

Prepared Testimony of **Ms. Vafije Krasniqi - Goodman**
submitted before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
on “Kosovo’s Wartime Victims: The Quest for Justice”
April 30th, 2019

Honorable Chairman Engel,
Honorable ranking member McCaul,
Honorable members of the Foreign Affairs Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for giving me the honor of sharing my story with you. I hope that it will shed some light on the human dimension of the issues that you are considering here today.

On April 14th, 1999 when I was only sixteen years old, a Serbian police officer barged into my house. He was looking for my father and my brothers. However, they were not at home. I was there with my mother, my aunt, and my two cousins. The policeman ordered us to show him our IDs. After taking a look at my ID he kept it and told me that I had to go to the police station with him to give a statement about the men of our household.

At this moment, my uncle who had walked over from his house came in and asked him "Why are you taking our girl?" The policeman said if anyone moved, he was going to shoot everyone. My mom told him to take her in my stead. "No, she is a child" replied the policeman, "that's why she would not lie about the whereabouts of her father and brothers. The Serbian police officer then ripped me away from my mother's arms and took me to a Serbian village nearby. He walked me into an empty house, just off of the main road and threw me onto dried corn stacks that were piled up against the house. I started to yell. I screamed at the top of my lungs. That's when he took me to his car and started to rape me.

I remember everything. He held me at gunpoint, abused and raped me repeatedly. I was so shocked and exhausted that I lost consciousness. I would regain consciousness and cry with no control begging him to kill me. He said "No. I won't because you will suffer more this way." In all honesty, I did suffer a lot.

I remember that he had a bandage on his left hand and he told me that the KLA had shot him, so now he would take revenge on me. Every time that I screamed he threatened to take me to an area full of Serbian forces where he said more people would rape me. After he was done assaulting me, he went into a local store and left me alone in the car. I knew that the village was predominantly Serbian, so I was terrified to make any move.

Shortly after the policeman left, an older man came out of the same store and walked towards me. He forced me out of the car and took me to an unfinished house. I distinctly remember the man, he was old and crippled. There, in that house that man raped me. A few hours later I was taken back to my village and left out on the street. They told me not to tell anyone about what had transpired. Instead, I was supposed to say that I had been at the police station the whole time, giving a statement about the whereabouts of my father and brothers.

I walked through the village cemetery and I hoped that my life would just come to an end, right then and there. I did not want to go home and have to explain to anyone what had just happened to me. However, I somehow made it to my uncle's house. Once I got there, I did not have to say a word. Judging from the condition that I was in, everyone knew what had happened. No one takes a sixteen-year-old child to the police station and keeps them there for hours only to return her home scratched, bruised, cut up and torn up. The next day, I reported my case to the KLA. Later I reported it to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. I also reported everything to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo.

The perpetrator of this crime was eventually identified. However, twenty years have passed and justice continues to fail me. My torturer has not been held accountable for his crimes, and is still at large. There are twenty thousand women and men who survived crimes of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo. All they want is justice. All I want is justice. Although today I live a happy life in Texas as a proud mother of two daughters who were born in the United States and thankfully will never have to encounter the horrors that I experienced, I will never have true peace with my past until justice is delivered.

Thus, today I call on the representatives of the United States Congress to address the impunity of war crimes and human rights abuses that were committed in Kosovo by taking immediate action to seek justice for the victims.

Thank you.