

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: I remember a case, I called on the phone, a man answered, he said, “My apartment is near Hotel Sirius, behind Hotel Sirius.” He explained to me where the apartment is and so, he said, “Two-three times a week, not more often.” “Okay, fine.” I had this thing, I’ve never told them I was a single parent, I didn’t want to, I had this fear, and married women enjoy more respect. And he said, “You can come and live here,” I said, “No, I live with my husband, I don’t need to,” I said, “I have my own apartment.” I said, “I want to help my husband, lend him a hand and work something.” “Okay.”

And we agreed to meet, I said, “Where do we meet?” “We’ll meet in Pristina and I’ll take you to see the apartment.” I said, “Can I know what exactly I will be doing?” “You don’t have much work, clean the apartment, wash clothes,” and he said, “Also” he said, “I have a little bone spur in the neck.” He said, “Sometimes you have to give me a massage.” I said, “Look, sir, next time you put a job advertisement, put one for a physiotherapist,” I said, “Not a housekeeper.” I said, “Because,” I said, “I’m coming to clean,” I said, “not massage you.”

I said, “I’m sorry but I can only give massages to my husband.” “But,” he said, “there’s not much work.” I said, “Okay, it’s fine, sorry I wasted your time, I don’t want to waste more of your time, and you mine.” “But,” he said, “This is very normal.” I said, “Sir, I’m not interested in continuing this conversation,” I said, “I’m not interested in the job either.” And I hung up. And from there, I never looked for jobs online. He was looking for a housekeeper and asking for a back and neck massage. When he said that, I immediately put a stop to it.

And when someone found me a job, for example, there are many women in my village who work like this, they clean. They would say, “Someone called me to work, can you go instead because I have a lot

of work that day?" "Okay." I would go. Then I started working for a dry cleaning service in Dragodan without an employment contract. They only paid me one hundred euros, I worked six days a week. I worked there for almost a year.

Interviewer: How could you afford to work there?

Narrator: Not that I could afford it, I would pay a monthly bus pass, because if I paid for it daily, my salary wouldn't suffice. I paid the monthly pass and I only worked for four hours. Then the rest of the day, I would go clean somewhere. Then after I came to Pristina to work there, I was at work until 12:00, from 12:00, someone would call me and I would go at 12:30 - 13:00, depending how far it was and I would go there, then I would go home. This happened for a long period of time until I quit because my son would stay without me for a long time. But I quit the dry cleaning service because I insisted on being registered two or three times. I wanted my taxes and contributions to be on record. But I don't know why it was stuck in their mind that I'm on social welfare, which I wasn't.

I said, "I've never talked to you about social welfare," he didn't even know that I was separated. Even though I worked somewhere, I didn't tell them my personal life, I have a husband and a son, that's it. And I said, "I don't know why," I said, "why do you have this idea in mind, I'm not on social welfare, I'm not such a case. Why would I have social welfare?" I said, "People who aren't capable of working are on social welfare, I'm capable of working. Who said that I'm on social welfare?" "No, I don't know why I think that." "I don't know what you think. Can you register me?" I mentioned it two-three times and they had the same excuses until I realized. It was October when I quit, the end of October. In the beginning of October, first or second, I said, "I will be here until the end of the month, so you're free to find someone else during this period of time. I'm leaving."