

## WE SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S COURT OF SARAJEVO

From 7th to 10th of May in Sarajevo, Bosnia, the Women's Court has taken place to judge the crimes committed during the wars of the Balkans in the 90s. Many women, coming from all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, testified about the war crimes, still impune, for which they asked justice with a feminist approach.

The composition of the steering committee shows the women's unity and solidarity that overcomes the national divisions that appeared after the partition of the former Yugoslavia: from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the "Madres de los Enclaves de Srebrenica y Zepa"; and the "Foros de Mujeres" from Croatia, Kosovo, Makedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Serbia.

This is, in itself, a great success in a period where Europe is full of arising nationalisms and extreme right forces that divide populations with ethnic and religious lines; in these days, when they try to homogeneize the nations and to exclude minorities and diversity; when even the citizens of the same country are more separated due to the construction of antagonic "communities".

The Court's coordination and preparation was done during the last 5 years by Women in Black-Belgrade, an organisation from one of the "aggressor" countries. These women are welcome as family members in Bosnia and in other countries from the former Yugoslavia, where people recognise their permanent support to women with other identities, during and after the wars, even at their lives risk.

The gathering of so many women from the nations of the former Yugoslavia is not only a powerful proof of solidarity through the borders but also a political statement, as they defy the extreme right destructive forces that are working in the region and in the whole Europe.

The Women's Court of the former Yugoslavia is different from any other Women's Court: its aim is to give back the mastering of the process to the victims and the survivors. Previously, hundreds of meetings were celebrated in small and big villages and towns with groups of women victims, for them to be the protagonist and the creators of a process, extremely respectful and deeply empowering of the victims.

In the Women's Court, they testified on the violence committed against them during the 90s, as well as on the types of violence they suffered after the wars. Obviously the injustice and the violence continued and they connect the war with the period after the war.

They emphasized, particularly, the **gender violence**: war crimes of rape, including the ones with nationalist aims; the men's violence committed against women; the current political repression of women activists for human rights, and the economic violence suffered by women as a consequence of the wars. They also testified on the militarist violence committed even against the soldiers.

During the preparatory process of the Women's Court, some doubts and challenges arose mainly on the issues of responsibility and accountability: nationalism, with its permanent transfer of responsibility to "others" and its minimization of the war crimes committed "in our name", that blocks the process to reach a "fair peace".

The Court has named the crimes and the perpetrators, denouncing the links between the different kinds of violence that women still suffer in the former Yugoslavia as a consequence of the wars; they asked for justice and they showed "*the power of the internationalist solidarity of women*". Moreover, the participants are committed to monitorise the answers of the authorities involved.

**In the Court of Sarajevo** also participated women from several countries where similar crimes took place: Madres de la Plaza de Mayo (línea fundadora) from Argentina; from Israel, Palestine and Algeria. Many women members of feminist organisations and networks from Australia, Canada, United States, Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, France and Spain also attended the Court.

Extracts from the testimonies of some women:

*"I am even more determined today to make all the injustices visible, to name them, as well as those who organized them"* Sabina (Pljevlja, Montenegro)

*"It is our moral duty to find the truth..."*. Marija (Osijek, Croacia)

*"My human rights have been violated; I could not make peace with so much injustice."* Marionka (Veles, Macedonia)

*"Those responsible for everything that I have been through, and everything that I am going through, are still in power. The same way that they organized crimes, now they organize denial"*. Sabina (Pljevlja, Montenegro)

*"I am alone, but I'm fighting. I hope that justice will come one day..."* Nura (Srebrenica, Bosnia Herzegovina)

*"The Women's Court won't give rulings, but it can contribute to creating an anti-criminal climate, which is a great investment for the future. We all must influence people from our community, to change people's consciousness. We must spread like weed."* Ana (Leskovac, Serbia).

*"Our voice is our power"*. Sevdije (Pristina, Kosovo)

Madrid, 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2015.