



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Katarina Kruhonja (Croatia)

Joint Award with Vesna Terselic (1998)



"...for their dedication to a long-term process of peace-building and reconciliation in the Balkans."

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Katarina Kruhonja was born in Osijek in 1949. She is one of the founders of the Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights in Osijek in the East Slavonia region of Croatia. She is a physician and was the nationally recognized senior specialist in nuclear medicine in Osijek hospital. The Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights was founded in 1992, and was initially part of the Croatian Anti-War Campaign (ARK). It became formally independent of ARK in 1993, but is still a 'collective member' of it.

Vesna Terselic, born in 1962, was largely responsible for founding the Croatian Anti-War Campaign (ARK) in 1991 and has been for some years its National Coordinator. After studying at Zagreb University she became involved in street theatre and then, intensively, with environmental issues.

ARK is now a network of about 15 local and specialized organisations, a peace movement that is also the strongest and most active part of emerging civil society in Croatia. ARK is concerned with, among other things, education for non-violent conflict transformation, human rights protection, social reconstruction and reconciliation, support for refugees and displaced persons, help for the unemployed and the bereaved and those severely traumatized by war, the promotion of conscientious objections and the promotion of a civil rather than a military service corps. There are now well over a dozen centres where different aspects of these activities are pursued.

The Centre in Osijek is also making a major contribution to peace building in the region. From its activities several independent peace groups and regional as well as national networks have been

established. The main activities of the Centre are dealing with the protection of human rights, peace education, organising seminars and workshops for primary school teachers and children as well as post-war peace building, including psychosocial support to the wounded population and preparing the ground for the return of displaced persons and refugees. There are a number of projects intended to bring people together and rebuild confidence across the ethnic divides, and to start interethnic cooperation in postwar community building.

As a result of work facilitated by Terselic and Kruhonja, in March 1996 three organisations from Serbia and eight others from Croatia came together to form the 'Coordination of Peace Organisations for East Slavonia, Baranja and West Sirmium', which has made a major contribution to the prevention of a massive movement of Serbs out of the region, their integration in the Republic of Croatia, the prevention of incidents and violence and the processes of rebuilding trust between divided ethnic groups.

In order to initiate the process of dealing with the past and the establishment of factual truth about the war, the Center of Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights Osijek, the Center for Peace Studies, the Civic Council for Human Rights, and the Croatian Helsinki Committee together established in 2004 DOCUMENTA, a Centre for Dealing with the Past. The key reason for establishing this centre was the experience of suppression and falsification of war crimes and other war events in the younger history of the Balkans. Vesna Terselic is the director of DOCUMENTA.

The commitment of these two women, and the many organisations and activities which they have helped to inspire, has significantly increased the prospects for a transition in the area from war and ethnic division to democracy, justice, non-violence and peaceful coexistence.

Quotation

"We, as citizens or members of people's organisations, can preserve and nourish basic principles needed for long-term efforts aimed at transforming a totalitarian and war-torn society into a democratic one."

Katarina Kruhonja

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