

(updated 4/1/9/00)

Afërdita Kelmendi is the director of RTV21 Pristina (Kosovo), the first Albanian-language radio station to broadcast freely from Kosovo. Kelmendi was also a long-time Kosovo correspondent for Voice of America.

**HISTORY:** In the 1980s Kelmendi worked as an editor with Radio Prishtina, which was controlled by the Yugoslav government, and as a correspondent for Radio France Internationale and Voice of America. In 1995, after the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia, she co-founded the Media Project to train young girls in journalism and internet skills as well as in conflict resolution. The organization also held roundtable discussions on the status of Albanian women, publishes a monthly women's magazine, and produced a documentary on daily life in Kosovo. In 1998, when the Media Project established Radio/TV 21, Kelmendi was named as its director. Because the Yugoslav authorities would not grant the station a radio license, Kelmendi decided to broadcast on the internet, where neither the transmission nor the content could be controlled, beginning in January 1999. Threats and violence subsequently forced her into hiding with her family. She relocated to Skopje, Macedonia where she re-established internet transmission of Radio 21 using borrowed and donated equipment. She has since returned to Kosovo to continue her work at RTV21.