



YIHR

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YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT

Denying genocide, freedom and common sense

Serbian Ministry of Interior pressed misdemeanor charges against Anita Mitic, director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights. Mitic has been charged for allegedly violating Public Assembly Law by organizing a gathering on July 10th 2015 – the night before commemoration of Srebrenica genocide.

the entire process. The act of denying Srebrenica genocide by an officer of police department Stari grad, increased furthermore an impression that the whole procedure of Ministry of Interior is not founded in the Constitution, laws, rights and freedoms for citizens of Republic of Serbia, but contingent to political standpoint towards the war past.

Additionally, YIHR was appalled, thus strongly condemned a formulation used in misdemeanor complaint submitted by Police Department Stari Grad of Ministry of Interior, placing the word genocide under quotation marks.









It wasn't her - it was all of us!

The first hearing before the Misdemeanor Court, on the charges against Anita Mitić, director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights was held today. Serbian Ministry of Interior charged Mitić with misdemeanor for organizing commemoration of Srebrenica genocide.

Few dozen of citizens and civil society activists gathered in front of the court building right before the hearing began. They expressed their support to Anita Mitić by holding signs with a message #it_wasn't_her_it_was_me. Gathered citizens and activists also showed united position that no misdemeanor charge, let alone unfounded one, would stop them from fighting for civilized and different Serbia, where the truth about Srebrenica genocide was acknowledged, accountable for the crimes committed, Serbia which was investing effort in the reconciliation process in the region on a daily bases.

Although YIHR notified Court on the significant public interest in the hearing, people interested in attending the hearing were prevented from doing so by police officers and court guard. Contrary to its Rules of Procedure, Court did not provide an adequate courtroom, therefore numerous citizens were left in front of the courtroom and court building. Police even prevented journalists from entering the court, thus violated the Article 7 of the Law on Organization of Courts which stipulates all hearings to be public unless restricted by law, in accordance with the Constitution. Eventually, journalists, who were allowed to enter the courtroom, were prohibited from bringing in the recording equipment.

At the very beginning of the trial, Anita Mitić's legal representative requested an acquittal. In the moment when Srebrenica genocide commemoration took place, Constitutional Court of Serbia declared Public Assembly Act unconstitutional, which made unconstitutional misdemeanor charge against Mitić. The hearing was postponed to allow presiding judge to familiarize herself to the decision of the Constitutional Court.



Security assessment for 'Seven thousand' assembly

In the last days of March, Ministry of Interior (MoI) delivered security assessment for 'Seven thousand' assembly to Youth Initiative for Human Rights. MoI acted upon the order issued by the Commissioner for access to information of public importance and personal data protection, obliging them to deliver, without further ado, security assessment based on which the decision to ban 'Seven thousand' assembly was made. Prior to Commissioner's order, security assessment was treated as confidential by Ministry of Interior.

This operational document confirmed that members of the Srpski Sabor Zavetnici and Serbian Radical Party were not charged with misdemeanor on the basis of organizing unregistered public assembly on July 10, 2015 or for organizing, previously banned, gatherings on July 11, 2015.

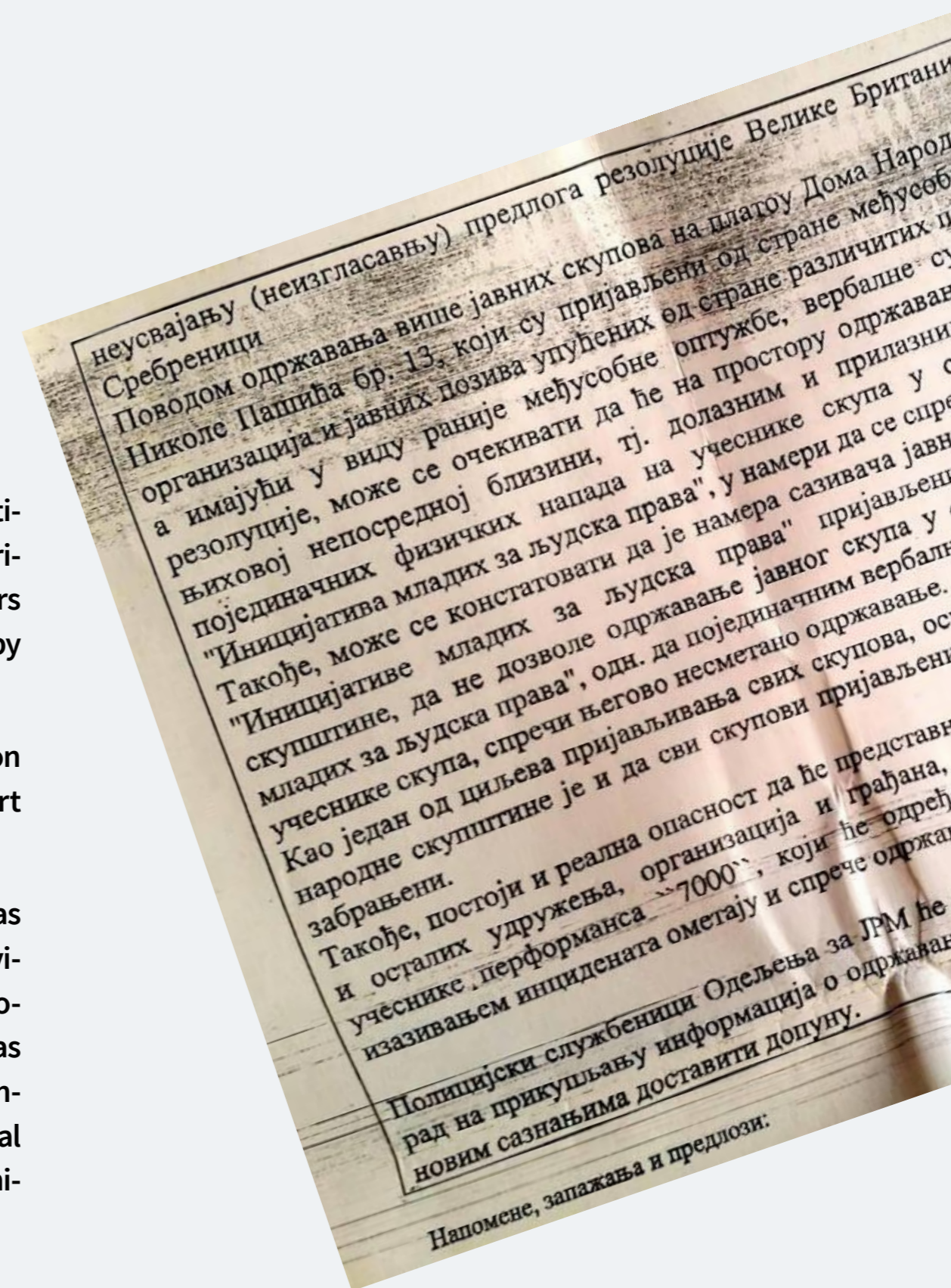
Gatherings of right-winged organizations aimed at precluding #seventhousand assembly from taking place and denying Srebrenica genocide committed by forces of Army of Republika Srpska in July 1995.

YIHR sees this absence of any kind of sanction for the organizations on the far right, as a state support to the political objectives

of these organizations, as well as continuation of criminal politics from the nineties created by political subjects and their derivatives, out of whom some are currently in power, while others are preventing Serbian society from dealing with the war past by using violence.

Any positive effect of Prime Minister Vucic's visit to Potocari on July 11th last year, has been repealed by this act of silent support to far right and war-driven politics.

We cannot expect genuine reconciliation in the region as long as commemorations are being banned, entire foreign policy activity of Serbian government is directed at blocking UN Security Council's resolution on Srebrenica which affirms that genocide was committed in Srebrenica and two ministers of Serbian government travel to Hague to accompany, with state honors, general Lazarevic, after he served his sentence for crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo.





IVAN ĐURIĆ, human rights program coordinator

Ban the assembly, we will protest against the ban

I remember specifically several spontaneous rallies I participated in: protest against adoption of Constitution in 2006, when members of the Parliament voted for the Constitution at midnight, not being able to read it beforehand; April 2010, when we celebrated Partizan qualifying for Final Four in Paris, 'Midnight Pride' in 2013 and of course 'Seven thousand' assembly.

Given the misdemeanor charges against Anita Mitic for inviting public to light candle in front of the Presidency building on the night before commemoration of Srebrenica genocide, filed by Stari Grad police department and recent adoption of Public Assembly Act, it is essential to start a debate about the meaning of 'spontaneous gathering', which representatives of national legislative and executive branches of power don't want to understand. It won't be long before we find out if judiciary apprehend this term.

Going back to the basis, it is important to underline that freedom of assembly is one of the fundamental human rights. It is even more im-

portant to emphasize that freedom of assembly cannot be observed separately from freedom of expression. Freedom of assembly without freedom of expression is like waiting for the bus during the morning rush hour. Gathering of a certain number of people who are sending common message is the essence of freedom of assembly.

Assemblies are usually planned, organized and scheduled weeks or days in advance. It is actually legal requirement of the organizers to notify police about the assembly (to register it) few days ahead. The deadline for registering an assembly varies from state to state. It is usually between 24 hours and 7 days before the assembly is to occur. In the

previous Public Assembly Act in Serbia due time was 48 hours, while in the Public Assembly Act adopted in January 2016 a deadline is 5 days before a date planned for an assembly.

However, what if something happens, an event, a decision, a statement or some other phenomena which in citizens' judgement required an urgent reaction, an urgent assembly? European Courts for Human Rights clearly states:

'In the Court's view, in special circumstances when an immediate response, in the form of a demonstration, to a political event might be justified, a decision to disband the ensuing, peaceful assembly solely because of the absence of the requisite prior notice, without any illegal conduct by the participants, amounts to a disproportionate restriction on freedom of peaceful assembly'. On this issue see Butka et al. versus Hungary, 25691/04.

In plain English this means we are entitled to gather even if we had not registered the assembly in line with a law. This is what we mean by European standards or European values.

'Spontaneous assembly' is a term not to be taken literally, since no assembly is actually spontaneous nor accidental, at least not in a sense of right to peaceful assembly. Spontaneous assembly actually means reactionary assembly.

I remember specifically several spontaneous rallies I participated in: protest against adoption of Constitution in 2006, when members of the Parliament voted for the Constitution at midnight, not being able to read it beforehand; April 2010, when we celebrated Partizan qualifying for Final Four in Paris, 'Midnight Pride' in 2013 and of course 'Seven thousand' assembly. I also remember one more gathering, though for di-

fferent reasons – gathering of supporters of Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) before laying the foundation for Belgrade Waterfront.


These spontaneous gatherings had their organizers – Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) organized protest against the Constitution, while organizers of Pride 2013 and 'Seven thousand' protested provoked by banning orders for these assemblies. In that sense, they were spontaneous.

On the other hand – State violated the law on several times – no one cared. The act(s) of banning Pride Parades were declared unconstitutional, which is also to be expected for the case of banning 'Seven thousand' assembly (the process before the constitutional courts is on-going). There is no political or moral, let alone some other responsibility for these unlawful banning decisions. Although security concerns were listed as a rationale for the banning orders (these concern were never elaborated, but treated as a confidential, state secret), it is the message that these assemblies were to send was actually banned. And that is obvious.

To ban an assembly is to do politics by unlawful legal means. That is why we have a right to protest against a ban- and judiciary has to make up its mind: to support repression or to protect human rights.

Region cut out for youth

On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, December 10th, youth of the Western Balkans gathered around YIHR regional network, conveyed to governments in the region Regional human rights declaration.

A young man with short brown hair, wearing a black zip-up jacket, stands in the foreground holding a white rectangular sign with both hands. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The sign has black text in a bold, sans-serif font. In the background, a city skyline is visible through a hazy, overcast sky. A person is sitting on a dark wooden bench in the mid-ground to the right, facing away from the camera. The ground appears to be a paved plaza or park area.

**Hoću da znam
gde su granice
moje zemlje.**



Youth from Belgrade, Pristina, Podgorica, Sarajevo and Zagreb jointly formulated issues they saw as a legacy of the nineties, which aggravated societies those young people were living in. Activist born shortly before, during and after the wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, in this manner, demonstrated their willingness to bear responsibility and deal with the consequences of wars and absence of genuine and serious reconciliation politics in the years following the conflicts.

While our political elites are denying crimes and are occupied with conspiracy theories and glorifying war criminals, hundreds of bodies are being exhumed from the mass graves scattered throughout our countries. While our politicians see a hand shake as a culmination of political courage and advancement of regional relations, dozens of young people are leaving our region in a pursuit of 'normal', substance, prospects or simply bread.

Demands, written in the Declaration, refer to securing freedom of assembly and freedom of movement, recognition of degrees issued by academic institutions in the region, visa liberalization, inclusive and education in mother tongue, guarantees of freedom of expression, establishment of telecommunication network with Kosovo and abolishing roaming charges in the region. Young people demand they are allowed to love openly, and not limited to 'within four walls', to know where the borders of their country are, establishment of the facts and institutional responsibility for the crimes committed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

Aside from the declaration, activists put posters in the cities around the region, where they clearly and picturesquely presented their demands. Some of the messages on the posters were: 'I don't want war criminals to be welcomed as heroes', 'To love who I choose, without pardon or cordon', 'To drive to Split, to Josip's, with Belgrade licence plates'.

International Human Rights Day is commemorated worldwide in order to celebrate Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on December 10th 1948. By adopting the Universal declaration, its signatories envisaged to restore human dignity which was shattered during the Second World War and to lay the foundations for peace-governed world, whose citizens would have equal chances for prosperity.

Regional youth declaration

We, the youth of the Western Balkans,

United in our intention to contribute to building societies based on respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Demand the fulfillment of our right to freedom of movement across the Western Balkans region and Europe, so that we meet our peers and exchange experiences with them, thus establish strong ties for professional, educational and social cooperation.

Cherish and promote mutually respectful and inclusive, as well as critical approach to human rights issues arising from our common violent past, only possible through regional and cross-border cooperation

Stress that the only and most efficient way to guarantee non-recurrence of violence is through open and free cooperation of governments and societies alike.

Affirm the importance of regional cooperation and communication between our institutions, point out the problems to be resolved so we can get to know each other, understand each other better and build societies we want to live in: free, democratic, open and prosperous.

Hence, on Human Rights Day, we demand:

1. Everyone to have freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. Everyone to have the right to education in his/her mother tongue as well as right to inclusive education.
3. Everyone to have the right to recognition of academic diplomas issued by any educational institution in the region; this right is to be conditioned only by professional standardization, free of ideological and political influence.

4. Everyone to have freedom of thought and expression, the right not to be disquieted on the account of his/her opinion, as well as the right to seek, receive and impart ideas and information by any peaceful and democratic means, regardless of national borders.

5. Everyone to have freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone to have the right to leave any country, including his/her own and to return to his/her country.

6. Every person of legal age to have the right to marry and establish a family, without any limitation due to race, nationality, sexual orientation and/or religion. Every person should be entitled to equal rights while entering into and during marriage.

7. Everyone to have freedom of conscience.

8. Everyone to have the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries.

9. Everyone to have the right to communicate and exchange information freely. For the purpose of restoring communication among the citizens in the region, we consider necessary to establish cooperation among mobile operators in all Western Balkans' countries.

10. Everyone to have the right of free trade of goods and service, regardless of national borders.

11. Everyone to have the right to enjoy culture and cultural production as well as to take part in the cultural life, regardless of national borders or ethnic, religious and national differences.

We also strongly believe that we cannot build a prosperous common future if we do not respond properly to the mass and systematic human rights violations committed in the recent past.

Such response is the condition sine qua non of any society built on the principles of justice and rule of law. Thus, on this occasion we remember those citizens of our countries whose basic human rights have been violated in recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

We urge the governments in the region to:

1. Strengthen cooperation and exchange information paramount to locating and identifying persons still counted as missing in the recent violent conflicts.
2. Strengthen judicial and security cooperation and exchange of evidence in prosecuting those responsible for grave human rights violations and violations of the international humanitarian law.
3. Promote an approach to memory and history based on the established facts, rights and perspectives of victims, and castigate nationalist and other extremist ideologies, which critically contributed to the occurrence of violence.
4. Support fact-finding processes, such as establishment of RECOM- Regional Commission for Establishing Facts about the victims of war crimes and serious human rights violations committed in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.
5. Invest in symbolic, instrumental, educational and political measures, which strengthen and drive the reconciliation process, thus securing non-recurrence of violence for future generations and us.

We stand firm in our belief that only through these restorative and retributive measures, we can live in an environment of sustainable peace and stability in the region of Western Balkans.

Forty young people from the whole region visited Kosovo



YIHR regional network organized a study visit to Kosovo for 40 young people from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo. The study visit organized within YIHR Regional exchange program took place from December 15th until December 18th 2015.



Debate: Berlin process – seen from a youth perspective, with focus on the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (#RYCO)

YIHR regional network organized a debate “Berlin process - from the youth cooperation perspective” on December 18th in Pristina. During the debate participants discussed about process of establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), which was initiated during the Western Balkans Summit in Berlin in 2014.

Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia officially supported an idea of establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Six prime ministers signed joint declaration on RYCO during the Summit on Western Balkans in Vienna in 2015. With this act they committed themselves to actively participate in the process of establishing programs on a regional level, entrusted to use funds allocated from the governments to organize cross-border, exchange, programs for young people.

‘Declaration on establishing future office was presented to all states since it was important to get support from all members. Until August 27th there was only informal working group. Later, an official working group was established, comprised of representatives of ministries in charge for youth policy and civil society organizations’, said Vedat Jashari, representative of Kosovo Ministry of culture, youth and sports and a member of RYCO working group. In his words, the aim is to establish legal mechanisms which will secure sustainable regional cooperation among young people as a way to promote peace, tolerance and freedom of movement. Vedat Jashari just returned from the second working group meeting in Tirana. In Tirana meeting members of the working group were unanimous on various issues, however the question of the head quarter of the future office was postponed for the third meeting which was organized in Sarajevo at the end of January 2016.

Krenare Gashi, from Kosovo Network of Youth Centers, the second representative of Kosovo in the working group, stated that all the members of the working group were aware that the Western Balkans region was specific. Nevertheless, they were doing their best to overcome all obstacles. “The issue of regional cooperation is of immense importance for all of us. All of us in Kosovo are giving our maximum so that young people from Kosovo become important actors in the process of regional cooperation through different projects. However, I am not convinced we are being successful for two reasons. We don’t have visa liberalization which is enormous obstacle to the youth movement. We are also experiencing problems with the countries we can travel to, such as Serbia and Macedonia’, explained Krenare Gashi. She believes that working group is kept together by the common goal. ‘We may be experiencing different religious, national and ethnic divisions, but I think we have common problems, unemployment for example affects young people in all the countries in the region. We have more things in common that the



ones which divide us. RYCO is very ambitious project, but it is necessary for our youth. As members of the working group we are committed to finding common denominators and solutions which unite us. It is extremely important that members of the institutions and civil society are sitting together in order to resolve these problems. This is an excellent opportunity for all of us and I hope we will make the best of it', concluded Krenare Gashi.

Edona Ahmetaj, from Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo, invited the working group to invest more effort to secure transparency of the process so that organizations and individuals interested in improving regional cooperation would have more space to contribute to the process with their experiences. Ahmetaj mentioned Montenegro as a good example of cooperation between state institution and civil society. Member of the working group from Montenegro was selected in a public call, published by the Montenegrin Government.

Kerim Somun from Youth Initiative for Human Rights Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that discussions on Regional Youth Cooperation Office are an excellent opportunity to rebuild the bridges between people, which were torn down during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. "Before the idea of establishing RYCO was born, I was a part of the 'Erasmus plus' project. I always used to say to my colleagues that I was sorry we didn't have something like that in the Balkans. We had a chance to go to Vienna or Budapest, but not to Belgrade or Pristina. This mostly affects students, since they are focused on projects which enable student exchanges and travelling to the Western countries. I hope that this office will actually change this', shared his vision for the future generations Kerim Somun. Somun added that he believed, regardless the obstacles, the office would be successfully established, mainly because the French-German Youth office with more than 50 years of experience in working with young people from the post-conflict societies was involved in this process.

Croatia is the only country in the region which didn't sign the Declaration from Vienna. According to Morana Starcevic from Youth Initiative for Human Rights Croatia, the reason for that was the fact that 2015 was an election year in Croatia. "Our meetings with Ministry of Youth and Ministry of Foreign Affairs were very confusing. They were interested, however unaware that the regional cooperation should be above politics and independent from the current government.

Therefore we didn't manage to get any kind of answer" said Morana Starcevic and announced that YIHR Croatia was forming a coalition of non-governmental organization which would promote the RYCO initiative. "Although our government wishes to be side by side with the EU, we are still part of this region. Our institutions are very proud when EU refers to them as 'leaders' in the region, but when something concrete is to be done, there is no reaction. We believe that no reconciliation process can go without us, since we were actors in the conflict. We need to be in contact and cooperate with young people from the entire region. I am afraid that our absence from this process can lead to an increase in the nationalistic and populist discourse and hate speech in Croatia itself", added Morana Starcevic. In her words, the future office should serve as a platform for traveling, movement, exchange of opinions, induction to a nationalistic discourse of the other side. "It should be a space where we start our quest for a common, fact-based, narrative, enabling us to move on. We should be criticizing our own institutions and institutions of the other states likewise", concluded Morana Starcevic.

'Usually in the assemblies where participants from the region are gathered, is stated that everything is fine in Montenegro and that we are always in favor of cooperation. I can openly say that a consensus on the necessity to establish RYCO has been reached in Montenegro. In 2015, YIHR office in Podgorica organized a national conference which was open by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Luksic. Representatives of the institutions, embassies and civil society attended this Conference. We involved members of the youth branches of political parties in this process. We believe that they too need to reach a consensus between themselves since they will be future decision makers', stated Ivana Drakic from YIHR in Montenegro.



'Why I think this is important for Montenegro? Perhaps, we have no significant issues in international relations, other than some minor disputes over borders. Perhaps we haven't suffered from the war on our own territory, but we experienced consequences of war. Our politicians tend to emphasize that we are a multiethnic country. This is true. However it is important to stress that the ethnic distance is great and people have prejudices based on ethnicity, nationality and religion. Of course, there is an issue of war crimes, committed on a certain scale, but not much is known in this regard. European Union even criticized us for not prosecuting those crimes', clarified Ivana Drakic.

Anita Mitic from Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia decided to speak about this future office from a personal experience. 'I was born in 1990 in Belgrade. There were some protest organized and Milosevic should be overthrown were the only things I knew about politics at the time. I knew nothing about the region. When I turned 18, I became an activist of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and soon afterwards I visited Kosovo for the first time', said Anita Mitic and added that trip to Kosovo completely changed her life. 'In the years to follow I would visit all the major cities in the region. I met incredible number of people, learnt a lot about the war, history, culture and political situation in the former Yugoslavia. When people ask me why RYCO is important, I respond that through this initiative we have a chance to completely transform the reality for young people, living in the Balkans', she stated.

In Mitic's view, no matter how hard we try to 'bury' some issues from the past under the rug, certain questions are unavoidable. Someone may ask where the church in the center of Prishtina came from or why there were bullet holes on facades in Sarajevo. 'Our governments agreed to this office and signed the declaration, but I am not convinced they were ready to answer all the questions. Furthermore, I think they didn't even realize that these questions could be raised', emphasized Mitic. She added that civil society would not allow for these questions to remain unanswered, 'which is why I believe that at this moment we are working on creating our generation's legacy, on enabling a different reality for the young people in the future. I have no doubt that YIHR changed my life and I believe that young people in the region deserve the same opportunity.'



Journalists from the region visited Belgrade

YIHR Regional Network organized a visit to Belgrade for journalists from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Visit took place from 17th until 19th February 2016.

Debate: How do we see neighbors? Role of the media in advancing regional cooperation

Media in the region are subordinated to the interests of big capital and politics. Tabloids and commenting news published on internet portals are the main manufactures of the negative stereotypes and hate speech in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. States in the region are not addressing this at all. There are no efficient state mechanisms to regulate media, media are left on their own in the market game and asks for blood. Media are mirroring the discourse of a political elite and are often used as a 'bat' for 'slamming' political opponents. A number of times media stimulate or even fabricate the tensions and don't contribute to the regional cooperation.

These are some of the conclusions from the debate 'How do we see neighbors? – The role of media in advancing regional cooperation' organized by Youth Initiative for Human Rights on February 19th at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade. Journalists from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro discussed with students how to change the current media situation where intolerance towards neighbors was being stimulated through media and how media should start contributing and promoting positive effects of regional cooperation.

From the standpoint of Ognjen Zoric, Radio Free Europe journalist, by reading only Serbian media people don't get a chance to realize that they share similar problems with the region, although media should foster communication and cooperation. In his assessment media are either not reporting about the region or they are doing it tabloid-like. If an extraordinary event occurs – refugee crisis - or on the occasion of an important date such as July 11th- commemoration of Srebrenica genocide media lighten up. Still, even then, media only fuel intolerance inherited from the past.

Although one would get an impression that media in Montenegro are not spreading hate, every now and then intolerance triggered by the political needs surfaces. Population of Montenegro feels the greatest ethnic distance towards the Albanians, Roma and Croats. 'If one followed certain media in Montenegro, namely 'Pobjeda', one would get an impression that until recently we were in actually in a war and not in a same country with Serbs', said Milan Sekulovic from 'Dan' the Montenegro daily newspaper. He underlines that media are often trying to divert attention from important social problems, by using nationalistic and sensational narratives.



‘If we put media reporting about the region in the current political context, it becomes obvious that media serve the interests of those in power. Right wing options are nourished by our intolerance, however it was social democratic government in Croatia that closed our borders with Serbia last year’, said Ladislav Tomcic, journalist of ‘Novi List’ from Rijeka. Tomcic added that events in the region were observed with editor’s awareness that hate speech increased viewing and listening ratings, and media were playing the game in which maintaining the tension was recommended.

Hilma Unkic, from Sarajevo Media Center, is quite aware of the complicated political situation in which media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are working, where everything is divided into three entities. ‘Although in our country entity partition is present, there are plenty of bright examples. Media are usually reporting on the negative stories and splitting reality in this manner. For me is essential that we realize that if we don’t show healthier side of Bosnia and Herzegovina we are the ones splitting the reality’, stated Hilma Unkic.

In an attempt to explain why journalists not only in Kosovo but in the whole region were drivers of the negative emotions towards the neighbors, Arbër Selmani from Kosovo said that journalists could be conformists as well as nationalist, since they were also humans.

Regional cooperation is one of the key preconditions for the EU integration processes which involves all the Western Balkans countries. However Croatia has been a member of the EU since 2013 and within Croatia there’s been a huge resistance towards the region. Ladislav Tomcic believed that Croatia was escaping the region and trying to build a self-image of a country which had nothing to do with the rest of the region. Nonetheless, in Tomcic’s view that was only a PR strategy designed



for Croatian media-content consumers intended to demonstrate that Croatia was better than its neighbors. This statement has a particular weight given the legacy of the war from the nineties. A trend of forgetting the events from the past, especially events from the war past, is present in all countries in the region. In view of Milan Sekulovic, Montenegro was the new Croatia, obliterating events from the past, which was clearly a price of the EU integrations and countries' commitment to show at their best.

As stated by professor of Faculty of Political Sciences, Jovan Teokarevic, since the end of the wars in the former Yugoslavia regional cooperation was being imposed from the outside, within conditioning policies of the EU and big powers. Countries in the region could not even resolve the issue of borders on their own, therefore it was a paradox that so called 'Berlin Process' took place as an initiative of Angela Merkel and not as a need recognized by the political elites in the region. 'Old, inherited and not always complicated problems cannot be settled due to unresolved bilateral relations. Additionally, even seemingly benign issues, in the regional context can trigger more serious consequences.'

Professor Teokarevic pointed out that according to the data from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) based in Sarajevo, there were more than 50 initiatives for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. 'One would think we tightly entangled, however the result of this cooperation is unknown. As reported by the RCC, in the research conducted on politicians' and citizens' per-

ceptions of regional cooperation, only 16 percentage of citizens of Serbia thought that regional cooperation contributed to the improvement of economic and safety situation in Serbia. Despite the fact that Serbia earns the biggest profit from the regional cooperation, especially in trade, and the only surplus is achieved by exporting to the region, citizens are not aware of that.'

The main conclusion of the conference was that improved contacts between journalists could contribute to better reporting on the regional level. Ladislav Tomicic stated that in the Internet era we had a chance to build something different, a space for those who understood the need for promotion of the regional cooperation. 'There are approximately 20 internet portals in Croatia which are speaking to the region. Owing to the language which connects, instead of targeting an audience of 4 million, we address the regional audience of 20 million people. 'Journalists gathered around Journalists' network develop personal contacts, exchange information, support colleagues who are being under some kind of pressure in any of the countries', explained Tomicic. Hilda Unkc emphasized she thought media reporting would be more efficient if the current tendency of signing an article by only one name was replaced with an effort to work jointly on the stories subsequently signed by several journalists from more than one state.

Anita Mitic, director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia stressed the demand to discuss the regional cooperation and media at the Faculty of political sciences, since that was where the future journalist were educated. They were, among other things, taught ideology at the Faculty.



The Initiative at the YouthLINC camp in Sarajevo

The Initiative's team participated in the last YouthLINC camp in Sarajevo in April. Within the YouthLINC project which is supported by the organization Internews Initiative, the web platforms www.involvednotinvalid.com, www.activebalkans.com and www.watchyourlanguage.rs were launched, more than three years ago.



Meeting about the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)

In November 2015, in Berlin, YIHR regional team had meetings with representatives of French- German Youth Office, German-Polish Youth Office, Global Policy Institute and organization Schuler Helfen Leben (SHL). The topic of all the meetings was establishment of the Regional Youth Office.



Meetings with representatives of Serbia in the RYCO working group

YIHR at the consultative meeting between civil society organizations from Serbia and Serbian representatives in the RYCO working group- Marija Bulat from Youth Umbrella Organization and Djuro Blanusa from Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sports.


Training on social integration

The regional network of the Initiative organized a training on the social integration of young activists and members of youth wings of political parties from the 10th to 15th of May in Belgrade.

Participants were activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. In the training the participants jointly developed the skills necessary for the analysis of political measures on social integration, then they devised campaigns and ways to advocate for the protection of rights of national minorities, refugees and migrants, and they talked with experts in human rights about the theory and practice of the policy of social integration.

One of the important topics was also the further development of the Political Youth Network (PYN). Political Youth Network is a regional network of youth organizations operating within the political parties. The network was founded in March 2014 at the founding assembly in Zagreb and consists of 31 members from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.





Premladi da se sećamo,
Odlučni da nikada ne zaboravimo.

MOJA INICIJATIVA

**March against rehabilitation
of war criminals**

Under the slogan ‘Too Young to Remember, Determined not to Forget’, Youth Initiative for Human Rights and My Initiative movement organized on Saturday, March 26, twenty kilometers long march from Republic Square to Batajnica, where bodies of over 700 Albanians were exhumed from the training site of Special Anti-Terrorist Unit. Among recovered bodies were also remains of the victims of the Suva Reka crime.

Suva Reka massacre was one of the most heinous crimes committed in the beginning of NATO intervention. Two days after intervention commenced, on March 26th 1999, Serbian police officers took women and children to local pizzeria ‘Kalabria’, threw in two hand grenades after which they fired shots at survivors. Among 48 victims were 46 members of Berisha family. For this crime, four members of police were convicted to long prison sentences before the War Crimes Chamber of



the Belgrade High Court.

This march served as a reminder to the role state bodies had in respect to crimes systematically committed in Kosovo and a protest against state politics which nowadays rehabilitated war criminals and openly refused to cooperate with ICTY in Vojislav Seselj’s and three Serbian Radical Party members’ extradition cases.

With this march we stated that we refused to accept that war crimes and brutalities as those in Suva Reka were committed in our name; when saying that general Lazarevic should be a role model to young people, Minister Selakovic was not speaking in our name; when claiming that convicted war criminal Lazarevic ‘kept Serbian flag high’, Minister of Defense Gasic was not speaking in our name; when declares that convicted war criminal Lazarevic was a ‘pride of Serbia’, Minister Vulin was not speaking in our name.

Quite the opposite, from this march we sent a message that war criminals such as Vladimir Lazarevic and Nikola Sainovic, supported and

protected by the ruling coalition immediately after serving their sentences, were those who defiled flag of Serbia in the deepest mud and Serbian greatest disgrace. By pronouncing war criminals as heroes, current Serbian government brings us back to the dark ages. Generations of young people in Serbia still have to fight against the consequences of this dark ages in order to regain a chance for a normal life.

Act of covering the street name ‘Zoran Djindjic’s Boulevard’ with ‘Ratko Mladic’s Boulevard’ street sign, is not in a domain of symbolism anymore, since for months it has become public and official politics of the Serbian government and ruling parties, Serbian Progressive Party and Serbian Socialist Party.

Dealing with the war past is the foundation of the European unity and politics which streams towards European integrations on one side, while rehabilitates war criminals on the other is in our view hypocritical.



We remember crime in Strpce

On February 27th, 1993, soldiers of Republika Srpska army, kidnapped on 20 non-Serbs. Until today, many of kidnapped victims remain unaccounted for. Jointly with Women in Black and Humanitarian Law Center, Youth Initiative for Human Rights honored victims of crime in Strpce on February 27th 2015 in Belgrade. The action started at 15.48 – which was the exact moment when 23 years ago the train was stopped.



Lectures about war crimes and Seselj case

Nemanja Stjepanovic, from Sense News Agency gave a whole day lecture on war crimes committed on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia to activists of My Initiative.

Stjepanovic spoke about Haradinaj and Gotovina cases before the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and more generally about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo.

Following lecture was dedicated to ICTY proceeding against Vojislav Seselj. Stjepanovic particularly elaborated parts of the indictment accusing Seselj for inspiring hate in public speeches he made during the war, as well as the crimes committed by the units gathered around Serbian Radical Party (SRS) in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.



Activities for commemorating the anniversary of the siege of Sarajevo

Together with the Women in Black (Žene u crnom), the Initiative participated in a campaign in Knez Mihajlova street to commemorate the anniversary of the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo which began on April 6th 1992.

The activists stood at the commemoration out of respect for the 11500 slain Sarajevans during more than three and a half years of the siege.

Second generation of the 'Justice without reconciliation?' program

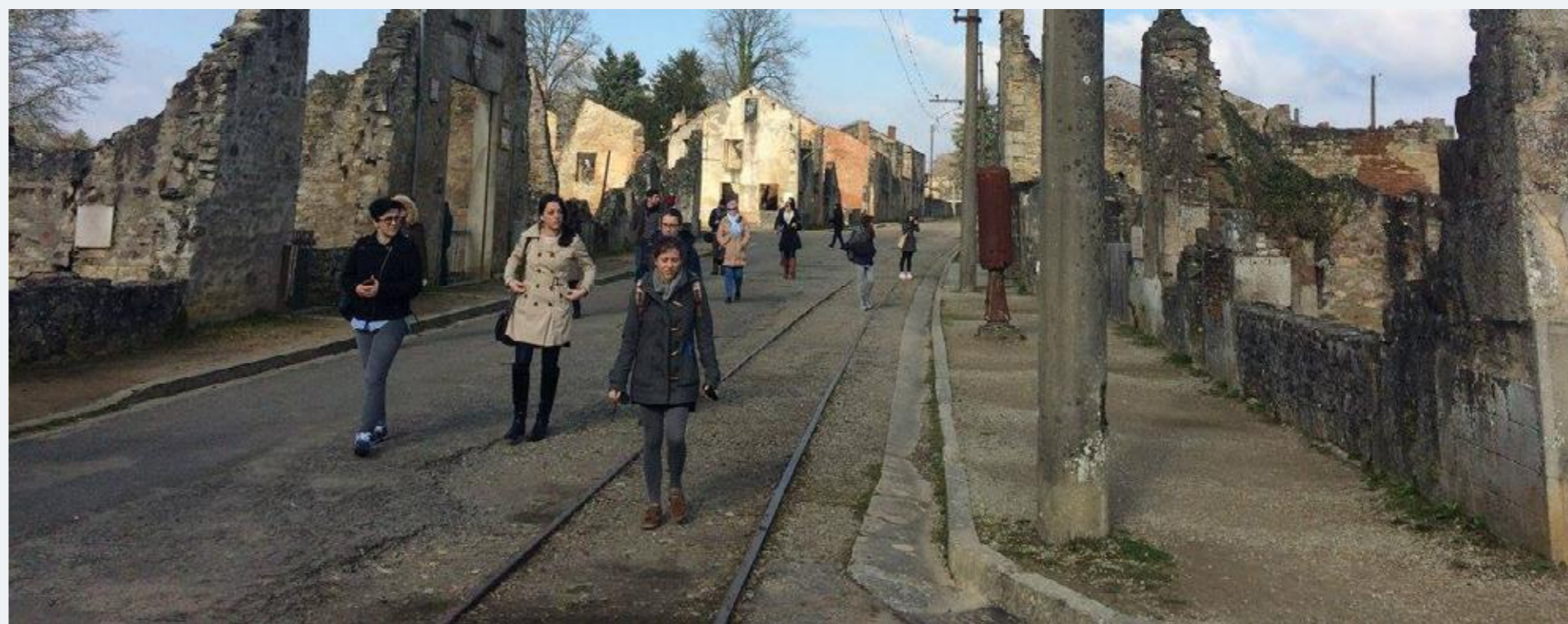
From 3rd until 11th November 2015, the first seminar within the program 'Justice without Reconciliation?' was organized. Young people from Serbia, Kosovo, France and Germany, 5 persons per country, gathered at the seminar. The main objective of the program is to enable young people to get to know each other and to discuss about war crimes and war crimes trials committed in the above mentioned countries, with a special emphasizes on the role of young people in the reconciliation process.

28

Within the program, visits to institutions and organizations which are working closely on the war crimes trials, crimes committed during the World War Second and during the war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, were organized.

First seminar took place in Dachau (Germany) and Hague (Netherland) and tackled following issues: crimes committed by the Nazi regime during the World War II and consequences that those crimes had on the society; development of the international law and national criminal legislation; establishment of the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia and its role in the process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans. The second phase of the project will be organized in France during 2016, while the third phase is planned to take place in Serbia and Kosovo.

The second phase of the program was organized in France, in Paris and Limoges, from March 6th until March 13th 2016. Participants received information about the World War II legacy in France and learned about the dominant narratives in France concerning the war in Algeria and genocide in Rwanda. The group visited a village Oradour (near Limoges) where on June 10th 1944, soldiers from the Second German Division 'Das Reich' killed 642 persons- all inhabitants of Oradour who were in the village at that moment. This was the single biggest massacre in France during the Second World War. Today, this village is a part of the Memorial Center. Nothing was refurbished in the village, therefore all the buildings look exactly as they did in the moment when German troops invaded the village.



The final stage of the project will be organized in Serbia and in Kosovo in October this year.



SOFIJA TODOROVIĆ, justice without reconciliation participant

In a pursuit of justice

First stop – Dachau. I am always facing a moral dilemma if it is all right to look forward to visiting the cities which are the symbols of massive human rights violations. Nonetheless it is okay to look forward to learning and advancing our knowledge about the events of past, which will help us to better understand the present moment we are leaving in and to eventually behave as we should, if you can put it like that.

I was preparing for the Dachau and the outlook I've got there met my expectations. I listened about the trials for the crimes committed during the Nazi Germany period. We discussed the legislation which was applied, procedure, those who were trialed and those who weren't. The trials were imperfect. It is even possible to say they did not bring justice. However something can be said. National Socialist Party had 8 million members. After it was concluded that someone had to be held responsible before the court (these were mainly the most distinguished members) for all the horrors which occurred, questions were raised: Had everyone known about the crimes committed? Were they all responsible? Was it possible to prosecute 8 million people and avoid creating a complete chaos (the number is almost equal to the entire

population of Serbia)? Would that bring peace? Trials are an attempt to bring justice, this is what trials are for. However, what serves the justice is not justice in its own right, but what trial aims to achieve. Undoubtedly, I believe trials are the first and fundamental step (not the only step, but definitely the hardest and the most important) in achieving justice. This, personal, understanding was additionally strengthened by this visit.

Concentration camp in Dachau. I have an idea how concentration camps looked like and what was going on inside their walls. There, people were tortured, starved, beaten and finally killed. At that moment you notice a gas chamber (people were sent there to take a 'shower').

And you stand in front of the crematorium, you walk through four connected rooms of hell, which, same as in every hell, end with fire and turning people into ashes in those enormous stows (crematoriums). Now, enough with a concentration camp. Oh wait, note to myself: Camps were established during wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia camps existed.

Second stop - Ludwigsburg. The central office for investigating crimes committed during the Nazi Germany. I am surrounded by documents, piles of documents pointing at crimes and perpetrators. Plenty of documents were gathered owing to cooperation with Poland and SSSR. In part, success of this office is embedded in cooperation with countries other than Germany. Cooperation is immensely important during an investigation, cooperation between the states is at the same time a sign of their readiness not to justify a crime, but to condemn it, as a society and as a judiciary.

Third stop – Den Haag or as we call it – Hague. My strongest impression is visit to the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia). That makes sense. The most interesting aspect of the visit was certainly attending Ratko Mladic's trial hearing. Only piece of glass was between us. Hearing was in the process so we had to be silent. It was unbelievable that the man, for whom the story in Serbia went from depicting him as a hero to a criminal, was sitting there, almost in front of me. After I recovered from initial tachycardia, I was observing him, old and committed to his court proceeding, and too many people lost everything because of his actions. This is where he was supposed to be, he had to be held responsible. I hope in the end, he is found responsible, at least in the eyes of the law. When it comes to the moral stance, it seems he thinks quite highly of himself. At least, that was the impression I had.

The last lecture in Hague was a catharsis like for me. It made me think and gave meaning to the entire trip. What makes it right, or wrong to claim: 'Not in my name', for the crimes which occurred and were committed anywhere and our country was involved. I realized I would keep repeating: 'Not in my name', as my way to express the deepest possible disagreement with any kind of crime against people.

Not in my name: since there is no reason why I should feel this, awkward, imposed (by those who committed the crimes in the name of Serbian interests) responsibility for the horrors done to the others.

Not in my name: since we found ourselves in the situation where people living on the territory of the former Yugoslavia hate each other (because they believe everything which was done was done on their behalf), and not only the persons involved in committing crimes.

Not in my name: and in the name of wonderful people I know all over the Balkans. Not in our name, because we never want this kind of opening line.

Justice and reconciliation process are interconnected. Reconciliation is necessary. Similarly, trials are necessary. We have many years ahead of us. This is a long process, and it's hard. Twenty years is unfortunately not a long period of time. It wasn't easy for others as well. And there were ups and downs (this line is dedicated to fans of comparisons). Every situation is unique and there is no single, universal solution. It is up to us to find our own way. By learning from others, of course. And learning is not the same as copying.

Open letter to the Faculty of political sciences in Belgrade

31

Youth Initiative for Human Rights and activist movement My Initiative, which gathers numerous students of the Faculty of political sciences, are wondering where were the representatives of the Faculty' administration yesterday, during the public discussion under the title 'Do law and justice exist in the Hague', organized by the Student Union of the Faculty, when students applauded when cases of raped women during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina were mentioned.

Due to poor criteria in selecting participants and organizers omitting to prevent humiliation of victims of crimes committed on the territory of Former Yugoslavia, the discussion was held in theatrical atmosphere where jurist Kostas Cavoskia and lawyer Goran Petronijevic were competing among themselves for a bigger applause by telling lies and making inappropriate comments about the work of the ICTY and crimes which were proven before this court.

Although organizers intended to open a public discussion on one extremely important topic such as attitude towards the war past and judgments of the ICTY, that did not happen. Students were lectured by two critics of the ICTY, Kosta Cavoski and Goran Petronijevic, as well as Nemanja Stjepanovic from the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), who was the only one actually addressing the work of the Tribunal. Other two speakers stuck to well-known theories where big powers conspired against Serbia, and mocked facts determined by the court, relativized crimes committed during the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and justified one crime with another.

At one point the moderator of the debate invited students to keep in mind academic standards when discussing an issue, but omitted to distance himself from professor Kosta Cavoski, who was in the be-

ginning referring to Albanians as Arbanasi and later 'Shiptari'. None of the organizers reacted when Nemanja Stjepanovic asked students why they were laughing when he spoke about raped women and one of the students replied: 'We were also laughing while we were reading the judgement'.

It is undeniable that in Serbia there are plenty of people who are criticizing the work of the Tribunal. However, the question raised is whether the official politics of the Faculty of Political Science is to support the discourse of belittling civilian victims of war, as well as people living in the neighborhood or to enable critical contemplating on the topics which are not in the official curriculum through the activities organized by student organizations.

It is a fact that a panel at the Faculty cannot be organized without the previous approval from the Dean's office. This is what makes us even more concerned, since in the initial information we have received on the panel, among the envisaged speakers to address the panel discussion was Vinko Pandurevic – commander of Zvornik Corps who was sentenced before the ICTY to 13 years in prison for his involvement in the events in and in relation to Srebrenica in July 1995. The question is if the Dean's office approved the list of the speakers, which included

Vinko Pandurevic, due to not knowing who he was (not being aware of his criminal background) or they had no problem with his involvement in the crimes in Srebrenica. In the discussion with the organizers of the panel we managed to explain them that Faculty of Political Sciences was not supposed to be the venue from which war criminals would address the students, thus they abandoned this initial idea.

There are number of experts in Serbia familiar with the work of the ICTY, professors, lawyers, NGO activists willing to discuss, in a critical manner, the work of Tribunal with students. However based on the panel discussion held yesterday it was clear that the organizers were not aiming at students learning anything and supporting their attitudes with facts, but provided a applause seeking atmosphere with disproportional battle between three speakers. If only the faculty administration invested some effort in helping students to organize this debate in a proper manner, they would create a space to adequately discuss this important topic in a politically sensitive moment.

If there was a space to reinvigorate genuine conversation among the speakers, perhaps more information would reach students and resounding applause, following Kosta Cavoski's presentation would have been replaced with questions on the role Serbian Academy of Science and Arts had in spreading hate among the people living in the former Yugoslavia, during the last three decades.

If Goran Petronijevic, member of Radovan Karadzic's defense team, spoke exclusively on the challenges they were facing with during the trial, students would have a better understanding of the work of the

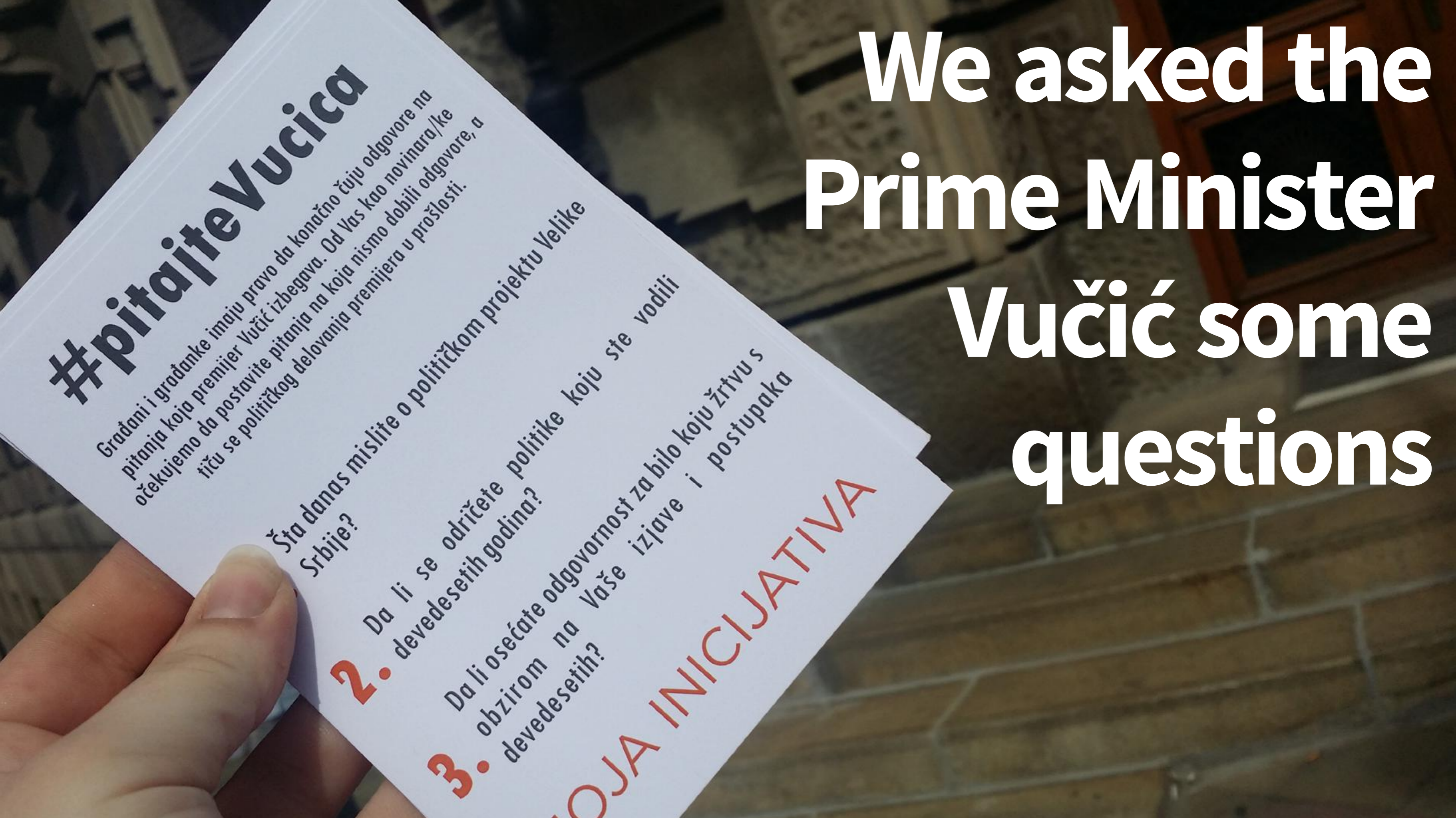
ICTY. If he had been following the indictment, point by point, explaining the manner in which defense tried to prove Karadzic's innocence, students would be listening, maybe for the first time, about the scale of the ethnic cleansing in parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, occupied by Serbs in first months of war, siege of Sarajevo, Srebrenica genocide, Prijedor camps and raped women in Foca. . .

If he had not been forced to react to relativization of the crimes done by two other speakers, Nemanja Stjepanovic would have been able to actually speak on deficiencies in the ICTY's work he identified by monitoring its work for more than a decade.

We can easily blame the Student Union of the FPS for the deficiencies of the debate yesterday, since they tried to tackle the issue which was too complex and not sufficiently known to students. Still, we see the Faculty's administration as the real culprit, which takes no care of the values system of the generations of students it educates.

ICTY was founded in 1993 and since its establishment it's been financed by the Security Council of UN. State of Serbia signed the agreement of cooperation with this court, while war crimes prosecutor's office in Belgrade intensively cooperates with the ICTY. Respectively of the autonomy of student organizations, we believe it was a duty of the administration to, at least, instruct students to start with these premises when organizing a debate on the work of the Tribunal and to critically examine the work of the ICTY at the later stage. Since clearly there wasn't a single instruction from the Dean's office, yesterday at the Faculty of political sciences everything was discussed but the topic suggested in the title of the panel.

Although, the invitation we've received from the Student Union of the Faculty of political sciences clearly stated that Vinko Pandurevic was



#pitajteVucica

Gradani i građanke imaju pravo da konačno čuju odgovore na pitanja koja premijer Vučić izbegava. Od Vas kao novinara/ke očekujemo da postavite pitanja na koja nismo dobili odgovore, a tiču se političkog delovanja premijera u prošlosti.

Šta danas mislite o političkom projektu Velike Srbije?

2. Da li se odričete politike koju ste vodili devedesetih godina?

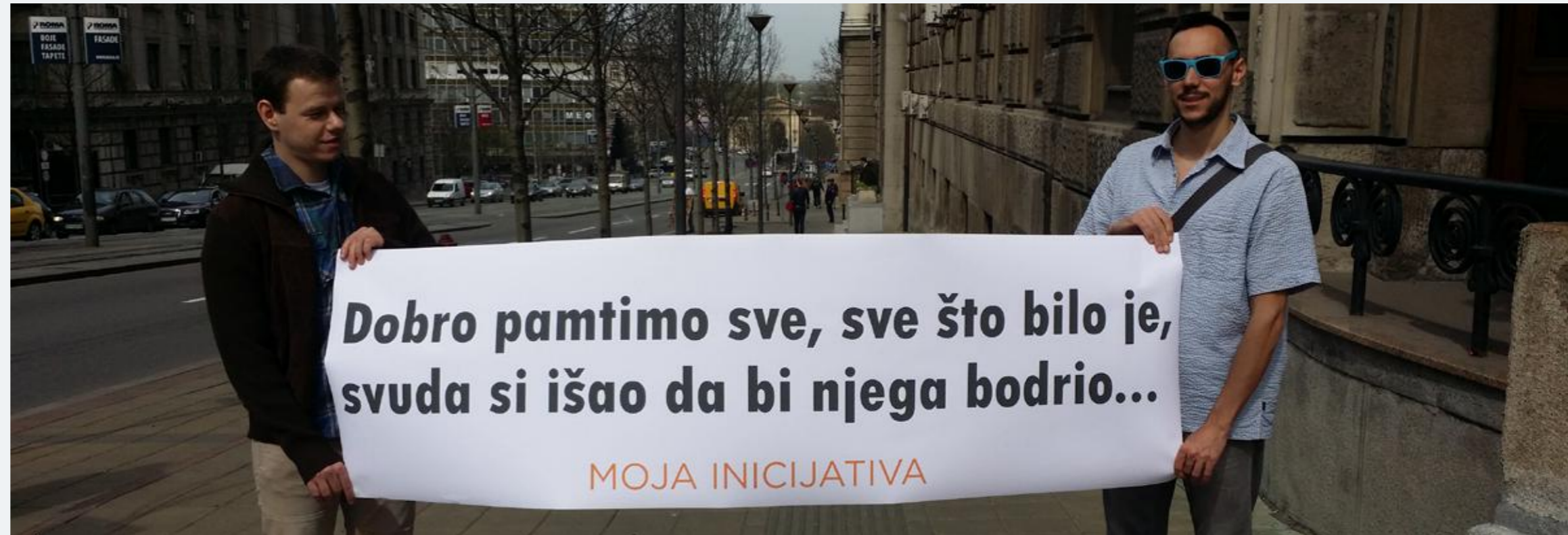
3. Da li osećate odgovornost za bilo koju žrtvu s obzirom na Vaše izjave i postupaka devedesetih?

KOJA INICIJATIVA

We asked the
Prime Minister
Vučić some
questions

On the 1st of April, in front of the building of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Initiative asked the reporters to ask the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić questions concerning his political past and political action in the nineties at the press conference which was to be held. At the press conference that day the Prime Minister was supposed to speak about the ICTY verdicts to the first President of the Republic of Srpska Radovan Karadžić and the leader of Srpska radikalna stranka -SRS (Serbian Radical Party) Vojislav Šešelj, the situation in the region and the economic situation in Serbia.

The Initiative in this way wanted to finally get answers to questions that Prime Minister avoids – what the Prime Minister thinks today about the political project of “Greater Serbia”, does he renounce the politics he represented in the nineties and does he feel responsible for any victim considering his statements and actions in the nineties. Prior to the conference, fliers with questions were distributed to all reporters who



Issues related to the political past of Prime Minister Vučić and his support for the idea of “Greater Serbia” are not the topic of interest for the Initiative, but the topic of major interest for the whole public. The Prime Minister’s criticism of the decision brought by the RT Vojvodina is in this regard particularly hypocritical, because it is identical to his initial reaction which was clearly seen as a signal to the RT Vojvodina, which is absolutely unacceptable.

It is extremely important that the reporters do not succumb to the obvious pressures, but on the contrary, to intensify the asking of unpleasant questions because the people of Serbia are entitled to know the answers to these questions. It is unacceptable that the journalist Svetlana Božić Krainčanić is punished only because in Serbia in 2016 it is still not allowed to ask the notorious question “And what did you do in the war?”.



ANITA MITIĆ, director

We remember the Boulevard of Ratko Mladić

We see the causes of many problems we talk about today in the politics that Aleksandar Vučić supported and implemented for 15 years. And it is not unusual that we are interested in whether he denounces that politics today and what will he do in order to try to rectify the consequences* Each time the current government takes a step forward in relation to a criminal past, what follows are two steps back.

When the coalition partner of Srpska progresivna stranka (Serbian Progressive party) at the local and national level – the Samostalni DSS (Independent DSS) – announced the promotion of the book written by Momčilo Krajišnik in Belgrade at the end of the election campaign, no party responded to that. The city authorities have ignored our criticism about a convicted war criminal taking a stage at the Belgrade Youth Center. We decided to blow the whistles when Krajišnik began to talk, which is why they tried to lynch us.

I assure you this is the paradigm of Serbia in 2016. War criminals on stage, revise history and deny responsibility. The audience at the Youth Center nod their heads and feel very comfortable in removing responsi-

bility from themselves, while those who dare to disagree with that scenario are physically threatened.

By attacking and silencing those who are the loudest, Serbia avoids the inconveniences caused by dealing with the war past. Thus, the civil society in this case is presented as the main enemy of reconciliation. It is said that our excessive emphasis on dealing with the past will only “awaken passions and cause conflicts”. Responding to by now famous questions of the Youth Initiative that the RT Vojvodina journalist Svetlana Božić asked, Vučić said that the people who ask such questions are “imbued with hatred”.

Each time the current government takes a step forward in relation to a

criminal past, two steps back follow. Vučić did go to the commemoration in Potočari, but at the same time the Ministry of Interior banned the commemoration of Srebrenica genocide in Belgrade and started an infringement procedure against me because of organizing the lighting of candles in the evening of 10th of July. The parties which organized the rallies on the 10th and 11th of July with the aim of genocide denial, the Srpska radikalna stranka (Serbian Radical party) and Zavetnici, were not prosecuted for the misdemeanor of illegal gathering. And why would they when the denial of the genocide is the official policy of this government.

We see the causes of many problems we talk about today in the politics that Aleksandar Vučić supported and implemented for 15 years. And it is not unusual that we are interested in whether he denounces that politics today and what will he do in order to try to rectify the consequences. There may be a few of us, but we remember the nineties and the hills around the sieged Sarajevo and the sentence “100 Muslims for one dead Serbian”, as well as the two-thousands and the Boulevard of Ratko Mladić (Bulevar Ratka Mladića), tears when Vojislav Šešelj was leaving for the Hague and the protests because of the extradition of Radovan Karadžić to the Hague Tribunal.

The politics of reconciliation which the Prime Minister is lately so proud of is insincere, hypocritical and superficial, and as such does not deserve our support. For every Vučić’s conciliatory statement towards the region there are five more statements uttered by his ministers which only fan the flames of conflict with neighboring countries. Only to the naïve observer that seems as an inconsistency of the state policy – those are two different messages for different target groups. In the morning these politicians are Europeans and peacekeepers and in the evening brawlers and nationalists. Vučić’s attempt to impose himself to the in-

ternational community as a leader of regional peace building processes, while representing himself to the domestic public as the greatest protector of national interests (which are of course threatened by the neighboring countries the most) will end in the same way like Tadić’s politics and Europe and Kosovo: complete failure on both fronts.

Unfortunately, this kind of behavior demonstrated by the Prime Minister Vučić has caused confusion in the socio-political life in Serbia. No one managed to deal appropriately with this situation, not even the civil society that always insists on dealing with the past very clearly and consistently. It seems as if we are satisfied with a couple of well-prepared answers in a few television shows in which he talks with those who have been fighting for the truth and reconciliation for two decades. After a period in which the entire public scene looked like it was under general anesthesia and is unable to react to any stimuli, we have woken up in a country that once again at all costs refuses to extradite its citizens to the Hague Tribunal, convicted war criminals Šainović, Lazarević and Krajišnik have an honorary place on the public stage, and the conviction of Karadžić is seen as a national tragedy.

If we do not confront them and if we allow ourselves to be overcome with fear, we will only become Vučić’s audience which confusedly wonders how we allowed this. If we already have no hope that things will be better, then at least let’s find the courage to stand up to him.



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Ja sam
BEK za!
Raje
ko

Rajenarska



Home of the criminals of Belgrade

Activists of the Initiative and My initiative protested in front of the Belgrade Youth Center on the 15th of April because of the public lecture which promoted the book by Momčilo Krajišnik and which denied the committed crimes.

The activists of the movement My initiative who managed to attend the book promotion, peacefully attended the panel until the moment when war criminal Momčilo Krajišnik started to speak, and then they started to blow whistles. The assembled members of the independent DSS (Democratic Party of Serbia) physically assaulted three girls, while some members of the independent DSS tried to defend them, persuading them to leave the panel because they can not guarantee their safety.

Since some activists remained outside the hall, the director of the Belgrade Youth Center is obliged to explain why the renters of the hall do not allow the citizens whose taxes payments finance the work of the Youth Center to attend public events in this city institution. In addition, the Youth Center administration must explain the violent behavior of the porters who work at the entrance and who attacked the activists at the door of the building.

We consider the interrupting of the lecture and promotion of the book written by Momčilo Krajišnik, a convicted war criminal, and the protest against the glorification of crimes our civic duty and the defense of the symbol which the Youth Center represents. Since its founding this institution has been the place of critical discussion and thought for the youth, and not a place of denial of basic civilizational values and promotion of criminals.

The Initiative is opposed to any attempt to restore the convicted war criminals in political life and giving legitimacy to the people who are responsible for the most monstrous crimes. People like Krajišnik and Šainović have no place in public life.

The Belgrade Youth Center should never be a „Home of the criminals of Belgrade“! That is why the Initiative will always react to this kind of



Pravilnik

standarda

o pravosuđnom sistemu Srbije

u pravosuđnom

sistemu Srbije

YIHR's new report on implementation of fair trial standards in judiciary system in Serbia

In March 2016, YIHR published the fifth report on 'Implementation of the fair trial standard in judiciary system of Serbia'.

YIHR has been conducting monitoring of certain criminal and civil cases since 2011, with an aim of analyzing the level of practical implementation of fair trial standard in the judiciary system of Serbia. YIHR is also carefully observing changes in the legislation within the judicial reform in Serbia, with a special emphasis on securing the independence of judiciary from executive and legislative branches of the government.

The report 'Implementation of fair trial standards in judicial system in Serbia in 2015' was written by YIHR young researchers. Researchers gained additional theoretical knowledge on right to fair trial and international legal standards in this area of human rights, as well as practical experience in judicial system functioning, while attending court hearings and analyzing court files, within a yearlong education program and trials monitoring.

The report is divided into three parts: the first part briefly, and in simple terms, explains elements of the fair trial standard; the second part provides an overview of court jurisprudence in 2015 and sheds a light on work of executive and legislative government which directly impacts judiciary; in the third part selected cases monitored by YIHR researchers are presented.

Presentation of the report at the Law Faculty in Belgrade



YIHR amendments to the Public assembly act

YIHR followed the public discussion on the Public assembly act since its very beginning in October, shortly after the Law on Public Assembly of Citizens was put out of force based on the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia. Some of the YIHR's suggestions were adopted by the Minister of Interior during the public discussion stage, nevertheless YIHR was not satisfied with the draft Act submitted to the National Assembly by the government on the 31st December 2015.

Please see below an appeal made to members of the Parliament as well as the document submitted by the YIHR just before the parliamentary session where the draft legislation was presented. Out of 21 amendment submitted, National Assembly accepted only two, by which the duty of the organizers to secure uninterrupted public transportation was abolished, therefore the text of this appeal is still equally important and it explains all the shortcomings of the adopted Public Assembly Act.

YIHR will submit the prepared amendments to the forthcoming convocation of the Assembly, hoping that elected members of the Parliament will have a better understanding of the criticism concerning non-founded and disproportional limitations to the freedom of assembly imposed by the current legislation.



Appeal to members of the Parliament

Although it is a well-known fact, YIHR points out that the draft Public Assembly Act is introduced with a nine years delay. Namely, new Act regulating freedom of assembly was supposed to be adopted shortly after the adoption of the new Constitution in 2006.

Since this was not done, Constitutional Court decided in April that the Act, as whole, was not in line with the Constitution and gave a six months' notice to the National Assembly to adopt a new law. Constitutional Court made this decision on its own initiative, following its decisions that several assemblies in Serbia were unconstitutionally banned-namely Pride Parade in 2009 and in 2001, as well as the Women in Black March on the occasion of 8th of March.

In many aspects of the draft legislation, citizens' assembly is narrowed down to technicalities, without recognizing a direct link between freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression – values necessary to call one society as a democratic.

In the six months period, granted by the Constitutional Court as a 'grace period', throughout which the old law was still in force, there was no visible work on preparing and adopting a new act, which is only a consequence of years long ignorance, by those in power, of freedom of assembly, which is, as we underlined, one of the fundamental human rights. The first draft of the law was published practically the day when the decision of the Constitutional Court on putting out of force current Law was enforced. Duration of the public discussions about the new law was within the legal minimum, with round tables which were not adequately advertised to the public

Overall conclusion is that the spirit of the act doesn't recognize the essence of the freedom of assembly, but decreases it to a basic fact that at a certain place at a certain time people will gather. The fact that the law threatens equally assemblies which are in their essence socio-political (which is at the core of this human right), as well as entertaining, cultural and sport manifestations, supports this conclusion furthermore. In its many aspects draft public assembly act is narrowed down to technicalities, without recognizing the direct link between freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression- values necessary to call one society a democratic one.

On the bright side, YIHR stresses that the draft Act submitted to the National Assembly by the Government is improved in some crucial points compared to the previous drafts of the law presented to the public in the previous months. It is praiseworthy that the National Assembly adopted some of the recommended solutions on which human rights organizations, Youth Initiative for Human Rights included, insisted of.

Nevertheless, there are still some provisions which are significantly limiting, directly or potentially, freedom of movement by using unclear

formulations which leave a space for additional abuses. These limitations are not founded in the Constitution, and it is inevitable they will be the subject of the Constitutional Court's deliberation if the Law is adopted in this form. Space and venue of an assembly are unjustifiably limited, with numerous limiting factors. State bodies, are without explanation, liberated from the obligation to register an assembly and other duties stipulated by the law, which puts them in privileged position compared to citizens and legal entities. Additionally, in many provision the Act serves the interests of the public bodies instead of interests of citizens as beneficiary of the right to peaceful assembly.

YIHR appeals to members of the Parliament, in a capacity of citizens' representatives, to look into prepared admonitions and amendments to the Public Assembly Act, and in this manner significantly contribute to advancing the system of human rights protection in Serbia.

Building free of torture societies in the Western Balkans

In the period from November 2015 until March 2016, YIHR team conducted 14 monitoring visits to institutions for deprivation of liberty and organized one training for young lawyers on the importance of respecting human rights of persons deprived of liberty. Monitoring visits were conducted within the project 'Building free of torture societies in the Western Balkans' which embodies researching and documenting cases of torture and cruel, inhumane treatment or punishment as well as providing free legal aid to the convicted persons. The objective of the project is to promote human dignity in prisons by eliminating torture and inhumane treatment of vulnerable persons in prison institutions in Montenegro, Serbia and Albania.

Aside from monitoring visits to penitentiaries, the project entails organizing trainings for prison staff and medical staff in prisons, students of law and medicine, activities for strengthening the capacity of the civil society in this area by exchanging experiences between countries in the region. In the Youth Office's premises in Belgrade, YIHR team organized a training on the topic of monitoring and preventing torture in the institutions for deprivation of liberty. Future legal experts had an opportunity to get educated on the subject of national and international legal standards for preventing torture, opportunities and challenges National Preventive Mechanism was facing with, as well as experiences of the human rights organizations which were conducting monitoring of penitentiaries. Aleksandar Stojanovic, legal expert with the Office of Council of Europe in Belgrade, Milos Jankovic, deputy of the Citizens Protector as well as Katarina Golubovic, YUCOM representative were discussing with young lawyers.

During April and May 2016, YIHR team will organize trainings for medical staff working within prison system, as well as trainings for students of Medical Faculty in Belgrade and Faculty for Special Education and

Rehabilitation, on implementation of health protection standards for persons deprived from liberty in Serbia. In addition to that, findings from monitoring visits will be presented in a form of an annual report at the regional conference organized in Tirana on June 26th 2016, which will serve as a final event within the project.



Indifference on the side of institutions directly contributes to lynch of Jelena Milic

In the last three months Jelena Milic, director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, has been exposed to organised lynch on social media, including serious verbal assaults and death threats made towards her and her family. Attack and threats culminated after the anniversary of NATO air strikes, on March 24th 2016, when Milic urged institutions to stop manipulating with victims of the NATO bombing.

In threats made against her on social media - Twitter and Facebook, Milic is labelled as 'scum', 'fascist slut', 'a person unworthy of bullet'. Milic's assassination, rape and exile from Serbia are invoked. Several threats were also made against her children.

Based on threats she received, Milic filed criminal complaints against Misa Vacic and several other persons, with the First Basic Public Prosecutor's office in Belgrade. Until today, there has been no reaction from the relevant institutions. Given that relevant authorities promptly reacted in cases when threats were made against public persons and

politicians, an absence of any reaction in Jelena Milic's case can be interpreted as an encouragement and a clear message that the state stands with perpetrators.

Coalition for Access to Justice requests from the institutions not to be selective when implementing a law and to prosecute those who endanger Jelena Milic and her family.

Members of Coalition for Access to Justice are: Center for Advanced Legal Studies, Civil Rights Defenders, CHRIS- Network of Human Rights Councils in Serbia, Humanitarian Law Center, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, Sandjak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia and Praxis.





YIHR at Heartefact Fund's WakeUp! Festival

YIHR team took part in the WakeUp festival, designed as 48 uninterrupted hours of reading hundreds of pages containing personal testimonies of refugees as well as texts depicting a refugee destiny, troubles of people forced to leave their homes, from ancient times until the present moment.



EGAM Debate: 'How to welcome refugees?'

Within the framework of EGAM sixth annual conference, Anita Mitic spoke in the debate 'How to welcome refugees', which was organized in Berlin on November 20th 2015.

One of the conclusions of the debate was that resolving refugee crisis was a long term process which required coordinated action of civil society organizations from the whole Europe.



Visit to the reception center for refugees in Prešovo

The Initiative's team visited the reception center for refugees in Prešovo in April, where many activists of the Initiative volunteer daily.

YIHR and Belgrade Pride condemned an attack on activist Marko Milovanovic

Youth Initiative for Human Rights and Belgrade Pride strongly condemned a homophobic act, which occurred on March 6th 2016, when gay activist Marko Milovanovic was attacked in Beli Potok.

It is presumed that Milovanovic was attacked by a juvenile who, together with his father and sister, previously participated in incidents and homophobic attacks on Milovanovic and his friends.

Belgrade Pride and YIHR demand that this case is properly investigated and prosecuted and that perpetrators are adequately punished.





YIHR at the International Trust Camp organized by Institute of Partnership and Sustainable Peace

Within the International Trust Camp organized in Ukraine, Anita Mitic spoke on the panel which was addressing the role of education in a process of reconciliation. Camp was organized in Lavovi in March 2016 by Institute for Partnership and Sustainable Development.



YIHR regional team at the EGAM's Film Festival in Paris

YIHR regional team was a part of the Film Festival 'Sarajevo sur Seine' organized by EGAM in March 2016, in Paris. Movies from the Western Balkans which were screened during the Sarajevo Film Festival 2015 were presented in Paris.



YIHR at the Assembly of the global World youth movement for democracy in Seoul



Discussion with SIT students

At the Faculty for media and communication, YIHR discussed Kosovo and current political affairs between Serbia and Kosovo with SIT exchange students.



YIHR at the CEAS conference

On the 4th of April, Anita Mitić spoke at the CEAS conference “Serbia and Russia – Russian influence on the stabilization, democratization and European integration of Serbia”.

Anita talked about the current perception of young people on human rights, democracy, Russia, the neighbors and questions of reconciliation, as well as the impacts and consequences of right-wing currents on future generations.



YIHR at ‘Journalists don’t kneel’ protest

YIHR team and activists of My Initiative took part in the protests ‘Journalists don’t kneel’, where citizens and media representatives gathered demanding dismissal of the Minister of Defense Brislav Gasic for the sexist verbal assault of journalist Zlatija Labovic.



Debate: Kosovo-Serbia live, organized by NUNS and Kosova Live

In November 2015, Djordje Bojovic was speaking in the debate Kosovo-Serbia live, Bojovic discussed a role of youth organizations in the process of reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians.



Street action on the occasion of International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

On the occasion of the International day for elimination of racial discrimination YIHR joined a street action organized by Women in Black. Activists sent a following message: 'We want open borders and not 'Fortress Europe'. No walls, no wires! We want to stop the war and that Europe in 2016 doesn't resemble the Europe in 1938.'



YIHR in Prishtina attending a panel about visa barriers

Djordje Bojovic took part in the debate: 'Can personal contacts and minorities defeat visa barriers? Bojovic spoke about freedom of movement and issue with visa regime enforced between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

The panel was organized within Initiative for Open Dialogue, led by Foundation Dokukino in a partnership with Youth Initiative for Human Rights Bosnia and Herzegovina and supported by Kosovo Foundation for Open Society and Open Society Fund.

Elections for a new leadership of the World Youth Movement for Democracy

50



When was the last time you chose?

On the occasion of the elections held on the 24th of April, the Initiative and My initiative conducted a campaign called “When was the last time you chose?” in 25 cities across Serbia, in order to raise awareness of the citizens about the importance of participating in elections and civic duty and responsibility to participate in the electoral process.

Despite the passivity and general lack of interest of young people for the socio-political developments, the Initiative tried to explain with this campaign that young people are capable of making decisions and independently assessing the consequences of their choices. Because, be it parliamentary or local elections, it is certainly the most important choice that we make as citizens of one country. How? Because in that way, through the representatives that WE elected, we influence the politics of our community – what will be the price of electricity, how many students are funded from the state budget, are crisps, chocolate and beer more expensive or cheaper, is our country leading a war or are we keeping peace... All of these things are choices which depend on our choice – the most important one.





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