

## **National consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative**

Skopje, Macedonia

November 20, 2010

The second consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative in Skopje was organized by Peace Action from Prilep, Macedonia. The gathering was attended by 40 participants from Macedonia. The discussion was moderated by Gordana Duvnjak (member of the Coordination Council of the Coalition for RECOM from Macedonia) and Boro Kitanoski (national coordinator of the consultation process in Macedonia). Representatives of almost all major associations of victims in Macedonia, both Macedonian and Albanian, were present at the consultation.

TV Kanal 5, A1 TV, Alsat-M TV, TELMA TV, Sitel TV, and MRTV reported from the forum.

### **Opinions, Suggestions, and Recommendations of the Participants**

**One of the main issues a regional commission like this should solve is the issue of forcibly displaced persons.**

*I fully support the work of this regional commission and the ZORA Association, regardless of how the commission is going to function or who is going to be in the presidency... will put the entire written and electronic documentation that we have collected in the last 10 years... at the disposal of the commission. With respect to internally displaced persons, I would like to reiterate that there were 76,000 internally displaced persons and now, 10 years later, that number is down to some 600 Serbs, Macedonians, and Roma who are unable to return to their houses. I understand that according to the Preamble of the Draft RECOM Statute this issue is considered to be a serious human rights violation, regardless of the number of displaced persons – individuals or groups that suffered psychological, physical and emotional damages from forced displacement, etc. (Jana Petruševska, ZORA Association of temporary displaced individuals, Aračinovo/Skopje, Macedonia. National Consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative, Skopje, Macedonia, November 20, 2010).*

**The mandate or RECOM should include the war and conflict related events from the period after 2001.**

*In part IV of the mandate, the Goals and the Assignments of the Commission, Article 12, it states there that the period from January 1, 1991 until December 31, 2001 will be investigated. I don't know who and why chose those dates, but I want to remind you that a person who returned home after being displaced was killed in Aračinovo in 2001 and in 2007 24 houses belonging to ethnic Macedonians were burned to the ground. Also in Aračinovo, 50 or so houses were robbed, and 80% of the houses were sold at way below market value. So, this means that in December 2001 the crisis was not over for those forcefully displaced from Aračinovo, Matejče, Lipkovo, and so on. (Jana Petruševska, ZORA Association of temporary displaced individuals, Aračinovo/Skopje, Macedonia. National consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative, Skopje, Macedonia, November 20, 2010).*

*The next important thing is to make a note of the fact that some individuals became victims at the time of the Ohrid negotiations and some became victims after the Ohrid negotiations. I support those who think that the facts need to be investigated. I was a military commander myself, and for the life of me I cannot understand why the conflict happened. (Ilija Nikolovski, Association of veterans for defence and security of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, Macedonia. National consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative, Skopje, Macedonia, November 20, 2010).*

**RECOM should not prevent former members of security agencies from becoming members of the commission.**

*... I would personally like to say that I think it is contradictory to prevent former members of security agencies from becoming members of the commission. Some members of security agencies were honest individuals, fostering high moral standards and I think that this exclusion is an injustice to them. (Strašo Gligorov, Dostojanstvo Association of Veterans, Skopje, Macedonia. National Consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative, Skopje, Macedonia, November 20, 2010).*

**Even if RECOM decides to define the causes (of the war), it does not mean that war crimes are justifiable.**

*So, in other words, there is no justification for war crimes even if RECOM decides to define the circumstances of the war in the former Yugoslavia. It will not necessarily lead to a political debate or a labyrinth. The circumstances were there, they resulted in all those terrible crimes and human rights violations that happened. There is no amnesty, no causes, no justification. So, if we focus on future generations and make sure that the facts are established, I think it will help them set themselves free from the burden of the war. And the commission should definitely focus on the victims of the war. (Dragan Zmijanac, First Children's Embassy, Međaši, Skopje. National consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative, Skopje, Macedonia, November 20, 2010).*

**RECOM could help us establish an accurate number of victims by providing official recognition to all sides in the conflict.**

*Some people here had a hard time establishing who the victims were in the former Yugoslavia. I would quite responsibly say that the all citizens of former Yugoslavia were victims, especially the poorest ones. There were other issues as well, concerning the number of the victims, and therefore I say that I believe everyone who lived in Yugoslavia at the time of those wars was a victim. One side in the conflict claims that they know the number of the killed and accuses the other side for hiding the number of victims. I guarantee that the other side also has all the necessary information, first and last names and everything else. It takes two sides for a conflict. The Albanian side to the conflict in Macedonia still does not have an institutional treatment from the government. All until that happens, I don't know how these numbers will be treated and I urge the commission to solve this issue. (Raim Limani, ONA (UÇK) Association of veterans Raduša, Macedonia. National consultation with civil society groups on the RECOM Initiative , Skopje, Macedonia, November 20, 2010).*