



INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE

# GENDER AND PEACE IN THE BALKANS: CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD

(SARAJEVO, 25–27 FEBRUARY 2025)

# INTRODUCTION

In a time when militant patriarchal systems are strengthening globally, we are witnessing an increasingly aggressive rise of anti-gender movements, the limitation of women's rights, and the shrinking space for feminist activism. Attacks on reproductive rights, academic freedom, and the human rights of marginalized groups are becoming more frequent, while post-conflict regions, such as the Balkans, are particularly vulnerable to these regressive trends. At the same time, feminist movements continue to resist, building solidarity networks and advocating for sustainable peace that includes gender justice. In this context, it is crucial not only to critically reassess the lessons learned from the past but also to articulate concrete strategies to protect and advance the hard-won freedoms and rights.

The conference *Gender and Peace in the Balkans: Charting the Way Forward* brings together academic researchers, activists, and policymakers from the region and beyond to collectively analyze the role of patriarchal structures in perpetuating violence and explore feminist approaches to building a just and sustainable peace. Through panel discussions, participants will critically examine militarized narratives of war and peace, analyze intersectional forms of oppression, and map strategies for feminist resistance and solidarity.

This event is not just a reflection on the past but a call to action. Through feminist visions of transitional justice, memory politics, and global solidarity, the *Gender and Peace in the Balkans: Charting the Way Forward* conference seeks to strengthen networks and initiatives that empower marginalized voices and build an inclusive future.

Join us in Sarajevo from February 25–27, 2025, and be part of the conversation about feminist pathways to peace and equality.



### Location:

Hotel Hollywood, Dr. Mustafe Pintola 23, 71 210 Ilidža  
(Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Location Map: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ysXKjNgge5MhJkSo8>



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### CONFERENCE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Zilka Spahić Šiljak, PhD, TPO Foundation

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Jasmina Husanović, PhD, Faculty of Philosophy UNTZ

Damir Arsenijević, PhD, Faculty of Philosophy UNTZ

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Rebeka Anić, PhD, Institute for Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

Biljana Kašić, PhD, Center for Women's Studies

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**ARRIVAL: FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

**FIRST DAY: February 25, 2025**

11:00–11:30 OPENING REMARKS

11:30–13:00 **PANEL 1. (Dis)continuities of Patriarchal Violence**

- Biljana Kašić: *Prospects and Fears of Feminist Peacebuilding*
- Damir Arsenijević and Jasmina Husanović Pehar: *Femicide and the Logic of Antisociality in Bosnia and Herzegovina Today: The War Against the Reproduction of Life*
- Renata Jambrešić and Vesna Janković: *The Uncomfortable Legacy of Anti-War Politics: Croatian Feminists in the 1990s and Today*  
(Moderation: Jasna Kovačević)

13:00–14:30 LUNCH

14:30–16:00 Keynote Speaker

- Nerzuk Ćurak: *The Rise of Militant Patriarchy and Feminist Responsibility for Peace*

16:00–16:30 BREAK

16:30–17:30 **PANEL 2. Anti-Gender Discourses and Politics**

- Jadranka Rebeka Anić: *"Revolution of Common Sense" or the Tragedy of "Intellectual Arrogance"? Populist-Political Manipulations of Gender Concepts*
- Daniela Antonovska: *The impact of anti-gender movements in North Macedonia on gender equality and peace*
- Željko Šarić: *Patriarchy as an Evolutionary Mistake? Evolution Theory, Violence, and the Rise of Domination*
- Dragana Pejović: *Do You Agree to Be Taken Back to the Past?*  
(Moderation: Zilka Spahić Šiljak)

19:00 DINNER

## SECOND DAY: February 26, 2025

### 9:00–10:30 **PANEL 3. Literary and Artistic Resistances to Patriarchy and Heteronormativity**

- Edisa Gazetić: *Patriarchy in Regression: Anti-Gender Ideology on Social Media and in Women's Literary Discourse*
- Tanja Antić: *Queer Linguistics of Peace in the Balkan (Post)Conflict Context*
- Marjana Stevanović: *Populism in the Discourse of Language Policy in Serbia*
- Adem Olovčić and Sara Arslanagić: *Beyond the Binary: LGBTQI+ Activism, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Intersectional Feminism in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Post-War Reconstruction*  
(Moderation: Medina Mujić)

10:30–11:00 BREAK

### 11:00–12:30 **PANEL 4. Stories of Resistance and Women's Peace Activism**

- Linda Gusia: *Solidarity and Resistance – Women's Movement in Kosovo*
- Draga Gajić: *Women's Peace Activism and Feminist Foreign Policy – Convergences and Divergences*
- Alenka Verbole and Igor Gaon: *Where are the women and why they are so few? Insights into women's leadership in negotiating peace and rebuilding communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*
- Ana Raffai: *Populism, Our Everyday and the Miracle of Nonviolent Resistance*  
(Moderation: Tatjana Perić)

12:30–13:30 Keynote Speaker

- Aida A. Hozić: *War Economy: feminist perspective*

13:30–15:00 Lunch

### 15:00–16:30 **PANEL 5. Trauma and Protection Mechanisms**

- Irena Praskač Salčin, Elma Huruz, Selma Ćosić: *Gender Dimensions of Violence and the Construction of Protection Systems from Violence Against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- Sabiha Husić: *Feminist Approaches to Recovery from Trauma (Healing) and Community Support*
- Maja Savanović Zorić: *Feminist Approaches to Healing Trauma and Community Support*
- Ružica Ljubičić: *Erasing the Stigmatization of Women in Media Discourse: Strategies of Digital Activism in the Process of Recovery from War Trauma*  
(Moderation: Željko Šarić)

16:30–17:00 BREAK

17:00–18:00 **PERFORMANCE** *Feminist Bodies*

19:00 DINNER

### THIRD DAY: February 27, 2025

#### 9:00–10:30 **PANEL 6. Memory Politics and Lessons from the Past**

- Vildana Džekman: *Feminist Critiques of Transitional Justice and Memory Politics: Confronting Patriarchal Commemoration of Wars and Erasing Women's Contributions*
- Amila Ždralović: *From the 'Women's Constitution' to Gender Justice?*
- Svetlana Janković: *Commemorating Wars Through the Lens of Patriarchy*
- Goran Božićević: *Where Did We Go Wrong?*
- Tatjana Perić: *Through the Lens of Postcolonial Feminism: The Position of Romani Women in the Political Obligations of OSCE Participating States*  
(Moderation: Adem Olovčić)

10:30–11:00 BREAK

#### 11:00–13:00 **PANEL 7. Ecumenical and Interfaith Feminist Approaches to Peace**

- Zilka Spahić Šiljak: *Feminist inter-faith approaches to peacebuilding*
- Ankica Dragin: *Ecumenical Approaches for Peacebuilding – Experiences of Women from Vojvodina*
- Margareta Bašaragin: *Gender and Peace: Research Findings in "Women's Studies and Research" (1998–2025)*
- Elma Softić Kaunitz: *How to Write About Women*
- Amra Pandžo: *The Female Image of God*  
(Moderation: Vildana Džekman)

13:00–14:00 LUNCH

#### 14:00–15:30 **PANEL 8. Charting the Way Forward (Plenary Discussion)**

(Moderation: Ana Raffai)

15:30–16:00 BREAK

16:00–17:00 Keynote Speaker

- Cynthia Enloe: *A Feminist Lense Enables Us to See Peace more Clearly*

17:00–18:00 Conclusions and Closing Remarks

DINNER

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Aida A. Hozic** is an associate professor of international relations at the University of Florida in Gainesville, United States. Her research lies at the intersection of feminist political economy, cultural studies, and international security. Her current project is titled *Follow the Bodies: Feminist Political Economy of War and Peace*. She is the author of *Hollyworld: Space, Power and Fantasy in the American Economy* (Cornell University Press, 2002), co-editor (with Jacqui True) of *Scandalous Economics: Gender and Politics of Financial Crises* (Oxford University Press, 2016), and has written dozens of peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. Her work has been supported by the John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation, IREX, the Institute for Turkish Studies, the Open Society Institute, and she has received several Fulbright awards and other fellowships. She is currently a co-editor of *Review of International Political Economy* and a rotating editor of *International Political Sociology*. Her public writings have been published in media outlets such as Slate, Foreign Policy, Politico, Al Jazeera, Le Monde, Guernica, and others. In the spring of 2024, she will be a distinguished scholar of political and international relations at Pembroke College, University of Oxford.



As a keynote speaker, she will present the work *War Economy: A Feminist Perspective*. The war in Ukraine and the prospect of war resurgent in other parts of Europe have prompted repeated calls for the development of a European “war economy.” A war economy is typically understood as a state-supported subordination of the economy to military needs. Historically, it has been praised for its ability to generate political consensus and mobilize resources but also criticized as a deviation from market forces. Less visible, but equally important, the war economy is known for transforming gender relations, though not always in the same way: it may pull women into defense production or relegate them to household labor and the informal economy to make room for men. Moreover, feminist perspectives on war are much broader than conventional ones and regard the war economy as having far-reaching implications beyond the production of weapons and ammunition, including, for example, the humanitarian industry, the care economy, and the militarization of everyday life. As there are currently no discussions in Europe about how a new war economy might affect already existing significant threats to gender equality and feminist politics, this presentation will address the often-neglected gender aspects of the war economy in its various forms. Feminist international political economy can create opportunities for broader conversations that would allow women and feminist activists to shape the war economy rather than be marginalized or instrumentalized, as has often been the case in recent conflicts and post-conflict recovery programs.



**Cynthia Enloe** is a research professor in the Department of Sustainability and Social Justice, with an associated role in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies and Political Science, at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Her career includes Fulbright fellowships in Malaysia and Guyana, visiting professorships in Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Iceland, as well as a visiting professorship in gender studies at the University of Cambridge, UK. She has lectured in Sweden, Norway, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Chile, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Austria, Finland, Ukraine, and at universities across the United States. Her works have been translated into Ukrainian, Spanish, Turkish, French, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Swedish, Czech, Icelandic, Finnish, German, and Chinese. She has published in *Ms. Magazine* and *The Village Voice* and appeared on National Public Radio, Al Jazeera, C-SPAN, and the BBC. Professor Enloe is the author of fifteen books, including *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (2000), *The Curious Feminist* (2004), *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (2010), *The Real State of America: Mapping the Myths and Truths about the United States* (co-authored with Joni Seager; 2011, revised 2014), *Seriously! Investigating Crashes and Crises as if Women Mattered* (2013). Her thoroughly updated edition of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* was published by the University of California Press in 2014. Her updated edition of *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* was published in English and French in 2016, and in Spanish in 2022. Her book *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging Persistent Patriarchy* was published in English, Japanese, and Spanish (originally: Myriad Editions, UK; University of California Press, US, 2017).



As a keynote speaker, she will present the work *A Feminist Lens Enables Us to See Peace More Clearly*. Feminist analysis brings research from any sphere in which gender is present – family, media, ethnicity, trade, violence, state – with a clear curiosity about power, overt power, and nearly invisible power. For all of us in this dangerously gender-shaped time, we need to be fully equipped with the skills to analyze what it takes to create and sustain peace—and those who undermine it. This means we must be equipped for feminist, explicitly gender-smart research on the ways in which civil trust, public participation, fairness, mutual respect, empathy, and accountability are created and perpetuated. At the same time, it means we must be able to conduct feminist, explicitly gender-smart research on patriarchy, misogyny, the spreading of fear, secrecy, exclusion, division, militarism, hierarchy, intimidation, and, of course, the use of force. Each of these spheres depends on how femininity and masculinity operate in specific ways that either stop and widely distribute power or, conversely, privilege and concentrate power. Today, more than ever, we need to know what these ways are. The everyday lives of women and men in different Balkan societies are now shaped by ideas and practices of power that are gender-infused. Do they maintain the dynamics of real peace, or do they undermine it?

**Nerzuk Ćurak** is a doctor of political science and a professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. He is an essayist, scientific publicist, journalist, columnist, editor, public intellectual, peace, and civil rights activist. He is the author of the books *Geopolitics as Destiny: The Case of Bosnia: A Postmodernist Essay on a Peripheral Country* (2002); *Dayton Nationalism* (2004); *Rebuilding Bosnian Utopias: Political Science, Political Philosophy, and Sociology of the Dayton State and Society* (2006); *Philosophy of the Hug* (2009); *Report from a Peripheral Country: Grammar of Geopolitics* (2011); *Debate on Peace and Violence: (Geo)Politics of War – (Geo)Politics of Peace – Peace Studies* (2016); *From Eros to Polemos: Conversations* (2018); *Why Bosnia and Not Nothing* (2021). He is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ANUBiH) and a member of the PEN Center of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the non-governmental organization Step by Step Educational Initiatives Center, which promotes fair and inclusive education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.



As a keynote speaker, Professor Ćurak will present the work *The Rise of Militant Patriarchy and Feminist Responsibility for Peace*. New governance methods affirm authoritarian and totalitarian practices of oriental despotisms on one hand, and, on the other, a disturbing retreat of liberalism and the set of values generated by it. The era of extremes is radicalizing to the point of breaking. The level of human rights, after an epic, decades-long struggle for gender equality and the general equality of all vulnerable groups, is being annulled, both within national policies and cultures and within the international order. Following the path of the great Greek poet Konstantin Kavafis, responsible humanist thinkers, particularly sensitized to recognize the masculinized militaristic codes that announce the regression of the world and global pauperization, are called to recognize the diabolization of the world on the horizon of radical negative transformation of the achieved level of universal emancipation, while on the streets outside, the people hear nothing.

# SPEAKERS

**Biljana Kašić** is a feminist and postcolonial theorist as well as a peace activist. She is one of the lecturers and co-founders of the Center for Women's Studies in Zagreb. Before retiring, she taught as a professor at the University of Zadar and various universities around the world. Her areas of academic interest include feminist studies, postcolonial theory, women's culture of resistance, and the ethics of nonviolence. She is the co-author and editor of numerous books and studies published in Croatian and other languages, including *Feminist Trans/Formations: Media, Art, Literature*, ed. et al., 2024; *Soggetti itineranti. Donne alla ricerca del sé*, 2013; *Critical Interventions: Thinking Heritage, Decolonising, Crossings*, ed. et al., 2013; *Teaching Subjects in Between: Feminist Politics, Disciplines, Generations*, 2006; *Gyné politiké ili o političkoj građanki*, 2004; *Žene i politika mira. Prilozi ženskoj kulturi otpora*, 1997, and others. She is the co-director of the international postgraduate seminar "Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective" at the Inter-University Center Dubrovnik; a member of the international editorial board of the *Materia Postcoloniale* series at the Università degli studi di Napoli Orientale; and collaborates with several feminist and critical portals both nationally and internationally. She has initiated a number of peace activities in Croatia and beyond.

Biljana Kašić will present the paper "Challenges and Concerns of Feminist Peace Politics". Who is considered a human being and who has ownership over the distribution of vulnerability when violence is concerned (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013), and to what extent does human destructiveness, through the production of a "landscape of fear" (Oslender, 2004), the legitimization of crimes, and "social death" on a global level, distort the possibility of peace? These are questions that, especially today, complicate feminist peace politics. Any critical approach to articulating these questions requires feminists to address ontological issues related to the particularity of female, i.e. gender subjectivity in the context of war-related violence, necessarily reflecting on these issues in connection with the "non-ethics of war" (Maldonado-Torres, 2008) and the destructive oppressive structures and powers of its global actors. At the same time, keeping in mind contemporary feminist debates and concerns regarding peace and nonviolence in relation to the war in Ukraine (Dutchak, 2022; Zhrebkina, 2023; Tlostanova, 2022; Kašić, 2024) and the war in Palestine (Deutsch, 2011; Ahmed and Bahar, 2023; Alasah, 2024), the paper will address three key questions for feminist peace politics. The first question concerns the necessary positioning towards (re)militarization and its masculine-colonial-capitalist anchoring; the second questions the politics of nonviolence (Butler, 2009) in a vibrant connection with the social imaginary of peace; and the third, following historical milestones and female-feminist support (Kašić, 1997; Talpade Mohanty, 2003), reawakens the concept of transnational feminist solidarity as a foundation for feminist action and responsibility. Acts of resistance to violence, enacted repeatedly in our regions and globally, despite risks and impossibilities, are constituent parts of the ethical authorization of the feminist subject that binds us.

**Jasmina Husanović** is a full professor of cultural and gender studies at the University of Tuzla, a feminist theorist, and activist. Her research encompasses politics of equality and solidarity, the management of life and the culture of trauma, as well as emancipatory politics with a focus on critical pedagogies in art, academia, and activism. She is one of the founders of the collective platforms EKO FEM BiH, the Workers' University, and Yugoslav Studies. Her books include *Između traume, imaginacije i nade: Kritički eseji o kulturnoj produkciji* (Fabrika knjiga, 2010) and *Culture, Community and Activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Emancipatory Trajectories* (Offset, 2020), as well as numerous co-authored international and domestic scientific publications. She is the coordinator of the Gender Equality Council at the University of Tuzla.

**Damir Arsenijević** is a full professor of literature and culture at the University of Tuzla, a psychoanalyst in training, and actively works at the intersection of academia, activism, and art. His research focuses on how international peace processes and transitional justice mechanisms have created political, social, and ecological devastation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2019, he founded the platform *Zemlja – Voda – Zrak* for environmental humanities. His books include *Forgotten Future: The Politics of Poetry in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Nomos Verlag, 2010) and *Unbribeable Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Fight for the Commons* (Nomos, 2014), as well as numerous co-authored international and domestic scientific publications. He is currently working on the manuscript of a book titled *Poisoned by Peace*.

In their paper "Femicide and the Logic of Antisociality in Bosnia and Herzegovina Today: The War Against the Reproduction of Life", Husanović and Arsenijević set theoretical coordinates for analyzing the killing of women not as femicide, but as feminicide – an extension of war-related gender-based violence normalized in the post-war period. The term "feminicide," used by Latin American activists and scholars, refers to the intentional killing of women as a means of social or political control, which occurs in societies where women's lives are undervalued and in which state actors, armed groups, or individuals are involved. Bosnia and Herzegovina represents an example of the "capitalism of horror" within the European periphery, marked by colonialism, classism, racism, necropolitics, economic and existential insecurity, neoliberal ideals, and fake news. This perspective, combined with Nancy Fraser's concept of "cannibalistic capitalism", requires a reevaluation of feminicide, placing it at the crossroads of gender and class, which potentially enables the articulation of resistance to this violence.

**Vesna Janković** is a sociologist and activist. She has participated in the initiation of several civil initiatives: Svarun (1986), the Croatian Anti-War Campaign (1991), the Women's War Victims Center (1993), the Autonomous Cultural Factory – Attack (1997), the Initiative for a Public Orchard at Jarun (2022), and the Ad Hoc Feminist Anti-War Coalition (2023). She was the longtime editor-in-chief of ARKzin, the magazine of the Anti-War Campaign. She has co-edited books such as *War and Human Rights* (1993), *Women Shape Economy and Politics* (2002), *Women Recollecting Memories* (bilingual, English-Croatian edition) (2003), *Anti-War Campaign 1991–2011: Untold History* (2011), and *Resisting the Evil: [Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Contention* (2012), along with the expanded domestic edition *Resisting Evil: [Post]Yugoslav Anti-War Engagement* (2015). She occasionally writes for the independent media portal H-alter and manages the Facebook pages of the Initiative for a Public Orchard at Jarun and the Ad Hoc Feminist Anti-War Coalition.

**Renata Jambrešić Kirin** is a scientific advisor at the Institute for Ethnology and Folkloristics, a collaborator at the Center for Women's Studies in Zagreb, and co-director of the postgraduate seminar *Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective* (IUC, Dubrovnik 2007–2025). She has published books *Home and the World: On Women's Culture of Memory* (2008) and *Camphor Covers* (2015), and co-edited fifteen volumes, including seven within the *Feminisms in a Transnational Perspective* publishing series. Her scientific and professional work in the fields of war ethnography, war and refugee memory, feminist anthropology, and women's history has been published in both domestic and international journals and publications. She is a member of the Ad hoc Feminist Anti-War Coalition.

Janković and Jambrešić Kirin present their joint work *"The Uneasy Legacy of Anti-War Politics: Croatian Feminists in the 1990s and Today."* The political articulation of feminist anti-war engagement, as well as the organizational and ideological divisions that followed, were guided by the complex social constellation in which women's/feminist and anti-war groups operated. Primarily, it concerns the ambivalent and contradictory socio-political matrix of the Croatian state, which underwent multiple processes of "transition," and was both a victim of aggression and an aggressor against the neighboring state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its citizens exposed to nationalist ideologization, economic and state violence, as well as war destruction. Some Croatian feminists took a consistent anti-war stance, which included condemning nationalism, militarization of society, and questioning the responsibility of "their" state for the war. This position became the basis not only for epistemological reflection, organizational growth, and expansion but also for a fruitful process of articulating a new feminist political subject, partially facilitated by new information-communication technologies.

**Jasna Kovačević** is an associate professor of management and organization at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Sarajevo. Her research area includes leadership and strategy, leadership in education, and ethics in organizations, with a special emphasis on gender and leadership, the development of inclusive organizational culture, social justice, diversity, equality, and inclusion. She is also interested in social psychology theories and their application in the study of leadership, gender, and ethics. Her work has been published in leading journals in the field of educational research, such as *Review of Educational Research*, as well as in key journals for educational administration, including *Journal of Educational Administration*, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, and *The Journal of Educational Change*. In addition to her academic work, Professor Kovačević works as an independent consultant, collaborating on projects with prominent organizations, including the Regional Cooperation Council, the European Commission, OSCE, USAID, UNDP, UNESCO, and IOM, as well as local and regional NGOs on projects focused on inclusive leadership, human rights in the workplace, gender discrimination, gender-based violence, and social cohesion. She is also a certified UNDP gender advisor for the Gender Equality Seal in the private sector. In this context, she collaborates with private sector companies on conducting organizational diagnostics and integrating gender perspectives into organizational policies, practices, and structures. Dr. Kovačević is a feminist and an advocate for the rights of children and adults with disabilities. During the conference, she will moderate the panel “(Dis)continuities of Patriarchal Violence.”

**Jadranka S. Rebeka Anić**, a school nurse and Franciscan, is a scientific advisor at the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences – Split Regional Center. She earned her PhD from the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna. As an external associate, she has lectured in the Master's program in Religious Studies at the University of Sarajevo, the Department of Sociology at the University of Zadar, the Theological Faculty Matija Vlačić Ilirik in Zagreb, and the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Split. She was a member of the board of the European Society of Women in Theological Research (ESWTR) and served as president and vice president of the Croatian section of ESWTR. Her research focuses on topics in theological anthropology from a gender perspective and social issues from a feminist-theological point of view. In 2017, the Herbert Haag Foundation for Freedom in the Church awarded her a research prize for her work on the anti-gender movement. Since 2021, she has been the co-director of the online school *Feminism and Religion* (FER School). A list of her published works can be seen at: <https://www.croris.hr/osobe/profil/372>.

Jadranka Rebeka Anić will present her paper *"'Revolution of Common Sense' or the Tragedy of 'Intellectual Arrogance'? Political Manipulations of the Gender Concept,"* aiming to present clearly defined and hidden anti-gender content that appears not only among (extreme) right-wing groups but also other political options and some feminists. The thesis is that anti-gender arguments are not based on common sense but on the arrogance of ignorance. Political science, sociology, and other scientific research that could provide insights into the contemporary political, economic, social, and other factors leading to conflicts, insecurity, unemployment, poverty, exclusion, etc., are ignored. In defending natural binary sex, violence is committed against nature by denying bodies that exist in nature but do not fit into the binary framework. While nominally acknowledging that God is above humans, the factual role of God is taken over, and with political will, it is decided which bodies can be human and which cannot.

**Daniela Antonovska** graduated from the Faculty of Philology in Skopje and completed postgraduate studies in gender studies at the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities. Since 2001, she has been actively promoting gender equality and empowering women in various national and international organizations in the country. She served three consecutive terms as a member of the Board of Directors of the European Women's Lobby. She is also an alumna of the Euro Balkans Gender and Feminist Studies Program, the Mother Teresa School of Public Policy, and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) program of the Peacebuilding Agency. She is the author of two books available online and has published numerous scientific articles, analyses, research, and columns on various topics in English and Macedonian. Her main interests include gender equality, human rights, women, peace, and security, as well as the gender perspective in various fields. She is the president of the NGO Ekvallitiko.

In her presentation titled "The Impact of the Anti-Gender Movements in North Macedonia on Gender Equality and Peace," Daniela Antonovska will discuss the impact of anti-gender movements in North Macedonia on gender equality and peace. She will analyze their development from sporadic attacks on women's and LGBT+ rights to organized coalitions supported by right-wing and pro-Kremlin actors. She will particularly focus on the narratives used by these movements, including the manipulation of gender equality terminology and the spreading of misinformation through media campaigns. Additionally, she will explore how these initiatives have weakened the implementation of the international Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, creating obstacles to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 at the local level. Through her presentation, Antonovska will highlight the growing threats to the rights of women and marginalized groups, emphasizing the need for strategic responses, strengthening alliances within the community, public education, and political advocacy to counter polarization and the erosion of democratic values.



**Željko Šarić** is an assistant professor in the Philosophy Department at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Banja Luka. He conducts research in the fields of existential philosophy, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of evolution, and philosophical posthumanism. He has edited the collections *Critical Theory of Society* and *The Holocaust and Theology*. He has participated in several international scientific projects, such as *Sciences of the Origin* and *Biopolitical Aspects of Institutional Action*. He is the founder and president of the Association for Philosophy and Social Thought from Banja Luka, which has organized several philosophical conferences and published about twenty philosophical works. He has completed psychotherapeutic education in transactional analysis and attended various psychotherapeutic programs. He is a certified trainer in Philosophy for Children. He is also the organizer and coordinator of events such as *Fil(m)ozofija*, *Philosophical Evenings*, and *Socrates' Café*.

Željko Šarić will present his work titled "Patriarchy as an Evolutionary Mistake? Evolution Theory, Violence, and the Rise of Domination." This paper examines the challenging hypothesis that patriarchal structures, shaped by evolutionary pressures for resource control and reproduction, are simultaneously key to adaptation and the foundation for destructive patterns of aggression. Evolutionary biology and theory provide a rich framework for understanding the emergence of gender hierarchies, while an interdisciplinary approach illuminates their moral, sociological, and political significance. Starting with John Teehan's insights on the evolutionary foundations of moral norms and their connection to violence, the paper includes Patricia Adair Gowaty's insights on sexual selection and reproductive strategies that contributed to the reinforcement of domination. This analysis seeks to deepen the understanding of how hierarchical relationships have shaped human history, including war as an extreme form of group conflict. Patriarchy is analyzed not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as an evolutionary tool that allowed for a monopoly on reproductive resources, legitimized violence, and institutionalized war. The paper raises key questions: Is patriarchy truly an optimal adaptive strategy, or merely a byproduct of evolutionary processes that contributed to survival but at the expense of long-term social and ecological sustainability? How can evolutionary theory help uncover the links between domination and destruction, and can this uncovering open the way to new, more egalitarian models of society? This analysis offers not only a critical reassessment of the evolutionary foundations of patriarchal norms but also a call to reflect on how we can confront the legacy of violence and domination, opening space for the evolution of societies that value cooperation, equality, and peace.

**Dragana Pejović** (1980) completed her undergraduate and master's studies at the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad and her doctoral studies in 2020 at the University Center for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies and Research (UCIMSI), Gender Studies Center at the University of Novi Sad, defending her doctoral dissertation on the topic "Legal Status of Women in Prostitution in the Republic of Serbia." She has been practicing as a lawyer in Novi Sad since 2008 and is a member of the Vojvodina Bar Association. She publishes scientific and professional papers, as well as reviews, in national and international scientific and professional journals. She has published the book *Legal Status of Women in Prostitution in the Republic of Serbia*. Her interests include prostitution, particularly the status of women in prostitution, violence against women, and women's education. She is also involved as a lecturer in the higher education program *Women's Studies after 25 Years* organized by the Women's Studies and Research Association in Novi Sad.

In her presentation titled "Do You Agree to Be Taken Back to the Past?" Dragana Pejović will speak about the current status of women in Serbia, which is largely shaped by growing nationalism. At first glance, it may seem that the state, by adopting the Gender Equality Law, has enabled women in Serbia to free themselves from centuries-old patriarchal constraints. However, this seemingly optimistic picture conceals the obstruction of gender equality by the state itself, which continues to promote the most important role of women as mothers. The obstruction of the implementation of the Gender Equality Law, which prescribes measures for achieving and improving gender equality, alongside promoting the obligation of childbirth and the state's announcement that compulsory military service will be reintroduced, demonstrates that women in Serbia are deliberately kept in a subordinate position in the 21st century, with their rights and freedoms manipulated. The payment of allowances, which are presented as earnings, rather than achieving equality with men in areas such as labor, information and communication, defense and security, transport, energy, culture, public information, sports, etc., raises the question of whether women in Serbia accept being taken back to the past.

**Zilka Spahić Šiljak** is an associate professor of gender studies and academic director of the University Gender Resource Center at UNSA. She leads the Transcultural Psychosocial Educational Foundation (TPO) in Sarajevo and lectures as a visiting professor at the University of Zenica and the University of Roehampton in London. Her research interests lie at the intersection of gender, religion, education, and peacebuilding. Her publications include *The Balkans Labyrinth: Culture, Gender, and Leadership* (2021), *Sociology of Gender – Feminist Critique* (2019), *The Shine of Humanity: Life Stories of Peacemakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2014), *Questioning Feminist and Muslim Women’s Identities: Postsocialist Contexts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo* (2012), and *Women, Religion, and Politics* (2010).

During the conference, she will present her work “Feminist Inter-Faith Approaches to Peacebuilding.” Feminist interfaith approaches to peacebuilding combine the principles of gender equality and interfaith dialogue to address conflicts, promote reconciliation, and build a sustainable culture of peace. Key strategies of feminists in the Balkans have included ensuring the representation of secular and religious women from different religious communities who have jointly acted against various forms of discrimination. Their peacebuilding efforts began with practical fieldwork, which was later enriched with peacebuilding theories and effectively integrated into a whole that connects knowledge and experience, academic research, and activism. Their approaches to peacebuilding can be seen as a form of “practice-based knowledge,” where the practical realities of conflict and the dynamics of their communities shape their strategies and actions.

**Edisa Gazetić** was born in Tuzla. She completed her undergraduate studies in Bosnian language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla (1999), and later obtained her master's and doctoral degrees at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, earning the titles of Master and Doctor of Literary and Historical Sciences. She is employed as a full professor at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Zenica, teaching literature-related courses. Professionally, she is interested in researching the position of women in the South Slavic interliterary community, with a particular focus on Bosnian-Herzegovinian culture and literature. She has published three books and numerous papers on topics related to gender equality, violence against women, and other marginalized groups in patriarchal cultures.

Professor Gazetić will present the paper "Patriarchy in Regression: Anti-Gender Ideology on Social Media and in Female Literary Discourse." She will analyze how the beginning of the last millennium, likely due to retrograde global policies, has been the most suitable time for the spread of anti-gender propaganda, which today takes on various patterns and strategies but with the same goal: to diminish or completely strip women of their rights, reduce women to biological and nurturing roles, and, at the same time, marginalize all other minority gender groups, making them less visible and important in the public space. In this regard, perhaps the most dangerous phenomenon is what is happening on social media, especially targeting younger or the youngest (female) populations, such as the "Trad wives" trend on TikTok, which has millions of followers worldwide. This trend consists of video messages where young women demonstrate that the best choice for a woman is to be a homemaker, cooking, cleaning, raising children, and serving her husband. The tone of these messages is hypnotic, aimed at encouraging more young women to embrace traditional living, which also involves adopting this lifestyle. Besides social media, there is also female literary discourse or self-help books where certain authors, like Sara Sabri in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context, suggest that a woman's place is in the domestic sphere and that everything feminism has changed over the past century is against women. This (quasi)writer, like the "Trad wives" on TikTok, has numerous followers, and such an anti-feminist and anti-gender trend has become so dangerous that it demands the development of new feminist strategies that will seriously address the issue of anti-gender ideology and anti-feminist actions.

**Tanja Antić** is a doctoral student at the Department of Culture at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, where she researches contemporary social and cultural phenomena. Her areas of interest include topics such as identity, language, and love, with a particular focus on the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as folk and contemporary culture. She also explores mental health issues through the lens of cultural and social norms, analyzing its connection to contemporary identity politics and language practices.

At the conference, she will present the paper “Queer Linguistics of Peace in the Balkan (Post)Conflict Context.” The paper explores the intersection of queer theory, linguistics, and peace studies in the context of the Balkans, a region long marked by ethnic, religious, and political conflicts. Through the analysis of language practices and discourse, the paper focuses on how queer perspectives can contribute to understanding and building peace in (post)conflict societies. The author highlights that language is not just a tool for communication, but a powerful means of constructing social norms, identities, and power relations. In this sense, queer linguistics offers a critical framework for deconstructing heteronormative and binary structures that often reproduce violence and exclusion. The paper analyzes specific examples from the Balkan context, emphasizing how queer individuals and communities use language to challenge dominant narratives about war, nationalism, and reconciliation. Through case studies, the author demonstrates that queer linguistic practices can serve as tools for promoting more inclusive and selfless forms of collective memory, transcending ethnic and national divides. This perspective underscores the importance of recognizing the diversity and fluidity of identities in peacebuilding processes, thereby challenging traditional, homogenizing approaches. Ultimately, the paper points to the potential of queer linguistics to contribute to transformative changes in societies dealing with the aftermath of conflict. Through critical analysis of language and discourse, this approach opens up possibilities for redefining peace, not just as the absence of violence, but as an active process involving the acceptance of diversity, promoting equality, and building shared lives in difference. The paper calls for further research and application of queer linguistic approaches in peace studies, especially in regions like the Balkans, where issues of identity, memory, and reconciliation remain central.

**Marjana Stevanović** is a philologist, lecturer, and journalist. She graduated in South Slavic Philology from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, and then completed a Master's program in Gender Studies at ACIMSI, University of Novi Sad. She is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade, focusing on Media and Communication. Her research interests include language politics, gender and language, feminism, and human rights. She has published numerous articles on these topics in the daily newspaper *Danas*. She is the author of several academic papers, *The Dictionary of New Reality*, and co-author of the *Guide for the Use of Gender-Sensitive Language*, as well as the *Grammar of the Serbian Language for Seventh Grade*. She has been a speaker at numerous panels dedicated to gender-sensitive language and media reporting. As a member of the group *Journalists Against Violence*, she participated in analyzing media coverage of violence against women.

Marjana Stevanović will present the paper "Populism in the Discourse of Language Policy in Serbia." Populism as a style of communication is an integral part of political messages in media discourse, including those related to language policy. Language policy in Serbia, which developed independently after the dissolution of the Yugoslav language community, focuses primarily on three areas that have received the most media attention: the status of Cyrillic, language names in the region, and, in recent years, gender-sensitive language. The aim of the presentation is to show how linguists of traditional Serbian philology have addressed these topics, what views they have affirmed, and how these views have been conveyed by the media, based on an overview of media headlines published between 2002 and 2024 (a total of 57 texts in which language authorities, mostly from the daily newspapers *Politika* and *Večernje novosti*, have expressed their views). The paper shows that language policy in Serbia is highly nationalistic and strongly and exclusively links language to national identity, which is constantly threatened by non-Serbian entities. This situation aligns with the description of the political climate in post-communist and transitional societies, where right-wing populism is based on national homogenization and the continuous perception of threat from other nations or groups. Initially, the main enemies of the Serbian language and script were Croats, but after the adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2021, the leading role of the dangerous "other" has shifted to feminists advocating for the standardization of gender-sensitive language. Experts on the Serbian language, who guide language policy institutionally, most easily promote their views, wrapped in a populist narrative, through the channels of tabloid media.

**Sara Arslanagić** is a master's graduate in international relations and European studies. She is currently a second-year doctoral student at the International Burch University in the field of international relations and European studies. She is the only member from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Young Elected Politicians program at the European Committee of the Regions. She has worked as an assistant educator at QSI International School in Sarajevo and as a journalist at BIRN BiH. Currently, she serves as the vice president of the Municipal Council of Centar Sarajevo.

**Adem Olovčić** is a university professor in international relations and European studies, as well as a researcher dedicated to issues of identity, gender equality, and social justice. As an assistant professor at the International Burch University, he teaches the course "Gender Equality in Society" and actively contributes to strengthening gender-conscious discourse within the academic community. He has participated in numerous international training sessions and conferences dedicated to gender equality, including projects within the UNIGEM framework. As the coordinator of the Gender Advisory Board at the International Burch University, he actively participates in creating policies aimed at fostering a more inclusive academic environment. His engagement in education also includes mentoring students and organizing workshops on gender, feminism, and social inequalities. Through his academic and research work, he seeks to enhance awareness of gender issues and contribute to building a more just society.

At the conference, they will present their joint paper "Beyond the Binary: LGBTQI+ Activism, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Intersectional Feminism in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Post-War Reconstruction." This paper analyzes the application of intersectional feminist approaches in the post-war reconstruction process of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a special focus on challenging heteronormativity, hegemonic masculinity, and the exclusion of LGBTQI+ communities from peace initiatives. Despite the introduction of international frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality, structural and institutional barriers rooted in patriarchal norms continue to hinder the full inclusion of marginalized groups in post-conflict recovery efforts. The analysis highlights the contributions of LGBTQI+ activists and feminist organizations, including the Sarajevo Open Centre and the CURE Foundation, in advocating for legal and political reforms that foster greater inclusivity. It explores how heteronormative discourses shape national identity, reinforce traditional gender roles, and marginalize gender non-conforming identities within power structures and security sector reforms. Additionally, the presentation critically examines the persistence of hegemonic masculinity in post-war security institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, showing how exclusionary policies hinder the participation of women and LGBTQI+ people in decision-making processes. Drawing on case studies and comparative analyses of other post-conflict societies, the presentation provides a comprehensive assessment of the successes and challenges faced by grassroots movements in promoting inclusive peace and interethnic reconciliation. Findings underscore the need for the adoption of intersectional policies within governance frameworks, the improvement of representation in security institutions, and the strengthening of legal protections against discrimination.

**Linda Gusia** is a sociologist and feminist researcher, as well as the head of the Institute for Sociology at the University of Pristina. Her research interests cover topics such as gender, feminism, activism, space, social movements, memory, and violence. She is particularly focused on analyzing how gender and feminist engagement shape social dynamics and the issues of collective memory and spaces of resistance. As one of the co-founders of the gender studies and research program at the University of Pristina, she actively contributes to the development of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of gender and social justice.

Her paper “Solidarity and Resistance—Women’s Movement in Kosovo” seeks to provide insights into the discourses, strategies, and spaces of resistance that formed during the crisis and war in Kosovo. Through the depiction of the women’s movement in Kosovo, she aims to illustrate the potential of multiple solidarities for social transformation and the ways in which such mobilization is enabled in situations of pressure and violence. The production of feminist subjects went hand in hand with community activism, solidarity, political mobilization, and attempts at internationalizing peaceful resistance. Women who participated in the struggle and networked at the international level emerged from this process changed. The women’s movements in Kosovo, which became most visible during the 1990s, reveal the complexity of transformations under conditions of authoritarian regimes and systemic violence. In this attempt to organize feminist communities and regional and international connections, new spaces for the emergence of women were opened, allowing them to be politically active in ways they had not previously had the opportunity to experience. The production of feminist subjects accompanied community activism, solidarity, political mobilization, and efforts to internationalize peaceful resistance. Through the analysis of these practices, she explores the thread of feminist solidarity in the context of an authoritarian regime and violence. She also addresses the challenges of regional and international solidarity, as well as the challenges of practicing solidarity in a pluralistic register—beyond the need for unity and the homogenization of the nation in the struggle.



**Draga Gajić** was born in 1988 in Banja Luka. She graduated in political science as the top student at the Faculty of Political Science in Banja Luka, completed a master's degree in gender studies at the University of Novi Sad (ACIMSI), and a master's degree in political science at the Faculty of Political Science in Banja Luka. She also completed a master's course on Gender Equality in Nordic Countries at the University of Oslo (Norway). She is currently a student of interdisciplinary doctoral studies in social and humanistic sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. She is the author of five books and fifteen research papers. Her research focuses on the areas of gender-based violence, media reporting on gender-based violence, feminist foreign policy, and the intersection of gender, peace, and conflict.

Draga Gajić will present the paper "Women's Peace Activism and Feminist Foreign Policy—Intersections and Divergences." Many authors (Aggestam, True, 2024; Aggestam et al., 2024; Lunz, 2023; Foster, Markham, 2023) have written about feminist foreign policy, but what is missing from the existing literature is the context of the Western Balkans. No country in the Western Balkans has adopted a feminist foreign policy, yet every year, more countries worldwide adopt this form of foreign policy (from the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Argentina), which could, to some extent, influence the Western Balkans. The goal of this research is to present interpretations of feminist foreign policy from the perspectives of peace activists and feminists from the Western Balkans, to highlight points of intersection and divergence between women's peace activism and feminist foreign policy, and to draw lessons from countries with feminist foreign policies that can be applied to the Western Balkans context. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the study.

**Alenka Verbole** has more than 25 years of experience working in multicultural and multiethnic environments, primarily in intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and the Council of Europe (CoE), as well as in academic institutions. Her focus includes democratization, gender equality in the social, economic, and political spheres, conflict prevention and management, peacebuilding, negotiations and mediation, electoral reform, and elections. Dr. Verbole has significant experience in various contexts in the Western Balkans, North Africa, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, with a special emphasis on empowering women and promoting their participation in democratic processes. Alenka holds a PhD in social sciences and has been teaching international relations and diplomacy at Schiller International University since 2016.

**Igor Gaon** was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war in Bosnia significantly altered the course of his life, and he transitioned from being a professor at the University of Sarajevo to becoming a humanitarian worker. In 1997, Gaon became the mayor of Centar Sarajevo. He wrote a book on human trafficking, with a special focus on women and girls. In 2000, he was appointed Bosnia and Herzegovina's ambassador to the Council of Europe, where he worked on Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the organization. In 2005, Gaon was appointed as the special representative of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe in Georgia – the South Caucasus. Today, he advises intergovernmental organizations and regularly visits the Schiller International University campus in Heidelberg as a guest lecturer in international relations and diplomacy.

Verbole and Gaon will present their joint paper "Where Are the Women and Why Are They So Few? Insights into Women's Leadership in Negotiating Peace and Rebuilding Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo." This paper explores the underrepresentation of women in peace processes during and after the Balkan conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, with a focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. While conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes are highly political and gender-determined, women are often marginalized or invisible. However, their involvement transcends local activism, demonstrating the ability and capacity to operate at the highest political levels. Through a comparative analysis of the roles, challenges, and contributions of women in peace processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the paper examines the consequences of their exclusion and highlights key lessons learned. Finally, it proposes concrete steps for improving women's participation in future peace and reconciliation processes.

**Ana Raffai** (1959) is a Catholic theologian and peace activist. She graduated from the Catholic Faculty of Theology in 1991, specializing in feminist theology with K. Halkes. She earned her Ph.D. in 2016 with a thesis on "Nonviolence in the Liberation Theology of Dorothee Soelle." She teaches at the FER School and the Protestant Theology Center in Zagreb, focusing on topics that connect nonviolent action and feminist liberation theology. Ana is involved with several NGOs, including the Ecumenical Women's Initiative, the Peace Center, and Peace Studies. She is a member of the advisory board of the Ecumenical Women's Initiative, an international network of Church and Peace, and the European Society of Women in Theological Research. Currently, she is active in the NGO RAND, the Policy of Nonviolence institution, and the initiative Believers for Peace, where she holds roles as a coordinator, program manager, and trainer for nonviolent action. Her main areas of focus are education for nonviolent action, mentoring peace-building groups, and coordinating the Believers for Peace initiative. Specifically, she promotes nonviolence in intercultural contexts and works to network believers to encourage and support ecumenical and interfaith coexistence. Ana has published several handbooks and numerous theoretical and popular articles on peace issues in Croatian, German, and French. She co-writes the column "Revolution of Tenderness" for the *Autograf* portal with Otto Raffai, popularizing nonviolent action. In 2006, she was nominated for the 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize initiative. Along with her husband, Otto Raffai, she received the International Reconciliation Movement's Peace Award in 2003 and the Kruno Sukić Award for the Promotion of Peacebuilding, Nonviolence, and Human Rights in 2012. She currently lives in Sesvete, Croatia.

In her work "Populism in Our Daily Lives and the Miracle of Nonviolent Resistance," Ana Raffai will analyze the forms of populism in the modern world. With the inauguration of the new U.S. president, populism gained momentum, and European political powers are not opposing it but are instead working to figure out how to cooperate with it under the new circumstances. It seems as though the pursuit of power could change anything in a meaningful sense about the phenomenon itself. The dangers of populist politics are often forgotten, even when led by the elected president of one of the world's most powerful countries. Raffai seeks ways to deal with populism through nonviolent political action. Therefore, it is important to recognize the traits of populism. What characteristics set it apart from the democratic conception of society, as populists disguise themselves as democrats, using democratic terms to change and "suck" their meanings dry? The first part of her presentation will focus on identifying populism to avoid falling for its deception. On the other hand, she will also explore alternatives to populism through public action that surpasses existing democratic structures, not invalidating them but restoring their original meaning. This alternative, demonstrated in the example of nonviolent resistance in Serbia today, represents a qualitative leap, an unexpected process of change. Raffai aims to understand how nonviolent resistance can be an effective response to the deception of populism.

**Tatjana Perić** is an international human rights expert, focusing on the rights of religious and national minorities. She specialized in human rights, religion, and religious freedoms at Columbia University in New York and earned a master's degree in human rights theory and practice from the University of Essex in the UK, as a recipient of the Chevening scholarship. From 2014 to 2024, she worked at the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Warsaw in various roles related to racism, xenophobia, and discrimination based on ethnic and religious affiliation, with a mandate covering 57 countries in Europe, North America, and Central Asia. Before that, she worked in the NGO sector as a senior research coordinator at the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest and as the development coordinator for the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization in Novi Sad. As an independent consultant, she has worked for many international institutions, including several UN agencies. Tatjana is the author of numerous national and international expert publications and frequently lectures at conferences. She currently lives in Subotica and is a PhD candidate in gender studies at the University Center for Interdisciplinary Studies and Research at the University of Novi Sad.

Tatjana Perić will present the work "Through the Lens of Postcolonial Feminism: The Position of Romani Women in the Political Obligations of the OSCE Participating States." This presentation offers an analysis of how the common political commitments in key documents of the OSCE participating states address the human rights of Romani women. The OSCE is an international organization of 57 participating states with great significance in the Balkans. It has been present in the region since 1996, with all regional states as members, and five significant field missions still operate on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The OSCE covers many thematic areas, including human rights for Roma communities, combating racism and xenophobia, protecting minority rights, promoting gender equality, and engaging women in peace and security processes. From the perspective of each of these thematic mandates, their intersections, and using postcolonial feminist methods, the presentation will provide some answers to the question of how adequately the current OSCE political mandate addresses the human rights of Romani women and other women from minority communities in a comprehensive and participatory manner. The analysis will also reflect on the reality of Romani women's human rights in the region in comparison to the theoretical framework, with a focus on participation in public and political life.

**Irena Praskač-Salčin** was born in 1983 in Sarajevo. She graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo in 2005 and earned her master's degree in 2011. In 2018, she received a Ph.D. in communication science. During her studies, she gained practical experience as a journalist, managing and editing smaller programming units. Since 2008, she has been an assistant at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo, teaching communication and journalism. With 15 years of teaching experience in communication science, she has served as an assistant, senior assistant, and lecturer. She is the author of the book "The Development of Radio in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (FPN, Sarajevo, 2023), along with numerous scientific and professional papers, reviews, and book critiques. Irena participates in various national and international academic and professional conferences and projects. She is a member of the editorial board of the Sarajevo Social Science Review, the academic journal of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Sarajevo, and a reviewer for many scientific papers. Her research interests include the history of communication, media and cultural identities, and the development of radio and television. She teaches courses on the history of communication, the contemporary media environment, media and cultural identities, and advertising.

**Elma Huruz Memović** was born in 1985 in Sarajevo. She earned her master's degree and Ph.D. from the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo. She became an assistant in 2010, then a senior assistant in 2015, and since 2019 has been an associate professor in the Department of Political Science. She teaches courses on the introduction to political science, public policies, and political anthropology at the undergraduate level, and elections and electoral systems at the graduate level. During the 2020/2021 academic year, she lectured on political science at the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla. Elma is the author of several scientific and professional papers in political science and participates in numerous domestic, regional, and international scientific conferences and projects.

**Selma Ćosić** was born in 1985 in Sarajevo. She completed her undergraduate studies in 2008, earning a bachelor's degree in peace studies, democracy, and human rights. Afterward, she enrolled in the graduate program at the same faculty and defended her master's thesis in 2011, focusing on "The Role of Women in the Security System of Bosnia and Herzegovina." In 2012, she was appointed assistant at the Faculty of Political Science, Department of Security and Peace Studies. In 2021, she defended her doctoral dissertation on "Security Dimensions of Gender Relations and Gender Policies in Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina," earning her Ph.D. in political science. As an associate professor in the Department of Security and Peace Studies, she teaches courses on democratic oversight and control of security systems, gender, peace, and security, and democracy, civil society, and human rights. She is the author and co-author of numerous scientific and professional papers in security and peace studies, focusing on gender discourse. Selma has participated in numerous international conferences, summer schools, and seminars.

During the conference, three authors will present a joint paper titled “Gender Dimensions of Violence and Building a Protection System Against Violence Against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” This work investigates the gender dimensions of violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on statistical trends, institutional responses, and the role of the media in shaping public perception and policies. It analyzes the widespread nature of gender-based violence and femicide, deficiencies in legal and institutional frameworks, and sensationalist, superficial, and often unethical media reporting that does not address systemic issues. The research includes an analysis of media reports on femicide in 2024, revealing a lack of investigative journalism and a focus on shocking details instead of structural causes and institutional accountability. The paper advocates for responsible media reporting that centers on victim protection, institutional responsibility, and policy change, in accordance with international standards like the Istanbul Convention.

**Sabiha Husić** is a doctor of gender studies, psychotherapist, peacemaker, educator, and researcher in psychosocial work, with a focus on stress, trauma, its consequences, trauma dynamics, conflict transformation, and nonviolent communication. For over three decades, she has worked with survivors of war and post-war violence, as well as women and children affected by gender-based violence. She develops models based on feminist principles and trauma-sensitive approaches, including integrative therapeutic methods. She is the author and co-author of numerous professional and scientific papers and has received prestigious international awards for her contribution to work with survivors of violence, justice, and human rights protection. Sabiha is the director of the NGO *Medica Zenica* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she leads innovative support and advocacy programs for survivors of violence.

During the conference, Sabiha will present the paper “Feminist Approaches to Recovery from Trauma (Healing) and Community Support.” This work highlights feminist approaches to trauma recovery, focusing on holistic support models that center survivors and communities. The feminist framework provides a gender-sensitive analysis of trauma, recognizing how power, violence, and domination contribute to its emergence and hinder the recovery process. Through a critical reflection on existing practices, the paper explores how feminist principles like empowerment, solidarity, and transformative justice can serve as the foundation for societal and individual recovery. It draws on examples from countries dealing with the long-term consequences of war, including the work of organizations that apply feminist approaches in their work with traumatized individuals. The paper uses a multidisciplinary approach, combining feminist theoretical frameworks, sociological analysis, and practical examples. The results indicate the need for transformative support models that address both individual trauma and the structural causes that contribute to its emergence and persistence. Feminist approaches to trauma recovery are a crucial step toward building more just and resilient communities, especially in post-conflict societies.

**Maja Savanović Zorić** is a psychologist and systemic family psychotherapist with many years of experience working with individuals, families, and professionals. She graduated in psychology in 2009 from the Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka and has worked as a school psychologist since then. In 2019, she founded the NGO Psiholuminis, where, as the executive director, she led a number of projects focused on the intergenerational transmission of trauma in young people whose parents have war trauma, prevention of extremism and radicalism, emotional literacy, and working with war trauma in families through a systemic approach. Her work is based on empowering communities and providing psychosocial support to vulnerable groups.

She is particularly engaged in the prevention of secondary traumatization in helping professions and raising awareness about mental health. Through education, therapeutic interventions, and media appearances, she continuously works on normalizing conversations about emotions and trauma. She is active in educating and supervising colleagues in the field of psychotherapy and regularly participates in conferences and panels. In her writings and public appearances, she empathetically discusses parenting, relationships, and mental health, advocating for authenticity and emotional literacy. As a mother of two teenagers, she balances professional and family life daily, and her personal experience further enriches her therapeutic approach.

Maja Savanović Zorić will present the work “Feminist Approaches to Trauma Healing and Community Support.” This paper explores feminist approaches to trauma healing and community support, emphasizing how social injustices, gender inequality, and systemic oppression shape the experiences of individuals and collectives. It particularly focuses on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the role of the feminist perspective in empowering marginalized groups through solidarity and collective responsibility. The paper analyzes how a feminist approach changes the power dynamics in the therapeutic process, emphasizing that psychotherapy should not be neutral but actively engaged in dismantling destructive patterns. Through examples from the work of Psiholuminis, the author presents educational and therapeutic programs that help women and young people regain a sense of control over their lives. It also addresses interethnic tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the impact of the media on trauma narratives, and the need to redefine the stories of survivors. The paper concludes with a call to integrate feminist principles into therapeutic and social work to build more resilient communities and a collective response to trauma.



**Ružica Ljubičić** holds a doctorate in information and communication sciences, and her doctoral dissertation focused on how the Bosnian daily press reports on violence against women. Her research interests include violence against women, discrimination, and the representation of women in the media, with a focus on critical analysis of media discourses and their impact on societal perceptions of violence against women. She is a journalist, researcher, and women's rights activist. Since 2023, she has been teaching at the Feminism and Religion School, exploring women's history, mythology, and religious narratives, analyzing the role of women through the stories of historical female figures and mythological heroines. She regularly publishes essays and columns that question hidden aspects of women's past, emphasizing the importance of recognizing women's contributions to societal and cultural processes. Throughout her career, she has collaborated with various portals, analyzing the relationship between patriarchal and capitalist structures and the position of women affected by war conflicts. She focuses on analyzing media narratives about women in wartime and crisis situations, with a particular focus on women in Palestine. Her work is based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining academic analysis, journalistic engagement, and activism. She is actively involved in feminist and social initiatives, advocating for gender equality and justice. Her work documents and analyzes not only the structural problems women face but also provides a critical framework for understanding them and exploring possibilities for social change.

As part of the panel "Trauma and Mechanisms of Protection," she will present the work "Erasing the Stigmatization of Women in Media Discourse: Strategies of Digital Activism in the Recovery Process from War Trauma." This paper analyzes the role of the media and digital platforms in shaping narratives about women who have survived wartime rape, with a special emphasis on media reporting, which largely remains within the framework of victimological discourse. This discourse, which focuses on the suffering and hardship of victims, can make it harder for them to recover in the long term, as it perpetuates their position as victims instead of creating space for healing and empowerment. While it is essential to recognize and address the seriousness of these experiences, it is crucial to avoid their permanent marginalization through a one-sided focus on victimization, which can prevent social and personal advancement. This paper explores how digital platforms allow women to utilize their full potential in education, professional development, artistic creation, and social engagement. Through the analysis of relevant feminist and media literature and specific examples of digital initiatives, it investigates how social media and digital platforms are reconstructing media discourse, enabling women to become protagonists in their own narratives. Additionally, it addresses the challenges that arise from preserving privacy, controlling one's narrative, and ensuring safe spaces for expression, to avoid retraumatization and misuse of personal testimonies.

**Vildana Džekman** is the president of the Women's Association "Make a Difference" and a long-time activist, feminist, peacekeeper, and fighter for women's human rights. She earned her master's degree in international private law at the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo, in 2021. She is one of the initiators of numerous gender equality initiatives that continue to exist today. She held the position of president of the Board of Directors of one of the largest peace networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Peacebuilding Network, where she contributed to its registration as an organization, which continues to operate actively. She writes actively, as she considers writing to be part of social responsibility and the preservation of women's feminist-activist history. She is the author and co-author of about 30 texts, research papers, publications, international reports, and analyses. She is the author of the collection of texts *Journey through Activism...*, which contains stories about fantastic women and activist heroines of today.

Her presentation, "Feminist Critiques of Transitional Justice and the Politics of Memory: 'Facing Patriarchal Commemoration of Wars and Erasing Women's Contributions'" focuses on highlighting the importance of documenting and valuing women's actions in pre/post-war periods. Women were highly engaged in all social areas during the wars, without hierarchical positions or socially assigned roles, but after the conflicts ended, women were systematically relegated to positions with little or no power. During the 1990s, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was marked by women's contributions in all segments. They were caregivers, soldiers, guards, typists, and the "first line" of male supremacy. Today, their contributions are erased, as memorials either do not contain or only marginally include the dimension of women's peace culture of remembrance. One reason for this is the institutional lack of support for "women's voices" in peacebuilding. This presentation focuses on the "activist voices" of women working to preserve women's and feminist peace culture of remembrance and the activities of the "Peace with a Woman's Face" initiative, whose members, representatives of women's organizations, are actively advocating for the institutionalization of December 8 as the Day of Remembrance for Women's Suffering in War in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important to emphasize that only by highlighting and documenting women's peace-making contributions through written words, audio/video, or other material creations can the visibility and persistence of feminist and women's peace culture of remembrance be ensured.

**Amila Ždralović** is an associate professor and vice-dean for scientific and research work at the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo. She earned her philosophy and sociology teaching degrees at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, and completed her master's and doctorate in sociological sciences at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. She has presented her research results in more than sixty works published in co-authored monographs, journals, and proceedings. Her area of interest is the sociology of law, focusing on gender equality issues. More: [ORCID link](#).

She will present the work "From 'Women's Constitution' to Gender Justice?" This theoretical discourse, critiquing consociational democracy, will examine the structure of the Dayton constitutional order, which encodes ethno-political matrices, the rights of ethno-political communities, and the paralyzed principles of equality and non-discrimination. The specific goal of the paper is to examine the alternative offered by the 'women's constitution,' created by the Citizens' Initiative for Constitutional Changes based on the Women's Priorities Platform. The analysis of the 'women's constitution' focuses on identifying a new paradigm that it offers. Considering that, although a gender-sensitive constitution is not a guarantee of gender justice, it is a necessary legal framework with transformative potential (Ashe, 2022; Mousmouti, 2022), the constitution offered by women/feminist organizations and activists is a significant intervention in the gender-blind BiH Constitution. The creation of its content excluded the female voice, and this subsequent reform attempt seeks to include the previously excluded voice. However, the "feminist intervention" did not radically change the existing institutional division of power along ethno-national and religious lines but offered a new paradigm for understanding various constitutional categories. The text "Our BiH Constitution" addresses issues such as gender-sensitive language, the introduction of affirmative measures, and the expansion of the existing Catalog of Rights in the BiH Constitution. Even in the introductory lines, the motivation of this text is expressed in the Constitution, which belongs to all citizens. Although, even assuming complete acceptance of women's/feminist amendments, the full scope of guaranteed civil rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina can only be achieved by belonging to a specific constituent nation, the proposed affirmative action measures in the Constitution still represent a significant corrective mechanism.

**Svetlana Janković**, a master of defense, security, and protection sciences, retired lieutenant colonel (2018), worked in the military from 1989. She is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Engineering Management, University “Union-Nikola Tesla” in Belgrade. The author of about 50 scientific articles and two monographs, both independently and in co-authorship. She won the Anđelka Milić Award for 2018. In the framework of the OSCE mission in Serbia, she worked as a gender and security consultant for the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (2018–2019). She has been a member of the working team for the development of the National Action Plan for implementing UN Security Council Resolution “Women, Peace, Security” 1325 (2010–2015 and 2016–2020); a member of the special working group for creating the Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2030 and the Action Plan for its implementation 2021–2023.

Her paper “Commemorating Wars through the Lens of Patriarchy” presents the activities of veterans and former soldiers from different armies (participants in the 1990s conflicts) who work together to overcome war trauma, dismantle stereotypes, and promote nonviolence and dialogue in reconciliation, confronting the past, and peacebuilding, in which the author is an active participant. It introduces the developed network of veterans involved in visiting places of suffering, holding quiet commemorations, and engaging with people in local communities, political parties, media, and authorities. In addition to veterans who are now peace activists, former prisoners, civilian war victims, journalists, and continuous support from the Center for Nonviolent Action, many protagonists, especially women, have had to go through challenging situations, as not everyone could expect acceptance in their (cultural, national, or religious) context.

The goal is to continuously highlight the importance of a culture of dialogue and tolerance and to transcend national and religious limitations. Reconciliation and cooperation among people, even those who once fought against each other, are not only possible but necessary for long-term peace. Thus, veterans become messengers of reconciliation and symbols of hope that war-affected societies can build better relationships in the future, in which women should play an important role.

In war-torn post-Yugoslav societies, war narratives implied collective guilt for entire nations involved in the conflict. There was no room for acknowledging their own mistakes, injustices, and misconceptions, nor for women. There was no space for compassion for others or understanding the injustices committed on their own side, or understanding the very real fears that people felt. The matrix of a carefully selected narrative of World War II was replicated, and we grew up reflecting the dichotomies of aggressor/defender, fascist/antifascist, righteous/unrighteous. Many former soldiers did not willingly go to war but were convinced they had to defend their nation, territory, homes, and families. They survived and realized that other forms of resolving political conflicts should be established, with personal responsibility taken to prevent the war from happening again.

**Goran Božičević** was born in Istria in 1962. He is a graduate in experimental physics; he has been working in peace-related fields since 1993. He is a co-founder of the Volunteering Project Pakrac and the Peace Studies Center, of which he was the first manager. He initiated MIRamiDA – The First Peacebuilding Training in Post-Yugoslav Countries in 1995, with about fifteen sessions held in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1996 to 1999. He worked on the regional program of Confronting the Past for the British Quakers from 2002 to 2009, together with Goran Bubalo and Zorica Trifunović.

He has published “In Accord and Disobedience” (<https://www.mreza-mira.net/wp-content/uploads/U-dosluhu-i-neposluhu-Pozitivni-primjeri-izgradnje-mira-u-Hrvatskoj-u-90-ima-i-kasnije.pdf>) and “Building Dialogue” (<https://politikenasilja.org/images/downloads/Gradnja-dijaloga-2016.pdf>), which was published in Ukraine in 2020. He writes a column, Miramidalije, for the H-Alter.org portal. He teaches peacebuilding topics at the Peace Studies program at CMS in Zagreb and at the German Academy Forum ZFD on topics of dialogue, mediation, and conflict intervention. He is currently part of the institution “Politics of Nonviolence” from Osijek (<https://www.politikenasilja.org/>), and a member of the team that developed peace modules for high schools, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in Macedonia. His interests include working with war veterans and working in divided communities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, he worked on dialogues with youth in 2019–2024 in the municipalities of Prozor-Rama and Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J97Yry-GitHw&t=993s&ab\\_channel=CSSPBiH](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J97Yry-GitHw&t=993s&ab_channel=CSSPBiH).

In his paper “Where Did We Go Wrong?”, Božičević reflects on three decades of peacebuilding in the region. As he says, when we speak of mistakes, we open paths that we did not follow, but that young people are already walking. “We” here refers to all of us who have been engaged in peacebuilding for years and decades, many of whom know each other. The observations are not necessarily new, and we do not have to agree with them. The problem arises when new insights are not accepted, and work continues out of inertia. The least that can be done is not to obstruct those who work differently, more innovatively, often without reference to the wars. Climate change, AI, and the collapse of the international order are here; how does this reflect in our work? This is a new opportunity for peace work and for synergy between experiences and new approaches, as long as the experiences are resources, start from our mistakes, and do not aim to direct new efforts toward peace. Peace work today is intensely happening in the streets and universities of Serbia, and that fact itself contradicts the thesis that we are all ‘stuck’ and that ‘nothing is being done.’

**Ankica Dragin** is a master in gender studies, which she completed in 2013 at the University of Novi Sad. Previously, she graduated with a degree in English language and literature from the Faculty of Philosophy at the same university in 1999, and completed postgraduate studies in adult education at the British Royal Institute for Professional Development in 2004. She has dedicated most of her career, academic work, and activism to promoting human rights and transforming conflicts in ethnically and religiously mixed communities. Among other things, from 2015 to 2019, she was a member of the Programming Council of JMU Radio-Television of Vojvodina. Over the past two decades, she has collaborated with international and domestic organizations, media, institutes, and government bodies, both in Vojvodina (Serbia), and in the countries of the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. Along with numerous presentations at professional gatherings in the country and abroad, she is (co)author of about twenty professional and scientific papers, publications, and books. Among them, in addition to works on media reporting on human rights for women, minority ethnic communities, and migrants, notable publications include the “Map of Religious Communities in Novi Sad” (2003), the monograph “Life Story as a Method for Recording the Gender Aspects of Women’s History: Hungarian Women from Telep” (2015), four guides against discrimination at the local level for returnees under the readmission agreement (2016), and the book “Guide to Peace Work” published in 2019 in Brussels in English, and later in Croatian and Russian. She lives in Novi Sad. Since 2020, she has been teaching English at the Faculty of Law at Union University in Belgrade.

Dragin presents the paper “Ecumenical Approaches to Peacebuilding – Experiences of Women from Vojvodina.” This research aims to document and analyze the experiences of women activists motivated by their religious beliefs who, in Vojvodina – the most ethnically and religiously diverse region in Serbia – were engaged in ecumenism and were recognized as actors in peacebuilding in the former SFRY during and after the wars of the 1990s. Based on the intersection of gender, religion, and peace activism, applying a feminist approach and conducting semi-structured interviews with representatives of seven Christian denominations, it examines their experiences of ecumenical peace activism, motivation for this engagement, and perception of their legitimacy. The research compares the experiences of these religiously motivated activists from Vojvodina with those from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, as documented in a similar analysis focused on interreligious dialogue under the auspices of a regional feminist ecumenical organization. The research found that the experiences of women who perceive themselves as believers, who were involved in ecumenical peacebuilding activities in Vojvodina, are largely similar to those of activists in neighboring countries. Religious beliefs are perceived as an important and potentially strong motivator for dialogue among churches and religious communities in local communities. Ecumenical activities, especially those initiated and carried out by women, have the greatest impact in local communities where churches hold some authority or where there is already a culture of interreligious or inter-ethnic dialogue. However, the gap between secular and religiously committed activists still exists, as does the reluctance of formal church authorities at higher levels to provide more decisive, open support for this type of activism in the public sphere.

**Margareta Bašaragin** completed her undergraduate and master's studies at the Department of German Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, UNS. She obtained her PhD in 2017 at the Center for Gender Studies ACIMSI UNS. Her doctoral dissertation: "Interaction of Gender, Language, and Culture in Shaping the Identity of Eighth-Grade Female Students in the Process of Bilingual Education in Vojvodina" (Novi Sad: Bogumil Hrabak Foundation VANU, 2019). She advanced her studies (within the Erasmus Mundus Sigma Agile project for the 2015/16 school year) at the Center for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany. She has been a commissioner of the Novi Sad branch of the "Women's Studies and Research" association in Subotica since 2020. She received the "Anđelka Milić" award from SeFem Belgrade (2022) and the "Bring The Noise" award from BeFem Belgrade (2023). She has authored several scientific papers published in domestic and international journals, addressing issues of gender and language in print and spoken materials, the integration of gender equality into the educational process, and the application of discourse analysis in the interdisciplinary field of gender studies. She particularly focuses on the research of notable women from Subotica (Vojvodina). She has published books such as "Gender, Culture, and Discourse in Classroom Conversations" (2019, Bogumil Hrabak Foundation, VANU, Novi Sad), "Notable Jewish Women of Subotica" (2020, ŽSI and Fut. pub, Novi Sad), "Antifascist Women of Subotica: Koms, Partisans, and AFŽ Members" (2021, ŽSI and Fut. pub, Novi Sad), "Contributions to the History of Women's Studies in Vojvodina: Women's Studies in Subotica" (Gender Equality Institute, Novi Sad, 2023), and edited "Aging and Gender in Time and Space; Sonja Licht: Life Story" (ŽSI and Fut. pub, Novi Sad, 2021), "Notable Women of Subotica in the 20th Century: Feminists, Artists, Peacemakers, and Philanthropists" (ŽSI and Fut. pub, Novi Sad, 2024).

During the conference, she presents the paper "Gender and Peace: Results of Research in 'Women's Studies and Research' (1998–2025)." This paper analyzes the contribution of the "Women's Studies and Research" (ŽSI) association from Novi Sad in researching the role of women in interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding over the past 30 years. ŽSI, as an interdisciplinary educational program, promotes the improvement of the position of women from different national and religious communities in Vojvodina, with a focus on marginalized groups. A key part of the paper is the project "Interreligious Dialogue and Women" (1998–), which analyzes the contribution of women in religious communities to peace and reconciliation. The project began with an international conference on feminist theology (1998), followed by two more conferences (2001, 2008) focused on the gender perspective in interreligious dialogue. The paper also addresses research on the role of Protestant clergywomen in Vojvodina and their contribution to peacebuilding. In addition to conferences and publications, ŽSI has conducted educational activities in collaboration with international institutions and organizations. Feminist theology and peacebuilding were part of ŽSI's alternative higher education program, later included in academic studies at the University of Novi Sad. However, in recent years, interest in this topic in scientific and academic circles in Serbia has declined, in contrast to the European and global context. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need to continue research and educational initiatives on the contribution of women from various religious communities in peacebuilding in Serbia, in order to strengthen their role in interreligious dialogue and social tolerance.

**Elma Softić-Kaunitz** has been the General Secretary of the Jewish Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Jewish Community in Sarajevo, and the Jewish Cultural, Educational, and Humanitarian Society La Benevolencija since 2005. With over 30 years of professional experience, she is a professor of philosophy and literature and holds a master's degree in religious studies from the University of Sarajevo. Her research focuses on interreligious dialogue, gender, culture, and education, with a particular interest in the contribution of Jewish women in the Balkans. She is the author of the book *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, which has been published in several languages and adapted for theater and radio performances in Toronto, Atlanta, and Chicago. Softić-Kaunitz co-authored two short story collections with Pavle Kaunitz: *Nirina Challenges* and *Everything We (Don't) Want to Know*. She has also contributed to feminist and religious studies as a lecturer at the FER school at the University of Sarajevo. She has published numerous articles on the history of women, education, and interreligious dialogue. As an editor and author, she has collaborated on ten radio shows for Radio La Benevolencija, emphasizing her dedication to education, dialogue, and community engagement.

During the conference, she will present the paper "How to Write About Women." This paper addresses how women are written about in social contexts and points out the tendency for generalization, even when there is an intention to affirm women as a social factor. She will particularly highlight the paradox in which the equality of women is often viewed through the lens of their relationship with men, rather than as an essentially independent value. In her presentation, she will focus on the contribution of Jewish women to the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 20th century, especially their participation in the National Liberation Movement during World War II and the Bosnian War of 1992–1995. Despite the significant efforts of these women, their roles have been largely overlooked. Her presentation will explore how, in attempts to present women as equals to men, many authors— including feminist authors—often fail to acknowledge a crucial fact: equality is not an absolute category, but a social concept, derived from existing inequalities.



**Amra Pandžo** was born in 1970 in Sarajevo, where she has lived all her life. For twenty years, she has been actively involved in peacebuilding, trust-building, and recovery from war horrors for citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This work was inspired by the “Bosnian spirit” of community, inclusion, and the power of her faith in Islam. She has worked in Kosovo and Ukraine, and with citizens from Afghanistan, sharing her own experiences of reconciliation from Bosnia. She currently works as the peace project coordinator for the International Organization for Migration (IOM UN). She compiled a manual for religious education teachers on the peace dimension of Islam and has published the book *Path to Peace: Peacebuilding and Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

In her presentation *A Woman’s Story of God*, Pandžo shares her personal story. After the war in the 1990s, she used an ecumenical approach to peacebuilding, and she aims to tell the story of resistance—a young woman who bravely reconstructed her shattered world. Through interfaith dialogue, she motivated people toward dialogue, forgiveness, and renewal. Through her community work, she created interactive exercises for building trust, overcoming fear, and fostering social cohesion. This presentation will highlight how communities can be guided toward peace and stability, with a focus on the efforts of women in religious communities for reconciliation and healing in post-war Bosnia.

**Medina Mujić** is a doctor of communication sciences and the executive director of the SmartPR Agency for Public Relations and Promotion. She is a distinguished expert in public relations with extensive experience in the non-governmental sector, where she has long been a spokesperson and representative of numerous organizations. Her experience includes active collaboration with the media in creating and promoting key initiatives, as well as strategic communication management for projects in the fields of human rights and gender equality. She also has an academic career, where she has taught courses on Introduction to Communication Studies and Media Relations as an assistant professor at the International Burch University, significantly contributing to the development of knowledge among students in key areas of communication sciences and public relations.

In addition, Dr. Mujić has significant experience in conducting various workshops, training, and educational programs, which further strengthened her distinctive approach to professional representation and empowering others through education. She is the author and editor of over 25 publications and scientific papers, and through her research work, she has contributed to progress in the field of gender equality and human rights. She particularly contributed to the creation of the Alternative Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina under the CEDAW Convention and the alignment of domestic legislation with the Istanbul Convention. Her extensive experience in public representation and media collaboration makes her recognized in professional circles, while her dedication to research and analysis in the areas of communication, media, and market research contributes to her successful and professional approach.

During the conference, she will moderate the panel *Literary and Artistic Resistances to Patriarchy and Heteronormativity*.

**Gaj Trifković** (1981) completed high school in Sarajevo and studied history in Graz, where he also obtained his PhD. The focus of his scientific and research work is on the contemporary history of Southeast Europe; he has published three monographs and about twenty articles in professional journals both in the country and abroad. He is also actively involved in monitoring and analyzing the state of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an emphasis on the education sector and gender issues. He is currently serving as the director of the Center for Human Rights at the University of Sarajevo.



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# GENDER AND PEACE IN THE BALKANS: CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD

(SARAJEVO, 25–27 FEBRUARY 2025)