



MEMORY / FACTS / POWER / BELONGING

KATERINA SINADINOVSKA THE 4TH POWER OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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A conversation with one of North Macedonia's most formidable media voices — on being displaced close to home, holding to facts when reality fractures, and insisting that public life still answer to courage.

INTERVIEW BY PATRIC BERJEAUT KIN INSTITUTE
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EDITOR'S NOTE

We were in the same city, at the same hotel, on the same day. And yet, for a dozen small reasons that now feel almost theatrical, we briefly lost the chance to meet. I regretted it immediately. Katerina is not someone one casually misses.

Back home, where I come from in Brazil, we often say: God knows better. So, trusting that instinct, I sent the questions by email. Less than twenty-four hours later, her reply arrived, along with a message of such warmth and attentiveness that it stopped me in my tracks.

My first reaction was simple: why would a woman so busy, so influential, and so deeply engaged in the life of her country choose to give her time to the Kin Institute, an initiative she had not even known existed two days earlier? But as I read her words, the question dissolved. What remained was the recognition of a rare kind of clarity: the understanding that heart, brain and action can, indeed, change everything.

What follows begins with her letter, and then unfolds into a conversation about truth, displacement, belonging and democratic courage. It is the voice of someone who has lived history not as an abstraction, but as a force that rearranges a life. And it is also the voice of a woman helping shape the future of North Macedonia with precision, humanity and resolve.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The story starts in intimacy, but its stakes are public: institutions, migration, evidence, identity, and the cost of refusing silence.



CLOSE PORTRAIT / EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Patric,

Thank you for these thoughtful questions and for the generosity of your introduction. Thank you for inviting me to revisit parts of my story that I do not often speak about. Answering them felt less like giving an interview and more like continuing the conversation we began in Skopje.

Some questions took me back many years; others made me reflect on issues I think about almost every day. For that, I am particularly grateful.

I hope you find the answers worthy of the care and curiosity with which the questions were asked.

**Warmest regards,
Katerina**



INTERIOR PORTRAIT / COMPOSURE, PRESENCE, CONTROL

PERSONAL HISTORY / BELONGING

03



A PRIVATE REGISTER BENEATH A PUBLIC
LIFE

YOU TOLD US YOU WERE A REFUGEE JUST 40 KILOMETRES FROM HOME. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER LIVED THROUGH THAT — THE FEELING OF BEING A STRANGER IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY?

The strange thing about becoming a refugee 40 kilometres from home is that nothing around you seems far away. The language is the same. The food is the same. The landscape is familiar. Yet everything that gave you a sense of safety, routine and belonging has been taken away.

You are surrounded by the familiar, but you no longer belong to it. That is perhaps the most disorienting part. Distance is not only geographical. It is also the distance between who you were and who you are forced to become overnight.

I was 14 years old. I did not fully understand what was happening. I only knew that we had to leave, that we could not go back, and that the life we had known had simply stopped. That feeling — of being present but not belonging — stays with you for a very long time.

PULL QUOTE

“Nobody can take the facts from you.”

ON FACTS AND TRUTH

YOU LIVED THROUGH CONFLICTS IN WHICH DIFFERENT GROUPS TOLD DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE SAME REALITY. WAS IT IN THAT ENVIRONMENT OF COMPETING NARRATIVES THAT YOUR COMMITMENT TO FACTS AND TRUTH WAS BORN?

I think so, although I only understood it years later. Growing up during a conflict, you quickly realize that people can look at the same event and describe completely different realities. Everyone has their own version, their own truth, their own explanation.

As a journalist, I became fascinated by the question: what actually happened? Not what people wanted to believe, not what served a particular narrative, but what the evidence showed. That obsession with facts was born in a context where facts were constantly being contested, distorted or ignored. It became my anchor.

EDITORIAL AXIS

Facts become not only a professional tool, but a form of orientation — a way to remain standing when reality itself is under dispute.

FIELD

Journalism here is not a decorative profession. It is a discipline of public memory.

Not what people wanted to believe. Not what served a narrative. What the evidence showed.

ON PRESS FREEDOM, MIGRATION AND BELONGING

05

PUBLIC FIGURE



PANEL APPEARANCE / PUBLIC VOICE / INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE

YOU LED PROMEDIA FOR TWO MANDATES. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DEFEND PRESS FREEDOM IN A COUNTRY THAT IS STILL CONSOLIDATING ITS DEMOCRACY?

It means working in a space where the rules are not always clear and the pressures are very real. Press freedom in a young democracy is not simply about laws on paper. It is about whether journalists can actually do their work without fear of economic pressure, political interference or personal risk.

During my time at Promedia, we worked on many fronts — legal protection, professional standards, media literacy, dialogue with institutions. But perhaps the most important thing was simply being present. Showing that there is an organisation that takes this seriously, that will speak up, that will not be silent when journalists are threatened or when editorial independence is compromised. That presence matters enormously.

PRESSURE POINTS

Economic pressure / Political interference / Personal risk / Editorial independence / Public accountability

PULL QUOTE

“The real question is not why they leave. The real question is whether the country can become a place to which they would gladly return.”

NORTH MACEDONIA HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST EMIGRATION RATES IN EUROPE. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS BRAIN DRAIN, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE?

It is one of the most complex and painful questions we face. Young people are leaving — educated, talented, ambitious people — and they are leaving for understandable reasons. They are moving toward opportunity, professional growth, stability or simply curiosity about the world. I understand that impulse.

BELONGING

Return, in this conversation, is not nostalgia. It depends on institutions, meritocracy, education and the belief that effort can still be rewarded fairly

ON IDENTITY, RELIGION AND TRAFFICKING

06

DURING MY VISIT TO NORTH MACEDONIA, I WAS DEEPLY STRUCK BY THE VISIBLE COEXISTENCE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. WHAT ROLE DOES RELIGION PLAY TODAY IN SHAPING THE IDENTITY OF THE COUNTRY'S COMMUNITIES?

Religion remains an important part of identity for many communities in North Macedonia, but its role is often more cultural than political. For many people, religious traditions are intertwined with family history, local customs and a sense of belonging.

Churches and mosques are not only places of worship; they are also markers of community and continuity. The challenge for every diverse society is to ensure that these identities enrich one another rather than compete with one another.

IS THERE CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING OR THE EXPLOITATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE REGION?

Yes, and it is a serious concern. The Balkans remain part of important migration routes connecting different regions of the world. Whenever vulnerable people are on the move, there is a risk that criminal networks will attempt to exploit them.

Human trafficking is not only a migration issue. It is also a human rights issue. It affects migrants, women, children and other vulnerable groups who may lack protection or access to information. Addressing the problem requires cooperation between institutions, civil society organisations, international partners and local communities. No country can tackle it alone.




MODERN PORTRAIT / IDENTITY, POSTURE, PUBLIC CLARITY

CONTEXT

Community, continuity and vulnerability run through this section — from religious identity to the risks faced by people in transit.

A powerful public life, anchored in facts, remains inseparable from the private memory of displacement.



WE ARE CLOSING THIS INTERVIEW — ONE I WISH COULD HAVE A HUNDRED MORE QUESTIONS — BUT I CANNOT LET YOU GO WITHOUT ASKING: IF THAT 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO ARRIVED IN SKOPJE COULD SEE THE WOMAN YOU HAVE BECOME, WHAT WOULD SHE SAY?

“We did it, baby!”

THESSALONIKI, GREECE — 21 JUNE 2026

INTERVIEW BY PATRIC BERJEAUT — KIN INSTITUTE