
The Scientific Director

TO
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CC
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Prot. N.: 027/13/OBC/U
Rovereto, 8th May 2013
Object: Has the ICTY contributed to reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia?

Dear President Meron,

Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC), widely recognised as the most qualified Italian online media and a think tank on the Balkans, promoted an online debate titled "Has the ICTY contributed to reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia?" that took place from 20th February to 5th March 2013.

I am glad to send you in attachment a synthesis of what emerged from tens of comments that were posted by practitioners, scholars as well as ordinary citizens residing in Western Europe and in the Balkans.

Please feel free to contact me for any further information.

Best regards,

Luisa Chiodi PhD



Attached:
Synthesis of the online debate

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Has the ICTY contributed to reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia?

From 20th February to 5th March, the Italian media and think tank Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC), conducted an online debate on the ICTY and the reconciliation process in former Yugoslavia.

The debate was organized in the frame of the EU project “Tell Europe to Europe”, aiming at raising awareness about benefits and challenges of the current EU enlargement process, and to familiarise EU citizens with the candidate and potential candidate countries.

Universities, media, foundations and training centres from four different countries are involved in the project.

The debate, “Has the ICTY contributed to reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia?”, was introduced by two experts, Refik Hodžić, of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, and Janine Clark, of the University of Sheffield, and moderated by Andrea Rossini, OBC journalist.

Refik Hodžić is director of communications of the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and has worked in transitional justice for almost two decades as a journalist, film maker as well as an expert in public information and outreach campaigns. From 2000-2004 and 2006-2010, he worked for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia serving as the Tribunal’s spokesman and outreach coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Janine Clark is a lecturer at the University of Sheffield, UK. She has been conducting fieldwork in the former Yugoslavia since 2002 and has widely published her work in various international journals, including the International Journal of Transitional Justice, the Journal of International Criminal Justice, the Journal of Genocide Research and Human Rights Quarterly.

The two experts also wrote the closing remarks.

During the debate, a poll was held and tens of comments - most of them with a high levels of insight - were published on a dedicated Disqus thread. The total number of single visitors to the debate was 6,257.

The debate highlighted different aspects we believe can be of interest to the ICTY.

In summary:

- the importance for the ICTY to keep on devoting time and resources to communicating with its primary constituents, the people of the former Yugoslavia;
- the importance to develop a new standard and practice of outreach, which cannot be considered as a side effort of the Tribunal's work, but as one of its main responsibilities. Namely, different contributors to the debate underlined how outreach cannot be understood and practised as a loose mix of public relations, de-contextualized dissemination of information and organization of a series of conferences. Crucial matters like the logic behind the Tribunal's prosecutions strategy or its sentencing policy, and the results of its work, need to be reported in thorough and adequate ways to its constituents, involving also local communities;
- poor outreach has been emphasized as a paramount weakness of the Tribunal, which needs to be addressed as such. The work, values and achievements of the ICTY cannot be taken for granted and regional outreach bodies should be strengthened;
- the contribution of the ICTY to reconciliation would be enhanced if complementary to other initiatives, led by the civil society, enabling a wider participation of the local public and namely the victims to a process of reckoning with the past. Such initiatives should be supported;

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- the wealth of facts established and documented by the ICTY trials cannot be simply assumed as a factor which will contribute to reconciliation. Other transitional justice mechanisms have an important part to play. The efforts made by the RECOM coalition are to be welcomed.

All materials can be found on our web page, at: www.balcanicaucaso.org/Racconta-l-Europa-all-Europa/Dibattito-online#disqus_thread

About Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC)

OBC (www.balcanicaucaso.org) is an online news provider and research centre devoted to social and political change in South-East Europe, Turkey and the Caucasus, followed by over 130.000 readers every month.

Our major aim is to stimulate public debate in the European public space and foster the integration process of South East Europe by raising European (and Italian in particular) public awareness on: the enlargement process involving the Balkans; the socio-political context of these countries; the regional reconciliation process.

In 13 years of activity and thanks to its collaboration with a network of over 50 local correspondents and contributors, OBC has produced more than 14.000 articles; 5 film-documentaries; numerous scientific publications; dozens of public events, conferences, seminars, online debates.

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