



COALITION FOR WORK WITH PSYCHOTRAUMA AND PEACE KOALICIJA ZA RAD SA PSIHOTRAUMOM I MIR

MONTHLY REPORT FOR JUNE 2019

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This has been a busy month, as they all seem to be. This was Torture Awareness Month and it included the International Day for the Victims of Torture, the International Day for the Victims of Sexual Violence in Conflict, International Refugee Day, and the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In all of this, the US State Department issued a report saying that Croatia and Bosnia do not meet the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking or for dealing with migrant flows, including asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. Further, the World Jewish Congress criticized the building of a monument to Holocaust victims in Zagreb because it would not include the active participation in these crimes taken by the Ustasha Regime during World War II. Further, the US State Department described an increase in religious intolerance in Croatia, particularly online, in 2018. It was almost ironic, in light of the above, that the Croatian Foreign Minister, Marija Pejčinović Burić was chosen as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

With regard to our external work, we had seven regular clients this month and one incidental consultation. The issues were the same as usual – people who were abused emotionally, physically, and/or sexually, this compounded trans-generational transmission and by the wars. We continued our supervision with Ivan Maslow in Split and Alphonse Kanda in South Africa. The Split group has adjourned for the summer. We started a group in South Africa online. Further, we are working with a group of students from the University of Belgrade who wish to do internships with migrants. Also, we have started a group with lawyers, mostly from the US, who are doing volunteer work with migrants in Greece.

We see the migrant situation getting worse and worse in the region. Assisting migrants has been criminalized, and conditions in which they are living are inhumane throughout the region. Further, there is no real response to their psychological needs. Unfortunately, most of the volunteers who are coming are what we call “voluntourists”, who stay for short periods and who are untrained and unsupervised, psychologically and in other ways.

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Further, we were contacted by a large non-governmental organization in Borno State, Nigeria to work with people on the ground and, significantly, with humanitarian workers who are burning out. Additionally, we are taking the free online course on unaccompanied minor migrants given by the University of Strathclyde.

Further, we are contacting a number of organizations in various locations to see if we can find mutual grounds for cooperation.

This month, we continued work on the second Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) self-paced online course on communication.

We were visited briefly by the Dutch Quakers Sytse and Marlies Tjallingii.

We see the coming months as challenging, particularly in light of the financial situation. Still, we continue our work.

Internally, our greatest concern is finances. We do not yet have sufficient funds secured for 2020 and beyond, and we feel that that situation is becoming critical. Thus, we ask everyone reading this report to assist us in finding funds so that we can survive and continue our work. We remind people reading this report that we are the only organization in the region giving psychological assistance without charge and that we are one of the very few organizations in the world working for the psychological welfare of traumatized people, especially with regard to increasing capacity from the ground up. Otherwise, despite our being overburdened with work, the internal situation was relatively stable.

SITUATION IN THE REGION

June 26th is the date that the United Nations has marked as the International Day in Support of Survivors and Victims of Torture. This year, a coalition of human rights, civil liberties, and faith organizations declared June as "Torture Awareness Month." This awareness-raising month is an effort to respond to the growing evidence of the use of torture and inhuman treatment as part of the "war on terror". Such practices are present worldwide. This month, the U.S. State Department issued a report on "human trafficking as one of the most heinous crimes on Earth". The report says that Croatia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Croatia is advised to "institutionalize and implement screening procedures for migrant flows, including asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors". In the same report, Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities are criticized for failing to show additional efforts to address this issue. No one is reporting on the mental health or wellbeing of refugees and migrants trapped on the border with EU, and there is virtually no work on this extremely important issue.

The World Jewish Congress (WJC) denounced the decision of the Zagreb City Assembly to erect a monument to the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The monument ignores the active role taken by the Independent State of Croatia under the Ustasha regime in perpetrating these crimes during World War II.

The U.S. State Department says in its annual report on religious freedoms worldwide that an increase in religious intolerance, particularly online, was perceived in Croatia in 2018.

The election of Croatian Foreign Minister Marija Pejčinović Burić as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe is a success for Croatia. Her election represents, for all diplomatic criteria, the success of her candidate country. For the most part, Croatia is not mentioned as a country of high

democratic principles and their implementation. According to all international indicators of international governmental and non-governmental organizations, Croatia is a country of "semi-consolidated democracy", as assessed by the international non-governmental organization Freedom House, the country is highly corrupt according to Transparency International, it is assessed as having an inefficient judiciary by the Council of Europe, and it has extremely bad relations towards migrants according to UN High Commissioner's rating on human rights. That is why Marija Pejčinović Burić and those struggling with the idea of sovereignty will have to emancipate themselves from the horrors of nationalist and sovereigntist attitudes of their own country, elevated to the level of representation of the basic principles of democracy and human rights - precisely where Croatia is the weakest and thinnest.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Introduction

We had eight clients this month, seven of them regular. The issues that we saw were the same as those that we have been seeing in previous months. Most of this amounts to people who now are adults having been abused as children in one way or another emotionally, physically, and/or sexually. The Split group has adjourned for the summer. We are working with a group in the Johannesburg area of South Africa that will work in the townships, a group of mostly foreign lawyers working with migrants in Greece, and a group of students from the University of Belgrade. We continue to supervise Ivan Maslow in Split and Alphonse Kanda in South Africa. The migrant situation continues to worsen. Assisting migrants now is becoming criminalized. There is virtually no sensitivity to the psychological needs of the migrants, be they underway or in the process of integration. We consider this to be a dangerous situation. Further, we are seeing that volunteers are coming untrained and unsupervised, psychologically and otherwise. Further, with regard to the migrant situation in particular, we have attempted to make contact with a number of groups. Additionally, we have been contacted by a large non-governmental organization in Borno State, Nigeria. We continued to take the free online course given by the University of Strathclyde on unaccompanied migrant children and have contacted them about the possibilities of cooperation. We also contacted a number of other organizations with similar goals. Further, we commemorated a number of significant days that occurred during the month. We made a small amount of progress on writing the self-paced online course on communication in the Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) series. We were visited by the Dutch Quakers, Sytse and Marlies Tjallingii. Thus, it has been a busy month.

Clients

We had eight clients this month, seven of them regular. The issues that we saw were the same as those that we have been seeing. Most of this amounts to adults having been abused as children in one way or another, that is, emotionally, physically, and/or sexually. These issues are increased by trans-generational transmission of trauma and by the war. These are long therapies and will continue in the coming months.

Groups

There are now four groups, the Split group, the group from South Africa, the group from the University of Belgrade, and the Advocates Abroad group. The last two will be discussed in the section of this report on the migrant situation.

The Split group has adjourned for the summer. The situation of trans-generational transmission with the one family continues. The group has obtained funds from the city for space and for some group psychotherapy. They have thanked us for encouragement.

The group in Johannesburg started this month. The first meeting had severe Internet difficulties such that it was not possible to continue work. During the second meeting, one member could not appear because of transport difficulties, and the group would not meet without her. The group will continue to meet twice monthly.

Supervision

The supervision work with Ivan Maslow is continuing. He is a skilled therapist and the work that he is doing is going as it should.

The work with Alphonse Kanda in Johannesburg also is continuing. Alphonse is under pressure from many sources.

The Migrant Situation

Introduction

The situation with regard to migrants in this region, and in general, is becoming worse and worse. Assisting migrants is becoming criminalized. We think that this is totally inhuman. Additionally, governments and inter-governmental organizations are denying non-governmental organizations access to migrants. Furthermore, there is little if any sensitivity to the psychological situation of migrants. Even those assisting them in other ways are not sensitive to this, nor are they sensitive to their own secondary traumatization. We think that this is creating dangerous situations in a number of ways. First, it is not dealing with the very real traumatization that migrants have experienced and are experiencing. This leads to frustration and buildup of tension. This results in implosion and explosion, thus leading to severe personal psychological reactions on the one hand and to external violence on the other. Furthermore, the psychological reactions lead to physical ones. Similar processes are going on in people assisting migrants. This leads to unrecognized burnout which decreases their effectiveness in their work. Unfortunately, we are seeing a substantial amount of "voluntourism", where untrained people come to work with migrants for short periods. Only very rarely is there psychological or other types of supervision of such people. We find this irresponsible and dangerous both for the migrants and for the voluntourists. To be clear, there is a difference between someone coming as an expert to give a workshop or to contribute in some other substantial way or to test out his or her capabilities to do this kind of work, and someone coming for a vacation and/or to get a citation on his or her CV. Also, while we understand the need for bodies on the ground, we think it irresponsible of the organizations allowing such people to come. We have heard that there is little screening of such people. We think that such screening should be strict.

Groups*Šid, Serbia and Velika Kladuša/Bihač, Bosnia*

For the reasons cited above, we had little work with the No Name Kitchen groups in Šid, Serbia and Velika Kladuša/Bihač, Bosnia during June. The situations in both regions are very bad, with a large number of police pushbacks and strong governmental resistance to the presence of the migrants. Unfortunately, the inter-governmental organizations are contributing to this chaos and inhumanity.

Advocates Abroad

This is a group of lawyers who are volunteering with migrants, primarily in Greece. Most of them are from the USA. They have a limited amount of psychological support. This month, we started a weekly education and supervision group with them. It appears that they are on our wavelength.

Students from the University of Belgrade

This weekly group comprises students from the Departments of Psychology and Political Science who wish to do internships with migrants. The education is voluntary. The size of the group varies from two to about eight. It is being done on the basis of a weekly seminar in which they ask questions, which then are used to delve into the material more deeply. Also, we are doing role plays with them. Several are quite enthusiastic. All are female. This points up an issue that arises continually with workers with migrants, namely that most of the migrants are male and most of those assisting them are female. This creates several issues. First, the males are always willing to speak to females about intimate matters. Further, considering the males' general frustration, there may be issues of safety at some points.

Other Groups to Which We Reached Out on Migrant Issues

We reached out to nine other groups. We will give the results of our attempts at cooperation in future reports.

In general, we are reaching out to all groups that are working with migrants and refugees, either people on the move or people in the process of integration. Again, we face the issue that psychological assistance is not considered to be a priority, or even worthy of consideration.

The Course on Unaccompanied Migrant Children

We continued to follow this free self-paced online course at <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/caring-for-children-moving-alone> . We will finish the course during the first week in July. Although we know most of what they are teaching, we find it useful for people who don't and for us to know what they are saying. It also gives useful examples. Unfortunately, it says little about psychological work with such children. The course is given by the University of Strathclyde. We also reached out to that university.

Refival Article on Children on International Refugee Day

Again, Hans van Nieuwkerk has published what we consider to be a very valuable piece on migrant children and their integration, this in commemoration of International Refugee Day. This article is available on <http://www.n0619.refival.org> .

Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET)

This month, we have worked at least a little on the manual for the self-paced online PET course on communication. We will be lucky to finish it by the end of the year. Once the manual has been written, the next steps will be to make the audio and video versions.

We are attempting to find someone to continue work on the videos for the first course, that is, that on the introduction to work with people and self-care and to improve them. There have been a number of issues, including finding images that reflect the intended audience, that is, not all white Western faces.

We also are attempting to get the manual for the first course translated into various languages.

Miscellaneous

Borno State, Nigeria

Through the Global Psychosocial Network, we were contacted by a psychiatric nurse, who also is doing a masters in conflict transformation and is working with a large non-governmental organization in Borno State, Nigeria. He described the situation among the population there, which has been terrorized by Boko Haram and in which there are large numbers of refugees from other places, as very much need of work on trauma. Further, he said that humanitarian workers in the region are being highly secondarily traumatized and are in poor psychological condition. We are reaching out to this organization to see what we can do together.

Commemoration of Various Events

For all of the events considered here, all that we had time for was to put short pieces on our Facebook page. We regret that we didn't have the time to do more. The events were as follows:

- Torture Awareness Month
- International Day for the Victims of Torture
- International Day for the Victims of Sexual Violence in Conflict
- International Refugee Day
- The 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit of Sytse and Marlies Tjallingii

We were visited by two Dutch Quakers who were in the region for other work. We are grateful for their support.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Finances and Fundraising

The situation with regard to funding is becoming critical. We still have not found any funds for 2020 and beyond and have only about € 6000 pledged by constant donors. We thus ask people reading this report to let us know if they are aware of funds for which we can apply.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS

The financial situation continues to be worrying.

The migrant situation also is extremely worrying and seems to be worsening. What worries us is the disregard of the issue of the psychological state of the migrants by governments and donors and the lack of access given to non-governmental organizations by governments.

We see that there is more than enough work to be done in the world working with people traumatized by conflict and those working with them. We need the funds to be able to do it.