

## Bosnia & Herzegovina Chronicle 6: Violence in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina

by Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) Tuzla - Youth Resource Center Tuzla

January 2014

**"Disgraceful footage filmed in one of the schools in Tuzla shocked the public: Student was carried out from the school, her hair has been cut and then she was brutally beaten"!** – **"Great increase in bullying – "Facebook debate as a cause of the incident between students in Tuzla?"** – **"Citizens of Tuzla are shocked: beaten by classmates, and footage of the brutal harassment published on the Internet."** – **"Violence in Lukavac: Student of the Electro-mechanical Engineering School was bullied, beaten and robbed for months"** – **"Disturbing results of research in violence: 70% of children and young people are afraid to report violence"** – **"Violence in Bosnian and Herzegovinian schools: violence of teenagers is shocking"** – **"Federation is powerless to repress the rise of the juvenile crime in Bosnia"** – **"More than 1,000 juveniles in BiH has a police record."**<sup>1</sup>

Are the juvenile and peer violence and violence in schools in BiH increasing? Or, it is only about the growing trend in publishing of such violence in the form of video clips on social networks? What are the causes for the increase of violence in schools: in the absence of parental education, lack of laws on juvenile justice and / or failure to implement the same, insufficient and uneducated staff in schools, lack of prevention mechanisms for juvenile violence in schools. Or maybe the course is in difficult social-economic situation in which are all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina? How should BiH society, educational and pedagogical institutions fight against this phenomenon, which is progressing rapidly and significantly affects the index of human security in BiH?

We dealt with these questions, as well as with potential answers in the last couple of months. We tried to gather as much information about this problem as we could. Through social networks we conducted a survey - interviews with 45 respondents. We reviewed all the journalistic research, and researches about this problem from some nongovernmental international institutions.<sup>2</sup> Despite the large number of collected materials and analysis this chronicle will not be able to provide answers to these questions, but can serve as a starting point for research on bullying, which we intend to do, in cooperation with experts from the Center for Youth Development PRONI Brcko<sup>3</sup>, in area of Posavina (Orasje), Tuzla Canton (Tuzla), North-East Serbian Republic (Bijeljina) and Brcko District of BiH.

### Great increase in bullying

Images and scenes of bullying are more often to be seen on internet. News of juvenile violence and brutality are coming daily from the streets and cafes, but the most alarming are the one coming from the schools. Today we are witnesses of the great increase of bullying, which indicates that insufficient attention is given to the suppression of this important issue. Speaking of peer violence we are mainly focused on abused children. But who are the abusers? Prevention starts at home, then in school and social environment.

Bullying is the burning issue in recent years. Abuse and violence cause physical and emotional injuries and in extreme cases lead to suicide, therefore this subject must remain an important topic that will launch significant measures in solving

<sup>1</sup> These are just some of the titles that are in the last few months, appeared on the covers of BH newspapers and Internet portals.

<sup>2</sup> Research made by World vision BiH, within the project: "Protection of the children, more at: <http://tuzla.danas.info/2013/11/14/zabrinjavajuci-rezultati-istrazivanja-o-nasilju-70-posto-djece-i-mladih-se-plasi-da-prijavi-nasilje/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pronibrcko.ba>

this problem. Children should be encouraged so they could learn how to confront violence and report it. Also they should be raised against bullying so they do not become bullies themselves. Bullies are not the cartoon characters, nor the villains. They are children too; children who need help of the experts and other appropriate methods that will contribute on solving the problem of bullying.<sup>2</sup>

### **Disturbing results of the research on violence: 70% of children and young people are afraid to report violence**

World Vision of BiH, within the project "Protection of the Children", organized a several months long research on violence against children and young people in the municipality of Sapna, Kalesija and Zvornik. These municipalities are a part of World Vision's development areas of Majeвица, and the survey was conducted by a local committee of Children and Youth.

Research on violence against children and young people, which was attended by 336 participants aged from 12 to 18 years, showed that percentage of non-recognition of violent behavior in these municipalities is disturbingly high. Conducted research revealed the following:

- 67% of children and young people don't recognize poking as a violence behavior;
- 64% of children and young people don't recognize an unpleasant touching as a violent and harmful behavior;
- 64% of children and young people don't recognize violence over the internet as a harmful behavior;
- Every seventh person has been experiencing uncomfortable physical touching several times in month;
- Forms of violent behavior non-recognized as harmful by children and young people are also: deprivation of food, gossip, exposure to inappropriate content and stealing things.
- 18% of boys and 12% of girls never complain to anyone who treats them in a way that makes them feel bad;
- 70% children and young people are afraid to report violence.

These results are only one part of the research conducted by the Board for children and young people, with professional support staff of World Vision and the leader of the research team, Dr. Hariza Saric, academic expert in the field of child abuse and social work.<sup>4</sup>

### **Violence in BiH schools: Teenage brutality is shocking (DW/ Author: Aleksandra Slavnić)**

What is causing the violence is a neglect of mental health of young people, teachers and incompetent government that does not provide the sense of security. Experts say that BiH citizens should be happy that scenes of violence, such as the one in Tuzla, are not often.

According to the research of NGO "Perpetum mobile", about 24% of young men took part in fights with knives. Psychologist Srdjan Dusanic, who worked on the study, says that the number of the violent girls in the last ten years is increased, and that the incident happened in Tuzla has not surprised him much. „Peer violence is nothing new, but what shocks me, is the brutality of the teenagers, we can see on these recordings every time they go out in public“, says Dušanić. Not even Vanja Josic, high school student from Banja Luka, is surprised, who watched violence scenes in schools many times. "It is bad to say, but I was the one of the witnesses and watched how students beat and harass other students".

### **"The teachers are incompetent"**

The health system in BiH deals only with fire-fighting and diseases of physical nature. Mental health of the population is completely neglected, considered professor of psychology on the Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka, Ivana Zečević. "Besides, teachers who need to recognize inappropriate behavior are not competent and they don't have the skills. They only deal with education not upbringing, because nobody teaches them how to do it. It's not enough to have good intentions and intuition when working with young people. We should be grateful because of our students not appearing more often in media with these excesses", says Zečević.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://tuzla.danas.info/2013/11/14/zabrinjavajuci-rezultati-istrazivanja-o-nasilju-70-posto-djece-i-mladih-se-plasi-da-prijavi-nasilje/>

Staff from high school in Banja Luka believes that teachers are trained and can properly respond to any challenges. School psychologist, Irena Spasojevic states NGO's projects, as personal example of teacher development: "We cooperate with non-governmental organizations; teachers are attending numerous workshops, seminars, in order to be better educated about this phenomenon".

The NGO's projects are, as it seems, the only attempt at preventing violence in schools. One of them, "Perpetum mobile" from Banjaluka has been working for six years with students and teachers on preventing violence. It is a model of peer education which shows excellent results in the world, says coordinator of this project Saša Ostojić. "The goal is that our program enters into formal education, that teachers and psychologists must be trained on interactive techniques, where the students themselves are the agents of change".

Nesib Hasanović, director of mixed high school in Tuzla, said for DW that mentioned footage of the violence casted a dark shadow on this school, and that the media made a big fuss about all that happened. "The violence did not take place within the school, but I still keep having phone calls from the journalists."

"This is the cry of young people because nobody cares about them"

Ivana Zečević believes that the educators cannot be liberated from responsibility just because the violence in particular occurs outside the schoolyard. Everyone in the chain had failed, she states. "I ask how many students still have confidence in teachers. This is the cry of high school students. Even from those girls who are bullies. Maybe they are harassing somebody because they have been abused themselves".

Best cure against violence is prevention and continuous work of experts with young people. However, for the prevention programs funds are always missing. "In all our researches we have came up with data that those who are committing violence have low self esteem, frustrated and mostly have gone some bad things. If we are to work with these teens more, they wouldn't become violent", says Srdjan Dusanic.

### **Shut up and suffer...**

It is surprising how many victims of violence as well as the observers are being silent and not reporting the abuse. Irena Spasojević considers that citizens from BiH firmly believe in the old saying "shut up and suffer". "Culturally, we are focused on masochism, somehow we think we are better people if we remain silent and suffer". The student, Vanja Josic, says that there is only a few students who are on the victim's side, the ones ready to help and to rebel. "Unfortunately, most of them don't condemn violence, they don't want to be involved and say it is not their business".

### **Violence is an integral part of life in BiH**

Ivana Zečević claims that great responsibility lies on government that is the system that does not exist and does not protect the citizens. That is a clear message to adolescents that they can act violent and pull without the punishment, considers Ivana. One of the crucial factors is parents and the environment in which they are growing up, where the violence and trauma are integral part of life. "The most common form of parental punishment is violent behavior toward the child, beatings, insults, ignorance, and psychological violence. Child in BiH inevitably grows in environment full of violence. Not mentioning how we transmit a much larger trauma of violent behaviors such as wars, from one generation to another." According to her, the problem should be tackled starting from the top. Although she is the doctor of psychological sciences, she believes that caring for the mental health of individual by itself does not promise good results, without a stable government system which dictates system of values.<sup>5</sup>

### **Juvenile delinquency is difficult to solve**

The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have an unified and systematic strategy to combat youth violence.

Juvenile delinquency in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a growing problem. Besides the lack of preventive measures, the particular problem is a lack of institutions for placing juvenile offenders.

Lately, more and more it is proposed the use of alternative measures, compared to previous solutions in the field of juvenile delinquency, reports a journalist from Al Jazeera Sanel Kajan.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://tuzla.danas.info/2013/11/11/nasilje-u-bh-skolama-sokira-brutalnost-tinejdzera/>

The state does not have unified and systematic strategy to combat youth violence. There are no adequate institutions, nor appropriate programs which would involve some contemporary, more humane and more alternative forms of resocialization of juvenile offenders.

The Police say that lot of violations and crimes are committed by minors. Srećko Bošnjak from the Ministry of Interior (Mol) of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (HNC) said: "When it comes to the execution of crimes, the range of their interest is really big. Enjoyment and enabling of enjoyment and resale of narcotics, property offenses, breaking and entering into a vehicle, breaking and entering into homes, stealing, pick pocketing..."

After the police, prosecution and courts to do their part of the job, the question is where to put the offender.

### **Unique institution**

Correctional institution for juvenile offenders in Stolac was the only institution of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Large pavilions, bedrooms, offices, classrooms, theater and concert halls, workshops, pools, sports courts...are the parts of infrastructure that this institution contained. Today, the walls are only thing that is remained", reports Kajan.

The aim of punishment is correction, not the humiliation of the child's personality, say experts in juvenile delinquency.

The former head of service for reeducation of this institution, Mehmed Dizdar said: "Minors, not able to find the job or money to live on, would have all the necessary training here. Lot of our former residents of this institution, have become honorable and important people. I know that the Department of Justice came here and offered to re-activate the correctional facility, but local authorities have refused to."

United Nations (UN) emphasizes the use of nonviolent strategies, as a support for programs for prevention of violence.

This means to adopt the disciplinary measures which are not based on fear, threats or physical force.

### **Professors and school**

What is recommended is a police warning, indemnities, regular attendance of school, community work, work in charity organizations, and psychological or other counseling.

The school is one of the main environments in which the juvenile delinquency is present. The most important thing is to recognize the beginning of inappropriate behavior of the child and to immediately react.

Director of Gymnasium in Mostar, Bakir Krpo said: "I think the teachers and school are in the foreground. School is ultimately responsible, because in some ways it is manufacturer of juvenile delinquency. That is why our professors are paying the most attention to educational components."

Psychologists suggest that if we do not recognize violent behavior at a time, if the problem is ignored by family and school, waiting for someone else to solve it, then such a behavior, in fact, is encouraged.

"Solving every problem starts with conversation. Conversation solves everything", Azra Bubic, the professor of psychology, concluded.

It is difficult to talk about systematic problem solving, until the competent authorities clearly detect the inevitable strong connection between legislation, prevention, alternative measures, and the application of the law in practice.<sup>6</sup>

### **Examples:**

Disgraceful footage shocked the public of Tuzla: The student was carried out of the school, her hair has been cut, and then she was brutally beaten!

The videotape showing girls from a mixed high school in Tuzla, was sent to the e-mail address of web portal named Danas.info. On the footage is shown how girls, after a short argument take one of the students out from the school, and then behind the nearby building brutally beat her. After she was brought out of the school in one point one of the students was cutting victim's hair, and then all three of them physically attacked her.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/tesko-rjesiva-maloljetnicka-delikvencija>

Once they knocked her on the ground, they started kicking her. The incident was watched by the group of students, some of which were filming everything with their mobile phones.

The interior Ministry of TK and the police officers received the mentioned video and they will take all of the necessary measures that are their responsibility, as it is confirmed today for Danas.info.

"Officials from Police Station West received the report, from the Security staff from this high school that on first October in Tuzla the sixteen-year-old girl, freshman of this school, was physically attacked by three under aged students. Police patrols went out to the scene and interviewed the sixteen-year-old girl in the presence of the school pedagogue. Given that students, who participated in the incident, were minors, they have been invited to come along with their parents to be interviewed at the police station", stated for Danas.info, spokesman of MUP of TK Izudin Šarić.<sup>7</sup>

### **Violence in Lukavac: Student of the Electro-mechanical high school was mistreated, beaten and robbed for months**

In the past few days we have all witnessed terrible verbal and physical bullying of under aged high school students.

Last unfortunate event recorded in the other high school in Tuzla encouraged others who suffered abuse to speak out openly and say, "Stop the Violence".

The case of bullying recorded in Electro-mechanical high school in Lukavac in which the student E.H. was often been subjected to harassment by his colleagues A.N., E.I. and B.G. from the beginning of the school year.

The boy was regularly badly injured and robbed by three minors with the threats that he cannot report this case. As he points out there was no motive for the attacks, and that he had to hide his money in his shoes. Daily harassment lasted from the beginning of the school year until a few days ago.

Persuaded by his class teacher, student reported the case in Thursday, on the 7th of the November, even though we know about it before!? The student was visibly scared and upset while he was describing the course of events and what was happening to him. We talked to him, tried to calm him down, and told him that there is no need for fear and that he should first tell his parents about it or come together to school for conversation. Only afterwards parents reported the case to the police. Few days ago we received an official student-written statement in which he speaks about the event and the names of the bullies.

Only now we can take the action about this case, and the teaching board will reflect on this event during this week. Stated Admir Hrnčić, assistant director of the school.

The case of Electro-mechanical high school was reported to police station in Lukavac, whose officials will take all necessary measures to shed the light on this tragic event.<sup>8</sup>

### **Juvenile violence: Girl stabbed in the neck because of the mobile phone?**

Seventeen-year-old Midheta D. from Stari Vitez was attacked with knife and robbed by 15-year-old beggar A.N. from settlement Sofa near Vitez. On the same day in the location named Zlatne Vode near Zvornik 14-year-old A.D. brutally beaten the girl named A.B.

### **The knife was found**

According to unofficial information, A.N. who usually begs in front of business center in Vitez, tried to take phone from Midheta D., which she was holding in her hand. When Midheta confronted him, he pulled out the knife and stabbed her in the neck. Somebody that was passing by ran to help the girl and the attacker fled. Shortly afterwards members of the police station arrested the 15-year-old A.N., and after the criminal processing, he showed them where he threw the knife.

The girl received medical help in the "Dr. fra Mato Nikolic" hospital in Nova Bila, where the medical staff declared minor injuries from attack. After the hearing, the cantonal prosecutor that was on duty, ordered the detention of A.N

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.svet.rs/hronika/tuzla-u-soku-pretukle-skolsku-drugaricu-a-snimak-surovog-maltretiranja-objavile-na-internetu?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter&fb\\_source=message](http://www.svet.rs/hronika/tuzla-u-soku-pretukle-skolsku-drugaricu-a-snimak-surovog-maltretiranja-objavile-na-internetu?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&fb_source=message)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sodalive.ba/izdvojeno/video-nasilje-u-lukavcu-ucenika-elektro-masinske-skole-mjesecima-maltretirali-tukli-i-pljackali/>  
<http://www.radiosaraievo.ba/novost/131667/ucenika-elektro-masinske-skole-mjesecima-maltretirali-tukli-i-pljackali-video>

On the same day police officers from Zvornik arrested A.D. (14) From Glumina for causing serious injuries to 13-year-old A.B. In accordance with the Law on the protection of minors, after the arrest, the boy was heard in the presence of parents, defense attorney and a social worker. During that occasion he admitted that he beat up the girl with a rock. The competent prosecutor ordered for him to be referred to a psychiatric examination at the Department of Mental Health. Thereafter, the boy was sent to the hospital in Banja Luka, to the Children's clinic for examination and treatment. The motive for the attack is not yet known.

### **Brutally beaten**

As we find out, A.B. did not return from school on Tuesday night. Shortly after parents reported that their daughter is missing, they found her almost unconscious in Zlatne Vode. After she was treated in Zvornik's general hospital she was sent to University-clinical Centar in Tuzla, because she was in severe post-traumatic shock. She was also examined by gynecologist, and it was determined that there was no sign of forced sexual act.

According to Dragan Cvijanovic, surgeon in General hospital in Zvornik, the girl was brutally beaten, had swollen bruises around the eyes, bleeding from the left ear, swollen ear shells with signs of internal bleeding.<sup>9</sup>

The fact is that the current growth tendency in juvenile delinquency is a big social problem, which in the majority of citizens creates a sense of uncertainty and concern. As long as the authorities do not clearly perceive the inevitable connection between legislation, prevention, alternative measures, institutional treatment, the application of the criminal law for minors in practice, and sustainable system of support in the strategic treatment of juvenile delinquency, we can hardly speak of a systemic problem solving. However, citizens have their role too, which is necessary to emphasize in order to replace the position of passive observer with the status of active participant. Reason for all of this is that we can all enjoy a high level of security situation related to the behavior of minors, and the phenomena of deviance in their behavior.

### ***ORC Tuzla team***

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.oslobodjenje.ba/crna-hronika/maloljetnicko-nasilje-djevoiku-ubo-nozem-u-vrat-zbog-mobitela>