

Confronting the past

LOOK AT THE PHOTOS

Women in Black: Actions against the Denial of the Criminal Past

While the war was occurring, our efforts were about confronting the present, confronting the 'history'- the criminal policies of the Serbian regime " that was happening. Our confrontation efforts were open, lively and memorable. Until October 2000, our efforts focused on state-organized crimes. After the fall of the Milošević regime, and especially after the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjić in March of 2003, the responsibility of Women in Black, as well as the other civil society groups working against the denial of the criminal past, became more complex. It was not enough to break with the criminal past; the state was not 'active' in repression like the Milošević regime had been (but not because of any essential change - the new leader did not have Milosevic level of absolute control over the entire repressive apparatus), but society still was intolerance. The unfulfilled expectations for the new government produced a very high level of apathy, frustration, and political abstinence.

The following is a list of the ways and models in which we confront the past and our actions against the denial of the criminal past:

- **STREET ACTIONS** We hold protests and performances, collect signatures for legislative initiatives and petitions, campaigned against war and conscription, demanded legal status for conscientious objectors, and organized actions against The Law on Help for War Crimes Defendants. It is difficult to state the precise number of these actions (although Women in Black carefully records an alternative history), but over our 14 year history, we have conducted well over a thousand street actions.

- **CONSTANT DEMANDS FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT CRIMES / DEMANDS FOR RESPONSIBILITY** (individual, criminal, moral, political, and collective responsibility) We supported the establishment of The International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia (since 1992), demanded the establishment of an international court for war crimes and war rape, supported the movement for the passage of a law that would criminalize genocide denial, and a series of similar initiatives related to the Srebrenica Genocide.

- **VISITING 'DIFFICULT' PLACES** We travel to unfriendly countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Kosovo) to break apart the national consensus and all forms of ethnic homogenization and to demonstrate our belief in women's solidarity and trust.

- **VISITING PLACES WHERE CRIMES OCCURRED IN OUR NAME** We continue our efforts to acknowledge the crimes committed in our name, looking for forgiveness for crimes and suffering and bringing compassion for others' suffering, solidarity with victims of crimes, and respect for the victims' dignity. These concrete actions build trust and friendship that is manifested at meetings marking the anniversary of crimes, and most dramatically at Srebrenica, the site of the biggest crime " genocide committed in the name of the Serbian people.

- **REMEMBERING AND MARKING IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE NONVIOLENT OPPOSITION IN SERBIA, THE WAR, AND THE CRIMINAL POLITICS OF THE SERBIAN REGIME** We have made demands for the renaming of streets and public spaces. In general, this has not been achieved, but we are not stopping our efforts.

- **ACTIONS AGAINST THE FASCISM IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES** This fascism include the exclusion of 'the other' and those who are different, the politics of collective identity which create hatred of 'the other' and those who are different. This is one of the most serious results of not confronting the criminal past.

- **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES** We organize seminars and workshops throughout the country and record war victims' testimonies and memories in an alternative history. The biggest part of our very extensive publishing activities is devoted to this issue.