



Centar za građansko obrazovanje
Centre for civic education

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JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS MUST BE A PRIORITY

On the occasion of the acquittal ICTY Appeals Chamber made in case against Croatian generals Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac, Centre for Civic Education (CCE) recalls that the establishment of justice for the victims after the wars in the former Yugoslavia has to be a priority. Also, regardless of the epilogue of this process, it is not acceptable to allow that committed crimes remain tragedies without proper closure.

During Operation “Oluja”, thousands of houses and other buildings were burned, while almost half of the number of refugees is still waiting to return to areas from which they left. Irrespective of the Appeals Chamber judgment in the case against Gotovina and Markac, families of victims have a moral right to expect perpetrators of the tragedy to be punished.

CCE reminds that according to the data collected by various international organizations, after the Croatian military operations in the former Sectors West, North and South in the summer of 1995 approximately 200 000 Croatian Serbs fled, mainly to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries of the former Yugoslavia. **Epilogue of the trial in the case of Gotovina and Markac, has just once more showed that war crimes trials are the only legal but not a sufficient instrument for establishment of the transitional justice, and they are quite often missing the essence - which is to achieve justice for the victims.**

It is very doubtful that war crimes as such are not mentioned in this judgment, and it seems like the verdict minimizes crimes, reducing them to isolated incidents. That is unacceptable and doesn't support those efforts that are being implemented in the region in order to finalize the process of dealing with the past in an effective manner.

Therefore, CCE emphasize that in the coming period, Croatian judiciary will face a serious challenge in terms of prosecutions for war crimes. At the same time, on civil society in Croatia, as well as in other countries of the former Yugoslavia, remains the responsibility to persist in establishing additional mechanisms that will lead to the indispensable justice for the victims.

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