

Identity protection measures for witnesses in civil proceedings are highly necessary

Sarajevo, 14 November 2017 – The NGO TRIAL International urges BiH authorities to adopt without further delay a set of legal changes that would ensure protection of the identity for the witnesses in civil proceedings in BiH. The current legal framework does not provide necessary protection to the victims.

While the victims' identities are protected in criminal proceedings, this is not an option in civil proceedings. The lack of these provisions is particularly damaging for survivors of wartime sexual violence who face safety issues, societal stigma and trauma. Furthermore, it discourages many victims from requesting compensation in civil courts, which is sometimes their only option for pursuing redress.

"The adoption of these amendments does not have any financial implications on the budget. On the other hand, these legislative changes would certainly introduce a systematic solution not only for war crimes victims, but also for all citizens who find themselves in a similar situation, including victims of organized crime and human trafficking," stated **Adrijana Hanušić Bećirović, Senior Legal Adviser at TRIAL International.**

In order to help ensure necessary changes to the legal framework, TRIAL International lead a working group of experts that came up with amendments to the all relevant laws at state, entity and district level, that should be adopted as soon as possible.

"All the relevant ministries' representatives recognized the importance of the changes in the current legal framework during the meetings held this year," added **Adrijana Hanušić Bećirović.** *"We believe that such attitudes are a positive sign and with the support of all the ministries we will be able to see these changes happen in the near future."*

TRIAL International notes that request for appropriate changes and improved witness protection measures also came from the United Nations Human Rights Committee in March 2017. The

TRIAL International is a non-governmental organization fighting impunity for international crimes and supporting victims in their quest for justice. TRIAL International takes an innovative approach to the law, paving the way to justice for survivors of unspeakable sufferings. The organization provides legal assistance, litigates cases, develops local capacity and pushes the human rights agenda forward.

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Committee demanded from BiH to urgently implement the necessary legal and practical measures which would provide the victims of torture and sexual violence with effective legal remedies.

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