They were cutting their clothes and beating them. They did not let them cry or scream. They were frustrated by their crying. She was terrified. She did not even feel their slapping and kicking because she was so scared.

They knock her down, as they did the other women who they put in that room. They were squeezing the breasts and were touching the body even on the sides that she never touched herself, even when she cleaned up.

They put their fingers inside, where nobody ever touched her before in her life, not even her mother that gave birth and raised her.

Then they jumped over her body like dogs over the prey caught after their running. She paralyzed, she was dying from the fear, from the pain...she started bleeding. They were touching that blood with their hands, which then they held up in order to show them to each other, then they laughed

and had fun with her pain. They were having fun with a body of a child.

“All those that entered in the room had raped me. And not only once, but during the entire day”, she pointed out.

And they continued the same thing the second day since the morning. Then they wanted to feed them at the lunch time. They had brought them a piece of bread, where they poured the beers that they were holding in their hands.

They told them that they have to eat. But they just held them on their hands. They did not feel hungry, although they did not eat for two days. The place of the hunger was replaced by the pain and the fear, and the nightmare was upon them, from where they could not be survived.

They were staying as paralyzed by not having a courage to look at each other in the face. Each of them had her own pain. Each of them had her trouble. They did not know if that terror will ever end for them. They were paralyzed from the pains over their bodies.

“They came in the afternoon and raped us and then again in the evening. They did the same thing the third day, too. They just took turns. They were about nine or ten persons. We could not remember their faces any more because there were too many of them”, she pointed out.

And then in the fourth day they forced them to wear their torn clothes. They through them out, gathered them in order to get them in the same truck that they brought them there. They had sent them to a mountain, where they were hoping they were being saved from the violence.

But this little hope for them had disappeared very fast. Another group of criminals were waiting for them, who were sitting around the fire. They were sitting and drinking...They had thrown bottles of beer and brandy on the ground.

“They grabbed and throw as a ball to one of them then to the other some women and myself that were standing at the beginning of the line. They were playing and making jokes with us. Then they ordered us to dance around the fire”, she pointed out.

Then she was giving up, she was dying in their hands. She was very tired; she had a lot of pains and she could not stand up any more. She could not dance, she could not move because she felt exhausted, there was no strength left on her. Her legs were failing her. Her head looked so heavy and she had terrible big pains on her body.

“I did not dance around the fire. I could not. Then one of them pulled me through my hair and by kicking me throw me over the fire. Then I lost my consciousness”, she pointed out.

She could not remember anything from that moment. When she woke from the fainting, she saw herself in a street around the mountain, where they left her together with the other women.

And only then they could cry loudly, they could wail the body and the pains that they felt. But they did not talk to each other because they were ashamed to look at each other in the face. They could not talk; they have nothing to say to each other. They did not find any relief...

She wished so much that she will not be ever awake, she wished she could be dead and not be among those women. So, they will not know what have happened to her, what have they done to her.

They had stayed there until it was dark in that place. They have searched around that place for a spring of water to wash their faces because the shame that they felt will never be cleaned.

Then they heard a noise of a tractor that was passing by. She hid behind a tree being afraid that the criminals could be back. But a line of vehicles was passing by the road that were carrying refugees who were headed to Albania.

She left with them, too. She told them that she was beaten and burnt.

The wounds from the fire were burning her, but not more than the shame that she felt in the soul, more than the madness that they did to her. The refugees that she did not know tried to offer her help as more as they could.

Then they searched for the doctors as soon as they entered in Albania. She had cured her body wounds there, but she could not cure the soul at all. As the days were passing her suffering was increasing.

She still feels the traces of those suffering, even twenty years after the war. The time could not make them disappear. They have remained in her heart, as the traces of the wounds has remained in the body that she has taken when they throw her in the fire.

For all these years, she was afraid to look to herself in the mirror and to comb her hair because she could see under it the traces of those wounds.

And the feeling that she was an unclean woman, with a dirty and a besmirched moral has started to go away since she took a professional treatment. Now, she loves the life, and lives for a better future. She mostly like to be a part of the group because she feels more secure. In the group, she meets other women and girls that have experienced the same event. So, she feels a relief and sees that the other friends also have returned to the life, as she was doing.

XX.

Her family had gone to manage welfare during that decade, when Albanians were expelled from workplaces, schools, hospitals, and factories.

They had leased the apartment at the center of the town where she and her husband had created a family and raised their children.

They themselves had decided to live in the house the husband had inherited from his family, which was in the same town, but on the outskirts of it.

Thus, at least they had a source of monthly income with which to support their family for those years. It was her husband, the one who took care of the rent management, the maintenance of the apartment, and everything else around it.

He never bothered to deal with these things, because with the rent money of this apartment, he supported his family. He traveled on one side of town, from home to apartment and vice versa several times during the month.

He had done so for many years, even at a time when gunshots in the city were frequent, and fighting was spreading throughout Kosovo.

But one morning, while he was making his routine route through the city, Serbian criminals captured and massacred him. He had left behind three children, two boys who had just went abroad, a 15-year-old girl, and a pregnant wife. After the murder of her husband, she no longer found peace. Fear had become part of her daily routine. She would close the doors and windows, as if she was protecting herself even from the breeze.

Mother and daughter were already living alone at home, on the outskirts of town, where spring was coming gloomy, with empty streets because Serbian patrols were rampant all over.

And just a week after, on March 26, 1999, criminals entered their home. "It was early morning, when masked paramilitaries, in uniforms with stripes, smashed the door of the house and entered the room where my daughter and I were sleeping" says SHE.

In an unexpected situation, she was more afraid of her still-minor daughter than of herself and her seven-month-old baby in the womb.

She had covered her with a blanket, thinking that they would not notice the girl that was there.

They were four or five people, and one of them began to ask the woman where her husband was. SHE had told the truth that her husband had been killed just days before.

But when asked if she had any children, she denied. Then, they did not ask many questions, but stripped the woman, who was not able to resist their strength. The only weapon she had was her voice, her cry. But they closed her mouth with their hands. One was keeping her mouth shut

and the other was stripping her. They saw that she was pregnant. They started making fun of her, laughing at her.

They made fun of her unborn child. They made the subject of humor and entertainment an innocent being who had not yet seen the light of this world.

"You are pregnant too? - oh well, better for us" SHE narrates their words.

They had raped her one after another. They each started raping her by hitting her stomach. She was punishing, she was crying... she was afraid she would lose her baby, she felt burns on her stomach, and her blood was freezing.

They kept her mouth shut. She couldn't open her eyes because she was afraid of their appearance. As if she wanted to deny that a crime is being committed on a body of a pregnant mother.

With eyes closed she waited for them to finish the crime. She was waiting for them leave.

She was horrified by the fact that she was raped near her daughter who was standing still under the blanket.

She felt shame because of her daughter, but did not see that they had lifted the blanket and found her too. She only realized this when she heard her cry.

"Mother, what are they trying to do to me" her daughter had called for help.

But she couldn't help her, or herself. They were not allowed to speak any more, they shut the girl's mouth as well.

She was shocked to see that two criminals had already stripped her only daughter, the minor daughter who did not even know what those things were. She was entirely stripped and was being raped by two of them, the third one kept her mouth shut.

That sight had left her without feelings. She had lost consciousness. When awakened by that agony, she found her

daughter bloodied, crying for herself and for her mother who did not know if she was alive.

Her cry had even awakened her from the loss of conscience. Mother and daughter embraced, injured, raped, dishonored...

She had to comfort her daughter, promising that she would never let such a thing happen to her again.

Indeed she kept that promise. After two days she went with the column of people to flee to Albania.

She had sought treatment there with her daughter. And when she gained strength, she found a way to seek refuge in Switzerland, where she gave birth to her fourth child.

She gave birth to another girl, to whom she confessed about the horror of that day of war 20 years after her birth.

And over the years, for the rape that she and her daughter had gone through, she did not tell anyone except her sister, who supported her since the day she learned of her misfortune.

"I never had the power or the courage to confess to the boys who were living abroad. Neither to them, nor to anyone else. I was afraid the word would spread. I could not survive more sufferings in life. I had been through a lot of pain, so I remained silent" she says.

But that silence had serious consequences on her life. She had not been able to overcome the suffering and fear that had turned into trauma and had accompanied her all the time.

That fear had become her illness, her stress. It had driven her to become depressed, to not trust anyone, to talk to no one, to live without feeling anything, without knowing joy or bitterness.

She still suffers from hypertension, but the feeling of loving the people around her has returned to her after she sought help.

XXI.

She felt happy at the time, though war was raging in her country. She felt happiness in her soul because she had become mother for a second time. Since it had been only five months since she gave birth to a little boy, SHE was reluctant to disrupt his comfort and leave the village, where fighting was becoming increasingly fierce.

But fears of the killings were growing. Her husband had convinced her that they had to take the two children, one three-year-old and the other five and a half months old, and flee to the city. He had sought refuge at his aunt, who had lived there since she had been married for more than thirty years. Her husband's aunt had a large house in a neighborhood in the center of the town.

There, perhaps, the family members would feel safer, because there was always movement and circulation of people.

But shortly before the end of the war, Serbian criminals, feeling defeated on the front, became increasingly aggressive. They targeted men, but also women and children. They wanted to leave behind as many crimes as possible, they wanted to leave traces of horror behind them, so that the Albanian citizens could not easily forget them.

Precisely on May 1, 1999, they charged to the town to empty it, to chase residents out of their homes, and in pursuit, to find the men, if any of them were still in the house.

Citizens had been driven out of suburbs all day long, and in the evening they charged for the town square. These actions were being carried out by Serbian paramilitaries.

They had also entered the house where she was staying with her two children and her husband. There were four persons, dressed in black uniforms, with straps tied to their arms, and colored faces.

Once inside, they had ordered everyone to surrender, with their hands on their heads and not move if they wanted to stay alive.

Upon seeing her husband, they had taken him hostage. They had moved him outside the house, and no one even dared to ask where they were sending him.

She was left breathless for fear of him, and of the children. Her aunt and her mother-in-law had started crying out loud, but they were stopped by criminals with only one threat, when they pointed their guns at them saying, "If we hear one more sound, all of you will die."

And when everyone was silent, they began raiding the house. Afraid they would get her hostage too, SHE ran away from home. But her departure was quickly noticed. They followed her through the city streets.

They caught her the moment she stumbled and fell. If she had not fallen, it was certain that she would have sur-

vived by hiding somewhere, though she did not know the city's streets well. She did not know the secret alleys of the neighborhood.

"They caught me, grabbed me by the hair, and dragged me across the ground, until they got me in a 'jeep' car. The one who was driving the car hit me first, in the face... Others started touching my chest, they forcefully grabbing and biting me" she says.

How much pain she had. How much fear and sadness. Her heart was beating fast, piercing through her chest, it wanted to get out and kill those criminal hands grabbing her with force, with violence.

"I was among the five criminals who beat me. They hit me in the face, in the neck, then in the stomach... I was hit repeatedly in the same place, until I lost conscience" she says.

Then they had sent her to the other side of the town, where she gained her conscience. She had noticed that they were in the "Sports Hall". They had put her out in the meadow. It was night, and no one could move around the city.

It seemed that the darkness wanted to keep this crime a secret. Only the moon made light from the sky. The criminal could not extinguish it, as they had done with the town that feared from their crimes. And the Moon was bringing some light, enough to see the colored faces of the monsters. They were the same ones who broke into the house, took her husband hostage, forced him into a car, beat him there.

There, SHE noticed that her clothes had been stripped and some had been torn.

"There were five of them. They raped me in the field... they put on the ground. One held my hands, the other my legs. They raped me one after another. I gained conscience

but pretended to be unconscious so that they would stop raping me” she says.

She had felt everything that they had done to her. They grabbed her by the hands and feet, and dumped her at the town’s Sports Hall.

She tried to stand up only after making sure they had left. But she could not stand up. Great pain was going throughout her body. Her head was hit by the blows. It seemed heavy, as if someone had placed stones in it.

But she had to stand up and go home to the minor children. To the baby, waiting to be breastfed.

“I wore a blue sweater that I had close behind me. I didn't find my pants, I found my pajamas a little further away. I started walking barefoot, my legs couldn’t hold me” she says.

She had managed to return to her husband's aunt's house, where her children were. She was crying in the street, but without voice. She was afraid that her cry would wake up another devil from sleep and attack her again. She was only 23 years old.

When she returned home, her appearance spoke of what they had done to her. SHE didn't even hide the truth from them. She was unable to fabricate a story, for she was suffering from pain, suffering from the terror she had experienced.

She had confessed the truth to her aunt and mother-in-law.

But they did not judge because they saw with their own eyes the violence that criminals did in that house, they saw the bride trying to escape through the darkness.

“I was crying a lot and I was worried. The aunt helped me clean, caressed me, tried to calm me down. She was tell-

ing me, try to get your mind off that event. She made tea and food for me” she says.

Her care was not alleviating her body aches, not removing the horror she had experienced, nor the fear for her husband.

He had returned only after the war ended. He had returned from prison, where he was tortured and beaten daily.

And she had also told him the truth about the horror she and her family had gone through after they had taken him hostage. Her husband had strongly supported her, begging her to try to forget about the rape. He had told her that in his eyes SHE is the same as she has always been.

But she wasn't the same anymore. She was suffering from insomnia, followed by anxiety everywhere, same as the night when she was raped. Meanwhile, she would get irritated by her intimate relationship with her husband. It reminded her of rape. And this suffering also brought her sickness. Although in young age, SHE began to suffer from hypertension, bad dreams became a routine. But SHE has started to become more relieved since she was offered treatment and professional help.

XXII.

The silence in the city was occasionally interrupted by the voices of some street animals and the sound of artillery. No human voice was heard anywhere, neither days nor nights. It seemed as if the city was sleeping in that stagnation. The spring came differently that year, when NATO began bombing Serbian targets in Kosovo.

It has been two months since in the neighborhood where she and her children had lived for years, now there was almost no movement of residents.

Serbian military police, accompanied by their Serbian neighbors, patrolled the neighborhood streets, day and night. Life was paralyzed. The shops didn't work. Schools were closed.

Residents were stuck in their homes. SHE was getting more and more worried, not only for fear of being killed, but also for hunger. Days passed, the war was not over, and food was becoming scarce.

The women were counting the bites of food they could give their children to eat. SHE had four children, her husband dead for three years. She was raising her children in poverty. She couldn't buy flour sacks, as some who bought wholesale food, because the safety situation was getting worse in villages and cities.

One day, SHE and some relatives had been thinking about going out to see if there was food left in the shops around the neighborhood.

It was the morning of May 16, 1999. They had heard that there were sacks with flour in the bakery, which was just two blocks away from the apartment where they lived. Someone even told them that the bakery was working from time to time.

Three women, SHE, along with a neighbor and the daughter of her sister-in-law, had set out to get whatever they could find, flour or bread. They had taken money with them and prayed that they would find the bakery still working.

"We went to the bakery quietly, but when we got there we saw that the Serbian police and some mobilized Roma were stationed. As we approached, they stopped us, took our money and told us to wait a bit, because they would give us bread and flour. They told us they would give us whatever we want" she says.

They did not speak Serbian, but the words were translated by an Ashkali citizen, who was accompanying police officers and was fluent in Albanian. The women were waiting, as the cops moved away five or six meters further and were heard communicating with someone by radio. No one was thinking they could be in danger. No, because it was still daylight. They were in the middle of the town. They trusted daylight, the town where they grew up, and were raising their children.

They knew the neighborhood well. They knew that houses and flats were full of inhabitants, despite that the city gave an impression that there was no one in it.

"After about ten minutes, three cars came each with one policeman in it. All three of us were told to get into different cars. There we started to suspect a little bit, but they behaved very well" she says.

From there, she no longer saw her friends with whom she had come out looking for flour. The policeman had sent her to the facility of an old bank of the town. They stooped there, and, holding her by the arm, he had put her in the basement of that building, where there was writing, but SHE failed to read it because the policeman shoved her.

Her life, same as daylight, was fading. Her mind became a dark place, same as the darkness of that basement without lights. She tried to stop, she was stunned and was asking the police why he was sending her there. He forcefully pushed her to walk. Her legs trembling from fear. Someone was coming from behind. It was that Ashkali citizen, the one who translated Serbian at the bakery.

"It was dark when they took me down to the basement of that building. Shouts were heard, and women were being raped. There were clothes scattered all over. There was blood... it was a horror" she says.

As soon as they put her inside, they had begun to take her clothes off, both of them, the policeman and the interpreter. She had resisted, pushed, tried to leave.

But they beat her, kicked her, stripped her, and both raped her. She had even tried to beg them to let her go because the children were waiting for her at home.

But her words had been interrupted by the translator threatening her to cut off her hands and feet with the knife he was holding to her body.

She cried aloud, but her cries dissolved into the endless shouting of other women. As if no one was hearing her cries. In that basement, the rooms were separated. Massive rape was taking place there.

"I was raped from time to time. Only their faces changed. They were in military uniforms, wearing bandanas, and tattoos all over the body and neck. They were crazy..." she says.

A few hours later, another woman was brought to her room. She didn't know her. They were raped and beaten, both together. They cried and suffered, both together.

"I was beaten all the time during the rape. I have a scar left on my arm when they hit me with the barrel of the rifle" she says.

They were told to leave only after being hurt and destroyed.

"Before they let us go, the Ashkali told us to get up, get dressed and go away and if you make a sound or tell what we did, I know you very well, I know your houses and we will come there and kill all of you" she says.

They wore whatever they could find. They did not know whom the clothes belonged because they had been thrown away, scattered all over the place. It was six o'clock in the evening when she got out. Her legs hardly holding her. She was devastated by the beating, by the rape. The pain had overwhelmed her body and heart. She had passed a day in hell, in that place, that day of her life, which she will never forget. She became very worried about that day, it became a sickness and a suffering for life. She got pregnant on that day. She realized this when her monthly cycle was late. She was a widow for several years. Therefore, she was feeling shame if someone could see her raising a child in her belly.

She felt ashamed, defeated by life. How many wounds and pains she was experiencing. Thinking that someone could no-

tice what had been done to her made her sad. Fear struck her as to how she would deal with it. She was shocked by the feeling of pregnancy, of motherhood. She was holding in her body the fruit of an act of crime. She didn't know how to do it, how to get rid of it. She hated herself, she hated the day she left home, she hated the world, the war. She hated this life. She hid her tears so that her children would not see her. She couldn't tell her troubles to anyone.

She had heard that there was a woman who, by primitive methods, helped women to have an abortion. Since she could not bear the shame, she decided to seek her help.

"I was a widow without a husband so I asked for help from a woman. She was not a doctor, but performed abortions by primitive methods. I told her my story of what I experienced. Until that day, I had not talked to anyone else about that horror" she says.

There, she had an abortion, but with major consequences. The bleeding was not stopping. A disease was growing inside her suffering body. She was forced to operate immediately after the war. She removed her uterus to save her life. Not because she loved life, but because she loved her children and couldn't imagine them living motherless.

Her suffering made her to seek the help from a psychiatrist many times. Trauma followed her everywhere, day and night, asleep and on the streets. She was afraid of people, she didn't want to be with anyone, she didn't trust anyone. The only person in the close circle to whom she confessed her experience was the daughter of her sister-in-law who had gone through the same horror on the day they went out to seek bread and flour for the family. She still suffers the consequences of that event. Although she has already taken courage of seeking professional help, she is now more relieved.

XXIII.

The villages were buzzing with life all year long, in winter and summer alike. But on that winter the village had fallen silent. Its serenity to be interrupted only by Serbian machinery patrolling the village streets.

Although they heard that fighting had started in the villages of Drenica, residents were still staying in their homes. It was hard to imagine anyone making a decision to leave home in the winter when frost had frozen everything.

Although war was almost the only topic discussed in the village, she and her husband had not even thought of going up the mountain or going somewhere as refugees.

They had two young children, one two and a half years old and the other eight months old. And when they thought about it, it was better for them to stay at home, in the village, where they had cousins and other relatives, rather than flee at a time of frost, without knowing where to go.

Three weeks had passed since the killing of Jashari Family in Drenica. One morning, she and her husband's cousin who had been a guest were getting ready to prepare breakfast for the children.

They heard a loud bang coming towards the courtyard. They were out of breath. They did not know what was happening, as there had been no fighting in their village yet. There was no time to exchange words about what that bang was because they saw that the courtyard door was broken, and masked Serbian paramilitaries were getting inside.

At first they were stunned. Her blood froze, just like the frost outside. They ran towards the children, trying to distract them from seeing people with masks inside their home. The husband wanted to go down the corridor, but was stopped by criminals who came in very quickly.

Upon entering, they approached him and began to hit him with the rifle butt. And then, even with kicks. They knocked him to the ground and kicked him in the head with heavy boots long to the knee. The women were in despair, the children were placed all in one room. The husband's cousin had two children with her. They both ran towards the lord of the house trying to get in front of the criminals who were beating him cruelly, hitting and cursing him in their own language.

But they stopped them too. They grabbed them by the hair. They leaned them against the wall, and were ordered to undress. They were shaking with fear and despair.

And when they did not comply with this order, they got punched in the head. Their cry and scream was heard all the way up to the sky. The criminals, who were six of them, shut their mouths with their hands soaked with blood and crime.

One of them was holding the man, kneeling, whose eyes were swollen and bruised. Blood flowed from his head, leaving stains on his clothes. In his throat a rope was tied, he was being held from behind by one of the criminals. He was holding him ready to pull the rope at any moment.

The others started with crimes against the women. They tore off their clothes using knives. They started to rape both of them. They were being raped in front of the husband's eyes. They made him watch the whole thing. Tears were dripping from his eyes. Each time he lowered his gaze, the rope in his throat tightened. He was forced to look at the women for the entire time.

SHE was suffering so much, she never imagined that her heart can suffer this much. The aches in her body were terrifying. Her soul was suffering too because her husband was suffering the most by seeing what they were doing to her.

They were raped all day long. They lost consciousness several times and awakened again by their voices, noises, screams, and laughs. They were happy with the crimes they committed. They raped the women and continued to beat the husband.

“When I came around, I saw my husband’s cousin completely naked. She was still unconscious. Poor girl, she had been also raped in the rectum” she says.

They had committed the crimes, and had fled. They had raped women, tortured their husbands to death, and beaten their children.

Amid the never-ending pain, she had gathered strength to get up, to wear and to somehow cover up with the torn clothes in order to see where the children were. Pains pierced through her body like arrows, her heart was beat-

ing strong with fear, how are the children, did they do evil things to them.

She hurried, though the pains did not allow her to hurry. She walked somehow to the room where the children had been placed. She found them sitting next to each other in a corner of that room. Together, in despair and beaten.

Her son, who was only two and a half years old, had a bruised face. So had her husband's cousin's son, who was only a few months older than her son.

But she felt joy in her heart when she saw that they were there, alive. She approached them, embraced them. On their innocent heads, her tears had dripped.

She had told the children that they should stay in that room for a little while, until she called them. They stayed until she made sure the criminals had left the house.

In a hurry again, this time she went to her husband, whom she had seen lying on the floor, in the room where they had both been raped.

"I saw my man lying unconscious. He was wounded in the leg. His head was bloody and he had a noose around his neck. I thought he was unconscious, but no, he was killed. They weren't satisfied with beatings and injuries, no, they hung him" she says.

Horrified, she had wept and cried. She will never forget that sight and that pain. Only her heart knows how she managed to live after that moment. How she managed to calm her children, keep them alive, keep their minds sane. Her husband was buried in the village cemetery, with no funeral, no ceremony, because the country was full of fighting everywhere.

She no longer had the guts to even think that she could stay home anymore. At that crime scene. Where she no longer could find peace.

She set out to escape, along with her children, just weeks after that horrific ordeal.

She had joined a column of citizens fleeing their homes. They were escaping using everything they could, anything they could, with tractors, trucks...

She climbed on one of them together with her children.

They had made a part of the road along which they had sometimes encountered groups of Serbian soldiers and policemen. But, they did not harass them, because they knew that they were leaving to never come back.

However, it was another ghastly day for her. While the convoy was passing through a village, criminals stopped it. A large number of women and children were taken off tractors. Others ordered them to continue on their way.

SHE and her children were among those taken off tractors. Fear overwhelmed all mothers. They did not know why they were taken off the tractors, what would happen to them and their children.

The criminals did not let them to think much, they told them to get in line and then they send them to a nearby village. The women were hoping that they would not be separated, only forced to return to their homes.

But she did not have that hope. She was horrified by the color of that uniform, because those who raped and killed her husband that day had the same color. They were wearing black uniforms, wearing red ribbons on their shoulders and bearing the name "Arkan" (the name of one of the most famous war criminals) on their foreheads.

"They got us off the tractor, and then forced us to walk towards a meadow that had been near the mountain. There, they separated the women from the children. The women were told to head to the mountain. And then, a mass rape started" she says.

Among the criminal rapists was a neighbor of hers. She knew him well, same as he did.

"Apart from the paramilitaries, a neighbor of the village who was a Serb raped me from 11:00 pm to 3:00 am, along with 5 or 6 others who played with my body as they wished. And then one of them said: Now we kill her. But, my neighbor said, "We're not killing her, let her remember what we did to her, and let tell the Albanians what we do to their wives" she says.

Her soul was overwhelmed, the hope that she could live was fading. Still without healing the wounds and pains from the horror she had experienced the first time, a horror was being repeated a second time. She thought much about death, but then regained her soul back, because she was thinking about her children. She took strength to get up for her children. She had to get up for the sake of her children, for the sake of their growth, to not leave them alone, because they already were orphaned, missing one parent.

She found her children in a cooperative where they had gathered them together. They showed them the way there, sent them all the way there, but all the way beating them... They were being hit from both sides with black batons.

They weren't satisfied with rape, they had to beat them. But their humble bodies were standing, enduring because they had a purpose - to reach their children, to see them again, to embrace them, and to tell them that they must grow up...

SHE had found her children, taken them, and returned home, where endless suffering was waiting for her. She could not sleep, she could find no peace. Her dreams haunted by criminals, her sleep was poor. She almost never spoke.

The war was over, but not her suffering. For days, she noticed that her belly was growing. She was pregnant from the rapes.

Although she knew the sense of motherhood, she hated why she had to bear the fruit of a crime inside her body. She hated being a woman. She decided to have an abortion, though she had no money.

"I borrowed some money from a relative and a gold ring I had. I went to a gynecologist. He removed the child and took only my money, not the ring" she says.

Her suffering did not end there. Her husband's family expelled her from the house, along with the children. Although they did not know that she had been raped and violated so many times, they were only worrying about the wealth of the inheritance because, as her husband was dead, they did not want to leave it to HER.

And then she had sought the help of the state, which placed her in an abandoned, half-ruined house.

"They gave me a half-ruined house, where I raised my children alone, with day jobs. I was cleaning different houses..." she says.

Only she knows how much her body and soul has suffered. How she has found the strength to get up, only she knows. The aftermath and trauma have burdened her soul for years. The horror still lives in her mind and heart, though she has begun to ease her suffering since receiving professional treatment.

She now talks to the group about the hardships she's experienced and tells other women that "shame is on them, not on us."

XXIV.

It had been only a few months since she had become a bride of that village. Her husband's words sounded good when he said that he loves children very much, that they will have many children together, and that they will be raised with love and care. Shortly thereafter, however, the husband began missing at home. He told her that he had found a job, somewhere in the city.

He had not told her that he was a KLA soldier, and his job was to fight for freedom. But, SHE realized this herself when she saw that one night he came home with a lot of weapons. He had brought them to give to the war mates the next day.

SHE was proud of her husband, helping him wherever he sought her help. Their home was turned into KLA headquarters. There, SHE along with her brother-in-law cooked bread and cleaned clothes for the soldiers of freedom.

The sound of their weapons erupted in the mountains. They had no tanks and no heavy weapons like the enemy. But

they say that the heart fights on the front and not the weapon. With those handguns, her husband, along with all of his uncles, and some war friends had taken part in a battle that took place very close to home, where she had been married a few months earlier. It was the year of 1988.

“The entire neighborhood was surrounded by Serbs. We saw with our own eyes the horror that happened there. In that battle, my husband was killed, along with many other men” she says.

She had mourned her husband and her fate. Why was the man of her heart taken so early? She was very sad and knew that his death would permanently remove her from that house, from that village as well.

Just days after her husband was buried she returned to her family because there was no longer any reason to stay.

But even the village where she had grown up was no longer safe. Residents went out into the mountains to escape the bullets. They had taken refuge in a location with many refugees from different villages. They had built shelters out of tents and whatever they could. It was the beginning of 1999.

On that mountain, her family married her for a second time. She had been told that it is a shame to keep a widow in the family.

And again, there was a huge military offensive on those regions. The refugees on that mountain were forced to flee. The women and children became columns and set out to move to another village.

“After a couple of hours on the road, we met with the Serbian army. They were many, they were staying in hoards. They stopped us and started asking for money and gold. And after they had taken everything from us, they charged at us the women, as if they were crazy. They charged at us like vultures...” she says.

There were many policemen and paramilitaries, with bandanas and camouflaged faces. The women, wanting to protect themselves, came together in the group. But they intervened, catching whoever they could.

"There was a lot of trouble. We tried to escape, each to their own. I started running towards the mountain, but they caught me..." she says.

They had taken the women to vent the anger of the losses at the front. SHE had been one of the victims. Some had been captured, stripped and beaten. They had laid her on the mud of that mountain... The rocks and thorns of the mountain were stuck to her body. But the violence caused by the vultures was piercing more than the thorns, it seemed to her as if they are pulling her eyes out.

Pain and fear became one. Her cry would dissolve with the screams of the other women. The mountain was a witness to their suffering. Rain washed away the traces of blood.

They had stood up as they could in order to make their escape.

"We got up somehow and became a column again to continue with the road. I watched the women with blood leaking from them. I didn't dare to look at myself..." she says.

On the way, they had met other women on a mountain. They were from different places. They were left without food. In that crowd, SHE had also met her sister with her three children.

"On those days we would wander the mountains to talk to women, to find food. We heard that they were giving aids somewhere. We were in a bad condition regarding food. We kept our souls alive with boiled corn" she says.

They found it difficult to hear children asking for bread, and they had nothing to give them. So SHE and her sister, along with her children and a group of other women, set out

on their way to a place where they heard they were providing food aid.

“Prior to arriving at the place for aid, some policemen stopped us and ordered us to board a truck. They grabbed us by the arm and forced us into it. They left some older women and children” she says.

She didn't dare to think she was expecting another rape. The wounds on her body had not yet healed from the previous sorrows. The memory of those sorrows was still fresh, though hunger was overcoming pain.

The truck was moving, her eyes were seeing black... her breath would stop. Thoughts separated... she thought about how to escape, what to do, where to go... she would look up at those men in uniforms and faces colored while guarding other women riding in the truck.

“It didn't last long, and they stopped the truck. They took us down, and there they dragged me away from my sister. I was sent to a room with no door, no windows” she says.

At the door they waited for her with a glass and she had to drink it. SHE refused, but got hit on the head from behind. She swallowed it and her tongue tasted the bitterness of that liquid.

She had never tasted anything like this before. She didn't know what it was, why they were giving it to her. Her head was boiling with evil thoughts. Her teeth chattering from fear and from trembling.

From the room where she was taken she heard women screaming. She was searching for the voice of her sister, which she never saw until the war was over, on each of those screams.

But, it didn't take her long to hear the screams of other women, because they made her start with the screams. The three criminals ripped her clothes by hand...

"I started screaming. One of them placed a hand on my mouth. They shoved me to the ground, and they both started biting me... until they left me for dead" she says.

She does not remember what happened next, because she was unconscious from the pains.

"When I came up, I saw some unknown women around me. I knew only one of them, my cousin. They have told me that someone had brought me there. Whereas, I had bloody clothes on" she says.

She stayed there until the end of the war. She couldn't even get up to the door of that house. The women who were there had taken care of her. She couldn't even sit.

"I couldn't even sit down. It seemed to me that I would never recover. I had a craving to stand up, I had been in bed for months" she says.

She had confessed all of her suffering to the women, but begged them not to spread her story. How many sleepless nights she had spent, trying to heal her wounds, thinking how she would tell her husband. She was afraid of his reaction, she was afraid that after all that horror, he would abandon her, and remain without him.

But he has been very supportive, he helped her overcome her body aches, had coped with her habits, her fears. Today, SHE is still afraid of the mountain, because in her mind the trees turn into people who do not stop chasing after her. They look like criminals who are ready to start the chase until they choke her...

But the traumas have significantly eased since she received professional treatment. SHE no longer speaks only of rape, only of bad dreams, only of the mountain and the bloodshed. She has changed them with conversations about life, work, friends, and the family she created.

XXV.

During the years of 1988-1999, many owners from the city had opened the doors of their homes to refugees fleeing the villages as a result of the fighting. There was the conviction that in cities, Serbian soldiers, policemen and paramilitaries would not raid homes and kill innocent civilians as they did in the villages.

Therefore, large numbers of villagers who felt threatened to stay in their homes were forced to seek refuge in the city.

She and her husband have been sheltering nearly 40 refugees for months. But that night, April 13th 1999, shortly after 10:30 pm, the paramilitaries, in black uniforms, entered their home. It seemed that they had been informed that one of the houses was where the refugees were being sheltered.

All the residents had left quickly, through the other entrance of the house, through a secret door in the basement, which connected both entrances. SHE was left alone with her

youngest daughter, who had just turned 13. She was a mother of five, she had three sons and two daughters.

“We had a big house with two entrances one was ours the other was my brother’s-in-law. They had entered through our door. There were four people who came inside. They smelled very bad and they started asking for money” she says.

Holding her daughter by the hand, she tried to answer the questions they asked her, where her husband was, was there any money...

SHE spoke Serbian well. She answered in their language. But suddenly they grabbed her by the hand. SHE was stunned when she saw that her daughter, so young, still a child, was in danger.

“They pulled my 13-year-old little girl from my hands. Trying to protect her, I told them to let my daughter go and I will give you money. I told the girl to go and get the money” she says.

They told her to take "the big money, not the small money". As if they wanted to convince her that the girl would bring them the money, and then she could save her daughter.

The girl was not coming, because other family members had not allowed her to return.

The criminals did not wait long they noticed that the girl had escaped, so they attacked her mother, who was about 55 years old.

“I tried to speak in their own language so they wouldn't get outraged, but one of them pushed me forward, pointing a machine gun at me. He sent me to the bedroom. The other was holding a large lamp in his hand pointing at my eyes, and the others were on guard” she says.

As she entered the room, the one who pushed her to walk began to hit her. He tore her body clothes and prepared to rape her. She moved away, and opened the door of the balcony. She was pushing back ready to jump from the balcony.

"I wanted to commit suicide. I would rather die than let them do what they did to me. But, from below, one of the criminals shouted: Grab her, she wants to die. I didn't know they were even guarding from under the house" says SHE.

They were outraged. They stripped and raped her one by one, at her home, in her bedroom, where she had endlessly waited for the day's dawn near her husband, with whom she had five children. There, SHE and her husband were expecting to get old together.

She was terrified, unable to believe that at that age, such a thing was happening to her. She wanted to think that she was having a bad dream, from which she had to wake up as soon as possible.

"My throat was dry from screaming. I told them you must be ashamed what you are doing with me, an old woman. But they continued. Each of them playing with my body. They raped me..." she says.

They continued until they left her for dead. Then, they had moved to the other side of the house, with big lamps on their hands, waiting for someone to move. Waiting for other victims. In the meantime, SHE managed to leave her home through the balcony door.

"I was naked, without shoes, and I moved into a house right next to our house. I knocked on the door, but I saw that the house was also full of paramilitaries" she says.

She was very scared when she saw them. Her body couldn't stand any longer, she could not escape further. She entered the dog house of her neighbor. And from there, frightened, she saw that she could hide under the stairs behind the many woods which were arranged side by side in the space next to the stairs.

"I removed some of the wood, and hid behind them. I don't know how long I stayed there, two maybe three hours, and then I lost consciousness" she says.

Her husband and brother-in-law had found her unconscious hiding there. They had found her naked, terrified. She felt ashamed to see that they too had known what had happened to her. She wished they had better find her dead. She remained speechless, she was hiding, as if she wished to prevent them from seeing her half naked. But they had told her that they were glad to find her alive. They wrapped her with their clothes. They took her on their arms, but they did not return home.

They sought refuge to a relative who lived a little further in the city. There, she cleaned her body, but not her shame. She was at fault for being a woman, why she couldn't run away, why she let them rape her! How often in life did she ask herself these questions? Endless times!

Two days later, she and her family left for Durres. Her health and psychological condition was deteriorating.

"We were placed in a German camp. The doctors treated me there because I was in a very serious psychological distress" she says.

She returned home on July 1st 1999, but her condition was not improving.

"When I came back, I threw away all of my clothes. I didn't want anything. It was very difficult for me to go back to life and to live again in that house where I experienced that horror" she says.

Since then, SHE has suffered traumas that have brought her illness. Although her family knew she was raped, she had never told the whole story to them and anyone else. It was difficult to speak of that horror, which was slowly destroying her. So far, after receiving professional treatment, she has opened her heart and talks freely about her experiences. This has helped her realize that she must feel proud that she protected her family that night, that she is a living heroine. This has helped her feel at ease and love life again, as she once did.

BIOGRAPHY



Salie Gajtani-Osmankaq is from Prishtina. She has completed her education in Prishtina, from elementary to university studies. She completed her studies in Albanian Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina. She graduated from the Prishtina Institute of Political Studies as well as Pedagogical

Studies of Bachelor and Master Degree.

During 1999-2001, she worked as a teacher of Albanian language and literature in the schools of Prishtina, at the same time she also started her career as a journalist. She has been working as a journalist for 20 years at the media company "KOHA Group". During this time, she was engaged as a collaborator on projects with various local and international organizations, such as the EU and OSCE. She attended various research seminars and conferences at home and abroad, as participant in various roundtables, as presenter and analyst, where various topics related to developments in Kosovo were discussed and analyzed.

She is the winner of four prestigious awards in the field of journalism, such as: the Award by the UNDP for "the Best Confession against Corruption" for the year 2008, the Award by the UNDP for "the Most Successful Women in the Media" for the year 2008, with cross-regional character, the Award of German GIZ for Education for the years 2015 and 2017. She is co-author of the academic book "Pedagogy, this Educational Polyphony".

She currently lives in Nairobi, Kenya, together with her family, husband and three girls.

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