



There is no excuse for violence
against women and girls

#noexcuse

**"16 Days of Activism
Against Gender-Based Violence"
Campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

25 November - 10 December 2023

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CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The campaign "**16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**" is marked annually from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day). It is part of the broader UNiTE campaign led by the United Nations Secretary-General, which calls on governments, media, women's rights organizations, youth, civil society, and the entire UN to fight violence against women and girls. This year's campaign was implemented with the support of Sweden, and in collaboration with numerous partners, government representatives, civil society organizations, artists, and influencers.

Despite significant efforts invested to address violence, gender-based violence remains a serious problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to available data, every second woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced some form of violence in her lifetime. However, many cases go unreported due to a lack of trust in protection system institutions, shame, or the fact that women do not recognize themselves as victims of violence.

Raising awareness about the importance of involving the entire society in the fight against violence against women and girls was the primary goal of the campaign, carried out under the slogan "**Turn off Violence Together**".

Through various activities, the campaign highlighted actions, measures, and initiatives undertaken in collaboration with various organizations from the government and non-government sectors that contributed to improving the position of survivors of gender-based violence, from regulating the legal framework to the economic empowerment of women. The campaign also focused on reviewing achievements in preventing gender-based violence and identifying future actions.

Collaboration with influencers and artists conveyed the message that there is **#NoExcuse for violence against women and girls**.



CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

The campaign "**16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**" began on 24 November 2023 with the performance of the play "Perseids" by author Emina Kovačević-Podgorčević and director Karmen Obrdali, at the Youth Theatre in Sarajevo.

In the presence of more than 200 people, the campaign was opened with introductory speeches by Sara Lindegren, Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor at the Embassy of Sweden in BiH; Ingrid Macdonald, UN Resident Coordinator in BiH; and Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić, Director of Agency for Gender Equality of BiH of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH.

Throughout the campaign, UN Women strongly supported the promotion of artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina whose works address socially responsible topics.





"Sweden strongly supports the fight against violence against women and girls worldwide. I want to acknowledge all those who work every day to build local capacity, change stereotypes and behaviors, and care for survivors. But more is needed to help survivors and change norms. We hope that this campaign can contribute to creating a society where a life without fear of threat and violence will be a reality for every girl and woman in BiH."

Sara Lindegren, Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor at the Embassy of Sweden in BiH

"The power of art can promote women's rights and gender equality. Artists have a special role in disrupting harmful social norms, and in promoting zero tolerance to violence against women."

Ingrid Macdonald, UN Resident Coordinator in BiH



"It is necessary to approach the systematic resolution of this issue, from the police, through health care, social work centers, to prosecution, to adequately implement recommendations that are also preventive measures for femicide. A systematic approach is very important. In the coming period, we will launch a major joint project with UN agencies and all institutions to systematically address this issue in terms of prevention, protection, and prosecution of perpetrators."

Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić, Director of Agency for Gender Equality of BiH of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH





"Violence against women is preventable with increased efforts and investments to transform social norms and stereotypes, empower women economically, and strengthen essential services for survivors. UN Women, with the support of Sweden and our partners, continues to advocate for an end to violence against all women and girls. I want to extend a call to everyone – be our ally in this. Every effort invested in preventing violence is a profound step towards a safer world for all women and girls."

Jo-Anne Bishop, UN Women BiH Representative

After the opening remarks, the central part of the campaign's launch was the performance of the play "Perseids", produced by the National Theater Mostar. The play, written by Emina Kovačević-Podgorčević and directed by Karmen Obrdalj, addresses the complex issues of patriarchy, domestic violence, and violence against women through the story of female friendship.



"Complex female characters are rarely seen in domestic audio-visual arts. We wanted to finally give space for a female story to be heard."

Karmen Obrdalj, director of the play "Perseids"

CENTRAL AND SIDE EVENTS WITHIN THE CAMPAIGN

Panel Discussion in Tuzla

The first central event, a panel discussion on the topic **“Positive Examples of Local Community Responses to Gender-Based Violence”**, was held in Tuzla on 29 November 2023, at the House of Flame of Peace.

More than 30 representatives from government and civil society organisations discussed the role of non-governmental organizations and institutions in the prevention and response to gender-based violence. Concrete examples of improvements in the regulation of this area were presented, ranging from the enhancement and implementation of legal regulations, a multisectoral approach to gender-based violence, to the economic empowerment of women who have survived violence.

Moderated by Tahir Žustra, the discussion involved the following panelists: Fatima Bećirović, project coordinator at the Gender Center of the Federation of BiH; Denis Fejzić, independent inspector and chief of the Office of the Director of the Police Administration of Tuzla Canton; Dragana Petrić, project coordinator at the Lara Foundation; and Aida Mustačević Cipurković, project coordinator at the CSO Vive Žene Tuzla.



“From September 2021 to May 2023, we implemented a project to build the economic resilience of women who survived violence and to improve social policies, with the aim of empowering survivors and creating a life without violence. The project demonstrated that investing in the economic empowerment of women is a direct path to gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth.”

Aida Mustačević Cipurković, psychotherapist, and project coordinator at CSO Vive Žene Tuzla



“A lot has been accomplished, but there is still a need for organizing mandatory and continuous education, improving and more consistent implementation of existing legal solutions, stricter criminal policies, as well as sanctioning professionals who are found not to have acted in accordance with all regulations and competencies.”

Fatima Bećirović, project coordinator at the Gender Center of the Federation of BiH

Panel Discussion in Banja Luka

The second central event was held on 7 December 2023, at the City Theatre “Jazavac” in Banja Luka, where a panel discussion on the topic **“Positive Examples of Local Community Responses to Gender-Based Violence”** took place.

The panel was moderated by Dijana Tepšić, and the panelists included Gorica Ivić, Executive Director of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka; Maja Marjanović, project coordinator at the Gender Center of Republika Srpska; Jovana Mlinarević, assistant at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Banja Luka; and Milada Šukalo, advisor to the Mayor of Banja Luka.



More than 60 representatives of government and civil society organizations, as well as students, attended the panel, discussing the role of media, non-governmental organizations, and institutions in the prevention and response to gender-based violence. Progress made, such as improvements in legal regulations and a multisectoral approach to gender-based violence, was also presented.

“The goal of the project ‘Banja Luka – the City with Zero Tolerance for Sexual Violence and Harassment’ was to ensure better protection for survivors of sexual violence and harassment. Activities such as law amendments, training for professionals dealing with sexual violence cases, informing citizens, and informing survivors about their rights were undertaken. An increased number of reports of sexual violence was recorded, which can be considered a result of raising awareness about the importance of reporting acts involving elements of sexual violence.”

Gorica Ivić, Executive Director of the Foundation United Women Banja Luka



“With the support of UN Women BiH, in the past five years, we have organized multisectoral trainings in 25 local self-government units, involving about 300 representatives of protection entities. In these 25 local self-government units, we have managed to develop internal documents and procedures and establish teams for handling and cooperating in cases of domestic violence and violence against women. Now, it is up to us and all people working in protection entities to make an effort to implement these acts in the field.”

Tijana Arambašić-Živanović, Senior Expert Associate for Education, Coordination, and Cooperation at the Gender Center of Republika Srpska

Performance of the play “Perseids” in Mostar

As part of the campaign, another performance of the play “Perseids” was held in Mostar with free-of-charge entrance for citizens. The play was performed on 5 December 2023, at the National Theater Mostar on the small stage Studio 64, once again drawing attention to the fact that art can significantly promote gender equality and influence public awareness on ending violence against women.



“Two young authors, driven by their own need and the urge to publicly address violence against women and girls, created a play that changes perspectives, depicts what we usually remain silent about, and influences individual awareness. This is the best each of us can do individually – each from our own perspective and field of action – take a step forward towards eliminating gender-based violence because every step, even the smallest one, is indeed valuable.”

Jo-Anne Bishop, UN Women BiH Representative



CLOSING OF THE CAMPAIGN

The closing event of the campaign was held on 8 December at the Historical Museum of BiH in Sarajevo. It consisted of two segments: an exhibition showcasing a collection of illustrations created by BiH illustrators on the theme of gender-based violence, emphasizing empowerment, new beginnings, and hope, and a panel discussion on how art can contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

The exhibition opened with introductory remarks by Birgitta Jansson, Deputy Head of Development Cooperation and Counsellor at the Embassy of Sweden in BiH, and Jo-Anne Bishop, UN Women BiH Representative.

"Art as an expression of free thought gives us the opportunity to fight against violence, injustice, and discrimination. Women's rights and respect for women are something we must defend and gain every day. Therefore, we can never give up. If one woman or girl is exposed to distrust, lack of respect, psychological stress, sexual harassment, and violence - we can never sit still without reacting. Men must change attitudes and behavior, and society as a whole - public institutions, the private sector, civil society, and citizens must work together to change patriarchal norms. Violence against women and girls has no place in a free and democratic society!"

Birgitta Jansson, Deputy Head of Development Cooperation and Counsellor at the Embassy of Sweden in BiH



The exhibition featured 15 illustrations by artists Ivana Janković, Nataša Konjević, Sabina and Zdravko Cvjetković, Vanja Lazić, and Merisa Bašić.



Following the exhibition opening, attended by around 50 people, including artists and representatives from the government and civil society organizations, a panel discussion was held. Panelists included illustrators Vanja Lazić, Zdravko Cvjetković, and Ivana Janković, along with Ajla Demiragić, a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, and Karmen Obrdalj, the director of the play “Perseids”. The panel was moderated by Kristina Ljevak Bajramović.



"It was important for me to show the complexity of this issue and remind people that we can all play a role in finding solutions. I believe that art can be a valuable tool in the fight against gender-based violence. The work of artists, presenting the problem in a different way, can be a step towards change by attracting attention and, I hope, initiating dialogues that lead to meaningful transformations."

Vanja Lazić, Illustrator



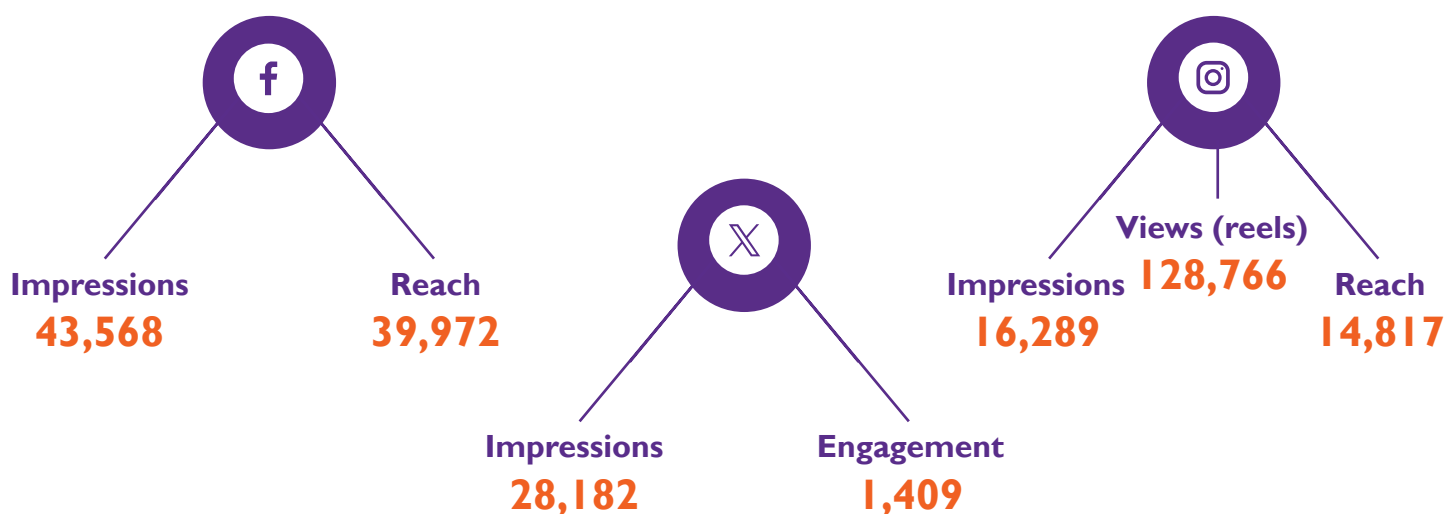
"I am glad we had the opportunity to participate in such a campaign, and if our work reaches just one individual and prompts them to think about actively getting involved in solving this problem, I will be satisfied."

Zdravko Cvjetković, Illustrator

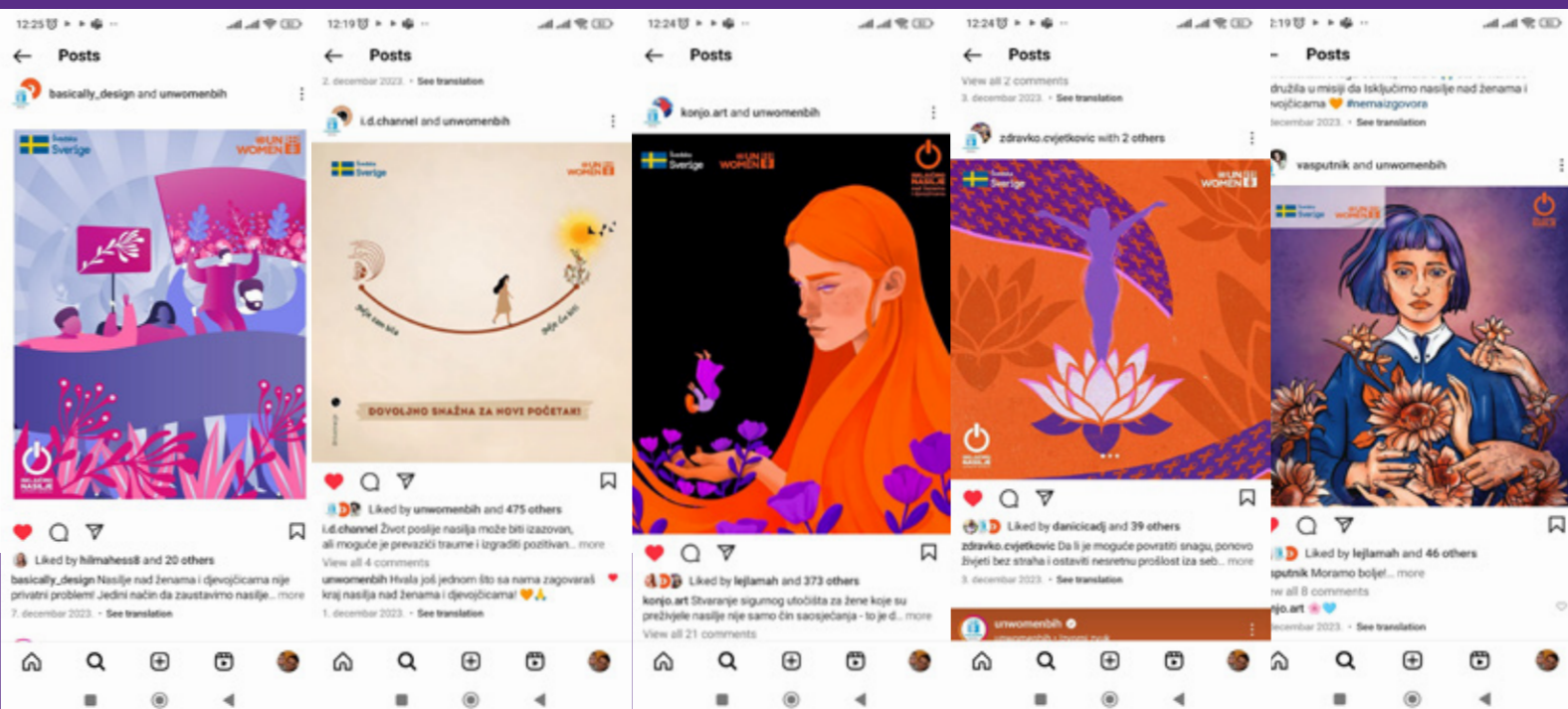
The exhibition of illustrations representing the artistic response to the necessity of the entire society to be engaged in eliminating violence against women and girls, was open to the public at the Historical Museum of BiH from 8 to 16 December 2023. The works, along with messages from the illustrators, were also presented to a wider audience through social media.

CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

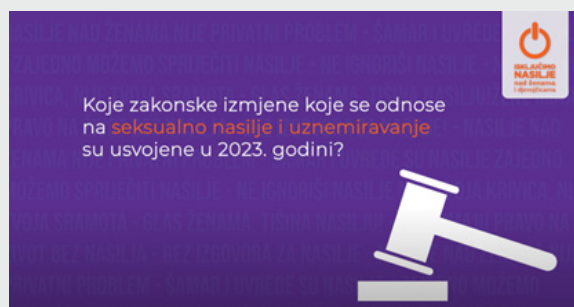
Simultaneously with other activities, a social media campaign was implemented on **Facebook**, **Twitter/X**, and **Instagram**. Illustrations by BiH illustrators, short videos with messages from participating artists, a video highlighting achievements in the legal framework for preventing sexual violence and harassment, materials promoting campaign events, and success stories of activities and projects in various formats were part of the campaign. Additionally, content created by influencers was included.



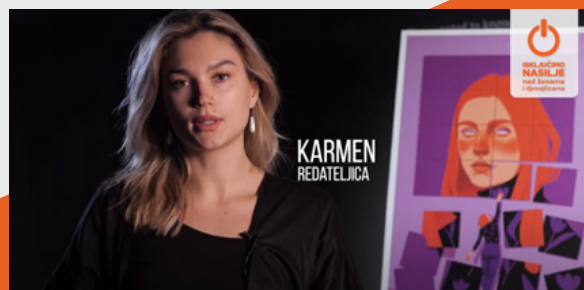
Illustrations by BiH illustrators



Videos



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSDOPSJMJ2g>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHmIzkEiZVk>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5nWYBkm0Ow>

Visuals

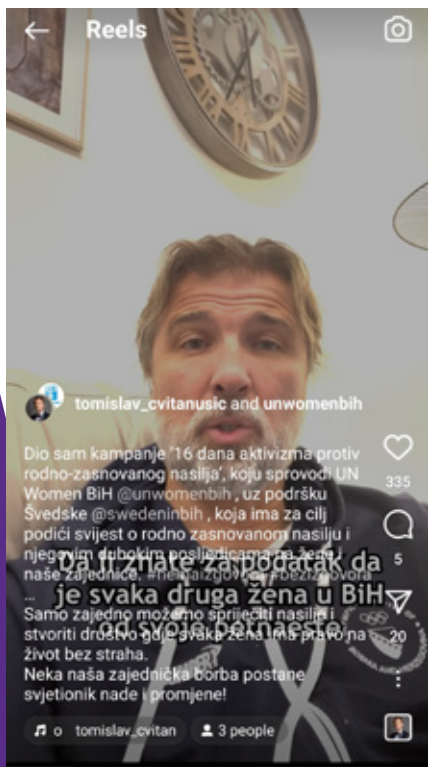




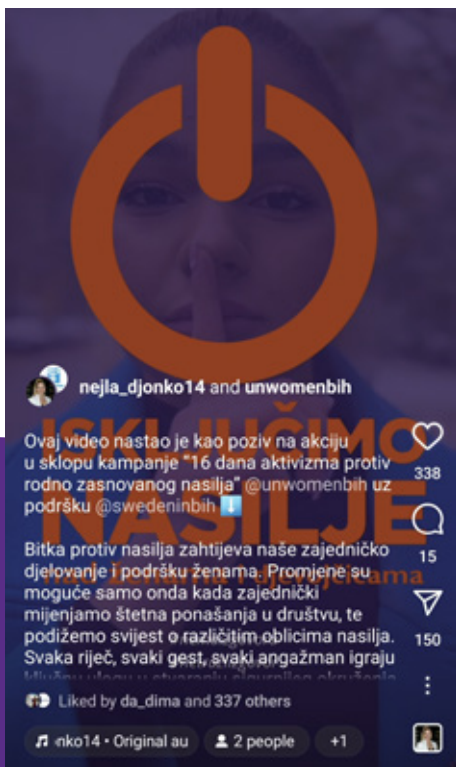
Video materials from influencers



To ensure that the key messages reach a wider audience, collaboration was established with 5 influencers on social media: **Nejla Đonko, Tomislav Cvitanušić, Josip Milanović - Pisoj, Brankica Raković, and Selma Baćevac**. Through their engagement, influencers provided support to the campaign and, through reels (short videos), spoke about the importance of raising awareness and knowledge about gender-based violence. They discussed how gender-based violence affects women and girls, how to recognize and prevent violence, and sent messages that there is no excuse for violence, that violence is not a private issue, and that together we can prevent it.



Tomislav Cvitanušić



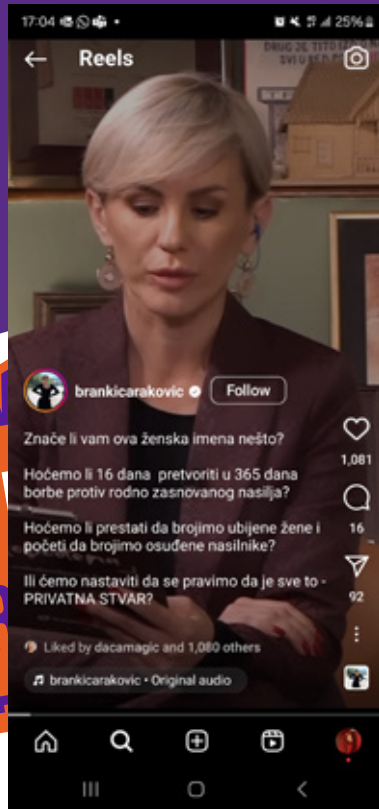
Nejla Đonko



Josip Milanović – Pisoj



Selma Baćevac



Brankica Raković

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NASILJE ZAJEDNO
NASILJE - SVAKI
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CAMPAIGN IN THE MEDIA

Throughout the campaign, the media provided significant support by reporting on the activities of UN Women BiH, featuring appearances on television and radio stations, and publishing successful stories of partners collaborating with UN Women BiH.

From 25 November to 10 December 2023, a total of 239 media reports were made in relation to the campaign.

239 media reports

Radio

5

Print media

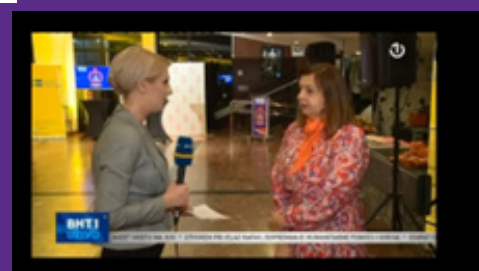
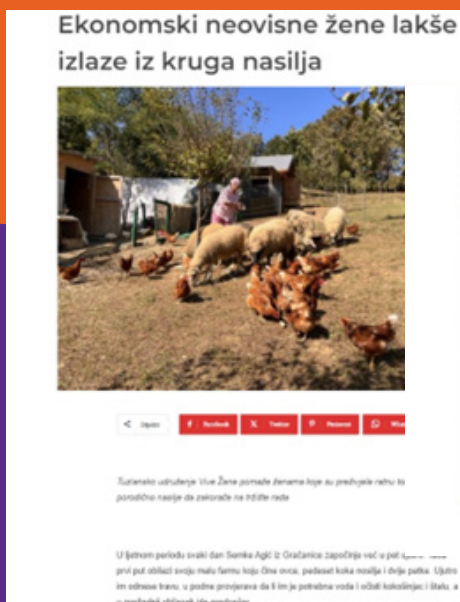
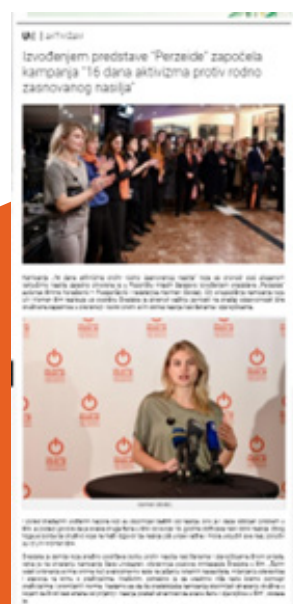
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TV

27

Internet portals

198





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against women and girls

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