

# 2020.

NEWSLETTER



# Youth Initiative for Human Rights Launched Website ratusrbiji.rs

In June, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights launched an on-line platform ratusrbiji.rs – a website presenting all the important and relevant information about war crimes and other human rights violations in the territory of Serbia in the period of 1991-2001 in one place.

In a time of widespread glorification of convicted war criminals in Serbia, and ignorance about the war crimes committed in Serbia, the website ratusrbiji.rs seeks to provide, in a simple and comprehensive manner, information about war crimes, and thus bust the myth that there was no war going on in Serbia, and that the state of Serbia did not participate in war disintegration of Yugoslavia. Because – it did happen.

Ratusrbiji.rs provides detailed information and analyses of secret mass graves on the territory of Serbia, prison camps, forcible mobilisation, paramilitary units, and the terrorising and persecution of minorities, as well as the insurgency in the south of Serbia and the anti-war movement. The ratusrbiji.rs website and events and activities within the project “Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” are supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany.

[Read more at warinserbia.rs](http://warinserbia.rs)

## BAZA ZNANJA

Baza znanja sajta **ratusrbiji.rs** sastoji se od analiza koje se oslanjaju na niz dokumenata, sudski utvrđeni članci i publikacija koje ukazuju na oblike nasilja i zločina, kao i forme otpora nasilju i ratu na teritoriji Srbije (1991-2001). Bazu znanja čine analize na sledeće teme: tajne masovne grobnice, logori, prisilne mobilizacije, paramilitarne jedinice, teror i proterivanje manjina, pobuna na jugu Srbije i antiratni pokret u Srbiji.



**Tajne masovne  
grobnice u Srbiji**



**Logori za Hrvate u  
Srbiji tokom  
devedesetih godina**



**Logori za Bošnjake  
u Srbiji tokom  
devedesetih godina**







## Workshops for Youth on War Crimes on the Territory of Serbia

An important segment of the project “Truth and Reconciliation in Serbia” were the workshops and a study visit for young people, held in six towns where serious human rights violations were committed during the 1990s.

After the workshops held in the second half of 2019, other workshops for youth were also organised in Belgrade, Niš and Bujanovac, addressing the topics of paramilitary units in Serbia, NATO bombing, as well as the position of Albanian minority in the south of Serbia. Within this project, a group of young people from Serbia had an opportunity to take part in a study visit to Srebrenica and the locality of former prisoner camp Šljivovica near Zlatibor.

*Read more at [YIHR.rs](http://YIHR.rs)*







## Group of Young People from Serbia Visited Srebrenica

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights, in co-operation with forumZFD, organized a study visit for twenty young activists from Serbia to the Srebrenica Memorial (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Šljivovica Detention Camp in the Čajetina municipality (Serbia) on February 25-28 2020. The first day of the study visit began at the YIHR office, where Dušan Jovanović gave a lecture about the genocide in Srebrenica to the participants from Novi Sad, Zrenjanin, Vrnjačka Banja, Čačak, Pančevo and Belgrade.



On the second day of the study visit, the group had the opportunity to visit the Srebrenica Potočari Memorial and the cemetery where the genocide victims are buried. There, they laid flowers on the monument of the Srebrenica victims with the message “Too Young to Remember, Determined Not to Forget”. On the third and last day of the study visit, Jovana Kolarić from the Humanitarian Law Centre gave a lecture about Šljivovica and Mitrovo Polje. After the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, these two locations served as detention camps for Bosniaks who managed to escape genocide and transfer to the territory of Serbia. They believed that Serbia would protect them since it was not officially in the war and that they would easier get to some foreign third country and obtain a refugee status there.

*[Read more at YIHR.rs](https://yihr.rs)*



# 25 Years since the Srebrenica Genocide

On the occasion of 25th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, together with the Independent Association of Vojvodina Journalists and forumZFD – Serbia, we have launched a campaign “Never Again, For Anyone”. With this permanent campaign we seek to draw attention of the broadest public and build a permanent reminder of the largest crime in Europe after the World War II. So that it would never happen again to anyone, and for Srebrenica to become a universal anti-war symbol. Within the campaign, a short video “Never Again, For Anyone” was created, while the Horkestar, an alternative choir and orchestra, rearranged and sang a song “Never Again, For Anyone”, an anti-war call by Kemal Monteno. The campaign “Never Again, For Anyone” will continue in the years to come. Contests for short videos on the topic of Srebrenica, as well as a documentary festival, will be organised within the campaign.

*“We have the whole year for political condemnations and attempts of political change, and we will continue, like all other peace activists in Serbia, to work throughout the year, but in this month of July, especially the way it is this year, without a possibility to visit Potočari and pay respect to the victims, without a possibility to do it properly in Belgrade, too, our campaign now aims to send that message in a different way.”*

**Ivan Đurić about the “Never Again, For Anyone” campaign**



Video “Never Again, For Anyone”



Horkestar song



## Emir Suljagić's Lecture about the Genocide in Srebrenica

Director of the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Emir Suljagić held an online lecture "Srebrenica: Genocide between Remembrance and Denial" and reminded that the genocide could not be reduced only to the mass murders of Bosniaks in July 1995, but rather included a continuity of events from May 1992 to July 1995, during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other than talking about the work of the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial, Suljagić also spoke about the events that immediately preceded the genocide in the period of 1992 onward, once Srebrenica was declared a UN protected area.

"We wish to do this because, for example, those murdered on July 6, 7 or 8, 1995, are not counted as victims of genocide, for reasons unknown", said Suljagić.

*"The denial of the Srebrenica genocide over and over again reopens old wounds for survivors."*

**Emir Suljagić, Director of the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial**





## Youth Training “Practices of Remembrance of Genocide in Srebrenica”

In December 2020, the YIHR organised, together with its partners, a three-day online youth training titled “Practices of Remembrance of Genocide in Srebrenica”. The training, attended by 20 young people from Serbia, was the first in a series of trainings implemented by YIHR within the project “Advocacy, Artivism and Education – No Place for Denying Genocide in Srebrenica”.

The participants had the opportunity to hear more about the very events right before, during and after the genocide in Srebrenica, about the trials and the role of international community, as well as about the attitude of the state of Serbia and Serbian society towards the genocide in Srebrenica.

In one part of the training, the participants spoke with Almasa Salihović, genocide survivor, who had been expelled with her family from the village of Skejčići and found refuge in a protected area 22km away – in Srebrenica. Almasa, who was 8 at the time of the genocide, shared her recollection of July 1995 with the participants.





Ognjen Glavonić, Fiona Jelići

## “Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival

“Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival, which brings Kosovo cultural and social scene to the Belgrade audience, was held this year, too, in October. It provoked great interest, but only a limited number of guests could attend due to COVID restrictions.

This year's seventh “Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival was opened by Kushtrim Koliqi's play “I am my own wife”, starring Adrian Morina, who, as the sole actor on the scene, plays more than 30 characters and tells a story of a difficult life of a transgender person, a German, who survived the Nazi regime.

*“We want to be the ones to send the message of peace to the world by way of sitting at the same table with young people from Kosovo and have opinions and culture exchanges with them. The mission of the Festival has always been to connect people from Belgrade and Prishtina, and in the time of closed borders and social distancing – we are still the place of gathering for artists, as well as journalists.”*

**Fiona Jelići, YIHR**





In addition to the play, the Belgrade audience had the opportunity to see the film “Aga’s House” about a boy in search for his missing father, and the exhibition “Kosovo – Memory Heritage”. This exhibition was accompanied by the debate under the same title, moderated by journalist Antonela Riha, hosting Korab Krasniqi from the forumZFD Kosovo Office and Durim Abdulahu from the Faculty of Philosophy in Prishtina

“In Kosovo, there is a collective consciousness of all nations regarding the protection of cultural heritage and monuments, while politicians are trying to divide that heritage according to ethnicity into Serbian and Albanian.”



A part of this year’s festival was dedicated to the discussion about the memory of victims of war in Kosovo, responsibility and prosecution of war crimes, as well as of finding missing persons. Speakers at the debate “Transitional Justice in Kosovo Today”, moderated by Marko Milosavljević from YIHR, were Besart Lumi, political analyst, Jovana Radosavljević from Severna Mitrovica-based New Social Initiative, and Nora Ahmetaj, activist from Prishtina.

“The reason why the Serbian community does not trust the institutions of Kosovo is because the institutions of Kosovo themselves do not comply with the Kosovo laws.”

**Jovana Radosavljević, New Social Initiative**





*"The majority of the Albanian community is of the opinion that an apology from Serbia would soften the relations. On the other hand, young people from the Serbian community say that crimes are individual and that only those responsible for the crimes should be held responsible. A database about the war should be made, from which young people would learn about what happened so that similar situations would never happen again."*

**Nora Ahmetaj, activist**



The winner of this year's award of the "Mirëdita, dobar dan" Festival, awarded for the third consecutive year to individuals and institutions that build special relations between Serbian and Kosovo society, is Ognjen Glavonić, director of films "Depth 2" and "The Load". Glavonić was awarded because, through his films, he broke the oath of silence about the mass grave in Batajnica, thus making a huge step in bringing the Serbian and Kosovo societies closer.





# **RATNI ZLOČINCI U IZBORNOJ KAMPANJI 2020. GODINE**

 INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA  
YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJERIUT

Election silence is provided by the law so that the citizens are left alone to make their decision. However, political election campaign in 2020 was once again marked by the participation of war criminals.

We have been warning and reporting about the participation of war criminals in public life, first of all because we believe this is an insult to victims, but also a threat to peace in the region.

What were convicted war criminals saying during election campaign? What is their relationship with political parties and current government? What are the activities of election candidates linked with war events? Who are the war criminals who, although not candidates themselves, support certain lists and what does it tell us?

We wrote about all the details, statements by war criminals and their activities in the report “War Criminals in the 2020 Election Campaign”.

*War Criminals in the 2020 Election Campaign*



## Our Reactions

### Reaction to the Arrest of Journalist Ana Lalić in Novi Sad

In the evening, during the curfew introduced due to COVID pandemic, Nova.rs portal journalist Ana Lalić was arrested after the Clinical Centre of Vojvodina (CCV) had informed the Prosecutor's Office and police that her reporting upset the public and damaged the reputation of this institution. In her article, Lalić said, among other things, that CCV had problems with "chronic lack of basic equipment and completely chaotic working conditions in the time of the pandemic".

After a public and civil society uproar, the journalist was released, while charges against her were dropped nearly one month following the arrest.

On this occasion we pointed out that the arrest of a journalist because of a published article must never happen in a democratic society. In a democratic society, the arrest of a professional journalist upsets the public much more than any article that may be published.

# Our Reactions

## Genocide Denial on the Premises of the Municipalities of Stari Grad and Novi Beograd

In February 2020, prior to the election campaign for parliamentary elections, the Serbian Radical Party organised several events in Belgrade, including those titled “There Was No Genocide in Srebrenica”, alongside the promotion of a book by the convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj.

The denial of proven war crimes, especially coming from Šešelj, who was convicted to 10-year imprisonment for persecution and incitement of deportation of Croats from Vojvodina during the wars of the 1990s, represents a continuation of the policy of denial and is insulting for all victims. Whether they take place on the premises of the Municipality of Stari Grad or Novi Beograd, in the year of marking 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, such promotions must not be allowed in public institutions.

## Anniversary of Operation Storm

Once again this year the Youth Initiatives for Human Rights in Serbia and Croatia commemorated the crimes against civilians during Operation Storm in August 1995. This year’s public focus was mostly on the presence of Boris Milošević, former president of the Serb National Council in Croatia, and today Croatian Deputy Prime Minister, at the official celebration of the Storm. Just before the celebration of this anniversary, YIHR Croatia sent an open letter to Croatian President Zoran Milanović.

Read more:

*Tabloid Headlines against Boris Milošević Sign of Weakness and Shame of Serbian Nationalism*

*YIHR Croatia: Open letter to President Zoran Milanović on the Occasion of 25th Anniversary of Storm Operation*

*Ivan Đurić and Branka Vierda for N1 about the Srebrenica Anniversary*

*YIHR Croatia and YIHR Serbia Reaction to Yesterday’s Speech by Croatian Prime Minister Plenković on the Occasion of the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Operation Storm*

# Our Reactions

## **Anniversary of the Crime in Ovčara**

On the occasion of 29 years since the crime in Ovčara, we reminded the Government of Serbia that the respect for victims is a prerequisite for genuine appreciation of citizens of Croatian nationality in Serbia.

A clear sign that institutions in Serbia are really open to the Croatian minority would be an expression of respect by the Prime Minister Ana Brnabić towards the victims of the crime in Ovčara and members of the Croatian minority who were victims of murders, forcible disappearances, expulsion and torture in Serbia during the 1990s. Therefore, we demand that all members of the Government of Serbia, by respecting court judgments, efficiently searching for missing citizens of Vukovar, recognising and compensating the victims of torture in prison camps in Serbia, at last give clear guarantees that the crimes like the one in Ovčara will never happen again.

## **Lukashenko Is Not “One of Rare Friends of Serbia”**

By the symbolic action of laying flowers in front of the entrance to the Belarus Embassy in Belgrade, YIHR activists expressed their support to the citizens of Belarus and sent a message that there can be no friendship with Lukashenko, who sacrifices the lives and freedoms of citizens in order to stay in power forever.

“We are ashamed when President Vučić says that Lukashenko is ‘one of the rare friends of Serbia’. Friendships, both in life and in international relations, are built on common values, and we have nothing in common with Lukashenko.”





Photo: TV N1

## Our reactions

### The July Protests in Serbia – No Violence is Acceptable

After the announcement of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić that the citizens were looking at another curfew in July as one of the measures against the spread of Coronavirus, protests erupted throughout Serbia, which in certain towns grew into unrests and clashes between part of the protestors and the police.

Immediately following the first evening of the protest which the citizens were able to watch in a live TV broadcast and see the developments in front of the Serbian parliament, the YIHR reacted and demanded that the Interior Ministry and Ombudsman immediately launch two investigations on excessive police force used at the protest in Belgrade.

During several days of the protests, which occasionally escalated into clashes between the police and protestors, a couple of dozens of citizens and police officers were hurt, while several dozens of attacks on reporters, photojournalists and cameramen were registered, as well.

# Events and Education Programmes

## **“Re-boot” conference gathered 100 young people from the Western Balkans, Croatia, Germany and France**

A five-day online conference “Re-boot Europe” gathered more than 100 young Europeans from the Western Balkans, Croatia, Germany and France. They had an opportunity to discuss and share their opinions and proposals about the future of Europe, as well as about the dealing with the past, reconciliation, solidarity and climate change.

At the final discussion and closing ceremony of the conference, a joint Declaration made by participants was presented, containing young people’s messages and recommendations on the occasion of Germany assuming presidency of the Council of the EU, with special emphasis on dealing with the past, as well as on co-operation of the states in the period following the crisis caused by Covid-19 pandemic which hit not only Europe, but the whole world.

## **Summer School of Human Rights**

In early August, we organised an online Summer School of Human Rights for around twenty of young activists, journalists and legal professionals. The School addressed the topics of freedom of assembly, access to information of public importance, protection of personal data, discrimination, freedom of association, and the concept of state capture.

## **Youth Seminar “Appreciate Democracy, Protect Democracy”**

Online interactive seminar titled “Appreciate Democracy, Protect Democracy”, held on December 7-11 2020, brought together fifteen young people from Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, North Macedonia, Germany, Kosovo, Albania and Croatia. The seminar also included a workshop, in which the participants had the opportunity to develop two different scenarios for the future of Europe in the next 15 years: one group reflected on Europe that remained democratic, while the other dealt with a quite undemocratic Europe.

“Appreciate Democracy, Protect Democracy” is a seminar jointly organised by The centre international de formation européenne (CIFE), crossborder factory (CBF) and Youth Initiative for Human Rights.



*Predrag Miletić*



*Serbeze Hadžiaj*

## Events and Education Programmes

### Debate on the Occasion of International Day of the Disappeared

Before the International Day of the Disappeared, we organised a debate “The Question the Disappeared 20 Years after the War in Kosovo”. Speakers at the online debate, moderated by Andjela Savić from YIHRm were Serbeze Haxhiaj from BIRN and Predrag Miletić from the Humanitarian Law Centre.

*“The question of the disappeared is always the question about the crimes committed during the war, and when you face them, that is the moment when you assume responsibility, as well, and when the prosecution of those who committed such crimes begins. The authorities do not wish to deal with the issue of the disappeared due to their absence of will to call the perpetrators of such crimes to account”*

**Serbeze Haxhiaj, journalist, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)**





## Events and Education Programmes

### Exhibition “Peace with Woman’s Face”

“Peace with Woman’s Face” is an exhibition by a peace movement bearing the same name and forumZFD which we opened at the Endžio Hub on March 8, International Women’s Day. Through 20 authentic stories of women from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the exhibition presents the female side of the story on surviving and overcoming the consequences of war.



*“Having in mind that collective memory in our region does not leave room for women’s experiences, one of the goals of the exhibition was to also document a small portion of female history which will thus remain permanently remembered by the future generations.”*



Photo: Igor Čoko





## Events and Education Programmes

### Exhibition “Counter-Archive”

Vladimir Miladinović’s exhibition of drawings, “Counter-Archive”, supported by BIRN, which was based on evidence of the attempts of Serbian authorities to cover up the murders of Kosovo Albanians, was shown at the Endžio Hub in Belgrade in November.

The ink-on-paper artworks are based on documents from the archive of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) about the remains of the Kosovo Albanians found in mass graves at the Interior Ministry Training Centre in Belgrade suburb of Batajnica, and from the investigations of the Serbian police regarding the finding of a chiller lorry full of victims’ bodies in the Danube.



# Civil Society Organisations on List of the Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering

## We Do Not Give Up Battle for Democratic and Free Serbia

The Youth Initiative for Human Rights found itself on the list of the Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering of the Ministry of Finance, together with another 20 persons and 37 organisations, who are requested to allow insight into all their transactions following January 1 2019. We find such a request to be the abuse of institutions and a dangerous attempt of further deterioration of the rule of law in Serbia. Therefore, together with the signatories of this statement, we demand that the grounds for suspicion due to which they ordered the extraordinary collection of information about organizations, media and individuals by commercial banks be presented. We would like to remind you that every legal inspection of the work of an organisation is welcomed and we will always support it. On the other hand, we will strongly oppose the abuse of institutions and procedures, because this is our mission – the battle for a democratic and legally regulated Serbia.

## What Bothers Us?

### Initiative for Adoption of the Law on Registered Same-Sex Partnerships

Members of the LGBT+ community do not have the rights equal to other citizens of Serbia because they have no access to rights, obligations and protections arising from the legal regulation of relations between two partners. As solidarity is necessary in the fight for equality, the campaign “What Bothers Us?” was launched in September, inviting citizens to give their signature in support to the initiative for adopting the Law on Registered Same-Sex Partnerships.

Until the end of 2020, nearly ten thousand people gave their support to the draft of this law which provides that registered partners should enjoy all legal rights of pension, health and social insurance like partners in traditional or common-law marriages.

*Support the petition*



## We Recommend

### **Ivan Đurić (YIHR Serbia) and Marigona Shabiu (YIHR Kosovo) Guests at the Radio Television of Vojvodina**

Marigona Shabiu from YIHR Kosovo and Ivan Đurić from YIHR Serbia were guests at the TV show “Pravi ugao” of the Radio Television of Vojvodina, where they discussed current politics, “Mirëdita, dobar dan!” Festival, Serbia-Kosovo relations and how to connect two societies and reach durable peace.

*[View more](#)*



### **“Insajder Debate” on Extreme Right in Serbia**

The extreme right organisations in Serbia have not grown stronger, they have always been there, and the question is, whom does it suit to re-activate them and when. Marko Milosavljević from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights was a guest of the “Insajder Debate”.

*[View more](#)*

# YIHR Regional News in One Place

In order to bring our activities as a regional network of non-governmental organisations operating in five Western Balkan countries closer to both the citizens of our country and to the audiences worldwide, all important news, events, and our activities can now be followed on our regional YIHR accounts on social networks.



Follow us to find out more about the work of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in English, too.





# Our donors

SIGRID RAUSING TRUST



Youth Initiative for Human Rights  
Belgrade, Serbia  
December 2020.  
[yihhr.org](http://yihhr.org)