

CAMPAGNING

Truth Commission Wins Support Throughout Former Yugoslavia

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An EU-supported campaign to establish a truth commission to examine abuses committed during the wars waged on the territory of the former Yugoslavia is rapidly gaining widespread favour throughout the region.

The Presidents of both Serbia and Croatia have recently endorsed the planned truth seeking body, an initiative of civil society organisations from all the former Yugoslav states. Important political support has also come from Members of the Montenegrin Parliament and the Chairman of the Slovenian Parliament.

Amid an aggressive media and PR campaign, organisers are now attempting to raise a million signatures from citizens throughout the western Balkans as a means of putting pressure on governments to endorse the commission as an official truth telling body.

The campaign for RECOM, as the proposed commission is known, wants to establish an independent and official regional commission to

establish the facts about the past and guarantee the right of all victims to truth about the conflicts. But supporters say that if it is to have serious impact, the commission must be recognised as an official body endorsed by governments, and not end up as a civil society initiative detached and isolated from the corridors of power.

Encouraged by meeting former commissioners from truth commissions in South Africa, Sierra Leone, East Timor, and Peru, campaigners are holding public consultations throughout the region. Participants have included victims and victims' families, human rights activists, NGOs, youth, political parties, local authorities, legal institutions, and war veterans. Their suggestions and recommendations will be reflected in a draft Statute that will be presented to governments on June 1, 2011.

The EU regularly supports worldwide and regional campaigns targeting concrete steps forward in the promotion of democracy and human rights.