



Centre for Nonviolent Action
Sarajevo | Belgrade

Conference: Reconciling Histories!?

Sarajevo 15-17th May 2018



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Introduction

The “Reconciling Histories!?” Conference, organised by the Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo/ Belgrade, was held in Sarajevo from 15 to 17 May, with a one-day study visit to Zavidovići on 16 May. The “Reconciling Histories!?” Conference brought together peace and human rights activists, peace work researchers, reporters and historians from various countries with war and post war experience, ranging from India and Sri Lanka, the Balkans, Ukraine and Georgia, all the way to Western Europe. The choice of peace and human rights activists, peace work researchers, reporters and historians was not haphazard. Rather, it reflected an identified need for linking the fragmented work in this area, or at least bringing its actors into dialogue, because everyone can give significant contribution in their own way to building, or to dismantling peace. That is the task of social reconciliation, a task for broad and diverse social groups that is certainly one of the foundations for a successful reconciliation process.

The conference was divided into six sessions, with a field trip to Zavidovići where we met with war veterans of the Army of BiH, the Army of Republika Srpska and the Croatian Defence Council that CNA has been cooperating with in peacebuilding activities for years. On the first day of the conference (15 May), we discussed the issue of justice and the relationship between justice and history. The keynote speaker was Edin Ramulić, a veteran and activist who has worked with justice institutions in BiH prosecuting war crimes, and who is himself a survivor of a Prijedor detention camp. In the second part of the morning sessions, we talked about history and justice, using the fishbowl method, with introductory remarks given by Edin Ramulić, Ponnampalam Narasingham, Marina Elbakidze, Albulena Karaga and Budimir Ivanišević. In the afternoon sessions of the first day of the conference, we discussed

nonviolence, with introductory input from Diana Francis, and we tackled the issue of taboos in our plenary discussion.

On the second day of the conference (16 May), we visited Zavidovići where, together with war veterans from the area, we went to sites of atrocities, sites of battles and a location that had until recently been an unmarked site of atrocity. We were joined by veterans Amir Mujkić, Asim Parlić and Enes Bajrić (Army of BiH), Spasoje Kulaga and Đoko Pupčević (Army of Republika Srpska) and Mirko Zečević Tadić (Croat Defence Council). We chose Zavidovići because we recognised it as a positive example of peacebuilding with a special contribution given by war veterans to the process. In Zavidovići, we visited Site 715, known as the “Hill of Death”, where heavy fighting was waged during the war, and which the war veterans had visited together a number of times before, a site that the warring sides recognise as a joint site of atrocity. We also visited the Central Memorial in downtown Zavidovići, as well as the “13th kilometre”, a site visited by war veterans last year, under CNA’s organisation, when they called for this unmarked site of atrocity to be properly marked, which was subsequently done. At the end of the study visit, we left room for questions and reflections from participants and war veterans.

On the third day of the conference (17 May), we devoted time in the morning session for reflections, questions and comments related to our study visit to Zavidovići, and the resource person was a member of CNA and war veteran Adnan Hasanebegović. Ponnampalam Narasingham and Nenad Vukosavljević were keynote speakers for the session on reconciliation, and Martina Fisher was the keynote speaker for the afternoon session on peacebuilding. The final session was devoted to work in small groups as a way to collect impressions about the conference and lessons learned.

The title of the conference contains an exclamation mark and a questions mark, which was meant to convey that we were in a process of exploration, that we do not have ready lessons to impart. Our aim was to invite and challenge people to exchange, cooperate and give critiques. The conference also provided people from different professional fields, who have worked on peacebuilding for years in different contexts, with an opportunity to think, reflect and re-examine. It is particularly important that the participants at the conference came from different contexts and (post)war societies with diverse and varied experience in peacebuilding. Another important characteristic was related to the passage of time, so it was very interesting to discuss issues of justice, nonviolence, reconciliation, etc. from the perspective of, for instance, Ukraine, with its very recent armed conflict, compared to somewhere like Sri Lanka where the conflict ended a decade ago.

** We apologize possible grammatical errors contained in this documentation, as well as possible other types of errors.*



Workshop: Justice

15th May 2018



Audio file

Input: Edin Ramulić

Facilitation: Natascha Zupan

Note: Audio recording available only in BHS due to technical problems during recording.

Guiding questions:

What are the main lessons learned from the process of searching for justice after the wars in the Balkans?

What are/were main challenges and taboos?

What were your hopes 20 years ago, compared to nowadays?

To what extent has it contributed to peace and reconciliation?

“What does justice mean to me? That those who are responsible be punished; that the remains of all victims are found; that the local community comes to understand that this act is to be condemned and that we should all feel ashamed, no matter which role we had when the crimes were committed.”

When it comes to international justice mechanisms, we were “lucky” that our war happened after the world was no longer divided into blocs, when international justice mechanisms became feasible:

- This contributed to the development of law in prosecuting war criminals.
- We got new capacities in the region - courts that were adapted to new legal frameworks (new elements of Anglo-Saxon law were introduced - the institute of cross-examination and other improvements in proving criminal responsibility, securing justice for victims, as well as a just defence for suspects).
- We have the Hague Tribunal to thank for the fact that countries of the former Yugoslavia are seriously prosecuting war crimes.

Problems of the Tribunal:

- Non-cooperation of countries in the region – inability to gather evidence
- Inaccessible witnesses

A number of serious errors:

- No uniform sentencing policy, which was later transferred as a practice to national courts.
- The victims appearing before the Tribunal as witnesses are put in a position where they form “part” of the evidence – the capacities of the courts were invested in providing a fair trial for the perpetrators, while the witnesses, especially victims who were testifying, were reduced to the task of telling their story and received only short-term support that would end once they left the courtroom.
- This practice originated at the Tribunal, but was then picked up by domestic courts, which did not establish a procedure for paying reparations in war crimes cases, or compensation for material and non-material damages to witnesses.
- Victims who testify during the trial find out about its outcome through the media, instead of being informed about it by the court.



Lessons:

- Left to their own devices, post-war societies are unable to establish mechanisms to seriously deal with retributive justice and prosecute war crimes. In the case of BiH, it was the international factor that made this possible.
- Expectations of courts are too high - there were expectations that the Tribunal would resolve all the problems created as a result of the wars, that it would bring about the desired and expected reconciliation between people and establish the kind of society we had before the wars.
- The problem of relevance of trials in absentia and their judgements against persons who were unable to defend themselves (a large number of trials in Croatia, but also at some cantonal courts in BiH).
- It was only ten years after the Tribunal started operating that the capacities of national courts were being strengthened and the laws aligned. In some places, this was done directly – the Court of BiH in Sarajevo was established under international influence, of the High Representative and various foreign embassies, with international prosecutors and judges working directly at the court. And indirectly - when the justice systems in Serbia and Croatia were, to a certain extent, aligned in their capacities to international standards.
- Despite the widespread view that war crimes should be prosecuted, there is resistance from various groups – public and visible – which is most often encountered from government institutions, or rather, those in power in the relevant countries. There is also tacit resistance, however – non-cooperation, refusal to extradite perpetrators, refusal to hand over documents and various ways of undermining a trial (by political representatives, NGOs and religious groups and those who have a direct interest in making sure the trial never happens). All the sides participating in the war had a generally negative view of the trials, and this was then transformed mostly into pressure on witnesses, especially victims who were testifying.
- Politicians in all of the countries tried to use the trials, to a greater or lesser extent, in order to promote their own values, which were questionable. They tried to use the trials to directly discredit their political opponents, which had a very negative effect on how the trials were seen by the general public, especially in local communities where a larger number of war crimes or violations of the laws and customs of war were committed.
- In some cases, the accused were presidents of states or members of institutions important for the countries in the region. The lack of vetting led to the courts often being the sources of public shock. The courts themselves were not obliged to inform the public or engage in outreach. However, the information offices of the courts contributed to this of their own accord – one of the objectives cited on an earlier version of the Tribunal's website was that the trials would lead to reconciliation in local communities.
- There was a lack of media support due to the remoteness of the Tribunal: there were times, during the trials, that not a single permanent correspondent from BiH was posted to the Tribunal in order to inform the public about what was going on over there. The Tribunal was quite late in launching its Outreach programme in an attempt to familiarise local communities with its work, and it was not particularly effectual. On the other hand, very few of the media keep up with the developments at the courtroom in Sarajevo, so remoteness cannot be used as an excuse for the lack of interest on the part of the media.
- A much bigger problem is that the trials elicit little interest among associations of victims and injured parties, who should have the most interest in the trials, not least because of the useful information they could glean (about how to subsequently litigate for damages; find out details about how their loved ones perished). The reporting mainly focuses on sensationalism from the courtroom, or the public is informed once there is a judgement, when it is too late to familiarise the public with the details of the trial. The result is that public opinion is shaped based on the judgement.

Consequences:

- Well-developed capacities (Court of BiH, district and cantonal courts) - far more cases were

tried in national courts, in BiH for instance, than the Tribunal would have been able to handle during its mandate.

- The Croatian justice system also dealt with a significant number of cases, but the focus was more on providing people with some form of reparations or damages and less on prosecuting potentially the most culpable war criminals.

- There was a good period in Serbia while the cases were heard by the Special Court in Belgrade, but often the Supreme Court would later undermine the successes of the Special Court in the appeals procedure. There were abuses where the mechanism was used to try to apprehend some famous faces from neighbouring countries, individuals whose prosecution in Serbia was not warranted, which again created a negative perception in the region.

- Negative perceptions are also created, under political influence, by some self-proclaimed representatives of victims' associations. No real surveys are conducted, we have no idea how those who were victims in a case, whether they suffered direct abuse or lost a family member, feel about the trial. Still, we often hear from their so-called representatives who express political views.

- Justice is relative, especially in the context of sentencing, or the institute of early release.

- It is hard to define what justice means for victims, for the injured parties. A life sentence is seen as the only adequate punishment. Even a 40-year sentence is met with dissatisfaction. It is very hard to determine what the victims would see as justice, in the sense of something that the courts could provide.

- The plea bargain agreement at the Tribunal had potential, but it had almost no effect on people in local communities, they had no idea what was going on. Media outlets do not publish confessions, though the judgement states that "his words of remorse will contribute to reconciliation" in the local community. Also, the court is obliged to inform the victims about a plea bargain, but they have no possibility of influencing the remainder of such procedures. There is no evidence of any further impact of plea bargain agreements, apart from mitigated sentences for the perpetrators. And yet, this had great potential in terms of justice mechanisms contributing to reconciliation - we are still at the stage of accepting the guilt of "our own" people who wronged those others.

Relationship between formal justice and reconciliation? Would you care to entertain the idea of reconciliation dialogue without preconditions?

- Dialogue is impossible between politicians of opposing politics, and they should be avoided from the beginning. Dialogue takes place through various regional and domestic organisations (organisations of victims from different sides) in the region, especially in BiH where it is necessary for normal day-to-day life in local communities. There were dozens of dialogue sessions in Prijedor, but funds are lacking, so various projects contributed funds to these activities. When this becomes a commonplace activity, it will also become a matter of policy.

- Preventing future conflicts is more important than everything else being done for economic growth and development.

What is needed is trying to make sense of a loss (it is often shown in nationalistic ways). What can be done?

- Politicians, religious communities, etc. assign meaning. Various rights are available, but discrimination has been created – further injustice has been imposed on the victims and for all the wrong reasons, in order to mobilise future voters (political corruption). We should think about what we will leave to future generations – memorials, historical archives. States should secure funding to prevent future violence.

How to go beyond the project framework and create a critical mass for all the future to come?

- Put an end to political scavenging, stop this kind of approach and speech, and spreading of hatred. That would make healthy dialogue possible.

How can we improve the work of courts? Which kind of justice is there for the victims? Having in mind all the wars raging in the world and with no acknowledgement of suffering ("unfinished wars")?

- A smaller number of victims managed to have their day in court, but the hope that this exists as a possibility is important, and conversely, for the perpetrators, the fear that they will be brought to face justice one day.
- A strategy was adopted, but its recommendations were not implemented and were not assigned to people capable of doing the job.

Fishbowl: Justice & history

*Starting fishbowl session with: **Edin Ramulić, Ponnampalam Narasingham, Marina Elbakidze, Albulena Karaga, Budimir Ivanišević***

Facilitation: Ivana Franović

Guiding topics and questions:

Reflections about input.

How does the process of retributive justice relate to collective victimhood?

How is it reflected in historical interpretations?

Does the retributive justice model (re)create a sense of purpose for people who feel as war victims?

Does it correct the sources which have led to hatred and violence? Does it guarantee non-recurrence?

How should one deal with different layers of violence (e.g. collective revenge; violence within communities to silence resisting voices or cultural violence such as caste system)?



Highlights:

- If we want a real progress, war crimes prosecution was not efficient (vetting, lustrations, reparations are all very important step), as well as truth telling initiatives. REKOM was launched 10 years ago, and after a consultation process, we are advocating for the political support for practical use of facts established by the courts.
- ICTY has a role in terms of established facts that should be used by future generations and all those interested in what had happened. As for now, historical interpretations in textbooks are horrible and facts presented in a very biased way.
- Despite controversial verdicts, in general we have to be positive about the work of Tribunal.
- Use of history in Georgian/Abkhaz context - 1991/92-armed conflict in regions Georgia South, Ossetia and Abkhazia (recognized as independent by Russia, not in control of Georgian government): It is important to understand it as political, economic, psychological and moral issue. What is justice in our societies? How do we understand justice in different contexts? Georgians think of Abkhazia as historically their own, so justice would be that Abkhazia is again a part of Georgia. Abkhazians believe that they are historically independent. For them, justice would be to be recognised as an independent state. For Georgians, Abkhazia is occupied by Russia, for Abkhazians, Russians are partners. How to talk about justice with these parties when they have very different visions and understandings? How can we transform this conflict?
- Problem of movement (Abkhazians must have “proper” documents in order to move; the same is with Georgian minority in Abkhazia). There is problem with education also - people from Abkhazia cannot travel anywhere except to Russia for higher education. In Georgia there is not much talk on the level of society about these issues, only civic organisations think about it.
- Acknowledgement is needed: what happened?
- History is used as a tool, in arguments “who is right/wrong” - one fact and two opposite interpretations. There is an initiative “Past to the Peace” - archival project - collecting information on conflict in all sides and by all (audio, video stories, newspapers, official documents, personal archives) - “Georgian-Abkhazian archive”.
- Retributive justice promised individualisation of guilt. Battles were transferred into courthouse
- selective use of information from courts were used to solidify their narratives (dominant collective narrative), not to deconstruct them.
- Macedonia: only one person is charged for war crimes, and being received as a national hero, now a parliament member.
- Justice would be acknowledgement of pain, injustice that was done, structural violence and previous privilege. Without this acknowledgement victims won’t hear about the suffering of others.
- Mechanisms of restorative justice are more linked to peacebuilding.
- Yesterday 25 Palestinians lost their lives in their struggle for justice.
- Justice is important, but what kind, and whose justice we are looking for? How could we engage in justice when government is not accountable by the proposition of transitional justice that is introduced? We are looking for justice for everyone, but the government has to acknowledge what has happened.
- Communities in fight are victims, but they also become perpetrators. And how to do justice here?
- The war in BiH never ended, it’s just that it is no longer waged by soldiers. National narratives are very exclusive, based on myths and patriotism. Only retributive justice mechanisms were able to bring into question national narratives. Retributive justice also made progress in, for example, expanding freedom of movement. Until they were arrested, these people prevented us from visiting our homes and returning to them. However, the least number of demands have to do with things that could lead to reconciliation in the Balkans. It is easier to initiate dialogue among ordinary people, and this did happen more often than with commissions, bodies, etc.
- I’ve met twice as many people selling t-shirts with the faces of war criminals than people wearing them. This means that there are more people trying to make money off of this.
- How should we deal with what people often see as official, “normal” history’s attack on their memories? There is an important connection between official narratives and memories.

- We cannot forget everything, start with blank paper. How to find right forms and words to say, “I’m sorry”, and how to prepare the other side to be ready to accept these sorry feelings?
- There is a difference in dealing with justice in democratic and semi-democratic setting, and as a third, situation of undeclared war. There are histories that were not documented.
- Dominant narratives are way to not confront the question “How to reconcile, make sense of your loss?” And without the acknowledgement of your own pain, it’s hard to see the suffering of others.
- It seems that preservation of identity is more important than acknowledgment of suffering of all people.
- People don’t know about the others’ narrative since they are often completely desparate, sometimes even chronically. We need to create the space for personal stories. Codification of the narrative often means preparation for the next war. Personal stories carry a potential for re-humanisation.
- Differentiate confessions of crimes, for example, and punishment. Threat of a punishment create obstacles for establishing facts.
- We are not good in ending war, establishing justice etc. Have we’ve been good in ending war in Germany? Struggling with this term “transitional justice”, and hopefully will manage to change the term into “legal justice”. Time dimension is much more handleable by Dealing with the Past then with Transitional Justice (or all these perspectives we talked about will be left out).
- Opting for more democracy leads to more conflict - but we have to think the way of dealing with this conflict in a constructive way.
- Many memories are mediated, they are not authentic.



Workshop: Nonviolence

15th May 2018



Audio file

Input: Diana Francis

Facilitation: Nenad Vukosavljević

Guiding questions:

What is your understanding of nonviolence? Why try to pursue nonviolence?

What is your notion of justice, and how is it related to your understanding of nonviolence? Where are the limits of nonviolence?

Must people reconcile after war?

How could our past contribute to reconciliation?

“There is huge power in nonviolence: in harmlessness and vulnerability. Unarmed, vulnerable power is extremely disarming.”

- Nonviolence is both about understanding how life works and a very profound moral-ethical-inner commitment. It's about action, responsibility, taking the source of power that goes with nonviolence and using it. It means much more than not hitting/shouting/abusing/killing; it's precisely about justice, unconditional respect for every single person. At the same time, it's about trying to see that there is justice, there is fairness, there is a human equality in the world: it's a commitment.

- There's a South African greeting, "I see you" - it's about recognition, understanding that the other person is everything that humanity is. It's a big ask, in relation to terrible things that people go through.

- Fundamental to nonviolence is that truth is in there, you can't have justice without the truth. Truths are multiple and very hard to find even within yourself, let alone with other people, and agree about.

- There are two forms of power: dominatory and cooperative power. Dominatory power has ultimate culmination in physical violence and war. Military violence is the instrument of other forms of violence (economic injustice, lack of human rights), emblem of dominatory power, pinnacle of patriarchal masculinity - the ultimate hero is the war hero. But there is another kind of power that we all can participate in - in nonviolent cooperative action everybody has a place. It's about inclusive, human power to work together, without harming, for the common good. How do you do it?

- Nonviolence isn't magic, humans are vulnerable, security is an illusion, but we can make each other more secure. The massive myth about war and its glorification is that „there is a just cause“- there are no just wars, they are wars of self-interest - „global influence“, „resources“. “It was a last resort“, „we couldn't have done anything else“- mostly we didn't even try. War is very often the easiest, the most automatic resort, particularly if you think it's in your interest. The other part of the myth – the outcomes, „the good things“ you said you'd achieve - it's hard to see it. We achieved endless smashing of cities, burning the people, mass migration, loss of livelihoods, economic devastation... WWII - how was that a good thing? Setting a world alight, killing 60 million people - how is that a success for humanity? It didn't even prevent the holocaust.

- Compared to this, small acts of resistance were few, but they were possible and, on that scale effective. If we actually thought differently, there would be ways of resisting. Nonviolent resistance and change, on average, are much more effective than violent ones.

- Justice is about fairness, recognition of the rights and the needs, honouring of each person, creating just and equitable/respectful relationships. In practice it often means addressing both past and present injustices, inequities, disrespects. Dealing with the Past will depend on and focus on discovering what has happened, identifying the truths, legal and social processes. It matters much to people who lost those close to them, to feel that has been acknowledged, identified, that we know what happened and somebody is being held to account.

- Those who suffered from past events also need financial, social, psychological support. That applies to people who have been involved in fighting, not just the civilians. A criminal justice process is a social marker on what has been tolerated and what is not and gives some kind of closure to those related as victims. But they're not the whole story.

- The truth-telling goes much wider and in part means looking at yourself, thinking what I was doing to help prevent it happening. Not collective guilt, but collective responsibility for what my country has done in the past, since it's not over. We have to be careful when we easily assign guilt.

- We forget the dead in our assessment of war, once it's over, but they are not gone, and should not be forgotten. Memorialising is important to achieve. It honours people's individual and collective experiences for what they are, subjective things but also a reality of what was felt.

- Punishment has a function of account holding and putting up a marker. It is a way, for a person who did something, to confront reality, to be confronted with the victim, and to hear what it meant to that person, what you did. That kind of confronting is both honouring the truth of the victim and honouring the humanity of the person who is being addressed - to have at least the chance to say, I did wrong, I'm very sorry, and I will do what I can to make amends. Retribution for the sake of retribution is not a liberating energy. When you're the victim, the biggest help you need is to become liberated, to be freed from the cage of the trauma and anger that you felt.

- Must people reconcile? Ideally yes, if you are going to stay in the same society and on the same planet, but there is no 'must' if you can't and some people die unreconciled, traumatised and bitter. Nonetheless, for a society reconciliation is important. Although society can function in a kind of a way without reconciliation, it's always going to have the seeds of the next conflict in it. Reconciliation isn't all or nothing, it's degrees of reconciliation, it's going to take time.

- Nonviolent action for change is needed at every moment, by building bridges between you and the people you'd never thought would be your allies. It goes on all the time, it starts when you find somebody to act with each day, it's a progressive and building thing.
- We have to look forward and have to look back. Trying to reconcile histories gives us the ground and the integrity and the capacity to work together that all of us need to build a different future, and we need to do it quite fast.

Discussion highlights:

- Lack of trust towards this concept.
- Mechanism of retributive justice didn't brought justice to all.
- Who is to reconcile? Victims have not the chance to answer this question.
- Widespread denial.
- What do apologies mean?
- We cannot preach reconciliation on behalf of other people.
- Daunting the language - place where violence starts, when you need to define, and you are defined.
- Kindness means recognizing someone as a human, especially in the heated situation.
- Nonviolence is readiness to risk conflict in a nonviolent way.
- Scale of nonviolence – how do you escalate the microenvironmental nonviolence.
- Nonviolence is immediate conflict in a way that you're in immediate conflict to most of the society.
- Self-interest drive is what is so destructive.
- It is up to me to use the power I have.

Taboos - examples of taboos within our work contexts

(Wallpapers produced jointly in plenary)

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criticism of victims' associations. - Trauma to kill - Unpopular victims - Expressing mistrust towards a victim - To talk to perpetrators - Patriarchy of victims (hierarchy) - The form of NGOs (administration and finances) - Perpetrator being a victim, victim being a perpetrator - Challenging veterans who support conservative political party - Crimes committed by Croatian Army - One truth - German victims - Responsibility of private companies and economic act - Questioning paradigm on reconciliation and peacebuilding - Criticize Israel from Germany | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very different dominant narratives (aggression or civil war) - Why people died? – was it sacrifice? - Identity engineering - Responsibility – refusing - Ethnic identities - Our victims are not the same as others, refusing contextualisation of victimhood - Competition of victimhood - Criminal acts that were perceived as lawful - Racism, xenophobia - Interests of other side (why do Abkhaz want independence?) - Own mistakes - Dealing with colonial past on political level - Uniqueness of holocaust - Questioning EU - The role of religious communities in the war - „all people who died were religious“ |
|--|--|

- Hierarchy of victims inside one community also
- Criticism of state nationalism
- Patriotism as purpose of death
- To question certain parts of dominant narrative
- Criticising glorification of war
- The crimes committed by „own“ side
- Acknowledgement of own mistakes (among NGOs)
- Being squeezed between fronts
- Being forbid to ask „Where are you from / What’s your background?“
- Muslims as non-religious category
- Criticism of neo-liberal politics
- Sexual violence against men, women as perpetrators
- Do we need military at all?
- Struggle with terms for races (even here)
- How many people on the other side died?
- Responsibility of the state of Serbia for crimes committed in Croatia, BH and Kosovo
- Arms trade
- Life in occupied territories (Krajina, Knin)
- Refugees from faraway countries
- How much passion we involved in hating each other? (ex Yu)
- Uselessness of the loss of lives
- Believers / atheists
- The ideologies that divided us
- Feelings or losses of soldiers
- Vulnerabilities and fears of soldiers
- Our lack of maturity
- Genocide in Myanmar
- Can we challenge the court decisions?
- Future





Study trip to Zavidovići

16th May 2018

Meeting with a war-veterans from all former warring sides in BH (Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Army of Republika Srpska, Croatian Defence Council) and visit to memorial sites in Zavidovići area:

- Site 715 - The Hill of Death
- Central Monument - Zavidovići
- 13th Kilometre - Kamenica

Discussion round with hosts, war-veterans, about their peacebuilding motivation and activities, highlights

- At the beginning, it was difficult, there were many opponents, but counting on my honourable conduct in the army and the authority I had among the fighters, there are now more people that support what we do. Veterans have a lot of legitimacy when they talk about the past, the present, the future.
- What was it like for you at other commemorations, and what about at places where “your side” committed the crime?
- Sijekovac in Bosanska Posavina, I didn’t know about that crime, and it was members of HV and HVO that had committed it. I started wondering about what I had been part of, because I was an honourable soldier. I felt uncomfortable, but I was not afraid to be among the families of those killed. After that, I felt the need to become more active as a veteran. At subsequent commemorations, it

was a bit easier, because I already had some experience. I saw that there were crimes on all sides. I had forgiven everything that happened to me during the war, I know there are those who will never forgive, but I also understand such people. It was difficult for me too, why should “we be the first”, but when we came to the commemoration, the priest ripped up the speech he had prepared, said it was a great honour and gesture, the people from those families accepted all the people who came. We make mistakes, but we need to work as much as we can to make things right. We were the first to do this, only later did state presidents start appearing at commemorations.

- You should see what it’s like to come to a community where the “opposite” side suffered losses, to feel not hatred, but their condemnation. You can’t describe that feeling with words, sometimes it’s best to say nothing.

- I was 27 years old when I was responsible for 5000 people. I was very much afraid of someone getting killed. Their children, imagine what it’s like for the families. Where I come from, everyone went to war with everyone else, a million times I asked myself if conflict with VRS, with HVO could have been prevented. That feeling of bitterness will stay with me to the end.

- I helped save a man from the other army from getting killed by my own. I knew the man personally. I put my own life on the line, but this is one of my great successes in life. I was condemned by “my own”, but I reacted like a man, I had never done anything out of hatred.

Reflections on the study trip to Zavidovići

17th May 2018

Some of the statements during the discussion:

- People were engaged in the war and then realised that they were doing something wrong. During the talk with veterans, someone mentioned they thought they were engaging in “honourable war”. How do we differentiate them? How do we see if they’ve done anything wrong? How do you detect the soldier who hasn’t done anything wrong? But even with war-criminals, how do we find a human in it?

- Inclusiveness - it seems easy although it’s not - there were different monuments to different groups but include them all in one visit is an achievement. All of them express that war crimes should be prosecuted; it’s a huge achievement.

- Honourable men in a dirty war. I would like to trust that in criminal situation you can try to behave honourably.

- Taboo in Germany - we can’t speak of honourable men in Wehrmacht, very difficult to deal with. And this is an eye-opener: one should accept that there may be honourable men in dirty war. Did we/they have a choice?

- War has rules, if you have a “regular” war, you cannot explain what happened in Srebrenica. How do you combine that?

- Words that I heard yesterday: “place of shame for us”; “I recognized myself as a warrior”; “honourable war”, “crime of war” ... I heard “I will forgive”, but I did not hear “I will be forgiven.”

- All are convinced that they did the right thing. They called it honourable war, but I think it can be connected to just war.

- “We are the ones who made the war, participated in it, and we are the ones who will end it”. This is disturbing. We have to find the role for other people too. Would you be ready to consider widening the field, include WWII?

- War is a dirty thing, but peace is a dirty work too. It needs to be done by people who did dirty things.

- They took a lot of space making this war.

- I found it quite emotional and moving. Humbling lessons in humanity, in all their simplicity born







out of the terrible experience that comes from the heart. How to include this in a future proposition, policy papers? How powerful it is to inspire people!

- It is very relevant in post-war countries to think about the social courage. In the absence of this social courage in confronting nationalistic ideas, it can lead to “no choice” situation.

- The role of veterans in justification of war, honourable men and war, and “there were always bad people who did the crimes”. So, when we talk about “our war crimes” they are done by individuals, but other’s crimes were structural. I have a feeling that I had the opportunity to choose. Why I chosen it? This is still my dilemma today. Out of duty, cultural pressure, especially in small towns. Most of the people are dedicated to peace and reconciliation, but are confused, don’t know how to react. Even nationalists are for peace. We need to open the space for everybody, nationalists, leftists, anarchists... Veterans are good media for reconciliation process, top level wants to have a good relation with veterans, and at the grassroot level, they are heroes in all communities.

- It’s about unconditional respect of human life.



Workshop: Reconciliation

17th May 2018

Input: Ponnampalam Narasingham, Nenad Vukosavljević

Facilitation: Ivana Franović

Guiding questions:

What is reconciliation in your context? What does it mean for you at personal/societal level? How does it refer to the pain of the past and the concept and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms? Who are the opponents/supporters of the process? If the vast majority of people is for peace and reconciliation, why doesn't it happen?

Sri Lankan context of reconciliation (Ponnampalam Narasingham)



Audio file

"Reconciling for me is, to sit one to one or in groups and hear each other about why this happened, and respect each other mutually, and to find collective solution to make sure it will not repeat"

- On May 18th, the war in Sri Lanka ceased. I belong to the community which was massacred on the last day of the war, and thousands of people were displaced within the country and put in camps.

- Sri Lankan government celebrates it as victory against terrorism, while the Tamil community mourns the very same day as a black day in history and as a memorial day of genocide.
- That is the context where I'm living, working and looking for answers, trying to work with my community people to find out how do we reconcile ourselves, to build a better island for every ethnicity and people with different language and religious background.
- Today, 9 years after the war, there are mothers, family members, sitting in the street for more than 400 days, looking for their loved ones. The number of the surrendered only goes up to 30,000-40,000. I'm not talking about people who forcibly disappeared. I am working with these families (who are Indian origin Tamils or Tamils), who are protesting in the public place to find answers and reconcile themselves. We demanded to have dialogue directly with the president. We had only a single demand: 'say where our loved ones are, publish the list of the ones who had surrendered, we want to know where they are.' On the third meeting with the president, he clearly said that, 'we don't know where these people are.' These families are still on the road. Family members informed the international community, went to the UN, the resolution was passed including high reporting mechanism to inquire the atrocities which took place with international involvement. Sri Lankan government has signed the resolution but, once it was out of the UN compounds, said that it will not inquire even a single soldier.
- This is the context where we are trying to work – looking for justice, looking for things which happened in the particular time-frame, and engaging with the government and the international actors such as Amnesty, UN, Human Rights Council.
- So how do we handle this? Still we try to work with the people from the Sinhalese community who have empathy for these families and try to find out a way to mobilize majority of these people, to put pressure on the government on this issue.
- But until now people disappear. Not in large numbers as how it happened before. Also, until now there are people as political prisoners. This is the context in how we should work on reconciliation. We can live with different opinions, without war and without hatred, but I don't have to reconcile with each and every one. This is the dilemma I'm having.
- Even after 30 years of negotiation with the Tamil moderate leaders, nothing has happened. People like me took arms. I grew up with so much hatred, very deeply through massacres, kidnappings, killings, bombing, shelling. I grew up in that way, with lot of hatred. I had to leave the country. I came to Europe, and I quickly realized that I'm not welcomed. I learned the hatred and differentiating people won't help us. We have to find a way in the world to live together with the respect for individualities or ethnicities or whatever it is but give the respect to those who want to have separate language, separate region, as long as it doesn't harm others. I returned to the island in 1995, in the middle of the war, and worked with my people in the camps.
- On the Tamil side, with the different militant movements, which are also subject to war-crimes, we killed each other, we fought against each other because of our own power struggle, to decide on who will be the legitimate representative of Tamil people. It's the other part of the coin.
- With regard to reconciliation, the struggle I have is the issue of language; I struggle to learn the language, Sinhalese. And to understand and create the avenue within the communities how we can work together. When people do harm to individuals, it's easier to sit together, handle and discuss the issue rather than with a collective form of punishment and harm.
- When I am oppressed because of identity or ethnicity, I think it's my right to defend. And I have no other rights, while I'm defending, to oppress another.
- Transitional justice and how does it help me? We are not in the transition, but we were forced by the government and some international governments with their own agenda, to accept that the war is over; the conflict is over; and now you have to reconcile. Root cause of this conflict is not addressed and nor we have a conversation, neither we agreed. Then how do I reconcile?
- Some sort of arrangement with the government is necessary, but because of the mistrust within Sri Lanka, there is also a need for the international, independent support. But they cannot decide for us, we have to take the decision for ourselves. And secondly, who are the people? Opponent or supporters of peace or reconciliation process? People who have done the war are opposing. They are sure that they will be subjected to some form of accountability.
- Majority in the North-East, they don't want to have another war in the area, but they don't want to forget what had happened. That's not possible either. So where do we strike a balance?



Audio file

Balkan context of reconciliation (Nenad Vukosavljević)

“There is no right to publicly and collectively hate but there is an individual right to decide whether you want to reconcile with an individual that has done you injustice. But if you project this injustice onto whole collectives, you lose the right. You commit injustice.”

Two major approaches to reconciliation in the Balkans

Quick and unconditional version

- We should not talk about the past and open old wounds.
- We should not blame one another because we will never agree.
- Let us agree that we are all guilty and not go into details.
- We should look into the future.

Underneath: we should not establish the facts, we will not acknowledge misdeeds conducted in our name, we will not distance ourselves from the violence committed or its consequences/results, we will not mention guilt or responsibility. We'll talk about economy, common interests etc, and try to satisfy some other need through this alleged process of reconciliation.

Conclusion: It does not address wounds of the past, apart from neglect.

Thorough and conditional version

There should be truth and justice before reconciliation, and in order to achieve it, it includes:

- Acknowledgement of responsibility,
- Acknowledgement of suffering,
- Admission of guilt,
- Punishment,
- Reparation (payment of) of loss,
- Justice for each victim (on our side),
- Request for forgiveness by the others,

Conclusion: All this will never happen, or not sufficiently, therefore our hatred “towards them” is justified, it's them to blame that this process is impossible

What should it be, reconciliation?

- Honest dealing with the past leads towards reconciliation, but demands constant questioning, balancing, thoughtfulness and preparedness to be self-critical and open for change. Ability to sympathise with “the enemy” is what enables us to work on social reconciliation, which includes also the skill to view issues from different angles, without being partisan, free of vanity, but granting yourself the right to make mistakes.

What are the actual contents of the reconciliation?

- Rehumanize the demonized enemy image in public within your society,
- Restoring safety, create basic trust with people from the other side, with border crossing,
- Allow communication and movement, allow dialogue to happen between unlike minded ones,
- Develop forms of cooperation,
- Work jointly on issues regarding dealing with the past...
- Deconstructing the myths that help generate collective images and attach characteristics to whole large groups of people, by multiperspectivity and inclusivity in history,
- Recreate the human sense of community, based on choice of sharing values not based on your ethnic background - or other backgrounds acquired through birth not by your choice.

The hard steps:

Acknowledging the genuine belief of people from the enemy side that their struggle is/was justified.

They fought for what they believed was right, defending their country, nation, homeland, city, house, family members or relatives.

Acknowledging the genuine motives of individuals to join the war means no approval or “seal of righteousness”. Furthermore, it is your own conviction of righteousness that is being transformed.

If you show respect for victims many will mistake it for an expression of support for the war cause of the side the victims belonged to, but that should not deter you. Respect of human life and expression of sorrow for their loss is the basic expression of commitment to humanism. This can be extremely challenging in some situations.

Showing respect for victims of violence and injustice should be consequent if you care to build bridges of trust toward former enemies.

Reconciliation does not need justice for all, because it is a personal decision not to hate the whole collective, not to discriminate the or view them as second-class citizens. There is no right to publicly and collectively hate but there is an individual right to decide whether you want to reconcile with an individual that has done you injustice. But if you project this injustice onto whole collectives, you lose the right. You commit injustice.

Therefore, reconciliation only needs honesty and courage to start from yourself and do what we can, what depends on us.

Why do I use the term honesty? Because of legitimacy and credibility that ought to be attached to the process of reconciliation. If I advocate human rights, but publicly express sympathies for a general (of my own side) that is accused of war-crimes and point out how freedom and justice loving person he is, then I should notice the discrepancy and discord, of my own unprincipled way. This check of own behaviour/standpoints against one’s own proclaimed principles needs to be constantly applied and scrutinized. It may take years to balance the two and even, so it is not a goal which you once reach and remain, it demands rebalancing every day. We are challenged daily to make these decisions, it is a tiring process, but potentially also uplifting. It is done at best when together with those people who are meant to be your enemies.

Definition attempt

So, reconciliation is for me a liberation of socially required and imposed antagonisms, it contains questioning of my personal imposed and chosen layers of identity, it contains a sustained effort to adjust myself and impact the societal norms that support ideas of allegedly unchangeable antagonisms.

So, you hear people complaining how they wish they had other neighbours. Sure, getting other neighbours may be just much easier than changing yourself, not to mention societal norms.

Reconciliation is for me a step out of the line, giving alternative example, nonviolent challenge to antagonised masses to stop being masses and to apply the same set of rules to themselves and to the others.

Reconciliation is all things become possible. It’s never too late for reconciliation, but it cannot wait. There is always something you can do today.

Questions raised/Discussion highlights:

- If opponents don’t want to admit their faults, how do we proceed?
- Is forgiveness an element of reconciliation?
- How to get to collective reconciliation in situation where basic conditions are not in place?
- What is the role of religion?
- The war we experienced: is it our war?
- Is reconciliation political process?
- Many powerful groups do not want reconciliation.
- Who is morally legitimate to propose the means of transitional justice? We have to ask also, how do we deal with colonization?
- Every war has an agenda and it is created.
- Reconciliation on every level is a political process.
- Healthy confrontation is an integral part of reconciliation.
- Everyday struggle with yourself not to get to the hatred part, do not humiliate others.
- International movement for reparation, to draw colonial countries to accountability.
- What is reconciliation for the next generation?

- How to talk to young generation about what happened?
- How can we strengthen movements in a setting of disbalance of power?
- How do economic injustices matter in a reconciliation process?
- Issue of resource extrapolation - contemporary form of colonization, by transnational companies.
- Feminist perspective on reconciliation?
- Where can we find a place for people who do not want to engage, don't care about the reconciliation?
- How to deal with isolation and burn out?
- In favour of perpetrators and demands much more of victims.
- Important for reconciliation: to build new narratives.
- How to bargain with the more powerful group?
- The real conflict is between ideas and values.
- We can only make contribution, trying to restore the continuation of life.



Workshop: Peacebuilding

17th May 2018



Audio file

Input: Martina Fischer

Facilitation: Ivana Franović

Guiding questions:

Peacebuilding best practices?

What should be adopted as practice by activists and practitioners in order to avoid becoming irrelevant or remaining marginalised (idealistic) groups?

Inclusive peace - what should it be?

Tension fields / dilemmas in the context of peacebuilding and Dealing with the Past: e.g. role of external actors (legitimacy and credibility to support peacebuilding when elsewhere holding a warmongering role).

Best practice:

- CNA with all the partners and many people that went to your trainings and belong to the regional network and all the veterans, who committed to storytelling, to peace education and building inclusive cultures of memory. Supporting people to make sense of what happened in the past and try to work on the vision for constructing the future, but at the same time trying to make sense of the

individual and collective experiences with past violence that determine the present and the future. Peacebuilding initiatives need that combination, a strong focus on nonviolent action and conflict transformation.

- Conflict transformation as making conflicts visible and enable people to see what are the causes and to try to work constructively on it. The root causes can sometimes be in structures and sometimes in relationships, sometimes on both. The important thing is to facilitate processes to discover that relevant causes emerge from political, economic or unjust social structures (and not from religious, cultural or ethnic differences).

What should be adopted as practice by activists and practitioners in order to avoid becoming irrelevant or marginalised?

- Peacebuilding, reconciliation and conflict transformation are multi-level processes that need to involve top-down and bottom-up activities. People should search for effective peace alliances (Lederach) in order to work on strategies for peacebuilding, involving local leaders, people who have credibility and respect in a local community or polity.

- In some situations, it would be important to look for campaigning and seek alliances for creating social movements, and in other contexts, it might be very important to create alliances that involve multipliers. It is important to do both, but at different stages. It is important to link the grassroots work that is done by single organisations. I remember that CNA was also a member of a bigger regional REKOM campaign which I consider an important step. This campaign aimed at establishing a regional Truth Commission in the countries of former Yugoslavia that would collect facts and support the voices of the victims, in addition to the work of the courts. Involve multipliers and people who have legitimacy and respect in the society (like war-veterans). Media people and teachers can also have a strong impact on the people they are working with. It is very important for the peacebuilding to have a clear picture with whom we are working, why and who can do what.

- It's very important to get grassroots activists and political actors into a dialogue, searching for alliance partners in political parties, parliaments and governments. However distant a government or parliament might appear you always find some brothers and sisters in mind who have a similar approach and who would like to establish peace. It is important to be open for that kind of linkages across levels.

- Institution building is also necessary to achieve a sustainable peace, rule of law, state, monopoly of violence, institutions for nonviolent conflict resolution. A functioning state needs courts, rule of law institutions and instruments for restorative justice that takes human security into consideration.

- Dimensions for peacebuilding and reconciliation: 1. Shared truths; 2. Justice; 3. Regard; and 4. Security. Security in the sense of personal and collective safety and wellbeing is a constitutive part of reconciliation. It is always a nonlinear process and often contradictory - some parts of society may go toward the reconciliation and parts of the society on both sides remain unreconciled, there are groups and individuals who support a peace and reconciliation process and others continue to fight and undermine the peace agreements.

Inclusive peace, what should it be?

- Peace processes need to involve all stakeholders, conflict transformation needs inclusive approaches. It means addressing the root causes, focusing on structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects.

- To look at the context from which the conflict derives: divided society, its cultural and government arrangements, institutions, social roles, norms, and rules, and relationships. Poor relationships between the groups are very often triggers for conflicts and remain a critical hindrance to peacebuilding efforts.

- Understanding of the situation shaped by culture and learning, discourse and belief, the way in which groups remember and construct the past is often central to the mobilisation of conflict. In many societies affected by ethno-political violence, relationships and memories are also marked by a selective remembrance, often combined with denial and the tendency to remain locked in victimhood. Cultures of victimhood can be found on all sides, involving people who have suffered but also those who committed the violence.

- Overcoming cultures of victimhood needs restorative approaches that acknowledge the suffering of victims on all sides, and changing war related identities – multi-level processes which aim at questioning and reshaping discourses on the political and societal level, especially in the field of media and education. In societies that have gone through a high level of ethno-political violence many versions of the truth and contrasting interpretations of history are likely to be expressed. Inclusive cultures of remembrance are strongly needed and have to be worked on, but selective memory cannot be challenged by a simple appeal to accept the facts.

Tension fields – dilemmas in the context of peacebuilding and DwP: e.g. role of external actors:

1. Ambivalent role of criminal justice and its effects in context of peacebuilding, reconciliation and conflict transformation:

- The work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia was a motor for discussions at the Balkans. Every judgement was discussed in different forms but the work of the ICTY also suffered from a lack of legitimacy. Court decisions have also contributed to fuel nationalistic discourses about the war, and hostilities in local communities. Studies conducted by James Meernik proved a clear correlation of court decisions and riots in some local communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This means that one cannot expect reconciliatory effects from tribunals, at least not at short terms.

- At the same time the ICTY has established a huge archive and important facts about massacres and crimes that could not be established in the same form by other mechanisms. The ICTY's role is comparable to what the Nurnberg trials in Germany contributed. They were also regarded as victor's justice by those who were affiliated to the former Nazi-regime, by others it was ignored. It did not have an immediate effect on social dialogue and didn't contribute to reconciliation in the short run. But for the next generations it had provided a lot of material and a set of undeniable facts which could be used then in processes for facing the past that started 20 years later. I very much hope that a similar thing will happen in this region.

- In situations where domestic justice is not capable, and the institutions are lacking accountability, international criminal justice might be inevitable. As Alex Boraine stated, accountability derives from the fact that no society can claim to be free or democratic until the strict adherence to the rule of law and there are mass atrocities and crimes that were so devastating that civilisation cannot tolerate their being ignored. But, given the limits of law and prosecution (in many societies it is simply not possible to prosecute all cases of war crimes or crimes against humanity), more holistic approach is needed, that combines truth recovery (forensic, factual, narrative, and dialogical truth), healing processes and restorative justice, and also reparations in order to acknowledge the suffering of the victims.

- Institutional reforms are also a prerequisite of truth and reconciliation. Reconciliation must be accompanied by acknowledgement of the past, acceptance of individual and collective responsibility and initiatives for rebuilding trust.

- Alex Boraine (former Director of the International Center for Transitional Justice) is convinced that societies emerging from violent conflict need a "shared truth", a set of undeniable facts that is accepted by those who suffered from violence, those who committed violence and those who were bystanders. But how to establish a "shared truth" in a situation where so many truths exist (as for instance is the case in the region of former Yugoslavia)? In certain contexts, and stages of war-torn societies it might be much more important to make people aware of the variety of truths that exist and to make people accept the existence of these contrasting views and develop a certain level of empathy for the different narratives.

2. Reconciliation as a religious and moral notion has a great potential but also bears a lot of risks to be instrumentalized:

- Reconciliation can prevent new spirals of violence; many peacebuilders regard it as necessary to prevent the desire for revenge. It is a process of trust and relationship building but those who promote a need for reconciliation often see it strongly linked with the notion of forgiveness. Linking both concepts, others argue, puts reconciliation processes in danger of failing, because the "right not to reconcile" is a key issue in understanding: this is an individual decision of anybody whether he or she wants to forgive. There is no doubt that the capacity to forgive might have healing effects for

some individuals, others might be unable or reluctant to do so. Peacebuilders should therefore be very careful and sensitive in using the concept, in particular when establishing activities in a multi-religious context.

- Dan Bar-On argued that the religious notion of reconciliation may create problems if one ignores that the sense of reconciliation inherent to Christian belief, differs from the approaches of Judaism and Islam. He recommended that it is better to relate to concepts like dialogue, or working through, concepts that have been tested empirically. He warned against overly high expectations and argued that expecting people to create completely new identities in an ongoing conflict and/or asymmetric conflict would be overloading people. Working on relationship building always needs to happen in the intrapersonal and intragroup level and on the political level.

- Forgiveness can have a cathartic and healing effect on someone who decides to do so. This is important to recognize, but the need to forgive should not be imposed on victims. It is also important not to prevent the concept of forgiveness of being instrumentalised for a debate that is basically focusing on closure.

- There are pro's and con's and there is no general recommendation whether one should use the concept of reconciliation in the context of peacebuilding and conflict transformation; trust-building and relationship-building are more pragmatic approaches (relationships, values).

- Given that the term reconciliation can produce misunderstandings and overloading at least in a multi-religious context, I use the term in a more pragmatic way, as a process of relationship-building and trust-building, both on political and societal level, that enables people in a war-torn community to operate, at least on a basic level, to move on and to provide the ground for a joint future (Bloomfield). I would still link it with a strong moral notion, because acknowledgement for victims and survivors and families of victims is crucial for this process to be set up (Gardner-Feldman).

- I would recommend not to outplay this pragmatic concept against the religious concept. It depends very much on the level we are working on and the setting. It depends very much on who is talking to whom. I can imagine that there is a talk about forgiveness among people from different religious communities who have exchanged about their understandings of reconciliation and forgiveness. But such a discourse cannot be made on political level. Both notions, secular and religious, have their clear function in the process of peacebuilding.

- As forgiveness has also a healing effect, we should not completely ignore it. It depends very much on individual psychological processes, decisions and value system.

Concluding words

We are now in 2018 and it is 10 years ago now that Dan Bar-On passed away, a close friend, colleague and peace activists who held a two-days workshop on DWP with us in spring 2008 in Berlin – the CNA-team was among the participants. Dan Bar-On has done some unique work as a social psychologist and bridge-builder, bringing together the children of Holocaust survivors and Nazi perpetrators as well as Israelis and Palestinians in a dialogue and in a very constructive work on learning from each other. He also managed to set up very interesting booklets on different narratives of the foundation of the Israeli state and Palestinian narrative of this time period together with his Palestinian friend Sami Adwan (<http://vispo.com/PRIME/>).

I learned from him that storytelling is a very important approach to deal with the past, as an educational tool for the new generations, but it also has a healing effects for those who tell these stories. As he says in his introduction to "Legacies of silence": "Personal stories of such severe contexts of war killing and survival have to be told in their authentic voice. In specific social contexts, storytelling can help the person who tells the story, work through some aspects of traumatic past, especially when being listened to by another person from the other side. They also have a function of eliciting other stories that have been hidden in people's minds and hearts for various reasons, waiting for the right moment and context to be told."

Storytelling in the service of peacebuilding became one of Dan Bar-On's major fields of interest and he applied it also to the very sensitive context of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, together with his Palestinian friends. He said that he learned to distinguish between the clear cut definition of victim,

and victimizer in the case of the Holocaust, which is less clear differentiation when addressing current conflicts: “I learned how powerful victimhood can be and how difficult is to move out of this state of mind, especially when the victim of past has become in the meantime also a victimizer of another group. And with all these developments I learned to accept the slow pace of social change, sometimes I have the feeling that although we know much more than we knew years ago about the issues discussed here, we are still at the beginning of the road and within time so many new problems emerged that we can easily be overpowered by them”.

So, if some people say, we should not deal with unresolved issues of the past because present is so pressing, his answer is – we have to learn to do both because focusing on one without the other will not enable us to understand the world we are living in, where we come from and where we are heading.

Discussion highlights:

- How to address the root causes of the conflict? Shouldn't be avoided because it can contribute to silencing.
 - Sometimes the dynamics of outcome replaces the root causes and become new cause.
 - We can apply all the strategies we want, but at the end we do what is possible.
 - Common ground - we are looking for what is human, with whomever we are dealing with.
 - We have to be mindful about words - what do we talk about when we talk about these concepts.
 - Peacebuilding - windows of opportunities (linked very much with support)
 - Creativity is crucial part of peacebuilding.
 - What can we, as peacebuilders, learn from human rights sphere (approaches and organisations) in the sphere of monitoring etc. Human rights and peacebuilding cannot be separated.
- Opportunity to reinvent ourselves in dealing with the violence - European cultural capacity to reinvent itself will depend on our capacity to deal with wars. How to advocate the responsibility to protect should be applied to everyone who experienced violence - responsibility to deal with the past and to repair.
- Dealing with the past perfectly fits with responsibility to prevent - to react, to rebuild - although can be used in the military, those are peacebuilding strategies.



Evaluation and closing words

17th May 2018

Main impressions/Questions to take with

Main impressions:

- Visit to veterans - inclusiveness; seeing the veterans giving their hearts.
- People getting to know CNA's work.
- Being reminded of violent past in our own families.
- Honesty felt in this group.
- Amer's talk - courage of veterans.
- Engagement of veterans and the visit - accepting responsibility; how powerful that simple act of humanity is!
- Opportunity to learn more from other contexts.
- Dealing with big concepts, we are expecting immediate results. Continuing the work on this.
- New concepts: genuine human possible future.
- Study visit - internal personal struggle; to meet them on a specific site; memorial for all the victims; easy to talk about other communities, but hard to talk about my own community.
- Taboos - could have gone deeper.
- Inspiration, motivation that comes from meeting people with different backgrounds,

experiences.

- Peacebuilding community - exchange and connectedness, but small and silent - how can we be better heard, how to reach out further.
- Can we influence members of the European Parliament?
- To continue with exchanges and cooperation, learn from a different experiences people got - question of capacity.

Questions to take with:

- How to come from individual to collective?
- How can we spread more and reach top level?
- How it can be used in other contexts?
- How it can be used more in educational work?
- How to install impact in the policy/ political obstacles we are facing?
- How to effectively implement all we have learned in the last three days?
- How to make it mainstream/ make it to political level?
- How to deliver this message to Brussels?
- More effective cooperation between human rights activists and peacebuilders.
- What is the future of youth in BiH?
- What is the role of state in supporting widows and children?
- How to transfer experience to other contexts?
- Question of capacity.

Encouraged:

- To work more on a regional level.
- To take what we experienced to deal with family conflicts.
- To exchange.
- To address militarism more.
- Act morally in criminal surroundings.
- To continue our important work.
- Search for people like those we met yesterday.
- More engagement of veterans in particular project.
- Develop a concrete project.
- Try to implement lessons learned to other topics that weren't discussed (racism, xenophobia).



Annex: Participants

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 Nedžad Horozović (CNA)
 Nedžad Novalić (CNA)
 Nenad Vukosavljević (CNA)
 Tamara Zrnović (CNA)

Annex: Media reports

Video report: "Reconciling histories!"

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