

My suggestion is to include victims or their family members in this commission, i.e. people against whom crimes were committed. If we don't have representatives of our respective governments in this commission I am not sure we'll be able to be financially solvent with respect to prospective court proceedings. Simply because the governments are the ones blocking the truth and preventing investigations for crimes committed against innocent people.

Statement: Milorad Trifunović, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, Regional consultation with associations of victims and veterans, Podgorica, Montenegro, May 9th 2008.

I think this regional commission should have a coordinating operational body headed by these three non-governmental organizations and representatives of all associations searching for the missing should give their representative for the regional commission forum which would meet occasionally to decide on certain important issues.

Statement: Dragan Sekulović, Center for Communication Pravda - Association of the refugees and forcefully displaced persons from Croatia, Serbia, Regional consultation with associations of victims and veterans, Podgorica, Montenegro, May 9th 2008.

Participants suggest creation of the Coalition for regional commission's web page.

I suggest the creation of a website of the regional coalition in four languages where everybody can find relevant facts. I also think that publishing a monthly bulletin containing the most interesting and most relevant data would be very useful.

Statement: Dragan Sekulović, Center for Communication Pravda - Association of the refugees and forcefully displaced persons from Croatia, Serbia, Regional consultation with associations of victims and veterans, Podgorica, Montenegro, May 9th 2008.

My idea was to design a web portal that would contain details of all victims.

Statement: Miroslav Varga, a war veteran from Croatia, Regional consultation with associations of victims and veterans, Podgorica, Montenegro, May 9th 2008.

13. National consultation with civil society on the Initiative for RECOM

Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo,
June 6th 2008

The consultation with civil society was organized by Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo and

Community Building Mitrovica (Kosovo). The consultation in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica was attended by 40 participants, members of human rights organizations, associations of political prisoners, and associations of the families of the missing. The atmosphere was very emotional at times. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia), Vesna Teršelić (Documenta, Croatia), and Veldete Idrizi (Community Building Mitrovica, Kosovo) opened the gathering.

Victims need to talk about what happened to them and also to name perpetrators. Representatives of associations of victims and the Human Rights Committee from Prishtinë/Priština believe that war crimes perpetrators should be tried at the place where crimes were committed.

I support the opinion that those who committed crimes in Kosovo should also be tried in Kosovo because it does not make sense that they should be tried in Serbia. If they committed crimes in Serbia they should be tried in Serbia, and so on. Criminals should return to the scene of the crime.

Statement: Bexhet Shala, Human Rights Committee, Kosovo, National Consultation with civil society, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 6th 2008.

Representatives of Serbian organizations from North Mitrovica insisted on the creation of a register containing names of all the victims and a critical self-analysis of responsibilities.

Each community should first examine its relationship towards itself. We are mainly talking about the other side whom we don't trust, which somehow can be understood. Clearly those who committed war crimes should face punishment, but let us all first deal with our own war criminals.

Statement: Aleksandar Stojanović, Civil Society Development Center, Kosovo, National Consultation with civil society, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 6th 2008.

Victims not belonging to any associations supported the regional initiative and war crimes trials regardless of where trials are held.

This regional commission, which will have its real name at the end of the process, has a pan-national and cross-border character which should be able to knock down barriers put up by governments that had a role in this war. Only when the walls are gone and only if it remains a regional initiative,

can we hope to reach at least a little bit of truth and justice.

Statement: Lush Krasniqi from Korenicë/Korenica, Kosovo, National Consultation with civil society, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 6th 2008.

Youth organizations activists and lawyers who took part in the consultations strongly supported the fact-finding process. They suggested that future consultations include amnesty-granting options in attempting to find the truth. RECOM should have a time-limited mandate.

It would be really good if we could grant amnesty to certain persons because sometimes it is even more important to reach the truth than to bring a person to justice. Secondly, I don't want this commission to have too long a mandate. I'd rather this commission would achieve its objectives as quickly as possible in order to come to know the truth.

Statement: Milot Berisha, Human Rights Initiative, Kosovo, National Consultation with civil society, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, June 6th 2008.

14. National consultation with associations of victims on the Initiative for RECOM

Belgrade, Serbia,
July 15th 2008

This consultation was organized by the Humanitarian Law Center (Serbia). The consultation represented the first preparatory meeting with associations of victims in Belgrade on which occasion the Admission Statement for joining the Coalition for the creation of the Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes (RECOM) was presented to participants. The Admission Statement will be the basis for the consultation process in the future. The participants were also shown a video recording of consultations held in Podgorica on May 9, 2008 during which the initiative to create RECOM became official. The consultations in Belgrade were attended by 16 representatives of associations of victims and five monitors. Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia) and Lidija Škaro (International Commission for Missing Persons, BiH) opened the consultations.

Participants supported the initiative to create a regional commission and they expressed beliefs that it would be very helpful for victims.

I salute the initiative to create a regional commission and I want it to be as soon as possible, to do something and to do it fast.

Statement: Olgica Božanić, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

I entirely support the work of this commission to finally do something which would help reveal the truth about all victims, regardless of their religion or nationality and establish the responsibility of all those who contributed to the suffering, again, regardless of religion or nationality. I guarantee it with my life that many Serbs will criticize this idea or this initiative, but when we stand behind this commission no one in Serbia will have to voice their disapproval because it is us who lost their loved ones. I am positive that on the territory of Serbia and Montenegro we will be able to collect 400 000 signatures for the commission.

Statement: Simo Spasić, Association of the families of the kidnapped and murdered in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

It is in the effort to create this regional commission that I can see a more durable communication between victims and associations of victims from the former Yugoslavia and it seems to me that in reality it is really necessary to achieve that kind of regional connection and a jointly organized search for the missing. No other consultations so far, no other gathering with journalists, human rights organizations, young people, artists, or writers, was so unambiguous about and so full of support for the initiative to establish the facts about war crimes and clarify the destiny of the missing as the consultations with victims and associations of victims.

Statement: Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

We are all unanimous in supporting the creation of the regional commission and everything it should do in solving the crimes and bringing perpetrators to justice. Victims' families support all that.

Statement: Milorad Trifunović, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in Northern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Kosovo, National consultation with associations of victims, Belgrade, Serbia, July 15th 2008.

I believe that the regional commission can obtain a large number of documents we have all been trying to get but without success.

Statement: Negovan Mavrić, Family's association of kidnapped and missing person on Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, office in