



*žene u crnom
beograd*



Report

**September, October,
November and
December
2024**

As before, we bring a brief report on the activities of Women in Black in the mentioned period, and if you are interested in more information, you can find them on our web site www.zeneucrnom.org or contact us by mail: office@zeneucrnom.org

Thank you in advance

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Street actions: In this reporting period, we organized seven (7) events and we also actively participated in other street actions:

- Commemorations/marketing important dates of crimes committed in our name;
- Feminist, anti-fascist, anti-war, anti-racist, anti-militaristic actions...

COMMEMORATIONS/MARKING OF IMPORTANT DATES OF CRIMES COMMITTED IN OUR NAME, AS WELL AS OTHER CRIMES AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, DURING AND AFTER THE WARS, IN THE TERRITORY OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA:

October 5th

Belgrade, October 5th “We shall never forget the Topčider crime”– On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the crime (October 5, 2004–October 5, 2024) the murder of two guardsmen in the barracks in Topčider, Women in Black organized two protests in mourning and silence:

- *Protest in front of the barracks in Topčider, together with the families of the killed soldiers. The banners “We shall never forget the Topčider crime”; “Solidarity, Responsibility” were displayed. Flowers with the message “Remember - Women in Black” were laid there.*

This commemorative vigil was attended by **15** activists of Women in Black, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Priboj, Santandrei, Madrid, Zagreb





following banners were displayed:

- We remember Dragan Jakovljević and Dražen Milovanović
- Discover the killers of soldiers!
- The state has been silent for 20 years, the Prosecution, the Police, the Army, the President of the Republic, for how much longer?
- October 05, 2004 – October 05, 2024



On that occasion, a stage action was also performed: it was written in salt on the pavement: We remember 10/05/2004 – 05/10/2024. Twenty white roses were then laid on the pavement.

Thirty (30) activists participated in that protest. In addition to activists from the above-mentioned cities, activists from Belgrade, Sombor, Pančevo, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Kruševac, Pljevlja and Dublin also participated.

October 22th

Sjeverin, October 22th – at the commemoration on the occasion of the 32nd anniversary of the crime in Sjeverin, activists of the Women in Black Network from Prijepolje and Priboj attended, where they paid their respects to the killed civilians, and then went to the town of Mioče and laid flowers. (Let us remind: on October 22, 1992, on the bus line Priboj - Rudo, members of the Serbian paramilitary formation Osvetnici (Avengers) kidnapped 22 passengers of Bosniak nationality).

November 18th

Belgrade, November 18th “We will never forget the crimes in Vukovar” – on the occasion of the 33th anniversary of the fall of Vukovar, Women in Black organized a vigil in mourning and silence in Knez Mihailova Street in Belgrade.

The following banners were displayed at the protest:

- We will never forget the crimes in Vukovar
- Vukovar 1991-2024: Yugoslav People’s Army/YNA held Vukovar under siege for 87 days; More than 1,000 civilians were killed, and about 25,000 were wounded, and the non-Serb population was expelled; In Ovčara more than 200 sick and wounded prisoners



from the Vukovar hospital were killed; In this urbicide, almost the entire city was destroyed;

- Thousands of prisoners passed through the camps in Serbia (Aleksinac, Begejci, Belgrade, Niš, Sremska Mitrovica, Stajićevo);
- Sexual abuse in camps - according to the testimony of detainees in camps in the territory of Serbia, women were exposed to rape and sexual abuse - no one was held accountable for these crimes!
- We demand responsibility for the camps - we demand justice for the victims and punishment for the perpetrators!



A stage action was performed at the protest: Vukovar 11/18/1991-11/18/18/ – We remember – was written on the pavement in salt. And then the candles were lit.

About **30** activists participated in the protest.



FEMINIST, ANTIFASCIST, ANTIWAR, ANTIRACIST, ANTI-MILITARISTIC ACTIONS:

September 20th

Belgrade, September 20th “We believe Milena Radulović!” – protests outside the Palace of Justice on the occasion of the trial of Miroslav Mika Aleksić, accused of rape and sexual abuse of students of the drama studio ‘Matter of the Heart’ whose owner he was at the time.

The following banners were displayed at the protest:

Žene u crnom, 1991 →



- We believe Milena Radulović
- Those who raped in war, also rape in peace ...
- Justice for the victims, sanctions for the perpetrators
- Rape is crime
- Solidarity
- Responsibility



This protest was attended by **20** activists from WiB Network: from *Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo, Banjaluka, Tuzla); *Montenegro* (Pljevlja, Herceg Novi, Podgorica); *Croatia* (Zagreb); *Slovenia* (Ljubljana); *Serbia* (Beograd, Leskovac, Kruševac, Kraljevo, Vlasotince...) and *Italy* (Udine, Verona).

October 7th



Belgrade, October 7th "Stop the war in Middle East"

Women in Black organized a vigil in mourning and silence in main street of Belgrade (Knez Mihailova).



In this antiwar action following banners were displayed in Serbian, Hebrew, Arabic and English languages:

- Stop genocide in Gaza
- Map of Palestine, which shows the shrinking of its territory sins 1947
- From the River to the See – freedom for all
- Rainbow flag – PEACE

- *Stop the War in Middle East*
- *Stop exportation of weapons to Israel (in Serbian and English)*
- *Solidarity with civilians in Palestine*
- *We demand liberation of Palestinian prisoners*
- *We demand liberation of Israeli hostages*



About **30** activists of Women in Black, Belgrade, Zagreb, Pančevo, Kruševac, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Sombor, Spain (Madrid and Santandrei) took part in this anti-war action.

December 6th

Belgrade, December 6th “Stop Femicide!” – on the occasion of the International Day to End Femicide, Women in Black, in cooperation with Autonomous Women’s Center, Belgrade and with the support of Women’s association ‘Anima’ Đulići/BH organized a street action in mourning and silence ‘*Stop the killing of women*’ in Republic Square.

This action was attended also by participants of regional meeting of Women’s Court – feminist approach to justice from Serbia, Croatia, B&H as well as WiB Network activists from Serbia.

The following banners were held at the rally:

- *December 6th – International Day to End Femicide*
- *Stop killing women*
- *Not one woman less, not one more dead!*
- *Let’s punish the irresponsible behavior of institutions*
- *Let’s react before it’s too late!*
- *Why are they not among us?*
- *Number of murdered women in 2024: BH – 8, Croatia – 17, Serbia – 17*
- *Definitions of femicide*

On that occasion, a stage action was performed. The women each held one letter of the slogan **Stop Femicide** written in black letters on red paper. Then, one by one, they stepped out and tore up her letter, leaving red pieces of paper on the pavement. The torn red papers represent the bloodstained traces left on us by the lives of the murdered women.

53 female activists participated in the action.





During this period, Women in Black activists participated in the student and civic protests "Stop, Serbia" - at 11:52 a.m. in Belgrade commemorating the tragedy in which 15 people were killed after the fall of the canopy at the railway station in Novi Sad (November 1 at 11:52 a.m.). with activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Croatia often joining the protests.



DEALING WITH THE PAST / TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE - A FEMINIST APPROACH

This is one of the most important activities of Women in Black. It consists of a multitude of segments: street actions, workshops, lectures, creation of different models of transitional justice from a feminist point of view, cooperation with related organizations in the form of joint actions (campaigns, consultative meetings).

Women's Court - a feminist approach to justice

We bring a brief report on the activities of Women in Black regarding the organization of the Women's Court - a feminist approach to justice in this period. Should you be interested in more information, you can find it on our website www.zeneucrnom.org and www.zenskisud.org or contact us by mail: zeneucrnombeograd@gmail.com

The first Women's Court in the territory of Europe was held in Sarajevo, May 7 to May 10, 2015, organized by 10 women's groups from the territory of the former Yugoslavia (Mothers of the Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves, Cure Foundation, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Center for Women Victims of War, Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia, Center for Women and Peace Education Anima, Kotor, Montenegro, Gender Equality Council, Skopje, Macedonia, Women's Lobby, Ljubljana, Slovenia, Center for Women's Studies and Women in Black, Belgrade, Serbia). The Women's Court was attended by more than 500 people from all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but also from Argentina, Algeria, Palestine, Israel, the United States, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Great Britain, etc.

The final event in Sarajevo was not the end of the process, but on the contrary, an incentive to continue from the feminist perspective towards the creation of new models of justice. It is an obligation first of all to the witnesses, but also the expression of our responsibility towards the enormous burden of the recent past.

In continuation of the Women's Court, Women in Black, Belgrade coordinates the program and other activities, with the support of organizations: Anima, Kotor (Montenegro), Center for Women Victims of War, Zagreb (Croatia), The Foundation CURE, Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina).

During this reporting period, the following activities were organized:

Regional meeting of the Women's Court – a feminist approach to justice

December 6, 7 and 8th

– **December 6, 7 and 8** held in Radmilovac near Belgrade. At the twentieth (20) regional meeting took part **28 persons** (27 women and one man): witnesses, organizers, therapists, associates from *Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo, Foča, Zvornik, Srebrenica); *Montenegro* (Pljevlja); *Croatia* (Novska and Zagreb); *Serbia* (Pančevo, Belgrade, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Leskovac, Sombor, Vlasotince) and *Spain* (Bask County/Bilbao) From the program we highlight:





About activities in the previous period (from the previous meeting from April to December 2024).

Transitional justice – Confession, repentance, a deliberate pragmatic gesture?

Discussion about the letter of Radoslav Krstić, former general of the Republika Srpska Army, the closest associate of the war criminal R. Mladić; he was the first person sentenced by the Hague Tribunal to 45 years in prison for participating in genocide and other crimes against humanity (2001), whose sentence was reduced in 2004 to 35 years. He wrote a letter to the UN after 26 years of imprisonment asking for his release, admitting to the genocide in Srebrenica, etc.

Reactions of participants at the meeting:

R. Krstić's letter – an insult to the victims, who will not allow him to visit the Potočare Memorial Center:

“We the victims are hurt. The hardest thing for me was when he said that he would come to Potočare. I don't know if he could face any of the mothers? If he were to be released, he should not be allowed to come to Potočare. We are on the path of truth and justice and we will not give up on that’ (Šehida, Srebrenica).

Admitting to genocide is important, it should encourage genocide deniers to do the same:

“We are encouraged by his act –admitting to genocide. We think that after him

others should come forward and admit to the genocide. It will then be easier for us victims to fight with these monster politicians in the region’ (Šehida).

‘His confession that a crime was committed is important. Repentance causes him to relieve his soul, but we are not interested in that’ (Suvada, Đulići).

‘Can an individual, after facing his own misdeeds, really reintegrate into a society that still celebrates him, or will the weight of the past weigh down on him?’ (Memnuna, Sarajevo).



"It is important to me that he owns up to genocide, and I am interested in how the institutions will now deny the genocide, since he owned up to it?" (Sabina).

"There was silence in Serbia about the recognition of Krstić, except in the daily newspaper Danas. The confession is a scam, but it is important that finally someone who was in the womb of evil confessed to the genocide in Srebrenica. Unfortunately, I am afraid that this will not lead to a change of attitude in Serbia" (Staša).

Krstić's repentance is (un)important, a deliberate pragmatic gesture – what is important is his accountability:

This kind of repentance has two sides. On the one hand, it is very cynical, and on the other hand, it is very important to the victims. On the other hand, it shows that somewhere there is a little humanity, so he repents and apologizes to the victims' (Halida).

"For us, the most important issue is accountability. There can be confession and repentance, but there must be accountability. He should answer for what he committed. Many confess, and when they are released, they continue to deny it' (Suvada).

'It doesn't matter to me that he repented. I don't trust him' (Sabina).

'His goal is to get out of prison early' (Nela).

'God is in no hurry. Whatever one has earned, Allah will come for His own' (Refia).

On transitional justice in Latin America (Colombia, Mexico...): on the Women's Commission for Truth, Justice, Reparations in Colombia - achievements, challenges; on the participation of women in peace negotiations; about experiences from Mexico, etc.

About the Truth Commission in Colombia (Comision de la verdad) - established as a form of transitional justice (2017) and concerns the internal armed conflict that lasted in Colombia for almost 60 years and caused 9 million victims. Carlos M. Beristain spoke about his experience as a member of the said Commission.

The above issues were discussed by: **Carlos Martin Beristain** (Bilbao, Basque Country/Spain): doctor, mental health specialist, has been working continuously with victims of political violence and human rights groups in Latin America for more than 30 years. He also worked in the Women's Commission for Truth, Justice and Reparations in Colombia together with the feminist network Ruta pacifica/Women's Peace Path. Carlos is an associate of the Women's Court - Feminist Approach to Justice, working with witnesses, organizers and activists of W'sC.

Spinning - an essay in motion, Hleb Teatar

*Sanja Krsmanović Tasić presented the story of her 25 years on stage using texts by Darko Suvin, Octavio Paz, Džemaludin Rumija and **Sanja Krsmanović Tasić**; concept, text, direction and performance: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić; video and music: **Jugoslav Hadžić***

Final session (evaluation, agreements on activities in the following period)



FEMINIST ETHIC OF CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY

– visits of WiB activists to female witnesses (W'sC Sarajevo), peace meetings of exchange and cooperation in the region - support for victims:

**October 14 and
November 28th**

- **Belgrade, October 14 and November 28** - meeting with Mother Mejra Dautović from Bihać (B&H), who testified at the Special Court for War Crimes because of the torture and wartime rape of her daughter Edna Dautović, who was imprisoned together with her brother Edvin in the concentration camp Omarska/B&H;



**October 15 and
December 30th**

- **Vršac/Vojvodina, October 15 and December 30** – visit to Rosa Jakovljević, witness at W'sC, mother of the murdered soldier (October 5, 2004); in this visit were: Mother Mejra Dautović, Ljilja Spasić, Nadežda Kostić, Violeta Đikanović, Staša Zajović WiB Network activists from Belgrade, Pančevo and Kruševac.

June 26, 2023

Women's Court – Foča case – this event took place in **Belgrade, June 26, 2023** in Miljenko Dereta Space and was organized by: Women in Black and Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade in cooperation with feminist groups from B&H, Montenegro, Croatia, associates of Women's Court, as well as artistic-activist collectives: Škart, Dah Theater, Belgrade and Art Clinic, Novi Sad. This event was attended by seventy (70) persons from whole region, as well as from European and Australia.

Women's Court – Foča case – was dedicated to sexual crimes, because during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), Foča was a place of systematic sexual violence and rape. Based on Foča case, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia stated that sexual slavery is to be considered a crime against humanity.

Nevertheless, despite this historically significant verdict, some of the sexual crimes against women and men of Foča, unfortunately, have not been disclosed or acknowledged, but have been silenced and forgotten...

Women's Court – Foča case – is the continuation of struggle, together



with the women and men from Foča to demand justice for victims of sexual crimes in Foča and beyond.

In *Women's Court – Foča case* - the following persons testified: *Ilvana Konjo, Zenija Hajdarević, Halida Konjo Uzunović and Kemalemir Frašto*, while W'sC associates interpreted the political context based on the testimony.

Public presentations Women's Court – Foča case

The presentation of W'sC – the case of Foča consists of several segments:

- **What is the Women's Court/W'sC?** What is a feminist approach to justice? History, process of organizing Women's Courts (Sarajevo, 2015); activities in the continuation of the process, effects of W'sC; Women's Court – Foča case, 2023.
- **Women's court – Foča case** – screening of a documentary film (42 min.) directed by *Marija Arandžević*, produced by Women in Black. The film is about the Women's Court- the Case of Foča, held in Belgrade (June 26, 2023)
- **Witnesses talk about their experience testifying at the Women's Court in Belgrade** (What did testifying at the Women's Court mean to me?)

In this period one (1) public presentation was held:



October, 24th



Zagreb, October, 24 – organized by Center for Women's Studies, Center for Women war victims from Zagreb and Women in Black, Belgrade. About W'sC spoke: *Dorotea Šušak, Nela Pamuković, Renata Jambrešić Kirin, Zagreb, Jadranka Miličević, Sarajevo and Staša Zajović, Belgrade*, witnesses: *Halida Konjo Uzunović, Foča/Sarajevo and Kemalemir Frašto, Foča/USA* (online). This public presentation was attended by **20** persons from Zagreb, Varaždin, Novska (Hrvatska), Foča, Sarajevo (BH) and Belgrade.

After the screening of the film, witness Halida Konjo Uzunović spoke, who, among other things, pointed out: 'I, like many



women, was convinced that all the evil that happened to me in Foča would be buried deep somewhere. However, at the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance for all victims of sexual violence in the conflict (June 19, 2018), I met the activists of the WiB Network, when I recognized and felt their strong support, emotions and empathy. We managed to come here to openly talk about such difficult and painful topics, even in Belgrade at W'sC. This truth was very liberating, it made me a different me. I don't care anymore if I have to carry some kind of stigma, some kind of shame... I think it's very important, in my case it was too heavy a burden, which I really couldn't carry anymore..!



Kemalemir Frašto spoke via Zoom: 'By testifying at W'sC, we did a historic act. It was a great success to come to Belgrade and witness. I was afraid of how we would be welcomed in Belgrade. We have seen from the very beginning that there are like-minded people, people who spread love and not hatred, in Belgrade I lost that feeling of fear... Witnessing at W'sC really makes me feel better, that I did something, something will be written down behind us. May what happened to us never happen to anyone,' *Kemalemir* said.

VIDEO ACTIVISM: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE – A FEMINIST APPROACH

In order to improve the visibility of the effects of various models of transitional justice, especially those from the feminist point of view, a group of video activists was created in 2010, which was capable of recording, editing, digitizing and setting up on the Internet video and audio materials collected during the regular activities of the WiB, so that it, in the form of short films, becomes available to the general public. During this reporting period, the group produced the following video materials:

- **We will never forget Srebrenica genocide** (10 min.)
– documentary about WiB in Belgrade in occasion of 29th anniversary of genocide.
- **Women's Court – Foča case** (42 min.) translated and titled in Spanish: '*Tribunal de mujeres – caso Foča*.'

- **We will never forget Topčider crime** (12 min.) – documentary about WiB protest in occasion of 20 anniversary of Topčider crime (5.10.2004).

Accountability for the crimes – the path to peace with justice: monitoring the trials at the Special Court

In this reporting period WiB attended following trials:

Kravica War Crime – Eight members of the Special Brigade of the Republika Srpska Army have been charged with war crimes (the murder of 1,313 Bosniaks, within the Srebrenica genocide, on July 13th, 1995).

(Let us remind: The Kravica crime indictment was brought at the beginning of 2016. This was the beginning of the most important trial at the High Court in Belgrade / Special Court, the Srebrenica genocide. However, on 14 July 2017, the Court of Appeal ruled to annul the indictment for this crime, which is otherwise not qualified as genocide, since it was raised at the time when the War Crimes Prosecutor's Office did not have a Chief Prosecutor. The trial continued in November 2017, and the hearings are continually being delayed due to non-attendance of witnesses, inaction of the prosecution and the withdrawal of protected witnesses due to the threats they receive).

In this reporting period, three **(3)** hearings were held:

September 9 - at this hearing, the witness Božidar Todić, a former policeman, now retired, and in 1995 he was the head of the shift at the police station in Zvornik, testified, and his testimony was unconvincing, superficial and avoided any responsibility.

October 23 - the hearing was canceled due to the non-appearance of witnesses.

November 19 - the hearing was canceled because the accused Vidosav Vasić did not appear. His defense attorney submitted to the court panel medical documentation about his client being hospitalized in the hospital in Vrbas.

The trial for the crime in Kravica was carried out as part of the genocide in Srebrenica, but it was never so qualified by the Special Court for War Crimes. The entire judicial process is filled with obstruction: postponement of the hearing at the last moment, most often on the day of the trial, non-appearance of the accused and witnesses, very often with false medical documentation. In short, the real goal is not to establish responsibility and justice for the victims - it is only a formal and apparent 'fulfilment' of the conditions in the EU accession process. This also happens in other court proceedings before this court.

Trial for the war crime in Štrpci – on February 27, 1993, the train on the Belgrade-Bar railroad number 671 was raided at the station of Štrpci, when members of the military formation Osvetnici

(Avengers), operating as part of the Višegrad brigade of the Army of Republika Srpska, abducted 20 persons from the train (18 passengers of Bosnian nationality, one passenger of Croatian nationality, citizen of the Republic of Yugoslavia and one unidentified person), took them to the village of Mušiči first, and from there to the village of Prelovo, in the community of Višegrad, where they were killed. So far, the remains of four persons have been found. This trial began on March 2019 and February 19, 2023 judges announced the verdict - the accused *Gojko Lukić, Duško Vasiljević, Jovan Lipovac and Dragana Đekić* were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms of **10** and **5** years, respectively, for crimes committed against the civilian population.

Trial (repeated) at Special Court for war crimes for Štrpce crime:

September 25- the following testified at this hearing: *Krsto Papić*, witness, commander of the Višegrad Battalion of the Army of the Republika Srpska/RSA. Right from the beginning, he denied participation in the crime. He stated that he knew only one of the accused (Gojko Lukić). Below is an audio recording of the testimony of this witness given in 2014. Although he confirmed his testimony, there were a lot of vague and contradictory statements in it, i.e., it does not correspond to the testimony of the witness from 2024. By the way, this K. Papić also testified before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and on that occasion, he gave testimony about the responsibility of some of the indicted before the Special Court for War Crimes in Belgrade. He also stated: "Before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I was forced to give a statement against the RSA."

Ljubinka Vasiljević, the wife of convicted Duško Vasiljević defended her husband, emphasizing his family attachment with the aim of denying the committed crime: 'I wanted to testify before, but my husband did not want to defend himself through his wife. My husband lied to me, he said he was going to celebrate St. George with his parents in Višegrad (May 1992), but he stayed there, and I was bitter because he left me alone. He returned in July 1992 (St. Peter's Day). My pregnancy was the most difficult period of my life...my husband helped me in everything and there was no theoretical chance that my husband would go anywhere. He never left me during my pregnancy, he just went to work... My son entered the Military Academy and passed all the security checks. How can you accuse my husband now?'; etc.

Trial of Milorad Kotur

The accused Milorad Kotur is a member of the reserve police force at the Bosanska Krupa Public Security Station. The indictment accuses M. Kotur of committing the following crimes from July 1992 to September 1992 in the Bosanska Krupa municipality:

1. In the second half of July 1992, **44** camp inmates, civilians of Bosniak and Croat nationality who were traveling in a minibus, were taken out of the Omarska camp (Prijedor municipality) for the sake of an alleged exchange that was supposed to take place in the Bosanska Krupa municipality. TAM 130 so that on the

way to the alleged exchange, on the order of the accused, they were taken out of the minibus to Donji Dubovik, municipality of Bosanska Krupa, after which they were tied with wire, and then, at gunpoint of automatic rifles, they were taken together to the pit "Lisac" which was nearby and killed the **44** civilians of Bosniak and Croat nationality by shooting them. In the year 2000, during the exhumation in Donji Dubovik, municipality of Bosanska Krupa, in the "Lisac" pit, the bodies of the said civilians were identified.

2. At the beginning of August 1992, in Donji Dubovik, municipality of Bosanska Krupa, they intercepted 7 civilians of Bosniak nationality, who were moving from Prijedor towards Bihać: B.M, B.N, B.Nj, B.O, B.P, B.R and B.S, whom they immediately shoot dead. In the year 2000, during the exhumation in Donji Dubovik, Bosanska Krupa municipality, in the "Lisac" pit, the bodies of the aforementioned civilians were found and identified.

In this period, one **(1)** hearing was held:

On October 15, three witnesses were heard via video conference with the court in Prijedor: *Muhamed Nakić, Sabiha Filović, Edin Alić*. All three witnesses told the chairperson of the court panel, judge Mirjana Ilić, that they did not know the accused. All three said that they had heard that their relatives were detained in the Omarska camp, from where they were transferred to an exchange, but that did not happen, and that their remains were found in a mass grave, the Lisac pit.

The trial of Milenko Živanović

The Prosecutor's Office for War Crimes of Serbia filed an indictment against the former general and commander of the Drina Corps of the Army of Republika Srpska (RSA) Milenko Živanović for war crimes against the civilian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995.

Živanović is charged with having ordered and participated in the forced relocation of Bosniak civilians from Srebrenica and Žepa in the east of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In March 1995, he issued an order to «create conditions of total insecurity, intolerability and hopelessness for the further survival and life of the villagers in Srebrenica and Žepa through daily planned and designed combat activities.»

On July 12, 1995, he ordered the provision of 50 buses for the "evacuation of the civilian population from the Srebrenica enclave". On July 13, 1995, he issued an ultimatum to the Bosniaks that they had to leave, etc.

In this reporting period, one **(1)** hearing was held:

September 26 - a court expert from the military profession, Dr. Mile Stojković, but for procedural reasons, the court panel decided that they would subsequently make a decision on his hearing, so the main hearing was postponed for that reason.

Trial for the crime in Bratunac

The indictment charges *Goran Stjepanović*, a member of the Republika Srpska Army, with crimes against Bosniak civilians in early June 1992 and with raping A.A., a Bosniak woman. The main trial began in January 2021.

In this reporting period one **(1)** hearing was held:

October 31 - two witnesses heard: witness *Damir Omić* testified via video conference connection from the court in Sarajevo, while witness *Muharem Salkić* testified in the court in Belgrade.

Witness *Damir Omić* said that in May 1992, together with his mother and sister, he was captured in the building of the directorate of the Sase mine in Bratunac. "Some Zvonko came in and hit me with the butt of his rifle." He wanted to kill me. Then the defendant entered and said: "No one should touch Omić!" Everyone listened to him. He was the leader. He ordered that no one touch my family. The witness also said that his mother was raped. "She testified about it in the court in Bijeljina, but it didn't end well for her." She lost her mind a year after that and died."

Witness *Muharem Salkić* testified about the shooting. "It was May 1992 when six armed men in fatigues came. One of them was the accused *Novak Stjepanović* aka *Krke*. They harassed us, beat us and demanded money, gold and watches. The defendant said, "They're not even worth my shoes." He didn't shoot. Out of 14 of us, 6 remained alive, one was wounded."

(Integral reports from the mentioned trials can be found on the WiB website)

In addition to the above mentioned, in this period we monitored the following trials:

January 2021 – several former students of the "Matter of the Heart" acting school made accusations of rape and sexual abuse against their former acting teacher *Miroslav Aleksić*.

April 21, 2021 – an indictment was filed against *Miroslav Mika Aleksić*. He was arrested and spent eight months in detention, when he was released to defend himself from freedom.

February 2022 – the court proceedings against *Aleksić* began after several delays and final preparatory hearings.

In this reporting period, five **(5)** hearings were held:

September 20 – two women testified. The testimony of the second was interrupted due to health problems of the accused *Aleksić*.

Witness *Mina Radovanović*, as well as witness *Sara Zeljković*, stated that in everything they stand by the testimony they gave to the prosecution – about sexual harassment by the accused.

This hearing was attended by **13** activists of the WiB Network from: Belgrade, Kraljevo, Leskovac, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Banja Luka, Podgorica...

September 23 – the hearing was not held, but was postponed because the accused did not appear, which the court was informed about on the same day.

October 14 – the accused Miroslav Aleksić did not attend this hearing due to health reasons, which was informed by lawyer Zoran Jakovljević.

The president of the court panel read part of the expert opinion of the specialist doctor, in which, among other things, it is stated that the disease is chronic: “On the days when he is not receiving chemotherapy, the accused is able to follow the trial, and when he is in the hospital, he is not.”

To that, the defendant’s defense attorney said: “The patient’s medical examination was not performed.” I will seek a new expert opinion.”

October 23 – before the start of the hearing, the judge provided the prosecutor with medical documentation on the defendant’s health condition, which was handed to her by the defendant’s defense attorney.

Two witnesses were heard: *Sara Zeljković* and *Natalija Klajsner*, both witnesses said that in everything they stand by their statements about sexual abuse that they gave to the prosecution.

The defendant’s defense attorney did not want to question any of the witnesses because of the defendant’s health condition: ‘He is not capable of following the course of the main trial. I want this to be over as soon as possible, so that he can go home and not die here. That is my position from now on, and let the state see what they can do.’

December 24 – three female witnesses and one witness were heard at the request of the prosecution. All three witnesses had experienced sexual violence, but their reports were rejected by the prosecution as unfounded. And they all said that in everything they stand by their statements that they gave to the prosecution.

Witness *Bojana Zečević* said that she attended the Matter of the Heart school in the period (1987-1991) and that she was continuously a victim of sexual predatory behavior by the accused.

The witness *Marija Đikić* said that she was present at the school when *Maša Đorđević* came out of the accused’s office and told her that she had been “verbally abused.”

Witness *Tara Đurašinović* testified about the humiliation by the accused: “He hurt us to the core, but we thought it was part of his pedagogy.”

The witness *Matija Ilić* said that he was called to testify because his friend and victim *Ivana Velinović* told him what happened to her: “Mika sexually abused Ivana.”

(Integral reports from the mentioned trials can be found on the WiB website)

WOMEN IN BLACK NETWORK – REGIONAL MEETING

Women in Black are drivers or active participants of numerous regional networks, coalitions and associations, active participants in the activities of related organizations, in order to strengthen mutual support, solidarity, civil society and democracy in Serbia and the whole region.

In this period, the following activities were realized:

20 to 22 September 2024th

Women in Black Network meeting took place by **20 to 22 September 2024 in Radmilovac, near Belgrade**

This meeting was attended by **55** activists from **27** towns from countries of ex-Yugoslavia:

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla, Zvornik, Sarajevo, Banja Luka), *Montenegro*(Podgorica and Herceg Novi), *Croatia* (Zagreb), *Kosovo* (Prishtina), *Slovenia* (Ljubljana), *Serbia* (Novi Pazar, Belgrade, Bajina bašta, Prijepolje, Priboj na Limu, Sombor, Pančevo, Zrenjanin, Zaječar, Kraljevo, Leskovac, Novi Sad, Kruševac, Trešnjevac, Vlasotince) as well as from other countries: *Palestine* (Bethlehem), *Germany* (Berlin), *Italy* (Verona, Udine).

Friday, September 20

Morning “We believe Milena Radulović” – protests outside the Palace of Justice on the occasion of the trial of Miroslav Mika Aleksić, accused of rape and sexual abuse of students of the drama studio ‘Matter of the Heart’ whose owner he was at the time. This hearing was attended by **13** WiBNetwork activists.

I part: In pictures and words – about the activities of the Network of Women in Black Serbia, in the previous period (March-September 2024)

II part: Discussion corner: “Where to and how to proceed”– an event, an activity from the previous period that was extremely important in their environment, in the region, in the world - presented by activists, associates of the Network.

About femicide in Kosovo – Rina Kika, lawyer and feminist activist Bern/Pristina

“In Kosovo, there are 2,000 reported cases of violence against women every year,” said Rina.

She then referred to the government campaigns that do not encourage women to report violence for the following reasons: ‘Women relatively often encounter mistrust in their experience and disrespect for their experience in police stations - this is common to all women in Kosovo, regardless of nationality; when women who do not have physical injuries report violence to the police, they are met with disbelief, blame,’ *emphasized Rina.*



Femicide is defined in the Criminal Code of Kosovo as the killing of a person because of gender affiliation. It is being treated as a hate crime. "Psychosocial support programs, as well as various types of economic support, are much more important. Work on prevention is particularly important: changing textbooks that promote gender stereotypes, normalize violence," explained Rina.

She then pointed out how the problems in the relations between Serbia and Kosovo affect the application of international documents in Kosovo: 'Because of the blockade of Serbia, Kosovo is not a member of the UN and therefore cannot ratify the CEDAW Convention, we cannot even go to the European Court of Human Rights human rights. However, we can directly apply certain international documents even though we have not officially signed them, including the Istanbul Convention. Two years ago, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo directly applied the Istanbul Convention in one case,' concluded Rina.



About the Femicide Memorial platform (on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance of Women Victims of Violence) - **Vanja Macanović**, lawyer of the Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade

The femicide memorial was presented by the AWC on May 18, 2024, when the *National Day of Remembrance of Murdered Women* was marked. Since 2010, the AWC has been collecting data on murdered women, because the state does not keep statistics on it.

She then pointed out the following facts regarding femicide in Serbia:

- Most of the murdered women are over 45 years old,
- Younger women report violence more often,
- Belgrade has the most cases of femicide, because it has the most inhabitants,
- almost **55%** of women were killed in the house where they lived, which confirms that for a woman who lives in violence, the most dangerous place is her home. In the last 10 years, **406** women and girls were killed in Serbia.
- More than **50%** of women were killed by their married or extramarital partners, murders of women in the family context,





then murders of women by former cohabitants and others,

- Method of execution - mostly with weapons and tools - knives and firearms are almost equal; then beating and finally strangulation.

In Serbia, 28,000 to 29,000 cases of violence are reported annually: 21,000 of these are emergency measures. Those are huge numbers,' Vanja concluded.

On the proposal of the Law on Gender Identity in Montenegro – Jovan Džoli Ulićević, Spektra Association, Podgorica, Balkan Trans Network, anti-fascist/feminist activist

Jovan Džoli explained the activities related to the Law on the recognition of gender identity based on self-determination:

What does self-determined gender identity mean?

- That there is no medical document that you need to provide in order for the legal system to recognize you in terms of your gender identity. For the time being, in Montenegro, forced sterilization is not prescribed by law, it is a gray area;
- The Civil Registry Act only states that you can change your unique citizen registration number in personal documents after xx things and gender change. Then the Ministry of Internal Affairs interprets that in practice as a request for forced sterilization, which we were aware that we were to overturn in court, if not in our court, then in the European Court of Human Rights.

Why is the right to self-determination important? explained Jovan Džoli:



- It is important that we all have the right to self-determination without changing or removing organs,
- That the state does not require us to perform invasive operations on our bodies,
- It endangers the health of some people,
- For some people this means much more violence,



- For some people it means social exclusion,
- For some, it implies huge financial costs that they cannot cover, etc.

How did the work on the adoption of the Law take place? Jovan Džoli mentioned various levels and fields of activity of the working group:

- *Involvement of institutions:* 'Everyone from the institution should be involved so that we all agree first of all on self-determination. We are currently in a situation where all political actors who have been anti-EU for many years now claim to be pro-EU, including the Serbian Orthodox Church/SPC.
- *Public debate:* it lasted thirty days, in all three regions of Montenegro we invited people from local communities to 'talk to people about this, so that people would not be afraid of this law'. Unfortunately, few people responded.
- *Media:* we tried to talk in the media, but most of the media did not report on it.

Jovan Džoli explained why they refused to debate with the church and why the church did not take a more offensive stance: 'We thought that this would give the church legitimacy to discuss issues of gender equality and human rights, even if we didn't get a minute in any media. The Church could have hit it much harder, but it did not do so because it is trying to present itself as a credible partner, and not as a disruptive factor in Montenegro. I personally believe that the SOC is the main disruptive factor in Montenegro.'



As for political parties, they were guided by pragmatic political reasons, primarily ratings: 'Absolutely every party knows about this Law, which does not bring votes to any of them. All parties want to please the church and their voters, claiming that the law will be abused, although there are restrictions in the law itself that it cannot be abused.'

"What encouraged me was that 41% of people believe that trans people should not undergo sterilization in order for their gender identity to be respected," Jovan Džoli emphasized.

He illustrated this with data from a survey of attitudes only for trans people, and this was for all LGBT people:

- **15-20%** of people support trans people. That is more than half of all political parties in Montenegro.
- **30-50%** are in between, you can talk to them, they are supportive of some things, some things they don't know.
- **20%** of those who are stubborn and against everything.

About the 'LEXICON of beautifully packaged threats' - About the 'Media Week' from June 17 to 19 - in Novi Sad, organized by the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina/IJAV - **Ljiljana Spasić**, Civic Action, Pančevo

The focus of this event was the safety of journalists and media workers, the following data were presented:

- Of the thirty reported cases this year, only two were solved - the number of solved cases on an annual level does not exceed **10%**,
- In the last six years in Serbia, **516** prosecution cases related to threats to journalists were filed: in 83 cases, the threat resulted in a conviction, which is 25%,
- During 2023, **70** cases were filed on threats and attacks on journalists,
- In the last year, **101** cases of pressure on journalists etc. were recorded.

A creative rebellion instead of despair: How did two female activists provoked an exhibition of weapons with an anti-militaristic canvas? – **Slavica Stanojlović**, Peščanik, Kruševac



On the occasion of City Day, a large military parade was held. My colleague Snežana and myself came out with the banner *All for peace, health and knowledge, nothing for weapons*. Snežana and I held the banner in front of the municipality building'



Solidarity in action – solidarity auction of artists to help the workers of Jura, Leskovac (July 9, 2024) – **Vladan Jeremić**, artist and activist, Belgrade

An artistic activist team from the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia organized, together with *Radnički glas*, a solidarity action to collect funds for the workers of Jura from Leskovac who were on strike. The workers of the South Korean company *Jura* (Leskovac) wind cables, have been working on the minimum wage for years, have no sanitary conditions, and do not have the most basic things. “We collected some 3,000 euros in funds and managed to cover the workers’ daily wages that were not paid to them during the strike. It is a great success to connect the struggle of workers with artists. What is important is that the money they lost while they were on strike was compensated through our auction,” said Vladan.

Good grief, what a heat!
- **Nađa Duhaček and Jelena Jaćimović**

A group of female artists organized a fundraising campaign for the purchase of air conditioning in a maternity hospital without air conditioning. This happened in July, during the hottest time. About 12 people donated their works, as well as one art collective. We collected about **133,000 dinars** and about 1,100 euros. We found an organization in Kikinda, the Center for Women’s Rights, which gave our donation to the hospital there and installed three air conditioners. The company that installed two air conditioners installed them for free.

Vox feminae/Women’s voice – documentary film (24 min.) about the solidarity of 10 women with Vietnamese and Indian workers in Zrenjanin, production 2024 – **Ivana Gordić Perc**, journalist and activist

The film testifies to the events of late October and early November 2021, about the slave exploitation of workers in the Chinese company Linglong: **750** workers, mostly from China and Vietnam, live in a slave position: they did not have passports, they did not have healthy drinking water. Workers were forbidden to go out, to mix with us, taxi drivers were forbidden to drive them outside the construction site. When TV N1 reported about it, the information was reported by **25** world agencies, including CNN and other major world agencies. Thanks to the public, Vietnamese workers were saved because a large number of them returned home and received as much money for their work,’ *Ivana stressed.*

Ivana explained the forms of repression, i.e., the persecution to which she is exposed by the Chinese company: ‘They constantly follow me on the street..’

Chinese companies in Serbia have their own ‘occupation zones’: ‘The Chinese have police in Linglong, we saw that when we started filming. The workers signed a contract where it says that they are not allowed to go outside, that they are not allowed to communicate with us,



Žene u crnom, 1999 →

they were isolated, they hid them from us. Nothing is visible from the outside. It's a real Chinese labor camp. No one can enter there. Free Europe's forensic team found that the Chinese exported 14 million tires last year. They are officially exported to the USA, Kazakhstan and Turkey. For two years, the factory has been working in three shifts, 24 hours a day,' *emphasized Ivana.*



A smile, laughter and satire – a powerful tool against repression, violence, tyranny: Muhamed Max Đerlek, caricaturist, illustrator, Novi Pazar - joint installation of the exhibition

Spin Dictators – The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century; authors: Sergey Guriev and Daniel Treisman, published by Archipelago (2023).

Moderator **Tanja Marković:** 'The backbone of the book is dictatorships in the 20th century and their transformation into spin dictatorships in the 21st century. The authors explain how old-fashioned dictators ruled by fear, while spin dictators are primarily focused on manipulation, on how to gain popularity, how to be loved by the masses, how to stay in power, without all of that appearing oppressive. The participants of this debate will talk about the book in selected texts. First, we will present an introduction to the whole book'

Lino Veljak: 'The point of this book is the following: today a tyrant (dictator, authoritarian leader, etc.) can choose between two models of securing his power: one is harsh repression, the other is gaining the support of his subjects through manipulation (based on spin). Of course, these two models of governance are often combined. In this sense, our authors (especially in the innovated preface to the book from 2022) cite the case of Putin's rule, where it is shown how Putin successfully used a combination of repression and media manipulation (at a certain moment giving the latter a distinct advantage), but at the same time there are also limitations. model of spin in societies that are in the process of modernization, as a result of which he had to intensify repression after the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine. The opposite example is offered by Viktor Orban, who relies on spin to successfully stay in power. The authors are otherwise inclined to the conclusion that the regime in



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Serbia is increasingly using the spin model. A possible criticism of our authors would be their limitation of spin analysis to the Third World and Eastern Europe. The spin model is by no means limited to those regions, however. That's how Donald Trump, who once won the presidential election, used the aforementioned model.



Nastasja Radović:Chapter One 'Fear and Spin'

As examples of very skilled spin dictators, the authors cite three leaders: Hugo Chávez from Venezuela, Li Guangyao, a dynastic leader from Singapore and the great Serbian friend of Vladimir Putin. It shows that they are very skilled in manipulation, with the mass media playing a huge role. Spin dictatorships are, formally speaking, democratic regimes: elections are held, there is a formal opposition. However, by manipulating and spinning public opinion, the three mentioned leaders regularly win elections. What I read reminded me of A. Vučić. Obviously, he is well informed and has a team that wins elections'

Snežana Tabacki: Chapter 2 "Supervise but do not punish"

It refers to political leaders in certain countries, who have consolidated their power as authoritarian leaders, adopting the techniques of spin dictatorship: manipulation of the media, marginalization of the opposition, while maintaining a democratic facade.

After this introduction, Snežana explained the remarks on this chapter:

"The sources cited are credible and unbiased, but various invectives are unreliable: especially those linked, for example, to Lenin (he approved the killing of prostitutes and those suffering from syphilis).

Equally unbiased are accounts about other communist countries: in them, according to the allegations, millions of people were executed or imprisoned in post-war Eastern Europe, but also in Mao's China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cambodia, etc., by the so-called totalitarian ideologues.

The anti-communists also killed, but they were less cruel and got away with few killings, amounting to a few thousand each, compared to the



Žene u crnom, 1999 →



millions during the communist regime: the authors argue that the Argentine generals killed between 15,000 and 30,000 people, while General Pinochet's soldiers killed 3,000 to 5,000 Chileans. I would accept all this if the authors assured me that this killing calculation was based on evidence.

Is the media-fabricated crisis in Serbia an introduction to the dictatorship of fear if we keep in mind that crises and external threats encourage citizens to gather around their leader? Observing what is happening in Russia with Putin, the external "threat" is used to justify the transition to open violence, so it is not excluded that Aleksandar Vučić could also, if he loses control, move towards open repression', emphasized S. Tabacki.

Fahrudin Kladničanin: commented on the book as a whole:

This study is good because it offers an overview and comparative analysis of how some regimes in the world work.



The book enumerates some of the rules that govern spin dictators:

- *Spin dictators are democratic, they supposedly believe in democracy, elections are held, everything is regular, everything is free, the media, everything is fabulous. These authors explain this in great detail.*
- *Spin dictators survive not by thwarting rebellion but by eliminating the desire for rebellion. You can see how it works the same way in Serbia. Vučić hasn't invented anything, he's just improved something that exists in some countries and it works very well.*
- *Spin dictators are constantly calling elections: we are constantly in election campaigns. Elections are there to confirm what the spin dictators like, to glorify them as deities.*
- *Spin dictators avoid violent repression: that camouflage, like something happens, and they are saviors. What we see with Vučić, we also see in the eastern states.*
- *Media control is brilliantly explained here.*



The book is both expressive and exciting. You have Vučić in front of your eyes, because this regime co-opts from a to z. All spin dictators co-opt people. And the important thing is generating enemies, Kladničanin emphasized at the end.

Mirko Medenica: *When you read the book, you see Serbia, I see this regime here.*

I would single out two things:

Firstly, the destruction of the desire for rebellion: propaganda has always served for some kind of mobilization around an enemy, etc. It is still used today. It is about the propaganda of demobilization: that is, with certain propaganda and spin, political life is rendered meaningless, and therefore the will of the citizenry to participate in it, which guarantees those people staying in power.

Secondly, the rhetoric of violence changes to the rhetoric of performance: it reminded me of Serbia. Vučić, as the face of the regime, speaks on every topic 'most expertly'. Citizens don't seem to feel fear, but a kind of self-respect because of that competence, which we certainly have in a large number of citizens who vote for Vučić.

Tamara Spaić: *Chapter on Censorship.*

In the chapter on censorship, the authors state that for former and current spin dictators, censorship is as important as a Kalashnikov: although censorship does not kill with a bullet like a Kalashnikov, it is just as repressive as a weapon.

Each of the dictators who allowed the level of censorship to be reduced, at the moment of reducing the level of censorship, risked falling from power: some did fall, such as Fujimori/Fujimori/ from Peru. Whenever a crack opens and some free media emerges in which people have confidence, popularity falls and the dictator falls or risks falling.

The authors say that for the fall of a dictator, it is necessary to have a free citizenry, intelligentsia, journalists, and an informed public that is able to take advantage of that moment: it happened here in a couple of cases that Vučić made a mistake, but no one managed to take advantage of that mistake.

In spin dictatorships, control over the media is carried out covertly, while the dictators of fear wanted it to be seen and did so publicly: the Nazis burned books in the square or killed journalists in the stadium and thereby spread fear. These new dictators don't want it to be seen. That is why they leave that small space for the existence of independent TV N1, which they do not give a national frequency, etc.

During the nineties, people were much better informed, at least since 96/97, when the opposition won in a large number of cities in Serbia. At that time, there were local media, the ANEM network, and information produced by B92 and other freelance journalists was distributed through them.





Media privatization is also a form of censorship, especially the purchase of all small local media- apart from the privatization of the media, there is the discrediting of journalists who report freely: they are the 'enemies' whom the regime makes technical obstacles or open attacks.

Vučić occasionally tried to shut down even those small niches of free speech: he occasionally turned into a strong dictator and no one took advantage of that, even though at that moment he lost confidence. Confidence in other dictators also falls when people believe that they are not the kind of democrats they portray themselves to be, explained Tamara.

Ljiljana Spasić: 'Many of the techniques that spin dictators use abroad are also used by fear dictators and even Democrats. Indeed, foreign affairs have become more of a subject of spin and less of fear than in the past. What decides is still military force, but it is not used as often anymore, and deception, manipulation, although they have always been important, have now become even more crucial'.

Staća Zajović: reflected on the entire book and its valuable lessons:

The spin dictator's methods have long been invented and devised: A. Vučić has not really studied those methods, it seems to me that he is a dilettante compared to those mentioned in the book.

Tyrants, dictators, authoritarian leaders combine two models of government: the dictatorship of fear and the spin dictatorship depending on the needs, mainly to stay in power. They target/attack/discourage critics through non-political methods: SLAPP lawsuits for tax evasion, fraud, alleged slander against SD, defamation, this makes the opposition a beggar's stick, it happens in all spin dictatorships/SD, opposition candidates go bankrupt.

They make political life senseless: fake news, reality TV, nurturing celebrities, tabloidization, permanent election campaigns, speeches... They co-opt and corrupt critics of all kinds, especially cultural elites (the case of Serbia...).

The following analysis by the author is extremely valuable: *it is a misconception that economic development and investments lead to political changes or the strengthening of democratic processes because "investors easily turn a blind eye to atrocities." For example, after the massacre in China (Tiananmen Square, 1989), investments increased in some cases by four times. "Wherever money can be made, memories of atrocities easily fade," the authors state lucidly.*

Slobodan Sandžakov: Chapter Eight: *The Future of Spin.*

Sandžakov explained his remarks:

Nothing particularly new has been said: there are good examples, I will not deny the author's effort now.

It is about replacing violent rule with spin: that technology of rule has always been present in the times of the slave and feudal systems.





The great shortcoming of this book is that it starts from the idealization of liberal democracy: the authors are honest, so they also talk about some support for dictators, it is not an absolute idealization, they also talk about the guilt of the West, but when the authors talk about liberal democracy, their attitude is extremely questionable. We have not invented a better form than this modern democracy, but of course it has shortcomings, especially in the functioning of the authorities that this liberal democracy produced.

*We cannot forget that liberal democracy can conquer with imperialism: since the end of the Second World War, the USA has had **120** interventions or support for a regime. Thus, liberal democracy supported dictatorial regimes.*

I think the main problem is the global political situation, the political and moral chaos we are witnessing after the Second World War. Then we had a clear political division, fascism and anti-fascism, black and white.

Now everything is gray and we act in a sad moment of humanity where we don't really know as libertarian beings who to focus on and who to trust: imperial China, imperial Russia, the imperial US, Europe in its confusions, problems, hypocrisies, bureaucratization.

Today we actually have general idiocy and it is normal that it is easy for one Vučić or Trump to rule over the masses, etc.

Saturday, September 21

The specter of populism is haunting the world and the region

First session:

Contemporary populism – pitfalls, challenges, danger for democracy?

Speaker: Zoran Stojiljković, retired professor of the Faculty of Political Sciences





Stojiljković initially stressed that there is no consensus on the concept of populism, so he offered his view: *'The minimum definition that everyone agrees on: populism is a type of politics and political practice that is based on the difference between the elite and the people. Whereas the elites are alienated, blasé, exploitative, and on the other hand, the people are simple, good-natured, insufficiently educated and exploited, which is not incorrect. The consent stops there.'*

He warned that one of the main dangers of populism is **anti-pluralism**: *'The real voice of the people is represented by some members of the political elite who are outsiders in the political space - in this sense, Trump would be a political outsider in relation to the dominant liberal political elite; populists offer simple, simplified and quick solutions to the people or 'heedlessly promised speed', as they used to say in Serbia at the end of the 1980s.*

Populism appeared in a certain socio-political context: *'Populist parties are in power in six European countries, in the other six they are in second place. It didn't use to be like that before. Several types of crises coincide: economic crisis, migration, terrorism. The right wing in Germany is emerging as a reaction to Angela Merkel's migration policy. This cultural nationalism is aimed at those who are visibly different, do not fit into the standards, many of them are isolated from the dominant environment. This is what after 2020 and the pandemic seems socially perverse.'*

The appeal of populism is a consequence of the crisis of liberal democracy - Stojiljković explained it as follows:

- The dominant type of democracy is plutocratic, under the dominance of big capital, it no longer deals with big issues, but with administration. Decisions are made at higher levels, instead of local autonomy, democracy has turned into the administration of some measures that are not questioned.
- The technocratic model of democracy makes ordinary people frustrated and cynical: mistrust of politicians is fantastically developed.
- The phenomenon of the electoral paradox: people know that elections are important, but at the same time they deeply despise those offered to them in the market; a large number of people believe that politicians look only at their own interest or the interests of the most powerful.
- The absence of intra-party democracy and mistrust of politics and politicians leads to the rise of movements, including populist movements. SNS is formally a party, but in fact it is a movement with an undisputed leader, who questions everything. They simply communicate directly with the people through controlled media.
- Populism, as an autoimmune disease of democracy, has the biggest problem with liberal presidential democracy: when they come to power, they first deal with independent bodies, with the judiciary, and collect all the government's resources.



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- *The phenomenon of the electoral paradox: people know that elections are important, but at the same time they deeply despise those offered to them in the market; a large number of people believe that politicians look only at their own interest or the interests of the most powerful.*
- *The absence of intra-party democracy and mistrust of politics and politicians leads to the rise of movements, including populist movements. SNS is formally a party, but in fact it is a movement with an undisputed leader, who decides about everything. They simply communicate directly with the people through controlled media.*
- *Populism, as an autoimmune disease of democracy, has the biggest problem with liberal presidential democracy: when they come to power, they first deal with independent bodies, with the judiciary, and seize all the resources of power.*

“Change in society is only possible if authoritarianism in society is reduced because more than half of the people are in favor of a great leader.” He can ignore the procedures, many tolerate it, they believe that only a great leader can get us out of the crisis, warned Stojiljković.

Stojiljković believes that there are alternatives: *‘I am in favor of radical democratization, which introduces elements of the socialization of democracy: citizens’ initiatives, autonomous and participatory civil society, which then pressures the field of politics. The opposition, which wants to be in power, must undertake to conduct a transparent policy. We need to monitor them in the elections, to limit the amount of money for campaigns, Stojiljković stressed.’*



Second session:

Populism in the countries of the Western Balkans

Speakers:

- **Andraž Rožman**, writer and activist, Ljubljana/Slovenia;
- **Daniela Antonovska**, feminist consultant and activist, Skopje
- **Ljupko Mišeljić**, journalist and activist, Banja Luka/BiH
- **Venera Cocaj**, doctoral student at the London University for

Economic Studies and Political Sciences (School of Economics and Political Sciences) and Pristina/Kosovo

- **Boris Pavelić**, journalist, Zagreb/Croatia

Who are the Balkan populists today? What are the specific manifestations of populism in the countries of the Western Balkans? Are there differences among Balkan populists?

In EU member states - Slovenia and Croatia:



“All populists are bound and connected; it’s all business totalitarian team; (un)freedom in the media; and when the leftists come to power, they lose their connection with the workers; stigmatization and persecution of others and different (Roma, migrants...); the rise of nationalist and anti-gender movements...”(A. Rožman)

‘Croatia, like Serbia, is a country founded on populist nationalism; in the last parliamentary elections, Milanović (President of Croatia) was a real populist; Homeland movement - populist - chauvinist - pro-Ustasha party; Plenković (Prime Minister) - a skilled technocrat of the EU format - adopted a very high-quality technology of ruling and managing in the EU; women are marginalized on the left - SDP is a sexist party... (B. Pavelić)

In the countries that are formally on the path to EU integration (Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), the situation is burdened by growing nationalism, polarization on ideological and ethnic grounds, and the strengthening of conservatism (anti-gender movements):

Nationalist rhetoric in Macedonia is getting stronger due to the deadlock with integration into the EU, because Bulgaria is setting new conditions (the inclusion of Bulgarians in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, as a constituent nation); polarization in Macedonian society, with the fact that nationalist rhetoric is not only a characteristic of the right (VMRO DPMNE), but also of the left (instead of dealing with economic, social rights, labor rights, they advocate nationalist

views, reject the inclusion of Bulgarians in the Constitution, support Macedonianism, etc.).

Daniela also pointed out the polarization within the Albanian political community: VMRO formed a government with the "Vlen" coalition, made up of right-oriented Albanian political parties, unlike DUI, which is formally center-left. Vredi received fewer votes than DUI (13 representative mandates. In addition, *political factors from Kosovo and Albania directly interfere and influence the Albanian parties in Macedonia (Daniela Antonovska).*

V. Cocaj reflected on the identity traps - the relationship between the majority and minorities: 'Are we Albanians, Kosovar Albanians or just Kosovars? What is our common identity? When we look at some symbols, where Albanians are the majority, we see the Albanian and Kosovo flags, the municipalities where there are Serbs, only the Kosovo flag. The Serbian flag does not have the same weight as the Albanian flag, it is an occupation flag and represents a parallel system of institutions.

'Kurti - both left and right populist: he is the bearer of the idea of Kosovo's sovereignty. We don't know which is the right way. Kurti did not go to LGBT parades while working on his campaign. When he came to power, he was in a pride parade. Next to him was a Roma trans woman. His policy is symbolic, cosmetic. When the law on artificial insemination was not passed, we saw that there are people in his party who refer to Islamic values.'

Civic mobilization in Kosovo is strong and that gives me hope. Citizens are active. Small parties will have to network' (Venera Cocaj)

Both in the Republika Srpska/RS and in the Federation, a populist-corporate system is at work - management of the crowd: 'That crowd is not only ethnic, religious, but a crowd of taxpayers who think they own shares of the state. We have a government that thinks the state is a joint-stock company. We have an opposition that thinks it should have its own shares in that society, so we have a corporate management model', Ljupko Mišeljić explained at the beginning of the presentation.

He pointed to the influence of external factors on BH: 'We have Christian Schmidt (the main representative of the international community in BH) as the head of the BiH corporation, who has no legitimacy for one part of the country, that is the RS. Schmidt imposed an electoral law that does not respect the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.'

Dodik (President of the RS) is a populist tyrant, a spin dictator, a denier of the genocide (in Srebrenica): 'He behaves as it pleases the crowd. He did not justify to anyone the means he spends...' (Ljupko Mišeljić)

'In the entire ex-Yugoslav area, perhaps with the exception of Slovenia, every kind of populism will be in power. In Serbia and elsewhere, you have that ethnic and cultural nationalism. These are petty-bourgeois societies with rather hypocritical behavior' (Z. Stojiljković)

Anti-gender movements are the common denominator of the countries in the Western Balkans:

Macedonia: Anti-gender movements operate both at the institutional level (especially education) and within civil society, with strong ideological and financial support from religious communities, as well as the state. All religious communities support the principles and actions of anti-gender movements, but there are differences in the intensity of that support: the movement against the so-called "gender ideology" was encouraged by Christian, Orthodox fundamentalists. Anti-gender movements enjoy formal support from the ruling coalition, which for pragmatic reasons is changing its rhetoric, only declaratively advocating for the adoption of laws on gender equality in the name of EU integration, etc.

Republika Srpska: Anti-gender movements work together with the Serbian Orthodox Church/SPC - it's a toxic misogynist, homophobic, fundamentalist policy... Gender identity has been removed from the law.

Croatia: A true Yugoslav counter-revolution against women and gender rights is at work. In Croatia, it is not possible to have an abortion in a public hospital. Women go to Slovenia. It is discussed in public as a possibility.

Serbia: The Law on Gender Equality was passed in Serbia (2021), and then suspended due to gender-sensitive language, so the implementation of the law was suspended. The law was adopted due to EU integration, but all relevant political actors, led by the Serbian Orthodox Church, are preventing the implementation of the law.

The sessions were moderated by: *Staća Zajović*

Ljubica Duvnjak, Berlin/Belgrade

Digital populism

Digital space is the space where populists have been active the most and most successfully in the last ten years. *Digital populism is a new type of political behavior marked by the political use of the Internet as a form of political participation and as an instrument of mobilization*, Ljubica said at the beginning of her presentation.



On the methods of action of populists on the Internet:

- *They style the contents according to ordinary people* - this means that the Internet is for wide popular use, which can be seen in the campaigns - in the Trump campaign or in our country in the SNS campaign,
- *Populist aesthetics* - very simple with very few artistic expressions and through such a visual campaign (posters, slogans, etc.) you get closer to ordinary people, you bring such aesthetics closer to them and your story is automatically closer to that uneducated layer than to educated people,
- *Populists constantly point out that they are the voice of the people, i.e., the voice of the people* - this is what Trump did in the 2016 election campaign, as well as many other politicians,
- *Populists using the digital framework can engage more populist technical possibilities* - it is free, cheap, accessible and with the development of artificial intelligence, it is available to create fake content, *The main platforms for sharing are social networks* - Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and now Tiktok etc.

At the end, Ljubica referred to the dangers of the Internet world and the development of new technologies: surveillance cameras, with the development of artificial intelligence, there are some softwares that work by producing fake news, etc.

About Palestine and life in Palestine – the testimony of a woman from Palestine – here are some excerpts:

What is happening all the time is presented as a religious war and conflict. It is not a conflict but an occupation: what remains today of the former historical Palestine is 22% of the territory.

Israel is waging a demographic war with the Palestinians - a policy of colonization: over 2 million of the nearly 3 million Palestinians live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 2.2 million in Gaza and 2 million in the northern part of Israel. Israel is waging a demographic war with the Palestinians.

*When people say that before October 7 (2023), there was supposed to be peace?! Well, it wasn't peace. As if there was no history before that date? In the past year alone, from January to October 7, over **234** Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, including a huge number of children. And Israel all the time justifies its actions by fighting Hamas, and there is no Hamas in the West Bank. From October 7 to August, over **600** Palestinians were killed in the West Bank alone, of which **150** were children. *Israel is the only country in the world that imprisons children.**

I have been living in Palestine for 12 years on a visa issued by Israel, which means that at any moment it can deny me that opportunity and break up my family. This refers to over ten thousand foreign women who are married to Palestinians and live in the West Bank.



Ljuba N. Čunović, 1999 →



I am an Orthodox theologian, I graduated from the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade. I have been living in the West Bank for twelve years in a part of Bethlehem. It is mostly inhabited by Christian Palestinians. This is our ghetto. We have two children. I applied for family reunification and did not receive it. They last issued several thousand such permits for family reunification in 2006. It doesn't just apply to foreigners, like me, it applies to Palestinians who are in Gaza. It took me a couple of years to understand what was happening. It took me the first couple of years of living in occupied Palestine. Everything was so abnormal...

What is left of the West Bank, that is, of the occupied Palestinian territory, is not a single entity. Usually, people think that it is divided by the apartheid wall which is eight meters high and will be over **700** kilometers long when it is finished. The wall doesn't go straight. As they grab the land, they build a wall and that wall is like a snake that is all over the West Bank. What's left of the West Bank at this point looks like Swiss cheese. These are small ghettos, Bethlehem, Nablus, Ramallah. At anytime, anywhere, on any road, Israeli occupation soldiers appear, stop traffic, harass people, frisk, check, and it can last for hours.

One of Israel's national values is the expansion of settlements. Those Jewish settlements are illegal under international law. The problem in the West Bank is these Jewish illegal settlers, terribly radical extremists. Most of them are American and Russian Jews. They are invited to receive benefits for each child born. This is a small number compared to the number of Palestinians in the West Bank, but they live completely protected in their settlements.

We have two refugee camps in Bethlehem itself. There are constant raids. These are all tactics to maintain domination over the Palestinians. They break into houses fully armed, demolish houses. Israel does not issue a permit for you to build a house on your own land. You apply, you never get it. In the meantime, a son or daughter creates a family and adds another floor. Then Israel waits for you to build it or tells you to tear it down or they will charge you an outrageous amount of money to come and tear it down for you. They make you tear down your entire life savings and everything you've built yourself. It is a psychological experience.

Israel has full control over the water. We have no water in the West Bank. We keep water in large canisters, cisterns. We and a family downstairs have seven. There are pipes, I have a faucet to turn on the water, but that's the only water I have. I am proud because I learned to save water. Israel has complete control over when the central tap is opened and closed. In summer, because the temperatures are huge, they give us much less water. It happens that we don't have water, that our canisters are empty, while illegal settlements have swimming pools and gardens.

When I hear abroad people saying that Israel is the only democracy, that it is unclear why the Palestinians are protesting, it means that the occupier reserves the right to decide on resistance.

It is not resistance going and shooting. Resistance is staying there to live. They do everything to drive us away. Together with other foreign wives, I will go to a coffee shop and drink coffee, and all this is resistance.

The occupied people have the right to decide on the type of resistance they will offer. Who am I to give you a parameter by which you can resist? The most effective movement is Boycott, Don't Invest, Don't Buy, Don't Cooperate! It is a peace movement that has been going on for a decade.

There is an international movement *The Present*. These are the activists who just stand at check points and record violations of basic human rights. It means a lot to the Palestinians. When it is olive picking season, many Palestinian farmers wait for one of the foreigners to come, because that white skin alone will save their lives. Without the physical presence of foreigners who will physically protect them, people cannot do their jobs, *testified, among other things, a woman from Palestine.*

Sunday, September 22

International politics – Internationalist News (Staša Z.)

The specter of militarization haunts Europe – Italy, Germany

Annalisa Comuzzi, Women in Black, Udine – brief summary of her presentation

Umberta Biasioli, Women in Black, Verona: introduced the audience to various types of populism in Italy, as well as the common denominators: *'Populist politics is also expressed through the growth of the military industry, which has also penetrated the educational system, numerous universities are engaged in research projects for the army. The Army is present in schools where they run safety workshops for children...'*





Zoran Solomun - the backbone of his presentation was the concept of *fascist economy* invented by Alfred Sohn Rettel, a German philosopher and Marxist economist (1989-1990). Solomun analyzed the concept of fascist economy in today's context:

- *Fascist economy is the production of weapons that nobody needs, but the consequences in society are very complex and direct;*
- *One of the most important characteristics of a fascist economy is its complete separation from the market; the most important thing is that wars are fought because the end of the war would mean the collapse of the economy;*
- *Aid to Ukraine exceeds 170 billion dollars, it is predominantly American aid. Where does that help go? Everyone says that the money goes to 'our workers and our nation'. That is not true. That money goes to American companies;*
- *Wars are fought between different groups, national, religious, etc. Those wars are also wars of humans against nature;*
- *The country of Serbia is deeply involved, even though it is small, in all arms sales. Close to a billion dollars of weapons were sold to Ukraine, mostly through third countries...*



Evaluation

- what do I take away from this Network meeting?

The testimony of a woman from Palestine about the war tragedy, but also about resistance and strength: "Testifying about Palestine was the most emotional and powerful moment" (*Andraž, Selena, Ljilja, Zinaida*); "The testimony from Palestine somehow opened my eyes, not only with information, but also with the fact that she showed us how the strength of resistance is extracted from that horror" (*Sole*); "She shared her struggle and her experience from Palestine, poignantly, with many details that we would not know" (*Nadežda, Nastasja, Violeta, Milka*); "The story of Palestine is sad because it tells me where this world is going" (*Manda*) etc.



Participation of Italian women – continuity of friendship, internationalist solidarity: 'I am glad that I met friends from Italy, because they inspired you to stand up against the war for the first time' (*Boris*); 'Thank you Italian women. I'm glad to see you again. We feel like a family' (*Reiha, Miloš, Milka*); "It is important that we continue to build relationships, especially at times when Europe raises walls, creates obstacles and barriers, it is important to be together" (*Umberta*); "It is necessary to strengthen the relations between WiB groups in situations of increased tensions and wars" (*Annalisa*), etc.



Joint learning, space for free thought, critical thinking and exchange; a safe emotional and political refuge: 'I feel at home, among my own folks, in this world where people are disinterested and scared and refuse to see things with their own eyes,



here is a rare place where serious deliberation takes place' (*Boris*); "It is very important to me that I saw a great effort to create space for the exchange of opinions and deepening of knowledge, presenting positions with serious arguments" (*Maria Roza*); "I am very happy that I met WiB a few months ago and now I feel that way, as well as a part of this society. Everyone needs a room of their own, and in the political and human sense, you are my room' (*Andraž*); 'What means the most to me is that we have the impression that we are all learning, encouraging each other. For me, it's really that primary feeling of some fulfillment and gratitude that I can be in this place' (*Slobodan*); 'At these gatherings, I hear news that cannot be read in the media. Contacts with people during breaks are very important to me because then we exchange views and experiences and then I get confirmation that I'm not crazy' (*Ivan*); 'This is an institution. There is something special. I always like to come and leave here always richer' (*Mirko*); 'For me, that feeling of belonging to this group is really an existential thing, and it is that support every day in these difficult moments' (*Sole*); 'I'm here for the first time. I am extremely grateful. I felt accepted, you give me back my strength. It is terrible to be there and experience injustice, and feel the silence from the outside. You break through that silence and it restores faith in humanity. Wonderful new acquaintances. Thank you for your solidarity, love, support. I am returning to Palestine strengthened, with full batteries. You confirmed to me that I am not crazy and that wars have no meaning' (*woman from Palestine*).



The presence and active participation of people from all countries of the SFR Yugoslavia –awakened a strong Yugo-nostalgia - a sense of cultural and emotional belonging and connection: 'The feeling that you lost the country where you were born, we compensate for this here, we cover everything from Triglav to Đevđelija' (*Ljiljana S.*) 'The meeting was wonderful, but a little sad for me. I'm going to cry. Everyone from our republics was there. I want everyone from ex-Yu' (*Zinaida*) to come to the next gathering as well; 'Yugoslavia is rarely mentioned, and I am a so-called Yugo-nostalgic. Not because I think it will return, but because I respect the legacy of that country: education, healthcare, culture' (*Ivan*);



"Sometimes I feel terribly sorry for the language gap that we have in Kosovo with the rest of the former Yugoslavia, so there are no more of us, so we need to see how to bring the young generations to see what benefits this networking brings and how to nurture it' (*Venus*); the most important thing is what I heard from you from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. That topic no longer exists. The media don't report anything about it anymore' (*Annalisa*)

Fascist economy, spin dictators, populism, exploitation of Vietnamese workers – caused a lot of interest, anxiety, concern:

'I liked Sole's story about the fascist economy the most, but it also disturbed me' (*Slavica*); Interdependence and a common thread - how spin dictators find their foothold in populism, in a fascist economy' (*Snežana*); "The story of the Vietnamese workers throws me into despair. The film about the workers in Zrenjanin impressed me strongly ' (*Manda*); "The topic of populism is a very important topic, analyzed at all levels, and that was important for me to hear" (*Nadežda*).

(You can find the integral report in bhsc languages
(54 pages) about WiB Network on WiB website)

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, PEACE GATHERINGS,
MUTUAL SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY**

– in addition to the ones already mentioned, the following educational programs (transitional justice, women's peace activism, feminist discussion groups, peace gatherings, feminist roundtable discussions, etc.) were realized in this reporting period as part of the Network.

We list them chronologically:

We list them chronologically:

September 11 and 12th

Prishtina, September 11 and 12 – Operational meeting (September 11) within the framework of the regional project (Autonomous Women's Center, WiB and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights) and women's groups from Kosovo and BH "Amplifying Voices by Women affected by war-related SGBV in the Western Balkans - For a culture of Recognition and Reconciliation". On September 12, the international conference 'I am not guilty for what happened to me' - A study of the long-term consequences of war crime in Kosovo was held. in Kosovo - organized by Medica Gjakova and Medica Mondiale, Germany. Staša Z participated on behalf of WiB. Other operational meetings were held (online) as part of the mentioned project.

October 3.-5th

Leskovac, 3.-5. October "Leskovac Literature Festival" - the 18th Literature Festival took part in the most important writers from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. As part of this festival, a tribute was held 'Pen against the mob' - Bojan Tončić (October 4), in which *Tamara Spaić and Lino Veljak* participated on behalf of WiB.



FEMINIST APPROACH TO HEALTH - ACTIVISM AND OLD AGE - ACTIVISM AND ETHICS OF CARE

October 5, 6 and 7th

Feminist discussion circle was held **October 5, 6 and 7, 2024** in Radmilovac near Belgrade attended by **25** persons from **13** towns: *Serbia* (Beograd, Kruševac, Priboj, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Sombor, Novi Pazar); *Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo); *Montenegro* (Pljevlja); *Croatia* (Zagreb); *Poland* (Krakowia) and *Spain* (Madrid and Santander). Workshops, debates-interactive lectures, film screenings were held within this FDK. We highlight the following segments from the program:

Feminist approach to health – (principles of feminist approach to health, factors affecting women’s health, etc.). According to the feminist approach, health is a socio-political category, determined by gender, class, race, ethnicity. Women’s health depends on: *class position - health for a poor woman is not a basic human right, it is a commodity* (‘if you have money, you are healthy, if you don’t you are not. The situation in which most women find themselves is that women put their well-being last’); *male violence against women*; *care for others - women are forced by upbringing and socialization to care for others* (‘in the name of satisfying the needs of their husbands, children, old parents, they care least about themselves’); *environmental pollution* (‘40% of deaths in the world can be attributed to the consequences of environmental pollution’); *militarism* (‘the state directs the budget to armaments, at the expense of investments in health care, social care, education, in everything that favors safety, the safety of women’, etc. The workshop was moderated by: *Tanja Marković*.

Activism and ethics of care – invisible, unpaid, unrecognized work of women, especially older women in the family - workshop moderated by: *Magdalena Sztandara*, Jagiellonian University, Krakow and *Gordana Radosavljević*, WiB, Belgrade. Summary of the discussion:

Caring for others, first of all, within the family, affects activism: by reducing the level of activism (‘We prioritized care, of children, the elderly, over activism’).

Caring for others is not divided and shared: 'There are often misunderstandings, anger, sometimes there is blackmail from the family...).

Caring for others is a free choice and a shared responsibility: ('Sometimes partners cook, go shopping or we do it ourselves').

We have much more space for activism now that we are alone and when the children have gone their own way, the parents have died: according to the experience of some women, 'husbands and sons are against activism, that's how it was before, and now we live alone and are the masters of our lives and our time.'

In doing the housework, women mostly rely on their children, mother, sisters, female family members: the most common answer.

When asked about helping mothers as injustice and exploitation towards an older woman, the participants were divided:

Help and support of mothers was not perceived as exploitation: "When we were younger, we liked the fact that our mother helped us: around babysitting, cooking lunch"; "I know that it was a real pleasure for her"; "I did not perceive my mother's support as exploitation of an elderly person, but as a contribution to activism".

It is exploitation: ('Now in our mature years we are aware that we were terrible exploiters in relation to our mothers'; 'mother's concern for grandchildren, accompanied by excuses in the style of 'grandmothers love grandchildren' does not reduce the injustice and exploitation towards the mother...'

Activism taught us to set boundaries: ('We learned to set boundaries; our mothers didn't know it. When we lost them, we realized how much they sacrificed').

All participants believe that it is necessary to share/socialize/democratize caring for others - at the level of family, society, state...

Healthcare collapse in Serbia - health is a social responsibility, a political category, determined by gender, class, race/ethnicity - short texts about the health collapse in Serbia were presented, the participants selected the texts and commented on them together, moderated by: Staša)

Reflexive path - joint commenting on short texts by scientists and activists about health (Part I):

- **Obsessions with perfect health (Ivan Ilić);**
- **A middle-aged woman (Florence Rush).**

*Moderated by: Marijana Senjak,
feminist therapist of the Women's Court, Zagreb*

Presentation of two studies:

- **'On no man's land' – gender-based violence against older women (65+) in the Republic of Serbia** (research 2021), **authors: Nataša Todorović, Marija Babović, Biljana Stepanov, Bojana Matejić, Bosiljka Đikanović and Milutin Vračević**
- **Research on violence against older women in the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine** (2022). **Research authors: Marija Babović, Patricia Bronweil, Nataša Todorović and Milutin Vračević**

About violence against older women, we highlight: 'More than half of older women in the region have experienced some form of gender-based violence since they were 15 years old. Most of them are from Ukraine, Moldova (about 75%), in Serbia 57%. The survey included 15,000 women in Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. The most prevalent is psychological violence experienced by 38% of older women and that this violence affects women throughout their lives. Violence against the elderly in the family is the most prevalent, it is perpetrated by close people, then in health care institutions and nursing homes, etc. Research was presented by: Nataša Todorović and Milutin Vračević, expert associates of the Red Cross of Serbia.

"The phenomenon of anti-vaccination in our country and in the world" – Zoran Radovanović, epidemiologist, Belgrade

'Citizens of Serbia are susceptible to anti-vaccination ideas - the era of post-truth has reigned. Truth is perceived as a socially imposed category, so it is relative and not the only one. Personal beliefs are more important than facts, by reason: Why should the results of scientific research have more weight than my ignorant prejudices? Such doubts are especially expressed in environments where there is not much social justice, in hybrid regimes like Serbia. The Law on the Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases in Serbia (2020) stipulates that vaccination and immunization is a legal obligation, which does not depend on anyone's decision. That is why coverage of 95% of vaccinations is needed, which is not easy to achieve, especially when there is organized resistance to vaccination, and the authorities do not take measures within their competence', the epidemiologist Radovanović. emphasized, among other things.

Reflexive path – joint commenting on short texts by scientists and activists about health (Part II):

- **Feminist perspective on health** (Janice Raymond);
- **Seven points of healing** (Gabor Mate)

Moderator: Marijana Senjak, feminist therapist of the Women's Court, Zagreb

Magical scenes – my imaginary place for rest, relaxation...

The participants described 'magical' scenes - most often in natural surroundings (rivers, forests, sea...) and they especially emphasized the importance of togetherness, vacations with friends...

Feminist party (I kiss my picture...)

Magda took photos of the women, and then sent those photos to each of the participants - a wonderful gift of tenderness and commitment...

*Moderated by: Magdalena Sztandara,
Jagiellonian University, Krakowia/Poland*

Fears in old age? Hopes? What feeds my hope? What decision should I make for myself in my old age? Why is it good to be an older woman? Why do we feel good in old age? What does that beauty consist of?

Moderator: Magdalena Sztandara

Here are some statements: *'All of us don't think about age, we think about what we want to start in our community. Because if you stop, it seems that everything will stop. And so, it will be';*

We are the initiators of changes, but those changes start from us, but those changes must be accepted by the environment from which we come; we wear our age with pride;

We learn from each other, women of various levels of education, class, ethnicity have different knowledge that only contributes to us;

The only limitations with old age are physical limitations: 'I have to go ten times slower, I can't hurry, but now we can watch everything as we like. We have earned the right to decide what we will do - activism has become a part of all of us...'

In the final session, most of the participants believe that *'focusing on ourselves - the most important thing in this circle - ('we finally gave the opportunity to focus on ourselves'; 'somehow, we ourselves this time focused on ourselves, like never before')*; on a personal level, we care a lot about each other, but somehow we didn't have time or we were ashamed to think about ourselves in addition to everything that is happening around us and, in the world, I just wanted to say that it is this is one of the best seminars I've ever attended...'

(The integral report can be found on the WiB website)

October 25th

October 25, Ljubljana – Promotion of the book'

Tega se ne da krishti' (That cannot be erased) by Andraž Rožman, writer and activist; the book testifies to the ethnic cleansing in Slovenia (1992) of persons of non-Slavic nationality. The event was organized in **PLAC** (Participative Ljubljanska Avtonomna Cona), which was attended by over **120** people, and at the promotion, in addition to the

author, the following spoke: members of the Izbrisani community, activists from Slovenia, Italy, as well as *Staća Zajović*, WiB.

November 13th

Aranđelovac/Serbia, November 13 – Balkan Gender Justice Regional Movement Convening, organized by the Global Fund for Women and the CURE Foundation, Sarajevo, the activities of women's groups from the entire region were presented at this event; *Staća Z.* participated on behalf of WiB.

Women's Peace Activism, Đulići, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Educational program that the civic association "Anima" from Đulići and Women in Black Belgrade have been organizing since the beginning of 2016. Meetings within Women's Peace Activism are strengthening trust, mutual support and solidarity, broadening areas of women's autonomy and self-confidence. This meeting is a continuation of many years of cooperation, friendship, mutual support and mutual cooperation of "Anima" and WiB. In this reporting period we realized following activities:

October 17th

Đulići, October 17 - the thirty-second (**32nd**) cycle of workshops was attended by **16** women from: Đulići, Klisa, Grbavci, Kučić kula, Tojšić, Belgrade. From the workshops we highlight:

At the beginning of the meeting, the women talked about a **seven-day excursion through Albania** in September, which they financed themselves (about forty women) at very reasonable prices. They expressed their enthusiasm for Albania: 'There are no covered women, we really liked that. We realized that this is unimportant for women in Albania, for them it is important that they are members of the Albanian nation, that they are not interested in religion, women are dressed modernly, women are employed, go out freely and dance freely... Otherwise, the people are very kind and pleasant. The prices are much lower than in BH'. Two women (witnesses at the Women's Court) spent fifteen days, together with witnesses from Croatia, in the women's house 'Seka' on the island of Brač and have the best impressions of: female friendship, mutual support, companionship...

As for the socio-political situation in BH, the focus was on the local elections held in BH on October 6, 2024.

Being an ethnic minority in the Republika Srpska entity, almost all of them voted for ethnic parties. *They explained this by the need to influence the change of institutions by giving their vote to young candidates* - they claim that they did not vote because of the reputation of the mentioned party, but for young candidates because of the desire for young people to stay in the country..!

In the elections, they showed greater trust in women, but they were marginalized, last on the electoral lists with practically no chance of winning: young women did not pass the elections and that was because of election theft ('our candidate got 40 votes only from us, but they counted less of that number'.

They expressed deep disappointment because "the old cadres who have

no reputation have won”. They are also disappointed by the behavior of the head office from Sarajevo, ‘who only use us as a voting machine’. Moreover, they testified about corruption - buying votes, especially among the poorest. In short, these elections did not bring any changes, the winners are the “worst” who do not express “our needs”. They are particularly outraged by the defeat of the ecological party, which warned about environmental pollution and the destruction of natural resources. They spoke with indignation about the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e., the responsibility of the political elite and “their rich people” who illegally built a quarry, which caused an environmental disaster.

Below is a short essay *on civil disobedience - an appeal by Ljupka Kovačević, a feminist therapist of the Women’s Court, who held numerous workshops with women in the Anima association.*

Transitional justice - trials for crimes committed against the Bosniak population in the area of the municipality of Zvornik - women are the main actors in the fight for justice and the punitiveness of crimes

The trial before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the crime in Klisa and Đulići (1992) began in July 2024, and since then women whose relatives were killed have been the most active in organizing attendance at the trials in Sarajevo, in preparing witnesses. *Women in Black* attended the beginning of the trial in Sarajevo. *Anima* activists expressed the enormous support provided by the *VIVE žene*, women’s association from Tuzla in preparation for the testimony. Women from the association ‘*Anima*’ believe that educational programs with *Women in Black* are of great importance to them in preparing for the trial and fighting for justice - for strengthening self-confidence, dignity, solidarity...

Organized visits to the Memorial Center in Bijeli Potok – paying tribute to the victims - on the 1st of every month in memory of the persecution of the Bosniak population (June 1, 1992) - this practice began on August 1, 2024 (after the opening of the said Memorial Center):

They also organize *public history lessons about events from the past* - women tell high school students about crimes committed in the area of Zvornik, but also testify about their fight for the punitiveness of crimes. The women gathered in the association *Anima* were and remain the driving force of the fight against impunity and only thanks to their persistence, mutual support and organization, numerous court processes were initiated at the institutional level. The participation of witnesses in the Women’s Court (2025) from the area of Zvornik strengthened not only the witnesses, but also other women to speak publicly and testify. They presented the ‘calendar’ of activities in the coming period in connection with trials, but also with other types of transitional justice.

WOMEN'S PEACE MEETING

October 21th

- Leskovac and Vlasotince, October 21, 2024.

Women's peace meeting was organized by: NENA - group for peace and women's rights, Leskovac, SOS hotline for women and children, Vlasotince and Women in Black, Belgrade at SOS hotline, Vlasotince. Thirteen (13) activists participated in this meeting.

Thirteen years have passed since the death of Nevena Kostić – Nena (August 1, 1968-October 21, 2011). **Nevena Nena Kostić** became involved in activism in July 1999 during the civil resistance in Leskovac against the regime of S. Milosevic. From that moment until her death (October 21, 2011), Nena participated in the activities of numerous local initiatives: People's Parliament, Women's Center; activist of the Women in Black Network since 1999; founder and coordinator of the women's peace group "Women for Peace" (2004) in Leskovac; Nena was also one of the coordinators of the activities of the Women's Court. As a sign of respect for Nevena Kostić and the continuity of common feminist peace values and principles, an association named after Nevena Nena Kostić "NENA - Group for Peace and Women's Rights" was founded. This meeting is an act of the culture of memory and the deepest respect for what our predecessors did, among whom Nevena Kostić occupies one of the most important places, not only in Leskovac and Jablanica district, but in all of Serbia and beyond.

Homage to Nevena Kostić – Nena – at St. Nicholas cemetery in Leskovac

Trip to Vlasotince

She's left a mark on us – homage to Nevena Nena Kostić – screening of documentary made by WiB Video activism group 'Nevena Nena Kostić (37min.) – the film is dedicated to Nena's activist engagement and shows the actions in which Nena participated, her public attitudes, passion, solidarity and knowledge; memory of Nena was shared by activists, as well as Nena's friends...

After the screening of the film, we discussed several issues:

1. Why did I become an activist?

To this question, the participants stated the following:

Anti-war/peaceful/anti-militaristic/anti-fascist motives: opposing war, forced mobilization, against denial of war crimes committed in our name; against historical revisionism...

The fight for women's rights: against violence against women (domestic violence, femicide, trafficking in women...)

Education for peace: joint learning, broadening horizons, ethical principles of WiB; education in schools - workshops with students about dealing with the past, about the war in Ukraine and the Middle East ('it is easier for students to talk about those wars than about wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia');

Mutual support, female solidarity and autonomy: "We are each other's greatest support".

2. What are the biggest obstacles to resistance to the regime and peace activism - now and here?

There are many reasons:

The regime demonized activism, especially the peace activism of groups that stand for confronting the past (WiB Network); due to the denial of responsibility for the war and war crimes, people in our environment prefer to talk about the war in Ukraine and Gaza than about the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia;

Militarization of consciousness - the regime's campaigns for the reintroduction of military conscription meet with the approval of young people (the experience of workshops in schools in Vlasotince), especially the fact that boys and girls, as well as girls who want to join the army because they believe in the regime's propaganda that they will get a job and 'earn';

Regime terror: among other obstacles, the following are most often mentioned: poverty, the regime's spread of fear and intimidation, blackmail (retribution in the form of job loss), apathy and indifference ("people don't believe they can influence change"), mistrust of the opposition that in the local communities, the regime (SNS) corrupts and co-opts.

3. What kind of activism do you want to do in the future? What are your main motives?

Regime change: that the regime no longer humiliates all citizens, especially the poorest (Roma and Roma women);

Activism against war, armaments, arms exports (Serbia produces and exports arms);

Empowering women, the more active participation of women in changing themselves and society -

Solidarity for refugees - peace caravans

Dealing with the past - especially working with young people, etc.

November 19 and 20th

November 19 and 20 – Women's peace activism - a cultural-activist meeting organized by the association Anima, Đulići, Bosnia and Herzegovina and WiB, Belgrade. This meeting also is a continuation of long-term cooperation, friendship, mutual support and joint work between "Anime" and WiB. The meeting consisted of the following segments:

November 19th

November 19 – Departure to Kovačica, a place in Banat/Vojvodina, 54 km from Belgrade (6,000 inhabitants). Kovačica is the center of the Slovak national community, the center of naive art:

- **Visit to the painter Eva Husarikova** (1942) in her house - talking with her, looking at her paintings;
- **Tour of the Naive Art Gallery; Babka Galleries** - meeting with Klara Babka, gallery owner and painter;

- **Tour of Kovačica**



- **Departure to Titel (35 km from Kovačica);** Titel is a town in southern Bačka (4,500 inhabitants) on the Tisza River: city tour; visit to the Secondary Technical School '**Mileva Marić Einstein**', the birthplace of Mileva Marić Einstein, born in 1875 , died in 1948 in Switzerland; she is a famous Serbian physicist and mathematician, and the wife of Albert Einstein (1879-1955), one of the world's greatest physicists, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics (1921). Mileva's merit for that award and the entire work of A. Einstein is great.



November 20th

November 20

- **Visit to the Botanical Garden 'Jevremovac'** – the oldest botanical garden in Serbia (opened in 1874). The visit to the Botanical Garden was worthwhile because of its enormous importance, as well as the concern of women from Đulići in nurturing nature, growing herbs...
- **Violence against women – reports from the field:** Novi Pazar, Zrenjanin and Belgrade - reported by *Fahrudin Kladničanin*, Academic Association 'Forum 10' from Novi Pazar, *Ivana Gordić Perc*, Zrenjanin, *Vanja Macanović*, Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade and *Suvada Selimović*, Anima, Đulići . The discussion was held within the thematic cycle "16 days of activism against violence against women". The discussion was

held as part of the thematic cycle “16 days of activism against violence against women”. Among other things, **Suvada Selimović** said the following about violence against women in the Zvornik area, but in the whole of BH: *‘There are now few men in our immediate surroundings. There are few survivors and those who returned. Mostly our male children are there. Those surviving men see us who are “on our own” as “women without an elder”, whose independence and autonomy bothers them. They are bothered by the fact that we have not remarried, that we are mistresses of our time... For us, the killing of a woman in peacetime was something unheard of. Now it’s happening more and more often... It happened recently in Gradačac, Živinice... Women rarely report violence, and when they do and the abuser is in detention for a while, he gets out and only then does he do what he didn’t do before. That’s why women speak out - even with bruises, they don’t admit it... There is a law, but it’s not applied...’*

Skopje/Northern Macedonia, November 25, 26 and 27 – Operational meeting of Kosovo-Serbia peace activists: joint reflection (Where we are with (feminist) peace – reflection from Kosovo and Serbia) organized by the Swedish foundation **Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation/KTK**



This meeting was attended by fifteen female activists from Kosovo and Serbia, as well as one female activist from Macedonia. Ljiljana Radovanović and Staša Zajović participated on behalf of WiB. At this meeting, the activities supported by the KTK Foundation were discussed, as well as other issues:

On the socio-political context - challenges and difficulties faced by women’s groups:

The attack in Banjska (September 2023 terrorist attack by Serbian armed formations in the north of Kosovo) made activities in

Mitrovica difficult: 'The attack in Banjska destroyed everything' (*Vetone*); "After that attack, hell began for us, we lost everything - there is fear everywhere, there is no peace, I cannot sleep, I feel like a rejected minority, I have had around 30 searches by the Kosovo police" (Gordana); "The Banjska worries me the most" (*Ljuje/Lule*), etc.

Nationalist-populist politics: 'A. Kurti is a populist. He is pursuing a wrong policy in the north of Kosovo, the voice of Serbian women must be heard, but many people do not like that in society or in the state' (*Ljulje, Prishtina*); "The regime in Serbia leads a nationalist-militaristic policy, as well as impunity. Unfortunately, there is no consensus even within civil society regarding Serbia's responsibility for the war and war crimes' (*Ljilja, Staša*), etc.

The relations between Kosovo and Serbia: 'There is no peace between Serbia and Kosovo, as peace activists who work with women from Serbia and Kosovo, we are doubly burdened - internally and externally. In our work, we pay the price of working with women from Serbia' (*Zana*).

Religious extremism is a big problem: all the activists emphasized that 'there are many fronts that we have to face - nationalism, populism, fundamentalism...'

Anti-gender movements are a huge danger: both at the level of institutions (Serbia, Macedonia, and in Kosovo there are strong parliamentary initiatives of the 'Family Group'); prevent the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality (Serbia); 'Blocking the bill on sexual education in schools' (Kosovo); "Anti-gender movements work together - state, church, citizens." Unfortunately, the anti-gender movement has divided women's groups and this makes joint action and mobilization of women difficult' (Macedonia); 'There is no consensus among women's groups in Serbia about the dangers of anti-gender movements' (*Staša*); "Everything is against feminism, peace activism, we are most threatened by the anti-gender movement" (*Igo*), etc.

The participants agreed: 'We all have a consensus on the necessity of the existence of civic-oriented women's groups; space for critical reflection, education, programs for dealing with the past, street actions...'

A representative of the KTK foundation explained that after the right-wing government won in Sweden, there was a change in the political discourse - the elimination of themes for women's peace activism, which affects most of the groups funded by the KTK.

December 14 and 15th

Novi Sad, December 14 and 15 "Srđan Aleksić Days": awarding of the regional journalistic award in memory of S. Aleksić, who was killed in Trebinje/BH (1993) defending his fellow citizen of Bosniak nationality. As part of the event organized by the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina/NDNV, photo exhibitions, screenings of documentary films, book promotions, and a forum "Remembrance of Bojan Tončić" of journalists (1967-2024) were held,

in which the following participated: *Stasa Zajović*, WiB, *Tomislav Marković*, journalist and writer from Belgrade, and the discussion was moderated by: *Ladislav Tomičić*, journalist from Zagreb.



September 26th

Belgrade, September 26, November 21 and December 23 - Operational meetings in the WiB premises devoted to the preparation of the publication of selected texts by **Bojan Tončić** (1967-2024), a journalist and WiB associate.

SOLIDARITY IS OUR STRENGTH

Solidarity actions – with members of vulnerable and disadvantaged minority communities (social-class, ethnic-racial, sexual), citizens whose human rights (working, educational, cultural) are endangered.

Solidarity with War Refugees: Women in Black addressed this situation in 2013, when solidarity campaigns against racist attacks were organized that culminated at the end of 2013, and since then, Women in Black has organized a lot of activities, about which you can find information on the WiB website. Solidarity activities are interconnected, at the same time, they include more dimensions – peace, humanitarian, artistic-activist, informative ...

Direct actions – solidarity assistance in the field:

Solidarity support and assistance to Palestinian refugees from GAZA: WiB has established contacts since March 2024 with refugees who arrived from this war zone:

October 24th

October 24, Jakovo near Belgrade – *Violeta Đikanović* and *Mirko Medenica*, WiB activists, visited the Al Najjar family from Gaza and on that occasion took humanitarian aid (food, hygiene items, clothes for the baby, etc.). In addition to the aforementioned food items, baby clothes were also taken, which were provided in solidarity by the association 'Anima' from Đulići, municipality of Zvornik/BH).

November 5th

November 5, Novi Pazar – *Violeta Đikanović* and *Zinaida Marjanović* visited the Al Najjar family, who moved from Belgrade to Novi Pazar,

thanks to the hospitality of a Novi Pazar resident who gave them an apartment for use, and on that occasion brought humanitarian aid.

November 17th

November 17, Jakovo near Belgrade – *Staća Zajović and Violeta Đikanović* visited the Palestinian family Al Najjar and on that occasion brought them humanitarian aid.

December 27th

Jakovo, December 27 - *Violeta and Staća* visited the Al Najjar family, who received humanitarian aid (baby food, clothes, fruit, toys...). Solidarity aid collected by the activists of the "Oktobar" Social Center from Belgrade during the humanitarian solidarity dinner (October 8) was also taken to them.

Solidarity support and assistance to Ukrainian refugees

– since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in February 2022, WiB has established contacts with Ukrainian refugees, providing humanitarian aid and support in Vranje:

Solidarity visits to the reception center for refugees in Vranje: October 19, December 3 and 24. WiB Network activists from Leskovac and Vlasotince ((*Milka Rosić, Svetlana Šarić, Snežana Daskalović, Ivana Gorunović, Vladimir Joić*) visited the refugee center where app. **70** refugees, predominantly women and children from Ukraine are staying; humanitarian aid was distributed on this occasion.

Solidarity aid for flood victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina

- At the beginning of October 2024, a catastrophic flood occurred in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Northern Herzegovina and Central Bosnia). In addition to the natural disaster, part of the responsibility lies with the human factor, especially the illegal quarry that operated without the permission of the competent institutions. Environmental organizations in BH had been warning about the illegal quarry for years, but to no avail. Solidarity with the endangered region in BH was expressed by the entire region of the Western Balkans, which was joined by Women in Black, providing humanitarian aid, together with our friends from the CURE Foundation from Sarajevo.

Solidary support and assistance to the civil initiative "The Bridge Remains" in Belgrade

– The regime began the removal of the old Sava Bridge - the symbol of Belgrade. It is about the demolition of a bridge that has been connecting two parts of the city (new and old) for decades, and the regime has not offered reasons for removing the old bridge, nor a plan on how to organize traffic without the bridge. That's why the citizens started the initiative *The bridge remains* - permanent round-the-clock duty in the defense of the old bridge, and so far, the beginning of the removal of the bridge has been prevented several times. WiB activists joined this initiative with modest humanitarian aid, on several occasions (throughout November) they were on duty in a tent near the bridge, together with other activists of this initiative.

Solidarity support for students – Student's'blockades of all universities in Serbia (which involve around 60 faculties in Serbia)

since mid-November 2024. Students demand responsibility for the fall of the canopy at the Novi Sad railway station, which 15 killed people (November 1, 2024). They demand the identification and sanctioning of those responsible for attacks on students, an increase in the percentage of funding from the education budget. Women in Black support justified demands of students by participating in street protests, announcements, as well as modest humanitarian aid.

DISCUSSION GROUPS, LECTURES, DEBATES IN THE PREMISES OF WOMEN IN BLACK – “WEDNESDAYS AT WIB”

The practice of regular discussion groups, lectures and joint reflections on important social and political issues in the country and the world continued in this reporting period, in which seventeen (17) lectures, debates, book presentations, and film screenings were organized with the participation of more than 250 people.

September 18 – 12 activists deliberated about the summer break/vacations and about the final preparations for the meeting of the WiB Network (September 20-22).

September 25 – Discussion on preparatory activities in October (street actions, educational programs, as well as current political events...) - 12 activists participated.

October 2 - screening of the feature film ‘*Farha*’ (92 min.), directed

September 18 – 12th

September 25th

October 2th



and written by *Darin J. Sallam*, is a historical film (2021) about the experience of the Palestinian girl Farha during the Nakba. The **Nakba** is the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population (1948) at the time of the establishment of the state of Israel, through forced evictions, confiscation of land and property; destruction of their society, suppression of their culture, identity, political rights. On that occasion, 750,000 Palestinians had to leave their country, more than 500 Palestinian settlements were destroyed. At that time, 78% of the land was in Israeli hands. After the screening of the film, there was





October 9th

talk about the genocide of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip, about the aggressive colonization of the West Bank by the Israeli state, etc. The discussion was held as part of the thematic cycle *"War in the Middle East"*, the presenters were: *Lino Veljak and Miloš Urošević*, and the discussion was moderated by *Ljiljana Radovanović*, **15** people participated.

October 9, Meeting with activists of the Women in Black Network, Spain: *Concha Martin*, Madrid and *Yolanda Roullier*, Santander; a discussion about the anti-war movement in Spain (about the war in Ukraine, the Middle East), about WiB activities, Spain, about the political situation in Spain. The 33rd anniversary of Women in Black, Belgrade (October 9, 1991) was also celebrated together. **20** people attended the event.



October 16th

October 16 - Screening of the documentary films *"Don't kill"* and *"Not in my name"* as part of the thematic cycle *"War in the Middle East"*. The first documentary is the work of the author **Fetima Lianes** *"Don't Kill"*, lasting 30 minutes, it talks about the violence of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, especially about groups of young men (*"Youth from the Hill"*), with a fundamentalist orientation who commit violence against Palestinians. The film also testifies to the non-violent resistance of Israeli progressive rabbis, writers and activists for human rights. The second film, *"Not in my name"*, lasting 10 minutes, follows the story of Israeli activist **Yael Khan** against the war in Gaza... After the screening, there was talk about the geopolitical situation - an extremely dangerous, global peace, militaristic international support for the state of Israel, but also about global solidarity with the Palestinian people. Also shown was a video of a mass gathering *"Imagine peace"*, the main slogan of which was *"Security and freedom for all"* in Tel Aviv, July 2, 2024 - a joint Palestinian-Israeli protest. Among the speakers at this meeting were those who have been kidnapped, and those who have their own in Israeli prisons. Presenters: *Miloš Urošević and Mirko Medenica*, moderator **Staša Zajović**, **17** people participated.



Žene u crnom, 1991 →



October 23th

October 23, "Lemon tree" (106 min.); the feature film was shot in 2008 in a co-production between Israel, Germany and France by the Israeli director Eran Raklis. The film is about a Palestinian widow who defends her lemon orchard against the Israeli defense minister who has moved into the house next to hers and wants to demolish it. There is a twist because a friendly relationship develops between a Palestinian widow and the wife of the Israeli defense minister... The screening of the film and the discussion are held as part of the thematic cycle 'War in the Middle East'; 18 people attended the screening and discussion.



October 30th

October 30 "The Seagull" (56 min.) - documentary film about children from Dedinje/Belgrade, i.e., about the position of children belonging to the communist nomenclature. Among other things, the presenter **Tanja Petrovar**, a lawyer, spoke about this, but she referred not only to privileges, but also to numerous problems she faced. Other participants talked about their class and social position in socialist Yugoslavia. The event was organized as part of the thematic cycle '(In) visible SFRY', moderated by Staša Zajović, 16 people participated.

November 6th

November 6 "On the relationship between freedom of speech, the media, journalists and whistleblowers" - on the one hand, and governments and judicial systems, on the other. The reason for this discussion is the *Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* - which is related to the case of WikiLeaks founder **Julian Assange**, adopted at the beginning of October 2024. This Resolution is considered historic because the highest European legislative body called the proceedings against Assange "political" and thereby drew attention to the controversial relationship between political elites and the judiciary. The topic was extended to the position of independent media in Serbia - repression, persecution, regime demonization. The keynote speaker was **Ivana Stevanović**, director of the "**Slavko Ćuruvija**" Foundation, moderator **Nastasja Radović**.

After that, other issues were raised:

The first "ad hoc" topic concerned: the regime's repression of non-



Žene u crnom, 1991 →

violent demonstrators in Novi Sad (November 3) after the fall of the canopy and the death of 15 people (November 1). Those present agree that it is about regime terror and its organized gangs, etc.

The second 'ad hoc' topic concerned the already clear results of the presidential elections in the USA: *Donald Trump: are we afraid of this outcome and what can it bring on the international level?* Those present expressed enormous concern about the strengthening of militarism, populism, the war against migrants, the strengthening of anti-gender movements, even the suspension of human rights... 18 people participated.



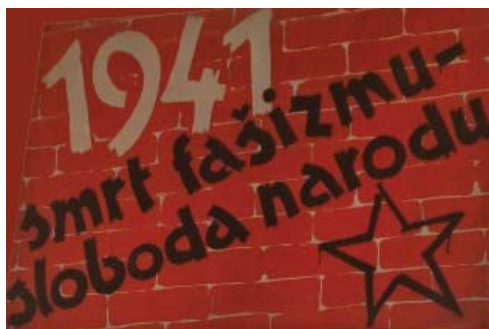
November 13th

November 13th "Petitions in SFRY – for basic rights and changes, and above ideological differences". Speaker **Vesna Pešić**, sociologist and politician, participant in many events in society and politics; it was about launching petitions by various socially and anti-regime-oriented groups in relation to events that the initiators considered challenging, where human rights were violated: especially the right to freedom of expression. Pešić also spoke about other initiatives of the 80s in Yugoslavia: *Committee for the Protection of Artistic Freedom, the Committee for the Defense of Freedom of Thought and Expression, the Free University*, as well as the repression of the socialist state against dissidents. 14 people participated in the discussion held within the thematic cycle '(In)visible SFFY'.



field” – Novi Pazar, Zrenjanin, Belgrade, Đulići/BH – reported by: Fahrudin Kladničanin, Academic community ‘Forum 10’ from Novi Pazar, Ivana Gordić Perc, Zrenjanin and Vanja Macanović, Autonomous Women’s Center, Belgrade and Suvada Selimović, association ‘Anima’, Đulići. They presented their research, findings and experiences on the topic of violence against women in their communities or at the level of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The discussion took place within the thematic cycle “16 days of activism against violence against women”, 15 people participated.

November 27th



November 27 – Screening of **Daniela Steinfeld’s** documentary “Heal Me” (as part of the cycle “16 days of activism against violence against women”). The film conveys intimate testimonies of victims and perpetrators of sexual violence with original material, recorded during research into the process of overcoming sexual trauma. Actress Daniela Steinfeld, after the screening of this film at a festival in Serbia, filed a lawsuit against actor Branislav Lečić for rape. The court found that there was not enough evidence for Lečić’s indictment... Steinfeld was already living in New York, as she’d left Serbia earlier, after the sexual violence she talks about in the film. After the screening of the film, the 4 people present discussed the film and their experiences, which they consider to be sexual abuse.

November 29th

November 29 – “Republic Day – Our Day” - Women in Black, in cooperation with anti-fascist activists and cultural workers, organized an evening among friends and an event on the occasion of the 81st year of AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia) on Republic Day. The speaker was Aleksandar Kraus, *Alliance of Antifascists of Serbia*. After that, a cultural and emotional act “Yugoslavia in our hearts - a positive socialist experience” was organized - exchange of objects, photos, symbols, scenes, videos with favorite songs, episodes from everyday life in SFR Yugoslavia, singing partisan songs, etc. Thirty (30) people participated in this event.

December 4th



December 4 „NEsavršENE“ (IMPERFECT) – presentation of the publication by the author Lidija Vasiljević, published by Agora, Novi Sad (2024). The book presents a psychological, feminist and political analysis of the traditionalist patriarchal view and treatment of the normality of women, through the deconstruction of myths about women’s diseases, and represents a unique contribution to this field in the literature written in our language. This book deconstructs the strategies of the pathologization of women in the framework of psychiatry and psychotherapy as well as in society itself, through an analysis of the abundance of literature, practices and examples from the author’s own psychotherapy experience. Introduction: Lidija Vasiljević; the event is organized as part of the thematic cycle “16 days of activism against violence against women” with the participation of 16 people.

December 11th

December 11 “What does Trump’s victory in the US elections mean?” – *Global and regional effects of Trump’s victory; Serbia and the American elections; About the perception of Trump’s victory in Serbia,*

etc. Speakers: **Lino Veljak**, philosopher, Zagreb; **Sonja Biserko**, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia; **Zoran Vuletić**, Civic Democratic Forum; **Đorđe Pavićević**, Faculty of Political Sciences, deputy of the Green Left Front/ZLF and **Nenad M. Kostić**, chemist and academic. The keynote speakers expressed great concern with Trump's victory, we cite just a few statements:

– *“Trump relativizes authoritarian regimes in the world and weakens the ties of the USA with the rest of the West... It is said that he did not start any war: and he encouraged Putin during his first term, and it will probably be the same in the second - with his ignorance and superficiality...”* (Vuletić)

– *“Trump is the catalyst of a trend within the US itself:” The Democratic Party/DS did not pay enough attention to social problems. DS also made a mistake by focusing too much on identity politics. Trump came in there and raised the working class with populism”* (Biserko).

– *“The American white working class has lost confidence in the political correctness of the Democrats.” But also, in the possibility that their support will ensure that they pay their bills and not become homeless... That's why they turned to populist promises, similar to the case of Brexit.”* (Veljak)

– *“Trump's is an anti-system story. It is a big deception. It is not different from neoliberalism, and it is presented as anti-system...”* (Pavićević)

– *“Trump did not win as a person - because it is clear that he is incompetent.” This was the downfall of the Democratic Party. Growth in the USA can no longer provide benefits to the poor because all distribution - also due to tax policy - goes to the rich’* (Kostić).

As for the future effects of Trump's second mandate on the world and especially on our region and Serbia, where the majority support Trump, it is about the misconceptions of Serbian politics and citizenship that are already being cultivated in Serbia in connection with Trump's victory. When it comes to the expectations of politicians, the participants believe that it primarily refers to “buying time in connection with Kosovo”, etc. **18** people attended the debate.

December 18th

December 18 “AFŽ (Women's Anti-Fascist Front) through memory - what does it tell us about the women's struggle against fascism today” Zorica Skakun, presented her master's thesis on the Women's Anti-Fascist Front/AFŽ, founded during the war (1942) which was abolished by the decision of the Communist Party (1952) and turned into a bureaucratized conservative Conference for Women's Social Activity - a transmission of the ruling Communist Party, etc. These questions cause numerous controversies among feminists, who already organized themselves outside of all official frameworks in the 70s. Below is an 'ad hoc' topic - the fall of the regime in Syria. Since Skakun worked in Syria (Oxfam): ‘Everything will depend on global relations, the fate of Syria will be transferred to the geopolitical level, the entire region is already physically divided but also “constantly bursting like a wound of the whole world”, said Skakun. The debate was attended by **11** people.

December 25 “Femicide in Juarez” (12 min.); a documentary film about femicide in the city of Juarez/Juarez, Mexico, on the border with the USA, as well as the activities of Women in Black in Mexico against the crime of femicide. The video activism group Women in Black translated and subtitled the film. After the screening, there was talk about femicide as a gender-based, but also a social-class crime against women. In the second part of the circle, student uprisings in Belgrade and throughout Serbia were discussed, **13** people participated.

(Integral reports you can find on WIB website)

PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

In this reporting period, we published the following publications:

Women’s Peace Agenda 2025 – is dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. The genocide in Srebrenica is the biggest war crime committed after World War II in Europe. The *Agenda* briefly presents the facts related to the siege (1992), the declaration of a ‘UN protected zone’ (1993), up to the mass killing of the population of Srebrenica by Serbian armed formations (1995). The *Agenda* includes a short ‘list’ of verdicts at the Hague Tribunal, as well as the text of the UN Resolution on the Srebrenica genocide (May 23, 2024), which declared July 11 as the International Day of Remembrance of the Srebrenica genocide. The *Agenda* presents the activities of Women in Black and related activist collectives related to Srebrenica: street actions, art-activist peace initiatives, campaigns, women’s solidarity actions, etc. The photos present the WiB street actions related to Srebrenica. *Women’s Peace Agenda 2025* - is dedicated to ‘the brave women of Srebrenica who turned their deepest vulnerability, irreparable losses, unspeakable pain and tragedy into peace activism, into a fight for peace, truth and justice’. The *Agenda* has **158** pages; edited by: Staša Zajović, collaborators: Ljiljana Radovanović, Miloš Urošević and Violeta Đikanović; design and technical arrangement: Studio Čavka, photos Marija Janković and Srđan Veljović.



Peace calendar 2025 – photos from WiB street actions in 2024 were taken by: *Srđan Veljović* and *Marija Janković*; the calendar has **26** pages; the layout and design were done by Studio Čavka.

CAMPAIGNS, APPEALS

In addition to the above initiatives in this reporting period, we have also initiated or actively participated in numerous campaigns, first of all in relation to requests for dealing with the past - responsibility for war crimes, violence against women, against repression of political opponents; in relation with the refugees, etc.

The state has been silent for twenty years! Expose the soldier killers! – in the announcement on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the murder of a guard in Topčider (October 5, 2004 - October 5, 2024), WiB reminds that two soldiers-members of the Guards Brigade, **Dražen Milovanović and Dragan Jakovljević**, WiB reminds that two soldiers-members of the Guards Brigade, **Dražen Milovanović and Dragan Jakovljević**, were killed while on guard duty on October 5, 2004, in the area of the Topčider barracks in the immediate vicinity of the “Karaš” military facility, the state has not publicly acknowledged even the possibility that the soldiers had seen before their death the then most wanted fugitive from The Hague, Ratko Mladić, a convicted war criminal, (June 8, 2021). The state has been silent for twenty years. For twenty years, the state insults the dignity of the victims, deepens the immense suffering and pain of the families of guardsmen, who persevere and bravely fight for justice. We support them in their fight because impunity is a blow to the victims, their families. Impunity also deepens the moral decay of the whole society’.

On this occasion we demand that the top of the state (primarily from the ministries of police, defense and justice): Immediately stop the obstruction of the investigation into the murder of **Dragan Jakovljević and Dražen Milovanović**; announce the real truth about the murder of the soldiers, as well as about the hiding of Ratko Mladić in the facilities of the Serbian Army. This is the only way for Serbia to move away from the war past and the crimes committed in its name; that the competent institutions sanction all the commanders and perpetrators of crimes in Topčider and that justice be provided for the victims’ families!’.

Stop the war in the Middle East! – It has been one year since the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians, which was the reason for the genocidal offensive of the criminal Netanyahu regime in Gaza. It is a continuation of decades of Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestine. October 7 is a tragic event for all of humanity, for all people in the Middle East, primarily for Palestinian and Israeli society’ it is stated in the announcement of October 6, 2024). The announcement also states:

- **We strongly condemn the genocide of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli armed forces;**
- **We demand the suspension of military operations by all armed formations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as in Lebanon;**
- **We demand the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, ending the siege and isolation of Gaza, free delivery of humanitarian aid and medical services to the Palestinian population;**
- **We demand an end to the Israeli occupation and violence in the West Bank.**

On this occasion we expressed once more:

- **Solidarity with the civilian population living through the inferno of war in the Middle East;**
- **Alliance with women in Israel and Palestine who, even now, in the midst of war and violence, are building relations of peace and coexistence;**
- **Support and admiration for Women in Black and other peace organizations in Israel who have been acting non-violently against the nationalist-militaristic policies of their government for decades.**

We will never forget the crimes in Vukovar! - in a statement on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the crimes in Vukovar (Nov.18, 1991-Nov. 18, 2024) WiBreiterated the request to the competent institutions of the State of Serbia to:

- Establish the responsibility of the leadership of former Yugoslav Popular Army for the armed attack on Croatia and to initiate legal proceedings for the crime of uricide in Vukovar;
- Establish the full truth about the missing by opening the archives of the Serbian Armed Forces and discovering the graves of Croatian victims in Serbia;
- initiate court proceedings for the establishment of camps and for the killing and torture of Croatian civilians and soldiers in camps in Stajičevo, Begejci, Sremska Mitrovica, Aleksinac, Niš and Belgrade;
- Acknowledge the request of Women in Black and the Art Clinic, signed by more than 30 civil society organizations, to erect memorial plaques at camps in Stajičevo and society organizations, to erect memorial plaques at camps in Stajičevo and Begejci and to support other forms of symbolic reparations to victims and their families;
- Initiate a legal ban on glorification and rehabilitation of war crimes convicts committed in Vukovar and all other places" (WiB statement November, 17).

Announcement regarding the refusal to issue a visa to Hoda Taheri – ‘We strongly condemn the action of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, who refused to issue a visa to the Iranian director Hoda Taheri. Iranian director Hoda Taheri was supposed to come to Serbia and be a guest of the Author’s Film Festival (FAF), which will be held in Belgrade for the thirtieth time in November 2024,’ reads the announcement (November 22) by *Women in Black and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia*.

Her German-produced film ‘Mother is a Born Sinner’ will be screened at FAF, a film that criticizes the fundamentalist regime in Iran, which is known for its gross violations of human rights, especially women’s rights. By refusing to issue a visa, Serbia sided with the Iranian autocratic regime,’ the statement emphasized.

Against the arrest of Radivoj Jovović - Women in Black strongly condemned the arrest of the Provincial MP of the *Movement of Free Citizens*, Radivoj Jovović, who received three months of house arrest after he was arrested on Thursday for an alleged attack on an official (November 3, 2024). Although the video shows that Jovović is not attacking the police, criminal proceedings have been initiated against him. Radivoj Jovović is one of those brave citizens who are fighting for justice for the victims of the murder of innocent people at the Railway Station in Novi Sad. The regime in Serbia has entered the phase of dealing with political dissidents in which it does not choose means, both for their political discrediting and for their physical removal from the field of political struggle. Supporting the non-violent protests of citizens in Serbia, who demand justice for the victims of the railway station in Novi Sad, who point to corruption and demand the punishment of those responsible, we once again express our solidarity and support with all the victims of the current regime,’ *WiB statement of December 6, 2024*.

Support student protests!“We express our full support for the student protests that demand from the representatives of the current regime in Serbia the fulfillment of all the set demands. We join those requests, considering them fully justified.

*We see the latest address of the current President of the Republic A. Vučić as the most common populist throwing dust in the eyes of the public, aimed at diverting attention from the increasingly obvious connection between organized crime and the government. This is more than obvious in the activities of the regime’s media. They persistently marginalize the importance of student protests and demonize their participants and accuse the West of destroying Serbia. Student protests are just one of the protests that have been articulated recently, drawing attention to the catastrophic state of affairs in the country. There is no rule of law in Serbia, but the rule of only one party, the Serbian Progressive Party headed by an undisputed leader, which has been **continuously working in the service of organized crime since coming to power.***

As part of the civil society, we demand the responsibility of those responsible, we demand punishment for the perpetrators and justice for the victims. Citizens in Serbia can no longer be held hostage by a regime that derives its legitimacy from the so-called electoral will of the majority, when we know that it was severely trampled on, because the election conditions were anything but fair.

We will continue to be part of the Stop Serbia! We hope that these protests will at some point draw the attention of the international public to stop supporting the regime in Serbia, and that it will collapse on its own when it loses the majority support of the Serbian society," *emphasized the statement (December 12, 2024) Woman in Black and Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia.*

Initiative for naming a street in Belgrade after Dejan Nebrigić - December 29th, 2024, 25 years have passed since the death of Dejan Nebrigić (1970-1999), gay activists, pacifists and antifascists. Dejan was killed in 1999. As a declared anti-fascist, anti-nationalist and antimilitarist, he refused military obligation, and was publicly reproved for being a homosexual, which at the time was treated as a disease for which he was permanently released from military duties. In early 1992, he joined Women in Black, and gave a very significant contribution to the anti-militarist and feminist engagement of Women in Black. He participated in launching the Network of Conscientious Objectors. We demand that "one of many streets in Belgrade be named after Dejan Nebrigić, one of the first fighters for human rights of LGBT people, feminists, antifascists and antimilitarists". The relevant institutions have not yet answered this many-year request.

Report prepared by:

*Staša Zajović; in cooperation with: Ljiljana Spasić,
Miloš Urošević, Milka Rosić, Nastasja Radović,
Nataša Milanović, Stanislava Lazarević,
Violeta Đikanović and Zinaida Marjanović.*

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