



YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT
INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY — JUNE 2024

www.yihr-ks.org



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to this edition of our Newsletter, the latest updates from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Kosovo (YIHR KS). As we celebrate 20 years of activism, we're proud to reflect on our journey towards justice and equality.

Some notable activities include, YIHR KS and with four other NGOs filed a lawsuit against the Kosovo Assembly and MP Labinotë Demi Murtezi for LGBTIQ+ discrimination, reinforcing our commitment to human rights. We also proudly received the "Ahen Peace Prize 2024," honoring our peace efforts in challenging times.

We published the 2023 Civil Society Report on Human Rights in Kosovo, featuring 203 recommendations for institutional improvements. Additionally, we're preparing to launch the Children of War Museum to preserve childhood memories from the Kosovo War.

Our street actions, such as the "Trail of Memories" on World Refugee Day and distributing 120 Constitutions to parliament members, highlight our dedication to justice and remembrance.

Thank you for your support. Stay tuned for more updates as we continue our mission for a better future.

Warm regards,

The YIHR KS Team



HIGHLIGHTS

YIHR KS, together with four other Kosovo NGOs dedicated to protecting human rights, Filed a Lawsuit Against the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo and MP Labinotë Demi Murtezi

On International Zero Discrimination Day, together with four Kosovo non-governmental organizations dedicated to protecting human rights, CSGD, CEL, CRD, & KGSC, we filed a lawsuit in the Basic Court in Pristina against the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo and MP Labinotë Demi Murtezi, due to the violation of dignity and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons during the plenary session of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, dated March 16, 2022. We later submitted a complaint to the Ombudsperson Institution.



The Youth Initiative for Human Rights Won the “Ahen Peace Prize 2024”

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights, alongside Omas gen Rechts, won the “Ahen Peace Prize 2024”. This recognition comes during challenging times when global peace is crucial. The award reflects their twenty-year fight for a region where peace, responsibility, and justice prevail. They dedicate the award to those who have suffered from regional wars and to activists striving to improve the region. The award highlights the importance of recognizing peace efforts, especially in hostile environments. The official ceremony will be held in Ahen, Germany, on September 1, 2024.





YIHR KS with other member organizations of The Human Rights Network launched the Civil Society Report on Human Rights in Kosovo for 2023

The Human Rights Network (HRN) officially published the Civil Society Report on Human Rights in Kosovo for 2023. A total of 37 NGOs participated in drafting the report, which included 203 recommendations directed at institutions for improving the human rights situation in Kosovo.

The published report is available in four languages: [Albanian](#), [Serbian](#), [English](#), and [Romani](#).



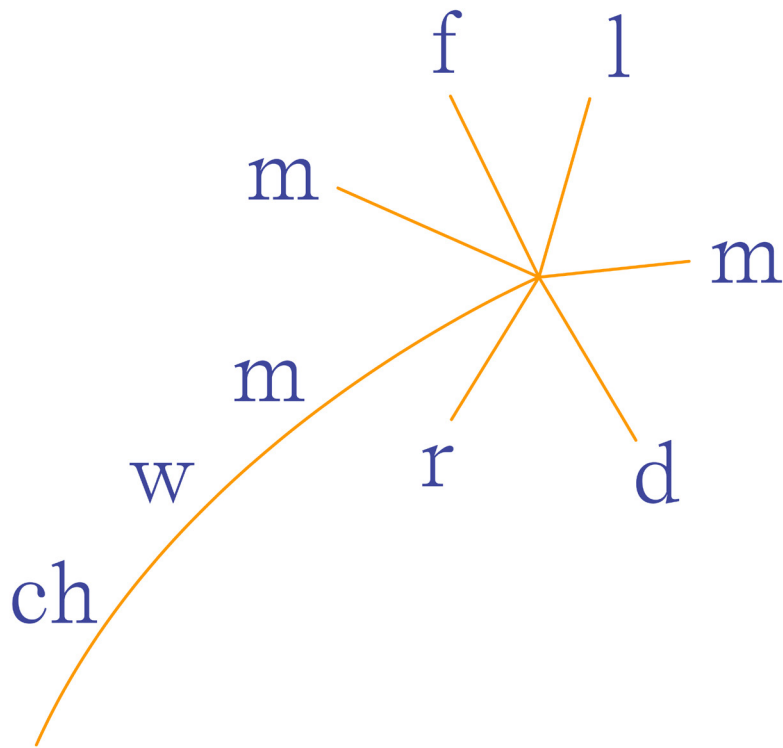
We Successfully Concluded the 5-year-long Youth for Justice Project in Kosovo!

The 5-year-long Youth for Justice Project in Kosovo has concluded successfully, impacting over 6000 beneficiaries through numerous activities. This initiative empowered youth to actively engage in advocating for justice, promoting sustainable human rights education, and fostering critical thinking among law students and young people. Key achievements include the establishment of the [“My Right”](#) platform to facilitate reporting on human rights violations and enhance transparency in Kosovo’s justice institutions.

The project also included educational programs like Justice Lectures, Mock Trials, an artistic competition, court monitoring, Justice Murals in schools, internships in Basic Courts, and the Alternative School for Human Rights. Additionally, the project accredited the “Human Rights Education Program for Young People” with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and provided training for civic education teachers. This initiative significantly contributed to youth empowerment and human rights awareness in Kosovo.

*The Youth for Justice Project is supported by the U.S. State Department - INL.





Children of War Museum launching soon!

We are excited to share that we are in the final preparation phase of the Children of War Museum, which will be launched in the next half of the year. This initiative is dedicated to preserving the childhood memories of the Kosovo War, ensuring that the personal war experiences are not forgotten. The museum will offer a shared space of collective memory where forgotten stories of the past are recognized and centered, acknowledging the multiple nuances of war experiences and understanding the importance of resurfacing stories from the margins. The museum will feature personal items, video testimonies, and curated exhibits highlighting children's experiences during the last war in Kosovo.

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ch	m	d	muzej dece rata
	w	m	children of war museum

STREET ACTIONS



Peace Starts With Us

A new installation was installed in North Mitrovica - symbolizing peace and unity in a place long plagued by inter-ethnic dispute.

We believe in bridges that connect, not divide. So, in the roundabout just in front of the North Mitrovica bridge, which has become a symbol of Kosovo's inter-ethnic conflicts, we placed a peace symbol installation as a small beacon of hope and unity in our collective consciousness.

*This activity was implemented in partnership with forumZFD.



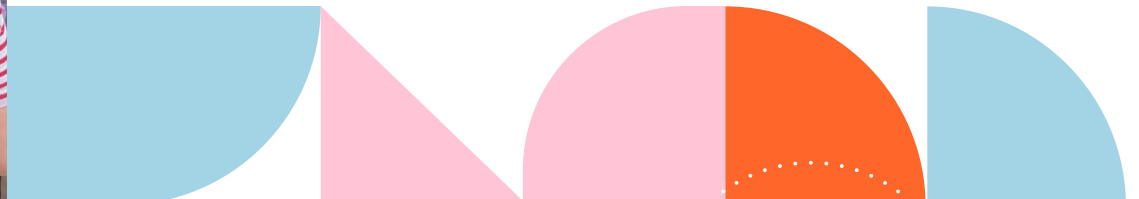


120 copies of the Constitution of Kosovo for 120 members of parliament

On Constitution Day, we held an action in front of the Assembly of Kosovo with unwavering determination to protect human rights for all without distinction. Our activism is not merely symbolic; it is a call to action, a demand for accountability, and a statement of our unwavering commitment to justice and equality.

120 copies of the Constitution of Kosovo were distributed to 120 members of parliament - not as a gift or as simple documents on paper, but as a powerful reminder for our members of parliament about what this Constitution guarantees and protects - shared democratic values. and steadfast principles of justice, equality, and liberty.

*This activity was supported by UNMIK.





How Many More Years In the Dark?

On April 27 we marked National Day of Missing Persons by gathering at Skenderbeu Square. During our street action, we screened the names of 1615 persons still missing from the last war in Kosovo. Gresa Broqi accompanied the screening with a heart-felt cello music piece.

It was a powerful testament to our collective commitment to remembering and seeking justice for the 1,615 missing individuals from the Kosovo war. Honoring the memory of those who are missing and sending a clear message to our state institutions: the enlightenment of their fate cannot be delayed any longer. Their families deserve closure, and our society demands accountability.

*This activity was supported by USAID and NED.





“Trail of Memories” for World Refugee Day

For World Refugee Day, on the 20th of June, we organized the street action “Trail of Memories” at Zahir Pajaziti Square which was a moving tribute to the experiences of Kosovo refugees.

Our installation showcased objects that symbolized those carried by refugees of Kosovo during the last war, each telling a story of hardship, resilience, and hope.

Keep honoring and remembering these experiences by exploring more stories at the Virtual Museum of Refugees (<http://museumofrefugees-ks.org>).

*This activity was supported by NED.

DEALING WITH THE PAST AND PEACE-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

YIHR KS, Executive Director, Marigona Shabiu, Calls for National Urgency on Femicide and Youth Inclusion at the Women Peace Security Forum

At the Women Peace Security 2024 Forum, YIHR KS Executive Director, Marigona Shabiu, called for femicide to be treated as a national urgency in Kosovo, following two recent femicides. Speaking alongside President Vjosa Osmani Sadriu, she demanded accountability from state institutions for the rising femicide rates and urged reflection on how these institutions perpetuate gender-based violence. She also highlighted the crucial role of diverse youth in promoting gender equality and peace, criticized the lack of representation of ethnic minorities, and advocated for inclusive policy-making and platforms that empower youth to contribute to a future of justice and equality.



SMALL GRANTS SCHEME 2023

Promoting Peacebuilding and Reconciliation through Theatre

NGO DUA and NVO GETO partnered under the 2023 Small Grants Scheme to promote inter-ethnic relations through peacebuilding and reconciliation via theatre. Their project engaged youth from Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Roma, and Turk communities in Kosovo to create and perform two plays focused on overcoming ethnic stereotypes and biases. This initiative highlights the importance of inclusive art spaces for social advocacy and unique expression.





Bridging Communities through Inter-Ethnic Astronomy Initiatives

The Astronomy Club of Kosova and ECO LEPO successfully partnered under the 2023 Small Grants Scheme to promote inter-ethnic relations. Their project focused on fostering cooperation in natural sciences and astronomy among students from various Kosovo communities. They organized activities across Kosovo, including public events at the Prishtina Observatory. These events provided a platform for youth from different ethnic backgrounds to engage in intercultural dialogue, demonstrating how astronomy can transcend cultural and ethnic boundaries. Such multi-ethnic science initiatives encourage idea exchange and collaboration among diverse communities.





The Power of Narratives: Bridging Divides in Kosovo's Education System for Inclusive and Peaceful Inter-Ethnic Relations

As part of the Small Grants Scheme project, ETEA and CSAY explored the narratives of inter-ethnic relations between Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs as depicted in schools, focusing on perceptions formed through textbooks, curricula, and classroom practices. Conducting qualitative research with high school students, teachers, and directors from both communities, the project produced evidence-based policy recommendations and the report “The Power of Narratives: Book-based or Oral History - The Role of Education in Shaping the Perceptions of the Other.”

This report highlights the detrimental effects of biased information on students' attitudes and advocates for a more inclusive and peaceful education system.

*The Small Grants Scheme is part of the 'Kosovo Youth Dialogue' project supported by USAID Kosovo.





Storytelling for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation!

Two separate Storytelling Workshops that lasted four days each brought together around 40 people from different ethnic communities in Kosovo to learn how to use the medium of storytelling to deal with the past and pave the road to reconciliation, emphasizing the importance of documentation. They also had the chance to learn more about the technical aspects of bringing stories to life.

*This activity was supported by NED.





Music & Poetry Night

On World Poetry Day, in collaboration with Community Building Mitrovica, we gathered at Bubble Pub to remind ourselves once again how much poetry unites us.

We enjoyed some moments from our ‘Music & Poetry night’, where the poems of Agon, Rubija, and Andjelija, accompanied by the music of the Jimmy Band, brought together the cultures of three communities, in a special evening organized in Pristina.



Living Library

We hosted a Living Library event, spotlighting the transformative impact of sharing stories. Our guests and “living books” this time were Dimitrije Obrenović and Rubija Redzeqi, human rights activists, who shared more about the challenges they face in their work. It was an inspiring and empowering talk for the youngsters in the audience.



*These Activities are part of the Reconciliation and Conflict Transformation Activity, implemented by Community Building Mitrovica and partners from New Social Initiative - Nova društvena inicijativa and Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Kosovo (YIHR KS) and supported by the American people through USAID Kosovo.



The Future Begins by Knowing the Past

Throughout 2024 we have continued to commemorate all civilian victims of all massacres from the last war in Kosovo. Remembering the past is the only way forward! This is one of the many efforts YIHR KS persistently works on to achieve justice for all civilian victims! Check out the commemoration posts on the YIHR KS official Facebook or Instagram pages!





THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW PROGRAM

The Human Rights Exchange in Zagreb was a Huge Success!

Professors and students from the University of Pristina's Law Faculty master's program in Human Rights, International Criminal Law, and Transitional Justice embarked on a study visit to Zagreb, Croatia. They engaged with esteemed human rights institutions such as the Faculty of Law at the University of Zagreb, various civil society organizations, and the Human Rights House in Zagreb, Republic of Croatia.

This exchange was part of a broader initiative organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo (YIHR KS), with financial support from the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

*In cooperation with: Kuca Ljudskih Prava Zagreb, Documenta Zagreb, YIHR Croatia, Fakulteti Juridik/ Law Faculty-UP, Pravni Fakultet, Sveuciliste u Zagrebu, UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosovo



Empowering Educators: Human Rights Training for Kosovo Teachers

In May, 21 teachers from Vushtrri, Drenas, Skenderaj, Lipjan, and Obliq underwent a 5-day training on human rights, the justice system, and access to justice, within the framework of the “Human Rights Education Program”. The training focused on practical teaching methods, including using real-life cases in the classroom. Teachers learned how to help students understand and promote human rights, identify violations, and report them to authorities. They also deepened their knowledge about the Free Legal Aid Agency and met its Deputy Executive Director, Mrs. Flutura Berbat-Zena.

*This activity is organized within the project “Human Rights Education Program” which is supported by GIZ Kosovo and implemented by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Kosovo (YIHR KS).





Empowering Advocates: Transformative Human Rights Training

We conducted a transformative human rights and advocacy training program with young people. Participants engaged in topics ranging from transitional justice to advanced human rights issues, including peace, conflict resolution, propaganda, hate speech, intercultural dialogue, and historical reconciliation. Through interactive sessions and group activities, attendees explored real-world human rights challenges, gaining valuable insights into protective legal frameworks. The training aimed to empower participants through knowledge-sharing and reflection, fostering a stronger commitment to human rights principles.

*Funded by the European Union.

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the European Union



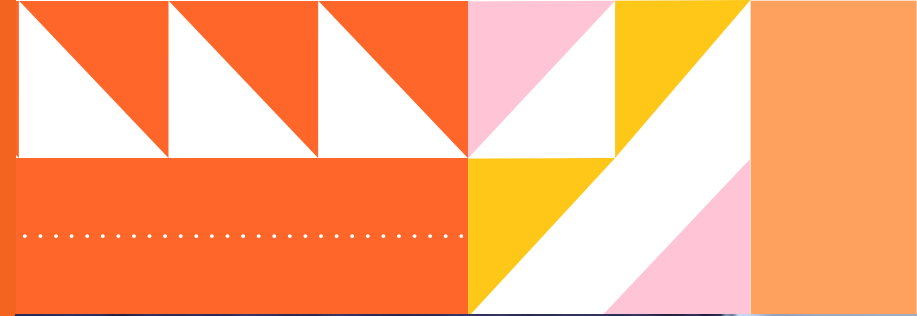
Homophobes Have No Place in the Parliament!

In February, we disrupted the Parliamentary Commission for Human Rights meeting chaired by Duda Balje, demanding her immediate resignation due to her homophobic stances. She reiterated her discriminatory views against LGBTIQ+ individuals, calling it her “personal opinion,” a statement she made during the discussion held in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo on the topic “The current situation in the protection and promotion of human rights in Kosovo.”

It is scandalous that a Member of Parliament and Chair of the Human Rights Commission does not uphold universal human rights. Our protest forced Duda Balje to leave the meeting, and we will continue to demand the resignations of both Balje and deputy Labinota Demi Murtezi, who’s also made homophobic statements in parliament.

Watch video:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1150975482950774>





HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK STATEMENTS

The Human Rights Network issued several statements earlier this year, urging state actors and others in positions of power to take accountability in implementing state laws and prioritize justice and equality above all else in their actions.

Click on the titles to read the full statements:

[HRN: The Assembly's arrogant number games apply pressure on the Ombudsperson](#)

[HRN condemns Minister Hekuran Murati's attack on the media and CSOs.](#)

[HRN urges the Deputy Prime Minister to refrain from lynching and labeling activists from NGOs Nisma e Re Sociale and Aktiv.](#)

[Another case of FEMICIDE in Kosovo!](#)

[Human Rights Network \(HRN\) held the third consultative meeting on the Ombudsperson's Report on Human Rights 2023.](#)

[Public Statement on the Draft Law on Reproductive Health and Assisted Medical Fertilization.](#)

[Public letter addressed to the media regarding reporting on gender-based violence.](#)

[Public Statement on the Tragic Loss of a Child's Life in Gjakova Suspected to Result from Medical Negligence.](#)

[Human Rights Network \(HRN\) held the second consultative meeting on the Ombudsperson's Report on Human Rights 2023.](#)

[Human Rights Network \(HRN\) organized the first meeting of the Committee for Dialogue of Civil Society Organizations...](#)

YIHR KS STATEMENTS

Amid local and regional political ongoings that concerned human rights these past six months, YIHR KS released several statements to remind the responsible bodies to prioritize and ensure equality for all.

Click on the titles to read the full statements:

[YIHR KS is Deeply Concerned and Saddened by the Serbian Authorities' Ban on the "Mirëdita, Dobar Dan" Festival](#)

[We Support the UNGA Resolution on the Srebrenica Genocide](#)

[Condemning Homophobia in Kosovo's Parliament](#)

[Public Letter Addressed to the Speaker of the Assembly, Mr. Glauk Konjufca](#)

[YIHR Jointly Condemn the Unjustified Detention of Kosovo Citizens in Serbia.](#)

[Public Letter to the Rector of UP, Mr. Qerim Qerimi](#)

[Advocacy Letter to the United Nations: A Call for Justice for Lead-Poisoned Roma Communities in Kosovo](#)

[No Smear Campaign Can Stop the Dialogue in the Region](#)



PRISHTINA PRIDE 2024

The eighth edition of Pride Week in Kosovo celebrates more than just a moment of joy—it stands as a testament to those who tirelessly advocate for equality and inclusivity. Despite challenges, this year’s theme, **“We were and will always be,”** reaffirmed the enduring presence and resilience of the LGBTIQ+ community in Kosovo. It’s a declaration that goes beyond letters; it embodies people with minds, activism, and aspirations. Amidst historical silence, this Pride Week signaled a bold step forward towards a future where diversity thrives openly and proudly.



Since its inception, Pride Week has been a platform for individuals to express their true selves in a society where such freedom is often restricted. It proudly showcases identities long suppressed and overlooked, asserting their right to exist openly!



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