



A Justice Guideline

Two Justice Advocates organized on March 11th and 12th the seminars in Kikinda and Sombor, with logistical support from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR). Seminar participants were members of political parties and local non-governmental organizations. The seminars were a combination of lectures, workshops and film screenings.

Following the opening statement and introduction of participants, a film *Survival Handbook*, was screened. The film is about the siege of Sarajevo in the 1990s and is composed solely of witness and survivors' testimonies. The film served as a discussion starting-point about war crimes victims, the responsibility of state and citizens for the past events.

At the workshops, entitled "Truth and Justice: the Path towards the Truth", the seminar participants in Kikinda and Sombor were introduced to the political events in Argentina under the military junta, as well as the those that took place in South Africa in the time of apartheid. After the introductory lecture, the participants were divided into two separate groups, and were asked to write and subsequently present their

own ideas of how they would have resolved the heavy legacy of the past, had they been part of the governing structures in the aftermath of crimes. The ensuing discussion focused on what mechanisms of transitional justice could be applied to Serbia and the countries in the region. Towards the end of the workshop, Justice Advocates suggested the reading materials to the seminar participants, which would assist them in their education on transitional justice.

The second part of the seminar consisted of a film screening. The participants watched a SENSE documentary *Despite Everything* which describes a decade-long work of the Hague Tribunal (ICTY), its successes and the problems it has been facing. A discussion followed about whether the region is in need of an institution such as the ICTY, its role and the perception of this court by the general public in Serbia. Although the participants in Kikinda and Sombor expressed both the pros and contras, the final conclusion was that the ICTY is one of the necessary and indispensable mechanisms of transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia.

The final seminar session consisted of action planning in these two towns of Vojvodina. The seminar participants, together with Justice Ad-

vocates and the YIHR planned a step-by-step public campaign aimed at promoting the work of the ICTY and mechanisms leading to the accomplishment of transitional justice in general. Justice Advocates' education and trainings will not only continue in 2006, but the Justice Advocates Network will be additionally expanded to cover the territories of Montenegro and Kosovo.





The first YIHR office in Vojvodina

On March 14th, at a press conference in Zrenjanin, the YIHR announced the opening of its first branch-office in Vojvodina. Dragan Popovic, YIHR Deputy Executive Director, presented to the journalists the basic values and mission of the YIHR – dealing with the past and the promotion of transitional justice mechanisms, mainly through truth-telling. The second most important segment of YIHR's

service, which will collect the citizens' requests and inquiries concerning the work of local self-management structures. On behalf of citizens, the YIHR will be submitting the questions and information requests to the municipal authorities, and will be informing the public of this campaign's outcomes and results at monthly press conferences.

The Zrenjanin office will engage in motivating the youth to take part in the development of their local community, whether through YIHR's local representatives or in some other way. Reg-



work is the Human Rights Program, which is being realized through the monitoring of transitional laws in order to force the government to amend the laws or make them more effective through full implementation. The third level of YIHR's operation consists of regional cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia on the one hand, and Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the other.

The main core of activities of the YIHR's Zrenjanin office will be focused on the monitoring of the Law on the Free Access to the Information of Public Interest. The office will be a citizens'

ular weekly lectures (every Saturday) for high-school and university students, and political parties' activists have already been agree. The Zrenjanin office has staged a theatre play *Vagina's monologues* by the Novi Sad Fens Theatre. A media campaign aimed at promoting the rights of citizens to control and monitor the institutions and individuals employed in them has also begun, and is being supported from the city budget. The Zrenjanin office coordinator is Ms. Daniela Jelisavac.

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The time of Media and Responsibility

On March 16th, the Nis Law School, Teofil Pancic, a weekly Vreme journalist, gave a lecture entitled “The Media and Responsibility”.

The aim of the lecture was emphasizing the responsibility of the media in their creating of the public opinion, the attitudes and social values, especially in societies in transition, burdened by war crimes.

Pancic’s introductory lecture was followed by a discussion on the role of the local media, the role of the national television as public service, the violation of human rights in the media, etc. Special emphasis was laid on the media situation after Milosevic’s death.



More than a hundred people attended the lecture, mainly students of journalism and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The lecture was covered by the local media: “Narodne novine”, TV5 and Media Center. The lecture was organized in cooperation with the Freedom House, as part of the project “Youth for Democracy”.

Justice Advocates Seminar A Decade of Crimes

As continuation of the project “Justice Advocates Network Capacity Building”, the YIHR organized in Belgrade on February 17th and 18th the second “Advanced Seminar on Advocacy”. The second seminar was supported by the German Embassy in Belgrade.

A two-day seminar was intended for ten Justice Advocates – young people who work with the YIHR in local communities of Serbia, educating their peers about the process of dealing with the past. Another ten volunteers from the YIHR offices in Nis, Kragujevac and Zrenjanin also attended the seminar.

The seminar participants were lectured on the socio-political context of the dissolution of the

SFRY, as well as on the work of the War Crimes Chamber in Serbia and the level of trials transparency in the region. Transitional laws were also discussed, their effectiveness and level of implementation.

Sonja Biserko, President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, explained the historical development, which resulted in bloody conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, as well as the role of various state institutions in the incitement of the clash. Biserko’s lecture was entitled “Social Causes and the Genesis of the Dissolution of the SFRY”.

Dragan Popovic, YIHR Coordinator of the Human Rights Program, spoke within the session “Transitional Laws – the ICTY and Availability of the Information”. Popovic presented the results of YIHR’s recently conducted analysis of



the implementation of eight transitional laws in Serbia. Seminar participants expressed interests in the level of implementation of the laws (or the lack of it) concerning the lustration and control mechanisms through the Law on the free Access to the Information of Public Interest.

Dragoljub Todorovic, the Humanitarian Law Center's lawyer, spoke of the "Critical View of the War Crimes Prosecution". Todorovic made a number of objections concerning the work of the War Crimes Prosecution, emphasizing that the Prosecutor's office and some judges inten-

tionally and continuously avoid linking the state of Serbia with the organization and execution of crimes in the 1990s.

Sonja Prostran, judge at the Second Belgrade District Court, presented the YIHR's report on the transparency of war crimes trials in the region. Prostran spoke of the work of prosecutions in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, listing a number of recommendations aimed at improving the war crimes trials transparency in Serbia. Two seminar sessions were dedicated to the work of Justice Advocates and the calendar of their activities in 2006. Different approaches with different target groups have been determined (political parties' youth branches, high-school students, NGO activists...). It was agreed that volunteers from Nis, Kragujevac and Zrenjanin should take part in the activities of Justice Advocates in their own local communities.