

can we hope to reach at least a little bit of truth and justice.

Statement: Lush Krasniqi from Korenicë/Korenica, Kosovo, National Consultation with civil society, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 6th 2008.

Youth organizations activists and lawyers who took part in the consultations strongly supported the fact-finding process. They suggested that future consultations include amnesty-granting options in attempting to find the truth. RECOM should have a time-limited mandate.

It would be really good if we could grant amnesty to certain persons because sometimes it is even more important to reach the truth than to bring a person to justice. Secondly, I don't want this commission to have too long a mandate. I'd rather this commission would achieve its objectives as quickly as possible in order to come to know the truth.

Statement: Milot Berisha, Human Rights Initiative, Kosovo, National Consultation with civil society, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 6th 2008.

14. National consultation with associations of victims on the Initiative for RECOM

Belgrade, Serbia,
July 15th 2008

This consultation was organized by the Humanitarian Law Center (Serbia). The consultation represented the first preparatory meeting with associations of victims in Belgrade on which occasion the Admission Statement for joining the Coalition for the creation of the Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes (RECOM) was presented to participants. The Admission Statement will be the basis for the consultation process in the future. The participants were also shown a video recording of consultations held in Podgorica on May 9, 2008 during which the initiative to create RECOM became official. The consultations in Belgrade were attended by 16 representatives of associations of victims and five monitors. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Lidija Škaro (International Commission for Missing Persons, BiH) opened the consultations.

Participants supported the initiative to create a regional commission and they expressed beliefs that it would be very helpful for victims.

I salute the initiative to create a regional commission and I want it to be as soon as possible, to do something and to do it fast.

Statement: Olgica Božanić, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

I entirely support the work of this commission to finally do something which would help reveal the truth about all victims, regardless of their religion or nationality and establish the responsibility of all those who contributed to the suffering, again, regardless of religion or nationality. I guarantee it with my life that many Serbs will criticize this idea or this initiative, but when we stand behind this commission no one in Serbia will have to voice their disapproval because it is us who lost their loved ones. I am positive that on the territory of Serbia and Montenegro we will be able to collect 400 000 signatures for the commission.

Statement: Simo Spasić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is in the effort to create this regional commission that I can see a more durable communication between victims and associations of victims from the former Yugoslavia and it seems to me that in reality it is really necessary to achieve that kind of regional connection and a jointly organized search for the missing. No other consultations so far, no other gathering with journalists, human rights organizations, young people, artists, or writers, was so unambiguous about and so full of support for the initiative to establish the facts about war crimes and clarify the destiny of the missing as the consultations with victims and associations of victims.

Statement: Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

We are all unanimous in supporting the creation of the regional commission and everything it should do in solving the crimes and bringing perpetrators to justice. Victims' families support all that.

Statement: Milorad Trifunović, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

I believe that the regional commission can obtain a large number of documents we have all been trying to get but without success.

Statement: Negovan Mavrić, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in

Hoçë e Madhe/Velika Hoça, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is necessary to prepare mechanisms for influencing governments in the region to accept the creation of the regional commission. It is also important to define the relationship between the regional commission and state institutions.

I think it is a very good initiative and I think that a regional approach can yield significant results. However, we have to be aware of the circumstances we live in and understand that many governments in the region still hold national interests beyond the rule of law principle. I don't know if you can assume the kind and the scope of problems you will be dealing with in the future, but it is absolutely necessary to prepare ahead of time mechanisms for pressuring the governments refusing the commission as an organization tasked with establishing the facts.

Statement: Srđan Popović, Fractal, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

There are many unsolved issues in this region due to a lack of political will to do so and for that reason we have to support all positive initiatives (...) Why is it so slow? It is slow because there is no political will and because the governments are very influential in this area. The question is (...) what kind of a relationship with the commission has with institutions taking into consideration the abundance of information that institutions have control of.

Statement: Čedomir Marić, Association of the families of the killed and missing Serbs in Krajina in Croatia, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

Election criteria for members of the commission must be clearly defined. Members must be courageous people capable of standing up against all who try to obstruct their work.

It is very important to define election criteria for the members of the commission, whether they will have legal background or be experienced in working with associations of the kidnapped and killed.

Statement: Srđan Popović, Fractal, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

Members of the commission should be strong and courageous persons able to confront all negative powers in the search for justice for us, victims of crimes, in the search for perpetrators of crimes and their archives (...) Soldiers made video footage with cameras; they have documentation on all people

who were found dead. And I guarantee that they have their archives and their documentation and they took it home and they only know what purpose will that serve.

Statement: Milorad Trifunović, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is necessary to start solving the issue of missing persons as soon as possible because witnesses and their family members are dying.

It is necessary to start solving the missing persons issue as soon as possible. We all have a feeling that this is dragging on and it suits many that it is being so procrastinated. We are getting older and many are dying and it seems highly incredible that in the third millennium this problem cannot be solved quickly and efficiently.

Statement: Olgica Božanić, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

Contradicting opinions were heard about whether the regional commission should cooperate with those who participated in the wars conducted on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

This commission should not include veterans simply because it would have a negative effect on the families. I know that you say that they did not commit crimes, but clearly no one can prove that somebody did or did not commit a crime without a trial (...) I claim responsibly that the commission cannot come into being, especially in Serbia and in Montenegro, those signatures cannot be collected if war veterans are not excluded from the concept.

Statement: Simo Spasić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

There were people who spent many sleepless nights for being forced to take part in war crimes, because they were forced by the power of the state and legal system against their will. I understand completely your emotions, but we cannot deprive ourselves from valuable information they can provide about hundreds of innocent victims who died in burning houses.

Statement: Dragan Sekulović, Center for Communication Pravda - Association of the refugees and forcefully displaced persons from Croatia, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, July 15th 2008.

By establishing the facts about war crimes the commission will protect new generations by removing the burden of the past from their shoulders.

They took our lives by starting that war. By disclosing the truth about who took our lives and who killed our sons, mothers, and everybody else, we will protect the young people who should not be carrying that burden.

Statement: Dragan Pjevač, Association of the families of the killed and missing persons in Krajina in Croatia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is necessary to form a public relations team in order to bring the truth about victims to the public. Findings of the commission can be presented to a parliamentary committee.

I would like to stress that it is very important to have a public relations team which will inform the public by the calendar of events about the facts about victims and perpetrators. We are here, talking to ourselves but the public must always be informed about what we are doing and they must at least hear one story told here. And, all this should be presented to a parliamentary committee.

Statement: Žanka Stojanović, Parents in Black Association, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

The commission should form a team tasked with locating witnesses.

It is necessary to form a team for locating witnesses. They are willing to talk. I spoke to two young men from Kraljevo and they wanted to talk because even today they cannot sleep at night because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Statement: Žanka Stojanović, Parents in Black Association, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

There can be no reconciliation in the region until all victims are granted judicial satisfaction.

Direct perpetrators of war crimes and those responsible according to the command responsibility doctrine will be tried before the ICTY, before international war crimes trial chambers in Kosovo, before the Court of BiH, and before national courts in Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia (...). All those responsible for Croatian, Bosniak, Muslim, and Albanians victims, from top to bottom of the chain

of command, including heads of state and generals of Serbian nationality, they were all sent to The Hague and some are even dead. So it must be easier to the families of these victims to see those responsible for their suffering being brought to justice. Now, on behalf of the families of the killed Serbs, Roma, Goranci, Turks, and Albanians, I tell you that there can be no reconciliation or forgiveness or our life together until the families of victims of Serbian nationality are not given the same treatment.

Statement: Simo Spasić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo nad Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

Associations of victims can help the commission a great deal by collecting information and testimonies about crimes. It is necessary to prepare them for that job by providing adequate training and equipment.

Since we have a lot of documents and victims associations are not quite up to it, maybe associations can be assisted in order to collect higher quality information. We need to be trained to do it properly and we need to make sure what we have will be admitted in a court of law as a valid and useful document. The best thing that associations of victims can do to help the commission, when it starts functioning, is to give testimonies because the problem is that many victims have died. However, many families repeat their stories and they don't have the strength to go through it again and we need to document it and record it permanently.

Statement: Dragana Đukić, Association of the families of the killed and missing Serbs in Krajina in Croatia, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

We talked here about the people known to have committed crimes who are still at large or those who have not been adequately sentenced. If you give up on it, it will be over. You are the main force of this process, your organizations. You can finish the process.

Statement: Aleksandra Stojanović, Centre for Civil Society Development, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is mandatory to clearly define the type of crimes the commission will deal with.

What is a war crime? Kidnapping, killing, organ harvesting are obvious crimes but what about depriving one of the right to home, freedom of movement, status rights, the right to a private property? We need

to be crystal clear on these issues, to determine what kind of crimes are going to be our priority and where we should focus.

Statement: Dragan Sekulović, Center for Communication Pravda - Association of the refugees and forcefully displaced persons from Croatia, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is necessary to promote the commission in public as soon as possible. It is also necessary to demand the support of the international community for its establishment.

It is necessary to promote the commission right away. We have to pave the road for it, we have to prepare the public for such a concept and let the public say we need it. We have to jump one stone at a time.

Statement: Dragan Pjevač, Association of the families of the killed and missing persons in Krajina in Croatia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

The commission should be formed as soon as possible and it must be supported by the European Union and the European Parliament and the Security Council of the United Nations. If it does not have that kind of support, the commission will have no influence at all and it will not be able to work.

Statement: Milorad Trifunović, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is necessary to make a documentary about all victims in the region.

I suggest that a documentary about all victims in the region is made, where representatives of victims' family members will speak and where their stories will be corroborated by video recordings from the area they are talking about. That documentary should be aired on all TV stations so that the public knows what our goal is.

Statement: Olga Božanić, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, July 15th 2008.

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

Zagreb, Croatia,
July 16th 2008

Documenta (Croatia) organized the consultation. A total of 29 representatives of civil society in

Croatia attended the gathering. Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Croatia) and Eugen Jakovčić (TV Jadran, Croatia) informed the participants of the present course of the consultation on of truth-seeking, initiative for establishing the regional commission, and the establishment of the Coalition for Support for Establishing the Regional Commission. It was announced that the coalition would be officially presented at the Fourth Regional Forum on Transitional Justice in Prishtinë/Priština in October 2008.

All participants supported the regional approach stating that it represents the only possible way to establish all facts about war crimes and the fate of the missing.

They underlined the significance of collecting information about all victims of war and the necessity to prosecute war crimes. They also expressed their concern about slow investigations and always present ethnic bias in prosecution of war crimes.

It was concluded that the initiative should encompass as wide a circle of civil society organizations as possible and that support for the initiative should be sought at local levels as well. With this regard, presentations, promotions and campaigns for the initiative should be organized and organizations at the local level should be linked and involved.

Participants also asked if the initiative should be placed in a wider context and if the European Union, OSCE, and International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia should be involved in the process as well.

16. National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM

Ivanjica, Serbia,
September 21st 2008

Young people support the regional initiative for establishing the facts about war crimes and they believe RECOM should be established as an official commission.

The regional commission must be free from bias and strictly objective in its work and the process