

Institute of National Remembrance

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International conference "Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy"

On 7-8 December 2017 in Warsaw the 6th edition of the international conference "Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy", organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Institute of National Remembrance entitled „Democracy in dialogue, dialogue in democracy”.



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The sixth edition of the international conference "Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy", organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Institute of National Remembrance was held on 7-8 December 2017. The motto of this year's edition was "Democracy in Dialogue, Dialogue in Democracy". "The Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy" is an initiative addressed to all persons, institutions and organisations acting for the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and the defense of human rights. The meeting was attended by 200 participants from 40 countries. The Institute of National Remembrance was the organiser of a panel regarding transformational justice, entitled "Building Bridges through Transitional Justice". Among the panelists were Farah Hached, the Head of Labo' Démocratique (Tunisia), Prof. Paulo de Carvalho, Deputy Rector of Pan African University (Angola), Prof. Jae Chun Won, lecturer at Handong Global University (South Korea), a representative of Venezuela, and prosecutor Robert Kopydłowski from the IPN's investigative division. Unfortunately, David Ndii, Managing Director of Africa Economics (Kenya), who was arrested on the Sunday preceding the event, could not participate in the debate.

The second day of the deliberations began with workshops for civil society "ODIHR Civic Tech", on the relationship between new

technologies and the process of democratisation and the involvement of society in political life. During the meeting, platforms with legal acts that can be used by voters were discussed. Among them were “Parlement Citoyen”, created in France, where legal and legislative acts are stored. The International Idea platform, whose mission is to support sustainable democratic change through the sharing of knowledge, assistance in democratic reforms and influencing politicians was also touched upon. During the discussion, the participants further mentioned a regular PDF conference organized at the Gdańsk Solidarity Center, regarding the relationship between technology and politics and talked about a tool called Network transparency, i.e. data transmission through the network in a transparent manner. This way, users of a given application can access both remote and local resources. The panelists touched upon the issue of how digital tools influence participation in elections. It has been concluded that on the one hand, technology activates society but, on the other, sometimes excludes certain social spheres from participation in political life.

The panel, organised under the aegis of the Institute of National Remembrance, was preceded by a report from the 2017 World Forum for Democracy delivered by Claudia Luciani, Director of Democratic Governance of the Council of Europe. The main topic of the panelist's speech was the issue of populism and its negative impact on democracy and citizens. Claudia Luciani emphasised the need for intensive educational media work, technology platforms, supporting initiatives and openness to the opinions of individual citizens and entire

societies, as well as compliance with the principles of transparency. She also talked about participative democracy, involving the activation of the community. As part of the discussion, the British Ambassador to the EU drew attention to investigations conducted at an international level.

The Institute of National Remembrance was the organiser of a panel regarding transformational justice, entitled "Building Bridges through Transitional Justice". The aim of the session was showing a wide spectrum of cases, including the Angola peace process, the Arab Spring, the fall of communism in Poland, as well as possible scenarios in the case of potential restoration of justice in North Korea. Regardless of the fact how hard the bringing of perpetrators to court may seem, it is our moral obligation to seek justice and forms of compensation for the victims. The panel will explore how a wide ranging dialogue that involves vulnerable and minority groups can build bridges between conflict parties, thus contributing to social cohesion and long-lasting peace..The moderator of the discussion was Dr Rafał Leśkiewicz, who introduced the panelists and outlined the scheme of the session. He further discussed the definition of transitional justice in the context of the mission and statutory tasks of the IPN, describing how it correlates with the work of the scientific, prosecutorial, educational, archival and vetting divisions of the Institute. Dr Leśkiewicz also noted that the cooperation between the particular divisions of the IPN aid the efficient implementation of processes regarding settlements with the past. Among the panelists were Farah Hached, the Head of Labo' Démocratique (Tunisia), Prof. Paulo de Carvalho, Deputy Rector of Pan

African University (Angola), Prof. Jae Chun Won, lecturer at Handong Global University (South Korea), a representative of Venezuela, and prosecutor Robert Kopydłowski from the IPN's investigative division.

During the IPN panel, Professor Paulo de Carvalho spoke about the incomplete democratisation process taking place in Angola, where, despite the four-fold elections, power is still exercised by the same people, which prevents a complete change of the system. Many citizens are still living below the poverty line, and narrow groups with numerous privileges accumulate the majority of goods. In addition, the law is often not respected, and the economic situation of the state is worsened by the functioning of the black market. At the same time, the international community is not responding to the arrests of political leaders. Professor Paulo de Carvalho also talked about the fact that the political system functioning in Angola is greatly influenced by specific political, cultural and ethnic factors, civil war and external influences. He further stressed the enormous problem of corruption and the fact that Angola differs from Western countries and that it is practically impossible to implement standards prevailing in the EU.

The representative from Venezuela said that Venezuela is a country where, unlike classic dictatorships, there are no mass murders or abductions of uncomfortable citizens. However, the intangible rights of individual entities are violated in a gross manner, and the degree of trust in the judiciary is very low.

A striking example of this, is the collection of signatures for a referendum project aimed at dismissing the current president, Nicolas

Madura. The list of signatures for the referendum project was passed on to one of the parliamentarians in order to be verified, and was later unlawfully made public on the Internet. Persons whose names were on the list, as well as members of their families, are currently subject to various forms of repression and their access to state positions has been blocked.

To sum up, Venezuela is only at the beginning of the path of change, and the activities of successive Truth Commissions have not brought on substantial changes as far as bringing representatives of the undemocratic regime to justice. New legal mechanisms would be needed to prevent the expiry of totalitarian crimes.

Professor Jae Chun Won, a board member of the South Korean Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR), dealt with issues related to transformational justice in North Korea. One of the goals of his speech was to show that although the North Korean regime is still in progress, the international community could take important actions to defend human rights in this totalitarian country, where about 1% of the population (including women and children) are detained in concentration camps. He referred to international sanctions related to the use of nuclear weapons or the perspective of the Winter Olympic Games, which may contribute to a temporary softening of the course by the regime. He also gave an example of the slave labor from North Korea, which is used by many EU countries, including Poland.

Moreover, the problem of refugees from Korea (about 30,000 people) who should be enrolled into adaptation programs (this is done, among

others, by NKHR) still remains, especially with regard to children and youth, who Korea's future will really depend on after potential reunification with the southern neighbor. Professor Won also mentioned projects aimed at creating international mechanism for the settlement of communist crimes.

An example of activities aimed at the future building of democracy in North Korean society was the joint NKHR and IPN project in August 2017. It assumed a trip for refugee students from North Korea to Poland, which included visits to Warsaw museums (e.g. Warsaw Uprising Museum, Katyn Museum), Auschwitz Concentration and Death Camp and the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa, the IPN Archives, as well as the place of searching for the remains of Stalin's prisoners in the Warsaw Powązki Cemetery section known as "Łączka". Presenting a series of photos from this event, prof. Won argued that the encounter with the difficult history of Poland, to some extent similar to the history of their country, allowed young people to distance themselves from their own painful experiences and gain the necessary motivation to work hard for future unification. At the end of his speech, prof. Won expressed his gratitude to the Institute of National Remembrance for the work put into this undertaking and the hospitality experienced by Korean guests during their one-week stay in Poland.

Ms. Farah Hached is the President of the Labo'Démocratique organisation. The theme of her speech was transitional justice after the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring in 2007 on the example of

Tunisia, considered to be one of the countries where this revolution has had the greatest impact. She also pointed out that parallel to the uprising, a cyber revolution involving the Internet also broke out. Farah Hached drew attention to the fact that for a large part of Tunisian society it was a surprise that the above mentioned revolution (the first revolution in the twenty-first century in this region) was only a prelude to changes that have not really ended yet. In addition, in most of the neighboring countries of Tunisia (maybe only with the exception of Egypt) this spurt collapsed very quickly.

Shortly after the revolution broke out, the country encountered many everyday problems, slowly learning new democratic principles and struggling with the legacy of the previous system. At first, Tunisian society did not even realise that there was such a term as transitional justice, although many of its principles were intuitively applied in practice. The knowledge of other states and non-governmental organisations in this field, including the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, proved to be immensely helpful. Thanks to the international exchange of knowledge and experience, the Truth and Dignity Commission was established in Tunisia in 2014. IPN experts took part in the work on the Tunisian Transitional Justice Act, and from 2011, four study visits for Tunisian partners took place at the Institute of National Remembrance, including two for members of the Commission - in 2014 and 2015.

Social dialogue proved to be an important condition for the success of the changes being introduced, especially in the context of disputes

between individual groups, constituting the legacy of the past regime, whose creators were guided by the principle of divide and rule. As the panelist pointed out, the mechanisms of reaching an agreement by representatives of various groups could be described as "transactional justice" based on the clash of various interests. Still, social life in Tunisia lacks transparent rules and established procedures, including those related to amnesty. This may have an impact on the formation of extremist attitudes within society and the threat of terrorism.

The last speaker of the panel was a prosecutor from the IPN's investigative division, Robert Kopydłowski. He began by presenting a short history of prosecuting communist criminals up to 1990. Initially, the investigations concerned the perpetrators of communist crimes from 1944-56, and only after the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance in 2000 they covered crimes committed in a later period, pursuant to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance . It is worth recalling here the indisputable principle that perpetrators can only be punished for crimes which, in a legal sense, also constituted a crime when they were being committed. Despite the difficulties associated with the fact that the majority of perpetrators and witnesses who could confirm their guilt are no longer alive (the so-called "biological amnesty"), and many of the documents have been accidentally or intentionally destroyed, the issue of explaining the circumstances of the case seems crucial, constituting not only the expression of homage to the victims, but also important information for the representatives of the former regime, that justice is inevitable. For example, a relative of a victim of the Katyn massacre who was waiting

for the perpetrators to be found guilty for 70 years.

The next panel concerned inter-religious engagement, reconciliation and democracy. Participants included: Farida Abbas Khalaf - Yazid activist and former ISIS prisoner (Iraq), Wai Wai Nu, founder and Director of the Burmese Women Peace Network, Tanya Segal, rabbi of Beit Krakow society, moderated by James Chen, Executive Director of the Institute of Global Engagement (USA). The theme of the panel was the role of religion in conciliation processes, but different cases of persecution based on religion (a moving example of persecution of Yazidis and insufficient involvement of the international community to prevent such violations) and religious leaders' involvement in ad hoc political and territorial disputes were also touched upon.

In the concluding statements, Jerzy Pomianowski, Director of the European Endowment for Democracy, stressed the role of the "Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy" and the close relationship between religion and geopolitics. In the light of his opinion, the international community is facing new challenges, but described the overall picture as positive. The source of strength and potential was noticed mainly in young people. Dr Marcin Walecki, Head of the Democratisation Department, OSCE / ODIHR called "Dialog" a forum for exchanging international ideas. Like the previous speaker, he stressed the value of young people. Dr. Walecki emphasised the need for active participation in the election process and promotion of democratic dialogue. Jerzy Bauriski summed up the event from the Genevan perspective and pointed out the existence of a gap between democratic standards and their

implementation. In this context, he discussed the problems of non-governmental organisations. He stressed that the participation of 200 panelists from various regions of the world in the "Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy" testifies to the great impact of the project and the great contribution of "Dialogue" on building democracy. Jerzy Burski thanked all of the co-organisers of the event, including the Institute of National Remembrance for their input and participation.

Information about the event can also be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/p/wdd_pl/warszawski_dialog_na_rzecz_demokracji

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