



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

### MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2019 DONOR VERSION

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#### **INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the region, as they do every year, people from Croatia and abroad gathered to commemorate the town's coming into Serb hands in 1991. This year, the Croatian Parliament adopted a law declaring Vukovar Remembrance Day on November 18 as a national, non-working holiday, a day dedicated to "all victims of the Homeland War".

Branko Lustig, a Jew originally from Osijek, who survived internment in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz, died at the age of 87. As a film producer, Lustig won two Oscars, one of them for 'Schindler's List'.

While Croatian teachers continued to strike for their rights as the unions gave the Croatian Government's recent offer the thumbs down, the situation has escalated, and also seems to be part of the worldwide series of protests, not only for salaries but for other rights.

During its chairmanship of the European Union in the first half of 2020, Croatia will advocate for the continuation of southeast European aspirants' journey, namely the accession of Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Albania to the European Union, as Premier Andrej Plenković finds this important for transformation, peace, and stability in the region.

The first round of the Croatian presidential election will be held on December 22, and a second round on January 5.

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Irregularities and human rights breaches on the borders of the Balkan countries continue. Recently, the town Mrkopalj, known for an International School of Peace Education whose purpose is to intensify the relationship between members of different ethnic groups and to help preserve cultural heritage, was in focus because of police shootings on migrants there. The European Commission approved a cooperation agreement between Serbia and the EU border agency “to manage immigration and tackle crime at the EU’s external borders.” According to a recently published Border Violence Monitoring report, at least 1279 migrants, including minors, have been threatened with firearms or shot at before being illegally expelled from Croatia. Humanitarian work is under constant scrutiny. People have been observed monitoring the volunteers’ houses.

With regard to external affairs, we had six clients this month. The issues are the usual ones, that is abuse as children complicated by the war. Several had issues of self-image. Most showed progress.

With regard to groups, the group with Snehalaya in India is meeting consistently. They are working on getting the children to do peer counseling. Further, we are carrying out supervision with some of the caregivers.

Supervision with Alphonse Kanda and Ivan Maslow continues.

The migrant situation continues to deteriorate. The conditions for migrants in official and unofficial camps are inhuman. Being a migrant has become a criminal act, as has assisting migrants. The frontier police of the European Union, Frontex, has joined with the police of virtually every country on both sides of the borders of the European Union to hold back migrants. The national police forces and Frontex have been shown by many human rights organizations to be extremely brutal in their treatment of people, and there have been many people injured and a number killed by them during this month. This is true of virtually every location that we can observe. As we have described in previous reports, there is no substantial psychological assistance being given to migrants on a long-term basis by any organization. We see this as a fundamental flaw in policy at a human level and at the level of security. Stating this very directly, we see the lack of work on psychological trauma creating a threat of violence because of the frustration of the migrants, aside from it being totally inhuman to do so. We very much would like to set up offices in a number of places in Serbia, Bosnia, and Greece, and outside of Europe. We do not have the funds for that.

With regard to Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET), we spent some time working on the communication course. We urgently are seeking someone to redo the videos for the first course on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care.

This month marked the 23rd anniversary of the registration of the organization in The Netherlands.

We had an electronic meeting with Baroness Helić, a Bosnian refugee now in the British House of Lords with close ties to the British government.

Charles Tauber did a little work in his function as a reviewer for the scientific committee of the InPACT Conference for 2020.

We wrote two reports for the Quakers, one for the annual meeting of the Friends World Committee European and Middle East Section Peace and Service Consultation and a piece for the Dutch Quaker monthly “De Vriendenkring”.

We have had contacts with Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo this month.

Charles Tauber continues to learn Arabic.

Charles also took an online course on health care in crisis situations.

We were discouraged that the International Leadership Association would not provide us with an electronic copy of the book in which our chapter on trauma and peacebuilding is published. We find this an abuse of our good will and of our work.

We strongly recommend the film "For Sama", which is a documentary produced by Frontline about the situation in Aleppo, Syria, particularly with reference to medical care.

With regard to internal affairs, the most significant event this month was that we heard that our anonymous US donor would fund us for another year, taking us into 2021.

We will continue to do what we can. We will continue to attempt to work with migrants and with any organization that will work with us. We will continue to work on the PET courses.

With regard to the coming season, we leave the last word to Tom Lehrer who, in his song, *A Christmas Carol*, said, "So let the raucous sleighbells jingle, Hail our dear old friend Kris Kringle, Driving his reindeer across the sky. Don't stand underneath when they fly by."

### **STATE OF THE REGION**

As usual, people from all over Croatia and from abroad gathered in Vukovar to commemorate the 28th anniversary of the town's coming into Serb hands in 1991. This year, the Croatian Parliament adopted a law declaring Vukovar Remembrance Day on November 18 as a national, non-working holiday, a day dedicated to "all victims of the Homeland War". It has caused controversy with the Croatian public because many believe that the point of the holiday is celebration, not mourning.

The anti-war activist group, Women in Black, during a commemoration in the center of Belgrade, said that they wanted to send a message that they never will forget the crimes committed in Vukovar and never will stop supporting the victims and their families in their fight for justice. "We also think that, instead of the shameful unveiling of a memorial plaque to commander of the former JNA forces and associated paramilitary units in the attack on Vukovar and the glorification and rehabilitation of war criminals, Serbia has the obligation to establish who is responsible for killing off a city that became a synonym for the barbaric destruction of cities in war."

Branko Lustig, a Jew originally from Osijek who survived internment in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz, died at the age of 87. As a film producer, Lustig won two Oscars, one of them for 'Schindler's List', which tells the story of a German who saved hundreds of Jews during WWII. He was at the president of Croatia's annual Festival of Tolerance, which is aimed at "fostering critical thinking and the creation of a more tolerant society". The Festival of Tolerance began as the Jewish Film Festival, which was intended to raise awareness about and maintain collective memory of the Holocaust through films and personal testimonies about the WWII concentration camps. Premier Andrej Plenković was at the funeral, as many others from public life. President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović was not there.

While Croatian teachers are continuing to strike for their rights as the unions gave the Croatian Government's recent offer the thumbs down, the situation has escalated and somehow managed to become even more absurd than it was before. The strike seems to be escalating and also seems to be part of the worldwide series of protests, not only for salaries but for other rights.

During its chairmanship of the European Union in the first half of 2020, Croatia will advocate for the continuation of southeast European aspirants' journey, namely the accession of Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Albania to the European Union, as Premier Andrej Plenković finds this important for transformation, peace, and stability in the region.

The first round of the Croatian presidential election will be held on December 22, and a second round on January 5. Until now, it is known that, beside current president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović and Zoran Milanović, who is standing for the SDP, another three candidates will try their luck. Among them are Miroslav Škoro, a popular singer, the controversial judge Mislav Kolakušić, and the economist Dejan Kovač, who is running for president as an independent candidate with the support of the HSLP Party.

In the meantime, irregularities and human rights breaches on the borders of the Balkan countries continue. Recently, the little town Mrkopalj, known for an International School of Peace Education, whose purpose is to intensify the relationship between members of different ethnic groups and to help preserve the cultural heritage, was in focus, because of police shootings of migrants there. The European Commission approved a cooperation agreement between Serbia and the EU border agency “to manage immigration and tackle crime at the EU’s external borders.” According to a recently published Border Violence Monitoring report, at least 1279 migrants, including minors, have been threatened with firearms or shot at before being illegally expelled from Croatia. Humanitarian work is under constant scrutiny. People have been observed monitoring the volunteers’ houses.

As we say very wearily every month in these reports, we continue to be the only organization in the region giving psychological assistance without drugs and without charge and the only organization in the region trying to teach people to assist one another.

We find the work that we are doing now to be extremely important. We will continue for as long as we can, given current circumstances and resources.

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

### Clients

We had six clients this month. The issues are the usual ones, that is abuse as children complicated by the war. Several had issues of self-image. Most showed progress.

### Groups

The group with Snehalaya in India is meeting consistently. They are working on getting the children to do peer counseling. Further, we are carrying out supervision with some of the caregivers. This is going relatively well.

The group in South Africa did not meet this month. It is set to resume in January.

### Supervision

We are working with Alphonse Kanda, a psychiatrist originally from the DR Congo who is working with a variety of different kinds of people in the Johannesburg area. He sees HIV/AIDS clients, migrants, and many poor people. He also teaches logotherapy and medical anthropology.

We also are carrying out supervision with Ivan Maslow in Split.

### Migrant Situation

The migrant situation continues to deteriorate. The conditions for migrants in official and unofficial camps are inhuman. Being a migrant, that is, fleeing from war, torture, and poverty, has become a criminal act, as has assisting migrants. The frontier police of the European Union, Frontex, has joined with the police of virtually every country on both sides of the borders of the European Union to hold back migrants. The national police forces and Frontex have been shown by many human rights organizations to be extremely brutal in their treatment of people, and there have been many people injured and a number killed by them during this month. This is true of virtually everywhere that we can observe.

We must note that several people have been shot in Croatia.

<https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/centar-za-mirovne-studije-nedopustivo-pucati-po-migrantima-sindikata-policije-slucajno-opaljenje-video-20191118>

In Bosnia, the situation can be illustrated by the following link

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2019/11/tackling-bosnia-migrant-crisis-191117075712865.html> .

In Šid, in Serbia, the factory that was a “squat” for the migrants was cleared by the police. The house of the No Name Kitchen volunteers was observed closely. <https://medium.com/are-you-syrious/ays-weekend-digest-23-24-11-19-in-serbia-removing-witnesses-from-the-border-area-d2a60f4a6cd1>

As we have described in previous reports, there is no substantial psychological assistance being given to migrants on a long-term basis by any organization. We see this as a fundamental flaw in policy at a human level and at the level of security. Stating this very directly, we see that the lack of work on psychological trauma is creating a threat of violence because of the frustration of the migrants, aside from it being totally inhuman to do so.

We would like to set up offices at very least in Šid and in Belgrade in Serbia, in the Velika Kladuša-Bihać and Tuzla regions of Bosnia, in several locations in Greece, and elsewhere to work on counseling and to give training to the migrant communities and those assisting them so that they can give one another assistance. We do not have the funds for that.

We continue to cooperate with No Name Kitchen and with Advocates Abroad.

Another issue that we see, and that we have mentioned before in these reports, is the situation of volunteers. They come for short periods of time. This is poor practice for the volunteers and for the migrants. The volunteers get inadequate training, if they get any training at all, they get very little if any psychological supervision, and they get no debriefing. This is a recipe for secondary traumatization and psychological distress later. With regard to the migrants, as we have said in past reports, this means that they are not being dealt with adequately, that they form improper relationships with the volunteers, and they have additional traumas once the volunteers leave.

An additional issue that we are facing is access to the migrants. Again, we note that we would like to set up offices in as many places as possible but do not have the funds to do so.

We are continuing to train a few students from the University of Belgrade online.

The long and the short of this is that we are extremely frustrated and feel powerless to do anything in a situation in which we see people's lives being destroyed and in which we see high levels of inhumanity and incompetence by governments, inter-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. We are convinced that we have the knowledge and the competence to deal with these issues. We are willing to cooperate with virtually any organization and/or individual to assist the migrants and those assisting them.

#### Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET)

We spent some time working on the communication course this month. We expect an alpha version to be finished in the new year

Our request for an ad for someone on the UN Online Volunteering website to make the videos for the first course was approved this month. At the end of the month, we had not yet found someone willing to do it.

#### Miscellaneous

This month marked the 23rd anniversary of the formal registration of the organization in The Netherlands.

We had an electronic meeting with Baroness Arminka Helić, a Bosnian refugee who has strong connections with the British government and the British Conservative Party and is a member of the British House of Lords. She seemed to be sympathetic to what we are doing.

Following up on Charles Tauber's appointment to the scientific committee of the InPACT conference, he received six papers for review. He carried out that work.

We finished and sent our usual annual report for the Friends World Committee European and Middle East Section Peace and Service Consultation.

Further, we received notice that an article for the Dutch Quaker monthly "De Vriendenkring" was accepted. The article, and an English translation of it, are available on our website on <https://www.cwwpp.org/articles-about-and-by-the-cwwpp.html>.

The group of relatives of people with psychiatric diagnoses in Split have asked Charles Tauber to be on their Board.

We have had contact with an excellent psychologist from Ghana with whom we had contact in 2009. He has finished his doctorate. He now is saying that he would like to cooperate with us. He is exploring the ways that we can do that. We welcome that work.

We also have had contact with Amos Malenga of the Evangelical Quakers in Bukavu in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The issues there are very severe. The issue there is funding.

Charles Tauber completed a short course on health care in crisis situations. The course is without charge and may be found at <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/health-crises/12/todo/58278>.

Charles also completed the Duolingo course in Arabic. He now has started on the Living Language course.



We were very discouraged that the International Leadership Association would not provide us with an electronic copy of the book in which our chapter on trauma and peacebuilding is published. We find this an abuse of our good will and of our work.

We feel a great deal of isolation. It is as if we are on another planet, and certainly illustrates different values and vision between the West and the rest of the world.

Finally, we strongly recommend the film "For Sama", which is a documentary produced by Frontline about the situation in Aleppo, Syria, particularly with reference to medical care.

#### **INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

The most significant event this month was that our long-term anonymous US donor told us that he would fund us for another year, taking us into 2021. The funding situation still is serious.

Further, while there were a few repairs necessary to various systems, there was nothing major.

#### **PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS**

We will continue to do what we can.

We will continue to attempt to work with migrants and with any organization that will work with us.

We will continue to work on the PET courses.

In some senses, we dread the coming season, which we see as the height of hypocrisy in the sense that we are supposed to be celebrating the birth of someone who himself was a refugee from the Middle East, who told people to turn the other cheek and not to be violent with one another, and who told people to think of spirituality and humanity and not money. The world, and even those who call themselves Christian, are doing precisely the opposite, in our view. As Tom Lehrer put it in his song, *A Christmas Carol*, "So let the raucous sleighbells jingle, Hail our dear old friend Kris Kringle, driving his reindeer across the sky. Don't stand underneath when they fly by." The complete song may be heard on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtZR3IJobjw> .