

**Statement:** South Africa Work Group, National consultation with young people, Belgrade, Serbia, April 16th 2009.

**RECOM should focus on establishing the facts which can help get a better understanding of the reasons that led to the conflict.**

*It is of vital interest for all in the region to establish objective facts on war crimes and the responsibility of perpetrators, including the responsibility of the international community. Also, it is important to determine the role of each ethnic community that participated in the conflict as well as the role of the international community in preventing or fuelling the conflict.*

**Statement:** Morocco Work Group, National consultation with young people, Belgrade, Serbia, April 16th 2009.

*The Commission should not deal with what caused some of the events but be more focused on facts, because when we know the facts we can reach our own conclusions and realize why things happened the way they did.*

**Statement:** Peru Work Group, National consultation with young people on the initiative for RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, April 16th 2009.

**It is necessary to adopt a witness and victim protection programme that can guarantee identity protection.**

*We should organize public testimonies with possible witness/victim identification protection for those who do not want to disclose their identity.*

**Statement:** Morocco Work Group, National consultation with young people, Belgrade, Serbia, April 16th 2009.

**RECOM should establish a Memorial Day dedicated to all victims and advocate the plan to build a memorial with the names of all the victims fallen in that particular place.**

*[It is necessary] to mark a Joint Memorial Day dedicated to all victims, regardless of their origin. It should be a neutral day, for example the day of the formal creation of RECOM or some other date. Memorials should be built at the places where people lost their lives containing the names of all the victims fallen there.*

**Statement:** Morocco Work Group, National consultation with young people on the initiative for RECOM, Belgrade, Serbia, April 16th 2009.

**It is important to set up a joint, inter-state scholarship fund for the children of the killed and missing.**

*The idea to create a joint, regional scholarship fund for the children of the killed or missing is an excellent idea. The problem in our region is that the governments do not have funds to that, but it is important to plea with good-will people and hope for donations or even the financial support from the European Union to establish such a fund in order to help the victims or their families.*

**Statement:** Morocco Work Group, National consultation with young people, Belgrade, Serbia, April 16th 2009.

## **28. National consultation with associations of victims on the Initiative for RECOM**

Belgrade, Serbia,  
April 25th 2009

The consultation was organized by the Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija (Serbia) and attended by 29 participants, mostly members of associations of the families of the killed and missing from Kosovo and several victims' associations from Croatia. Participants came from Montenegro (11), Kosovo (3), and from different parts of Serbia (14). Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), Milosav Stojković (Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia) and Maja Stojanović (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) opened the gathering. Media Agency FoNet reported on the event.

**Participants National Consultations supported the initiative to create RECOM.**

*I have given it a lot of thought, obviously, considering the seriousness of the problem and experiencing it for ten long years and I decided to support this idea and I do thank Ms. Nataša Kandić for devoting her best energy to making things happen.*

**Statement:** Desanka Pejčinović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*Why RECOM? Because all we hear in this region are lies. And refuting these lies, of course, is one of our goals (...) With RECOM we will build a public platform for the voice of the victims to be heard and through public hearings of victims we will be able*

*to make the public in the region understand and respect the victims, feel solidarity and empathy not only for the victims we already recognize as victims, but also for those we were not able to see in the past (...) For that reason we are going to make a list of victims and human losses and prevent manipulation of the number of victims on any side (...) Because with RECOM we will help Serbia to reveal its secrets and search for mass graves which will ultimately lead to solving the most painful issue of all – the destiny of the missing. Because we will create a better understanding and tolerance, and last but not the least, restore the dignity of victims and their families.*

**Statement:** Milosav Stojković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*It was about time to form such a commission, to make sure we don't forget the crimes committed on our behalf, to make sure we don't forget the criminals who committed them and make sure they are brought to justice accordingly. My heart goes to all victims, Muslim, Croatian, and Serbian alike, but we gathered here today to discuss our victims and give our support to the creation of this Commission hoping that all criminals will be prosecuted accordingly.*

**Statement:** Saša Ristanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Shtërpce/Štrpce, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I must admit that I have been a little sceptical at first about this initiative, but the fact is that the existing associations of victims have lost edge in dealing with these issues. The issue of victims is slowly being forgotten. However, now it seems to me that this initiative brought before us by Nataša Kandić makes a lot of sense and I am willing to give it my full support. Also, I would like to explain that Nataša Kandić pays more attention to arguments versus arbitrary assessments of those who criticize her work and who are dissatisfied and yet never tried to give her any evidence based on which she would either help or refuse to search for truth.*

**Statement:** Marinko Đurić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*It is true that associations lose their edge. These associations are the most reliable source of information since we are direct witnesses and victims at the same time and because these associations are*

*made up of victims' family members, which may be an additional reason to support the creation of RECOM. Also, every government has a commission on missing persons, but there is not a single commission to investigate killed persons. And that should be enough for us to support the creation of this Commission.*

**Statement:** Snežana Zdravković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*If this Coalition for RECOM can prompt institutions which haven't been willing so far to investigate any crimes in Kosovo, then I like this idea, and I personally know who killed my father and because of that man I have not been able to work on my land ever since or go back to live in my house.*

**Statement:** Nenad Popović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**RECOM should provide reparations for victims and tackle the issue of the status and the rights of civil victims of war.**

*I hope that we will all benefit from the work of this commission. First of all, we need to find real instigators of this tragedy and discover the truth about the destiny of our loved ones. Secondly, our families who have suffered enormously should at least partly use the pecuniary aspect of compensation.*

**Statement:** Saša Ristanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Shtërpce/Štrpce, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I think that these are issues of great significance which RECOM should by no means overlook. To be more precise, I will mention housing problems in Croatia. We are being robbed of our property. I don't know the situation in Kosovo but I believe that it is similar, and I believe that RECOM should deal with it.*

**Statement:** Dragan Pjevač, Association of the families of the killed and missing Serbs in Krajina in Croatia, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*It would be good if this commission could work out a plan to compensate those who have lost their loved ones for emotional pain (...) and by all means to deal with the issue of stolen or usurped property. Those who robbed other people of their property should not go unpunished.*

**Statement:** Nataša Šćepanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National Consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*We are very dissatisfied. For the last ten years our families have been asking the same question – why. We know who perpetrators are and still there is no investigation. Why are our victims – civilian victims deprived of all rights? Our government does not treat them as victims of war. For our government they are just killed, missing, or disappeared (...) Ten years later our government is not able to help us with our family problems, leaving it up to us to do it by ourselves. They expect us to say that our kidnapped or killed family members are just dead.*

**Statement:** Desanka Pejčinović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I cannot realize that it has been ten years since we are in the same situation (...) and back then we were told it was only temporary, when we were declared internally displaced persons (...) we don't enjoy our basic rights to enjoy our property, we cannot move freely, we can't go to our birth place, to the place where our children and our ancestors were born, which is our inalienable right.*

**Statement:** Zoran Petrović, Association of the families of the kidnapped, missing and killed in the period from 1998 to 1999 in Kosovo Crveni božur, Montenegro, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I hear that our families staying in Montenegro have another problem in addition to what has already been said – officials of the government of Montenegro direct them to contact the government of Serbia for all issues concerning their status since they are displaced from Kosovo and Metohija and they don't consider themselves responsible for any of their problems. Here in Serbia, they say that they can offer no financing since these families and their associations are registered in Montenegro and they also don't consider themselves responsible.*

**Statement:** Milosav Stojković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**RECOM should investigate a longer time period since crimes also took place after 2001.**

*So, let's make it until 2005, to include the March 17, 2004 violence. That pogrom should never be forgotten because after the horrific events of 1999 came*

*March 17, 2004 and we should not forget it, ever.*

**Statement:** Saša Ristanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Shtërpce/Štrpce Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**RECOM commissioners must be individuals accepted throughout the region.**

*The idea so far is good but I would like this commission to be unbiased, just, and honourable, to be made up of people with high moral values (...) who have never thought evil or done evil. That is important for all of us. Please do not any one person to become a commissioner whose presence will be offensive to any of us.*

**Statement:** Nataša Šćepanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**RECOM should have sub-commissions or offices in all post-Yugoslav states.**

*Are there going to be some sub-commissions, maybe (...) within these regional commissions, let's say for Serbia, for Belgrade, for our victims in Croatia, in Bosnia and so on. I think it will improve the functioning of the main commission.*

**Statement:** Nataša Šćepanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*If sub-commissions are formed, for example in Croatia, they should not deal with Croats only, but with all those who were victimized on that territory.*

**Statement:** Snežana Zdravković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**RECOM should include representatives of the army and the police who have not committed crimes and who can help solve war crimes.**

*They are not all bad and they would like to help establish some facts. There are some members of the police and the military, I think two of them were in Montenegro in 2008, who have not committed war crimes and I think they should be given an opportunity to help solve some of the war crimes mysteries. I am thinking precisely of those who committed war crimes.*

**Statement:** Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.



*I am a retired colonel; I was in a military unit which was deployed to Kosovo and Metohija and I am all too well aware of how difficult it was to remain an honourable man and soldier, and I know how I implemented the orders I received and how I treated everybody, except for the ones up in the sky since I was in the Air Defence Brigade. But my relationship with the people of other faith or nation has never been questioned. So, I know that there are people in my line of work who haven't committed any evil deeds and who can help a great deal.*

**Statement:** Milosav Stojković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

#### **Veterans should not be RECOM commissioners.**

*I think war veterans should not be included as RECOM commissioners (...) Maybe something else, some kind of reconciliation between veterans themselves.*

**Statement:** Lozanka Radoičić, Parents' Association Vera Nada Ljubav, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*Please, be careful, if these veterans were members of the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] they are not acceptable; please make sure you use the same standards because we would all react the same if similar people were included.*

**Statement:** Nataša Šćepanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

#### **Killed soldiers who were sent to war zones without proper written decisions should be treated as all other victims.**

*I cannot stress enough that all the soldiers who were sent to Košare, to Morina and who knows where else in 1998, are also victims. We wrote criminal complaints against generals but this country knows no victims and no responsibility. So, please, help us begin with these victims first because only a handful of people in Serbia knows about how many soldiers and civilians were really killed, not even the people in Kosovo, only those we talk to.*

**Statement:** Lozanka Radoičić, Parents' Association Vera Nada Ljubav, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

#### **All victims must be equal and all should be part of a collective memory.**

*I believe that in Serbia, not to mention other states in the region, not all victims are equal. Some are more important than others (...) with all due respect to victims but some are forgotten and neglected. I think that RECOM can help all victims in the region to get equal status.*

**Statement:** Marinko Đurić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I am asking you on this occasion to help us prevent Serbia kill our dead and our victims one more time. I say that the Albanians killed them when they were alive, and that was something we could not control. But for a state to kill their dead again by silence, that is another murder and an even bigger sin before God and in the eyes of the law which, unfortunately, is not recognized here.*

**Statement:** Lozanka Radoičić, Parents' Association Vera Nada Ljubav, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*Those who would be included in the work of this commission, regardless of their religious and national background, should by all means be careful not to prioritize victims according to their faith and nation.*

**Statement:** Zoran Petrović, Association of the families of the kidnapped, missing and killed in the period from 1998 to 1999 in Kosovo Crveni božur, Montenegro, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

#### **Leaders of associations of victims should circulate news about the initiative for RECOM at meetings with their members. Victims should be actively involved in offering support to RECOM.**

*We mainly socialize with people who have the same problem as we do. Usually families want to close the story. But if they are convinced that RECOM is a good idea and it has an honourable goal, and if it can enable more people to learn about the facts, then associations of families of kidnapped and missing would support it (...) That communication should be better and easier to convey what we are doing here and it is that we want to achieve.*

**Statement:** Gordana Đikanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I expect RECOM to achieve something, not overnight, of course, that is impossible, but little by little (...) It depends on how much all of us are willing*

*to invest in this, we are the fighters now to win as many people to support this idea.*

**Statement:** Desanka Pejčinović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**It is necessary to compile an exact register of all victims, all suffering, and all crimes. RECOM should request UNMIK and EULEX to open their archives.**

*It is absolutely mandatory to ask UNMIK and EULEX to open up their archives.*

**Statement:** Snežana Zdravković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I think that there are no data bases in Serbia at all and those who should be dealing with it are not doing it the way they are supposed to (...) That bothers us a lot and if it is up to different associations to do the job, it will never be done properly.*

**Statement:** Dragan Pjevač, Association of the families of the killed and missing Serbs in Krajina in Croatia, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I must reiterate how important it is to establish a commission that will deal with killed persons and to establish the date a person was killed, kidnapped, how the victim died, every little detail. That is a job only experts can do and I think that such a commission would be of great help in doing that job properly.*

**Statement:** Nataša Šćepanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**RECOM should solve the problem of documenting the death of missing persons.**

*They ask me, a child, what is the date of death. I just shrug my shoulders (...) I don't know (...) they put the date when he was kidnapped. And what about a seven-year-long search? (...) The cause of death in the UNMIK generated documents and in the documents issued by the Institute for Forensic Medicine in Kosovska Mitrovica are not the same. And the date is different. So, the date he was declared missing - 2000, date found - before 2004. It is a long period, and I found out he was dead on February 8th 2007. Until then I suspected he might be dead but without any proof or facts.*

**Statement:** Snežana Zdravković, Association of the families of

the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*My father was kidnapped, later he was found and buried. The death certificate issued in Istok states that he died of natural causes. Can you believe it? What can I do with that paper? I don't have the cause of death; there was no identification and no word about who did it.*

**Statement:** Nataša Šćepanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**An important part of RECOM's activity should be hearing victims. It is necessary to provide for the security and wellbeing of those that testify.**

*I had an opportunity to hear a testimony of a prisoner from Bosnia and the testimonies from people from Kosovo are the last ones I heard. It was truly very impressive how other nations survived (...) We all grieve our loved ones, but when you hear that there are even worse destinies than yours, I guess one not only feels better but understands other better. There is no doubt in my mind that we should do it.*

**Statement:** Marinko Đurić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*There is a big difference between a public hearing and a hearing of victims, as organized within this commission and forum (...) The atmosphere is somehow sad and all, but relaxed. It is not at all to what it looks in a courtroom because here they are all together, the Serbs, the Albanians, the Croats, the Muslims, everybody. If we are ready to do such a thing, whether we are safe at that moment or not, I think we are doing the right thing, fulfilling a goal we set for ourselves.*

**Statement:** Snežana Zdravković, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I think we all owe it to our loved ones. I owe it to my son, to tell the truth (...) The single biggest problem is not fear, but the media which for some reason is not prepared - I don't know why - to write about establishing the truth.*

**Statement:** Lozanka Radoičić, Association Vera Nada Ljubav, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I think that it is up to the associations and their leaders to motivate people to testify. We should disperse our fears and develop awareness that they can help charge and sentence perpetrators of crimes committed against their loved ones and that no one else can do it for them.*

**Statement:** Gordana Đikanović, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

## 29. Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM

Niš, Serbia,  
April 25th 2009

The consultation was organized by the Committee for Civic Initiative (Serbia) and was attended by 30 non-governmental organization activists, lawyers, university professors, judges, and journalists from the Niš region. The discussion was moderated by Danijela Gavrilović (Committee for Civic Initiative, Serbia) and Andrej Nosov (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) and Vehid Šehić (Citizens' Forum of Tuzla, BiH) opened the gathering. The following media reported on the event: Danas, TV Niš, Radio Niš, TV5, and TV Zona.

**Participants supported the initiative to create RECOM and they also advocated the Coalition for RECOM.**

*I guess the whole idea behind this initiative is to make institutions take responsibility which is why they exist in the first place, from legislature to the executive to courts and media, etc. What is the situation like in the military and the police? Who has a final say in these institutions? Those who probably most often abused or manipulated their power in the recent wars. If they feel any remorse, they should come up with some kind of initiative to deal with the past and [establish] justice. What is the situation like in the Academy and our universities? What are the dominating topics at numerous gatherings organized at universities by students and their mentors? And it is not only at the Law School and the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and Novi Sad, it is at all other universities. I cannot give you exact information because I don't do that kind of research, but based on the data I have, I can see what the prevailing topics are at the Faculty of*

*Philosophy and I can see who the participants are. We can hear discussion about the clerical-nationalist and fascist topic as well as rhetoric aimed at protecting war crimes and war criminals. From that perspective I see this initiative as a brilliant idea and I wonder what each one of us can do to help the process.*

**Statement:** Draško Bjelica, Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, Serbia, Local consultation with civil society, Niš, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*I understand this initiative as a response to a need to finally deal with the horrendous damage that was inflicted upon us in the period from early 1990s until the beginning of the 21 century.*

**Statement:** Nenad Popović, Committee for Civic Initiative, Serbia, Local consultation with civil society, Niš, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

**It is important to prepare the public for the creation of RECOM and that job should be done by the media and non-governmental organizations.**

*No matter how you want to do it, I think it is important to wait a little bit and gradually prepare the public, if possible (...) give it proper media attention and coverage, and then create this commission, not some other, but this particular one.*

**Statement:** Dragan Vesić, Al Kanal Media Agency, Serbia, Local consultation with civil society, Niš, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*If the only goal of the commission is to collect information about victims and motivate the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor and the judiciary to start proceedings against perpetrators, then I think the public does not need it. I think that the goal of the commission is conceptualized to face the future (...) If the goal is to create conditions for living better in the future (...) then I think it will be difficult to win over the public (...) We need to have the public on our side somehow, and in accordance with that public position on this issue, we should define the operating procedure, election of members and participation, mandate, public relations, and main pillars of the entire process.*

**Statement:** Gordana Đorić, Committee for Civic Initiative, Serbia, Local consultation with civil society, Niš, Serbia, April 25th 2009.

*Non-governmental organizations should organize an intensive networking of non-governmental organizations to motivate the public in terms of creating the regional commission.*

**Statement:** Semiha Kačar, Sandžak Committee for the Protection