AfP Recognizes Velma Šarić With Inaugural Local Peacebuilder Award

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Washington, D.C., USA. – The Alliance for Peacebuilding, the leading nonpartisan global network of 150+ members working in 181 countries to end violent conflict and build sustainable peace, is launching this year its inaugural Local Peacebuilder Award, which recognizes that locally-led peacebuilding (LLPB) is critical to preventing and reducing violent conflict and building sustainable peace.

AfP is thrilled to announce Velma Šarić as the winner of AfP’s Inaugural Local Peacebuilder Award. Velma is from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the founder and President of the Post-Conflict Research Center, a trusted and valued AfP member. Velma has over 20 years experience working in BiH as a researcher, journalist, peacebuilding expert, and a human rights defender.

Liz Hume, AfP’s Executive Director, stated “Velma and PCRC are an amazing example of locally-led peacebuilding organizations that understand the local conflict dynamics and know how to address them through storytelling and education. Although BiH has avoided full-scale war since 1995, in 2021 the country was again experiencing an ethnic crisis and Velma and PCRC’s work is instrumental to prevent and reduce this crisis and build long-term peace in BiH at all levels of society. They were also critical in assisting us to understand the conflict dynamics and how to help at the international level.”

“The AfP inaugural Local Peacebuilder Award inspires my team with hope and we are humbled by this recognition. This award occurs at a fortuitous moment when Bosnia
and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans are confronted with increasing conflict
dynamics, ethnic tensions, and war crimes glorification,” said Velma Šarić. “As an
organization that has been actively working to build sustainable peace in Bosnia for
more than a decade, the AfP Award will spur us forward to continue our mission of
peacebuilding, despite significant obstacles.” She added: “this award is also an
affirmation of the PCRC mission and I dedicate this award to the exceptionally
talented team represented by Bosnian youth, our supporters, advisors, allies, and
donors who believe in us.”

Velma Šarić is the founder and President of the Post-Conflict Research Center,
which is dedicated to fostering a culture of peace through peace education and
research, creative multimedia, and addressing human rights, transitional justice,
and conflict prevention. PCRC works to publish school curriculums about the
Holocaust and its parallels to genocide denial that is pervasive throughout BiH and
the Western Balkans. It produces film documentaries that expose details of war
crimes and feature stories written by youth journalists from the Balkan Diskurs
program which have been often ignored by the media. PCRC curates exhibitions
that tell the stories of people who bravely rescued persons from a different ethnic
group during the 1992-1995 ethnic war and curates photo exhibitions at the
Srebrenica Memorial Centre of survivors of the genocide. They have also told the
stories of Roma and LGBTI communities, communities that are still discriminated
against in BiH.

Velma is also a journalist, trained at the BBC Reporting School and worked as a
journalist at the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in London and The
Hague, Velma spent eight years reporting on war crimes trials and investigating
transitional justice processes in the former Yugoslavia. Additionally, she spent
three years working as a court reporter at the Balkan Investigative Reporting
Network and Association of Court Reporters in BiH covering court procedures at
the local and national levels. Velma worked as a researcher at the Institute for
Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law in Sarajevo. As a
researcher and producer, Velma has worked on numerous publications and films
about the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, including Uspomene 677, Ordinary Heroes, In the
Land of Blood and Honey by Angelina Jolie, and I Came to Testify and War Redefined
from the PBS series Women, War & Peace. From 2012 to 2019, she served as the
Project Manager of the WARM Foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During this
time, Velma led the development and design of the Foundation’s work and the
annual Festival on contemporary conflicts in Sarajevo bringing together more than
1500 attendees from the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. Velma holds an M.A Degree in Political Science from the University of Sarajevo. She is a Columbia University fellow, having attended the Alliance for Historical Dialogue and Accountability Fellowship Program. In addition, she is a fellow of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Global Post’s GroundTruth Project.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP)—named the “number one influencer and change agent” among peacebuilding institutions worldwide—is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit, nonpartisan network of 150+ organizations working in 181 countries to prevent conflict, reduce violence, improve lives, and build sustainable peace. At our core, AfP cultivates a network to strengthen and advance the peacebuilding field, enabling peacebuilding organizations to achieve greater impact—tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.