



Shedding Light on Fate of Missing Persons

"With this letter, I want to express my discontent with the long-standing inactivity of Serbian institutions in the process of clarifying the fate of persons who went missing during the wars in the former territory of Yugoslavia" - this is the content of hundreds of electronic messages sent by activists of My Initiative movement on addresses of responsible institutions in Serbia, regarding the International Day of the Disappeared. The My Initiative movement in Kosovo addressed state officials with the same message. In their electronic mail addressed to the cabinets of the President and Prime Minister of Kosovo, Parliament, Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs, Ombudsman, and Commission for the Disappeared, activists demanded from these institutions to clarify the fate of 1.940 persons who disappeared during the war in Kosovo more intensively and with greater responsibility.



Activists in action: Appeals fell on deaf ears foto: yihr

With the same demand, activists from Kosovo addressed international institutions that have their offices in Pristina: International Red Cross, UNMIK, and EULEX.

In a synchronized action of the two offices, on August 29th, from 9am to 10am, activists made phone calls to employees of the cabinets of the most significant state officials in Kosovo and Serbia. The goal of this action was to block the work of state institutions whose jurisdiction is discovering the truth about persons who disappeared during wars in the territory of former Yugoslavia for one hour.

Reminding that according to International Red Cross' records there are still 17.000 missing persons on former Yugoslavia territory, members of My Initiative demanded from

state institutions stronger cooperation with countries in the region, in order to determine the truth about war crimes.

Officials' reactions to My Initiative's actions were diverse. Some secretaries complained about the blockade of telephone lines, faxes and the bulk of e-mails. "Aleksandra, you are calling us for the third time since this morning. I received all your messages and will give them to the Minister", complained the lady in The Ministry for Human and Minority rights in Belgrade. Serbian Government's and Ministry for Internal Affairs' cabinet staff assured activists that they know what their obligations are, and that they are fulfilling them, according to their abilities.

Ministry of Justice and Ministry for Kosovo had similar responses. The staff of the Serbian Prosecution for War Crimes complained about getting such a message, because they claim that fates of missing persons are being clarified in the course of trials for war crimes.

The response from the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia was that missing persons are not in their jurisdiction. However, My Initiative activists reminded them that Assembly Secretary Veljko Odalovic is at the head of Government Commission for the Disappeared.

Prenk Gjetaj, Kosovo's Prime Minister Hashim Thaqi's Commissioner for the Disappeared pleaded that he organized a panel discussion about the disappeared. Answering a question from an activist from Kosovo what can be accomplished with a panel discussion, Gjetaj tried to explain, but the next time he did not answer his telephone. The mobile telephone of Serbian President Boris Tadic was not available for My Initiative's messages.

Hajredin Kuçi, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Kosovo, replied to all electronic messages that he received. "We are concerned about the fate of the disappeared, as members of the Government, and as people. We are working in Kosovo and elsewhere to prove to the international community that that is our priority. Your suggestions are welcome. Once again, I ask of you to give us the opportunity to prove to you that we are doing our best to find the truth about the people still missing", as reported in Kuçi's message. The International Civil Mission and International Red Cross in Kosovo invited My Initiative activists to attend a panel discussion organized on the International Day of the Disappeared. It seems that they got the message of the one-hour action in Serbian, Albanian, and English, by many activists in Belgrade, Pristina, and Djakovica.

Jasmina Lazovic, YIHR Office in Belgrade



Small Fish in the Net

Regarding wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia, the judiciary has recorded that five crimes have been committed on Montenegro territory. Victims, witnesses and documents indicate dozens of crimes.

A concentration camp existed in Morinj, near Herceg Novi since October 1st, 1991, mainly for civilians from Croatian towns of Konavli and Dubrovnik. Around 400 people suffered the torture.

On May 1st, 1992, around hundred of Muslims were deported, mainly from the Montenegrin seaside, and delivered to the Army of the Republic of Srpska. Most of them were killed. At the same time, the ethnic cleansing of Pljevlja Bukovice began, where eight persons were killed, 500 exiled, and 14 villages ethnically cleansed.

On the Bar – Belgrade railroad, at the station of Strpci, which is on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a passenger train was stopped. 20 passengers were kidnapped and killed.

During the bombardment of FRY, in Kaludjerski Laz village near Rozaje, 23 civilians of Albanian ethnicity who were fleeing from Kosovo were killed. The majority of them were women, children, and elderly persons. Apart from these crimes on Montenegro territory, whose perpetrators were Montenegrin citizens, a great number of individuals from Montenegro took part in the crimes in battlefields in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, and there are testimonies about this in The Hague Tribunal. Most of them are still living freely on Montenegrin territory.

The only citizen of Montenegro accused and sentenced by the ICTY is General Pavle Strugar, convicted for the bombardment of Dubrovnik. His son Predrag is accused for the crime in Kaludjerski Laz. He commandeered a reserve unit of former FRY Army that is under suspicion of this crime. After a ten-year silence, under the pressure of the international community, the investigation of this case started this year.

Only the "Strpci case" was closed by conviction of Nebojsa Ranisavljevic, while Milan Lukic, who is suspected that he commandeered this action, is in the ICTY, accused for other crimes. The investigation about deportations and ethnic cleansing in Bukovica is drawing to its end, and indictments are expected soon. The first indictments were raised for Morinj and Kaludjerski Laz. Supreme State Prosecution indicted eight members of the former Yugoslav People's Army for war crime on April 18th, 1999 in Kaludjerski Laz, and suggested incarceration. Predrag Strugar, Petar Labudovic,



foto: pbase.com

Morinj: A fair distribution of misery

Aco Knezevic, Branislav Radnic, Momcilo Barjaktarovic, Boro Novakovic, Miro Bojovic and Radomir Djuraskovic are indicted. By order of the Higher Court in Bijelo Polje, all of them, except Strugar, were arrested. Strugar lives in Belgrade.

Families of the victims think that because of these investigations and indictments Montenegrin state decided to deal with the past. Others are convinced that Podgorica is doing this only to make Euro-Atlantic integrations of Montenegro easier. The accused are of the lowest rank in the hierarchy of crimes.

Six members of the Yugoslav People's Army are accused for the crime in Morinj. Four of them are imprisoned: Mladen Govedarica, Ivo Gojnic, Spiro Lucic, and Boro Gligic. Ivo Menzalin and Zlatko Tarle are living in Belgrade.

Montenegrin jurisdictional bodies cooperated with Croatian in the "Morinj case". Croatian courts interrogated 170 witnesses. Attorney General of Croatia Mladen Bajic greeted the indictments and arrests of the accused. However, nobody was indicted for crimes in Morinj for command responsibility.

What all five war crimes have in common is that persons under investigation, indicted or judged, are of lower social status and lower level in the chain of command, which leaves space for doubt if those responsible are sincere about bringing justice and any satisfaction for the victims.

It is alarming that the media, journalists, or NGO who systematically deal with war crimes in Montenegro are rare.

Boris Raonic, YIHR Office in Montenegro



Regional film festivals

Festival in a destroyed town

Activists of My Initiative from Serbia, Kosovo, and several towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina visited the Sarajevo Film Festival from 15th to 23rd of August. This visit is part of the Visiting program of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.

Activists took part in the "Competitive Documentary Program outside Competition", and Human Rights documentary film program, where around fifty films were shown. In a café next to the Youth Theater where the films were shown, discussions on the themes of the films were held on a daily basis. Activists of My Initiative, Helsinki Human Rights Committee in Sarajevo, and authors of the films participated in these discussions.

The Documentary Film Program was opened on August 16th, with the world premiere of a film about genocide in Srebrenica titled "The Sky is High, and the Earth is Hard", consisted of confessions of young people from Srebrenica, who were 12 years old at the most at the time of genocide. The screening was followed by the Hungarian film "Rhythm of the Town", about a mentally disturbed boy, who communicates with his hometown of Budapest thanks to his musical talent.

On the second day of the Human Rights Documentary Program we saw the film "Charming Fairies" by the young Serbian author Marko Jeftic, which talks about women from a nursing home who play around other homes in Serbia with their musical sextet. One of members of the orchestra is 85.

Film "Diagnosis for S.B.H." raises a question which language is actually spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Is there any difference between the Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian language in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

In the film by Croatian author Goran Devic "Three", war veterans from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina talk about war experiences, and the film by Duska Zagorac from Bosnia and Herzegovina "Patria Mia, Rights of Nomads" talks about Chinese migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the last two days of the Human Rights Film Program, we saw "Corridor 8", "Cenotaph in Srebrenica", "Albanian Divorce", "Blind Loves", "Flower Bridge", and "If You are Watching This, Mum...".



foto: yihr

Sarajevo: Discussion after the film projection

Apart from the visit to the festival, My Initiative activists visited the tunnel that was the only way in and out of the town during the siege of Sarajevo. They talked about the siege of Sarajevo and the building of the tunnel with Jovan Divjak, the former General in BH Army, who is now leading the organization called Education is Building BH. They also visited the Research and Documentation Centre, where they were informed about human losses during the war in BH. They visited the National Museum and Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where photographs and artifacts from the siege of Sarajevo are exhibited.

The first Sarajevo Film Festival was held in 1995 during the siege of Sarajevo, and the festival was a way for citizens of Sarajevo to oppose the war. Nowadays, the Sarajevo Film Festival is the most significant film festival in the region.

At this year's festival, the Heart of Sarajevo prize for the best documentary film was awarded to "Corridor 8", a film directed by Boris Despotov, the prize for the best film about human rights went to "Albanian Divorce", a film by Bulgarian director Adela Peeva, and the special prize went to "Charming Fairies", a film by Marko Jeftic.

Ruzica Devic and Ana Prokic, YIHR Office in Belgrade



Minorities and the Alternative

"During long, stormy, winter nights, Zagorje sometimes echoes with the weeping of Veronica Desinicka, once a beautiful village girl, who lived in the fifteenth century in the picturesque village of Desinic, settled beneath proud Veliki Tabor." The legend has it that Veronica fell in love with Friedrich, which she was not supposed to do, so his father, the mighty Croatian Governor Herman II of Celje, captured her, took her to the Veliki Tabor castle and executed her. When the castle was renovated centuries later, a woman's skull was found. Whether it was Veronica's, nobody knew. Nevertheless, thereupon, the author of the best film at the Tabor Film Festival (TFF), which has been taking place in the Veliki Tabor castle in Croatia for the past six years, receives a replica of the "Veronica's skull", as a grand prize.

From 11th to 19th of July this year, numerous animated and feature films were shown, along with a few documentaries. From morning to evening, the following programs took place: films awarded by the European Film Academy, LGBT and feminist video program, music videos and "Neighborhood" program, consisting of works by students of the Belgrade Faculty for Dramatic Arts. As many as 62 films by authors from 30 countries were shown in the main program.

The audience awarded the hilarious two-minute animation "KJFG No. 5", by Aleksej Aleksejev, where a bear, a rabbit, and a wolf, three professional musicians, outwit a hunter who suddenly appeared in the woods.

The jury, which consisted of last year's Grand Prix winner Amy Neil, Melissa Pritchard, selector of Hamburg Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, and me, gave the Grand Prix to the animated film "Life Belt" by Tomek Ducki, because the author made animated cogwheels to move, love, and die – just like us.

We commended the comedy by Teemu Nikki titled "Buddy", where two middle-aged friends explore their sexuality, and drama "Angels Die in the Ground", by Iranian director Babak Amini, because he dared to choose a strong woman for his leading character.

The program policy of TFF promotes minority political views and alternative interpretations of identity. Very often, some of these approaches present a quantum leap in thought for numerous audience members; this is one of the biggest qualities of this festival.

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Tabor Film Festival has an unwritten rule that anyone can get in to see a screening – I do not remember that I ever saw someone paying for the ticket. That is why it is admirable that the Civil Organization for Culture from Zabok, that organizes the festival every year, manages to get funds from the Ministry of Culture, and Krapina-Zagorje county

Civil Organization for Culture from Zabok, that organizes the festival every year, manages to get funds from the Ministry of Culture, and Krapina-Zagorje county. I certainly recommend TFF – you will have the feeling that the whole thing was organized only for you to enjoy great films. In addition, every night after the screenings, some excellent regional band is playing at the castle – for free!

Actually, during the hot days in July in Zagorje, Veronika Desinicka's weeping somehow appropriately transforms into the buzzing of film projectors and a great beat.

Darko Sokolovic, YIHR associate



Youth Initiative for Human Rights
Inicijativa mladih za ljudska prava
Nisma e të rinjve për të drejtat e njeriut

NEWSLETTER

Talking Serbian

Within the regional youth exchange program, Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized a visit to the documentary and short film festival – Docufest in Prizren from 4th to 10th of August. Activists of My Initiative and young people who deal with film participated in this visit. 130 films from all over the world were shown at this year's, seventh festival, the emphasis being on films from the region.

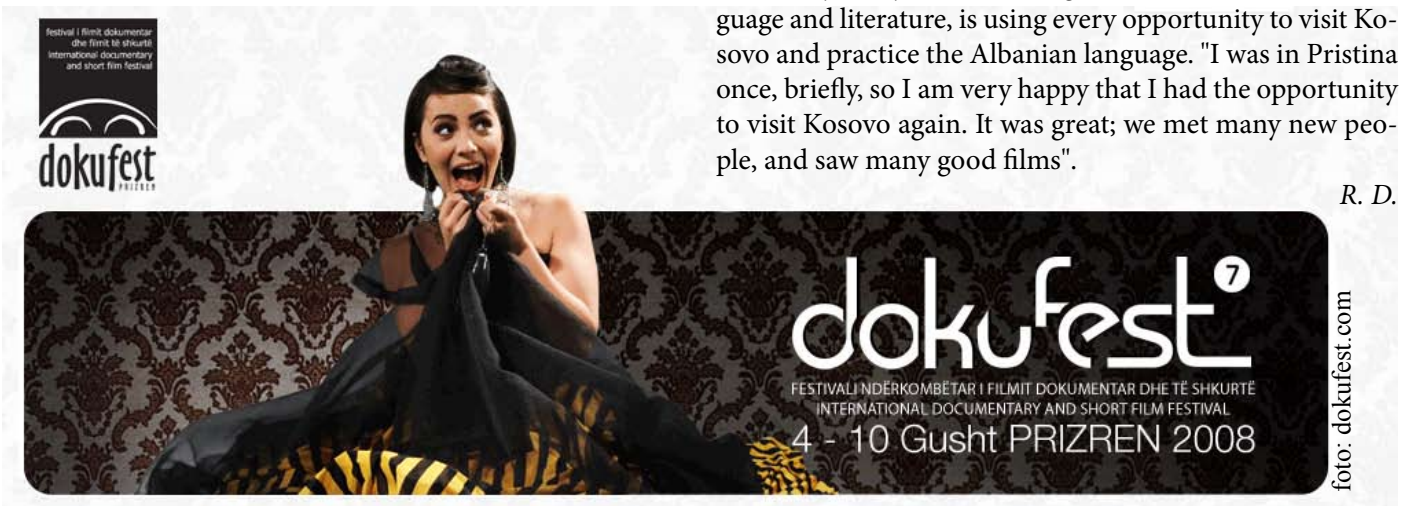
Prizren is a town without any movie theaters. There was one theatre, but it was destroyed during the war in Kosovo.

Serbia that visited the festival in Prizren. A member of the group Petar Veljacic points out: "I have heard about this festival before, because it is a documentary film festival. I have seen many good films, met some of the authors, and organizers of the festival. I talked to the citizens of Prizren about the destruction of the town in 1999".

Relja Ilic, student of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade was more than surprised by the visit to Prizren and Dokufest. "I am delighted by the town and the people".

Antonija Stojanovic, who graduated in Albanian language and literature, is using every opportunity to visit Kosovo and practice the Albanian language. "I was in Pristina once, briefly, so I am very happy that I had the opportunity to visit Kosovo again. It was great; we met many new people, and saw many good films".

R. D.



Festival screenings took place in open and closed spaces. One of the most significant films at this year's festival was a film by British author Phil Collins "Why I Do Not Speak Serbian". The author thinks that it is as a reaction to Serbia's repression in Kosovo. In 2008, Docufest focused on films about war on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The film by Bosnian author Namik Kalib "Informative Interview" talks about life in Sarajevo during the four-year siege, and the film "Log Full of Lead" by Croatian author Branko Smit deals with traumas of Croatian war veterans. Regarding films from Kosovo, the film "Train to Freedom" stands out – it talks about people that travel through Kosovo by train. The train was a symbol of freedom of movement in Kosovo, connecting the Serbian and Albanian parts.

Activists of My Initiative from Serbia and from Kosovo participated in a panel discussion that examined engaged documentary film, and ethics and human rights issues that documentary film promotes.

The group organized by YIHR was the only group from

By publishing a monthly newsletter, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) wants to inform friends, collaborators, and sympathizers about activities and undertakings in the previous month. Exceptionally, this newsletter issue includes the work done during the summer holidays. We would also like to announce some interesting YIHR's actions. On September 28, YIHR will mark the International Right to Know Day. During the second half of September YIHR will organize a seminar in Ivanjica. The "Dealing with the Past" seminar will take place from 19th to 21st of September.

The seminar will be organized in cooperation with the OSCE mission in Serbia. From 26th to 28th of September YIHR will organize its Training for Trainers.

We are planning to open the New Policy School in Belgrade on October 16th. The second generation of students will be presented and the first generation of students will receive their diplomas.

Editorial Staff