



# **BIANNUAL REPORT**

## **2020-21**

HUMANITARIAN LAW CENTER -  
RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

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**FORWARD**

Dear friends,

The HLC is about to turn thirty. While navigating the challenges of delivering our programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been reflecting on our work in the past three decades and developing our vision and strategy for the future.

The struggle for justice for the egregious human rights violations committed in the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s continues. Documentation remains at the heart of our distinctive approach to leading that struggle in the region and, increasingly, sharing our expertise and experience with civil society groups in other global regions afflicted by large-scale violence and repression.

At the same time, new challenges have prompted us to adapt and innovate. Rising nationalism and populism tied to a new kind of authoritarian politics are destabilising the region, closing down civic spaces and alternatives, and reversing gains made in human rights and democracy.

A surge in historical revisionism and the spread of exclusionary memory politics about the wars and atrocities of the 1990s have been central to these worrying developments. To counter them, in the past two years we have developed a new Memory Activism programme that uses judicially established facts and digital tools to change the narrative about the past. And we have launched a capital campaign for a permanent Research and Documentation Center – physical and digital – to secure the resources we need to match our vision and resolve.

The pandemic has reinforced our appreciation for our dedicated friends and partners, donors and collaborators, whose support and contributions have been more important than ever. As we prepare to mark the 30th anniversary of the HLC, we invite you to join us in celebrating our achievements, continuing our struggle and accelerating our efforts in the years to come.

**Iavor Rangelov**, Chair of the Board

**Ivana Žanić**, Executive Director





S E C T I O N O N E

# ACCOUNTABILITY

## Accountability

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We promote accountability for war crimes and human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia by monitoring criminal prosecutions, representing victims in war crimes trials, publishing Dossiers on suspected perpetrators and filing criminal complaints.

In 2020-21:

- We monitored **27** war crimes trials in Serbia, involving **57** defendants and **2,817** victims
- Our lawyers represented **1,554** victims in **9** war crimes trials
- Despite the disruption of COVID-19, we enabled **20** victims to travel to Serbia to monitor war crimes proceedings
- We launched **2** Dossiers and filed **2** criminal complaints against **9** suspected perpetrators of war crimes

### *Dossiers and Digital Narratives*

In 2020, we started presenting the facts about suspected perpetrators of war crimes from our Dossiers in the form of Interactive Digital Narratives. Aimed at the general public and especially the younger generation, the narratives bridge our work on justice and memory.





S E C T I O N T W O

# REPARATIONS

## Reparations

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Our efforts to enable victims of gross human rights violations to exercise their right to a remedy and reparation are critical for advancing justice, building solidarity and creating a human rights culture in the region.

In 2020-21, our lawyers represented **97** victims in **24** civil cases for damages before national courts. We reviewed the recent judicial practice in Serbia in compensation lawsuits and identified the main obstacles for victims seeking to exercise their right to reparation.

A major achievement in that period was the successful completion of **4** cases for damages related to the massacre in Ovčara, Croatia, in which **15** family members were awarded compensation.

These decisions pave the way for **200** families of Ovčara victims to seek reparations in Serbian courts. They are also significant for acknowledging the responsibility of the Serbian state and affirming its obligation to provide compensation for damages that its bodies – in this case, the Yugoslav People's Army – caused in the wars in the former Yugoslavia.





S E C T I O N T H R E E

# ADVOCACY

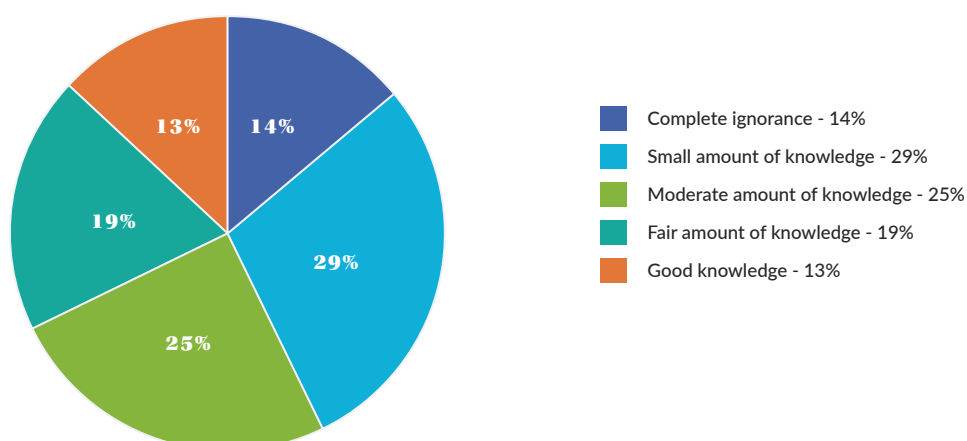
## Advocacy

The COVID-19 pandemic complicated our advocacy efforts in the past two years but it also accelerated a shift to digital and hybrid advocacy strategies across our programmes, which included:

- Informing the public about ongoing cases and challenges in the prosecution of war crimes with regular reports, media events and press releases
- Engaging Serbian institutions to develop a National Strategy for the Prosecution of War Crimes and providing independent assessment of its implementation with shadow reporting to the European Union
- Raising awareness among victims of conflict-related sexual violence about their right to reparation with conferences and publications
- Mobilising civil society across the region with the RECOM Reconciliation Network and the annually convened Forum for Transitional Justice in Post-Yugoslav Countries

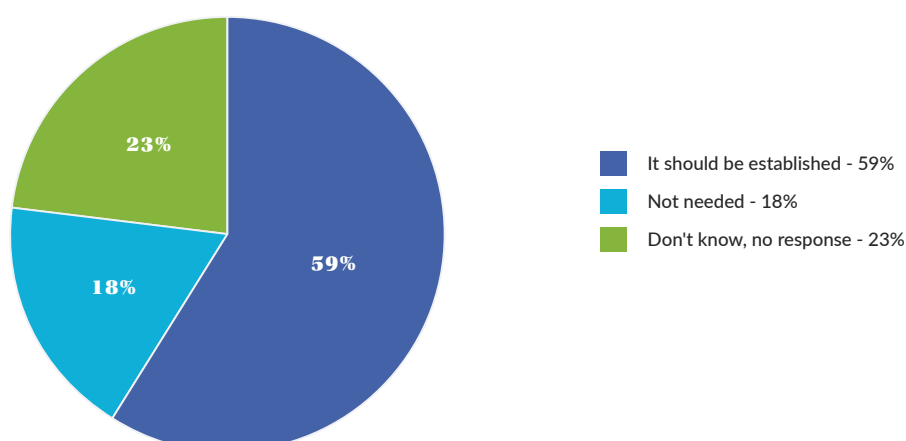
To inform our advocacy and outreach, we commissioned a survey of public awareness and attitudes in Serbia about the wars in the 1990s, war crimes, and justice.

**Index of knowledge about the wars of the 1990s**



**Demostat**  
Istraživačko - izdavački centar

**Need to establish a documentation centre on the wars of the 1990s**



**Demostat**  
Istraživačko - izdavački centar



S E C T I O N F O U R

**DOCUMENTATION,  
DIGITIZATION  
& TRANSFER OF  
KNOWLEDGE**



## Documentation, Digitization & Transfer of Knowledge

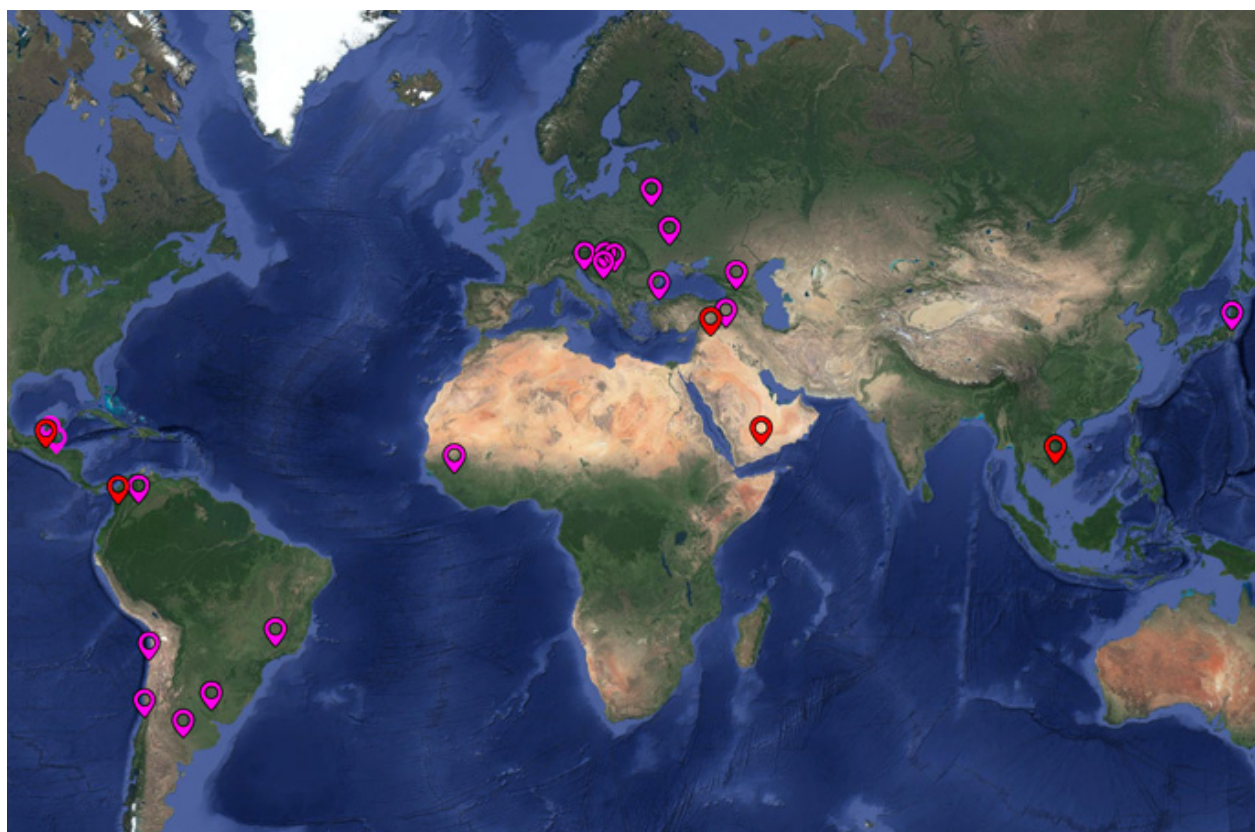
Documentation is the bedrock of our work and a focal point for our ongoing digital transition. Our records include copies of **90** percent of the public archive of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) including video recordings of nearly **10,000** trial days, records from all war crimes trials in Serbia and Kosovo, a media archive from the 1990s and other collections related to the wars and human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia.

In 2020-21, our work on documentation and digitization included:

- Collaborating with our partner in the Kosovo Memory Book, the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, to verify the identities and circumstances of death/disappearance of **5,500** victims of the Kosovo war, having already done so for more than **8,000** victims of the conflict
- Integrating **12,000** records in our searchable War Crimes Database
- Digitizing **8,800** documents and other records from our archive
- Converting and merging **24** ICTY case records and **3,200** videos in MP4

We continue to expand our efforts to transfer knowledge about documenting human rights violations and catalysing justice to civil society groups around the world. In 2020-21, we contributed to **9** projects of the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) in Colombia, Guinea, Iraq, South Sudan and Sudan.

### GIJTR Support to Civil Society Organisations in Digital Archiving



S E C T I O N F I V E

# MEMORY ACTIVISM



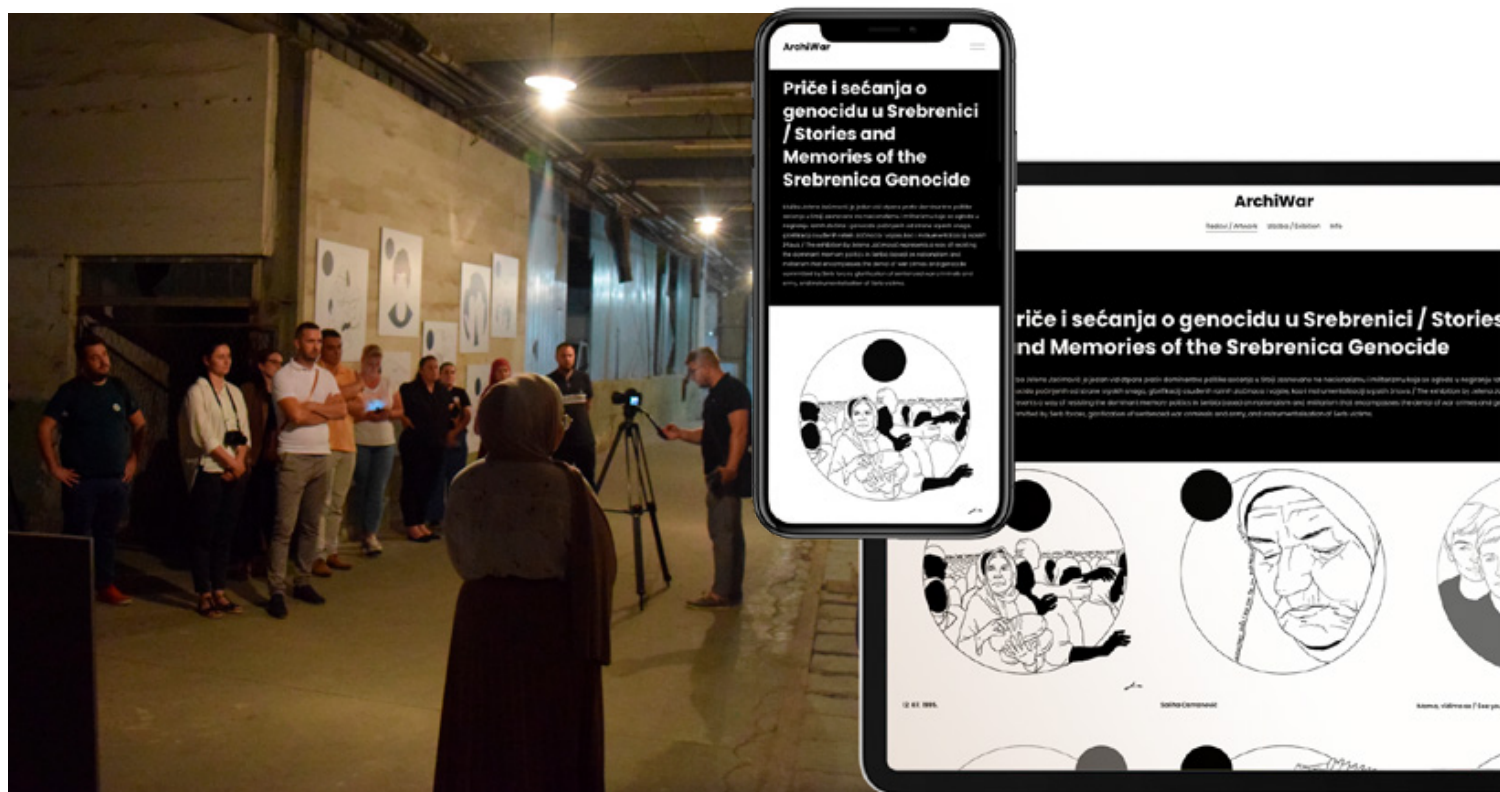
## Memory Activism

In 2020, we launched a Memory Activism programme to change the narrative about the past and foster a new memory culture in the region.

Our approach to memory activism relies on judicially established facts to challenge the dominant revisionist narratives about the wars of the 1990s and commemorate the victims of war crimes and human rights abuses. It combines digital memory practices on social media and other platforms, informal education, public events and exhibitions, media- and policy-oriented research and publication. Some of the highlights in the first two years of the programme include:

- **16** podcasts, **10** blogs, **4** on-site events with live streaming/online events
- **5** interactive digital narratives based on Dossiers of suspected perpetrators
- **2** digital collections presenting primary sources and evidence about the 1992 atrocities in Foča and the denial of the Srebrenica genocide in Serbia
- **2** regional transitional justice schools with **40** participants
- **2** reports, Memory Politics of the 1990s Wars in Serbia and The 1990s Wars in the Former Yugoslavia in History Education
- Screening of Dino Hodži's film Trči Nina and launching Jelena Jaćimović's exhibition Archiwar: Stories and Memories of the Srebrenica Genocide, in Belgrade and digital

### Archiwar Exhibition in Belgrade and Online





S E C T I O N S I X

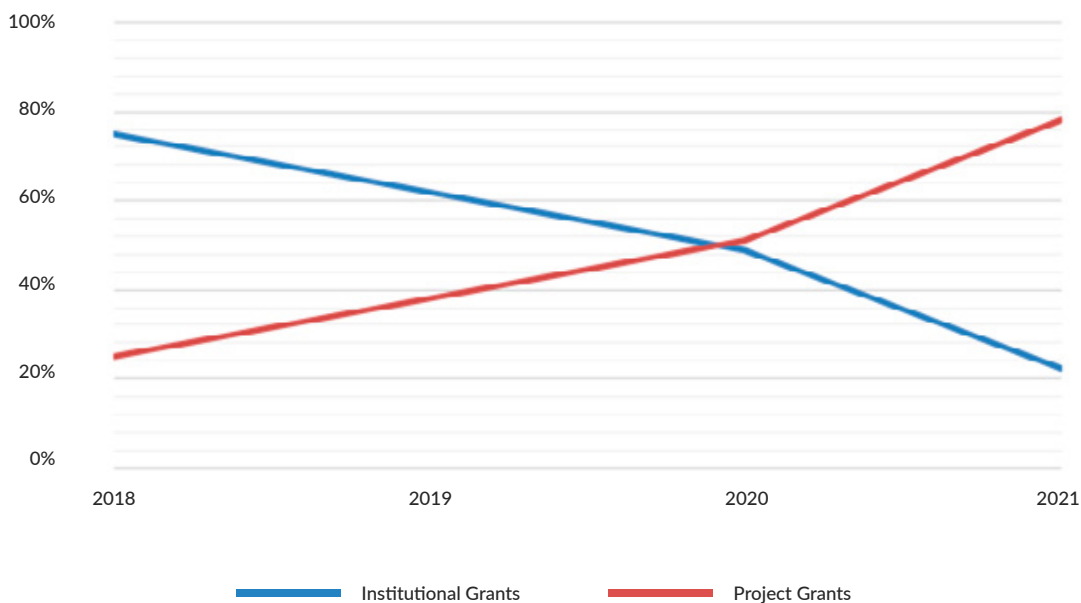
# SUSTAINABILITY

# Sustainability

The impact of the global pandemic and regional developments such as closing civic space are changing the funding landscape for civil society and reinforcing the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of the HLC as a matter of priority. In the past two years, we have developed and made significant progress in implementing a sustainability strategy with two main components.

Firstly, we are adapting the funding model of the organisation and shifting our core operational costs from institutional grants to project grants.

**HLC Core Costs, 2018-2021**



Secondly, we are carrying out a Capital Campaign for a permanent Research and Documentation Center – digital and physical – to create new spaces and resources for memory activism that pushes back on revisionist narratives about the past using the facts established by the ICTY, national courts, and local documentation initiatives linked to RECOM.

This strategic investment will ensure the sustainability of our current and future efforts to empower social actors, create infrastructure for change and catalyse movement-building in the memory space. We have secured nearly 45 per cent of our fundraising target by the end of 2021 and we are on course to successfully complete the campaign in 2022.



D O N O R S &  
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