



**President of Kosovo, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga**  
**Member of Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Bakir Izetbegovic**  
**President of Serbia, Mr. Boris Tadic**  
**President of Slovenia, Mr. Danilo Turk**  
**President of Macedonia, Mr. Djordje Ivanov**  
**President of Montenegro, Mr. Filip Vujanovic**  
**President of Croatia, Mr. Ivo Josipovic**  
**Member of Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Nebojsa Radmanovic**  
**Member of Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Zeljko Komsic**

**Subject:** Establishment of RECOM

Brussels, April 2012

Your Excellencies, Presidents and Members of Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina,

*PEN Vlaanderen* wants to express support for the initiative for the founding of the Regional Commission for establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia (RECOM). We do so as a token of international solidarity with our colleague writers and artists in the countries of the former Yugoslavia who last year took the initiative to support the RECOM initiative.

*PEN Vlaanderen* is the Belgian Dutch-speaking branch of PEN International (<http://www.pen-international.org/>), the worldwide writers' association that champions the ideals of a single humanity living in peace, freedom of speech, and mutual respect. PEN members all over the world are directly concerned with helping to create a good understanding and mutual respect between nations. We are not only part of a worldwide network of PEN centers, we also represent more than 200 Belgian members – writers, journalists and public figures (<http://www.penvlaanderen.be/>).

Like our colleagues in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, we believe that citizens of these countries have the need and the right to know all the facts about the war crimes and other massive human rights violations committed during the wars of the 1990s. They also have the right and the need, we believe, to know exactly what the consequences of those wars have been. This is why we are writing to you.

For over a decade, since the weapons have been muted, post-Yugoslav societies have not been given a chance to cope with the heavy legacy of the war past in large part because to date there is no clarity about the fate of a large number of those who were killed, forcibly disappeared, tortured, and persecuted during those years. A few names of those who died are known, but more than 13,000 families of forcibly disappeared persons are still searching for their loved ones. On top of this, there is no organized, systematic mechanism for the victims to seek and obtain fair reparation; and the lack of reliable facts about the victims is continually used for political manipulation, nationalist promotion, hatred and intolerance.

The Initiative for the founding of the Regional Commission for establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia (RECOM) was launched

so that the facts about victims would finally be identified and accepted by all parties and cannot be denied anymore. This is an opportunity for public and governments alike to recognize the injustices done to the victims, to hear finally the voice of survivors and families of victims, to allow them to publicly express their suffering, to hear them directly and not through mediators, and to show them compassion and solidarity instead of concealment and humiliation.

The establishment of RECOM has been supported by a number of victims and their families, as well as war veterans and former prisoners from all post-Yugoslav countries, religious communities, non-majority ethnic groups, human rights activists, many lawyers, educators and historians, and especially a large number of young people.

With this letter we want to give loud and strong support to the Initiative for RECOM because we believe that the establishment, publication and acceptance of facts at the regional level is necessary for all the citizens of the region, in order to create a foundation for restoring dignity to victims, to meet their needs and rights, to determine the fate of forcibly disappeared persons, and to prevent the horrors of the past from happening again.

The Initiative for RECOM is the best opportunity to stop finally talking about the past as if it is still the present. It is high time to face it, and begin to remember and learn from it, rather than continue to live it.

Apart from its potential as a source of reconciliation, the Initiative for RECOM has the potential to be a fresh and authoritative source of data for the judiciary, for historical research and for fact-based politics in the region, but especially for the creative moral and psychological examination of the context the people in the region emerge from and live in. It has the capacity to play a crucially important role for the future, and for the conquering of the past in the name of this very future.

Like our colleagues in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, we ask you to do everything in your power to enable the RECOM Initiative to come to life and to begin its operation on the basis of the Statute that has been adopted by the Parliament of the Coalition for RECOM after years of consultations with citizens across the region.

Yours sincerely,

David Van Reybrouck



President PEN Vlaanderen

Peter Vermeersch



PEN Vlaanderen coordinator European affairs

<http://www.penvlaanderen.be>

Huis van het Boek - Boelaerlei 37 – 2140 Borgerhout - [info@penvlaanderen.be](mailto:info@penvlaanderen.be)

Full list of members: <http://www.penvlaanderen.be/deploy/index.php/wie-zijn-we/leden>