

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW EXTRACT

[The in-depth oral history interview with the narrator was conducted on May 3, 2021 in Pristina. Due to the narrator's request for anonymity, we have concealed the identity.]

Narrator: After giving birth to my son, I had serious health issues, and I didn't have the support of my husband or his family. I lived with my husband and his parents.

Interviewer: Where?

Narrator: In Pristina. Even after I gave birth to my son, I continuously had health issues. Issues began from pregnancy but were more visible after giving birth to my son.

Interviewer: What kind of issues were they?

Narrator: Maybe not much during pregnancy. Some things that were said to me, some... psychological and such, because I did not experience physical violence. But sometimes psychological violence hurts more than... a word hurts more than a slap. For example, I didn't have the right to make any plans with my husband, because we always had to ask his married sister, should I or should I not do it? If I ever made a plan, actually if we made a plan it always failed. So, the biggest issues came up after I gave birth. I had health issues because of their negligence. I am aware of what I am saying, they didn't allow me to go to the doctor.

Interviewer: Why?

Narrator: Because allegedly, "She's just faking it, she doesn't have anything. We all gave birth, we all were in pain. We all had this, we had that." And...

Interviewer: More specifically, was it depression after giving birth?

Narrator: No, I had breast abscess, from which they told me it had become cancer. Since they didn't let me go to the doctor and get treatment, it has grown. When I started going to the doctor, if I'm not wrong, my son was two weeks old. After my son was two weeks old, I noticed they didn't ins... not... I insisted on going to the doctor and they still went on with that, "It goes away, this happened to everyone. It will pass." And I insisted on going to my father's house. Not to go to father's and separate, but I said, "I miss them, I want to go there for a while." And okay, his mother said, "Take her!" He took me to my father's house. And the night I went to my father's house, I fainted. Then my brother called him on the phone and told him about my condition. And he said, "If you don't come and take her to the doctor since she's your wife and in the condition you brought her, we will take her." He came and took me to the doctor.

When we went to the Family Medical Center, they sent us to the hospital. And in the hospital I had my first surgical intervention. Everything happened there without anesthesia, without anything, because the body was filled with pus. And they said, "Even if we give you anesthesia it will not make you numb." So, all those cuts, they were all done without anesthesia. The doctor's words, "You should have brought her in earlier, not have her get to this state. But thank God you brought her, she could have died. All her organs were about to get infected." After five weeks, I had to do more detailed tests, where they said, "You have breast cancer and you have to get operated on and remove the breast." So, I was in the fourth week of treatment when we separated.

Interviewer: Fourth week of what?

Narrator: Of treatment, when we separated. I woke up in the morning and went to the doctor, he was going to stitch my wounds that were still open, open for three weeks. The stitching was also done without anesthesia and I went back to the apartment. We ate Eid lunch and everything was as usual. Then my husband's parents went to their parents to wish them a happy Eid. My family called me, my brother, they said, "We want to come and wish you a happy Eid." Everything started here.

I told my husband that and, "Okay, fine." And I went to my son's room. Then her sister influenced the turn of events. When I went in, they were talking, I said, "What is happening?" "They have no reason to come here, why would they come when my parents aren't home? You're not the lady of the house. How dare you bring your family here when my mother isn't here." This is where all of it began, they started saying things to me for no reason.

I didn't want there to be a conflict between the families, because my family members respected them very much and I wanted to keep that relationship always. Whatever happened, I didn't want to tell my

family about the problems I had with my husband. I wanted them to respect him, love him the way they did.

Interviewer: Have you ever talked to anyone?

Narrator: No, never. Never. And I texted my brother, I said, “Don’t come, his parents aren’t here.” And my husband got a bit mad, “Why did you text him?” I said, “You’re not welcoming my family.” I said, “This is normal, it’s the same if they had come to the door and you had closed it, the same as saying to them, ‘Don’t come.’” I said, “He didn’t say they would come immediately, he just said, ‘We will come.’” I said, “I don’t understand why, what’s happening? They’re not the kind of family that would come here all the time.” They’re not the kind family that goes anywhere unannounced, if they were like that, I would find his request reasonable. But, regardless, parents are never unwelcomed.

And I even said, “It’s not out of the ordinary,” I said, “but it’s okay,” I said, “you decide.” I said, “What you do in your own home, you decide. There’s nothing I can do!” And I got up and went to my room, and since I had talked back to his sister, he came to the room and we started having a bigger fight. Then my brother called, I was crying, and when he called, I told him everything on the phone. When his parents came, I was too shy to come out and tell them what had happened. I am a shy person. And I went there, I sat, I tried to gather the courage to tell them what had happened.

At some point I knew that if I didn’t start talking, my brother would call them. And I sat, I said, “Father [father-in-law],” I said, “I have to discuss something with you if I could?” I said, I told him, I said, “My family wanted to come visit,” I said, “They didn’t agree.” I told him everything and as he was laying down, he got up and said, “I was against your relationship from the beginning.” I respected him a lot, I can’t say I loved him like my own father, because I can’t love anyone like my father, but I can say that I loved him 80 percent like my father. The only person who if I heard coughing in the other room I couldn’t stay still and ignore it.

I respected him, I respected him a lot. When he said that word, I don’t know, I can’t say I was surprised, but he shocked me. And I said, “Why, what happened? Why are you against me? Why are you against our relationship?” I said, “I know it’s over, but I just want to know this, I want to clarify these things so I can have a comfortable life, because I can see it now that I don’t have a comfortable life. What do you have against it? Why were you against it?” “No,” he said, “I have nothing against you. I can see you’re nice, polite, I was just against the relationship.” “Why against the relationship? Do you have anything against my father?” Because he knew my father.

“No, God forbid. I always said we’re lucky to have his daughter in our home.” “Then what were you against?” I said, “I don’t understand.” “Just,” he said, “I want my son to marry someone educated and employed.” “Okay,” I said, “I am educated, I’ve finished university, I’m not working now,” I said, “We got married, I became a mother, not everything can happen at the same time.” To be honest, those

words hurt me, his son had finished two universities but he was unemployed. I didn't understand why, why it is always the goal for the woman to work, to take care of the family, men should also do that for the family. I understand that the woman should work to offer support to her husband, but it's not her obligation to take care of the family.

I talked to his father there, "I," he said, "never liked you." "Okay," I said, "Before I got engaged to your son and before our relationship got more serious " I said, "We have met, and if our relationship is affected by your opinion, you should have said, 'We don't like her, she's not suitable for our home.'" I said, "I would have simply backed down." I said, "I just want to let you know of this, before you don't ruin someone else's life," I said, "Because you have put a stop to many things in my life with this." And then he started, he said, "Take," he said, "take her clothes, get her out of my house," he said, "I don't want to see her, I will find someone much better for you."

"Okay," I said, "You have decided?" I said, "Where I come from we say, this death happened and we saw each other. Now I'm saying this situation happened and I see where I belong," I said, "Or more accurately that I didn't belong in this family. And I would have never belonged here, no matter how much I would try." And I laughed, I literally laughed. And his sister said, "She's," she said, "she's not sane, she's laughing." And I got up and went to my room because I thought they were just angry and talked in vain, they didn't know what they were saying. And when I went to my room I heard his mother saying, "Everything she has, I don't even want her socks laying around here, get them out. Immediately get them out. Out!"

And he came and said, "Get your clothes ready, I'll take you to your father's house. I said, "Okay, you want to take me to my father's?" "Yes." "Do you have an explanation for my father, what are the reasons?" "I'll just say it isn't working." "You can't tell my father it isn't working, it worked until now. How is it not working now?" And I told them, "Can we wait until my brother goes home?" I said, "My father is alone," I said, "I don't want to, give him time to prepare him a little." "No, no, let's go immediately!" "Okay," I got up and took my bag and he asked his mother, "Can we give her the baby's diapers, or not?" There was a package of diapers he had just bought. Now, should they give them to me, or not? She said, "Give them to her, she can take them."

I went to my parent's house. I went in, it was only my father and my little sister. Out of all of this, that might have been the hardest moment. When I went in, they stayed at the door, my ex-husband and his father and asked my father outside. I went inside, when he saw me with my son he opened his arms, "Who came to see me." From happiness, he hugged us. The moment he hugged me, I started crying. The moment he saw me crying he knew something happened. "What happened?" I just said... I couldn't talk. I said, "They're waiting outside." "No," he said, "I will not go out if you don't tell me what's wrong. You matter to me, it doesn't matter who's waiting outside. You're important, what happened? Calm down."

And I stopped, I tried to calm down, but my voice was trembling, I couldn't speak clearly. And I said, "Father," I said, "this is what happened, they're waiting for you outside, I can't talk more, can you go outside?" I said, "They're waiting for you, they will tell you," I said, "If they decide to tell you." "Okay." And my father got out, "Okay," he said, "calm down, I'll take your son." And my father got out, when my father got out, my uncle was saying goodbye to some guests. My father said, "What's the problem?" He said, "I brought your daughter." "I can see you brought my daughter, but why? Did you bring her for Eid or what?"

"No, it's not about Eid," said his father. "Talk to your daughter," and he doesn't tell him anything. And my father said, "Okay, I will talk to my daughter, but I will tell you one thing, I will pray to God day and night that my daughter is to blame a little, but knowing what kind of child I have, she isn't to blame. I will pray that it's her fault and this doesn't get more complex. I'm telling you, you better know what you are doing, otherwise prepare for what is coming for you." Then my brother came, my mother, my sisters and I told them, I told my sister. She said, "Tell our father everything." I said, "I don't know if I can," I said, "that's why I'm talking to you," I said, "Because I know when I'm in front of our father I won't be able to speak," I said, "my voice won't come out." "Okay," she said, "Don't look at him, just say everything you have to say."

Then the next day I told my father, I sat, maybe God helped me and I talked with ease, I managed to tell him everything to the end. "Okay," he said, "what about your son?" I said, "He is my son." "I understand," he said, "that he is your son, he is my grandson, but what did they say about your son?" I said, "Nothing. They just said, 'Take your son.'" He said, "Didn't they say, 'Leave your son here, you can go?'" I said, "No." "Nothing?" I said, "No." "What, didn't they hug him?" "No" I said, "Not just them, even his father didn't hug or look at him." He said, "You don't have to tell me more."

He had no news of his son for two months. Nothing. Even though time after time, I sent him pictures. Not for any reason, but I felt sorry, I thought he would see how his son is doing. And when we went out after two months, we sat face to face, I was actually in front of his father. And as we were going there, I said to my father, "Father," I said, "if you think I haven't told you something, ask me now." "No," he said, "if you have forgotten to tell me something, tell me," he said, "because we're human, we can forget." I said, "I don't remember that I've forgotten anything," I said, "But if they say something, I have forgotten," I said, "will tell you that I forgot." You know. "Okay." And we went to meet them, all well.

They started joking at first, "How are you, what are you doing?" As usual, as if life had continued normally. Then my father said, "Let's get to the real talk now, because we didn't go out to drink coffee for fun of it," he said, "but we went out to find a solution for a problem," he said, "which is quite big," he said, "that will cost our whole life." So he addressed his father, "Now, I have more to talk with you," he said, "not with your son, or my daughter, because they're children. No matter how old they are," he said, "they're children. For me my daughter is still a child. Children are always children. So, I have to

talk to you man to man. What did my daughter do to you?" "Nothing." "Has she ever offended you, or disrespected you?" He said, "No, she respected me."

"Hasn't she been attentive to you?" "No, there was no need to ask anything of her, because she did everything." "Then what, did she offend you?" When he asked, "Did she offend you?" He gave a response that knowing my father I knew he would be suspicious. I interrupted, I said, "Father [father-in-law]," I still called him Father, "Father [father-in-law], sorry to interrupt, but my father asked you a question," I said, "I would ask you please answer him honestly." I said, "Because the way you answered my father provoked suspicion." "What," he said, "to answer?" "My father is asking you if I ever offended you?" He said, "Your words can't weigh enough to offend me." I laughed and said, "This answer is enough for me, and I believe for my father as well" My father said, "Why isn't she good enough?" He said, "You can't imagine how potent her words are."

I went out, my father always called me by my aunt's name, she was always very quiet and she suffered a lot. When I got engaged, I'm going back now to when I got engaged, he said to him [the fiancée], "I worry for her," he said, "she might suffer, because she holds it in, she doesn't express herself." And he said about my aunt, "She is just like Mirvet. She always endured," he said, "she was silent, she held it in. Now," he said, "she's fine. But her body has suffered," he said, "her life went to waste. Now her life is on point, her life is okay, but she suffered a lot." He said, "I feel sorry for my daughter too, because she doesn't talk. Talking to me is different," he said, "But she doesn't even talk to me, or anyone else. I worry for her. So, please the moment I see that she isn't doing well, I will know you are the problem."

And my father tells him, "I have always compared her to my sister because she is also like that," he said, "Out of my five children, if someone says anything about her I won't believe them. Not you, but my own wife," he said, "I wouldn't believe it, let alone you," he said, "Because I know what she's like." "No," he said, "I don't have any complaints either." He said, "Then what? Do you know when one leaves one's wife?" He said, "Do you know?" He said, "There are three reasons." He addressed my husband, "Have you caught her doing something she shouldn't have? "Professor," because he called him Professor, "God forbid!" He said, "How can you even utter something like that?" He said, "I can let her go anywhere by herself and I would not suspect her." "Did she lie to you?" "No." "Did she steal from you?" "No." "Then what? Quit these childish things. Are you a child? Weren't you capable of creating a family? If you weren't ready for a family, why did you do this to my daughter? Why didn't you do this to someone else, but my daughter? What did she do to you?"

When they saw they could not spin this, then they were less aggressive, and everything we talked about was the way I told my father. I said, "I've always decided on my own because my father supported me," I said, "This time, I want my father to decide and I will support him." "How," he said, "your father will decide for us?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Where have you heard something like this?" I said, "The same way your mother decided for us to separate." "Now," I said, "my father will decide for us to get back together." And I looked at my father, he said, "She decided, not me," he said, "she is

giving me that right, but it's her life, not mine. I," he said, "I can't trust you with my daughter in your house, you did this now, what about next time? Just because she was sick and you have to take her to the doctor, give her treatment? Treat her? And now that she is feeling better you want to take her back? When she isn't feeling well, we will take her to her father's, when she's well, we'll take her back to ours?"

He said, "What is the reason? In addition to that," he said, "even if she comes back, she needs two-three other months to pick herself up, she's still using treatment, she's still in therapy until she's done. Then," he said, "we can talk. Though," he said, "you have the opportunity," he said to his father, "to gather the men, and you can come to my house with them," he said, "and when men deal with this then," he said, "my daughter can come there." "No," he said, "we didn't start this with men, we will not deal with this with the men." "No," he said, "we didn't start it, but you brought it to this point," he said, "because we started off very well. We wanted to have a good relationship." And his father said, "I will never gather the men. Never," he said, "I will not gather the men." And there, "If you think this is men-to-men," he said, "Come, here he is." My father said, "I can do those things easily," he said, "but I've finished," he said, "school," he said, "I want to resolve things by coming to an agreement, not violence," he said, "because violence comes first. Immediately."

He said, "You wouldn't have talked if I chose violence," he said, "I wouldn't have waited for you for two months." He said, "But I can see that it isn't worth talking to you anymore. The other thing," he said, "that I've noticed," he said, "We've been sitting here for two hours, and neither he as a father nor you as a grandfather are capable of asking how the baby is doing. Does he have enough to eat, drink? Does he have diapers? Is he laughing, crying? Is he sick, is he okay? Neither one of you asked. Don't joke around. My grandchild is part of my daughter, part of me, he will grow up the same way my daughter did. Actually my daughter lacked some living conditions, he will not lack anything. I feel sorry that my grandchild will grow up without the love of his father, he will lack this. I will give him a grandfather's love, he will not lack grandfather's love, but his father's, yes." These were the last words and we separated. He went in his direction, I went mine. He said, "The door is open if you want to come back." But I never wanted to go back.