

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

FROM WAR TO RECOVERY: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO KOSOVO'S WAR TRAUMA

REPORT, 2026

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International Conference: From War to Recovery: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma

Dates: February 17-20, 2026

Venue: Central Administration Building, University of Prishtina
George Bush Street, No. 31, 10000 Prishtina

Organized by: Institute of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo (ICCW)

Executive Summary

The International Conference: From War to Recovery: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma was the second conference organized by the Institute of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo (ICCW). It brought together scholars, legal experts, policymakers, and practitioners to examine the multiple dimensions of war-related trauma, amplify the voices and testimonies of victims and survivors, and highlight institutional efforts in this field.

Once again commencing on Kosovo's Independence Day, the conference sought to consolidate reliable, evidence-based knowledge and advance transitional justice and collective memory as foundations for sustainable peace. Compared with the previous edition, the 2026 conference expanded significantly in both scope and programme. It comprised four thematic sessions featuring a total of 16 presentations, eight panel discussions, and two film screenings, compared with three sessions, eight presentations, and three panel discussions at the 2025 conference.

The research presented during the conference will be brought together in an edited scholarly volume, co-edited by Prof. Catherine Althaus (UNSW Canberra, Australia) and Prof. Blerina Kellezi (Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom).



INTRODUCTION

Background and Relevance

The Kosovo War left profound and enduring effects on individuals, families, and communities, many of which remain unresolved nearly three decades later. The conference serves as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue across the fields of psychology, law, history, art, and public policy, bringing together academics, professionals, survivors, and institutional representatives around the shared objectives of advancing transitional justice and post-war recovery. The expanding scope of the conference reflects both the complexity of Kosovo's wartime legacy and the sustained commitment required to address it comprehensively. This requires not only systematic documentation and legal accountability, but also the preservation of memory, processes of healing, and recognition of all those affected by the war.

The 2025 conference examined the enduring legacy of the Kosovo War, with particular emphasis on the documentation and adjudication of crimes committed during the war. By bringing together scholars and practitioners from the fields of law, anthropology, history, and sociology, the conference fostered interdisciplinary engagement and contributed to the advancement of research on transitional justice in Kosovo. Its organization on Kosovo's Independence Day further underscored the close relationship between state-building, historical accountability, and the pursuit of justice for wartime atrocities. Building on these foundations, the 2026 conference broadened its conceptual and disciplinary framework to address the long-term and multidimensional consequences of the war, many of which continue to affect individuals, families, and communities nearly three decades later. By incorporating perspectives from psychology, public policy, and the arts alongside legal and historical approaches, the conference reflected an increasingly holistic understanding of post-war recovery and transitional justice.

Across both editions of the conference, the ICCW has maintained a pivotal role in advancing the systematic documentation of war crimes as a continuous and evolving process. This work extends beyond the collection of evidence for judicial proceedings to encompass the preservation of historical memory, the recognition of victims' and survivors' experiences, and the production of scholarly knowledge concerning wartime atrocities in Kosovo. The progression from the 2025 to the 2026 conference reflects a growing recognition that the documentation of war crimes is not a finite undertaking, but rather a sustained scholarly, institutional, and societal commitment. Such a commitment remains fundamental to strengthening accountability, preserving historical memory, and advancing the ongoing pursuit of justice in Kosovo.

Objectives

Building on the foundations established by the first edition, the 2026 conference sought to broaden the multidisciplinary examination of Kosovo's wartime legacy. A central objective was to strengthen survivor-centred perspectives by placing testimonies, lived experiences, and community narratives at the forefront. The conference also sought to examine the psychological and social dimensions of war-related trauma, including its intergenerational effects, its impact on vulnerable groups such as women, children, and forcibly displaced persons, and its long-term consequences for the mental health of affected communities. Through its presentations and discussions, the conference further aimed to strengthen accountability by highlighting the ongoing efforts of institutions engaged in the documentation and adjudication of war crimes. As with the previous edition, one of the key tangible outcomes of the conference is the preparation of an edited scholarly volume. Once published, the volume will serve as a lasting academic resource for researchers and policymakers working in the field of transitional justice in Kosovo and beyond.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Government Bodies

- Office of the Prime Minister
- Institute of War Crimes in Kosovo, ICCW
- Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo
- Special Prosecution Office of the Republic of Kosovo
- Kosovo Police War Crimes Investigation Directorate
- Institute of Forensic Medicine
- Government Commission on Missing Persons
- Kosovo State Archive
- National Library of Kosova

Academic Institutions

- Institute of War Crimes in Kosovo, ICCW
- University of Stockholm
- University of Pretoria
- University of Birmingham
- Nottingham Trent University
- University of Westminster
- University of Prishtina
- University of Tirana
- University of Shkodra
- UBT College

International Organizations

- UK Embassy in Kosovo

Civil Society Organizations

- Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims, KRCT
- Medica Gjakova
- QPDG

Methodology

This report is based on data collected through the following methods:

- Analysis of keynote presentations, panel discussions, and interconnected sessions held over the course of the three-day conference;
- Documentation of direct quotations and contributions from presenters and participants; and
- Thematic analysis of panel topics and related discussions.

The The conference was structured around four thematic sessions:

- 1. Memory, Testimony, and Trauma Narratives**
- 2. Memorialization of Collective War Memory**
- 3. Pain, Memory, and the Stories We Inherit**
- 4. The Legacy of War: Pathways to Healing and Justice**

Each session featured a series of presentations followed by panel discussions involving experts from diverse fields, thereby fostering a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and multi-perspective approach to the topics under examination.

THE OPENING CEREMONY

Dr. **Atdhe Hetemi**, Executive Director of the Institute for War Crimes in Kosovo, opened the conference by framing the event as an institutional platform for structured, well-supported, and methodologically rigorous research into the war crimes committed in Kosovo. He emphasized that efforts to confront the past must be firmly grounded in scientific standards and substantiated facts.



He further stressed that research and investigations must be conducted with academic integrity, institutional responsibility, and sensitivity toward victims, with the ultimate aim of consolidating reliable knowledge and advancing transitional justice and collective memory as essential foundations for sustainable peace.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, **Albin Kurti**, delivered welcoming remarks on the state's role in addressing the legacy of the war. He emphasized the responsibility of public institutions to systematically support documentation processes, strengthen judicial mechanisms, and ensure the dignified treatment of victims and survivors.



Kurti presented transitional justice as both an institutional obligation and an integral component of Kosovo's democratic and legal order.

The Rector of the University of Prishtina, Dr. **Arben Hajrullahu**, delivered a keynote speech highlighting the long-term consequences of war crimes for both individuals and society as a whole. He presented justice for the victims of these crimes as a fundamental prerequisite for lasting peace and reaffirmed the University



of Prishtina's commitment to evidence-based research and institutional cooperation with the ICCW in this field.

The opening ceremony also featured the presentation of the upcoming edited volume by Dr. **Catherine Althaus** and Dr. **Blerina Kellezi**, which will synthesize the scholarly contributions presented at the conference and serve as a permanent scientific platform for the analysis of war trauma and recovery.



The ceremony concluded with an overview of the conference agenda and thematic structure, delivered by PhD candidate **Greta Avdyli**, A.D. Director of the Research Department at the ICCW, who outlined the sessions and the multidisciplinary approaches that would be explored over the course of the three days.





SHQIPTARË
BE S'ATOHUN

from Illyrians and Pelasgians. We will die here as well. We will
or leave this land.

MAIN FINDINGS

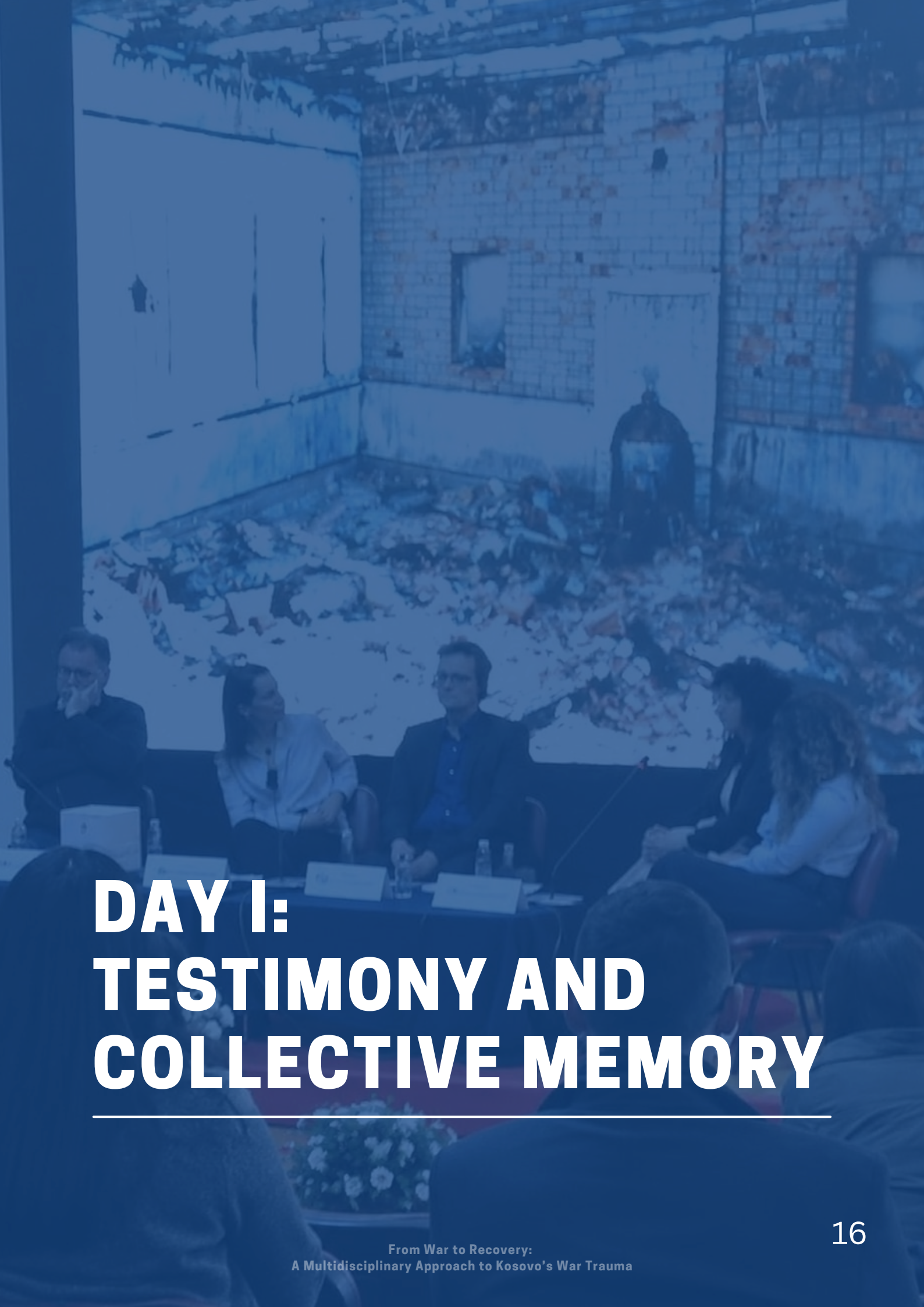
Thematic Sessions:

The conference was organized around four key thematic areas:

- **Memory, Testimony and Trauma Narratives** – This thematic area examined how survivors and witnesses document, narrate, and communicate their wartime experiences, with a focus on victim-centered methodologies and the role of testimony in establishing truth and preserving historical memory.
- **Memorialization of Collective War Memory** – This thematic area explored how communities, civil society, and institutions work to commemorate and preserve the collective memory of the Kosovo War, including through oral history, architectural heritage, and the ongoing challenges associated with public commemoration.
- **Pain, Memory, and the Stories We Inherit** – This thematic area addressed the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of war trauma, including its intergenerational impact, its representation in art and literature, and its long-term effects on the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities.
- **War Legacy: Paths to Healing and Justice** – This thematic area analyzed the institutional, legal, and social mechanisms through which Kosovo pursues accountability and recovery, with a particular focus on war-related sexual violence, gender-based harm, survivor care, and the responsibilities of the state toward victims.

Outcomes:

The presentations and discussions held during the conference will be synthesized into an edited volume edited by Prof. Catherine Althaus and Prof. Blerina Kellezi. The volume will serve as a valuable resource for academics and policymakers working in the broader field of transitional justice.

A panel discussion is taking place in a room with a large mural of a destroyed building in the background. Five people are seated at a long table with microphones and nameplates. The audience is visible in the foreground, looking towards the panelists.

DAY I: TESTIMONY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Session 1 of the conference was moderated by Greta Avdyli. The session examined the importance of memory, testimony, and trauma narratives, emphasizing multidisciplinary approaches and the importance of respecting survivors' experiences.

Memory, Testimony, and Trauma Narratives

Dr. **Furtuna Sheremeti** and Dr. **Aidan Hehir**, of the **University of Pristina and the University of Westminster**, respectively, and editors of the first volume, opened the session with a presentation on the first edited volume arising from the first ICCW Conference, *The Scale, Legacy, Documentation, and Prosecution of Crimes Committed in Kosovo*. The presentation outlined the content and main scholarly contributions of the publication to the study of crimes committed during the war in Kosovo.

Juliana Ajdini (University of Tirana) presented her research paper, **"Is It Hard to Laugh Again? Mothers' Memories, Guilt, and Resilience After the War."** Ajdini is a lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Tirana. She has published several scholarly articles in national and international journals and has participated in academic conferences, contributing to the advancement of scholarship and professional practice in her field.

Blerina Kellezi (Nottingham Trent University) presented the study **"The Impact of Holistic Justice on the Long-Term Experiences and Well-Being of Survivors of Mass Human Rights Violations: Ethnographic Evidence and Interviews from Kosovo, Northern Ireland, and Albania."** Drawing on ethnographic evidence and interviews conducted across these contexts, Kellezi analyzed the relationship between transitional justice mechanisms and survivors' well-being.

Mehmet Musaj (Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims, KRCT) presented the study **"Documenting Memory: A Survivor-Centered Approach to the Wartime Legacy in Kosovo."** The presentation addressed the importance of preserving survivors' testimonies and experiences as part of the broader legacy of the war, as well as the role of documentation processes in preserving collective memory and supporting the recovery of survivors of sexual violence.

Session 2 was moderated by Laura Brumleve, who led the discussion on the processes of memorialization and the construction of collective memory. The session contributed to broader discussions concerning the memorialization, documentation, and preservation of collective war memory, emphasizing the importance of strong institutional and multidisciplinary approaches.

Memorialization of Collective War Memory

Arsim Canolli (University of Prishtina) presented his research paper, **"Documenting the Memory of Atrocities: The Oral History Project of the Krushë e Madhe Massacre Case,"** co-authored by **Tahir Latifi and Shemsi Krasniqi**. The presentation addressed the documentation of survivors' experiences and the preservation of collective memory of the crimes committed in Krushë e Madhe.

Marigona Shabiu and **Aidan Hehir (University of Westminster)** presented the research paper **"Civil Society and the Struggle for Memorialization"**, which addressed the role of civil society organizations in shaping collective memory and in efforts to memorialize wartime events.

Gjejlane Hoxha and **Fjollë Caka (Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo and UBT College)** concluded the session with a presentation of their research paper, **"Preserving Collective Memory Through the Documentation of Architectural Heritage in Post-War Kosovo"**. The presentation addressed the importance of protecting cultural and architectural heritage as part of the peacebuilding process and the preservation of collective identity.

Panel Discussion 1

Following the first two sessions, the first panel discussion was moderated by Greta Avdyli. It addressed the ways in which personal narratives are intertwined with judicial processes and the broader social reckoning with the past. The panelists shared structured reflections on the experiences of survivors and witnesses of massacres, drawing on their memories of the war.

Survivors and Witnesses of Massacres in Kosovo

Bislim Zogaj, a survivor of the Dubrava Prison massacre, presented his account of his time in prison. He highlighted his experiences of traumatic events, including the killings and injuries during the massacre, efforts to help the wounded, the struggle for survival, and the support he received. Zogaj's account illustrated the psychological and social impact of war trauma and the importance of personal testimony as a source of historical documentation.

Jusuf Buzhala, a survivor of the Kralan massacre, shared his account of the extreme violence, including the separation of men from their families, the burning of bodies and civilians being burned alive, and widespread killings. The discussion emphasized both the trauma experienced by survivors and the importance of documenting their experiences as historical sources. Buzhala also underscored the need for judicial processes to contribute to the preservation of collective memory.

Bekim Gashi, a survivor of the Tërnje massacre, described his experiences as a witness to the killings and forced disappearances of family members and neighbors, as well as to systematic crimes. He also discussed the identification of Serbian soldiers who participated in the massacre. Following the war, the main challenge was searching for and documenting the dead and missing, an essential process for the preservation of historical memory and the advancement of transitional justice.



Panel Discussion 2

The second panel discussion focused on the experiences of children during the war in Kosovo, exploring the psychological, social, and educational effects of wartime experiences. The discussion was moderated by Valentina Shahini-Grajčevci, who provided an academic reflection on the ways in which early experiences of trauma affect individual development. The panelists shared their stories and perspectives on their childhood experiences, the recovery process, and the process of rebuilding their lives. Their insights highlighted the importance of integrating children's perspectives into the documentation of collective memory and in assessing the long-term psychological, social, and developmental consequences of the war.

Those Who Experienced the War in Kosovo as Children

Blerta Nalli shared her experiences of the war in Kosovo, during which she was a teenager. She recounted her exposure to massacres and torture, the separation of women and children from men, and the challenges of coping with psychological and social trauma in the post-war period.

Besnik Deliu shared his experiences of the war, which he experienced at the age of five. He recounted the trauma he experienced during and after the war, emphasizing its impact on psychophysical development and emotional and social adaptation.

Kimete Haxholli recounted the killing of her father, the disappearance of his body, and the later discovery of his remains in a mass grave.



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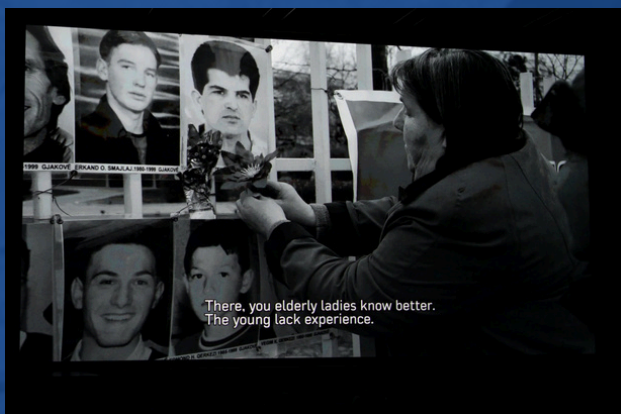
“At the end of the war, the main challenge was the search and documentation of the dead and missing persons, an essential process for the preservation of historical memory and for transitional justice.”

Bekim Gashi, a survivor of the Tërñje massacre

MOVIE NIGHT AND PANEL DISCUSSION III

As part of the first day of the conference, which was dedicated to exploring wartime memory through art, the documentary **Ferdonija** was screened. The documentary tells the story of Mother Ferdonije and other women searching for their missing family members as a result of the war. It portrays loss, emotional absence, and the ongoing struggle for justice and historical recognition. The subsequent panel discussion was moderated by Drilon Selmani and focused on the human, historical, and cultural dimensions of the film.

Gazmend Bajri, the director of the film, shared insights into his creative experience, the challenges of the production process, and his artistic approach to addressing war-related themes. He emphasized the role of cinema as a bridge between history and the public. The discussion highlighted the film as an important medium for documenting personal and social experiences and fostering public dialogue about the past, while also underscoring the role of art in preserving historical memory.



Panel Discussion 3

The final panel discussion of the first day was moderated by Drilon Selmani. The discussion addressed the role of international correspondents, the challenges of reporting, and the influence of the media in shaping narratives of the war. The panel offered a critical analysis of the challenges, responsibilities, and influence associated with media reporting in times of war.

War Correspondents and Media Coverage During the Kosovo War

Nuhi Bytyçi reflected on the systematic repression of Albanian media and the political context preceding the war, emphasizing the critical role of information during periods of heightened tension.

Ridvan Slivova reflected on his work as a photojournalist and the power of photography to document dramatic moments and preserve historical memory.

Jeta Xharra shared her experience as a journalist reporting from the field. She highlighted the security risks, limited access to information, and the challenges involved in seeking to report accurately under pressure.





- How much longer must we endure?



From War to Recovery:
A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma

A FILM BY
SHKURTE DAUTI
GAZMEND BAJRI

Ferdonija

3V G



From War to Recovery:
A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma

GENDER:



12 cases



10 cases

DAY II: **PAIN, MEMORY AND THE STORIES WE INHERIT**

The second day of the conference opened with Session 3, moderated by Blerim Halili. The presentations contributed to broader discussions of pain, memory, and inherited narratives. They also reflected multifaceted approaches grounded in the humanities, social sciences, and health sciences.

Pain, Memory, and the Stories we Inherit

Brikena Smajli and Ermira Alija (Center of Albanological Studies, University of Shkodra) presented the paper **“Metamorphosis of Pain: The Myth of Niobe as an Axis of Trauma and Memory in the Documentary Novel of Ag Apolloni.”** Their presentation examined the maternal figure and the preservation of trauma through literary creation and myth.

Diona Visoka and Kaltrina Kelmendi (University of Prishtina) presented the paper **“The Impact of Historical Trauma on the Justification of the System Through Victimizing Narratives.”** The presentation explored the impact of historical trauma on the justification of unequal systems in Kosovo.

Isa Blumi (University of Stockholm) presented the paper **“Hierarchies of Destruction: An Anthropology of the Kosovo Traumatic Experience (1912–2012)”**, which analyzed the dynamics of ethnic cleansing, patriotism, and forced displacement, as well as the transmission of experiences and trauma across generations.

Tringa Visoka (University of Prishtina) presented the paper **“The Relationship Between Traumatic Experiences, Social Support, and Psychological Well-Being Among Families of War Martyrs”**. Visoka discussed the difficulties faced by survivors, including exposure to extreme circumstances and unprecedented crimes, as well as the role of social support in promoting family well-being.

Mytaher Haskuka (University of Prishtina) presented the paper **“Long-Term Effects of Traumatic Events of the Kosovo War on PTSD, Anxiety, and Depression Among Students”**. His presentation examined the relationship between exposure to trauma and clinical symptoms, such as traumatic stress, re-experiencing, and anxiety.

Panel Discussion 4

This panel was moderated by Arjeta Gashi-Gara and discussed those who were forced to leave their homes. The discussion addressed the documentation of refugee experiences, their impact on collective memory, and the study of the humanitarian consequences of the war.

Forcibly Displaced Persons and Refugees during the War in Kosovo

Naim Ismajli, a survivor of the Kralan massacre, recounted his experience. He was saved from execution when his father, Sheremet Ismajli, took his place. His father subsequently remained missing until April 2025. Ismajli also reflected on the violence and sacrifices associated with his forced displacement to Albania.



Arbnor Tolaj shared his personal experiences of the violence and systematic persecution experienced by his family before and during the war. He also recounted the discovery of his father's body in the family's backyard after the war.

Kumrije Karaqica shared her experiences of the war and internal forced displacement. She recounted the physical violence inflicted upon her by Serbian forces during her sixth month of pregnancy and the killing of her husband and nine-year-old brother. Her account illustrated the long-term effects of trauma and the importance of documenting collective memory.



The fourth session of research presentations was moderated by Etnike Dibrani, who guided discussions on wartime violence and post-war institutional responsibilities. The research presentations addressed sexual violence, gender-based violence, and the issue of persons missing as a result of the war. The discussions contributed to a broader examination of the consequences of war, placing particular emphasis on war-related violence, state responsibilities, and the necessity of sensitive and inclusive approaches.

War Legacy: Paths to Healing and Justice

Greta Avdyli and Gerda van Dijk (Institute of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo and University of Pretoria) presented the paper **“Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War in Kosovo: Post-War Survivor Care and Healing”**. Gerda van Dijk examined sexual violence as a weapon of war used by Serbian forces to inflict long-term harm upon the population and perpetuate stigmatization. Her analysis of survivors’ experiences shed light on the extent of trauma, the timing and methods of perpetration, and the age of the victims.

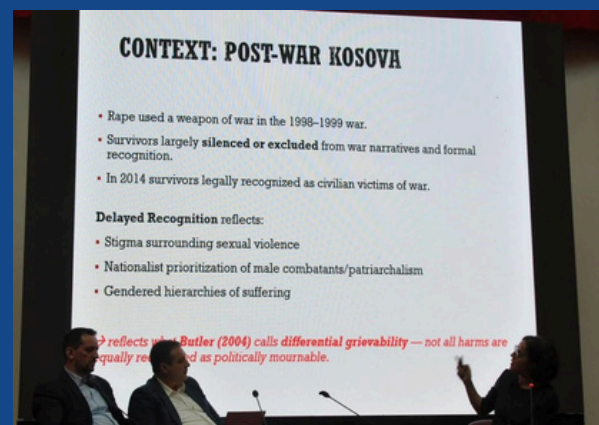
Greta Avdyli presented an in-depth analysis of data from 22 cases involving victims of sexual violence. The findings provided insights into the weapons and forms of force used during these acts, as well as the frequency of this form of crime. The paper demonstrated how these organized forms of violence were used as a weapon of war.

Hina Malik (University of Birmingham) presented the paper **“Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys During the Kosovo War: Filling the Evidence Gap and Understanding the Silences Around Male Victims of CRSV”**. She emphasized that the silence surrounding male survivors is shaped by the fear of stigmatization and social exclusion, as well as systemic gaps in testimony and documentation concerning this category of victims.

Ardiana Shala (Nottingham Trent University) presented the paper **“Gender-Based Violence, Recognition, and State Responsibilities”**. The study analyzed the experiences of survivors of sexual violence within the context of collective silence, stigma, and limited formal recognition. The study further examined the impact of dominant war narratives and the prioritization of a national identity centered on the male figure. These dynamics, intertwined with entrenched patriarchal structures, have contributed to the marginalization of survivors and delays in institutional accountability.

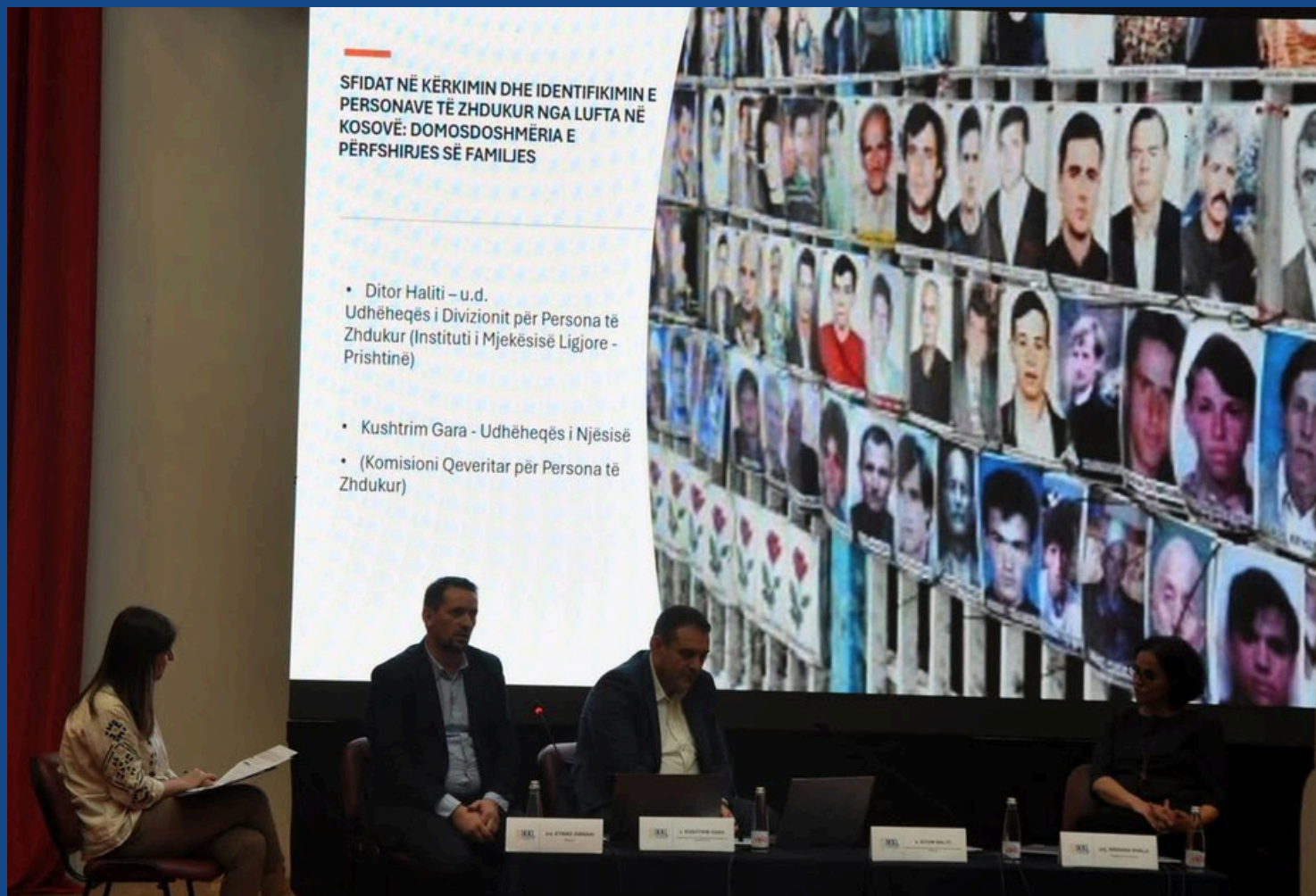
Ditor Haliti and Kushtrim Gara (Institute of Forensic Medicine and Government Commission on Missing Persons) presented their joint research paper, **“Challenges in the Search for and Identification of Missing Persons from the War in Kosovo: The Necessity of Family Involvement.”** Ditor Haliti outlined the key findings of the study concerning the challenges associated with identifying persons reported missing during the war in Kosovo. He emphasized the importance of traditional methods for identifying exhumed remains, medico-legal and scientific identification methods, and the role of political dialogue and the active involvement of families in obtaining information and confirming the identities of victims.

Kushtrim Gara presented the issue from the perspective of the families of missing persons. He emphasized that the participation of families within a complex political, legal, humanitarian, and social context, together with efforts to address challenges in dialogue and ensure the fulfilment of state obligations, is essential to the effective pursuit of justice.





From War to Recovery:
A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma



From War to Recovery:
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Movie Night and Panel Discussion 5

The second film screened during the conference was “**Klithma**,” followed by a discussion that fostered reflection on sexual violence during the war and the role of art in shaping collective memory. Moderated by Rrezarta Ahmeti, the discussion addressed the experiences and long-term consequences of sexual violence against men during the war. These consequences were examined across physical, psychological, and social dimensions. The film highlighted stigmatization, collective silence, and the familial and marital challenges faced by survivors.

Korab Lecaj, the film’s director, emphasized that the primary aim of the film was to inform viewers and foster empathy. Cinema served as a means of creating space for survivors to speak publicly and confront trauma and stigma.

Panel Discussion 5

The fifth panel focused on the role of art in the aesthetic interpretation and memorialization of wartime experiences. The panel as a whole underscored the necessity of listening to survivors’ experiences and the power of art as a means of documentation, reflection, and the preservation of historical memory, thereby contributing to the restoration of dignity and social recognition of survivors.

Interpreting War through Art: Remembering Kosovo

Arian Krasniqi discussed the impact of war-themed films and asserted that a lack of institutional support and broader structural challenges limit engagement with this topic in local cinema.

Blerina Rogova-Gaxha underscored the ethical and artistic obligation to document war through literature, analyzing post-war literature as a form of testimony by authors who experienced the war and who establish connections between historical experience and literary creation.





DAY III: **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Panel Discussion 6

The third and final day of the conference opened with a panel discussion focusing on the role of institutions and organizations in providing care for, supporting, and empowering survivors of wartime sexual violence. Leonora Vranja moderated the panel, and the discussion addressed ongoing challenges, progress achieved, and the continuing need for justice and rehabilitation.

Institutions Working on Addressing Wartime Victims of Rape and Sexual Violence

Feride Rushiti emphasized the role of the KRCT in the medical and psychosocial rehabilitation of survivors of sexual violence and in documenting their accounts in an impartial and respectful manner. The KRCT has implemented multidisciplinary practices and a faith-based treatment model as part of this process. The organization has also systematically documented the consequences of war and addressed bureaucratic challenges in its efforts to empower survivors and contribute to transitional justice.

Vepror Shehu discussed sexual violence as a weapon of war used as a means of ethnic cleansing. Such violence inflicted collective trauma on survivors. Pregnancies resulting from rape also affected minors. Collective silence has made survivor identification difficult. Nevertheless, once identified, survivors receive support through interdisciplinary approaches. Cooperation with institutions is essential to ensuring an effective response to legal requirements. These practices aim to empower survivors and support their integration into the community.

Anita Istogu emphasized the severity of the trauma experienced by survivors of sexual violence, as well as the stigmatization, prejudice, and social barriers they face. Effective psychological and social support requires the development of trust and safe relationships, alongside socioeconomic empowerment. The QPDG plays a key role in leading and coordinating these services to ensure comprehensive and integrated support.

Leonora Selmani provided insights into the roles of the Government Commission and state institutions in recognizing the status of survivors and providing institutional support. The process depends on legal reforms governing the recognition of survivor status; however, the main challenges include the lack of documentation required to substantiate cases of sexual violence and difficulties in establishing the commission.

She also emphasized the contributions of organizations to identifying survivors and providing support. State policies are being developed to overcome these challenges and strengthen the institutional response to the needs of survivors.

Mirlinda Sada emphasized Medica Gjakova's role in addressing the physical and psychological consequences of sexual violence and providing long-term support to women and girl survivors. Its programs address anxiety, depression, and other effects of trauma through individual psychosocial sessions, as well as sessions involving partners or family members. This holistic approach addresses not only the direct consequences of trauma but also the broader factors that affect the healing process.



Panel Discussion 7

This panel was moderated by Greta Avdyli. It focused on the work carried out by the Institute of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo. All panelists were representatives of the ICCW and discussed current processes, challenges related to documentation, and goals for the near future.

Institute of Crimes Committed During the War in Kosovo: The Ongoing Commitment on Documenting and Addressing Wartime Crimes

Sedat Sahitaj, Head of the Division for Specialized Analysis

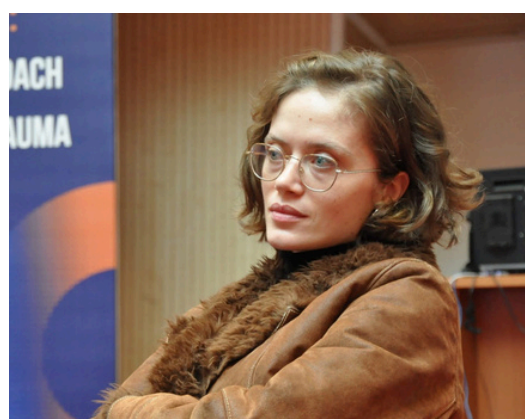
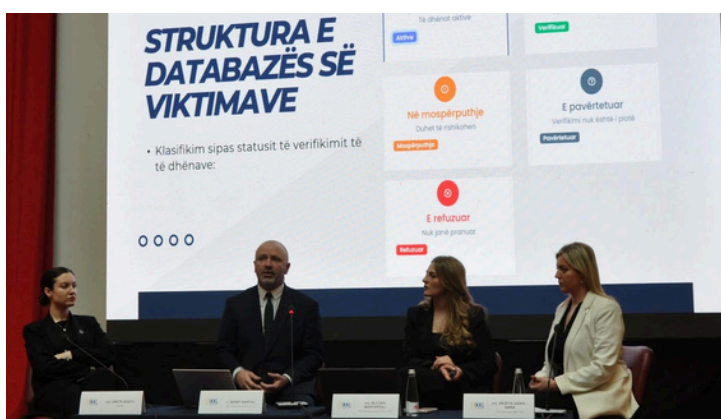
Bleona Maxharraj, Senior War Damage Assessment Officer

Arjeta Gashi-Gara, Senior Victim Analysis Officer

The discussion focused on the creation of a digital platform for all victims of the war, which represents the first initiative of its kind among state institutions. The lack of a unified institutional database and a central point of reference for researchers underscores the need for a standardized approach to documenting victims and preserving their stories. The development of the platform is based on a comprehensive and structured approach that combines a clear methodology, verification, technology, and classification. Various sources are also used to document victims.

The discussion focused on the creation of a digital platform for all victims of the war, the first initiative of its kind among state institutions. The absence of a unified institutional database and a central point of reference for researchers underscores the need for a standardized approach to documenting victims and preserving their stories. In this regard, the ICCW is actively working on the development of the first institutional database of war victims in Kosovo, reflecting its broader commitment to establishing a reliable and comprehensive record of the war and its consequences.

The process underpinning this platform combines a rigorous methodology with verification procedures, technological tools, and systematic classification. Drawing on a wide range of sources, the initiative aims not only to document victims accurately but also to preserve the factual record of wartime events, demonstrating the ICCW's dedication to safeguarding historical truth and ensuring that evidence of what occurred in Kosovo remains accessible to future generations.



Panel Discussion 8

The conference concluded with the eighth panel, moderated by Greta Avdyli. The discussion addressed the investigation and documentation of war crimes in Kosovo, with an emphasis on inter-institutional cooperation, investigative processes, legal challenges, and compliance with international standards. The panel underscored the importance of a coordinated approach based on international standards for addressing war crimes and their consequences.

Institutions Working on the Investigation of War Crimes: Ongoing Efforts

Sir Geoffrey Nice, this year's special guest speaker and former prosecutor in Slobodan Milošević's trial before the ICTY, praised the work of the ICCW and stressed the importance of collecting evidence in raw form, without prior analysis, to avoid subjective interference. He discussed the fragility of international criminal justice and the limitations imposed by political will. His remarks underscored that, beyond convictions, the documentation and preservation of evidence remain essential to ensuring a complete picture of events. His experience in Račak was cited as illustrating the need to return to the field and conduct a detailed analysis of the facts.

Ilir Morina, from the Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo, highlighted the lack of a comprehensive legal framework, material evidence, and specialized investigators as the main obstacles to well-founded indictments. He stressed the need for a coordinated strategy, stronger international cooperation, and the use of modern investigative and forensic methods.

Kushtrim Gara from the Governmental Commission for Missing Persons, emphasized the lack of reliable information, the presence of unidentified remains, and the challenges of cross-border cooperation, while also highlighting the ongoing commitment to clarifying the fate of missing persons.

Captain Avni Vrajolli, from the Kosovo Police, addressed operational challenges, including the passage of time since the events, the lack of specialized personnel, the death or migration of witnesses, and the difficulty of arresting suspects who reside abroad. He emphasized the strengthening of staff capacity and the prioritization of cases in coordination with the Prosecution.

Ditor Haliti, from the Institute of Forensic Medicine, spoke about the process of identifying victims, distinguishing between traditional identification methods and contemporary DNA-based methodologies. He underscored the importance of forensic standards and the reopening of cases involving misidentification to restore families' trust.



From War to Recovery:
A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma

Analysis and Discussion

The conference highlighted the multifaceted and ongoing nature of Kosovo's efforts to address its wartime past, demonstrating that recovery from war requires sustained engagement across academic, institutional, legal, and artistic domains.

In this context, the ICCW has reaffirmed its commitment to fostering collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, including academic institutions, government bodies, international experts, civil society organizations, and members of the artistic community. Recognizing that the documentation of wartime atrocities extends beyond legal and historical inquiry alone, the ICCW actively supports interdisciplinary approaches by making its archival materials available for research, education, public policy initiatives, artistic productions, and other projects. Since its establishment, the Institute has increasingly become a central repository and reference point for war crimes documentation in Kosovo, attracting growing interest from researchers, institutions, and practitioners in the field seeking access to its collections. This expanding engagement reflects both the significance of the Institute's archival holdings and the broader recognition that preserving and examining documentary evidence from multiple perspectives are essential to advancing historical knowledge, public awareness, accountability, and collective memory.

Key Issues Discussed Included:

- The centrality of survivor testimony in the processes of evidence-gathering and healing;
- Persistent gaps in documentation and recognition, especially for marginalized survivors;
- The intersection of memory, art, and collective identity;
- Institutional and legal challenges to accountability; and
- The value of interdisciplinary and comparative approaches.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Building on the momentum of the previous year, The International Conference on the Progression from War to Recovery: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma demonstrated the progress made in the field of transitional justice in Kosovo. A central feature of the conference was its insistence on treating recovery as a long-term and evolving process rather than a finished chapter. The key insights emerging from the conference reaffirmed that the broader process of recovery requires continued attention to memory, mental health, cultural preservation, and institutional accountability.

Taken together, the 2025 and 2026 conferences underscore the significant progress made in advancing transitional justice in Kosovo while reaffirming that the pursuit of justice, recovery, and historical accountability remains an ongoing process. The International Conference on the Scale, Legacy, Documentation, and Adjudication of Crimes Committed in Kosovo highlighted the importance of comprehensive documentation, interdisciplinary research, and survivor-centered approaches to addressing war crimes and strengthening accountability. Building on these foundations, The International Conference on the Progression from War to Recovery: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Kosovo's War Trauma expanded the discussion beyond legal adjudication to encompass the broader and long-term dimensions of post-war recovery, emphasizing memory, survivor-centered approaches, cultural preservation, and institutional responsibility.

A central theme emerging from both conferences is the recognition that transitional justice cannot be understood as a finite objective but rather as a continuous societal commitment requiring sustained engagement across academic, legal, governmental, cultural, and civil society spheres. In this regard, the ICCW has played a pivotal role in advancing the documentation and preservation of Kosovo's wartime history. Through its commitment to rigorous research, comprehensive documentation practices, the development of the first institutional database of war victims, and the maintenance of an increasingly significant archival repository, the ICCW has contributed to safeguarding historical facts and supporting evidence-based approaches to justice and remembrance. Its collaboration with domestic and international institutions, researchers, experts, and cultural actors further demonstrates the importance of interdisciplinary partnerships in documenting wartime atrocities and preserving collective memory. Together, these conferences reaffirm that accountability, historical truth, and recovery are deeply interconnected processes and that the ICCW's ongoing work remains essential to ensure that the experiences of survivors and the realities of the war continue to inform scholarship, public understanding, and the pursuit of justice across generations.

Beyond its scholarly contributions, the ICCW conference has increasingly established itself as a unique and influential platform that brings together academics, policymakers, institutional representatives, international experts, legal practitioners, members of civil society, artists, and survivors of wartime atrocities. By facilitating dialogue among these diverse actors, the conference has created a space not only for critical reflection and exchange but also for the development of concrete scholarly and institutional outputs. This commitment to translating discussion into tangible results is evidenced by the publication of the first edited volume arising from the 2025 conference proceedings as part of Routledge's South East European Studies series, which brought Kosovo's experiences and perspectives on transitional justice to an international academic audience.

The preparation of a second volume, currently underway, further demonstrates the conference's sustained intellectual impact and its capacity to generate new knowledge on war crimes, memory, and post-conflict recovery. These achievements reflect the ICCW's broader mission to ensure that research, documentation, and public engagement extend beyond the conference setting and contribute to international scholarship, policy debates, and historical understanding. In doing so, the ICCW has strengthened its position as a leading institution in the field of war crimes research and documentation, while also enhancing the international visibility of Kosovo's experiences, challenges, and contributions to the study of transitional justice.

Future efforts should focus on:

- Strengthening institutional frameworks and unified documentation systems, including the continued development of standardized digital platforms for documenting victims;
- Expanding recognition and support for survivors of war-related sexual violence, children affected by the war, and families of missing persons;
- Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration across legal, historical, psychological, and artistic fields to ensure a holistic approach to trauma and recovery;
- Continuing to amplify survivor voices and experiences in legal, academic, and public discourse; and
- Investing in forensic and investigative capacities to address the ongoing challenges of identifying missing persons and pursuing accountability decades after the war.

Beyond its academic outputs, the conference served as a platform for collaboration, bringing together universities, government institutions, and civil society organizations, both domestic and international. This strengthened networks that are likely to inform future research and policy in this area.

Once again held on Kosovo's Independence Day, the conference's timing carried symbolic significance, linking the country's pursuit of justice for its past with its ongoing democratic development.

The forthcoming edited volume by Professors Catherine Althaus and Blerina Kellezi will further advance this work, bringing together contributions presented at the conference in a resource intended to support both scholarship and policy. Taken as a whole, the conference reaffirmed that Kosovo's path from war to recovery remains an ongoing process and that sustained collaboration across disciplines and institutions will be essential to advancing this process.

