



March 14, 2019

H.E. Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Executive Office of the Secretary-General  
S-3800, United Nations Secretariat Bldg  
New York, NY 10017

**Re: The RWLSEE Letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres seeking the international justice for women survivors of sexual violence during wars in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia**

Your Excellency,

Post-Conflict reconstruction process in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia estimates that tens of thousands of women have been raped and assaulted during the wars in these countries, following the disintegration of former Yugoslavia.

In Bosnian war (1992-1995), estimates of the number of women survivors of sexual violence range between 12,000 and 50,000. In Kosovo war (1998-1999), estimates of the number of women survivors of sexual violence are over 20,000. In Croatian war (1991-1995), estimates of the number of women survivors of sexual violence are over 2,200.

Although this horrifying phenomena ranks among the worst atrocities in modern European history, it continues to remain a hidden genocide until nowadays.

We note with concern, that 20 years after, the tragedy of women survivors of sexual violence during wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo has not been addressed by any international justice mechanisms. Even though the ICTY for the first time qualified rape as a war crime in Krnojelac case (IT-97-25) "Foča", nevertheless it was not later addressed in a relevant way.

*UN Security Council Resolution 2106 (2013)* specifically defines that "sexual violence can constitute a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide" and that "rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict are war crimes." Resolution 2106 recognizes that effective investigation and documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict is instrumental both in bringing perpetrators to justice and ensuring access to justice for survivors. While the annual reports of UN Secretary General on Conflict-related Sexual violence provides valid documentation on this phenomenon in many conflicts worldwide, it fails to include the cases of Kosovo and Croatia, while the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is presented in a poor way.

We, women of the Regional Women's Lobby in South Eastern Europe (RWLSEE) have decided to stand up together in seeking international justice for women survivors of sexual violence during wars in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

In line with the UNSC Resolution 2106 (2013) and having in mind that the United Nations fully supports the principle of ensuring services for survivors and an end to impunity, we urge you as the Secretary General of UN to address the issue of international justice for women victims of war rape in the three countries, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The crucial step that would lead towards international justice is to provide a credible evidence on what has happened and to what extent women were affected by this genocidal war crime.

Therefore, we call on you to conduct a Report on women survivors of sexual violence during wars and conflicts in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. A credible factual based report on the evidence of raped women would inform on what has really happened in war times to women in these three countries, and would send a clear message of hope that international justice will be put in place while perpetrators will not remain unpunished, making sure that these terrible war crimes will never happen again.

We remind you that the UN has conducted a similar Report (1996) on the Korean “Comfort Women” on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime. (Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/45.

The failure to seek justice for wartime sexual violence undermines reconciliation, deepens grievances, and feeds a cycle of conflict. The time has now come for international justice for women of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo who were raped in wars during the disintegration of former Yugoslavia (1991-1999).

International humanitarian law, CEDAW and UN resolutions on this matter make a clear call that the issues of sexual violence in conflicts must not remain unabated and unpunished anymore.

There have been constant calls for international justice for women victims of war rape in former Yugoslavian wars; however, such calls remained unheard or ignored.

Furthermore, the petition signed by over 120000 citizens of Kosovo seeking the international justice for women survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by Serbian forces during the war in Kosovo (1998-1999), addressed to the United Nations Secretary General in 2015, has not been accepted yet. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that justice might delay but comes at the end of the day. We do not want to believe in endless injustice and unpunished criminals.

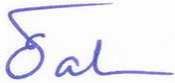
We believe in the United Nations and your commitment to human rights, peace, justice and reconciliation, as well as your stated readiness to implement the UNSC Resolution 2106 (2013), the UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) and following resolutions in support of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, through your good offices and personal engagement as the United Nations Secretary-General.

Today the RWLSEE Chair Edita Tahiri will meet with Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to discuss this issue and hand over this letter for you, with same content sent to you last year, on which we did not receive any reply.

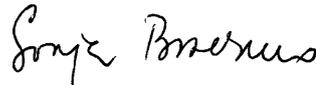
We are looking forward to your engagement and concrete action on addressing these important issues for a better and peaceful future in Western Balkans region.

Please accept, your Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration for your leadership in the UN mission.

Sincerely yours,



**Edita Tahiri**  
Chairperson  
Kosovo



**Sonja Biserko**  
Member of Steering Committee  
Serbia



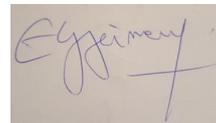
**Memnuna Zvizdić**  
Member of Steering Committee  
Bosnia and Herzegovina



**Nada Drobnjak**  
Member of Steering Committee  
Montenegro



**Gordana Sobol**  
Member of Steering Committee  
Croatia



**Eglantina Gjermeni**  
Member of Steering Committee  
Albania



**Irina Pockova**  
Member of Steering Committee  
Macedonia

CC: To All Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations  
Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

*The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe (RWLSEE) was established in 2006 with the support of UN Women (then UNIFEM). The RWLSEE is a regional women organization for peacebuilding and Euro-Atlantic integration of the all countries in the Western Balkans region, having women play a central role. RWLSEE promotes political and advocacy actions to advance peace and stability, justice and reconciliation in our region of a troubled past, including the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which calls for a large representation of women at all levels of decision making. The organization is composed of women from seven countries of Western Balkans; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.*

*The members are prominent women leaders, including politicians, members of parliaments and governments, holding high governmental or public positions, as well as representatives of civil society.*