



Kvinna till Kvinna

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**Civil Rights Defenders and Kvinna till Kvinna condemn death threat against human rights defender**

Civil Rights Defenders and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation express our deep concerns and strongly condemn the death threat against Ms. Nazlie Bala, a well respected Kosovo human rights defender. We call upon the responsible Kosovo institutions to take all necessary and appropriate measures to ensure protection of human rights defenders in line with their international and domestic obligations to protect and fulfill human rights. We also call upon Kosovo police and State prosecutor to act accordingly and immediately investigate the threat against Ms. Bala.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Ms Nazlie Bala found a note left on the door of her apartment in central Pristina containing a threat from an anonymous person. “Do not protect the shame. Otherwise we will kill you”, was the message. The threat is assumedly a reaction to her appearance on the public TV show “In Search” on 18<sup>th</sup> March, where Ms Bala expressed her support to an amendment to the “Law on the status and the rights of the martyrs, invalids, veterans, members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, civilian victims of war and their families”. Giving victims of sexual violence during the conflict in Kosovo the status and right to financial support, the important amendment fills a gap in the Kosovo legislation.

Even though it is known that sexual violence was used as a weapon of war during the Kosovo conflict in 1998 to 1999 the victims have still not been recognised on equal terms as other civilian victims of war. We would like to underline that conflict-related sexual violence has received considerable international recognition, amongst it through the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1820 on sexual violence against civilians in conflicts which states that rape can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, and a constitutive act of genocide.

It is not enough to condemn such a worrisome occurrence. A threat to a human rights defender, who protects rights of others, is a threat to democracy. Concrete measures are necessary not only to bring to justice the perpetrators of these threats, but also should be a message of what this society stands for: protection of human rights and equal rights for all.

Robert Hårdh, Executive Director, Civil Rights Defenders

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*Civil Rights Defenders and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation are non-profit organizations without political affiliation. Both have long experience of supporting human rights issues in Kosovo and internationally.*