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"We Can No Longer Declare Ourselves a Multicultural City Until We Start Reacting to Things Like This" : Contextualizing the Violence at the 2008 Queer Sarajevo Festival

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"We can no longer declare ourselves a multicultural city until we start reacting to things like this"[1]: Contextualizing the Violence at the 2008 Queer Sarajevo Festival

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Abstract:

The 2008 Queer Sarajevo Festival was an effort by LGBTIQ activists to raise visibility and educate the public through a series of artistic and cultural exhibitions over the course of five days. However, the Festival was preceded by a month-long media campaign in widely distributed right-wing newspapers, which declared the immorality of the Festival—particularly because of its timing during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan—and a crowd gathered outside the opening exhibition, throwing stones and violently assaulting at least eight Festival attendees. The remaining events of the Festival were cancelled. Government officials, political parties, and religious leaders' responses to the violence were minimal, and no prosecutions were made against those who had incited or committed violence. The Festival's impact, however, on LGBTIQ activism and visibility was significant. After the Festival organizers received multiple death threats, the primary LGBTIQ activist organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina retreated into hiding, and many others felt that the Festival demonstrated the impossibility of being "out" in Bosnian society.

This paper examining the violence and hate speech surrounding the Festival, the reactions of governmental, religious, activist and political leadership, and the impact of the Festival on LGBTIQ life. Through conducting interviews with LGBTIQ people, activists, politicians, professors and students in Sarajevo, this paper uses the events surrounding the Queer Sarajevo Festival as opportunities for analyzing issues of human rights, cultural values, tolerance, discrimination, queer visibility and the politics of difference in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Though LGBTIQ people and activist efforts face enormous political, institutional, financial, cultural and social obstacles, strategies developed by LGBTIQ activists include a variety of potential methods to achieve eventual LGBTIQ empowerment.

Introduction:

In the fall of 2008, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) activist group called Organization Q organized the Queer Sarajevo Festival, which was Sarajevo's first major public LGBTIQ event. The festival was scheduled to open on September 24th, 2008, and present photo exhibitions, documentaries, and performances exploring true stories of the lives of LGBTIQ people in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH). A month of media campaigns and public statements preceded the festival, declaring the immorality of the festival, particularly because of its perceived affront to Muslims due to its timing during the holy month of Ramadan.[2] An angry, violent crowd, made up largely of Islamic radicals known as Salafis or Wahabbis, gathered outside the opening event of the Queer Sarajevo Festival. Stones were thrown, people were beaten, and eight attendees of the festival were hospitalized with severe injuries. Some were attacked as they exited the Art Academy where the opening event was held, while others were followed home as they walked blocks away from the Festival, and then were assaulted.[3] The rest of the Queer Sarajevo Festival was cancelled. After the festival, political and religious leaders made only negligible remarks regarding the violent assaults that took place, and no one was arrested for inciting or committing violence. Nevertheless, the violence at the Festival had a tremendous impact on life for LGBTIQ people in Sarajevo, provoking fear, hampering activism, and publicly demonstrating how dangerous and hostile the climate in BiH can be for LGBTIQ citizens, and perhaps, for anyone who is perceived as different or threatening. The Queer Sarajevo Festival also made LGBTIQ issues truly visible in Sarajevo for the first time. It sparked dialogue among many about how these controversial issues

[1] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[2] Buso, Sanjin. "Sarajevo Queer Festival Attacked." OneWorld, Southeast Europe. 25 September 2008. http://us.oneworld.net/article/357677-sarajevo-queer-festival-attacked
[3] *A Story About Queer Sarajevo Festival 2008.* (Film.) Organization Q, 2009. For more information on Wahabbism in BiH, see page 13 of this paper.

should be handled in a city that was once considered a multicultural, cosmopolitan center, but is now troubled with post-war trauma, political corruption, economic instability, and ever-deepening ethnic divides. The Festival's mission, the violence at the opening exhibition, the reactions of Bosnia and Herzegovina's leadership, the impact this event had on Sarajevo's LGBTIQ citizens, all provide opportunities for investigation into Sarajevo's political and cultural climate. In my research, I sought to explore the question: What can this event and its impact illuminate about the current state of civil society, cultural values, human rights, tolerance, discrimination and violence, free expression and the politics of difference in Sarajevo?

Methodology:

In my research, I sought to compile many perspectives on the events of the Queer Sarajevo Festival. I conducted thirteen interviews with LGBTIQ activists, LGBTIQ Sarajevans who are not activists, feminist scholars, Islamic scholars, politicians, and students.[4] Conducting interviews was a useful method for researching this topic, because of the centrality of multiple, personal perspectives to this research and the opportunity this method provides for giving voice to a variety of personal experiences, histories and perspectives. My interviews were tailored to the subjects I interviewed, and while I asked some of the same questions to all subjects, some questions were only relevant to particular subjects. I asked my subjects questions about their professional experiences, their personal experiences, their opinions, and their views on the current climate in Sarajevo. I conducted my interviews in a variety of spaces, including cafes and offices. Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, and the fact that many LGBTIQ people in Sarajevo are not out as LGBTIQ, I refer to many of my subjects only by first names (with their permission), identifying by last name only my interview subjects who are prominent public

[4] For a list of interviews conducted, see Appendix A on page 67.

figures. In some cases, I use pseudonyms for my interview subjects, if they asked that their real first names not be disclosed. I do not refer to the sexual orientations of my interview subjects unless they explicitly identified themselves as LGBTIQ. In my writing, I use past tense to refer to quoted statements that were made in interviews with my subjects. I use present tense to refer to the overall perceptions, opinions and beliefs of my interview subjects, when they refer to current issues and strategies in BiH. In my analysis of these issues, I also use present tense to describe current issues and strategies, because of the ongoing nature of the struggle for LGBTIQ rights and visibility in BiH.

I conducted this research with an awareness of my positionality and how it may affect my research. For the past five years, I have been involved in many forms of LGBTIQ activism in the United States, studied queer theory and LGBTIQ history and literature, and considered myself part of several vibrant LGBTIQ communities in Washington, DC and on my college campus in northeast Ohio. My positionality as an American queer student and activist affected my research in a number of ways. My familiarity with LGBTIQ life in my communities in the United States provided me with relatively strong background knowledge about LGBTIQ activism, interesting material for comparative analysis, and as a potential basis for increased trust with my LGBTIQ research participants. Many of my LGBTIQ research participants asked me why I was interested in this topic, and seemed more at ease with the interview when I told them of my history of LGBTIQ activism in the United States. I did not disclose my sexual orientation unless I was specifically asked by my research subjects, but when I was asked, it did seem to provide source of common ground and trust between us. Furthermore, some of my subjects explained that they were more comfortable speaking with me because I was an American, and they felt they trusted my motivations and my use of their information more than they would if I were, for example, a

student at the University of Sarajevo. Additionally, many of my subjects, LGBTIQ or not, stated that they were happy I was doing this research, because though Sarajevo tends to be an "overstudied" location, LGBTIQ issues are not typically the subject of research, and many of my subjects thought there should be much more exploration of these issues.

I must also consider my positionality not only as a source of connection, but also a source of division. In the United States, I have never been afraid for my physical safety and well-being because of my sexual orientation. Though this is obviously not the case for all LGBTIQ Americans, it is my experience, growing up in relatively progressive, privileged and violence-free communities. I have been supported by family, friends and teachers, and have almost always been comfortable being "out" in social, academic, and employment settings. These experiences may be very different from those of my interview subjects, and I have tried to be careful not to universalize my experiences or make assumptions about my interview subjects' experiences, based on my own experiences.

Additionally, my positionality implicates my personal ideology about these issues and my deeply emotional investment in my belief in the right of all people to feel physically and emotionally safe, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Though I felt I was always respectful and grateful to my interview subjects, some interviews were challenging for me for this reason. Before conducting this research, I had never before sat across from someone, listened to them tell me people like me are sinful, unnatural, and abnormal, and not proceeded to fiercely dispute their claims. However, for the sake of making all my interview subjects feel comfortable speaking to me, regardless of their views, I nodded, asked follow-up questions, and thanked them for their time. I presented myself slightly differently in different interviews, sometimes explaining my queer identity and my history of

activism when I knew it would build trust, and sometimes refraining from doing so when I knew it would limit my ability to gather information.

Because my research was conducted over the course of thirty days, time placed obvious limitations on the scope and depth of my research. Ideally, I would have liked to conduct more interviews and heard more perspectives on this subject. Most of the people I spoke with who identify as LGBTIQ are relatively open about their sexual orientation, which is part of why they were willing to speak to me. I would have liked to hear the perspectives of LGBTIQ people who are not out. With LGBTIQ interviewees, I always asked interview subjects if they knew people who would be useful contacts for me to speak with. However, I was frequently told by my interview subjects that they knew people who might be useful people for me to talk to, but that they were unsure whether their contacts would be willing to speak to me, because they are not public about their sexuality. Perhaps if I had more time to conduct this research, I would have gained the trust of more of members of this population, and would been able to reach more people. Additionally, most of the LGBTIQ people I interviewed were currently or previously involved in LGBTIQ activism. I would have liked to hear the perspectives of more LGBTIQ people who were not involved in activism, because I think they would have had a different perspective on these events and on LGBTIQ life in Sarajevo. Additionally I would have liked to hear the positions of more civil society activists, government officials, and leaders from political parties who do not publicly support LGBTIQ rights. Finally, I would have liked to hear the perspectives of more people who were heterosexual and not involved in any kind of LGBTIQ activism, in order to develop a better understanding of general public opinions on these issues.

Throughout this text, I use the acronym LGBTIQ. Though different activist movements dealing with these issues around the world have used a number of different acronyms and terms,

nearly all the activists I spoke with in Sarajevo used the term LGBTIQ. According to Svetlana Durkovic, one of the founders of Organization Q, the use of this inclusive acronym was an important political choice for her organization:

> "We were the first organization in the region that was inclusive of intersex and of queer. I remember when we went to Queer Zagreb in 2003, people were laughing at us because we were using this long abbreviation. Now everybody's using it in the region because it's all-inclusive. One big point was that a decision was being made that it's either going to be everyone or no one, so we are going to include all the issues. Even if we didn't have members who were intersex per se—because all these issues were so taboo, obviously are not going to have individuals who are intersex talking about it—but if we are knowledgeable about it, then we have to raise visibility surrounding them. It was to be all-inclusive. The 'queer' was really for everyone from the community as well as individuals who are heterosexual but, by their attitude or knowledge or appearance are queer or are shattering social norms in some way."[5]

This inclusive acronym is widely accepted throughout the relevant activist community in BiH. It marks an interesting contrast to the United States, where LGBT tends to be the most commonly used acronym. While the terms "intersex" and "queer" are rarely used by larger United States LGBT non-profit organizations, transgender citizens have only recently become widely included in this group. The largest and most prominent American LGBT non-profit organization, the Human Rights Campaign, added "transgender" to their mission statement in 2001.[6] Furthermore, protection for transgender Americans is often considered a less important or urgent struggle than protection for lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans. In 2007, the Human Rights Campaign supported a proposed version of a federal employment anti-discrimination bill, which included protection based on "sexual orientation" but not based on "gender identity." This decision which sparked antagonism within the LGBT movement and revealed divergent beliefs among activists about prioritization, inclusion and strategy.[7] A thorough comparative analysis of inclusion and

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[5] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.
[6] St. Pierre, Ethan. "Organized Tragedy," Boycott HRC. http://boycotthrc.wordpress.com/ 11 August 2008.
[7] Sandeen, Autumn. "Breaking: The HRC now Supports ENDA without Perceived Gender Protection." http://www.pamshouseblend.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=3543 6 November 2007.

prioritization between LGBTIQ/LGBT activist movements in BiH and the U.S. is outside the scope of this research. However, it is worth noting that perhaps in the BiH, where gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens experience more ubiquitous discrimination and violence than gay, lesbian and bisexual citizens in the US, inclusion of all is considered an essential element of the struggle for equality and justice, while US activists sometimes have other priorities. Mirza, a young LGBTIQ activist I spoke to, said, "Our activism starts after this long history in the States and elsewhere. We have all these experiences to learn from."[8] The BiH LGBTIQ activist movement, which formed in the early 2000s, has benefitted from the ability to study the trajectory of the previous 30 years of LGBT activism in the United States and elsewhere.[9]

Literature Review:

There does not seem to be a great deal of academic literature about the Sarajevo Queer Festival, or about LGBTIQ life in BiH. However, four major areas of literature have been useful for my research: 1) media coverage surrounding the Queer Sarajevo Festival, which provided general information about the Festival as well as the opportunity to explore some of the rhetoric used by different media sources, 2) non-governmental organization research on discrimination, violence and human rights as they pertain to LGBTIQ people in BiH, 3) scholarly articles that strengthened my understanding of issues in BiH that pertain to my research, including Islam in BiH, post-Dayton politics in BiH, etc, and 4) contextual historical research that describes the global history of LGBTIQ visibility. Additionally, one master's thesis, "Pride and Prejudice: The Queer Sarajevo Festival in 2008 in Bosnian and Germany Media" deals specifically with this

[8] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[9] LGBT activism in the United States is widely considered to have begun with the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, in which a crowd of LGBT people experiencing police harassment at the Stonewall Inn began to fight back against police officers, bringing new visibility and a collective sense of empowerment to their struggle. See, for example, Obama, Barack. "Presidential Proclamation: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Month, 2009." http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-LGBT-Pride-Month/

event and provided useful media analysis. The author, Renata Cigler, analyzes 250 news articles in the aftermath of the Festival. Cigler argues that media reporting surrounding the event tended towards two, polarized extremes—some articles reinforced prejudices, used hate speech, normalized violence and presented the Festival as a "provocation in a traditional society," while other articles worked to educate the public about LGBT issues and contribute to a better understanding these issues within the framework of human rights.[10]

Several non-governmental organizations have published research that has been useful to me in understanding civil society approaches to treatment of LGBTIQ people in BiH. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina's "Report on the Status of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina" includes discussion of issues pertaining to LGBTIQ individuals in Bosnia. The Helsinki Committee reports that, in general, "in the field of human rights, Bosnia and Herzegovina has done very little on harmonization of legislation with international norms in force. Harsh violations of human rights and freedoms have continued, and the absence of the rule of law is evident."[11] The failure of BiH's government to protect LGBTIQ people can be better understood in the context of a number of failures to prevent and respond to human rights violations in the country. The report provides useful background information on the state of LGBTIQ rights in BiH. Though homosexuality is decriminalized, LGBTIQ people are still harshly discriminated against. The report states, "religious leaders and clerics qualify homosexuality as evil and 'Western trash,' where theologians equalize terrorism and homosexuality, where politicians qualify same-sex sexual declarations as 'a disease.' The status

[10] Cigler, Renata. "Pride and Prejudice. The Queer Sarajevo Festival 2008 – A Discourse Analysis of Bosnian and German Media." MA Thesis (Summary), Mediadesign Hochschule University, Berlin, 2009.
[11] "Report on the Status of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Analysis for the period January 2008-December 2008." Sarajevo: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 11 February 2009, p. 2.

of these persons is difficult and they are frequently victims of violence and discrimination."[12] The report provides a summary of the events surrounding the Queer Sarajevo Festival, and places responsibility on several groups: the politicians, clerics and media who launched a hate speech campaign prior to the Festival which instigated violence, the attackers who committed violence against eight attendees of the Festival, the police who did not fulfill their legal obligations to protect attendees, the political parties in BiH, who apart from two parties—Nasa Stranka and the Liberal Party—did nothing to condemn the violence, and the government of BiH, who has failed to take action against the attackers or disseminators of hate speech. The report states, "The responsible prosecutor's office has not taken any action against persons who initiated violence and hate in their statements, and encouraged intolerance and promoted fascist, racist and xenophobic ideas."[13] This report is useful because it contextualizes LGBT issues in Sarajevo in a human rights framework and details the failures of several groups to prevent and respond to these human rights violations. Another useful publication was "The Invisible Q?: Human Rights Issues and Concerns in Bosnia and Herzegovina," published by Organization Q. This report analyzes questionnaire research on demographics, needs, problems and recommendations regarding LGBTIQ people in BiH.[14]

The Queer Sarajevo Festival received a great deal of coverage in local and international media, and this coverage was the most useful reading I found on the events of the Queer Sarajevo Festival and the repercussions. These articles include many interviews with civil society groups and local citizens, and lay the framework for some of my research, exploring issues including the implications of these events for BiH's status as a religious or secular state,

[12] Ibid, p. 7.
[13] Ibid, p. 8.
[14] Durkovic, Svetlana. "The Invisible Q?: Human Rights Issues and Concerns of LGBTIQ Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Sarajevo: Organization Q, 2008.

questions of LGBTIQ visibility and the value of public events, the responsibility of local media sources for the instigation of violence, and the reactions of political parties to these events.[15]

Juan Carlos Antunez's paper, "Wahabbism in Bosnia-Herzegovina" summarizes the history of Islam in BiH and explains the relationship between the Islamic Community and the Wahabbi/Salafi movement in the region. This paper was useful to me in explaining the structure of the Islamic Community, its varying degree of influence over Bosnian society throughout history, and the new presence of Wahabbism in BiH after the 1992-1995 war. The Islamic Community is a structured leadership body, which has administrative control over mosques, madrases and other Islamic institutions in the BiH. It follows the Hanafi School of Jurisprudence, which has existed in Bosnia since the Ottoman Empire, and emphasizes flexibility and tolerance over other groups in society. Wahabbism, also known as Salafism, follows a stricter interpretatation of scripture. Antunez argues that the initial spread of Wahabbism in BiH is linked to the post-war years and the financial, societal and architectural needs created by wartime destruction of physical and societal Islamic institutions.[16]

A final framework that may be useful for contextualizing issues of LGBTIQ public visibility in BiH is the global history of activism surrounding LGBTIQ visibility. "A History of Pride," written by Capitol Pride of Salem, Oregon, provides useful information about the history of LGBTIQ marches and parades in the United States.[17] The first major gay visibility events are often considered to be the 1970 marches in New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and San

[15] News articles consulted include: Bartley, Jim. "Bravery Amidst Brutality: In Sarajevo, A Bold Few Break A Culture of Secrecy and Face A Violent Backlash." *Capital Xtra*, Ottowa. November 11 2009; Ferrara, Cecilia. "Kristalnacht in Sarajevo." Osservatorio. September 30 2008; Latal, Srecko. "Gay Festival Tests Bosnia's 'City of Tolerance.' Buso, Sanjin. "Sarajevo Queer Festival Attacked."; "Eight Injured as Sarajevo Queer Festival Attacked." Amnesty International USA. September 28 2008.
[16] Antunez, Juan Carlos. "Wahabbism in Bosnia-Herzegovina." Bosnian Institute. September 16 2008.
[17] "History of Pride." Capitol Pride of Salem, Oregon. http://www.capitolpride.org/pridehistory.shtml

Francisco, commemorating the one-year anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall riots.[18] These events were called "Gay Liberation Marches," and spread to other United States cities in the following years.[19] The rise of Gay Liberation Marches in the US in the 1970s is often considered to have had a major impact on LGBTIQ rights in the United States. As the marches gained popularity and raised public awareness of LGBTIQ rights, legal protection increased, decriminalizing of consensual same-sex acts in twelve states and passing of the first laws prohibiting anti-LGBT discrimination.[20] Additionally, the 1970s in the United States saw election of the first openly LGBT political figures and the launching of several new LGBT political groups.[21] As LGBT marches in the United States continued to gain popularity in the US, their presentation shifted from one of "Gay Liberation Marches" to "LGBT Pride Parades." [22] More recently, pride marches gained popularity globally. Activists in many countries around the world, including South Africa, India, China, Japan, Israel, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, as well as many Western and Eastern European countries have all organized pride parades.[23] Some of these have been peaceful, but others have resulted in violence. In Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Russia Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Malta,

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Philadelphia Gay News editor described this shift as a "demonstration of outrage [replaced] by a celebration of culture" (History of Pride). In the move from a march to a parade, some were dismayed by a loss of perceived visionary political organizing. Urvashi Vaid of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force stated "I think there's a need for a political action that's focused around lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans realities. The vision that we have for the society -- those are the things I'd like to see at pride celebrations" (History of Pride). Some have perceived Pride as increasingly corporatized, commercialized and assimilationist, ignoring structures of power, privilege and oppression in society. For more on this critique of Pride in the United States, see "Gay Shame: A Celebration of Resistance." http://www.gayshamesf.org/.
[23] "InterPride." http://www.interpride.org/

Moldova, Greece and Turkey have organized pride parades.[24] Later in this paper, I will elaborate on the history of LGBTIQ visibility-based activism in the Western Balkans.

Findings:

Contextual Societal Frameworks – Post-War Trauma, Post-Dayton Ethnic Divides, Traditional Values and Patriarchy:

In studying human rights issues, the treatment of LGBTIQ people and otherness, it's important to understand the some of the larger contextual issues. One major contextual framework is the post-war dynamics of BiH, and of Sarajevo in particular. The Bosnian War took place between 1992 and 1995, beginning after Bosnia declared independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Many cities, towns, and villages in Bosnia were attacked by the Bosnian Serb army, which was given financial, military, logistical support by the Yugoslav People's Army, under the control of the Republic of Serbia.[25] Approximately 100,000-110,000 people were killed, and 1.8 million were displaced.[26] The Bosnian Serb army committed many atrocities against the citizens of Bosnia, including the ethnic cleansing of towns and villages, the detention of civilians in concentration camps, the genocide of 8,000 men and boys in Srebrenica, and the systematic rape of Bosniak women.[27] One of the atrocities most relevant to this research was the 44-month siege of the city of Sarajevo, in which 18,000 soldiers surrounded the city, shelling the city with an average of 329 shell impacts per day. Approximately 10,000 civilians

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[24] Ibid.

[25] "Listing of Cases: Conflict Between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." ICTY, 2004. http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/ij/icty/2.htm#_Toc62882595 Accessed 13 May 2010.

[26] Tabeau, Ewa and Jakub Bijak."War-Related Deaths in the 1992-1995 Armed Conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *European Journal of Population.* Volume 21, Numbers 2-3, June 2005 pp. 187-215(29). For the most detailed research on casualty research in the Bosnian War, see the Human Losses Project of the Research and Documentation Center (RDC).

[27] "Bosniak" generally refers to Bosnian Muslims. See: Dimitrovova, Bohdana. "Bosniak or Muslim? Dilemna of One Nation with Two Names." *Southeast European Politics,* Vol. 2, No. 2. October 2001. "ICTY: Kunarac, Kovac, and Vukovic Judgment." http://www.icty.org/x/cases/kunarac/acjug/en/kun-aj020612e.pdf Accessed 13 May 2010.

were killed.[28] According to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), "Not since [World War II] has a professional army conducted a campaign of unrelenting violence against the inhabitants of a European city so as to reduce them to a state of medieval deprivation in which they were in constant fear of death…there was nowhere safe for a Sarajevan, not at home, at school, in a hospital, from deliberate attack."[29] The siege had a profound impact on the citizens of Sarajevo. The government of BiH reported a "soaring" suicide rate and a 50 percent drop in births since the beginning of the siege.[30] Understanding the trauma of the siege is an essential framework for understanding attitudes and perspectives on conflict, violence, identity and public space in Sarajevo. Attitudes towards the events surrounding the Queer Sarajevo Festival—as well as treatment of LGBTIQ people in general—can only be understood in terms of the context of the siege. According to Mirza, a young LGBTIQ activist who was violently attacked in the summer of 2008 after kissing another man in a club, Sarajevo's population has become increasingly aggressive in the 15-year aftermath of the siege:

> "I think [the siege] fundamentally changed the city and its people. After having lived through so much violence, one would expect people to be afraid of any violence or not want any violence in any form, but it's just basic psychology, people do become more aggressive. This city has become more aggressive…Four years ago, I would not have been attacked for making out with a guy."[31]

Though Mirza believes there was a more peaceful time immediately after the end of the war, violence, aggression, and traditional values have become more predominant recently, a lasting effect of the war. Furthermore, post-war trauma has cemented traditional, nationalistic values

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[28] Bassiouni, Cherif. "Final report of the United Nations Commission of Experts established pursuant to security council resolution 780." 27 May 1994. http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/comexpert/ANX/VI-01.htm United Nations. Accessed 13 May 2010.
[29] "ICTY: Stanislav Galic Judgment and Opinion." 5 December 2003.
[30] Bassiouni, Cherif. "Final report of the United Nations Commission of Experts established pursuant to security council resolution 780."
[31] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.

and impacted the homophobic climate of Sarajevo. Durkovic argued, "If you live in a state that is post-conflict, traumatized to its core, where communication is extremely violent, and a society that's ultra-religious and nationalistic, then of course you're also going to have homophobia and sexism added to it because it's a package that goes together." The links between trauma, violence, nationalism and homophobia are inextricable, and essential for understanding the difficulty of LGBTIQ empowerment in Sarajevo.

Another important contextual framework for understanding these issues is the importance placed on ethnic identity above all else in politics and ideology. Many of my interview subjects attribute this set of values to the Constitution of BiH that was established in the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. The Constitution establishes that political power will be equally divided between BiH's three constituent peoples—Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs—explicitly enshrining the political-ethnic divide between these three groups.[32] According to Gorana, a Gender Studies professor in Sarajevo, the Dayton Agreement's establishment of power-sharing between three constituent peoples has led to the current situation, where ethnic identity is a more essential component of the political sphere than genuine ideological debates: "Society is still in ethnic conflict that was established with Dayton…At the moment, the only political identity is ethnic identity, and the only way to gain political power is by belonging to one of the ethnic groups."[33] The emphasis placed on belonging to one of these three ethnic groups has profound impacts on attitudes towards difference and otherness in BiH, as well as on the rights of all minorities in BiH. Challenges include the institutional barriers of Dayton that prevent of Jews, Roma, and other ethnic minorities from being elected to the House of Peoples or the Presidency, as well as

[32] Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. http://www.ccbh.ba/eng/p_stream.php?kat=518 Accessed 12 May 2010.
[33] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.

cultural attitudes that prize belonging to an ethnic group above all else.[34] According to Marko, an LGBTIQ-identified man in Sarajevo:

> "The biggest issue here is not only dealing with the gay issue, but also the fact of being different, being of a different ethnicity, a different religion…you still see some really horrid examples of how easy it is for people to be led by a very simple, stupid idea. It's like, you need to follow certain ideas to be considered a member of a group, to reinforce your national or ethnic identity."[35]

The politics of otherness in BiH are structured, among other things, by a post-conflict culture with increasingly traditional values and a political structure that disables political and ideological debate, limiting opportunities for free expression of difference or otherness, and reinforcing hegemonic values.

Hegemony is also reinforced by the patriarchal values that structure society in BiH. According to Zilka, an Islamic Feminist Studies professor in Sarajevo, patriarchy is still a core component of Bosnian society:

> "The general attitude towards gender is that Bosnian citizens, males and females—it doesn't matter what kind of religious identification or non-religious identification they have—support, promote and transmit patriarchal values in their family lives and in institutions, in public life in general…all of them pledge for the preservation of traditional family values."[36]

These patriarchal values affect heterosexual as well as LGBTIQ citizens in BiH, and according to some of my interview subjects, contribute to producing a difficult environment for the expression of gender and sexuality. According to Senad, an LGBTIQ activist and a student in Sarajevo, LGBTIQ people "cannot tell their families about [being LGBTIQ], because this society

[34] For more information on the political office ineligibility of ethnic minorities in BiH, see *Sejdic and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which judged in 2009 that this discrimination places the Constitution of BiH in violation of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, which is placed above all laws of BiH.
[35] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[36] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.

is very patriarchal. Fathers rule here, fathers have the main word whatever they say, and a lot of people are afraid to tell their families what they feel, even if they are straight."[37]

According to Senad, even heterosexual people are often afraid to tell their families about romantic relationships, because they fear they will immediately be restricted by traditional values regarding premarital sex, cohabitation, etc. However, not all young people feel limited by these values. Azra, an Islamic Studies student in Sarajevo, explained that there are not strict rules about sexuality in Sarajevo, but that many people follow the guidelines of traditional values. Azra explained that many people would not choose to live with a significant other to whom they were not married, not simply because of societal expectations, but also because of personal beliefs. She said, "It's a more open society, but still there are religious people who wouldn't like to do that. I wouldn't do that. That tradition is still here."[38] Citing the relatively equal gender demographics of most universities in Sarajevo, Azra argued that in general, men and women are treated equally in BiH. Though she explained that values in some rural communities limit opportunities for education, she believes that the situation is improving and that discrimination based on gender is lessening. Nevertheless, several interview subjects expressed the tremendous pressures of traditional societal expectations and beliefs regarding gender and sexuality.

Public Perceptions, Climate and Culture – LGBTIQ Life in Sarajevo:

A 2005 study conducted by Prism Research in BiH surveyed 1550 individuals, and found that 82.5 percent of them had a negative opinion of homosexuals.[39] These negative opinions are often reinforced by homophobic statements made by public figures and leaders in BiH. In 2007,

[37] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.
[38] Personal interview with Azra, 11 May 2010.
[39] "Researching Public Opinion about Homosexuality and Prostitution," Prism Research, Sarajevo, May 2005, cited in Durkovic, "The Invisible Q?: Human Rights Issues and Concerns of LGBTIQ Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina", p. 19.

the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, stated on public TV that "faggots are not allowed in [his] cabinet."[40]

Nearly all of my interview subjects commented on the silencing and rejection of LGBTIQ people in Sarajevo. Marko stated, "I'd say the general attitude is really homophobic. They consider it an illness, something really wicked."[41] Azra explained that the rejection of homosexuality is not specific to the BiH, but is instead typical of the traditional values present in the Balkan region. "This whole region is not really open to homosexual groups, as we can see in Western societies that are more open to them. Probably its because we still care about our traditions and we don't think it's normal, it's not natural."[42] The rejection of homosexuality as abnormal leads to a cloak of silence around the issue. According to Zilka, "Usually people do not want to talk about it. When I talk to students, even young people are not ready to discuss it, to hear arguments."[43] Azra agreed that it simply was not a topic of discussion in her social circle, and that she had heard friends bring up homosexuality only once or twice. "We are not talking too deeply about it. Because homosexuals are not here in Sarajevo that much."[44] Zilka analyzed the commonly held belief that LGBTIQ people are simply absent in Sarajevo, rather than closeted, stating, "People simply reject it…as something bad, trash from the West they imported to us during the war, like we haven't had it before… Homosexuals have always existed in every society, based on research, so we cannot just pretend it is somewhere else, that it is not here."[45] Though homosexuality is believed by some to be "not here in Sarajevo that much," it is clear that their lives are simply frequently made invisible by a climate of intolerance.

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[40] Durkovic, Svetlana. "Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina: 7th Round of Universal Periodic Review – February 2010." Organization Q and Sexual Rights Initiative. Republika Srpska is one of the two entities in BiH, the other being the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
[41] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[42] Personal interview with Azra, 11 May 2010.
[43] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.
[44] Personal interview with Azra, 11 May 2010.
[45] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.

The belief that LGBTIQ people are not present in Sarajevo, rather than simply in the closet, is cyclically reinforced by the fact that the vast majority of LGBTIQ people are in fact in the closet, refusing to discuss their sexuality because of the pressures of silence and rejection. Though he has been out for years and told the story of his violent attack in a national newspaper, Mirza explained, "The majority of LGBTIQ people in this city and this country are not out at all, maybe to a very small circle of friends…a lot of people still lead double lives. What worries me sometimes is that this seems to be an accepted norm within the community, and there is a lot of resistance to it being done any other way."[46] He attributed his ability to come out publicly to the support of his family, which he considers very rare in BiH. Mirza said that most LGBTIQ people believe, perhaps rightfully so, that they would be rejected by their family, friends and society as a whole. According to Mirza, the normalization of the closet cyclically reinforces the difficulty of coming out, because there is never a critical mass of visible LGBTIQ people to support or protect those who decide to come out. Discrimination against LGBTIQ people is very common, he said, in part because of the total lack of resistance to it. "I think in the majority of situations, if people were out, they would be discriminated against. We've had dozens of cases like that. The problem is they are not willing to resist it in any legal sense. No one is willing to sue or complain. The general reaction is just to pack up your things and leave."[47] The continuously reinforced silence and rejection surrounding LGBTIQ people leads to a hostile climate in which life for LGBTIQ people—whether out or in the closet—can be extremely difficult, and as a result, and fear of rejection reinforces an inability to resist homophobia. Instead, many people leave the country for a more tolerant society, or simply lead "double lives" in BiH.

[46] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[47] Ibid.

Addressing the Climate – The Missions of Organization Q and the Queer Sarajevo Festival:

Though their organizing efforts began in 2002, Organization Q was formally registered in 2004, becoming the first registered LGBTIQ organization in BiH. [48] Basing their mission on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Organization Q was founded with the follwing goals:

> "protection of human rights of [LGBTIQ] individuals, as well as to the empowerment, development and public visibility of queer identity and culture, leading to the elimination and suppression of human rights violations, discrimination, and inequality based on sex, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and (inter)sexual characteristics."[49]

Durkovic described Organization Q's two-pronged approach to LGBTIQ activism as "working with the general population in some way to decrease discrimination, social exclusion and prejudice" as well as "providing encouragement and support to the LGBTIQ community… so that people would feel more supported and get involved, and really start taking care of their own rights."[50] Between 2004 and 2008, Organization Q was involved in a variety of different kinds of projects. They started an online forum to aid LGBTIQ communication, hosted parties for LGBTIQ people, acted as a public voice of the LGBTIQ community in the media, conducted needs-assessment research on health, education, media, human rights and legal issues relevant to LGBTIQ people, provided legal assistance and counseling to LGBTIQ people, and led workshops for the public on LGBTIQ issues (and in particular, workshops on the gender binary and transgender issues).[51]

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[48] Durkovic, "The Invisible Q?: Human Rights Issues and Concerns of LGBTIQ Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina," p. 23.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.
[51] Ibid.

The 2008 Queer Sarajevo Festival (QSF) was to be the first event of its kind in BiH—a public, visible five-day festival containing a series of cultural events—photo exhibitions, documentaries, and performances, which all told true stories of LGBTIQ people. According to Durkovic, the conception of an arts festival was envisioned as "the least hostile and least violent way [to reach people]…it's not us talking, it's other people talking."[52] Durkovic argued that by producing a cultural festival, "people could come, feel secure and reflect… [but] not really engage in debate," because they believed that would make the event less likely to incite major hostility and conflict.[53] In addition, the focus on life stories was conceived as another method of reducing the likelihood of conflict or backlash, because "these are stories of people, and it's their life and you can't really tell someone, 'oh that didn't happen to you' because it did."[54] In producing the QSF, non-hostile visibility was considered paramount.

Perceptions of the Queer Sarajevo Festival:

Many people I spoke with believed the festival was a tastefully constructed, thought-provoking, and very positive event for raising awareness of LGBTIQ people in BiH. Marko explained, "It was just fantastic…it actually really modest, but so powerful in its own way…The opening night was just an opening speech and the exhibition of photographs. People who consider themselves activists were photographed, and it was their names, their identities, and just a sentence about how they see themselves. It was interesting and well-done, with style."[55] Senad agreed that it provided thought-provoking queer art, something many LGBTIQ people appreciated: "It was really refreshing and new and extraordinary experience to see queer art and

[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.

culture here in Sarajevo."[56] Furthermore, Senad argued that it was a very productive event because it challenged the status quo and impacted the opinions of the general public: "In my opinion is one of the best things that could happen here in Sarajevo, not just for the LGBTIQ population but for other people, [because] it could help them conquer their prejudice about it [and] change their attitudes…towards the LGBTIQ population."[57] From these reactions, it is clear that the Festival seemed, for some, like a welcome and refreshing challenge to Sarajevo's cloak of silence on LGBTIQ issues.

Many Sarajevans were upset with the public nature of the Festival, though they may have opposed the violence that transpired. Azra stated:

> "I must say that I don't like those things [i.e. the QSF] but I was against those who attacked them because you cannot fix things [with violence]…I know everyone has the right to express themselves, but it doesn't look natural, it's not a natural thing to be homosexual…I don't have anything against them getting together and having their festivals, just maybe in some closed places, not so much publicly. If you are not accepted in society…you shouldn't be asking for problems. This society is not ready for that, so you shouldn't get into some problems because you want to show yourself."[58]

According to Mirza, reactions like this one were the overwhelming response of Sarajevans, and are consistent with the mindset of attitudes towards homosexuality in general: "I think most people would tell you they don't have anything against LGBTIQ people as long as they don't see them on the streets, as long as they don't have any social influence, as long as they can't adopt children and get married."[59] In other words, as long as LGBTIQ people are completely invisible, Mirza believes people would say they do not have a problem with their existence.

Boris, an activist who was one of the founding members of Organization Q and later worked with an LGBTIQ group called Organization Logos, argued that the Queer Sarajevo

[56] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Personal interview with Azra, 11 May 2010.
[59] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.

Festival was ill-conceived and counter-productive. He explained that "Bosnia was not ready for that kind of Festival" and that Organization Q's approach is "too aggressive [and] not applicable to common Bosnian society."[60] He believes that the end result was negative, because it ended up provoking radical political and religious groups. Boris disagrees with Organization Q's strategy, because he thinks LGBTIQ activism requires a stronger foundation of support among activists—LGBTIQ activists outside of Organization Q as well as other civil society groups. He thinks the Festival was poorly organized, because it was primarily organized by the four staff members of Organization Q (as well as some volunteers), but that "if there had been more NGO support, it would have been good…this is too important to be exclusive."[61] Though Boris believes successful LGBTIQ activism may demand several years of building strong support within NGOs in BiH, he thinks that "Q didn't want a slow strategy…they did what they did, and we had violence."[62]

Mirza also critiqued the Festival, for a number of reasons. "The idea was very good, the implementation wasn't."[63] He was somewhat involved with Organization Q at the time, and even before the Festival, he worried that violence may be impossible to prevent: "I said this six months beforehand, but I really didn't think it was a good idea to have a five-day festival. This was the first major visibility activism [in BiH]. That meant that of course it was dangerous, and doing a five-day thing was just wrong. There was no way to protect people. There was no way to secure locations. It was impossible to do."[64] Additionally, Mirza, who had been involved with organizing the BiH delegation at the International Zagreb LGBTIQ Pride Festival, disagreed

[60] Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[64] Ibid.

with the presentation of the QSF as a cultural event that was not supposed to resemble a Pride event:

> "I didn't agree with was the fact that the festival was wrapped in this nice little cultural package…I mean it was a queer festival, and that was pretty obvious, and I felt that after calling it a queer festival, there was no need to go into this self-justifying, 'we're a cultural festival, we're not a pride parade.' There were major PR mistakes here, like Svetlana [Durkovic] making a statement saying 'This is not a parade, we're not organizing parades, we don't want to organize parades.'"[65]

By explicitly rejecting the idea of a Pride event, it's possible that that Organization Q may have solidified commonly held beliefs that Sarajevo should not have visible events that are simply structured around celebrating LGBTIQ identities, and may have limited Sarajevo's possibilities for Pride events in the future.

Prelude to Violence – Perceptions of the Media Campaign:

For a month preceding the Queer Sarajevo Festival, a right-wing media campaign relentlessly propagated hate speech, and according to some of my interviewees, is the primary reason that violence occurred. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina describes this campaign:

> "The campaign featured attempts to qualify homosexuality as "trash" and "disease" on one hand, and on the other, to represent the Festival during the month of Ramadan as an attempt to offend and provoke Muslims…statements of public personalities…can be qualified only as hate speech and creating of an atmosphere for lynch[ing]…on the eve of the Festival, Sarajevo was covered with posters and leaflets promoting fascist, racist and xenophobic ideology directed against homosexuals."[66]

Though the media campaign took shape in several newspapers, *Dnevni Avaz* can be highlighted for its particularly relentless hate speech. According to Mirza, the *Dnevni Avaz* media campaign was particularly dangerous because it is the most widely circulated daily newspaper in the Federation of BiH, so a "majority of Bosniaks will most likely adopt the opinion and attitudes of

[65] Ibid.
[66] "Report on the Status of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Analysis for the period January 2008-December 2008," Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, p. 7.

Dnevni Avaz, or at least look for one there."[67] The media campaign with a *Dnevni Avaz* article titled, "Who is Trying to Deceive Muslims With a Gay Gathering During Ramadan?"[68] and continued with daily articles. Mirza stated, "If there is any ethical code that they could have broken, they did. They were this close to calling people to violence, inciting violence. I think in some countries they would have been charged with inciting violence."[69] Naida, an LGBTIQ activist at the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, summarized the media campaign as a series of articles proclaiming: "We're supposed to kill them, we are pure, we're not supposed to let them destroy everything that's pure and valuable in the city."[70]

Additionally, some political and religious leaders spoke out condemning the Festival, adding authority to these attitudes. The mufti of Mostar, Seid Smajkic, stated, "Freedom and democracy should not be used to promote deviant ideas and garbage imported from the West." [71] Amir Zukic, General Secretary of the ruling Bosniak Party of Democratic Action proclaimed, "We respect freedom and tolerance, but this festival is a provocation because it is taking place during Ramadan…Bosnia and Herzegovina is a conservative society and I do not believe this event will be welcomed. Homosexuals should be helped because it is medically proven that they are sick people."[72] Mirza argued that elected officials who made openly homophobic statements should have been prosecuted because they were indirectly inciting violence. "In a normal democratic country, they would end up in a court of law."[73] Though the Bosnian penal code cites

[67] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[68] Cigler, Renata. "Pride and Prejudice. The Queer Sarajevo Festival 2008 – A Discourse Analysis of Bosnian and German Media," p. 2.
[69] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[70] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[71] Latal, Srecko. "Gay Festival Tests Bosnia's 'City of Tolerance.'" Balkan Insight. September 10 2008. Mostar is the largest city in Herzegovina, and is approximately two hours from Sarajevo.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.

fines and jail time for elected officials who incite violence or who discriminate against non-heterosexual people, no indictments were made.[74]

Given this climate, the month preceding the Festival was a particularly frightening time for activists at Organization Q, as they expected to be personally attacked at any moment. A day before the *Dnevni Avaz* campaign began, a feature article was published in a left-wing newspaper about QSF, Mirza, and his experience of being physically assaulted for kissing a man in public. Though he had been out for years, the media campaign, as well as the resulting public climate of hostility made him feel an unprecedented sense of terror:

> "I wasn't in Bosnia during the war, so I never really felt the war, but I think this is what it felt like. We were under siege. I didn't feel free to move. I was extremely afraid. [Another activist at Q] suggested that it would be probably a good idea that I wear a hat and glasses, so I wore it every time I left the house. My dad chauffered me around everywhere. I didn't use public transportation."[75]

Mirza's sense of terror stemmed in part from direct threats on the lives of the organizers and calls for violence against them, which began a month before the Festival and continued after its cancellation. According to a letter written by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and IGLA Europe, these threats included "a YouTube film showing digitally manipulated images of one of the organizers to make them look as if they were beheaded…A number of websites have called for the organizers of the festival to be lynched, stoned, doused with petrol or expelled from the country."[76]

Though many felt only fear during the month of media coverage preceding the Festival, some saw this period as a productive initiator of dialogue surrounding these issues. In response to the *Dnevni Avaz* campaign, some media coverage gave voice to alternative perspectives on this issue. According to Marko, there was public support from "outspoken people who were

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "IGLCA and IGLA Europe Letter." 19 June 2009.

defending gay rights, and not only gay rights but simply the right of people to organize an art festival…it was a really exciting time in the city. You could tell there was a different vibe, for the first time since the war, there was really something happening."[77] Marko was impressed with the overwhelming support from the international community and the amount of coverage in magazines and on TV.

Others explained that the debate surrounding the timing of the Festival during Ramadan initiated useful dialogue regarding BiH's status as a secular state and the role of religion in society. Gorana stated, "Some people wanted to go to the exhibition just give to their support to the Queer Festival, but to the secular issue as well…it entered another sphere, the question of whether the society is secular or not."[78] Despite the fact that the timing of the Festival during Ramadan was inadvertent, it may have garnered support for the LGBTIQ rights among those simply supporting the rights of activists to organize secular events, but who otherwise would not consider themselves LGBTIQ activists.

My interviewees expressed a range of opinions regarding the Festival's timing during Ramadan. Naida said, "We have four religious communities that are equal here, so if they were trying to avoid every religious month, every religious day, every event within those religions, they couldn't find space to have the Festival."[79] On the other hand, Gorana explained that though this is a secular state, the reality of religion's importance here must always be taken into account: "Unfortunately, it became obvious that the calculation with respect to which traditional holidays it falls on needs to be considered. Not that we are not a secular state, and we should insist that it's a secular state, meaning that we can hold any festival whenever we want. But unfortunately,

[77] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[78] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[79] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.

within this traditional society, quite a lot needs to be examined."[80] Zilka, an Islamic scholar and a believer, illustrated the theological hypocrisy of the claim, among those who reacted violently. She stated, "During Ramadan, Muslims are obliged to live a peaceful life…There are a lot of examples from the prophet's time—you are not allowed to kill, to be violent, to harm anybody, so it is one of the most important messages for all of us. They could criticize it, but to use violence to express their attitudes was not Islamic at all."[81] However, Zilka also expressed that in the BiH, it is essential to consider religion, as a sign of respect for others: "The organizers that should have paid attention to that, to be more sensitive to the environment. Because people here always are sensitive to that, it is a part of culture. They pay attention to each other's holidays, customs and they respect each other…But you cannot justify violence just because someone forgot it was Ramadan time."[82] The complexity of this debate demonstrates the difficulties of navigating religion, secularism and free expression in BiH.

Though some argued that the media coverage preceding the Festival opened useful dialogue, Naida argued that the homophobic bias of many media outlets turned any potentially useful dialogue counter-productive. She described a televised TV debate between representatives from Organization Q, and right-wing religious communities and nationalist parties, which aired on nearly every TV station on the BiH. Naida explained that the talk show was biased because while representatives from the religious groups and political parties had been informed of the questions before the debate, representatives from Organization Q had not. Furthermore, Naida stated that the debate itself was inappropriately edited, grossly misrepresenting the remarks of Organization Q: "Svetlana [Durkovic] said, 'I don't care for people who think we are not normal,' but in the end they [edited] it so that he asked her, 'What do you think about the whole

[80] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.
[81] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.
[82] Ibid.

thing happening during Ramadan?' and she answered them, 'I don't care.' But she didn't answer that question with that specific answer…It was horrible."[83] Naida argued that the wide circulation of this unfairly edited talk show only intensified the hostility towards Organization Q and the Festival.

Violence in the Streets – Experiences from the Queer Sarajevo Festival:

According to news reports, at least fifteen people were injured while leaving the Queer Sarajevo Festival, and eight were injured seriously enough to be hospitalized.[84] While some were attacked leaving the Art Academy where the Festival occurred, others were followed in cars and attacked on the outskirts of the city.[85] Some of my interviewees attended the Queer Sarajevo Festival, and shared their reactions from that night. Marko described the crowd:

> "You had two different narratives really. Inside the Art Academy, you had the people who came to attend the exhibition. On the outside, you had police troops, the Wahabbis, their wives, the people who were not allowed to get in because it was too crowded or they didn't have an invitation, and on the other side of the river you had soccer fans."[86]

There was some controversy in the media regarding who was primarily responsible for the violence—the soccer fans or the Wahbbis. According to Marko, "The soccer fans came, sang some bullshit songs and left…It was the Wahabbis who did the beating up."[87] Ahmet, an Islamic Studies professor, disputed this claim, stating, "It wasn't just these Salafis. The main culprits were these football clubs."[88] Regardless of the controversy over who was responsible, it, there is no debate over the intense trauma of the experience: Naida, who was 17 when she attended the Festival, stated:

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[83] Personal interview with Naida, 19 April 2010.
[84] Ferrara, Cecilia. "Kristalnacht in Sarajevo." Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC). September 30 2008. http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina/Kristalnacht-in-Sarajevo
[85] Ibid.
[86] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Personal interview with Ahmet, 29 April 2010.

> "Stones were thrown at people. It was the most unpleasant experience I ever had…Some memories we had from the war couldn't even compare to that. The Wahabbis made this whole circle around the Academy of Arts, so everyone who was just walking by the Academy, they thought they were going to the exhibition and they threw stones at them… I remember one man who lived next to the Academy of the Arts saying, 'When I heard those screams and shouts and the stones and things crashing all over the Academy, I thought it was 1991.' Nothing is worth that."[89]

Civil Society, Government and Political Party Responses to the Violence:

The violence and hate speech surrounding Queer Sarajevo Festival led to a coalitional response from a number of non-governmental organizations. A coalition of organizations called Odvogornost (Responsibility)—which included thirteen BiH NGOs, such as the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights BiH, Open Society Fund BiH, and Global Rights—released several statements throughout August and September of 2008, condemning hate speech and violence. The day after the violence at the exhibition, Odgovornost released a public statement, condemning violence, expressed solidarity with the victims of violence, and urged indictments against "persons who printed and displayed posters with contents unambiguously inviting to violence."[90] The statement also stated that legislation of BiH should strictly ban "promotion of fascist, racist, xenophobic and similar tolerance-free ideologies and promotion of violence as a reaction to differences…police [should] provide full protection to citizens who supported and continue to support this cultural event."[91] It is interesting to note that, though this statement explicitly refers to the Queer Sarajevo Festival, it does not specifically mention "homophobia" in its list of "tolerance-free ideologies," and does not specifically refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer people as victims of violence. Marko stated that though there was an initial public reaction from civil society organizations, it had little lasting effect: "There were

[89] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[90] "Public Statement of the Coalition Odgovornost (Responsibility): Unequal Assistance to the Equal – Police Sometimes Defend the People, Sometimes the Law, Never the Human Rights." 25 September 2008.
[91] Ibid.

letters and appeals written to the High Representative here in the country, and letters written to the EU and so on and so forth. But after a while things settled down. The momentum is gone."[92]

Government officials and political parties issued a wide range of responses to the violence on the opening night of the Festival. Very few political parties spoke out against the violence, and only one political party, Nasa Stranka (Our Party), a left-wing party, and the only multi-ethnic party, explicitly supports LGBTIQ rights. In a press release published just before the Festival, Nasa Stranka publicly expressed their support of LGBTIQ rights for the first time. The press release stated, "It is obvious that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the life of this population is threatened, and not enough is done to protect them…If Sarajevo wants to become a truly open and multicultural city, then human rights must be guaranteed for every individual and every collective, and now it's just the opposite."[93] The statement explicitly supported the organization of QSF, condemned the homophobic reactions of all other political parties, and demanded that the rights of homosexuals be included in the BiH constitution. Rada, a member of the board of Nasa Stranka (Our Party), explained Nasa Stranka's decision to support LGBTIQ rights, despite the threat to their membership numbers:

> "Bosnia is very traditional place, so we lost a lot of members [after the statement] and we are aware of that…we decided to support, without any doubt, rights of different sexual orientations than this one which you see all around us...Those are basic human rights…We don't support only homosexuals, we support any kind of difference in this community."[94]

Though Nasa Stranka's members did debate whether to fully support LGBTIQ rights, because they knew it would affect their membership numbers, they decided that as supporters of human rights, they must support sexual minorities. The violence at the Queer Sarajevo Festival clearly

[92] Interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[93] "Against Discrimination, For Human Rights of Homosexuals." Nasa Stranka. 28 August 2008. http://nasastranka.ba/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=2
[94] Personal interview with Rada, 26 April 2010.

illustrated the dangers LGBTIQ people face, and galvanized Nasa Stranka to publicly increase their support for LGBTIQ rights. Rada explained that other left-wing parties do not support LGBTIQ rights because their fear of loss of membership overrides any belief they may have in the universality of human rights.

According to Rada, Nasa Stranka represents a revolutionary group in Bosnian politics, because unlike most political parties, they have no ethnic affiliation. Rather than a shared ethnic identity, Rada explains that the party is a group of people who share an ideological commitment to change: "We are a group of people who decided to take our country's destiny in our hands, because otherwise it's going to be killed—morally, politically, socially."[95] She sees the support of all minorities as an essential part Nasa Stranka's platform, because their goal is "to put the country back together…to let every citizen of this country feel Bosnia is their own country…The gap between [the ethnic groups] are enormous…they see an enemy in the other. We want to change that. We want to say, 'that's not your enemy, that's your neighbor…He's a citizen of Bosnia just like you are. We are all citizens of Bosnia.'"[96] In their desire to alter the perception of "the enemy in the other," LGBTIQ rights are now a visible, explicit goal of Nasa Stranka.

Some government institutions said nothing regarding the events. Naida expressed frustration that the Ministry of Human Rights said very little about the Festival, condemning violence but never specifically mentioning the threat faced by LGBTIQ people. She explained, "They were just trying to remain quiet, because in every legal aspect, they were supposed to fight against that violence and discrimination. They are mostly [made up of] of representatives from nationalistic parties, and they are very aware that if they do what their task is, they will lose all

[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

their support from their national parties."[97] Rada argued that the government's silence on this topic exists within a general context of the government's refusal to react to important issues regarding the universal rights of citizens:

> "This government doesn't care to do anything which doesn't impact them directly…'them' meaning persons of the ethnic group they are part of. Whatever is connected to…citizens themselves, they don't react. One member of the Party of Democratic Action party said, '[LGBTIQ] people should all be moved from the country.' It's not good. It doesn't lead us to prosperity."[98]

Some politicians responded with statements that, rather than addressing the violence, spoke only to their personal beliefs on homosexuality. Bakir Izetbegovic, vice president of the Party of Democratic Action and Chair of the BiH representation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, publicly stated, "The violence is worse than any sexual depravity. But I think that [the organizers of the Queer Festival] shouldn't do that in Sarajevo. Sarajevo went through a lot of suffering…they shouldn't popularize [homosexuality], and display it as an innocent thing; that's a thing that spreads, if you let it. It should be kept behind four walls."[99] Though Izetbegovic mildly denounced the violence, he also declared that homosexuality was "sexual depravity" and stated that because of its history of trauma and conflict, Sarajevo is not an appropriate space for LGBTIQ activism. Zilka criticized these comments, stating that regardless of these politicians' personal opinions, they are representatives of the state, and therefore "need to be responsible government authority and react against violence and discrimination."[100] However, as no charges were filed based on the Bosnian penal code regarding discriminatory speech of elected officials, there is little enforcement of this political responsibility.

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[97] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[98] Personal interview with Rada, 26 April 2010.
[99] Lippman, Peter. "Bosnia-Herzegovina Journal #5: End of the Queer Festival." http://citycellar.com/BalkanWitness/journal2008-5.htm
[100] Personal interview with Zilka Spahic-Siljak, 22 April 2010.

Religious Leadership Responses to the Violence:

According to Naida, there was a nearly unanimous religious response to the Queer Sarajevo Festival itself—disapproval. She remarked, "that was the first time that all four religious communities here in Sarajevo—Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Catholics and Jews—gathered around one thing. They gathered in their propaganda against Queer Fest."[101] Senad agreed that the religious response was basically entirely negative, but that one rabbi challenged this reaction, providing an alternative theological response. "It was very interesting to see that he alone stood up against all the authorities here in Sarajevo and just said, 'It's okay, we know all about Sodom and Gomorrah and that's a different thing that people just connect to LGBTIQ.'"[102] Senad noted that this rabbi unfortunately passed away recently, and that now there is no remaining religious leadership support for LGBTIQ issues.

Because of the significant presence of Wahabbis at the Festival, many people called on the Islamic Community to publicly denounce the violence and distance themselves from those who committed it. However, the top Islamic cleric in the country, Mustafa Ceric, never publicly addressed this issue.[103] Some Islamic leaders continued to denounce the Festival in its aftermath. Sarajevo mufti Husein ef. Smajic said, "The joy of this Ramadan was disturbed by the provocation of the Queer Festival…same-sex marriage is the ugliest sin towards God and human nature."[104] Ahmet explained the Islamic Community's lack of clear response to the Festival as a result of underdeveloped discourse:

> "We simply have not looked into the issue [of homosexuality]…Like anything else, your private sins are your private sins…The moment you go into public space, things get complicated…our scholars haven't discussed it, haven't gone beyond classical solutions

[101] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[102] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.
[103] Lippman, Peter. "Bosnia-Herzegovina Journal #5: End of the Queer Festival." http://citycellar.com/BalkanWitness/journal2008-5.htm
[104] Ibid.

> punishing it. Obviously it's a sin, that's one issue. And I don't expect any change in that regard. But that's also punishable sin, at least socially, if not the state, somebody has to sanction it. As a community, as a state, we have to sanction the sin, and since you can't expect a state sanction, it's more on the community level, and to what extent the community should go in preventing and suppressing and discouraging the practice. Should we use violence as some did? Or should we just disapprove and socially exclude those who show those tendencies?...In the reactions of Islamic scholars who spoke on the issue in those days, all these issues were lumped together."[105]

According to Ahmet, the issue that needs to be further addressed in this debate is not whether whether or not homosexuality should be punished, but how it should be punished. Furthermore, Ahmet expressed that the Islamic Community is not responsible for the actions of the Wahabbis, but is simply responsible for the administration of its institutions. "If someone is a troublemaker, we have police, we have the court system, so it's not our business to go around inquiring about people."[106] Zilka stated that Mustafa Ceric publicly referred to Wahabbis as "'new Muslims,'" indicating their acceptance under the framework of the Islamic Community:

> "He said they are practicing a new way of Islam, but…they do not violate any fundaments, basic pillars of Islam…they are integrated into the Islamic Community…they are not so powerful, but the Islamic Community estimated that it is much better to have those groups within the framework of the Community in order to be able to control them than to have them separated and out of control."[107]

Ahmet elaborated on this position, stating "of course that those who promote violence and hate speech, we have nothing to do with them. But those who are, okay, a little more conservative than we see fit in this environment, we said we probably don't agree with you but you are welcome any time you want."[108] Despite Ahmet's statement that the Islamic Community would have "nothing to do" with those who promote violence and hate speech, it is clear that with regards to the violence at the Queer Sarajevo Festival, this distancing from violent offenders was not an explicit position of Islamic leadership.

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[105] Personal interview with Ahmet, 29 April 2010.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.
[108] Personal interview with Ahmet, 29 April 2010.

The Impact of Wahabbism on LGBTIQ Life:

My interview subjects expressed a variety of opinions about the impact of Wahabbis on LGBTIQ life. Marko explained, "To a certain extent, it does affect life in Sarajevo, because they are the loudest ones, you know, at the queer festival. Do I oppose them? It's a tricky question, because how can you oppose somebody's right to be religious? But then again, I don't oppose anything as you don't oppose me."[109] Boba, a former member of Organization Q, stated that she did not think Wahabbis are significantly responsible for the difficulties of LGBTIQ activism: "This kind of activism cannot succeed in other countries in the region, who do not have 'selefije.' Queer is still unacceptable by tradition, not by a certain religious group."[110] Durkovic argued that though Wahabbis are a significant problem for LGBTIQ activism, the problem is much broader. She explained that the threat of Wahabbis stretches beyond LGBTIQ issues to anything these groups oppose, and that people are reluctant to speak out against them.

> "I think it has indirectly affected [LGBTIQ rights]. People who originally would be on our side or on the side of human rights—regardless of whether its LGBTIQ or Roma or women or children or anything else—had to be quiet, because people are scared. We know that those Wahabbis who were there on opening night, who were photographed…are known to the public for doing other misdeeds, and that no one really dared to do anything about it. We know that they are extremists, that they are not bluffing, we know that they use force, and that it's not really only about LGBTIQ, it's about a girl who wears a shirt that is too see-through or a skirt that's too short. It's not one specific thing."[111]

According to Durkovic, Wahabbis are able to control the outcome of events like the Queer Sarajevo Festival and threaten the functionality of activism because that "no one dared" to challenge them, and their use of violence makes people afraid to speak up. Furthermore, Durkovic stated that the problem is broader than the Wahabbis, and is indicative of the tolerance of violence and extremism, and the inability to maintain genuine peace in this society:

[109] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[110] E-mail correspondence with Boba, 3 May 2010.
[111] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.

> If we had a society that was democratic, we wouldn't have Wahabbis who can go around and do whatever they want. They wouldn't be able to gather and spit and hit people. The fact that you don't have a society that has order of any kind means that you have Wahabbis who are allowed and give themselves a right to do anything that they want to do. It's kind of a Catch-22. Why do we allow violence in the first place? The fact that we allow it means that we can't really secure peace for anyone. So, I don't necessarily think that Wahabbis can be blamed, I think that you have the state that allows…violent behavior, and it could have come from Wahabbis or football fans or anyone else. As long as violent behavior is being tolerated, it's just a matter of question, who is going to be the next victim? We are all lined up."[112]

As Durkovic argues, the root cause of the threat of violence and extremism in BiH is the inadequacy of state institutions to protect citizens, react to violent behavior, and enforce the rule of law.

The Impact of the Queer Sarajevo Festival on LGBTIQ Life:

My interview subjects expressed a wide range of perspectives on the impact of the Queer Sarajevo Festival on LGBTIQ life and LGBTIQ activism. Some argued that it had an ultimately detrimental effect. Marko explained the Festival's impact on silencing the LGBTIQ party scene in Sarajevo, which he considered an important source of safety for many in Sarajevo. "I'd say things are much worse now, in terms of not having any parties anymore."[113] There are no longer any gay-friendly clubs or LGBTIQ parties in Sarajevo. There was a gay-friendly bar in the early 2000s, but after a newspaper interview revealed the identity of the bar, it closed. Another club hosted LGBTIQ parties, but after the Queer Sarajevo Festival, these parties were stopped. Additionally, Organization Q used to organize LGBTIQ parties, as a method of providing support to the LGBTIQ community with the eventual goal of empowering visibility, but those were also stopped after the Festival.[114] Marko said, "It seems like parties were the only social event where people would feel comfortable…people got used to the fact that they would see a

[112] Ibid.
[113] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[114] Ibid.

certain group of people at those parties, and now they don't have that anymore."[115] According to Marko, these parties provided a much-needed safe haven and source of community-building for LGBTIQ people. This is something that has been lost as a result of a loss of organizational resources as well as an increased sense of fear surrounding public LGBTIQ community events after the violence at the Festival. Mirza agreed that increased fear, as well as a sense of hopelessness, has been detrimental for LGBTIQ community morale and visibility: "A lot of people didn't even believe it was happening, it was such a big thing, and they were hoping it would move things along. After seeing how society reacted, they just buried themselves deeper in the holes they were already in. This is a healing period, in a sense. But I think it's time for something to start happening again."[116] Naida argued that the Festival had mixed effects. One the one hand, the extreme threats to the personal safety of the Festival's organizers reaction to dramatically hindered Organization Q's ability to function. Naida explained that the Organization had to move to a secret location, and that their phone numbers are no longer public.[117] According to an Organization Q report, the danger posed to activists was intolerable:

> "Activists of the Organization Q who are publicly out have in light of QSF faced death threats, termination of the office lease and—in the case of two activists—even of their apartment lease, have been subjected to hate speech, had their vehicle followed, and had to have office and personal space secured and watched by a security agency…Activists of the Organization Q filed approximately 20 reports to the police, both on behalf of the organization and of particular individuals. Activists were not attacked only as queer individuals and activists but also on the basis of their perceived national/religious identity/origin. Three activists were called "chetniks" based on their names (perceived ethnic/religious backgrounds), thus inciting hate on the grounds of ethnicity.[118]

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[117] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[118] Durkovic, Svetlana. "Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina: 7th Round of Universal Periodic Review – February 2010." Organization Q and Sexual Rights Initiative. This report notes that "Chetnik" is "a word used for Serbian aggressors during the 1992-1995 war who besieged Sarajevo for almost four years and committed genocide in BiH."

This intolerable situation not only made life extremely difficult for the organizers of the Festival and limited their ability to do further activism, it also made many other LGBTIQ people feel that participating in LGBTIQ activism or even simply coming out would pose a great risk to their personal safety. Durkovic admitted that it negatively affected the ability and motivation of many to be visible or outspoken:

> "Some people had a reaction that their peace has been compromised, their cover has been blown. Most people are not out, and it hindered their process of coming out, now that they know and they know that such a thing will not be publicly tolerated, and that especially if you are out and you are doing social or political activism in that regard, you will be tolerated even less. It was really measuring of a pulse, where people kind of realized where they live."[119]

Suddenly the threat of violence to LGBTIQ people in BiH was undeniable, and for many—whether they were out or in the closet—the recognition of this reality was very painful.

However, Naida also explained that the Festival brought public visibility to these issues for the first time: "Before the Festival, most people didn't know [LGBTIQ people] exist. They thought there were only a few people, maybe five or six of them in all of Sarajevo who are gay or lesbian. After Queer Fest, they became more aware of this whole organization that exists in Bosnia, that gathered more than 100 members that night."[120] The Festival demonstrated that the existence of LGBTIQ people in BiH cannot be denied, and that they have the support of a number of activist groups and international organizations. Senad agreed that this was a positive visibility-raising experience, and that many heterosexuals started to consider the rights of LGBTIQ people for the first time, once they realized the threats they face in society: "A lot of people started to talk about it. After the Festival, everyone was talking about it for at least three months."[121] According to Senad, the dialogue that the Festival initiated had a powerful

[119] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.
[120] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[121] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.

consciousness-raising effect. Additionally, Senad stated that "people got more courage, at least the people who are actively involved in LGBTIQ got courage to do some braver stuff than that."[122] Countering claims of loss of morale and energy, Senad argued that the Festival encouraged the bravery of some activists. According to Naida, the violence at the Festival also sped up the passage of the Law Against Discrimination, which at least minimally states that sexual orientation is a category protected from discrimination. Though she states that the organizations drafting the law thought it would take at least 3 years to adopt, the law was adopted in November 2009.[123] Naida explained, "Queer Fest was one of the main reasons. We needed something to stop the violence, to show that if 500 people react that way, it's not that the whole community that thinks that way. After Queer Fest, more than 150 organizations gathered in 5 regions in Bosnia and made a draft of the law on anti-discrimination."[124] I will address the impact of the anti-discrimination law later in this text.

Mirza argued that the Festival had a detrimental impact on the LGBTIQ movement, because the violence should have been anticipated and responded to differently. Mirza believes the visibility raised by the Festival was positive, because "anything that raises visibility is a good thing."[125] However, he stated that the overall impact of the Festival was very negative because of mistakes in its implementation, particularly the cancellation of the Festival:

> "There are examples from dozens of countries that if you raise visibility, that automatically incites violence, because there is a reaction in society. The important thing is not to give up right after that, and [that's] what I'm afraid we did…The festival never should have been cancelled. Even if it was just a symbolic five-day thing without guests, it really doesn't matter, that word never should have been used anywhere."[126]

[122] Ibid.
[123] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[126] Ibid.

By cancelling the Festival, Mirza argued that the organizers publicly admitted defeat, and strengthened attitudes that it never should have been held in the first place, and that events like these could not succeed in Sarajevo. This public surrender, he stated, "set us back five or ten years. We are in a worse position than we were five years ago. Our goal right now is overcoming that…The future isn't very bright."[127] Naida also explained that she wished there had been a more public demonstration of survival by the organizers of the festival, but that they essentially remained silent, because of fear for their safety and a desire not to incite further conflict. She stated:

> "[I hope that] Organization Q will become more visible, do some public debates, because if we can talk about Srebrenica and why it's a genocide, if we can talk about a person who killed 8,000 people, why can't we talk about a person who didn't kill anyone, but who is different. I would like them to be more open to the public, but I understand their reasons. But by hiding they won't accomplish anything."[128] [129]

Naida believes that without visible attempts to educate the public, the LGBTIQ movement in BiH will be unable to push forward acceptance and justice.

Barriers to LGBTIQ Activism – Limited Human Resources and Financial Resources:

Major barriers to LGBTIQ activism in BiH include a lack of a critical visible mass of LGBTIQ activists, a lack of financial resources, and a lack of coalitional support from civil society. Organization Q is currently conducting HIV/AIDS outreach work in BiH, and recently released three research reports, but two of its four primary members are no longer in BiH, and another two left the organization in 2009. Durkovic stated that because of this, "Organization Q is slightly in a transformative state…we have to figure out what we can do with the capacity that

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Personal interview with Naida, 19 April 2010.
[129] In July 1995, 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed by Bosnian Serb forces in the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica, a declared UN "safe area," The Srebrenica massacre was the largest mass murder in Europe since World War II. It was declared a genocide by the ICTY and the International Court of Justice, but the use of this term remains a source of heated controversy. For more information, see "Facts about Srebrenica," ICTY Outreach Program, 2006.

we have."[130] Mirza claimed that one of the major problems with the Festival was a lack of capacity to begin with. "Q didn't have enough manpower…it was four people pretty much doing everything for a five-day event. It was just too much."[131] Mirza agreed with Boris's statement, (cited earlier in this text) that the Festival would have been much more organized and successful if it had support from a wide range of NGOs and a much larger group of organizers.

According to many of my interview subjects, the lack of a critical mass of visible, outspoken and dedicated LGBTIQ activists is a continual problem in BiH, and one that cyclically reinforces the difficulties of LGBTIQ activism and visibility. One major problem is that many LGBTIQ people simply leave the BiH. According to Senad, this poses difficulty for activism because, even though some people do not leave permanently, "its never a constant number of people here."[132] Though many are frustrated with the homophobic climate in BiH, they choose to leave rather than resist the status quo, because, according to Gorana, "It's easier to escape it, just to go to London or Berlin than to deal with it in Bosnia."[133] Gorana stated that young LGBTIQ people here in particular are likely to leave the country. In addition, many young people, LGBTIQ or not, leave BiH to pursue careers or education elsewhere. Boris, an activist at Organization Logos, explained that most of the original members of Logos have left BiH for work or graduate study. He believes that if the organization is to continue, a new generation of visible and dedicated LGBTIQ activists in BiH must step up.[134]

However, even among those who remain in BiH, many LGBTIQ people are afraid to participate in activism or be visible as LGBTIQ in society because of the homophobic climate, limiting the potential success of an LGBTIQ movement. Marko thought the opening event of the

[130] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.
[131] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[132] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.
[133] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[134] Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010.

Queer Sarajevo Festival was attended by more non-LGBTIQ civil society activists and members of the international community than by the BiH LGBTIQ community, because of fear: "During the opening night of the Queer Festival, I couldn't see any people I used to see at parties. It was the first time that they were asked to show support, to get engaged—not by holding a rainbow flag but just by being there—but people were really scared to attend the opening event."[135] Marko stated that the violence at the Festival and the personal threats to the organizers only intensified the reluctance to participate in activism: "I don't think anyone would dare to start up an organization of that kind as yet…it's a lesson learned, like, 'see what happened to them.'"[136] Mirza thinks that this reluctance to participate in visible activism, combined with his perception of Organization Q's "transformation" as the end of the organization, demonstrates that LGBTIQ activism may be paralyzed: "With Q falling apart and shutting down slowly, I don't know if there is anyone to replace it."[137] Gorana contextualized this fear of participation within the larger context of BiH's societal problems: "It is a question of solidarity. That's what happens in divided societies and poverty-stricken societies, because everyone starts thinking about themselves, but if it wasn't just four girls or ten people doing it, it would be far better."[138] Senad agreed that a larger foundation of visible support is essential for this movement to continue: "If you want to change things, as an individual, it's very hard to fight against prejudice, but if you have a group of people who love their work, who really want to achieve something…for all of society, then things go a lot easier. I would like that to happen ASAP, because we desperately need it."[139] Though Mirza also believes that Sarajevo needs a strong and visible LGBTIQ activist community, he also understands the desire to simply leave the country, and he is preparing to

[135] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[138] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[139] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.

move to Berlin, where he is planning to marry his German fiancé and enter a graduate program. He explained:

> "When you consider everything else that's happening in society, people just want to leave. It's too much. Faced with so many obstacles, the normal human reaction is to just want to get away…it's a weird position to be in, on the one hand you feel guilty about leaving and you don't really feel like you are able to do anything even if you stay…I don't have any solutions to that."[140]

Because of the multiplicity of obstacles they face daily in BiH, a large percentage of LGBTIQ people move elsewhere, limiting the potential for a critical mass of an LGBTIQ community. Additionally, fear prevents many who remain from being visible and engaged in LGBTIQ activism. These two strategies for survival reinforce the public perception that there are not many LGBTIQ people in BiH. They also limit the ability of a visible community to resist the status quo, because without a critical mass of outspoken LGBTIQ people to collectively challenge norms, those who do choose to come out and participate in activism are even more vulnerable and isolated.

Boris explained that an absence of funding poses a serious challenge to conducting LGBTIQ activism. Organization Logos receives no financial support from the government, so international donor support has been their primary financial resource. However, according to Boris, after the crisis in Kosovo gained international attention, many international donors withdrew their funding from BiH and began supporting Kosovo NGOs instead.[141] Logos is currently an entirely volunteer-based organization, and while Boris believes they would be much more effective with three or four paid staff, they do not have the finances to support them. Logos is also interested in beginning a concerted advocacy effort that would build support among BiH NGOs and educate the public through an ongoing presentation of LGBTIQ cultural productions.

[140] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[141] Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010.

However, they have not found any donors who are willing to fund this project.[142] With both Organization Q and Organization Logos at a standstill due to lack of resources, the barriers to LGBTIQ activism may be very hard to overcome.

Coalition-Building Within Civil Society – Feminist Organizations, Human Rights Organizations, and Regional LGBTIQ Organizations:

A lack of coalitional support from other NGOs has also been a significant barrier to activism. Durkovic pointed out, in particular, the struggles that Organization Q has had with gaining support among women's rights' organizations in BiH:

> "There is no common understanding of what feminism means. There is definitely no common understanding of how different organizations define equality based on sex, gender and sexual orientation…that defines the work that you're doing. A lot of people who are involved in women's and feminist organizations have absolutely no official knowledge of the history of feminism…when you're involved in the work of an NGO that's trying to change laws and public policy making, you kind of have to update your knowledge as your organization grows…We have had feminist and women's organizations offer support to us on a personal basis or an organizational basis but not in public or in the media…Although it seems like we have common goals and common missions and visions, that's not necessarily always the case."[143]

Though the goals of these two movements both relate to justice and equality based on gender and sexuality, LGBTIQ activism has not garnered visible support from feminist organizations. Without the support of this important and broad movement, LGBTIQ activism may struggle more in gaining support among other NGO movements. The divide between LGBTIQ organizations and feminist organizations has historical precedent in other countries as well. In the United States, the issue of lesbian inclusion in the women's movement was hotly debated in the 1960s and 1970s. In a 1969 speech, Betty Friedan, founder of the National Organization for Women (one of the largest feminist organizations) referred to lesbian involvement in the

[142] Ibid.
[143] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.

movement as "the lavender menace."[144] After lesbian exclusion from the Congress to Unite Women sparked controversy within the movement, in 1971, NOW stated that lesbian rights were a "legitimate concern of feminism," and eventually many feminist organizations became more inclusive and provided valuable coalitional support.[145] Securing the support of women's organizations in BiH may be an essential step in the process of gaining LGBTIQ visibility and equality in society.

A second potential source of coalition-building is cooperation with human rights organizations. According to Durkovic, for the most part, human rights organizations have only given nominal support to Organization Q, but the support of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been very productive. Durkovic stated, "We have operated with them, we have trained their youth group, we have given them our publications, we have done workshops for them, they have included this issue in their annual reports. Cooperation with them has been very good."[146] After undergoing five months of training and preparation with Organization Q, Naida and other members of the Helsinki Committee's youth group, (most of whom were still in high school at the time) developed their own workshops on gender, sex, and LGBTIQ issues to educate high school students.[147] The workshops were slated to take place in 23 high schools in BiH, beginning in the fall of 2008. However, in the aftermath of the Queer Sarajevo Festival, the Ministry of Education revoked the organizers' permission to enter schools.[148] Naida and her peers spent nine months trying to find any way to gain entry to schools. They finally garnered the support of several high school psychologists, who aided their entry into

[144] Jay, Karla, *Tales from the Lavendar Menace: A Memoir of Liberation.* Basic Books, 1999.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.
[147] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[148] Ibid.

schools. Naida remarked, "It was our luck that they were so open-minded and they helped us."[149] So far, the group has facilitated workshops in 13 high schools in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar, and Biljeljina.[150]

Though Naida stated that many students in the workshops had extremely hostile reactions, and that "we never met a student who…was completely agreeing with everything we said," she thought the workshops ultimately had a very positive effect.[151] In addition to conducting these workshops in high schools, the organizers also led workshops with students at Helsinki Committee youth seminars throughout BiH. Naida described her most recent workshop, with 14- to 16-year old students from Velika Kladusa, a small city in northwest Bosnia which she described as a very traditional area in BiH. She stated:

> "When we started talking about it, they just changed colors. They were like traffic lights. But then after the workshop they called us, and they asked 'Can we learn something more about this?' and we [said] 'Sure, we're sending you extra materials.' We're pretty aware of the fact that we're not going to get them to accept [LGBTIQ] people, but we're going to get them not to attack them, to consider their position here."[152]

The Helsinki Committee workshops have the potential to reach a large number of young people in BiH, and as this anecdote illustrates, may be able to genuinely impact the opinions of students who have never been exposed to the idea of tolerance of sexual minorities. In the aftermath of the Queer Sarajevo Festival, whereas other activism has retreated into silence, this project appears to be perhaps the most visible and effective attempt to educate the public and change attitudes. Naida noted that the perceived legitimacy of the Helsinki Committee has enabled them to reach students, whereas specifically LGBTIQ-focused organizations like Organization Q may have struggled more to facilitate these workshops because of stigmatization: "The schools will

[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

probably give us approval and not them, because it's a big help when they see that logo, Helsinki Committee. Then they reconsider it. Even if they're not agreeing with it, they'll do it because they know the position that Helsinki has in the whole region, and they are maybe afraid of it."[153] This discriminatory treatment of LGBTIQ-focused organizations vs. well-known human rights organizations by state institutions is certainly unjust. However, perhaps this example demonstrates one valuable component of coalitional work with mainstream human rights organizations—the ability to access resources and achieve activist goals that may not otherwise be possible, given the current climate of stigma and discrimination.

A third potential source of coalitional activism is with other LGBTIQ organizations in the Western Balkans. Mirza, who worked on International Zagreb Pride events, explained that activists in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo provide support to each other and stay informed about LGBTIQ issues in each city. "Everyone is very interconnected," he stated.[154] Marko believes that regional cooperation between LGBTIQ groups is essential for the success of LGBTIQ activism in BiH: "If it starts…it will start through the support of similar organizations in the region."[155] Regional cooperation may be very useful, because Croatia, Serbia and BiH share some cultural traditions values, histories, and have had some similar experiences with challenges of LGBTIQ activism. LGBTIQ activists in Belgrade attempted to organize Belgrade's first Pride Parade in 2001, but the Parade ended in with violent assaults on attendees by nationalist groups.[156] In 2009, Belgrade LGBTIQ activists again attempted to organize a Pride Parade, but 24 hours before the Festival, the Festival was banned, because police stated they would not able to ensure the safety

[153] Ibid.
[154] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[155] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[156] Personal interview with Dragana, 28 March 2010.

of Pride participants.[157] Dragana, an LGBTIQ activist at a Belgrade organization called Labris, stated that as a result of the 2001 Pride Parade, "Now people realize that okay, there are LGBT people in Serbia, and we must accept that. No one can deny that anymore, and that's a big step, in terms of visibility."[158] Like activists in Sarajevo, Belgrade activists have been dismayed by the violence that has resulted from attempts to raise LGBTIQ visibility, but some also state that even these harshly contested attempts to bring LGBTIQ visibility into public space have positive impacts, because they raise the overall level of awareness in society.

In 2002, the first attempt by Zagreb organizers to stage a Pride Parade also ended in violence, with approximately 20 people assaulted.[159] However, Zagreb activists have organized Parades each year since then, and except for in 2007, these parades took place without violence.[160] Mirza explained that Zagreb activists' ability to organize peaceful public LGBTIQ events is a result of a strong base of support from a plurality of LGBTIQ organizations and community members, as well as institutional support from government and police. "This is a fundamental difference between Sarajevo and Zagreb. In the first Zagreb Pride Parade, the first people in the parade were the Minister of the Interior and the Chief of Police. That would not happen here."[161] Despite the fundamental differences between these societies, and the varying degrees of visibility and legal rights in the region, the obstacles and the successes of other LGBTIQ groups in the region provide valuable lessons for activists in Sarajevo attempting to promote LGBTIQ rights.

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[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] "The State of Human Rights of Sexual and Gender Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in the Year 2002." IGLA Europe, 2003.
[160] "Freedom of Assembly – Country by Country Diary of Events." IGLA Europe, 2008, p. 7.
[161] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.

Additionally, events like the 2006 International Zagreb Pride Festival demonstrate that regional coalition-building can produce productive demonstrations of shared values and goals. The 2006 International Zagreb Pride Parade included representatives from 12 nations and one autonomous region—Kosovo, which did not formally declare independence from Serbia until 2008—in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, including Croatia, BiH, Slovenia, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Kosovo.[162] Some of these nations had held Pride Festivals before, while others had not. Despite the histories of violent conflict between these nations and the differences in their cultures, the 2006 International Pride Parade demonstrated the ability to move beyond conflict and work towards common goals.

Logos hopes to build a strong foundation solidarity among many organizations throughout the region. According to Boris, Logos is interested in "preventing violence by creating allies [and] a strong position in the NGO community."[163] He believes that human rights organizations and women's organizations "don't know enough about LGBTIQ issues," but that educating these organizations and gaining their support is an essential priority.[164] Before tolerance of LGBTIQ visibility can be achieved, Boris argued, "first you must advocate for yourself within these NGOs, explain who you are, get them out of fear, and then get out together with these organizations."[165] Boris believes that a cohesive and widespread NGO position supporting LGBTIQ rights is the only way to effectively move forward with this movement.

Legal Protection? - Perspectives on the Anti-Discrimination Law:

Though the Queer Sarajevo Festival may have demonstrated the importance of an inclusive anti-discrimination law, and eased the process of adopting a law that at least, in theory,

[162] "2006 Annual Report on the Status of Human Rights of Sexual and Gender Minorities in Croatia." IGLA Europe, 2007.
[163] Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

protects the rights of sexual minorities, most of my interview subjects were apprehensive or dismissive of the law's impact on protection from discrimination and violence. Marko argued it has no impact at all: "It doesn't change anything. You can't change public perceptions through a set of laws. There are so many different laws in this country that are vital but are not implemented, that's why we are so stuck in this place."[166] According to Durkovic, an immediate impact cannot be expected, because in the BiH and in Eastern Europe in general, social change often comes after the implementation of laws: "In the United States, change has been coming from the people…and the laws are following. In Eastern Europe…we might have the laws come first, and we have several laws that do not exist in the United States, but it doesn't mean that people believe it or agree with it. So we might have to go the other way around."[167] Despite the challenges of implementing a law that people do not support, Naida believes that the law will eventually have a positive impact: "It will take some time, at least two or three years for people to start implementing the law, to understand the fact that they will get punished by the state if they are doing something against it."[168] Mirza stated that though the law could be better written, and was revised into a "horrible political compromise," part of the problem is that LGBTIQ people are afraid to take action: "There are mechanisms provided by the Anti-Discrimination Act that, if they were used by members of the LGBTIQ population, could bring about change. I guess it's a matter of whether there will be enough strength within the community to use what we have."[169] Implementation of other laws of this kind, including Law on Gender Equality, which guarantees some protection based on gender, has been lackluster. Gorana explained that the Law on Gender Equality was passed in 2003, but still has not become accepted or utilized by society:

[166] Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010.
[167] Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010.
[168] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[169] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.

"When it was adopted it was the most progressive one in the region, but I think no one really knew what to do with it. I don't think it now has relevance in any sphere...it was just on the paper and remained on the paper really."[170] The lack of implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, even today, suggests that the Law Against Discrimination is also unlikely to be effectively implemented in the near future. Though Mirza did explain that LGBTIQ people must know how to use the law, he also placed responsibility for failure of legal implementation on the government. He stated: "That is a major problem, not just when it comes to LGBTIQ but anything else, we often have very good legislation but it's just not implemented, especially by the institutions. I think that's where it all starts. The institutions don't implement anything Parliament passes."[171] According to most of my interview subjects, failure to implement legislation is a consistent problem in BiH, and therefore there is little hope that the law preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation will have any significant impact.

Perspectives on Possibilities for LGBTIQ Visibility:

My interview subjects had a variety of opinions on the possibility of another Queer Festival or Pride Parade in the near future. Zilka argued that the climate is still too hostile for another public LGBTIQ event: "I think this year, whether they organized it during or outside of any religious holiday, they would face violence again."[172] Gorana agreed that because of the increasingly traditional nature of society in general and the post-Festival climate specifically, organizing Pride may be unfeasible: "At the moment, because the situation deteriorated since the Queer Festival two years ago, I'm not sure what I would recommend… I mean, I would love to do it, I would be the first one in a pride parade, but the question is whether we would just attract

[170] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[171] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[172] Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010.

more violence or not."[173] Gorana argued that society has become increasingly conservative as poverty in BiH has deepened.[174] She stated that changes are apparent with regard to poverty and traditional values over the last few years.[175] Along with increasingly traditional values, Gorana argued that some people are becoming more aggressive, and that the rising threat of violence must be considered when planning events that challenge the status quo.[176] "Three years ago, if you asked me whether to have a pride parade I would say yes. Now I'm not sure."[177] Gorana expressed that Organization Q's workshops had been an effective mechanism for change, despite the limited capacity of the small organization, and that continuing to work with "smaller groups rather than doing it on the grand scale" may be a more effective and safer way of raising visibility, educating the public and challenging perceptions.[178] According to Boris, holding such a public event was counter-productive in a society like this one. Boris explained, "you can do that when society is living, but to do it in a society with so many problems and radicals you miss the point."[179] Boris argued that public visibility is a form of lobbying and advocacy, but that other channels of advocacy would be more effective. He thinks Pride could be held perhaps five or ten years from now, but that "maybe then it won't be important to have Pride," if LGBTIQ people have genuine rights.

However, other interviewees expressed their belief that large, visibility-raising events are possible and necessary for furthering LGBTIQ equality. According to Senad, one of the Queer Sarajevo Festival's outcomes was the fact that the intolerance of society was made clearly visible, a step that is essential in order to promote change. He explained:

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[173] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010.

> "When you open a pipe, and water starts to come out, first you will see filthy water coming out, and after a while you will start to see clean water coming out. That's the same thing about Queer Festival. I would make it really big and everyone would know about it…and then you would see what are the problems in the community...And then you start to work on them—you don't have to solve them all right away, just start to work on them. Then the clear water will start to run down the pipe and the situation will get better…Because if you want to change something, first you have to say the problems, so that everyone can hear it."[180]

Mirza thinks that holding a Pride Parade is possible and necessary for change. He stated, "It can absolutely be done. If Warsaw could do it so could we."[181] Mirza noted, somewhat jokingly, that Warsaw Pride was accomplished by bringing in five buses full of Germans, because LGBTIQ people are more accepted and visible in German society than in Polish society. Citing the usefulness of regional Balkan LGBTIQ cooperation, Mirza argued that this kind of international support could be a valuable strategy for BiH Pride.[182] Furthermore, Mirza explained that perfection cannot be expected in the first Pride, but that the producing the event is necessary nevertheless: "No one is expecting it to go perfectly smoothly, it will probably be horrible the first time it happens, but this is just something we have to go through. There is no way of avoiding that unless we want the city to become more conservative and more discriminatory against LGBTIQ people."[183] According to Mirza, the staging of a Pride parade is an essential element of demonstrating the existence and willpower of an LGBTIQ community that willing to fight for justice.

Goals for Social Change:

My interview subjects expressed their desire for a number of different kinds of changes that they argued would have positive impacts on life for LGBTIQ people in BiH. These ranged from strategic changes to LGBTIQ activism to structural changes in BiH society and politics.

[180] Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010.
[181] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.

Mirza argued that the movement needs "a fresh start, a grassroots campaign to mobilize people within the community."[184] According to Mirza, LGBTIQ activism needs the revitalization of "fresh faces" as well as "the support of the elders."[185] In Mirza's vision for change, activists would push for LGBTIQ visibility through posters, leaflets, and street actions, raising public awareness of these issues. According to Mirza, an effective campaign for visibility would include not only educating the public through workshops and literature, but also pushing to empower more people to come out: "A long term goal should be to have as many people as possible come out, people from various walks of life, and talk about their personal experience."[186] Though Mirza expressed that, of course, the decision to come out is a complex personal choice, but that a critical mass of visible LGBTIQ people is a completely necessary element of a successful movement.

Naida argued that education reform is necessary to change public perceptions of LGBTIQ issues, because schoolbooks contain a great deal of explicitly homophobic text, stating that it is a disease, that it is unnatural, and that it is sinful.[187] Naida explained that an overhaul of the curriculum is necessary, because in addition to promoting explicitly homophobic values, schools also teach intolerant attitudes regarding difference and otherness in general. "We are teaching children [from a very young age]…to become people who will eventually throw stones at other people."[188] The Helsinki Committee youth group has made recommendations to education policy-makers regarding textbook reform. One of Naida's main concerns is with bias that is transmitted to very young children, through elementary school texts that include statements like

[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[188] Ibid.

"'Mom makes lunch and Dad goes to work."[189] Naida believes that changing bias in textbooks, and therefore perceptions in society, will be a long and difficult process. However, she believes that "if we are persistent, eventually [educational policy-makers] will have to listen to us. Maybe they won't agree with us completely but they have to admit that we have some things solved in our heads that they just skip over because they don't know how to solve them."[190] Education reform of curricular materials—both specific to LGBTIQ issues and relating to larger values and perceptions—could have a significant impact on societal perceptions and beliefs.

Several of my interview subjects argued that the state must also take a more active role in the implementation of laws and the protection of LGBTIQ people. According to Naida, if the state continues to remain unresponsive to the violence and discrimination faced by LGBTIQ people, despite pressures from the European Union and the United Nations to respond to these problems, the global reputation of BiH abroad will deteriorate. According to Naida, it is in the best interest of the state to change "the view of Bosnia as a state who hates differences and minorities."[191] One news report published shortly before the Queer Sarajevo Festival stated that the hate speech preceding the Festival had "cast a shadow over the city's once famous reputation for tolerance."[192] Naida echoed the sentiment of this article, and declared that the state must take responsibility for reacting to events like the violence and hate speech surrounding the Queer Sarajevo Festival. She stated, "I expect them to write a law that will prohibit hate speech, not only against the state or against religious minorities but against every minority in Bosnia…I think we can no longer declare ourselves a multicultural city until we start reacting to things like

[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Latal, Srecko. "Gay Festival Tests Bosnia's 'City of Tolerance.'" Balkan Insight. 10 September 2008.

this."[193] Durkovic also stated that the state has a responsibility to take a more active role in protecting LGBTIQ people. She argued that one of the major challenges of LGBTIQ activism is that LGBTIQ organizations are stretched too thin, because they must take on projects that should be the responsibility of state institutions, but are simply ignored by officials in those institutions. She argued that NGOs like Organization Q should be able to focus their resources on directly supporting the needs of the LGBTIQ community, but that Q has also been required to take on projects to fill a void caused by governmental silence:

> "Any NGO that exists and does not have its counterpart in the government means we are doing their job. If our state was doing this, we would not be doing research, we would not be doing public policy making, we would not be [working on] changing of law…We would not be training [government officials]…We would be collecting information with the population because no one else has access to them—they don't trust them, they trust us, and we would be working on supporting LGBTIQ community itself, so that they report problems and crime that happens to them. We would be doing other intricate, depth issues with the population."

According to Durkovic, in order for an LGBTIQ activist movement to succeed, it must be supported by efforts within state institutions. In addition to providing supportive resources, such as research, legal implementation, and adequate police protection, Mirza stated that the state should publicly display solidarity for LGBTIQ rights, using the example cited earlier in this text, of the Zagreb Chief of Police and Minister of Interior marching at the front of the 2002 Zagreb Pride Parade. Additionally, in 2008, the Mayor of Zagreb also officially allowed the display of rainbow flags in the main square of Zagreb, a symbol of LGBTIQ liberation.[194] According to Mirza, public expressions of solidarity from significant government officials can have an important impact on the willingness of the public to tolerate free expression, and that though this may be unlikely for Sarajevo in the near future, it is essential.

[193] Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010.
[194] "Freedom of Assembly – Country by Country Diary of Events." IGLA Europe, 2008, p. 7.

Other interviewees emphasized the value of a stable foundation of advocacy, committed to continuous education of the public. Rather than a day of Pride, which may inflame tensions and invite sudden hostility, Boris thinks that projects and cultural events that are "ongoing and always present" may be more effective at changing public opinions. He hopes to get funding for advocacy work that would truly reach the general public, "educating people who may be influencable, people who have never really thought about it but could be allies."[195] He thinks it is important to be visible without compromise, but that in order to reach the widest population possible, it's important to promote these issues in an accessible way, with an emphasis on values of tolerance of difference and human rights. Boris explained, "people are scared of words like queer but that's not important. What's important is treating all kinds of human rights inclusively, dealing with all problems, on the same level as women's rights and other goals."[196] With inclusion and support of a broad base of civil society organizations, Boris believes that the importance of human rights for all—including LGBTIQ people—could become an accepted understanding of the general population. Mirza noted that the support of a broad civil society base is a very real possibility. He noted that a vast majority of the attendees of the opening exhibition of the Queer Sarajevo Festival were activists from a variety of NGOs, as well as some members of political parties. Mirza stated that this indicates "there is support. There are people who can help,"[197] but that LGBTIQ activism must have a significant enough base to organize these efforts.

Many of my interviewees stressed that until larger societal changes are made, addressing economic instability, political corruption, and ethnic division, LGBTIQ rights cannot be fully achieved. According to Gorana, "Because of the poverty, we are definitely are deepening and

[195] Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010.

going further into former patriarchal orders. Unless we address that, we can't address LGBT rights or anything else. But unfortunately at the moment, the greater the poverty, the greater the re-traditionalization."[198] According to Gorana, the inextricable ties between increasing poverty and traditional values present major obstacles for LGBTIQ activism. Rada noted that political greed and corruption must be addressed, because genuine rights are impossible to obtain in this climate of corruption: "All the institutions are managed by political parties. They've lost their credibility…They've lost the interest of the citizens. They don't represent the institutions. They represent themselves. It's really time to change something, if we want to be civilized, normal people living in a normal society."[199] According to Rada, state institutions do not address the needs and rights of Bosnian citizens, because institutional leadership is defined by personal greed, rather than a dedication to societal development.

Rada also argued that the political situation is worse than the immediate post-war period: "After the war, people were ready to get together, because they were fed up with war…Unfortunately, nationalist parties are still in power…With every sentence they pronounce, they make that gap deeper. That's really dangerous, because they play with the fear of the other."[200] Rada believes that BiH's political climate has become increasingly dysfunctional because nationalist parties promote "the fear of the other," deepening a climate of intolerance. Gorana agreed that the immediate post-war period offered an opportunity for transformation that has since become impossible:

> "People were tired of fighting…At the end of the war you had optimism. I mean you had quite a lot of violence, you had problems with everything, but on a certain level they were more optimistic, willing to work...But it was 15 years ago. This is a regressive period, and they're just completely disillusioned. War stopped so there was some positive energy, but that energy was wasted within three or four years because nothing changed,

[198] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[199] Personal interview with Rada, 26 April 2010.
[200] Ibid.

> nothing went forward…and the deepening of the ethnic conflict is just more disillusioning than anything else. Plus, we are definitely entering poverty."[201]

According to Gorana, in addition to the problem of growing poverty, the lack of progress in the post-war period has decreased people's belief in the possibility of government to affect change, and the ethnic divisions have only worsened. She noted that the increasing ethnic conflict has a significant impact on intolerance of LGBTIQ people, because of the increasing fear and rejection of any kind of identity difference: "It's been shown in Pride Parades in Croatia and Serbia. Ethnicity always comes in [to homophobia], [LGBTIQ people] become the 'other.'"[202] The interconnected structural problems of economic instability, political corruption, deepening ethnic conflict, and intolerance of otherness present serious obstacles to an improvement in rights and tolerance for LGBTIQ people. They demonstrate the need for an inclusive, broad and system-wide investment in reform.

Conclusion:

The Queer Sarajevo Festival, the events preceding it, the violence, the reactions of society and the impact on LGBTIQ life in Sarajevo provide rich material for exploration and analysis of activist strategies, cultural conflict, tolerance, discrimination, dynamics within institutional structures and civil society, and the experience of otherness in BiH. While my interview subjects presented a variety of perspectives on these issues, some general conclusions can be made from this investigation. In BiH, public perceptions are generally fairly homophobic, and the climate is marked by silence and rejection of LGBTIQ rights. The Queer Sarajevo Festival was organized as an effort to promote visibility and public awareness of LGBTIQ issues in BiH society. However, the hate speech in media preceding the Festival and the resulting

[201] Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010.
[202] Ibid.

eruption of violence at the event demonstrated that intolerance poses a significant threat to LGBTIQ people in Sarajevo, and sent shockwaves of frustration and fear through the community.

The cancellation of the Festival, the retreat of Organization Q, and the absence of prosecutions for inciting and committing violence may have all resulted in a decrease in LGBTIQ visibility. Many people feel more afraid to come out or participate in activism, because of the harsh realities of danger and the lack of state response to these dangers. As Mirza stated, this may be a "healing period" for LGBTIQ people in Sarajevo, but it is clear that new activist energy is needed in order to push forward justice for LGBTIQ people. However, many obstacles to activism remain, including fear, lack of state, coalitional and financial support, and lack of a critical mass of visible LGBTIQ people. The lack of a strong base of activists results from many of Sarajevo's LGBTIQ citizens' fear of coming out and participating in activism, as well as from the fact that many LGBTIQ people move elsewhere to find tolerance. This struggle to build a strong base of outspoken LGBTIQ citizens is a cyclically reinforced problem, because those few who do speak out are even more vulnerable to retaliation because of their singular visibility, and they are also less likely to be able to make significant changes to society due to lack of capacity.

Though Wahabbi groups are considered by most to be responsible for the violence at the Festival, interview subjects suggested that these extremists are a symptom of the problem, rather than the root cause. The failure to protect citizens from violence and to prosecute those responsible is seen by many as a greater obstacle to ensuring safety for LGBTIQ people, and for anyone who—purposefully or not—challenges the status quo. The lack of outspoken reactions to the hate speech and violence on the part of political parties and government institutions, as well as the lack of implementation of laws protecting the rights of LGBTIQ people, demonstrate the

institutional absence of support for LGBTIQ people and the lack of state responsibility for preventing violence and discrimination. This is indicative of some of the structural problems within BiH government, which according to my subjects, include political corruption, ethnic divisions, and a lack of responsibility for the needs of citizens, particularly minorities. Obstacles to LGBTIQ empowerment can only be understood in the context of these structural problems, which they may pose long-term challenges to raising visibility and tolerance.

Despite the multiplicity of social, political, financial and cultural obstacles faced by LGBTIQ people and activists, possibilities for empowerment remain, and many of my interview subjects pointed to potential strategies for change. Coalition-building among human rights, feminist and regional LGBTIQ activist organizations all offer potential avenues for a broad, strong foundation of groups pushing for inclusive social change, supported by a multiplicity of voices. Workshops dedicated to educating the general population have proved to be an effective way to challenge perceptions, engage in non-violent dialogue, and increase awareness of LGBTIQ issues. Educational reforms could reduce the bias transmitted through classroom experiences. Lobbying governmental structures to pass and implement anti-discriminatory legislation and provide support to LGBTIQ citizens would provide LGBTIQ people with greater structural protection. Efforts to empower the LGBTIQ population, enabling them to come out and share their experiences and voices may be an essential component of building an activist movement, as well as changing the climate of silence. Visible public demonstrations, including Pride Parades, may be challenging and controversial, but according to some interviewees, they are a necessary and valuable step in the process towards societal acceptance. Though there are major barriers to overcome, the strategies developed by LGBTIQ activists include a variety of potential methods to achieve LGBTIQ empowerment.

I hope that my research has provided not only useful investigation into the challenges of LGBTIQ activism in BiH, but that it has also illuminated the strength, resilience, and creativity of the LGBTIQ activists I spoke with. These individuals face major obstacles, critically formulate missions and strategies, and continue to resist silence, challenge intolerance, and fight discrimination. Their stories illuminate the difficult realities of life for LGBTIQ people in BiH, and in my opinion, suggest that genuine LGBTIQ visibility and acceptance will be eventually achieved, given of the dedication of these activists.

Recommendations for Further Study:

Further research could add new perspectives to the voices included in this work. Re-investigating this issue after several years would probably provide new insight into the ultimate impact of the Queer Sarajevo Festival and new developments in the progress of LGBTIQ rights. One topic I would have liked to explore further is the politics of LGBTIQ activism in BiH, and intra-movement debates over issues like visibility, strategy, and priorities. Additionally, if I had a much longer period of time, I would like to expand this research into a comparative analysis of LGBTIQ activism in the Western Balkans, exploring visibility, strategy, climate, institutional support and community life.

Appendix A – List of Interviews:

E-mail correspondence with Boba, 3 May 2010. Former member of Organization Q.

Personal interview with Ahmet, 29 April 2010. Islamic Studies professor.

Personal interview with Azra, 11 May 2010. Islamic Studies student.

Personal interview with Boris, 30 April 2010. Member of Organization Logos.

Personal interview with Dragana, 28 March 2010. Member of Labris, a Belgrade LGBTIQ organization.

Personal interview with Gorana, 22 April 2010. Gender Studies professor.

Personal interview with Marko, 19 April 2010. LGBTIQ-identified, but not involved in LGBTIQ activism.

Personal interview with Mirza, 12 May 2010. Student, former volunteer at Organization Q, activist with International Zagreb Pride.

Personal interview with Naida, 20 April 2010. Student, coordinator of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH youth group, and board member of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH.

Personal interview with Rada, 26 April 2010. Board member, Nasa Stranka.

Personal interview with Senad, 29 April 2010. Student, former volunteer at Organization Logos.

Personal interview with Svetlana Durkovic, 21 April 2010. Co-founder, Organization Q.

Personal interview with Zilka, 22 April 2010. Islamic feminist studies professor.

Appendix B – List of Interview Questions:

LGBT Activists:

-How did you become involved with LGBT activism?
-What is the history behind the founding of Organization Q?
-What were the goals of the Queer Sarajevo Festival?
-How did you feel about the media coverage of the Festival?
-What are the biggest issues facing LGBT people in Sarajevo today?
-What would you say are general public perceptions of LGBT people and LGBT issues in Sarajevo?
-What are you currently working on? Is your current work related to LGBT rights?
-What would you most like to see accomplished in terms of LGBT rights in Sarajevo?
-How do you think the Bosnian and Herzegovinan government should respond to the violence and discrimination experienced by LGBT people?
-Which organizations or individuals have been useful allies in the struggle for LGBT rights?
-How has religion played a role in this work?
-How have human rights organizations and other parts of civil society played roles in this work?
-Has the presence of the international community in Sarajevo affected your work?
-Which organizations or individuals have presented the most challenging opposition or obstacles to the movement?
-How has life for LGBT people changed in Sarajevo since the Queer Sarajevo Festival?
-Do you think the growth of Wahabbism in Sarajevo has affected the ability of LGBT activism to succeed?
-What do you predict will happen in the future for LGBT life in Sarajevo?
-Do you have any contacts who may be useful people for me to interview?

LGBT Community Members:

-What is your profession?
-What are your hobbies?
-Are you involved with LGBT activism in Sarajevo?
-Are you involved with any civil society organizations or other political or cultural groups?
-How would you describe life for LGBT people in Sarajevo?
-What strategies for networking and communication do LGBT people use? Does the Internet play a role in LGBT communication and networking?
-What would you say are general public perceptions of LGBT people and LGBT issues in Sarajevo?
-What are the biggest issues facing LGBT people in Sarajevo today?
-Did you attend the Queer Sarajevo Festival?
-How has life for LGBT people changed in Sarajevo since the Queer Sarajevo Festival?
-Do you think the growth of Wahabbism in Sarajevo has affected life for LGBT people in Sarajevo?
-What do you predict will happen in the future for LGBT life in Sarajevo?
-Do you have any contacts who may be willing to have an interview with me?

Other Civil Society Organizations – Human Rights, Women's Rights Organizations:

-How did you become involved with human rights/women's rights?
-What is the primary agenda and philosophy of your organization?
-How is LGBT rights incorporated into your organization's mission and work?
-How did your organization react publicly to the violence at the Queer Sarajevo Festival?
-How do you think your organization may be able to support LGBT communities and further LGBT rights in Sarajevo?
-How do you think the Bosnian and Herzegovinan government should respond to the violence and discrimination experienced by LGBT people?
-What other organizations do you collaborate with?
-How does coalition-based activism function in Sarajevo?
-How does the media play a role in your work?
-How do you think the increase in Wahabbism in Bosnian and Herzegovina has affected the state of human rights/women's rights?
-What do you predict will happen in the future for LGBT life in Sarajevo?
-What would you most like to see accomplished in terms of LGBT rights in Sarajevo?

Political Parties:

-What is the platform of your party?
-How are LGBT rights incorporated into your party's political stance?
-Does your party consider LGBT rights to be a human rights issue?
-How did your party react publicly to the violence at the Queer Sarajevo Festival?
-How do you think your party may be able to support LGBT communities and further LGBT rights in Sarajevo?
-How do you think the BiH government should respond to the violence and discrimination experienced by LGBT people? What would you say is the government's responsibility in terms of protecting LGBT people from violence and discrimination?
-How do you think the increase in Wahabbism in Bosnian and Herzegovina has affected the state of human rights and LGBT rights in Sarajevo?

Scholarly Contacts:

-Can you tell me a little about your area of research and your views on feminism and Islam?
-To what extent do LGBT issues fit into a feminist Islamic framework?
-How did the Islamic Community react to the Queer Sarajevo Festival, and to the violence that occurred at this festival?
-What do you think about the belief that the QSF was a direct offense to Muslim society because of its timing during Ramadan?
-What did you think of the media coverage of the Festival?
-How you do you think LGBT issues should be handled in Bosnian society?
-How did the structure of the Islamic Community evolve?
-How has the relationship between Wahabbism and the Islamic Community evolved over the years?
-How do you think the government should address the actions of Wahabbis?

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