

Consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative

Prizren, Kosovo

February 24, 2010

Local consultations with civil society organizations were organized by the non-governmental organization Fisnikët and the gathering was attended by 41 participants and 11 observers from Prizren, Mališevo/Malishevë, Vuçitër/Vushtrri, Kruševa/Krushevë, Orahovac/Rrahovec, Dragaš/Dragash, and Uroševac/Ferizaj. The following media reported from the session: the *RTV Deutsche Welle*, *RTV Kosova*, *RTV Prizren*, *RTV Besa*, and *RTV Opinion TV outlets*; *Koha Ditore* and *Kosova Sot* daily newspapers, and Radio ROA. The introductory speech was given by Nora Ahmetaj (Center for Research, Documentation, and Publishing, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo) who spoke in the session titled 'Information on the course of the consultation process in the post-Yugoslav states and comparison with experiences of other societies in the process of establishing the facts from the past', while Besarta Vasija (Humanitarian Law Center, Kosovo, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo) moderated the discussion. At the end of the consultation 23 participants joined the Coalition for RECOM.

Opinions, Suggestions, and Recommendations of the Participants

The word 'conflict' should be replaced with the word 'war' wherever possible.

The word 'conflict' should be replaced with the word 'war' because we all know that in reality it was war, both in Kosovo and on the territory of other states that came into being after the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. I think we should use the word 'war' on every occasion. (Hamit Ademaj, president of the Association of the families of fallen Kosovo Liberation Army Veterans, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

RECOM must investigate the period starting as early as 1974.

...the commission must find a way to investigate human rights violations that happened long before those of the 1990s, because we should deal with the year 1980 and also 1974. [ethnic]Albanians have been continuously abused and their human rights have been violated.

(Ejup Kabashi, president of the Association of War Veterans. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

The commission should investigate events from as early as 1987/1989.

With respect to the circumstances in Kosovo, I think that the year when Kosovo's autonomy was abolished is the most appropriate start of the period of time that needs to be investigated. So, I would start from the year 1987 or 1989. (Vildane Minci, Swiss Caritas, Prizren, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

RECOM's headquarters should be outside of the former Yugoslavia.

I think that RECOM's main office should be in a place from where it would be easier to exert pressure on parliaments, a place where the influence of international politics is the most intense. (Ejup Kabashi, president of the Association of war veterans. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

RECOM's main office should be in Slovenia.

I think that RECOM's main office should be in Slovenia. (Nazim Bahtiri, Youth Step, Vučitrn/Vushtrri. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

RECOM's main office should be somewhere in Europe.

...I think that RECOM's main office should be somewhere in Europe, maybe in Brussels. (Qerim Bajrami, Selam, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

Members of the commission should be individuals from the RECOM Initiative.

Who should we elect as members of the Commission? ...I think that it would be good if members of the Commission are the same individuals included in the whole Initiative for RECOM process. Those individuals are the worthiest representatives of the entire process. (Haqif Ilazi, Association of Political Prisoners, Prizren, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

RECOM should be mandated to investigate the participation of state institutions in war crimes.

I think that I have seen somewhere in the document that RECOM's mandate, in addition to all other important assignments, will also allow investigation into the participation of representatives of state institution in war crimes. I think that is of key importance. (Qerim Bajrami, Selam, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

The commission should have a number of different sub-commissions.

The Commission should have separate sub-commissions, such as one for victims, one for political prisoners, one for missing persons, one for sexual abuse during the war and a special sub-commission for the financial compensation of victims of war crimes. (Azem Pula, Association of Invalids of War, Prizren, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

RECOM should be mandated to collect information from war crimes perpetrators.

...I don't think it is unacceptable to conduct interviews with war crimes perpetrators for the purpose of obtaining information about (other) war crimes. (Ejup Kabashi, president of the Association of war veterans. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

War crimes perpetrators must be given an opportunity to testify and repent for their wrongdoings.

When it comes to war crimes perpetrators – whether they should testify or not - I think they ought to be given an opportunity to testify but only if they have previously repented for their wrongdoings. (Bylbyl Duraku, Association of Political Prisoners, Prizren, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

War crimes perpetrators who have demonstrated repentance for their misdeeds should not testify.

I respectfully disagree with my colleague – I think that war crime perpetrators who demonstrated repentance should not testify – I think they should be tried. (Azem Pula, Association of Invalids of War, Prizren, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).

Those who provide information concerning war crimes victims and war crimes perpetrators should be rewarded.

...I think that the Commission needs to find a way to reward those who provide information concerning war crimes victims and war crimes perpetrators. If not, everybody will keep their information to themselves. (Azem Pula, Association of Invalids of War, Prizren, Kosovo. Local consultation with civil society on the RECOM Initiative, Prizren, Kosovo, February 24, 2010).