



YIHR

2015.
JANUARY - MARCH

YIHR sent OSCE report to the Government of the Republic of Serbia

On the occasion of the first day of the Serbian chairmanship of the OSCE YIHR delivered the copy of the OSCE report “Kosovo: As Seen, As Told” to the Prime Minister and Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and addressed them the following letter:

1

Dear Prime Minister and dear Ministers,

On the occasion of the first day of the Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE, YIHR Serbia is sending you two OSCE publications, which contain detailed descriptions of schemes and strategies of human rights violations, including the killing of more than 13 thousand people which occurred in Kosovo during 1998 and 1999.

In the public discourse in Serbia, suffering of people during these two war years is often mentioned, but it is uncommon that anyone, particularly the representatives of the Government, mentions the victims that are not of Serbian nationality. The crimes committed by forces wearing Serbian uniforms are not spoken about. Two days ago when Serbian Prime Minister paid a visit to Kosovo, he decided not to answer a journalist’s question about Belgrade’s responsibility for the killing of Albanians in Kosovo during 1998/1999. He invited the journalists to address him with some more serious question.

We do not find this question silly, on the contrary. We would like to hear that the Government of Republic of Serbia not only speaks about the systematic campaign conceived in Belgrade, but also apologizes for the participation in ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. We would have more confidence in our government if you spoke publicly about all the crimes which have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt in the considerable number of trials for crimes committed in Kosovo, and if during your public appearances you would sometimes present the facts established by the Hague Tribunal and domestic courts.

There is a long list of issues which you do not mention in public, and that you remain silent about every year in the period between

March 24 and June 10 when we remember the NATO intervention. Because of your silence our peers are confused and they know nothing about the reasons for which we lived under the bombs for 78 days. Neither you, nor the media, nor teachers at schools, inform them on this.

Even though we are young, we remember events from the end of the last decade of the past century. Each of us has someone in the family, neighborhood, or among friends, who was a conscript and went to Kosovo during the war years. These people have told us about the systematic “terrain cleansing” of the Albanian population. They told us that in Kosovo in 1998, and especially after the NATO bombing started, numerous regular army and police units, as well as those from the reserve and special units were deployed. Paramilitary and para-police forces were also present on the ground. The whole machinery was engaged.

These pieces of information can be found in the reports before you, and have been confirmed by the evidence presented at the trials of Slobodan Milošević, the Kosovo Six, Vlastimir Đorđević, Saša Cvjetan, members of various police units convicted of the crime which occurred in one pizza parlor in Suva Reka. Relevant reports on mass graves with Albanian bodies in Batajnica, Perućac, Petrovo Selo, Kladovo can easily be found through Internet research.

As representatives of the new generation, we would be happy if you, the representatives of the executive power in our country, apart from Max Weber and Bill Gates, sometimes quoted parts of OSCE, or any other reports that document massive human rights violations in Kosovo, which the Belgrade regime is responsible for.

You would distinguish from the crowd of your predecessors if these reports served you as an inspiration to support the RECOM (Regional Commission) that would, among many other things, have the task to create an official, individual list of those killed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia and thus get in the way of numerous abuses which arise from the lack of this information.

We are addressing you in the name of a generation of young people who cannot, in any way, be held responsible for what happened in the nineties of the last century in Kosovo, but we deeply believe that we have a responsibility to speak publicly about the crimes from the past, not to deny them, and to build relationships with peers from the region, that are primarily based on mutual trust.

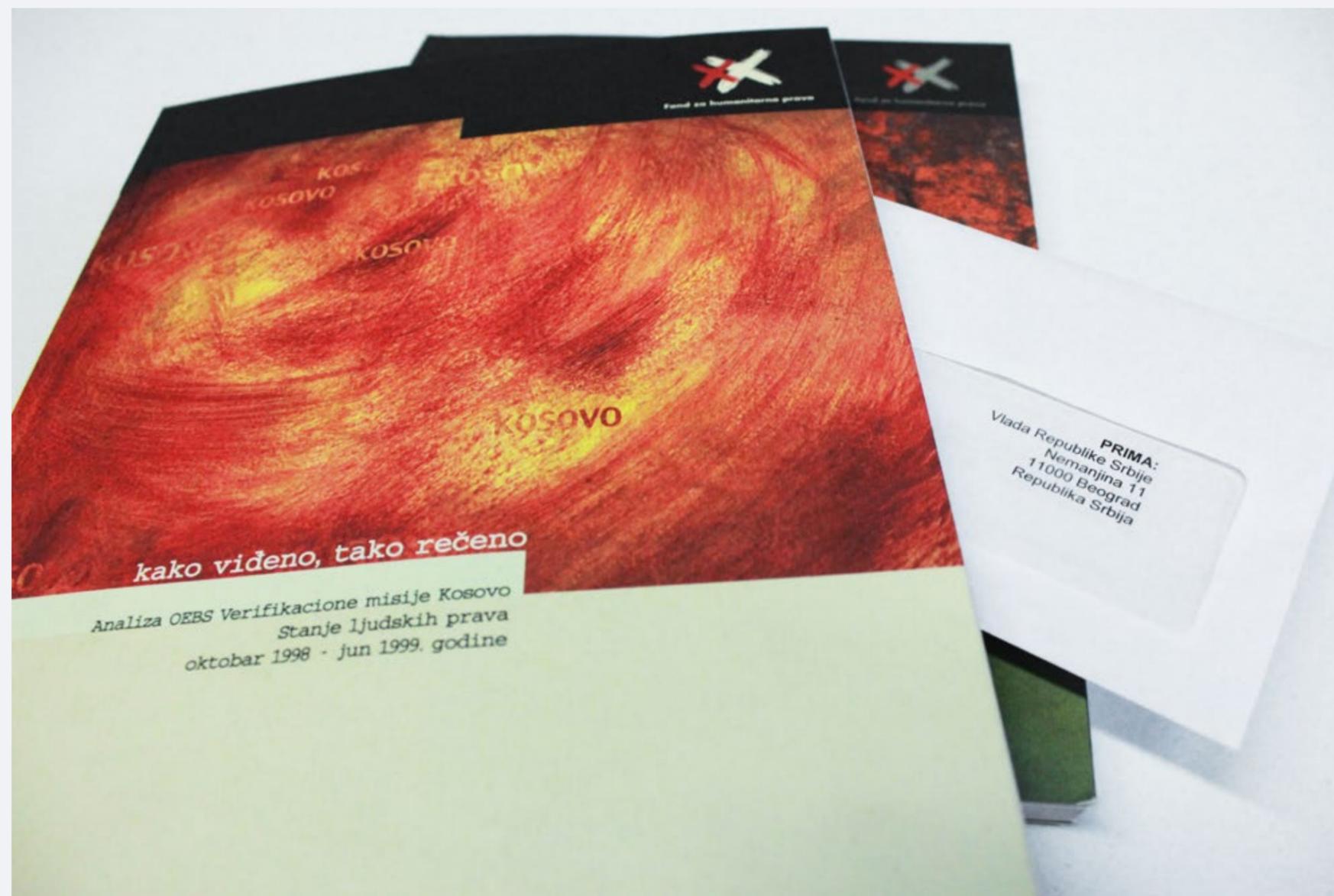
We have studied this OSCE reports in detail, and we hope that during this year, while Serbia holds the chairmanship of this organization, you will find some time to skim through it.

Two volumes of the OSCE report on Kosovo were translated from English and published in Serbia by the Humanitarian Law Center:

- Report I: Human Rights in Kosovo, October 1998 – June 1999,
- Report II: Human Rights in Kosovo, June 1999 – October 1999.

Hoping that our proposals will meet your understanding!

Youth Initiative for Human Rights Team ■





ISTRAGA, A NE ORDEN!

Protest against the decoration for Diković: INVESTIGATI- ON, NOT A DECORATION!

4

Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized a protest named: “INVESTIGATION, NOT A DECORATION!” on the occasion of decoration for the Chief of the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces Ljubiša Diković, which took place on Sunday, February 15 in the Pionirski Park.

At the time when Humanitarian Law Center disclosed allegations of general Diković’s involvement in crimes against civilians in Kosovo in April and May 1999, president Nikolić decided to award him with a medal for distinction in command of the military units.

By this political act president Nikolić arrogantly sent the message to the War Crimes Prosecution, families of the victims, and to Serbian citizens that he publicly supports the policy of impunity. The decoration that Tomislav Nikolić awarded Diković with, represents ridicule of civilian victims of the war and an insult to the citizens of Serbia who demand that everyone be treated equally before the law.

General Diković does not deserve a decoration. We demand an investigation on potential responsibility of Ljubiša Diković for crimes against civilians and for concealment of traces of the crimes.

We are reminding the public, general Diković was the commander of the 37th Motorized Brigade during the war in Kosovo. In the area of responsibility of his brigade crimes against the Albanian civilians were committed, including killings of civilians in Rezala/Rezallë, Staro Čikatovo / Čikatovë e Vjeter, Donji Zabelj / Zabel i Ulët and Gladno Selo / Gllanasele. In same area the “clearing up of the battlefield “ occurred and the dead bodies were removed. DNA analysis confirmed that 52 bodies found in a mass grave in Rudnica in Raška municipality, 100 kilometers from the place where these people were killed and fifteen years after the end of the war – were the bodies of Albanian civilians murdered in villages in the area of responsibility of Diković’s brigade.

All these allegations are available in **Dossier Rudnica on this link.**

The citizens gathered at the protest sent a clear message that they do not support awarding those which are under suspicion of involvement in war crimes. ■





Jasmina Lazović on The Fall of Yugoslavia at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade

As part of the study visit to Belgrade organized by Nova International School from Skopje, Jasmina Lazović was at the Faculty of Political Science on March 19. She delivered a lecture on the breakup of Yugoslavia, with a special focus on massive human rights violations, to a group of twenty students, mostly from Macedonia and Kosovo. The group continued with a program dealing with the fall of communism in the countries of southeast Europe in Budapest where they visited Central European University. ■



Dorđe Bojović on YIHR work at the Faculty of Law in Sarajevo

Dorđe Bojović delivered a lecture at the Faculty of Law in Sarajevo on March 7 titled: “The role of young people in transitional justice in Serbia through actions of Youth Initiative for Human Rights”, as a part of the conference “Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia 20 years after the war” organized by The European Law Students’ Association in Sarajevo. ■



New generation of “War Crimes and Trials” program

At a planning session in Dachau, YIHR team and its partners from France, Germany and Kosovo, with support by French-German Youth Office created an agenda for participants of the second generation of the program “War Crimes and Trials”. This generation will visit Dachau, Ludwigsburg and The Hague from November 3 to November 11, and the program in France, Serbia and Kosovo is planned for 2016. Everybody interested in this program will be able to apply from May. ■



The anniversary of the crime in Štrpci

On February 27, 22 years have passed since the abduction and murder of 20 passengers on the train traveling from Belgrade to Bar. Women in Black, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Sandžak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Law Center organized a peace action titled 'Truth – Accountability – Justice' in front of the Belgrade Railway Station main entrance, in order to remind the public of this crime, and to call on the institutions of Serbia to prosecute all the persons responsible, find the locations with the mortal remains of the victims, and provide their families with dignified satisfaction and recognition. ■

To Remember: Billboards, Not Genocide

The YIHR activists approached Ljiljana Smajlović, editor of the newspaper Politika, concerning the article in which she criticised the work of NGO sector in Serbia, mentioning YIHR's activity of setting up the billboards about Srebrenica in 2005: "For me, the biggest champion is a certain Andrej Nosov, who gained his fame by setting up billboards about Srebrenica in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia." Even now, twenty years after the genocide, she deals more with billboards than crime - that's why the YIHR activists replied: "To see, to know, to remember... genocide, not billboards." ■





THIS IS KOSOVO

In the Light of New Round of Brussels Negotiations

A group of 20 young people from Serbia, mostly students of law and political science, visited Kosovo at the end of January. YIHR organized this visit as a part of Regional Exchange Program where young people are given an opportunity to visit countries in the region for the first time. Focus of this visit was the new round of Brussels talks which started in February 2015.

9

During their visit to Kosovo, students from Serbia had a chance to meet representatives of the Government of Kosovo, including the representatives of the Serbian community at the time, as well as the representatives of the Self-Determination movement, Democratic League of Kosovo, local government in Prishtina, Humanitarian Law Center and BIRN.

The group arrived in Prishtina the day after the protest of the Self-Determination movement, who demanded dismissal of Aleksandar Jablanović, now former Minister for Communities and Return of the Government of Kosovo. Jablanović commented on gathering of 100 Kosovar Albanians on Christmas Eve for a protest against the visit of a group of orthodox Serbs to a church in Đakovica. The Albanians stoned the bus that the group of Serbian believers took to Đakovica, and Jablanović commented on this: “Savages in Đakovica ruined a holiday for people that returned to their burned homes.” According to the representatives of Self Determination movement, among the Albanian protesters were the mothers from Đakovica. After this event, the movement demanded Jablanović’s urgent dismissal, claiming that with his statement he offended mothers of the victims from Đakovica.

At the meeting with the YIHR activists, Aleksandar Jablanović stated that this whole event was “constructed in the media” and that he did not say that all the protesters were savages, but only those who threw rocks at the bus. He also added that the headlines in Kosovo media were carefully planned, with the intention of showing how the Serbs entered the Government of Kosovo to spread the hatred between Serbs and Albanians. According to Jablanović, who was dismissed by the Kosovo Prime Minister some ten days after the meeting with the group from Belgrade, protests of the Self-Determination movement had a direct impact on his dismissal. He thinks it was impermissible to replace Government ministers by violence on the streets.

Shpend Ahmeti, mayor of Prishtina, said that the Self-determination protests were not only about Jablanović. “The issue of Jablanović is not the problem with one person, but the whole concept of the Serb List”, said Ahmeti. He thinks that it is disturbing that the Serb List promotes the agenda of the Republic of Serbia instead of putting the interests of local Serbs ahead. As the second reason for the protest he added the issue of Trepča, because the members of the Self-Determination movement, whose member Ahmet is, believe that Trepča belongs to Kosovo and that there should be no negotiations about that with Belgrade.



Meeting with Aleksandar Jablanović

Not only should there be no negotiations about Trepča, but the dialogue with Belgrade is no longer a good solution at all, according to the then president of the movement Albin Kurti, because: “We should not think that we will get anything done by conversation.” Kurti believes in a concept of democracy, development and justice, as well as that the international protectorate (international community’s presence in Ko-

sovo, author's remark) is led by the wrong order of priorities, i.e. peace, stability and safety. "I am not against peace, stability and safety, but once we have democracy, development and justice, the first three things come as consequences," said Kurti.

Kurti pointed out that Kosovo is nowadays compared to other crisis areas in the world. "We would love it if the international protectorate compared us to Slovenia, and would say that, for example, compared to Slovenia we deserve a grade down by ten. But they don't do that, instead they say that in comparison with Palestine we deserve the grade up by two. Were they comparing us to normal countries, we would easily become one of them."

Kurti added that the Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue should be continued, but it must not be the only step towards solving the issue. According to



Meeting with Albin Kurti

his words, the solution should include solidarity, universality and mass movements, which are necessary in Serbia as well. In order to contribute to peace and stability of the Western Balkans and therefore help all the citizens of the Republic of Serbia, it is necessary to make a strong leftist movement. "If you continue with people like Vučić, Nikolić, Vulin and Dačić, Serbia will become worse than Kosovo. You won't move forward with the heritage of Nikola Pašić. You need people that read Dimitrije Tucović. You need a new social democratic movement - a strong Žarko Korać, not Aleksandar Vučić." Kurti concluded that the left is non-existent in Serbia and the consequence is that the negotiations are led by the right, due to which the dialogue comes down to mere market share.

Contrary to Kurti's opinion, minister of the Government of Kosovo responsible for negotiations with Belgrade Edita Tahiri thinks that dialogue is the key component for transformation of the conflict relations existing between Serbia and Kosovo into peaceful relations of two states that recognize each other as sovereign and independent. According to her, public in Kosovo was initially against the negotiations, mainly because of the war consequences, human losses, and tragedy which occurred in Kosovo at the end of the nineties. The Government managed to explain to the public that past should not be forgotten and that it should not be an obstacle to a better future. Tahiri also said that seven technical agreements signed over the last four years are mostly successfully implemented. Problematic issues are recognition of Kosovo diplomas in Serbia and cadastral registries that have not yet been returned to Kosovo.

Tahiri said that the dialogue and implementation of what was already agreed are a step closer to the European Union, both for Kosovo and Serbia. "In order to join the European Union we need good relations

with neighboring countries and regional cooperation. It is important to stick to our deals and work on their implementation." Tahiri pointed out that concrete steps were needed towards integration of the prosecutors and judges who currently work in illegal structures. Integration of the Serb members of the civil protection structures was also under way



Meeting with Edita Tahiri

as well as forming the police. She added that the government of Kosovo accepted establishing an association of the Serb municipalities, but that it needed to be formed in accordance with the Kosovo laws.

During the meeting with Kosovo BIRN journalists they highlighted the importance of forming a multiethnic police and official involvement of Serbs in Kosovo police. This is particularly important having in mind that since 1999 there have been no official security forces in northern Kosovo. BIRN points out that besides the police question, it is highly important to work on the integration of Serbs into the Kosovo justice

system. According to them, it was not sufficient only for police to work, because in that case they are just collecting the information about infringements, but there is no officially recognized justice system to process the infringements.

A special problem with the Serb community is that there is no exact information about the number of people of Serbian nationality who reside in Kosovo. Edita Tahiri stated that she hoped the census would successfully be done this year, because that is necessary for the municipalities to make a plan based on this data. At the meeting with Aleksandar Jablanović, YIHR found out that nobody came to perform the census of Serbs in northern municipalities in Kosovo. Edita Tahiri, who was Minister of Public Administration at the time, said that Serbs boycotted the census, despite the Government's recommendation that on the census documents there should be no marks of the Kosovo state and that the census itself should be carried out by a third party - UN office for project services.

As an answer to the question whether Trepča would be a part of the new round of negotiations, Tahiri categorically denied it on behalf of the Government of Kosovo. "Even if Serbia tries to put this issue on the agenda, it will not be discussed, because in order to start a certain topic, all three sides must agree. Trepča is inside the Kosovo borders, and these borders were defined by the Constitution, not only of the Republic of Kosovo but also the one of Yugoslavia from 1974," added Tahiri.

While on the one hand the representatives of the Government of Kosovo claim that Trepča belongs to Kosovo because it is inside its borders, representatives of Serbs, mayor of Gračanica municipality Vladeta



Meeting with Branimir Stojanović and Vladeta Kostić

Kostić and Deputy Prime Minister of the Kosovo Government Branimir Stojanović, told that Trepča must not become a public company, because it was, along with Brezovica, one of the two most important things for economic development for Serbs in Kosovo.

Stojanović said that the reason why he was in the Government of Kosovo was not the position itself, but primarily staying and survival of the Serbs in Kosovo. Criticizing prior governments, he pointed out that last year a change of official policy of the Republic of Serbia started which "over the last fifteen years was based specifically on running away from the problems, non-existence of the alternate plan to solve them, negation of everything done in Kosovo and seeking excuses for failures in implementing Serbian policies in Kosovo." Stojanović added that hiding behind the Constitution and repetition of the talk on sovereignty and integrity was what brought us to an even faster migration of Serbs

from Kosovo and land sale which is taking place even nowadays.

"Now we want to implement the only possible policy. Policy that is closely related to Belgrade and that is seeking foothold there. The official policy of the Serb List is the official policy of our state," said Stojanović. It was also said that the job of the Serb List was to use all the possibilities within the institutions in order to improve life there, as well as that Kosovo should never be recognized and how everything must be done in order to preserve Serbian existence and cultural-historical heritage in Kosovo.

When he was asked whether they represented Serbs in Kosovo or Belgrade policy in Kosovo institutions, Vladeta Kostić answered that they represented interests of Serbs in Kosovo, but no serious politics in Kosovo was done without direct relations and contacts with official Belgrade. He added that prior to every visit of the Serbian representatives to Brussels, Belgrade first consults with the leaders of Kosovo Serbs gathered in the Serb List in order to get information about their demands which are, in fact, demands of the Serb community in Kosovo.

Kostić added that the support of Belgrade, international community, and Serbs in Kosovo institutions are necessary for the establishment of the association of Serbian municipalities. "It is important that the association of Serbian municipalities becomes a strong and stable institution which will provide institutional protection for the Serbs in Kosovo."

He added that there is no political option on the Serbian side that will recognize Kosovo and remain in power. "There isn't one political party that is willing to risk losing authority by doing that. Certainly, Serbia has to work on establishing good relations with Kosovo and Prishtina. What matters to me is that nobody who represents the Government of the Republic of Serbia signs that document ever," Kostić concluded. ■



**BELGRADE SIDE
OF THE STORY**

As the second part of this program, upon the return from Kosovo, YIHR organized meetings for the study group with liaison officer Dejan Pavićević, former Serbian representative in the Belgrade-Prishtina negotiations team Borko Stefanović and representatives of the Bureau for social research (BIRODI) which monitors the implementation of the Brussels agreement.

The liaison officer Dejan Pavićević, whose role is facilitating the implementation of the agreements reached, said that the whole process of negotiations is extremely politically burdened and that, unfortunately, the interest of an ordinary citizen is limited by higher political interests from all three sides. “Everybody has their own perception and vision of how the negotiations should look like. This contrasts a lot from all the canons of negotiations, and the main thing that hampers the negotiations is the political component,” said Pavićević.

According to the opinions of the most speakers that represent interests of the Serbian side, one of the biggest issues for Belgrade related to Kosovo is the property issue. Borko Stefanović said at the meeting with YIHR how he had asked many times from Edita Tahiri to start the work on solving the issue of Serbian property in Kosovo, but that it was never the topic of the talks.

He pointed out as a special issue how the MPs did not have any information about the budget allocations of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo, because sessions of the competent committee were very rare - that was the committee with the least sessions. Stefanović said that there was no adequate control of the budget spending and that the purpose of spending 500 million Euros annually is still unknown. “There are no social cards, no lists of people who are in need of that money so what happens is that some people receive the money from the budget of the Republic of Serbia and they do not live in Serbia, or in Kosovo but somewhere abroad. There is no plan of which hospitals or schools in Kosovo Serbia would finance”, said Stefanović.

On what would be the biggest issue in chapter 35 on Serbia’s way towards the European integration, Stefanović said: “The chapter 35 will be overfilled with the new things that have not been done. It will contain disagreements about the association of Serbian municipalities or



A question is raised whether the Government of Serbia will be capable of signing something that will not be devastating for our interests, to avoid things such as war reparations, confession that genocide was committed, or even public apology. These are the things that no Government in Serbia would survive. I don't know whether Vučić is aware of what awaits him in the demands from the Kosovo side.

potential insisting on signing the peace agreement. A question is raised whether the Government of Serbia will be capable of signing something that will not be devastating for our interests, to avoid things such as war reparations, confession that genocide was committed, or even public apology. These are the things that no Government in Serbia would survive. I don't know whether Vučić is aware of what awaits him in the demands from the Kosovo side.”

The Parliament Committee on Kosovo and Metohija was unable to meet the group of students of the Belgrade University in February and March. Although it was clearly answered to the questions posted by the president of the Committee on the subject of the meeting, the group was left without hearing the legislative branch of the government on Kosovo.

We discussed with Pavle Dimitrijević from Bureau for social research about how Brussels agreement is being implemented by the Republic of Serbia. BIRODI has been present in Kosovo for four years, and from June until December 2014 they dealt with the monitoring of the implementation of the Brussels agreements in several categories – the implementation of the Brussels agreement in the context of forming the association of municipalities, structures and ways of making decisions by the Republic of Serbia concerning the implementation of the Brussels agreement, with the focus on written decisions of the state bodies, implementation of the agreement in judiciary, education, police and security structures.

At the meeting we asked for clarification on what association of Serbian municipalities should be and look like. Dimitrijević said that it was still unknown, because, according to him, the Serb List does not have a concrete plan yet. “During nine assembly sessions in Kosovska Mitro-

vica nobody from the Serb List asked to speak. It was all about merely raising hands and formalizing already prepared things. The Serb List does not have its position on any important issue. They have general opinions that Serbs in Kosovo should be protected, establish conditions for their return and that nothing could be done without Belgrade. When you ask them for their stance on the association of Serbian municipalities and how it should like, they say that they would have autonomy and the ability to make decisions on their own life. If you ask for a plan or a model you won't get anything – because there are no plan and model,” said Dimitrijević.

Some of the agreements are being implemented, such as integration of the Serbian courts into the Kosovo system. Dimitrijević stated as an example the court for Mitrovica which is now a part of the Kosovo system, with 65,000 inherited cases which have been ongoing for the last 10 years. However, trials are very slow with very bad Serbian translation, so the right to a fair trial is still questionable.

As far as the integration of the security structures is concerned, according to Dimitrijević, it has long been represented as the most concrete success in the implementation of the Brussels agreement. Police and staff are integrated into Kosovo Police Service, but their legal status in Serbia is still problematic. ■



Debate in Prishtina: The Importance of the Youth Exchange

YIHR organized a debate on January 30 titled “The importance of youth exchange” in Dit’ e Nat’ café in Prishtina. The debate participants were young people from Kosovo and Serbia that had a chance to participate in an exchange program in Belgrade or Prishtina. They discussed the importance of personal relationships and contacts for breaking prejudices.

This debate was held in the light of YIHR advocating for the institutionalization of youth exchanges on a regional level which should cover the area of former Yugoslavia and Albania. In the last months a discussion on governmental level was started in the region about establishing the official channels of communication among young people, and during this debate young Albanians and Serbs spoke about how they thought the program should work. ■



JOVANA PRUSINA, activist

Prishtina 101

We were not one of the people with prejudices. Some of us have already been in Prishtina, some have heard amazing stories from the others, and some had no idea where exactly they were going or what was waiting for them there. I belong to the second group. But no matter how many stories I've heard, nothing could resemble to what I have experienced.

Going to Kosovo isn't hard, what is hard is coming back. You know that feeling when you go somewhere, have amazing time, but no one understands your private jokes after your return? We have that problem right now. The difference is that majority of people go to Greece in summer or visit Budapest for New Year's holidays, so it's kinda expected that great time is guaranteed. However we took the road less travelled (or unfortunately, not travelled at all).

Before I went, my friends had sent me news about protests. Some awful and pretty scary photographs of Prishtina made the headlines and I think I speak for all of us when I say that we weren't indifferent. But YIHR always makes panic courage overcome everything else (let's mention last year's Pride and improvised Pride a year before), so the wish for go-

ing there was even bigger because of the uncertainty to which we were headed. The evening before we went, we met at the office in order to settle about details concerning the trip and get rid of our common fears. Djordje held as short as possible lesson about war at Kosovo. By the way, if you ever need any help with history or geographic – ask Djordje, the walking encyclopedia.

We started our trip tomorrow morning. As expected, we were late, but some we late at Kosovo even back in 1389 so what. Trip as a trip, smokers are begging for a cigarette break, sleepers are sleeping, the rest of people were playing "heads up". The interesting fact was that folk music (read: Miroslav Ilic) could be heard when we passed the border. What's even more interesting is that we passed the border on foot, so that our bus driver wouldn't pay some silly taxes. The most interesting thing was that from that moment we had no service on our phones.

Our trip had two basic goals: to meet Prishtina and to get informed with the current political situation in Kosovo. The list of people we had the chance to meet is more that significant – Shpend Ahmeti, Aleksandar Jablanovic, Albin Kurti, Edita Tahiri and Branimir Stojanovic are just

some of the names on that list. When you add to that list BIRN and HLC Kosovo as media representatives, i.e. civilian sector, you may say that we got to see the story from every perspective. You don't get that chance every day, and we certainly used it well.

I would like to use this opportunity to truly thank everybody that opened their doors for us in Prishtina, because our visits to the officials weren't official at all. There were no stiffed political monologues to which we are used to hearing every day, but instead of that it was as if we were sitting, talking honestly and friendly while having a beer. We got answers to some important, yet uncomfortable questions. Truth to be told, we did have macchiato instead of beer – we are talking about Prishtina after all.

I wouldn't go through all the details from the meetings, since that would last too long (who wants to hear more about it should pay me a coffee) but I would like to highlight certain things. First, all of us have the same problems. This is not some stupid phrase or a cliché and everybody gets it. But it's one thing to know it in theory, totally other thing is to see in practical situation where you and an Albanian from Prishtina have the same problem with, for example, poor public transportation. Then, I was amazed with how direct people are. On the other hand, I got saden by political limbo that contains different interests of the authorities of Kosovo, Serbs from Kosovo and Serbs from Belgrade. I got a feeling that all those interests are making people lose their interest to everything that does not represent the basic human needs. Finally, if you're feeling up for it, try googling the Self-Determination movement and their representatives. Concerning all ideological and other possible and non-possible disagreements, I'd like to see somebody on our political scene expressing such directness and absence of elitism between a politician and a citizen (there is something special in seeing a lider of a

political party protesting with their voters in front of the police or sitting on sidewalk and rubbing their eyes because of the tear gas).

As mentioned before, another goal of our visit was to meet Prishtina. Well, not only did we fulfill it, but, as Kutlarovic would say, we nailed it. Beside several monuments and important buildings, there was not much to be seen. But the people... I don't remember the last time I've



seen so many beautiful and young people at one place. Although the city is small, there are many places for going out. I don't know how did we have so much energy to stay in the clubs until they got closed and manage to wake up every morning at 8am to have meetings, but so-

mehow we survived it. If you followed us at ovojekosovo.tumblr.com, you could see our adventures, if you didn't, check it out as soon as possible. We are much better in taking photographs than in writing blogs.

I'd also like to mention the unofficial debate in Dit' e Nat' café. Debate is a pretty strict term for what had been going on there. Actually, we were sitting, drinking beer and sharing our experiences- the most sincere, emotional, nice experiences, filled with both laughter and sadness. It has already been mentioned that it is not hard going to Kosovo, but coming back. It's the same thing with Albanians- it's not hard to go to Belgrade, but to come back. Not only because of the stupid private jokes to which nobody laughs, but primarily because of the misunderstanding that awaits you upon your return. I choose to believe that each of us has changed the world if at least one person chooses to go to Prishtina based on mine experience or experiences of Masha, Ivan, Nina, Jana, Marko, Dajana, Senka, Mladen. I also deeply believe that Anita and Jasmina have changed the world because, based on their experience I wished to do the same.

I am talking to you, the one reading this, the person that will decide to go to Prishtina.. Get ready to drink macchiato all the time and that smoking is not allowed in bars. Get ready to accidentally meet at least five people on a daily basis. Make sure to eat börek in Bosna bakery. When you're going out and that will be on Wednesday, Friday or Saturday, don't forget to go to Zanzibar or Megahertz. Don't come back if you haven't met a taxi driver who served military service in Serbia and knows Serbian better than English. Also, don't come back if someone didn't give you a pat on the back and told you that you can have a cigarette in the club since police won't control it after 11pm. Learn some basic words in Albanian- in our case those were "thank you" and "two beers". Go to the Rooftop club, which is not my cup of tea, but still it's

nice to see how Belgrade's Stefan Braun looks in Prishtina. In case you get hungry afterwards go to Route 66 (which is open 24/7) and have a cheeseburger. You should most definitely try the "tri leće" cake. And be prepared in advance that you won't succeed in telling how good it was. No matter what, do your best, because there will be a person that will, based on your story, pack their things and go to Prishtina, just like you did after reading this blog. And if you do fall in love there, which is not uncommon, let us know.

Huge thanks to YIHR and the group from the trip ("inicijativići"). Also, I would like to thank Didi, Pajtim, Egzon, Aljbin, Abdula, Valjon, Teuta, Vjosa and the rest of amazing people who I can't wait to see again. Faleminderit! ■



IVAN KUTLAROVIĆ, intern

Bro in Prishtina

OK. The aim of this text is to fulfill certain needs. To begin with, it needs to fulfill my need to express a huge gratitude (not merely enough) to the Youth Initiative for Human Rights for inviting me to be one of the participants of a visiting program in Prishtina. Had it not been for this trip, the probability of me ever visiting Prishtina, would be equal to a statistical error.

Next, summarizing all of our feelings through this blog was also the YIHR idea (which is a pretty tough job) and letting the readers peek a bit not only into our adventures but also social and political situation in Kosovo. You'll forgive me for the bits where I let my immense imagination vividly speak for me, but be sure that everything did happen and that the characters in this story are as real as you and me.

After four unforgettable days, I simply do not know where to begin, but at Stefan, my friend from primary school would say "what a happy beginning it was". So let us begin with how it all started. We departed from Belgrade, filled with enthusiasm and hunger for adventure and even though our tour guide overslept and was late, we didn't hold a grudge against him. He held history lessons in a café nearby, which made all

the female participants of that lecture happy and male participants filled with doubt. It would be a shame not to mention three types of sandwiches from the Orao pizza parlor, that kept us from being hungry for quite some time (read: up until a pay toll on our way out of Belgrade).

I said it publicly in Prishtina and I'll write it now, I am ashamed of how little I knew about this city. But now I say with pride that I did learn something. One young man in a café Dit' e Nat' told me: "If you think that Prishtina is nice because of its buildings or location, you've obviously had too many beers". Prishtina is nice because of the people who live there". Hospitality and friendliness that we experienced there, slapped me in the face saying "screw you for even doubting".

We had official visits on such level as if we were ambassadors or diplomats. We met the mayors of Prishtina and Gračanica, Vice President and ministers in the Government of Kosovo, the leader of an opposition party, BIRN and Humanitarian Law Center. Quite a list. I will not go into details about the political background of these people, their past and the things they had dealt with. In the present, we heard how negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina should not be continued until some basic existential problems of people in Kosovo are dealt with.

We heard that both Serbs and Albanians are just people with the same problems, for example, floods, or shortage of clean drinking water, poor public transportation, safety of the streets in the places they live in. We also heard that Svetozar Marković is read and highly appreciated in the political discourse of Kosovo's left oriented party and how Kraftwerk can be more popular than Daft Punk, that in modern politics idealists can still be found who didn't sink into pragmatism and dogmatism which can be seen in our politicians nowadays.

One of the things we heard was that while Serbs from Kosovo are considered great Serbs - in Serbia they are seen as traitors, that the significant amount of money that is sent from Serbia returns to its sender and that people avoid talking about it publicly, that even though it wasn't easy to be a Serbian minister in the Government of Kosovo, it was necessary. Next, it is also important what Belgrade has to say when some of the political decisions are concerned. Also, not all the people from Kosovo accept its independence but many people in Serbia do. At the end of the day, everybody tries to live as normally as possible and I personally think that it really is the most important thing.

This blog would not be completely mine if I didn't mention the night life of Prishtina. The night life where there is something for everybody (not to sound as Slobodan Mičić, the reporter of a famous travel show "Svet na dlanu"). You can find everything from everyday cafés, comfortable restaurants to bars, pubs and clubs. Everywhere you can meet relaxed people smiling that will be happy when they hear you're from Serbia (not for your kidneys of course). We learned about the connection of Kosovo and Serbia as well as people from the area from the stories of taxi drivers, waiters, people on the street, people who studied in Serbia, went to army, fell in love, visited weddings, baby showers or just visited Serbia as tourists.

I also have to mention my participation in a show at the Radio Television Kosovo 2 with two adorable people from YIHR, and to thank them for believing in me not to say anything stupid (highest bets were on the words "man" and "bro") and not letting the Dorćol wittiness get in my way. I was nice, smooth and I sounded smart (for a change).

Last but not least, I'd like to mention the amazing group of people that travelled to Prishtina. Sure I'm thankful because they had to deal with my occasional egotistic moments, but they have also contributed to this trip with their knowledge, openness, tolerance and healthy amount of naughtiness, when needed. As my grandma would say "oh, what people they are". I'd recommend everybody from the bottom of my heart (no, this is not a commercial for Kosmodisk) to visit Prishtina. Gather your courage to break the existing prejudices with your own example and you won't regret it. I promise you that. ■

One of the things we heard was that while Serbs from Kosovo are considered great Serbs in Serbia they are seen as traitors.

The Vice President of Government of Montenegro supported the establishment of the Regional Exchange Program

At a meeting held at the beginning of February with the Vice President of the Government of Montenegro Rafet Husović, the regional network of Youth Initiative for Human Rights presented the initiative for institutionalizing a youth exchange program in the countries of the Western Balkans. This program is supposed to engage governments of the countries in the region to establish a youth exchange body with an aim to contribute to redu-

ction of prejudices among post conflict generations.

The representatives of YIHR from Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro spoke of their ten years of experience of connecting young people across the borders and presented the problems they came across in their regional communication. These problems can most effectively be dealt with if the governments of the states in the region were committed to opening official channels of communication among the young people which would include exchanges between primary and secondary schools, universities, young artists, athletes, NGO activists.

Mr. Husović agreed that it was essential to have bigger mobility not only between the countries in the region but also within the countries themselves. He fully supported the establishment of this program and added that he would help in ensuring budget funds for an exchange program in the following year. At the meeting they concluded that it was desirable to make use of good neighborly relations that Montenegro cherishes with all countries in the region, so that this initiative could receive support in other states as well.

The visit to the Government of Montenegro was organized during the regional meeting of the representatives of five YIHR offices in Podgorica with the aim to speak about the possibilities of establishing a regional youth exchange program, potential drawbacks, but also the advantages of fulfilling this goal. ■



Youth Academy for Dialogue and Cooperation is Closed With the Visit to Strasbourg

WRITTEN BY: MARKO MILOSAVLJEVIĆ

The second generation of the Academy for Dialogue and Cooperation ended their program with a trip to Strasbourg at the end of February. While the aim of the first two study visits was for the participants from Serbia, France, Germany and Kosovo to get familiar with the process of reconciliation in these countries, the program in Strasbourg was focused on the questions of further development of the Europe as a political community.

Logically, the first session of the program in Strasbourg was dedicated to the terrorist attack on the “Charlie Hebdo” offices as well as the consequences not only for the French but also European societies. While confronting their attitudes in a dynamic discussion, participants most commonly referred to the questions of limiting freedom of speech and hate speech.

An indispensable part of the program were the sessions whose aim was to get the participants familiar with the economic and socio-political context of the city they were staying in. Several days after the research, the participants presented to each other their impressions of the social context of Strasbourg, as the center of the French border region of Alsace, famous for institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Next, the participants visited the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the

European Parliament in order to find out more about the duties and how these institutions work. They first talked to the Director of Communication Giuseppe Zaffuto, who spoke about topics such as how the member states implemented the conventions of the Council of Europe, and how the European Court of Human Rights operated. Also, he replied to the series of questions concerning the Ukrainian crisis and participation of Russia in the Council of Europe, whose status in this international organization is currently frozen.

When the participants visited the European Parliament, they were acquainted with the daily activities in administration of the highest legislative body of the EU, but also with how plenary sessions on the progress reports of the Western Balkans countries looked like.

These visits initiated further discussions about how the European institutions function but also what the European values are and how we determine them whether we live in the EU or not. They also spoke about the results of the European Parliament elections last year, voter turnout which raised for the first time since 1979, as well as what young people in European Union think about the European Parliament election.

Those days the top story was the initiative for the European army of the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, which snowballed a series of conversations about the perspectives of peaceful solutions for this crisis, as well as the significance of the recently reached Minsk Agreement.

During the last two days of the seminar, the group also visited two museums - the Alsace-Moselle Memorial, located about 10 km

from Strasbourg, dedicated to the French-German relations, and Tomi Ungerer Museum, where one can find sketches of the most popular French cartoonist of the 20th century, who was among other things, a role model to Wolinski, the murdered editor of the “Charlie Hebdo” magazine.

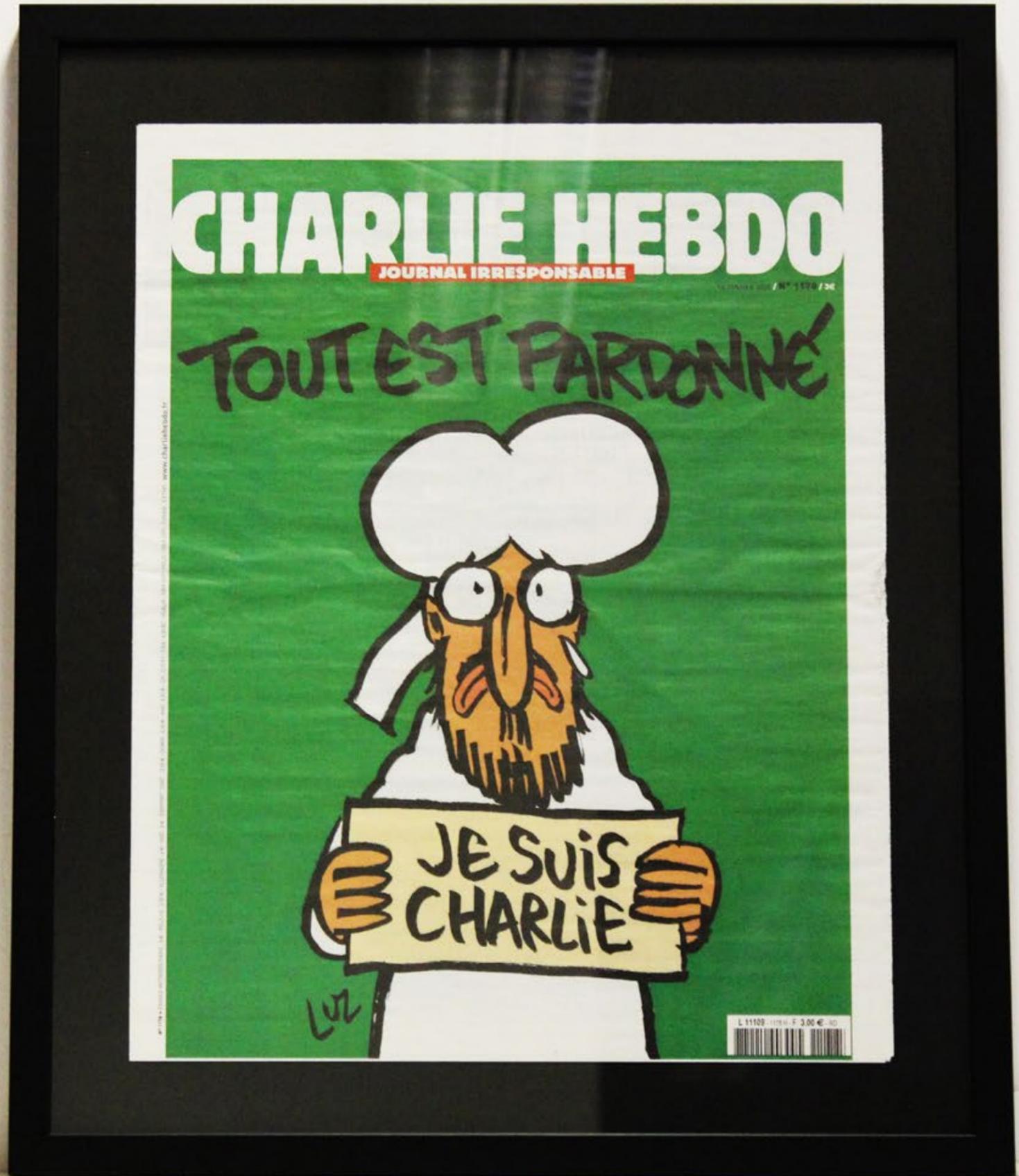
The second generation of the program “Academy for Dialogue and Cooperation” on the topic of “Thinking Europe” implemented the first part in Berlin in August 2014, where participants got acquainted with the German experience in the process of reconciliation and overcoming the totalitarian past. The second part of the program was focused on the process of reconciliation between Serbia and Kosovo as well as the European integration of these countries concerning that part of this academy was held in Belgrade, Prishtina and Mitrovica. During the third part of the program, the participants articulated their experiences using different forms, from presentations of their research papers to video interviews, dealing with the topics such identities, minority rights, processes of reconciliation, long-term EU development and nationalism. Their papers are available [at this page](#). ■



In mid-February Secretaries General of the French-German Youth Office Beatrice Angrand and Markus Ingenlath met with the Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, Kosovo Prime Minister Isa Mustafa and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama. The reason for their visit was the establishment of the Regional Youth Exchange program in the Western Balkans. They began with a meeting in Belgrade with the YIHR team, discussing establishment of such body. ■

CHARLIE HEBDO: EVERYTHING IS FORGIVEN

Here you can read the statement signed by members of EGAM concerning the attack on “Charlie Hebdo”



Discussion on the Situation of the Persons With Disabilities in Serbia

Persons with disabilities in Serbia are being discriminated on a daily basis and do not have the possibility to exercise their legal rights. State and educational institutions, public transport, culture institutions, as well as most other objects are largely inaccessible to persons with physical disability, which significantly reduces the process of inclusion of persons with disabilities into society. Not only does the state not pay enough attention to this issue, but neither does the society in Serbia.

These are just some of the conclusions of the panel discussion on the situation of the persons with disabilities in Serbia that YIHR organized on February 25 in Belgrade Youth Center, presenting their platform “Involved not Invalid”, whose purpose is to make it easier for persons with physical disability to find accessible educational programs.

Marija Zarić, independent advisor of the Commissioner for Equality showed through examples of complaints filed to the Commissioner how widespread discrimination against persons with disabilities is. The main task of the Office is the fight every kind of discrimination, including discrimination based on disability, and the 2014 annual report shows that the number of discrimination complaints based on disability represents 10% of all the complaints (similar to 2013). “This is not a realistic situation, there are many more people who are discriminated based on their disability, and based on the conducted research, it has been established that citizens recognize this group as one of the most discriminated”, said Zarić and added that persons with disabilities are discriminated in almost all areas, and the majority of complaints concerns labor and employment as well as accessibility of objects.

A large number of objects is formally accessible, there are ramps, certain steps have been taken in order to provide persons with physical disabilities access to objects, but still in many cases the work has not been carried out completely and professionally enough.

Jasna Marjanović, psychology student, took as an example Faculty of Philosophy which has a ramp that nobody uses because it is very steep and slippery. “This is the reason why I enter the faculty by the professors’ entrance which is accessible, although that is also not the most perfect solution because I have trouble opening the door because I use a walking frame,” said Jasna. She is currently living at the residence hall Mika Mitrović which has recently been renovated to better accommodate people with disabilities. While renovating, students living there were not asked how it should be fixed, so there have been some large omissions. Jasna also said that she feared she would not be able to find an accessible workplace because during her practice at the GSP her work environment was not accommodated, bringing into question her competence for the position.

Persons with disabilities are most commonly offered administrative jobs and this largely narrows down the choice of jobs they are interested in. Lana Nikolić, a student of the Faculty of Philology, said that she was lucky she studied what she liked, but most persons with disabilities do not get that opportunity. “People often use the term ‘persons with li-



imited capabilities' for persons with disabilities, and they often relate physical handicap to mental handicap which is completely wrong", said Lana. She thinks we all miss "naturalness" in communication with persons with disabilities and that it is necessary to understand that they are just as same as everybody else.

Persons with handicap also want to go to concerts, theatres, go out and attend cultural events. Besides the object accessibility, another obstacle is Belgrade transportation, which is not adapted to persons with disabilities. The city of Belgrade spent a lot of money buying vehicles that would transport persons with disabilities, but they are available only during working hours and the service is unavailable to those living in second and third tariff zone. This kind of functioning of public transport largely reduces possibilities for persons with physical handicap to move, socialize and participate in social events. At the discussion, it was also debated whose duty it was to change this situation.

Vidan Danković from Accessibility Audit Association said that Serbia missed "the activism of persons with disa-

bilities" but also that it was not only their fault, but that it was necessary that "all other conscientious citizens of Serbia need to deal with this issue"

Dajana Berisavljević from Youth Initiative for Human Rights said that inaccessibility itself is an issue, but an issue that can be solved with enough dedicated attention. "What we saw as much bigger obstacle while gathering information about accessibility was the lack of interest of institutions to deal with this problem or change anything."

In order to raise awareness about the situation of persons with disabilities in Serbia, in more than ten cities in Serbia of YIHR began an action of marking inaccessible objects with stickers with the text "The facility is currently inaccessible, please try again later". People at the debate also got stickers and were invited to join the action.

"Although improving the status of persons with disabilities is not the primary focus of the YIHR work, battle for a society in which discrimination of any kind is non-existent is the mission of YIHR. That's why our activists will always be happy to contribute in the battle against discrimination, and persons with disabilities will always be able to count on them – no matter whether they need support or partnership in the fight against discrimination" concluded Dajana Berisavljević.

The platform InvolvedNotInvalid.com was created as a part of YouthLINC project and supported by Internews. ■

77%

POŠTI, BANAKA
I PRODAVNICA JE
NEPRISTUPAČNO



Activist Marathon

Six cities, six actions, 48 hours

YIHR team visited six cities in Serbia in 48 hours and conducted actions with the activists concerning some of the issues in cities. This Activist Marathon followed activities by Active Balkans platform, whose goal is to provide information, news and educational material for activists in the Balkans.

On the first day there were actions were carried out in Novi Sad, Bačka Palanka and Subotica and on the second day in Bor, Jagodina and Vrnjačka Banja. With the help of the activists from these cities and their wish to deal with big topics, improve this country and live better, activities in all the cities were successfully completed - in only 48 hours each of these cities became a little better place to live. ■



(NON) NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS - BAČKA PALANKA

Only 6 km away from Bačka Palanka there's a Croatian municipality of Ilok and citizens of these 2 municipalities - though geographically so close - have minimal communication. Twenty high school students from Bačka Palanka surveyed their fellow citizens about Croatia and Croats. A girl, 15, 16 years old, as an answer to the question whether she would date a Croat said: "I don't know, yeah, why not, but pops would kill me". This was more than a sufficiently clear message that this subject needs to be dealt with, which is precisely what YIHR is doing through the Regional Exchange Program. ■



OUR LIFE - OUR THING! - BOR

In Bor, the YIHR team held a 'fishbowl' workshop at which they discussed with students changes they would like to see in their society. Despite their constant repeating at the beginning of the workshop how they could not change anything at their school, how they lacked the power and numbers, after an hour and a half of talks about various examples, alternatives and activism, they came to different ideas for change and improvement of their condition – and they concluded that no one else besides themselves has the power over their lives. ■

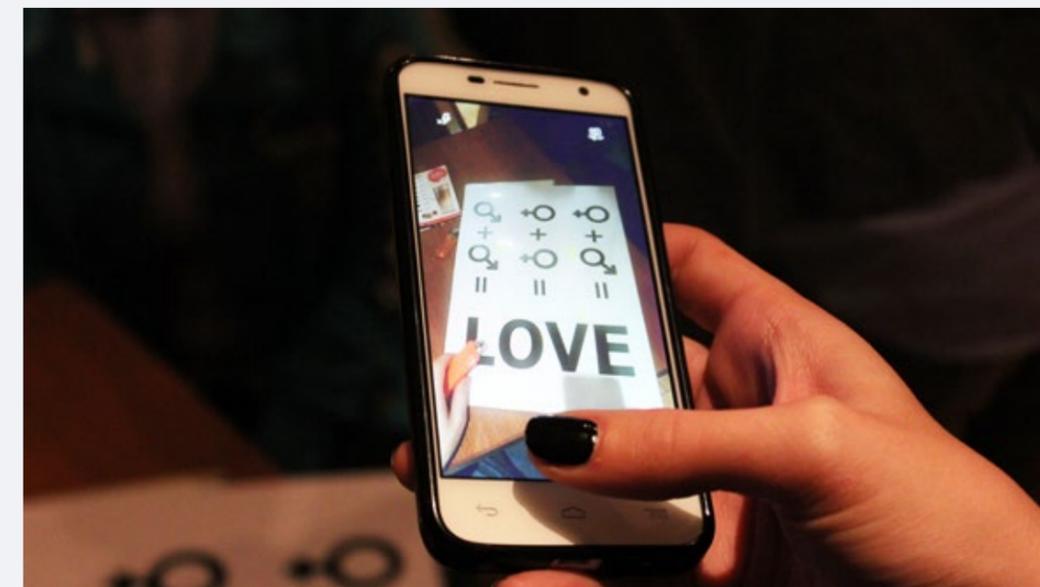


“YOUTH’S BRAIN OVERHAUL” - JAGODINA

A show on the local radio about young people by the YIHR activist Kristina Konovalov was cancelled because radio station stopped broadcasting. The YIHR team and Kristina together broadcasted the show publicly, with more than 20 young people from Jagodina in the audience. Many different questions were raised – how local community can be changed by activism, why somebody should be an activist etc. The show "Youth's Brain Overhaul" will in the future be available online and young people will be sent a message how changes at the local level are possible. ■

City for everybody! - Vrnjačka Banja

Young people from Vrnjačka Banja wanted for their city to be a city of love during the whole year for everybody living there and for those who visit it. Together with the YIHR team they created stencils which sent a message that everybody has equal rights to love. They left those messages in the city centre to remind everybody that love is more important than hatred and that differences are welcome. ■





HE ALMOST BEAT HER

BLACK AND BLUE



The second activity of the Activist Marathon that did gained lots of attention was the video “He almost beat her black and blue in a full café in Subotica!” which shows how we as individuals react to violence around us.

A guy curses several times at his girlfriend, threatens her with beating, makes her leave the café, failed to provoke any reaction of the people sitting in a café in Subotica. The reaction was triggered when the guy pulled the girl’s hair and pulled her off the chair.

The psychological phenomenon of apathy of the spectator is the lack of reaction. The more people present, the chances for an individual to react are lower. An individual thinks: “Why me and not someone else?”

People fear for their safety and up to a point that is reasonable, but what is not normal and cannot be reasonable are the reactions on social networks upon posting the video, and which clearly point out how important it is to speak about violence against women on a daily basis and repeat the phrase “a woman is never guilty for the violence she suffers and the responsibility is always and exclusively on the attacker”.

Comments which justify violence by saying that it was her fault are the result of the decades long neglect of the problem of violence against women and domestic violence, but also bad media reports, especially involving the cases known to the public. Still, the largest responsibility is on state institutions, often due to a bad reaction or the lack of it, which then leads to reasonable suspicion of the institutions. Both civil society and individuals, but primarily state bodies become accomplices to the crime for not reacting and keeping quiet about this issue. ■

Fight for Cultural Center of Novi Sad

At the end of February and beginning of March, YIHR directed attention at the actions of Andrej Fajgelj, director of the Cultural Center of Novi Sad (KCNS), as well as his texts that Večernje novosti are happily publishing.

After the text published in this daily newspaper titled “They teach boys to kiss their friends” YIHR activist Vladislava Mrčela wrote an open letter to Andrej Fajgelj, which follows:

I wanted to start this letter with some amount of respect, however, in my case, respect must be earned, therefore I am starting it by a short introduction on what exactly Red Cross is and what it does, concerning that you Mr Fajgelj - are obviously not familiar with it.

Red Cross of Serbia is a voluntary, independent national organization, whose mission is to help persons in jeopardy in cases of natural disasters or accidents, no matter whether they were caused by war or nature, to spread the knowledge about international humanitarian law, to teach citizens in areas of social and humanitarian protection, and if necessary provide social care and shelter.

Having on mind everything what I mentioned, this society acts in accordance with some of the basic principles (humanity, independence, neutrality etc.), and generally accepted rules of humanitarian law. I would like to focus on knowledge of international human rights law, the law that members of the LGBTQ population have been fighting for for years now. In order for that right to be realized, what we as a society have to do is to talk, to break down the stigma, open our hearts and accept the facts. I believe that you as a doctor would agree with me that knowledge is one of the most valuable things in this world and that you want it for your son, and for the children in Serbia. In that case, your son had a lesson on important things and I believe he learned a lot.

“Tolerance” as you said in your biased and intolerant speech, is a good word with a positive meaning. When your sons kiss other male friends or when daughters kiss female friends, that means they can love, that they are unspoiled, that they see the world around them in a way we all should, purely, honestly. If you see something bad in a kiss or a hug, especially with children, then you and I are unfortunately not living in the same world. When your sons and daughters pretend to be of another gender, that teaches them to respect the opposite, equality, difference. Gender equality will not make out of your sons and daughters transvestites, they will not become transgender, gay or bi, they either are or are not that, but it will help them, if they are not, they will understand easily those who are; and if they are it will make it easier for them to understand themselves. Gender equality is not only about women, it crushes stereotypes for both genders and therefore creates healthy surrounding for



both genders. I think that it is an ultimate right of a child to learn, to know. You could call that indoctrination, but I would disagree with you. A child is capable to decide for itself what it likes or dislikes. In most cases children are much smarter than us because they see things more clearly. I think we could all learn much from them.

Many might object that I, as a 23-year-old student, am drawing your attention, but I truly believe that when you write or speak about some topic, you need to have valid arguments and you have to use the right expressions. Homosexuality, or “homosexuality” as you called it, is not an art style of any kind; and speech about homosexuality is not a promotion, and neither are gender equality, “choice” of sexual orientation and similar topics considered values. They are by their definitions in the Constitution - guaranteed rights, besides others I would not mention now, which any human being should know and which every citizen should realize.

“Our deepest convictions that a boy should be a boy, and that small children shouldn’t be told anything about sex, let alone with the same gender, according to liberals are nothing else but a repression.”

Your deepest convictions are yours alone, and it is your right guaranteed by freedom of speech to express them, and transfer it to your sons and daughters, but is also the right of a child to learn and to know absolutely every fact and to choose for himself what would his convictions be. As far as repression is concerned, you, Mr Fajgelj are doing it, by demanding not to write or speak about everything previously mentioned.

You mention Civil Code and “striking force of liberalism” but you are neglecting precisely the most important word - CIVIL, those who “introduce new standards of behavior in a family” are the ones who the people, i.e. citizens (pay attention to that word) elected to do a job that contributes to the society, therefore to introduce new standards for impro-

ving life of all citizens. I wouldn’t go into whether they belong to the right or left, and whether they do their job adequately.

It’s tacky and utterly disgusting to compare the state, social and health rights as well as their performance of duties with the Turkish tribute. The state has to protect its citizens, which means that a child will be taken from its parent if not provided with adequate care, no matter the reasons, as long as the reasons are violation of basic rights. If you believe that anyone can influence your child so much that the child turns against you, I think you are belittling, underestimating and disrespecting it. How long are we going to keep quiet?

Unfortunately, families in Serbia face far greater problems than whether their child is taught to respect others, understand and love them. To begin with, let’s deal with economic and social situation of families. I invite you to get serious, to dedicate your attention and energy to more important problems, and help in solving them in any way possible, instead of spending your and our time by far too long and extremely stupid presentations of your attitudes and opinions.

It is up to you Mr Fajgelj and other parents to love your children and raise them, and if you dedicate enough of your time to them, they will grow up and, unfortunately for your son, but hopefully fortunately for other children, they will become similar to their parents and get similar if not the same convictions as their parents.

Violence is not solved by violence. Authoritativeness means pressure and in most of the cases it only triggers counter-reaction. Dear Serbian parents, please, do not limit your children, allow them to be free enough to be what they want to be, but teach them that you can be a knight using words, and that protection of one person does not mean hurting another. Finally, just love them and it will all turn out just fine. ■

After this text, YIHR organized an action named “Anti-fascist decontamination” in front of the KCNS, as a part of the Activist Marathon.





“Anti-fascist decontamination”

Dressed in white suits, with sprinklers in their hands – YIHR activists wanted to direct the attention to the issue that can become much more serious than it already is. Violence in Novi Sad has become an everyday thing, and the values that current management of KCNS is cherishing and promoting are nothing more than support for violence.

The Cultural Center of Novi Sad, once a space of freedom has become a source of spreading nationalism, homophobia and other similar fascist occurrences since Andrej Fajgelj of The Third Serbia took over. Actions of Andrej Fajgelj and his public appearances are characterized by hate speech and advocacy of human rights violations.

The Cultural Center of Novi Sad belongs to all citizens regardless of their nationality, religion or similar characteristics. All of those whom director Fajgelj is attacking in his public appearances and articles, whose rights he is violating, do not feel welcome in the KCNS. Resignation of Andrej Fajgelj from the position of director of this institution is the only acceptable solution and is a step to getting the KCNS to its real owners and values it had been nurturing for years. ■

Once again, Fajgelj used *Večernje novosti* newspaper as means of his interpretation of actions, which is often a story full of lies and insults of human rights defenders. As a reaction to the text titled “Cleansing by Kurti’s recipe” Luka Božović, YIHR activist wrote:

LUKA BOŽOVIĆ, activist

Dear Mr Fajgelj, dear Third Serbia,

I say “dear” only because I was taught that and because I am polite, although I neither respect you, nor what you’re supposed to represent. Values you are representing, which you speak about, are the things I have been actively fighting against for almost ten years on a daily basis. All of your ideas are pulling us back and are closing our society that does not deserve to live in isolation.

A few days ago, in front of the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad that you are in charge of now, we performed the action “Anti-fascist decontamination” which I initiated. I wrote the text that bothered you so much. I feel responsibility to answer to the lies you had written.

I agree with you that in front of the KCNS building “an unusual incident” occurred. Unfortunately, reaction to fascism in Serbia is nowadays considered an incident and is very rare. Reaction to fascism needs to be an everyday phenomenon. If it is considered an incident, then I say it with pride that I am an incident person. I believe I am not the only one who would say this with pride.

I will immediately answer your question about whether our action was an invitation to lynch of an official of your party and of your security. Don’t worry, we will not hurt you. We treat violence as a social issue that demands an urgent solution. You, Mr Fajgelj are a part of our problem. Your texts stigmatizing homosexuals, lesbians and transsexual population lead directly to violence. Your actions lead directly to what we were able to see in Novi Sad.

You remember how primary school students in Novi Sad beat teacher Ivan Janeša shouting “You are gay”? That, Mr Fajgelj, was caused by your party’s actions as well. That was caused because you and people like you are against teaching children since their early childhood about tolerance and respecting differences.

It wasn’t for nothing that some thinkers after WWII started to describe fascism as disease, horrified by its consequences. Fascism causes high mortality rate, it spreads very quickly and at the beginning it looks harmless, and it can happen to anyone. Does that sound like a description of a disease? Fascism is a disease, and those spreading it are the source of contagion of our society. Third Serbia party is a virus, just as intolerance, violence and hate speech are diseases. Don’t feel endangered because of this; we fight violence but we don’t use violent methods, Fascism is curable, and that has been proven lots of times in practice.

You, Mr. Fajgelj, in your wish to be represented as a victim, don’t care about anything else. You

don’t care whether you’ll lie or tell the truth only partially. Yes, it is truth that the YIHR team had a meeting with Albin Kurti. Still, in the article of your Third Serbia party, you decided to hide that we also met and talked to Aleksandar Jablanović, now former Minister of the Government of Kosovo. I believe that since you do know Albanian language, you can go to Prishtina and speak with Albanians on topics you are interested in. Believe me, no matter what your attitudes are, they’ll gladly speak with you. I am also ready to speak with you and answer all of your questions.

You, Mr. Fajgelj, are an insult to the KCNS. This institution is inseparable from Youth Debate and discussion in which great people and great anti-fascists participated (these two terms and inseparable to me) such as Kiš, Oskar Davičo, Branko Miljković, but also many others who have meanwhile become what I fight against. Youth panel discussion was a place for developing progressive ideas and freedom, and now Zoran Milivojević speaks there advocating violence against children. Not only him, there is also your comrade Boris Malagurski with his conspiracy theories. You allowed in a French association that was built on opposition to same-sex marriage and that fights for “preserving traditional values”. At the moment when more and more countries recognize the right to family to same-sex couples, respecting their human rights, you claim that same-sex marriages and LGBT population are evil.

The KCNS and people of Novi Sad have successfully fought repression and those who denied freedom, so they will successfully fight you and the Third Serbia as well. If I, as someone who doesn’t live in Novi Sad but who has friends and family there, get to contribute at least a little to this fight, I will be satisfied.

Fighting every form and product of fascism is our duty; we owe it to ourselves, victims of fascism fallen for their freedom, but also to the future generations.

Surrender and defeat in that fight are not an option. Were they, we wouldn’t have already defeated fascism once and gained freedom. The only option is to defeat fascism again! NO PASARAN! ■





Conference about Hate Speech in Media and on the Internet in Serbia

Conference about hate speech in media and online was organized at the Media center, on March 13 by Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

The conference dealt with the past work on **Watch Your Language** platform, whose goal is to contribute to establishing a definition and clearer boundaries between freedom of speech and hate speech. A great part of physical violence is based on hate speech and discriminatory behavior online. Imprecise definition of hate speech and differentiating hate speech from freedom of speech which is regulated differently are two burning issues that online community is facing nowadays.

At the first session of the conference on hate speech in media and on the internet speakers focused on traditional media, hate speech there and the responsibility of journalists for the current situation. The speakers were Nikola Tomic, editor of politics and world section and deputy editor of the daily newspaper Blic. Boban Karović, journalist and award winner for extraordinary contribution in fight against discrimination and Ivan Đurić from Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

Moderator of the first discussion Luka Božović, opened the conference by speaking of media reporting on the case of Goran Jevtić and reactions to that coverage. Nikola Tomić from Blic said that that case could be seen from two perspectives – as “professional omissions or as informing about known facts” but that it most certainly was not hate speech.

Journalist Boban Karović spoke about the fact that hate speech is less common in media compared to its amount online, and said that the truth is that as of now there is no clear boundary between freedom of speech and hate speech and that the context is often the determining factor. He also reminded the public that hate speech is often mistaken for an insult, which makes the distinction even less clear. One of the examples given was chanting “Vučiću pederu”, that the speakers agreed was an insult, not hate speech.

In further discussion about hate speech in media Nikola Tomić pointed out that at this moment in Serbia we are facing a very important and relatively new phenomenon of hate speech against political opponents. He highlighted the example of calling the opposition Ebola by an MP of the ruling majority. Tomić stated that this was the product of “the sum of political instruction and

money”.

Ivan Đurić from Youth Initiative for Human Rights spoke about the role of civil society concerning the media reporting of certain topic, saying that it is not the job of civil society to change journalists but to give them information, among other things. He gave an example of the text that Blic journalist wrote about her visit to Prishtina, at the time when he was also there and said that the only thing they agreed on was the weather those days. Ivan said that ten years have passed since the first YIHR project “Journalists can do it” whose aim was the exchange of journalists



between Belgrade and Prishtina, and that it was high time to repeat this project - because there was space for cooperation between civil sector and media.

The speakers of the second session moderated by Đorđe Krivokapić talked about the ways of regulation of the online content, institutional and alternative mechanisms of setting up a clearer boundary between freedom of speech and hate speech, as well as online platforms against hate speech on the Internet.

State Secretary of the Ministry for Youth Affairs and Sports and president of the National Committee for the combating hate speech on the Internet Nenad Borovčanin said that the Ministry considers hate speech one of its primary topics of concern. The campaign against hate speech on the Internet has been ongoing for two years, and as an answer to the question why the Ministry has chosen this particular topic as priority, Borovčanin said: “This topic chose us. There is no limit between online and offline worlds – one is a part of the other. It is important that young people, who mostly use online space and are our target group, are educated on this. That is why we chose preventive-educational role as one of important activities.”



Tamara Skrozza from the Press Council talked about who is responsible and how for supervising hate speech on the Internet. Press Council is a self-regulatory body which acts upon citizens' complaints, NGO sector, but also ministries and only in cases of breaches of the Journalist Code adopted in 2006. Press Council does not deal with cases in which laws and Constitution of the Republic of Serbia are broken. Skrozza said that, unfortunately, there is only one point in the Code that deals with hate speech and discrimination and that sometimes it is hard to establish whether there is hate speech in the case or not.

When speaking of hate speech on social networks, that is not in the jurisdiction of the Council. “The Council deals with Journalists' Code of Ethics. We deal with media, but concerning web sphere under our jurisdiction are only those portals with administrators or editors. If we were to deal with social networks, we would accept that those people were journalists, which is not the case. It's too much for us. It is the job of the state to deal with this area, and they did show us they knew how to do that job during the floods when they knew absolutely everything going on on social networks. They know how to do it and can do it, the question is whether they want to do it,” said Skrozza.

Borovčanin added that one of the issues was that the Council was self-regulatory body, not a state body. “The issue is that there are no sanctions. At the end of the year, a code on hate speech was adopted, but its implementation is lacking. You can get to the solution, but what is needed is the joint proposal.”

Đorđe Bojović from YIHR said that Watch Your Language platform could be one of the efficient means in fighting against the hate speech on the Internet. He stated that some of the instructions about moderation of online content and comments would be found on the platform, and these instructions would be available to all those willing to use them. After Tamara Skrozza said that sometimes it would be best to ignore certain content with hate speech, Bojović replied: “I don't think we should keep quiet about it. I think that by being quiet today, we become accomplices to the act. It is necessary to point out this issue and never turn a blind eye on it,” said Bojović. ■

Debate on Asylum Seekers in Subotica

Over the last three years, the treatment of asylum seekers in Serbia has been a problem rarely spoken of, but that requires undivided attention and seeking solution. People fleeing the area affected by the war, riots, the territories where human rights are of no importance, want to provide security and better life for their families and themselves.

Migrants who fled from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries torn by wars and unrest, situated on the territory of Subotica, do not have other accommodation but the abandoned buildings of the old brickyard, with inhuman conditions. They are out in the cold, with no water, electricity, warm clothes, food and medications.

We discussed the possibilities of solving the issues which the asylum seekers in Serbia are facing at the Forum YIHR organized on January 30 at the Youth club Skladište in Subotica.

Tibor Varga from the Eastern-European mission helps the migrants hiding in an abandoned brickyard in Subotica on a daily basis. Varga said that the migrants escape from their countries because otherwise they would be killed there, but their goal is not to stay in Serbia. Those with money move to the EU, while all those penniless or sick stay in the brickyard. “No one comes to help them. They often tell me they did not eat for days. There is no sanitation, no water,” Varga said.

Milimir Vujadinović, member of the City Council of the City of Subotica responsible for social protection, said that due to legal restrictions, the issue of asylum seekers cannot be solved by the local

government. The only thing the city of Subotica can do is to assist in humanitarian terms with the aim to protect human lives. A special budget line was made in order to provide help to the asylum seekers, and in February 2014 a shelter for youth and migrant children was opened. Yet, when it comes to the adults, hands of the local government are tied. Opening any kind of shelter in Subotica is not planned, because according to Vujadinović’s opinion it would be “an additional stimulus for immigrants to break the law” concerning the fact that what they do is illegal, and the opening of a shelter would only increase the number of newly come migrants.

In the last year 16,500 migrants, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, sought asylum in Serbia. Of this number, 388 requests were filled, 17 hearings were conducted and the request was approved for only six of them. According to Radoš Đurović from the Asylum Protection Center, when these numbers are compared it is clear that the system is not working.





“It is necessary for the state to have a clear attitude on this issue“, said Đurović. As a big defect he pointed out that there is no body in Serbia that would coordinate all the activities between different services and institutions dealing with the asylum, and therefore, the Government needs to correct its existing strategy on migration, link relevant services, increase capacity and be more active in solving this problem. Đurović pointed out that all immigrants must obtain refugee status in Serbia, which implies they are provided with housing, minimal health care and freedom of movement. As one of the challenges he highlighted that the citizens of Serbia need to be explained the situation, and that there was no quick and fast solution. “It is very hard to tell the citizens that whatever we do, those people will be here, they will not disappear. We shouldn’t be restrictive and push them further into the grey zone, far from the city’s authority. We should provide them with some sort of protection, for them to become visible, to have statistical data about their number and who of them comes from potentially unsafe areas,” said Đurović.

It is a long road to the solution to migrants’ problems, and most of the citizens in Serbia look the other way. How can the state react and how similar issues were treated in other countries, what are the obligations of the state under the Constitution, or the Geneva Convention, what has the city of Subotica has done regarding this situation, and what are the possibilities of solving this problem are just some of the questions that concern each one of us. ■



Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized a visit to the south of Serbia for a group of 20 students, so the young people would get familiar with the political situation as well as the position of the south in Serbia-Kosovo relations. Meetings with the president of Bujanovac municipality Nagip Arifi and the president of Albanian National Council Jonuz Musliu took place. The topics of the discussion were problems of education, judiciary, unemployment, boycott of the census by the Albanian population and other problems citizens in the south face. In order for this group to get a more complete picture of this topic, upon their return to Belgrade, meetings were organized - with the president of Government of Serbia Coordination Body for the Municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa Zoran Stanković and MPs of the Party for Democratic Action (PDD) in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia – Shaip Kamberi and Riza Halimi. ■



IVAN ĐURIĆ, program coordinator

Disinformation of Public Importance

The right to free access to information of public importance means that every citizen may ask an institution for certain information which can be statistics, documents, reports etc. This right is guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 10), the Constitution (Article 51) and the law.

Long story short: you ask for an information, body of authority provides you that information and your right is realized. However, nobody can guarantee that the information given is correct. YIHR asked at the end of January from the Supreme Court of Cassation information about received requests for the protection of the right to a trial within reasonable time.

The court replied within before the legal deadline and YIHR proceeded with the information, treating it as an official one - and that information was supposed to be published in the YIHR report on the right to a fair trial in the judicial system of Serbia.

But the plot thickened on March 25, when the Supreme Court of Cassation published the Annual Report on the Work of the Supreme Court of Cassation for 2014, with the statistical data YIHR asked for which was different from that provided before.

YIHR sends hundreds of requests for access to information annually, and bases its research, opinions, conclusions on them – because those answers are treated as official information of the institutions whose work we control. It is not possible to check each piece of information we get from those institutions, neither do we think that is our obligation.

How can YIHR, for example, check an information provided by the BIA, that 52 persons were under surveillance in 2013? Of what importance is the legal victory of YIHR before the European Court of Human Rights which ordered BIA to deliver us information on the number of people being eavesdropped, when BIA provided incorrect information?

State sometimes offers means for us to control its work – like Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance. Still, they keep our control under control. ■



Let us remind you, YIHR requested this year again the number of people being eavesdropped in 2014 – however, BIA denied our request, just as they did in 2014 and 2005. By the time this newsletter is published, we should have received an answer from the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection to whom YIHR complained.

#VoteNOTfight

Due to violent character of the last election in Nigeria held in 2011, and attacks on the presidential election campaigners in 2015, World Youth Movement for Democracy organized an online campaign #VoteNOTfight inviting young people in Nigeria to vote and participate in a democratic and peaceful way in advocating changes in Nigeria.

The YIHR team supported this global campaign.





WHAT MATTERS IN 2015?

