



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
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Statement at the Permanent Council
(Review of Current Issues)

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This week Radio Obrenovac, Radio Smederevo, Radio Novi Becej, Radio Zajecar, Radio Lazarevac, Radio Mladenovac, Radio Sremcica, Radio Television Krusevac, Timocka Television in Zajecar and some others in Serbia have changed their editorial policy and told their audiences that in the future they will broadcast objective information about events in the country. All these stations were close to the ruling coalition.

It seems that Milosevic is losing control of the media - one of his main power bases. Journalists from state-controlled media are joining their colleagues from the independent broadcasters and newspapers in calling on the regime to respect the will of the people. This deserves full support from the OSCE.

On 3 October, therefore, I issued a public statement stressing that over the past week hundreds of employees of state-controlled media have gone on strike protesting the government's refusal to recognise the results of the elections and state media's lack of objectivity in covering the post-electoral crisis. The situation around the media in Serbia continues to be tense. That is why I decided to inform the Permanent Council on the latest developments.

On 3 October security guards at Novi Sad Television ordered journalists from minority-language programs to leave the building, saying that these programs would no longer be aired. Journalists who arrived later were barred from the building. In Kikinda, Vojvodina, the local SPS organisation issued a statement in which it insulted journalists and the owner of the local VK radio and TV station and accused them of organising the protests and "inciting a civil war."

Now the journalists themselves are reacting. Reporters at Politika, the leading state-controlled newspaper, are calling for a strike unless Politika changes its editorial policy. On the same day, 18 editors from RTS [Radio and Television Serbia], Milosevic's main propaganda outfit, asked the Serbian parliament to dismiss the station's management. These editors called the editorial policy of national radio and television "arrogantly one-sided" and "humiliatingly unprofessional." All RTS broadcasts ceased in Nis as of 3 October.