

Report

Roundtable

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE PREVENTION OF MASS ATROCITY CRIMES

The Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities in cooperation with the International Visegrad Fund and the Central European University organized the Roundtable that took place as a Pre-event of the VII. Budapest Human Rights Forum in the premises of the Central European University on 19 November, 2014. (The program of the event is attached.)

Opening the floor, Dr. **Gyorgy Tatar**, Chair at the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, highlighted the significance of education in preventing mass atrocity crimes. He pointed to the commitment of the Budapest Centre to increasing the international efforts in this field, with a special view to the cooperation of the Visegrad Group in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dr. Jon **Greenwald**, Visiting Professor at SPP/CCNR, Central European University, underlined the importance of education in post conflict environments. He said diplomacy is always preferred but the first and best defense against atrocity crimes can be found in education and knowledge sharing.

In his welcome speech, Dr. **Tamas Kuntar**, Deputy Head of the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, suggested the need to make space for dialogue and exchange of ideas also by supporting initiatives as those promoted by the Budapest Centre. Education has a central role in many aspects of mass atrocity prevention and next year, at the 10th anniversary of the World Summit Outcome, the international community will have the opportunity to cross-check the achievements. The Hungarian Government is deeply committed to and involved in the culture of prevention and the implementation of the principle of R2P. The Government of Hungary supports all non-governmental initiatives on the issue.

Ferenc Jari, representing the International Visegrad Fund, stressed the importance of regional organizations in supporting cooperation between countries, helping to build regional identity. The Visegrad region, he said, had a long and tragic history of crimes such as hate incitement and racial discriminations. There are also national stereotypes that complicate the issue. The aim of the Visegrad Fund is to strengthen internal cohesion and to support neighboring countries to achieve their goals: stability, democracy and integration. The Visegrad Fund recognizes the role played by the Budapest Centre, which stands for educating the young generations about tolerance, respect and non-discrimination. Using the tool of dialogue, it is possible to generate action and open discussion, which could lead to recommendations and suggestions for addressing the situation in neighboring countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina where there is the need for resilience.

1st Panel

Mr. **Mario Buil-Merce**, Political Affairs Officer at the Office of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, opened the discussion by mentioning that the United Nations published a number of documents on education with a special focus on educational trainings and prevention to promote and understand democracy and tolerance between different groups.

It is important to work on education under different perspectives such as education ABOUT-THROUGH-FOR Human Rights. He underlined the importance of the key components of the 2014 Secretary General Report on R2P, in particular of pillar 2 that also includes the assistance in education.

He pointed to three operational tasks in education and mass atrocity prevention in comparison with the education for Human Rights:

1. Need to define what is working and what is not working within the UNESCO/UN cooperation on education;
2. Conduct consultation among policy makers on education;
3. Share experience and best practices on concrete operational challenges such as school curricula

Mr. Buil-Merce concluded that we should know exactly who must be educated (find the target group) and what the risk factors for mass atrocities crimes are (understand the topic).

Ambassador Istvan Lakatos, Deputy Permanent Observer of the Council of Europe to the United Nations in Geneva presented the role and the activities of the CoE regarding education in the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. He emphasized that the CoE has a long history of education. As an example he pointed to the European Culture Convention being in force since 1955. Ambassador Lakatos restated the idea that education is one of the best tools to fight racial discrimination and discrimination in general. A clear example of that is the role of education within the CoE programme on democratic citizenship. According to Mr. Lakatos, besides providing skills, education could also be a tool to help people take stance in human rights issues. Furthermore, he highlighted the role that history has in the educational system in general and in relation to education and mass atrocity crimes. History itself has different sides: the interpretation of an event, the deconstruction of stereotypes and the building of a shared history. He concluded by the positive experience of the CoE on the role of history and education in the Cyprus project, which triggered a historical dialogue on the situation in Cyprus.

Mrs. **Zuzana Dorazilová**, Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs, European Commission, presented the EU activities in the field of education and mass atrocity crimes. She highlighted the EU action against racism and xenophobia in the 2010 EU Report in which the EU member states focused on the crucial role of trainings and education in sensitizing countries suffering from totalitarian regimes.

Mr. **Kuntar Palmer**, Head of Human Dimension Department of OSCE Mission to BiH explained how OSCE in BiH, took the leadership and the responsibility for improving and implementing the educational system. He underlined the challenges faced by BiH authorities with regard to the educational system in the last decade.

In the course of discussion the BiH participants made critical comments on the role and effectiveness of the international organizations within their society.

2nd Panel

Mrs. **Agnese Osztolykan**, former Member of the Hungarian Parliament, opened the discussion by elaborating some challenges of the Roma issue in Hungary and the integration problem they are still facing. She underlined that, when talking about integration, it is fundamental to distinct national and international levels. Furthermore, when analyzing situations at national level, one needs to assess situations at local/community level due to the differences between rural areas. Based on her personal experience, she finds that the situation of Romas did not change, even deteriorated in Hungary since the change of regime in 1989 because the Roma community is not strong and well organized enough. Partly, that is why the segregation of the Roma minority remains deep even concerning education and access to education.

Mrs. **Elizabeth White**, Research Director of US Holocaust Memorial Museum presented the activities of the US Holocaust Museum on education as a tool to prevent genocide. She shortly briefed the audience on the project of the Museum to counter hate speech. She emphasized the fact that there are many actors (judges, lawyers, security forces and civil servants) whom we have to sensitize on the challenges and prevention. She suggested to expand education and prevention far beyond the classrooms by using a variety of tools for sharing knowledge of history, past atrocities and prevention. She underlined that the knowledge could be effectively shared only by working in the field and knowing local problems and challenges.

Dr. **Marialaura Marinozzi**, researcher at Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities highlighted four fundamental rights that should be taken into account when talking about education and prevention of mass atrocity crimes:

1. The right to know,
2. The right to justice,
3. The right to reparation, public knowledge and recognition,
4. The guarantee of non-recurrence that includes the obligation to end impunity at the national and international level.

According to her, dialogue plays a crucial role in reducing the impact of warning signs, such as hate speech. Thus, it is fundamental to promote dialogue as a tool and teach people a new way of thinking about stereotypes, ethnicity, differences and tolerance. To that end, it is necessary to increase empathy among human beings and encourage those who are willing to speak out their dissent. Marinozzi concluded by saying that countering hate speech and promoting dialogue is a big challenge, especially in divided societies.

Mrs. **Krisztina Lakatos**, Head of the Education Department at the Holocaust Memorial Center based in Budapest, presented the activities of the Center by focusing on the activities in the field. She underlined that it is difficult to capture the attention of the younger generations when the object of discussion is the Holocaust. Sometimes, she said, they simply don't care about the past even if the institutions involved try to cooperate in sensitizing schools and children from the very first years of schooling (primary schools in particular).

The representatives of the Anne Frank House in Hungary, **Ildiko Laszak and Bori Klacsmann**, focused on the presentation of "The Travelling Exhibition" program aimed at abating stereotypes, working against prejudice, giving a sort of timeline of WW2 history and presenting Anne Frank's life.

3rd Panel

The panel focused on the current situation in BiH, with particular attention to the education system and the ethnicity issue.

Dr. **Senadin Musabegovic**, Professor of Sociology of Culture and Art Theory at School of Philosophy at the University of Sarajevo, opened the panel by explaining that, in BiH, culture and education are topics that don't generate unity but division across ethnicity lines. He stressed there is no national BiH identity. The only reality is fragmentation. He suggested to better implement the so-called three "R" factors(Remember the past, Recover and Represent the trauma) during the daily life for finding the way out of the present situation.

Dr. **Maja Nenadovic**, Western Balkans Coordinator of Anne Frank House in Netherlands presented a project she is running in the Balkans that has proven quite effective in education. The main objectives of the project are the

presentation of war, understanding the role of identity and working on the history of events. It is a combination of practice and theory based on the Criminal Court Model. It also includes a 6-day workshop for secondary schools students.

Mrs. **Ljuljeta Goranci Brkic**, General Manager at the Nansen Dialogue Center for Peace and Dialogue in Sarajevo, emphasized the significance of enhancing the inter ethnic dialogue in BiH being a strongly divided country. The fragmentation is to be seen on the fact that Sarajevo is the only capital in Europe which is divided in two municipalities. One of the ways out of this situation is the development of dialogue among ethnicity and, at the same time, improvement of the skills of federal education officials.

Dr. **Elijas Tauber**, Manager at the Institute for Researching Crimes Against Humanity at University of Sarajevo claimed the majority of the people in BiH feels to be in a place marked by segregation and an educational system where minorities are not represented, where the political system fails to take into consideration problems stemming from the use of different languages, and where there is no use of a common language and a common educational program.

The views of the panelists triggered vivid discussion about the role of international actors attempting to assist the country in improving the current situation. The majority of participants agreed that although many international actors rendered assistance to BiH during the last decades, but none of them included the population in the legal, judicial and administrative reconstruction. Some participants found the current situation fragile to the extent where the military presence is the only guarantee for maintaining security. According to some other views, only an early EU membership could help address the conflicts within the country and coalesce the nations.

In the end of the panel the participants agreed that the dialogue should be continued to explore the needs of the BiH population in the field of education. The Budapest Centre suggested that in the spring/summer 2015 a workshop in Sarajevo will be convened where local teachers and other experts in the field of education will continue the discussion. The panelists offered assistance in the organization of the event.

Conclusions and Remarks

Professor **Enzo Le Fevre Cervini**, Director of the Research and Cooperation in the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, when summarizing the day, underlined that the discussion clearly confirmed: role of education in the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities is crucial. The contributions have all shown how difficult and complex the situation is in BiH. Strikingly, international actors still fail to closely cooperate with local stakeholders and, in many occasions, the overlapping activities lead to ineffectiveness.

The international community must pay more attention to the role of schools and other environments where tolerance could be promoted in a tangible manner.

He pointed to the consensus on the need of dialogue between local actors that may help better understand realities, divisions and difficulties and explore measures for addressing the problems.

The whole-day discussion strengthened the ambition and readiness of the Budapest Centre to continue its efforts for organizing other roundtables and events to generate more structured dialogue between teachers, scholars, politicians and institutions that may lead to more inclusive policies.