

## Peace Prize Nomination

**Organisation's Name:** Mreža za izgradnju mira (Network for Building Peace)  
**Organisation's Location:** Sarajevo/Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
**Organisation's Website:** <http://www.mreza-mira.net>

### **Description of specific project, practice, or technique:**

In past three years since officially gathering together to work for the better life of our societies Network for Building Peace passed the long way, and today became lighthouse in building peace and nonviolence in country and whole region.

What is crucial to underline is that this is not application of a single organization or even the Network, we aim to recognize all activities of civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in past 20 years, where we are all working together to shift the paradigm and change this society for better. Numerous organizations contributed to building peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and through Network for Building Peace and our joint activities we want to recognize their work and values.

As recognition for its work at February 2013 Network for Building Peace received in Sarajevo traditional Freedom Award of the International Peace Centre for an extraordinary contribution to building peace, humanism, fight for human rights and freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe and the world.

Celebrating September 21st, International Peace Day is one of most important issues in our work. In 2012. International Peace Day was celebrated by our members in 12 towns throughout the country (Bihac, Bratunac, Busovaca, Derventa, Doboj, Jajce, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Tuzla, Vares and Zvornik).

To celebrate Peace Day in 2013. we plan to have conference where Network for Building Peace will be awarding media outlets with Srdjan Aleksic Award (young man killed during the war because defending his friend who was of different nationality, widely accepted as peace hero). Through open competition we are inviting journalists, men and women, from print, electronic and online media from Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose texts and/or stories affirm and promote the professional reporting on marginalized groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina resulting in particular actions and progress in practice.

As follow up for Peace Day we expect to have celebration throughout the country, organizing Week of Peace and Nonviolence, promoting our values everybody should share and care for. By March 2013 we have published 26 monthly issues of Peace Newsletter, now published in local and English language. The Peace Newsletter provides information to peace organizations, but also other CSOs in the region.

For three years in a row we organized international competition for the best photos with topic of peace and published Peace Calendar with selected photographs, important peace and human rights dates and peace quotes. Photos published at the Peace Calendar last year were selected in the competition "Peace in the Lens". The theme of "Peace in the Lens" in this contest allowed authors expressing specific vision of peace, a term that allows for a wide creative process. Specifically, peace through photographic lens can be represented symbolically, peace as antimilitaristic project, peace as a woman, as a white peace dove with an olive branch, peace as an activity, peace as security, peace as protection, peace for a mankind.

For past three years we are celebrating Human Rights day at the National Parliament, where e.g. last December we brought 350 participants (parliamentarians, members of organizations, children from schools, etc.).

Part of celebration was competition My World of Human Rights in which we have received articles from 520 students of primary and secondary schools from whole country, which will be published in a e-book as same as for previous year. The idea of this competition was to draw attention to

the problem of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a creative and innovative way, and to encourage activism to marginalized groups, which often include children, women, the former war victims (families of missing persons, prisoners, people with PTSD, women victims of war, etc.), ethnic minorities and others, and to provide them with a dignified human life.

This year Network for Building Peace was one of initiators of the V-Day (One Billion Rising), action the biggest mass global action to end violence against women and girls in the history of humankind. In Bosnia and Herzegovina we were able to mobilize 211 organizations who celebrated V-Day at 37 towns and places.

Our web-site <http://www.mreza-mira.net> currently is the key regional resource for wider CSO community, with intention to make it global portal for sharing information and opening discussions on peace issues. Besides this we have two Facebook profiles, twitter and LinkedIn profile. Now we have published seventh edition of Directory of Donors working in BiH.

And individually organizations continue to have implement activities at schools, with government, media, ordinary citizens, changing this country into better one.

**Information on organisation or agency including history and scope of its work:**

Several studies and surveys indicate that most organizations and activists committed to peacebuilding in BiH are aware that the current lack of national networking is hampering their overall impact. Also, the European Centre for Conflict Prevention as reaction to the initiative by UN General Secretary Kofi A. Annan, where Nansen Dialogue Centre organized regional consultations for South East Europe. As a result, on February 10, 2010, NGOs (mainly local, but also a few international) which are working in all parts of the country have united to form the "Network for Building Peace". Initiative for this came from Catholic Relief Services and Caritas of Bishops Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there were many other organizations founders.

Today Network for Building Peace gathers 85 members including leading peace and human rights organizations working in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the region and all over the world, and is growing and improving its activities and helping its members in their own activities. This number is growing, and in forthcoming months we expect to have many more members joining our work.

We are very proud to have World Vision Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of our founders and active members.

The Network for Building Peace is aiming towards comprehensive renewal of social and economic life in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to long-term enhancement of the whole society to deal with difference and conflicts in a constructive and non-violent way, in that way creating a framework for joint, coordinated activities of a number of civil society organizations, local government, business sector, media and governmental institutions.

Our goal is influencing and contributing to concrete actions related to the following areas of public policy which are recognized as crucial for long-term building peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a) education, b) security, c) regional development, d) protection and promotion of human and minority rights, e) dealing with the past and transitional justice, f) gender equality, g) culture of public dialogue and democracy, h) strengthening civil society and building true peace, i) building trust between BiH people and nations, j) constructive influence towards political structures in BiH, and k) improving coexistence in BiH.

**Describe the context in which the organisation works, analyse the conflict, and indicate how this analysis has influenced the peacebuilding work of the organisation:**

The successor states of Yugoslavia, and BiH in particular, are still struggling with the legacies of war. Political, economic and social progress are hindered by a structural status quo which is

based on ethnic divisions. Most of the current political leadership is not willing and able to address the legacy of the past (particularly war crimes), to support reconciliation and to develop cooperative strategies with the other sides. In turn, large parts of BiH society are either following antagonistic rhetoric and action or are withdrawing into the private sphere as they do not see alternatives. At all levels those actors which promote dialogue, cooperation and issues of general public interest are overshadowed by dividing discourse and the inability to constructively deal with diversity and to transform conflicts in a peaceful manner.

The European Union's accession process presents one of the few prospects to build a peaceful and more prosperous future for the citizens of BiH. However, at this point in time at the level of civil society there is not enough exchange and cooperation focused on peacebuilding in order to support processes of dialogue and reconciliation as a precondition for sustainable social change. Without coherent national, regional and pan-European civil society support to these broader societal processes they will also remain low on the priority list of politicians and governments in BiH at local, regional and national levels. Instead, in the current weak civic environment the risk for violent escalation of conflict remains high.

Numerous CSOs have valuable experiences with grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, are rooted within local communities, and some already participate in political dialogue from local to national levels, particularly those with offices and regular activities in urban centres. However, the widespread lack of organizational capacity and the non-existence of a coordinating body for peacebuilding NGOs lead to focusing on individual projects. As a result, there is a lack of mutual awareness, contact and cooperation between organizations pursuing similar goals. Potential synergies are not fully developed, mutual learning through exchanging knowledge, experiences and resources remains sub-optimal. A targeted civil society contribution to peacebuilding in BiH, which by definition would need to follow an all-BiH strategy, is thus dissected into a myriad of unconnected small initiatives.

The second specific problem is closely related: inter-ethnic cooperation and the promotion of an all-BiH peacebuilding agenda for reconciliation and cooperative development is currently not visible enough and finding little access in the media as well as in public and political debates. With a coordinated approach NGOs committed to peacebuilding would have the potential to give an important impetus in this regard. However, capacities for engaging in political advocacy and for entering into political dialogue are also currently low. Nation-wide outreach and visibility actions to mobilize larger support from within the broader BiH public will need to be developed if we want to advance peacebuilding and cooperative development and remind governmental authorities about citizens' public interests.

**Impact of the organisation or agency's work, including credible policy and advocacy influence that contributes toward peace:**

We can tell you many stories about the activities of our individual members in past twenty years. Organizations we are representing have been the only credible source for any change in country, it was civil society working very hard and pushing for a change, unfortunately not the government. As Network we have been leaders in preparing National Strategy for Development of Positive Environment for Civil Society, in a working body with five people from government and five from the NGO sector.

We were preparing and lobbying for National Transitional Justice Strategy. The goal of the strategy is to increase the accessibility of BiH legal institutions and services for standard court users and systematically address remaining access to justice challenges for victims of 1992-95 conflict in the country. In spite of various initiatives in BiH since the signing of Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 to address past abuses related to the conflict, most of the efforts were piecemeal, lacked government engagement were limited in scope to particular areas of transitional justice. Based on the success of the government's transitional justice consultation supported by UNDP, was formed government Working Group tasked with drafting a National Strategy for Transitional Justice. At the same time, overall access to justice in BiH was

strengthened by developing strategic approach and support for raising the courts' communication capacities, increasing the level of legal awareness and providing free legal aid in BiH, with a focus on gender based violence and domestic violence survivors. One of the key objectives was to enable the government officials and service providers at all levels to appropriately respond and to raise public awareness on gender based violence in the society. All activities are executed in partnership with the BiH Ministry of Justice within the implementation framework of its Justice Sector Reform Strategy completed in 2008. These two components are mutually reinforcing as they work in parallel towards restoring public confidence in BiH institutions.

Network for Building Peace is the most active actor in communication with government and international community, organizing and coordinating other active networks in their efforts. Last activity was mobilization and coordination of civil society in preparing input for IPA 2014 – 2020. Network is also taking active part in strengthening capacity of civil society organizations that provide assistance to the war victims, in order to be able to effectively address the needs of the victims, network and advocate for the redress of rights of the victims guaranteed by the adopted Bosnian legislation and international human rights standards, as well as to establish and to maintain better partnership relations with the government institution, to engage wider public in adoption of the BiH Law on Victims of Torture in BiH. Draft Law is prepared and it is to be presented to the government.

The Network has prepared input for European Social Watch for 2010, and currently coordinates activities of five networks in communication with state institutions and international community.

**Tell us a story about this organisation or agency's peace work:**

At the beginning of April 2013 we shall start nation-wide campaign for throughout the country (at national level, entity levels, and at cantonal and municipal level, for all actors individually) asking governmental representatives to declare 2014 Year of Peace and Nonviolence. This initiative has already started by informal communication with key stakeholders, but plan is to have wide campaign and to use all media inform wider public in country and in the world about this initiative. It would be important to mention activities planned for the next year where we plan to organize Peace Event gathering several hundred peace organizations from around the world. Official title of the event will be Peace Event Sarajevo 2014: From a World of War and Violence to a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence.

The year 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I, which was triggered by the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne in Sarajevo on June 28th, 1914. This can be seen as a symbolic date for a century of a "Culture of War and Violence" with two world wars and numerous regional wars - among them the one in the former Yugoslavian countries in the 1990's when Sarajevo suffered from the siege of the city during the "last war in Europe" - as well as for the global dominance of structural and cultural violence.

But the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century have also seen a world-wide rise of nonviolent activities and achievements as an alternative to war and violence and for global and social justice, human rights, peace and reconciliation which was reflected in the declaration of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence (2001–2010) by the United Nations.

So, building on the experience of three "Salons des Initiatives de Paix" in Paris in the course of this Decade, the idea came up: Let's make of Sarajevo the place to trigger a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence in 2014.

This Peace Event will be embedded into a more extended series of events in Sarajevo and in different countries in Europe. It would create an "European Season for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence", e.g. from June 2014 till September 21st, the International Day of Peace and October 2d, the International Day for Nonviolence. Different decentralized previous or

simultaneous events could be organized in many places in Europe.

This will be a meeting and exchanging place for activists, practitioners and researchers of peace and active nonviolence. It will be an opportunity to review the achievements and challenges related to peace and nonviolence in Europe, and to present a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence in its diverse dimensions.

Sarajevo Peace Event 2014 will include different types of activities as conferences, workshops, public events, street actions, artistic performances, animations in/with schools, exhibitions, youth camp, film festivals, etc.

We plan to have workshops such as education for peace (education for peace and nonviolence, curriculum for peace), science and peace (new technologies and peace), economy and war-peace (war industry, arms trade, conversion of these industries), arts and peace (peace artists, music for peace, forum and playback theatre), networking (strengthen the movements for peace involve young people), active nonviolence (nonviolent actions for social justice, nonviolent revolutions), dealing with the past (reconciliation, peace memories, culture of remembering), women for peace (role of women in/after war, gender issues and gender equality), active peace policy (toward a new European policy for ministries of peace), history and peace (demilitarization of the history, histories of peace movements), EU and peace (EU as a Peace initiative, peace tools), media and peace, human security, intercultural dialogue (religions and cultures in peacebuilding, cultural diversity)

We also plan that part of the Peace Event will be World Social and Economic Forum, once again gathering great number of people. It will be closely linked with other activities to be organized in Sarajevo and world remembering World War I.