



Ajna Jusić at Stand Speak Rise Up! forum in 2019

# Children born of war status

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**During the war aggression in Bosnia and Herzegovina, between 30,000 and 50,000 women, girls and men were raped.** As a result of these war crimes, children were born. Children who live in the age of Status quo, 30 years after the war, and remain invisible in a society that does not recognize them. We are children who live in a society that was completely blinded by its strong beliefs, mostly related with war, that they missed a possibility of a child being born after an act of rape.

During and immediately after the war, along with the strengthening of militarization, so-called "Children born of war", were born all around the world, i.e., children who are less likely to be born if there was no war in a certain region, and where their fathers were sent on official or military duty. In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this category includes children whose fathers were: a) soldiers-members of the opposing army, i.e., members of other ethno-national groups in relation to the group to which the mother belonged (parents belonging to previously warring, so-called enemy parties); b) members of the stationary / peacekeeping forces (UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR, etc.); or c) employees of foreign humanitarian missions while mothers were local women.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we often talk about the consequences of the war, but very rarely about one of the most vulnerable categories - "children born because of the war", who suffered violations of children's rights. The results of previous research, UN reports and journalistic reports suggest that "children born of war", often unrecognized and rejected by fathers, and left in the care of mothers and / or the community in which they were born, grow up deprived of many children's rights and with possible problems of identity, stigma, discrimination, marginalization and / or isolation.

The Forgotten Children of War Association was founded in 2015 by several enthusiasts - human rights activists and "children born of war" from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who remained in the shadow of war and defeat, invisible and unrecognized as a vulnerable category of children in the country of origin of their mothers and / or the country of origin of their biological fathers.

**The Forgotten Children of War Association is the first and currently the only association in Europe whose founders and members are children born of war, and approaches the topic of children born of war in a completely different way.** The first association that works on social and legal visibility, the first that unites its members who belong to the categories above.

In order to legally and socially recognize and respect children born of war, through activism, public advocacy, research, networking and the arts, **we contribute to the elimination of stigmatization and discrimination against this social category.** Our vision is that Forgotten Children of War (ZDR) is a global organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina that advocates

*« We want a solidarity and inclusive society without violence, in which the rule of law is respected »*

for the legal and social recognition of children born of war based on positive practices from BiH. We want a solidary and inclusive society without violence, in which the rule of law is respected.

As for the children born because of the war, we are often called a hidden population because if people knew we were born, we would be exposed to stigmatization and discrimination. **We are still exposed to social condemnation, including political and legal rejection.** Precisely because of this, our mothers try to hide our father's identities very wisely, which makes it more difficult to map and gather children born as a result of rape in a certain country.

We are a neglected population whose very birth comes with life-threatening and permanent risks and damages. These may include stigmatization, discrimination, physical violence and emotional abuse, reduced or no access to education, hunger, poverty, homelessness, involvement in armed or criminal groups, increased risk of radicalization and poor health.

**Our mothers are exposed to double stigmatization, as survivors of war rape and mothers.** Without support, women and girls suffer significant physical, psychological, social and economic effects of forced motherhood.

The damage and shortcomings that our mothers face have been passed on to us, their children who are labeled as children born of sexual violence.

This intergenerational effect of conflict-related sexual violence must be urgently recognized and addressed. In the general lack of specific, targeted, national and international policies and laws to address our needs, risks and harms are likely to multiply and become worse in the lives of children. A lost childhood becomes an uncertain adulthood, and the right to human rights becomes an illusion.

**Global and national communities must face the taboos and complexities surrounding reproductive violence that lead to “forced motherhood”, the conception and birth of children as a consequence of that violence.** The existence of children born of sexual violence and the high-yielding consequences of pregnancy and motherhood resulting from rape must not remain euphemisms in the resolutions of international political actors.

The constant normative and practical marginalization of children born of sexual violence and their “forced mothers” in post-conflict societies is a significant obstacle to sustainable and inclusive peace, reconciliation and transitional justice. Transitional justice processes that do not recognize nor enforce the rights of children born of sexual violence cannot meet their goals, which include truth, reconciliation, accountability, and the delivery of reparations. Denying the rights of children born out of sexual violence is irreconcilable with the demand for human rights to universality.

We are ready to share our experiences anywhere in the world. We are ready because we do not want to take part in future wars, we do not want to take part in future rapes. **We do not want to take part in the status quo that allowed us to go through this kind of suffering and pain.**