

*but they can also help with the process of dealing with the past because of their enormous influence. That is why I think they should be included in the consultations process.*

**Statement:** Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

## 26. National consultation with students on the Initiative for RECOM

Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo,  
April 15th 2009

The National Consultation with students on the initiative for RECOM was organized by the non-governmental youth organization Integra Association (Kosovo) and was attended by 40 students and three monitors, members of associations of victims' families. Four panellists, Kushtrim Koliqi (Integra Association, Kosovo), Shukrie Gashi (Partners Kosova, Kosovo), Bekim Blakaj (Humanitarian Law Center, Kosovo), and Ivan Novosel (Legalis, Croatia) gave their introductions as specified by the agenda. KosovaPress was the only media house that published an article on this event.

### Participants supported the initiative for RECOM and the regional approach to the entire process.

*We truly hope that this Coalition for RECOM will be successful and we hope it will be created soon and mobilize all its forces (...) I want one more time to ask you to approach the whole issue very seriously and I hope you will be lucky enough to go on with this Coalition.*

**Statement:** Besart Metaj, a student, Faculty of Law, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*In my opinion there should be a deeper cooperation in the region and it should be designed as an inter-state cooperation because our main interest is to find war crimes perpetrators and bring them to justice.*

**Statement:** Ylber Maxhuni, Youth Step Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Up until this moment, ten years after the conflict, there were only two war crimes trials which were brought to an end with final decisions handed*

*down by international judges here, in Kosovo. The sentences were disappointingly low from the point of view of the victims' family members. And that is why such a commission is needed.*

**Statement:** Bekim Blakaj, Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*There is one war crime perpetrator in common for all of us, and I am talking about the same people who committed crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and here in Kosovo. That is why I believe it is necessary to cooperate because any help coming from any part of this region is very important.*

**Statement:** Edmir Sejdiu, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

### It is necessary to establish the facts about all crimes committed in Kosovo and the process should begin with victims and their testimonies while the judiciary from Kosovo and Serbia should process war crimes perpetrators.

*There have been many crimes in Kosovo, various massacres and so on, but we need evidence for all that, it is necessary to find perpetrators of these crimes but not every time by balancing perpetrators with those who suffered the crimes. They cannot be put in the same category.*

**Statement:** Lavdim Rizani, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Many perpetrators of more or less serious war crimes, murder, violence, and other kinds of crimes, are still at large living a normal life. They must be identified and they should be confronted with the facts. Victims are the facts against the perpetrators which is more or less the underlying concept of this commission. It is necessary to know what to do, to know names, to find evidence, to know all the events important for the commission, to know what happened.*

**Statement:** Kushtrim Koliqi, Integra Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Our job is to establish facts and present them to the authorities, and it is up to Serbian society, the Serbian government and our government to identify groups which were active in the region and within these groups to identify those who committed war crimes.*

**Statement:** Ylber Maxhuni, Youth Step Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Victims reluctantly give their accounts of the events because society has distanced itself from the problem and it is not searching for ways to include the victims in this process. The commission should know what its goals are, where to go and who to ask for information or help, instead of knocking on the wrong door. It is much better to make smaller and safer steps and know what we need to research and get a better understanding of the problems victims are facing because they do not have a clear picture of what happened.*

**Statement:** Shukrie Gashi, Partners Kosova, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**All victims must be listed and RECOM must establish their exact number.**

*Each victim has a first and last name, each victim has dignity and personality. And we can't let people say one or two hundred thousand, they can't say one or two hundred people, one hundred or one hundred and one victims. Simply, victims must have a first and last name. They must be here, they must be recognized.*

**Statement:** Ivan Novosel, Legalis, Croatia, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**It is necessary to give priority to elderly victims and witnesses because facts may be lost or forgotten once they die.**

*And what will happen to victims and those who eye-witnessed massacres, and who are now very old, having in mind that with each passing day they have more psychological and mental issues and less memory and some die as the time goes on. Don't you think that when they're gone the facts disappear.*

**Statement:** Besart Metaj, a student, Faculty of Law, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*I think that is a very good idea to give priority to the elderly and re-take their statements again if they are able to repeat what they already testified about. A video recording of their testimony could be a welcome addition to the set of tools used by RECOM in this process.*

**Statement:** Naser Lajqi, Syri i Visionit Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**RECOM should also tackle the issue of political prisoners.**

*Victims who can offer direct evidence for each war crimes trial or against the state that conducted criminal activities which are not encompassed by any of existing international conventions are political prisoners (...) I personally think that the commission or somebody else should by all means tackle political prisoners.*

**Statement:** Liridon Jetishi, a student, Faculties of political science and law, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**RECOM should be independent from any form of political pressure in publishing its findings.**

*How successful can such a commission be in such a volatile political situation, when old national passions are still being encouraged by all parties involved in this situation, victims and perpetrators alike, and when we are well aware that in order to succeed in publishing the facts about the crimes from the past, it is necessary to achieve good cooperation among all parties.*

**Statement:** Kristijan Hasani, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**The civil sector should cooperate with courts in Kosovo and with EULEX mission to Kosovo which is able to influence the government.**

*There are numerous facts obtained from victims of war, but what happened to those facts and how much did UNMIK judges who cooperated with our local judges really do? What this coalition should do is ask the judiciary, or now EULEX, to create a separate judiciary to deal with these facts. And we, as civil society, should take the facts presented by the victims, compile reports which we will review and determine whether they were included.*

**Statement:** Naser Lajqi, Syri i Visionit Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**Memorials being built far from the places where crimes took place are adding insult to injury for victims.**

*I am taking the Dubravë prison as an example. When we went to visit the prison, half of us regretted going there because the massacre took place inside the prison and the memorial was built on a meadow. Who needs a memorial on a meadow,*

*who did they make it for? A memorial should be built at the very spot where the crime took place, it only takes one square meter, and I hope we can afford it.*

**Statement:** Bledon Jetishi, a student, Faculty of Law, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**It is necessary to inform victims and civil society on the initiative for RECOM and later on about the activity of the regional commission. Cooperation with regional media outlets will be of great importance.**

*Facts and arguments are in place, but they exist in silence, they seem to be unable to find a way out. Victims' family members are the determining factor in collecting these facts and they don't even know that this process is underway, that it is going on. In a way, the fact that we can speak openly and have a place to have these debates is a sure step forward, but the cooperation with the media can probably have the most significant impact on the families of victims because they still have a feeling that their stories are just an echo.*

**Statement:** Florentina Hajdari, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*The media are paying more attention to other less important issues instead of trying to shed light on the events from our recent past and inform the general public. Specifically, I think, and I am almost positive that my colleagues also share my opinion, is that our main problem is a lack of cooperation with the media.*

**Statement:** Naim Maxhuni, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

**It is necessary to reduce the level of animosity between different ethnic groups in the region and prevent generalization of crime as well as laying the blame for individual criminal acts on the entire nation.**

*If we tell the Serbian people that they are all criminals, or if they tell us that we, Albanians, are all criminals, I think it will be an ideal breeding ground for hatred between the two ethnic communities. What we need to do is identify perpetrators of each and every crime committed in Kosovo.*

**Statement:** Naser Lajqi, Syri i Visionit Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Kosovo, Prishtinë/Priština, April 15th 2009.

*How can we achieve something like that when we know that we grew up in an atmosphere that we have enemies? Our enemies, the Serbs, have instilled in us hatred for them. And something else, too: how can we even begin to think that we have no enemies when we are growing up in such an atmosphere?*

**Statement:** Lirie Avdiju, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*In order to cut this revanchist policy short and in order to be able to make space to plant a garden of friendship and not of hatred in our community, we should do the opposite. At this moment we have to forget the past hoping it does not happen again and turn towards the future which is creating conditions for a favourable climate to develop the idea of creating RECOM.*

**Statement:** Shukrie Gashi, Partners Kosova, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

## 27. National consultation with young people on the Initiative for RECOM

Belgrade, Serbia,  
April 16th 2009

National consultation with young people on the initiative for RECOM was organized by the non-governmental organization Fractal (Serbia) for 31 college and high school students, members of Fractal (Serbia), Civic Initiative (Serbia), and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (Serbia). They debated the issue in four work groups which created a set of suggestions, conclusions, and recommendations. The consultation was opened by Shukrie Gashi (Partners Kosova, Kosovo), Andrej Nosov (Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia) and Filip Pavlović (Fractal, Serbia).

**Participants support the establishment of RECOM. Students, youth, NGO activists ought to have an active role in advocating the establishment of RECOM, and help implementing the activities of the commission.**

*We believe that this initiative is extremely important and for that reason we intend to give it our best effort both as organizations and as individuals gathered around these organizations and help*