



International Conference “Stop Domestic Violence against Women
Ten Years of Austrian Anti-Violence Legislation in the International Context”
within the framework of the campaign of the Council of Europe
“Stop domestic violence against women”
5 and 6 November 2007, Vienna

women's emotions and state policies

a women's organisation against male violence against women from a counsellor's
perspective

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To remind you of where I come from... 15 years ago, when the transformation of the institutional practices of protection of women started in Austria, I was here at the conference organised by the Minister for Women, Johanna Dohnal, *Test the West...* That was in 1992, and there was a war going on in my homeland. Rosa Logar asked me how I was, and I said, *I feel cold all the time*. So she took me to a big store and bought me one of the warmest duvets there. This was the year that brought news of mass rapes in Bosnia and we, as feminists from the “aggressor's state”, had different reactions – in my case, there were moments when I felt cold to the bone. Living in Belgrade, the city where orders were given to kill and rape during the war in what was then Yugoslavia, meant one had to go through the process of realising that *one's own* are fascists. I needed to go through the feelings of fear, helplessness and guilt before I could get up and move for action. This emotional process of dealing with so-called victims' feelings placed me closer to the women with whom I work as a counsellor, and at the same time, moved me directly into the women's anti-war movement¹.

¹ Belgrade *Women in Black Against War* group was founded on the 9th of October, 1991, with the slogan “Against one's own occupying others,” following the model of activists in Israel who started vigils with the slogan STOP THE OCCUPATION in 1988. <http://www.zeneucnom.org>

In that beginning period of the war, I was a feminist activist and a volunteer on the *SOS Hotline* for battered women in Belgrade², together with others organising different activities in order to understand what was going on inside and around us. It was clear that besides the classic *activist guilt*, (guilt that comes from the feeling that, no matter how much an activist does, there is still more injustice to overcome) we also had to deal with *aggressor country guilt*. This meant realising that guilt is a feeling – a feeling I can work through and transform into political action – and that it is a particular phenomenon of collective responsibility about which I need to be concerned. This meant I needed to take a stand about the fact that people in my homeland were subjected to pain and suffering, they were being killed and these crimes were done in my name. This was precisely our practice and politics for many years to come: making our bodies and our resistance publicly visible by standing in Women in Black vigils on a city square with a message “NOT IN OUR NAME”.

Learning that the message from guilt feelings can be transformed into citizens’ courage was a strengthening process. By 1994 feminists in Belgrade had formed a few historic women’s groups to respond to political and women’s needs.³ The Autonomous Women’s Center (AWC) was one of them.

As most of us in the women’s movement were also active in the anti–regime and anti–war movement, one of the on–going discussions in which we were engaged was about the so–called “neutrality” of counsellors vs. our political commitment. Nationalism was rising in its devastating size and feminist organisations were affected as well. In that period, in Croatia and Serbia two service–oriented feminist organisations (the Center for Women War Victims in Zagreb⁴ and the Autonomous Women’s Center) decided to take an explicit non–militarist and non–nationalist stand. It was therefore a daily virtue to keep the AWC a service open to all women (nationalist and non–nationalist), to have a precise political standpoint that meant we held the Serbian government responsible for the war, and at the same time we collaborated with institutions of that same government in relation to common clients. In that period, we learned that the principle *Clients first* is not a principle of

² *SOS Hotline* (original name *SOS telefon za žene i decu žrtve nasilja – SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence*) was founded on the 8th of March, 1990 in Belgrade.

³ Activists from the first feminist group in Belgrade, *Women and Society* (founded 1980), became founders of the *SOS Hotline* in 1990. Soon after the war started, feminists moved in different directions and by 1994 many other groups were formed: *Women’s Parliament*, *Women in Black Against War*, *Center for Women’s Studies* and *Autonomous Women’s Center*.

⁴ During the wartime the Autonomous Women’s Center collaborated with two sister organisations: *Center for Women War Victims*, founded in 1993 by feminists already engaged in the women’s safe house and the *SOS Hotline* in Zagreb, to organise support for women survivors of war and violence, (<http://www.czzzr.hr>); and also with *Medica Zenica – Women’s Therapy Center*, founded that same year in Bosnia and Herzegovina, (<http://www.medica.org.ba>).

institutions of nation-states. For them, *Nation first* meant that national interests preceded needs of clients’.

In 1994 two counsellors of AWC made a visit to the psychiatric hospital in Belgrade in order to offer support for a few women raped in war who were their clients. The chief psychiatrist's answer was NO. Psychiatrists kept women raped in war far away from us - 'national traitors' - in order to keep the survivors as token evidence in international politics that Serbian women are also raped in war. Later we learned that this same chief psychiatrist photocopied and distributed the medical dossiers of rape survivors to foreign journalists (!), but would not allow the support of volunteers from non-governmental organisations.

These few images are an introduction to understanding how the war in the region shaped the experience, knowledge and politics of a feminist organisation in Belgrade during the 1990s.

15 years of the Autonomous Women's Center

The Autonomous Women's Center was founded in 1993 by feminist activists and volunteers of the SOS Hotline in Belgrade. This was the first women's center with a safe space for counselling in Belgrade. In the beginning, services were adapted to the huge needs of refugees and women survivors of the war. During this period, the activists were developing hotline support and ways of counselling professionally, and also were active in street demonstrations against the Serbian regime and against war. As I mentioned, there was almost no collaboration with state institutions at this time, and by 1999 the Milosevic regime was definitely not accepting non-governmental organisations, (sending financial police to NGOs), and *vice-versa*. Nevertheless the Center was growing, and it now has 22 staff members and more than 20 regular associates in three teams.

After the political changes, in 2002, the activists and counsellors of the AWC divided the Centre's activities into two main groups: those focusing to elaborate the educational and lobbying means to facilitate working with the state, now that such cooperation was finally possible, and those continuing to develop counselling and therapy as a means to facilitate changes in individual women. This *division of labour* among activists of the Center means that on one side AWC works on growing as a service provider, and on the other on increasing the protection of women through state institutions, laws and public documents.

Before I go further in presenting the AWC, here in Vienna, in the context of the ten years of the Austrian model, I need to say that feminists–activists have become counsellors–experts in Belgrade by learning and using the shared knowledge of many other feminist centers in the world, and I will now mention some. For me it is crucial to remind ourselves that we learn from others, and that is exactly one of the reasons why we are at this conference.

In the first phase after starting AWC, we had regular trainings and advice for a decade with experts from the Rape Crisis Center *Against Our Will*⁵ from Holland, and many other therapists from the USA, Germany, Australia and other countries. We were translating historic manuals from the Washington DC Rape Crisis Center and London Women’s Aid and many indispensable essays of feminist theoreticians⁶. After the overthrow of the regime in 2000, a few AWC activists were inspired by the community–based intervention programme of the Duluth Model and by the Austrian Model of protection in family. In 2006 the AWC translated an essay that Rosa Logar had presented to the UN in order to distribute it to participants in our training programmes.⁷ Staff in most of the state institutions had been highly neglected, isolated geographically, politically, as well professionally during the Milosevic regime – therefore, offering a brochure with Austrian experience as a gift was a political act of respecting them with dignity, giving them the chance to be informed professionals and citizens.

Facilitating change of state institutions and documents

The AWC teams started in 2002 to work on strengthening institutions to work with women who have survived violence in the family, first with community health centers that still are part of the state–organized service. Soon the collaboration enlarged to include social work centers, as well the Ministry of Social Affairs and Politics, then the Ministry of Health and later police and judicial systems.

⁵ The Dutch government financed the organisation *Admira* to create a programme through which the best feminist therapists and experts trained counsellors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia from 1994 to 2005. The experts who trained activists in AWC were: Gerda Aarnink, Anja Muelenbelt, Ingrid Foeken, Gunille Klieverda, Sylvia Borren, Els Auberg, Marlies Bosch, Marlies Manesse.

⁶ Diana Russell, Donna Hughes, Andrea Dworkin, Judith L. Herman, Ellen Bass, Laura Davis.

⁷ On June 28, 2007 Rosa Logar and Sylvia Taller were key speakers in an historic, magnificent all–day event, “Austrian model of intervention in cases of violence in family”, organised by the AWC and held in the building of the parliament of Former Yugoslavia, where 400 representatives of social work centers, police, community health centers and jurisprudence institutions filled the parliamentary hall. Each guest received a copy of the booklet about the Austrian Model.

Here the AWC was faced with different issues: institutions had, and still have, different levels of motivations for education on violence against women. Second, they have different attitudes toward women's non-governmental organisations, ranging from respect and praise (rarely) to negation of our expertise (more often). Since there is still no National Plan of Action for Violence Against Women, collaboration of non-governmental organisations with governmental institutions is sporadic and depends on individual personalities of decision makers and their political will.

I will now list the most important aims & successes of the Autonomous Women's Center in influencing change of state institutions and their policies in relation to violence in the family.

- Since 2002 organising education for professionals in primary health care and social work centers in recognizing, documenting and providing adequate services to women who are exposed to violence: trainings done in 16 Belgrade counties and 10 others in Serbia.

Example: The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy accredited the AWC team in 2008 for education of social work centers in Serbia on violence against women.

- Facilitating the elaboration of concrete documents of work in the above mentioned institutions for accepting standards and protocols. Protocols of work have been specifically outlined, published and distributed for primary health practitioners, social work centers and police.

Example: The Ministry of Health has accepted the *Protocol in the Primary Health Care for Treating*

Women with Experience of Violence in Partnership shaped by the AWC team and invited AWC to be in the Implementation Working Group for this protocol (2008).

- Facilitating the introduction of data collection systems and documenting violence in social work centers and community health centers.

Example: In the 16 counties in Belgrade, social work centers have been introduced to an electronic database system (computers, expert support, data programme – provided by AWC) that enables a formation of a statistical picture of the characteristics of violence and the intervention of professionals.

- Developing a model of coordinated action in the local community as a means of prevention of violence against women in 9 counties (5 counties–towns, and 4 Belgrade counties).

Example: AWC supported development of a model of cooperation in Lazarevac (one of Belgrade's

16 counties) which became a model of good practice: they carry out permanent collaboration

between county government and social work center, police and community health center. As

part of their commitment, the social work center organises case-conferences and has developed a

Mobile Team for Violence in Family (on call 24h).

- Permanent pressure on decision makers on national and local levels to create the state policy documents, laws and to standardise the protocols and procedures on protection of violence.

Example: In 2007 AWC organised discussions on the protection practices in Serbia and formulated a list of recommendations to the Ministry of Justice for improvement of the articles in the Criminal Law and Family Law concerning violence in the family.

- From 2006, motivating judges and prosecutors to consider seriously the theme of violence against women by organising round table discussions, professional seminars, researches and public discussions in order to equalise the judicial practice.

Example: The biggest improvement has been seen among judges in family courts in Belgrade in who have issued orders of protection measures even in cases where economic and psychological violence was recognised, without evidence of physical violence.

- Monitoring of law implementation on the protection of women survivors of violence.

Example: Three years of research on monitoring criminal charges for violence in the family⁸, in 529 cases in Belgrade and Nis, showed that 30% of cases were dismissed by the public prosecutor after a prosecution process lasting around four months. Of those cases that actually went before the court, 60% of perpetrators got suspended sentences and 20% effective prison punishment⁹.

⁸ The Law on Amendments to Criminal Law of Republic of Serbia, passed in 2002, defined violence in the family as a criminal act for the first time in Serbia. Article 194 provides for punishment of perpetrators of family violence with a fine or imprisonment up to one year (Note: it is only *one* year!)

⁹ Research under the title: "Violence in family as criminal offence: legal practice in Republic of Serbia" was done during two periods: 2002 – 2003, and 2006 – 2007. The researchers were feminist law professors from the University of Niš: Slobodanka Konstatinović Vilić and Nevena Petrušić.

- Active involvement in creating national documents: National Action Plan for Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Gender Equality (2007–2010), National Action Plan for Preserving and Promoting Women’s Health in Republic of Serbia (2005–2010), Alternative (Shadow) Report according to the CEDAW (2007), General Protocol for the Protection of Child Abuse and Neglect (2007).

Local and international networking, research and strengthening women’s movement

AWC is active in prevention campaigns, research, networking and strengthening the women’s movement. I will note some of the most important aims & successes of the work in these fields:

- Research conducted by the AWC in Belgrade, a sampling of 1,456 women, as a component of the World Health Organization (WHO) survey “The WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women” (2005), showed that *One in four women suffers physical and/or sexual violence*, and *One in three women experiencing violence suffers injuries*¹⁰.
- Supporting and facilitating the local communities to be involved in the Council of Europe campaign *Stop Violence in Family Against Women*, 2007/2008. The response amounted to the participation of 10 city government-counties, Belgrade county, as well as the City of Belgrade Department of Social Affairs, and the local government of the autonomous region of Vojvodina.
- Since 2001, coordinating the national campaign for *16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women* each year by pointing out the accountability of the state, engaging approximately 30 to 50 women’s organisations which carry out street actions in their towns, printing from 30,000 to 50,000 leaflets, distributing radio jingles for 50 to 100 media presentations.
- Initiating and supporting transfer of information, knowledge and skills to the local *Network Violence Against Women* of women’s organisations working with women survivors of violence in Serbia. This Network includes 35 women’s

¹⁰ “23% of ever-partnered women reported having suffered physical violence, and 6% sexual violence by an intimate partner; 4% had experienced such violence during the past 12 months; 30% of the women who had experienced physical violence by their partners reported having been injured.”

<http://www.womenngo.org.yu/publikacije-azc/istrazivanje-zdravlje.pdf>

organisations, mainly SOS Hotlines and safe houses for battered women (8)¹¹. Most of them are small activist organisations with enthusiasm and few resources.

- Since 2006, organising peer-support education and raising awareness of students in Belgrade University regarding the need for protection from gender-based violence, through educational and peer discussion workshops, motivating self-organising.
- Since 2007, AWC has been a focal point – *Civil Society Contact Organisation* – for 48 women’s non-governmental organisations in the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Serbia: strengthening women’s organisations to be visible in civil society and influential in government planning (through annual ministerial plan)¹².
- Moderating the women’s e-mail list (*zenskaposla*) with more than 440 addresses of activists throughout Serbia, feminists, professional women advocating women’s human rights and others, with an exchange of approximately 5 to 15 e-mail messages daily (in 2007 there were 3,091 messages).

Facilitating change of individual women – service provision

Over the course of 15 years, the Autonomous Women’s Center has managed to develop different services in order to respond in the best ways possible to women who have survived male violence. Since state institutions were offering no specific support for women, the non-governmental organisations had to cover the various needs of women surviving all different types of violence: in the family, sexual violence, sexual abuse of children, rape in war, sex-trafficked women, and others. The AWC works

¹¹ Women war survivors asked not to use the word “shelter” for battered women because it re-traumatizes them with memories of wartime and shelters in protection from the shelling and bombs.

¹² http://www.womenngo.org.yu/images/dopis_mapa_11-11-07.pdf – Resource Map of women’s organisations in Serbia gives a picture of resources available through the women’s movement.

with adult women and covers most of their needs for counselling and legal rights, except the need for shelter¹³.

In order to give you a general idea, in the year of 2007, AWC provided 5,216 services for about 2,000 women,¹⁴ which means that, on the average, each woman uses approximately 2.5 services.

TOTAL SERVICES AWC 2007	
Type	Sum
■ SOS Hotline counselling	1,670
■ SOS legal counselling	1,250
■ Individual counselling	1,530
■ E-mail counselling	220
■ Lawyer counselling	292
■ Court representations	70
■ Self-help group sessions	144
■ Conference case advocacy	40
Total	5,216

- **SOS Hotline and individual counselling** is done by specially trained counsellors using feminist principles of empowering women.
- **SOS Hotline legal counselling** is done by young lawyers over the telephone, particularly about the Criminal Law (2002) and measures of protection in the Family Law (2006).
- **Self-help groups** proved to be a great means of empowerment, as it has been shown from the early years of the women's movement. The groups are lead by

¹³ This year there are 8 safe houses for battered women in Serbia (7.6 million inhabitants). In 2006 a media campaign was launched in support of a Safe house in Belgrade, after which the city government, as well as other institutions allocated some money for its functioning and for building another safe house.

¹⁴ It is still difficult to state the exact number of clients because separate database for different services are not yet synchronized.

trained *experts of experience*¹⁵, for women surviving violence in partnership (groups for sexual violence still need to be formed¹⁶).

- **E-mail counselling** and support started in 2006, an excellent tool for women who use the Internet.¹⁷ The future plan includes moderating an e-mail forum for survivors.
- **Court representation and lawyer's counselling** are done by lawyers who are trained to work with traumatised women. The legal support is done for cases involving criminal charges against perpetrators in the family, and for family protection measures. In 2007, court representations were made 70 times in 27 court proceedings for 22 women.
- **Participation of AWC counsellors in Conference cases for violence in family** in the social work centers (from 2006). The AWC counsellor serves as support of the woman survivor of violence and monitors the process, in order to make sure that the case managing is done in the women's best interest, given that institutions still do not act on women's needs, but often stereotype women in patriarchal roles.

■ **Inventing profession of feminist counsellors in Serbia**

The main success of the Counselling team of the Autonomous Women's Center has been in making "counselling of women survivors of violence" a profession. The counsellors' work is based on knowledge of the women's mental health movement and feminist principles in counselling. Given that there are no institutional educational programs to prepare professionals for working with survivors of violence trauma, the AWC team has used the experience of long-term knowledge acquired from feminist therapists and counsellors to create its own training programme. This training programme lasts up to one year of theoretical and practical learning in order to become a counsellor. Presently, AWC has ten counsellors and five apprentice-counsellors.

¹⁵ *Experts of experience* are women survivors of violence who themselves have gone through the self-help groups.

¹⁶ In the region, the only other women's organizations working on sexual violence are: *Incest trauma center*, Belgrade, <http://www.incesttraumacentar.org.yu>, and in Croatia: *Women's Room*, Zagreb, <http://www.zenskasoba.hr/>

¹⁷ Most of the time e-mail counselling address is found on the AWC web site, that has 12 hits a day from 5 to 10 minutes long – the most frequented women's web site in Serbia.

Recently, two dimensions of work have been discussed among the counsellors in the team:

■ Affirmative action as restructuring emotional order of oneself

When we talk about affirmative action as a feminist principle, we usually mean the politics of a certain organisation or institution toward supporting women facing multiple discriminations. The AWC has a history of advocating affirmative action measures from its founding when we insisted on working with women of all ethnic names raped in war¹⁸. An addition, the AWC database has showed from the beginning that about half of clients are coming from double discriminated groups, most of them being Roma women, emotionally intense and psychiatrised women, poor, foreign women, women with disabilities, etc.

Lately, discussions have moved further to include the personal changes each activist and counsellor has to make in order to understand multiple discriminations. Affirmative action can be understood as the choice one makes in one's own mental and emotional space in order to understand and affirm an experience of women/clients who belong to discriminated groups. This means choosing to experience the Other: to meet, to encounter women who belong to the discriminated groups we do not belong to. This encounter can bring experience as well as knowledge important for counsellors, so that they will be able to not make their one's own reference group assumptions (cultural, class, national, race, etc.), but to be open, collaborative and understanding of the ways in which the Other understands herself, with the interpretation map she has from her own reference group and herself alone.

Affirmative action is therefore understood as a process of restructuring emotional order in oneself. It is an individual decision that is important for the professional attitude and is supported by the team. This means that the strategic planning of the Counselling team includes encounters with women's groups from different discriminated populations¹⁹. The Counselling team therefore takes a stand that working through one's own emotional patterns is the beginning of the knowledge of ourselves that can bring change in our relations to others, in our deconstructions of patriarchal control of power in ourselves. This is how affirmative action can be used,

¹⁸ The principles of work are documented in the *Politics of Work of AWC* in 2000.

¹⁹ In 2007 Counselling team organised exchange visits to women's groups: *...Out of the Circle, Organization for protection of rights and support of women with disabilities* (<http://www.izkruga.org/>) and *ASTRA- Anti Trafficking Action* (<http://www.astra.org.yu/>), the future plan includes Roma women's group in Belgrade.

as a politics of relationship that implies particular effort in enlarging our own experience.

Affirmative action understood this way is therefore not only a set of standards the women's organisation formulates in order to offer more chances to women who did/do not have a chance to have those conditions in terms of accessibility, extra trainings, working hours, and other decisions, but also a decision to work on our personal emotional order, in order to understand and hear women from other discriminated groups than ours.

■ Feminist ethics of care

Feminist ethics of care has different meanings depending on the context,²⁰ but basically it starts from overcoming the patriarchal, dualistic gender–role division given in the culture where men should take care of themselves only, and women of others only. Feminist ethic of care is therefore based on the concept of caring for oneself and of others equally -- as an individual choice and as a citizen's responsibility.

This concept is especially important in relation to counselling and other service–care professions, when the profession itself involves offering care to others. Women in these professions face a dual role, caring for others in their work as well as those at home. The outcome, we know, is burn out²¹ and if we go more specifically to long–term service providers the outcome is – institutional violence. In the service providing institutions, institutional violence implies two common reactions: ignoring the needs of clients or/and being constantly angry at clients.²² Furthermore, institutional violence re–traumatises survivors of violence. It is therefore crucial for all service–providing professions to include ethics of care of workers as part of their work policy. This clearly means: we choose to take care of our own mental and emotional well–being of care providers in order that we are capable of caring for others. This further means, that emotions of workers are taken seriously. It is a historic decision for every

²⁰ Feminist ethics of care in relation to responsibility of citizens, Selma Sevenhuisen, *Citizenship and the Ethics of Care* (NY: Routledge, 1998); in relation to transitional justice, Stasa Zajovic, *Transitional Justice – A Feminist Approach*, (BG: Women in Black, 2007), Joan Tronto in relation to critics of liberal politics, Nira Yuval Davis in relation to politics of belonging, etc.

²¹ During the ten years of totalitarian regime in Serbia (1990–2000), employees in social work centers, police units, courts and health institutions had low salaries, received no specialised training, and most of them were exposed to widespread corruption in the system. Due to this history of systematic structural neglect of their professions, their exhaustion and burnout is very high.

²² Poulin, J. & Walter, C. (1993). *Social worker burnout: A longitudinal study*. *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, 29(4), 5–11.

organisation that makes such a stand, because historically emotions are devaluated as belonging to the “female world”, while every stand on rights and efficiency of organisation is valuated, as it is coming from the “male world”. It is therefore a feminist stand to value equally workers’ rights as well as their emotions, and moving the concept of justice to include both of them.

The AWC Counselling team has made initial decisions on its own standards of feminist ethics of care in counselling work. To start it is individual supervision with a psychotherapist (on a monthly basis), intervision²³ with colleagues (on daily basis) and case management discussions during on the weekly team bases. In addition to this, another feminist organisation, Žene na delu²⁴, runs special bodywork seminars, “We place ourselves first,” dedicated to lessening burn-out of activists working in the field of violence against women.²⁵

At the end: perspective of a feminist counsellor

What have I learned? – that an important dimension of our work is validation of the experience of trauma. In order for a woman to overcome trauma, she needs me, she needs another person whom she can trust and who wants to listen.

A society -- and that means me as a citizen -- has a responsibility of listening to the other, to my neighbour, or to a woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Kosova, where soldiers who killed her family wore uniforms *Made in Serbia*. And we have some different layers here. It is particularly healing for survivors to be able to tell their story to people belonging to the group of perpetrators/aggressors. This means, for example, that for women who have been victimised by Serbian solders, it is of special meaning to be heard by someone like me who is a member of the Serbian state. If I listen, if I believe, understand her pain and say I am sorry for the crimes done in my name; if I feel the depth of my experience of asking for apology for what the Serbian regime has done in my name, in me and in the woman I talk to, if she touches my heart – then she has a chance to feel she is heard, to feel her pain has been recognised, and after that she has a possibility to regain trust in others. She has a

²³ *Intervision* is a term used for checking emotional responses of counsellors after their sessions, among counsellors on duty.

²⁴ *Women at work (Žene na delu)* is a feminist organisation in Belgrade that, among other projects, organises seminars with bodywork in order to prevent or heal burn-out of activists working in the field of violence. <http://zenergija.org/>

²⁵ Mental health care of women human rights defenders was discussed in the "Defending women defending rights: international consultation on women human rights defenders" conference in Sri Lanka, 2005.

<http://defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/>

chance to let go of the hatred that has been charged in her body. Many times in my life, these encounters ended up in embraces and common joy. Warm tears also.²⁶

Along a similar line are testimonies recounting the experiences of men against violence against women. The impact of those men who take collective responsibility and say yes, other men have done crimes as men, therefore in our name, and we are sorry – we shall talk about that soon.

If we look at the governmental/state institutions in relation to this first of all principles of counselling work: it is the state through its institutions which has to trust the experience of survivors. Patriarchal systems do not believe women. This has been a basis of misogyny for millennia. Therefore we all have a long work to do to unfold and reframe patriarchal standards and to trust in women's experiences. A woman victim/survivor needs laws and services that will listen, trust her words and that will confirm her pain. This is equally true for women in wartime and for women on my street. This means that all the institutions created up to now and those that we have yet to create, laws, protection measures, national action plans -- these all serve, among other functions, to give traumatised women and men a confirmation that: *yes the crime happened and yes it was inflicted upon you, and we know it and this is what we shall do as a consequence*. This validation of a terror, a confirmation of a most intimate pain in our lives, is a need of our existence, it gives matrix for the meaning of our lives. At the same time, this validation of personal pain is the first act of a public justice.

This therefore means that laws, courts, international and local documents, protocols, standards, UN resolutions and other mechanisms are there as well in order to lessen the traumatic pain, to support healing of survivors in order that they can grow, overcome pain and become honourable citizens of this society. This also means that state institutions need to find measures through which to hear survivors' stories, to find ways to honour them for sharing their very personal experience, before other measures of justice are applied. Because the first measure of justice is listening with trust. It is, yes, because of the safety of women that we need all possible measures of protection and jurisprudence, and, yes of course we need all of the mentioned institutions because of the rule of law and the attempt to believe in democracy, but

²⁶ *Women's Peace Coalition* was formed in 2006 with activists of the *Women in Black Network in Serbia* and *Kosova Women's Network*, in order to strengthen collaboration, women's solidarity and women as dynamic actors in peace movements. *Women in Black* have taken many actions with the feminist approach to transitional justice, one of them being: *Asking for apology for the crimes done in our name*. I am proud to say that many of us in the last forty years of the women's movement have used passion for other women in opening and revaluing differences in society in order to lessen the misogyny of this world.

http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=199&Itemid=54

their function on the personal level is crucial, and that is the function of validation of injustice experienced through traumatic feelings. If her pain is not acknowledged by a perpetrator, which we cannot expect, then the acknowledgment of the crime and of her emotions as consequence of this crime, must be the function of the state.

A good implementation of a law takes permanent account of the dimension of mental health of a victim/witness: is she heard in a court, is she is taken care of through witness protection procedures, is she not confronted with a perpetrator if that might be retraumatizing for her, and so on. And, if the perpetrator is declared guilty, she has a confirmation from the state that, yes, an injustice was done to her. This act of a public acknowledgment of guilt serves to enlarge mentally healthy dimensions in her life: *Healing Wounded People* is one of the three reasons for the formation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as Richard Goldstone has pointed out.²⁷ Healing is justice: If the standardised procedures are adapted to a survivor's needs, that means the state is taking care of her emotions. What does this mean? That in the process of making more democratic courts, laws and protocols, we are taking seriously the emotional lives of survivors. This means we are finally reordering patriarchal values: Emotional reactions become equally valuable as rational acts: The pain of a survivor becomes equally important quest for justice, as any other material evidence of injustice. Because traumatic experience *per se* is injustice for the world. The personal therefore is validated as the political, as a need of the state to act upon – this is how we move closer to a notion of a feminist state.

This essay is outcome of joint work of feminists of the Autonomous Women's Center and sisterly support for editing English from Shebar Windstone and Laurence Hovde.

²⁷ Richard Goldstone, first Prosecutor of the ICTY, in his speech *War Crimes: Healing Wounded People*, given at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, on the 27th of January 1997.