



Youth Initiative for Human Rights **Inicijativa mladih za ljudska prava**

Report about the incident at the vigil of Women in Black—in marking the ninth anniversary of the genocide at Srebrenica

“All of you should be hanged, slaughtered, skinned...”

Facts

On July 10th at 7 o'clock on the Republic Square in Belgrade, a vigil was held to mark the ninth anniversary of the genocide at Srebrenica, participation in which was invited by non-governmental organization Women in Black. Around fifty human rights activists attended the gathering. Even though the vigil was correctly registered on time, the police did not do enough to prevent incidents and bring to justice those who were violating the human dignity of protest participants, openly threatening and shouting, and denying the massacre at Srebrenica.

State organs are obligated to ensure the right to free thought and expression of all citizens, so that all who violate this right and threaten the security of citizens are dealt with according to the appropriate law regulations.

How did it begin?

A few minutes before 7 o'clock, one woman dressed in a dark dress with a black hat, and with a photograph of a young man hanging around her neck, approached and asked Women in Black activist Ljilja Radovanovic: “Why are you wearing black?” The activist was taken by surprise, and didn't answer the question. She was then hit between the legs by the women. Ljilja Radovanovic withdrew and then was again slapped in the head by the women.

Then the same woman attacked Cica Marjanovic, slapped Slavica Stojanovic, and hit Stasa Zajovic in the jaw, threatening: “Why are you wearing black, all of you should be hanged and slaughtered. My son was killed!”

Three policemen prevented the woman from continuing the violence. Protest participants were standing in the space between the café “Inex” and the clock on the square, since at the same time on the Republic Square a concert for “Belgrade Peace Festival” was taking place as well as an ice-cream promotion.

A group of about fifteen women and men, who were standing near the clock, began to shout insults: “Foreign payees!”, “Traitors”, “Traitors of the fatherland to the Tribunal!”, and then continued the threats: “We are preparing a lamppost for you”, “We are remembering all of you, we have a solution for you!” In the meantime, the group began to grow larger and began to protest louder and more brutally, shouting chauvinistic, nationalistic, and misogynistic slogans such as “Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic live, and blessed be their golden hands!” “Slobodan Milosevic lives, General Pavkovic lives!” and “Sljivancanin lives!” then “This is Serbia—It’s not nice to betray the fatherland, if you are Serbs then you are traitors, and if not, then you’re not respecting our hospitality.” At the same time, they were singing the songs “Who says that Serbia is small is lying”, “Hey Duke Sindjelic” and “Belgrade” (Svetlana Raznjatovic’s song, widow of Zeljko Raznjatovic, aka Arkan). The songs were finished with the swears and words “Arkan lives, so if he is alive he would show you” and “Seselj lives, and all other Serbian heroes!”

(Non)reaction of the police, lynching and open threats

The police didn’t react to the threats, and let the group of radical citizens continue to humiliate those gathered to mark the Srebrenica massacre. The police separated several of the young men from the group and took their information, but did not intervene in reaction to the open threats.

One older man was talking with one of the police officers that was standing behind the protesters. The officer then moved, making it possible for the man to enter the circle of activists. Entering the circle, the man began to threaten: “I warn all present that the next of your vigils, which is shaming and humiliating the Serbian spirit and all holy Serbian lands, will be baptized with a clash and you will all be skinned alive. Never again will something like this be repeated. Traitors deserve the worst punishment—remember well what we have said!”

Following these threats, participants of the vigil were surrounded and verbally attacked. About ten police officers formed a living wall between the activists and the

group of radical nationalists. Participants of the vigil were unable to continue with their planned protest walk. They heard the new threat “Come on, step outside of your circle and there will be no saving you.” A woman in a black hat and a white dress threatened: “This is outrageous, that the traitors can publicly gather and we aren’t doing anything to them—this won’t be possible again.” Another woman was vulgarly cursing and insulting the women who were carrying banners.

A young man, wearing a yellow shirt with the slogan “Association of War Veterans 1990—Zemun”, was agreeing with another young man as to who was going to lynch the participants after the protest. Another woman was insulting Edina Veljovic from Youth Initiative for Human Rights who was protesting with Women in Black: “You are dried out from drugs and an immoral life, you must be gay” and then she was vulgarly swearing at the Women in Black activists, calling them “Muslim whores.” Drinka Gojkovic, director of the Documentation Center [Wars 1991-1999] was insulted by the same woman, who said “Drinka, Muslim whore, you are spreading AIDS gotten from the Muslims throughout Belgrade—because of that, we are going to put you on a lamppost; twelve members of my family had their throats slit.” The young man in the yellow shirt began to threaten again: “Junkie, you are using cocaine because you are living from Soros’s money—since you forget where you are, we are going to teach you, the whole night is in front of us.” Vera Vujosevic, journalist from *Republika*, was unable to photograph the gathered mass, and one of the women from the crowd threatened her and tried to take her camera.

After an hour, as long as the protest had been planned to last, the activists sat in the outdoor café of “Inex”. The gathering of hooligans was shouting “We aren’t going anywhere, we are waiting here for a concert, and so we can have you for dessert” and sat on the benches next to the café.

After forty minutes the radical group had not dispersed, and so the activists decided to set off in groups in order to lessen the chance of an attack, with police officers accompanying some of them. Near the movie theater Balkan, the hooligans threw stones at one of the groups secured by police. In order to protect themselves from the radical citizens, the protesters found taxis, and the police secured the activists until the last one had been placed in a car.