

# MAPPING GENDERED DISINFORMATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS **KOSOVO**

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# Introduction

It is more likely for dinosaurs to come down on earth and say hello to us, than it is likely for disinformation to disappear. This is the opening statement of Lindita Tahiri, professor of Language and English literature, with whom Kosovo 2.0 met, in attempting to deconstruct the ways disinformation has gained such significant ground in Kosovo, from an academic perspective.

Beyond disinformation alone, gender disinformation proves even more complex, as it is closely linked to anti-gender discourse<sup>1</sup> as well as hate speech, a growing problem being pointed out by feminist activists in Kosovo.<sup>2</sup> In public discourse, anti-gender narratives are often framed as protective efforts to uphold traditional values and family structures, or as gender disinformation that serves nationalist, populist, and frequently religiously driven agendas. These narratives primarily target women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and particularly children – both girls and boys, who are exposed to educational content shaped by distorted gender norms and stereotypes.<sup>3</sup>

Although journalists consider these labels such as the anti-gender movement or anti-gender narratives to be considerably new to the reporting discourse<sup>4</sup>, they note, however, that gender disinformation has been present all along, working its way through gender based discrimination, stigmatisation as well as legislation.

In 2018, several discussions arose concerning the inconsistency between the Kosovar Law on Civil Status and the Constitution of Kosovo, triggered by [Blerit Morina's request to modify his name and sex marker](#) in official documents. As of 2021, Kosovo's draft Civil Code has been pending for ratification from the assembly. The public debate as well as the disinformation following discussions about it had severe impact on the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as human right defenders who worked to push forward the draft Civil Code. Later on, [the draft Law on Reproductive Rights and Medically Assisted Conception](#) became the backbone for the formation of a conservative political party, the Coalition for the Family. Hate speech and disinformation evolved around what the law would bring, with speculation about incest and the destruction of the "traditional" family.

Therefore, this research will seek information from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the qualitative part, the research will be informed by eight interviews with journalists, activists and an academic.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the qualitative part will draw significantly from articles and headlines used by various media, to promote gender disinformation covering the timeframe from 2021 to 2025. Whereas both the qualitative and the quantitative approach will also be informed by pre-existing research on topics such as: anti-gender movement, gender based discrimination, gender-sensitive reporting, including research conducted on the matter from the Regional Diversity Network, Kosovo 2.0, BIRN Kosovo, Center for Critique and Action (QIKA), and others noted below.

1. Kosovo Women's Network. (2024). [Gender Analysis of Digitalisation in Kosovo](#). Chapter 10, Digital Transformation and the Media.

2. Rashiti, V. (2024, November 29). [Who is Out to Get Whom? The Impact of Gender Disinformation in Kosovo](#). Reporting Diversity Network.

3. Ibid.

4. Interviews with Ardit Kika, Freelance journalist & Leonida Molliqaj, Editor in Chief, Center for Information, Critique and Action. May 2025.

5. The list of persons interviewed throughout this research is as follows: Mirishahe Sylja – Feminist Activist, Leonida Molliqaj, Editor in Chief – Center for Critique and Action; Representatives from Hibrid.info – Fact-checking platform; Ardit Kika – Journalist; Lindita Tahiri – Professor of Language and English Literature – Faculty of Journalism, University of Prishtina; Dan Ramadani – Dylberizm, LGBTIQ+ activist, Adelina Hasani – Researcher, Kosovo Center for Security Studies, Blenda Asllani – feminist activist and researcher at the Centre for Information, Critique and Action. All interviews were conducted throughout May, 2025.



# Analysis

## Quantitative analysis

While there isn't an exact count of all fact-checkers in Kosovo, several key organisations and initiatives actively engage in fact-checking and combating misinformation. Kallxo.com is a prominent platform addressing corruption and misinformation. Its fact-checking tool, Krypometri, is Kosovo's first to be certified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and has been a Facebook third-party fact-checking partner since 2018.<sup>6</sup> Hibrid.info, in the other hand, is another fact-checking platform aiming to contribute to the provision of accurate, fact-based information through fact-checking analysis of content presented in the media and other publications, in order to diminish the impact of misinformation stemming from disinformation, conspiracy theories, pseudo-science, fake news, unverified content, clickbait, and other forms.<sup>7</sup> Kallxo.com does not provide annual reports on the scale of disinformation in Kosovo specifically targeting categories such as gender, sex or ethnicity, although it does have published reports covering broader aspects of disinformation in relation to international as well as national security. Hibrid.info does provide annual reports based on their monitoring, yet, their reports do not provide any data on disinformation which specifically targets gender, sex, or ethnicity.

Based on the data gathered from articles enlisted as disinformation in [Krypometer](#), the following presents an analysis of gender disinformation trends in 1518 articles identified as disinformation from 2021 to 2025, focusing on the frequency, thematic focus, and targets of disinformation:

### Overall Trend: Increasing Volume of Gender Disinformation

YEAR	GENDER DISINFORMATION	TOTAL NR. OF NEWS	% GENDER DISINFORMATION
2021	1	69	1.4%
2022	17	393	4.3%
2023	37	473	7.8%
2024	20	424	4.7%
2025	9	159	5.7%

According to this analysis of Krypometer, the number of gender disinformation peaked in 2023. The proportion of gender disinformation relative to the total of false news also increased over time, suggesting the growing relevance of this issue in the media landscape. The analysis provides an upward trend that is visible from 2021 to 2023, followed by a drop in 2024, and a relative stabilisation in 2025.

However, it is important to note that activists suggest these data from Krypometer don't accurately portray the reality of gender disinformation, as it peaked throughout 2024 and 2025, particularly during the Kosovo national election campaign from January to February 2025.<sup>8</sup>

Activists also emphasise that headlines regarding gender-based violence, femicide, and rape crimes are the most frequently discussed and distorted by the media, as victims' identities are published, [victim blaming is highly incited](#) through headlines, and many [fake stories are created](#) from these cases that do not align with the truth.<sup>9</sup>

6. Balkan Investigative Reporting Network. (n.d.). BIRN Kosovo holds fact-checking journalism course. BIRN. <https://birn.eu.com/news-and-events/birn-kosovo-holds-fact-checking-journalism-course/>

7. Hibrid.info. (n.d.). Rreth hibrid.info. Retrieved June 4, 2025, from <https://hibrid.info/rreth-hibrid-info/>

8. Interviews with activists: Leonida Molliqaj, Dan Sokoli, Mirishahe Sylja, Blenda Asllani, May 2025

9. Ibid.



What this means is that gender disinformation exists in various forms and layers. However, collecting disinformation in its variety is something that is expected from women's rights organisations and activists.<sup>10</sup> It is not a mere priority for the media.

Across all years, the dominant topic of gender disinformation relates to the image of women in politics. This shows a politicisation of gender disinformation, where gender stereotypes and narratives are strategically weaponised to undermine women's legitimacy in politics. Recurring political figures are repeatedly targeted across years, including: Vjosa Osmani - President of Kosovo (mentioned in 2023 and 2025), Mimoza Kusari Lila - Parliament member (mentioned in 2023 and 2025), Doarsa Kica Xhelili, Duda Balje, Ariana Musliu Shoshi, Hykmete Bajrami, Marigona Geci, Albulena Haxhiu, Ganimete Musliu, Adriana Matoshi - all prominent women in politics, frequently subjected to disinformation. This highlights gender targeting of women in visible leadership roles, often using discrediting tactics like manipulated videos, attacks on appearance, or false statements. As Adelina Hasani notes, women are targeted specifically on the basis of gender, not just because they are involved in politics. "We can see how, with women, the focus is placed on aesthetics—because the expectation is that women cannot contribute intellectually, but should only be present politically in terms of their appearance" – she adds.

A diversification of topics is noticed over time, in relation to gender disinformation. While in early years (2021-2022) Krypometer's data on gender disinformation dealt with only a few cases related to gender based violence, later years (2023-2025) show topic diversification, including: Women's reproductive health, LGBTIQ+ issues, as well as attacks on women journalists. This suggests a broadening of anti-gender narratives, aligning with global trends where gender disinformation increasingly overlaps with anti-feminist, anti-LGBTIQ+, and authoritarian discourses.

Drawing from the Media Diversity Institute & Kosovo 2.0's [Media Monitoring Report on Hate Speech in Kosovo](#) throughout October 2020–April 2022, as well as the [Media Monitoring report on hate speech in Kosovo](#) covering the period from May 2022 to December 2023, the following comparative analysis in relation to gender disinformation and hate speech in the media was conducted:

### Comparative Table: Gender Disinformation & Hate Speech in Media (2022–2023)

CATEGORY	2022 REPORT (OCT 2020–APR 2022)	2023 REPORT
<b>Total Cases Monitored</b>	71 cases of hate speech/divisive narratives	112 cases of hate speech analyzed
<b>% of Gender-Based Hate Speech</b>	21.1% on gender, 22.5 % on homophobia	37% on gender, 15.18 % on homophobia
<b>Primary Targets (Gender-related)</b>	Kosovo Serbs, Women, LGBTQ+ community	Women (specifically), LGBTQ+ persons, activists, DV survivors
<b>General Hate Speech Targets</b>	Women, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities	Women, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities
<b>Main Types of Hate Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative labelling/stereotyping (75%)</li> <li>- Insults (18.1%)</li> <li>- Lies (4.2%)</li> <li>- Incitement (2.8%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insults (22%)</li> <li>- Harmful lies/misinformation (16%)</li> <li>- Mixed types</li> </ul>
<b>Key Perpetrators</b>	Social media activists, journalists, media, politicians, professors	Misogynistic groups, online trolls, some public figures
<b>Dominant Sub-Narratives (Gender)</b>	Gender disinformation, Homophobia	Gender disinformation, Homophobia
<b>Narrative Themes</b>	Nationalism, Xenophobia, Hate speech, Sexism, Homophobia	Traditional roles, victim-blaming, anti-gender equality
<b>Tone of Attacks</b>	Mostly general group stereotyping	Highly personalized, aggressive, dehumanizing

10. Interview with Adelina Hasani, Researcher, Kosovo Center for Security Studies, May 2025



Between 2022 and 2023, gender disinformation and hate speech in Kosovo's media and online platforms became significantly more frequent, targeted, and aggressive. The number of monitored cases rose from 71 to 112, with a marked increase in content specifically attacking women from 21.1% in 2022 to 37% in 2023. While homophobic content slightly decreased as a percentage, both years were dominated by gender disinformation and anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives. Over time, the attacks shifted from broad, group-based stereotypes to highly personalised, dehumanising rhetoric. Women – particularly feminists, activists, and survivors of domestic violence – emerged as key targets, along with LGBTIQ+ persons. The content grew more vicious, relying not only on stereotypes but increasingly on insults, harmful lies, and complex misinformation strategies. In 2023, for instance, 22% of the content involved direct insults and 16% involved false or manipulated information, showing a significant rise in manipulative tactics compared to the previous period.

Perpetrators also changed, whereas in 2022 hate content came from a range of actors including social media users, journalists, politicians, and professors, in 2023 there was a clearer emergence of coordinated online trolls, misogynistic groups, and public figures deliberately spreading gender hate. These narratives were often embedded in broader ideological frames that linked feminism, LGBTIQ+ rights, and gender equality to threats against tradition, family, and national values.

Throughout both reports, a recurring theme was the use of nationalism, sexism, and victim-blaming to discredit gender justice efforts. The tone of discourse became more intensely politicised and personal. Rather than addressing collective movements or values, the attacks zeroed in on individual women and queer people—questioning their legitimacy, humanity, and motives. Feminist women were often portrayed as politically biased or manipulated, while queer identities were framed as Western imports threatening the Albanian family and moral order.

This data suggests a dangerous escalation in both the volume and intensity of gender-based disinformation and hate, with more sophisticated and harmful narratives being used to polarise society and undermine efforts toward equality and human rights.

## Qualitative analysis

Kosovo is part of the Western Balkans which has been identified as vulnerable to disinformation, with diverse factors that contribute to its vulnerability, including external influences, fertile ground for interethnic conflicts, lack of media education, the lack of capacities in media control mechanisms, lack of knowledge and capacities of other institutions in the country to address the issue.<sup>11</sup>

There is currently no mechanism, organisation or source in Kosovo which gathers data specifically on the prevalence of gender disinformation in Kosovo.

Respondents of interviews conducted through this research noted that gender disinformation is not considered a “national threat”, a “security threat”, or a “political threat”, even when disinformation targets women in politics.

Media outlets tend to prioritise these topics and report more on such aspects. Even fact-checking initiatives in Kosovo, such as Krypometer or Hibrid.info, do not collect gender or sex disaggregated data in their monitoring platforms. Representatives of Hibrid.info, for instance, noted that among other categories, they also monitor disinformation related to “social issues” in Kosovo. When asked if they collect information which specifically targets women, in relation to this category, especially on ways media outlets are reporting on gender based violence, Hibrid.info noted that “they don’t have the capacities to follow such cases”, as they mostly only cover political content. Their annual reports reflect the same approach as well, with no data in relation to disinformation targeting persons as per their gender or sexuality. This shows that gender disinformation is widespread, all the while not being tracked by local fact-checking mechanisms. Adelina Hasani, researcher at the Kosovo Center for Security Studies notes that the problem consists in the fact that journalism education is lacking and that journalists are often easily replaced. Gender-based reporting among journalists is missing, and a misogynistic narrative is perpetuated. Further, Hasani notes

11. Kallxo. (2023, November). [THE STORY OF OUR LIES](#). p.13



that although fact-checking platforms exist, the public does not have the necessary awareness to conduct further research and debunk false information. Furthermore, she notes that fact-checkers may not even have the capacities to conduct discussions about the gender nuances of disinformation – as they don't even see these nuances themselves. This is affirmed by representatives of Hibrid.info, who during the interview noted that throughout the 2025 national elections campaign, did not address or collect disinformation related to the Law on Reproductive Health and Medically Assisted Conception – despite the false information that was spread from MPs and the media, targeting women specifically. “There’s no clear way to filter or deal with that kind of content” – they noted.

The qualitative analysis based on interviews as well as existing research provided some answers to the key research questions. In relation to the types of information disorders that affect messages about women in Kosovo, all respondents noted that disinformation and misinformation are widespread and persistent, particularly regarding feminist and gender equality issues. These take the form of false narratives that deliberately distort feminist goals, portraying them as anti-family, anti-men, or as attempts to destroy traditional values. Such messages often spread through social media, traditional media, and public political statements. The disinformation is not accidental but politically motivated to maintain existing power structures and suppress resistance, especially from feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements. Gender disinformation is rooted in stereotypes that evoke fear and hostility toward women’s rights and gender equality.

*From a security perspective, we have observed how extremism finds its way to penetrate through gender. Gender-based bullying groups are being formed, because men are expressing their masculinity through them. Then, within those groups, a large amount of disinformation circulates.*

**Adelina Hasani**  
Researcher  
Kosovo Center for Security  
Studies

When asked **who the key agents involved in creating and spreading gender disinformation are**, respondents noted that political figures and public authorities play a significant role by propagating misleading or false narratives about gender issues.<sup>12</sup>

A representative of Dylberizm, an LGBTIQ+ rights organisation, also emphasised the impact from the global political stage (e.g., the U.S. president) and local politicians in Kosovo. Media outlets (both traditional and social media platforms) are considered critical agents of disinformation, either through irresponsible reporting or by amplifying sexist and discriminatory content for clicks and profit.<sup>13</sup> Media outlets sometimes give space to platforms that spread disinformation, normalising sexist and hateful discourse.<sup>14</sup>

Right-wing, extremist, and antifeminist movements, both locally and internationally, actively contribute to the creation and dissemination of gender disinformation, aligning with broader ideological agendas.<sup>15</sup>

The characteristics of disinformation about women published online consist mostly of disinformation which is characterised by stereotyping, fear-mongering, and moral panic, especially framing feminist activism as harmful or threatening. Common tropes include accusations of feminism “attacking the family” or “promoting hatred against men”.<sup>16</sup> It is often emotionally charged, sexist, and sometimes violent, including verbal abuse, threats, and personal attacks on activists. Three of the activists interviewed describe being targeted through social media harassment and threats, with hateful messages and threats, such as “Where is your office location, as we’re going to come set it on fire”.<sup>17</sup> Online disinformation frequently uses simplistic, sensationalist language designed to polarise and spread quickly among social media users. Disinformation thrives in unregulated or poorly moderated digital spaces like X, Facebook, TikTok, where misinformation is hard to control. According to Hibrid.info, their monthly reports show that those responsible for spreading disinformation are 25% media outlets and 75% social media – various pages, fan pages, and sites with domains whose origin is unknown. This latter category spreads the most disinformation. Hibrid.info also notes that 80% of disinformation is purposeful, aimed at gaining more clicks on certain articles, whereas only 20% might be disinformation that is spread as a result of journalists’ lack of experience and knowledge of reporting ethics.

12. Interview with Dan Sokoli, activist and co-founder of Dylberizm, an LGBTIQ+ rights organisation, May 2025

13. Interview with Hibrid.info, fact-checking platform, May 2025

14. Ibid.

15. Interview with Ardit Kika, Freelance journalist, May 2025

16. Interview with Blenda Asllani, Feminist Activist and Researcher at the Center for Information, Critique and Action, May 2025

17. Threat towards Dylberizm, emphasised by Dan Sokoli.



# Case Studies

## Gender disinformation in Kosovo - Hand to Hand with the Opposition of Progressive Legislation

### < Case 1 >

#### Gender Based Disinformation in Politics

As noted in the analysis above, smear campaigns and disinformation targeting women involved in politics have been present throughout the entire 2021-2025 period. However, as the interviewed activists note, the labels have now become more refined, in the sense that journalists can now better categorise between hate speech, anti-gender narratives, misinformation and disinformation. What is complex in the case of attacks against women in politics is that all of these categories are sometimes used simultaneously, with one contributing to the other. The main pattern that can be noted is that in many of these attacks, disinformation as well as anti-gender discourse arise specifically whenever legislation is proposed that favours advancing women's rights and LGBTIQ+ rights.<sup>18</sup>

Since 2014, progress on Kosovo's [draft Civil Code](#) has been slow, with repeated delays under various governments. Throughout this time, activists have consistently [called for the inclusion of same-sex marriage](#) within the draft code, in line with constitutional guarantees. In 2022, the draft Civil Code failed to pass in the Assembly. Although the government pledged to build parliamentary support in the meantime, discussions have since been repeatedly postponed.



[Sinjali.com](#) uses a sensational and pretentious text to spark hate speech.

#### The text in the picture notes:

LGBTI activist to VV deputy: Come cure me from this disease

Despite this, MPs have used the draft to spread disinformation. Article 1383 (2) of the 2022 version recognises same-sex civil unions but defers their regulation to another law. Meanwhile, Article 1283 (1) defines marriage as between a man and a woman. Nevertheless, MPs have misrepresented the draft, falsely claiming it legalises same-sex marriage and using it to promote homophobia. In public debates, some have referred to LGBTIQ+ people using derogatory and dehumanising language, calling them “sick” and a “public health threat.”<sup>19</sup>

18. Also confirmed by interviews conducted with feminist and LGBTIQ+ activists.

19. Rashiti, V. (2024, November 29). [Who is Out to Get Whom? The Impact of Gender Disinformation in Kosovo](#). Reporting Diversity Network.



Such statements were significantly reproduced from several mediums<sup>20</sup>, sparking public debate, hate speech and an increase of disinformation in relation to the draft Civil Code.

Duda Balje, head of the parliamentary committee on human rights and gender equality, has [also used media](#) to publicly state that same-sex marriage contradicts her religious and cultural values and claimed that sexual orientation is a choice. Activists have called for her removal, but she remains in position and continues spreading hate speech. Civil society has also filed a complaint against MP Labinote Demaj Murtezi for anti-LGBTIQ+ remarks. Despite public outcry, institutions have failed to take action, allowing harmful rhetoric and disinformation to shape public perception and undermine fundamental rights.

*Now they are dehumanising [queer people] and presenting them as if they are demanding more rights than heterosexual people, as if they are trying to copy Western countries - with a tendency to destroy the family and Albanian traditions. This is the easiest hook to gain the trust of the masses.*

*In each of these pieces of disinformation, the strongest connection is made with the family. The link between a queer person and marriage, gender transition—as if children have the right to change their gender, women’s ability to divorce their husbands—all of this emphasises the FAMILY.*

*Since 2021, these arguments have been used. The narrative is: how we are destroying the institution of the family—just by living and existing. That has been the core of the disinformation.*

Dan Sokoli, Dylberizm

## < Case 2 >

### Trans Women Confronting Disinformation

Edona James, born in Suhareka, Kosovo, is a vocal transgender woman who has significantly impacted LGBTIQ+ visibility in Kosovo and the Albanian-speaking world. She grew up in Germany and underwent gender-affirming surgery at the age of 23. James gained initial public attention in 2014 through a televised [interview with Privé TV](#) in 2014 titled “Edona James: the Albanian who Crossed the Rainbow,” echoing a recurring Albanian myth which uses the phrase “crossing the rainbow” to signify one’s change of gender, where she openly discussed her gender transition. This candidness made her one of the first Albanian trans women to come out publicly, a move that was met with both support and significant backlash, including threats that led her to avoid public appearances in Kosovo for nearly a decade.<sup>21</sup> In 2023, she returned to the public eye by participating in Big Brother VIP Kosova 2, where she became a finalist and one of the show’s most talked-about contestants. Her openness about her life experiences, including her gender transition and personal struggles, resonated with many viewers and sparked broader conversations about transgender issues in the region.

*Apart from Edona, during the Trump administration, when the decision was made to remove gender identity recognition [i.e., limiting gender to male/female], the media translated and reported it as if it applied to the context of Kosovo. The media used it to fuel and increase transphobia.*

Dan, Dylberizm

Despite her popularity, James has faced sensationalist media coverage that has often dehumanised her and used her identity for clickbait. Such portrayals have been criticised for perpetuating harmful stereotypes and contributing to societal stigma against the LGBTIQ+ community in Kosovo. In November 2023, Gazeta Express released an [article](#) claiming to reveal a photo of James pre-transition, when she was only six years old. The headline reads: “A small boy, this is what Edona James looked like at 6 years old.” Other articles written by [Sot News](#) and [Pamfleti](#) refer to her as “Transgender Edona James,” emphasising the word transgender to maximise views and engagement. Pamfleti has also directly used James’ deadname for an eye-catching [headline](#).<sup>22</sup>

20. Gazeta Express. (2022, February 23). [Duda Balje kundër martesave të gjinisë së njëjtë: Nuk dal kundër fesë e vlerave familjare](#). Gazeta Express. [Duda Balje against same-sex marriage: I won’t go against religion and family values. In a statement, MP Duda Balje declared her opposition to the regulation of same-sex marriages in Kosovo, stating that such unions go against her religious beliefs and traditional family values.]

21. Limani, A. (2024, June 10). [Sensationalist media coverage dehumanises Edona James](#). Reporting Diversity Network.

22. Ibid.



Whereas during January 2025, In the [T7 television program “Zanat”](#), Edona James was the subject of a segment that sparked controversy due to a comment made by one of its guest speakers. During the episode, the speaker referred to Edona James by her birth name, stating, "Edona James për mu është Kujtim!" ("To me, Edona James is Kujtim!"). This remark was perceived by many as misgendering and dismissive of Edona James's gender identity. Further disinformation persists in this episode of “Zanat”, as speakers equalise hormonal therapy with post-pregnancy hormonal changes. The clip was shared on social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook, leading to public backlash and discussions about respect for transgender individuals in media representations.

The incident emphasised the ongoing challenges that transgender individuals face in Kosovo regarding societal acceptance and media portrayal. While Edona James has been an important figure advocating for LGBTIQ+ visibility, providing media space for this extent of disinformation risks marking regress on the need for greater sensitivity and respect towards the LGBTIQ+ community in the public discourse.

### < Case 3 >

#### New technology: Using AI Technologies to Denigrate Women’s Identities

In Kosovo, the advent of new technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms, has introduced both opportunities and challenges. While these technologies have empowered many, they have also been misused to perpetrate gender-based violence, disproportionately affecting women, including public figures and ordinary citizens.

Many of the gender disinformation articles identified in the Krypometer analysis mentioned above dealt with false statements in relation to the bodies and images – the appearance of women of Kosovo involved in politics.



AI adapted picture of Vjosa Osmani, president of Kosovo  
Identified as disinformation from [Krypometer.com](https://krypometer.com)

Notable incidents as a result of tech-facilitated abuse were also identified. A significant case involved the ["Albkings" Telegram group](#), which had over 100,000 members. This group disseminated non-consensual explicit videos, deepfake images, and personal information of women, including a journalist's phone number. The content was viewed over 30 million times, highlighting the scale of digital misogyny and the challenges in addressing such abuses within Kosovo's legal framework.<sup>23</sup> These incidents emphasise the importance of pursuing an intersectional approach to legally regulating technology to reduce gender-based violence, both online and offline.

23. Isufi, P. (2024, June 25). [Kosovo law ignores tech-facilitated abuse of women: BIRN report](#). Balkan Insight.



# Disinformation campaigns against feminism and feminists

Women's bodies and reproductive rights were the theme of the 2025's year annual March 8th march, organised by the feminist activist collective "Marshojmë s'festojmë". Women and girls protested on the streets and rallied against statements by various parliamentary deputies who used the [Draft Law on Reproductive Health and Medically Assisted Conception](#) to spread misinformation and disinformation about the rights the law would allegedly grant. Evidently, politicians and MPs were also using [hate speech towards LGBTIQ+ and feminist activists](#) who promoted the benefits the draft law could bring and the contribution it would bring reducing costs for women to have children and increasing the number of women who may bear children, including single mothers. The [portrayal of feminists and queer activists as demonising](#), anti-family and opposed to the "traditional" nationhood concept continued and increased severely during the national election campaign, January – February 2025. More specifically, the newly founded political party, the Coalition for the Family, which was expected to get the least vote share in the 2025 national elections, had wide media coverage, as their discourse sparked hate speech, violence, as well as distorted, tendentious disinformation. As activists who have been interviewed note, this is because this Coalition invested a large amount of money in media sponsorship.<sup>24</sup>



*I see media presence as a tool to convey a message to a larger group of people – a message that, in my opinion, should be well-informed, based on personal experiences, accessible data, and knowledge that sheds light on a phenomenon, with an emphasis on issues related to the well-being of women and other oppressed groups. When I agree to speak publicly, I start with this intention, and then I see that a simple headline, taken out of context, ends up shaping what I wanted to say – and sparks entirely different discussions from what I had hoped. It naturally makes me feel, first, misunderstood, and then powerless, because I'm not managing to communicate what I truly mean. Instead of using the media as a tool for communication, I feel like I'm being used by the media as a tool for provocation, clickbait, or disinformation. And all of this then makes it harder for me to speak publicly about topics I actually know better and could contribute more to than the usual guests, who are mostly unprepared men. This shrinks the public space for me, because I also fear I might provoke the opposite of what I intended – and deep down, I'm afraid that I might actually be doing more harm than good in the end.*

**Mirishahe Sylja, Feminist Activist**

Attacks towards feminist activists in Kosovo have increased throughout these last couple of years.<sup>25</sup> Many activists have raised concerns about the way the state is trying to [discipline feminist activists through fines](#) and through [police violence](#). The offices of the Center for Critique and Action [QIKA] – a feminist organisation in Prishtina were [vandalised after their continuous reporting](#) and support shown towards pride week in Kosovo, during 2024. Furthermore, journalists have also adopted an attack mode towards feminists, often spreading disinformation towards them and calling feminist activists as "gold diggers", "[users of international funds with no concern for women's rights](#)". In other cases, journalists completely distort statements of feminist activists and [make up headlines](#) which are not based on actual discussions. All to spike more hate in the comments section and to ensure more clicks on their articles.

*I believe that disinformation directly affects my work as an activist, because it forces me to spend more time and energy not only on advocating for change through activism, but also on countering false and distorted narratives. Instead of focusing all my efforts on building alternatives, I often have to first lay the groundwork just to be able to advocate for change – to clarify the truth, correct misinterpretations, and create spaces where activism is taken seriously. This undoubtedly adds to the burden activists carry, as they not only have to do their own work but also undo the damage left behind by disinformation.*

**Blenda Asllani, Feminist Activist**

24. "During the campaign, it became clear which political party was being used or supported by which media outlets. Klan – every figure who said something anti-queer was featured in their headlines. The Coalition for the Family had several media outlets: Klan, RTV Besa – we've saved them all – Arberesh Info – they had an action for the traditional family in the square, and after the action was over, the Coalition for the Family gave money to the guy with the camera. Meaning, specific media were paid to produce this kind of content. There was a deliberate effort to drill it into people's heads, through the media, that we are the threat." – Dan Sokoli, Dylberizim

25. Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. (2024, November 11). Women's rights in Western Balkans: Women's labour market participation & security for human rights defenders. Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. Security for Women Human Right Defenders, Kosovo, p.52.



# Is There Room Left for Counter Narratives?

The spread of false and harmful narratives about women's rights causes real harm, both to public discourse and the emotional well-being of activists. However, activists note that there is always room and power for resistance. As the interviewed activists and journalists have acknowledged, media and social platforms have a dual role—they can either amplify or challenge gender disinformation. Their takes on counter-narratives to disinformation were very clear and similar.

Journalists and fact-checking reporters emphasise the need for responsible journalism and increased fact-checking, which are considered crucial for counteracting falsehoods. However, from an academic perspective, it is noted that journalists must be better trained to develop critical thinking as well as skills in gender-sensitive reporting, to be able to combat the ongoing unethical reporting that promotes hate speech and violence towards women and the LGBTIQ+ community. Activists note that solidarity and coordinated resistance among civil society groups, journalists, academics, and activists are essential for building effective counter-narratives. They see the recent resistance to progressive legislation as a pathway to dive deeper into complex societal topics, such as same sex marriages and the notion of the family, which were taboo topics for a long time.

The emotional toll on activists targeted by gender disinformation is significant, and in terms of ways forward, the need for psychological support and collective strategies for resilience was also identified as a key strategy for the long-term sustainability of human rights defenders.

Furthermore, more work needs to be done to increase media awareness, especially in relation to gender disinformation, so that the burden of debunking them does not fall solely on feminist activists and women's rights organisations or LGBTIQ+ organisations. As gender is being instrumentalised to ignite violence, public authorities must understand how this is also a national security problem.





## Conclusions

This research confirms that gender disinformation in Kosovo is a growing and intensifying phenomenon, both in volume and in its sophistication. Over the past five years, disinformation narratives targeting women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and feminist activists have become more prevalent, personalised, and damaging. The analysis shows that gender disinformation is not isolated but intersects with broader ideological, nationalist, and populist agendas that seek to maintain patriarchal control and suppress progressive change.

Quantitative data from fact-checking platforms such as Krypometer reveals a rise in gender disinformation articles, particularly peaking in 2023. However, activists and experts argue that this data underrepresents the true scale of the problem, especially during politically sensitive periods like national election campaigns. Women in politics and human rights defenders, especially those advocating for progressive legal reforms, are frequently targeted through manipulative tactics, including false accusations and dehumanising language. Similarly, LGBTIQ+ individuals, especially trans women, face severe transphobic disinformation that equates their existence with societal decay or foreign influence.

The qualitative data further emphasises that political figures, media outlets, online trolls, and organised misogynistic groups are key actors in producing and amplifying this disinformation. Social media, particularly TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter (X), are primary vectors where poorly moderated content allows false and hateful messages to spread rapidly. Moreover, media tasked with fact-checking is yet to better recognise or prioritise the gender dimensions of disinformation, leaving activists and civil society organisations to carry the burden of countering these narratives alone.

Interview data revealed the emotional and psychological toll this climate imposes on feminist and queer activists. Many describe experiencing burnout, fear, and silencing as a result of constant harassment and distortion of their public messages. Media sensationalism often increases the harm by using provocative headlines and unverified claims that misrepresent activists' words and goals, further shrinking the public space for feminist activism.

Despite this, civil society – especially feminist and LGBTIQ+ organisations – remain a crucial front line in challenging disinformation and advancing counter-narratives. They emphasise the need for more coordinated, cross-sectoral responses involving journalists, educators, and institutions.

Ultimately, the findings of this study highlight the need to treat gender disinformation not only as a social or media issue, but as a deeply political and security concern. As gender continues to be used as a battleground for ideological conflict, Kosovo's media, civil society, and public institutions must collaborate to resist the normalisation of misogyny and anti-LGBTIQ+ hate. Without this collective response and more spaces for truth, human rights and freedoms will continue to be at risk.







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