

solidarnost je naša snaga



„Give peace a chance“

Solidarity action with refugees from Middle East on October 9th, 2015, from 3 pm to 4 pm
in parks at the Faculty of Economics and Bus Terminal arriving platforms.

Homage to John Lennon, the author of peace anthem Give Peace a Chance,
an anti-war friend, an engaged artist...

On October 9th, 1991 we went out to the street to protest against war
and militaristic-nationalistic politics of Serbian regime...

We are still on the streets against all injustices and violence anywhere in the world...

Always disobedient!

Women in Black

This action is organized by Women in Black and music band Anti-against.



The action of solidarity was organized together by Women in Black and the music band called "Anti-protiv" ("Anti-against"; Anastasija and Jugoslav) from Belgrade. We spread the transparencies of solidarity and peace in Arabic, English, Farsi, Serbian, and the refugees joined us just like during other similar actions. Then we sang the peace anthem "Give peace a chance", as well as traditional Balkan songs. At first, the refugees were a little wonder-struck, hesitating... All of a sudden, couple of men brought drums, returning the "gift" to us - bringing in the sounds of their homelands, Afghanistan, Syria and the whole Middle East. Then they started dancing their traditional dances, gracefully, elegantly spinning in circle, with smiles on their faces and music in their bodies... Bodies became words, they spoke what the words couldn't... And it lasted for awhile, people were gathering, coming from all sides, dancing together the dances of the Balkans and the East, children were playing with balloons and toys that we brought them. Women from Afghanistan were observing without joining in, probably because of the cruel, decades long bans that were imposed upon them in that country. Then the volunteers from the USA joined and continued to dance with refugees as we were leaving...

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Later, a group of us in WiB talked about the wonderful exchange that day in the park - about the concert and the 24-year anniversary of WiB, marked with this solidarity action:

"For me, this was the most touching visit to refugees. At first they were desperate, somehow they kept to the side. Then we set up the transparencies, a long Solidarity canvas, on the ground, and the asylum seekers spontaneously started lifting up the canvas. I found it very touching. The harmonica, the music, and I saw in their smiles and looks their approval of what we were singing. Then we heard that instrument, tarabuka, and the party started, they're giving it back to us... We danced with them for the longest. The atmosphere was great. My spirit was lifted, one of them said "Serbia is awesome!" At the end we danced Užičko kolo, it was awesome." (Violeta)

"It is important that we marked our anniversary in the park, with the refugees, that's how ŽUC started the first time... It's important for those people who had to leave their homeland and come here to sleep in the park, all because of some aggressors and attackers." (Ljilja)

"I spoke with a boy from Afghanistan. He was here with his whole family, we even exchanged Facebook contacts. He told me that he likes Serbia and Serbs a lot, he said it like that, he found us real joyful and happy as a people, that we love to party, and we joked about it. Everybody was enjoying. You could see how everyone joined the circle. I'm glad because of them, that we managed to lift their spirits high." (Tomislav)



"It seemed to me as they had prepared for our visit. We prepared a concert for them and they prepared it for us. That was a good response for us and our activity. They wanted to communicate with us, to establish a contact..." (Yana, Ukraine, volunteer in WiB)

"I liked that we sang and danced with them, we showed that we have accepted those people, people with an unfortunate destiny that made them leave their homes. I'm glad we made them feel good." (Duda)

"How much music can just do, when people open their hearts, when they receive and accept..." (Senka)

"This action was beautiful, more so its timing for our anniversary. What I noticed was that there was few women. Before there were more families from Syria, today from Afghanistan. It was very joyful, very beautiful." (Snežana)

"I'm with Women in Black in Geneva. We too have refugees in Geneva and problems with housing. We do the same things you do here. So, I'm happy to share this moment with you. I am worried about the single women and minors who travel alone. They come to Geneva from all those countries, Afghanistan, Syria, Eritreia. Minors are really a problem. We need people who speak their language, otherwise it's hard. They tend to hide together and not come out, they don't have access to help. Those two groups are the most exposed, single women and minors." (Rina)



"I look at this today from a symbolic point, because of the anniversary, 24 years later WiB continue their activities right where they started, on the street. So, my participation was more emotionally tied to the anniversary. It was okay, this time they accepted us as benevolent, as their own. It's like that every time but today especially because of the music, music connects us, so we tried to ease their problems a bit..." (Fahrudin)

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"I'm glad we marked our anniversary this way. Obviously it was the best possible way. I would suggest marking it like this every time in future. For example, in a Roma neighborhood. Again on the street, in a public place. This is an great idea. Second, this is an example that music is a political matter, I think it's good to use music. Third, women in Afghanistan are not allowed to dance and sing. When we were in Sarajevo not long ago, Eve Enslar told us that the situation is the worst in Afghanistan. She played music on her phone with some women in the restroom so they would dance, they cannot dance in public. Next time we dance with the men, what are we to do with women? I spoke with ordinary citizens of Belgrade who were approaching and were very supporting, they were very glad. I was delighted with a woman who came with her child and she said that she comes here often and explains to her children who these people are. There's another dimension here, it's the Roma population, the police officers are only looking for ways to get them out of there. One of them came to two Roma girls and said: "Don't approach here, they are dangerous!" I told him they were with us, so don't worry. I told them twice. It is important that we know how to treat each other, our duty is to protect Roma people who come here to use the situation because they live hard. I'm glad we celebrated the anniversary by dancing with people who are going through a rough time..." (Lepa)

"When they say how much we try hard, that was the moment of returning gifts - the balance between giving and receiving. That's a type of communication. It is not a cultural difference, those are people's communities that can survive only when they lean on each other's support and help, everywhere is like that. They don't count on the state. That moment of nobleness, they brought out the joy of dance for themselves, it's a creative effort. It is completely adequate that we marked our anniversary this way. Not only because the street is our "workplace", but because this is an act against war, an act of solidarity with war refugees.

We also had met with the war victims and refugees during the war here on October 9, 1991. Back then, just like now, we were with men who refused to get mobilized in any kind of military formation. Syrians told me how the forceful mobilization there is horrible, it's the same in Afghanistan and all the places they come from. This is not only an action against war, but also a support for demanding justice, mass people's movement for justice. They are going to Europe, the minimal act of justice would be that those who produced this, as well as the dictators from their countries where refugees come from, must confront with this massive people's migration, as a consequence of militarism...

This action is also against the militarization of European continent, on states and society level. This is not a "refugee crisis", this is a consequence of a terrible politics of official Europe and colonial politics." (Staša)

The next action "Stop war - Stop trafficking", "We knit peace and solidarity" is scheduled for October 17 - International day against poverty and European day of fight against trafficking. We organize it together with "Astra" and Autonomous Women Center.

**Reported by: Staša and Tomislav
Women in Black, Belgrade**

