

Repression against human rights defenders

Attacks on Women in Black:

November 2015 - December 2015.

Dossier No. 5



Women in Black are activist group and network of feminist and anti-militaristic orientation, consisting of women of different generations and ethnicity, educational level, social status, lifestyles and sexual choices. Women in Black have been established on October 9th 1991 in Belgrade.

Since the beginning of work Women in Black (1991) face various forms of repression, both to the state and non-state actors.

From the very beginning until now, very often we were and we are now targets of attacks because of our commitment to human rights of others and different (in ethnic, political, sexual sense). However, as a women's peace group most of the problems we have because of our insistence at all levels of responsibility for war and war crimes committed in our name.

The wave of violence against activists has intensified significantly since 2014.

Reminder: spokesman for the anti-terrorist unit of the MIA Radomir Počuča urged (25. 3.2014.) on his Facebook profile, hooligans to deal with Women in Black, after we commemorated 15 years of war crimes of Serbian forces against Kosovo Albanians.

Ultra-right movement "Zavetnici" held a protest in support of Radomir Počuča, against the "Woman in black", on the premises of "Women in Black". Police abused freedom of assembly, and provided permission for a protest whose motive was defense of incitement to violence. This caused fear and insecurity, both for the "Women in Black" activists, as well as for tenants in the building housing the "Women in Black", with which otherwise we have very correct relations since we moved in (1997). Excessive police powers (tenant harassment by the police during the protest) have sparked resentment of a part of the tenants and encourage their petition for eviction of Women in Black, which is still in progress. This further reinforces social exclusion, fear, insecurity and, of course, the continued media campaign (primarily through social networks) against activists of "Women in Black".

On his facebook profile Boris Knezevic (real name Boris Hasanovic) wrote on March 29, about which we were informed by the police on 13 May 2014. : "I invite all the brothers wherever they see those whores in black to immediately lynched and burned them!!! Justice for POČUČA", at same time also appeared hundreds of threats and offensive comments, as a direct result of the public lynching which as provoked by Radomir Počuča.

On the occasion of 19th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Women in Black and participants in "Peace activism – cycling activism - Srebrenica 2014" organized on 08.07.2014. at the main square in Valjevo, in black and in silence, peace action "We will never forget the genocide in Srebrenica. From the very start the group of men who wore T-shirts with the inscription "Chetniks Valjevo" as well as T-shirts with images of Ratko Mladic (indicted for genocide in Srebrenica at ICTY) indicated the nationalist-militaristic-misogynistic insults and threats, ferocious shouting, swearing, spitting, throwing eggs at the activists. At the same time the atmosphere of hatred rise and they were becoming increasingly brutal, until finally undoubted lynch atmosphere was created. The increasing number of members of the pro-fascist groups was followed by increased number of police officers who were securing the action. "However, the police failed to prevent puncturing the cordon by the pro-fascist groups and during the attack activists Stasa Zajovic, Ljiljana Radovanovic, Milos Urosevic and Dejan Gašić were injured"¹

Police eventually managed to evacuate activists and for security reasons all participants under police escort back to Belgrade. Though earlier it planned to cyclists / activists to lodge in Valjevo, and then continue cycling peacekeeping tour to Srebrenica, the action was continued the next day, with changed route. "Peace activism – cycling activism - Srebrenica 2014" action was organized for the second time this year(2014): From Belgrade went nine cyclists. Participants of the cycling expedition wanted

1 Saopštenje Žena u crnom, 9. jul 2014.



to remind residents of Western Serbia and the Drina valley of Serbia's role in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina mentioned area is often served as logistical support for the campaigns of various military and paramilitary formations that fought on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should be noted that the Women in Black, despite threats and attacks implemented all the planned activities to mark the 19th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica.²

On 22.07.2014., around 14h at the bus station, near the main post office (near flower shop "Jelena") in Zemun, dark-haired, tall, corpulent man, between 30 to 40 years, for a few minutes, indicated Stasa Zajovic constant insults and threats "I know you, you're Stasa Zajovic the woman in black. And you know, there's no place for you in Serbia." To her question: "Who are you?" he did not respond and continued: "Are you afraid for your safety? For the safety of your family? You should be afraid, because you hate Serbs and you work for Muslims ... And I will not say my name. We're invisible, we arrive out of the darkness and work in the dark, we are everywhere ... American commandos won't be able to protect you..."³

In previous reports on these cases (Dossier No. 1, 2, 3, 4) facts were presented about the attacks, the reactions of state authorities, the reactions of local and international human rights organizations, the political context in which violence is happening, etc.).

I Chronology / Event List



During the reporting period (November and December 2015), there were no new direct attacks on activists of Women in Black. The proceedings conducted against Boris Hasanovic (Facebook account: Boris Knežević) for threats that are addressed via Facebook has been suspended due to lack of evidence. Higher Public Prosecutors Office in Belgrade has accepted the claims Boris Hasanovića gave at the hearing at the police, that he had not sent the threat and that "besides him, other members of the organizations "Chetnik Youth" and "Ravnagora movement" used his facebook profile and that they are abroad". What is also marked this period is the discriminatory behavior of public authorities and the police against the activists of Women in Black, during visits to the reception centers for refugees. Activists of Women in Black were visited locations in which there were refugees, to bring help and to collect informations about conditions in which refugees reside, as well as the attitude of the state authorities towards them. In these visits, the police prevented them from entering the reception centers, with the excuse that they need permits. On questions about the procedures and responsibilities for issuing the permission, they gave different answers. Our attempts to make contact with the Commissariat for Refugees and the relevant Ministry and get more information or alleged permits were not successful.^{4 5 6 7 8}

II Legal actions taken by Women in Black and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights / Jukom

The following actions have been launched as a legal protection and also to determine the responsibility of state authorities for violence against Women in Black:

1. Appeal against the decision of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade number Kt. 94/14 from November 1st 2015⁹

2 "Mirovni aktivizam – aktivistički biciklizam - Srebrenica 2014"

3 Iz informacije Staše Zajović, 22. jul 2014.

4 Izveštaj-Poseta izbeglicama Preševo 09.11.2015.

5 Izveštaj-Poseta izbeglicama Preševo 27.11.2015.

6 Izveštaj-Poseta izbeglicama Adaševci 18.12.2015.

7 Izveštaj-Poseta izbeglicama Preševo 21.12.2015.

8 Izveštaj-Poseta izbeglicama Adaševci 30.12.2015.

9 Prigovor protiv Rešenja Višeg javnog tužilaštva u Beogradu pod brojem Kt. 94/14 od 1.11.2015.

The legal team of YUCOM, as well as other legal experts / activists and activists from Women in Black are in constant communication regarding the legal remedies and procedures to be undertaken in the coming period in relation to the responsibility of the state, communication with international organizations and institutions, as well as the further development of strategies of resistance, mutual support...

III The measures undertaken by the State

In this section we will only cite the actions undertaken by the state, information we received exclusively at our request.

Decision of the High Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade KTP FTC 94/14 from November 1st 2015 rejecting the criminal complaint KU 9320/14 from May 14th 2014 against Boris Hasanovic¹⁰

1. A decision of the Appellate Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade KTP 291/2015 of 15.12.2015. rejecting the complaint against the decision of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade KT FTC 94/14 from November 1st 2015¹¹

IV The political context

During the reporting period continued to strengthen authoritarian and totalitarian phenomenon as it was mentioned in the previous reports. The ruling regime led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic has continued his efforts to put under control as much as possible segments of society. Particularly vulnerable are the media.

The media under direct control of the ruling party constantly spreading fear and panic among the citizens. They maintain the tension, the constant stories of alleged "threat" to Prime Minister and "dangers" threatening from the inside and abroad. The scale of this propaganda can be seen for example in the fact there were often "special / extraordinary" full-day program about "on going coup" on the tv stations under Vucic control.

During this period, a significant event was the welcome ceremony for the war criminal Vladimir Lazarevic, former general of the Army of Serbia, which is before the International Criminal Court sentenced to 15 years in prison for war crimes against Albanians in Kosovo in 1999. After being released from prison he received "state honours" reception, attended by senior government officials, including the chief of staff and four ministers. On that occasion, the Minister of Justice Nikola Selakovic said: "I believe that his personality and his career shows to citizens of Serbia what it means to the end and at any place and at any time to fight for their homeland. It is the brightest example". This shows the true relationship of the state authorities towards war crimes. One face, "modern", towards peace and the future "is shown in Brussels, and another, more honest in Serbia. War criminals are becoming "a shining example of how to fought for the country", and those who point to the war crimes and seek punish for the perpetrators are "enemies of the state" and as such a legitimate target for attack of any kind.

The same double mindedness is shown on refugees from the Near and Middle East issue, who are passing through Serbia on their way to Western Europe. Government publicly praising their own „human aproach“, and in reality refugees become victims of abuse, corruption, police brutality and a source of income for the parastatal tycoons.

Written by:

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10 Rešenje Višeg javnog tužilaštva u Beogradu KT VTK 94/14 od 01.11.2015.

11 Rešenje Apelacionog javnog tužilaštva u Beogradu KTPO 291/2015 od 15.12.2015.