

Media in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003

PUBLIC SERVICES UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTORATE, PRESS BEYOND ANY CONTROL, STATISTICALLY SPEAKING PRESSURE ON JOURNALISTS DECLINING

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The media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina is very complex: remnants of propaganda journalism are still present, ruling political structures strive to put pressure on the media, ethnic division of the country poses an obstacle to full freedom of flow of information, the media market is underdeveloped, the economy is destroyed, local and foreign capital is not interested in investing in media, and the majority of media are not able to survive in the market as a result of years of dependency on foreign donations. The media are going through a difficult period of transition led by the international community in line with powers granted by the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement and subsequent decisions of the Peace Implementation Council.

The international community launched several parallel processes in Bosnia-Herzegovina through the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) aimed at bringing about stable development of media in line with the standards of Western European society. The Dayton Constitution did not place media issues in the jurisdiction of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but rather its two entities – Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. This impedes the passing of regulations that would function with equal standards in the whole country. The High Representative, however, issued a subsequent interpretation related to telecommunications and public radio and television according to which this field must be regulated by a country-wide law.

Broadcasters: Public RTV Above All

The media landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina is presently characterized by efforts made by the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) to finally stabilize the field of

broadcasters, which has been one of the most chaotic areas in Bosnian social reality since the agency was created. Meanwhile, under OHR leadership, but with a lot of wandering, transformation of public broadcasting services into sustainable and efficient services has been going on.

The public service consists of two entity broadcasters based in Sarajevo and Banja Luka and a service for the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The public radio service (BH Radio 1) broadcasts a 24-hour program, while a public television service is still being developed (it broadcasts a TV news program and carries sports events). Slowness in creating a nation-wide public TV service is a consequence of an initial interpretation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, according to which the entire media legislation, including the field of telecommunications, falls in the jurisdiction of entities.

Bosnia-Herzegovina still does not have a consistent strategy of utilizing frequency resources and developing radio and television production and broadcasting as a public service and business. Today's public service concept (one state broadcaster, two entity broadcasters) is too complex and too costly for the limited economic, technical and creative resources. At the same time, there is still no domestic or foreign capital (and no frequencies) for building large commercial broadcasting networks.

Public broadcasters have an obligation to broadcast 40 percent of public service programming (news, documentary and educational programs). They find it very hard to reach this percentage. There are many reasons for this: financial problems resulting in production (or purchase) of cheap entertainment programs, lack of quality professionals and financial resources for complex programs, as well as undefined quality of these TV stations as public services. Therefore, one of the first tasks in restructuring public broadcasters is to achieve this program quota. Local broadcasters registered as public services also have this obligation.

Since October last year, and still going on, there has been a real fever pitch between public TV services and the international community, which had been abundantly helping their transformation from state televisions into public services. The Office of the High Representative, an international institution essentially with supreme authority in Bosnia-Herzegovina and almost protectorate powers, is guiding the process of transformation of

the broadcasting sector. Last year the Office, with consent of managements of the national public services (which, by the way, it itself appointed), named a so-called BBC consulting team tasked with proposing a solution for these TV houses to emerge from the crisis. After the BBC experts completed their study, the syndicate of the broadcasting service started a real war against the team and the proposed solutions. Namely, the study proposes the dismissal of as many as 500 workers, the closure of some newsrooms, and rationalization of business premises in Sarajevo where RTV Federation BiH and the nation-wide public broadcasting service are based. The syndicate, as well as many journalists, addressed harsh words to the international community, such as “occupiers,” “colonizers” and “ignoramuses.” Meanwhile, the Office of the High Representative proposed a new law on the public broadcasting service which brings many novelties, which was also received negatively, both by the television in Sarajevo, as well as in Banja Luka. However, the gist of their opposition is different. RTV Republika Srpska in Banja Luka is mostly upset about a solution in the law according to which out of the three now separate broadcasting services, **one** will be created which will be composed of three parts. This is mostly reflected in that there will be one Steering Board for all three services (which is not the case now), which among other things will coordinate the work of Programming Councils and pass crucial business and programming decisions. Although the entity broadcasters will maintain relative independence, solutions in the new law basically deal a blow to separatist tendencies in the Republika Srpska which wants to maintain exclusively political power over radio and television. On the other hand, in Sarajevo they are desperate because of provisions in the new law envisioning the sale of a large and non-functional building and constructing new ones in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. It is incomprehensible for RTV employees in Sarajevo that property in Sarajevo which had been theirs until yesterday is to be sold in order to erect a building in Banja Luka (by the way, RTV Republika Srpska really does not have its own building). However, what is unclear (and illogical) to the author of this article is why the present building in Sarajevo should be sold in order to build a new one in the same city. Would it not be more logical (and economically more lucrative) to lease out the excess premises in the present building? This view is shared by the majority of employees and management of this media outlet.

The international community put classical pressure on RTV employees and management to accept the BBC plan, as well as the new law. Blackmail was resorted to

using an earlier announced European Commission donation of 1.5 million euros, as well as support to a new way of collecting the obligatory RTV subscription fee. Namely, public broadcasters were given the message that if they do not accept the plan and the law, the international community would withdraw donations and would no longer insist on a new solution according to which RTV subscription fee amounting to six marks (3 euros) would inseparably be attached to the land telephone bill. Of course, in the end Bosnian-Herzegovinian politicians (who are actually supposed to pass the new law) and managements of the broadcasting services had to reconcile to the internationally proposed solutions. It is interesting that for pragmatic and petty political reasons each side publicly interpreted the acceptance of these solutions as their own victory. The syndicate by saying that the dismissed employees would be socially taken care of adequately, which is only partly true, and Serb politicians and RTV Republika Srpska management by stressing that they would maintain independence, completely overlooking the fact that now all three national broadcasters will be run by a single Steering Board. In any case the 1.5 million euro donation was approved and the Bosnian-Herzegovinian side committed to pass the new law by December 15. However, the deadline was not met and the law is still undergoing parliamentary procedure. In the meantime, RTV Republika Srpska and the local telecom operator signed a contract on collection of TV subscription fee by way of telephone bills, while a similar contract in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina is still being stalled, as a result of which Federal RTV practically has no sources of funding because a contract on collection of subscription fee by way of electricity bills expired at the end of last year. Although the Federation Government has asked the telecoms to sign the contract on collection of tax, the operators have refused to do so claiming it will violate consumers' rights. However, serious analysts believe that the telecoms, whose managements were constituted to a significant degree according to the wishes of the ruling parties, are refusing the contract for political reasons. Namely, the SDA and HDZ parties several times have accused Federal TV and the state public service of being inclined to the opposition. They are evidently using blackmail with regard to collection of TV subscription fee to bring about a change in editorial concepts. A requirement for commencing talks on Bosnia-Herzegovina's association with the European Union is stable funding for public broadcasting services.

The number of broadcasters and their ownership status is shown in tables.

| Development of Broadcasting Media in BiH from 1991 to 2003 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | 1991 | | 1997 | | 2000 | | 2001 | | 2003 | |
| | Radio | TV | Radio | TV | Radio | TV | Radio | TV | Radio | TV |
| Federation of BiH | -- | -- | 97 | 34 | 127 | 42 | 119 | 39 | 91 | 27 |
| Republic Srpska | -- | -- | 59 | 18 | 83 | 29 | 86 | 25 | 49 | 15 |
| Brcko District | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| BiH Total | 54 | 5 | 156 | 52 | 210 | 71 | 208 | 66 | 141 | 42 |

Source: CRA/2003 and Media Plan

Ownership Status of Broadcasters (Year 2003)

| | | FBIH | RS | Brcko District | BiH | |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| FM | Public | 48 | 13 | 1 | | |
| | Private | 43 | 36 | | | |
| TV | Public | 15 | 1 | 0 | | |
| | Private | 12 | 14 | | | |
| Total | | 118 | 64 | 1 | | 183 |

Table 4. Ownership Status of Broadcasters / Source: CRA/2003

At the end of the story of broadcasters, it would be interesting to look at the results of research carried out by Prism Agency from Sarajevo on radio and television ratings in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Based on a sample of several thousand respondents in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003, the most popular radio is BH 1, the national public radio service (14.4 percent), followed by Federal Radio, also a public service (5.8 percent). The percentage of listeners of all other stations is negligent, looking at the level of the whole entity. In the Republika Srpska the situation is similar. BH 1 has around 10

percent, Radio BN from Bijeljina holds a surprisingly good place with 8.8 percent, while Radio RS is in third place with 4.8 percent. But we must note that according to other research results, although smaller in scope, Radio RS is convincingly the most popular station in that entity.

As for television, according to Prism, convincingly the most watched station in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina is Federal TV with 47 percent ratings. After a considerable gap come TV Tuzla Canton, TV OBN, TV Pink BiH and Mreza Plus with ratings ranging from 5 to 6.1 percent. In the Republika Srpska, of course, the most popular is TV Republika Srpska with 13.4 percent. Solidly placed is TV BN, and it is interesting that Mreza Plus and TV Pink BiH have identical ratings in the Republika Srpska as in the Federation (between 5 and 6 percent). TV Pink BiH is based in Bijeljina, RS, and Mreza Plus in Sarajevo, FBiH.

Of course, these radio and television stations' good ratings are determined by the fact that they have national or regional coverage and are thus available to a large number of respondents. Still, most competent people believe that these stations have the most contents (and even the best quality programs), and therefore their ratings are not only a result of availability.

The presented data is from October last year. However, latest data, although still not integrated, indicates that TV Pink BiH is achieving a big rise in popularity, especially in the BiH Federation. This is the Bosnian-Herzegovinian branch of the mega-popular Serbian TV Pink. Although there was a lot of repulsion for this TV station in Sarajevo before it started broadcasting because of its owners' ties with Slobodan Milosevic, the station's programming has proven to be diverse, entertaining, good quality and all-Bosnian with particular emphasis on events in Banja Luka and Sarajevo. The newsroom is also multi-ethnic and journalists have solid salaries. Many predict that if Pink BiH receives additional frequencies from the Regulatory Agency, it might seriously threaten the public services.

Print Media: On Their Own Respective Turfs

As for print media, they are characterized by a strong division along ethnic, even ideological lines, which particularly culminated during the election campaign in the fall of last year and has been going on with more or less fierceness even today. Unlike radio and television, which are subjected to CRA sanctions if they do not abide by professional standards, print media use the principle of self-regulation which, unfortunately, has shown many weaknesses. The Press Council, and especially journalist associations, has still not acquired authority in the media community to have significant impact on protecting professionalism. The public believes that the most important print media to a large extent are showing political sympathies and inclination towards certain political options, parties or party leaders, and are conducting entire campaigns to disqualify those who do not suit them. Readers get the impression that there is great animosity, conflict, even hate, among newspapers and journalists. The reasons for this can be sought to a considerable extent in a struggle for political and market positions, as well as frustrations after a rapid disappearance of foreign donations which some media, especially independent ones, had strongly relied upon. There are also opinions that unprofessional reporting on the part of some print media is mostly a result of abuse of media by politicians, but it can also be heard more and more often that this is a consequence of autonomous views of editors and journalists based on ethnic, ideological and selfish motivations, as well as a ruthless fight for circulations. Some analysts think that investigative journalism is mostly a product of mutual clashes among political, military, police and economic centers of power which are using the media for this purpose.

Seven daily newspapers now publish in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Four are based in Sarajevo – “Dnevni Avaz” (founded in 1996), “Jutarnje Novine” (2000, continuing the tradition of “Vecernje Novine”), “Oslobodjenje” (1944) and SAN (2003). “Glas Srpske” (1992 – continues the tradition of the paper “Glas,” and then “Glas Srpski”) and “Nezavisne Novine” (1997) are published in Banja Luka. “Dnevni List” is published in Mostar. “Glas Srpske” is the only daily paper owned by the state. Weekly political and news magazines are published regularly. In Sarajevo these are the magazines “Dani,” “Slobodna Bosna,” “Liljan,” “Start” and “Valter.” The entertainment paper “Express” and the women’s magazine “Azra” are popular. “Novi Reporter” is published in Banja Luka. According to Media Plan Institute data from August 2002, 128 print media are registered

in Bosnia-Herzegovina which have different publishing intervals, but most of them are published with interruptions and at irregular intervals for financial reasons.

Print media are heavily burdened by political topics and often wage real media wars behind which political parties and other centers of power often stand. Hate speech which characterized the wartime propaganda journalism has mostly disappeared from broadcasters due to the watchful attention of the regulatory agency, but there is still a lot of unprofessionalism in print media with regard to violations of ethical norms.

The press market is torn by ethnic and entity divisions. Readers are used to their “own” ethnic media and most newspapers are not even trying to boost sales beyond territories inhabited by their own respective majority populations. The newspaper “Nezavisne Novine” from Banja Luka has the most developed distribution network in the whole country and a large newsroom in Sarajevo.

Newspapers from Croatia (sold in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Yugoslavia (which can be bought in the Republika Srpska) create competition for media from this country. Of course, it is positive that this country is open to media from other countries, but this does not stimulate domestic publishers to develop bigger projects. Division of the market along ethnic lines, as well as a low purchasing power of the population, results in small circulations and large numbers of unsold copies. The majority of newspapers guard circulation figures as a business secret or exaggerate them, probably because owners maintain that publication of figures would question their market value, decrease donor interest, and turn away potential advertisers.

No one in Bosnia-Herzegovina has reliable data on newspaper circulations. According to Media Plan estimates, the total daily circulation of all seven daily newspapers does not exceed 90,000 copies (this figure is somewhat higher on Monday and Friday due to sports and TV supplements). It is estimated that at least a third of this circulation belongs to the paper “Dnevni Avaz.” The number of unsold copies ranges from 20 to as much as 50 percent.

Newspapers are in a very difficult economic position. The price of 1 KM (about 0.50 euros) for a daily newspaper (or 0.50 KM for “Glas Srpske”) and 2 KM (1 euro) for a

weekly can cover the actual costs only if the paper is sold in at least 25,000 copies. Large advertisers do not exist. The state has abolished tax on newspapers, which has only partly alleviated the position of publishers. Tax is paid on newspapers with so-called trashy contents.

Let us go back to Prism Agency to show the ratings (popularity) of daily newspapers in the entities. We have already said that a single Bosnian-Herzegovinian market does not exist. In the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Dnevni Avaz is read by 33.5 percent of the population. In Bosniak-majority parts of the Federation, this percentage ranges from 60 to 70 percent. In second place by popularity is Vecernji List from Zagreb, which has an edition for Bosnia-Herzegovina (7.9 percent), followed by Oslobodjenje with 7 percent. Popularity of other newspapers, at least according to these research results, is minor.

In the Republika Srpska the first two places by popularity are held by newspapers from Serbia – Vecernje Novosti (27.2 percent) and Blic (18.8 percent). Glas Srpske has a rating of 10.9 percent, closely followed by Nezavisne Novine with 9.4 percent. Nezavisne Novine is basically the only paper in the country which tries to play the role of a true Bosnian-Herzegovinian paper and cover events in both entities. However, readers are obviously not reacting to its efforts.

Attacks on Journalists and Media: Subtle Methods

Statistically speaking, Bosnia-Herzegovina had a peaceful year when it comes to classical attacks on journalists. According to information from the Media Help Line, an institution supported by the international community where journalists with full discretion of identity can report the kind of pressure they have been subjected to, only one physical attack on journalists was registered (but it is kept confidential where and when it occurred). The line was active only until the end of August this year, when it stopped working due to lack of donor funds. According to this source, the largest number of reported cases was related to pressure through labor disputes (10). These are, for instance, denials for various reasons inside a company of the right to work or report freely. The rest of the reported cases in various categories were almost negligent. However, we must say that this journalist help line is just an indicator since it is evident

that many cases of pressure were not reported. Generally speaking, other than information from the line, there have been a number of verbal incidents with serious accusations and threats. However, what is interesting and what fits with the chaotic situation, as we characterized the print media, is the fact that even the media themselves terrorize journalists from other newsrooms, even other citizens. For example, in the middle of this year a case was registered of pressure by the powerful *Dnevni Avaz* on the majority owner of "Sarajevo Brewery," Hilmo Selimovic, for refusing to pay *Avaz* 150,000 KM for advertising. This was qualified as typical racketeering; racketeering done by a media outlet. At least in Bosnian conditions, this was unprecedented. The paper brought a large number of articles labeling Selimovic as a mafioso, a tax evader, a petty politician close to SDP President Zlatko Lagumdžija. Following these reports, someone hurled a grenade outside the businessman's family house. Although there is no evidence that this serious incident had anything to do with *Dnevni Avaz*, many people relate the case to media influence and struggle for economic interests in all walks of life. Also, for months *Dnevni Avaz* has been attacking SDP President Zlatko Lagumdžija, his wife, and various figures from public life mostly close to the so-called left option. The editor-in-chief of the highest circulation weekly "Slobodna Bosna," Senad Avdic, has feared the worst, often badmouthed in *Avaz* articles. But *Dnevni Avaz* itself has also received heavy blows. The weeklies *Slobodna Bosna* and *Dani* brought a number of extremely harsh, and *Slobodna Bosna* sometime even vulgar articles at the expense of *Avaz* owner Fahrudin Radoncic. To sum up these articles, Radoncic is the "biggest criminal in BiH," and his journalists are "whores and faggots."

In this context, for the first time in Bosnia-Herzegovina a court indirectly censored the media by pronouncing a so-called temporary measure. Pursuant to the Law on Libel and Slander, a Cantonal Court judge pronounced a temporary measure forbidding *Avaz* to write about Hilmo Selimovic (Aug. 15, 2003), and several days later a similar measure for *Dani* to refrain from writing about Fahrudin Radoncic. Journalist associations condemned this as a matter of principle – this is a case of media censorship on the part of court – but they agreed that inflammatory writing is inadmissible. Also, a temporary measure only partly solves the problem because it does not deal with a "war" waged by some newspapers against holders of opposed political opinions (whether it be politicians or journalists).

According to journalist associations' assessment, the Law on Slander which decriminalized slander more than two years ago and transferred it to the area of civil law, has become a real noose around journalists' neck. Many individuals, in their own name or in the name of various institutions, have been filing a huge number of civil suits against media outlets asking for enormous amounts of money for "inflicted mental anguish." In Sarajevo only, 100 cases against journalists are pending. For example, in 1998, when slander was in the criminal code, 68 cases were reported during the year. The Tuzla paper "Front Slobode" is in the most difficult position with as many as six suits filed against it, of which one by the political party BOSS. It is not clear why the latter suit was not dismissed since the law says that only an individual can be a plaintiff, certainly not an institution or political party. According to the vice-president of the Independent Union of Professional Journalists, Borka Rudic, the large number of lawsuits is a result of judges' non-selective approach to cases as they do not dismiss any lawsuits as unfounded, but rather open long cases which are a noose around the neck of journalists and media outlets.

Here is an overview of some cases in chronological order as they happened.

Already at the very beginning of the year, in January, strong feelings were stirred up by threats to the public Federal Television in Sarajevo. The broadcaster was even guarded by special police forces for a while. The reason were frequent threats to journalists in the news and political program which were coming from various political groups and economic lobbies. The target of threats was usually the political program "60 Minutes," which criticizes many individuals and phenomena in society in an open, sharp and sometimes striking way. Groups close to the Bosniak SDA party have accused the program editor of being biased in favor of the Social-Democratic Party, which lost elections in 2002. A very serious threat was made by a student organization called "Movement for a Normal BiH," which issued an ultimatum demanding the resignation of the editor and journalists who make the program. Many people believe that this organization is close to Islamist positions, which once even called for the dismissal of court proceedings against former SDA politicians accused of plotting terrorist actions in 1997. This was the first time since the war that special units were guarding the public television building.

The student movement "For a Normal BiH" again attracted attention in April. It filed a request with the public prosecutor's office in Sarajevo "to sanction the warmongering reporting" of the highest circulation weekly "Slobodna Bosna." The movement also announced (but did not hold) demonstrations outside the paper's newsroom in which citizens could express their dissatisfaction with the paper's allegedly untrue and tendentious reporting. The concrete occasion why the organization filed the suit against Slobodna Bosna is the front page of one of its issues claiming that Bosniaks were preparing for a new war in which they want to emerge to the Adriatic Sea and the Drina River (territories inhabited by Bosnian Croats and Serbs respectively). However, the paper's newsroom says they were writing about plans of extreme Bosniak organizations, which include the above movement, and not Bosniaks as a whole people. The conflict has strong political background because it is an open secret that the student movement "For a Normal BiH" is close to the right wing ruling Bosniak SDA party, while the Slobodna Bosna newsroom favors the opposition left wing SDP party.

In May parliamentary delegates from the Democratic Action Party (SDA) accused the FTV management of fraud and of favoring the Bosnian language on this broadcaster. A coordination of journalist associations announced that interference of delegates and political parties in the editorial policy of any media outlet and work of journalists is unacceptable and it strongly backed the Federal Television editors. The SDA on a number of occasions has accused federal television of being close to the Social-Democratic Party. Also, individuals from the SDA believe that liberalism in choosing language (Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian) is inappropriate. The three languages are very similar, almost identical.

Towards the end of May the Ombudsmen of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, an institution that monitors human rights, condemned in the strongest way the summoning of the director and editor-in-chief of the daily "Oslobodjenje" for an interview with the police due to the paper's reporting. A criminal report against these journalists had been filed by the director of the highest circulation daily "Dnevni Avaz," Fahrudin Radoncic. The editor and director of "Oslobodjenje" did not have a chance to acquaint themselves with the contents of the criminal report, but were verbally informed that it regards "complicity in the criminal act of false reporting" in relation to an article published in Oslobodjenje. The article was published on April 15 this year and in it the commercial

director of "Sarajevo Brewery" claims that his company refused to give 150,000 KM for regular advertising in Dnevni Avaz and that since then, everyday attacks started against the company (Sarajevo Brewery) and its director. After receiving the criminal report, namely nine days after the article was published in "Oslobodjenje," a deputy prosecutor asked the Police Administration to carry out an "informative interview" with the editor and director of Oslobodjenje. The Ombudsmen maintain that this is collusion between a daily newspaper and a part of the police since the criminal report was not filed with the Police Administration where Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje are based, but instead in another municipality. But, what is much more important, the report has no ground because Bosnia-Herzegovina decriminalized slander three years ago and therefore potential untrue reporting can only be processed in a civil suit. The Ombudsmen, who have full support of the international community, asked the authorities to prevent such proceedings which restrict media freedom. The proceedings were instantly discontinued.

In June the House of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina passed an amendment to the Law on RTV FBiH which imposes on this media house an obligation to directly broadcast all sessions of both houses of the Federal Parliament. The coordination of journalist associations called on delegates to revoke the passed amendment and to allow FTV journalists and editors to independently edit and create the program in all segments, including coverage of the work of parliament. The parliament decision was received at Federal Television itself with a lot of displeasure. Director General Jasmin Durakovic resigned on the occasion, but was not relieved of duty. The passing of a new law on public television is probably being awaited, which says that it is a matter of free choice of the newsroom whether it will broadcast sessions or only report on them in a timely fashion in journalists' items. In October the House of Peoples of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina confirmed the earlier decision of the House of Representatives and passed amendments to the Law on Federal Radio and Television. Although the law was passed by both houses, Federal Television has not started direct broadcasts. The reason is because the international community proposed a new law on the Public Broadcasting Service whose passing will derogate this new rule.

Mithad Delic, former director and editor-in-chief of Radio Sana from Kljuc, after last year's October elections and the SDA coming into power again, started to suffer months of continued pressure, and in June last year he was dismissed from his position. Radio

Sana is a municipal radio station. The case was investigated by the federal ombudsmen, but it turned out that during the election campaign Delic had openly campaigned for the Social-Democratic Party (SDP), and even openly worn its badge, which is inadmissible for a journalist in such circumstances.

In August the leader of the Party of Democratic Progress from Banja Luka, Mladen Ivanic, who is also the minister of foreign affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, announced that he would sue Nezavisne Novine over articles published by the paper. The reason for the party's dissatisfaction are articles speaking about muddy and non-transparent actions of the party and its secret agreements with the coalition partner SDS, a party that is considered nationalistic.

In October Jasin Ravasde, correspondent for the Kuwaiti news agency – KUNA and, as he has been identifying himself lately, advisor to the federal prime minister, verbally attacked an FTV journalist (Gordana Ristic-Muslija) over alleged tendentious and untrue reports about the BH Steel plant. The steel plant, owned by the state and a large Kuwaiti company, has not been able to emerge from financial problems for years. However, Ravasde, who is of Arab origin and has passports of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bangladesh (!?), insulted the above journalist for criticizing the factory management. The Federation prime minister condemned the conduct of his new advisor.

In November an Oslobodjenje correspondent from Mostar Nermin Bise was attacked on two occasions by persons with criminal files, but on political grounds. The reason was an article by the journalist saying that the SDA president for Mostar had offered the Croat HDZ party the abolishment of the central city zone, the only place in Mostar that does not fall under any of the ethnic authorities in the town. A local criminal, Samir Dugalic a.k.a. Luster, told the journalist in the street that he would beat up him and the newsroom he works for because he cannot write against the SDA party. After Bise reported the case to the police and journalist associations, Luster went to the Oslobodjenje bureau and told the journalist he “would beat him up when there are no witnesses so even his own mother would not recognize him.” After that police arrested the delinquent.

At the end a labor dispute, as we have said at the beginning, a favorite kind of pressure on journalists, at least last year. Ruzica Kasalovic, journalist of RTV Republika Srpska, complained to different journalist associations that after the appointment of new editor Mira Mocevic Lolic, she was in her bad books. According to the journalist's allegations, the new editor cancelled her show and after that blocked any kind of journalistic engagement on her part. To make matters worse, this was done without any explanation. Now Ruzica Kasalovic, author of many documentary programs, is employed only formally, but without any journalistic assignments. She suspects this is a result of political animosity, although she had not done any political programs.

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