



Victims of War Torture in Republika Srpska Will Be Included in the Public Call for Medical Rehabilitation

TRIAL International in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Foundation United Women and Foundation Lara are welcoming the Decision of the Government of Republika Srpska to, for the first time, include victims of war torture in the public call for medical rehabilitation. The medical rehabilitation previously only included disabled war veterans and families of fallen soldiers even though victims of war torture were guaranteed this right by the Law for Protection of Victims of War Torture in the RS, which came into effect in 2018.

This decision of the Government comes partly as a result of advocacy by TRIAL International and its partner organizations, United Women and Lara, as well as representatives of state institutions and international actors. European Union was an active advocate for the implementation of this right, as one of key steps that the governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to take in the process of EU accession to ensure environment suitable for reconciliation and reparations for victims of war crimes.

Adrijana Hanušić Bećirović, Senior Legal Advisor at TRIAL in BiH, welcomed this very important step for victims with status of war torture victims in RS, mainly for victims of conflict-related sexual violence. „Three years ago, in our discussions, we noticed that victims have started articulating the need for medical rehabilitation as the consequences they are suffering due to trauma are becoming more prominent with age. Republika Srpska has made an important step forward in the region and we hope that Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which also included this right in its newly adopted Law for the Protection of Civilian Victims of War, will also ensure implementation in practice without delays.”

Ministry of Labor, War Veterans and Disabled Persons' Protection has dedicated 500,000 BAM (around 250,000 EUR) for this activity. **Gorica Ivić**, Executive Director of Foundation United Women from Banja Luka, also welcomed the decision: “We hope that the victims will have an opportunity to use this right without additional administrative hurdles and that the status of victim of war torture will be enough to get treatment in institutions that also offer psychosocial support provided by professionals who have trauma-oriented expertise.”

The need for medical rehabilitation was recently highlighted during two events in Banja Luka and Bijeljina, which took place as a continuation of the efforts aimed at improving the implementation of the Law for Protection of Victims of War Torture. The advocacy efforts began in October of 2022. At the time the main focus was the extension or abolishment of the deadline for obtaining the status of victim of war torture.

Radmila Žigić from Lara commented on the decision: „We hope that access to rights will be obtainable without complicated administrative procedures. Also, we still haven't lost faith that the deadline for status application will be extended for many victims of conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of torture. We expect that government in the RS will put forth the amendments to the Law in 2024.”



UK Government supported the activities aimed at improving access to rights for victims of torture in the RS.