



PRESS RELEASE

Public Advocates Refute Allegations of Impropriety and Pledge Their Commitment to RECOM

21st June 2012.

Some media organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and representatives of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska have been persistently releasing inaccurate information about Initiative RECOM, using hate speech when referring to the Public Advocates for the Initiative for RECOM, and have been disseminating views that are in profound contradiction with the basic principles of transitional justice, thereby misusing the organization on behalf of which they speak.

On June 20, 2012, in the daily newspaper *Press*, published in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), they went one step further. Openly, and with strong backing from the editorial team of *Press*, Branko Todorovic, President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, vilified Professor Zdravko Grebo, theater director Dino Mustafic, journalist Dzenana Karup-Drusko, the instigator of the Initiative Natasa Kandic, and Pierre Mirel, Director for the Western Balkans at the European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement.

In direct contradiction to the published reports prepared by international auditors, and without any explanation, Todorovic again falsely alleges that the project has fallen into ruin and that donor grants have been spent inappropriately on, among other things, fees for the Public Advocates. The truth, however, is that the advocates work as volunteers, because of their belief in the project and the idea of RECOM.

It is concerning that Todorovic seems to misunderstand the role of NGOs in the process of dealing with the past. In his article in *Press*, Branko Todorovic argues that the RECOM project would "sabotage any attempt by state institutions to finally put an end to the events of the 1990s," only to later express his concern that "the leaders of RECOM are trying to stop the establishment of state commissions to determine the truth about the events of the last war." At a Roundtable organised by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, held in Sarajevo in March 2012, Aleksandra Letic, another

senior official with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska called on the Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg and other inter-governmental institutions to abandon the effort to create RECOM “because the establishment of RECOM would be yet another aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

We, the undersigned, take this opportunity to once again confirm that we are professionally, and as activists, determined to not let state institutions and NGOs, such as the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, put an end to the events of the 1990s. We advocate that our difficult legacy remains an open book, to be written with the established facts, for future generations. We emphasize that with all our heart and knowledge we will work to found the regional inter-state commission for the establishment of the facts of all war crimes, and we firmly believe that there is no alternative to RECOM.

We draw public attention to the potential damage to the transitional justice strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s state institutions, from engagement with the project of the representatives of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, who advocate that a line be drawn under the events of the past war. We thank the European Commission and other institutions which have recognized the potential of the Initiative for RECOM for peace-building and reconciliation in the region of the former Yugoslavia.

Zdravko Grebo, Professor, Law School, University of Sarajevo, advocate of the Initiative for RECOM

Dzenana Karup-Drusko, journalist, advocate of the Initiative for RECOM

Dino Mustafic, theater director, advocate of the Initiative for RECOM

Natasa Kandic, Founder and Executive Director of Humanitarian Law Center, advocate of the Initiative for RECOM.