

Prepare some sort of a planner or a calendar, let's say, for the year 2000, where the most significant holidays would be replaced by war crimes which took place on those dates, and give it to journalists as a reminder.

Statement: Larisa Inić, Radio Subotica, Serbia, National consultation with journalists, Fruška Gora, Serbia, October 11th 2008.

RECOM commissioners should be reputable individuals. Some of them should be representatives of the government.

That commission (...) will only be interesting for the media if it is made of people recognized in public for their personality, integrity, profession, their career and the positions they hold, regardless of whether they are artists, representatives of the non-governmental or governmental sector, or politicians, but I do believe that both should be members of the commission, but it is a must that government representatives are included.

Statement: Ivana Jovanović, BETA news agency, Serbia, National consultation with journalists, Fruška Gora, Serbia, October 11th 2008.

Positive experiences should be included in public hearings and made readily accessible for the media.

Srdan Aleksić would never make headlines if it had not been for the Civic Vojvodina/ Gradanska Vojvodina who started an initiative to name a street after him. When the then government banned the initiative, the whole story was revealed. So, what we need is an initiative, something really happening (...). You mentioned positive experiences. Journalists did not write about it, but give them an opportunity, at least to some of them, to contact some people.

Statement: Smiljana Milinkov, Radio 021, Serbia, National consultations with journalists, Fruška Gora, Serbia, October 11, 2008.

20. National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders on the Initiative for RECOM

Vukovar, Croatia,
October 24th 2008

The consultation was organized by Documenta (Croatia), the Alliance of Associations of the fami-

lies of detained and missing Croatian homeland defenders (Croatia), and the Mothers of Vukovar Association (Croatia). There were 30 participants, mostly representatives of victims' associations, veterans, and human rights organizations activists. The initiative to create RECOM was presented by Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia), Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), Katarina Kruhonja (Center for Peace, Non-violence, and Human Rights, Croatia), and Mirko Kovačić (Mothers of Vukovar Association, Croatia). Croatian Radio Vukovar, B92 and Vukovarske novine reported on the gathering.

Some participants expressed fear that RECOM will be formed by non-governmental organizations and that documentation collected by various associations over the years might be lost if taken outside of Croatia.

It was clarified during the discussion that the non-governmental organizations are advocating the establishment of the Coalition for creating RECOM and that the commission can only be formed by governments.

Participants of the consultations suggested a more intensive inclusion of veterans and veterans' association in the consultation process.

Veterans are interested in being included in the debate because that could help them dispel the stereotype that all veterans are war criminals. Participants stressed the importance of including all victims as equal and active participants of the consultation process.

The initiative to create the regional commission for establishing the facts about war crimes needs the strong support of associations of victims and homeland defenders.

These three pillars [HLC, Documenta, and RDC] are not sufficient. We need much stronger support for such an initiative and Mr. Ivan Pšenica [Alliance of associations of the families of detained and missing Croatian homeland defenders] and Mr. Mirko Kovačić (Mothers of Vukovar Association) have already told us about the importance of including victims, representatives of victims' associations, and hopefully homeland defenders' associations, and other civil society organizations as supporters of this initiative.

Statement: Katarina Kruhonja, Center for Peace, Non-violence, and Human Rights Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

The Regional Commission must have an office in each state. These offices will perform activities as specified by the regional commission.

In addition to the central office, that regional commission would have an office in each member state. Their job would be to collect data, collect and store documentation on the national level, and direct it to the regional commission which should be able to build a picture of the events from the past based on chronologically sorted data. Where is the regional commission going to be is yet to be determined as a result of consultations and agreements.

Statement: Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

Members of associations of the families of the missing homeland defenders support the initiative to create a regional commission for establishing the truth about war crimes.

I believe that this initiative is good and we are going to join it for one very clear reason: wherever there's talk about missing persons, we are going to be there and help because that is our obligation towards those who are gone, to give them to their families. The fact is that after all these years it is only the families still suffering while our governments pulled out of it a long time ago (...) in spite of the fact that associations of homeland defenders are almost 100% against this initiative, I still believe they are wrong.

Statement: Ivan Pšenica, Alliance of associations of the families of detained and missing Croatian homeland defenders, Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

I support this initiative and I say I wish you would be more successful than those who have worked on it so far on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, and I really want to see some results. That is the most important priority. And all of these families will all accept you and understand you because they have their needs, their children, and they have a life and a way of work different from other associations and needs.

Statement: Štefica Krstić, Association Victims of homeland war, Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

First of all, I would like to give my sincere support to the initiative to create a body like this. We support this initiative because we believe that the government cannot do much without us, citizens (...) I think that without such an initiative, without the inclusion of citizens we cannot do much. People are no longer feeling empathy, everybody's living in fear, we mind our own business and we don't really care too much about the suffering of our neighbours.

Statement: Ljiljana Gehreck from Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

Members of the families of the missing support war crimes trials, regardless of the nationality of perpetrators.

Our opinion is that a war crime perpetrator is a war crime perpetrator, the victim is a victim, and for us they have no other identity. We don't want to segregate people according to some ethnic criteria etc. All crimes are the same for us, regardless of whether they occurred in Srebrenica, Ovčara, Pakrac, Poljana – perpetrators too. We are condemning war crimes and war crime perpetrators and we want them all brought to justice.

Statement: Ankica Mikić, Center for Peace, Legal Advice and Psychosocial Assistance, Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

Associations of homeland defenders do not support the initiative to create the regional commission.

Well, we don't like the idea of giving you everything we have, all documents and data, to carry it to Serbia and use it the way you like, whenever you like.

Statement: Vesna Katić, Widows Association, Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

The coordination of the associations, there are 13 associations, we discussed over the phone this initiative and we don't think it is such a good idea to make that centre in Vukovar. They will most likely reject the idea.

Statement: Slavko Jurić, Coordination of Associations of homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

The European Union should not grant membership to the states who have not solved the issue of missing persons.

We wrote to the European Union officials and to Brussels that, no matter what state is in question, it should not be granted EU membership until the issue of the missing is solved.

Statement: Ivan Pšenica, Alliance of associations of the families of detained and missing Croatian homeland defenders, Croatia, National consultation with associations of the families of the missing and homeland defenders, Vukovar, Croatia, October 24th 2008.

21. National consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM

Podgorica, Montenegro
October 25th 2008

The consultation was organized by Human Rights Action (Montenegro) and attended by 33 representatives of the civil society sector, media, and politicians from Montenegro. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Tea Gorjanc-Prelević (Human Rights Action, Montenegro) opened the consultations. Dan i Vijesti reported on the event.

Participants support the initiative to create RECOM.

After so many years and after all that happened in this region in the area of the activity of the civil society, this is the most significant idea, the project of creating a commission tasked with investigating the events of the past and helping deal with past.

Statement: Velija Murić, Montenegro Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, National consultation with civil society, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 25th 2008.

RECOM can only be a state sponsored project.

It can only be a state sponsored project and not a project managed solely by non-governmental organizations (...) it would never work (...) So, confidence, readiness and determination to undertake such a project, to build a Coalition which will be strong enough to, at a point, exert pressure on institutions in giving us what we need, i.e. to make the whole process a state project, to make the government accept RECOM as its own project, and then, based on our recommendations, we can monitor every step of the way government institutions are undertaking with respect to the creation and operation of such a body.

Statement: Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia,

National consultation with civil society organizations, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 25th 2008.

Political elites are not interested in dealing with issues of the past because of their responsibility for its criminal legacy.

Dealing with war issues here, at the moment, implies dealing with the current political establishment, so that I absolutely understand state institutions which should be doing the job and they do it reluctantly.

Statement: Koča Pavlović, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro, National consultation with civil society, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 25th 2008.

The regional character of the initiative and strong international support will contribute to the acceptance of the idea by the political elites in the region.

The existence of a regional Commission in the Balkans is the only guarantee to the EU that we will not do anything similar in the future.

Statement: Tea Gorjanc-Prelević, Human Rights Action, Montenegro, National consultation with civil society, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 25th 2008.

I also think that a very important aspect is the fact that it is a regional commission. Its regional character will help us overcome our local barriers.

Statement: Koča Pavlović, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro, National consultation with civil society, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 25th 2008.

Although we have heard many limitations, we will be facing in the process of promoting this idea and advocating it in front of those who should make a final decision about it. I think that is a very significant ally in the very process of European integration and the context of a regional cooperation etc.

Statement: Aleksandar Zeković, a researcher of human rights violations, Montenegro, National consultation with civil society organizations, Podgorica, Montenegro, October 25th 2008.

RECOM should be an instrument of the state utilized to free its young people from the legacy of the past.

I think that if we want to create a regional commission, we need to think about how to include the young people in the entire process from establishment to the actual work of the commission. But, the most important question is what to do with all the findings of the commission. I agree with Boris that we should identify the problems first and