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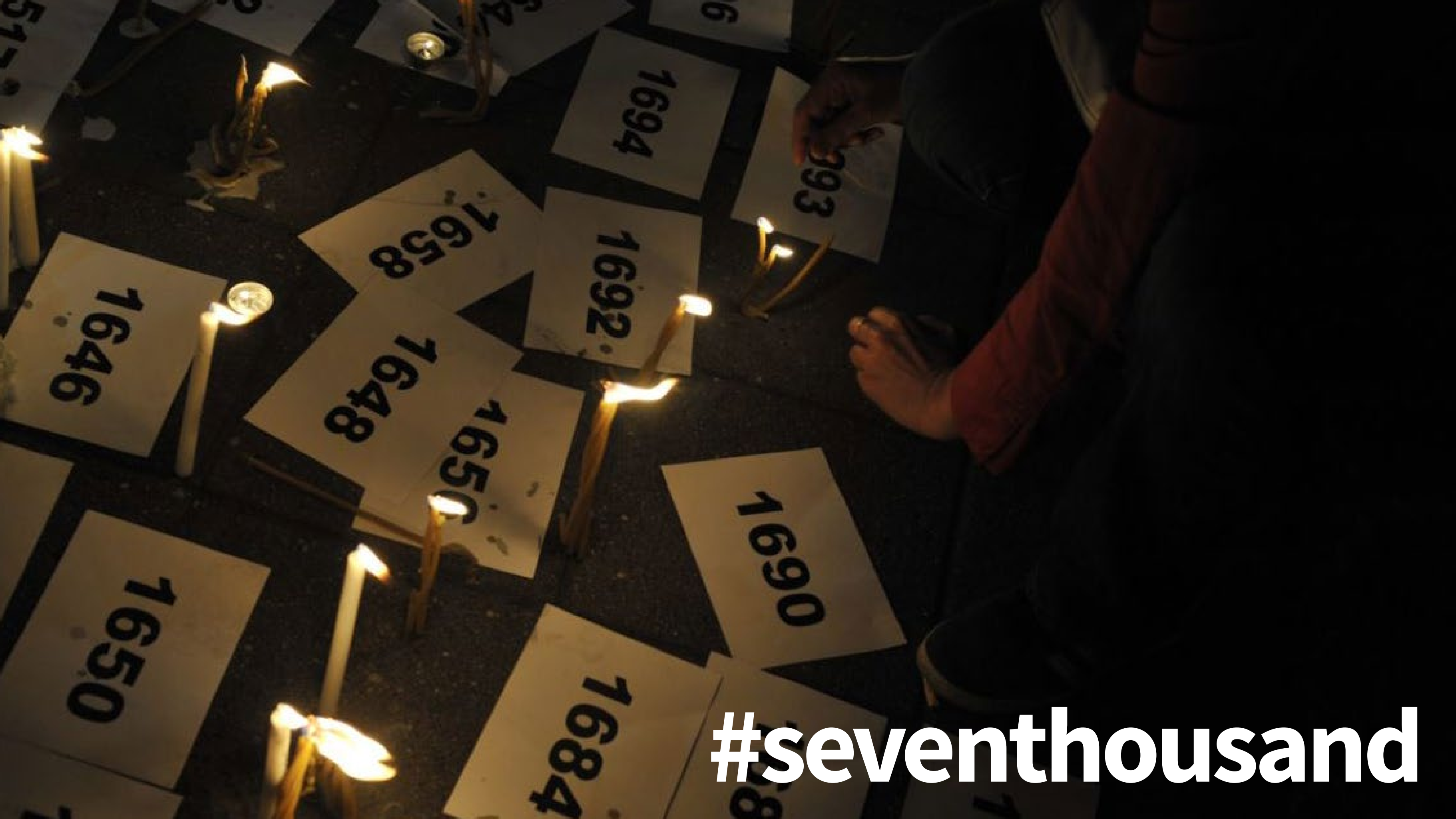
2015.

JULY - OCTOBER

YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT



#seventhousand

Demonstration of the citizen solidarity and respect towards the victims of Srebrenica genocide

Seven thousand action was expected to take place on July 11th, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Srebrenica genocide, as a demonstration of the citizen solidarity and respect towards the victims of genocide. Journalist Dušan Mašić initiated an action on social networks, designed to gather seven thousand people who would lay down on the plateau in front of the House of the National Assembly of Serbia on July 11th.

Civil society organizations and numerous citizens supported this action, as their way of expressing sympathy to more than eight thousand Bosnian Muslims killed in Srebrenica enclave and their families, and to confront, increasingly frequent, genocide relativisation and justification.

Several international and national tribunals delivered the verdicts, determining that genocide was committed in Srebrenica. This is the only case on the European soil, after World War II, in which political and army leadership united, in order to destroy, on a certain territory, one ethnic group as such. Republika Srpska regime targeted Muslim popu-

lation in east Bosnia, assembled in UN protected enclave of Srebrenica.

From July 11th until July 19th, 8372 persons were killed in Srebrenica area. In only nine days, 8372 lives were systematically terminated. These people were chosen as the elimination targets since they were part of Bosniak ethnic group, which Republika Srpska leadership intended to exterminate.

Civil society organizations were speaking about Srebrenica for years. They worked to enable for the voice of the victims and truth on their suffering to be heard in Serbia. They were fighting against genocide denial when there was no support from the government, institutions or public.

Twenty years after the genocide, while remains excavated from the mass graves were buried at Potočari in July, it is important to maintain

the discussion on responsibility for the crimes committed. It is important, in order to prevent repetition of crimes. It is important to be reminded of those who entered Srebrenica on trucks and tanks, and in the name of Serbian nation, as they waved with Serbian flags, conforming to the orders and developed strategy, killed innocent people.

Citizens initiated and supported Seven thousand action. Citizens, who have no problem to call the things by their real name, to stand up and publically apologize for what was done in their name twenty years ago. This action is a demonstration of the sincere desire to keep the memory of massacre of eight thousand people alive.

Seven thousand is an appeal to demonstrate different side of Serbia – July 11th 2015 is when seven thousand mouth, more relentlessly than ever, with no “but” would say “I am sorry”.

Banning of the Seven thousand assembly



11.07.1995.

#sedamhiljada

One day before the date Seven thousand assembly was scheduled for, institutions of the Republic of Serbia banned Seven thousand assembly and prevented commemoration and honoring the victims of Srebrenica genocide in Belgrade.

By banning the gathering, State sent a clear message that there is no process of dealing with the war past in Serbia nor the space to discuss numerous human rights violations on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

The assembly was banned by the institutions of the same State, found guilty, by the International Court of Justice, for not taking all the measures within its power to prevent genocide in Srebrenica. It was evident that prohibition of the Seven thousand was not caused by incapability of the institutions to protect the assembly, although this was the official justification for the banning order.

The decision to ban the assembly sent the message that the state was not willing to allow citizens of Serbia to express their disagreement with the official politics which instigated the bloody wars in the nineties. Government's decision to ban the gathering in front of the National Assembly, made the attendance of the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić at Potočari commemoration meaningless.

Vučić's visit to Srebrenica proved irrelevant, since the institutions of his state, precluded their citizens from publically honoring victims of the only genocide in Europe after World War II.



Lighting candles for the victims of genocide

The banning order didn't stop citizens of Serbia who gathered on July 10th across the street from the National Assembly building, in Kralja Milana Street, and honored the victims of Srebrenica genocide by lighting the candles. The initial plan was to light the candles in the park in front of the Republic of Serbia Presidency.

However, police prevented citizens from entering the park. At the same time, in front of the Presidency, the protest of the Serbian Radical Party was organized, while in the arm's length from the citizens who were lighting candles for Srebrenica victims, gathering of Srpski Sabor Zvezdara was taking place.

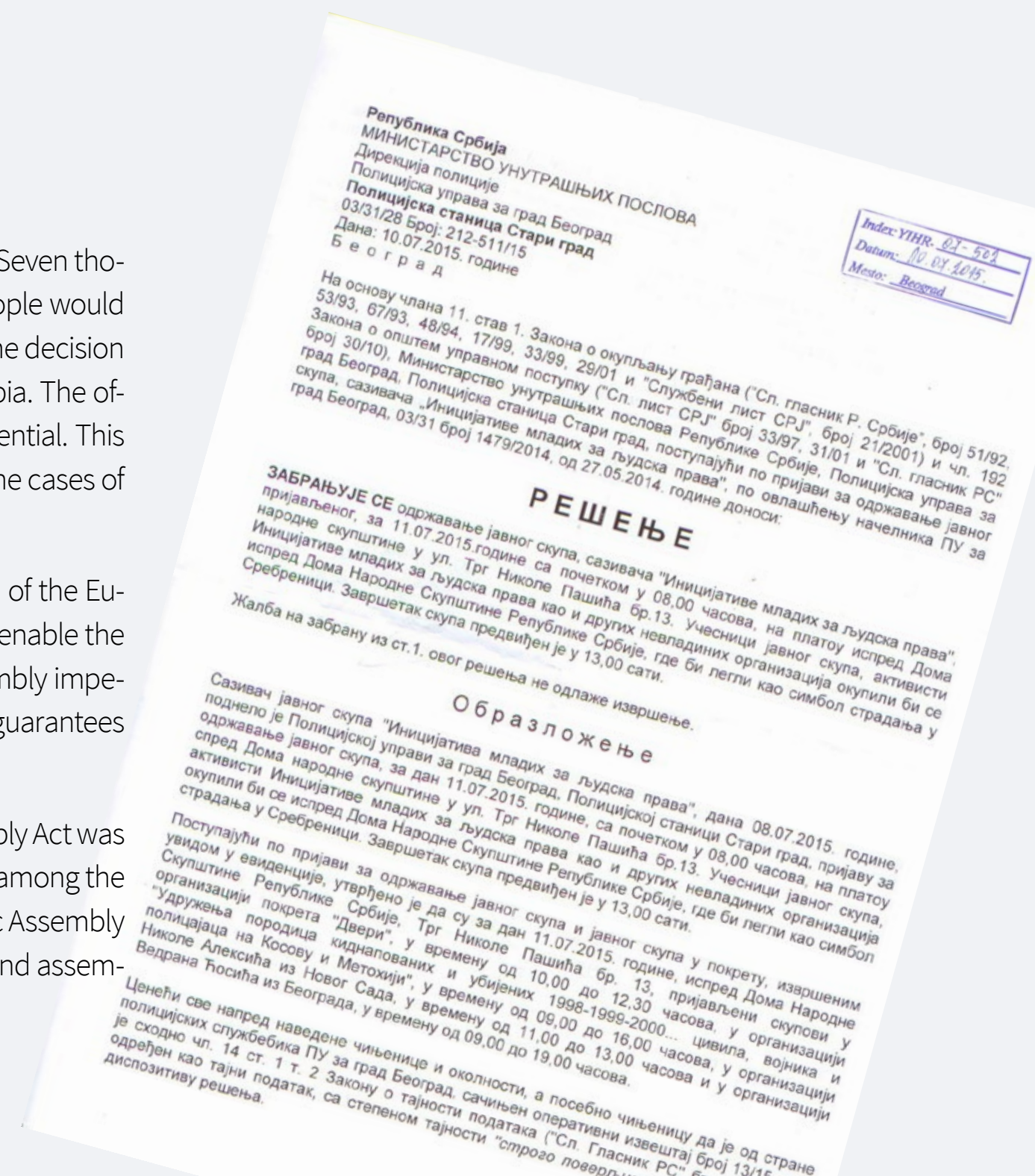
Albeit, citizens, gathered in order to light candles, proved that banning of the remembrance is not an option and sent a clear message, 'Srebrenica! To know! To Remember! Not to forget! Never again!'

Constitutional Appeal in respect to the Seven thousand ban

Few hours after the press conference where Minister of Interior Nebojša Stefanović announced banning of the Seven thousand action, YIHR received official decision on banning the assembly. Although it was already clear that people would gather in the evening, even in the absence of the particular notice, YIHR considered important to respond to the decision by using legal means and to defend citizen's right to free assembly in front of the Constitutional Court of Serbia. The official banning decision provides quite poor justification, based on the security assessment, treated as confidential. This was the usual pattern followed in the situations of banning an assembly, the same 'template' was applied in the cases of banning Belgrade Pride Parade in the previous years.

In the constitutional appeal submitted on the July 23rd was stated, 'The state has a duty, under the article 11 of the European Convention on protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms to undertake the measures to enable the peaceful legal assembly. The threat made by the as such cannot serve as justification of any kind of the assembly impediment, thus state is obliged to justify each banning order which is to be investigated in accordance with the guarantees sanctioned under the Constitution and ratified international treaties.'

Three months prior to the date when Seven thousand assembly was expected to take place, the Public Assembly Act was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. Provisions regulating the banning of an assembly were among the reasons behind the Court's decision. YIHR is intensively advocating for including better solutions into the Public Assembly Act, to be adopted. The big part of the motivation is drawn from the circumstances surrounding Seven thousand assembly.





My Initiative at the 'Ordinary heroes- Million bones' program in Srebrenica

My Initiative activist, Sofija Todorović participated in the four day multidisciplinary youth event 'Ordinary Heroes-Million bones', organized from 8th until 11th of July, in Srebrenica. In the workshops and discussions, within the program, participants were educated on moral courage, peacebuilding, media and social change and memorialization.

**Numbers are
important if the
lives are!**

6020



ĐORĐE BOJOVIĆ, activist of My Initiative movement

Forget, I was killing you madly!

Forgetting is probably our bigger problem than all financial misfortunes. We forget where we are going, who and what we love, and in particular what we are responsible for. And every year, as a rule, somewhere around July 11th, we experience the symptoms, of exactly same kind of partial memory loss. In that moment, in our society we debate on the same issue, use the same arguments, since it seems, that somehow, we can not completely forget this date.

Questions surrounding circumstances in and around Srebrenica in July 1995, severely polarize Serbian society and have greater consequences that a division on 'Delije' and 'Grobari', supporters and opponents of the Belgrade Waterfront, the Belgrade 'natives' and Belgrade 'settlers'. The greatest battle is fought for the basic facts, which are determined by the international tribunals. And fifteen days before July 11th, half of the Serbian population gains legal expertise, sufficient to determine if one action constitutes a crime and if a particular state of mind makes a genocidal intent.

What are we actually talking about?

Since genocide in Srebrenica was committed in the last year of Bosnian war, it is essential to examine all the circumstances which led to the greatest crime on the European soil, after World War II. It's true that:

Srebrenica municipality is located on the border with Serbia; before the war Srebrenica's ethnic structure was mixed, Bosniaks comprised $\frac{3}{4}$ and Serbs $\frac{1}{4}$ of the population;

In 1992, Radovan Karadžić, President of Republika Srpska (RS), developed 6 strategic goals of Serbian people. According to this, in addition to separating Serbs from Bosniaks and Croats, Karadžić wanted ethnically clean Podrinje (at the time mostly inhabited by Bosniaks), so 'Drina will stop being the border between two worlds';

After the ethnic cleansing of majority of municipalities in Podrinje, Bosniaks sought refuge in Srebrenica and Žepa, which created enclaves within Republika Srpska territory and increased the population of Srebrenica from 10,000 pre-war inhabitants to 45,000 inhabitants;

Srebrenica was declared UN safe zone in 1993, which encompassed complete demilitarization and suspending all the attacks on Srebrenica. Complete demilitarization never occurred and Army of Republika Srpska continued attacking;

As a consequence of humanitarian crisis in the enclave, Bosnia and Herzegovina army units, under the command of Naser Orić, famously known as 'torbari', attacked Serbian villages during the great holidays, since at that time there used to be a lot of food in the houses, and committed war crimes against Serbs;

As a result of Directive 7, which determined Srebrenica related objectives of RS, Army of Republika Srpska launched the operation Krivaja 95 and attacked enclave. It is during this operation that the crime of unforeseen proportions occurred.

Ratko Mladić, commander of the Republika Srpska army, separated men from women and children; organized transportation for women and children to the Muslim controlled territories, killed all the men he captured (around 1200 men were captured in Potočari, and 7000 men were captured as they tried to escape for Tuzla). The act of unselectively capturing all the men who were running away from Srebrenica, executing systematic killings of men in the range from Bratunac to Zvornik, in order to prevent regenerating of the Bosniak community in that area (you must agree that men are necessary for the reproduction to occur) constitutes genocidal intent as a key component of the genocide.

These are the facts determined by the International Criminal Court for former Yugoslavia and confirmed by International Court of Justice in 2007, in the case between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Voltaire said that simple men argue about the facts, while wise men discus

s interpretations. Unfortunately for us, the facts are the main stepping stone and crucial obstacle to reconciliation and viable peace in the Balkans.

In Serbian society tendencies to relativize and deny court established facts are still largely present, as well as the fetishizing of the word genocide: if the resolution is adopted, Serbs will be declared a 'genocidal nation' (which is stupidity, since the criminal responsibility is individual); are the Nazi crimes equal to Mladić's crimes (yet again, stupidity, since in a case of genocide the number of victims is not relevant). True proportions of the situation become clear, only when certain individuals 'acknowledge' that a war crime was committed in Srebrenica, however not genocide. As if they don't know that in its consequences (for example number of victims) war crime can be far more vicious than genocide.

Having all this in mind, we can only conclude that the empathy for victims, killed innocent people is absent from the Serbian society! As long as we are counting the blood corpuscles of the victims, as long as we don't realize that every mother's tears are equally valuable, as long as deep inside we don't feel the need to honor people, our society will dream its homophobic dream, isolated from the universal values of civilized nations.

As long as we close our eyes when facing with the facts, compare the numbers of victims and celebrate war criminals in our own yard, we won't cross the dividing line from being civilized.

Serbia has a new opportunity to cross that line next July 11th.

**Message to
Serbian and
Croatian prime
ministers:
DON'T
REENACT THE
NINETIES!**

A group of ten young people, five men and five women, are standing in a line on a paved plaza. They are holding a long, dark blue banner with white text. Behind them is a large, ornate stone monument with a bronze statue of a horse and rider on top. The monument is decorated with intricate carvings. In the background, there is a large, multi-story building with a red facade and many windows. A digital clock on the building shows the time as 22:08:17. To the left of the group, there is a green lamppost with several white globe lights. To the right, there are some steps leading up to the monument. The ground is wet, suggesting it might have rained recently.

NE IGRAJTE SE DEVEDESETIH!

On September 28th, YIHR activists from Belgrade and Zagreb sent a unified message to the prime ministers of Serbia and Croatia. The message was a response to irresponsible and damageable statements and actions made by both prime ministers, while dealing with the influx of refugees who are transitioning through Serbia and Croatia. Two groups of young people, gathered at the Republic Square in Belgrade and St. Marko's square in Zagreb, at the same time and sent a message: Don't reenact the nineties!

Additionally, activists addressed two prime ministers with a letter of protest:

REGIONAL



11

*Dear Prime Minister Vučić,
Dear Prime Minister Milanović,*

We are very disappointed with your irresponsible, inappropriate and damageable statements and actions, made in respect to the mutual challenge of wave of refugees travelling through our countries at the moment. Considering violence and difficulties we experienced in the nineties, our societies are well aware how the discourse of conflict at the international level is dangerous.

Instead of framing your current politics based on the understanding of this threat, judging by your actions and statements, you are using the challenge we are jointly encountering to construct bilateral conflict, with a potential devastating effect to our societies.

In the situation you could use to improve the mutual relations for the benefit of the people in trouble, you are pushing our societies into the conflict you caused with reckless behavior and by being immature and irresponsible.

It is extremely disappointing to realize that you prefer diplomatic and trade blackmail to conversation and cooperation.

Dear Mr. Vučić and Mr. Milanović, take a look at your societies. See how your compatriots, the ones holding you responsible for your actions, dealt with this challenge. Volunteers from Croatia collected and sent humanitarian aid for the refugees to Serbia, whereas volunteers from Serbia shared their experience in dealing with the refugees with their Croatian peers.

You are abandoned in your violent and devastating behavior. On the both sides of the border, we are ashamed with your messages and actions.

You are responsible for the caused damage as well as for the consequences we are not aware of, yet to occur.

It is about time to choose cooperation instead of conflict. Hereby we are asking you to stop reenacting the nineties. We remember the price we paid – in lives, property and security – in the conflicts in the nineties. We are aware, better than you are, that this is not a game. We are asking you to listen to your citizens who demand cooperation. For decades, we are heavily investing in dealing with the past, peace-building and repairing the damage, caused by the irresponsible politics of the nineties. Instead of being advocates of these processes in every situation, you are a liability (Instead of advocating for these processes in every situation, you are damaging them).

We are asking you to open the borders and opt for amiable and diplomatic means, instead of blackmailing each other and enacting devastating and dangerous political solutions. There is an appropriate way to address this joint challenge. It is in a sharp opposition to the actions you are currently undertaking. Stop reenacting the nineties, communicate, cooperate and allow us to cooperate and live in a peace. This is not a matter of your choice. This is your duty.





Support to establishing RECOM

My Initiative activists participated in gathering citizens' signatures in support to establishing RECOM. This action was organized on September 26th, at Knez Mihajlova Street.

RECOM is the Regional commission for establishing facts about the war crimes and other major human rights violations committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, from January 1st 1991 until December 31st 2001. RECOM Coalition is advocating for establishing RECOM.

If you haven't supported establishing of RECOM yet, you can sign the petition [ONLINE HERE](#).

Meeting with the Commissioner for Equality Protection

On August 25th, representatives of the Coalition for Access to Justice and Coalition against Discrimination, met with Brankica Janković, Commissioner for Equality Protection. The meeting took place at the premises of the Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade.



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Representatives of two coalitions presented their work related to the prevention of discrimination. Commissioner informed the civil society representatives on her plans in the following period. They also discussed the future models of cooperation between the office of the Commissioner and member organizations of the two Coalitions. Civil society representative emphasized the need for organizing public sessions in the National Assembly, in order to draw attention of the institutions and general public to the specific problems of discriminated groups and to suggest solutions for overcoming problems within the system, concerning discrimination.

Representative of the following organizations participated in the meeting: Center for advancing legal studies, Civil Rights defenders, PRAXIS,

Regional center for minorities, Labris- organization for lesbian human rights, Gayten LGBT, Association of the students with disabilities, Youth Initiative for Human Rights and CHRIS – network of the human rights committees and HLC.

Members of the Coalition for access to justice are: Center for advancing legal studies, Civil Rights defenders, CHRIS – network of the human rights committees, Humanitarian Law Center, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina, Independent Journalist Association of Serbia and PRAXIS.

Members of the Coalition against discrimination are: Center for advancing legal studies, Civil Rights defenders, Labris- organization for lesbian human rights, CHRIS – network of the human rights committees, Association of the students with disabilities, Gayten- LGBT, PRAXIS, Regional center for minorities Gayten LGBT.



Building free of torture and impunity societies in the Western Balkans

In cooperation with the National Preventive Mechanism, YIHR organized an expert round table ‘Role of the doctors in the prison system in Serbia’. The round table took place in Belgrade, on August 28th and gathered doctors and health care providers, working in the prison system in Serbia.

Participants identified the challenges they encounter in providing health care and systematic shortcomings in the system, which are preventing them from delivering adequate medical assistance. They formulated the recommendations for improving the health care in the institutions for enacting criminal sanctions. Participants were unanimous in the opinion that it was necessary to pay special attention in order to detect torture in prisons. They also agreed it was needed to provide special care to women, children, persons with disabilities and LGBT persons.

During October, regional team of partners initiated preparation of the documentary on torture. The film will tackle the issue of torture in general, as well as specific cases of torture reported by the researchers and representative of the NPM. It will be screened during the final conference in the project ‘Building free of torture and impunity societies in the Western Balkans’, to be organized in July 2016, in Albania.

Riots after 'Kosovo is Serbia' protest without satisfactory punishment

YIHR issued a press release in respect to the judgment of the Higher Court in Belgrade, which acquitted and sentenced to suspended prison sentences defendants in the case of setting fire to the American and Turkish embassies in Belgrade in 2008, during and following 'Kosovo is Serbia' protest. In the press release, YIHR stated that this criminal proceeding was a personification of the deficiencies in Serbian judiciary system.

It took more than four year to issue an indictment, first hearing was held a year after the indictment and no hearings were held in 2014. Due to the change of the trial chamber the case was remanded to a retrial. Sentencing to suspended prison sentences, is frequently exercised by courts in the cases of violent criminal behavior.

YIHR pointed out that a year ago, Minister of Interior Nebojša Stefanović announced forming a working group, tasked to establish the responsibility of the police leadership for the delayed police response. However, the results of this investigation haven't been publicized nor they have a court epilogue.

Since 'Kosovo is Serbia' protest was organized by the Serbian government, YIHR considers essential to determine the political in addition to the police responsibility. It is important to highlight that the organizer (Republic of Serbia Government) omitted to register the assembly with the police, as obliged by the Public Assembly Act.

In addition to the negative diplomatic and political consequences and enormous physical damage, it is important to remember that in the attack on the U.S. embassy, 21 year old boy lost his life, poisoned with the nationalism and speeches filled with hate, heard at 'Kosovo is Serbia' protest.

**SOLIDARITY,
NOT HATRED!**





Solidarity, not hatred! in Belgrade

On August 31st, YIHR organized assembly 'Solidarity, not hatred' at the Republic Square in Belgrade. This event was a reaction to the gathering 'Protest against the EU plan to resettle 400,000 in Serbia' announced by Obratz and SNP Naši, which was, in the meantime, banned by the police.

YIHR peaceful assembly was a response to numerous messages, spreading hate and intolerance, towards the people who found themselves in Serbia while running away from the war. YIHR wanted to demonstrate different side of Serbia – Serbia ready to help those in need, Serbia which doesn't hate and Serbia which shows empathy. The event was also YIHR's way to express gratitude to citizens of Belgrade and Serbia who provided help to the refugees.

The exhibition of the photographs taken by the journalist Gordan Panočić, accompanied the gathering, in order to draw attention of the Belgrade public to the difficult circumstances refugees were in.

YIHR and Asylum Protection Center opened joint office in Subotica

On Tuesday, September 22nd, by signing the Memorandum of understanding, Youth Initiative for Human Rights and Asylum Protection Center opened joint office in Subotica.

At the press conference, following the opening, speakers discussed the current position of the asylum seekers, readiness of the Republic of Serbia and institutions at the local level to respond to the refugee crisis and potential further steps of the states in the region. The speakers at the conference were, Radoš Đurovic, director of the Asylum Protection Center, Milimir Vujadinović, city council member in charge for the social affairs and Anita Mitić director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

The joint office will be working at the local level and in addition to providing the basic humanitarian assistance consisting of personal hygiene products, tents and everything else needed, it will be working on collecting information in the field, providing health care to the refugees and psychological counseling for those in the poor mental state.

Parallely, the office will organize educational trainings in high schools and campaigns designed to prevent increase of xenophobia in the society. Although, the reaction of the representatives of institutions, media and citizens until now is praiseworthy, there is a fear that the enthusiasm will decrease over time. 'The state can not rely only on the good will of citizens, but has to provide the clear strategy and plan for the years to come. Non-governmental organizations are ready to help- as always. That is what we will do in Subotica,' said Anita Mitić at the press conference.



Debate: What's the plan?

On October 23rd, within the 'Parliamentary Week', My Initiative organized debate 'What's the plan?' at the club Sinnerman. The 'Parliamentary Week' was a seven day long series of events organized by Open Parliament in cooperation with the National Assembly of Republic of Serbia.

The debate focused on the role of the National Assembly in respect to the refugee crisis and explored options for changing the legislative framework, regulating refugee status and asylum, with proactive initiative of the political elites. In order to facilitate wider public dialogue, ultimately leading to that kind of change, My Initiative invited the representatives of the youth wings of political parties to participate in the debate. Nikola Rajičić from Socialist Party of Serbia and Uroš Eleković from Nova Stranka shared the floor with civil society representatives Pavle Kilibarda from the Belgrade Center for Human Rights and Jovana Prusina, My Initiative activist Marko Milosavljevic from YIHR moderated the debate.



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At the beginning of the debate Pavle Kilibarda presented the national legal framework and international standards regulating the refugee status. He pointed out that the crisis lasted for couple of years, but we became aware of it only when it reached to us. As he said, Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, from 1951, defined refugee a person who was unwilling or unable to avail oneself of the protection of his or her country of nationality. Kilibarda explained the legal conditions to categorize refugees, however two rights were extremely important: refugee couldn't be returned to the territory where his or her life would be threatened and refugee couldn't be subjected to penalties for illegally entering other countries. As his final remark, Kilibarda highlighted differences between refugee and a migrant. He added that migrants

were not as protected as refugees and that there was a need for a new asylum law in Serbia in order to advance the legal protection of the refugees.

Nikola Rajičić said we were currently dealing with the consequences and not the causes of the refugee crisis. He considered interesting that in Serbia we were trying to provide answers that not even the EU had. He pointed out that an 'unclear' EU border is a big problem, which made him uncertain if the EU action plan for 'migrants' was applicable. Not wanting to discuss the attitude of parliamentary group of the Socialist Party, Rajičić emphasized that the position of his party is to treat refugees in a human manner. He suggested not to close borders to the refugees, but to provide them with basic health conditions and assistance in water, food and things they needed for the journey to their final destination.



Uroš Eleković stated that his political party recognized this issue and parliamentary group of his party tried to raise this issue in the Parliament, however government had no strength to deal with that problem. He didn't think it was necessary to wait for the EU to resolve the problem, since, we as the society, and state, were capable of being responsible, primarily on regional and on the higher level. In Eleković's opinion irresponsibility of the government towards the refugees is the main

issue and that government was justifying it by presenting Serbia as yet another transit area. He concluded that the attitude of the government was wrong, however Nova stranka, being a small political party, was lacking capacity to deal with this problem in the serious manner.

Jovana Prusina from My Initiative, shed the light on the claims that refugees were treated in a human manner, frequently heard in the media. She considered that to be a merit of the civil society organizations, since they were helping refugees with humanitarian aid while on the other side state didn't use all of its resources to help. In her opinion it was necessary to pressure political actors in order to adopt national and respect international legal standards, regulating protection of the refugees.

In the second part of the debate, speakers concentrated on exploring

the ways of potential cooperation between state and civil society organizations in order to tackle the issue of the poor condition and treatment of the refugees travelling through Serbia. Eleković restated that his political party was open for cooperation but he repeated that the issue of refugees was mainly responsibility of the government.

In respect to the behavior of the state, personified in the government, towards the refugees Kilibarda believed it positive that the borders were open and that we were providing humanitarian aid. On the other side, he criticized the government for the registration process which was complicating situation rather than simplifying it for the refugees and was treating them as asylum seekers although refugees acquired temporary protection guaranteeing non-return and access to appropriate support centers. In Kilibarda's words, those were the basic things and rather inexpensive. Rajičić emphasized the proactive role of the state in the refugee crisis and claimed registration to be necessary for the safety purposes.

Focusing again on the role of the National Assembly, not the executive branch, in relation to the refugee crisis, Prusina stated that neither control nor legislative functions of the parliament were visible at that moment. That remark prompted other speakers to yet again explain the actions of their political institutions. However, they all agreed that cooperation between political actors and cooperation between state and the civil society was necessary condition to efficiently provide help to refugees.

As an example of that kind of cooperation, My Initiative and YIHR, in cooperation with relevant political actors, will organize a few more informal debates in order to provide space for young people to listen, but also to speak on the important social topics.



Exchange

Programs



Erasmus+ program in Sarajevo and Mostar

Group of 40 young people from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia and Netherlands, visited Sarajevo and Mostar in the period from July 24th until August 3rd. The visit was implemented within the Erasmus+ program. The participants gathered to discuss the possibilities of engaging young people into democratic processes.



Marko Milosavljevic speaking on the regional exchange program

‘In the past year we had an opportunity to hear the ideas on bilateral structure of the future Regional Youth Cooperation Office, coming in particular from the Serbian and Albanian governments. This idea as well as retrieving the reconciliation in the public discourse is praiseworthy. On the other hand, we consider regional approach to be more favorable for establishing regional exchange program. This implies including all the Western Balkans’ countries that were involved in the conflict,’ Marko Milosavljević on the regional exchange program in the radio show ‘Seize the Day’ at the Radio Belgrade 1, broadcasted on August 17th.



My Initiative at the Sarajevo Film Festival

My Initiative activists attended the Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF) in August this year. Owing the support of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights BiH, activists had an opportunity not only to enjoy in the amazing festival program but to moderate discussions with movie directors at SFF Docu Corner.

On the occasion of the International youth day, a group of the civil society organizations from Croatia, Serbia, BiH, Kosovo and Montenegro issued Declaration addressed to the governments of the Western Balkans countries, in respect to the Summit on the Western Balkans, to be held in Vienna at the end of August.

Declaration signatories pointed out that advancing youth regional cooperation had to a top priority at Vienna Summit. They also welcomed the willingness to discuss the establishing of Regional Youth Cooperation Office. In the Declaration, signatories listed the values which should be the foundation of the regional co-operation and asked the governments in the region to truthfully dedicate to this process.

Declaration on the occasion of the International Youth Day

'We, the youth of the Western Balkans,

United in our intention to contribute to preserving the peace and nurturing anti-fascist and European values in our societies,

Demand more opportunities for free movement across the region and Europe, for meeting other and different young people and exchange of experiences with them. We see that to be the best way to overcome the year's long misunderstandings, obstacles and isolation, imposed on us as a reality by the older generations and a consequence of the events which occurred before we were born or in our early childhood. Despite that, we want to get to know different cultures, and together with young people from other countries in the region responsibly build our common future.

We demand to know what happened in the past and who was responsible so we could acknowledge and deal with the facts and build reconciliation on those foundations. We want to be the part of Europe, where truth, responsibility, fairness, cooperation and reconciliation are appreciated.

We believe that socio- political, democratic, economic, and social and every other aspect of our countries' progress inevitably linked to the respect of human rights. We share a common vision of society in which everyone is equally entitled to the same undeniable rights and freedoms.

We have a vision of peace loving and prosperous region comprised of inclusive societies, mutually cooperating on the bases of trust and mutual understanding.

Bearing this in mind,

We urge the Government of the Republic of Serbia to support the initiative for establishing the Youth office of the Western Balkans at the following Summit in Vienna; We expect governments in the region to express the common willingness for improving regional youth cooperation; We urge all the governments to adopt regional, multilateral approach to this subject and to equally dedicate to this process.

We offer our experience, expertise and advice and we demand that non-governmental and youth organizations are adequately involved in the process of establishing Youth office of the Western Balkans. We believe that the establishment of the Regional youth office signifies the biggest progress in the regional relations which guarantees long lasting peace and prosperity.'



Meeting with Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and sport of Kosovo

While visiting Prishtina in August, together with our colleagues from YIHR Kosovo, we visited Kosovo Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport where we discussed the establishment of the Western Balkans Youth office.



Preparation meeting for the participation in the talk show 'Okruženje'

Representatives of the youth related ministries, who participated in the visit to Berlin and Paris organized by French German Youth Office, met in Tirana to prepare for participating in the talk show 'Okruženje'. The show was broadcasted in ten countries of the Western Balkans on the occasion of the Western Balkans Summit, which took part in Vienna, in August.



About the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the talk show 'Okruženje'

"The values that should be promoted by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office are: peace, not only as the absence of war, but as the reconciliation based on the dealing with the past, building trust which is the obligation of everyone in the public space, since trust is fragile and we are not allowed to degrade it on the daily basis by making the populist statements, and thirdly it is mandatory that all the governments in the region participate in the process,"

Đorđe Bojović speaking on the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the special edition of the talk show 'Okruženje', produced during the second Summit on the Western Balkans. The guests were Aleksandar Vučić, Serbian PM, Edi Rama, PM of Albania and Goran Svilanović, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council.

Signing of the declaration on advancing youth cooperation, a positive step towards the stability in the region

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YIHR welcomed the signing of the Declaration on advancing youth regional cooperation in the former Yugoslav countries and Albania. Declaration was signed on August 27th in Vienna, during the Summit on the Western Balkans.

For 13 years, YIHR has been working on connecting young people from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Additionally, YIHR urges the governments to take over the assignment of establishing more intensive cooperation of youth in the region.

YIHR believes that signing of the Vienna declaration represents a positive step towards building stability in the region. Involving youth in the regional processes is a solid ground for the reconciliation process in the former Yugoslav countries, as well as discontinuity with the previous practice which did not encourage cooperation. Owing to that kind of practice young people in the region are alienated from one another, they don't know each other and very often they have deeply rooted prejudice towards their neighbours.

Being engaged on the cross-border cooperation programs in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo, YIHR is convinced that establishing personal contacts is the easiest way for the youth to abandon negative perception of the nations in the region. In that manner young people come to realize they have many more similarities than differences with their peers from the neighbourhood, they share the same problems and they can unite in order to jointly find

solutions to some of these problems.

YIHR believes that all the governments in the region will make an effort in the following period so that Regional Youth Cooperation Office starts to work as soon as possible and that financial and all other means necessary for its successful functioning will be provided. YIHR demands that all the obstacles to youth mobility in the region are removed, restriction related to freedom of movement as well as the impediments to exchanges through educational system.

YIHR is hoping that the governments in the region will recognize the importance of opening the discussion on the war legacy of the past and that the future office for advancing regional youth cooperation will serve as a beneficial mechanism for dealing with this legacy.

In order to make the results of working with youth through regional exchange programs visible, it is necessary to build trust across the region. YIHR believes that the trust will be mutually developed on the institutional level and will not be undermined by the politician's populist statements, which are, although useful for the in-country politics, seriously damaging regional cooperation.

My Initiative activist visited Albania in the organization of Serbian and Albanian governments





Within the first official youth visit, jointly organized by the governments of Serbia and Albania, 10 activists of Youth Initiative for Human Rights visited Tirana in the beginning of October.

Group of 50 high school students was hosted by their peers in Albania, with whom they, among other activities, attended the football match of Albanian and Serbian national teams. Following the violence outbreak during and after the match in Belgrade, in October last year, the importance of this match exceeded the limits of sport.

‘This visit is a first concrete step two states are making towards the advancement of cooperation of Serbian and Albanian youth,’ said Ivan Đurić youth coordinator at the YIHR, ‘that is why the YIHR activists, visiting Tirana, want to send a message different than the one we could hear at the Belgrade stadium “Kill! Slaughter! Exterminate the Albanian!” flags of Great Albania flags and violence of the Serbian football fans towards the Albanian players’. Đurić added ‘Young people from Albania and Serbia this time proved that sport manifestations can give rise to and be the platform for friendship and cooperation and not exclusively for violence and spreading hate, we got used to in our region’.

With its campaign ‘Cheer for the Neighbours’ organized during the World football championship in 2014, YIHR broke the ice and initiated process of altering usual narrative. While cheering for the national teams of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the center of Belgrade sport spirit and fair play served as the inspiration for promotion of advancing regional relations.

In addition to the football match, which was certainly the central part of the visit, this trip was an important opportunity for the youth from Serbia and Albania to get to know each other, discuss the problems they are dealing with and set the grounds for the future cooperation.

YIHR points out that this visit was organized after the Western Balkans Summit in Vienna in August 2015, where state representatives signed the Declaration on establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office. This Declaration constituted institutional framework for exchange and cooperation of young people in the region of the Western Balkans. It is important to stress that this kind of exchange needs to take place not only on bilateral level, between Serbia and Albania, but between other states in the Western Balkans as well.

Conference on the regional youth exchange program



As a part of the Regional Youth Exchange, from October 14th until October 16th, YIHR organized a Conference, which gathered more than 200 young people, civil society representatives and representatives of international organizations from the region of former Yugoslavia and Europe. They discussed the process of establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office launched during the Summit on the Western Balkans in Vienna, in August 2015. The conference on the regional youth exchange program was supported by the European Commission and was one of the segments of Sarajevo Youth Summit, in the part dealing with the region of the former Yugoslavia, and was supported by the European Union.

REGIONAL  **LONG READ**

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Youth exchange programs as a tool for reconciliation

Within the session 'Exchange programs as a tool for peace-building in the post-conflict societies' different models of the youth exchanges were presented. These exchange programs, intensified after World War II, were designed to bring closer young people coming from the formerly conflicted communities. Adrian Pollman from the German Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina spoke about the efforts invested by Germany and France to involve young people in the reconciliation process in the post war Europe. Only 18 years after the war, these two states had taken an obligation to annually allocate certain amount of funds into the youth exchange programs implemented by the French German Youth Office.

Pawel Moras, representative of the German-Polish Youth Office confirmed the effectiveness of exchange programs on breaking the prejudices that young people have towards the people presented as the enemies in the history textbooks. In Moras's opinion in order to achieve genuine reconciliation between former enemies it is necessary to invest serious efforts in building the positive neighbouring relations, with a special focus on young people. That this is not an easy process on the state level proves the fact that the conditions for establishing German-Polish Youth Office were met only after the end of the Cold War and reunification of Germany.

In the contrast to two examples of the youth exchange programs implemented on the state level and sponsored with the funds provided by the founding states, in the countries of the former Yugoslavia work on engaging youth in dealing with the past is almost exclusively endeavor taken by the civil society. Jelena Soldo, from the Sarajevo branch

of the Schuler Helfen Leben, spoke about the specific circumstances in which her organization is working on bringing together young people from Bosniak, Serbian and Croat communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She emphasized that the everyday public appearances of the political representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina were not positively contributing to the implementation of that kind of projects. Naim Leo Beširi, is working with the Institute for European Affairs, Belgrade based organization implementing programs which gathered young people from different areas, often from Serbia and Kosovo. Beširi spoke on the ways exchange programs impact changing awareness of youth towards 'the other', young people from neighbouring countries they were not acquainted with. As he explained, it was rather simple to measure the success of the programs gathering youth from the communities formerly in conflict. By comparing interviews made with the participant before and after completion of the program, it was obvious how useful these programs were.



Fighting against nationalism and dealing with the past as the main obstacles to reconciliation in the region

Apart from the economic underdevelopment, insufficient functionality of the institutions and poorly developed awareness of the need to democratize former Yugoslav societies, high sense of nationalism among the youth and not recognizing the need to deal with the past, were the main obstacles in building successful regional cooperation. Nationalism and ignorance, and denying the crimes committed in the past, were three serious problems societies in the Western Balkans were dealing with 25 years after dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Taken globally, former Yugoslav countries were not the exclusive in dealing with the problem of rising of nationalism. However, the causes of this phenomena were deeply rooted in the social fiber and are were blocking the democratization process in the Western Balkans.

That was the conclusions made by Krenar Gashi from Kosovo, Maja Mičić from Serbia and Srđan Sušica from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who spoke in the session 'Rise of nationalism as a regional threat to Western Balkans'.

Based on their wealthy experience of working in the academia and civil society, three speakers shed the light on nationalism as a global challenge, especially focusing on the effect that global trend was causing in the Balkans. They concluded that as a consequence of



globalization, nationalism, already deeply rooted in the former Yugoslav countries, was additionally strengthened and was taking different shapes. Therefore, islamophobia was being spread in the Balkans, accompanied by the increased number of people supporting idea of 'clear national awareness' and politics of isolation of the small Balkans' nations inside the narrow, national borders. This phenomena was in sharp opposition with the demand for improving regional cooperation in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

On the other hand, in the session Regional approach to dealing with the past, four speakers, experienced in working on the programs designed to set the ground for an open debate on the legacy of the war past, discussed the obstacles they encountered in their everyday work. Mario Mažić, from Croatia, Goran Zorić and Dženana Karup Druško from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Teuta Hoxha from Kosovo, concluded that since the wars which followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia

originated from the regional problems, in order to overcome the consequences of the wars, it was mandatory to work on the regional level. They stated that regional cooperation was often imposed on the states in the region as an imperative. Regional cooperation was not always seen as the genuine need by the institutions on national and local levels, however that should not undermine the duty of war crimes prosecutors' offices for war crimes, courts, governments, civil society organizations, scholars to work together to tackle the consequences of the wars. Speakers concluded that the only right way towards long term stability in the region was to create the space for an open discussion on the war that occurred on the territory of former Yugoslavia. Additionally, they emphasized that relevant institutions were to perform their duties diligently, punish persons involved in the mass human rights violations during the wars, invest united efforts to shed the light on the facts and consequences of the war and honor the innocent victims.



What are the elements of the substantial regional cooperation?

Žarko Korać, Serbian politician, recognized across the region as a person dedicated to improving regional cooperation, warned that current regional relations were very fragile. In Korać's opinion, since the regional relations were not based on the openness and genuine need for cooperation, they could be easily broken or damaged by what would appear to be innocent problems, such as the issue of the Middle East refugees travelling through Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. He pointed out that although political leaders were aware of the need to coope-

rate with neighbouring countries, they were often falsely engaged in regional cooperation and prompted by current political demands.

Anita Mitić, director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights, stated it was necessary to change general discourse in the countries of the former Yugoslavia while speaking on their neighbours in the region. In Mitić's opinion currently dominant narrative, describing neighbours as an obstacle to making progress, an ancient adversary to be afraid of, had to be replaced with the image of a neighbor as a partner on the way to prosperity. That would ultimately shrink the enormous ethnic distance between youth from Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Mitić added that it was also necessary to make region of the former Yugoslavia, at least closely, equally accessible to everyone, by securing freedom of movement. 'The issue of freedom of movement is mostly burdening Kosovo citizens, who can not enter Croatia and Slovenia without visas, and they can enter Bosnia and Herzegovina only if they obtain special permissions. Three persons, expected to speak at

this Conference did not receive permissions to travel from Prishtina to Sarajevo, which proves how complicated and unpredictable the process of obtaining permissions is,' concluded Mitić.

Special representative of the French German youth office for South Eastern Europe, working on the exchange programs for young people from France, Germany and Western Balkans countries for more than 15 years, Frank Morawietz, discussed the founding principles of the future Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Morawietz said that the office should not avoid the legacy of the past as a topic in its programs. In his opinion, considering that civil society organizations were already for years working with youth on cross-border cooperation and dealing with the past, governments in the region should learn from their experience and involve civil society in the process of establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office. He added that the states in the region were obliged to support the future office financially, but to restrain from interfering in political sense.

Process of establishing the Regional Youth Cooperation Office

Process of establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) was initiated over a year ago during the Berlin Congress on the Western Balkans, while the initiative gained its shape and was officially launched during the Vienna Summit in August 2015. On that occasion, prime ministers of Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia signed the declaration and undertook the obligation to work on establishing that office. Representatives of ministries in charge for the process, Đuro Blanuša from Serbia and Kreshnik Loka from Albania were joined by Marija Bulat from Serbian Youth Umbrella Organisation and Slavko Žarkov from Macedonia, discussed the progress made in respect to establishing RYCO. They announced setting up the working group which would work on the structure and mandate of the RYCO in the six months to come.

Members of the working group would be representatives of the ministries in charge for the youth policies and representatives of the civil society from six countries. Working group would prepare the draft Statute of the future organization as well as its financial sustainability plan by the Summit on the Western Balkans, planned to take place in 2016, in Paris. Following the Paris Summit, Regional Youth Cooperation Office was expected to start working.

Participants of the YIHR Sarajevo conference considered the fact that Croatian government didn't sign the Vienna Declaration to be the main objection to the RYCO process. It was concluded that in order to maximize the reach and the impact of the future Office, Slovenia and foremost Croatia, had to be among the founding states of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, regardless their EU membership.



The second assembly of the Political Youth Network organized in Sarajevo

After the first, founding, assembly of the Political Youth Network (PYN) in Zagreb, regional network of Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized the second PYN assembly, on October 14th, in Sarajevo.

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Political Youth Network, established in Zagreb in March 2014, gathers, at the moment, 31 political parties' youth wings, both right and left on the political spectrum. The YIHR initiated establishing of the network so to create new generation of politicians, aware of regional context and necessity of cross-border cooperation on the territory of former Yugoslavia, who would avoid chauvinistic rhetoric and lack of the basic political culture, characteristic to the current political reality. In the process, YIHR has the role of facilitator and serves as the PYN secretariat. It was in this capacity that YIHR suggested human rights and postwar regional cooperation to be the theme framework and strategic objectives of the PYN.

In addition to the Secretariat, 3 permanent working groups were established in Sarajevo. The first working group was designed to tackle the issue of regional cooperation and support the Western Balkans Youth exchange office. The second working group had a twofold assignment. Firstly, group will be engaged in human rights protection. The group



will react in the cases of the human rights violations and celebrate the important human rights related dates. Secondly, group will work on dealing with the past by commemorating particular dates when the war crimes on the territory of the former Yugoslavia were committed. The objective of the third working group is to strengthen the capacity of the youth wings by organizing conferences, trainings, seminars and study visits for the PYN members.

At the Sarajevo assembly, 10 new political parties' youth wings from the region joined the PYN. The PYN consists of 31 members, out of which 11 is from Montenegro, 8 from BiH, 6 from Serbia, 5 from Croatia and one member from Kosovo.

Speaking of influential political parties, youth wings of the Croatian Democratic Community from Croatia, Serbian Progressive Party from Serbia and Party for Democratic Action from BiH have not yet joined the PYN. The PYN intends to reach out to them in the following period.

Group of Sarajevo Youth Summit participants from Kosovo was denied from leaving Serbia by Serbian border police

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Serbian border police denied the right to leave Serbia to a group of Sarajevo Youth Summit participants from Kosovo. The group was stopped at the Serbian side of the border, in the night between October 13th and 14th, as they tried to enter Bosnia and Herzegovina.

YIHR regional network, Summit organizer, demanded that Serbian Ministry of Interior and the Directorate of border police urgently react and enable uninterrupted transit for people from Kosovo travelling through Serbia, who obtained visas to enter BiH.

Being aware that the decision to 'prohibit' several Kosovo participants from leaving Serbia and entering Bosnia and Herzegovina at the border crossings 'Mali Zvornik' and 'Loznica', damaged the reputation and interest of BiH, as the Summit's host country, YIHR demanded prompt reaction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

YIHR considers it absurd that the right to leave Serbia in case of the Kosovo citizens is limited to the border crossings towards European Union, and that in the individual cases the decision to allow or deny entry to Bosnia and Herzegovina is based solely on the assessment of the border control officers.

Additionally, since none of the speakers from Kosovo received visa to travel to BiH, which participants of the Summit were prevented from discussing regional issues with representatives of Kosovo institutions and organizations.

Due to the administrative oversight at the border crossings, part of the Kosovo participants were excluded from the Summit, which sent a negative message and encourages political groups, being against dialogue and cooperation. Bearing that in mind, YIHR demanded urgent reaction from Serbian and Bosnian governments as well as the answers from relevant which would enable that freedom of movement was respected in the entire region.

This would also remove the main obstacle to the regional youth mobility and give practical meaning to the joint declaration on establishing Regional Youth Cooperation Office, signed by the prime ministers of BiH, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania during the Western Balkans Summit in Vienna.



SARAJEVO YOUTH SUMMIT

Sarajevo Youth Summit

Sarajevo Youth Summit, organized by YIHR, was held in Sarajevo from October 14th to October 16th 2015. The Summit gathered more than 150 young leaders from the Western Balkans and European Union, as well as representatives of organizations and leaders from conflict and post-conflict regions across the world.

This was the third Summit organized by Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The first Summit was held in Belgrade, while the second Summit took place in Prishtina. Belgrade and Prishtina summits gathered 400 participants from around the world – young political leaders and civil society activists from the Western Balkans, Eurasia and the EU, representatives of the institutions, member states and Presidency of the EU, US officials, as well as human rights activists from different parts of the world.

Sarajevo Youth Summit gave the opportunity for youth voices to be heard and for the youth from the Western Balkans to exchange experiences about the issues they considered relevant and important for the region's future. They also shared knowledge and experiences of activists from (post)conflict societies and emerging democracies that could be significant for the Western Balkans.

The Summit provided a space for young activists to build mutual relationships, to collaborate across the borders, to deepen their knowledge

on key issues, and to develop practical skills.

An important part of the Summit was the promotion of youth participation in overcoming the legacy of the pasts and challenges of transitional periods. During the Summit, a strategy for the establishment of global network of youth from (post)conflict societies was formulated.

Summit participants – young people, activists, politicians from the Western Balkans and the representatives of the international community – worked within the three panels, and in smaller groups which provided space for intensive discussions. The three panels of the Summit were:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina – What Next?
- Regional Youth Exchange Program
- Global Experience

One of the outcomes of the Summit was also the Western Balkans' Youth Declaration with the demands for their governments.



SYS Opening Ceremony
at the Sarajevo City Hall

Western Balkans' Youth Declaration

We, the youth of the Western Balkans, have gathered in Sarajevo to continue our dialogue and come up with an agenda for the future of our region, as we see it.

Today, the Western Balkans is a region in transition, where signs of economic development are becoming visible and in which cooperation is more seen as an obvious choice, rather than an only remaining option. Yet, there are still numerous acute political and social problems within the region.

The slow pace of reforms and its impact on prospects for EU integrations, full regional cooperation and dealing with the legacy of recent past endowed the region with weak institutions and judiciaries, ailing education systems, severe unemployment, poor infrastructure, fueling drug and human trafficking and other forms of organized crime.

These days, we are witnessing how the relations between states and leaders in the region's political society are very fragile, endangering the minimal levels of cooperation established so far.

The EU was built on a belief that the political harmony and prosperity of its citizens strongly depends on close cooperation between neighbouring countries across a wide range of social, cultural and economic areas.

The history of achieving reconciliation between once conflicting neighbouring states is best shown through relations between France and Germany. These same values and spirit of cooperation must be fostered in the Western Balkans.

New generations of active young people represent the resource with which such relations can be built.

However, young leaders must be empowered to do so, at a practical level, by facilitating robust and informed dialogue in order to open new and durable channels of communication and cooperation on issues challenging the region, particularly the common goal of EU membership of

the Western Balkans countries.

We, the youth of the Western Balkans, are willing take on the responsibility of carrying out the work that must be done. In this endeavor, we need support from our governments and this is why, from them, we jointly demand:

To make concrete steps in establishing the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans and create grounds for full reconciliation between our peoples, process led by the new generations. First step must be involvement of Croatia as an equal partner in this process;

To fully support the RECOM Initiative and after 20 years since wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and 16 years since the war in Kosovo, 14 years after the conflict in Macedonia pay full respect for all the victims of wars in ex-Yugoslavia;

To immediately tackle the issues of freedom of movement, especially between Kosovo and Serbia and Bosnia and Hercegovina and Kosovo;

To focus on solving all open issues burdening the advancement of our region, especially issues within Bosnia and Herzegovina and relations between Kosovo and Serbia;

To pay rigorous attention to adoption and full implementation of laws guaranteeing rights of all minority groups, in all of the region's states;

To encourage youth activism, provide opportunities for new generations to engage in reforming processes and gradually take leadership roles in the region's future;

To show solidarity and offer coordinated region's solution to the ongoing humanitarian crisis that the refugees passing our countries are currently facing.





On 23 sessions and 6 side events, we had the opportunity to discuss the ways of resolving conflicts in which our societies are drowning for decades, talk about the relation between activism and politics, models for protection of every minority, nationalism that threatens our countries and region. We had the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences on fighting authoritarian regimes, activism of the digital era, and models of making viable peace in post conflict societies.

We concluded that although we come from different parts of the world, our countries are young democracies in transition processes, we are troubled with similar problems. Albeit our countries are miles away, we know each other well and understand each other even better. Although we speak different languages, belong to different cultures – problems that our countries face while wondering in attempts to become modern, functional democratic societies are essentially very similar, from the Balkans to Latin America, from Ukraine to the Middle East.

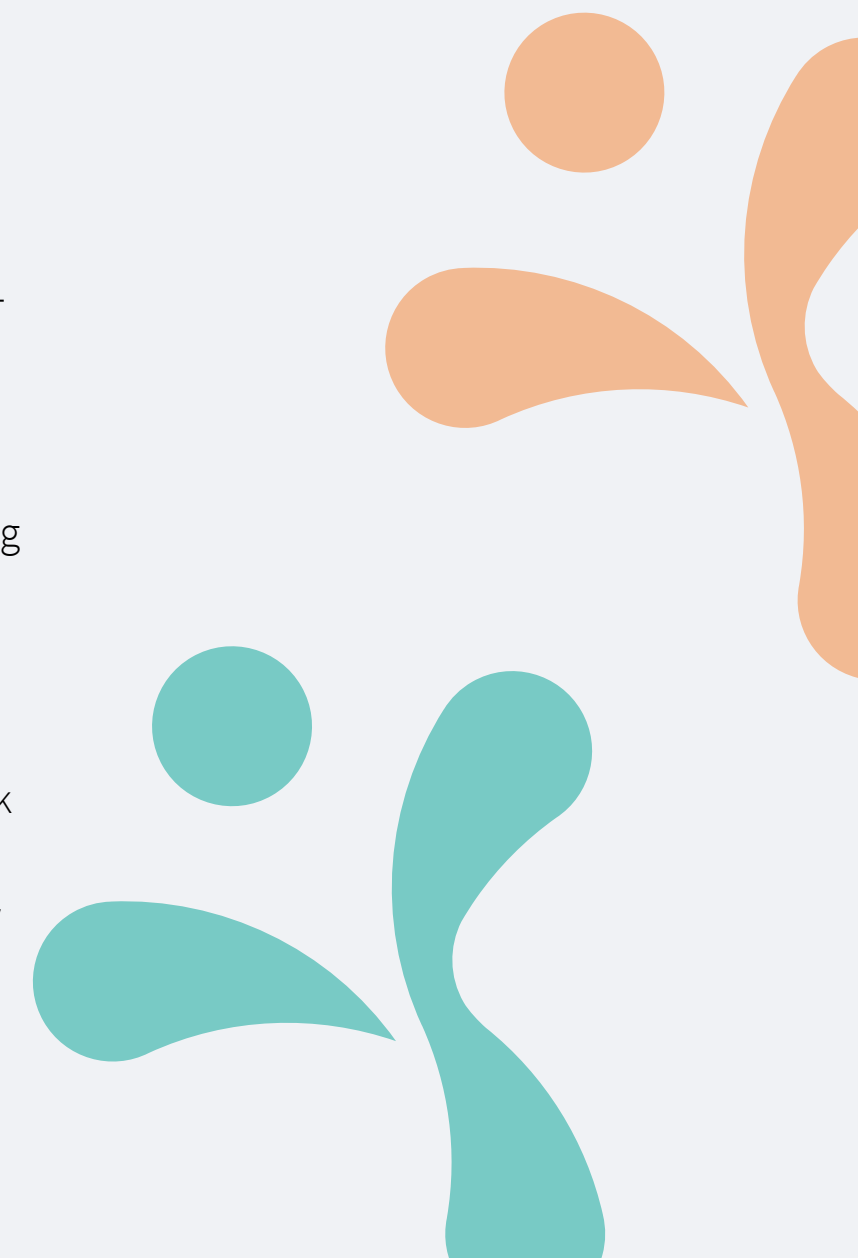
At each session, formal and informal meeting, coffee breaks, parties – at every moment of this Summit, it was clear that no one was here by accident, or by mistake. We felt that we understand each other. We saw through your passion to be one of the leaders of the world we want to live in. We see young people ready to sacrifice themselves for the common good.

Our dear friends who are not with us today, prevented by prison bars or firm borders of totalitarianism and terror, as well as those of you who

managed to come here in spite of the risk –we hold a special place for you in our hearts, your problems are not solely yours. We will stay in permanent contact and you can always count on us for help and support.

We owe special gratitude to our friends from Kosovo. Efforts they invested in order to go through labyrinths of borders and absurd bureaucracy, inspire us to fight even more with what is left of failed nationalistic policies, thus creating a place where we can all live in peace and in a world with no borders. It will not be the problems that are connecting us but cooperation, business and friendships.

Until we meet the next time, let us just repeat what you already know. Youth Initiative for Human Rights will always be there for you, for every problem you're facing, for every dilemma, for every challenge you think is overwhelming. Everywhere we went, it felt like home, having true friends in every place, which is why we'll always be connected in every circumstance, problem or success.





Support to **#SetThemFree** campaign

Participants of the Sarajevo Youth Summit joined the global #SetThemFree campaign, launched by the World Movement for Democracy, with an aim to raise the awareness on men and women who were unjustly imprisoned either because they chose to challenge oppressive laws and stand for human rights or because they openly advocated for more transparent and accountable government. They put their lives at risk in the name of defending and promoting fundamental freedoms and equality for all.

You can find out more about the campaign [HERE](#).



YIHR at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015 organized by ODIHR/OSCE

Ivan Đurić discussed the role of youth in the political processes at the panel Democracy and You(th) - new mechanisms of political participation which was a part of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015. The Meeting was organized in Warsaw, at the end of September, by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), working within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).



Third generation of YIHR at the American University of Kosovo Summer School

My Initiative activist, Jovana Prusina, participated in the summer school program organized by American University of Kosovo (AUK). Đorđe Bojović from YIHR and Anita Mitić, current YIHR director, attended the same program in the previous years.

AUK program of post-conflict transformation and development offers student programs and activities, supervised by distinguished scholars, diplomats, military and civilian experts working on the conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the Balkans and worldwide.



YIHR at EGAM's 'Genocide against Tutsi: Truth, Now!' Conference in Paris

Đorđe Bojović was among the key note speakers at the 'Genocide against Tutsi: Truth, now!' conference, organized by European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM), on October 19th, in Paris.

In the period from April to July 1994, 21 years ago, more than 800,000 people were executed during the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. At the time France supported the Rwandan Hutu led government. From that period on, there was no discussion in France on the French role in the genocide in Rwanda, especially in regard to the responsibility of the individuals, appointed to the highest state in the French state, while the genocide was ongoing.



YIHR regional team with Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council after the filming the talk show 'Okruženje'

During the filming of the talk show Okruženje, Goran Svilanović, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, said, 'Youth Initiative for Human Rights gathers extraordinary young people who are working important job so we could all live in a normal, organized and responsible society.'



My Initiative at the Festival of Roma Culture and Activism

My Initiative activists were a part of the 'Roma culture and activism' festival, that took place on September 25th, in Belgrade. Festival is focused on improving human rights of the Roma community in Serbia, promotion of Roma culture and shedding the light on the constant problems Roma Community encounters on a daily basis, in Serbia.

The Festival was organized by Civil Rights Defenders, Romany Cultural Center and KNOW HOW Center.



Initiative at the EGAM preparation meeting for the testing campaign against the racial discrimination

Initiative attended the preparation meeting for the testing campaign against racial discrimination, organized at the end of October, in Vienna by European Grassroots Antiracist Movement. YIHR regional team had the opportunity to learn more about racial discrimination in the field of labor and employment and to create, jointly with civil society organizations from 15 European countries, a draft mechanism for testing campaign against racial discrimination.

Pride Parade





IVAN ĐURIĆ, coordinator of Pride volunteers

Proud to participate in Pride!

As in the previous years, YIHR supported organization of this year's Belgrade Pride Parade. YIHR had, probably the best task of all – to coordinate volunteers who were taking care that everything ran smoothly during the Pride Week, and especially during the Pride March.

This year, the atmosphere was more relaxed, since for the first time, we were not afraid that Pride could be banned at the last minute. Although, there is no doubt that it will take few more years for the Belgrade Pride to become more like Pride manifestations in Europe and world, with every step made in that direction, YIHR is proud to be a part of that process. However, nothing compares to pride and joy while working with young boys and girls who choose to stand (literally) on the human rights front lines in Serbia. Courage, determination and dedi-

cation of the Pride volunteers are unique and they are tremendous motivation and inspiration to continue the fight, new energy for the experienced human rights defenders.

The Pride is much more than a simple walk from point A to point B. However, this is only a small portion of what has to be done in order to conquer freedom. YIHR remains dedicated to building society where love is not banned and being different is appreciated.

This year, YIHR also supported organizing of the first Trans Pride. YIHR hoped that Pride would increase the visibility of trans* persons and empower them in fighting for their rights. Although the visibility of trans* person was improved in the previous year, the absence of the legislation on the legal consequences of the sex change – undercuts a chance for a normal life.

Be whatever you want par- ty within the Youth Pride!

In the scope of the Pride Week, YIHR organized Youth Pride on September 17th, in Belgrade club Ben Akiba. 'Be whatever you want' costume party, gathered young people from the community and activists to jointly celebrate differences in the night behind the masks.



Support matters!

My Initiative activists sent cards of support to LGBT activist Dragoslava Barzut, who was attacked in the night between 26th and 27th September in one of the Belgrade restaurants in Belgrade. The attack occurred only a week after the successful Pride Parade. Barzut and her 3 girl friends were attacked by two hooligans who remain on the run. Since the attackers were shouting 'Lesbians, lesbians,' in the moment of attack there was no doubt this was a hate crime.

Following the attack, YIHR, Civil Rights Defenders and Belgrade Pride demanded from the State to urgently react, arrest and prosecute the attackers.



Dragoslava Barzut

Danas me u kancu, za mojim stolom, zatekla podrška. Pregršt razglednica Beograda na kojima su ispisane poruke podrške i solidarnosti!

Beograd je i naš grad. Hvala Youth Initiative for Human Rights na ovoj akciji i podršci koja mi je u ovim trenucima, malo je reći, dragocena.
#solidarnost #podrska

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‘Days of Sarajevo’ Endowment supported Sarajevo exhibition of Belgrade based artists

Days of Sarajevo were organized as the festival for the last time in 2014. In the same year festival was transformed into Days of Sarajevo Endowment, established to support young artists from BiH and Serbia, who are using artistic means to question and criticize our societies, thus create new spaces for cooperation between two countries.

Days of Sarajevo Endowment pioneer project was ‘Analysis of Space’ installation, work of a group of Belgrade artists, which was presented from October 15th to October 30th, in Sarajevo, at the invitation of Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

‘Analysis of Space’ is collective work of Marije Kauzlarić, Sonja Radaković and Marko Tirnanić, initially realized realized within New Technologies program at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Pančevo.

By using personal independent research artists created an installation which examines the structure of the space in a gallery, process of creating one piece of art and role of the viewer in the process.

Starting from the space in the gallery and current social context where the work is developed, authors position their spatial installation in a way enabling direct participation of the audience. Audience is a part of the installation from the moment they enter the gallery. The space in the gallery is fragmented into smaller compartments which disturb the structure of the space. Smaller compartments create the great installation. The idea behind the work is to create, small, intimate rooms, where the viewer can isolate himself from others. However viewer’s peace can be suddenly interrupted at any time.

My Initiative activist network appoints new coordinator

Sofija Todorović was appointed new coordinator of My Initiative activist network, this year in September. Read about Sofija's first days at YIHR and what has changed since then in [HER BLOG](#).



YIHR Regional Network shortlisted for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize

YIHR regional network was among 3 shortlisted nominees for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize, awarded to individuals and organizations for outstanding civil society action in defense of human rights in Europe and worldwide.

It is our great honor to be side by side with two other nominees – Women for Afghan Women and Ludmilla Alexeeva, veteran Russian human rights defender, who was awarded with this year's prize.

