



Peace Newsletter

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Reconciliation and Dealing with Past

Good people in evil times
and their influence at me:
*How do we work on dealing
with the past*

Round-table Peace Event Sarajevo, 6-9 June 2014

Reconciliation and dealing with the past: Is silence the price to pay for peace?

There are many different ways for a society to deal with its violent past. And there are many different ways to build peace and (re)construct broken ties within a society after a violent conflict. Current "transitional justice"-concepts emphasize the importance of openly facing the past for the rebuilding of a society which has gone through a violent conflict. In the same time, many individuals and societies prefer to avoid addressing the violent past because they estimate that this is a too sensitive issue and that silence is the price to pay for a pragmatic living together. Under which conditions can "dealing with the past" and "reconciliation" become complementary processes, and under which conditions are they obstructing each other? How much memory and how much forgetting do we need in the (re)construction of societies which went through a violent conflict? Discussing examples from different

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countries, this round table will bring together practitioners in the field of dealing with the past from South Eastern Europe and other regions from Europe and the world.

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Jankica Samouković lives in Višegrad and he is a member of Višegrad Municipality Association of Inmates. He is former inmate of the concentration camp “Silos” Tarčin and one of many that suffered tortures in concentration camps throughout BiH.



Janko Samouković

Project “Choosing Peace Together” (CPT) supported by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was jointly implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Caritas of Bishops Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Caritas BK BiH), between January 2010 and end of April 2014. With USAID’s support CRS continues working with war-victims through new project PRO-Future (September 2013 – September 2017).

Goal of the project was that together with members of active organizations in local communities we work on building peace and in that way give way to positive changes in whole bh. society. Through project “Choosing Peace Together” we supported associations of war-victims throughout BiH, focusing on creating more positive attitudes towards reconciliation at the grass-roots level.

The project targeted two mutually reinforcing groups: individuals who can utilize their particular influence

to actively promote healing and reconciliation, and institutions that can employ their structures to provide leadership and space for reconciliation to take place. The approach is based on the idea that once individuals can come to terms with the effects of conflict on their lives, they can become much more effective agents of peace within their communities

Today participants (former war victims) publicly speak about their experiences and events in 1991 - 1995 entitled “My Story: Choosing Peace Together”. On the basis of their personal testimony they are trying to reach wider public and explain to them how conflict and violence affect the individual, but also how man is independent of the bad experience can grow, strengthen and work in their local community and beyond with the goal of creating a better life and future.

This is one of those stories.

GOOD PEOPLE IN EVIL TIMES AND THEIR INFLUENCE AT ME

At the beginning of the war, as a young man, full of life and nice expectations from it, enjoying all the benefits provided by youth, I did not understand what was happening. Suddenly, it all fell down and broke, and I ended up in the concentration camp, in conditions that words can't describe. In a place where a man loses all hope. If I had not experienced this awful place I could not even imagine it - in imagination or in the worst dreams. Starting from the interior and the cold concrete walls from which radiated the chill that is seeping into the bones, the people and the soldiers who had come to watch us like we were animals in a zoo that they have never seen before, and they now come and watch us with wonder, and along the way provoke and harass, but also of our inmates who, living in these inhumane conditions, skinny, dirty, unshaven, lost, full of fear and uncertainty. All this is deeply imprinted in my memory. Although after many efforts after several years I somewhat managed to push into the background, even today they are still lurking and stalking me. We were totally unprotected and left adrift. Hygienic conditions were horrible, and for a short I fell unconscious from the effects of hunger and lack of water; in addition to lack of food we did not have any water.

While this beginning suggests that my speech topic will be the description of the various harassments through which I passed and people who did this, on the contrary, I just want to talk about other things and other people who are doing their job, but they remained normal. People who have not fallen in a situation where almost everything is allowed, in situations where, unfortunately, many deranged minds got their five minutes, and on their effect on me, who was inmate than, until today. I have to say that out of all harassments worst thing was that they were killing human dignity in us and because we were not treated as human beings. Same opinion is shared by other war-camp inmates I spoke to. People who have stayed in different camps at various sides. I would say that this war was a kind of test for us ordinary people. We were tested to see what hidden in us and our subconscious. I think that each of us had a choice whether to go astray or truly stay at human way. Those who managed to stay human should congratulate themselves on that. When in that chaos, where everything seemed hopeless and dark, I encountered someone who just looked at me with a hint of compassion or understanding, I used to catch for that look like a drowning man to a straw and trying to get the maximum out of that hope for myself. In those moments

I received a bit of hope. Hope that in the world there are people who think differently. People who would like to change something. In these I have, at one time, to tell you the truth, doubt.

I want to mention one guard. In his shift he would visit us and quietly, that the other guards do not hear, talk to us. Would provide us with words of encouragement and hope, conveyed some news about what is happening in the outside world. The most important thing was that we were perceived as ordinary and normal people who, by the concurrence of some unfortunate circumstances, found in that place. It was the guard who brought some food to people that they send some of their relatives or acquaintances. I wasn't that lucky. My mother, in spite of countless attempts, was unable to reach someone whom she could present some food to bring me to the camp. Neither she had freedom of movement, even though she was not in the camp.

On one occasion I got a cigarette from a policeman. At that point, for me it was not just cigarette. It was a lot more - proof that not all is lost, that people will resurface somewhere, that people will be able to do something to regain freedom and dignity which they were denied. I'm here now to say and argue that nobody is ever to be denied!

I am aware that this was the maximum, the only way that I could help these people at that moment without being endangered. Although, they are probably not even aware how much good work they have done and how they've helped me, and I thank them for that. "Small" people can help just a little bit, but they should not be afraid if that was small help. Because, quite a bit once may be enough. There are plenty of such examples, but my goal is to mention some of them. To know they have existed.

Included into project Choosing Peace Together I noticed that the people of various nationalities who have survived all sorts of trauma and loss can communicate and share experiences with people who until yesterday, it could be argued, were on opposite sides. And why is that? Because we have something in common. We know what it means to suffer and survive torture. What we have in common is that what we have been through we do not want to happen to anybody else ever again in these areas.

New friendships are created among us, we communicate, hear each other by the phone, we congratulate each other holidays, when we see we warmly welcome each other, etc. I'm sure we still have

different opinions and thoughts about certain things, different political beliefs, but it is most important that we all genuinely want peace. For us and for our children. I am happy because from the first moment I realized that the evil that happened to us is not fault of some nation. I solely blame the individuals. Even to them I didn't feel desire for revenge. Because if an honorable life is award, so in the same doing evil is punishment in itself. If I would have to choose: to be a victim or executioner, I would choose to be a victim.

Upon leaving the camp I sympathized with people who are still suffering on different sides. I hitch-hiked in one occasion and in the van which stopped there were inmates Muslims / Bosniaks who were probably driven to work somewhere. I was so shocked that I'm not ashamed to say, when I got out of the van I sat on a bench and cried for half an hour. It is the longest and deepest cry in my life. I had no way to help them, I was riding in the van for only five minutes, but I was glad that at least they could see I empathize with them. I think that was very obvious.

I will always have in mind people for which indeed I tell this story. People who at the first sight helped just a little bit and with small things. But indeed they helped me a lot, so much that even today from their actions I draw sustenance and energy. I hold to the principle that if I cannot help someone - I will not hurt him either. I believe that, in some way, I have helped him. I'm willing to listen to people and their stories and to sincerely empathize with them. Also I was in a situation to tell my story and to be understood, what helped me to alleviate burden I carry.

Today I live a normal life, have a family, wife and wonderful son. I do not feel like a victim anymore, I normally communicate with people, I have friends, I feel like a free man, and I love it. I love nature, mountains, I play sports recreationally and this burden that I mentioned is now pushed into the back. It stands somewhere just like a scar in the hidden part of the soul. I'm here to convey a message of peace and as much as is in my power, to help him to reach it in its true sense. I want peace to be a lasting category in these volatile areas where very often we have wars. Regrettable is the fact that there are people who in the short human life experience lived through three wars. Let us ask ourselves what kind of life is that? I do not wish it for myself. I have given myself the task of telling this story, and I do not know how this in fact is the story, but I intentionally skipped the details of my stay in the camp and the detailed description of my suffering. I just want to warn you how small things can be great when a person is in trouble, and to mention that in these terrible events there and normal and good people, people who were not intended to harm anyone, but these people I'm sure were everywhere and on all sides. A lot has been told about criminals and crimes, but I think that good people deserve to be spoken about. Talking about them, I just send a clear message of peace. I would like to send a message that all of us should recognize good and bad people in our nations, and that we should be proud about the first, and convict the others, and not hide them because they come from nation we also belong to. Because, disguising them we identify ourselves with them. ■

Do we need to fiddle with our past?

*The question that always occurs is:
"Why fiddle with our past?"*

Why can't we all just leave it behind and look forward to a happy and peaceful future? Unfortunately, the experience of many countries and people, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, shows there is no future without addressing the issues of the past. Especially if that past was filled with crime and suffering. Such issues always find their way to the surface and are often used in daily politics, usually with no real desire to



Goran Šimić

solve and overcome them. If we can move beyond this, no longer will it be possible to use them to manipulate society and prevent lasting peace. These conflicting interests mean that the decision on whether to "peddle"

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the past or simply push it all under the carpet, is more difficult than it seems.

Although the simple solution, of avoiding the past – which has its merits – deciding to confront it is difficult, painful and a long-term process. Unfortunately, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in the whole of the former Yugoslavia, people are not ready or have not accepted the need to deal with the past. Will this now change? I worry that, like well-known Bosnian writer Meša Selimović said, this generation will be no different from previous ones. If we are going to be completely honest with ourselves, we cannot be completely secure of our views today, even for the days that are ahead of us.

But this need not be our fate. We are choosing our own destiny, and whatever we do, it will not be the fault of some imaginary that is not ours. Dealing with the past will not be easy, but it is essential. Dealing with our own past by bringing closure and offering justice for all, perpetrators and victims, is the only right way. This path will not remove crimes from history. It will not repair souls that have been torn apart. But it will offer them the option to move on, and future generations will be able to live without the baggage of what went before. Hence people will have the opportunity to live full and worthy lives. Otherwise, and this can be seen in many communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will have towns, villages, places and people in conflict, whose life together in an area will offer nothing more than waiting for the final settling of the score. There is no happiness in that, for victims or perpetrators. In this equation, everyone is a loser.

Why would you continue to insist on the atrocities and destruction that have been repeated throughout history?

It seems that the most important ingredient missing is honesty. Honesty with ourselves, with others, to the society in which we live. Without it, the activities that we carry out will always be oriented towards cosmetic things, but the essence we will never find. In addition, the most important thing is to start with ourselves. Ourselves as individuals, but also ourselves in sum, as ethnicity, as society. Some say it is compassionate not to look back, but this is a cheap excuse. Ultimately, it does not bring benefit to anyone. Therefore, no matter how painful, it is necessary to start with yourself, and find the strength to tears and to lend a hand. 'A kind word and a steel door opens,' we say in this country, and not without reason. Unfortunately, we live in a time when the peak of vision is

often individual benefit, regardless of those who live with us.

In the long run, this cannot bring good to anyone. So, how to deal with justice in a society full of pain and suffering? Is it valid to address so painful and difficult a process? To go back in time again to remember the suffering? I believe so. Moreover, I would say that this is the only thing worth doing. It's nice to talk about economic progress, prosperity, material goods but what is it all worth when people create and then destroy every 50 years? Is there not a real need to stop the combination of destroying not only material goods but also peoples' lives? To change the practice of the last few centuries? There is no doubt that there is, and it is hard to really find, if they exist at all, any counter-arguments. After all, this approach has led us to where we are now, so why not change it. Why would you continue to insist on the atrocities and destruction that have been repeated throughout history?

But is it just a pipe dream of this author who doesn't understand the reality of the moment in which Bosnia and Herzegovina is located? Is peace (and why not reconciliation) in these areas possible? A peace that will finally eliminate the suffering and the suffering of the people who live in these areas and to give them, and future generations, peace and prosperity.

Maybe it is a dream. The dream of a better future without bloodshed, murder, arson and abuse. We who have experienced killing certainly have the right to dream and do everything in our power to make it not just our dream, but our reality. Activities that have been already taken show that that is achievable. To go further, it will take more determination and courage. More wishes for a better today and a better tomorrow. Only in this way will we create a positive enough atmosphere to do everything that is necessary, because it will be neither easy nor painless. Not only victims but everyone involved should have their say. And nor should it be left to the politicians, on whose good or bad will we too often depend. It should be a commitment from all of us, society as a whole, that suffering will no longer exist. Never again. ■

ONGOING PROGRAMS OF THE UN BIH IN THE AREA OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

THE UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT) IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BIH) IS COMPRISED OF 10 UN PROGRAMMES AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNV, WHO), THE BRETON WOODS INSTITUTIONS (WORLD BANK, IMF), UNICTY AND IOM.

The focus of the next generation of joint UN programmes is to address, among other things, pressing BiH developmental challenges in the areas of transitional justice and peace and reconciliation. Transitional justice encompasses holistic approaches to address legacies of massive past human rights abuses. A UNDP programme “Supporting National Capacities for Transitional Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina” highlights challenges of dealing with the past in the current transitional context of BiH which revolves around multiple dimensions of justice and human rights. Three main dimensions of justice and human rights are: (i) how to bring war criminals to justice, (ii) how to do justice to the war’s victims and survivors, and (iii) how to bring justice to the generations that will have to live with the legacy of the past violent conflict. The general objective of the programme and desired output is to strengthen national capacities in BiH for promoting peace through transitional justice processes. This general objective will be achieved by:

- Raising the general public’s awareness about the nature and significance of different transitional Justice processes and mechanisms by fostering local media’s capacity to inform about transitional justice processes.
- Facilitating the building of inclusive constituencies for developing a national process around the issue of truth-seeking and developing Transitional Justice Strategy with defined roles of CSO, Parliament and War Crimes Chamber.
- Enhancing CSOs’ capacities to voice their opinion and engage in constructive dialogues with decision-makers through information and a Small Grants Fund as incentive mechanism.
- Developing a capacity development strategy for the local courts system regarding the trial of war crimes.



Recent developments indicate that new momentum has built up to pursue and support comprehensive strategies for dealing with the past. Based on this understanding and given the recent developments in BiH, UNDP continues to build on the activities in the field of transitional justice conducted in 2005 in order to develop a deeper understanding of current challenges and capacity needs and provide preliminary support, in particular to CSOs. This UNDP programme proposes a multi-pronged approach with several programme components, addressing several dimensions of transitional justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina that should be seen as complementary and, ultimately, mutually reinforcing. The Project is perfectly complementary to the Regional Transitional Justice Programme. While the Regional Project focuses on resource development and research, the Bosnia and Herzegovina national project is more action oriented programme based on the current state of activities and developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another UNDP programme named “Supporting the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina” is being implemented in partnership with national partners to establish a country-wide free legal aid system ensuring minimum equal standards for all citizens in accessing free legal aid services. It presents the first phase of a multiyear UNDP’s “Rule of Law and Transitional Justice” programme that consolidates a number of UNDP projects and provides new tools and direction to comprehensively address the legacy of the ’92-’95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The programme consists of two main components: (i)

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Transitional Justice and (ii) Access to Justice. Main goal is to (i) endorse national and local transitional justice strategies and mechanisms for redress of victims, and to (ii) strengthen legislative and institutional capacities in order to enhance access to justice for vulnerable populations. The Programme will use a consolidated set of tools to address post-conflict issues and bridge gaps between the implementation of the EU *acquis communautaire* and the necessary institutional reforms, provision and delivery of justice to the victims of the war.

„Seeking care, support and justice for survivors of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) in BiH“ is a three year joint UN project that will engage The UN Country Team in BiH and partners - MoJ, Entity, Canton and District judicial authorities, civil society organisations, health care providers, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and international organisations. The project aims to enable access to justice, care, empowerment and reparations for the survivors of CRSV, and their families, enhanced in line with UN and European standards. Using the 2013 visit of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict as a platform, this programme aims to consolidate and provide new tools to government and civil society to comprehensively address the unresolved legacy of conflict related sexual

violence (CRSV) from the 1992-1995 war. The programme is designed to benefit both female and male survivors, and directly supports a new transitional justice and survivor-centred approach. This will enhance the status of, and provide redress to, survivors by ensuring the further development and expansion of the delivery of reparations, rehabilitation, and equal access to services, access to justice, and efforts to combat stigmatisation against survivors of CRSV.

The United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina is soon to embark upon implementation of a Joint UN project on named “Dialogue for the Future: Promoting Coexistence and Diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina” implemented by three UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO) with support of state authorities. The Project will build upon three main streams of culture, youth and education and will create spaces for dialogue that will enable a country-wide peacebuilding process that promotes coexistence, trust building and appreciation of diversity; increase participation, awareness and influence of youth in policy dialogue on issues impacting B&H’s development and reform agenda; ensure that education supports greater social cohesion; and that citizens and communities advance common peacebuilding goals through culture. ■

ICMP and BiH Chief Prosecutor discuss future efforts to accelerate accounting for missing persons in BiH

THE CHIEF PROSECUTOR OF THE PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE OF BIH MR. GORAN SALIHOVIĆ TOURED THE HEADQUARTERS AND DNA LABORATORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON MISSING PERSONS (ICMP) IN SARAJEVO TODAY. MR. SALIHOVIĆ AND ICMP’S DIRECTOR-GENERAL MS. KATHRYNE BOMBERGER REVIEWED THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO INSTITUTIONS AS WELL AS THE GENERAL PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN THE PROCESS TO LOCATE AND IDENTIFY PERSONS MISSING FROM ARMED CONFLICTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN THE 1990’S.

Mr. Salihović was briefed on ICMP’s assistance to governments in the Western Balkans and worldwide in accounting for persons missing from armed conflicts, natural disasters, human rights violations and other causes. Accompanied by Ms. Bomberger, Mr. Salihović also toured ICMP’s main DNA laboratory where he was introduced to the scientific techniques of DNA identification used by ICMP



Meeting of ICMP Director General and BiH Chief Prosecutor in ICMP’s HQ.



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to account for more than 17,500 persons in the Western Balkans, of which 14,500 were missing persons relevant to BiH.

Mr. Salihović and Ms. Bomberger discussed future efforts needed to accelerate accounting for missing persons in BiH, of which special importance was given to the continuation of the NN Working Group process to review cases of unidentified mortal remains in BiH mortuaries.

It was noted during the meeting that over 70% persons missing from Bosnia and Herzegovina have been accounted for, which is unprecedented. However, it is estimated that approximately 9,000 are still unaccounted for. Over 30,000 persons were considered missing in BiH following the armed conflicts.



Mr. Salihović during the visit to ICMP's DNA laboratory

Mr. Salihović was introduced to ICMP's Online Inquiry Center, an online tool that allows domestic authorities, including the Missing Persons Institute, investigators, forensic pathologists and the prosecutors to have real-time access to information on submitted DNA reports in ICMP's database, as well as progress on the identification of individual cases submitted to ICMP.

"I would like to thank Mr. Salihovic for visiting our international headquarters. As an organization that has been assisting the local authorities in the missing persons issue for the last 18 years, we are very grateful to the BiH Prosecutor's Office and Mr. Salihovic for the productive initiatives he has undertaken in the past period. For example, the inventory of the 11 mortuaries across the country that was initiated by Mr. Salihovic's office last year and involves the work of ICMP's forensic anthropologists, has already produced results, as we have made dozens of new DNA identifications following reviews of Mostar and Nevesinje. In addition, in cooperation with MPI and the Prosecutor's Office regarding the excavation in Tomašica, ICMP has so far made DNA matches for mortal remains of

253 persons exhumed there", said ICMP Director General Kathyne Bomberger.

"My congratulations go to you Ms. Bomberger and the ICMP experts for their professionalism and impartiality in helping to locate and identify the missing persons in Bosnia and the region. The success of our cooperation gives me a hope that the authorities of BiH will be able to locate and identify the remaining missing persons. I often meet with families of missing persons from across the country and I am familiar with the problems in the identification of their missing relatives. My office will remain dedicated and will keep the issue of missing persons as one of our high priorities in the future", said the Chief Prosecutor of the Prosecutor's Office of BiH Mr. Goran Salihovic, who announced a visit to ICMP's facility in Tuzla and the ICMP DNA laboratory in Banja Luka in the coming period.

ICMP is an international organization based in Sarajevo and established to support the Dayton Peace Agreement. ICMP is today actively involved in helping governments and other institutions in the Western Balkans and other parts of the world to address social and political issues related to missing persons and establish effective identification systems in the wake of conflict or natural disaster. ICMP provides assistance to countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and it has helped countries in Southeast Asia and North America. To date it has assisted governments in locating and identifying over 18,000 missing persons globally. In the context of the Western Balkans, ICMP has helped account for over 70% of the 40,000 persons missing from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. It played a critical role following the 2004 Tsunami, the Philippines, following Typhoon Frank in 2008, and in the United States, following Hurricane Katrina in locating and identifying thousands of missing persons. ■



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The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina - BIRN BiH

About BIRN BiH

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina - BIRN BiH - is a non-profit organization based in Sarajevo that specializes in monitoring and reporting war crimes trials before the Court of BiH War Crimes Chamber, Cantonal and District courts. Acting as a public information service in the field of domestic judiciary and human rights protection, BIRN BiH works to increase public understanding and support for war crime prosecution. Furthermore, BIRN BiH supports the development of high quality media and civil society in BiH, aiming to empower a citizenry that exercises its democratic rights and obligations, and is fully active in the governance of its country.

BIRN BiH has a number of publications and projects, including the Justice Series program, composed of online news reporting agency Justice Report, Radio Justice, TV Justice, and an advocacy network of courtroom reporters from all over the country.

Various regional and international entities—including the judiciary and a number of war crimes victims—have voiced their support and appreciation for BIRN BiH's contribution to the post-war reconciliation process.

"For Balkan watchers, BIRN BiH offers an immense resource: committed to fairness, superbly edited, and user-friendly. Can a news service win the Nobel? Besides reportage, BIRN BiH is itself a force for justice and European integration," says Steven F. Sage, a research historian from Washington DC and former U.S. Consul in Sofia, Bulgaria.

"Information and reports on the trials conducted before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina are still of interest to the victims," Saja Coric, a former detainee in Vojno detention camp, near Mostar, remarked.

"The reports I read each morning on Justice Report website, knowing they are correct, are important to me. Your reporters raised, followed and elaborated on many issues of interest to the victims in a professional manner," Coric added.

Highlights

At the end of the year 2013, BIRN BiH produced over 400 issues of Justice Report weekly magazine and wrote over 20,000 courtside reports, analyses, and investigations.



The BIRN team also produced over 2,500 radio reports and investigative reportages, and 50

TV Justice magazines. The organization distributes its material via its website, which receives over one million visits annually from BiH, the region, diaspora countries and beyond.

Notable Reporting

Over the years, numerous publications have been used as evidence in a number of war crimes trials throughout Bosnia.

- In 2012, the State prosecutor's Office submitted BIRN's analysis – *Killer's Memory Still Haunts Grbavica* – from December 2008 as evidence because it contained statements by Grbavica inhabitants recalling Vlahovic expelling and killing their neighbors. The defense later requested every report published between April 2011 and August 2012 by BIRN on Vlahovic's trial. In his closing arguments, the defense attorney Radivoje Lazarevic acknowledged BIRN's expertise and objectivity in reporting the Vlahovic trial, as distinct from other media outlets reporting the trial (cite).

-An analysis published in 2012—titled "The Untold Story of the Dretelj Horrors"—compelled a former UNPROFOR member, Hector Gullan, to come forward and give BIRN BiH a statement about what he witnessed during the war. "I have read with great interest your recent report on Dretelj- 'The Untold Story.' Absolutely correct." Others—including international transitional justice specialist Dragan M. Popovic, director of the Center for investigation of War Crimes in Republika Srpska Janko Velimirovic, and former UNPROFOR member Hector Gullan—have consistently referenced BIRN as an excellent source of reporting.

Critical Reception



"As an editor of this radio station, I am very satisfied of your work and proud of our



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cooperation. We broadcast your weekly show on Fridays and Saturdays at 7pm and the daily reports in our news many times during the day. Our audience is very much interested in war crimes and issues of the past and due to that demand we are happy to say that Local Justice Under



Spotlight has been a huge success. We really want to compliment the quality of your audio files and speed you deliver them," said

the editor in chief of Radio of Federation of BiH Dzevad Kucukalic.

"First of all I want to thank you for your material and readiness to assist us anytime. As a journalist dealing with war crimes reporting, I must say that I am constantly relying on the content you product," says Irena Antic, reporter of the Radio of Federation of BiH.

"Over the past years, BIRN BiH developed extensive expertise and know-how in following all war crime trials in

the whole of BiH. Given the physical distance between the former Yugoslavia and The Hague, the lack of consistent coverage by locally based media, and the Tribunal's own limitations in dissemination information, BIRN BiH's reports area much needed source of accurate and easily understandable information about our cases and daily activities. BIRN BiH reaches out to those to whom this information matters the most: the people of the former Yugoslavia," stated Serge Brammerts, ICY Chief Prosecutor. "BIRN BiH promotes independent media, and raises the standard of professional reporting. Its investigative stories have sparked off many positive processes and brought to prominence the personal stories of victims which are all too often neglected in the public sphere," adds Tim Judah, The Economist, The Guardian, BIRN contributor. ■

More information:

<http://www.justice-report.com>

<http://birn.eu.com/en/network/birn-bosnia-and-herzegovina-home>



Center for therapy and rehabilitation

Additional value of Vive Žene's works, Tuzla

Over the past few years of work, in addition to providing direct psychosocial support to the beneficiaries, Vive Žene invested a lot into the development of internal capacities and specialisation of professionals. The staff has had additional educations in: Gestalt therapy, psychodrama, group analyses, family therapy, art therapy, reality therapy, and cognitive behavioural approach.

The knowledge that Vive Žene has gained is constantly being tested and enriched through practice. At the same time, new knowledge and practical experiences forces them to constantly seek new approaches in their work with traumatized persons and, by itself, to influence changes to the whole context and the communities where the organization is conducting activities.

Vive Žene has adopted an integrated multidisciplinary approach to its work with beneficiaries and provided them with social, psychosocial, medical and legal assistance.

The work of Vive Žene represents continuity in rehabilitation process of torture survivors and the recovery process of the whole society of B&H. Besides the empowerment and rehabilitation of victims of direct torture, Vive Žene has succeeded in defining the nature of

the problem and noting various contexts in which victims have been subjected to threats and reprisals. The Vive Žene team has already presented to B&H authorities the nature of consequences of this practice: variety of needs for protection that have emerged and the subsequent consequences from the failure to protect. Vive Žene led the process of recognition of this unique population, and made an effort to ensure torture survivors have access to the specialized professional treatment they need in order to become healthy, productive member of B&H society. Vive Žene raised awareness for the victims of torture firstly regarding the need to respect their rights, and then also the laws and by-laws that the B&H Government has to change and adopt to protect the interest of torture victims. During the "Day of Torture Victims – June 26th", Vive Žene attracted public attention to the pain and suffering of torture survivors in B&H and their resilience. Vive Žene has become one of the key promoters of torture victims' prevention and rehabilitation in B&H and will continue its activities on rehabilitation, reconciliation and recovery of B&H.

Centre for therapy and rehabilitation: Since the beginning of their work during the war in June 1994, the Centre has become well known in Tuzla and all of Bosnia and

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Herzegovina. Given the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have targeted and professional centres for treatment of torture survivors, aside from centres for mental health within local health centres in several towns and psychiatric hospitals, our Centre became respected and recognized for treating persons still suffering severely from the consequences of torture.

Some additional value to our Centre is the possibility of regional treatment, when needed, and the fact that beneficiaries do not have to pay for our services nor do they need to have health insurance to be treated in our Centre. This is especially important since the current economical situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very unfavourable for many persons, especially for those with heavy traumatic experiences and no income or jobs, who are in need of intensive treatment by qualified professionals but cannot afford it. Another important factor is that beneficiaries feel less **stigmatised** when treated in our Centre than when treated in psychiatric hospital. In the psychiatric hospital, the treatment goes on their official medical documentation and will follow them like a shadow throughout their life.



Jasna Zečević,

President of Vive Žene association

Vive Žene works on Prevention of transgenerational transition of trauma in the communities: These activities have a special focus on children and adolescents dealing in their own way with the consequences of the war and the transitional situation in the country, in addition to the wide spectre of problems in their families. The lives of children and youth are both directly and indirectly affected by the processes which characterise the aftermath of war and countries in transition. These increase the risk factors regarding transition of trauma influencing children's and youth health and their social behaviour. Children have the right to grow up in families, in harmony, in love and understanding, and to get a good education. In this challenging context of B&H, supporting children and adolescents and promoting healthy socialisation processes

is one of the most important tasks.

Vive Žene works on Reintegration and reconciliation in the communities: Reconciliation is a societal process involving mutual acknowledgment of past sufferings and changes from destructive attitudes and behaviours into constructive relationships towards sustainable peace. The process of reconciliation is complex and includes several different aspects: searching for truth, justice, helping victims in healing, ensuring reparation. Reconciliation appears in specific social contexts and the process must reflect each society. Reconciliation occurs at several levels, individual (victim and perpetrator), family and community level. It is a long process, sometimes lasting for decades. This process requires deep changes with regard to feelings, attitudes, ways of thinking, understanding of how violence influences women, victims of sexual violence, widows, entire families, etc. The process of reconciliation is usually observed through phases such as the phase of peace establishment and creation of conditions for at least minimal communication between parties, and minimum safety. The phases begin by establishing trust and requires acknowledging former enemies and respecting them as human beings. There is also the phase when victims and perpetrators are willing to listen to each other, and to put efforts into understanding the perspective of all sides. Slowly common interests become stronger than anger and wish for revenge.

When working on reconciliation and reintegration of the community, Vive Žene puts emphasis on the empowerment and internal capacity of the groups and individuals with whom they are working and support them to become more active in creating their own future. It is important not to look at the returnee as merely helpless victims, nor should we see them as people who can completely cope on their own. But, rather we must sort out the balance between stressors and protective factors together with them. Rebuilding an individual's social network is a slow process which starts from the ground up, working on forgiveness and linking to reconciliation. Reconciliation is the end product of a long chain of events which we trust can gradually be rebuilt. Different ethnic groups need to learn to live side by side again – to live and let live.

Vive Žene's work on Training and Capacity-building of professionals:

The training and capacity-building program is based on replicating Vive Žene's multidisciplinary integrative approach into the working methodology of two teams in the NEB&H (Brčko District and Bratunac municipality). Professionals from different institutions e.g.: centres for social work, mental health centres, public health centres, police and NGOs, gain knowledge and adopt new skills and techniques in the fields of trauma (trauma of mourning, rape trauma, sequential traumatisations, re-traumatisation



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of torture victims while being witnesses in court). Besides that, professionals of the mentioned institutions will gain new communication skills and will work on personal boundaries. A very important part of support for victims of war crimes is creation and coordination of community based services and actions. Given the fact that psychosocial needs of victims of war crimes are very complex and multi-faceted, the most effective ways to meet those needs in a community should be based on these two principles:

- 1. Cooperation and partnership should be multidisciplinary to be able to build a common supportive environment for trauma healing within a community.**
- 2. The approach should emphasize the empowerment of victims and witnesses, their families and communities.**

Throughout the years, Vive Žene invested a lot in the development of its own human resources especially in expertise and development of the multidisciplinary integrative approach. Expertise from the Vive Žene team will be transferred to two other teams of professionals in the NEB&H. Multidisciplinary teams of governmental institutions do formally exist, but their capacity does not develop support for individuals and communities to apply the multidisciplinary approach. Vive Žene will continue to develop our personal capacity in order to achieve professional sustainability. The main focus will be on the improvement of psychosocial work with severely traumatized persons, development of a training manual and the establishment of a model for capacity building for other organizations and individuals.

However, all of Vive Žene's major advancements and the beneficial impact that its work has directly or indirectly had on thousands of peoples' lives have only confirmed the need for an open dialogue about the country's past. Breaking the silence in a society engulfed in so many problems is not an easy task but may be a decisive step to stop the vicious circle in which the Bosnian-Herzegovina society seems to be trapped. The sluggishness of reforms necessary to meet the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable groups, politicians' indifference and the society's inability to make its own decisions contribute to keeping the country in a crisis that has lasted for almost a decade. A major obstacle is that we still do not have a joint and united state. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains an artificial creation with two entities and three constitutive nations who by any means avoid to agree on core issues with regards to benefiting citizens.

Discussion about the consequences of torture during the recent war still only takes place among professionals who are dealing with the issue and not among the politicians who are responsible for the development of the country. Through experiences observed in other conflict zones and research done worldwide, it is well known that avoiding

conversation about what happened during wartime can lead to new conflicts. Through public discussion, roundtables, research and documentation, Vive Žene's team hopes it can alert Bosnia and Herzegovina's people to the importance of reflecting and talking freely about the past. For eighteen years, Vive Žene has been following and reporting on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From year to year there is an increasing contradiction between what has been published in the media and what is going on in the real everyday life of our beneficiaries.

Often we may agree that there are positive trends in this country and we ourselves actively take part in these developments. However, the slowness of reforms that are needed to solve the problems of marginalised and vulnerable groups and the negligence and ignorance of their needs bring us to the conclusion that in this country our politicians and leaders do not have any interest in finally taking this country out of a crisis which has lasted almost an entire decade now.

The return of refugees and internally displaced persons is still insufficient to reduce all effects of the ethnic cleansing that occurred during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The situation of security is no longer a big obstacle for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, but the educational, employment and primary health care systems, as well as legal procedures for returnees, are major difficulties. The majority of the returnee children continue their further education in Federation schools, which is a destabilising element in the process of making a sustainable return of persons to their pre-war addresses. Our state still does not offer an unique educational system and, as a matter of fact, we still do not have a unified state in order to talk about unified systems, whether we talk about education, health or similar.

Vive Žene expects that the wall of silence (block of communication) among different ethnic groups will gradually collapse. A very important moment in this entire process will be when beneficiaries can deal with the past in a constructive way. This deep silence that isolates individuals, weakens families, and increases fear and mistrust, will be broken. With psychosocial, multidisciplinary work we will help our beneficiaries to deal with difficult experiences, to reduce isolation and restore a sense of hope. This is a first step in developing or re-establishing relationships with others and with oneself, building a social network of support, and engaging more fully in life.

We are all aware that it is not realistic to expect fast recovery after the period of years of large-scale destruction, damage and separation. However, if the dynamics of implementation of reforms continue to move like this, then we may need a few more decades before we start to call this country democratic, European, united...



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Even now, after all these years, we are still talking about war, genocide, refugees, and poverty. For these almost seventeen years since the end of the war in this country, we find out that the social community is still not able to make a step forward.

Everything accomplished so far, all the small steps that someone might call a success, were imposed by the international community, or are so irrelevant to our politicians who fail to agree upon such issues. ■

POST-CONFLICT RESEARCH CENTER (PCRC) ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

PCRC is a Sarajevo-based NGO that works to cultivate an environment for sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) using creative multimedia projects that foster tolerance, moral courage, mutual understanding and positive change. In addition, we leverage our expertise to act as independent consultants for journalists, photographers, researchers, filmmakers, NGOs, IOs, and others interested in carrying out projects that contribute to a brighter future for the country. PCRC has developed and organized student programs, youth conferences and workshops throughout the region. We are responsible for organizing study abroad and research programs for universities such as Harvard, NYU and Georgetown. Furthermore, our organization has become known for its creative multimedia approach to peacebuilding. Such an approach has provided us with a broad network of local and international photographers, journalists, and filmmakers. Some of our most noted colleagues include Angelina Jolie, Abigail Disney, Janine di Giovanni, Ahmed Imamović, and Taryn Simon. PCRC is additionally involved in documentary production, and many of its documentaries have attracted acclaim, including *Uspomene 677*, *Unprotected*, and *Ordinary*

Heroes. Our discovery of Bosnian rescuer Mina Jahić gained the attention of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who formally recognized Mina's bravery during the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees for saving the life of fellow Bosnian Ferid Spahić in 1994 during the Bosnian genocide. Finally, PCRC served as co-hosts for the Sarajevo premiere of Angelina Jolie's *In the Land of Blood & Honey*. We continue to work with Jolie to organize activities related to her campaign to end sexual violence in conflict.

More information:
www.p-crc.org

Ordinary Heroes Documentary Series

PCRC is currently producing a documentary series that highlights the phenomena of rescue and rescuer behavior. The series details the stories of Bosnian rescuers from every ethnic group and includes interviews with the rescuers and those they've saved. To date, PCRC has produced 3 episodes: *Mina & Ferid*; *Đorđe & Salih*; and *Zoran & Azra*. Each episode is 25 minutes in length. ■

SYNOPSIS FOR EPISODE 3: ZORAN & AZRA

This episode focuses on stories from members of the Bosnian Jewish community and depicts their role as rescuers during the Bosnian War from 1992 -1995.

Zoran Mandlbaum is a Jewish man from the Bosnian city of Mostar. Born and raised in Mostar, Zoran is a pillar of the Jewish community. As a young Jewish boy growing up in post-Holocaust Yugoslavia, he remembered the suffering of his parents and was all too aware of how Nazis and local collaborators murdered many members of his family. When the war in Bosnia began, he had the choice to leave, but the legacy of the Holocaust motivated him to stay and help others.

Zoran was responsible for saving countless lives of people from all sides the conflict. During the Siege of Mostar, he initiated various humanitarian efforts and, with the support of the Jewish community, used his neutral position as a Jew to organize convoys that supplied the city with desperately needed supplies of food, water, medicine, and doctors. Zoran not only helped those trapped within the city, but also found ways to deliver letters, news, food, and hope to people detained in the nearby the concentration camps of Heliodrom and Dretelj.



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Velma Šarić began her career at the University of Sarajevo where she worked as an expert assistant at the Institute for Crime Investigation and International Law from 2003 to 2008. In 2008, she began working as a Sarajevo-based correspondent for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). She soon became a leading source of information for various media outlets including the *BBC*, *PBS*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *The London Times*, *La Repubblica*, *Le Monde*, *Sunday News*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and many others. Šarić's career as a filmmaker took off in 2010 when she became the Bosnian Field Producer for PBS's "I Came to Testify" and "War Redefined" episodes of the *Woman War & Peace* documentary series. In 2011, Velma founded the Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC), which focuses on peacebuilding in BiH. She produced her first feature length documentary "Uspomene 677" (*Memories 677*) and acted as a consultant for Angelina Jolie's film *In the Land of Blood & Honey*. In 2012, Šarić was nominated to take the position of Sarajevo project manager of the newly founded War Art Reporting and Memory Foundation (WARM) which is an international foundation working on telling the stories of the world's contemporary conflicts. In addition to her work as a journalist, filmmaker, and the executive director of PCRC, Velma has planned and organized numerous successful peacebuilding programs, youth conferences and workshops throughout the region.



Facilitating Intergroup Reconciliation



Sabina Čehajić-Clancy

Post-conflict societies face many challenges. One of those is the question of how to restore broken intergroup relations or, more specifically, how to re-build intergroup trust. We address this and related questions from an empirical and socio-psychological perspective through conducting research and implementing research-informed interventions. Our work focuses on young people across the country and examines question such as:

- How do people deal with atrocities committed by their group
- Which conditions would promote intergroup contact
- What type of narrative is perceived as less threatening to peoples' social identity
- What are the processes and conditions that would facilitate intergroup forgiveness
- What processes might facilitate acknowledgment and promote moral responsibility
- What are the effects of apology and reparation offers

Sustainable restoration of damaged intergroup relations rests on three socio-psychological pillars:

acknowledgment, acceptance of moral responsibility and forgiveness. These three processes are key determinants of future intergroup relations and therefore require systematic and methodological approach. We examine the above questions through an employment of both qualitative and quantitative (including experimental) participatory methods. In the last ten years, we have conducted over twenty studies in different conflict and post-conflict settings

such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Poland, Northern Ireland and Chile. Overall, our findings show that people are reluctant to deal with their past marked by atrocities and human rights violations as it poses high levels of threat to their personal and social identity. As a consequence, people engage in various forms of denials and justifications in order to ease the burden that the past poses to their self-perception. However, our research has identified possible ways as to how to reduce perceptions of threat through creating and promoting situations of self-affirmation. Encouraging affirmations of personal (in comparison to social) identity led to decreased group identifications which, in turn, decreased the need to use various justification means. Such decreased usage of justifications opened up peoples' minds and hearts to effectively deal with their past through acknowledgment and approach-associated processes (e.g., desire for contact, reparation etc.). This is one of our many findings which should be used for education policies in post-conflict societies aiming at sustainable intergroup reconciliation. ■

About the author

Sabina Čehajić-Clancy received her PhD ("Responsibility and Denial: Antecedents of Acknowledgment, Collective Responsibility and Guilt") in social psychology from the University of Sussex in 2008 under the supervision of Professor Rupert Brown. Society for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues (SPSSI) has awarded her with the Dissertation Award for 2008. Besides this, she has received the Harry Frank Guggenheim Award for her dissertation. At the same university, she has also received her Master of Science degree in applied social psychology as a British Chevening scholar. She works in the field of intergroup relations, more specifically on reconciliation in post-conflict societies, collective emotions of guilt and shame, collective responsibility, dehumanization, and other moral disengagement strategies. Currently she is working at the SSST University as an Associate Professor teaching political psychology and directing the Balkan Institute for Conflict Resolution, Responsibility and Reconciliation. She has received funding for her work from the British Council, Open Society Institute, British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss embassy etc. She has published numerous peer-reviewed research articles on the issues of acknowledgment, group-based responsibility, guilt, and intergroup forgiveness, one book and several book chapters. In the last ten years, she has coordinated and supervised twelve scientific projects, presented her work on over twenty national and international conferences, and worked as a consultant for various NGO's in BiH such as UNICEF, UNDP, Post-conflict Research Centre, Save the Children UK, and USAID etc. She is also a member of International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) serving also on an Editorial Board, European Association of Social Psychology (EASP) and Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), International Society of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and American Psychological Society (APS).

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