



YIHR

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YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT

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ANITA MITIĆ, the Director

Persistence Pays off

The Declaration of the Foundation of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office was signed on July 4th in Paris. It was signed by the prime ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia in the Élysée Palace. The act of signing this declaration represents the crowning achievement of the efforts of the regional states, but of the civil sector and international partners, on the task of ensuring the most significant mechanism of reconciliation at the moment.

YIHR presented the idea of establishing an institution, the one similar to the Franco-German Youth Office, approximately seven years ago. Over the past years, we have organized tens of conferences and events to promote this idea. We met with hundreds of people – politicians, officials, diplomats, activists, young people all around Serbia, Brussels, Paris, Berlin – searching for the support for our idea. We haven't always come to an open door, nor have we always encountered approval and support. On the contrary, even our interlocutors who understood and who supported our idea in theory, were quite skeptical towards a possibility that, in the recent future, the regional states could reach an understanding, sit together and take responsibility for regional youth cooperation.

We have not been discouraged by the lack of support, or by the uncertainty of our success, because we have believed in the importance of this idea from the very beginning. Our motivation, inspiration and a certain sense of responsibility was inherited from the people who had started this mission in the first place, the ones who founded YIHR, who were the pioneers of youth exchange, especially between Serbia and Kosovo. Since its foundation in 2003, YIHR has been working

on diverse programs of exchange, with more than 15.000 young people from the region having participated so far. The results of the exchange undeniably testify that when young people get to know each other, travel, discuss social and political issues of their communities, while confronting their war pasts – prejudice and bias nurtured in their states can be more easily overcome.

During the process of the foundation of the Office, we have closely worked with the Workgroup for the preparation of the founding documents, created by the governments of the regional states. Together with our partners and individuals whom we share common values with, we ensured that the founding documents do not rely solely on formalities, but guarantee that they will be filled with the essence of our mission. Also, the documents oblige the Office to be the bearer of peaceful values, of trust based on mutual understanding, respect of human rights, diversity, dignity, solidarity, cooperation, tolerance and respect, through its work.

We eagerly look forward to the January 1st 2017, when the Office is to officially start working. We will closely follow whether the regional governments will take into consideration the recommendations created as a result of regional coordination, made by the youth, presented to the ministers responsible for the youth on the “Connecting youth” conference, organized by the European Commission, as part of the Paris Summit for Western Balkans on July 4th.

YIHR Contribution to the Establishment of Regional Youth Cooperation Office

Youth Initiative for Human Rights has been conducting many programs targeting the exchange of young people from the region since it was founded, led by the idea that the only way the new generation will work successfully on creation of a better politically-social situation is to meet and have a chance to cooperate.

Young people of the Western Balkans share the burden of the war past and they grew up in the region full of different prejudices and in which, besides administrative there are also mental barriers. Still, young people are the only generation that cannot be held accountable for what happened in the former Yugoslavia during the nineties.

This is why YIHR believes that young people are the bearers of the positive changes in the region and that it is of the utmost importance that all of the states in the region pay close attention to building good relationships among young generations.

YIHR has been promoting the idea that we need an institution similar to the Franco-German Youth Office which proved to be a very successful mechanism in reconciliation in the post-conflict societies. After many years of advocating, numerous events and meetings, YIHR is proud to say it is a part of the process of establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office which Founding Declaration was signed on July 4th in Paris this year.

YIHR regional network has organized three youth conferences the same day as the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office has been signed in cooperation with the Centre for Balkan Cooperation – LOJA and the Franco-German Youth Office. The three conferences were in Belgrade, Tirana and Podgorica. In Belgrade, there was a meeting of the youth leaders from the region who made recommendations for the incoming work of the Office. Recommendations were presented at the “Connecting Youth” conference on July 4th in Paris.

The road to the establishment of the Office was long and demanded hard work and persistence in moments when it seemed that the mechanism like that was impossible to implement in our region. Youth Initiative for Human Rights is grateful for its partners and colleagues that did not give up and made possible for all of us to say today “Happy RYCO to you!”

HAPPY

RYCO

TO YOU!



Young Leaders from the Western Balkans Give Their Recommendations for RYCO

As part of advocating for the establishment of the regional mechanism for the cooperation between young people. YIHR gathered 14 young leaders in Belgrade on June 27-29th. The participants were from the six countries which signed the agreement and Croatia. They wrote together recommendations for the work of the future Office. These recommendations were presented at the “Connecting Youth” conference on July 4th in Paris organized by the European Commission.

In these recommendations, what was specially pointed out was the need that a part of the future activities of the Office is related to dealing with the past. One of the fundamental goals of the Office should be strengthening of the reconciliation process which is impossible without programs which would focus on facing with the war past of the Western Balkans societies.

They also mentioned the need to work on the issue of youth mobility, especially among Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also the need to overcome mental barriers which prevent the young people to meet their peers from the region. This is clearly seen in divided communities, such as Mostar, Kosovska Mitrovica, Skoplje, but also Vukovar, Sarajvo, Ulcinj and numerous other towns, where young people do not communicate with their peers from other ethnic groups growing only a few kilometers away from each other.

One of the recommendations was that educational institutions need to be as much as possible included in the work of the future Office, having in mind that you can influence a greater number of young people if schools and universities are open for it. An additional problem for the youth mobility on an academic level is the non-recognition of the diplomas among different universities in the region, primarily referring to Kosovo- Serbia and Kosovo- Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since RYCO was established because of the need to deal with the consequences of the war during the nineties and that the goal of it is reconciliation, it was said that it was necessary for Slovenia and Croatia to enter the Office as soon as possible. Only that way the mission of the newly-founded organization can be completed at the whole territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Following this text are the ten recommendations.



Recommendations to RYCO and its Signatories

We, the young people of the Western Balkans,

Genuinely devoted and motivated to contribute to the process of reconciliation, establishment of trust and mutual understanding between peoples of the Western Balkans countries:

Express satisfaction that youth cooperation is set as one of the highest priorities of regional relations by our Governments;

Hold in high regard civil society efforts in previous years to connect young people and overcome the consequences of the wartime period;

Strongly believe it is necessary that exchange programs include the largest possible number of young people;

Recognize the need for institutional support to exchange programs that will bring together youth of the Western Balkans.

Strongly support the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office as an international organization with an objective to provide a perspective of a better future of the region,

In good faith recommend following to RYCO and its Signatories:

1. Principles of Civic Participation

Having in mind the well established principles of democratic participation and cross-sector cooperation, we urge RYCO and its Signatories to put continuous effort into conducting wide consultations with all relevant stakeholders over all relevant RYCO related decision making processes. This includes, but is not limited, to:

- the selection of youth representatives in RYCO Governing Board,
- the adoption of national positions on RYCO related issues, and
- the consultations over RYCO Strategic Framework.

2. Principles of Good Governance

Following the above stated principles, all the RYCO processes should also apply the highest standards of good governance, with the special emphasis on transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

3. RYCO's Team

RYCO's mission, vision and operations should be carried out by individuals with a good understanding of the regional context, guided by values of peace, reconciliation and human rights; persons who are devoted to the European Perspective of the Western Balkans. This especially concerns RYCO highest officials and it is without a prejudice to applying the highest standards of a merit-based system.

4. Dealing with the Past

Bearing in mind the conflicts of the past decades and the prejudices and intolerances they have brought, dealing with the past should be a substantial part of RYCO activities. Hence, both RYCO and its signatories should put an emphasis on dealing with the past and reconciliation in terms of encouraging inter-ethnic and constructive dialogue, common narrative, positive stories, and joint action focusing on understanding of shared history with a special care for facts.

5. Divided Communities

Considering that divided communities by ethnic and religious lines throughout the region are one of the most obvious consequences of the wars, we recognized a need of careful and strategic approach to promotion of exchange and mobility among these targeted communities. Therefore, we urge RYCO to put special emphasis on programs contributing to sustainable resolution of politically imposed segregation.

6. Socially Marginalized Groups

Recalling that human rights are universal and apply to all individuals, we call for RYCO and its Signatories to even stronger commitment in securing equal dignity of all human beings. Therefore, RYCO should provide specialized programs for socially marginalized and discriminated groups, and groups that do not have equal access to public resources, services and institutions. These marginalized groups are, among others: Roma youth, persons belonging to non-majority communities, persons living in rural and underdeveloped regions, LGBTIQ persons, persons with disabilities, and young persons excluded from employment, education and training of any kind /NEET.

7. Formal Education

Acknowledging the importance of the formal education system for youth, RYCO should foster institutional cooperation among high schools and universities by adding a regional component to it and enact mobility and collaboration between pupils and students, scholars and academia.

8. Youth Employability

Recognizing the value of youth programs, we strongly encourage the need that all programs which will be implemented through RYCO, should enhance young people's knowledge and skills which will further promote and foster the exchange of ideas, innovations and entrepreneurship and foremost contribute to youth employment and the development of socially responsible and sustainable economy.

9. Freedom of Movement

Considering the existing barriers and difficulties regarding the freedom of movement in the Western Balkans Region that are specifically related, but not limited, to Bosnia and Herzegovina-Kosovo visa-regime as well as to the Kosovo-Serbia travel-re-

gime, we invite RYCO Signatories to make concrete steps towards ensuring freedom of movement throughout the region, in order to enable the full implementation of RYCO's mission and its goals, and minimize the effect of present obstacles in the youth mobility.

10. Membership of Croatia and Slovenia in RYCO

Bearing in mind Western Balkans countries' common historical, cultural, geographic and political ties that are naturally directing us to each other, and being fully aware that a sustainable peace can only be achieved with cooperation of all the countries in the region, we urge the Governments of Croatia and Slovenia to accede to RYCO as soon as possible in order to provide its youths an opportunity to cooperate with its counterparts, and to help RYCO in achieving its goals by sharing valuable experiences as the EU member-states.

Appendix to the Recommendations to Regional Youth Cooperation Office and its Signatories.

RYCO Working Group Presented RYCO Road Map



While 14 young leaders from the region worked on the recommendations for the future Office, YIHR had a chance to be the host for the members of the Working group who created the road map. The map was also shown at the session in Paris where RYCO was discussed.

The Working Group presented the mission, values, structure and the activities

of the future Office. It was highlighted that RYCO will bring more possibilities for learning, travelling and job creation in the region, and also that RYCO will contribute to the cooperation between the signing countries and the reconciliation process and creation of peace and stability.

More about the road map can be found [here](#).



The Voice of Youth on the Establishment of RYCO

YIHR regional network has organized three youth conferences the same day as the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office has been signed in cooperation with the Centre for Balkan Cooperation – LOJA and the Franco-German Youth Office.

Since young people are the main beneficiaries of the forthcoming Office, and since they have already gathered so much experience in numerous exchange programs organized by NGOs, it is vital that their voice is heard. Three conferences had been organized on July 2-4 in Belgrade, Tirana and Podgorica as a platform for young people to share their opinions concerning coming to terms with the war past, European integration process, and personal experiences they had gathered throughout the youth exchange programs.

70 young people in total had participated in these three seminars, and the result of their work was presented on the “Connecting Youth” conference on July 4th in Paris.

Regional
Youth Cooperation
Office
established!

Conferences
conclusions:

Belgrade

Podgorica

Tirana



“Connecting Youth” Conference in Paris

On the eve of the ceremony of signing the agreement which established the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, the Workgroup, representatives of the French-German Youth Office, YIHR and the Centre for Balkan Cooperation – LOJA, have all participated at the “Connecting Youth” conference which was organized by the European Commission. The conference had brought together more than 150 young people from the Balkans and other European countries. The conference was organized as a side event of the summit in Paris where six Prime Ministers signed the Joint Declaration.

At the conference, there were discussions about the youth education and mobility, job possibilities and entrepreneurship, relation between young people and the media, and one session was devoted to the presentation of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office.

During this session, Ministers of Youth of the six countries were presented the recommendations for the future work of the Office. Young people said that it was necessary to make political steps as soon as possible in order to enhance regional cooperation and make the Office itself more functional.

YIHR truly believes that the future Regional Office will make a positive impact on solving many regional problems which do not refer specifically to young people. The process of advocating for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office was started precisely because intolerance needed to be replaced with cooperation and mutual understanding.

The recording of the session from Paris where Regional Youth Cooperation Office was discussed is [here](#).



RYCO Statute

RYCO Agreement



Regional Exchange Program

As part of YIHR activities of advocating for the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, six conferences were held in Sarajevo, Banjaluka, Podgorica, Pristina, Belgrade and Zagreb in May and June. During those conferences, the potential challenges that the Office may face in its work have been discussed with the representatives of the civil society and certain institutions. On the conference in Zagreb the main focus was on the discussion about how to enable the Croatian government to join the initiative on the institutional level.

In addition to the national conferences, YIHR organized five youth exchanges on a regional level. Those conferences were supposed to represent an example of the activities the Office would support.

All of these activities were realized with the support of the European Commission.



Montenegro War Crimes During the Nineties

YIHR regional network organized a study visit to Rožaje, on May 26 _ 28. Twenty young people from the region had the chance to meet and discuss the process of confronting the past, with a special reference to war crimes which took place on the territory of Montenegro. During the study visit, the group spoke with the representatives of the local authorities, learned about the socio-political context during the 90s, especially on the north of Montenegro where there had been a number of war crimes.

Although coming to terms with the past was not much discussed in Montenegro, there had been at least seven cases in this country, which are to be dealt with: Bombing of Dubrovnik, the deportation of Bosniak refugees, the murder of Albanian civilians in Kaluđerski Laz, the crimes against Bosniak the civilians in Bukovica, incarcerating civilians in Morinj camp, the murder of the Bosniak family in Nikšić and the case



of the Štrpci massacre. The Montenegro state tribunal is investigating these cases at the moment.

During the visit, the young participants had the chance to talk about the murder of Albanian civilians in the Rožaje municipality, as well as the refugees fleeing from the war in Kosovo in 1999 who found sanctuary in these parts, with journalist Sead Sadiković, Šemso Dedeić, a former Chief of Police in Rožaje, and the inhabitants of Kaluđerski Laz who testified about the crime committed in 1999. On the bridge, on which the Yugoslav Army killed a number of civilians, including one young boy, on April 18th 1999, and there is a commemorative plate to remind of this crime. It is uncertain how long this plate will remain on the bridge in Kaluđerski Laz, having in mind that the majority of the population of Montenegro, as well as the one in the entire region of former Yugoslavia, reluctantly talks about the crimes committed against “the other nationalities”. The trial for murder of the civilians in Kaluđerski Laz began in Montenegro in 2007, but in 2013, all eight soldiers were acquitted due to insufficient evidence, including the son of Pavle Strugar, a man convicted by the ICTY for the bombing of Dubrovnik.

Apart from the seminars and workshops, the participants of the study visit had the chance to watch documentaries, and also socialize with the representatives of local youth NGOs during sports activities.

Tanja Javorina, the participant from Croatia, said that if it were not for this program, she would almost never think about visiting Rožaje. According to her, when it comes to Montenegro’s involvement in the crimes on the territory of former Yugoslavia, young Croatians are only familiar with the bombing of Dubrovnik. “I find this visit to Kaluđerski Laz, very important, because we were on the very site of the event. It is not the same to be informed about the crime while sitting at home, and, on the other hand, talking to the witnesses on site,” said Tanja, and then added that a sentence that she heard from another participant from Kosovo that has been carved in her mind ever since. He stated that he was surprised to see so many positive people from Serbia. “He thought they wouldn’t want anything to do with them. Statements like these always sadden me a bit, because they show how exposed we are to stereotypes and prejudice caused by our own national groups. . . Anyway, I am always happy to see that there is an increasing number of people who rise above those constructed barriers. This was definitely a chance for that.” concluded Tanja.



FATMIR MAVRIĆ, the Activist

Visit to the WWII and Former Yugoslavia Memorials

The seventh regional camp Kozarac took place on June 24-29, and it was organized by YIHR Bosnia and Herzegovina in the attempt to connect young people from the region. The participants from this camp had the chance to visit the memorial center of World War Two, and the one of the wars in former Yugoslavia, as well as to meet the young people from Prijedor and Kozarac.

Prijedor, You are Full of Sevdah

Thanks to a call from a good friend, I decided to accept the invitation to the camp in Kozarac, in the town of Prijedor in Republika Srpska. I admit, I hadn't heard of Kozarac at that time, but I did know about mountain Kozara. The place of great bravery demonstrated by great Yugoslavs. The place of selfless sacrifice of a great number of people.

As every trip, this one also required certain preparation. Starting from checking the weather forecast, up to checking the length of the journey. When you're travelling from a borough like Novi Pazar, everything seems far away. I owe special thanks to the poorly constructed and maintained roads.

The camp in Kozarac had a serious subject in mind. The young people discussed the past, with the reference to the culture of remembrance (referring to these 'bold' Yugoslavs) and fieldwork. On the first day of camp, surrounded by young people, I had a need to ask them why they were there. There had been diverse responses, ranging from the ones like "it's summer, and I'm bored at home", to the ones like "I came to learn something". At first, I have to admit, I thought the camp would mostly be a teaching-based one, and that the young people wouldn't be up for sharing opinions and views. ...I would stop here! I couldn't have been more wrong about those young people. Since the first day of the sessions, until the very last, they actively contributed to the work of the group. My stereotypical views about high-schoolers broke to

pieces the first day. The second day was devoted to field activities, including the historical overview of the town of Prijedor. The demographics of Prijedor changed over time. If I could make a loose conclusion, I would say that Prijedor has never been in peace. Basically every century has been marked by some conflict or war. Prijedor did not elude the First, nor the Second World War, and sadly it didn't avoid the war in the last decade of the 20th century. I do not want this text to resemble a history, or a geography lesson, so I will tend to avoid unnecessary information.

We started with the visit to the "Kozara" National Park. We were greeted by a cross, raised to honour the fallen soldiers – the Partisans. On that spot, we came to the famous culture of remembrance. If the culture of remembrance is a revision of history to your liking, then mister Dodik, you have successfully accomplished that part of the job. The second part of the Kozara trip, was a lecture about Jasenovac. The useful two hours spent there did not erase the sight of the cross that had greeted me the second I left the bus. Partisans and a cross. Or wait, I have

a different idea. Communism and religion. Can there be a greater paradox? We continued our fieldwork by visiting the Keraterm, Trnopolje and Omarska camps. Having studied law, those names did ring a bell. While reading the verdicts of The International Crime Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, I got the impression I knew what went about over there. Later, I would find out that I had absolutely no idea what, actually, happened over those critical years. We had the chance to meet and listen to the survivors who had witnessed the atrocities in those camps. That's right, atrocities. A conscious, systematic and unrestrained dehumanization. Three words that echoed in my head. Three words that I will share with you.

We started with visiting the Keraterm camp. I was profoundly agitated with the fact that the camp is quite near to the highway! I expected it to be far from everything. Far from the public eye. The man who spoke to us, talked about the conditions in Keraterm in great detail. Clearly distressed. With his head down. I got the impression he felt he still a captive of Keraterm, and all its cruelty. He shared the things he had concealed deep within. Then we visited the Trnopolje and Omarska camps. I would dedicate a few sentences to Omarska. That camp is out of sight. As away from the public eye as it is possible. After more than 20 years, it still looks haunting. With its two "apartments". The Red and the White house. On the parking lot we were greeted by a man who, in a severe tone, instantly warned us not to take photos of anything but the White house. You were right, the "Red" house was off limits, and we couldn't even visit it. Our guide was a man who spoke about Omarska. He told us that "the neighbours were the worst. You had to hide from them to prevent them from putting you at risk". The conversation lasted for only a few minutes when we were interrupted by our "host" from the parking lot. The visit to the DNA lab for victim identification left a bitter taste in my mouth. We entered a hall with displayed remains of victims. Bones of the unfortunate people who ended their lives in inhumane conditions. Removed from their primary into secondary and tertiary mass graves. Now they were there, in front of us. On those bones we detected signs of torture and brutality. The older participants succeeded in spotting bullet wounds on the bodies, or at least on what is left of them. The point of the trip was not a museum-like visit, but it sure looked like one. In the utmost silence, absolutely aware of the senselessness of war that took place in former Yugoslavia, we left the laboratory. Aware of the fact that a new mass grave had been discovered. What awaits is the work on the victim identification. What lies ahead are the painful conversations with the victims' families.

I would end this text with a few words about the visits to Prijedor and Sanski Most. The center of Prijedor consists of memorials to Serbian war victims. Completely neglecting the fact that Prijedor, after Srebrenica, is the place of the greatest mass crime over non-Serbian civilians. Sanski most, is also full of victim memorials. To Bosniak victims.

About the text:

The text is a product of ideas and emotions I experienced during the five-day-long stay at Kozarac camp. There were difficult moments painstaking for every individual, human rights activist and humanitarian. This may sound like a stereotype, like a sentence you can read in any text, but the participants truly helped each other to deal with emotions that overwhelmed them. I'm sad to have seen a great deal of subservience to the present political elite. I'm even sadder that the appeal, to rise a monument, the one made by the parents of the murdered children of Prijedor, has been denied by the Town Assembly of Prijedor. Fun fact, Article 93 of the Town Statute provides that the Assembly must discuss a civil appeal that has been signed by at least 500 citizens. This initiative has been signed by 1175 citizens and was filed according to the Statute on November 25th 2014. For two entire years the discussion of the appeal has been postponed, thus violating the law. If you're afraid that the truth about the war crimes in Prijedor, the one that children are learning in school, will be called into question just think about this: You're children are already familiar with everything, it is only a matter of day before the walls of propaganda start to crumble. The murder of children will no longer be justified by war and fight for a national cause. Let our role, our life goal, be to fight against violence. To fight against oblivion. Against the superiority of the oppressor, and the inferiority of the oppressed. Let our fight be directed against the ones who deny the murders. Let it not be painted in colors and catchphrases. Let our fight be, in its core, an acceptance of all civilian victims. We must educate one another about the memory of the tragically deceased. An active involvement is the only way to fight against those who are guided by the wrong policies. I didn't have the intention to talk about the injustice that happened in Potkozarje. I respected the protocol of the organizers, the sites and the memorials we visited. Detached from any intention of making my text turn to pure emotions, I dedicated the conclusion to the thoughts that have remained in my mind and that I will bring with myself upon leaving Kozarac.



The Different Memories School



Young people from the region participated in the School, which lasted from August 21st until 27th. This event was organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, based in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the goal to discuss the events that had happened in the last two wars, which took place on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although the school was organized for the third time, this year it had a regional character since, apart from the youth from Bosnia, young people from Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro also participated.

According to Sofija Todorović, a participant from Serbia, thanks to this school she was informed about “different war memories”. “What is different about this school is the fact that it goes beyond the framework intended for every constitutive nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the one that is created to have a one-sided character and to be easily accepted. Although she thinks that a “pious interpretation” of past events and the tendency to relativize crimes, was not invented in the 90s, but after the Second World War, she is content to have been part of a program where young people can hear a different opinion.

“We had the opportunity to hear different narratives from people who were on different positions, on opposing sides, or who were part of different structures during the war. Opposing narratives enable a profound understanding of the attitude and the rhetoric of each side, and contribute to putting the event in a specific context.” said Sofija and added that, for her, the purpose of contextualization is not justifying the crimes that occurred, but enabling a broader understanding of circumstances that led to such events.

The School of Different Memories represents an educational program based on visits to the territory of Herzegovina. The goal of this program is to share and exchange experiences between people from the local community, human right activists, representatives of religious communities, historians, victims and witnesses about the process of reconciliation and confronting with the past.

“During this program, one sentence had been carved in my mind, the one I heard during the visit to Čavkarica. It’s a pretty simple sentence. ‘One crime always causes another’. The idea of vengeance and retaliation, was something common to each story about the deaths of innocent people. It seems that, to many, this rule had been an excuse to think they’re entitled to decide whether one lives or dies”, Sofija Todorović told us. She was quite shaken up to hear that the symbolism in choosing the dates of the 90s killings (according to the ones from WWII), was not overlooked.

The group visited the places of great tragedies from WWII and the last war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which lasted from 1991 until 1995. They were on the outskirts of Stolac, Široki Brijeg, Mostar, Grabovica, Bradina, Prebilovci, Čavkarica and had the opportunity to hear the untold stories of these parts.



Political Science Students Met with Kosovo Politicians

YIHR had organized a study visit to Kosovo for the students of the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade which lasted from May 26th until May 28th. In order to get know the current political situation in Kosovo, ten young people met with the Vice Prime Minister of Kosovo Branimir Stojanović, mayor of Pristina, Shpend Ahmeti, an ex-member of the Self-Determination movement, Ilir Deda and a member of the Kosovo Parliament Nenad Rašić. They had the chance to talk with the representatives of the Humanitarian Law Center about the crimes committed during the 1998-99 war, as well as to learn about the Brussels talks by talking with the representative of the negotiation team of Kosovo - Blerim Shalio.

More than 3.500 young people completed the exchange program between Belgrade and Pristina, organized by YIHR. Those young people visited Serbia or Kosovo for the first time. The majority of the participants were young journalists, political sciences majors, political party members, activists. However, a considerable number of participants were students of science,

tourism or technical faculties, whose interest was not closely related to the socio-political situation, although they had a wish to meet their peers “on the other side”.

The coordinator of this exchange, Jovana Prusina, pointed out that she was very proud that, with this youth exchange program, YIHR offers a meeting platform for students from Serbia and Kosovo, having in mind that their faculties do not officially cooperate. “It is sad because students of politics from both sides want to learn about the political system of Serbia and Kosovo. Also, there are a lot of topics they would like to discuss with their colleagues from the other side, but the universities are not yet ready to moderate such an exchange.” said Jovana Prusina, and added that this had been the case with university cooperation between Belgrade and Zagreb, and Belgrade and Sarajevo, but the situation changed over the years.



Young People Discussing Croatia as the Newest EU Member

The young people from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro visited Zagreb starting on June 22-25, 2016. The visit was organized almost exactly three years after Croatia had joined the EU, so the young participants had a chance to talk with the officials and civil society representatives about the country's experience as the youngest member of EU. Some of the topics that were discussed during this visit were nationalism, hostility towards members of the LGBT community, an irresponsible attitude towards its wartime past and disrupted regional relations. Đorđe Bojović from Serbia believes that it is of the outmost importance that the youth of the Western Balkans, whose countries are still far from joining the EU, sit and talk, not only about the challenges that the

government has to overcome during the process of European integration, but also about what happens after joining the EU. "Most people in the Balkans believe that the membership is a goal in itself, but we are not aware of the fact that it does not mean our problems would just go away. The changes and reforms that one country makes on its journey to the EU, must echo in the society, and the values on which EU is based must be accepted by the vast majority of citizens." said Đorđe, and added that we are reminded by the current socio-political situation in Croatia to work harder on promoting these values.

During this visit, YIHR - Croatia, organized a conference "Confronting the past – the youth perspective", where the forthcoming Regional Youth Cooperation Office was discussed, and its role in the process of reconciliation. It was pointed out that it is crucial for Croatia to join the process and sign the declaration of joining the Regional Office, as soon as possible. One of the conclusions made at the conference was that inclusion of the youth from Croatia into programs of the RYCO, is necessary as a condition for the reconciliation and as a challenge of preconceptions between young people in the region.



Memorial park Dotrščina is a spot of the greatest mass crime on the territory of Zagreb. It is the place where the Ustashi killed around 7000 antifascists, in the period from 1941 until 1945.



International Festival of Documentaries and Short Films - Dokufest

Young people from the entire region met at the Dokufest- International festival of documentaries and short films that has taken place in Prizren on August 7-9, every year, since 2002.

During these three days, the group watched a few films, visited a number of historical and cultural monuments, that bear witness of a diversity of nations and ethnicities that had lived in Prizren, and which left a strong mark on the soul of the city. They also had the chance to talk with the festival organization team about the importance of this festival for the local community. They also had a chance to meet their peers from Kosovo, including other young people from the Western Balkans and to participate in the festival panels together.



Fifth DocuCorner at Sarajevo Film Festival

The activists of the regional network of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, were part of the Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF) which took place from the 12th until the 20th of August. Apart from the main program, YIHR - Bosnia and Herzegovina had organized a DocuCorner, which had, over the years, brought young activists from Bosnia and the region together.

DocuDorner is a platform organized by YIHR – BiH as part of the festival, for the fifth time in a row. Here, young people have a chance to watch documentaries and talk to film directors.

The participants also visited the Historical museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Tunnel of Salvation and the gallery 11/07/95 that hosts the Srebrenica genocide exhibit. Read more about this study visit in the blog of the exchange participant Marija Matić (18), who participated in YIHR exchange program for the first time.



MARIJA MATIĆ, the Activist

SEVDAH

Sevdah, the Miljacka river, the Sebil fountain, Božo Vrećo, Baščaršija, the Latin bridge, Sarajevsko beer, the Ilidža district, the nargila pipe, love, the park Vrelo Bosne, the Town House, friends, the Vučko mascot, the National Museum, the Avaz Tower, Maria's hill, The Madrasa, the fountain at Gazi Husrev Bey's Mosque, the Ramadan feast, the film festival, the Tunnel, Ferhadija street, the Bey's and Prince's mosque, the Sacred Heart Cathedral, the Orthodox Cathedral...

Writing about my experience of Sarajevo, while keeping up with the program of the film festival hasn't been an easy task. This is why I have begun noting down the names of those sites and things, which, for me, are a direct reminder of Sarajevo.

My first trip to Sarajevo in July, has been like an infatuation. However, after what I had experienced during the visit during the festival, I knew it was true love. You know how it is with a crush... It's almost always sudden, fluttering, careless and subjective. That is exactly what I felt when I decided to visit Sarajevo on July 4th, when I had, having thought about it for only a half a day, left for this town, with a couple of friends I just met.

I found it rather interesting that I could go somewhere out of our country, carrying only an ID card. Having arrived in Sarajevo, on the first evening of the Ramadan feast, I felt something exotic, something that can only be felt when listening to Safet, Vreća and Dino. I strolled by the Miljacka river, down by the crossroads of Baščaršija, I drank the water from the fountain at Gazi Husrev Bey's Mosque, two times – one for the oblivion and one as a welcome, I guess, for two people or maybe only because it's my lucky number – who knows... The most important thing is that I warmed up my frostbitten palms on the Eternal Fire during the cool Sarajevo summer night.

For me, the reason why this second visit to Sarajevo was important, could be put in one word – acceptance. The reason isn't the mere comfortable grandeur of the Festival or its glamor. I feel blessed and grateful to have had the opportunity to get to know the things which can be commonly only spoken of in a low voice, especially in Serbia. Those are the cries for the acknowl-

gment and understanding of particular details that are key factors in healing the trauma in the Balkans.

Apart from the everyday activities at noon, which entailed the DocuCorner, on the Festival square, during which we talked about the documentaries we had watched the day before, we also had the chance to visit the Historical museum, the exhibit about the genocide in Srebrenica and the Tunnel of Salvation.

As for the part about the documentaries, among the great number of ones we had watched, the ones that made the greatest impact on me are the following ones: Korida, On the other side, Down There, Among the Believers and Depth II.

I thought that I, as someone who comes from the north of Serbia, don't have much contact with events in Kosovo. After the screening of Depth II, named after the operation that took place in the late 90s in Kosovo on the orders of the government of the state where I then lived, I understand now that this is only because someone in our education system does not want us to know the truth. I am extremely grateful that this film exists and, in addition to the conversation and some questions raised during the DocuCorner, I had the opportunity to connect with the author of the film, and together we came to the same conclusion, that a projection in Sombor would be very useful.

As someone who hasn't been aware of what YIHR does, until this summer, I'm happy to share impressions of my visit to Sarajevo. Until next time, I'm sending you my regards, and my love...

The Social Integration Training

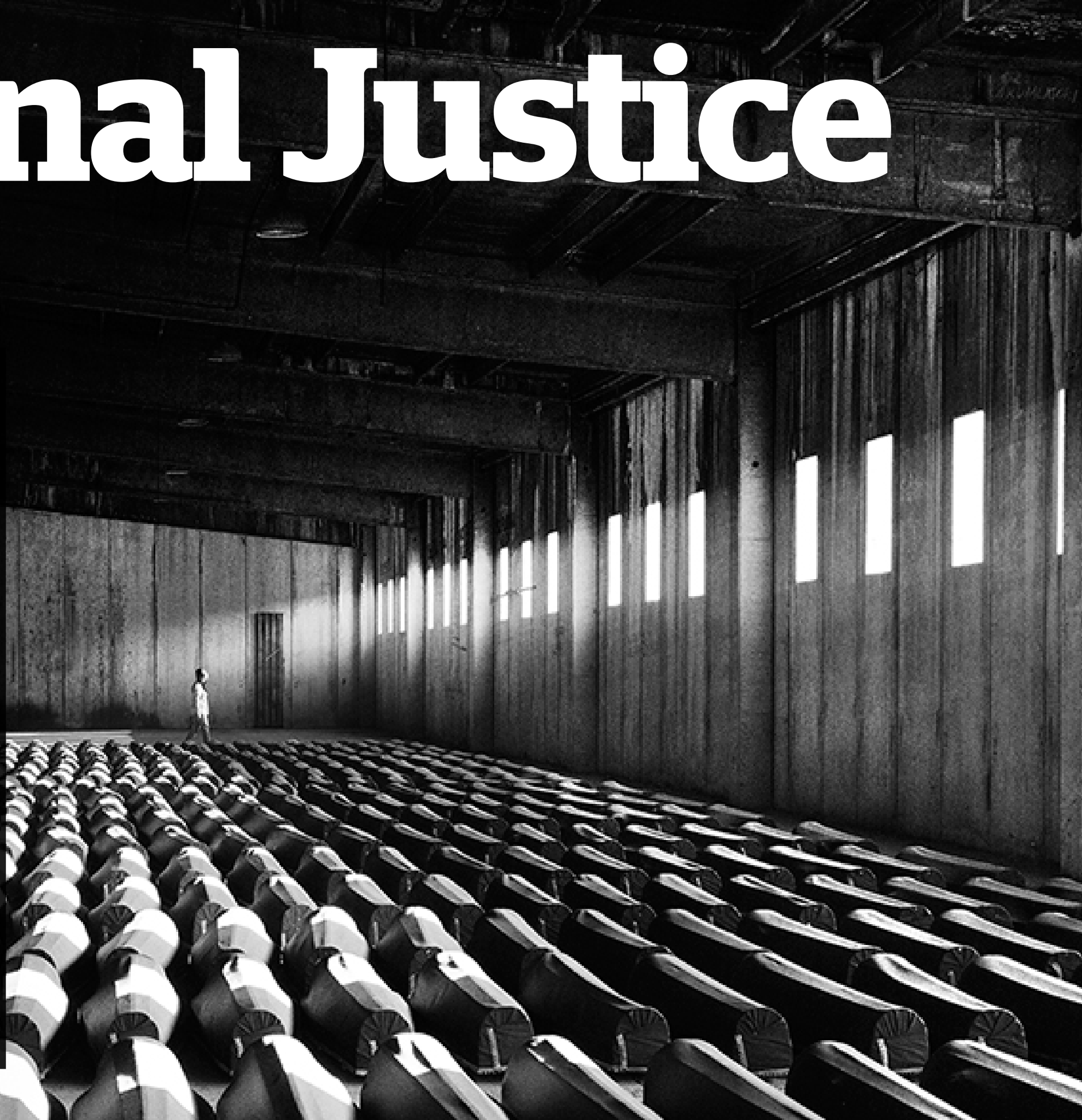
- ➔ YIHR regional network organized the training about social integration for the youth of political parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia, on May 10-15th in Belgrade.
- ➔ During this training, the young delegates developed the skills necessary for the analysis of political measures on social integration, and devised campaigns and ways to advocate for the protection rights of minorities, refugees and migrants. In addition to this, they talked to experts about the theory and practice of social integration policies. An important topic of this training was the initiative to establish the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, as well as the support of the youth of political parties during this process.
- ➔ The young delegates also discussed the further development of the Political Youth Network (PYN) – the regional network of youth organizations operating within political parties. The network was founded in March 2014 at the founding assembly in Zagreb, and has 31 members from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.



Transitional Justice

YIHR main intention was creating an organization of young people which would create new relations in post-conflict societies of former Yugoslavia, but also work actively on the process of dealing with the past. The new generations are often uninterested for severe violations of human rights in the past and they forget about the pain of the community they belong at, but also the pain of other communities which are seen as enemies.

This is why YIHR pays a lot of attention to the communication with young people concerning the question of the past. Every year we mark the dates of massive human rights violations which had happened during the war in the former Yugoslavia with its activists. This is how YIHR builds its program of dealing with the past, raises the capacity for public remembrance and supports the young people who participate in it.



Commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide in Front of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia



Civil society organizations had organized a commemorative gathering on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the genocide, committed in eastern Bosnia in 1995, on July 11th, in front of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The commemoration, organized for the purpose of remembering 8372 victims of Srebrenica genocide, was joined by approximately a hundred citizens who laid numbers on the asphalt, up until 8372, and lit candles to honor the victims.

This year's commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide was preceded by a call that Initiative had sent to the Assembly members, with a request that the Assembly adopts a declaration that would condemn the genocide committed in Srebrenica in the way that it was done by resolution of the European Parliament. YIHR had also requested that a solemn session of the Assembly should be organized, which would begin with a minute

of silence, in memory of more than 8,000 innocent victims. They were also invited to participate in the commemorative gathering in front of the National Assembly on July the 11th.

Not only did they not consider a single request submitted by YIHR, but in the period before the commemoration, a strong current of those who insulted the ones who called the Srebrenica genocide by its real name, grew stronger. The policy of denying the genocide continued in order to avoid accepting the legally established facts and institutional responsibilities of the Republic of Serbia for the events in July 1995.

Therefore, this year, YIHR, along with the organizations and individuals who are aware of the importance of responsibly confronting the past, preserved the face of the Serbian society and those who are ashamed of the crimes committed, and who actively fight against forgetting and denying this crimes.

Open Letter to the Members of the National Assembly on the Eve of the Commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide

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Dear member of the National Assembly of Republic of Serbia,

In our society there is still a strong tendency to challenge and deny legally established facts, and even to openly deny genocide. The civil society has been, for the past 20 years, the first one to defend the civilized values and to fight for a society in which peace and anti-fascism are fundamental values. It is, therefore, important that, today, you, as a direct representative of the people, provide institutional support to the efforts that civil society organizations have invested in order to preserve the memory of the crimes committed during the nineties.

That is why you are called to, on July 11th:

1. Hold a commemorative session in the Assembly, to honor the victims of the worst crime committed in Europe since the Second World War;
2. Adopt a declaration condemning the Srebrenica genocide, and the denial of crimes committed, according to the Declaration which was adopted by the European Parliament last year;
3. Join us in front of the Assembly and light a candle to commemorate the victims of the genocide.

In Srebrenica, in July 1995, in only a few days, more than 8,000 people were killed as a result of an organized attack by the army forces of Republika Srpska, that occupied the area under the protection of the UN.

Having done so, the plan of executing the Serbian leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was completed, as part of six strategic goals, one of which was the desire that “the Drina river no longer be the border between two worlds,” and

the dream of an ethnically clean Drina valley. Soon, this became a reality. Ratko Mladić gave the command to his troops to kill all the men from Srebrenica that they could find - including the prisoners, and those captured on their escape route to Tuzla.

These facts were adopted before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and were confirmed by the International Court of Justice in 2007 in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina against Serbia, finding that there was a genocide in Srebrenica against Bosnian Muslims and Serbia was found guilty because failing to do anything to prevent such actions and because Serbia failed to extradite the suspects to the International Court of Justice.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights invites you to attend the commemoration of the 21st anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, which will be held on July 11th in Belgrade. The aim of the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide is honoring more than 8,000 victims. It is also important that on that day we send a clear message that we are ready to confront the crimes that were committed in our name and prosecute all the perpetrators, in order to prevent such a crime from ever happening again.

There is no lie we can hide behind. Nothing to preserve, except our future. No longer shall we open the door to evil. Because of everything that we cherish. Because of everything that we are proud of. Because of what we were and what we want to become. On July the 11th, be part of those who honor the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica, show that crimes are not the values of Serbia which we want for ourselves.



Biljana Srbljanović on the Commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide

“In 2005, on the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, when Youth Initiative for Human Rights set up billboards reminding of this crime, the reaction of the public and the media was hysterical. Artistic photos by Tarik Samarah which were created in Potočari, with only one line of text stating: “To see, to know, to remember” were destroyed overnight, covered in black paint, covered in written threats “There will be a rerun” or “Knife, Wire, Srebrenica” including the messages celebrating Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić, who were still at large back then. Even then, the genocide in Srebrenica was a taboo for Serbian politics, to the extent that people didn’t know when it occurred, and what heaviness it left on our society. “

The entire article published in “Peščanik”, can be read [here](#).

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YIHR Standing Proudly with Women in Black

YIHR participated in an action of the commemoration of the genocide in Srebrenica on July 10th at the Republic Square which was organized by Women In Black.

Women in Black started in 1991 public, non-violent protest against the war, against the policy of the Serbian regime, nationalism, militarism, all kinds of hatred, discrimination, violence and YIHR is proud to have a chance to cooperate with members of this movement. They represent the brightest example of civil duty and bravery throughout all these years in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.



Reply to the President Nikolić: The Defense of a Democratic and European Serbia, Not the one of Vandalism

During the last fifteen years, four mass graves were discovered in Serbia, with nearly thousand of bodies of Albanian women, children and men who were murdered in 1999 by police forces under the command of Slobodan Milošević. Military under the control of Milošević captured, tortured and killed Croatian civils and war prisoners in Vojvodina; Bosniaks, who escaped from Žepa to Serbia, knowing what had happened in Srebrenica, were brutally beaten up and tortured in camps in Serbia. These are not the only crimes committed in Milošević's Serbia which deserve memorialization. Still, neither of these places has a monument.

It is unacceptable to forget side effects of Milošević's regime and policy of violence, terror and war. Concerning the several-weeks-long discussion about the correctness of the policy of Slobodan Milošević, the idea of erecting a monument to him in Serbia and the statement of President Nikolić that "the monument to Milošević would not physically survive because probably self-proclaimed democrats would tear it down by vandalism", YIHR issued a proclamation on August 25th:

We, who were born and who spent our childhood in war, complete isolation and cut off from the world, in the greatest misery and poverty, we speak on behalf of:

All the young people who had been transferred from their military service to the front lines;

Young people who have endured tear gas and who had their scalps and spines broken by police batons;

The young people who spent their early childhood in cellars and long rows in front of supermarkets;

Young people who have fled the country in the nineties, never to return again;

Young people who are still fleeing the country due to consequences of the nineties;

Young people who were separated from friends with whom they had previously played and had fun, all due to Milosevic's policies;

Our peers from the region who spent the nineties under siege;

Victims of Milošević's bloody squadrons who spread death from Croatia to Kosovo;

All the victims of bombing who have not still been recognized by name;

Forcibly conscripted refugees who were returned to the crater of war which they had fled;

Our exiled peers who came in on tractors to Serbia, and instead of being offered refuge, got banned from entering the capital;

All victims of the Greater Serbian idea;

All expelled and murdered journalists and political opponents of the regime;

Generations of our parents, teachers, and professors who, despite the dictatorship of hatred, lies, deception, violence, fraud, thievery, managed to

preserve their dignity and teach us the values of freedom, peace, truth and justice;

On behalf of the generations of our grandparents, who were deprived of everything they earned during their lifetime, so that war machines and election stealing would be financed;

All those whose lives were destroyed by Milošević, his politics, his regime, and his obedient followers, in a direct or an indirect manner.

Our responsibility to the generation born in the 2000s is to ensure that they are the first generation to live their lives in peace.

Therefore, we will not allow a monument to the last lord of war of our region to be raised in Belgrade. If that happens, our obligation is to take it down. That is not vandalism, but the defense of a democratic and European Serbia.

Discussion Panel: How do We Remember Milosević?

Since the eve of June 28th, the day when the former Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosević, was extradited to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague in 2001, there have been numerous speculations about the circumstances of his arrest.

The process of criminalization of Milosevic's arrest was started by the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, who stated that the Government is trying to solve numerous murder cases in Serbia, as well as to get to the end of "who had ordered people in balaclavas to jump fences and arrest the President of the Republic", stressing that this was a "great crime". During an interview, one of the main perpetrators of the criminal policy of Milosević, Milorad Ulemek Legija, sentenced to 40 years in prison, told the

weekly "Express" that someone from a former government received five million dollars for the arrest of Slobodan Milošević. Legija claimed that the rumor the former Yugoslav president had been arrested by the members of the Zemun Clan who wore masks, was intentionally published so that the money could be collected.

Due to such media announcements, and statements by politicians who hold the highest positions in our country, the question remains whether the Serbian society is aware of the political context, as well as the reason why, 15 years ago, Slobodan Milošević was extradited to the Hague Tribunal. If we consider the time that has passed since then, as well as the countless attempts to relativize Serbia's role in the wars in former Yugoslavia, it is necessary to determine what are the facts that we are left with, and why it is important for young people to talk about Milošević and his politics.

It is also important to know why the Prime Minister of Serbia calls the arrest of Milosević into question in 2016. Are we witnessing the process of criminalization of his arrest in the public discourse? In Serbia, is there a difference between what is open for discussion and what represents irrefutable facts? Is this an attempt to redefine everything as far as the 90s go, redefining the role of Slobodan Milosevic, and the role of the current Prime Minister of Serbia?

For the purpose of starting a debate on these issues, YIHR organized a

forum named "How do we remember Slobodan Milošević." on June 28th at the Center for Cultural Decontamination. Moderated by journalist Antonela Riha, the discussion was attended by the National Assembly member, Žarko Korać, Milica Kostić from the Humanitarian Law Center and Ivan Đurić of YIHR.



Ivan Đurić pointed out that, in the last six months, we witnessed the rehabilitation of people from Milošević's environment. "What hasn't changed in our society, for years now, is the fact that the policy pursued by Slobodan Milošević has never properly been condemned. Today, when Vučić speaks

Why is Serbia silent about Srebrenica in the same way that Croatia is not willing to discuss crimes committed against Serbs during the military operation “Storm”? Why do education systems of Serbia and Croatian produce nationalists, who and why is someone considered a foreign mercenaries and traitor, and to what extent do hateful messages, exchanged between Serbian and Croatian officials, reach and affect the young generation?

Read the entire interview with Anita Mitić (YIHR) and Nikola Puharić (YIHR - Croatia) for Radio Free Europe.

about his arrest, he will not mention the reason behind Milošević’s arrest, and that there were soldiers who guarded him outside his villa. With this way of selectively omitting facts, a completely new reality has been created” said Đurić.

Žarko Korać, spoke about the political situation in the first half of 2001, when on one hand, there was the Serbian government led by Zoran Đinđić, who was trying to do what’s best for Serbia, while on the opposite side there was the President Vojislav Koštunica. “Koštunica was taken for some kind of legalist, because he demanded that a law on cooperation with The Hague tribunal should be passed,” said Korać, adding that, according to many, experts in international law, there was no need for such a law. “The moment when we became re-admitted to the United Nations, with the Security Council established the ICTY, we took on a responsibility that each of their legal acts becomes part of our domestic law. Koštunica has insisted the law should pass solely to obstruct the extradition of Milošević,” Korać had stated.

The panel explained that Milošević himself changed the former Constitution of Serbia, which was at that time part of Yugoslavia, ensuring that the Republic of Serbia does not have to implement any decision of the federal structure, if it is not in the interest of Serbia and that, in the same case, the Constitution of the Republic would have primacy over the Federal one. “Ironically, Milošević was arrested on the basis of amendments which he himself had previously proposed,” concluded Korać.

Milica Kostić, from the Humanitarian Law Center, also confirmed that the arrest and extradition of Milošević was legal. “Only a person who does not have the perspective of international law, or is simply malicious, can claim that Milošević was illegally extradited,” Kostić said, adding that citizens of Serbia have a very narrow approach to law by focusing solely on national laws. “It is not only present in the current Constitution, but in all the previous ones, and it

is explicitly stated that international law is an integral part of the domestic law of the Republic of Serbia. The Security Council in 1993 formed the ICTY under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which is a constitutive act of the organization and thus obliges Serbia as a member to adopt such a decision “said Kostić.

Ivan Đurić believes that it is important to remember that if Serbia today does not talk about the legacy of Milošević’s policies and fails to adequately comprehend June 28th 2001, we can easily go back to the time of 1989 and Milošević’s famous speech at Gazimestan. “It’s terrible that, for us, the nineties meant a lot of bad movies with thugs, but we forget that it was a time of war, political assassinations, legal uncertainty, economic isolation, and stolen elections. The only reason why people stayed in Serbia is that they did not have a passport to leave it. In Serbia, the 90s are, unfortunately, not remembered in this fashion. We, who have some recollection of that period, rarely place the 90s in a political context, and young people, who were born after Milošević, and have no direct memory of this period, have no knowledge of it”, said Đurić, while concluding that this is frightening, especially since “war in the region is rather certain if we delete this period from our memory.”

Fifteen years after the arrest of Milošević, the Serbian Prime Minister started a narrative about the “masked arrest as a horrible crime”, questioning the achievements of Serbian society in building a legal and democratic state. As a confirmation of one of the main conclusions of the discussion - that Serbian society, as well as the state of Serbia, is not clearly determined about Milošević - in mid-August, an unofficial initiative had been undertaken by two prominent members of the Socialist Party of Serbia - Ivica Dačić and Milutin Mrkonjić, that Serbia should raise a monument to Slobodan Milošević.



Commemoration of the Crime at Tuzla Gate

My Initiative and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights visited Tuzla on May 25th, where they attended the commemoration of the crime that had occurred at the Tuzla Gate. Carrying the banner “too young to remember, but determined to never forget”, every year, YIHR organizes a visit to Tuzla, on the anniversary of this horrible crime, where on the Youth Day, in 1995, The Army of the Republika Srpska, opened fire from a position on Mount Ozren in the direction of the Tuzla Gate, which was a popular meeting place for young people in this town. In this crime 71 young people were murdered. The average age of those killed was 23, and the youngest victim was only two years old. Novak Đukić was convicted for this crime, and he is currently in Serbia, where he avoids serving prison sentence.

My Initiative activist, Jana Vujić, spoke at the “The smell of mown youth” forum, which was held at the Faculty of Law of the University of Tuzla, stating that the activists of YIHR find that it is extremely important that they go in Tuzla every May 25th and stand with the citizens of this city. “It is important to honor our peers who were killed on this day. It is important that we remember them today, but what drives us to be here every year is accountability. We, as the youth, are responsible for what we will happen tomorrow. The way we treat these crimes will lay the foundation for future cooperation and integration of youth in the region,” said Vujić.





White Armband Day

My Initiative and The Youth Initiative for Human Rights conducted a campaign to commemorate May 31st as the White Armband Day.

On this day, the killing of civilians in Prijedor during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is symbolically remembered. YIHR sent postcards with a photograph of Trnopolje camp prisoners with a description of the events in Prijedor in 1992, to many homes in Serbia. With the postcard they also sent white armbands, with an invitation to take photos wearing this armband, and with an invitation to share it on social

media with an indication #danbijelihtraka (#whitearmbandday)

The wearing of white armbands is a sign of remembrance of the Prijedor victims in the period between 1992 and 1995. On May 31st 1992, the local authorities in Prijedor ordered the non-Serb population to wear white armbands, and proclamations were also broadcasted to inform the non-Serbian population that they were required to put a white cloth over their houses as proof of loyalty to the Serbian authorities. During the same radio broadcasts, lists of names and addresses of Bosniaks and Croats had been

read, indirectly calling for their destruction. The result of this campaign is the expulsion of over 33,000 inhabitants of the Prijedor area, and about 5,000 killings between 1992 and 1995.

The war period in the Prijedor area will be remembered for the fact that on the territory of this municipality, Serbian authorities established several camps in which civilians were brutally physically abused, starved, raped, tortured, and humiliated. In Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje, during 1992, thousands of people had been held captive, 3,000 of which were killed and buried in mass

graves. British journalist Penny Marshall made photographs of the starved prisoners in camps Omarska and Trnopolje during the summer of 1992. Once these photos reached the world, the international community became actively involved in calming the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the UN Security Council established the ICTY.

White armbands are not simply a symbol of commemorating the victimhood of one ethnic or religious group during the war, but also a reminder of the need to fight all forms of fascism and discrimination.

Human Rights Defenders

The program of human rights protection exists in YIHR since 2004, and in the last few years a program concerning human rights monitoring was especially developed and it deals with freedom of assembly, the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, application of anti-discriminatory laws and the standard of rightful trial.

Priority of our work is to educate as many people by giving them an inside of the practical side of the mechanisms of the protection of human rights state authorities have. We are proud to say that hundreds of people gave their contributions in advocating for the respect of human rights through educational trainings (trainings and debates about human rights) and researching activities (trial and jails' monitoring).

Young people with articulated knowledge are the greatest result of the program, which makes our duty to continue with educating future human rights defenders.



The Regional Conference “Prevention of Torture in the Balkans – The Best Practice and Experience” in Tirana

A conference called “Prevention of torture in the Balkans – The Best Practice and Experience” took place on June 23rd and 24th, as part of the project “Building a society free of torture and impunity in the Western Balkans” in Tirana. The focus of this conference was a regional approach for the adoption of a better treatment of prisoners in Serbia, Albania and Montenegro. The conference was attended by the ministers of Justice of Montenegro and Albania, Zoran Pažin and Jli Manjani, as well as the representatives of the Human Rights Office, and the Ombudsman Office, officials from prison authorities, police academies, judiciary officials, prosecutors and officials from other state institutions, and civil society representatives. The conference was also attended by the victims of torture that have shared their experiences of abuse. During the conference, there was a screening of a documentary called “Paths of torture”, directed by Nikola Vučković.

During these two days, there had been four panels. The first panel, which focused on the degree of implementation of international principles in the fight against torture, the Minister of Justice of Montenegro Zoran Pažin, spoke about the importance of calling upon the practice of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg when prosecuting individuals that abuse the convicted or the detained. In addition to pointing out the need to expand prisons capacities, Minister Pažin spoke about excessive use of force by the police during the opposition protest in the fall of 2015 in Podgorica. He stressed that the Montenegrin prosecution promptly reacted and that anyone who overstepped their authority would have been held accountable.

Jli Manjani, the Minister of Justice of Albania, said that discussing the conditions in which prisoners are held is, without a doubt, very important. He stated that in a society where there is poverty, torture is an everyday occurrence. Manjani concluded that the need for new instruments to improve cooperation with the civil society and the state administration would establish an improved regional cooperation and which would contribute to the elimination of torture. Also, the panel on the implementation of international standards in the fight against torture, as well as the opening of the conference, was marked by questions and doubts on the application of international instruments in the Western Balkans in reference to the determination of the United Kingdom to

initiate the procedure of exit from the European Union.

As part of the panel “The protection of human rights in prisons”, the representatives of the prison authorities, as well as the Ombudsman Office, presented the main obstacles they face, in their work, while combating torture. On one hand, Artur Zoto, the Head of the Prison Authorities in Albania and Milan Pavlović, the Head of the Prison “Padinska Skela”, both spoke about improving the training of officials on the prevention of torture and on the existence of alternative way that can be established in order to relieve the prison capacities. On the other hand, civil society representatives and some representatives of the



prison services have pointed out the problems that all post-communist countries in the region face: abuse in closed institutions, a small number of reported cases of torture, overcrowded prisons and other closed institutions, poor conditions and insufficient number of activities for the incarcerated ones. They pointed out that the health care is still not adequate, and that there is a shortage of security personnel and health care staff, as well as the lack of a systematic approach to training employees. Also, the reintegration process is not adequate, resulting in large number of returnees.

The mentioned issues were also observed during the monitoring of correctional facilities of partners who participated in the project “Building a society free of torture and impunity in the Western Balkans”, so the reports on the conditions of prisons in Serbia, Montenegro and Albania were presented at the third panel of the conference. Milan Radović (YIHR - Montenegro) stressed out that the treatment in prisons, especially health care-wise, was improved, as well as the conditions of detention facilities in Montenegro. However, the issue of the prosecution of police officers after protests of the opposition at the end of October 2015, still remains

unclear. He also said that there is a lack of cooperation between the prosecution and police, making this the major missing link that would enable the prosecution of those responsible in this case. Erinda Bjanka, a spokeswoman of the Albanian rehabilitation centers for trauma and torture (ARCT), underlined the importance of cooperation between civil society organizations and prison institutions at the regional level, claiming that there is little progress in increasing the capacities of overcrowded prisons, but that there is a continuous effort to improve the conditions. She also stated that the problems of the penitentiary system in Albania are a clear remnant of the authoritarian regime until 1990. Commenting on the state of the penitentiary system in Serbia, a YIHR research analyst, Marko Milosavljević, pointed out that the main problems the system is faced with are the inadequate health-care and the fact that the prisons are constantly overcrowded. On the other hand, he mentioned good examples, which resulted from the prison authorities adopting recommendations given by the Ombudsman (the Office of National Prevention Mechanism) which are medical exams without the presence of the non-medical personnel and directing underage convicts and women into all facilities.

On the last panel, the conclusions and key steps in fighting torture and impunity, in the countries of the Western Balkans were presented. Having summed up what was presented at the conference, attended by more than 120 prison officials, Jasmina Lazović, the Program Coordinator of YIHR, reminded everybody of the importance of resolving the problem of impunity and torture on a political level, and stressed out that cooperation on the regional level is an imperative, as well as between different institutions of the system. Also, Lazović said that the cooperation with young experts is quite important as they operate in a form of civil control that pushes the state to respect human rights that are declared by the Law. Apart from the political level, which is still the most important aspect of solving the problems of the penitentiary system in the region, Lazović pointed out that there is a need for a common development of capacities between the civil society and state services dealing with prisons, which the Youth Initiative for Human Rights has demonstrated by organizing a series of education seminars over the past two years.

Presentation of the Report “The Rights of Inmates in the Prison System in Serbia”



On the occasion of the International Day against Torture, YIHR presented the report “The rights of inmates in the prison system in Serbia.” in Belgrade’s EU Info Centre on June 27th. The report is comprised of conclusions made after 19 visits to prisons facilities in Serbia (mostly district prisons) over a period of 30 months when YIHR, together with partners from Montenegro and Albania, worked on the project “Building free of torture and impunity in the Western Balkans “.

Marko Milosavljević, YIHR researcher, spoke about the general state in prisons in Serbia. “The current number of convicts is more consistent with the capacities of smaller institutions, and, on the general level, the problem of too many convicts and those awaiting to serve their sentence, remains unresolved,” said Milosavljević. He pointed out that the security service is still understaffed and that the Government’s ban on recruitment in the public sector, is a great problem. As for other issues,

there are poor health care, lack of space for individual and collective interviews with prisoners, and the fact that counselors perform the tasks of commissioners for alternative sanctions. “Since 2011, 24 Commissioner Offices have been founded, but they haven’t still started operating properly in practice,” concluded Milosavljević.

The Program Coordinator of YIHR, Ivan Đurić emphasized the importance of the regional approach in the prevention of the fight against torture. “Given that we have worked on this project with the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Montenegro and Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma and Torture (ARCT), we noticed that the majority of the challenges we encountered have been inherited from the previous authoritarian period, so our problems are quite similar,” said Đurić, also pointing out the problem of the lack of interest of the media for topics such as the rights of inmates. He stressed out the importance

of creating new ways of presenting the importance of fighting for the rights of those who are on the margins of society. Speaking about the necessity of cooperation between the actors in the reform of the prison system, Đurić said: “We see that there is still a great need for cooperation of the state with the civil society, and that the best solution is building trust and developing the cooperation between civil society organizations and institutions, primarily with the Directorate for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions and the National Preventive Mechanism.” Jelena Samardžić from the Office of the Ombudsman highlighted the similarities in the findings of the report of the Ombudsman for 2015 and YIHR reports. First of all, there were references to the problems of health care, in other words, medical examinations, treatment and the status of individuals with mental disabilities. “There are certain deficiencies, but the Directorate is working on taking measures in order to solve this in the future”, said Samardžić. One of the important recommendations was that the health care service gets removed outside the Directorate for Execution of Criminal Sanctions, so that medical staff has a more independent position, which is of great importance, both to preserve the standard of health, as well as to document violations inflicted during torture.

The story of marginalized individuals, the ones who have served their sentence, does not end in prison cells, explained Jelena Srnić (NEOSTART), when she spoke about post-penal acceptance. “NEOSTART points to practical problems in terms of documents and the rights of the released individual. The problem arises when a person steps out without documents, as is often the case, and is deprived of any medical treatment,” said Srnić.

She pointed out that when talking about general acceptance after having served the sentence, the civil society contributes significantly to the formal system of execution of criminal sanctions, by assisting with employment, as well as facilitating the convicts relation with his/her family.

The conference ended with a discussion on how to efficiently transfer the recommendations of the Ombudsman and civil society to government institutions. The speakers agreed that it is much easier to talk about issues on the practical level, when there is still a lack of political will to act on a broader level, both in matters within the authority of the prison system, as well as within the domain of the judiciary. Following the monitoring process of prison conditions in Serbia, YIHR will continue to insist on the reform of the prison system, as well as on the legal protection of convicts who experienced inadequate treatment, torture or inhuman conditions.

The full report can be downloaded [here](#).



Monitoring of the Prison System



→ In cooperation with the European Law Students Association (ELSA), YIHR organized the training “Monitoring of the prison system” for students of Law on May 25th, this year. The training is aimed at acquainting students with the area of human rights protection in the penitentiary system from different perspectives of functioning of the prison system. Future lawyers were educated about the international standards in the fight against torture, as well as their application in practice through the work of the National Preventive Mechanism in Serbia.

→ Young lawyers had the opportunity to meet the representative of the Council of Europe in Serbia, Aleksandar Stojanović, and learn which instruments in international law can rely in the case of torture, as well as what are the best known cases of Serbia that were

handled by the Human Rights Court in Strasbourg. In the second part of the training, the representatives of the National Preventive Mechanism in the service of the Ombudsman, presented their previous work, and then, together with students, discussed the implementation of recommendations given by the National Preventive Mechanism. In addition to this, future legal experts spoke with the Head of the Treatment in the prison facility Zabela from Požarevac, in order to gain insight into individual and collective treatment of prisoners and their reintegration in the society.

→ YIHR researchers Ivan Kutlarović and Marko Milosavljević spoke about civil surveillance of prison officers with students of law, who had the opportunity to hear about the researchers’ findings at the last session of the training

Prison Treatment Service under Scrutiny



Having noticed that the Treatment Service is an important link in the penitentiary system, YIHR had organized a training “Prison Treatment Service under scrutiny” on June 7th in the premises of the Youth Office of Belgrade. The training was attended by students from the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER), and from other social sciences faculties.



At the training, they discussed the challenges and problems that the workers of the Treatment Service encounter when dealing with the convicted individuals on a daily basis. The subject of the discussion was the post-penal acceptance in Serbia, with emphasis on the institutional shortcomings, but also on the room for improvement in this area of treatment.





Health Care in the Prison System in Serbia

YIHR organized a training session for prison doctors and medical staff called “Health care in the prison system in Serbia” on June 9th. The training session was realized in cooperation with the Directorate for Execution of Criminal Sanctions and with the support of the Office of the Ombudsman. The conference was opened by Milos Janković, Deputy Ombudsman, Milan Stevović, Head of the Directorate for Execution of Criminal Sanctions and Ivan Đurić from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

- ➔ The speakers of the first panel were Aleksandar Stojanović - a lawyer and an expert of the Council of Europe, Đorđe Alempijević - a forensic doctor and a member of the CPT (The Anti-torture Committee of the Council of Europe), Vladimir Jović - psychiatrist and member of International Aid Network - IAN and CRPT. They presented different aspects of the protection of the rights of convicted individuals, international standards, as well as the role of prison doctors in the prevention of torture in penitentiary facilities, with special emphasis on mental health care in prisons.
- ➔ The second panel was hosted by Dragoljub Pavlović, the Director of the Special Prison Hospital in Belgrade, Jelena Unijat, Secretary of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, and Maja Jović, Head of the Department for the Rights of convicted individuals in the Office of the Ombudsman. In the context of this discussion, special attention was given to medical services in lower capacity prisons, as well as in detention facilities, where often, due to the lack of staff, non-medical staff provides the first aid.
- ➔ Unsystematic medical care in prisons, which is often on the verge of law violation, as well as the lack of knowledge about international instruments - are the main problems which were mapped during a meeting with the doctors who worked in prisons throughout Serbia. Moreover, the cause of inadequate medical treatment in the system is the lack of doctors who work in prisons full-time, as well as the status of medical services which, should, according to the recommendations of the NPM, be within the control of the Ministry of Health, and not within the authority of the Ministry of Justice, as it is the case today.



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www.involvednotinvalid.com

Join the Campaign of Marking Inaccessible Facilities

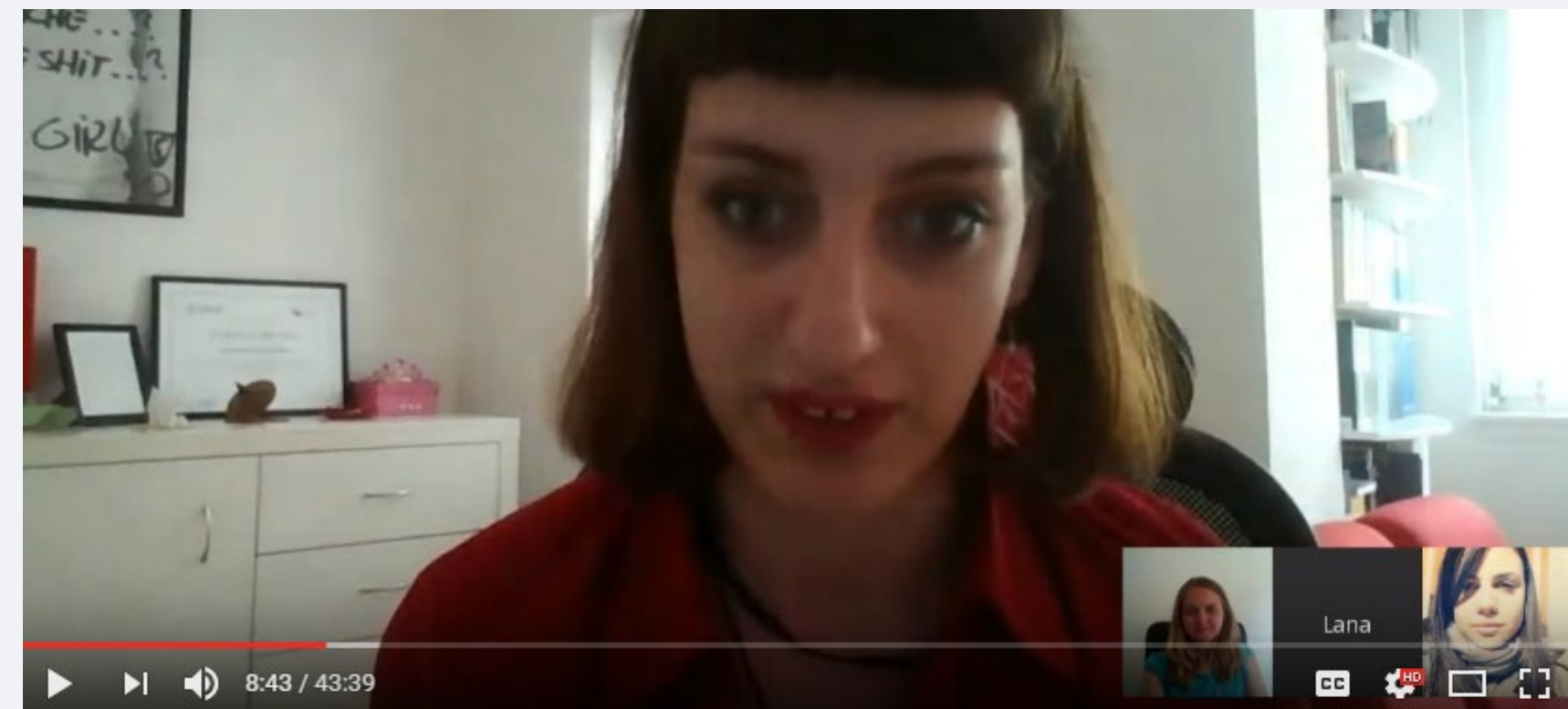
YIHR has continued with marking the facilities and buildings that are inaccessible to people with disabilities. This action was organized within the project Involved not Invalid, with aims to help people with physical disabilities to find a suitable place where they can be educated. In addition to this, the platform collects all the information about scholarships, organizations and institutions that can be of assistance to people with disabilities, in one place.

If you would like to join this campaign and mark the inaccessible facilities in the area where you live and work, stop by YIHR office and get the stickers.



Workshops with high school students throughout Serbia

As part of Involved not Invalid and Watch Your Language projects, YIHR spoke with high school students about online hate speech and the position of persons with disability in our society. The goal of the workshops was educating high school students about hate speech they face everyday on social networks. They also discussed about today's position of persons with disability in Serbia, as well as how to find the best possible way to include this minority group into the society.



“The Importance of Accessible Education for Persons with Disabilities” Webinar

“The Importance of Accessible Education for Persons with Disabilities” Webinar was held on May 26th as part of the YouthLINC project which was initiated by Internews BiH and Youth Initiative for Human Rights BiH. Their goal was to empower young people to use new technologies and social networks more effective in promoting human rights, activism and better education in the region. The Project Coordinator Lana Nikolić spoke about the problems young persons with disabilities face concerning their education after high school

The whole webinar is available [here](#).



Film “In the Interspace” at Bosifest

The film “In the interspace”, which was created as part of the project Involved not Invalid, competed at this year’s Bosifest, - Belgrade International Film Festival of People with Disabilities. The goal of the program is to offer possible solutions that would contribute to the development of a democratic society, and the creation of the environment which would be accessible, and without obstacles and barriers – for all.

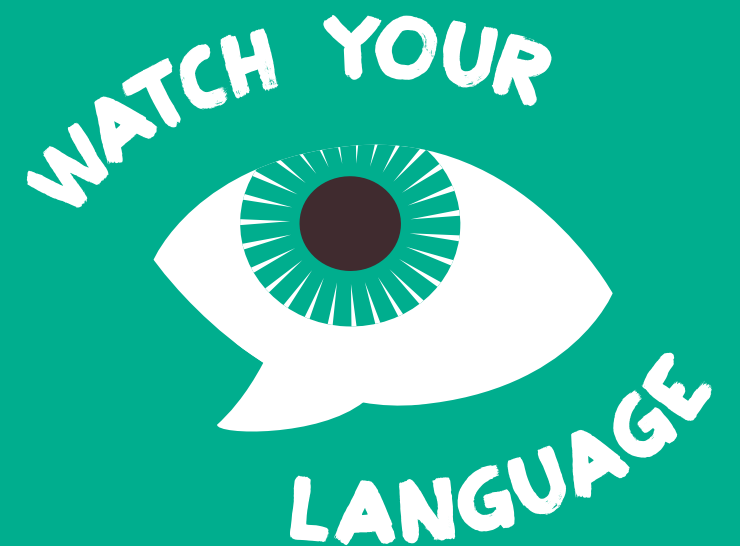
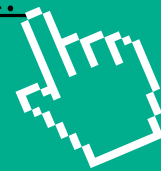


Join the Fight against Hate Speech on the Internet

As part of the YouthLINC project, YIHR has created a regional platform Watch Your Language, which aims to contribute to generating a definition and the distinction between free speech and hate speech.

Hate speech in the online world does have an effect on the real world, which is reflected in the increase of discriminatory behavior and physical violence. The definition of hate speech and its distinction from the freedom of speech, is differently regulated from country to country, and this has become a leading problem that the online community is facing today. Therefore, this platform was created to enable the community to share their comments and suggestions, react and contribute to defining hate speech.

Join the fight against hate speech online. [Report the hate speech here.](#)





Belgrade Pride Parade

This year as well, YIHR supported the Pride Parade in Belgrade. The walk was successful- more colourful and relaxed than in earlier years, mostly because of the YIHR volunteers who stood out for their bravery and commitment.

Year after year, we can see that we were rights and that the persistence of individuals fulfilled one of our greatest goals- the streets of Belgrade are the streets that belong to all of us.

Success and experience we gained oblige us to be more active in our most important fights - the fight for the equality of all the Serbian citizens.



Condemning Obradović's Policy is Our Civil Duty

- Regarding the statement of Boško Obradović in which he negates the rights of LGBT people, YIHR has urged all state and independent institutions, all political parties, organizations, the media and individuals to, in their own way, to denunciate the statement given by Boško Obradović, so as to send a clear message to the LGBT community that they do not stand alone in the fight against primitivism and the subdued fascism.
- The invitation to support the Pride Parade was handed to him on May 17th at a conference, on the occasion of the International Day of Fight against Homophobia and Transphobia, by YIHR Director, Anita Mitić. After what turned out to be his reactions, the Initiative has nothing more to discuss with Boško Obradović, whose entire political career was built on encouraging hatred towards 'the others' and mostly towards the LGBT population. On a day in which the whole world sends messages against homophobia and transphobia, Boško Obradović confirmed his position as the most prominent representative and advocate of anti-civilized values that are rejected by every decent man, and what was abandoned a long time ago, by the modern, developed world.
- YIHR specifically condemns Boško Obradović intention to create an artificial division between the LGBT community and other citizens of Serbia, by mentioning the bad position of farmers, and citizens who have problems returning their loans in Swiss francs. This demonstrates the absolute ignorance and lack of understanding. Obradović is unaware of the fact that members of the LGBT population are equally affected by all the problems, like the majority of the population of Serbia. In addition to these numerous problems, members of the LGBT populations have to cope with additional difficulties and risks, which Obradović either denies, or directly causes them, and in many cases he does both.



Conference on the International Day of Fight against Homophobia and Transphobia

On the conference which was held on May 17th on the occasion of the International Day of Fight against Homophobia and Transphobia organized by the Pride Parade - Belgrade, Anita Mitić spoke about ways in which to improve the position of LGBT community in Serbia.

International Day of Fight against Homophobia and Transphobia is a holiday created because of the importance of coordination of international events which remind on violations of LGBT persons' rights and the importance of those same rights throughout the world.



Discussions with the Community

On one of the Interviews with the community, which are organized once a month by the Pride Parade - Belgrade, Ivan Đurić talked about how the current political events in Serbia affected the position of the LGBT community in Serbia on May 26th.

Discussions were organized after elections and the entry of the right-wing party Serbian Movement Dveri in the Parliament. The topic was how that could affect the LGBT activism especially in regards to everything LGBT movement has made so far.

The Government Has no Solution to the Violence against LGBT People

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YIHR strongly condemned and protested against the attack on Boban Stojanović that occurred on August 22. Two unknown assailants, physically attacked Boban Stojanović, who as one of the organizers of the Pride Parade, over the years, has often been the target of violence.

According to the latest data, available to the organization “Let it be known”, which records cases of violence and discrimination against people of different sexual orientation and gender identity, five physical attacks happened this year. Out of these 5 attacks, only two were reported to the police indicating a high degree of distrust in state institutions. This is confirmed by the first results of the survey conducted in the first half of 2016 by the Center for Public Policy Research. According to them, a significant number of the interviewed stated they rarely speak to the police because they do not trust the police authorities to react on their report.

We remind that the attacks on activists remain unsolved and the undisputed conclusion is that there is no political will to punish the perpetrators. We urge the society to stand up and rebel against the systematic form of discrimination and the ignoring of violence.



MAŠA MILUTINOVIĆ, the Activist

Pride Parade- an Ongoing Fight

Today we find it unthinkable to stand in line for a visa so we can pop to Budapest. We are so accustomed to the free movement in Europe, that we cannot even remember what life had been like before 2009 and visa liberalization. And yet we are not satisfied, because - well, for Britain still need a visa.

It's the same with pride. We go (or not) to the Pride and whine about how that's just not it: not enough people, the police ... We forget the bloodshed from 2001, the first prohibition of 2009, the chaos on the streets of Belgrade in 2010 and all other prohibitions of which we feared to Midnight Pride 2013.

Still, when I see the pictures of that night, I cannot forget how I felt nauseated because of the ban, how I felt angry, sad and in despair when we learnt that the Pride was banned to be on our national television live and the euphoria and joy when we went out and conquered the streets of Belgrade.

When we said that there is was fear and no surrender. When we said that we had enough of playing by the rules when our rights were violated on a daily basis. When we were afraid and yet emerged. When we shouted that we were Serbian. That we were Serbian. We existed. There are different people and they are not less worthy because of their diversity. But they are less free in the country where we all live in. In a country where they were born.

That evening, we have won the streets of Belgrade and both us and the knew there was no going back,. I know that this year's Pride did not meet the expectations of many, and I'm sorry that there were fewer people than before. Many of my friends stayed at home. My straight

friends. Because they do not want to go to the checkpoints, run into other 4 wall made by guys in uniform.

But this year we made another step. Three years ago, we and citizens were divided by 3 inputs, 3 check ups. Today only one. Three years ago, we stood behind the tanks, surrounded the police, gendarmerie, and this year I stood in front of the police in front of the entrance. With rainbow flags. Without security. Talked with people who passed. Taking flags, although they did not go to the Pride. They waved and said "that's how it should be."

I know that sometimes it seems that the changes are small or that there are not any of them. That things are changing for the worse. Often I think that myself. Then I look back on 2001, 2009, 2010 ... I see the change has occurred. Thanks to all of us.

And as waiting in line for visas is now ancient history to most citizens in Serbia, soon the points - enters to the Pride will be forgotten. As will the fear and the struggle that preceded capturing that freedom. People get used to better things quickly.

Find Us at...

YIHR appreciates very much the efforts of individuals and partner organizations towards a common goal of democratic society where human rights and freedom are respected. That is why YIHR team always joins gladly to all activities of the organizations and individuals who have the same values.



Anti-fascism is My Choice!



Together with Women in Black and My Initiative we have celebrated May 9th - the Day of Victory over Fascism and Europe Day. Anti-fascism became indisputable value of democracy, so May 9th is Europe Day and the day then Hitler's capitulation is marked.

This was, Women in Black demand every year not to relativize anti-fascism and have fascist and anti-fascist put as equals; that State Commission for revealing and marking all secret graves where the remains of the ones of the executed in 1944 are, should be revealed as well as graves of the victims from the nineties; that negating the genocide in Srebrenica should be a criminal act; to mark July 11th as Genocide Remembrance Day in Srebrenica; that the prosecution and state authorities treat with respect threats to citizens especially members of minority groups as serious as physical violence; to forbid all organizations or societies which break or call to breaking human and minority rights, provoke or stimulate inequality, hatred and bigotry based on racial, national, religious, sexual or other affiliation.



Freedom of Expression in the Region

The YIHR was part of this year's POINT 5.0 Conference on May 25th in Banja Luka, which was organized by Internews organization, and "Why not?". As a representative of YIHR, Anita Mitic talked about freedom of speech in the region.

The main conclusion of the session where Anita Mitić spoke was that the increase of auto-censorship in the region is horrifying and that we did not accustom yet to practice culture and democracy tools, being a society which was too long under communist authority. A problem of journalism as a profession was also mentioned and the fact that journalist are very afraid and rarely decide to report truly, being afraid of the consequences..



#PodržiRTV (#SupportRTV)

My Initiative activist were a part of the Support RTV protest on June 13th in Novi Sad.

The staff of RTV started protesting together with citizens after the shift and repositioning of the few editors not long after the elections in Serbia. Staff demanded public explanation why there was such a sudden shift and whether it had any political influence.

Global

YIHR is a part of the network of organizations gathered around the World Youth Democracy Movement. As part of it, YIHR organizes, participates and supports the actions in fighting for better democratic societies all around the world.

Besides, YIHR always tries to support and join other organizations and individuals whose goal is building of democracy, peace and prosperity, respect of all human rights no matter the state they come from.



What do You See When You Look in the Mirror?



A network of organizations and individuals gathered around the World Youth Movement for Democracy marked the International Youth Democracy Day in more than 50 cities all around the world. The goal was to draw attention to young people who have always been the driving force in the process of democratization of society. YIHR marked this day at the plateau in front of the Faculty of Philosophy.

During the break up of the Yugoslavia and transition towards the creation of the democratic society and legal state, young people in Serbia have been left with a long list of problems they face everyday. In order to deal with stereotypes and prejudices in the society, illegal acts of state bodies, the revision of the history and authoritarian tendencies in the society, young people are engaged in different ways in working to promote human rights and democratic values. Često sa malom podrškom okruženja, ali sa velikim entuzijazmom, omladinske organizacije i angažovani pojedinci/pojedinke delujući kako u lokalnoj zajednici, tako i na nivou cele države pomeraju različite granice mišljenja i društvenog delanja.

Their ideas are often disregarded because their youth is presented as inexperience, and the interest for solving some important social problems as criticism without coverage. With such a burden rarely can we find out who the young bearers of ideas that are changing society in the Republic of Serbia are, as well as what kind of obstacles they face while simultaneously fighting for a free and just society.

What stays after the work of young people working for the better society, the individual battles they lead, social background and professional development, no matter the results are often not tangible and are out of the media, is important so that future generations can pick it, understanding motifs and reasons.

These inspirers if the changes and bearers of democracy deserve a day when we will pay tribute to their efforts and tell them they are our heroes. We often forget how much concern, failed attempts, personal questioning and dilemmas are behind a young person who decides to step into the field of activism. What's their motivation? How did they start? Where have they stumbled then started again? What's their end goal?

That is why we asked them- What do you see when you look in the mirror?



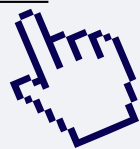


Racial Discrimination on the Labor Market in Europe

YIHR was a part of the research conducted from January to April this year, by the European Anti-racist Movement in order to assess the level of racial discrimination on the labor market in Europe.

Racial discrimination is illegal and it presents a great harm to important values of equality and freedom which should be in the centre values of democratic societies. In time of the social crisis, some people cannot find a job easily, only because of their origin and background, so they are pushed to the margins of society.

The results of the study can be found [here](#).



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Erasmus+ Re-Cycling Program

Activists were part of Erasmus + “Re-Cycling” program which took place on July 22-31, 2016 in the Netherlands. During the lectures and workshops, they had the opportunity to work together with young people from Estonia, the Netherlands, Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina, learning more about climate change and recycling.

The main idea of the program was for young people to find out as much as possible about the best environmental practice protection in order to be able to apply that knowledge in their local communities while meeting their peers from other countries.



International Visitor Leadership Program

Anita Mitić was a part of the International Visitor Leadership Program which implemented by Educational Bureau for Culture and State Department from June 12th to July 3rd.

Throughout the visit to the USA, leaders from all around the world had the chance to build and nurture the relations with their American colleagues, attend meetings in public institutions and private organizations and participate in culture and social activities.

Our New Interns



Eli Bickford:

I am so grateful for the opportunity to intern with YIHR. I have enjoyed my time at YIHR is because I get to be surrounded by incredibly smart, motivated, and courageous activists. I have the privilege of observing and working for a NGO at the forefront of Serbian civil society. Additionally, I have been able to gain valuable practical experience in proposal writing, research, and grassroots activism.

One aspect of my internship which constantly inspires me is the passion that the people at Youth Initiative have for their work. This has certainly been an eye opening and life changing experience.

Sofija Todorović:

Youth Initiative for Human Rights is not an ordinary organization dealing with human rights, but a style of life. I think there is no better dealing than the one of doing what you love, with people who pay a lot of attention to their professional development. Through activism I saw the pragmatic side of the state in our country and region. However, this internship gave a practical side to my knowledge. What I would highlight for this organization are support to the constant education in fields I'm most interested in, such as transitional justice and dealing with the past.



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