

# THE STRUGGLE OF WOMEN FOR GENDER EQUALITY IS EVERYONE'S ISSUE

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## ABSTRACT

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**T**his article is written for the main aim for us to become aware of our rights, to achieve gender equality and empower the women and girls by raising our voice against these discriminations. Sadly, there is no country in the world that has achieved gender equality. So, I will give some statistics based in my researches for the women's rights worldwide, what are the countries where women are most discriminated, and what about these rights in my country, Kosovo. In conclusion, we have emphasized that the struggle for gender equality should not be only an issue of women but it should be an issue to all men in the world as well. Over all, we are human beings and should be treated all equal!

**Keywords:** gender equality, women's rights, human beings, discriminations, statistics, world, Kosovo.

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Everywhere in the world are people who endure from gender inequality and their basic rights are violated. Usually, the most discriminated gender remains the gender of women. While causes and consequences may vary from country to country and also by the law, discrimination against women is widespread. It is perpetuated by the survival of stereotypes and of traditional cultural and religious practices and beliefs detrimental to women. Women are discriminated the most in the countries where the civilization has not arisen yet.

After that gender equality is a basic human rights principle, we struggle everyday, we raise our voice and through various forms of revolt we strive to achieve the rights that belong to us! Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of 'women and men' and 'girls and boys.'

But, did we achieve gender equality? Sadly, even today there is no country in the world that has achieved gender equality. Not even the most democratic societies, not even the most educated and developed countries. Women's rights are violated

worldwide. Women are being discriminated in family, in community and in their workplace.

According to the recent statistics of participation of women in spheres of life, it is clearly seen that the situation is alarming in political, economic and social gaps. Women are the majority of the world's poor and majority of the world's illiterate. Women in Asia and Africa work 13 hours a week more than men and are mostly unpaid. Worldwide, women earn 30 to 40 % less than men for doing equal work, women make up less than 5% of the World's Head of State. [1] The average percentages of women parliamentarians according to the last statistics are: Nordic Countries with 41.7, United States with 28.1 %, Europe with 25.3%, Sub Saharan Africa with 23,6%, Asia with 19,4%, Arab States with 17,4%, and the Pacific with 17,4%. [17.4] If we calculate all these statistics we will be in a conclusion that the average percentage of national parliamentarians, only 23,3% are women that is a slow increase from 11.3 % since 1995. [3] The recent researches show that only 11 women are serving as Head of State and 12 are serving as Head of Government. [4] There are only two countries that have 50% or more women in parliament, Rwanda with 61,3% and Bolivia with 53,1%. [5]

In political sphere there are still women who don't have their full right to vote. Even though, there are more than 100 years that women are allowed to vote in some countries, it seems clearly that it was a slow progress in this aspect. New Zealand was the first country to allow women to vote in 1893. Also, it is important to mention that women in United States voted for the first time in 1920. Moving further, women in United Kingdom after the suffrage that was a movement to fight for women's right to vote, it finally succeeded through 2 laws in 1918 where only women over 30 years who had a property or were educated were allowed to vote. The leader of this suffrage of women in UK was the political activist Emmeline Pankhurst who died weeks before the second law extended the vote to all women over 21 years in 1928. Pankhurst's famous speech "Freedom or death" remains one of the most influential speeches of all times about women's right to vote. Amongst the words she proclaims that: "I mean to be a voter in the land that gave me birth or that they shall kill me."

Discrimination against women starts at birth! Furthermore I will highlight some alarming statistics about women being discriminated worldwide. One in three women across the world has experienced violence including: physical, mental and sexual violence. This leads to many health problems in the globe such are: physical and mental health of women and girls, injury, depression, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, abortion and death.

Statistics show that all women killed globally, almost half of them are murdered by their partner or by someone they know. Also, the cases of domestic violence are very frequent in all societies in the world. Around 1 in 10 (120 million) girls worldwide have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives.

Over 700 million women alive today were married as children and already suffer the consequences of child marriage. It means that each year, 12 million girls are married before the age of 18 that is 23 girls every minute, nearly one girl every 2 seconds. Moving further, 250 million of these girls are married before 15 years old. Child marriage violates girls' rights to health, education and opportunity. It is a global issue because if there is no reduction in child marriage the global number of women married as children will reach 1.2 billion by 2050, with devastating consequences for the whole world. There are many countries that women are discriminated the most in all spheres of life such are: Jordan, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Malaysia, Algeria, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and many others.

I want to take this opportunity and write about gender equality in my country, Kosovo. Kosovo is in a process of peace-building as a post-war nation. Kosovo is working to establish gender equality. We also can see women participate in politics and law enforcement in the Republic of Kosovo. The best example is when a female was elected as the fourth president of Kosovo. Women in Kosovo have the equal rights to men in terms of the rights to vote, property, rights and work. Even though, only 18% of women own property and 3.8% inherited property. Due to our culture, women in most cases are excluded from property inheritance or they are forced to give the property that belongs to them to their male relatives. Also, domestic violence seems to be common in Kosovo. However, sources estimated that 90% of domestic violence incidents go unreported.

According to a survey done in 2015, 68% of women reported that they had suffered from domestic violence at one point in their lives. Also, the survey is found that 20% of male and female thought it was acceptable for a husband to beat his wife.

Also, writing about sexual violence in Kosovo brings me one thing in mind to write about the women sexually violated during the war in Kosovo in 1998-1999 by Serbian and Yugoslav forces. There are not accurate statistics about it because there are many women alive that haven't reported the sexual violence. But, many believe that the number of the survived women is about thousands.

The worst thing is that most of these women and girls were sexually violated or raped in front of their family members including father, husband or brother. Being in that

difficult situation of war they could not help or protect their daughters, wives or sisters! And the worst of all was the fact that by the end of the war many husbands left their wives and some of them had to raise their children alone. These women had to face all alone the hard situation and consequences that came after the disaster that happened to them. Husbands left their wives because they could not bear to have their wives sexually violated. They left in the time when these women needed their protection, their help and their moral support the most! Today, women are choosing not to identify themselves as victims of sexual violence by the fear that they will be judged and because they feel ashamed of something that happened against their will. I would like to take this opportunity to extend that these victims should never feel disgraced of something that happened against their desire and were forced in it. Instead, these women should feel proud of themselves for staying strong, for not giving up and for finding the force to continue, to overcome the nightmares of their horror, to learn to love the life again, to work hard and be successful. Indeed, you are our heroines! The Republic of Kosovo as an independent State is being represented in the best way possible by our talented girls as Majlinda Kelmendi, Rita Ora, Dua Lipa etc. These girls are our pride and in the same time the best ambassadors of Kosovo by recognizing it worldwide.

From the statistics above, we came in conclusion that gender equality is in an alarming point. Women's rights are violated in every country in the world and they are discriminated in all spheres of life in comparison to men. Sadly, there is no reduction in this number, instead it is growing day by day and that's why gender equality is not only a women's issue, but it is a global issue. Let's imagine the world in a near future and wonder why it's becoming such an uncomfortable place to live. In fact, it's not the world but it's the idea and the ambition behind it. We all know that this has to stop, we should give these things another direction, and for doing it we need everyone to be involved. By raising our voice we become the best advocates of ourselves. Women should be considered to have the same rights and opportunities. Women should be paid the same as men for the same work, women worldwide deserve to have at least a secondary education, and women deserve to participate in decisions that will affect their lives. And women should have the right to make decisions for their own body! Every girl deserves to marry a person they love and not to be forced to marry as a child against her will and break her dreams! Women don't need to be limited, they don't deserve to be marginalized nor by prejudices nor by circumstances because they might have the capacity to go even further than do men! I will conclude this piece of paper with a famous quote of one of the most influential women of all times, Marilyn Monroe that says: "give a woman the right shoes, and she can conquer the world!"

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