

Repression against human rights defenders

Attacks on Women in Black:

November 2014 - October 2015.

Dossier No. 4



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

1 Saopštenje Žena u crnom, 9. jul 2014.



organized for the second time this year(2014): From Belgrade went nine cyclists. Participants of the cycling expedition wanted to remind residents of Western Serbia and the Drina valey 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) 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

The attack on activists / activists during the action

"We will never forget the crimes committed in Vukovar" 18.11.2014.

On 18.11.2014. during action "We will never forget the crimes in Vukovar," several persons, members of the organization, "Zavetnici" have tried to stop the action in which they were prevented by the police. On the same occasion they have developed transparent "Vukovar(cyrilic) will never be Vukovar(latin)" and referrers insults and threats against activists of "Woman in Black".



The attack on Stasa Zajovic on trial for the rehabilitation of Draza Mihailovic 28.04.2015.

At the trial for the rehabilitation of Draza Mihailovic, before the start of the trial, on 28 April 2015, the President of the Serbian Radical Party and the accused before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Vojislav Seselj, referrers insults to Coordinator of Women in Black Stasa Zajovic:

"You are so ugly. I never saw such an ugly women. You're a witch. Have you always been ugly or something happened to you? They should drown you while you were still in the cradle when they saw how ugly you are. Do you have a mistress?"

For this offenses, the court guards did not react, and didn't moved Vojislav Seselj away from the courtroom.

Sexist insults against Women in Black are a continuation of political activity by Vojislav Seselj, as a man with twenty years of continuous impunity spreading fascist ideology.⁴

The attack on Stasa Zajovic and Ljiljana Radovanovic 23.06.2015.

On June 23rd 2015, at 12:30 Women in Black activists Stasa Zajovic and Ljiljana Radovanovic entered the flower shop, which is located next to the New Cemetery in Belgrade.

2 "Mirovni aktivizam – aktivistički biciklizam - Srebrenica 2014"

3 Iz informacije Staše Zajović, 22. jul 2014.

4 Beleška o napadu Ljiljana Radovanović i Miloš Urošević 28.04.2015.

Suddenly a big man burst into a flower shop. He came close to Stasa Zajovic to less than half a meter, started insulting:

"You're a traitor of the Serbian people, who are you to attack my hero Ratko Mladic. You bitch. Who pays you? How many Americans give money for what you do? The people had nothing to eat, and you organize a gay parade. I saw you, you wore gay flag. You're evil and shame for Serbian people."

He raised his hand to Stasa Zajovic, she step back, and he said:

"I'm not going to hit you, but where is now a police cordon to defend you? Do you defend only the Ustasha, Balije and Shiptar victims, not admitting Serb victims. What did you do at all for Serbian victims?"

They tried to get out of the shop, but he stand at the door and prevent them to go out. Flower Seller was a silent observer, also a woman who was in a flower shop.

After ten minutes they managed to get out of the flower shop, and he continue to followed them and commented:

"You are going to the toilet. I'm with you."

They continued to walk and joined the other people who came to funeral of lawyer and human rights activist Dragoljub Todorovic. On the bench were sitting Sonja Biserko, Latinka Perovic and Mensur Mikijelj.

He still followed them, shouting that he's Serbian nationalists that he will show them, when the police are not protecting them. He went to the bench, recognizing Sonja Biserko, said:

"Well, well, well. Here is the Ustasha whore".

At that moment Mensura Mikijelj noticed a police car and called them. Police asked the man for ID, but then an elderly man approached, who claimed that he is his father, and said that his son is "disturbed and under treatment." He did not even have an identity card that the police had asked for.

Police released him soon. Then the officers approached the activists, wrote their names, they asked what happened. Activists asked why did not they detain the attacker, they replied that there are many similar cases, that they brought them to the clinic Laza Lazarevic (mental hospital) or police station and release them soon.⁵

Attacks on activists during commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide

During June and July, activists were target of insults and threats almost on a daily basis, in particular, when they were exposed, during the actions which marked the 'anniversary of genocide in Srebrenica (actions in Belgrade July 07th and July 10th, July 8th in Sabac, July 9th in Loznica). At the same time a large number of threats and insults was sent to the Facebook profile of Women in Black, insults were mainly on misogynic and chauvinist basis ("whores in black," "slaughter Balije (insulting word for Muslims)," "slut, I am fucking your dead mother", "I am fucking your Ustashes mother "...)⁶



The attack on the premises of Women in Black 24.09.2015.

On 24.09.2015. unknown persons from the front door to the office of Women in Black, removed and destroyed all signs of the organization, as well as other tags that were at the door.⁷

5 Beležka o napadu Staša Zajović i Ljiljana Radovanović 23.06.2015.

6 www.facebook.com/womeninblackserbia

7 Beležka o napadu Miloš Urošević 24.09.2015.

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:

- 03.11.2014. - Request to the High Court in Belgrade to inform us about the measures taken to ensure the presence of the defendant Radomir Pocuca at trial 22.10.2014.⁸
- 26.11.2014. - A review of the case files "Počuča", acting judge Sretenović inform us that the next hearing will not convene until Radomir Počuča is apprehended.⁹
- 02.12.2014. - A request for access to information of public significance to Ministry of Interior which refers to information about events related to the events during action of "Women in Black" - "We will never forget the crimes committed in Vukovar", 18.11.2014. in Belgrade.¹⁰
- 10.12.2014. - An appeal to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection against Ministry of Interior, Valjevo Police Station for skipping the delivery of requested information regarding the events on 08.07.2014., during the peace - action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.¹¹
- 15.12.2014. - The request to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Valjevo to inform us about the action taken in regard to the events on 08.07.2014., during the peace - action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.¹²
- 15.05.2015. - The request to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Valjevo to inform us about the action taken in regard to the events on 08.07.2014., during the peace - action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.¹³
- 02.06.2015. - The request to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Valjevo to inform us about the action taken in regard to the events on 08.07.2014., during the peace - action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.¹⁴
- 06.10.2015. - The request to the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Valjevo to inform us about the action taken in regard to the events on 08.07.2014., during the peace - action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.¹⁵
- 14.10.2015. - The request to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Valjevo to inform us about the action taken in the case against the suspect Luka Gajic.¹⁶
- 17.10.2015. - The request to the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade to inform us about the action taken in the case against the suspect Boris Hasanovic.¹⁷
- 19.10.2015. - The request to the Magistrates Court in Belgrade to inform us about the action taken regarding criminal charges plead by MUP RS 1-101-01338/14 since 21.11.2014.¹⁸

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...

8 Dopis Višem sudu u Beogradu od 03.11.2014.

9 Beleška o poseti Višem sudu u Beogradu – Violeta Đukanović 26.11.2014.

10 Zahtev za pristup informacijama od javnog značaja 02.12.2014.

11 Žalba Povereniku za informacije od javnog značaja i zaštitu podataka od 10.12.2014.

12 Zahtev Osnovnom javnom tužilaštvu u Valjevu od 15.12.2014.

13 Zahtev Osnovnom javnom tužilaštvu u Valjevu od 15.05.2015.

14 Zahtev Osnovnom javnom tužilaštvu u Valjevu od 02.06.2015.

15 Zahtev Višem javnom tužilaštvu u Valjevu od 06.10.2015.

16 Zahtev Osnovnom javnom tužilaštvu u Valjevu od 14.10.2015.

17 Zahtev Višem javnom tužilaštvu u Beogradu od 17.10.2015.

18 Zahtev Prekršajnom sudu u Beogradu od 19.10.2015.

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.

- 21.11.2014. – *The Serbian Interior Ministry, PS Stari Grad Motion for initiating criminal proceedings (Law on Public Peace and Order, Art. 12 § 1 - insolent and ruthless behavior) against two persons, members of the group "Zavetnici", for trying to prevent the action "Women in Black" - "We will never forget the crimes committed in Vukovar", 18.11.2014. in Belgrade.*¹⁹
- 26.11.2014. - *The Higher Court in Belgrade: Decision of Kv.br.378 / 14 of 26.11.2014. Radomir Počuča been ordered into custody. Acting judge Sretenović said that the next hearing will not convene until Radomir Počuča is apprehended.*²⁰
- 05.01.2015. – *The Serbian Interior Ministry, PS Stari Grad provided the requested information relating to the developments regarding the action of "Women in Black" - "We will never forget the crimes committed in Vukovar", 18.11.2014. in Belgrade.*
- 26.03.2015. - *Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection: By Decision br.07-00-04822 / 2014-03 of 26.03.2015. ordered the RS Ministry of Interior, Police Station Valjevo to submit the requested information regarding the events on 08.07.2014., during the peace action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.*²¹
- 09.04.2015. – *RS Ministry of Interior, Valjevo Police Station complied with the decision of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection br.07-00-04822 / 2014-03 of 26.03.2015. and provided the requested information regarding the events of 08.07.2014., during the peace action, marking the anniversary of the crime in Srebrenica.*²²
- 30.07.2015. – *MUP RS, Belgrade Police Department for law and order: a statement taken from Stasa Zajovic on the circumstances of attack by Vojislav Seselj, on trial for the rehabilitation of Draza Mihajlović in Belgrade 28.04.2015.*²³

IV The political context

During the reporting period continued strengthening of authoritarian and totalitarian phenomenon that is pointed in previous reports. The ruling regime headed by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic has strengthened its position in all spheres of society. Particularly devastating are the consequences in media freedom and human rights areas.

Space for criticizing the regime is reduced to the sphere of Internet media, with a few minor exceptions.

A paradigmatic been happening with the project "Belgrade waterfront" where the entire state apparatus is available and subordinate to the private investor interest.²⁴

Street protests against the project mentioned above are disabled in ways that citizens had limited freedom of movement, and there were cases of discrimination on political grounds, as individuals who could prove their membership in the SNS (ruling party) could move freely and others not.²⁵

There has been an increase in nationalism and revisionism that are induced by the authorities.

19 Zahtev za pokretanje prekršajnog postupka od 21.11.2014.

20 Beleška o poseti Višem sudu u Beogradu – Violeta Đukanović 26.11.2014.

21 Rešenje Poverenika za informacije od javnog značaja i zaštitu podataka od 26.03.2015.

22 Dopis MUP RS, PU Valjevo od 09.04.2015.

23 Službena beleška o obaveštenju primljenom od građana od 30.07.2015.

24 <https://nedavimobeograd.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/analizaugovorazaprojekatbeogradnavodi.pdf>

25 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwRTA1IZyFo>

In April 2015 ended the process of rehabilitation of Draza Mihajlovic (WW2 Nazis collaborator), which was a legal verification of policy of historical revisionism. In the proceedings on the side of the promoters, participated high-level representatives of government, such as Oliver Antic the adviser to the president.

The media has been returned nationalistic and chauvinistic discourse and the media who are forefront in spreading hate speech are those under the biggest influence by authorities (Informer, Kurir, TV Pink).²⁶

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, in early June, the UN Security Council, proposed the adoption of a resolution.²⁷ The campaign of the authorities against the adoption of the resolution, as well as the campaign regarding commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Operation Storm brought a rise in tension in the society.

Climate of censorship and self-censorship, repression of the media, freedom of expression in Serbia increased with the approach of commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. It become more difficult for us to continue with our activities. For example, in organizing public forums regarding the genocide in Srebrenica, Women in Black were faced with numerous problems – prevention holding of debates in public - cultural institutions: the House of Culture (American Corner) in Novi Sad, Cultural Center in Zrenjanin, Student Cultural Centre in Kragujevac, the American Corner in Kragujevac, Youth Center (American Corner) in Belgrade. All the above institutions are governed by local authorities, headed by the SNS.²⁸

Despite the fact that the topic of the genocide in Srebrenica is prohibited, proscribed, as we reported in a public statement on June 12, 2015, Women in Black, thanks to civic responsibility and solidarity and friendly support of cultural centers and other institutions (Independent Journalists Association of Vojvodina in Novi Sad, "Zeleno zvono" in Zrenjanin, Youth Centre in Kragujevac) managed to organize all scheduled public forums, although for organizational reasons the dates of some events were changed.²⁹

Also in connection with the activities of Women in Black on the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, it is noticeable participation of huge police force, as a form of "protection", and it's really a strategy of militarization and intimidation. This is reflected in the withdrawal of many young people to participate in some of our actions, especially in the "Peace cycling - Belgrade - Srebrenica 2015". All this speaks of the widespread climate of impunity in Serbia imposed by the current government. This is confirmed by the fact that none of the cases of attacks on Women in Black has not been resolved despite continuous pressure that we make. In general, the position of human rights defenders in Serbia is still extremely difficult.

Using the methods of revisionism and relativism, the victims were placed in the background, and the war criminals were amnestied, and all that culminated during events on and after the commemoration in Potocari on 11.07.2015.

The atmosphere created by the government significantly complicates every aspect of the struggle for truth and justice for the victims of wars, citizens and organizations who insist on it and do not fit into the imposed and prevailing "truth" about the events in armed conflicts, become a "legitimate" target for attacks of all kinds.

An aggravating circumstance is that the international community, particularly the European Union, which often occurred as a dam to negative tendencies in society, due to some "higher" interests, turning the head in opposite direction and no longer insists on respect for the human rights and dealing with the past.

Some of the WiB activists testimonies:

Tijana Mirkovic: I have not been this year in Srebrenica, but I have a huge fear of Aleksandar Vucic, who has more and more power. I have the impression that whatever we talk unless we sit here (WiB), like talking to walls that can not hear me. I have a younger brother who was out of politics, and when this happened, although knowing who I was and what I was doing, he said, "they tried to kill Vucic." I find it so bad, and I can not sit with him. These are people with whom I live every day. They live with me. I'm with them, I

26 <http://www.cenzolovka.rs/misljenja/ko-je-tabloidima-skinuo-brnjicu-ulicarski-govor-mrznje-na-naslovnim-stranama/>

27 <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/573547/Ovo-je-tekst-rezolucije-o-Srebrenici-koja-ce-bit-na-Savetu-bezbednosti-UN>

28 Mirovni biciklizam, Srebrenica - debate po Srbiji, jun 2015.

29 <http://www.e-novine.com/srbija/vesti/122250-Spreene-dve-tribine-Srebrenici.html>



can no longer communicate. They are so blinded by his policies. He has a very great power. These are young people who, day after day become his followers. I've never been scared to live in this country. But when I see that it affects the people close to me, like everything falls apart. I am glad that there is any group of people who understand and who is still not gave up to believe in change. Because if you give up now we're done.

Alija: I was happy that I took part in it, but when I came back I was faced with my fellow people and their negative reactions. I put a status on Facebook that it is better that they threw flowers on Vucic, than stones. It would hurt him more. My friend wrote to me go to Bosnia, what are you doing in the heart of Serbia, in Belgrade. It hurt me and hurt. I have a friend whose father is a Bosniak from Bosnia, who told me that she is disgusted because I was in Srebrenica. I feel fear as a Bosniak. I live here eight nine years. Now it is very difficult.

Jelena Markovic: My impression is that truth is so out of focus. It really hurts me. The adherence of the international community to any rhetoric. Our work is so isolated from everything, from mainstream that is irrational but real. Everything is the same. There is no effort to get to the truth. I have never felt such a gap. The international community is indifferent. It is quite depressing and hits me. The situation is very critical, because we are have a very big social pathology. People are in a critical condition. People are isolated in their bubble of madness. I do not know which way we will bridge the gap to them.

Djordje Balmazović: They think that the crime and the crime obliterate each other, but no, those are the two crimes.

Tamara Spaić My personal feeling is that emotional isolation which this idea of a sincere reconciliation experienced even among "civil" Serbia, during the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the genocide. I felt incredible isolation, similar like in 1991. ³⁰



