



Recommendations for commemorations dedicated to the 1990s war conflicts in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro

Based on the experience of existing commemorative practices in the region, it can be concluded that the main features of these commemorations are:

1. **Selectivity** - ie choosing those events for commemoration that can be used for political and nationalist purposes of a certain community / people, as well as ignoring commemorations or memories of the suffering of members of other ethnic, national, religious and minority communities.
2. **Ethnocentrism** - that is, putting in the focus of commemorative practices only those crimes and mass suffering from the period of armed conflicts of the 90s committed by members of other ethnic communities, as well as the division of victims according to ethnicity.
3. **Politicization** - that is, the use of commemorations for political and nationalist purposes, which is reflected in the accompanying rhetoric at commemorative events, which often deepens existing conflicts and divisions and which is aimed exclusively at "enemies", as well as through state commemoration of only those events battles, fallen fighters and victims of "heroes".
4. **Victims as "heroes"** - that is, the dominance of narratives about victims "heroes" who gave their lives for the homeland and the nation, where most commemorative events related to the memory of fallen fighters and battles, and which exclude memories of civilian victims of war.
5. **Denial** - that is, denying or publicly forgetting a large number of events from the period of armed conflict in the 1990s that speak of the mass suffering of the civilian population and deliberately omitting such narratives from official commemorative practices. This refers mostly to the suffering of civilians, as well as to those crimes in which the state or certain representatives of the government participated;
6. **Gender insensitivity** - that is, omitting from official practices the memory of women victims of war as victims of sexual violence and deepening the existing stigmatization of these victims;
7. **Marginalization** - that is, the exclusion from the public and media space of numerous commemorative initiatives dedicated to the preservation of the memory of all victims, regardless of ethnic, national or religious affiliation. Such initiatives are mostly led by civil society organizations, are not part of the official practice of remembrance and remain unknown to the general public;
8. **Lack of commemorations** for peace activists and individuals who resisted the war;

In order to improve the commemoration process in the region and restore the purpose of commemorative practices as part of transitional justice mechanisms, in the context of contributing to reconciliation and ensuring non-recurrence of conflict, it is recommended that the following criteria become part of official practices:

1. **Inclusiveness** - Opening commemorative practices to minority communities, marginalized groups and other ethnic, national and religious communities.
2. **Supranationally** - Abandonment of ethno-nationalist narratives in commemorative practices and solidarity with all victims, regardless of their affiliation.

3. **Counter “self- victimization”** - Changing the ruling paradigm of suffering only one's own people and denying the suffering of others, which will be reflected in commemorative practices through the commemoration of all victims.
4. **Depoliticization** - Stop the political instrumentalization of commemorations and the use of commemorative practices to realize the nationalist agendas of political elites and strengthen national consciousness.
5. **Gender equality** - Developing a gender-sensitive framework for commemorations, ie placing a special focus on commemorating female victims of war and giving greater visibility through commemorations to victims of sexual violence.
6. **Focus on victims** - Focusing commemorative practices on civilian victims of war rather than "heroic" victims, participants in battles and the battle itself. Cessation of the practice of heroization of victims.
7. **Dialogue** - Opening a dialogue on the past between different and opposing groups, as well as between representatives of the civil and state sector on the ways and content of commemorations.
8. **Solidarity** - Providing support and more public and media space to local and individual initiatives in commemorations.
9. **Networking** - Creating a wider regional network of organizations, individuals, various formal and informal associations, and initiatives dedicated to maintaining memory practices in the region.
10. **Accountability** - Accepting responsibility for crimes committed by members of one's own people and commemorating such events - relating to the suffering of members of other ethnic communities, as well as ending the glorification and glorification of members of the military and police responsible for crimes.
11. **Cooperation** - Involvement of the civil sector in state commemorations and vice versa, as well as stronger cooperation between the state and non-governmental organizations in the field of commemorations.
12. **Pacification** - The use of commemorative practices in building a culture of peace and preventing a recurrence of violence rather than perpetuating conflict and a state of "frozen" conflict between formerly opposing parties. conflict and division, rather than casualties.
13. **Peace Commemorations** - Introduction to regular practices of remembrance and commemoration for events, initiatives and individuals who resisted violence and conflict in the 1990s.

This document is prepared within the Project "Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub" financed by SIDA and implemented by BCSDN".

