

**REPORT ON THE SEEMO PRESS FREEDOM MISSION TO
KOSOVO
Nov. 23-25 2011**

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The objective of the press freedom mission conducted by the Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute, was to assess media developments in Kosovo, following reports and information concerning pressure on the media. The Kosovo media landscape has changed dramatically during the past 20 years. As part of former Yugoslavia, Kosovo had only a few state-sponsored media and one state television. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Kosovo media market expanded exponentially: numerous newspapers, television and radio channels have been created. They are currently competing to survive in the crisis-stricken market of 1,8 million people.

Interlocutors

The SEEMO delegation met Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga; Prime Minister Hashim Thaci; International Civilian Representative Pieter Feith; Head of the OSCE Mission Werner Almhofer and more than 50 media representatives, including owners, directors, editors-in-chief, journalists, media experts, media NGO representatives, and other professionals.

Political Environment: An Outline

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia on Feb. 17, 2008. Serbia did not recognise the move and considers Kosovo as a United Nations - governed entity that forms an integral part of Serbia. According to the latest Serbian constitution (2006), the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of Serbia, although with "substantial autonomy". However, in 1999 Serbia had to pull out its army and police forces from Kosovo, in order to comply with the Kumanovo Agreement

(1999). Belgrade-run institutions do not currently exist in Pristina, Kosovo's capital.

As of April 19, 2012, 89 countries, including the United States and most European Union member countries, in addition to most neighbouring states, recognised the new state.

Kosovo is not a member of the United Nations and is awaiting membership of other international organisations and agencies. However, in 2009, the Republic of Kosovo became the 186th member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and joined five World Bank institutions, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).

Kosovo shares history with the rest of the Balkan region: it has been a territory invaded by many armies and settled by numerous ethnic groups. Both Serbians and Albanians are historically, politically, culturally and emotionally tied to this region. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Kosovo belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, later Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After World War II, it became part of Yugoslavia.

In post-World War II Yugoslavia, Kosovo was formally part of Serbia. The 1963 constitution granted Kosovo autonomous status within Serbia.

The period of socialism in Kosovo was not free of conflicts. However, the first major clashes between Albanian students and the Yugoslav army and police occurred in 1981, after the death of Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia's only leader after World War II. In response to protests, Belgrade sent Special Forces to Kosovo. Their presence and methods did not calm the situation. In fact, their actions consolidated dissatisfaction against Belgrade policies, and proponents of independence gained influence.

In 1989, Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic reacted forcefully after a series of incidents, and stripped Kosovo of its autonomy. In 1990, Serbia's government suspended the Kosovo parliament and other institutions, and closed down, for extended periods, the main Albanian-language daily, *Rilindja*. Further, Belgrade took over the electronic media in Albanian, which belonged then to the state broadcaster, Radio Televizija Pristina.

This move aggravated the situation and escalated the conflict which ended in a war. NATO intervened in March 1999. NATO bombardments ended after the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement (1999) and international

military and civilian forces arrived in Kosovo. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 stated that Serbia should remove its military and armed forces from Kosovo. (See below the list of major international organisations)¹

Internationally mediated negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina are ongoing. A durable political solution has not been reached yet. However, some practical matters are slowly being agreed upon, such as Kosovo representation at international meetings and the implementation of the joint management of border crossings.

¹ KFOR: NATO-KFOR's mission is to contribute to maintaining a safe and secure environment in which sustainable political solutions can be found. KFOR also supports the development of professional, democratic and multi-ethnic security structures in Kosovo. In carrying out its mission, NATO cooperates with and assists the United Nations, the European Union and other international actors, as appropriate, to support the development of a stable and peaceful Kosovo. KFOR's mission is mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. (NATO-KFOR web portal http://www.nato.int/kfor/structur/nations/placemap/kfor_placemat.pdf)

UNMIK: The mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established by the Security Council in its resolution 1244. The Mission is mandated to help ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo and advance regional stability in the western Balkans. The Mission is headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Special Representative ensures a coordinated approach by the international civil presence operating under UNSC resolution 1244, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which retains the status of UNMIK's pillar for institution building. The Special Representative also ensures coordination with the head of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which has operational responsibility in the area of rule of law. (UNMIK web portal: <http://www.unmikonline.org/Pages/about.aspx>)

EULEX: The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo is the largest civilian mission ever launched by the Common Security and Defence Policy. The decision is based upon a decision by EU member states in February 2008. The central aim is to assist and support the rule of law institutions, judicial authorities and law enforcement agencies in their progress towards sustainability and accountability, and in further developing and strengthening an independent multi-ethnic justice system, and a multi-ethnic police and customs service. While EULEX tackles all issues related to the rule of law, a number of areas have been prioritized. These include: war crimes, corruption, organised crime, inter-ethnic crimes, money laundering and property related issues. (EULEX web page: <http://eulex-kosovo.eu/docs/info/basic/Basic-ENG.jpg>)

ICO: The International Civilian Office provides international support for a European future for Kosovo. The aims are to ensure full implementation of Kosovo's status settlement and to support Kosovo's European integration. Kosovo's Declaration of Independence on 17 February 2008 expressly invited an international civilian presence, as it was envisaged in the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, drawn up by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Kosovo. The International Steering Group comprises States that support the full implementation of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, that is, 20 EU member states and five non-EU countries. ICO advises Kosovo's government and community leaders. (Reproduced from ICO Web Portal, <http://www.ico-kos.org/?id=9>)

OSCE: The mandate of the Kosovo mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe encompasses the promotion of human rights and good governance. It focuses on: the protection of community rights, including returns and reintegration of displaced persons, safety and freedom of movement, property rights, non-discrimination, participation in public life, access to education and other services, and language and culture preservation; municipal governance reform with a view to bettering the quality of services and public participation in decision-making; rule of law and human rights monitoring within the municipalities, courts and the police; support to and further development of independent institutions working with human rights, rule of law and elections; supporting anti-trafficking efforts; enhancing Assembly procedures and the oversight role over the executive, as well as all the communities' participation therein; further development of the public safety sector, including the police, customs and correctional services; strengthening print and broadcast media regulators; and improving access to and quality of higher education for all communities. (Reproduced from the OSCE Kosovo Mission Web Portal, <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/43381>)

On Feb. 24, 2012, Belgrade and Pristina agreed that Kosovo is to be represented at regional forums under the title Kosovo accompanied by the footnote citing UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Kosovo's declaration. Kosovo is to be referred to as Kosovo and not as the Republic of Kosovo. UN Resolution 1244 does not mention independence. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of July 22, 2010 states: "The Court finds that the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law."

Last but not least, Kosovo's ethnic composition plays an important political role. Kosovo's ethnic map has been changing during the past century due to forced and voluntary migrations. It is currently estimated that Albanians constitute around 90 percent of the population. The exact number of ethnic Serbs is hard to assess, since their numbers are manipulated for political reasons. It is generally assumed that Serbs represent 10 percent of the Kosovo population, but this figure is difficult to verify. The Serbian population in Kosovo lives in and around Mitrovica, the disputed northern territory and the focus of ethnic divide, and south of the Ibar River, mainly in villages and enclaves. Further, some Serbs are formally registered in Kosovo but do not live there. In addition, Turks, Roma, Egyptians, Bosniaks, Goranis and other smaller groups complete the ethnic landscape.

Other than in Albania, an ethnic Albanian population lives also in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

THE MEDIA SCENE

Kosovo's current media landscape started developing in 1999, upon the end of the NATO bombardment and the arrival of the international civilian and military forces. International institutions, foreign governments, NGOs and foundations provided seed-funds and technical support for the creation of numerous media outlets. However, those external funds have been dwindling. Major international institutions are no longer actively involved in promoting media development. In the meantime, some media outlets - print and electronic - have become financially successful, privately owned businesses. Others struggle to survive.

An editor explained this evolution: "After the war, it was a better time for media. There were a lot of tenders for media. Now, the time has changed.

People no longer get financing from NGOs and they have never invested money. They did not try to make a business out of their media. They were used to getting money from the international community... Now this money is gone."

As a result, initial enthusiasm generated by new opportunities has subsided: media are competing to survive in a saturated and small market, with meagre advertising. After recent legislative changes, the government stopped supporting certain media through sponsored campaigns and advertisements.

Kosovo has a poor economic base and the advertising market is small.

"There is not enough advertising because nothing is being produced in Kosovo," one editor explained. "Most advertising comes from public institutions." However, legal reform of public institution advertising changed this situation. The government is no longer allowed to advertise to support media through campaigns. One media expert applauded this decision: "The government will no longer give money to the media for advertisements. This is good for the government and for the media. This way, all media will be treated equally." Some dailies have survived thanks to this financial support. One media outlet, Infopress, had to close down after the change in legislation. The survival of some other dailies is also in question, considering that overall circulation is estimated at 35,000 copies. "There is no way that they can survive," said one expert. Some media owners have other businesses, although not all of them. They may decide to subsidise their profit-losing media outlets. Major international media investors are absent from the Kosovo market.

Electronic Media

According to the Independent Media Commission (IMC), established in 2006, with a mandate to allocate frequencies and apply broadcast development policies, as of January 2012, there were 105 electronic media in Kosovo: 84 radio and 21 TV stations.

Out of 84 radio broadcasters, 49 emitters broadcast in Albanian, 26 in Serbian, one is bilingual Albanian/Serbian, three stations broadcast programs in Bosnian, two in Gorani, two in Turkish and one in Roma. The above-mentioned data is gleaned from information provided for registration with the IMC.

Out of 21 TV broadcasters, 15 have programs in Albanian, five in Serbian and one in Turkish. Kosovo Radio Television (RTK) is the public broadcaster.

This apparently multilingual landscape is misleading: Kosovo society is ethnically divided and multilingual programs are often a requirement for obtaining funds or complying with laws, rather than a genuine expression of multi-ethnic communication.

Radio stations in Serbian, many of them micro enterprises, are mostly engaged in transmitting listeners' music wishes. Some survive thanks to the support of KFOR, which uses their services in order to transmit public announcements of the Kosovo government.

Five radio stations, however, do produce information programs. Radio Kim, Radio Kontakt Plus, Radio Gorazdevac, Radio Klokot and radio Herc have formed KOSMA, an association of radio stations that broadcast in Serbian. This network, financed by various international donors, covers the whole territory of Kosovo.

In the absence of print media in Serbian and considering that most ethnic Serbs live in small communities, radio has been the most efficient communication channel. Most ethnic Serbs in Kosovo do not speak Albanian. Serbian electronic media are politically divided. Some reflect strong partisanship. Some of them report more about events in Belgrade and reflect the views of political parties in Serbia's capital.

Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK)

Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) is Kosovo's public service broadcaster. It consists of the television service, broadcast on the terrestrial transmitter network and digital satellite, and two radio stations, 'Radio Kosova' and 'Radio Blue Sky'.

RTK operates under UNMIK Regulation 2001/13 as a self-managing organisation.

Although conceived as a public broadcaster, RTK, according to most interviewees, has been functioning as a state broadcaster, subject to political pressure and self-censorship. One media expert phrased it simply: "RTK cannot produce critical journalism, because many journalists working there have some relatives in the government, so they cannot be critical."

In addition, getting someone to speak in front of the camera is not easy: “It is really difficult to find someone who would speak in front of the camera. People do not feel free to say what they think. It is not only about losing a job. This is a general problem of how Kosovo institutions function, especially the justice system, “one media expert said.

An RTK insider specified: “Right now we are still not a public service television. There are many reasons for that. The budget is one of them. But the first reason is the professional level of journalists and their understanding of what public service is.”

In fact, RTK has had problems finding a proper channel for covering its budget and collecting license fees. Thus, it has depended on parliamentary emergency funding, often covering six-month periods. However, the recently approved Law on Radio Television of Kosovo (March 2012) is expected to change this uncertainty and dependence on political goodwill. According to this law, in the next three years, RTK will receive 0.7 percent of the Kosovo budget, or around 9 million EUR a year. This law was drafted in consultation with numerous international and national stakeholders. The International Civilian Office was formally in charge of the task, and Kosovo institutions, journalists’ associations and other actors participated in debates.

The new law foresees the creation of the second public TV channel, broadcasting in Serbian, under the umbrella of the RTK. This channel is assigned 10 percent of the RTK annual budget. Some Serbian MPs in the Kosovo parliament voted in favor of the law, some against, reflecting political divisions in the Kosovo Serbian community. Those who supported the legalisation claimed that the Serbian community would finally have its own public broadcaster. The opposition argued that a TV channel in Serbian should be totally independent from RTK and not even stationed in Pristina, where few Serbs live.

Albanian opposition MPs, on the other hand, expressed discontent because of a different selection process for appointing the RTK director for the Albanian and Serbian channel.

While the law on public broadcasting is a step forward, it is expected that its implementation will face challenges. Albanian and Serbian politicians in Kosovo share one common feature: they still have to learn the difference between a public and state broadcaster, and about the role of independent media.

[Print media](#)

Kosovo readers can choose between eight dailies: *Bota Sot*, *Gazeta Express*, *Kosova Sot*, *Epoka e Re*, *Koha Ditore*, *Tribuna Shqiptare*, *Zeri* and *Lajm*. Their combined circulation is estimated at 35,000 copies. All of them are published in Pristina. There are no print media in Serbian.

In less than two decades, Kosovo publishers, media owners, editors and journalists had to learn all aspects of the media business. Prior to 1999, and especially before 1989, when Kosovo formed part of Yugoslavia, the media scene was limited to one daily in Albanian – *Rilindja* – and one state-owned TV station. There was no school of journalism.

Currently, numerous titles, and radio and TV channels, as well as online media, coexist in a relatively small territory, where people know each other. The Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo estimates that 600 professional journalists work in the region.

The rapid growth of media outlets in Kosovo, political changes in the past decade, and support programs of the international organisations (as well as their physical presence) have left imprints on the Kosovo media scene: a) Numerous media have been created and an army of journalists has entered the market; b) the need for trained professionals for public institutions and international organisations influences the media market: high-profile journalists and especially bilingual professionals tend to accept better-paid positions in the government and international institutions. As a result, and with a few exceptions, most practising journalists are young, untrained and underpaid. These three factors undermine their independence and motivation to pursue investigative reporting in a country where most people are: "either relatives or friends, or friends of friends", as one expert described it. "If you want to avoid causing harm to someone, you do not speak to media about problems," the expert said.

"Journalism is not a respected profession"

Most interlocutors noted that journalism is not a respected profession and underlined that those who managed to acquire a good position were offered high-profile, well-paid, government jobs.

"Journalists cannot make enough money," explained one young TV anchor. "Journalism is not well-regarded in Kosovo. This is not a profession that allows you to live." This view was shared by most, if not all interviewees: "The future of journalism is grim..." said another interviewee. "Most journalists are young people and this should not be

the case. Only people who are willing to engage in different battles stay in this field for a longer period." An editor-in-chief said: "I do not want my children to work in this profession." Journalists tend to earn between 300 and 400 Euros a month.

Relying on young, often inexperienced, untrained and underpaid journalists has a direct impact on the media scene. Young professionals tend to be complacent with authorities, avoid complicated topics, stay away from investigative reporting, and resort to "copy and paste" whenever feasible. Quality information is scarce and even politicians, national and international, complain that professional levels are so low that many reporters fail to understand the issues they write about. One politician said: "Many of my meetings are open to journalists. And yet, some reporters come after the meeting to ask me to summarise what was said, although they were present at the event." Another politician phrased it differently: "There are no proper and professional newspapers... Everything is copy and paste." A representative of one international organisation stated: "Media coverage of our activities in Kosovo is very poor. Even when we hand out papers to journalists, their reports miss the main point. The level of professionalism is very low."

Since proclaiming independence and creating numerous institutions, Kosovo has been in constant need of qualified professionals. They are not abundant. In communication, national institutions need qualified professionals. A union representative explained: "The country is in transition. The institutions need qualified people. A lot of people become journalists and after they become famous, they usually go to work for the government. "

Incorporating journalists into public structures represents, according to some observers, a way to control the media: "At the moment this is a way how the prime minister exerts control," one editor-in-chief said. "If you write against the government, they will make you an offer to become part of the government. All former editors-in-chief of one paper work for the government now."

Pressure on Media

Intimidation, verbal insults, preventing certain media from covering events, and occasional physical attacks are part of everyday life for journalists in Kosovo. Another feature is fear. People are afraid of appearing in front of a camera and expressing what they think. "The problem of self-censorship exists in Kosovo," a TV journalist stated.

“People are not used to speaking up. It is really hard to make people say what they really think because they are afraid of the consequences. For example, a police officer gave an interview and after that he lost his job. One businessman gave an interview and afterwards he stopped receiving grants from the government.”

Threats and pressure come from different institutions: government, including ministries; political parties; international organisations; business people; judges; and academia. They are neither structured nor organised. Government methods are, according to several interlocutors, sophisticated. Journalists are not taken to court, there are no public statements condemning their writing. Pressure comes through phone calls and text messages. As previously said, many politicians and editors know each other. Thus, private meetings can be used to silence criticism. If this does not work, there is always a bribe or an offer to be incorporated into a public institution.

An editor explained the system: “You do not get any official reaction. They will not send you to court. Probably they will call you, or they will send you a text message.” A TV professional described his experience: “There are a lot of phone calls. Politicians want to appear on television... Politicians use their relationship with journalists but they do it very carefully. They never impose direct pressure.”

Another editor said: “They look for other methods to influence you: they do not threaten you or send you to jail. They try to bribe you.”

One influential editor said he did not receive any phone calls because none of the politicians were his friends.

Overt or covert, pressure on the media comes from different directions, and many reporters try to avoid high-profile stories. One journalist said: “In Kosovo they are not trying to physically harm you, but your sources are too scared to speak.”

In other words, journalists fear to address certain issues and citizens fear expressing their opinion.

Training and Unreported Topics

All interlocutors working for international institutions said they had organised numerous trainings and seminars for the media. In fact, international institutions have had many roles: some were active in promoting the recently approved draft law on public broadcasting, some provided equipment and training, and some monitored hate speech. Most

interviewees, national and international, ascertained that hate speech was generally absent. Yet these positive developments have not contributed to: a) quality and professional reporting, and b) reconciliation of the two ethnic communities currently in confrontation.

The reasons for the relative low impact of numerous training sessions seem to be multifaceted. Those who learn the trade often leave journalism for better-paid jobs. The turnover in media is very high. Further, one media instructor indicated that training courses were not adapted to the local environment: "A lot of money has been invested in trainings for journalists. But most of the curricula are imported. NGOs have transferred their programs to Kosovo without adapting them to the local situation. Nobody actually cares if these programs are suitable for the Kosovo situation. At these trainings, half of the people do not speak English, and the other half do not stay during the seminars. This is the way how these trainings function." Another editor said bluntly: "Media do not have a profit and cannot invest in their journalists."

Even though most reporters try to have two sources and follow basic professional rules, the outcome is not encouraging. A representative from a media monitoring institution said: "Sometimes, it is hard to know if we are reading news or rumours." A disillusioned experienced journalist commented: "You have people working for media who do not have basic writing skills. Everyone thinks they can become a journalist."

Yet, in Kosovo's society media have a special role, and according to some observers this role has not been fulfilled. Neither media in Albanian nor in Serbian have worked towards reconciliation. "Extremism in Kosovo does not sell any more," one media expert said. "Newspapers are patriotic but not extremist anymore." However, patriotism is defined differently and in ethnically volatile situations the media can play a crucial role: they can have either a calming or fuelling effect.

In spite of the absence of hate speech, the media reflect political and ethnic divisions and even those who try to address sensitive topics do so very carefully. Serbs tend to be absent from Albanian-language media. One international observer pointed out: "Serbs are not given any voice in the Kosovo media."

An editor of a nationalist-patriotic Albanian-language daily confirmed this statement by explaining his editorial policy: "When Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic died, we did not report about it. Why do we want to

know what is going on in Serbia?” Yet, this same editor said that his medium does currently report some news related to Serbia. “It is time to change the style,” he said.

The thorniest issue, however, is the coverage of war crimes. During the past few years, some media have addressed this topic: “We were prudent and respected the high sensitivity of the issue,” one editor said. Some other interlocutors claimed to have written about war crimes because they felt that a positive reply was expected of them.

Former war heroes are still prominent in Kosovo public life and questioning their actions may generate discontent.

Most media in Serbian follow a similar editorial line. In fact, some hardly reflect what happens in Kosovo.

Role of the International Representatives and Pressure on Media

Representatives of the international community in Kosovo, bilateral ambassadors and heads of different agencies, are prominent public figures. Initially, some Kosovo interlocutors said, they played a crucial role in calming tensions after the war, preventing new conflicts and providing financial, legal and technical support, as well as training, for media.

Some ambassadors have played a high-profile role in the Kosovo political arena and have openly clashed with some media. Others have chosen quiet diplomacy. At any rate, their statements and declarations have always had a high impact in Kosovo.

One editor explained: “In many ways, the international representatives prevented negative trends in Kosovo. When it was important not to kill one another, foreigners were helping a lot. But from the moment tensions between Albanians and Serbs diminished, international representatives forgot about people. ”

Most interviewees felt that international representatives had diverted their attention to boosting institutions. Their attitude was frequently perceived as pro-government.

An editor said: “The international representatives are now supporting the government, not the media. When the media criticise government policies, they support government policies and not the media. Their attitude has changed. We would like to see the international community in Kosovo

support the media, the way they were in 2001- 2003... At the time, they made efforts to establish independent media in Kosovo.”

Some editors suggested that international representatives exerted pressure on the media: “If you do an investigation about corruption and discover that foreign companies are involved, you will get into trouble with the international organisations in Kosovo,” one prominent editor said. Another high-profile editor said that he had received visits from an international representative asking him to postpone publication.

Thanks to the international assistance, monitoring and pressure, the Kosovo parliament approved the law on public broadcasting, and set up the Press Council and the Independent Media Commission, among other institutions. The Code of Ethics was also approved. While the implementation of laws is still to be monitored, the two established institutions are presently active and functioning.

However, on April 20, 2102 the Kosovo parliament approved changes to the Criminal Code and added two articles, 37 and 38, that have caused great concern among media professionals in Kosovo and abroad. These changes, approved by MPs against the opinion of the Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo and other civil society organisations appear to benefit those accused of bribery or illicit activities. One daily illustrated the situation: a journalist could end up in prison if he or she does not reveal a source that has denounced irregularities or bribes. The Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo is trying to rally national and international support in order to convince Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga not to sign off on these reforms of the criminal code, and to return the law to the parliament.

CONCLUSIONS

The Kosovo media market is crowded with numerous print and electronic media that may not survive economic challenges. Media in Albanian and Serbian reflect the unresolved political status of Kosovo between Pristina and Belgrade.

Media communities have not contributed to reconciling Albanians and Serbs: with some exceptions, they usually address parallel issues of parallel societies. Yet, most abstain from hate speech

Media are subject to political and business pressure. In the case of the Albanian-language media, pressure stems from different sources, mainly

the government and political parties, but also from business leaders and some international representatives. In case of the Serbian-language media, pressures are divided: some stem from internal struggles, while others come from Belgrade political representatives. Serbian-language media that try to overcome these divisions are also partially isolated from mainstream society: most Serbian journalists do not speak Albanian.

The common features of Kosovo journalism are low professional standards, high turnover, economic challenges, an absence of investigative reporting and a silencing of sensitive issues. Low wages and the frequent absence of regular contracts undermine reporters' independence.

The lack of democratic traditions, as well as the lack of understanding of the role of independent media, combined with general fear of expressing one's opinion, curtail the efforts of those reporters who try to conduct professional investigations.

Some attacks on journalists occur because of the lack of understanding of their role. In that respect, government and its institutions have failed to communicate properly, and/or train different officials as to the rights of access to information.

On the other hand, different international agencies that have played a crucial role in fostering the establishment of the legal basis for the functioning of independent media are presently perceived as supporters of institutions rather than promoters of freedom of expression.

The process of democratisation is a long-term project and international pressure and influence cannot substitute the political decision of the local authorities to transform their democratic rhetoric into concrete actions.

One editor said: "Kosovo is like a protectorate. The politicians listen to what the international community says. Politicians are more scared of the international community than they are of public opinion. Kosovo politicians still think they are not being elected by the people of Kosovo."

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Kosovo Media Professionals:

Strengthen professional organisations capable of defending and promoting journalists' rights.

Encourage journalists' training and workshops.

Support investigative and quality reporting.

Respect professional standards.

Promote multiculturalism and diversity.

To Kosovo Authorities:

Guarantee freedom of expression through actions rather than declarations.

Implement the law on public broadcasting and ensure that RTK functions as a public rather than a state broadcaster.

Improve and professionalise communication departments of ministries and other public institutions, so as to establish proper working channels and transmission of information between public institutions, media and the public at large.

Organise capacity building for civil servants and explain the role of media in democratic societies.

Implement and respect all media-related laws.

Abstain from pressure on media, direct or indirect.

To the International Community:

Monitor and ensure that government fulfils all its obligations related to respect for freedom of expression and media freedom.

Monitor and ensure that all media-related laws are implemented.

Abstain from pressuring media.

Organise training and workshops for journalists as a long-term project, respecting local necessities.

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