

2018

newsletter



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Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Belgrade office

December 2018.

Introduction

Youth Initiative for Human Rights

We have made a commitment to be more positive, affirmative and active in the year 2019. Throughout the previous year (2018), we were focused on reacting and defending our values. We did not allow for the uninterrupted promotion of war criminals in the public spheres of our society.

We spoke out against the exchange of territory between Serbia and Kosovo, and supported the dialogue that is being led between our two societies. We have continued to support and connect youth who refuse to accept the hatred and fear which is being spread by nationalists from the region, but rather choose to learn about the past and participate in the establishment of new values.





Festival “Mirëdita, dobar dan!”

May/June

The “Mirëdita, Dobar dan!” Festival, a unique event representing the Kosovo cultural and social scene in Belgrade since 2014, took place from May 30th to June 2nd, 2018. The goal of the festival was to initiate changes in the relationship between two societies and to foster a tradition of cooperation through the meeting of Serbian and Kosovo artists and cultural communities, which would indirectly contribute to the **normalization of the relationship between Belgrade and Priština.**

Several hundred visitors had the opportunity to meet representatives of the modern Kosovo cultural scene through performance acts, theatre, films, concerts and exhibitions. The festival was officially opened to the public with a screening of the film “Marriage”, directed by Blerta Zegiri, a film awarded the Critics’ Choice Award and the Special Jury Award at the Tallinn Black Nights film festival. The performance of the “Craft” ensemble, as well as the joint exhibition of caricature artists from Belgrade and Priština, elicited great interest from the audience. Apart from the musical aspects of the program, the play „Paramparčad“ was performed, a piece meant to expose how deeply the patriarchal paradigm is rooted in the Kosovo society.

Festival "Mirëdita, dobar dan!"

The festival was closed with the "Between Reality and Dreams" **exhibition by the artist Eliza Hodža**, a multiple-award-winning photo-reporter who worked in the weekly journal "Zeri" in the 1990's, and she presented the photos made during that period at the Belgrade exhibition.

Aside from presenting the cultural scene, a part of the festival this year was dedicated to the conversation about **the future of the relationship between Belgrade and Priština**, as well as the significance of the cooperation between these two societies.



Ensemble "ZANAT"

Like every year before, the festival "Mirëdita, Dobar dan!" was accompanied by the gatherings of right-wing movements and parties requesting the abolition of the festival, and several of the photographs which were part of the **"Between Reality and Dreams"** exhibition were impounded at the Merdare border crossing, because Serbian police deemed them to be "provoking".

"THE MESSAGE IS SINGULAR"

Sofija Todorović's "Peščanik" article

// The „Mirëdita, Dobar dan!“ Festival, which has been annually taking place for five years in Belgrade already, approaches. You could get the impression that the public's been aware of it only since last year, however, considering the protests of right-wing activists, who have been attempting to steal the spotlight from others, instead of building their own space. Yet again, the usual recipe for drawing the attention of the public to yourself has proven itself tried and true: as much Kosovo talk and “patriotism” as possible, spiced with a generous helping of hate speech and inciting violence.

How an, objectively-speaking, small festival became the training ground for hot-heads to practice their intolerance and bring more shame to this city and country is a question easily answered by a single word: Kosovo. The goal of the festival was to demystify Kosovo and to bring an end to its treatment as a “mythical country”, and instead cause people to view it as a real place, inhabited by people who use their time to create beauty for this world.

"THE MESSAGE IS SINGULAR" ON PEŠČANIK WEBSITE

Regional Exchange Program

Exchange programs have been of the main activities the Initiative has engaged in during 2018. **More than 200 young people participated in regional exchange programs during this year.**

CAMP KOZARAC AND **THE SCHOOLS OF DIFFERENT MEMORIES**

July/August

More than 50 young people from the region participated in exchange programs which took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through which the participants were given the opportunity **to talk about subjects related war history, to learn and visit the places where war crimes were committed**, but also to meet the witnesses of the events from the war. Aside from the education and conversation about the events related to the wars from the end of the last century, the participants of **Camp Kozarac and the Schools of Different Memories in Eastern Bosnia and Stolac** visited the sites of war crimes from the Second World War, as well as other towns and locations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of learning the details of the untold war stories belonging to these parts.



SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL & **DOCU-FEST**

August

Like many years before, the youth of the region had the opportunity in 2018 to participate and be part of **the Sarajevo Film Festival and Docu-Fest**, the documentary film festivals in Sarajevo and Prizren, respectively. Along with film screenings and discussion panels, visits to museums, galleries and other spaces related to the culture, memory or facing the past were organized, for most of the participants, this was their first chance to visit **Sarajevo and Prizren**, respectively.

YIHR activists in Prizren



“PAST CONTINUES” PROGRAM

one-year program

“Past continues” program is a new one-year program of the Initiative which is meant to offer **young people, high-schoolers and college students the opportunity to visit cities and locations in the region for the first time**, to learn about the details of the wars which transpired on the territory of former Yugoslavia, as well as to share their insights and narratives about the events of the war, which they've heard about from their own people, with the other participants.

The narratives and impressions formed before, during and after the program will be imparted by the participants in the **“Sharred Narratives” publication**, through which they will be able to get acquainted with the most common attitudes, opinions and narratives of the people who come from different countries, and whose perspectives regarding the same events often contain major differences.

The introductory part of this program was a conference in Belgrade, which gathered all the participants in one place: a hundred of them from **Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo**. The goal of the introductory conference was to get the participants acquainted with the activities awaiting them in the following year, but also to get them started on writing the narrative and specifics which will be included in the publication at the end of the program.



After the conference, the participants were split into groups, and visited **Vukovar, Mostar, Belgrade, Knin, Dubrovnik, Podgorica, Prijedor, Banja Luka, Priština and Sarajevo**. The most active participants, as part of the Traveling School of Nationalism, visited Kosovska Mitrovica, Peć, Suva Reka, Srebrenica and other places.



Dubrovnik, Croatia

The final phase of the program putting the narratives into writing and the preparation of materials for the joint **publication “Sharred Narratives”, which is to be presented during 2019**, and is comprised of the individual narratives the participants combined after their student visits, which concern the dominant narratives pertaining to the wars in the countries they come from. Aside from the narratives, a part of the publication includes details of the cultural life and anti-war movements from the nineties.



Samobor, Croatia

Educational Programs

DRVO PROBLEMA

REACHING DIALOGUE THROUGH **DEBATE ABOUT KOSOVO**

February/March

Through seven debates in **Novi Sad, Novi Pazar, Niš, Kragujevac, Preševo, Bujanovac and Belgrade in February and March 2018**, we brought about the program “Reaching Dialogue about Kosovo through Debate”, in which eight teams of young debaters discussed the subjects relevant to the current and future status of Kosovo. The debate program was organized by the Initiative through internal dialogue about Kosovo, and the debate subjects were tied to both the future status of Kosovo and the implementation of the **Brussels Agreement, as well as the war in Kosovo and recognition of the war crimes committed by Serbia.**

debate subjects

- The relationship between Serbs and Albanians can be described as one of hatred
- Serbia's policies in Kosovo were criminal
- Is CSM a non-government organization or the third level of the Kosovo government?
- The sharing and exchange of territories between Serbia and Kosovo
- Five years since the Brussels Agreement: everyday problems
- For or against the Brussels dialogue?
- Serbia (not) recognizing Kosovo's independence



Debate in Belgrade

The two teams which rose to prominence during the program participated in the final debate in Belgrade, and, with the help of mentors and associates of the Initiative, explained their arguments and discussed the subject **“For and against Kosovo’s independence”**.

Through the program “Reaching Dialogue about Kosovo through Debate”, the publication “The Kosovo chronology (1974-2017)” was presented, which served as a source of education and argumentation for the participants in the debate program.

YOUTH **HUMAN RIGHTS SCHOOLS**

2018.

In 2018, we began courses for youths between **the ages of 15 and 19 about the basics of human rights** as part of the Youth Human Rights School, in cooperation with the Helsinki Board of Human Rights.

Within the four five-day Schools, we talked to the youths and educated them about the armed conflicts during the nineties, the basics of human rights and also visited a string of state and international institutions which are relevant and accountable for human rights and democracy in Serbia: among others, the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, the Ombudsman of Serbia, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, the EU Delegation in Serbia, the OEBS Mission, and others.

Educational Programs

The main result of the first four Schools of Human Rights is eighty young participants who received basic knowledge about the concept of human rights, and the political context in Serbia. Also, due to the need to continue working with the participants on the development of their ideas and education even after the School's end, activities regarding the 9th of May, Victory Day, were carried out in Belgrade and Zrenjanin. With the support of the Initiative, Lara Majkić, an activist and participant of the Youth Human Rights School, organized a **two-day “Youth Jazz and Rock” Festival in Subotica**.



Youth Human Rights School in Belgrade

For the twenty most engaged participants of the first four Schools, an **Advanced Human Rights School was organized in November**, with a focus on facing the war-related past, the downfall of Yugoslavia, conflicts, as well as processing war crimes and anti-war activism during the nineties.

The Human Rights School is going to continue on until 2020, with the aim of preparing more than 150 young people born after the 5th of October 2000 to be the catalysts of change and the promoters and defenders of human rights in their local community.

“THE **OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTION** AND WRITING APPEALS” TRAINING

december

By the end of 2018, we began the execution of one-day **“The Ombudsman Institution and Writing Appeals” training exercises**, aimed primarily at activists, representatives of the media and students of political and legal sciences.

The goal of the training is to empower the Ombudsman institution through the participants' introduction to the **rights of citizens and the work of the Ombudsman**. During the program, the participants are taught to write appeals to the Citizen Protector, in order to protect their own and the rights of others guaranteed by the state legislation.



Training in Niš

Kosovo

During 2018, the Initiative participated in several events and discussions as part of the internal dialogue on Kosovo, and within the Working group 35, Ivan Đurić, Program Director of the Initiative, participated in a meeting with Aleksandar Vučić, Serbia's president. **Ivan Đurić's speech at the meeting was mainly concerned with facing the past and war crime processing.**

IVAN ĐURIĆ'S SPEECH AT THE INTERNAL DIALOGUE ON KOSOVO ROUND TABLE

March 31st

*The cooperation and dialogue process between Serbian and Kosovo society is practically nonexistent. The separatism among the people, caused by armed conflict and propaganda, hasn't been overcome – **in fact, the nationalistic elite on both sides is feeding and fostering it further.** Generations of young people grow up in such an atmosphere, contaminated from birth with stereotypes describing the Albanian, or the Serbian nation as their arch-enemy, usurper, the symbol of evil. There is practically no difference between Serbian and Albanian extreme nationalism, and in synergy they create an effect which allows hate, violence and self-isolation to reign free.*

*At some of the round tables which were part of this process, you could have heard the some of the causes for Kosovo's pursuit of independence, and our first step must be to loudly speak the truth about it. **About the part of the past which is not spoken about in our public. Enough with the Great Albania nonsense, mineral wealth, army bases and such.***

The majority of Albanians on Kosovo is systematically discriminated against – to the point of segregation, they are practically forbidden from participating in public and political life, the state structure, from getting educated and getting medical attention. **After 10 years of attempting to negotiate and peaceful resistance, completing their studies in basements, escaping raids and police torture,** armed resistance began, which was met by a systemic campaign of murder and terror by the Serbian army and police, as part of which 800,000 people were banished. The NATO alliance, in order to prevent a complete humanitarian disaster, began a campaign of aerial attacks on Serbia, after which the Serbian army withdrew completely from Kosovo.

// According to the database of the Kosovo Memory Book, during and within the context of the armed conflict in Kosovo, a grand total of 13,535 people have either been killed or gone missing. Albanians make for 10,812, Serbs for 2,197, while Roma, Bosnians, Montenegrins and other non-Albanians make for 526 of the victims. Almost 1,700 people are still classified as missing.

Kosovo was not stolen from Serbia, neither through war, nor through the peace agreement. Serbia lost the right to Kosovo because of the way the state treated the Albanian majority of the populace. In order for us to live in peace with each other, we have to shine a light into the darkest places in our history. **We have to apologize to honor the victims of the wars and the crimes.** We must find and process all the perpetrators so we could, at least in part, satisfy the demands of justice. We must atone in order to have a chance for a normal future as a society. We must permanently decide that the crimes were not committed in our name, but instead in the name of policies we will never again allow to be the governing policy.

IVAN ĐURIĆ'S SPEECH

The advocacy program

THE EIGHTH ASSEMBLY OF **THE RECOM COALITION AND THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE FORUM IN SARAJEVO**

January

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights participated in the eighth Assembly of the RECOM Coalition in Sarajevo in January 2018, from which **an invitation was sent to Croatian president Kolinda Kitarović to continue her support for the RECOM Initiative**, and also to keep in mind the facts ascertained by the Hague Tribunal, the courts in Croatia and in the region, as well as the results of the Documente and The Humanitarian Justice Foundation research.

The Assembly delegates saluted the readiness of most of the leaders of post-Yugoslavian countries to sign the RECOM Founding Agreement at the Berlin Process Summit in London, in July of 2018, thereby activating Article 49 of the draft Statute of RECOM.

Although the presidents of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia gave a solemn promise to sign the RECOM Founding Declaration, leading up the summit in July, Great Britain's Ministry of State for Foreign Affairs did not include the Declaration in the Summit agenda.

The RECOM Coalition announced post-summit that the advocacy and cooperation of post-Yugoslavian countries concerning the founding of RECOM continues. The Influence of Civil Initiatives on strengthening transitional justice panel, organized as part of the Transitional Justice Forum in Sarajevo, showed that there are few projects of non-government organizations which were granted political support, and that RECOM Initiative example shows that it took 10 years to gain political support. The support, which came and went over the years, was mainly retained thanks to the fact that the RECOM Coalition, apart from political and public advocacy, is also conducting research – making an index of the war victims from the 1991-2001 period, the Forum concluded.

NOT OUR HEROES

#nisunašiheroji

At the Belgrade Book Fair in October, the war journal of **General-Colonel Nebojša Pavković**, the commander of the Third Army of the Army of Yugoslavia during the NATO Aggression in 1999, was presented. The four tomes of the journal, titled “The Seventy-Eight Days of the Merciful Angel’s Embrace of the Third Army” are part of the seven-book “Warrior” edition, which bring together the **memories of the events of the war in Kosovo and Metohija during 1999.**

Aside from general Pavković, one of the editions of the “Odbrana” Media Center, a specialized army institution of the Ministry of Defense, concerns the memories of the brigade commanders, headed by the **Commander of the Priština Corps, General Vladimir Lazarević.**

And while the Ministry of Defense has maintained its silence on this matter, the Initiative has reminded the public of all the facts the Ministry has stayed quiet about when it comes to convicted war criminals, whose books are printed and promoted by the state authorities.

YIHR press release

Aside from the negligence concerning numerous established facts shown then by the Ministry and Serbia’s Government, and the deep disrespect expressed towards the war crime victims, they showed they were not ashamed of the war crimes committed in the name of Serbia’s citizens by members of the army and police, who have been marked as criminals by their sentencings.

Also, **the truth about the NATO aggression is presented by the Ministry through the spreading of falsehoods, using the incorrect title “Merciful Angel”,** thereby deliberately protecting those whose actions brought about the bombing of Serbia in 1999. >>>

>>> The Ministry of Defense is, very transparently, with the taxpayers' money of Serbia's citizens, promoting the participation of the generals and army commanders in the war, whose actions are very clearly characterized by their sentences as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The **Youth Initiative for Human Rights has spent the last two years actively warning the public about the increasing presence of convicted war criminals on our political scene** and the increasing support offered to them by our institutions.

PRESS RELEASE

THE LETTER FROM THE INITIATIVE TO ANA BRNABIĆ

October

After the presentation of the war journals and books by convicted war criminals at the Belgrade Book Fair, the Initiative addressed the issue with the Prime Minister through a letter in which they asked for a reaction and an end to the promotion of war criminals by the government.

After the open letter, **representatives of the Initiative spoke to Ana Brnabić at the invitation from her cabinet about the ways of abolishing the promotion of war criminals in the public** forum and they proposed solutions for the treatment of convicted war criminals by the government, with an invitation to introduce the fact about the crimes and wars on former Yugoslavia's territory into the school curriculum.

THE OPEN LETTER ON YIHR.RS WEBSITE

THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW FOR DW

November

The promotion of war criminals and negating the established facts on part of the the highest officials of our country has continued **through the interview of Prime Minister Ana Brnabić she gave for Deutsche Welle in November.**

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights reacted with a series of comments through the media to the interview the Prime Minister gave on the 15th November for Deutsche Welle, perceived as a continuation of the promotion of war criminals. It's important to note the meeting with Theodor Meron, the president of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, at which it was spoken about the cooperation of the Mechanism with the Initiative through the Informational Center, which will contain the ICTY archive, and which will be presented to high-school students.

Judge Meron expressed his support for the work of the Initiative, and for the possibility of such cooperation throughout 2019. On the other hand, Marko Milosavljević from the Initiative expressed criticism for Serbia's government and the way it celebrates war criminals, listing examples of non-compliance with the court decisions, and disrespect for the victims. On the same day, Meron met with Prime Minister Brnabić and criticized the government for the promotion of war criminals and negating the genocide in Srebrenica on part of the Prime Minister.

THE REACTION TO VOJISLAV ŠEŠELJ'S SENTENCING

April

After the **legal sentencing of Vojislav Šešelj on the 11th of April 2018, the Initiative demanded from the members of the National Assembly,** with Maja Gojković at its head as president, to act in accordance with the law, considering the fact that a member of the Assembly is a convicted war criminal, and announce the end of Vojislav Šešelj's mandate, as a member of the Assembly and president of the Serbian Radical Party.

A CALL TO THE ELECTIVE LISTS FOR THE BELGRADE ELECTIONS TO DECLARE THEIR STANCE CONCERNING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BATAJNICA MEMORIAL CENTER

February

Leading up the local Belgrade Elections, scheduled for the 4th of March, the Initiative called for all the lists participating in the elections to declare their stance on the construction of the Memorial Center for civilian victims in Batajnica. The theme of the Memorial Center is very important, because its construction would honor the civilian victims murdered, transported in refrigerator trucks from Kosovo to Belgrade and then buried in mass tombs on the SAJ training grounds in Batajnica.

A CALL TO THE ELECTIVE LISTS

TO BUILD A MONUMENT TO **GENERAL VLADA TRIFUNOVIĆ**

September

In honor of the 27th anniversary of general **Vlada Trifunović's rescue of 220 recruits of the Yugoslavia's National Army's Varaždin Garrison**, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights filed a request with the City of Belgrade to build a monument for the fallen general Vlada Trifunović. Trifunović saved 220 lives in 1991, for which he was treated as a traitor in Serbia and a war criminal in Croatia and Slovenia, for more than 25 years.

The official request is now with Belgrade's Commission for Titling Streets, Squares and Monuments.

DETAILS ABOUT A REQUEST

THE PROTEST AGAINST THE AWARD FOR **LJILJANA BULATOVIĆ** November

The giving of the “Zlatno pero” award of the Journalist Association of Vojvodina to journalist Ljiljana Bulatović, as well as the participation of Province Secretary Dragana Milošević in the award ceremony was condemned by the **Youth Initiative for Human Rights and the Vojvodina Citizen Center, due to the fact that Ljiljana Bulatović actively participated in warmongering campaigns during the nineties**, while also often negating court-established facts after the war, which makes her undeserving of any kind of journalism award. Bulatović is considered to be best known as Ratko Mladić’s personal biographer, prone to relativizing the Srebrenica genocide.

The Initiative and the Vojvodina Citizen Center also requested that the Province Secretary Dragana Milošević formally distance herself from the event, as well as to apologize to the families of Ratko Mladić’s victims.

THE REACTION TO **HARADIN BALJA’S COMMEMORATION AND PANDUREVIĆ’S PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNAL DIALOGUE ON KOSOVO** February

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights from Kosovo and Serbia’s Youth Initiative for Human Rights strongly condemned war criminal **Haradin Balja’s Commemoration** in the Kosovo National Assembly on the 9th of February, the only member of OVK convicted of war crimes by the ICTY. They also condemned the **participation of Vinko Pandurević**, convicted in 1995 for his crimes in Srebrenica, in the internal dialogue about Kosovo.

YIHR PRESS RELEASE



Belgrade Pride 2018

The Pride week and the Pride parade

PRIDE INFO CENTER

One of the greatest achievements of Belgrade Pride is the reopening of the Pride Info Center in Belgrade – the center which has had an activity program, workshops, and events, as well as dozens of regular young visitors since its opening.

PRIDE PARADE

The Pride parade, with the slogan **“Say YES”, has been incident-free, in a cheerful atmosphere, with Prime Minister Ana Brnabić**, Belgrade’s mayor Zoran Radojić and ministers Zoran Đorđević and Branko Ružić showing their support for the LGBTQ+ community. The Pride procession’s route this year stretched from the Flower Square, over Terazije and Republic Square, to the Student Square, where a music performance program took place, after the march was complete.



Prime Minister of Serbia Ana Brnabic at Belgrade Pride Parade 2018

The Pride Godmother for 2018 **was journalist Suzana Tirnanić**, who stated that she believes all people were born equal and that no one has any right to discriminate against anyone else, as well as criticizing the state authorities for “not respecting the equality proclaimed by the Constitution and the legislation, and offering selective justice because it doesn’t grant its recognition to same-sex marriages”.

The engagement of volunteers in the organization and preparation for Pride Week was high, while the Parade itself was secured by the lowest number of policemen in the history of Pride Parades in Serbia.

A group of young people, mostly of South Asian descent, are sitting in a circle in a room with large windows. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or a collaborative activity. The image is dimly lit, with a blue tint, and the text 'YIHR & RYCO Cooperation' is overlaid in white.

YIHR & RYCO Cooperation

BUILDING SPACE FOR RYCO STAFF AND USERS

The Initiative spoke to the staff of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office at several meetings, about the exact steps of the Office to be taken in order to expand its capacity and improve the quality of youth exchange programs, with a special focus on projects which promote reconciliation in the region. In addition to the meetings, **YIHR organized training for RYCO staff, on the subject of facing the past and war crimes**, after which the RYCO priorities and activities for 2019 were defined. The plan is for the focus of the Office in 2019 to be advocacy for the abolition of visas between Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo, as well as increasing the participation of the Office in the process of facing the past, aside from the regular youth exchange program.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FROM **CROATIA IN RYCO PROGRAMS**

The YIHR office in Croatia, in cooperation with the RYCO office, began an advocacy campaign in 2018, with the goal of gaining financial support for establishing a connection office for RYCO in Croatia and Slovenia, the countries in which RYCO currently has no representation.

MAINTAINING **POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR RYCO**

The process of maintaining political support for RYCO has been improved during 2018 by a visit from members of the Assembly to RYCO's head office in Tirana, organized by the Initiative. Six members of the West Balkan Parliament agreed that an informal network of members of parliament should be established in the region, to support the mission and the work RYCO does. **The "Declaration of WB6 support for RYCO" was then signed in Tirana** by all of the present members of parliament, with the goal of getting three times as many members of parliament to sign the Declaration in 2019.

THE INITIATIVE AS A MEMBER IN THE **RYCO ADVISORY BOARD**

The Initiative was also named as a member of the RYCO Advisory Board, which is important for the further development of the Office. **An important segment the Initiative came up with is the training program for expanding RYCO's staff capacity,** so that RYCO's mandate could be successfully fulfilled in the following period. Along with the training program, one of the major steps up in the RYCO 2018 program was the proposal to allow participants from Croatia to be included in RYCO projects, despite the country not being a part of the Office.



"Youth for Peace" Meeting in Belgrade, October 2018

YOUTH FOR PEACE - **100 YEARS AFTER THE WAR,** **100 IDEAS FOR PEACE**

More than 60 youths from the West Balkans territory participated in the **"Youth for Peace" event in Belgrade, organized by the Initiative in cooperation with RYCO, the Franco-German Youth Office, as well as Cross Border Factory.** The event in Belgrade was a preparatory meeting of the participants for the event which was later organized in Berlin for Armistice Day, which was attended by more than 500 young people from all over Europe.



The Global Program

As the Secretariat for the World Youth Movement for Democracy, the Initiative completed multiple activities as part of this program.

Through the global program, we cooperated with activist networks and human rights organizations throughout the world, with the common goal of raising awareness about global threats to democratic values, as well as about the activities of human rights defenders within the Asian, North African, Near Eastern Sub-Saharan, European and Eurasian Asian region.

The Beška Case

By unfolding a banner and whistle-blowing, activists of the Initiative protested the participation of Veselin Šljivčanin, a convicted war criminal, in the Serbian Progressive Party panel in Beška, in January 2017. After unfolding the banner, a contingent of panel participants physically assaulted the activists and caused light bodily injuries.

The Serbian Progressive Party then called the beaten activists fascists, and called for the police to bring them in, and then-prime-minister Aleksandar Vučić announced that it was a case of public disturbance committed by the activists. The Stara Pazova prosecutor's office soon attempted to press charges against the activists, but the court rejected the criminal charges, after which misdemeanor charges were pressed against nine people for disturbing the public peace.

In July 2018, the court sentenced eight of the activists to an individual fine of 50,000 per person for causing a public disturbance. Two months later, the Misdemeanor Court of Appeal confirmed the sentence.

Thanks to the interest of the public and citizens in the case, the fine, with a grand total of 450,000 with added court fees, was paid by the activists with the help of more than 130 citizens of Serbia and other countries in the region, who donated monetary funds to pay the fine.

Aside from the completed court procession against activists of the Initiative, three more court procedures are relevant to the Beška assault case.

In a lawsuit started by Anita Mitić, Sofija Todorović and Marko Milosavljević against the Serbian Progressive Party as the legal entity responsible for organizing the summit at which the assault on the activists happened, only two hearings took place in 2018, while three were cancelled.



The High Court of Belgrade ruled in favor of a first-degree sentence according to which Informer's writing about Anita Mitić on the 1st of January, 2017 was characterized as a violation of the right to personal dignity.

For the pasting of stickers with messages of hate in YIHR's offices by a group of young men in hoodies on the 27th of January, 2017, there has been no information about the start of an investigation.

THE **"ALWAYS A WHISTLE, NEVER A GUN"** PROTEST

November

After the Misdemeanor Court of Appeal's decision confirming the sentencing of eight activists of the Initiative, we organized a whistling protest on the plateau between the Serbia Presidency building and the Belgrade Assembly, on the 1st of November.

The message of the protest, attended by over 100 citizens, was that the presence of war criminals in public spaces has become more and more common, and that convicted war criminals are getting support from the state authorities and political figures.

The Initiative then used the protest to remind people that the Ministry of Defense promoted the journals and books of convicted war criminals only several weeks prior, as well as that, seven months after his legal sentencing by the Hague Tribunal, Vojislav Šešelj still remains in office as a member of the National Assembly, despite this being forbidden by the Assembly Member Election Law.



The "Always a Whistle, Never a Gun" protest in Belgrade, 1st November 2018

Youth Initiative for Human Rights

Belgrade

December 2018.

www.yihr.org

