

2019

newsletter



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Vaclav Havel Prize for YIHR

September

Youth Initiative for Human Rights received the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize

The Regional Network of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights won a prestigious Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize for 2019 that has been awarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe since 2009.

This prestigious award in the area of human rights is a confirmation of significance of YIHR's work done so far, as well as an impetus to confront even more vigorously the nationalist rhetoric used by the Western Balkan leaders to disturb the peace in the region.



Youth Initiative for Human Rights received the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize

Ivan Đurić, Programme Director of YIHR Serbia received the prize on behalf of the YIHR Network at a ceremony in Strasbourg. At the award ceremony, Đurić stressed that YIHR in the whole region will continue to work on creating the future and societies in which attitudes would not be based on prejudices and unreliable information, but on personal experiences and knowledge.

“We want to make it possible, normal, natural for young people to meet, travel, work together, create, make exchanges and fall in love across the countries in the Balkans; just as they do across Europe.”

The Vaclav Havel Prize is one of the most important and most prestigious awards YIHR has received since it was founded.

It gives us additional motivation to create even more opportunities for citizens to strengthen



co-operation between the societies and countries in the region through regional exchanges and dialogue. YIHR will continue to encourage dealing with the past, as well, because societies in the region cannot achieve lasting and sustainable peace without it.

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights dedicates the Vaclav Havel Prize to the hundreds of activists, volunteers, participants and people who have created and managed, with incredible energy and knowledge, YIHR's programmes across the region for more than 15 years.

The Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize has been awarded since 2009 to organisations and individuals in honour of their outstanding contributions in the area of human rights in Europe as well as worldwide. Until 2013, the prize was named "Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Human Rights Prize", when it was renamed into "The Vaclav Havel Prize" in memory of the former president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.

Vaclav Havel Prize ceremony: Ivan Đurić's speech

Firstly, allow me to express my utmost admiration and support for the two activists whom, in our part of the world, we know so little about, despite their great importance and contribution – Mr. Tohti and Mr. Yorov.

The reach of our solidarity must travel beyond European borders. This is what we have all vowed to do when we declared and accepted human rights and freedoms as universal values.

However, our Europe also didn't achieve all ideals we have set decades ago. When the Council of Europe was founded 70 years ago, Western Europe united in a vision of peace, freedom and democracy. After the fall of the Berlin wall and concurring events, that vision and dream was joined by the block we called Eastern Europe, led by Vaclav Havel.

There was only “a small Gaelic village that resisted still”, resisted a trend some called “the end of history”. While democratic transitions came rushing in, Yugoslavia was preparing for a violent breakup.

What most deemed impossible, happened. Wars broke out in the European continent once more. More than 130 000 people died in the wars, hundreds of thousands displaced or victimized in some other way. More than 10.000 are still missing.

Apart from personal, individual and family tragedies which so many suffered, the damage for our countries and societies is still more than tangible. Our democracies are weak, our economies still not even close to what they were before the war. Regional cooperation in the Balkans is still heavily burdened by hatred, mistrust, prejudices and wartime legacy.

The political elites and societies in our countries have still not renounced their war agendas and nationalist ideologies.

I won't say before you all that new wars in the Balkans are inevitable, but I will tell you that our countries' leaders mention war with ever-increasing frequency, while in parallel there is an ongoing arms race in the region.

I will say that borders in the region are not defined. Kosovo's territorial integrity, but also that of Bosnia and Herzegovina are questioned daily. I will say that world powers have firmly chosen sides in our disputes and conflicts.

I will tell you that convicted war criminals are treated as esteemed members of our societies, while peace and human rights activists are being labelled as traitors and state enemies.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights is devoted to the process of dealing with the past, which we believe is the only guarantee of a viable peace. We live by these words – Too Young to Remember, Determined Never to Forget.

We are trying to rectify the errors of the past, so that justice may be brought to victims. We also want to shape the future, a peaceful future for the Balkans.

The future we hope for and work towards is one where opinions of others will not be formed through prejudice and lies, but through personal, authentic experiences and facts.

We want to make it possible, normal, natural for young people to meet, travel, work together, create, make exchanges and fall in love across the countries in the Balkans; just as they do across Europe. We want for people to have universal respect for victims and deep disdain for war criminals, no matter what their nationality is. We want deeper, more substantial and more honest regional cooperation.

These are not commonplaces and empty talk. These are very ambitious goals in our countries. It is crucial for me to say that none of these values are appreciated in our region. This concerns us, and we want to share this concern with you today.

We are deeply proud, grateful and honoured by this prize, and once again would like to thank PACE, Vaclav Havel Library and Charta 77 and the Selection Panel for recognizing the values we stand for, and our long-time friends and partners who nominated us.

Thank you for understanding that Europe needs the Balkans whose fundamental values are those of the Council of Europe. We need Europe in order to achieve peace in the Balkans, instead of the ceasefire that is our current reality. Each of our countries needs more of Europe and European values, more freedom and democracy. Most of us benefit from the protection of the Council of Europe, the Convention and the Court, but not all of us. Kosovo's citizens do not have access to the Council of Europe or European Court for Human Rights. They need a visa to get here. That is not European. We must change that.

Our message to Europe is – do not play deaf to the sound of war drums fading in from the Balkans. We are not strangers, we are Europeans. Our message to the citizens of our countries is – peace is our most prized possession, and something we must fight for

Vaclav Havel Prize ceremony: Ivan Đurić's speech

constantly. Peace is not merely the absence of war, but a state in which war is impossible.

We must actively and persistently work on building peace, creating new bonds between people and improving regional cooperation in every field of life.

We dedicate this award to pioneers of these processes – hundreds of Youth Initiative for Human Rights' present and former activists, volunteers, exchange participants and leaders. This belong to all of you.

Thank you, hvala, faleminderit, merci.

Ivan Đurić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights



October

Reception at the French Embassy in honour of YIHR

In honour of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, the laureate of The Vaclav Havel Prize, the Council of Europe Office and the Embassy of France to Serbia organised a reception for YIHR activists and representatives of civil society, media and political parties in Belgrade.

The President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Liliane Maury-Pasquier, the Ambassador of France to Serbia Jean-Louis Falconi, and the Head of Mission of the Council of Europe Tobias Flessenkemper were present at the reception.



Reception at the French Embassy in honour of YIHR

Liliane Maury-Pasquier, PACE President, congratulated the YIHR Network on the award and stressed that this year's Vaclav Havel Prize was even more important as it was awarded in the year when the Council of Europe celebrated its 70th anniversary.

Nevena Todorović, Programme Coordinator, addressed the guests and CoE representatives on behalf of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

“Despite the fact that the wars ended more than 20 years ago, unfortunately, the gap that appeared between the citizens of the region and wounds inflicted on all our societies by the wars are very deep.

We often say at the office that when the day comes that we close the doors of our offices and when our work is done, it will be the happiest day of our lives. However, we have a long road and enormous work in front of us.”



December

YIHR Croatia awarded the Human Rights Prize of the French Republic

In addition to The Vaclav Havel prize, the Youth Initiative of Human Rights Network received another prestigious award in 2019 – “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”, the prize which the French Republic awards to distinguished individuals and organisations for their contribution in the area of human rights.



YIHR Croatia received the prize for the project “Shared narratives”, which gathered around 180 young people between 18 and 25 years of age from the whole region, who had the opportunity to visit every country in the region and discuss the dominating narratives in the countries they come from with regard to

the events and wars of the 1990s. The outcome of discussions and study visits is a collection of narratives which the participants created with assistance of experts and historians from the region.



SKOPJE YOUTH SUMMIT

December

Skopje Youth Summit

After the events in Belgrade, Prishtina, Sarajevo and Zagreb, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights organised the fifth Youth Summit in Skopje (Skopje Youth Summit) on December 3-5. The Summit in the capital of North Macedonia was held exactly ten years after the first one, which took place in Belgrade. It gathered more than 200 young activists, human rights defenders and CSO representatives from the region and Europe.

The participants had an opportunity, during the three days of the Summit, to discuss and debate in panels, debating sessions and workshops and exchange opinions about current developments in the Western Balkan countries, as well as about democratic processes worldwide.





Central panels and discussions on the EU model for the Western Balkans, dealing with the past in the countries of former Yugoslavia and the advocacy and protest actions attracted the greatest interest among the participants.

Besides the main panels, Skopje Youth Summit addressed the issues of EuroPride 2022 in Belgrade, regional networking of young politicians within the Political Youth Network (PYN), activism through art, advocacy campaigns in social networks, activists' safety on the internet, as well as the topics related to the reconciliation and connecting of young people through sports. One segment of Skopje Youth Summit programme was dedicated to Nadia Diuk, human rights advocate and activist, who, as a representative of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) provided enormous support to the activists around the world who are fighting for justice and freedom, including the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, especially with regard to the organisation of the Summit ever since 2009.

At the closing ceremony of Skopje Youth Summit, the Declaration against Nationalism was

Skopje Youth Summit

presented, sending the message that young people from the Western Balkans support the reform of the EU accession process, but that it is also necessary that the Western Balkan countries participate in that process. The Declaration has also sent a strong message on the necessity of regional reconciliation and the building of democratic societies, calling on the European Union to support Slovenia and Croatia in joining the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

The Declaration also stresses that it is necessary to abolish the visa regime between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as possible and that Western Balkan youth fully supports the process of normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. The closing ceremony was attended by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Andrej Žernovski and Head of EU Delegation to North Macedonia, Samuel Žbogar.

For the first time, Skopje Youth Summit had a music programme with bands and DJs from





Nevena Todorović, Youth Initiative for Human Rights

the whole region, such as Buč Kesidi, Don't listen to your neighbours, Chalgia Sound System and Foolish Green.

Skopje Youth Summit was also an opportunity for the civil society of North Macedonia to learn about the work of the Youth Initiative of Human Rights and other organisations that attended the Summit, as well as to make new partnerships and contacts and thus continue connecting young people in our region and spread the values of reconciliation and co-operation.

SKYS Declaration Against Nationalism

We, the young people of the Western Balkans, We the young Europeans, gathered in Skopje around the notion that democratic societies can only be based on peace, freedom, justice and respect for human rights,

Confirming the conclusions and values of the Belgrade Youth Summit (2009), Pristina Youth Summit (2012), Sarajevo Youth Summit (2015), Zagreb Youth Summit (2017);

Fully supporting the European aspirations and efforts of the Western Balkans countries;

Disappointed by the short-sightedness and inconsistency of the EU policy towards the Western Balkans;

Aware of strong anti-democratic, nationalistic and populist winds blowing both in the EU and in the WB seeking to distort European and democratic development of our countries,

As a part of the pro-European cores of our societies, We:

Support the reform of the EU integration process if it will contribute to deeper democratic reforms of our societies and faster accession of the WB countries. However, we need to reiterate that the mistakes of the past which led to this dead-end must not be repeated. We must have a voice on the reform of the EU integration process. Civil society organizations being advocates of the European integrations for the last 30 years must be genuinely included in the reform processes.

Highlight that the reform process must stop ignoring this fact that we live in a post-conflict region,

Understand that democratization of post-authoritarian societies is far more difficult in the present day than it was in the 1990s, as modern-day global undemocratic tendencies have grown in strength;

Hope that our European future will not be a collateral damage of individual EU member states' troubles and caprices;

Demand to exercise our right to actively shape our future and therefore to take part in the Conference on the Future of Europe.

We COMMIT ourselves to:

Continue to promote relentlessly the European idea among our fellow citizens of the WB6 countries in order to foster a sustainable support for the EU integration process;

Join the European social and political debates not as mere objects but as active participants and contributors to the decision making and reform processes.

Seek support and build partnerships with the EU citizens and civil society as well as with leaders of EU Member States and EU institutions.

Solidarize with pro-European movements in fight against undemocratic forces across the continent,

Engage in building democracies, the rule of law and respect for human rights in our countries, establishing regional cooperation and an intensive and comprehensive process of dealing with the past as a precondition of reconciliation.

We URGE regional political leaders to:

Cooperate on a regional level more intensively, promote youth mobility and further commit

to reconciliation and the resolving of the most serious legacy of the conflicts: locating and identifying missing persons.

Resolve open bilateral disputes in good faith and with more transparency, engage different actors in the official process, including civil society; end the visa regime between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina;

Advocate to the EU to enable the freedom of movement for citizens of Kosovo, and to Croatia and Slovenia to join RYCO;

Overcome divisions within societies and pledge to maximize support to EU integration and regional cooperation; stop with exclusivist policies of building national identities on the idea of ethnic purity;

End the practice of public rhetoric that incites hatred and mistrust in the region; stop the promotion and glorification of war criminals in public and political space;

Support the leaders and societies of Serbia and Kosovo in peacebuilding efforts, support citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in building a functional and peaceful state, support and help each other on the path towards the EU membership.



“Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival

May/June

“Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival

The “Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival, a unique event presenting Kosovo cultural and social scene to the Belgrade audience since 2014, was organised again in 2019 on May 29 to June 1.

Presenting the artists and performers, representatives of a contemporary cultural scene of Kosovo, the festival sought, as it did in the previous years, to initiate changes through the meetings of Serbian and Kosovo social and cultural communities and build tradition of co-operation which would contribute to the lasting normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Prishtina.

In 2019, the festival took place at a specific moment, when the relations between Belgrade





and Prishtina were at their lowest since the beginning of the Brussels negotiations. A crisis in political dialogue very clearly and directly reflects on everyday lives of the citizens of Serbia and Kosovo and additionally discourages rare examples of co-operation between the two societies, not only in the area of culture, but also in the economy, sports, education and all other areas. The festival sends a very clear message to both Serbian and Kosovo public, but also to the political elites, that the barriers and obstacles must be removed instead of creating new ones.

In the sixth edition of the "Mirëdita, dobar dan!" Festival, with the record number of visitors so far, the citizens had an opportunity to see the film "Cold November" by Kosovo director Ismet Sijarina, the plot of which takes place during the 1990s, with the disintegration of Yugoslavia in full swing. In addition to the film, two books were presented, as well: "Living with Memories of the Missing", about persons and families whose members are still recorded as missing after the war in Kosovo, and "One Flew over the Kosovo Theatre", a collection of plays by the Albanian authors from Kosovo.

"Mirëdita, dobar dan!" Festival

Promotion of the publication "The History of Kosovo in the History Textbooks of Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia" aroused great interest. This publication discusses how the most important periods in the history of Kosovo, from ancient times until today, are presented in history textbooks for primary and secondary schools in Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

During four festival days, the visitors could also see Enver Petrovci's play "Balkan Creoles", while the final night of the festival was reserved for performances of the band "Don't Listen to Your Neighbours" from Gjakova and DJ Matale from Prishtina.



"Mirëdita, dobar dan!" Festival



Ivan Đurić, Programme Director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights stressed at the opening ceremony that this festival showed the other side of political reality we lived in, the side based on co-operation, friendship and common work.

“For too long, nationalism has been the only filter through which we can see Kosovo, Prishtina and Kosovo Albanians. However, through this festival, as well as through other activities that connect the two societies, we are opening a new look and a new approach as a prerequisite for reconciliation and building connections between the two societies”, said Đurić.

At the opening ceremony, Kushtrim Koliqi from Integra, Prishtina-based organisation and partner in organising the festival, addressed the audience and said that it was difficult to organise the festival in such a toxic environment, above all because of toxic political relations. He thanked all guests and supporters of the festival, as well as those “overcoming obstacles – obstacles set by those who wish for such obstacles to exist.”

"Mirëdita, dobar dan!" Festival

Secretary-General of the Regional Youth Co-Operation Office (RYCO), Đuro Blanuša, also attended the festival. He said to the guests that he, as the president of an organisation dealing with the connecting of young people in the region and reconciliation, believed that young people were those who should "socialise much more, meet and learn more about one another."

At the closing ceremony, Blanuša handed the awards of this year's "Mirëdita, dobar dan!" to the authors of the film "Albanian Women are Our Sisters" which premiered at the 2017 "Mirëdita, dobar dan!" Festival and which was screened in several towns in Serbia in spite of obstructions, as well as to "Samizdat B92" for outstanding contribution to the reconciliation and the culture of remembering peace activists from Serbia and Kosovo. The author of the film Sanja Kljajić thanked the organisers of the festival, first of all for the activities of the festival, but also for the prize they received.



"Mirëdita, dobar dan! Festival"



YIHR Serbia and YIHR Kosovo

“Each one of us individually, and the Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina (NDNV), the producer of the film in co-operation with BIRN Kosovo, are not doing this for the first time and are not dealing with this topic for the first time, and I am sure that in future we will continue to address both good and bad sides and stories that occurred”, said Sanja Kljajić.

Veran Matić, receiving the festival award on behalf of “Samizdat B92”, reminded that Bekim Fehmiu was a motif of the Festival and that Bekim was his friend.

“I believe that he would be very happy to see that this Festival exists and that it works regardless of all possible imputations. Petrit Imami, who was buried today, was also a great friend of mine. He was also very happy when he saw that a bridge was built between young Albanians and Serbs here. This is one very creative event which accompanies creative communication”, said Matić while receiving the award at the closing ceremony.



Srebrenica

July

Commemorative gathering in Belgrade for 24th anniversary of Srebrenica genocide

With a commemorative gathering “We Remember Victims of Genocide in Srebrenica”, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Women in Black and the Humanitarian Law Centre marked the 24th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica in the centre of Belgrade.

In the park between the buildings of the Presidency of Serbia and the Belgrade City Hall, the citizens expressed their respect for victims of genocide by lighting candles. The gathering



Commemorative gathering in Belgrade for 24th anniversary of Srebrenica genocide

was attended by US Ambassador Kyle Scott, Norwegian Ambassador Arne Sannes Bjornstad, German Ambassador Thomas Schieb, Italian Ambassador Carlo Lo Cascio, representatives of several organisations and public figures. At the gathering, YIHR activists spread a banner stating “Too Young to Remember, Determined Never to Forget”. Marko Milosavljević from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights said that “the atmosphere of noise, shouting and disrespect for human life and victims’ dignity is caused by the denial of genocide and the relativisation of the crime in Srebrenica”.

“In spite of that, we have gathered to show the policy which has respect for human losses. Unfortunately, we are witnessing that we are the only country in the world responsible for not preventing genocide while knowing that it would happen. For this reason, there are people standing for years, ready to step forward in front of this noise and shouting and say we are sorry for those human losses”, said Milosavljević.

Marko Milosavljević, Youth Initiative for Human Rights



July

Activists from Serbia at the commemoration in Srebrenica

On the occasion of the 24th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, besides the commemorative gathering in Belgrade, YIHR activists from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed their solidarity and respect for the victims of genocide by visiting the Potočari Memorial, carrying the message “Too Young to Remember, Determined Never to Forget”.



July

Ana Brnabić to Decide Whether She Denies Genocide in Srebrenica or She Is a Politician of Peace

Right before the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić said that “a horrible crime” had been committed in Srebrenica, that we should stop returning to the past and that she would not go to Potočari to attend the commemoration and burial of the remains of the 33 victims of the Srebrenica genocide as she “was not invited”. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights invited Brnabić, as well as other government officials, to attend the commemoration YIHR was organising on July 11 in Belgrade, light the candles and pay respect to the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica

YIHR reminded Ana Brnabić that the Republic of Serbia had to respect the decisions of international tribunals and the facts established by courts, and that Serbia was obliged to acknowledge the genocide in Srebrenica, not only as an important step on its EU integration path, but primarily as a recognition and respect of dignity of victims, as well as the respect for international law.

YIHR’s message to the Prime Minister is that, if her ambition is to promote the idea of peace and stability in the region, an apology to the victims of genocide in Srebrenica is the least she could do.

July

YIHR's response to the silence of the highest officials of Serbia regarding July 11

Serbia is once again embarrassed by the silence of the highest officials of the Republic of Serbia in marking the July 11.

Instead of using silence as an expression of condolence and respect for the victims of genocide in Srebrenica, the silence of political leadership of Serbia is an expression of genocide denial, disrespect for the victims and maintaining of nationalist policy of the Greater Serbia.

In the absence of the President and Prime Minister, we could hear the statements of their collaborators.

Defence Minister Aleksandar Vulin, in response to the statement of German Ambassador to Serbia Thomas Schieb that the genocide took place in Srebrenica, said that he did not accept the German Ambassador telling Serbs what to think and do, and especially telling them what genocide was.

The condemnation of the Nazi regime and all the horrors it committed, inflicting the largest scar on the conscience of humanity through the horrors of the Holocaust, is very deeply ingrained in modern Germany and democratic Europe. The process of dealing with the past of the German society through democratisation and European integration is an example to learn from and not to be ridiculed, as is ignorantly, banally and maliciously done by Minister Vulin.

Vladimir Đukanović, MP and member of the Serbian Progressive Party's Presidency posted

a horrifying message on Twitter: "I want to congratulate the Serbian people on the day of liberation of Srebrenica. Thank you General Ratko Mladić for a brilliantly executed military operation Krivaja 95."

Nenad Popović, Minister in the Government of Serbia said that "because of setting new, humiliating conditions, demanding that Serbia acknowledges false genocide in Srebrenica in order to make progress on its path to the EU, it is necessary to reconsider further EU integration process for the sake of protecting the national interests of Serbia and of Serbian people."

The rest of the Government had no comment and were visibly inconspicuous and unavailable on this July 11, as well.

On the other hand, even clearer messages came from the European side, where July 11 is marked as Srebrenica Genocide Remembrance Day.

In a joint statement, High Representative Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn said: "Today we commemorate the genocide in Srebrenica. This was twenty four years ago; yet this tragedy still haunts us. Our hearts and thoughts are with the victims and all those whose lives have been affected by these tragic events. It is our shared duty to always remember Srebrenica, one of the darkest moments of humanity in modern European history. There is no place for inflammatory rhetoric, for denial, revisionism or the glorification of war criminals. Attempts to rewrite history in Bosnia and Herzegovina or anywhere are unacceptable."

Joseph Daul, President of the European People's Party which counts the Serbian Progressive Party as its associate member, had a direct message: "Today we commemorate the victims of Srebrenica genocide & remember all atrocities during the Yugoslav wars. We strongly condemn any attempts to glorify or deny these horrific war crimes. These crimes are a painful reminder of how extreme nationalism can tear societies apart."

The President of Serbia and president of the largest political party Aleksandar Vučić, as

well as Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, have a duty to respond to these statements. We are no longer in position nor do we have hope to expect them to suddenly change their values. We expect that the President and the Prime Minister make a clear choice between Đukanović and Popović on one side and European officials on the other.

The attitude towards belligerent politics of Serbian nationalism is a crossroad for our generation. Europe is in one direction. In the other is a dream of the Greater Serbia which ends in the abyss into which all Balkan people will eventually fall. There is no middle way, the middle way is only a bypass to the abyss.

If Ministers Vulin and Popović stay in the Government of Serbia, it would mean the abandonment of Serbia's European perspective. And then we have no right to resent President Macron when he visits us tomorrow, for being quite sceptical about us quickly joining the EU, when we are allowing a Minister who cherishes all anti-European values, from nationalism to homophobia, and openly opposes membership in the European Union to remain in the Government.

The manipulators from the nationalist spectrum have made up the term "genocidal people", meaning that every time the hell of Srebrenica is named genocide, the Serbian people are labelled as "genocidal".

As always when it comes to manipulation, the truth is completely different.

They did not commit genocide or other crimes in our name. They lied that they did. It is time now to uncover that lie. They did it in the name of their sick ambition for the Greater Serbia.

The only way for the citizens of Serbia and for Serbian people around the world to free themselves from the sins of Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić, Slobodan Milošević and other members of their criminal actions is to renounce them publicly and to renounce their politics. This is primarily the obligation of our political leaders.

The first steps in that directions are as follows:

- That the Republic of Serbia respects the decisions of international courts and facts established by courts;
- That the genocide in Srebrenica is recognised, not only as an important step towards membership in the European Union, but primarily as a respect for victims' dignity;
- That the President and Prime Minister of Serbia and all other state representatives stop denying the genocide and all other war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond;
- That the glorification of convicted war criminals is stopped;
- That the denial of the Srebrenica genocide is qualified as a criminal offence without limiting criteria;
- That public policies created and advanced by Serbia in the process of accessing the European Union really reflect the intention of punishing war crimes;
- That July 11 is declared the Srebrenica Genocide Remembrance Day in the republic of Serbia.

July

Vojislav Šešelj's threats to journalist Snežana Čongradin and Commissioner Brankica Janković

A few days after the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, a convicted war criminal with unlawful parliamentary immunity, Vojislav Šešelj, made a series of threats and insults to the journalist of the Danas daily Snežana Čongradin because of her article about the commemoration of the victims of genocide in Potočari.

Šešelj repeated his earlier proposal to amend the Criminal Code so that anyone who said that the genocide had been committed in Srebrenica should be sentenced to prison. He lifted his monstrous intimidating technique to another level by stating that if he came to power, he would know how to deal with the opponents – he would run his political opponents over with his jeep for which he had already obtained tank tracks.

In this act of violence, Vojislav Šešelj did not spare Staša Zajović (Women in Black) or the deceased Biljana Kovačević Vučo, either. Reducing women's words and deeds to their physical appearance and grossly insulting them is a part of Vojislav Šešelj's sexist and misogynist politics.

In that regard, YIHR demanded that the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Chairperson of the National Assembly, and the members of the governing coalition condemn Vojislav Šešelj's threats and finally, both physical and metaphorically, take him away from the National Assembly by applying the Law on the Election of Members of Parliament.

After threatening the journalist and peace activists, Šešelj made another series of monstrous sexist threats of rape against Brankica Janković, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, on Twitter.

Janković was chosen as a new target of the convicted war criminal as she was the only one of the representatives of state institutions who condemned the sexist threats and insults Šešelj made against the Danas daily journalist, whereby the Commissioner called on competent authorities to urgently investigate who was behind the attack against Darija Ranković, editor of the portal kolubarske.rs, as well.

YIHR reminded that Šešelj's threats directly resulted from the denial and silence of the officials of the Republic of Serbia regarding the responsibility for the genocide in Srebrenica and the absence of elementary human empathy for the families of victims of genocide.

Marko Milosavljević for Novi magazin: It's Legal Obligation to take away Šešelj's MP status

Sexism, Marko Milosavljević from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights had no doubt in the interview for Novi magazin, when assessing violations Vojislav Šešelj committed by heinously labelling first journalist Snežana Čongradin at the Parliament and then the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality Brankca Janković, who condemned such an attack.

“Sexism is in the basis of everything, but it comes from his politics, the politics of defending Vojislav Šešelj’s crimes and the political programme of the Serbian Radical Party based on which this country was waging the wars in the 1990s”, says Milosavljević for Novi magazin and stresses: “Much more problematic than Šešelj himself is that his behaviour is met by tacit approval of the governing coalition and the Serbian Progressive Party, suggesting that it has not changed at all. Such view is supported by negative answers to the question of whether Šešelj could be fined for his speeches at the Parliament if there is no political will to throw him out of the Parliament.

Taking away Šešelj’s MP status is not only a matter of will and moral obligation, but also an obligation under Article 88 of the Law on the Election of Members of Parliament, because all the conditions for his removal from the National Assembly are met, as he was convicted by a final verdict. Competent parliamentary committee should have only confirmed and removed him already in April last year”, said Milosavljević for Novi magazin.

He added that Šešelj is protected by the parliamentary immunity from prosecution for the offence qualified in that way, but also that the biggest issue is that all mechanisms of his condemnation depend on the political will of governing coalition.

“The governing coalition shows that it has not taken off T-shirts or badges with Šešelj’s image, they are only hiding behind European suits and ties”, said Marko Milosavljević from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.



Attack on “Roma” Bakery

Stop lynching of “Roma” bakery in Borča

With regard to violence and lynching threats to the employees and the owner of the “Roma” bakery in the Belgrade suburb Borča, which was under siege by hooligans on April 27, who threatened to close down the bakery, singing nationalist chants and leaving pig heads in front of it, in order to avoid such attacks from repeating, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights demanded urgent response from the prosecutor’s office.

Invitation to a lynch of the “Roma” bakery owner Mon Gjuraj came through one social networks’ group, when a photograph was published of an employee, owner’s brother, making the Albanian national symbol of a two-headed eagle with his hands. The photograph was taken in 2017, but was misused as a provocation and trigger to gather bullies.

However, YIHR warns that displaying national symbols represents freedom of expression and cannot be used as an excuse for threats and violence.

A day after the incident in front of the bakery in Borča, Interior Minister Nebojša Stefanović said that “there weren’t any incidents or disturbance of the public peace and order” in Borča. The Minister of the Interior and one of the leading people of the Serbian Progressive Party tried unconvincingly to relativise the attack, as well as to demonise everyone who defended the lives of the family in Borča, targeted for lynching by extreme right-wingers and nationalists.

Fully concordant stances of both the extremist groups and Minister Stefanović forced the Gjuraj family to fear for their lives. The particularly cynical part of the Interior Minister’s statement was that there were no broken windows at the bakery, thereby denying threats and

hate messages that can be louder than the glass breaking. The Minister dared to relativise the lynching at the “Roma” bakery with the attacks on property and Serbian nationals in Kosovo, at the time where the independent media and political adversaries from Kosovo, also Serbian nationals, are targeted by his party.

Having in mind that the “Roma” bakery is recognised in the local community for its charity and humanitarian work aimed at vulnerable groups, YIHR urged all those who cared about equality in Serbia to find a way to help this bakery resume its work.

First work day after the incident at the “Roma” bakery

On May 3, the first work day after the incident, the owner of the “Roma” bakery prepared various bakery specialties for the citizens of Borča and all those who came that day to offer support. The “Burek of Solidarity” campaign attracted large numbers of citizens, as well as the representatives of political parties and prominent public figures.

However, only a day after the support campaign for the bakery, posters calling for a new gathering against the owner Mon Gjuraj appeared once again in Borča.

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights demanded that the Ministry of the Interior protected the citizens during that gathering, which represents the continuation of the campaign of persecution and violation of freedom of expression of national and ethnic origin.



YIHR Reactions

Reaction to the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin

On the occasion of Vladimir Putin's visit to Serbia on January 17 2019, many civil society organizations, including the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, expressed their protest against the glorification of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian rule, a trend that is prominent in Serbia.

Accompanied by extensive media coverage, Putin's visit further damages the already corroded democratic institutions, rights and freedoms of the citizens of Serbia, all under the guise of Serbo-Russian friendship. On this occasion, we wish to stand in solidarity with all the victims of political repression in Russia, especially with the human rights activists and members of the LGBT+ community, who are exposed to systemic discrimination and various forms of torture and violence.

Especially terrifying is the discovery made last year, of the existence of so-called "anti-gay purges" in Chechnya, which have led to the formation of the first concentration camp for gay and bi men. Although Russian authorities denied such allegations, mostly coming from opposition media, in December 2018 OSCE confirmed that persecutions of LGBT+ persons were present in Chechnya and that the authorities were doing nothing to prevent them. The testimonies of survivors were horrifying: prisoners were tortured with electroshocks, held captive in prison cells for months on end without trial, brutally beaten and humiliated, and some stated that they were released only once their families promised that they would kill them.

The Russian organisation LGBT+ Network states that at the beginning of 2019 a new purge began in Chechnya, in which more than 40 LGBT+ persons were imprisoned, two of whom died as a result of torture. Since 2013, the controversial "gay propaganda" law has been in

force in Russia, which silences any attempt of LGBT+ activists' struggle for more solidarity and more inclusive society, although the European Court for Human Rights has deemed this law a breach of the freedom of expression and a tool to encourage homophobia.

Aside from horrific persecutions in Chechnya, extreme human rights violations occur throughout Russia under the regime of Putin's party. The Russian Duma has decriminalised domestic violence that does not result in serious bodily injury, competent institutions brutally oppose any form of freedom of assembly and opposition is intimidated in various manners. The fact that 58 journalists were killed in Russia since 1992 until 2019 speaks enough of what lies ahead for the freedom of media in Serbia should Putin's Russia continue to be a role model.

Since 2012, human rights organisations receiving foreign donations have been labelled as "foreign agents" in Russia, and such qualification has been extended to foreign funded media since 2017. This type of measures are broadly supported by Serbian nationalist and populist movements who regularly call on government authorities to take similar measures in our country. Such labelling and practically banning human rights organisations essentially serve to further promote the idea that democracy and human rights are concepts which are "violently" imported from the Western world and which are neither natural nor necessary for our society.

Although Serbian authorities deny that Putin's visit means giving up on reforms and Euro-Atlantic integration, happening at this particular moment, it significantly indicates that Serbian authorities are willing to sacrifice human rights and better social standards to continue idolising Putin's regime.

There is no room for the development and freedom for the citizens of Serbia if a regime that stifles freedom and upholds the principle "might over right" remains its paragon.

Karadžić's verdict reconfirms a need for Serbia to acknowledge the genocide in Srebrenica

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights would like to underline that the legally binding verdict of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals confirms that Radovan Karadžić is guilty for the genocide in Srebrenica and war crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia, its institutions and officials must stop denying the genocide in Srebrenica and disregarding other war crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina; they must adopt the Declaration about the Srebrenica genocide and express the utmost respect for the victims of genocide and war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbian authorities, all political actors and society as a whole must decisively stand against the glorification of war criminals and the relativisation of war crimes, as the Vecernje novosti daily did one day earlier by publishing Radovan Karadžić's aphorisms and a letter written by convicted war criminal Nebojša Pavković on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the NATO bombing.

Consequently, the verdicts such as the one rendered against Karadžić must become a stepping stone urging all countries in the region to allow for victims to be heard through institutions, to acknowledge them, and to condemn any nationalist programme.

YIHR stresses that this verdict confirms individual criminal responsibility of Radovan Karadžić; it is not a judgment against the Serbian people in its entirety, the Republic of

Karadžić's verdict reconfirms a need for Serbia to acknowledge the genocide in Srebrenica

Serbia or the Republic of Srpska as an entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is fallaciously believed for court judgments against political, army and police leaders in the context of war crimes.

War criminals are not our heroes. Glorifying war criminals means glorifying the crimes they committed.

March

Šainović to apologize for his crimes and not to promote the politics of crime

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights protests against public panels and statements made within public institutions and public media service Radio Television of Serbia, where convicted war criminal Nikola Šainović made guest appearances, neglecting and relativizing facts about war crimes against Albanian civilian population in Kosovo during 1999.

YIHR demands that Nikola Šainović publicly, clearly and unambiguously apologize to the families of Albanian civilian victims of war in Kosovo for whose murders he was convicted. Rather than denying their acts, war criminals must apologize to the victims and speak publicly about their individual accountability and guilt. Further, media outlets such as RTS need to give more voice to victims' families than to those who celebrate, relativise and diminish the extent of human losses.

On Tuesday, March 26, Nikola Šainović was a guest on the TV show "Question Mark" at the Radio Television of Serbia, where he was presented as "negotiator in Rambouillet who bore

witness to the times”. Although it was mentioned during the show that he was convicted of war crimes, no question was asked about his responsibility for civilian victims of crimes in Kosovo. Šainović is not a chronicler of the time, but a convicted war criminal who – if already at the Public Broadcasting Service, which is a problem in itself – must be asked about the crimes and his responsibility. Everything else amounts to the denial of the crimes and a mockery of the victims, by both Nikola Šainović and the Radio Television of Serbia. Also, on Saturday March 23, Nikola Šainović was a guest speaker at the panel titled “On the Eve of War, 20 Years Later” at the Aeronautical Museum in Belgrade, a public institution owned by the Republic of Serbia, where he used a narrative of defence against the aggression on the country to relativise his role in war crimes in Kosovo, which can be seen on the footage of the event. Further, the Board of the Socialist Party of Serbia in Vrbas announced on their Facebook page that Nikola Šainović would deliver a lecture titled “Slobodan Milošević and Challenges of Yugoslav Crisis” in the “Yugoslavia” cinema in this town on Thursday, March 28.

As a reminder, Nikola Šainović is a former Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, convicted by The Hague Tribunal for crimes against humanity and violation of the rules of warfare in Kosovo in the course of 1999. His indictment contains accusations of deportation and other inhumane acts, murders and persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds with the intent to forcibly displace part of Kosovo Albanians and change ethnic balance in Kosovo, with the aim of re-instating the control of Serbia in Kosovo. Šainović was convicted to 18 years in prison. Having served two-thirds of the sentence, he returned to Belgrade in 2015, where he was expressly appointed a member of the governing board of the Socialist Party of Serbia. Today, he is a member of the Presidency of this party.

The highest state officials, political parties, government authorities, public institutions and public services, state-owned media and publishing companies, have joined together in the recent months in an intensive campaign of promoting and legitimising war criminals in the Serbian public space. A support for and glorification of war criminals is equal to the support for criminal politics and justification and celebration of the crimes committed.

August

Instead of belligerent messages of Croatia and Serbia, we demand full recognition and respect for victims of the Storm

Joint statement of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Croatia and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights Croatia and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia are calling on political representatives of Serbia and Croatia not to use victims' distress and suffering for belligerent messages, but to co-operate in order to enable victims of crimes committed during and after the Storm operation to achieve their rights and justice.

In early August twenty-four years ago, during and after the Storm operation, members of Croatian army participated in murders and abuse of civilians, destruction and theft of private property and preventing refugees from returning to their homes.

Since then, no politician of the Republic of Croatia offered sincere apologies to the victims. Croatian President Grabar Kitarović and Prime Minister Plenković refuse to attend commemorations organised in memory of crimes committed during and after the Storm action, thus refusing to deal with the past in pursuing their policies.

Kolinda Grabar Kitarović's statement commending and showing affinity for Thompson, who had a concert on the eve of the Storm anniversary, where fascist greetings once again could

Instead of belligerent messages of Croatia and Serbia, we demand full recognition and respect for victims of the Storm

be heard, is humiliating and insulting not only to the victims of crimes, but to all the citizens of Croatia and the values Croatia is founded on.

Thus far, Croatian courts have rendered only one final verdict for war crimes committed in the context of the Storm, while it is estimated that more than 600 persons were killed and more than 150,000 persons left Croatia as a consequence of this action.

On the other hand, no Storm victim in Serbia has the status of a civilian victim of war, although Serbian officials have, for the past five years, spoken of the necessity to keep the memory of the victims of the Storm through official commemorations. Yesterday's statement of the Serbian President Vučić, in which he reminded that "his job is for us not to forget this date and to respect the victims of others" is not in accordance with the policies pursued or messages sent by the representatives of Serbia, which still supports convicted war criminals.

Further, for years, the Humanitarian Law Centre has been reminding the Serbian public of the responsibility of the Republic of Serbia to apologise and adequately compensate a large number of citizens who left Croatia as refugees at that time, who were arrested by the members of the Serbian Interior Ministry in 1995 and turned over to the military authorities of the then Republic of Srpska Krajina (RSK) or to the paramilitary unit "Serb Volunteer Guard", led by Željko Ražnatović Arkan, after which they were as a rule sent to the first lines of combat. Such forced conscriptions as the most severe violation of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in the majority of cases resulted in lost lives or grave bodily injuries and psychological consequences on conscripted men.

Although we were not born during the crimes in the Operation storm – or we were infants – we are determined never to forget them. We are ashamed, not only because these crimes were committed, but also because they are used by politicians in Croatia and Serbia for mutual squabbles and malicious manipulation and because the institutions of our states failed to respond to these crimes in accordance with the principles of justice, that is, they have not done enough to get justice and provide reparations for victims. We do not want to

Instead of belligerent messages of Croatia and Serbia, we demand full recognition and respect for victims of the Storm

leave a society burdened with the past and divisions to future generations like the one we have inherited, but we want to act responsibly for the sake of co-operation and reconciliation of Serbia and Croatia.

For this reason, we are calling on the Republic of Croatia to ensure the following:

- That the Prime Minister and the President make a sincere apology to the victims of crimes committed by the Croatian forces during and after the Storm operation. A guide for politicians “How to Apologise for Crimes” published by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Croatia can be of assistance in that respect.
- That State Prosecutor’s Office and courts invest more efforts into the prosecution of war crimes committed during and after the Storm operation.
- That schools’ history curricula pay more attention to the events connected with the Storm operation which amount to the violation of human rights.
- That the process of return of refugees to their homes is speeded up, including the full realisation of property rights, housing, the renovation of destroyed property and the resolving of the issues pertaining to their status.

Furthermore, we are calling on the Republic of Serbia to ensure the following:

- To fully regulate the status of the civilian victims of war following the model proposed by the Humanitarian Law Centre so that, besides other victims of wars in former Yugoslavia, those who suffered in the Storm operation are properly compensated, as well.
- That the President of the Republic issues an apology and the Government of Serbia enables, in accordance with the procedures, access to compensation to the citizens who fled Croatia in 1995 and were forcefully conscripted by the police and paramilitary units.

Instead of belligerent messages of Croatia and Serbia, we demand full recognition and respect for victims of the Storm

- That Serbia's representatives at the official commemorations of the Storm victims stop promoting the nationalist policy, abusing the wounds of those who were killed or made refugees in the Storm operation.

We are inviting both states to jointly commemorate sufferings during the Storm operation, to respect court judgments and the facts established by the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice, as well as co-operation in resolving the issue of missing persons.

The acknowledgment and prosecutions of crimes committed in the Storm operation by the Republic of Croatia, as well as full legal respect for the killed and the refugees by the Republic of Serbia is in the interest of both societies who can only prosper in peace.

Gošić, Croatia



Ministry of Defence has once again shown its criminal face at the Book Fair

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights strongly condemns the Ministry of Defence establishing a tradition at the Belgrade Book Fair where for the second consecutive year a platform and voice is given to convicted war criminals such as Nebojša Pavković, Vladimir Lazarević, Dragoljub Ojdanić and Vinko Panudrević.

In this way, by giving a public opportunity to deny their crimes, the Ministry of Defence protects and glorifies war criminals, hiding behind the value of truth and pride, yet again killing the memory of the victims of those crimes.

The Ministry of Defence has once again shown its criminal face at the Book Fair by promoting war criminals who do not consider their victims worthy even of a footnote. In view of their implicit or vocal defence of the war criminals, we assume that the Prime Minister Ana Brnabić and President Aleksandar Vučić are one step away from erecting a monument dedicated to Slobodan Milošević.

Republic of Serbia continues to defend the crime and hides Novak Đukić, the murderer of the Tuzla youth

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights condemns the promotion of “The Gate of Tuzla – a Staged Tragedy”, a book by Ilija Branković, organised by the Ministry of Defence on Tuesday, November 5 at the Serbian Army Hall in Belgrade.

Sadly, after the Book Fair (of war criminals) in Belgrade and a several years' long campaign by the Večernje novosti daily, and now by the Defence Ministry, rejecting the findings from the verdict against Novak Đukić, the denying of the crime at the Gate comes as no surprise, but rather confirms the fact that Serbia is a safe house for the fugitives from justice such as Novak Đukić.

As a reminder, on June 12 2009, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina sentenced Novak Đukić to 25 years' imprisonment for war crimes against civilians under Article 173 of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was found guilty because on May 25 1995, as the commander of Tactical Group Ozren of the Army of the Republic of Srpska, he ordered the launch of an artillery attack on Tuzla, at the time a UN safety zone declared by the UN Resolution no. 824 of May 6 1993. A projectile hit the part of the city centre called the Gate (Kapija) and killed 71 people, mainly around 20 years of age, and wounded more than 100 persons. The average age of those killed was 23 and the youngest victim was only two years old. In February 2014, he was released from prison following the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina overturning the verdict of 25 years in prison due to a

Republic of Serbia continues to defend the crime and hides Novak Đukić, the murderer of the Tuzla youth

misapplication of the law. In June 2014, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina reduced Đukić's sentence to 20 years. A few days later, his defence counsel informed the Court that his client was undergoing medical treatment in Serbia. The BiH arrest warrant for Đukić was released in October 2014 because he did not respond to summons and subsequently Serbia was requested to take over the verdict.

Since February 2016, the War Crimes Department of the Higher Court in Belgrade has conducted the proceedings for the recognition and enforcement of the final judgment of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina against Novak Đukić.

Along with the proceedings, Đukić's defence counsel has continuously released information about his alleged innocence to the Serbian public. To dismiss the final verdict, the defence used the results of an experiment conducted at the training ground of the Serbian Armed Forces in Nikinci near Ruma, where it was concluded in extrajudicial proceedings and in the presence of experts hired exclusively by Đukić that he and the Army of the Republic of Srpska were not guilty of the massacre of civilians in Tuzla.

According to the Humanitarian Law Centre's data, the trial began in February 2016 and during 2017 none of the four scheduled sessions of the panel were held because the convicted Novak Đukić failed to attend the court, justifying his absence with health reasons, that is, frequent hospitalisations at the Military Medical Academy. During 2018, only one session was scheduled, which was not held because Novak Đukić failed to appear, as he was undergoing hospital treatment. Expertise determined in early 2018 that Novak Đukić was temporarily incapacitated for trial and that a new expert examination would take place in a year's time.

However, on March 4 2019, Novak Đukić made a statement to the Večernje novosti daily that "he deserves to have his name on the Tuzla Monument". Also, this statement by Đukić was only a part of the article of Večernje novosti's journalist Dragan Vujičić titled "Exclusive: Seven Islamic Terrorists' Deadly Attack in Tuzla", which argues that "seven Islamic terrorists" were responsible for the death of 71 people at the Gate. Let us remind you of

Republic of Serbia continues to defend the crime and hides Novak Đukić, the murderer of the Tuzla youth

the fact that the Republic of Srpska Radio Television, which conveyed this article, was fined by the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CRA) with 12,000 convertible marks.

The CRA determined that there had been a breach of “fairness and impartiality” as well as of “the protection of privacy” as regulated by the Code on Audio-visual Media Services and Radio Media Services, as it is said in the decision to impose sanctions for an article citing the Belgrade-based Večernje novosti, in which it was stated that it was a hidden explosive that had detonated at the Gate and not artillery. In a piece aired in May 2019 by the Radio Television of the Republic of Srpska, it was also claimed that Novak Đukić, the war commander of the Tactical group Ozren of the Republic of Srpska Army, was innocent.

Having in mind that Novak Đukić attended the promotion of the book “The Gate of Tuzla – a Staged Tragedy” by Ilija Branković at the Army Hall on November 5, while being “judicially incapacitated” to face the justice of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as of those in Serbia, we are asking state authorities of the Republic of Serbia how it is possible that they are not ashamed to mock the victims of the crime at the Gate.

YIHR letter of support to the Tuzla Youth Council

Letter of support of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights to the Tuzla Youth Council in protest against the denial of the crime at the gate

“Dear all,

We, as the generations of peace activists of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights from Serbia,

who have been coming to Tuzla for years to commemorate the May 25 crime at the Gate, as well as because of the new relationships we have made, have a duty to wholeheartedly support the efforts of the Tuzla City Council to loudly and clearly oppose the denial of the crime at the Gate, due to new attempts by the Serbian Ministry of Defense to protect Novak Đukić by promoting Ilija Branković's and presenting convicted war criminal as a tragic figure, while portraying the victims as suicide bombers.

The bonds we have made in the exchange programmes between young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, friendships and love relationships in Tuzla, prove that criminals and warmongers have not succeeded in completely separating the societies and nations of former Yugoslavia.

Since its establishment until today, YIHR has been fighting for the same values. We are fighting for peace in the region, not only as an absence of war, but as a permanent process that involves dealing with the past and the ongoing co-operation of the countries and people of the region. We do not consent to warmonger politics and war criminals in public space. We insist on respect for established facts, as well as on legal and moral convictions of those responsible. We educate and introduce young people from the region with the wartime heritage, by conducting a dialogue on the perspectives of democratic development of our societies. Aware that without civic activism there is no democracy, we protect human rights and refuse to give away the freedoms we fought for.

Therefore, we say to the youth of Tuzla – you are not alone in your fight for the same values and you can count on yet another vote coming from the young people of Serbia.”

YIHR Kosovo and YIHR Serbia condemn President Vučić's rhetoric of denial

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights – Kosovo and Youth Initiative for Human Rights – Serbia strongly condemn the statement of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić denying the massacre in Račak.

On January 15 1999, Serbian forces killed 44 civilians in the Račak village. Former Head of the OSCE Verification Mission William Walker called it “a crime against humanity”. The Račak massacre was initially part of the indictment of Slobodan Milosevic before the ICTY, but it was later removed, whereas no final verdict was made due to his death while in detention. President Vučić said that “it was all fabricated by that global fraudster, scammer and swindler, Walker”. This unacceptable statement violates the dignity of victims and their families, and at the same time, it is against the values of peace, reconciliation and justice.

We are calling on President Vučić to apologize and to stop denying war crimes committed by the Milošević regime in Kosovo and in the region. We are also calling on all political leaders in Serbia and Serbian political leaders in Kosovo to distance themselves from extremist statements and invite people to recognize, respect and commit to bringing justice for all victims, including the survivors of sexual violence and persons gone missing in the war in Kosovo.

We, as young people from Kosovo and Serbia, will always stand against the denial of war crimes. We are determined to continue opposing nationalistic narratives and we will persist in working towards building peace and reconciliation between Kosovo and Serbia.

YIHR's letter to Interior Minister Nebojša Stefanović

Youth Initiative for Human Rights' letter to Minister Nebojša Stefanović: "After a mass grave is discovered, arrests should follow rather than praises for the unit which was involved in concealing the bodies."

Minister Stefanović,

Eighteen years have passed since the bodies of 744 civilians – Kosovo Albanians killed in 1999 during the war in Kosovo were found at the police range of the Special Anti-Terrorist Units-s (SAJ) in the Batajnica suburb, only some 15 km away from downtown Belgrade,

The Serbian Interior Ministry, as well as SAJ, whose celebration you have attended today, were involved in concealing the bodies of victims of war crimes in Kosovo (1999-2001) at the SAJ Training Center in Batajnica. For this reason, on the occasion such as the celebration of the Day of the Unit, as well as on any similar occasion, you must show responsibility and at least express respect for 744 civilians whose bodies had been concealed at the shooting range of the Interior Ministry's unit for two whole years.

In addition to 744 bodies of Kosovo Albanians in Batajnica, mass graves with the remains of Kosovo Albanians were also found in Petrovo Selo (61 bodies), near Perućac Lake (84 bodies) and in the Rudnica mass grave (52 bodies).

We remind you that, although the war in Kosovo ended two decades ago, the crimes of the Serbian police, military and paramilitary forces against Albanian population are still a

taboo topic in our country. However, the killing and concealing of 744 bodies gives you as the Interior Minister a certain responsibility to examine all persons who were responsible for the concealment of bodies operation.

According to Humanitarian Law Center's data, the operation of removing the bodies of Albanian civilians from Kosovo and their their concealed burial in Serbia was planned at the highest levels of the state. Those involved in executing the order to conceal the bodies are prominent persons in Serbian society today: Obrad Stevanović, Petar Zeković, Dragan Ilić, Vladimir Aleksić, Desimir Radić, Goran Radosavljević Guri and many other heads of police departments and police stations of the Serbian Interior Ministry.

In Humanitarian Law Center's Dossier "The cover-up of evidence of crimes during the war in Kosovo: THE CONCEALMENT OF BODIES OPERATION", it is established that more than 100 high-rank officers of the Serbian Interior Ministry were involved in the operation of concealing the bodies.

Minister Stefanović, after a mass grave is discovered, arrests should follow rather than praises for the unit which was involved in concealing the bodies.

On this occasion, we are calling on you and the Ministry of Interior you are leading to examine all allegations from the above mentioned HLC Dossier and establish the responsibility of police officers who were involved in the concealment of bodies operation and prosecute them accordingly.

An apology to the families of victims and taking responsibility for the crimes and operations carried out by the Interior Ministry during and immediately after the war in Kosovo is least you can do as a current Interior Minister.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights
In Belgrade,
December 18, 2019

Graffiti messages “Ratko Mladić” and “No Divisions” left in the hallway leading to YIHR office

On March 11, the hallway leading to the Youth Initiative for Human Rights’ office was marked with the graffiti messages “Ratko Mladić” and “No divisions” and the office doors were covered in spray-paint and stickers with photographs of eight prominent women in Serbian history and the writing “This is a source of pride and a true Serbian woman, you are unworthy of her shadow”.

We interpret the messages that have been left for us as a reaction to the fact that we painted over three graffiti messages (“Ratko Mladić, Serbian hero”, “Kosovo is Serbia”, and “No divisions”) in the Terazije tunnel two weeks before. The graffiti we had painted over, as the utility services of the city of Belgrade should have done, and the graffiti on our door come from the same nationalist and misogynist sources. Human rights activists have always been the primary target when nationalist muscles are being exercised.

Ongoing competition in expressing nationalism between ruling parties and opposition movements must stop. A society which is based on human rights principles and European values, must be explicitly direct and clear – Ratko Mladić is a war criminal who carries the most responsibility for the genocide committed in Srebrenica. We do not have the right to use euphemisms, make the matter relative or deny the crime.

Graffiti messages "Ratko Mladić" and "No Divisions" left in the hallway leading to YIHR office

Human rights activists must not remain alone in standing against radical right-wing movements and nationalism. If we allow for the glorification of war criminals, we diminish our chances of living in peace, prospering and living better than we are today. A space for war criminals cannot exist in state institutions, the Parliament, state supported publishing houses and the education system, nor on the walls of our towns.



Graffiti messages "Ratko Mladić" and "No Divisions" left in the hallway leading to YIHR office

October

Ivan Đurić guest in the “Question Mark” on the Serbian Radio Television

In October 2019, the full House of Representatives of the US Congress unanimously passed a resolution requiring Serbia to resolve the murder of three of the Bytyqi brothers – Illy, Agron and Mehmet.

The document states that the development of relations between the United States and Serbia should depend on the progress in resolving this case. The murder of the Bytyqi brothers was the topic of the “Question Mark” talk show on the Serbian Radio Television. Guests in the studio were Ivan Đurić, Programme Director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Ivica Dačić, Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ljiljana Smajlović, journalist.

Ivan Đurić said that all witnesses - and more than one hundred of them were heard at the trial of two members of the Interior Ministry for aiding and abetting in the murder - had “collective amnesia” for the period of the murder.

“The defence offered by Goran Radosavljević Guri at the trial was that he was on his annual leave during that period and therefore had no knowledge about what was happening at the camp in Petrovo Selo at the time”, said Đurić.

Đurić stressed that, for this reason, political dimension is an important factor with regard to the Bytyqi brothers’ murder, as well as a political will to resolve it by protecting witnesses who will testify against high-ranked officials of the Serbian Interior Ministry.

“It is important to untangle the hank of the Depth Two operation and the moving of bodies, and to give an impetus and political support and show that the state is behind these

Ivan Đurić guest in the “Question Mark” on the Serbian Radio Television

investigations, instead of trying to cover them up”, said YIHR Programme Director.

After Minister Dačić’s statement that the adopted resolution represented “an opinion, that is, a sentiment of the House of Representatives” and that “lawyers, judges and FBI people” should have been brought to the talk show, asking why FBI did not launch an investigation of the Bytyqi brothers’ murder, Ivan Đurić reminded that the three young men were killed and buried in a mass grave at the range of the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit after the Serbian police handed them over from prison to another police unit, which took them there.

“How is it possible that the murder at the police unit’s range is not our responsibility? Why would FBI provide evidence for us? The police is involved in this case from the beginning to the end and if our police and prosecutor’s office are not capable of finding evidence, how could FBI do that?” said Đurić and added that the resolution is very clear and we agree with it – we condemn the murder and we want the perpetrators to be punished. Talk show “Question Mark” is available on [this link](#).





Remembrance

March

20th anniversary of crimes against Albanian civilians in Kosovo

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights, the Humanitarian Law Centre and Women and Black commemorated the 20th anniversary of crimes against Albanian civilians committed in Kosovo in 1999, whose bodies were hidden in the Belgrade suburb of Batajnica.

Performance "Batajnica 744: the Buried Truth", Belgrade



According to the data of UNMIK Office of Missing Persons and Forensics, the remains of 744 Kosovo Albanians were found in Batajnica.

The activists held a performance “Batajnica 744: the Buried Truth”, when they covered a banner with the names of 744 victims in dirt and then went for a walk to the plateau in front of the National Assembly of Serbia.

Marko Milosavljević from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights said that in the last 20 years, Serbia had a narrative of silence with regard to the mass graves in Batajnica, Petrovo Selo, Lake Perućac and Rudnica and a tendency to acknowledge Serbian victims only.

“You have more than ten locations here from which these victims were transported, and the very number of 744 remains which were dug out only 10 km from here speaks enough of the evil we must not stop talking about. We will keep insisting on it and we will try to educate young people so that they know the whole context of the war in Kosovo and the disintegration of former Yugoslavia”, said Milosavljević.

Let us remind you, Albanian civilians in Kosovo were exposed not only to NATO bombing, but also to the campaign of crime by the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Military formations (Serbian Ministry of the Interior, the Yugoslav Army and paramilitary units) committed a series of crimes in Kosovo, which culminated during the NATO intervention. The moving of bodies of murdered Kosovo Albanians to mass graves throughout Serbia is also a crime

Before being transported to Batajnica, the bodies of murdered Albanians were buried in primary mass graves in Kosovo. Since 2001 until today, mass graves have been discovered on four locations in Serbia containing 941 bodies of Albanians killed in Kosovo in 1999, primarily civilians who were not involved in the military conflict.

Crime in Štrpci – 26 years, no justice for victims

On February 27 2019 it was 26 years since the crime in Štrpci, when members of the Republic of Srpska Army (VRS) abducted and killed 20 passengers, non-Serbian civilians, from a Belgrade-Bar train at the railway station in Štrpci .

The Humanitarian Law Centre, Women in Black, the Sandžak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights reminded that the families of these victims have been waiting for 26 years for justice from the courts in Serbia and for recognition of their status as families of civilian victims of war.

The anniversary of the crime in Štrpci was commemorated by a street action at 15:48, which is the time when the train left the Main Train Station in Belgrade 26 years ago.

The victims of this crime were: Esad Kapetanović, Ilijaz Ličin, Fehim Bakija, Šećo Softić, Rifat Husović, Halil Zupčević, Senad Đečević, Jusuf Rastoder, Ismet Babačić, Tomo Buzov, Adem Alomerović, Muhedin Hanić, Safet Preljević, Džafer Topuzović, Rasim Ćorić, Fikret Memović, Fevzija Zeković, Nijazim Kajević, Zvezdan Zuličić and one unidentified person.

To date, the remains of only four victims have been found. The body of Halil Zupčević was discovered on the banks of Lake Perućac, while the remains of Rasim Ćorić, Jusuf Rastoder and Ilijaz Ličina were found at the same location in 2010. The other victims are still unaccounted for.

So far, only Nebojša Ranisavljević and Mićo Jovičić have been finally convicted for this crime. Nebojša Ranisavljević was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2003 by the Higher



Main Train Station in Belgrade

Court in Bijelo Polje (Montenegro). Mićo Jovičić, who was tried by the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, admitted to the crime and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

Ten persons are currently on trial before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the crime in Štrpci, including Luka Dragičević, Commander of the Višegrad Brigade, and Boban Indić, Commander of the Intervention Unit of the Višegrad Brigade.

In October 2018, after three and a half years, the Belgrade Court of Appeal finally confirmed the indictment against five members of the Višegrad Brigade of the VRS for the crime committed in Štrpci. Although the beginning of the main trial was scheduled for January 2019, it was postponed owing to the illness of one of the accused.

Victims' families, most of whom are the citizens of Serbia, have been ignored by the state authorities responsible for the care of civilian victims of war (the Ministry of Labour,

Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs) – increasingly so over the two decades. Owing to the discriminatory legal framework in Serbia, victims' families are deprived of their right to obtain the status of family members of civilian victims of war, simply because their family members were killed outside the territory of Serbia, although they were the citizens of Serbia. With this status, the relatives of the victims would be provided with symbolic personal benefits in the form of monthly cash allowances and social support.

For many years, victims and their associations, as well as the HLC and other civil society organizations, have been pointing out the inadequacy of the existing legal provisions and their discriminatory implementation. Despite the serious objections of domestic and international actors, this law has not yet been altered. Instead, in August 2018 the Ministry of Labour brought the Draft Law on War Veteran and Disability Rights, which retains the discriminatory provisions.

The HLC, Women in Black, the Sandžak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights demanded that the institutions of Serbia effectively prosecute this crime, and that the Ministry of Labour and other competent institutions pass a new law based on a Model Law on the rights of civilian victims of human rights violations committed during and in connection with the armed conflicts in the period 1991-2001, which contains normative solutions for the realisation of victims' rights in accordance with international human rights treaties and other international standards in providing reparations to victims.

October

27th Anniversary of the Crime in Sjeverin

Women in Black and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights commemorated the 27th anniversary of the abduction and murder of 16 Bosniak citizens of Serbia from Sjeverin by the peace action “Remember the Crime in Sjeverin”.

The killed Sjeverins have not yet been properly buried, all the killers have not yet been convicted, and the state of Serbia has not confessed to its crime.

On October 22 1992, members of the Serbian paramilitary unit "Avengers", led by Milan Lukić, abducted 15 men and one woman from the Priboj-Rudo bus, crossing the territory of the Republic of Srpska in Mioče, at the Amfora pub, took them to Višegrad, where they were mentally and physically abused and then killed at the banks of the Drina River. These Serbian citizens were killed just because they were Muslim.

The Sjeverins killed: Mehmed Šebo, Zafer Hadžić, Medo Hadžić, Medredin Hodžić, Ramiz Begović, Derviš Softić, Medhad Softić, Mujo Alihodžić, Alija Mandal, Sead Pecikoza, Mustafa Bajramović, Hajrudin Sajtarević, Esad Džahić, Ramahudin Đatović, Ediz Gibović, and one woman, Mevlida Koldžić.

For this crime, the court in Serbia sentenced Milan Lukić, Oliver Krsmanović (in absentia) and Dragutin Dragicević to 20 years and Đorđe Šević to 15 years in prison. Unfortunately, the Hague Tribunal did not address this crime.

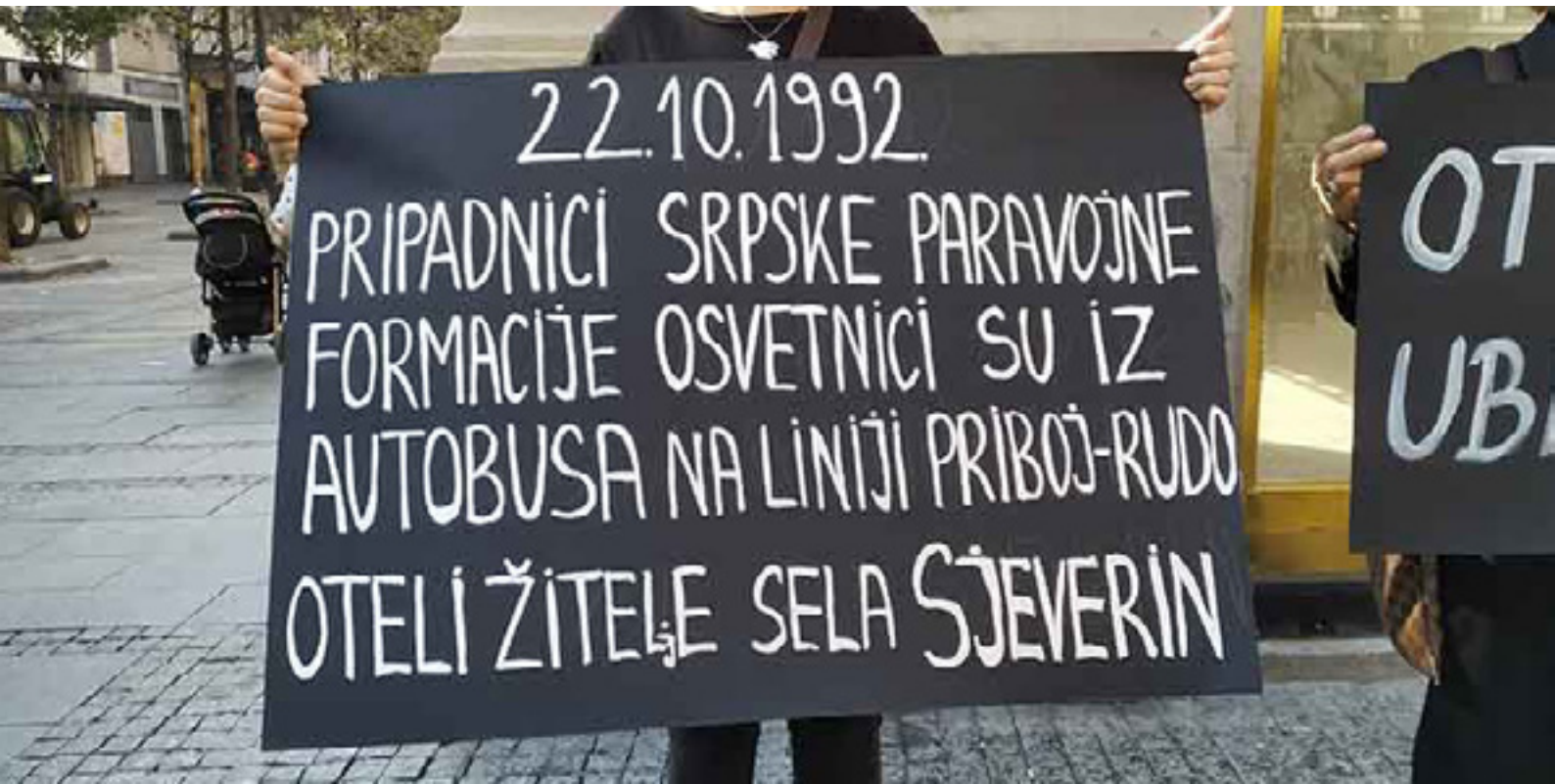
Women in Black and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights consider that neither the first instance nor the Supreme Court accepted that the convicts belonged to the Republic of Srpska Army, which was funded, organised and supported by the then Yugoslav Army. The

27th Anniversary of the Crime in Sjeverin

courts concealed the state's responsibility, although it was established during the trial.

The Law on the Protection of Civilian Victims of War does not acknowledge the Sjeverin victims. Namely, this shameful law does not recognise its own citizens as civilian victims of war, because the war was not conducted on Serbian territory, the victims were abducted in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and they were not killed by the enemy in the conflict. We demand that the state of Serbia begins compensating surviving family members of the victims from Sjeverin.

In the name of justice, on behalf of the dignity of the victims, we demand that Serbia arrests the perpetrators and their commanders. Until Serbia faces these and all other crimes committed on our behalf, it will continue to be a safe house for convicted war criminals and an oasis of impunity.



May

Commemorative gathering for the victims of the crime at the Gate

The activists of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina once again visited Tuzla on May 25 2019 to pay respect to the victims at the commemorative gathering dedicated to the victims of the crime at the Gate.



Carrying the message “Too Young to Remember, Determined Not to Forget”, they said that the coming of activists was a gesture of solidarity and pledge for the future of peace in the region and that they would not give up, in spite of attempts to relativise not only the crime at the Gate, but numerous other crimes, as well.

August

Operation Storm Anniversary Jointly Marked by YIHR in Serbia and Croatia

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights Croatia jointly marked the anniversary of the crime against civilian population committed in the course of the Storm Operation in August of 1995.

Around thirty young people from Serbia and Croatia took part in the memorial tour, paying

Varivode, Croatia



PREMLADI DA SE SJEĆAMO,
ODLUČNI DA NIKADA NE ZABORAVIMO.

INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

Operation Storm Anniversary Jointly Marked by YIHR in Serbia and Croatia

their respect to civilians killed during and after the military operation Storm. The activists had an opportunity to visit, together with the Initiative, victims' associations and the Serbian National Council, the places of suffering in the vicinity of Knin – Ervenik, Varivode and Gošić, and learn more about the facts established by courts on war crimes committed in August 1995. YIHR Programme Coordinator Marko Milosavljević said that the goal of this joint visit and commemoration with young people from Serbia and Croatia was to pay respect to all victims of crimes that took place 24 years ago. Through this memorial tour, YIHR wished to shift focus from the perpetrators of crimes to victims, primarily because convicted war criminals have much more attention in public than their victims.

“In this way we want to educate young people, to give them the opportunity to see places where the crimes were committed, to talk with members of the victims' families associations and to learn as much as they can in places where everything happened”, said Milosavljević.

Ervenik, Croatia

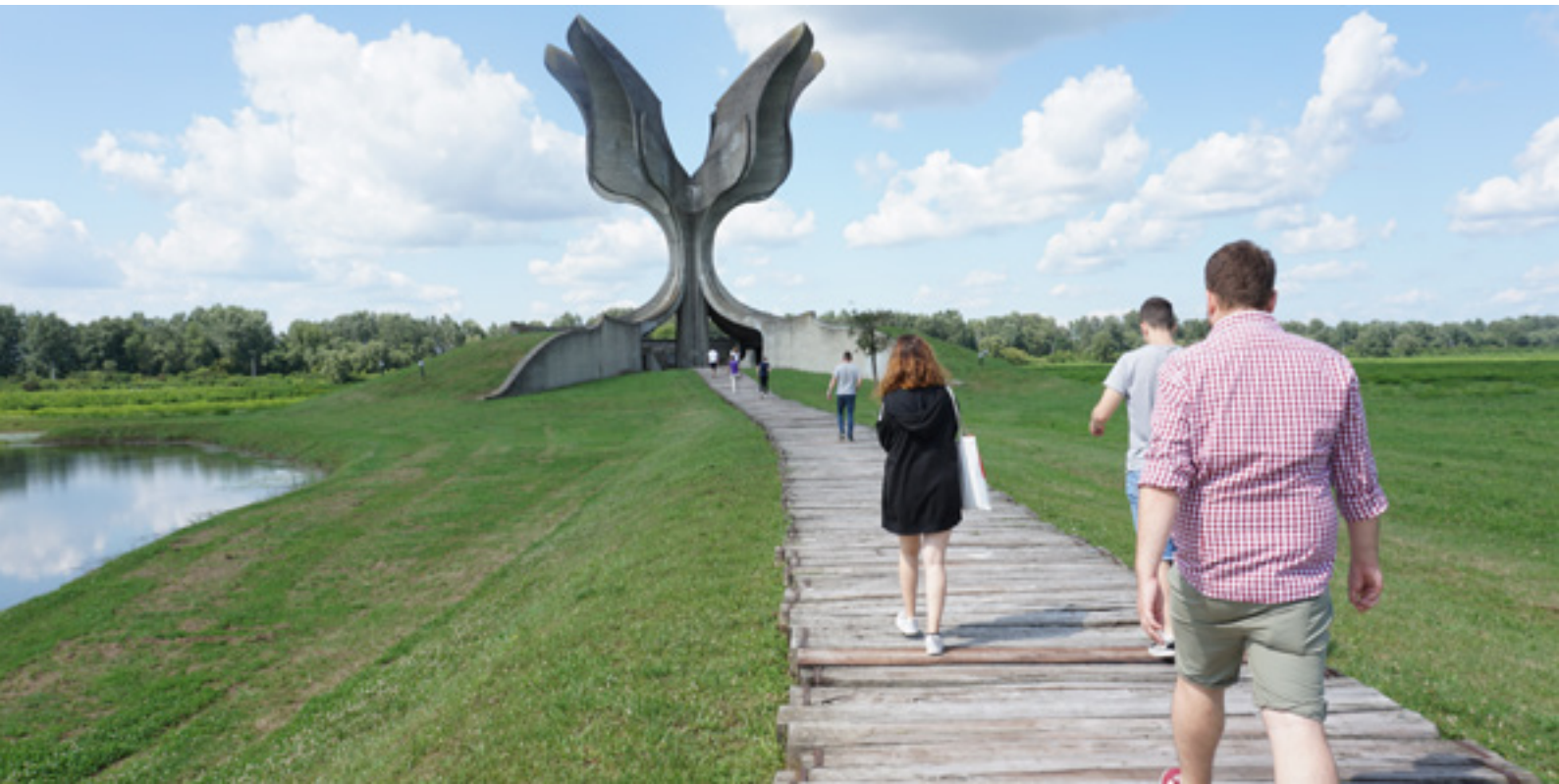


August

YIHR Activists Visited Jasenovac memorial Site

A group of YIHR activists from Serbia ended their memorial tour of commemorating the victims the Storm Operation by visiting places where crimes were committed by a visit to the Jasenovac Memorial Site, that is, a site of the 'Ciglana' concentration camp ran by Ustashe during the rule of the Independent State of Croatia in the Second World War.

At the Jasenovac Memorial Site, they visited a museum in which names of more than 80,000 persons are written down, who were killed in the camp according to the official record of the



Site. The majority of victims were Serbs, Roma and Jews.

The museum also exhibits the objects which former prisoners used for eating, as well as blunt objects - hammers, knives, mallets, axes... used for hitting them on their heads and killing them: any camp guard was allowed to kill a prisoner at any moment, for any reason, without bearing any consequences.

In addition to the clothes of some prisoners, the museum also exhibits the segments of bricks which the prisoners were producing and which were used to surround the camp from three sides in the length of 3.5 kilometers.

The activists also visited the “Stone Flower” monument, designed by a well-known architect and former mayor of Belgrade, Bogdan Bogdanović. The path to the monument is made of wooden sleepers brought from the railways used to transport imprisoned men, women and children. In front of the monument, the activists have unfolded a banner stating “Too Young to Remember, Determined Never to Forget”.

The monument that is a symbol of the Jasenovac Memorial Site is made in the shape of flower with the idea to symbolize the energy drawn from the earth, that is, from the victims, but still open to the Sun and new generations so that what happened to them in that camp never happens to anyone else.

The path to the monument situated on the land of former concentration camp III Ciglana Jasenovac passes beside several mounds which Bogdanović designed on places where mass graves of prisoners were found; their remains were burnt 15 days before the end of the Second World War.

The Jasenovac Concentration Camp was the largest concentration camp established by the Ustashe regime in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War. It consisted of several units founded in short periods of time between August 1941 and January 1942.

July

21st anniversary of crimes against Serbian civilians

On July 18, as every year, Women in Black, the Humanitarian Law Center and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, together with the victims' families, attended the commemoration at the Orlovača cemetery, where they placed a wreath with the writing "We remember the crime in Orahovac".

With this act, the Women in Black network, the Humanitarian Law Center and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights wished to express their sympathies and solidarity with the victims' families, as well as to support their requests for the facts about this crime to be established and for all the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

During and after the armed conflict between Serbian and Yugoslav police forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army in the Orahovac municipality in Kosovo on July 17-25 in 1998, crimes were committed against Serbian civilians. The KLA struck Orahovac on July 17 and the villages of Retimlje and Opteruša on July 18, which is why this date is commemorated as a memorial day for the Serbian civilians murdered in the Orahovac municipality. In KLA's attacks on Orahovac and nearby villages of Retimlje and Opteruša, five civilians were murdered: Aleksandar Majmarević, Borivoje Simić, Jagoš Fildžokić, Vekoslav Kazić and Anđelko Kostić. Dozens of civilians, largely Serbs, but also Roma, were taken and held captive in the former Mališevo police station building, as well as in an Albanian home in the village of Semetište, the Suva Reka municipality. Mostly thanks to the efforts of the International Red Cross Committee, 60 persons, mainly women and elderly men, were released, while 36 Serbs, three Roma persons and one Montenegrin went missing.

The remains of the majority of victims were found in mass graves in Volujak near Klina and in Mališevo near Orahovac. In April 2005, the exhumation of a mass grave in the village of

21st anniversary of crimes against Serbian civilians

Volujak revealed the remains of Spasoje Banzić, Božidar Božanić, Mladen Božanić, Nemanja Božanić, Novica Božanić, Miodrag Burdžić, Spasoje Burdžić, Đorđe Đorić, Dimitrije Kostić, Lazar Kostić, Miodrag Kostić, Miroljub Kostić, Mladen Kostić, Nebojša Kostić, Srećko Kostić, Svetislav Kostić, Todor Kostić, Vekoslav Kostić, Vitomir Kostić, Živko Kostić, Saško Kostić, Cvetko Nikolić, Rajko Nikolić, Duško Patrnogić, Sreten Simić and Krsta Stanojević. The remains of Đorđe Baljošević, Saša Baljošević, Tomislav Baljošević, Dušan Đinović, Duško Dolašević, Čeda Čabarkapa, Aleksandar Stanojević, Srđan Vitošević and Srećko Vitošević were found in May 2005, in the mass grave next to the hospital in Mališevo. The remains of Azem Isaku, Visar Isaku and Svetozar Tomić were found in the Dragodan cemetery near Priština. Agron Hamza was exhumed near Glogovac. Mladen Kostić's body has not been found yet.

The remains of the majority of victims were buried in the Orlovača cemetery, among whom the Kostić and Nikolić family members.



April

Twenty years from the murder of 16 workers of Serbian national television

On April 23 1999, a building of the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) in the Aberdareva Street was hit during the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, when 16 RTS workers were killed.

The court found former director of the Radio Television of Serbia, Dragoljub Milanović, responsible for their death because, in spite of having knowledge that the building would be bombed, he failed to notify his employees.



Twenty years from the murder of 16 workers of Serbian national television

Dragoljub Milanović, as well as the Slobodan Milošević's criminal regime, in which Aleksandar Vučić used to be the Minister of Information, decided to sacrifice innocent people. On the occasion of the 20th years of the crime, on April 23, 2019 at 02:04 and at 14:04, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and Women in Black attended the commemoration of the murdered workers of the Radio Television of Serbia in front of the "Why?" monument and thus expressed compassion and solidarity with their families. The commemoration was also attended by women from the communities of victims and survivors from Bosnia and Herzegovina, from Srebrenica and the Zvornik region (Đulići, Klisa, Sapna), and from Croatia (Zagreb and Novska), as well as the activists of the Women in Black Network from Serbia.

Once again we wish to express enormous respect towards women – victims of crimes from the territory of former Yugoslavia who have transformed their tragedy and pain into a common fight for peace and justice above and beyond all state borders and divisions.

August

Memorial walk for missing persons in Kosovo

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo marked August 30th, International Missing Persons Day, with a memorial walk from the Newborn monument in Pristina to the Government of Kosovo.

YIHR reminds that twenty years have passed since the end of war in Kosovo, but the destiny of 1600 missing persons is still unknown, while institutions in Kosovo work insufficiently on resolving this issue.

Memorial walk for missing persons in Kosovo

YIHR Kosovo's message is that Kosovo and Serbian societies could not be able to reach lasting peace unless crimes committed during the war are condemned honestly and until open issues, including the issue of missing persons, are resolved.

Memorial walk for missing persons in Pristina



“Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” Programme

In 2019 the Youth Initiative for Human Rights launched “Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia”, a comprehensive programme which, among other things, consists of a series of workshops and education sessions about crimes committed on the territory of Serbia during the wars of 1991-1999.

November

Priboj: Workshop about crimes in Sandžak (1990-1995)

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights has organised an educational two-day workshop “Crimes in Sandžak (1990-1995)” in Priboj, within the programme “Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia”.

A dozen of young journalists, activists, and politicians from several towns in Serbia attended lectures given by Seniha Kačar from the Sandžak Human Rights Committee, Marijana Stojčić of the Centre for Applied History, as well as by Marko Milosavljević from YIHR with whom the participants also had an opportunity to talk about the memorialisation practices in Sandžak. Family members of the victims abducted and killed in Sjeverin and Štrpci, Dževad Koldžić and Nail Kajević, also discussed Serbia not recognising victims from the Sandžak municipalities.

In her lecture on intimidation and persecution, cases of torture, murders, and abductions of Muslim citizens in this period, Seniha Kačar from the Sandžak Human Rights Committee



Workshop in Priboj

reminded the attendees of the fact that around 10,000 citizens have gone through some form of harassment and abuse by the public and secret security agencies of the Republic of Serbia in Sandžak.

Marijana Stojčić of the Centre for Applied History talked about the culture of remembrance, i.e. of forgetting war crimes on the territory of Serbia from 1991 to 1999. She said that a hybrid narrative of the collective memory of war crimes characterised by the ideology of victimisation is currently in place, and is based on two elements: one's own righteousness (one's own community) and the dehumanisation of one's adversary (i.e. other communities). In practice, such policy of remembrance creates and renews the denial of war crimes such as kidnappings and killings of victims in Sjeverin and Štrpci.

Along with Marko Milosavljević from YIHR, the attendees had the opportunity to hear about the practices of memorialisation in Sandžak, which commemorate the victims of war crimes

“Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” Programme

in Prijepolje, Bjelo Polje, Sjeverin, and Belgrade, as well as with commemorative practices of organisations such as Women in Black, the Humanitarian Law Centre, and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

The State of Serbia is still denying and not acknowledging the victims from the Sandžak municipalities even after 27 years. This was confirmed in the discussion with the family members of the victims abducted and murdered in Sjeverin and Štrpci - Dževad Koldžić and Nail Kajević.

The second day of the workshop saw the attendees visit the spot of the first abduction of workers from Sjeverin (the Amfora pub in the village of Mioče), followed by the monument in Sjeverin, as well as the abduction spot of Štrpci on the railway Belgrade - Bar. While visiting these places, the participants were talking with Dževad Koldžić and Behudin Hodžić, whose

Mioča, Bosnia and Herzegovina (“Too Young to Remember, Determined Never to Forget”)



“Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” Programme

family members were abducted in Sjeverin, and erected the banner saying: “Too Young to Remember, Determined Never to Forget”.

YIHR also organised a public projection of RTV B92’s film “Abduction” in the Cultural Centre “Pivo Karamatijević” in Priboj. The film, which was first released in Priboj in 2002, was viewed by 50 citizens of Priboj, among them the representatives of the Islamic Community and the family members of the Sjeverin victims.

Having seen the film, the citizens of Priboj, along with the participants of the “Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia”, had a chance to voice their impressions of the film as well as the need of the victims’ families to discover the truth about their family members’ demise, as their remains are still missing.

Štrpci, Bosnia and Herzegovina



December

Workshop about crimes in Vojvodina and visits to Begejci, Stajićevo and Ovčara

After the workshop in Priboj, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights organised a two-day workshop about crimes, persecution and concentration camps on the territory of Vojvodina in the period 1991-1995. The workshop took place in Zrenjanin in late November 2019 and gathered ten young journalists and activists.

The workshop was designed as a two-day educational event in which the participants had an opportunity to visit the places of crime, hear the testimonies of survivors, learn the facts from court proceedings and watch documentaries about the persecution of the citizens of Serbia who were Croatian nationals.



“Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” Programme

On the first day of the workshop, the participants attended the lecture “Crimes against Civilians of Croatian Nationality” in which Marko Milosavljević from YIHR presented the facts according to the judgments of domestic courts and ICTY. After the lecture, the participants visited Begejci and Stajićevo, two places of captivity of Croatian civilians in the vicinity of Zrenjanin.

The participants also watched documentary titled “Unsuitable Citizens”, produced by Vojvodina Civic Centre, and talked with the authors, Jelena Dukarić and Željko Stanetić. The documentary is a sequel of the project of the same title, which involved many years of research into cases of intimidation and persecution of Croatian population from Vojvodina during the 1990s. The documentary contains intimate testimonies of individuals who were directly exposed to or witnessed physical and psychological abuse and pressure aimed at their moving out from Serbia: murder of the Oskomić–Tomić family in Kukujevci in 1993 and the persecution in Hrtkovci in 1991-1995. On the second day, the participants had an opportunity to visit Grabovo near Vukovar, the location of the Ovčara Memorial Centre.



December

Workshop about secret mass graves in Serbia

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized a two-day workshop for young journalists, activists and politicians from the Political Youth Network in Belgrade on December 21-22 2019. The workshop titled “Secret Mass Graves in Serbia” is part of the programme “Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia”.

On the first day of the workshop, at the lecture delivered by Ivana Žanić, executive director of the Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC), around ten young people from different parts of Serbia had an opportunity to learn the facts from HLC dossier “The Concealment of Bodies Operation”. On the territory of Serbia, four mass graves have been discovered so far, containing a total of 941 bodies: Batajnica (744 bodies), Lake Perućac (84 bodies), Petrovo



“Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” Programme

Selo (61 bodies) and Rudnica (52 bodies). The first three mass graves were discovered in 2001, while the last one, Rudnica, was found in 2013. In the said dossier, HLC also presents data on the burning of the bodies of Kosovo Albanians, mentioning three locations in that context: the Mačkatica aluminium complex near Surdulica, the Feronikl plant in Glogovac and the copper mining and smelting complex Bor (RTB).

The FHP dossier states that the units under command of Milorad Ulemek Legija participated in the events in Mačkatica in May 1999. Although the then War Crimes Prosecutor Vladimir Vukčević visited the factory in 2005, no indictment has been raised.

After Ivana Žanić’s lecture, the participants were asked, with facilitation of Fiona Jelići and Marko Milosavljević from YIHR, to fill in the blank maps by creating the maps of paths of the concealment of victims based on the data from the judgments and documents: from war crimes committed in Kosovo to secondary mass graves in Serbia (Batajnica, Lake Perućac, Petrovo Selo and Rudnica). After the group work on the maps, the participants had the opportunity to read the stories of families of victims whose bodies ended in the mass graves at the shooting range of the Serbian Interior Ministry Special Anti-Terrorist Unit.

The end of the first day was reserved for the training on how to search information and data in the archive of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at their website. Jovana Kolarić, HLC researcher, presented to the participants how they can get certain documents from the cases tried before the ICTY.

As an exercise, the participants searched for the New Year and Christmas greetings by Milan Martić in 1995 and the recordings of the guilty pleas of the accused.

Documents such as Milan Martić’s New Year and Christmas greetings for the New Year of 1995 point to the links between and “aspiration” of the participants in a joint criminal enterprise included in the indictment against former heads of the Serbian Intelligence Agency Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović. The author of the greetings is the then President of the Republic of Srpska Krajina and other recipients, besides the accused Jovica Stanišić, are

“Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” Programme

Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, Momčilo Krajišnik, as well as the then Presidents of FR Yugoslavia and Montenegro, Zoran Lilić and Momir Bulatović.

On the second day of the workshop, the participants came to the entrance of the Training Centre of the Serbian Interior Ministry’s Special Anti-Terrorist Unit, where 744 bodies of persons killed and then secretly buried at the shooting range were found.

Mirko Medenica, associate of the Centre for Applied History, an organisation that often organises public lectures on secret mass grave in Batajnica, delivered a public lecture near the entrance to the Training Centre; he talked about crimes in Kosovo and the culture of remembrance of the concealment of bodies operation in Belgrade.

After visit to Batajnica, the participants watched the movie “Depth Two” and talked with the author Ognjen Glavonić.





Publication “Guide through the Institution of the Protector of Citizens”

2019

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights implemented the project “Promotion and Monitoring of the Work of the Institution of Ombudsman in Serbia” in the period October 2018 – November 2019.

Eleven visits to the local Ombudsman offices were organised, as well as four trainings for more than 80 young lawyers, political scientists and journalists about the work of the Ombudsman and how to write appropriate application. The participants had an opportunity to talk with the lecturers about human rights protection mechanisms in Serbia and their efficiency. The lecturers – local Ombudsmen – talked about the problems the citizens most often face at the local level and how a local Ombudsman can solve them. The project ended with a conference of the Serbian Association of Local Ombudsman, where an action plan for further broadening of the network of local Ombudsman was made.

Training in Kragujevac



November

Promotion of the “Guide through the Institution of the Protector of Citizens”

As a final activity of the “Promotion and Monitoring of the Work of the Institution of Ombudsman in Serbia” project, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights presented a publication, “Guide through the Institution of the Protector of Citizens”, aimed at introducing the citizens with the work of the Ombudsman Institution, as well as with ways the citizens can reach out to this institution.



Promotion of the “Guide through the Institution of the Protector of Citizens”

In addition to offering a detailed manner in which citizens can turn to the Ombudsman for help, the publication also provides information on the competencies, history, and mandate of the Ombudsman, and other services the institution provides.

At the promotion, Boban Stojanović, the author of the publication, emphasised that the Guide was intended primarily for all citizens, but also institutions such as local Ombudsmen who would give out the Guide to the citizens with complaints in cases out of their jurisdiction, but rather in the jurisdiction of the Republican Ombudsman.

The promotion of the Guide was also attended by local Ombudsmen who discussed the state of this institution in Serbia, further work to be done by the Serbian Association of Ombudsmen and the expansion of the local institutions of citizens’ protectors’ network.

Local Ombudsmen had previously attended a two-day conference “Promotion of local Ombudsmen in local self-government units in which this institution has not been established”.



Youth Human Rights School

2019

Youth Human Rights School

In partnership with Helsinki Human Rights Committee in Serbia, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights continued implementing the programme “Youth Human Rights School” in 2019. Within this programme, four youth human rights schools at a basic level were organised in Belgrade, while one advanced human rights school for was organised in Vrdnik, Fruška Gora.

A total of 80 secondary school pupils from the whole of Serbia passed through four basic human rights schools. In June, July, September and October, the participants had an opportunity to talk about identity and discrimination with psychologist Tamara Tomašević and to take part in a forum theatre with trainer Demir Mekić. In the course of five days of the



Youth Human Rights School

school, the participants, among others, could learn more about media and human rights, gender equality, dealing with the past, the position and rights of national minorities and citizens' social and economic rights.

The Advanced Human Rights School gathered those who completed basic level and who were the most active during the work in Belgrade and expressed a wish in their motivation letters to learn more about dealing with the past. The process of transitional justice, identities today and facts in connection with the conflicts of the 1990s were the topics addressed at the Advanced Human Rights School and they were selected based on the interest and great wish of the participants to learn more about them.



September

Caravan of the participants of the Youth Human Rights School

More than one hundred participants of the Youth Human Rights School organised actions and events related to human rights, the position of young people, national minorities, LGBT+ persons, as well as street actions aimed at the awareness raising of specific issues in local communities.

The actions were organised in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Zrenjanin, Subotica, Valjevo, Novi Sad, Šabac, Niš and Vranje.

Kragujevac



Caravan of the participants of the Youth Human Rights School



Zrenjanin



Pride Parade and Pride Caravan

September

Pride Caravan

The Pride Caravan, which announced the upcoming Pride Parade in Belgrade, started in Kragujevac. The Caravan sought to support local LGBT+ communities in towns throughout Serbia and to invite citizens who do not live in Belgrade to come to Belgrade Pride.

Under the slogan “I Do Not Renounce”, the Pride Caravan visited Krajevo, Kragujevac, Zrenjanin, Novi Sad, Subotica, Šabac, Niš and Vranje. It was cancelled in Valjevo and Novi Pazar due to the protests of right-wing organisations.



Pride Parade and Pride Caravan

Check the atmosphere of the Pride Caravan at [this link](#).

This year too YIHR was part of the organising committee of Belgrade Pride.



September

EuroPride 2022 in Belgrade

At the Annual General Meeting of The European Pride Organisers Association (EPOA), Belgrade Pride was selected to be the host and organiser of the annual European event EuroPride in 2022, leaving behind other candidates - Barcelona, Lisbon, and Dublin.

EuroPride has been selecting host cities ever since 1992, but Belgrade is unique in that it will be the first city to host EuroPride outside the European Economic Area (EEA).



Pride Parade and Pride Caravan

Goran Miletić, Director of Civil Rights Defenders for Europe and member of the organising committee of Belgrade Pride, stated after the vote that the 2022 EuroPride is an opportunity for strengthening the Western Balkans LGBT community and reaffirming the promotion of European values and human rights in Serbia.

“EuroPride gives us the opportunity to present Belgrade as an indispensable tourist destination, safe and open to all. We believe that EuroPride will shine a light on issues of particular relevance to the LGBT community in Serbia and the region, such as the legal regulation of the same-sex partnership to the regional and European public”, said Miletić.

EuroPride has been organized since 1992 - every year in another European city, gathering between tens of thousands of participants up to as many as 3 million in 2017 in Madrid.





Other activities

May

Strengthening regional inter-parliamentary co-operation through supporting the Regional Youth Cooperation Office and the Berlin Process

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights, together with the French-German Youth Office (OFAJ/DFJW), the Aspen Institute, Crossborder Factory from Berlin and Western Balkan Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) organised in Berlin on May 18-21 2019 the second meeting of members of parliament, that is, parliamentary representatives from six Western Balkan countries aimed at widening the support to RYCO through joint work with twelve actively engaged young people from the region and members of parliament from France and Germany.

The conference in Berlin is the second meeting of MPs who support the work of RYCO since the parliaments of the Western Balkan countries are not formally included in the Berlin process. For this reason, YIHR has continued to work together with partners from France and Germany in order to obtain as large as possible political support for exchange programmes and initiatives carried out by RYCO in the region.

The same as it was at the first meeting of MPs in Tirana in 2018, which we organised on this topic, with the presence of the representatives of institutions from Germany, EU, members of the European Parliament and the presenters at the conference on the topic of regional co-operation, through a declaration agreed with youth representatives from the region, MPs from the six countries committed to support RYCO's programmes and initiatives, as well as regional co-operation at the political level.

December

YIHR and RYCO signed Memorandum of Co-operation

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office signed a Memorandum of Understanding at Skopje Youth Summit, confirming cooperation between the two organisations and a wish that YIHR regional network and RYCO jointly participate in promoting cooperation in the Western Balkans.

The Memorandum of Co-operation provides that, for the purpose of more efficient co-operation and communication, YIHR and RYCO will appoint persons responsible for



Other activities

the exchange of information and coordination of joint activities within their respective organisations. Further, the Memorandum envisages periodical meetings of the two organisations, as well as joint public events through which YIHR and RYCO will seek to present their own work as well as their joint work to relevant actors and institutions, both in the Western Balkans and EU-wide. With regard to joint activities, the Memorandum foresees that YIHR and RYCO will co-operate at the strategic level, too, and that they will jointly put efforts in achieving goals of both YIHR and RYCO, as well as that they will organise and participate in joint trainings and education programmes for the staff of both organisations.

The signatories will establish the practice of promotion and increasing of visibility of both YIHR and RYCO as well as the exchange of information and research in the areas relevant for the two organisations, especially with regard to project evaluation.

The Memorandum of Understanding between YIHR and RYCO was signed by the representatives of all members of YIHR regional network (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo) and Đuro Blanuša, Secretary-General of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office.

August

Sarajevo Film Festival and Dokufest

As in the previous years, in 2019 YIHR activists had the opportunity to be part of the Sarajevo Film Festival and documentary film festival Dokufest in Prizren.

Other activities

Members of the Political Youth Network from the whole region had the opportunity to see numerous award-winning documentaries and take part in panels and debates on regional co-operation and dealing with the past.

Also, as every year, YIHR activists were present at the Sarajevo Film Festival and participated in the discussions organised within the Docu Corner programme.

Sarajevo Film Festival



June

Kozarac Camp

Inicijativa mladih za ljudska prava BiH, u saradnji sa centrom za mlade KVART iz Prijedora, i ove godine je održala deseti po redu Kamp Kozarac sa ciljem približavanja teme suočavanje sa prošlošću mladima iz regiona.

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the KVART youth centre from Prijedor, held tenth consecutive Kozarac Camp aimed at bringing the topic of dealing with the past closer to young people in the region. During the four days of the Camp, the participants had an opportunity to hear Tamara Šmilding's lecture "Culture of Remembering" and to visit the Museum of Kozara. An important segment of the Camp was a visit to the concentration camps of Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje where the participants could learn more about how these camps operated and hear from survivors about monstrous ways in which people were tortured and killed.



PYN activities

Three regional meetings were organised within the Political Youth Network (PYN), an international network composed of 31 youth political organisations from five Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia). The first meeting was held in Belgrade in late May and early June, the second one took place in Zagreb in late June, while the last regional meeting in 2019 was held in Prizren in August.

The Belgrade meeting focused on the topic of human rights and regional politics; it also had a cultural aspect, since the participants visited the “Mirëdita, dobar dan” festival held in Belgrade at that time. The meeting in Zagreb happened only twenty days later; it sought to discuss the issues of intra-party democracy and the system of the European Union, while the participants paid an official visit to the Office of the European Parliament in Croatia. The last regional meeting in 2019 took the form of regional conference in Prizren and addressed the issues of constructive communication between political parties and media relations in politics.

Each of these meetings also had an educational component. Namely, besides meetings and sessions of the Network Assembly, the participants also attended workshops aimed at the development of young politicians’ specific skills, primarily those related to human rights and democracy. The main goal of the PYN is the development of competences of young politicians and reaching standards in communication between different political parties and their ideologies.

2019

Global programme

During 2019, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights continued supporting the work of World Youth Movement for Democracy, global activist network which gathers young human rights defenders and organizations whose work expands freedoms and protects human rights around the world.



Besides promoting the work of member organisations, the Network launched a video campaign aimed at supporting political prisoners in Latin America and marked October 18, World Youth Day for Democracy, discussing various forms of political participation and activism. On

that occasion, Network members organised a series of actions, discussions and workshops in their communities.

In September 2019, YIHR organised the first international workshop with young people from Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan. With support of local and foreign lecturers, the participants studied different methods of creating campaigns and had an opportunity to learn more about the work of local activists and organisations dealing with the improvement of civil liberties and human rights. As a result, they developed the proposals for local campaigns.



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