

42. Local consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM

Pejë/Peć, Kosovo,
June 26th 2009

The consultation was organized by the non-governmental organization Syri i Vizionit (Kosovo), and was attended by a total of 34 participants, including representatives from non-governmental organizations, associations of war veterans and the media. The consultation was monitored by four representatives of the Pejë/Peć, Istog/Istok and Klinë/Klina municipal authorities and three representatives of international organizations. Salem Čorbo (Povratak i održivi opstanak Association, BiH), Bekim Blakaj (Humanitarian Law Center, Kosovo), Valdete Idrizi (Community Building Mitrovica, Kosovo) and Veton Mujaj (Syri and Vizionit, Kosovo) opened the consultation. Zeri and TV Dukagjin reported on the event.

A great number of participants supported the initiative for establishing RECOM.

I want to focus on the initiative, which I approve of: I think this is the right moment for civil society to focus on this matter (...) I think we [in Kosovo] are running late in this process compared to Bosnia and Croatia (...) I think this represents one of the solutions for collecting facts in order to direct these facts to the appropriate addresses.

Statement: Elbert Krasniqi, Youth Committee, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

We should really embrace such an initiative (...) God help us that by establishing this commission we start progressing and that (...) people will not be hesitant. I cannot point at a person and say he or she is to be blamed. We talked about the Government of Serbia here; those who killed will definitely not provide evidence. If they were willing, they would not have killed.

Statement: Lale Grabanica, Elena Gjika, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

The Problems faced by disabled war veterans and war veterans must be resolved by law and through institutions.

We have 2,500 killed soldiers of the Kosovo

Liberation Army. We have disabled war veterans, who are neglected by society and who still receive one small percent of compensation. Therefore, war veterans and members of KLA are not covered by the law at all (...) We should institutionalize the search and rehabilitation of war victims: this must be carried out in a lawful, institutionalized manner.

Statement: Pren Marashi, Association of War Veterans, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

If RECOM provides compensation for the violence endured, a positive psychological response can be gained from the victims.

I would not underestimate the judicial or legal effect of this process. The knowledge that someone was freed or compensated for the violence endured can have a considerable psychological impact on a victim: this is of great significance. Justice in a certain way provides an opportunity to close this pain.

Statement: Lulzim Arapi, Association for Psychological and Social Support for Children and Families, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

Participants expressed doubt over the identification of mortal remains, and criticized the manner in which the identification of these remains was conducted.

This is the only concern I present today for the first time. Even though they paid 70,000 marks, even though this person was buried and has a headstone, is the person buried the right person? So, these people we receive, are they who we think they are? Or could it be a completely different person?

Statement: Sabrije Zeqaj, Hendikos Association, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

Victims of sexual violence, including women, require moral support, and must be seen as equal to other civilians before the law: they must have psychological support and the right to reparations. Their decision to testify in public must be respected.

There is a category of war victims: women who suffered sexual violence or any other acts of brutality. When the law regarding civilian victims was passed, we were disappointed because it did not include this category of persons (...) We proposed an amendment to the law enabling these victims in the future to claim reparations and to be morally sup-

ported and recognized. However, no response has been received, even though female members of the parliament were present at this gathering.

Statement: Ilirijana Hoti, Medica Kosova, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

To my knowledge, some non-governmental organizations are actively dealing with this issue. However, there are no official institutions dealing with women victims of rape in comparison to those dealing with participants of the war. [Rape can be described as one of many] syndromes of war, not a syndrome of the Vietnam or Bosnian war alone. There are no institutions here dealing with this issue. And you know that the treatment is very expensive. This is our concern.

Statement: Pren Marashi, Association of war veterans, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

But when we talk about cases of sexual violence, when we speak about women, we also have to respect their reluctance to testify in public.

Statement: Valdete Idrizi, Community Building Mitrovica, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

Conflicting opinions were presented in relation to reconciliation as an objective of RECOM, as well as the task of truth-seeking.

We are not ready for reconciliation, we just want fact-finding. At the same time, the word truth, truth commission, what kind of a truth? Everyone has his or her own version of truth, and that is the reason why we are very careful when it comes to RECOM. It is a regional commission for fact-finding and confirmation of facts about crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and other serious human rights violations (...) We have removed this word [reconciliation] on purpose.

Statement: Valdete Idrizi, Community Building Mitrovica, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

The conceivable objective or purpose of the work done by the commission seems to be reconciliation. I do not wish to speak lightly: however, it is my belief that this issue has negative connotations. The way we can solve our problems is through communication, by speaking about these problems. Maybe commissions like this one could help people open up about their experiences. I think this may have a psychological effect. We call it emotional catharsis; where all these emotional charges are being discharged.

Statement: Lulzim Arapi, Association for Psychological and Social Support for Children and Families, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

People who are here cannot ask for reconciliation because a victim is not looking for reconciliation. Please, make sure that this commission is not looking for reconciliation in the future and must not mention reconciliation because it focuses on victims and victims do not look for reconciliation.

Statement: Pren Marashi, Association of war veterans, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

We should not get involved in politics; we should find the perpetrators of crimes. As for a formal apology, there is time for that. French and Germans waited for thirty years and we might also reconcile after a certain period of time.

Statement: Atdhe Berisha, Kalaja, Kosovo, Local consultation with civil society, Pejë/Peć, Kosovo, June 26th 2009.

43. Local consultation with associations of victims, concentration camp prisoners and NGOs

Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
June 27th 2009

The consultation was organized by the Centre for Civic Cooperation from Livno (BiH) and Solidarity for South from Trebinje (BiH). Out of 10 participants, one was a representative of the Medžlis of Islamic Community Trebinje.⁴ Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Aleksandra Letić (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH) opened the gathering, while Sonja Garić (Centre for Civic Cooperation, BiH) and Stanko Buha (Solidarity for South, BiH) moderated the event. Radio Free Europe and RTV Republika covered the event. The participants⁵ supported the idea of establishing RECOM. EuroBlic, Nezavisne novine Daily and SRNA published articles about the consultation.

The Islamic Community of Trebinje supports the idea of establishing RECOM.

I want to say that I really honestly welcome the organization of this gathering. I support this idea. I signed the joining statement on behalf of the Trebinje Islamic Community Council, which gath-

⁴ The representative of the Medžlis of Islamic Community Trebinje signed the statement on accessing the Coalition for Establishing RECOM on behalf of the Council.

⁵ Some participants had remarks in view of the organization of the consultation, for example, that they were not able to contact the Center for Civic Cooperation because the invitation contained an incomplete phone number. In their opinion, that was the main reason for the poor response of representatives of associations and nongovernmental organizations.