

Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice

Working Group IV: Public Advocating for RECOM

October 17, 2010

Zagreb, Croatia

The key note speakers at the Working Group IV session were Lazar Stojanović (Humanitarian Law Center, Belgrade, Serbia), Dinko Gruhonjić (Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia), and Gordan Bosanac (Center for Peace Studies, Zagreb, Croatia). The Working Group session was attended by 40 participants and two observers: Jonathan Sisson (Swiss-peace, Switzerland) and Admir Duran (Impunity Watch, Serbia).

Opinions, Suggestions, and Recommendations of the Participants

Citizens should be informed about the ideas of the Initiative for RECOM

I would like to comment on something that Mr. Stojanović said earlier – at one point Mr. Stojanović said that it was not important for citizens to have in-depth knowledge about RECOM's ideas, saying that specific target groups were more important. I wouldn't necessarily agree with that because we may end up being in a situation that this whole thing happens, that the Commission is established and that it publishes its final report, but it fails to produce the effects we have been hoping for all along. (Milan Cakić, Civic Initiatives Committee, Niš, Serbia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

I think that it is necessary to carefully think it over and explain to the public why the Coalition for RECOM wants to collect one million signatures. People who will be standing in public places collecting signatures will be exposed to all sorts of humiliations and de-motivating moments. They will have to know at all times why they are doing that so that they are able to communicate with people. (Marina Škrabalo, Center for Peace Studies, Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

I think we need to properly prepare activists in the “One Million Signatures for RECOM” campaign to be able to use the campaign not only for collecting the desired symbolic number of signatures but to obtain at least a million followers who will tell others about the ideas we are advocating. (Zlatko Vujović, CEMI, Podgorica, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

There should be two different campaigns – one directed at the public and one directed at decision-makers. The campaigns need to be more aggressive. A lot of attention needs to be paid to strategic planning because the campaigning will be conducted in seven states.

When a campaign is directed at decision-makers, at politicians, it is important that it is accompanied by appropriate messages. A different campaign and different messages should be used in approaching the public. (Marko Veličković, Center for Development of Civil Resources, Niš, Serbia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

*In my opinion the campaign should be more aggressive. It should be more aggressive in terms of public media presence and also in terms of its contents. **The campaign should not be offensive with respect to victims, their families, and other citizens of the war-torn region.** Secondly, many of you mentioned young people and I can just add that **I think that young people, especially high-school students have been egregiously left out of the campaign.** (Tomislav Dujmović, Center for Peace Studies, Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

The more I think about your proposals, the more I am convinced that because inter-ethnic relations are at a shockingly low level, **the RECOM campaign should be shockingly graphic.** Something similar to the traffic safety campaign which was intensely promoted by showing shockingly atrocious pictures of people who were killed in traffic accidents because they ignored traffic safety rules (...) Just an idea – maybe in one of the video-spots for RECOM we should feature a Chetnik inviting Croats to deal with the past and once the whole of Croatia and all associations are driven into a frenzy, we should start explaining what RECOM is. (Srđan Antić, Nansen Dialogue Center, Osijek, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

***The organization I come from, Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo, organized an interesting event on August 30, 2010, the International Day of the Disappeared at the central square in Priština/Prishtinë. We staged 400 pairs of shoes on the square and many passers-by stopped to look at the shoes and sign the petition. All those who stopped were very emotional and it did not take any convincing them to sigh, they just did it (...) That may be an idea to consider. I am sure that a number of provocative events should be included in the signature collecting campaign.** (Raba Gjoshi, Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

*We seem to be forgetting a very important fact: **we have seven different markets to deal with.** There are seven different markets that can be divided into segments or, as people in the marketing business like to say, into “x y” target groups. Everybody will express their preference, people from Osijek will say this, those in Slovenia will say that, and Kosovo will say something quite different and we will have to pay attention to that. For that reason I think that in the next two steps **we need to pay attention to strategic planning of the campaign.** (Tin Nuić, Risol Media, Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

Young people are an important target group.

***It is much easier to approach college students and therefore I agree that the campaign should be not more aggressive, but more intriguing. It has to provoke a reaction.** (Mladena Tadej, Documenta, Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

*I think that in terms of strategic planning, **it may be a good idea to approach younger politicians in the initial lobbying stage**, those who are not too influential in the society but who have a certain reputation and influence in their political parties and who are able to approach the true decision makers and convey the message in a way we can't. (Mladena Tadej, Documenta, Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

*(...) I think that it is necessary to **wrap up the story of war crimes in pop culture forms and then present it to young people**. (Danilo Marunović, director, Podgorica, Montenegro, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

***It is necessary to produce two video spots. One of them should be directed at younger audiences.** Today, young people do not want to listen about war crimes. The war was over 15 years ago and you can't direct their attention to war crimes stories. They have different opinions and they look at things from a different perspective but it has to be clear to everyone that they are the most significant audience RECOM is turning to (...) What I want to suggest is something that is quite inexpensive and quite feasible: **a short film festival** which will promote RECOM. It is not a big cost for RECOM. People will do it themselves. Just give them the terms, explain your goals, and they will do it. Also, we need an exhibition of paintings that will be shown throughout the entire region. (Radomir Jagodić, Izbjeglika/Refugee non-governmental organization from Rudo, BiH, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

*(...) **What we have to keep in mind is that our priority number one is to deal with young, completely lost, uneducated, uninspired, and unmotivated audiences.** And we mustn't forget that they are the majority. People who don't know anything, people who don't read newspapers, they have no vision, and who have completely forgotten what happened in Vukovar. (Drago Pilsel, free lance journalist, Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

A public opinion poll on RECOM should be conducted.

*(...) **a public opinion poll on RECOM can be very significant. It can be a powerful instrument of pressure** because in public opinion poll you can ask a question you want if you know that such question will be answered in a manner favourable for you. That is how you can create results much more significant than one million signatures you collected. So, if in each post-Yugoslav state 40% of poll participants say that it is necessary to mention each crime and each victim by name, regardless if it will be done by a commission or some other body, you will create an atmosphere of public pressure that politicians will unmistakably understand. (Marko Veličković, Center for Development of Civil Resources, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).*

***I am also very much in favour of conducting public opinion polls in post-Yugoslav states.** I think it is very important primarily because we will find out how the Coalition for RECOM is perceived throughout the region. I don't think those public opinion polls are too expensive and I am sure that it is possible to find a socially responsible marketing agency which will do it for a reasonable amount of money. Secondly, we should use the data obtained in the research*

conducted in Croatia on the need to deal with the past. It should be done in other countries as well because such information can be used as an argument in negotiations with political decision-makers. If you can tell them that 70% of citizens of Croatia are in favour of dealing with the past initiatives and if we obtain similar figures in other states in the region, then we will have a solid argument in our hands to negotiate with those who will be making that decision. (Borka Rudić, *BH Journalists Association*, Sarajevo, BiH, Regional Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations on the Draft RECOM Statute, Banja Luka, BiH, June 5, 2010).

The OSCE Mission in Serbia is planning to conduct a similar research/public opinion poll with respect to transitional justice issues in the near future. And to the best of my knowledge, several non-governmental organizations, whose representatives are here today, are also planning to do that sort of research very soon. So, I think that those initiatives need to be connected into a joint effort. (Jelena Stevančević, OSCE Mission in Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

The Campaign for RECOM should be promoted more aggressively on television.

(...) I am afraid that Internet is not so widely used by the broad public in the region. Even in capitals of the states in the region and even among the younger population – it is still not sufficient. For that reason, I still think that **television should be used as the most significant media for the promotion of RECOM.** (Nataša Govedarica, Heartefact Fund, Belgrade, Serbia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

If we want to have a campaign that's going to be visible, we have to make a better video spot, a more attractive and very clear spot and we have to show it on public service TV stations. (...) it is necessary to work with citizens and that is why we need one million signatures. I am deeply convinced that no media, Internet, Facebook, Twitter, or any other virtual campaign will yield results without the support of citizens. We have to earn their trust and make sure they are on our side. (Suzana Kunac, B.a.B.e., Zagreb, Croatia, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).

(...) **I strongly support the initiative concerning public service TV stations** because the results of our research in Bosnia and Herzegovina tell us that most people, as much as 90% of the people in some communities use television as the main source of information. Another reason I think that public TV stations are important for our campaign is the fact that our politicians use them heavily and we need to use the same space they are using. (Borka Rudić, *BH Journalists Association*, Sarajevo, BiH, Regional Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations on the Draft RECOM Statute, Banja Luka, BiH, June 5, 2010).

(...) **I think that we need to produce more documentaries** which can offer a lot of information about the campaign and explain to people what this Initiative is about and what it is trying to achieve. Because all spots that were aired on television and on other media are very short and not too straightforward, they were not really well-received by viewers. Therefore, I think that a well prepared documentary which will be aired on local and national stations will be much more efficient in reaching much larger audiences. (Raba Gjoshi, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in

Kosovo, Priština/Prishtinë, Kosovo, Seventh Regional Forum on Transitional Justice, Zagreb, Croatia, October 17, 2010).