

## Report on CESI International Summer School on Refugee Law

21-28 July, Sarajevo

Today we are being a witness of an alarmingly increasing numbers of violent conflicts and humanitarian crisis around the world with a steady rise in the global forced displacement. More than 2 million new refugees were forced into exile in 2013 - this being the highest number of new arrivals in nearly 20 years. The largest number of the uprooted individuals by the violence in today's world are in Syria (around 5 million internally displaced and 3 million refugees), but also the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Mali, Somalia, Iraq, Palestine and Ukraine. Moreover the new emergencies arise year after year, while the existing ones take longer and longer to be resolved. For this reason, ensuring and sustaining fare, effective and humane refugee protection in the years to come will require enhanced support of all scholars, NGO workers, UNHCR staff and dedicated activists and practitioners around the world.

Twenty years ago, with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Western Balkans region in general, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, underwent the tremendous demographic changes as a result of the massive scale displacement. It is estimated that around 4 million persons were forcibly displaced between 1990-1999, making this a single largest European forced displacement crises since the World War II. Every sixth person in ex-Yugoslavia and every second person in BiH had to leave their homes due to wide spreading hostilities or were systematically targeted, persecuted and displaced. **Today, 20 years after, the region is still being faced with the protracted war displacement and unresolved refugee issues. At the same time the Western Balkans region has become a destination for refugees from other parts of the world seeking international protection and asylum.** Persons seeking safe shelter and asylum in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia today come from variety of war affected areas – from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and other parts of the world. They need our support, competence and help in accessing the entitled protection and integration rights.

For this reason, having the second international summer school in forced migration studies dedicated to refugee law and means of protection became an imperative to CESI.

This eight days course brought together 25 activists, lawyers, students, NGO workers, anthropologists and practitioners from Europe, Africa, and North America.

Our training program was conducted by the experienced scholars, NGO legal advisers and law practitioners from US, UK and BiH, and covered the following modules:

### I. Assessment of 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol

- II. The Relevance of International Human Rights Law to Flight from Persecution
- III. UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection: “Membership of a particular social group” within the context of Article 1A(2).
- IV. Assessment of the Female Genital Cutting debate in Africa
- V. Convention on the Rights of the Child: Unaccompanied Minor/Separated Children
- VI. UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- VII. Psycho-Social Issues: Medical Evidence in Asylum and Human Rights Appeals
- VIII. Use of Country of origin Information assessment
- IX. Credibility Assessment in Asylum Procedures
- X. Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Procedures in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- XI. Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Procedures in Croatia
- XII. Reception and integration of Refugees in Croatia
- XIII. Reception and integration of Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- XIV. UNHCR Guidelines on the Application in Mass Influx Situations of the Exclusion Clauses
- XV. Internal Protection/Relocation/Flight Alternatives
- XVI. Providing Legal Aid to Refugees: Starting a Refugee Legal Aid Clinic?

The teaching staff included: **Professor Emerita Barbara Harrell-Bond**, being with us for the third time, supporting CESI work and helping the development of the refugee studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina/ WB region, **Pamela Goldberg**, Legal Advisor, UNHCR Regional Office for the United States of America and the Caribbean, **Victoria Smythies**, Juris Doctorate from the University of Alabama and an LL.M. in International Law from the University of Vienna/intern at Fahamu Refugee Programme in Oxford, UK, **Viktor Koska**, MSc degree in Forced Migration as an OSI/FCO/Chevening scholar at Refugee Studies Center, University of Oxford, teaching and research assistant and a PhD Candidate at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, **Nedim Kulenović**, doctoral student and a lawyer at the Association "Vaša prava Bosnia and Herzegovina", providing free legal aid in the sector for international protection, representing cases before the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Committee, **Dr.Selma Porobic**, CESI director and forced migration scholar, and the two guest speakers, **Armin Hoso and Liljana Kokotovic** from the UNHCR, BiH Office.

During the closing ceremony the students received the certificates of participation issue by CESI, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, handed over by the **Dean of the Faculty, Professor Dr. Sacir Filandra**. Professor Emerita Barbara Harrell-Bond was presented with the Certificate of Honorable Mention, awarded to her by Dr. Porobic for her extraordinary solidarity and work in establishing and

supporting the development of academic refugee studies programmes, research centers and refugee legal aid organization worldwide. Dr. Porobic commented that the world without Barbara Harell-Bond would be much sadder places for the refugees.

Students were also able to enjoy the closing speech delivered by **Hannah McMillen** from University of Kent, UK, CESI intern and a school participant, and a very moving passport poem performance by **Antoine Cassar** from Malta, with support of Valletta foundation – expressing strong solidarity towards all world migrants, increasingly subjected to deprivation of freedom of movement, degrading border controls and dehumanizing treatments around the globe.

Student's comments and experiences of the CESI ISS 2014:

**Lea Pehcec, graduating law student at University of Zagreb and a volunteer working on integration of refugees at Center for Peace studies, Zagreb, Croatia:**

*"Jako sam sretna što sam sudjelovala na ljetnoj školi ove godine. Sve je bilo odlično organizirano, program zanimljiv, a nešto od naučenog već sam uspjela primijeniti u svom angažmanu. Drago mi je da sam uspjela upoznati ljude iz drugih zemalja koji se bave sličnom djelatnošću te imala priliku učiti od nekog s Vašim znanjem i iskustvom u ovom području. " / "I am truly happy for attending this year's school. Everything was well organized, the programme was very interesting, and I was already able to apply some of the learned skills upon the return to my work. I am very glad to have met people from other countries who work in the similar field and for having been given the opportunity to learn from such an experienced scholars in this field. "*

**Dan Villegas, MA in International Development and International Relations, Florida International University, Miami, USA, UNDP in Mozambique in 2010, international electoral advisor in Georgia and Kazakhstan and electoral advisor for UNMIT (United Nations Mission in East Timor) in 2012-2013:**

*"I must compliment the Centre for Refugee and IDP Studies (CESI) in Sarajevo on the excellent training I attended in Bosnia! We had a myriad of brilliant refugee law speakers, led by Dr. Barbara Harell-Bond-, an icon in this field, who applied a perfect combination of technical expertise, humor, patience and experience to showcase the complexity of refugee law. We covered so much more than I would ever have expected, and so thoroughly!! It was so far superior to any previous training I may have exposed to. CESI is an extraordinary center located at the heart of Sarajevo, Bosnia led by a tireless and forward-looking director, Selma Porobic. I can't wait for more to be available next year. Thank you for making the whole experience so worthwhile"*

**Cassidy Rappaport, undergraduate student in refugee studies, human rights, cultural anthropology and law at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts and an intern at Fahamu Refugee Programme, Oxford, UK:**

*"Despite the many highlights of the course, one moment encapsulated the essence of the reasons we had come together to study. One participant, a Syrian refugee, bravely told her story and experiences in Syria.*

*With a small, crumbling, piece of chalk, she doodled a picture of a little plant with a childlike sun situated above it. She then drew an identical plant but the sun was gone with snowflakes surrounding it. She asked 'What happens when a plant is uprooted from its home to a new, harsh environment?' As you probably said as well, a fellow participant exclaimed: 'It dies'.*

*'No' she declared, 'Not if it has someone nurturing it, providing sunlight, warmth, food, and care.' She continued 'Just like refugees, uprooted from their homes and placed in harsh and different environments, they can die and deteriorate but not if there are people, people like you, to ensure it survives'*

*And in those few words came the essence of the course - a lesson at the heart of righting injustice suffered by refugees. "*

**All the information about the school will soon be found on CESI new website [www.cesi.fpn.unsa.ba](http://www.cesi.fpn.unsa.ba) on ISS2014 e-learning platform that will remain active for the purpose of general use.**

**To view the school pictures taken by Jusitna Gornyak, CESI intern and ERMA student, please click here <https://www.flickr.com/photos/126611506@N05/>**