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Media News

Prepared by the
SAFAX News Agency Sarajevo
<http://www.mp-institu.com/>

• Journalism and Democracy • Media in Transition

No 50, Vol. I Sarajevo,

January 24, 2000

JOURNALISTIC SOLIDARITY

Syndicate Narcissists

The president of the Independent Syndicate of Journalists of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nagorka Idrizovic, on January 11 in a TV BiH program said a few words in favor of protecting the position of journalists employed with this TV house. A day later, insulted that someone was laying claim on members of "his" syndicate, the president of the Independent Syndicate of Workers of RTV BiH, Miodrag Oljaca, responded with a statement that he is the only representative of interests of workers and most journalists from the state RTV BiH. The Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*, where Nagorka Idrizovic is employed, then dedicated almost a quarter of a page to show what and how the Independent Syndicate of Journalists is doing.

Perhaps this "battle for members" would be understandable if these two journalist syndicates from Sarajevo were fiercely competing through good and attractive programs offered to potential members for their professional protection. However, when most journalists are working off the books, without pay or with a shameful pay of 200 or 300 marks a month (which they do not always receive on time), when rare returnee journalists are facing a lot of difficulty in claiming repossession of their former apartments and jobs in their media, when retired colleagues are "losing the right" to be able to visit their former organizations, when the fate of hundreds of people who are working for RTV BiH on the eve of its forthcoming radical reorganization is unknown, when future bosses of former state media are announcing how many journalists they will fire from work, when most journalists have no social insurance, when for the sake of a bigger salary they agree to the shameful position of working for foreigners without any contract – such a competition for members between syndicate leaderships is a tasteless and narcissistic.

Five journalist associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and three journalist syndicates (two in the Federation and one in the Republika Srpska) are proof that there is no professional solidarity whatsoever. Not one association can take pride in having journalists rushing to join it, paying membership fees and expecting speedy and efficient assistance. Divided by entity, national, political and narrow-minded interests, these associates are vegetating, while the journalist profession is on the verge of compromise, manipulation and social disaster.

Journalist rights are not handed to them by the law and decisions of the international community. They must also be won through good professional and syndicate organization, journalist solidarity, and even journalist self-defense and strike as last resorts in the struggle for human rights.

The EROTEL Case

SFOR's Move Next?

EROTEL and Croatian Television continue to transmit their programming on close to 157 frequencies in Bosnia-Herzegovina without any legal decision. Meanwhile, reconstruction of Radio-Television Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the condition for the establishment of Federal RTV and a Public Broadcasting Service for the entire Bosnia-Herzegovina, is going slowly and meeting with resistance.

Independent Media Commission spokesperson Zinaida Babovic said the IMC sticks to its decision that EROTEL must transmit on approved frequencies only, or terminate activities. It has undertaken measures to ensure compliance with its decision. OHR spokesman Oleg Milisic said the High Representative has asked SFOR to enforce the IMC decision taken due to illegal use of frequencies. He did not say when SFOR will give an order to stop EROTEL's transmission and in what way it will be done. Meanwhile, the new chairman of EROTEL's board of governors, Mladen Bevanda, is trying to arrange to have a solution to this problem synchronized with the start of work of Federal RTV, because that would protect the interests of the Croat people. SAFAX received this information on January 21. However, in Sarajevo's Oslobodjenje of Saturday, Jan. 22, a news item quoted sources close to the Croatian Democratic Union as saying that the party is again ready to request the establishment of three public television stations.

Let us go back a little. A decision taken by the High Representative to Bosnia-Herzegovina on July 30 last year states that HRT shall immediately cease its activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina effective 1 October 1999. The frequencies currently used for the re-broadcasting of HRT programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be made fully available to the IMC, who will reassign them in line with the objective of ensuring adequate and equitable use of the frequency spectrum as necessary for public broadcasting activities, with special consideration of the needs of RTV FBiH.

The "EroTEL" company from West Mostar is authorized to re-broadcast HRT programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although EroTEL is registered as a legal local organization, "EroTEL's" real majority shareholder is actually HRT, which exercises full control over it. "EroTEL's" activities are



Media News- all the media news of BiH collected in one place.

Issued every second Monday in English and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian. Texts by local author are published in whatever variant is appropriate to the author.

Published by **Media Plan - Safax**

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Thanks to the Soros Open Society

Fund for BiH and Westminster

Foundation for Democracy London,

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not transparent. Its board of governors was recently dismissed and a new one appointed, but the names of its members have not been made public. The new board of governors chairman is Mladen Bevanda, president of HDZ Sarajevo.

All OHR attempts to settle open issues with HRT and EROTEL have failed thus far. It is a known fact that HRT is practically the most powerful media system in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A total of 157 transmitters are used to transmit three HRT channels, which is considerably more than that used by RTVBiH and RTRS. A large number of these transmitters are owned by RTVBiH, that is former RTV Sarajevo. Property relations have never been regulated.

HRT's presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina is illegal from the standpoint of international relations. HRT programming threatens the function of local public stations. HRT is showing many foreign programs which have been bought for broadcasting by local stations. This system is threatening domicile stations' marketing income, at the same time violating international standards related to overflowing of ground systems' signal (European Convention on Trans-National Television). Erotel and the Croatian Democratic Union in Bosnia-Herzegovina justify their insistence on the necessity of such presence of HRT in this country by the fact that Croats do not have their own media in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the present RTVBiH does not reflect the interests of the Croat people. This position is encouraged by the fact that reconstruction of Radio-Television BiH is going slowly.

The Independent Media Commission early last November allocated a restricted, temporary working license valid for 180 days to EROTEL, obliging it to abandon all transmitters under its present management save for 11 whose use it is authorized for, in order to enable the functioning of federal television. IMC also warned EROTEL that in re-broadcasting any HRT program within its own program, it must bear in mind HRT's continuous violation of the IMC Broadcast Code of Practice. However, EROTEL refused to adhere to IMC decisions. It did not accept the temporary license, to which the IMC reacted on November 15 with an order on closure of operations and a call to SFOR to intervene in line with its mandate.

The international community has so far hesitated to take more radical action to resolve this problem for several reasons. One of them is probably contained in the fact that the establishment of federal RTV, which will put the Croat people in Bosnia-Herzegovina into an equal media position, is going slowly. The second reason is probably the strong political turmoil in Croatia, which the international community did not want to influence by making a radical move related to HRT. The opposition victory in this country has now considerably changed the political situation, but the new authorities still have no influence on HRT.

It is almost impossible to further delay finding a solution to the status of EROTEL and HRT status because it seriously impedes the public broadcasting restructuring process in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in particular the establishment of federal RTV, although the issue of EROTEL is not the only one that is slowing down this process (see *Media News* 49).

Do conditions exist for reaching a realistic agreement with HRT at this moment or will the international community have to activate enforcement measures? (Z. U.)

R e s p o n s i b i l i t y f o r L i b e l

Citizens Against Imprisonment And Fines

Bosnian-Herzegovinian journalists welcomed High Representative Carlos Westendorp's decision of July 30 last year on decriminalization of libel and defamation in the Federation and Republika Srpska. A surprise, however, came from the federal government which, in place of imprisonment, proposed a law on compensation of damage caused by libel and defamation. The law stipulates that in case the court find a journalist for committing libel and defamation, draconian measures shall be imposed, which journalists would not be able to pay, which then means that prison would await them anyway. The federal ombudsmen have reacted to this (see *Media News* no. 49) and

proposed that in such cases journalists or media should be fined symbolically (for instance 1 KM), while the court decision should be publicized in the media that committed libel or defamation.

Media News now present the results of a telephone poll on this subject carried out among 150 residents of Sarajevo and 100 from Zenica and Tuzla each. The poll was carried out on January 14-17. The polled people do not agree with imprisonment and big fines for journalists responsible for libel and defamation: 44.7 percent of the polled Sarajevans, 62 percent of residents of Tuzla and 68 percent of those in Zenica maintain that in cases of libel and defamation the journalist should be fined only symbolically, while the court decision should be publicized in the newspaper.

New International Community Intervention

In the meantime, on January 18, High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch and OSCE Head of Mission Robert Barry sent a joint letter to Federation Prime Minister Edhem Bicakcic calling on him to recall the proposed Law on Libel. An OSCE press release stated: "In a letter to Mr. Bicakcic, Petritsch and Barry pointed out that the proposed law does not respect the fundamental rights and principles of freedom of expression, which is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights and widely accepted in modern democracies. Three provisions are particularly disputable: inclusion of defamation, a provision specifying big fines for journalists found guilty of libel, and the right of elected and appointed officials to file compensation charges in official capacity.

Ambassadors Petritsch and Barry called on the prime minister to recall the draft Law on Libel and to cooperate with the OHR, OSCE and other interested parties in drafting a Law on Freedom of Expression in line with the highest democratic standards.

In the letter Petritsch and Barry refer to the High Representative's decision which states that this Law should be drafted in accordance with guidelines from the OHR, OSCE Mission and experts. In the process of passing the law, an Advisory Group was formed which includes representatives of the government, OHR, OSCE and IMC, as well as local and international experts. The High Representative's decision also specified that the public should be consulted about the law on all levels.

The Public is Well Informed

The poll, carried out by Media Plan's Monitoring Center in Sarajevo, encompassed 20 percent of people under the age of 35, 55.3 percent of people aged 36 to 60, and 24.7 people over the age of 61. In Tuzla this ratio was 29:56:15 percent, and in Zenica 34:46:20 percent.

Most polled people have high school degrees (45.3 percent in Sarajevo, 52.0 percent in Tuzla, and 35.0 percent in Zenica), while a considerable number of pollees have a university degree (28.7 percent in Sarajevo, 35.0 percent in Tuzla, and 25.0 percent in Zenica).

In Sarajevo, when asked "Do you regularly follow news programs on radio and TV?", 66.0 percent of the respondents said yes, in Tuzla 88.0 percent, and in Zenica as many as 92.0 percent. The pollees read newspapers a little less. The answer to the question "Do you regularly read daily and other newspapers?", the answer yes was given by 50.7 percent of those asked in Sarajevo, 60.0 percent in Tuzla, and 50.0 percent in Zenica. This all corroborates earlier findings that electronic media are the primary source of information, while press are in the background.

When asked "Have you heard of the Draft Federal Law on Compensation of Damages Caused by Libel and Defamation?", 55.3 percent of the polled residents of Sarajevo said yes, 48 percent of those from Tuzla gave the same answer, as well as 100 percent of those in Zenica. If we look at the answers given to the question on how often they follow news programs, polled residents in Zenica are the ones who set aside most time for news programs on radio and TV and the press, so it is no wonder they are well informed about this issue.

We asked the respondents to choose one of the three options that have appeared most often as possible forms of court punishment for libel and defamation circulated in the press:

The question was: If a journalist publishes something untrue or incorrect which may be considered libel and defamation, are you in favor of:

- a) having the journalist prosecuted and imprisoned,
- b) seeking compensation for libel and defamation in the form of a big fine,
- c) fining the journalist symbolically, and publicizing the decision on his responsibility in the media.

Option c – a symbolic fine and publication of guilt – got most votes in all three cities (44.7 percent in Sarajevo, 62.0 percent in Tuzla, and 68.0 percent in Zenica). Prosecution of journalists and imprisonment received least support: 8.7 percent in Sarajevo, 17 percent in Tuzla, and 16 percent in Zenica. Some Sarajevans showed their placability by insisting on an option that was not given as a choice, which is that the journalist should not be punished at all and that he should be sanctioned through public condemnation. We also received the following suggestion from two respondents – that the journalist “who does not speak the truth” should be banned from work without any other sanctions.

By comparing answers to several questions, it was established that opinions on the gravity and type of punishment do not depend on how well a respondent is informed, or what is his or her age and social status.

The comments we heard in this poll show that the pollees look at this issue from two angles: their dissatisfaction with “what is being done around us,” and support to journalists “who don’t even get paid.”

S e m i n a r *Journalist Freedom and Responsibility to the Public*

Propaganda Should Be Fought With Words

The Sarajevo-based Media Plan School of Journalism on January 18 hosted the first of three seminars on the theme “Journalism – Dilemmas and Challenges,” which are organized within the Communication Network for Free and Professional Journalism in Southeast Europe. The main topic of this seminar was “Journalist Freedom and Responsibility to the Public.” Prof. Dr. Miroljub Radojkovic of the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade spoke about the limits of journalist freedom and instruments of protection, the state of media in Serbia, and problems faced by Serbian journalists. He presented a rather pessimistic view that most journalism students and young journalists in Serbia are turning to so-called *show journalism*, which offers a bigger chance of financial reward, more than to traditional journalistic values. In his opinion, the reason for this is the poor economic situation in Serbia, but also world trends which are pointing journalism in this direction.

“In the world in 1999, a total of 36 journalists were killed and 85 imprisoned, which is more than in previous years,” said Alexander Levy of Paris-based *Reporters Without Frontiers*. He said that Serbia, due to the situation in Kosovo, repression by the regime and NATO air strikes, had the largest number of journalist casualties in Europe. When asked by students what they think of NATO’s bombing of Radio Television Serbia, both Levy and Radojkovic agreed that, despite the evident fact that it is a propaganda tool of the regime, NATO should not have done it. “After all, it is a media organization. Propaganda should be fought with words, not bombs,” said Radojkovic.

The president of the Independent Union of Professional Journalists of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mehmed Husic, answered questions asked by the School’s students and other attendees about the state of media freedoms in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He underlined that adoption of a law on libel and defamation which stipulates draconian fines for journalists is insisted upon by the political parties in power in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which want to use it to keep the media in a state of submission.

Dusan Babic, head of the Independent Media Commission office in Mostar, spoke about the non-ethical conduct of certain media sanctioned by the IMC. Babic also underlined the unacceptability of Independent Television Banja Luka airing a report from Chechnya showing a Russian soldier being slaughtered by Chechen extremists. The IMC fined the Independent Television, however not only because the report is so disgusting, but also because a journalist announced the item by linking it to speculation that Chechen extremists were being trained in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to the IMC, indirectly, this item does not contribute to understanding in Bosnia-Herzegovina and spreads antagonism against Bosniak Muslims.

The main topic of the next two seminars to be organized by the Media Plan School of Journalism will be reporting in conflict situations and investigative journalism. The seminars are held with support from the Government of France and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
(D. Aleksic)

C o n t r o l o f t h e I n t e r n e t – Y e s o r N o ? (1)

Media News in its latest issue published an article on Internet control whose author, on behalf of Media Plan, took part in a Conference on New Media, held under the auspices of UNESCO in Paris in December. One of the most important conclusions of the conference is that Internet control must not be allowed because it would be a kind of censorship which would particularly suit totalitarian regimes in the world. *Media News* starting with this issue will publish articles featuring opinions of journalists and other public workers, as well as Internet surfing lovers, on the issue – does the Net need to be specially regulated.

Control Would Deprive The Internet Of Being A “Global Junge” (*Mensur Camo, Radio Free Europe journalist, Prague*)

The question from the title is just as rational and hopeless as if one were to start pondering the regulation of, for example, public transport. The Internet is a technological and communication step towards further democratization of society (which, let us not forget, is turning from local to global) and as such, it is available to criminals as much as to ordinary, law-abiding citizens. And, as the advantages of democracy are not reserved exclusively for these ordinary, “positive” citizens, usage of the Internet must not be, and for that matter, cannot be banned for the “bad guys.” Just as they cannot be forbidden to use public transport.

Of course, it is one thing if a criminal boards a tram or train to get to a desired destination, and another if in the crowd he tries to pick people’s pockets or beat them up. However, the latter situation is police and court jurisdiction. Check, if you want, whether that “list of rights and obligations...”, which hangs in every tram or bus, has anything on criminals, perverts or international terrorists. Fortunately, or unfortunately, regulation which will one day “hang” on the first page of every Internet browser or at the bottom of every web site will also say something to that effect. According to it, all users will be equal until they “put their hand in someone else’s pocket” or decide to “beat up” or “kill” someone. It goes without saying that Internet regulations cannot be put on the same level as those related to behavior in means of public transport, but what can we do; both ministers of police and courts will sometimes have to connect to the Internet to be able to keep up with trends. Ask the potential next U.S. president, Albert Gore, why he had to become a “computer expert”!

Another major question follows: who would be responsible for Internet control and who would regulate it? The state, some supra or multinational body, Internet providers? In each of these options (if they can be implemented at all, and fortunately they cannot), the Internet would lose the appeal of a “global jungle” or a communication “garden of paradise with a thousand flowers.” The Italian writer Umberto Eco illustrates the democratic quality and “democratibility” of the Web with, among other things, the global availability of the most exotic languages, which cannot be found even in the largest of libraries, but which have been used for create many web sites. Is it not, not even in greatly

pessimistic visions, impossible to imagine some Internet “regulator” or “controller” who decides that, for example, there is no need to have Pig Latin as one of the languages on the Great Web (I do not know if there is such a site, but in any case it sounds good)? “Self-regulation,” which the Paris conference discussed, comes down to more or less the same. Let us imagine – going back to the example at the beginning of this article – what “self-regulation” would look like in a Number 3 tram in Sarajevo, whose driver is in a bad mood that day and the passengers, as usual, are ill-tempered due to jams, low salaries and dull rain. It does not sound very promising...

Hence, a direct answer has not yet been given to the question of Internet control and only one day will it become a part of local criminal codes and, perhaps, international conventions. And, as democratic rules prescribe, it is up to each individual surfer to do all s/he can to ensure that this law is good.

There is no distrust towards government representatives, but towards their commitment to the Web.

N e w s

Entity Governments Against Payment of License Fees to IMC

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) decision to start charging broadcasting license fees as of January this year has provoked a strong reaction from the BiH Federation prime minister, Edhem Bicakcic, and displeasure with, as he says, the fact that the Government will be deprived of this revenue.

The minister instructed the Federal Ministry of Transport and Communication to protect broadcasting and transmission resources for electronic media and the government decided to form a Public Broadcasting and Transmission Infrastructure Corporation.

The Government of the Republika Srpska reacted in a similar fashion. Information Minister Rajko Vasic said his ministry will not accept the IMC decision, which he called a “theft of entity commodities.”

IMC Public Relations head Zinaida Babovic said no money has yet been taken from electronic media for licenses.

“As this is a regulatory agency which is expected to become part of the state structures, it is envisioned that it shall have its own source of financing, which in the future shall consist of charging fees for issuing licenses,” Babovic said. She added that fees are planned for the coming period, to be paid directly to the IMC account, which will use the money to support itself.

The IMC’s general position is that it will not accept the entity governments’ opposition to charging license fees.

“It is a small amount and it is out of the question that it jeopardizes the entities’ revenues,” the Independent Commission is categorical.

For example, these are the monthly fees. A television station with a transmitter of up to 250 W pays 100 KM, from 250 to 500 W 350 KM, from 500 to 1000 W the fee is 900 KM, and for more than 1000 W it is 4000 KM. For radio transmitters the price is half as much.

Slobodna BiH Closes Down

Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina and other readers have been left without *Slobodna BiH*, the only daily newspapers dealing with so-called Croat interests. The reason, according to its owner, the Split news company *Slobodna Dalmacija*, is of a financial nature.

The paper's freelance contributors, who did not receive any pay for eight months, are preparing a suit against the Split news company. Although media in Sarajevo speculate that the closure of *Slobodna BiH* is related to the defeat of the HDZ party in the Croatian elections, SAFAX Agency has found out that it does not have a political background. Publishing *Slobodna BiH* was incurring continuous losses for *Slobodna Dalmacija* and it had been thinking of ending the project for quite some time.

According to OHR spokesperson Alexandra Stigelmayer, the Office of the High Representative regrets the closure of the daily and hopes financial problems will be overcome so that Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina may again have their own newspaper.

Reporter Sues Dodik

Reporter magazine intends to sue Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik for, according to the weekly's editor-in-chief Perica Vucinic, lies presented in the Belgrade daily *Blic*.

The RS prime minister in an interview with *Blic* accused the magazine's journalists of "working against RS interests" and said that "certain journalists, who often go to Sarajevo and obtain information from circles which are against the RS, write untruths for which they get money."

Reporter wrote in earlier issues also about scandals in the "Brod" oil refinery and Telecom RS co., which Dodik denied claiming there was no corruption involved.

The prime minister also slammed the writing of one of *Reporter's* journalists about the political situation in the RS, calling it "lies of a sick mind, who does not shrink even from foretelling the collapse of the RS in federal newspapers."

According to Vucinic, the prime minister will have to prove in court the accusation that *Reporter* is undermining the foundation of the RS.

Dani Journalist Threatened

Dani journalist Hasan Hadzic, following a number of death threats received from armed men, left his apartment in Tuzla's Slavinovici neighborhood and moved his family to a safe place, the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje* wrote. The reason for the threat is reported to be a series of articles that Hadzic wrote in *Dani* related to criminal activities of dismissed and incumbent ministers in the Tuzla Canton Government.

A statement issued by *Dani* magazine says police, who were called several times, failed to intervene when Hadzic and his family were harassed by armed men.

"Our magazine believes this to be the realization of publicly repeated threats to our journalists on the part of a dismissed minister in the Government of the Tuzla Canton, Abid Djozic," said the statement.

Djozic told *Oslobodjenje* that he had nothing to do with the incident and that he was a witness in a court case that day.

The Helsinki Human Rights Watch in Bosnia-Herzegovina issued a comprehensive report last week on the position of media in this country in the context of human rights for 1999, which *Media News* will publish in two parts. The report gives a good cross-section of attacks on media and journalists by authorities and individuals. The report contributes to better understanding of the difficulties that media are encountering in this transition period in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Position of Media in BH Within Context of Human Rights

Reporting period: 01.01.-31.12.1999

From the end of 1998, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BH has been monitoring with particular attentiveness the position of media in entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the cases presenting various forms of pressures exerted by the authorities and individuals over the media, media workers and their families. Within the project, the analysis of the state in respect of freedom of expression, freedom of media and position of journalists in it is being made. On the basis of this project, i.e. analysis within it and through the co-operation with journalists' associations, public media, all journalists individually as well as with other concerned, we are trying to get insight into media and to make estimate to which measure freedom of expression is respected. Essentially, we are trying to promote freedom of expression and journalists' rights through joint effort and actions undertaken on that ground, i.e. to eliminate numerous negative appearances in this field.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BH, shortly to say, estimates that the state in realisation of freedom of expression and freedom of media in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the reporting period is very difficult. For example, only in the May report of the International Helsinki Federation even three cases were recorded of violation of this aspect of human rights. Minister of Information in the Republic of Srpska was openly intimidated by the Serb ultranationalists and his car was burned down. The Mayor of the municipality of Zenica made direct pressure over the leadership of local media trying to put their editorial policy under his service. That report accentuated the case of beating of two journalists of *Novi list* from Rijeka in Mostar.

The assassination over the owner and director of *Nezavisne novine* (Independent Newspapers) and radio NES Željko Kopanja in Banja Luka in October, was a culmination in creating an atmosphere in which media and journalists become targets for killing. Kopanja is the pioneer in free journalism in the Republic of Srpska and was the first in that entity to support integration of BH media. That terrorist act is, as a drastic assault over independent journalism, a demonstration of force through which the voice of truth, democracy and reason wanted to be made silent. The investigation and search for perpetrators of this horrible crime has not moved from the starting point in this case also as in many previous cases. Unpunishment of perpetrators of the previous physical assaults over the journalists and media (murder of journalist in Zavidovići, throwing of bomb on the editorial office of magazine *Dani*, demolition of equipment of "Studio 99") stimulated hunt after journalists and brought to assassination of Kopanja with extremely difficult consequences.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BH estimates and expresses its fear that pressures, intimidations and even physical assaults and assassinations over journalists and media can be expressed to a greater extent in the forthcoming pre-election period.

During the reported period, the Helsinki Committee, through public media, warned of the seriousness of the situation, initiated actions for the purpose of fighting against various forms of pressures over journalists and freedom of public expression and was engaged in establishment of

legislative in this domain. The Committee has, among other things, given contribution to decriminalisation of defamation and libel.

The Helsinki Committee, from the angle of protection of human rights, recognised six forms of attacks over free journalism and freedom of expression: threatening personal safety of journalists and physical assaults over media, making pressure over public media and journalists, closeness of sources of information and inaccessibility of information, law regulations, misuse of media, and material position of media and journalists.

Threatening Personal Safety And Physical Attacks Over Media

As already mentioned, tragic culmination in assaults on journalists is the assassination of the director and editor-in-chief of *Nezavisne novine* and “NES Radio” from Banja Luka Željko Kopanja, after which both his legs were amputated. The monstrous assault took place after series of articles in *Nezavisne novine* about financial and other abuse of power-holders in the Republic of Srpska. The estimate is that Serb ultranationalists were especially angry with the series of texts in which, for the first time in a newspaper in that entity, through a research journalism, a file was opened in respect of crimes committed over Bosniaks, Croats and other non-Serb people by Serb nazi-fascists in the passed war. The intention was to have made Kopanja and his media silent as well as to threaten media and journalists in the Republic of Srpska and BH. Prior to assassination, Željko Kopanja and his family were receiving threatening letters and they were blackmailed. Fifteen days prior to assassination, he was asked to pay his personal and his family’s safety with 500,000 DEM. It is important to note that it was only by chance that his wife and son escaped the explosion.

Intimidating public media workers in the Republic of Srpska resulted also in intimidating Minister of Information in the government of that entity Rajko Vasić. His empty car was burned down. Acting President of the Serb Radical Party Mirko Blagojević, at one meeting, accused Vasić of “committing crime against Serb people” and because of that “Chetnik’s court-martial” (Chetniks are Serb nazi-fascists) was in session, and decision of such courts, as a rule, is a capital sentence. Vasić was threatened because Serb extremists did not like some of his statements. Serb ultranationalists demolished an independent Radio Station “Osvit” (Down) in Zvornik thus causing considerable material damage. The Mayor of the city of Doboj Mirko Stojićinović physically assaulted the correspondent of RTV BH and BETA agency Milan Srdić. Former Co-Chair of the Council of Ministers of BH, official of the Serb Democratic Party established by Radovan Karadžić, Boro Bosić, now director of thermo electric power plant Ugljevik, switched off the power to PIM, the first alternative RTV house in the neighbouring Bijeljina. Switching off took place when RTV took shots of Bosić attacking one officer of Bijeljina municipality for depriving him of his “right”. The crew of PIM wanted to dislocate the transmitter to another place in order to provide for alternative power supply but they found the place and equipment for new transmitter damaged.

Mika Damjanović Avdo, free-journalist from Orašje where the Croat Democratic Union is in power, addressed the competent institutions in BH because of threats with death sent by an owner of one local company, Ivica Benković Maršev. He threatened the journalist with cutting his head if he dares making picture of the locality where his company intends to build a market centre or writing about Benković himself. In the area in which HDZ is a dominating party, a serious physical assault happened over the journalists of independent *Novi list* from Rijeka (Republic of Croatia) who wrote about President Tuđman and Croatian nationalists in a very critical manner. Two unidentified persons took out from the hotel in western Mostar journalists Robert Frank and Ronald Brmalj and beaten them up heavily, smashing right fist of one of them “to prevent him from writing in future”. The international peace mission believes that assailants could be even local Croatian policemen. Setting fire to Radio Usora is one of the attacks on media as well. All copies of the independent weekly *Nacional* from Zagreb disappeared from newspaper-shop in Mostar.

Attacking journalists is also a characteristic of the area in which the Party of Democratic Action is in power. Thus, the journalists Branka Vrebac and reporter Pavle Čondrić from television of Kiseljak, both Croats, were maltreated by a group of Bosniaks in the Association of Killed Bosniak-Muslim Soldiers of the Canton of Sarajevo. The repeater of the independent RTV “Studio 99” in Sarajevo was mined with plastic explosive. The equipment of RTV Bugojno was robbed.

Pressures Over Media and Journalists

The anonymous letters, threatening phone calls, unexpected coming across and sending threats are everyday appearance in media life in BH. We should emphasise that public and competent institutions got to know only for some of the pressures. Namely, many journalists do not want to publicise the threats sent to them considering them as price for their professional engagement, while some of them do not want to further provoke new intimidation directed to them or their families. The Independent Media Commission (IMC), among else, introduced a phone line, through which journalists throughout BH, can register all kinds of behaviour affecting their rights and professional privileges. Through IMC, the journalists can obtain legal assistance.

Editor-in-chief of TV Zenica Medina Delibašić, editor-in-chief of Radio Zenica Spahija Kozlić and chief of Information-Market Centre of Sarajevo's *Večernje novine* (Evening Newspapers) in Zenica Selvedin Avdić sent a letter to the High Representative following the pressures and unacceptable demands of the Mayor of Zenica Ferid Alić. The direct cause was a demand of Alić to Director of RTV Zenica Remzija Hukeljić to dismiss Delibašić and Kozlić or he would be dismissed otherwise. The reason for his demand is the fact that RTV Zenica publicised the letter of one association to Alija Izetbegović and Carlos Westendorp, speaking critically of the situation in Zenica, in which SDA of Alija Izetbegović is in power. Threats of the Mayor were sent even after refusing repossession of the apartments to Serbs and Croats, their pre-war tenants.

The size of political paranoia toward independent newspapers can be shown in a fact that the Vice President of the Party of Democratic Action Halid Genjac used a cartoon in a new year quadruple issue of *Oslobođenje* for severe attack on editorial policy of that renowned independent newspaper, accusing it of equalising the role of the three leading national parties during the war – Serb Democratic Party, Croat Democratic Union and Party of Democratic Action. Then editor-in-chief of *Oslobođenje* Mehmed Halilović with arguments proved that Genjac had wrongly “read” the cartoon and that accusation of equalising the roles of the parties during the war was ungrounded. However, Halilović emphasised that that was against the concept of national political organisation in respect of tragic effects of that option and that in that context, the SDA was also under critical magnifying glass of the said newspaper. Dika Bejdić, correspondent of *Oslobođenje* received threats after publishing article with names of local functionaries living in someone else's apartments.

There is a characteristic example of acceptance of censorship in Gradačac. Thus, the SDA keeps under the control the local radio-station financed from the municipal budget, whose journalists are at the same time the correspondents of *Dnevni avaz* and of RTV of Tuzla Canton. Besides, the Secretary of the Municipal Secretariat for Administration and Social Affairs asked from journalists to submit to him first all “doubtful” texts while the Secretary of the Secretariat for Economy and Utility Issues asked that none information from his field of work could be published without his knowledge and permission.

BH Muslim religious leader reisu-l-ulema Mustafa ef. Cerić publicly accused editor and speaker of BH TV news Midheta Kurspahić of using, among else, the formulation Jesus Christ, but not Isa – according to Kur'an, during the Ramadan, and on occasion of the Catholic Christmas. Cerić accused Kurspahić of not being good Bosniak, Muslim as well as the RTV house where she works for “catholicising Muslims”. Reis spoke of some “magazines” spreading hatred toward Islam, thinking of critical articles in the independent press. Such ungrounded accusations were also sent by the association of Young Muslims (organisation established before the Second World War, the member of which was from early young days, Alija Izetbegović, President of the Party of Democratic Action and the member of the BH Presidency) after the articles in *Oslobođenje* criticising efforts to put RTV of BH under service of Bosniaks, Muslims and statement of Cerić as well.

Rade Popović was arrested in Sarajevo and following the reaction was set free. He was cameraman of Serb RTV from Banja Luka, and was arrested on the grounds of criminal charges from 1992 according to which he, as a former worker of RTV of BH took away a car of that institution. After the hearing, Popović was released and he will defend himself before the court in regular court procedure. He estimated the overall behaviour toward him as correct. However, basically, this is also a case of threat to freedom of media and freedom of movement in BH.

The journalist of *Dnevni avaz* from Sarajevo Almasa Hadžić was bluntly met by the police of Serbia (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) at the border of BH while she was returning from journalist task in the Yugoslav autonomous province of Sandžak where a great number of Bosniaks live. Hadžić was kept for three and half-hours during the night and early morning. She was investigated about her trip and contacts she had.

The reporter of TV BH Sanela Prašović and her family were exposed to severe threats after her reportage in which she disclosed illegal network for provision of passports to Serbs from BH. Threats were sent particularly from Celje (Republic of Slovenia) in which the agency dealing with this unlawful job is located.

The Association of Croat War Veterans of Herzeg-Bosnia (HVIDRA HB) threatened three journalists of Croat ethnic origin – Pejo Gašparević (HINA news agency, based in Zagreb), Marija Topić – Crnoja (EROTEL) and Blažica Krišto (HRTV Oscar C) – accusing them of betraying Croatian interests in BH because they attended expert seminar organised by the Independent Media Commission (IMC) in Mostar. HVIDRA is an exponent of the Croatian ultranationalists.

The Association of the Croatian Journalists strongly protested when members of SFOR, during the action in western part of Mostar (led in order to collect evidence about activities of illegal Croatian information service in BH) “forcefully entered the premises of EROTEL and literally detained their fifteen workers, forcing them to put a piece of paper in front of them with written down names and surnames and photographed them in such a position, keeping them detained for four hours”. SFOR stated that EROTEL was not an aim of the operation, but that it was located in a building that was an object of the action.

Pressure of the authorities over media and journalists is also expressed in court disputes following journalists’ articles. Editor-in-chief of the independent daily *Slobodna Bosna* Senad Avdić was twice sentenced to suspended sentence while the third time he was released. If he had been sentenced for the third time, he would have had to go to jail. However, even in that case, the authorities demonstrated their power sending court policemen in early morning hours to take Avdić from the editorial office when the magazine was in a final phase of preparing magazine for publishing. The policemen did not allow him to communicate with anybody. 15 criminal charges are filed against Avdić but Senad Pećanin, editor-in-chief of the independent magazine *Dani* is in the similar situation, as well as editors and journalists of that editorial office, who are also exposed to physical, verbal and court pressures.

Arrival of court policemen in order to take Avdić as well as his releasing sentence happened when the High Representative Carlos Westendorp, within the scope of his intervening measures in respect of the judiciary system, suspended libel and defamation as criminal acts and included them in civil proceedings. The arguments spoke in favour of protection of research journalism.

Pressures over journalists and media were exerted in Tuzla as well. *Front slobode* (Front of Freedom) is exposed to permanent pressures. After a series of texts in which this newspaper produced evidence, giving arguments, that Tuzla named one street after the SS-officer Muhamed Hadžiefendić, the editorial staff was receiving threats over the phone. One day, Nazi Germany Swastika appeared on the entrance door of the editorial office while the next time a list of people who are to be killed was put under the door. Editor-in-chief Sinan Alić receives anonymous threats with a note “take care of your behaviour, you have a beautiful son”. After the serial “Right to be Irresponsible” in which the behaviour of ex-Minister of Justice of Tuzla Canton, Šemso Softić, was disclosed, the author of the text Sinan Alić was receiving anonymous telephone and written threats. During the last year, there were two court disputes held against this author in which the plaintiffs were the Chancellor of the University of Tuzla Sadik Latifagić and the President of the BH Federation Ivo Andrić Lužanski. Both cases were suspended because the plaintiffs surrendered their accusation after one year of dispute.

The correspondent of the Radio Slobodna Evropa (Free Europe) from Tuzla Marko Divković was pushed out from the premises of the Tuzla HDZ by a body-guard of Ante Jelavić in unprecedented and bullying manner, just for putting a question “How long are we to wait for statement?”

TV STUDIO FS-3 (ownership of *Front slobode*) one day, without receiving any warning, remained without power supply with an explanation that they were in debt to Power Distribution Company. Later it was found that there was not any debt and in Power Distribution Company it was never established who and why had left the studio without electric power. This TV station is recognisable for playing music and showing films from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

(to be continued)

**If somebody interfere with your professional, journalistic work call
SOS – open line for journalists - 078 213 442 Media Plan Banja Luka**



Listen with your ears!



Look with your eyes!



Think with your head!

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