

Development of Leskovac, Serbia, Local consultation with civil society, Leskovac, Serbia, June 11th 2009.

RECOM should not avoid perpetrators. Their confessions are very important.

Victims always have a subjective approach to the event (...) With this regard, we should not avoid perpetrators; we should chase them, go after them and make them confess the crime (...) I do not mean that perpetrators should be involved in this way, but that in the course of the work of the commission, we should also have an opportunity to hear that side, I mean when a victim points a finger at someone, the commission should find this person and continue its research, and obtain at this side information that will give a comprehensive truth.

Statement: Živojin Tasić, literature teacher from Leskovac, Serbia, Local consultation with civil society, Leskovac, Serbia, June 11th 2009.

40. Local consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM

Novi Sad, Serbia,
June 12th 2009

The consultation was organized by Fractal (Serbia) and the Youth Dialogue Programme (Serbia). A total of 18 young people, representatives of non-governmental organizations from Vojvodina, three participants from the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina Youth, and one representative of the province authorities participated in the consultation. Parts of the film *Dealing with the Past: Truth Commissions and Societies in Transition* (examples from South Africa and Morocco) were screened. Marijana Toma (Impunity Watch, Serbia), Mario Mažić (Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Croatia) and Maja Ledenac (Independent Journalist's Association of Vojvodina, Serbia) opened the gathering and Srđan Vezmar (Youth Dialogue Programme) and Filip Pavlović (Fractal) were moderators. Danas and MINA announced the consultation.

The regional approach to fact-finding about crimes is important because of the responsibility we, as a society, bear with respect to victims.

It is very important to establish a commission like this one and establish facts because of the respon-

sibility we have with respect to survivors and all societies we live in. These facts are rather complex and the only way to observe it is to use a regional approach. Focusing on victims in the regional concept erases borders between these victims, makes them equal; and through this, the victims become our responsibility.

Statement: Maja Ledenac, Independent Journalist's Association of Vojvodina, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

RECOM should deal first and foremost with the interests of victims.

There are at least three kinds of interests when it comes to commissions: perpetrators who want to avoid punishment and public humiliation, commissions who would like to play justice and equity, in my opinion, and the victims who want to learn the truth (...) It is very hard to satisfy the interests of all parties involved. I believe that the commission and commissioners should primarily be focused on victims because I believe that their story is of utmost importance.

Statement: Dejan Rašeta, Youth Dialogue Programme, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

The public should be prepared for the establishment of RECOM through learning about examples of positive experiences gained in other societies.

The youth and the public will try very hard to exert pressure: this initiative will then again be left in the hands of institutions, and it is possible that it will be disrupted. I don't know if it can be avoided, in order to prevent this initiative from being left in the hands of politicians and political parties. (...) Better results can be gained by the commission if it gains the support of the public before it is established: public awareness could greatly contribute to the success of the commission. I think this should include the promotion of positive examples from around the world, so that the public can see that justice can be served, and that people can be held accountable for their deeds.

Statement: Ruža Helać, Fund for the Development of the Non-profit Sector in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

I guarantee you that half of the students do not know exactly what Srebrenica represents. Because we, as a civil sector, are informed, we are not aware

of the level of ignorance and lack of information available to the public; we do not know that. That is why the role of the media is so important, and that is why it is of great importance that we broadcast these stories on RTS, on major TV channels, because we must not disregard the lack of information available.

Statement: Ana Marija Popović, Youth Initiative Team, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

It should be a priority of RECOM to deal with journalists who participated in war propaganda.

I think RECOM should also point to the journalists who carried out war propaganda and instigated commission of certain crimes.

Statement: Srđan Vezmar, Youth Dialogue Programme, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

The initiative for RECOM represents an opportunity for each society to correct its mistakes and take responsibility for its actions.

As a matter of fact, I think that one of the main motives for avoiding the process of dealing with the past on a political and international level could be, I dare to say, a certain illusion that the picture of this society and societies in the region could be damaged, thus making a distorted image of the state itself (...) I believe that through recognition of atrocities committed in the past, we will be able to overcome certain problems and gain a level of social maturity.

Statement: Filip Pavlović, Fractal, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

We are considered aggressors and are not looked upon very kindly in the world, i.e. in the media. We should correct our mistakes, and lead by example: others must take responsibility for their own mistakes, and by this I am referring to Croatian mistakes. Hence, we should clean up our own mess first, solve our problems and thus improve the image of our country in the world. By doing this, we would improve the entire situation.

Statement: Mile Novaković, Sigo ando Them Association, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

The most important thing for RECOM is to support victims because institutions cannot ignore them.

This will happen in the moment when associations of victims start to put pressure on the state (...) these are groups of people who you can ignore for some time, but you cannot ignore them completely when they are standing at the doors of institutions and making demands. That is where I really see a possibility for RECOM to prepare for possible problems in the future.

Statement: Marijana Toma, Impunity Watch, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

RECOM should deal with crimes against civilians, disappearances, but also with war crimes committed against prisoners of war.

The focus should be on the missing, but I also believe that it should encompass all crimes. The time period should not exceed three years.

Statement: Jovana Kolarić, a student from Novi Sad, Local consultation with young people in Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

Maybe the mandate of the commission should be narrowed down to certain aspects of crimes because of the limited capacity of our society, so that we would not stretch to all aspects of crimes and accomplish nothing.

Statement: Ruža Helać, Fund for the Development of the Non-profit Sector in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

War is war. There are shootings, there are killing; soldiers attack soldiers. However, when a soldier shoots at a civilian, that is really not humane and I believe there is no excuse for that. Other massacres of civilians should be dealt with first, as well as exhumations of gravesites near Srebrenica and other areas. The commission should put a deadline that should not be too long. I believe that these issues can be solved between one and two years. In my opinion, that is the most pressing issue.

Statement: Mile Novaković, Sigo ando Them Association, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

We shouldn't forget that crimes against prisoners of war are very horrific and that if we focus solely on civilians, then we lose sight of Lora, for example: this represents a huge problem.

Statement: Marijana Toma, Impunity Watch, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

War veterans should be involved in activities concerning RECOM.

My advice for RECOM is to include war veterans because war veterans already cooperate among themselves. Yesterday, Croat war veterans and Serb war veterans had a discussion: and already there is a level of cooperation among them. I think they should also be included because they can provide firsthand [information].

Statement: Nenad Vezmar, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina Youth, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

RECOM should not offer amnesty to perpetrators.

RECOM (...) should disregard amnesties. Because I don't believe that a confession alone should absolve a perpetrator: justice is not served. Because I can't free a man from punishment, not me, not anybody; if he committed genocide against civilians, soldiers, prisoners of war, then I cannot accept anything less than justice. I do not believe that because of an admission of guilt, we should say "Ok, it's forgotten thanks for helping, you are free now". No, he should not be sentenced to 20 years, but he should be sent to jail for five to ten years minimum.

Statement: Nenad Vezmar, League of the Social Democrats of Vojvodina Youth, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

A TV station with regional frequency bands should be established, dealing solely with crimes.

I suggest that you make a regional TV station where only this topic shall be deliberated because, until we have RECOM set up and running, governments may change, we may have a different RTS: programming may be different.

Statement: Nenad Vezmar, League of the Social Democrats of Vojvodina Youth, Serbia, Local consultation with young people, Novi Sad, Serbia, June 12th 2009.

41. National consultation with women's groups

Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo,
June 25th 2009

The consultation was organized by the non-governmental organization Partners Kosova (Kosovo). A total of 24 women's organization representatives participated, in order to discuss human rights and provide support to victims. The film *Dealing with the Truth: Truth Commissions and Societies in Transition* was screened. Shukrie Gashi (Partners Kosova, Kosovo), Nora Ahmetaj (human

rights activist, Kosovo), Suzana Kunac (B.A.B.E. Association, Croatia) and Gazmir Raci, (Pro Peace Platform, Kosovo) opened the gathering.

The majority of participants supported the civil initiative for RECOM and believe that the involvement of institutions in the region is essential.

I want to congratulate you on this initiative. This is a great accomplishment (...) We should look for greater involvement of the parliament, as well as relevant ministries and parliamentary committees. Their participation will bring us to the creation of documents, to the implementation of these documents and the implementation of recommendations.

Statement: Belgjzare Muharremi, Open Door, Kosovo, National consultation with women's groups, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, June 25th 2009.

I received a message today and from now on I will be an advocate of this commission. Why do I say this? First of all, to treat myself because it's been ten years and if we don't meet in one group regardless of the level, we will end up in a war again.

Statement: Sakibe Doli, Safe Home, Gjakovë/Đakovica, National consultation with women's groups, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, June 25th 2009.

One asked a question if it is a good time for establishing RECOM considering the political instability in Kosovo and problems arising in Serbia.

When were these commissions established in other countries? Right after the conflict or sometime after the conflict? Was the conflict over? One of the challenges for establishing this commission or a coalition in general is, for sure, political instability, which at the moment prevails in Kosovo, and problems coming from Serbia perhaps are representative of resistance from certain groups, when we speak about the work of this coalition.

Statement: Eli Krasniqi, a sociologist, Kosovo, National consultation with women's groups, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, June 25th 2009.

The Coalition for RECOM should demand an apology from states that started the wars, especially from Serbia, which would have an impact on the strengthening of victims' trust in RECOM.