

Report by Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia and Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Croatia on **1,000,000 Signatures for RECOM** Campaign

April 26th – June 30th, 2011

The campaign for the collection of signatures for the establishing of RECOM was carried out by the Institute for Progressive Ideas (Slovenia), PRONI, and the Youth Resource Centre (BiH), The Monitoring Centre – CEMI (Montenegro), *Integra* (Kosovo), Youth Educational Forum – MOF (Macedonia), Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Croatia, and Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia; the last two organizations coordinated activities of the campaign at the regional level. Two regional coordinators, eight national (at the state level) and 81 local coordinators were directly involved in the organization of the campaign and they coordinated activities of volunteers in the field.

The Campaign lasted from April 26th until June 30th, 2011. By July 5th, 2011 a total of 542,660 signatures of support for the establishing of RECOM were entered in the Campaign Data Base. Hereafter, until governments of the post-Yugoslav countries render a decision on establishing RECOM, the collection of signatures and support shall be carried out online ([http: support.zarekom.org](http://support.zarekom.org)) and in public events organized by the Coalition for RECOM.

Launching of the campaign

The Campaign was launched on April 26th, 2011 at 12.00 in eight cities in the region of the former Yugoslavia (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Belgrade, Zagreb, Priština, Skoplje, Podgorica and Ljubljana). Several hundreds of young individuals, members of the Coalition for RECOM and friends of the Initiative for RECOM participated in the launching. The first signatory of the petition for the establishing of RECOM in Sarajevo was President of SDA, Sulejman Tihić. Other politicians from SDA and SDP attended the launching of the campaign in Sarajevo and they gave their signatures of support for the establishing of RECOM. Launching of the campaign in Priština was the most important media event on April 26th, 2011. Activists of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo marked the campaign with the *Regional Defrosting* action. Over 70 reports were published about the launching of the campaign in printed and electronic media.

Organization of the campaign

The number of volunteers who participated in the campaign was 1,301 and they were activists of youth organizations and members of several political parties' youth wings. They collected signatures at 219 stands in capital cities and other major cities, as well as in a door-to-door action.

Course of the campaign

The support for the RECOM Initiative, expressed during the signatures collection campaign, does not correspond entirely to the expectations that the Coalition for RECOM had, based on the results of the poll carried out by *IPSOS* agency in April 2011. According to the poll, the Initiative for RECOM had a significantly greater support in Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and the Federation of BiH, than in Croatia, and the Republic of Srpska - BiH. During the campaign, the number of signatures collected in the Federation of BiH and Serbia was less than expected, while the number of signatures collected in Banja Luka (BiH – Republic of Srpska) was much greater than expected.

Integra Youth Organization in Kosovo collected 100,559 signatures in four weeks, the number of signatures which was prescribed by the Plan of the Campaign. Volunteers collected the greatest number of signatures in *the door-to-door* action. At the beginning of the campaign, the Coordination of

associations of family members of the missing, which claims that RECOM Initiative is a Serbian initiative, called upon citizens not to sign the petition; however, it had no impact on the ground.

The number of signatures collected in BiH was 122,473. Leadership of the Republic of Srpska Union of associations of war veterans and family members of missing persons (BiH) publicly invited citizens not to sign the petition for the establishing of RECOM, explaining that RECOM was against Serbs. Media in RS did not undertake a campaign against RECOM Initiative, like they did in March 2010 when they supported the assessment of Branko Todorović from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in RS and Edin Ramulić from the Association of women from Prijedor *Izvor* (Spring) that RECOM process had failed in BiH. For instance, *Nezavisne novine* (Independent Daily) professionally relayed information regarding the course of the campaign. Signatures collection in RS was interrupted during the protests against the arrest of Ratko Mladić. Besides a well organized team of volunteers, unbiased position of media and authorities relative to the critique and attacks directed against certain members of the Coalition for RECOM, which happened during March 2010, definitely had impact on the number of signatures collected in Banja Luka, which is 45,239. The number of signatures collected in the Federation of BiH was less than expected. Apart from the firm support of the *Oslobođenje* Daily, other printed media were not interested in following the signatures collection campaign. At the peak of the campaign, the most watched TV station in Sarajevo, FTV, broadcast two negative reports about the Initiative for Establishing RECOM and Nataša Kandić, which, for sure, had impact, alongside the insufficient number of volunteers, on a less significant support than expected.

Signatures collection campaign in Montenegro was carried out in the atmosphere of strong political and public support for the initiative for establishing RECOM.

The campaign in Serbia was carried out in the context of a good media campaign, and especially with the strong support of RTS, and support of the most significant political parties. There is an impression that the number of signatures collected might have been a lot greater than 254,539, which were collected during the campaign.

The campaign for the collection of support signatures for RECOM in Macedonia was carried out in the context of support for the involvement of Macedonia into regional initiatives.

A total of 5,000 signatures were collected in Slovenia, which is the number defined in the Campaign's Plan. Citizens expressed interest for the initiative from the countries of the Western Balkans. Croat, Bosniak, and Serb Diaspora web pages did call for the boycott of the Initiative for RECOM.

The signatures collection campaign in Croatia began immediately after the Hague Tribunal had rendered guilty judgments for two Croatian Army generals, which additionally raised the already existing resistance towards regional interconnection and regional initiatives. Volunteers worked under the pressure of hostile citizens and with the lack of support from political parties and institutions. At the beginning of the campaign, members of the SDP Youth Forum participated in signatures collection, but the Presidency of the Party decided that SDP should not be involved in the signatures collection campaign and that it should not support the initiative. For this reason, volunteers from SDP lines withdrew from the campaign. Association of Family Members of Detained and Missing Croat Soldiers publicly opposed the organization of the *Million Signatures Campaign* in Croatia with explanation "that by demanding their signatures for the truth about victims, their [Croat citizens] current sensitivity regarding everything related to the Homeland war will be manipulated, and that they would give their signature in support of objectives they do not even agree with".

Incidents

Several cases of offensive behaviour towards volunteers were registered during the course of the campaign because they promoted a regional initiative and called for cooperation between the countries that were part of the former Yugoslavia. Unidentified individual physically pushed the signature stand in Doboj (BiH) and insulted volunteers. In Dubrovnik (Croatia), an unidentified man scattered promotional materials placed on the Coalition for RECOM stand. In the centre of Split (Croatia) a middle aged man spilled urine on the stand and volunteers of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and ran away. On the occasion of a joint action of youth from Croatia, Slovenia, BiH, and Serbia organized on June 16th, 2011 in Zagreb at the Ban Jelačić Square, and titled *Regional Defrosting*, some fifty activists collected 200 support signatures in three hours. Citizens would even approach volunteers and offended them for promoting the regional initiative in Croatia.

Support of politicians and public figures

Deputy Prime Minister, Slobodan Uzelac, mayors of Poreč and Karlovac, Edi Štifanić and Damir Jelić, Mayor of Vukovar and member of SDP, Željko Sabo, Deputy Mayor of Šibenik, Franko Vidović, Deputy Prefect in Brod-Posavina County, Davor Vlaović, members of parliament from SDP Mirela Holy, Šime Lučin, Ingrid Antičević Marinović, Josip Leko, Nenad Stazić and Karolina Leaković, member of parliament from the Istra Democratic Forum (IDS), Damir Krajin, independent member of parliament Ratko Gajica, former President of the Republic of Croatia, Stjepan Mesić, writer and a publicist, Slobodan Šnajder, and many other gave support signatures for RECOM in **Croatia**.

In **Serbia**, President of the Vojvodina Parliament, Šandor Egereši, President of the Vojvodina Government, Bojan Pajtić, Vice President of the Republic of Serbia Parliament, Judita Popović, MPs from LDP, LSV MP Aleksandra Jerkov, and SDU MP Žarko Korać, Mayor of Bujanovac, Shaip Kamberi, Mayor of Pančevo Vesna Martinović, Mayor of Valjevo Zoran Jakovljević, Mayor of Sombor Nemanja Delić, and Mayor of Subotica Saša Vučinić signed the petition, as well as the President of the Liberal Democratic Party, Čedomir Jovanović, President of the League of Social-Democrats of Vojvodina, Nenad Čanak, President of the Democratic Action Party, Rizo Halimi, Vice President of the Democratic Party Jelena Trivan, President of the United Regions of Serbia Mlađan Dinkić, President of the Serb Renewal Movement Vuk Drašković, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance Rodoljub Šabić, State Secretary in the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, Oliver Ivanović, and others.

In **Montenegro**, Prime Minister of Montenegro, Igor Lukšić, signed the petition on April 29th, 2011 in the meeting with representatives of the RECOM Coalition. During the campaign, a number of MPs, leaders of political parties, and public figures gave support signatures for RECOM.

In **Slovenia**, Ombudsman Zdenka Čebašek – Travnik (May 3rd, 2011) and President of the Slovenian Liberal Democracy youth wing, Borut Cink gave support signatures for establishing of RECOM.

On the day when the signatures collection campaign was launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, April 26th, 2011, President of the Federation of BiH Mirsad Kebo, President of SDA Sulejman Tihić, Mayor of Sarajevo Alija Behmen, Minister of Culture Salmir Kaplan, and SDP Member of FBiH Parliament Besima Borić, writer, essayist, analyst and publicist Ivan Lovrenović, directors Dino Mustafić and Danis Tanović signed the petition in support of the establishing of RECOM. Vice Presidents of the Federation of BiH, Živko Budimir and Svetozar Pudarić, BiH Minister of Security Sadik Ahmetović, President of the Sarajevo Centar Municipal Council, Slaven Kovačević, Mayors of Velika Kladaša, Bosanska Krupa, Doboj, Bihać and

Cazin Admil Mulalić, Armin Halitović, Obren Petrović, Albin Muslić and Nermin Ogršević, President and Vice President of the BiH Democratic Peoples Union, Rifet Dolić and Kenan Keserović, President of Our Party, Dennis Gratz, Vice President of HDZ 1990 Martin Raguž, SDP BiH Youth Forum, and a member of the SDP BiH Presidency Lidija Korać, poet and writer Ferida Duraković, actor Ermin Bravo, director Haris Pašović, and others signed the petition in support of the establishing of RECOM.

Member of the BiH Presidency, Željko Komšić, gave support signature on the day when the Draft RECOM Statute and collected signatures of support for the establishing of RECOM were delivered to him on June 23rd, 2011.

In Kosovo, Rada Trajković, leader of the United Serb List, signed the petition for the establishing of RECOM on May 16th, 2011. In a meeting with members of the Coalition for RECOM held on June 7th, 2011 Kosovo Minister of Health, Ferid Agani, gave support signature for RECOM, thus supporting the establishing of the regional commission.

In **Macedonia**, a member of the Parliament and a member of the governing VMRO DPMNE, Vlatko Gojcev, signed the petition in support of the establishing of RECOM.

Statistics

on July 5th, 2011

Serbia	
Belgrade	63910
Novi Sad	34446
Subotica	3808
Zrenjanin	799
Pančevo	2939
Sombor	4613
Kikinda	3340
Sremska Mitrovica	2793
Kragujevac	10613
Čačak	5867
Kraljevo	6420
Kruševac	5036
Jagodina	731
Smederevo	2660
Požarevac	1037
Valjevo	8691
Novi Pazar	13593
Tutin/Sjenica	7358
Priboj	3638
Prijepolje	4736
Niš	24943
Leskovac	8300

Vranje	5380
Zaječar	2683
Dimitrovgrad/Bosilegrad	2833
Šabac	5282
Preševo	5380
Bujanovac	5200
Užice	3520
Online	2490
Total (Serbia)	254539
Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Sarajevo	24727
Tuzla	6882
Kalesija	2325
Živinice	2809
Banovići	2342
Lukavac	1794
Bihać	2808
Cazin	1950
Velika Kladuša	2533
Bosanska Krupa	1425
Sanski Most	2678
Zenica	1758
Stolac	480
Celic	465
Kladanj	51
Olovo/ Teocik/Sapna	62
Bosanski Petrovac	60
Drvar/Jajce	69
Gornji/Donji Vakuf	41
Vareš/Kakanj	70
Modrica	78
Domaljevac	47
Zavidovići	1653
Travnik	2397
Maglaj	672
Tešanj	396
Gradačac	2695
Srebrenik	1507
Orašje	2529

Odžak	478
Jablanica	1895
Konjic	1011
Mostar	1713
Banja Luka	45239
Bijeljina/Ugljevik	1792
Brčko	752
Doboj	408
Vlasenica(Bratunac/Srebrenica)	931
Online	954
Total	122473
Croatia	
Zagreb	7123
Split	2035
Osijek	4304
Varaždin	1499
Pula	666
Slavonski Brod/Požega	930
Zadar	196
Velika Gorica	109
Karlovac	283
Vukovar	353
Šibenik	722
Sisak	126
Dubrovnik	68
Rovinj/Pazin	657
Online	867
Total	19668
Kosovo	
Prishtine	18200
Podujeve	5006
Lipjan	700
Kastriot	1400
Fushe Kosove	1400
Prizren	10500
Suharek	700
Dragash	700
Malisheve	700

Peje	12600
Istog	2800
Junik	700
Kline	1400
Gjakove	12600
Decan	1400
Mitrovica	9800
Skenderaj	2100
Vushtrri	6300
Leposavic	700
Ferizaj	1400
Shterpc	700
Shtime	1400
Gjilan	5600
Bujanovc	700
online	499
Total	100559
Slovenia	
Ljubljana	1499
Novo Mesto	1250
Celje	950
Piran	768
Maribor	689
Online	186
Total	5342
Macedonia	
Skopje	3271
Tetovo	2693
Shtip	1597
Struga	1133
Bitola	852
Veterani NGO	92
Online	384
Total	10022
Montenegro	
Podgorica	9020
Pljevlja	700

Herceg Novi	500
Rožaje	4000
Bijelo Polje	3000
Berane	1800
Tivat	600
Kotor	800
Nikšić	3000
Budva	1040
Bar	200
Ulcinj	2500
Tuzi	400
Cetinje	750
Kotor	350
Sutomore	400
Online	453
Total	30057
TOTAL	542660