

MEDIA DEPARTMENT

# Media freedom in Serbia in 2008

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*The views expressed by the authors in this publication are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of OSCE Mission to Serbia*

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# I | Summary

The results of a survey conducted by the OSCE Mission to Serbia (hereinafter, OSCE) in 2008, in conjunction with the Centre for Political Studies and Public Opinion Research of the Institute of Social Sciences (hereinafter, the Institute), show that the change of regime in 2000 did bring about the liberation of the media sphere from total control by the regime and censorship. However, the conditions for full autonomy in the media and the enjoyment of media freedoms and rights, i.e. the rights that the media and journalists exercise in the name of general public, still do not exist. The media system is characterised by a belated and incomplete process of transition, an accelerated pace of commercialisation in a cash-strapped and unregulated market, a drawn-out transformation of ownership, weaknesses in legal regulations and law-enforcement institutions, the modest financial power of the media, a low level of professionalism and a large number of attacks on journalists. In a variety of ways, these all have had an impact on the manner in which the media carries out its important social functions.

The principal objective of this survey has been to assess the real extent to which media freedoms and rights in Serbia in 2008 are threatened, i.e. to examine the spread, forms, intensity and factors exerting pressure on the media and inciting attacks on, and threats to, the media and journalists. For the purpose of this survey, attacks on journalists and the media entail any violations of media rights and freedoms involving the use of force, as well as threats and various other types of pressure, motivated by the reporting of a particular media outlet or journalist, or by the very fact that the person assaulted is a journalist. The survey was divided into two phases.

Over the course of the year, OSCE researchers monitored and documented cases of attacks on journalists. The methodology used was based on field research. This meant direct contact with assaulted journalists and taking their

statements about the incidents, as well as daily monitoring of the media and the recording of all known incidents. The results of this part of the survey showed that in 2008, according to available information, 138 attacks on journalists were reported in Serbia. Of this figure, 76 were physical assaults on journalists and their property, while 62 involved verbal attacks, pressures and various other attempts to thwart journalists in their efforts to carry out their assignments. Eight court rulings against journalists were also recorded. The figures pertaining to attacks on journalists in the course of this year are not final but these are the data that the OSCE managed to collect, using all the available information that could be obtained. The fact that some journalists are reluctant to go public with information on attacks must be taken into consideration.

The OSCE conducted the second phase of the survey in collaboration with the Belgrade-based Institute. As part of the poll, the Institute distributed questionnaires to 439 media outlets in Serbia (97 newspapers, 205 radio stations and 137 TV stations), with the objective of assessing the perceptions of media editors and journalists who had been exposed to pressures, attacks or threats as regards the reasons for undermining media freedoms and rights, the possible consequences of the said pressures and attacks, and measures for the better protection of media freedoms in future. In the poll, 328 media outlets replied but 22 were eliminated because they failed to meet the criterion for sample selection, which meant that the total number of the eligible replies received was 306.

According to the survey data, 80% of citizens and as many as 95% of journalists<sup>1</sup> believe that there is control or censorship of the media in Serbia. However, media freedom today is not in the spotlight as a social or professional issue. Several institutions and professional associations whose activity is, above all, focused on recording instances of media freedom violations and alleviating their detrimental impact, are addressing this problem. The issue of media freedom is discussed in public solely on the anniversaries of still unsolved murders or attempted murders of journalists and in relation to the World Press Freedom Day. No domestic entity is engaged in systematic research into

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1 Strategic Marketing survey from 2007, *Journalists and Journalism in the Eyes of Serbian Citizens and Journalists*.

media freedoms and rights, hence, no comparative reviews in Serbia are available of the state of media freedom over a longer period of time, including cases of violations, the most frequent forms of such violations, their perpetrators, etc. This lack of relevant sources undoubtedly limits the possibility of approaching this problem in a systemic manner, consequently resulting in the absence of a sustainable solution to the problem.

Whenever media freedom and attacks on journalists in Serbia are mentioned, we must recall the unresolved murders of Dada Vujasinović, Slavko Ćuruvija, Milan Pantić, and the unsolved attempt on the life of Dejan Anastasijević. As long as the perpetrators of these and many other unsolved crimes are not identified and brought to justice, there will be no media freedom in Serbia of a level that can be considered acceptable.

In this survey, media freedom entails freedom of expression, freedom to gather, publish and disseminate information, freedom of information flow and media openness to different opinions, freedom of editorial policy and media independence, right of access to information, right to monitor and criticise the government and public institutions and other professional rights of journalists that do not undermine the rights and reputation of others, general security and public order.

The OSCE would like to thank all the contributors who have made this publication possible, above all, the Institute, i.e. the research team consisting of the expert advisor and head of the Centre for Political Studies, Dr Dragomir Pantić, expert associate Dr Jovanka Matić and researcher M.Sc. Zoran Pavlović, as well as Zlatko Minić and Anka Milošević, BETA news agency journalists and independent researchers involved in this project.

## Media Freedom in Serbia in 2008

## II | Introductory Framework

The period under observation was marked by several important events. A presidential election in Serbia was held on 20 January<sup>2</sup> with the run-off on 3 February<sup>3</sup>. In the first round, Tomislav Nikolić, as candidate of the Serbian Radical Party, and Boris Tadić, as candidate of the Democratic Party, won most votes (39.4% and 35.4% respectively). Since neither candidate won the support of more than 50% of the electorate, however, the two battled it out in the run-off<sup>4</sup> in which Tadić emerged victorious with 50.5% of the votes, compared to 47.9% of votes cast for Nikolić.<sup>5</sup>

Dramatic events in the week when Kosovo declared independence on 17 February 2008, i.e. the protests against it, which were marked by various forms of violence, particularly violence against journalists, and which were unprecedented in recent times in Serbia, thrust the issue of media freedom and rights before the attention of experts and the general public. Not only were journalists physically attacked and exposed to various open and anonymous threats but whole newsrooms were accused of “traitorous” actions by a variety of political organisations and ideologically organised groups. Protests under the slogan “Kosovo is Serbia” were organised by the Democratic Party of Serbia and New Serbia, the then political parties in power, as well as by the Serbian Radical Party and others.

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2 Election results for 2008, CESID, see the web page: <http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/index.jsp> .

3 Ibid.

4 Presidential election in Serbia, 20 January 2008, CESID, see the web page: [http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/sr\\_jan\\_2008/index.jsp](http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/sr_jan_2008/index.jsp) .

5 Presidential election in Serbia – run-off election, 3 February 2008, CESID, see the web page: [http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/sr\\_feb\\_2008/index.jsp](http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/sr_feb_2008/index.jsp) .

The month of May was marked by early parliamentary and local elections<sup>6</sup>. In the 250-member National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the most seats were won by the Democratic Party – 102, with the runner-up results as follows: the Serbian Radical Party – 78, the coalition of Democratic Party of Serbia and New Serbia – 30, the coalition of the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia (PUPS) and the United Serbia – 20, the Liberal Democrat Party – 13, the Hungarian Coalition – 4, the Bosniak List for European Sandžak – 2, and the Coalition of Preševo Valley Albanians – 1.<sup>7</sup> Several months later, the Democratic Party and the coalition of the Socialist Party of Serbia, PUPS and United Serbia managed to form a parliamentary majority with the support of national minority parties, and consequently formed the new government of the Republic of Serbia.

The National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia on 21 July arrested the long-time fugitive Radovan Karadžić and handed him over to the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia in The Hague (ICTY). The Serbian Radical Party and New Serbia organised protests on 29 July in Belgrade's city centre against the arrest of Karadžić and clashes occurred between demonstrators and police. During those days, many journalist crews were attacked.

These events had a significant impact on the enjoyment of media freedom and rights in Serbia over the course of this year, perhaps a crucial one. Analysis of this survey results showed that each and every one of these events was marked by a large number of attacks on journalists, the incidence of which was much higher than the average number of attacks in the months when there were no such events.

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6 See above, footnote 2.

7 Results of early parliamentary election in Serbia, 11 May 2008, CESID, see the web page: [http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/sr\\_maj\\_2008/index.jsp](http://www.cesid.org/rezultati/sr_maj_2008/index.jsp).

### III | Table of attacks on journalists in 2008

Data gathered by the OSCE in collaboration with its partners on attacks, threats and pressures on journalists show that over the course of 2008, journalists experienced 138 attacks. Analysis of the information collected suggests that attacks were most intensive in those months when events of great importance to society were taking place, such as the presidential election in February, parliamentary elections in May, Kosovo's declaration of independence in February and protests in the wake of the arrest of Radovan Karadžić, the Hague indictee, in July. By far the most attacks occurred in February – 41, whereas fewest attacks were recorded in September – only two.

	Physical assaults and attacks on property	Threats, verbal attacks and pressures	TOTAL
January	5	3	8
February	35	7	42
March	2	7	9
April	4	1	5
May	7	11	18
June	3	8	11
July	11	8	19
August	3	3	6
September	-	2	2
October	2	5	7
November	3	4	6
December	1	3	4
UKUPNO	76	62	138

## Media Freedom in Serbia in 2008

## IV | Death threats to Vukašin Obradović

In early November, Vukašin Obradović, the owner of Vranje weekly *Novine vranjske*, received death threats<sup>8</sup>. Obradović, and other journalists on the weekly and those familiar with local situation in Vranje, claimed that the death threats were the consequence of a series of articles written by Obradović about clashes in the Vranje underworld and alleged collusion between organised crime and political centres of power. Obradović is one of the most reputable journalists in Serbia and the recipient of a number of journalistic awards, including the prestigious “Jug Grizelj”, “Dušan Bogavac” and “Stanislav - Staša Marinković” awards.<sup>9</sup>

The problems for Obradović and the staff of *Novine vranjske* started in 2003 when the weekly revealed a scandalous affair involving a Serbian Orthodox Church bishop, Pahomije, who was subsequently accused of sexually harassing underage boys. *Novine vranjske* received a threatening letter signed by the “Serbian Liberation Resistance Movement” and the “Serbian Liberation Front” which read: “You’ll lose your life over Albanians. We know you’re their mercenary and that you got things for your newsroom [from them], computers... You are dragging Pahomije and the Serbian Orthodox Church through the gutter. We’ll chop off your head and kill your family unless you drop your allegations and apologise to Father Pahomije. You live in Serbia, you traitor-

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8 *Recurring Threats to Journalist*, NUNS, 6 November 2008, see the web page: <http://www.nuns.org.yu/vesti/view.jsp?articleId=9974>

9 *Obradović without Permanent Protection*, B92, 6 November 2008, see the web page: [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=06&nav\\_category=12&nav\\_id=327495](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=06&nav_category=12&nav_id=327495)

ous dog, but you'll pay for dragging the Orthodox Church through the gutter. You and your family are condemned to death".<sup>10</sup>

The weekly's newsroom and offices have since been broken into three times, while unknown perpetrators once broke the windows of Obradović's car.<sup>11</sup> No perpetrators of these attacks or of threats against Obradović and the *Novine vranjske* newsroom have been identified.<sup>12</sup>

In a statement given to OSCE representatives, Obradović said he saw the threats and pressures to which he had been exposed as a consequence of *Novine vranjske's* reporting on criminal structures in Vranje.<sup>13</sup> One political party, following the publication of an article in which Obradović associated its political activities with the local underworld, brought charges at the local court, seeking millions of dinars in damages.<sup>14</sup> Soon, Obradović started receiving warnings from sources close to the underworld that he should "watch out", as well as telephone calls from unknown persons threatening to "break his legs if he continued to write about those issues".<sup>15</sup> Obradović saw one threat sent to him through his young daughter as the most serious. Namely, in early November, unknown persons intercepted Obradović's daughter on her way home from school and told her: "Your dad will be killed in 10 days".<sup>16</sup> As soon as his daughter passed on the message, Obradović reported the threat to Vranje police department, which said that everything would be investigated.<sup>17</sup>

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10 *We Will Continue Writing about Crime in Vranje*, NUNS, 7 November 2008, see the web page: <http://www.nuns.org.yu/vesti/view.jsp?articleId=9980>

11 From the statement given by Vukašin Obradović to OSCE representatives on 18 November 2008. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

12 Ibid

13 Ibid

14 Ibid

15 Ibid

16 Ibid

17 Ibid

According to Obradović, however, Vranje police did not undertake any measures until after the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (hereinafter NUNS) demanded that the Ministry of Interior provide protection for Obradović, his family and *Novine vranjske* newsroom.<sup>18</sup> It was only then that police summoned Obradović for an interview, which he described as an informal conversation, as part of which the police offered security protection for his apartment and the newsroom.<sup>19</sup> He also pointed out that he had never signed any paper as a statement made to the police, but that he saw one of the police officers writing down his words.<sup>20</sup> The police never took a statement from Obradović's daughter about the threats she had received. Vranje police department did not offer physical protection to Obradović until after he went public with the case, which then received coverage in all the major media outlets in Serbia. He refused an offer of police protection because, as he put it in his interview with OSCE representatives, "I wouldn't feel comfortable walking in the company of police officers through my town where everybody knows me well."<sup>21</sup>

In view of the threats made to Vukašin Obradović, Vranje police department issued a statement, declaring that all necessary measures to protect the personal safety of Obradović and his family were being taken, but that no permanent police security had been assigned to him since "he did not specify any explicit form of threats, hence there were no reasons for it".<sup>22</sup> Obradović claimed that he told the police explicitly about all the specific threats that he had received. A press release, subsequently published by *Novine vranjske* newsroom, read: "We are wondering why, then, the police have taken all the necessary measures to ensure the personal protection of the owner of *Novine vranjske* and his family if, as the police announcement states, no spe-

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18 *NUNS Welcomes Police Protection for Obradović*, NUNS, 6 November 2008, see the web page: <http://www.nuns.org.yu/vesti/view.jsp?articleId=9971>

19 See above, footnote 10.

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

22 *Obradović: Utterly Illogical Explanation*, Danas, 6 November 2008, see the web page: [http://www.danas.rs/vesti/hronika/dezurna/obradovic\\_potpuno\\_nelogicno\\_objasnjenje.47.html?news\\_id=144577](http://www.danas.rs/vesti/hronika/dezurna/obradovic_potpuno_nelogicno_objasnjenje.47.html?news_id=144577)

cific proofs warrant it”<sup>23</sup> In a statement to the media, Obradović said that he did not request physical protection, but went on to describe the police’s public announcement as indicative, because it seemed “as if a recommendation had been given to interested parties, essentially saying something like – Don’t go near his apartment or the newsroom, but he doesn’t have security, nonetheless”<sup>24</sup>

As regards the police protection provided to him, Obradović said that police patrols were checking on his apartment and newsroom several times at night, going on to say that some policemen might be following him who were not visible to him, but that he did not notice or know anything about it. The atmosphere in Obradović’s family has significantly changed for the worse since the last threats were received. Their lives are now full of anxiety, fear and tension. In his words, this is particularly true in the case of his underage daughter who is very anxious and keeps asking if he really has to write about things that have prompted the threats.<sup>25</sup>

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23 *Vranje: Police Ignore Threats*, NUNS, 9 November 2008, see the web page: <http://www.nuns.org.yu/vesti/view.jsp?articleId=9985> .

24 *Threats to Obradović’s Daughter: “Your Dad Will Be Killed in Ten Days”*, Vranje Press Agency, 7 November 2008, see the web page: <http://vranjepres.info/sh/1203/10/18722/?tpl=25> .

25 See above, footnote 10.

## V | Overview of incidents

### A. PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND THEIR PROPERTY

#### [ January ]

**9 January** – A group of a dozen unknown persons attacked TV Studio B journalist Predrag Sarapa and the then presidential candidate of the People's Peasant Party Marijan Rističević after the TV show *Problem* in which they had participated, while sitting in the Irish Pub in Knez Miloš Street, in Belgrade. According to Rističević's statement, his assailants hit him after which he fell off his chair and hit the floor with his head. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter MUP RS) issued a statement saying that Rističević and Sarapa were both "visibly intoxicated" at the time.<sup>26</sup>

**14 January** – Ivan Prodanović, a journalist on the magazine *REZ*, was attacked by an unknown person while gathering information at a business centre and shopping mall in Ustanička Street No 189, in the Belgrade suburb of Konjarnik, for an article that he was supposed to write. Prodanović gave the following statement about the incident: "I was attacked at work! That night, I went to see a friend, a former policeman, at the offices of his firm, which provides physical and technical security services, to work on a case. I wanted to write about war veteran invalids so my friend and I talked about it. On leaving the business centre, I was several metres in front of him. At some

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<sup>26</sup> *Attack on Rističević and Sarapa*, B92, 10 January 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=10&nav\\_category=418&nav\\_id=279858](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=10&nav_category=418&nav_id=279858) .

point, someone attacked me from the back and said, “Cut, cut the throat”. He mentioned the Church, but I cannot remember in which context, and hit me with his fist on the head, my arcade to be more precise, and then I fell down. My friend rushed after him and pushed him several metres further, but after the attacker fell down, my friend came back to me, to help me get up. The attacker had disappeared in the meantime. Then we went to the police so that I could give a statement”.<sup>27</sup>

**17 January** – Three unknown attackers beat up TV journalist and writer Đula Mirnić at Novi Sad railway station. The attack took place while Mirnić was waiting for a bus to take him to Bačka Topola and dictating a news item on his cell phone to his Hungarian-language newsroom. Mirnić told *Magyar So* daily the following: “A young man came up to me, smiling, but when I looked at him, someone hit me from the side with a rubbish bin. I tried to flee, but they knocked me down and kicked me mercilessly for minutes on end. Finally, they asked in Serbian where my briefcase was. A book and my wallet with a thousand or two thousand dinars were inside. But they didn’t take my expensive cell phone and wristwatch. I received countless blows, especially on the head. I’ve got a serious external scar, a wound on my forehead, and at least four bumps on my head. Also, my ribs, one eye and my head are hurting a lot.” After the incident, Mirnić asked a female clerk at the information desk to call the police. When the police failed to show up even after some 20 minutes had passed, Mirnić went to a police station on his own where he was interviewed and two police officers were dispatched to the scene of attack.<sup>28</sup>

**18 January** – Justin Vela<sup>29</sup>, a photographer/reporter covering the Serbian presidential election for World Picture News, a US-based news agency, was assaulted at a Belgrade bar in Knjeginja Zorka street. Three or four unidentified young men, each aged about 20, attacked him while he was talking with his colleagues from Britain and Russia. Vela briefly described the incident: “We were standing, drinking and laughing. At some point, I

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27 «Punch because of an article on people with disabilities», ANEM, 19 January 2008

28 *Robbery or Commissioned Crime*, Danas, 25 January 2008, p. 33.

29 Justin Vela is a freelance journalist. You may find out more about his work at the following web site: [www.justinvela.com](http://www.justinvela.com).

felt a blow which knocked me down to the floor. While I was lying down, they were hitting me, until other guests at the bar stepped in and separated them from me<sup>29,30</sup>

**23 January** – A journalist and a cameraman of Novi Pazar’s Regionalna televizija, Medin Halilović and Aladin Dazdarević respectively, were physically assaulted while filming a protest meeting in the square between Novi Pazar municipality building and the Vrbak hotel, where a formal session of Novi Pazar’s municipal assembly was taking place to mark the official recognition of Novi Pazar’s status as a city. The police stepped in to protect the journalists and prevent more serious consequences after which a stone was thrown at them.<sup>31</sup>

## [ Februar ]

**17 February** – In the aftermath of Kosovo’s declaration of independence, demonstrators and police clashed in Terazije, in Belgrade city centre. Protesters used stones, torches and concrete slabs against the riot police. They shattered windows of a McDonalds restaurant in Terazije and tossed a Molotov cocktail inside to set it on fire.<sup>32</sup> In the midst of the fracas, the demonstrators beat up a FONET news agency journalist, Ognjen Stevanović who was left with several swellings and bruises on his head and his body. Stevanović was intercepted by a group of hooligans who hit him and knocked him down to the pavement, and then kicked him while he was lying on the ground.<sup>33</sup>

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30 UNS (Journalists’ Association of Serbia) report on attacks and threats to journalists from the beginning of the year until August 2008 is available on at the following address:  
<http://www.unsonline.org/index.php/IZVE%C5%A0TAJ-UNS-a-O-NAPADIMA-I-PRETNJAMA-NOVINARIMA-OD-PO%C4%8CETKA-GODINE-DO-1.-AVGUSTA-2008.html>.

31 UNS Condemns Attack on Journalist and Cameraman, Press, 18 February 2008, see the web page:  
<http://www.naslovi.net/2008-01-24/press/uns-osudjuje-napad-na-novinara-i-snimatelja/554100> .

32 *Incidents, Brawls and Tear Gas on Belgrade Streets*, Blic, 17 February 2008, see the web page: <http://www.blic.co.yu/politika.php?id=30816> .

33 Excerpt from Ognjen Stevanović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation

**17 February** – A Studio B television crew was attacked in Belgrade’s Republic Square while reporting on people’s reactions to Kosovo’s declaration of independence. Journalist Marijana Mitrović, who was at the scene as a Studio B crew reporter, described the incident: “Immediately after our live report for Studio B News at 7pm, out of the blue a group of young aggressive people, who had been pushed away from the Slovenian embassy at that moment bore down on the cameraman, his assistant, the technicians and myself. We were the only TV crew there and it was made clear to them we were from Studio B. They abused us verbally first, and then they attacked my colleague physically. They swore at us using various derogatory names, calling us traitors and mercenaries, and they destroyed a part of our equipment”.<sup>34</sup>

**17 February** – During the Belgrade protest, unidentified persons smashed the windows of B92’s shop in Makedonska street. Veran Matić, RTV B92’s CEO and editor-in-chief, said that as a media company, despite this incident, B92 would continue to do what it had always done – report on all matters that the public had an interest in and a right to know about, and that RTV B92 would never yield to such pressure.<sup>35</sup>

**17 February** – In front of the US embassy in Belgrade, a Studio B television crew was attacked while reporting on the riots. Journalist and crew reporter Milana Mrkalj gave a statement describing the incident: “Apart from myself, a cameraman and his assistant were in the crew. The demonstrations unfolded peacefully, but after several hours in front of the embassy, the protesters were becoming more aggressive. They first started threatening us verbally, and then physically attacked the cameraman. The Gendarmerie fended off the first attack, but when a group of a dozen youths attacked us for the second time, we had to flee to a private apartment. Before we fled, they hit the cameraman and his assistant a couple of times, while the man in whose apartment we stayed protected me personally. Apart

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<sup>34</sup> Excerpt from Mirjana Mitrović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>35</sup> *Frequent calls for lynch because of different attitudes*, Blic, 22 February 2008, (<http://www.blic.rs/politika.php?id=31419>)

from my crew and myself, demonstrators were attacking anyone with a camera, regardless of whose sign was on the equipment”<sup>36</sup>

**17 February** – A B92 journalist crew was attacked while reporting on demonstrations in Belgrade. Nikola Radišić, a journalist who witnessed the attack, described the incident: “During the protests against Kosovo’s declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, I was reporting on the rioting in the city. I was supposed to report live for the news at 4pm. Immediately before that, a crowd of hooligans came along and rushed towards the B92 crew among whom there was a Croatian female journalist. They were throwing stones and swearing at us... We managed to dodge the stones being hurled at us, but one piece did hit the camera, which was slightly damaged. A little later, while I was reporting from the streets, and we were in Terazije, police and demonstrators clashed. Several people were swearing at journalists, including ourselves, and a stone was thrown that landed near us. At that moment tear gas was fired, we started choking and had to leave”<sup>37</sup>

**17 February** – Many Belgrade media outlets carried the news that another two journalist crews were attacked during the demonstrations: Palma plus TV crew and Croatia’s RTL television crew.<sup>38</sup>

**17 February** – Portuguese journalist André Cunha was attacked by protesters in the immediate vicinity of the St Sava cathedral in Belgrade. In his article published on his return to his home country by the Portuguese daily *Diário de notícias*, André Cunha, described the attack: “While candles were burning brightly in front the St Sava Temple, a crowd of several hundred thousand people were chanting peacefully, ‘Kosovo is the heart of Serbia.’ Had someone counted the candles? I wanted to do so, but I could not reach the temple as a young hooligan assaulted me near the United States embassy. Drugged or drunk, he was in the crowd, attacking the embassy. He hit me with a wooden baton on my hand two times, and then hit me on the back and upper arm. The TSF microphone fell to the ground. The same

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<sup>36</sup>Excerpt from Milana Mrkalj’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>37</sup>Excerpt from Nikola Radišić’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>38</sup>*Hooligans attacked jouranlists as well*, Politika, 18 February 2008, p. A8.

hooligan had just smashed a window on a nearby car. Half of his face was covered. I only remember his eyes seething with rage. Fortunately, the riot police sprang into action at that very moment, and he fled”<sup>39</sup>

**17 February** – During the riots in front of the US embassy, demonstrators attacked a Fox TV crew, but were rescued by Russian journalists who were on the spot. A group of attackers charged towards the Fox TV journalists when the Russian journalists told them to leave them alone because they were their colleagues. Police were nowhere near.<sup>40</sup>

**17 February** – A *Večernje novosti* photographer/reporter, Milutin Labudović, was beaten up in Belgrade in front of the US embassy while reporting on the riots taking place after the declaration of Kosovo’s independence. Labudović said: “As soon as I started taking photos, hooligans attacked the police and journalists like mad dogs. When they saw me holding a camera, they started yelling that they would beat me up, and everyone embraced that idea keenly, so I made a run for it. But I had nowhere to go. They started hitting me with all sorts of things. I tried to run away towards a police cordon, thinking I’d be protected there, but they continued to beat me one metre in front of about 40 policemen who were standing by and looking on. Then one of the demonstrators hit me with a stone on the head. I collapsed, barely conscious, in front of the police, got up and asked for help, extending my arm towards one of the policemen. Not even at that point did they help me, which made me feel more bitter than the injuries inflicted by the hooligans. Each and every policeman could clearly see I was on a journalistic assignment, that I was a photographer-reporter, because I had a camera with me”. Labudović sustained serious physical injuries. His teeth and parts of his jaw bone were fractured.<sup>41</sup>

**21 February** – On a YouTube web site, a video clip was posted on 21 February showing a sniper shooting at TV B92 news presenters Maša Mileusnić and Miša Stojiljković. The video clip starts off with dramatic music as a

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<sup>39</sup> *Blood, Flames, Tears and Vito*, Politika, 25 February 2008, p. A9, author André Cunha.

<sup>40</sup> Excerpt from FONET journalist written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department

<sup>41</sup> Excerpt from Milutin Labudović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

background to pictures of stormy skies. Then a message appears on the screen, “Dark clouds are looming over Serbia! There is only one reason for it”. The next image shows sniper shots at B92 sign, and then at B92 presenters,<sup>42</sup> after which blood gushes down their faces.<sup>43</sup> The author of this clip, signed as WerGoNy, posted a caption beneath the clip saying he was not a coward “because he was in war to defend Serbia”. He went on to say, “I’m not a rabble-rouser because I’m not forcing anyone to do it! This is only an artistic expression of my point of view. It’s something like Adem Jashari in Belgrade city centre.”<sup>44</sup> The video clip was briefly removed from but re-appeared on YouTube on 1 March only to be removed again on 6 March.<sup>45</sup>

**17 February** – *Alo* daily journalist Bojan Radović was beaten up by the police while carrying out his journalistic assignment in Makedonska street in Belgrade related to the hooligan rampage from the US embassy to the city centre. Radović described the incident: “At one point, although the Gendarmerie were involved in clashes with demonstrators, the special intervention riot police brigade came from the direction of the Republic square and started beating everyone in sight in Makedonska street, screaming savagely all the while. I shouted several times that I was a journalist, holding up my press ID, but this didn’t stop two policemen from attacking and beating me. After several blows with batons to my body, they knocked me down onto the pavement where I lay for several minutes. After that, the police let go all those who were lying on the tarmac, clearly intending not to detain anyone. When I explained again to those same police officers, but now without their threats to beat me up, that I was a journalist, one of them said: ‘Fuck, bad luck.’” Subsequent medical examination revealed a rib fracture and numerous hematomas on the body.<sup>46</sup>

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42 *Open Letter of the Committee to Protect Journalists, CPJ, in Relation to Attack on B92 Media Company*, NUNS News, see the web page: <http://www.nuns.org.yu/vesti/view.jsp?articleId=8963> .

43 *Recurring Lynch Mob Calls against Different Opinions*, Blic, 22 February 2008, see the web page: <http://www.vesti.rs/izvor/Ucestali-pozivi-na-linc-zbog-drugacijih-stavova.html> .

44 *Shot at B92*, *Alo*, 22 February 2008, p. 2.

45 See above, footnote 17.

46 Excerpt from Bojan Radović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

**17 February** – Demonstrators attacked a TV B92 crew near the Albanian embassy in Belgrade and caused damage to their vehicle. Several hundred demonstrators gathered in the vicinity of the Albanian embassy in the Dedinje residential district. Strong police forces prevented them from coming closer to the embassy, while protesters were throwing stones and bottles at them.<sup>47</sup> Enraged by their thwarted effort to attack the embassy, the demonstrators vented their anger on the TV B92 crew, throwing bottles and stones. Their vehicle was damaged in the attack, but cameramen and journalists were unhurt.<sup>48</sup>

**18 February** – On that day, the police were following a group of protesters who were marching from the direction of Nemanjina street in Belgrade, but when the police emerged from the Terazije tunnel, they immediately started to beat passers-by and people standing at a bus stop. Among them was a *Pravda* daily journalist, Željko Segić, who tried to show his journalist ID to a police officer but failed to do so as he was struck by a fist on his head, after which he collapsed to the ground.<sup>49</sup>

**18 February** – A cameraman and a journalist of TV Pannonija attempted to film the organised departure for Belgrade of football fans and other groups from Novi Sad, going to the rally against Kosovo's declaration of independence. The group of football fans attacked them verbally, preventing them from filming, and then threw bottles and waved flags threateningly at them, after which both the journalist and cameraman fled.<sup>50</sup>

**18 February** – Several hundred secondary school students and football fans protested in Subotica city centre against Kosovo's declaration of independence. They smashed the windows of a McDonalds restaurant and four pastry shops owned by ethnic Albanians. During the protest, demonstrators

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<sup>47</sup> *Hooligans Clash with Police*, B92, 18 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=18&nav\\_id=285256&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=18&nav_id=285256&nav_category=640).

<sup>48</sup> Excerpt from Nikola Radišić's statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>49</sup> *Punch for Pravda journalist*, *Pravda*, 19 February 2008, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Excerpt from TV Panonija editor's statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

chanted slogans against the ethnic Albanian, Croatian and Hungarian communities. No clashes with the police occurred.<sup>51</sup> In the course of the riots, demonstrators attacked *Subotičke novine* weekly photographer Dejan Malagurski. According to Malagurski, he approached the head of the protest column and asked if he could take pictures of their protest. Young men from the column told him that he could not take pictures, and then one of them pushed him away.<sup>52</sup>

**19 February** – About 300 Užice residents, mostly secondary school students, protested in the city centre against Kosovo’s declaration of independence. During the protest, the windows of two banks and of the Idea Croatian supermarket were smashed, while the local headquarters of Liberal Democratic Party was attacked. Police monitoring the rally failed to respond to the incidents.<sup>53</sup> Demonstrators threw stones at the police, shouting: “Go to Kosovo!”. They also threw stones at a TV5 ENG crew. No journalists were hurt during the incident.<sup>54</sup>

**19 February** – On the day following Kosovo’s declaration of independence, a peaceful protest took place in Niš. However, demonstrations were also organised the next day in which several hundred secondary school students, football fans and others took part. Gendarmerie prevented protesters from coming nearer to the Merkator shopping mall, so the protesters threw stones, metal items and burning torches at them.<sup>55</sup> During the demonstrations in Niš city centre, a group of protesters attacked a Niš TV5

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51 *New Riots, Police Arrest Hooligans*, B92, 18 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=18&nav\\_id=285380&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=18&nav_id=285380&nav_category=640) .

52 *UNS in Subotica Reacts to News on Mosque Burning*, Subotičke novine, 19 February 2008, see the web page: [http://www.subotica.info/press.php?tag\\_id=103](http://www.subotica.info/press.php?tag_id=103)

53 *Riots in Serbian Cities*, B92, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=19&nav\\_category=640&nav\\_id=285477](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=19&nav_category=640&nav_id=285477) .

54 *Protests throughout Serbia*, RTS News, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www3.serbiancafe.com/lat/vesti/14/45348/protesti\\_sirom\\_srbije?action=shownews&id=14&topicid=45348](http://www3.serbiancafe.com/lat/vesti/14/45348/protesti_sirom_srbije?action=shownews&id=14&topicid=45348) .

55 *Niš: Police on Alert All Night*, Blic, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

<http://www.blic.co.yu/politika.php?id=31007> .

cameraman while he was filming their movement towards the Merkator mall. The cameraman sustained light physical injuries.<sup>56</sup>

**19 February** - Several thousand demonstrators from Leposavić and the northern part of Mitrovica, in Kosovo, gathered at the Jarinje border crossing on the administrative demarcation line between Serbia and Kosovo, between Leposavić and Raška. They first threw stones at border officials and then set fire to the facilities and vehicles of UNMIK, border police and customs.<sup>57</sup> While taking pictures of demonstrators, *Glas javnosti* and *Kurir* journalist Zoran Šaponjić was attacked by a protester who struck him with his fist on his head three times, which caused large hematomas on the back of his head.<sup>58</sup> In his words, it was pointless to try to show his press ID so he fled the fury of the “enraged mob”, as he put it, throwing stones at him, and climbed a nearby hill. “Two masked men hunted me down on that hill and took away briefly my camera, threatening I’d fare pretty badly if their faces appeared anywhere in newspapers”, said Šaponjić.<sup>59</sup>

**19 February** – During the riots at the Jarinje border crossing, the demonstrators attacked another journalist – *Večernje novosti*’s correspondent from Novi Pazar, Miroљub Nićiforović. Attackers grabbed the journalist by his throat and tried to seize his camera.<sup>60</sup>

**19 February** – At Jarinje border crossing, almost at the same place where other journalists were attacked, Televizija Republike Srpske journalist

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56 *Riots in Serbian Cities*, B92, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=19&nav\\_id=285477&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=19&nav_id=285477&nav_category=640) .

57 *Border in Flames*, UNMIK on the Run, *Glas javnosti*, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

<http://www.glas-javnosti.rs/clanak/glas-javnosti-20-02-2008/granica-u-plamenu-unmik-u-bezaniji?page=1> .

58 *Samaradžić: Legitimate Actions*, B92, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=19&nav\\_id=285424&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=19&nav_id=285424&nav_category=640) .

59 *Journalists Attacked in Jarinje*, 24 sata, 19 February 2008, see the web page:

<http://www.24sata.info/10237> .

60 *Ibid.*

and cameraman Vladimir Milaković was physically assaulted. Apart from Milaković, a Radio Kim journalist was also attacked.<sup>61</sup>

**19 February** - In the riots taking place at the Jarinje border crossing, German TV ARD journalist Zoran Orlandić was attacked by demonstrators who pushed him to the ground and kicked him on his head and his body.<sup>62</sup>

**19 February** – In the same incident, *Glas Juga* journalist Ivan Vučković was also assaulted.<sup>63</sup>

**19 February** – At the Jarinje border crossing, TV Most journalist Miloš Savić was also attacked.<sup>64</sup>

**21 February** – Radio Televizija Srbije cameraman Vladan Bugarski and his colleague Darko Vučević, a security guard at this media company, were attacked and injured near the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in Belgrade.<sup>65</sup>

**21 February** – Demonstrators attacked and beat up two Russian journalists near the US embassy – Russia Today TV producer Andrey Fyodorov and head of his team Andrey Pavlov. According to Fyodorov's statement, demonstrators hit him savagely on the head, while the cameraman was severely beaten.<sup>66</sup> Russian satellite news channel Vesti 24 reported that the attack on the journalists ceased when they declared themselves to be Russians.<sup>67</sup>

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61 *Journalists Get a Bashing*, Alo!, 20 February 2008, p. 2.

62 See above, footnote 33 (Samardžić).

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Excerpt from RTS editor's written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

66 *Yesterday's Riots: Day After*, B92, 22 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=22&nav\\_id=285931&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=22&nav_id=285931&nav_category=640) .

67 Tanjug news agency, 21 February 2008, see the web page:

[www.tanjug.co.yu/Dogadjaji/Protest/default.aspx](http://www.tanjug.co.yu/Dogadjaji/Protest/default.aspx) .

- 21 February** – RTS cameraman Milan Ljubinković was attacked while filming demonstrations near the Belgrade University Law School. Various objects were thrown at him. Protesters swore at the rest of the RTS crew.<sup>68</sup>
- 21 February** – Protesters verbally abused and pelted an RTS journalists' crew with stones as they reported on demonstrations near Belgrade's Slavija square.<sup>69</sup>
- 21 February** – Demonstrators attacked an RTS crew reporting on the riots taking place at the corner of Kneza Miloša and Birčaninova streets in Belgrade, while they were preparing a live report on the programme. Journalist Vesna Dragičević was pushed away and knocked down to the pavement. Cameraman Vojislav Đurović sustained several heavy blows to his head, ribs and legs as he was scrambling to protect his tripod and camera. Sound assistant Darko Glišić was also knocked down to the pavement as well as light technician Mile Ilić, who was kicked on his head and body. Their camera and tripod were destroyed in the process.<sup>70</sup>
- 21 February** – Dutch *NRC Handelsblad* daily photographer Dirk-Jan Visser was attacked by demonstrators near the US embassy and sustained a severe injury to the chest. Describing the incident, he said: "I was in front of the US embassy, taking pictures of the unfolding events. At one point the crowd turned to three of my colleagues and myself. They managed to escape, I think, as I started running away and apologising to the people who were chasing me. A young protester continued to follow and shout at me. Others noticed and joined in. All of a sudden, they encircled me and all hell broke loose. They were hitting and kicking me all the time. Finally, some older people came up and got me out it, and there was an ambulance

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68 Excerpt from RTS editor's written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

69 Excerpt from RTS editor's written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

70 Excerpt from RTS editor's written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

nearby”.<sup>71</sup> The Dutch reporter was received at the Emergency Centre Surgery Department with three broken ribs and head injuries <sup>72</sup>

- 21 February** – Belgrade daily *Alo* photographer/reporter Miloš Perić was beaten up by police while he was trying to take pictures of the riots in Belgrade streets. While taking a picture of an injured policeman in Nemanjina Street, another police officer came up to him and said, “What on earth are you taking pictures of?”. Then the policeman hit him with the helmet on the head and went on beating him with a baton.<sup>73</sup>
- 21 February** – Near the Belgrade Emergency Clinical Centre, police attacked Belgrade daily *Alo* journalist Nemanja Kostić while he was trying to take photographs of a police cordon. Kostić showed his press ID to policemen but they ignored it and first tried to seize his photography equipment and then hit him with batons until he managed to get away.<sup>74</sup>
- 21 February** – During the demonstrations in Belgrade, one of the protesters approached Leskovac weekly *Naša reč* photographer/reporter Jovica Smiljković, snatched his camera and then smashed it. This was the only camera that this media company owned.<sup>75</sup>
- 25 February** – At Mutivode border crossing near Medveđa, demonstrators who were protesting against the secession of Kosovo from Serbia verbally and physically assaulted Milica Ivanović, correspondent of BETA news agency and of *Blic* daily. One of the demonstrators hit the journalist with a log and called her a traitor. Ivanović gave a statement describing the in-

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71 *Yesterday's Riots: Day After*, B92, 22 February 2008, see the web page:

[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=22&nav\\_id=285931&nav\\_category=640](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=22&nav_id=285931&nav_category=640).

72 *Destroying Belgrade*, Večernje novosti, 22 February 2008, see the web page:

<http://www.novosti.rs/code/navigate.php?Id=14&status=jedna&vest=116586&datum=2008-02-21>.

73 UNS report on attacks and threats to journalists from the beginning of the year until August 2008 is available on at the following address: <http://www.unonline.org/index.php/IZVE%C5%A0TAJ-UNS-a-O-NAPADIMA-I-PRETNjAMA-NOVINARIMA-OD-PO%C4%8CETKA-GODINE-DO-1.-AVGUSTA-2008.html>.

74 Ibid.

75 *Naše reči Weekly Reporter Had His Camera Smashed*, Blic, 25 February 2008, p. 2, author: M.Ž.I.

cident: “A younger protester hit me with a wooden log while I was on the cell phone dispatching my report to BETA news agency, and I was holding a large notebook with *Blic* written on it in capital letters. Other colleagues heard my screams, but no one rushed to my aid. The whole incident, the blow to my leg and my argument with my assailant, was witnessed by several police officers. I turned to one for help and protection, but that policeman said he saw nothing, laughing in my face. Then I asked the police chief for help, but he said I should move away and stand next to the police officers, and then no one would dare touch me. Previously I asked the attacker why he hit me, to which he said: ‘Because you’re a traitor’. While arguing with him, several other demonstrators surrounded me threateningly, so I was forced to seek police protection which I didn’t get”.<sup>76</sup> The next day, BETA, *Blic* and NUNS sent a protest letter to the Ministry of Interior, since the journalist had not received adequate police protection.<sup>77</sup>

**25 February** – RTV B92 cameraman and picture editor Milan Sokolović was given an assignment to film protests by football fans and army reservists in Niš, Medveđa, Leskovac and at Mutivode police checkpoint immediately after Kosovo’s declaration of independence. While undertaking his journalistic duty, Sokolović was attacked twice. In his statement about these events, he said: “In Niš, in the central square and in front of the Merkator shopping mall, I asked my colleague from RTS, who was not at work that day, to come with me because I perceived that this would be a high-risk event. A group of football fans came from the back, swearing and calling me a mercenary, traitor and an ‘Ustasha’, and tried to get me. My colleague and I managed somehow to get away and hide in a nearby building. I was recognised as a B92 journalist in Niš, but in Mutivode they didn’t know who worked for B92 – this was the only television they bore a grudge against. MY colleague from FONET news agency told drunken reservists I was a FONET journalist so that I could continue filming them as they were shouting, ‘We’ll kick the shit out of this B92 cameraman bloke.’” As a

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<sup>76</sup> Excerpt from Milica Ivanović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

result, Sokolović had to remove all RTV B92 signs from his van, camera, microphone and other pieces of equipment.<sup>78</sup>

**28 February** – In the aftermath of Kosovo’s declaration of independence, the number of death threats sent to B92’s CEO and editor-in-chief Veran Matić, reached a new height. The threats sent by e-mail from fictitious addresses included saying, “I’ll slaughter you, Ustasha”, “You’re still alive?”, and “You’ll get a bullet to your head... if you continue undermining the Serbian state. You’ll end up like stinking Đinđić – not only you but also many others who stand in the way of the Serb people”.<sup>79</sup> In a protest letter from the Committee to Protect Journalists, CPJ, addressed to the Serbian state leaders in connection to the attacks on B92, the following threats to Matić were also quoted: “I’ve found out where you live so I’ll kill you soon”, and “Burn in hell if you you’re not at your television station when it is burnt down”. According to information in the possession of the CPJ, threats continued flooding in in February and March. Matić told the CPJ that it was hard for him to walk along the city streets as he would immediately come across verbal threats and abuses once he ventured outside.<sup>80</sup>

## [ March ]

**1 March** – In the night between 28 February and 1 March, a hand grenade was thrown at the entrance door of Belgrade’s TDI Radio in Maksim Gorki street No 56. The radio station’s director, Ružica Krdžić, is also chair of the Belgrade Radio Station Association. In her statement to OSCE, Krdžić said: “I received direct threats on the mobile phone two days before the attack from a person using a hidden number who said, ‘If you want a war, you’ll have it! You know very well who we are and who stands behind us!’ I knew the threat message was coming from the people from a radio station operating for years as a pirate broadcaster, and which, for years, had

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<sup>78</sup>Excerpt from Milan Sokolović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>79</sup>B92: *Criminal Charges for Threats*, B92, 25 February 2008, see the web page: [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=25&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=286344](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=25&nav_category=11&nav_id=286344)

<sup>80</sup>Documents B92, 5 March 2008, [www.b92.net/info/dokumenti/index.php?nav\\_id=287835](http://www.b92.net/info/dokumenti/index.php?nav_id=287835)

interfered with our signal, which was why I had submitted 20 complaints to RRA and RATEL regulatory agencies. We also have a Serbian Supreme Court ruling against them, and all these threats culminated in a grenade being thrown at our door, which was meant to serve as a warning against our efforts to have them prosecuted". The police conducted an investigation at the scene of the incident, but there has been no official information yet as to whether the persons responsible for the attack have been identified and brought to justice.<sup>81</sup>

**31 March** – After a football game in Čačak between local FC Borac and FC Partizan of Belgrade, Voja Radojević, an official of the Belgrade football club, attacked *Kurir* daily journalist Konstantin Radulović in an attempt to settle scores with him.<sup>82</sup>

## [ April ]

**12 April** – Two Radio Televizija Panonija journalists from Novi Sad, Milan Antonijević and Biljana Gavrić, were assaulted in Novi Sad's Freedom square while trying to film a clash between FC Partizan and FC Vojvodina fans. Hooligans beat up Antonijević, seized and destroyed his camera. A little later, his damaged camera was returned to him but without the taped material.<sup>83</sup>

**23 April** – A *Blic* daily photographer and reporter, Jovan Jarić, was attacked in front of the Kolašinka restaurant in the Novi Sad suburb of Veternik. In Jarić's words, Kolašinka owners attacked him while he was trying to take a photo of the building on account of a previously published story that revealed that the facility's owners had been convicted of human trafficking. His assailants seized his camera and smashed the lenses.<sup>84</sup>

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81 Interview with TDI Radio director Ružica Krdžić, 3 March 2008. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

82 *Kurir Journalist under Attack*, *Kurir*, 31 March 2008, <http://www.kurir-info.rs/clanak/kurir-31-03-2008/napadnut-novinar-kurira>.

83 *Football Fan Knife Fight*, Two Journalists Beaten, *Politika*, 13 April 2008, p. A1, author: S. Živković.

84 *Condemnation of Attack on Blic Photographer/Reporter*, 24 April 2008, <http://www.vesti.rs/izvor/Osuda-napada-na-fotoreportera-Blica.html>.

**27 April** – In the Belgrade municipality of Voždovac, an incident between Aleksandar Tijanić, Radio Televizija Srbije’s general director, and Robert Tomaš, a member of Liberal Democratic Party election campaign team, took place. Tomaš said that it was by pure chance that he happened to be there, together with his wife, when he noticed Tijanić coming out of a florist. “I frowned and he noticed I had a grimace on my face, which was not particularly pleasant towards him. My wife told me to get into the car, and I said, ‘Fuck him’. He heard what I said and retorted, ‘Fuck your Čeda and Beba’. I replied in kind. He charged aggressively towards me, attacked and threatened me”. The RTS general manager claimed the opposite: “I was off to a family lunch and passed by a car in which a young man was leaning backwards,” explained Tijanić. “He called out to me, saying I’d pay for everything, and that we destroyed the state over Kosovo. I replied I was 30 years his senior, but he was getting into his car, which I perceived as a possibility that he might have some weapon inside. I rushed up to him and tried to keep him inside the car by blocking the door. He kicked me and I replied in kind.” According to the flower shop assistant, where Tijanić had just been, the incident occurred when Tomaš first swore at Tijanić: “I didn’t see if there was some fight, but I heard a man, sitting in a car, swearing at the RTS director, and then he responded.”<sup>85</sup>

**28 April** – During an interview conducted by *Dnevnik* daily journalist Snežana Nikolić with Social Democrat League of Vojvodina, LSV, chairman, Nenad Čanak, the latter interrupted it by grabbing the dictaphone from the table, turning off the recording and taking out the tape, which he subsequently smashed in his hand. Then he tossed the smashed tape onto the floor, started waving with his walking stick and threw the journalist out of his house. In relation to the incident, Nikolić stated: “The question which I posed to LSV chairman was, ‘Mr Čanak, you’re saying, and you’ve made yourself clear, that these parliamentary elections are a referendum on Europe or isolation, which is why you rallied round the ‘For European Serbia – Boris Tadić’ election list. But it is unclear, and there’s ambiguity about it in public, whether you’ve also accepted the Democratic Party’s policy towards Kosovo by entering that coalition? I ask you this because Oliver Dulić, in an interview for our daily, said the moment you joined

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<sup>85</sup> *Fight in Front of Flower Shop*, *Večernje novosti*, 27 April 2008,

(<http://www.novosti.rs/code/navigate.php?id=9&status=jedna&vest=120368&datum=2008-04-28>)

the coalition, you also embraced the DS's policy towards Kosovo, but this was subsequently denied by LSV deputy Aleksandra Jerkov. After a brief exchange as part of which I also asked him questions about the same subject – the Kosovo issue, which I thought to be very important, and that the public was interested in it in the election campaign ahead of the polls on 11 May, the LSV chairman unfairly alleged I was trying to drive a wedge into the 'For European Serbia – Boris Tadić' election list, and that 'these were methods that Vojislav Koštunica was using'. When he took the tape out of the dictaphone, I asked him to put it back and resume the interview. However, he wasn't willing to do that." A day later, at a press conference, Čanak said: "I apologise. I was in a bad mood a bit and, of course, I'm sorry that this actually happened. Yet, I don't think I was so wrong. For someone to be a journalist, it isn't enough to have a press ID. One must have professional ethics. When ethics fail, unpleasant situations are bound to occur. As we reached a point where the interview became pointless, I didn't want a scandal where there was no scandal at all."<sup>86</sup>

## [ May ]

**4 May** – In Mt Golija, unidentified persons damaged the transmission equipment of Regionalna televizija and Radio 100+ from Novi Pazar by cutting the cables, thus interrupting the broadcasting signal of these media outlets. In a statement given to OSCE representatives, Regionalna televizija's editor, Medin Halilović, said that there had been dozens of attacks on journalists and property of Regionalna televizija since 2004, adding that no perpetrators had been identified. Attacks, he added, usually take place during election campaigns.<sup>87</sup> Radio 100+ editor Ishak Slezović told OSCE representatives that this radio was collateral damage in the attack which, in his view, had targeted Regionalna televizija, and was a consequence of the election campaign.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Čanak Kicked out Dnevnik Journalist, Blic, 29 April 2008, (<http://www.vesti.rs/izvor/Canak-isterao-novinarku-Dnevnika.html>)

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Medin Halilović on 6 May 2008. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Ishak Slezović on 6 May 2008. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

**4 May** – The owner and editor-in-chief of the independent RTV TNT from Bela Crkva, Stefan Cvetković, was attacked by about 20 persons at the Gulašijada event (Goulash Fair) in the village of Dupljaja near Bela Crkva. Cvetković tried to film this group of people as they were taunting and swearing at the Social Democrat League of Vojvodina's leader, Nenad Čanak, who was also present, but then some members of the group, after noticing that Cvetković was filming them, charged towards him, hit the camera with a bottle and hit Cvetković himself several times. Police soon came to the scene of the incident. Cvetković claimed the attackers told the police they were Serbian Radical Party supporters.<sup>89</sup>

**6 May** – At about 2.15pm, the office of *Večernje novosti's* correspondent in Niš was attacked and a window smashed by a large stone wrapped in a yellow plastic bag. A note reading “Death to Fascism, Fuck Communism”, signed “Black Hand”, and addressed to the editor-in-chief, was found in the plastic bag, which also contained a flyer with a picture of a woman wearing a “šajkača” (traditional Serb national hat) and a caption “Šajkača – Serbian brand”. A company employee dealing with classified ads was sitting next to the window that was smashed, but was not injured in the attack.<sup>90</sup> The very next day, police arrested Milorad Lazarević from Niš under suspicion of having carried out this attack. A local magistrate fined Lazarević 20,000 dinars for the offence.<sup>91</sup>

**08 May** – Unidentified persons cut a power cable in the vicinity of RTV Sokobanja's transmitter, thus disrupting the broadcast while local mayor Miša Dinić was on the programme in a leased time slot. The station's acting editor-in-chief, Gordana Stamenković, told Tanjug news agency: “In the late Nineties, our uplinks were seized and removed, cables were cut and our offices sealed, but we were convinced those times had long gone. The incident was reported to the police and an investigation is underway.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>TNT TV Editor-in-Chief Attacked at Gulašijada, Danas, 5 May 2008.

<sup>90</sup>Black Hand Threat, Večernje novosti, 7 May 2008, see the web page:

<http://www.novosti.rs/code/navigate.php?Id=9&status=jedna&vest=120697&datum=2005-11-24> .

<sup>91</sup>Stone Thrown at Correspondent Office, Press, 8 May 2008, p. 16, author: D.K.

<sup>92</sup>OSCE report on the incident, 9 May 2008, is filed in the OSCE documentation.

**17 May** – A Subotica *Gazeta* correspondent happened to be at the scene of a traffic accident near Vetrušić on the old Subotica – Novi Sad road in which two persons lost their lives. While trying to take pictures of the scene of the accident, a policeman came up to him and started insulting and swearing at him. The policeman then seized his camera as well as personal and press IDs. This journalist said the following: “He came back later and told me to show him how to erase the photos. In the meantime, the investigating judge also came up to me, attacking me verbally and calling me a ‘mummy’ for taking pictures of corpses. The policeman who had seized my camera started erasing the pictures, including those that hadn’t been taken at the scene of the accident.” He went on to say that, at some point, news started circulating in the crowd that gathered there that a senior government official was responsible for the accident, and that “the police and investigative organs were very nervous because some journalist spoilt their plans”.<sup>93</sup>

**19 May** – About 50 supporters of a political organisation, Radnički otpor, (Labour Resistance) from Kragujevac, tried to force their way into the offices of Radio Televizija Kragujevac but were prevented from doing so by the police. They insisted that the station should take a statement from their leader in relation to alleged election fraud at some polling stations on the territory of the city. Several organisations and journalists; associations condemned this incident.<sup>94</sup> In its press release, NUNS reiterated that “the editorial policy of a media company is solely under the competence of editorial staff, and that any attempt to influence the editorial policy from the outside amounts to pressure on the media and violation of media freedoms guaranteed by the constitution and law.”<sup>95</sup>

**30 May** – A *Kurir* daily journalist, V S, went to Novi Sad to investigate a story about the alleged illegal transport of transformers for Elektromreža Srbije, Serbia’s electric energy transmission and transmission system con-

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93 *VIP Traffic Accident!*, *Gazeta*, 18 May 2008, p. 11.

94 *Attempt to Storm TV Kragujevac*, B92, 20 May 2008, [https://xs4.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=05&dd=20&nav\\_id=299509&nav\\_category=418](https://xs4.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=05&dd=20&nav_id=299509&nav_category=418).

95 NUNS press release dated 20 May 2008, <http://www.nuns.org.yu/aktivnosti/view.jsp?articleId=9224>.

trol company. On behalf of Elektromreža Srbije, a Croatian company, Zagrebtrans, had subcontracted the Novi Sad-based firm Eurošped for the purpose. According to the statement of V S. Eurošped's general manager approached him and said that he was not pleased with articles published by *Kurir* about this case, then pushed him away and made a gesture as if he was about to hit him, but stopped at that.<sup>96</sup>

## [ June ]

**15 June** – An unknown person physically assaulted and injured Televizija Vojvodina cameraman Bojan Dakić on Ribarsko ostrvo [a Danube River island] in Novi Sad while he was filming footage for a weather forecast package. Dakić told the children who were standing next to him, that they could freely bathe in the river and would be on TV weather forecast. An unidentified man then came up to him and said: “I was killing Shqiptars [a derogatory term in Serbia for ethnic Albanians] in Kosovo, and I haven't come to Novi Sad to have my children provoked by strangers”. He hit Dakić several times on his face and body so that the cameraman had to seek medical assistance. After the attack, Dakić had to wear a cervical collar round his neck, and he also had swellings in the areas of his jaw and ribs.<sup>97</sup>

**17 June** – The bodyguard of the well-known musician Goran Bregović physically attacked a *Kurir* daily woman journalist in the Belgrade Clinical Centre when she tried to enter a hospital apartment where the said musician was recovering from an injury. One of Bregović's bodyguards seized the journalist's camera, threatening to “throw her out of the window if she continued to sneak around and take pictures in the hospital”. The journalist describes the incident as follows: “At around 1pm., without any problems, we entered the building where Bregović's hospital apartment was. When we tried to open the door of the hospital room, which no one had been guarding up to that point, an armed man in black T-shirt and black trousers appeared behind our backs. He grabbed me by the hand, dragged me out into the corridor, and started questioning me as to who I was and

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<sup>96</sup> *Kurir Journalist Assaulted*, *Kurir*, 31 May 2008, p. 3, author: E.K.

<sup>97</sup> *RTV Cameraman Beaten Up*, *Dnevnik*, 16 June 2008, p. 8.

what I was doing in front of that door. When he heard I wanted to see Bregović, he literally snatched my camera, erased all the photos, and yelled as if he'd just exposed dangerous terrorists, 'You're crazy! I can throw now both you and your camera out of the window. Don't you know it's forbidden to take photos and sneak around the hospital?! What are you trying to do? You wanted to take pictures of Bregović, didn't you? Get lost and I don't want to see you here anymore! If you come back, I won't be gentle like this.'"<sup>98</sup>

**18 June** – An incident between believers and clergy occurred at the Holy Trinity Church in Duškovci near Kragujevac in which a Dečja televizija journalist, who was filming the event, was physically attacked. Miodrag Gavrić, founder of Dečja televizija who witnessed the incident, said: "In the middle of the church, the priest Dmtitar attacked the cameraman of Dečja televizija from Kragujevac, who was clearly marked as a journalist, pulled him and then pushed him against the wall"<sup>99</sup>

## [ July ]

**13 July** – A murder took place in the grounds of the city swimming pool in Zaječar. Several TV crews came to the scene of crime. Friends of the murdered youth attacked the police and journalists, trying to prevent the former from conducting a crime scene investigation and the latter from filming the scene of the crime. Police reinforcements managed to protect the journalists and help them leave the swimming pool area safely. However, the attackers later waited for the journalists in front of the media offices from which reporters of the national television broadcasters B92, Pink and Avala operated, stopped them and demanded the tapes with recorded material. The attackers threatened the journalists with death if they published what had happened.<sup>100</sup> The police reacted quickly, identifying the attackers and bringing criminal charges within ten or so days against

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<sup>98</sup> *Brega Is Closely Guarded Like Tito*, Press, 18 June 2008, p. 25, author: Sanja Vajagić.

<sup>99</sup> *Scuffle at church*, Kurir, 19 June 2008, p. 7, author: B. Kuljanin.

<sup>100</sup> *Journalists under Attack in Zaječar*, B92, 14 July 2008.

Igor Prvulović, Miljan Manić and Ivan Lazarević for violent behaviour and interference with public officials in the performance of their duties.<sup>101</sup>

- 16 July** – Novi Pazar Regionalna televizija journalist Medin Halilović was physically assaulted by a man in Stevan Nemanja street, suffering concussion. Halilović said the following about the incident: “While I was going home from work, he came up to me and asked what was it that had made him known to the police. He told me he’d kill me, and then hit me twice with his fist on the head. It was only later that passers-by told me the attacker’s name, so I remembered that I had reported several times on incidents in which he had been involved”. Shortly after the incident, the police arrested Aladin D who was identified as the attacker.<sup>102</sup>
- 19 July** – Former policeman Marko Petrović first threatened, and then beat up Stefan Cvetković, RTV TNT’s editor-in-chief from Bela Crkva. The incident took place in a restaurant in Bela Crkva where Cvetković was dining with his girlfriend when Pavlović approached him and struck him with a fist on the head. The reason for the attack was footage that RTV TNT and subsequently B92 had broadcast, in which Pavlović, the then police officer, could be seen using narcotics. After this footage was broadcast, Pavlović was suspended as a police officer. The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia, (NUNS) and the Independent Journalist Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) condemned the attack on Cvetković and stated that journalists were under serious threat locally: “We are concerned and wondering what will happen next if law enforcement agencies fail to prosecute the perpetrators in a timely fashion. Journalists in local communities are under threat to a larger extent than journalists in Belgrade or Novi Sad. Far removed from the eyes of the public, local strongmen feel sufficiently protected to dare try control the editorial policies of local broadcasters, and anyone who opposes this becomes a target for attack.”<sup>103</sup>

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101 *Criminal Charges for Attack on Journalists*, Dnevnik, 24 July 2008, p. 9.

102 *Arrest for Attack on Journalist*, B92, 17 July 2008,  
<http://www.vesti.rs/izvor/Hapsenje-zbog-napada-na-novinara.html> .

103 *Editor Got Fist on the Head over Footage*, Blic, 20 July 2008, p. 10.

**23 July** – In Freedom square in Novi Sad, where a rally of support for Radovan Karadžić was taking place, an unknown person attacked a TV Apollo cameraman and hit him on the head. For security reasons, the assaulted journalist wished to remain anonymous, so Dragana Aleksić, a journalist who had witnessed the incident, gave the following statement: “At around 8pm, my colleague and I went to Freedom square where about 50 young people had gathered. My intention was to approach them and ask if there was an organiser of the event so that I could take a statement. When we came up to them, most of them, I’d say, were high on drugs or drunk, and they all said they were organisers, that I had nothing to do there and to go away, which I did because I saw the situation was tense and that something might happen. However, my colleague continued to film. They told him to stop, and lower the camera, but instead he moved closer, to the midst of it all, near the Svetozar Miletić monument, where a Serbian flag had been hoisted. Two young men were taking pictures of each other. One wore a cap with a cockade. They told the cameraman to stop filming, saying he was from a traitorous television station. The cameraman lowered his camera and tried to calm the situation. One of them came up to me, while three or four charged towards us, shouting that we shouldn’t film anything. Then someone from the crowd approached my colleague from the back and slapped him heavily on the ear. It was horrible, really.”<sup>104</sup>

**23 July** – FONET cameraman Zoran Jovanović was hit with a beer bottle on the head in Dečanska street in Belgrade during demonstrations held in protest against the arrest of Karadžić. A witness to this incident, a Dutch peace activist, Sjers Benker, said Jovanović was hit from the back by a young man with a mask on his face.<sup>105</sup>

**24 July** – During the demonstrations against the arrest of Karadžić, a B92 journalist, Boško Branković, was attacked by hooligans who inflicted a serious leg injury. Branković was filming a column of demonstrators passing by the Turkish embassy and at one point he noticed a young man who was yelling. Branković turned the camera towards him, but he attacked the journalist and knocked him to the ground with a leg kick. All the while the

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104 *Hooligans Beating Journalists Again*, Dnevnik, 24 July 2008, p. 29, author: I. Mihaljević.

105 *Journalists under Attack and SPS Flag Burnt*, Danas, 24 July 2008, p. 1, author: I. Živanović.

crowd chanted: “Hit, hit the journalist”. Then, other demonstrators joined in to kick the cameraman while he was lying on the ground. The police subsequently identified and detained four attackers of Boško Branković. Court proceedings are underway.<sup>106</sup>

**24 July** – During an action against violent demonstrators, the police also attacked a group of journalists standing nearby with their press IDs in their hands. One of the journalists who was beaten up that night was Miloš Đorelijevski, a BETA news agency journalist. In Terazije, in Belgrade city centre, Đorelijevski came across a several-dozen-strong police cordon. He presented his press ID and said that he was heading towards the Emergency Clinical Centre. The policemen then started screaming at him: “You cunt, you’re attacking us from the back”. One of the policemen came up to him, kicked him and tried to slam the baton into his groin. The journalist asked them why they were doing this when he had not done anything, but the policemen continued to beat him.<sup>107</sup>

**24 July** – Unknown assailants beat up Spanish journalists Oscar Martinez Forcado and Luis Perez while they were reporting on the Serbian Radical Party rally against the arrest of Karadžić. Perez gave the following statement about the incident: “We were reporting on the Serbian Radical Party rally against the arrest of Radovan Karadžić. While Mr Nikolić was speaking, clashes between police and a group of demonstrators broke out. We went there to film the clashes, but when we were about 20 metres from the stage, all of a sudden two persons attacked us. One of the attackers hit my colleague, the cameraman, from the back, and three seconds later another assailant kicked the camera. The camera was instantly destroyed, and my colleague was sent to the Emergency Clinical Centre. He received a heavy blow to his back. He felt pain, but we don’t know if something’s broken.”<sup>108</sup>

**24 July** – During the demonstrations in Belgrade, a FONET journalist, who prefers to remain anonymous, was attacked. While he was taking pictures,

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106 *Hit, Hit a Journalist*, B92, 25 July 2008.

107 Interview with Miloš Đorelijevski dated 24 July 2008. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

108 *Chronology of riots in Belgrade*, B92, 30 July 2008, ([http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=07&dd=30&nav\\_id=310854](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=07&dd=30&nav_id=310854))

an unknown person attacked him, hit him several times on his back, and smashed his camera.<sup>109</sup>

**28 July** – During the demonstrations in protest against the arrest of Karadžić, hooligans attacked American photographer/reporter Russell Gordon while he was taking pictures of the rally. At one point an unknown person approached him from the back and physically assaulted him, trying to snatch his camera. The attacker threatened him, saying he should leave immediately because he was “provoking people”.<sup>110</sup>

**29 July** – Following the clashes between hooligans and the police during the demonstrations organised in Belgrade by the Serbian Radical Party, when a *Gazeta* daily journalist approached the party’s secretary general, Aleksandar Vučić to ask him questions, Radical Party supporters attacked her. Vučić started shouting at the journalist, while the Radicals nearby insulted her. One of them came up to her and struck her.<sup>111</sup>

## [ August ]

**8 August** – A security guard from the Gradsko zelenilo public utility in Novi Sad tried to prevent a *Dnevnik* daily journalist from taking photos of emergency service doctors resuscitating a woman on the Štrand city beach. The journalist was first prevented from coming near to where it was all happening, and then the attacker came after her, trying to seize her camera. He told her that she would not be allowed to leave the beach with the camera and pictures that she had taken. He then called the police who came and asked her to show her ID. She did not want to get further embroiled in the argument. However, she managed to take the card with photos out of the grounds of Štrand city beach. The following day already, a Novi Sad Gradsko zelenilo spokesman apologised publicly to *Dnevnik* but said that the public utility could not be held responsible for each and every individual case of inappropriate behaviour on the part of their employees.<sup>112</sup>

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109 Ibid.

110 *Pro-Serb Yankee under Attack*, Kurir, 29 July 2008, p. 4, author: A. Obradović.

111 *Gazeta Journalist under Attack*, Gazeta, 30 July 2008, p. 3.

112 *You Won't Leave the Beach with Those Pictures*, Dnevnik, 9 August 2008, p. 35, author: I. Brcan.

**12 August** – Ljubomir V stormed into the *Kraljevačke novosti* weekly newsroom and threatened all the present journalists with his pistol. He hit one of the journalists with the pistol butt and inflicted a light physical injury – skin cuts on the hand. The company’s management brought criminal charges against Ljubomir V for having threatened public safety, inflicting light physical injuries and for illegal possession of a weapon. They also brought civil lawsuit for insults, abuse and harassment.<sup>113</sup> Kraljevo municipal magistrate sentenced the said Ljubomir V to 25 days in prison for having insulted and abused *Kraljevačke novosti* journalists.<sup>114</sup>

**30 August** – Representatives of the 1389 movement and Obraz organisation, demonstrating against the arrest of Karadžić, stormed into the offices of BETA news agency to protest against the agency’s failure, in their view, to report on their rallies. Demonstrators were carrying a placard which read “Yellow journalism – BETA news agency” and a flashlight that was symbolically supposed to bring “light to the media blackout in Serbia”.<sup>115</sup> Also, BETA agency journalists said that on one occasion, during one of several raids on their offices, unknown persons took pictures and filmed journalists from the agency who were present in the newsroom.<sup>116</sup>

## [ October ]

**17 October** – A bomb was discovered around 8.45am in *Kurir*’s daily newsroom in Vljakovićeve street in Belgrade. The bomb was found by a cleaning lady in one of the jardinières on the second floor, where top management offices were located. Police came to the scene and removed the bomb. The persons who planted the explosive device have not yet been identified.<sup>117</sup>

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113 *Pistol Threat to Journalists*, Dnevnik, 13 August 2008, p. 8.

114 *Twenty-Five Days in Prison for Insulting Journalist*, 24 časa, 13 August 2008, p. 5.

115 *Karadžić Supporters Stormed into BETA Agency*, Press, 31 August 2008, p. 9.

116 Excerpt from BETA journalist’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

117 *Bomb Found on Kurir Premises*, B92, 17 October 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=17&nav\\_id=324016](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=17&nav_id=324016).

**22 October** – *Geopolitika's* editor-in-chief, Slobodan Erić, established during a regular servicing of his Ford Escort car that an unknown person had loosened a central screw in his left front wheel, which might have caused the wheel to fall off while driving. This could have resulted in a traffic accident and serious injuries. Erić claimed that his car mechanic, while checking the car, found marks left by a wrench on that wheel only. No similar marks were detected on other wheels. He went on to say that the perpetrator put the wheel cover back to hide the marks. Erić's guess was that a possible motive for the threat to his safety, as he had no personal enemies, was the editorial concept of *Geopolitika*. This, he said, was based on articulation and defence of Serbian national and state interests.<sup>118</sup>

[ **November** ]

**2 November** – Sulejman A from the village of Veliki Trnovac attacked Nedžad Behljuji, owner of Spektra TV from Bujanovac, in a parking lot in front of the entrance to the television and inflicted serious bodily injuries, including concussion. Behljuji turned for medical assistance to Bujanovac Health Care Centre and then to a similar medical institution in Vranje. In a statement given to OSCE representatives, Behljuji said that he had lately been a frequent target of attacks and threats. He went on to say that he had lost confidence in the police and now planned to take care of his own security. "I'm in a big trouble, and I'm forced to defend myself, my family and TV Spektra journalists who are carrying out their difficult assignments professionally", Behljuji said.<sup>119</sup> NUNS condemned the attack on Behljuji and called on the police and other competent organs to protect both him and his family as well as to provide normal conditions for his life and work.<sup>120</sup>

**22 November** – According to statements by Slavko Savić and Čedomir Savić, RTV Kuršumljija editor and director, respectively, Kuršumljija deputy mayor Dejan Milošević and deputy chairman of Kuršumljija municipal as-

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118 *Geopolitika Editor's Car Sabotaged*, Politika, 23 October 2008, p. A9, author: M.S.P.

119 OSCE report.

120 *NUNS Condemns Attacks on Bujanovac TV Spektra Owner*, NUNS press release, <http://www.nuns.org.yu/aktivnosti/view.jsp?articleId=9941>.

sembly Branislav Jovanović, accompanied by another five unknown persons, stormed into this media company and threatened staff with death if they again mentioned the names of these municipal officials. On the day before they stormed into the TV station's offices, news about alleged financial abuse involving funds earmarked by the state for army reservists on account of their participation in the armed conflict in Kosovo in 1999 had been broadcast by RTV Kuršumljia. Dejan Milošević claimed that the conflict between the municipality and the local television stemmed from the refusal of the local authorities to pay the sum of 360,000 dinars to RTV Kuršumljia. He added that he went to the local television offices, together with a group of reservists, because he was displeased with untruths published about them but insisted no threats were made. The next day, Kuršumljia police department launched an investigation into this incident.<sup>121</sup>

**26 November** – In Novi Sad city centre, in Ilija Ognjanović street, at about 3am, unidentified persons set fire to the Porsche owned by Novi Sad television Panonija owner Zoran Andrić. While Novi Sad police confirmed that the incident took place, Andrić was reluctant to comment, however.<sup>122</sup>

## [ December ]

**7 December** – Unknown persons broke into the premises of the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina, NDNV. In its press release, NDNV stated that nothing was stolen from its offices, although the burglars got past the first door, because another safe door presented an obstacle that they could not overcome. It was the third attempt this year to break into the premises of this journalists' association. According to the NDNV management, none of those responsible for any of the three attempted robberies had been identified or apprehended.<sup>123</sup>

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121 See video clip with statements of participants in the incident on the following web page:  
<http://www.mefeedia.com/entry/upad-u-rtv-kur-umljia/12369946/> .

122TV Panonija Owner's Car Burnt, B92, 27 November 2008, see the web page:  
[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=27&nav\\_id=330971](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=27&nav_id=330971) .

123 *NDNV Premises Broken Into*, NDNV, 8 December 2008, see the web page:  
<http://www.ndnv.org/vest.php?id=5526> .

## B. THREATS, VERBAL ASSAULTS, PRESSURES AND VARIOUS OTHER ACTIONS PREVENTING JOURNALISTS FROM CARRYING OUT THEIR DUTIES

### [ January ]

- 08 January** – Director of RTV Spektra Jeton Ismaili and editor-in-chief Baki Rexhepi claim that the mayor of Bujanovac, Nagip Arifi, threatened them after Ismaili published a text on the web pages of [www.presheva.com](http://www.presheva.com) in which he criticised the local authorities for stopping the privatisation of RTV Bujanovac. According to them, Arifi called them by phone and threatened to destroy their television station and their lives. Arifi described the allegations as untrue.<sup>124</sup>
- 17 January** – Zvonimir Perušić, director of the *Hrvatska riječ* newspaper publishing house, resigned from his position, saying he could no longer resist political pressures. He said that the Croatian National Council, the founder of this media organisation, had illegally appointed a new board of directors, acting under the political pressure of a political party. Perušić added that the whole case could be seen as an attempt by politicians to curb and control journalist circles. The Croatian National Council and Democratic Alliance of Croats dismissed the allegations.<sup>125</sup>
- 23 January** – Senada Leković, journalist from Novi Pazar's radio Universa, was assaulted at around 1pm while passing the Vrbak hotel, where the Pazar Movement for Changes was holding a protest. Leković gave the following statement: "I went to cover the protest of workers and NGO activists in the town centre. Passing by the hotel, I was seen by people from municipal protocol, namely, when a ceremonial session of the town assembly was be-

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124 See OSCE report from the investigation dated 15 January 2008. Filed in the OSCE documentation.

125 [http://www.subotica.info/press.php?tag\\_id=1368&press\\_id=536](http://www.subotica.info/press.php?tag_id=1368&press_id=536) .

ing held in the hotel. These people from protocol started shouting insults and threatening me. I am a modest woman, dedicated to my religion, job and child. I cannot repeat in public the kind of ugly words they used, and there were threats as well. I passed by, remaining silent, and later reported the case to the police. Everyone who knows me know I did not deserve such unpleasantness.”<sup>126</sup> The Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Serbia, headed by mufti Muamer Zukorlić, announced that Leković had been assaulted by senior officials of the Ticket for Sandžak coalition and officials of the Novi Pazar municipality. The Information Service of the Novi Pazar municipality denied involvement in the assault on the journalist.<sup>127</sup>

## [ February ]

- 10 February** – A photographer of the local weekly *Subotičke* was denied his professional right to report from the Veliko Prelo gathering, organised by the Croatian Cultural Centre from Subotica. Jovanov tried to enter Subotica Sports Hall, where the Veliko Prelo was held on February 2, using a legitimate journalist’s identification, but was told that only accredited journalists could enter, although his paper did not receive the accreditation questionnaire. When attempting to use another entrance and clear things up with organisers, Jovanov was thrown out by security, who explained that they had such orders.<sup>128</sup>
- 17 February** – According to a statement from a journalist from Radio BETA RFI, Jovana Đurović, during the protests against Kosovo’s independence declaration in Belgrade, a group of football fans threatened her with the words: “You will be beaten because you are a traitor.”<sup>129</sup>
- 19 February** – A photographer from the *Alo* daily, who prefers to remain anonymous, gave a statement to OSCE representatives saying he was

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126 *Attack on Journalist*, Alo, 25. January 2008, page 3, author E.H.

127 *Threats to Journalist Senada Leković*, Politika, 25 January 2008, page A10.

128 *Croatian Cultural Centre Denies Shooting in Statement to Subotičke*, Pravda, 11 February 2008, page 8

129 Excerpt from the written statement of Jovana Đurović. The report in filed the OSCE documentation.

threatened at the administrative border between Kosovo and Serbia proper, at the Jarinje border crossing, while doing his job, photographing a protest by locals that turned into an action against the border facilities. The journalist said: “The situation was specific because protestors were aware that the attacks on border facilities were not legal but they were intent on carrying them out. In similar situations protestors do not want their actions to be documented and show up the next day in papers, because it can be a basis for legal action against them. When I started shooting, several people came up to me and said, ‘Don’t fool around taking our pictures, hairy guy, ‘cause we will bust your chops.’ Since I learned from my previous experience how serious these threats are, I did not take any pictures.”<sup>130</sup>

**21 February** – A group of protestors gathered around 8pm in the vicinity of the RTV B92 building in New Belgrade. Some time later, a dozen of them charged the building with rocks in their hands, but the police stopped them. The director of RTV B92, Veran Matić, said that several days before, the media group received a lot of threats, which included open talk of setting fire to the building that B92 leases from Serbian state. Igor Božić, editor of B92 info television station, told OSCE representatives about the incident: “It is a very selective attack because the hooligans were surrounding the building that was broadcasting a television programme. It is obvious that the target of the attack was the building with journalists in it. It is also obvious that the attack was politically controlled and that someone organised hooligan groups whose task was to show that B92 was a traitorous television station.”<sup>131</sup> Božić added that the attackers were football fans and that later that day it turned out that the then minister of capital investments, Velimir Ilić, had announced those attacks at a government session.<sup>132</sup> In the end, he added that the consequences of the attack could be felt in the tense atmosphere in staff offices.<sup>133</sup>

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130 Written statement by journalist of ‘Alo’ daily. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

131 Written statement by Igor Božić. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

- 26 February** – At this time, the mayor of Zaječar and several associates were on trial, charged with skimming the municipal budget. Judge Zoran Jovanović removed the journalists of *Nova timočka revija* from the courtroom although the journalists repeatedly showed their identification papers. The same happened to colleagues from other media. One of the basic principles in contemporary legal systems is public access to trials.<sup>134</sup>
- 27 February** – Danica Vučenić, journalist of RTV B92 and host of radio show “Kažiprst”, (Index Finger), was subjected to threats while sitting with a friend in the Ruski Car restaurant in downtown Belgrade. Vučenić gave the following statement to the OSCE: “As soon as we sat down in the restaurant, I noticed a man of specific features – crew cut, strong, in a T-shirt although it was cold, and he was staring at me. We sat at the table several metres from his table. He was sitting alone. He was on the phone and stared at me the whole time. He was staring so obviously that even my friend, who is not from the media, noticed it. After more than 20 minutes, he stood up and went right towards us. He came to the table, stopped for half a second, and turned at an angle of 90 degrees and then went on towards the exit. He made several steps, turned and looked at me without saying anything. He resumed going towards exit. At the back of his shirt there was a sign and inscription of the Special Operations Unit. This event was a classical example of intimidation.”<sup>135</sup>
- 28 February** – A journalist from Novi Sad’s Most television accused a senior local official from the League of Social Democrats, Zoran Petakov, of threatening her, by saying that if a new revolution ever occurred, her television would be sixth on a list of buildings to be set on fire, and that he was carrying a gun that he was ready to use. Afterwards, the Information Service of the League of Social Democrats apologized to the television station, saying Petakov would suffer consequences for this incident.<sup>136</sup>

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134 Interview with Miloš Zdravković, publisher of *Nova timočka revija* dated 28 February, 2008. Filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

135 Written statement by Danica Vučenić. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

136 [http://www.rtv.co.yu/sr/vesti/vojvodina/vojvodina/2008\\_02\\_27/vest\\_52894.jsp](http://www.rtv.co.yu/sr/vesti/vojvodina/vojvodina/2008_02_27/vest_52894.jsp).

## [ March ]

**01 March** – Several members of the Sabor Srpskih Dveri (Assembly of Serbian Gateways) organization tried to prevent the promotion of the radio show Peščanik (Hourglass) in Pančevo. After the speech from Srđa Popović, a dozen young men started protesting loudly and tried to stop the speech by force but were prevented from doing so by police, the audience and guest speakers. Svetlana Lukić, a journalist and the host of Peščanik said: “We learned from one of the policemen that a group of young men was stopped at the Pančevo bridge. The police did not let them enter Pančevo. However, several young men entered the building anyway and, after ten minutes, tried to interrupt the promotion by loudly protesting against what they heard at Peščanik’s promotion.” Radiša Stanišić, director of Dom omladine in Pančevo, where the promotion was held, said that during the promotion they had received an anonymous tip that there was a bomb in the room.<sup>137</sup>

**02 March** – At the annual assembly of the Serbian Radical Party’s local branch in Sremska Mitrovica, a senior official for Srem, Vitomir Plužarević, threatened the local media. Plužarević said he spotted the enemies of the party, which were the media, more specifically Sremska televizija, *M novine* and *Rumske novine*. He added that he held it against them that they “do not air Radical ideas in their programme and haven’t written a single positive article about the Radicals”. Plužarević suggested to his colleagues that “when they come to power, they would speak differently with the said media houses”, and he promised he would “fight those systems that are against the Serbian Radicals and eliminate them with quality technology and methods”. The editor-in-chief of *M novine*, Svetlana Cucanić, said of the incident that Plužarević was a public figure and a deputy, which is why his words had special significance: “The irresponsible use of strong language can have unforeseen consequences. No one knows where those words would strike, in what way and how strongly”. Vladimir Ćosić, editor-in-chief of *Rumske novine*, called the vocabulary of Plužarević Goebbels-like and added: “What would happen if someone felt the need to use those words as an incentive and alibi for real violence. Some younger colleagues

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<sup>137</sup>Pančevo Residents Defended Peščanik, B92, 2 March 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=03&dd=02&nav\\_id=287261](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=03&dd=02&nav_id=287261) .

are really afraid that the Radicals could start shutting down media, that they can be left without jobs, or worse”.<sup>138</sup>

**07 March** – At 7.10pm., the staff of the daily *Gazeta* received an anonymous tip that a bomb had been planted in the building housing its offices. Soon afterwards, special police force arrived at the scene and after conducting a detailed search of all rooms, concluded it was a false alarm. The secretary of *Gazeta* said that the call was muted and a male voice had said in a threatening tone: “A ticking bomb has been planted in the building” and immediately hung up. Antonije Kovačević, editor-in-chief of *Gazeta*, said that the call was just the latest in a series of pressures on the media. “Someone is using the chaos in the country to create the atmosphere of fear. I expect the state to find the perpetrators and protect the freedom of public speech and information and thus enable journalists to do their jobs without fear for their lives.”<sup>139</sup>

**15 March** – Momčilo Đorđević, journalist on the *Nedeljni telegraf*, a weekly, from Belgrade, received a letter threatening him with execution over articles he published. The letter described *Nedeljni telegraf* as an anti-Serbian paper and said its goal was to sell the country to the Americans, NATO and the EU. In a statement given to the OSCE, Đorđević emphasised that he was very frightened and that his work had been made difficult by all this. He added that while the threats were reported to the police, the attackers had not been identified.<sup>140</sup>

**23 March** – The staff of *Nedeljni telegraf* received a letter containing threats to the owner, Momčilo Torgović, and journalist Danijela Milinković. The letter said: “You are in for big trouble! Watch out for the bullet you will get in the head! Be prepared to go to the great beyond. You will be blown up. Watch out when getting into your car because you could be blown into a thousand pieces.” According to Torgović, the letter was signed “The Red

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138 *Accusations and Threats to Media*, Vreme, 24 April 2008, p. 4, author Jovan Milević.

139 *With a Bomb on Truth*, *Gazeta*, 8 March 2007, p. 9.

140 Written statement by Momčilo Đorđević. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

Berets”. *Nedeljni telegraf* informed the police about these threats.<sup>141</sup> The threats to *Nedeljni telegraf* were condemned by the Brussels-based International Association of Journalists.<sup>142</sup>

**24 March** – According to the daily *Kurir*, after several articles were published about the then minister of economy and regional development, Mlađan Dinkić, their journalist, Vuk Stanković, received a call from Nikola Papak, spokesman for the G17 Plus party, headed by Dinkić, who threatened to sue him for several thousand euros.<sup>143</sup>

**30 March** – Persons unknown called weekly *Pirotske novine* from Pirot and announced that four bombs would explode in the near future. According to employees, an unidentified male introduced himself as commander of the Bulgarian Liberation Army for the Pirot region and said that the bombs would explode at 11am sharp. Strong police forces immediately arrived on the scene and established it was a false alarm and that no explosive devices were in the buildings.<sup>144</sup>

## [ April ]

**11 April** –In Novi Sad, Dinko Gruhonjić, president of the Independent Association of Vojvodina Journalists and head of BETA news agency’s office in Novi Sad, was arrested. That day, Gruhonjić had gone to a gathering of the Otpor movement to take a statement and write an article. While interviewing the organisers of the event, they were approached by the police and asked for identification papers and a license for the gathering. Gruhonjić stepped aside for a few metres because as a journalist he wanted to obtain a complete picture of their conversation. After the police asked for his identification, which he declined to submit, saying there was

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141 Threats to Owner and Journalist of *Nedeljni telegraf*, Blic, 24 March 2008, <http://www.blic.co.yu/hronika.php?id=35253>

142 Ibid.

143 *Dinkić’s Errand Boy Threatens Kurir*, 25 March 2008, p. 6, <http://www.kurir-info.rs/clanak/kurir-25-03-2008/dinkicev-potrcko-preti> .

144 *False Tips in Pirot and Subotica*, B92, 31 March 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=03&dd=31&nav\\_id=291687](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=03&dd=31&nav_id=291687) .

no reason to do so, as he was only doing his job before the police interrupted it, and was not an organiser of the gathering, Gruhonjić was taken to the police station. In 2007, Gruhonjić and his family received serious threats on the neo-Nazi web site Stormfront.<sup>145</sup>

## [ May ]

- 05 May – A senior official of the Serbian Radical Party and then mayor of Zemun, Gordana Pop Lazić, said the party would fight against all media that support pro-European forces. In the television programme “Uvećanje” (Blow Up) aired on B92 info television, Pop Lazić said: “We must primarily work on enlightening younger generations and on grooming them in a patriotic and national spirit. Unfortunately, we must fight the media that support these European Union forces because that is not good, and also non-government organisations who are doing the same”<sup>146</sup> Dragan Janjić, assistant minister of culture in charge of media, commented on the statement: “There is a difference between the rights of politicians and citizens to protest against badly presented facts, but no politician has the right to announce he will crush those media that espouse an editorial policy he or she does not like.”<sup>147</sup>
- 09 May – Several journalists and correspondents from the daily *Kurir* received SMS warning them “to watch out after May 11” and saying that “journalists of *Kurir* should be shot because they are conducting an anti-Serb policy”, as well as insulting messages such as “You people from *Kurir* are anti-Serb mafia shits.”<sup>148</sup>

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145 Interview with Nedim Sejdinović and Dinko Gruhonjić on this incident dated 11 April 2008. The report is filed in the documentation of the Initiative.

146 *Serbian Radical Party: Enlightening the Youth*, B92, 06 May 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=05&dd=06&nav\\_id=297171](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=05&dd=06&nav_id=297171) .

147 Janjić: *Politicians Must Be Held Accountable for What They Say*, *Blic*, 06 May 2008, <http://www.blic.co.yu/politika.php?id=40618> .

148 *Threats to Kurir Correspondents*, May 10 2008, <http://www.kurir-info.rs/clanak/kurir-10-05-2008/prete-i-dopisnicima-kurira> .

**09 May** – *Kurir* announced that one of their journalists, Oliver Nikolić, was arrested while doing his work in the Commercial Bank in Svetogorska street in Belgrade. BETA news agency reported that when Nikolić was assigned with checking certain documentation related to Commercial Bank's business dealings, security called the police who arrested him on the spot.<sup>149</sup>

**15 May** – Miodrag Bakić, secretary of the local branch of the Socialist Party of Serbia and mayor of Apatin, verbally assaulted Sofija Paulić Škero, veteran journalist of Radio Apatin and the local paper *Glas komune*. Bakić accused the journalist of biased reports on the election campaign, because the candidate of the group of citizens Movement for Apatin was allegedly given more time in the news programme than all other contestants combined. He accused the journalist of tolerating the street talk of his political opponent because she herself was on the ticket of the group of citizens. About the incident Sofija Paulić Škero said: "It is a blatant lie that I am on the ticket of the Movement for Apatin and that I was collecting signatures for it. On behalf of the local leadership of his party, Bakić launched a harangue against me, which has happened in the past as well. The fear he is trying to spread, the lies he is saying, and the attacks on integrity of my person and the journalistic profession are all things concerning which I will address the International Federation of Journalists."<sup>150</sup>

**15 May** – The owner and editor of Valjevo weekly *Pečat*, Željka Milićević, in an editorial comment published in the latest issue of her paper, threatened the editor of the Valjevo monthly and BETA news agency correspondent Branko Vićentijević by promising him a "free obituary in 8,000 copies", while commenting on his health condition. A number of the media from Valjevo issued a press release condemning the behaviour of editor of *Pečat*.<sup>151</sup> In September, the municipal court in Valjevo fined Željka Milićević 600,000 dinars, after she had failed to respond within the legal

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149 *Journalist of Kurir Arrested*, Glas javnosti, 10 May 2008, <http://www.naslovi.net/2008-05-10/glas-javnosti/uhapsen-novinar-kurira/667646> .

150 *Media Hunt Full of Lies*, Danas, 16 May 2008, ([http://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/terazije/hajka\\_uz\\_gomilu\\_lazi.14.html?news\\_id=91339](http://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/terazije/hajka_uz_gomilu_lazi.14.html?news_id=91339))

151 *Free Obituary to Colleague Announced*, Blic, 16 May 2008 <http://www.blic.co.yu/srbija.php?id=40993> .

deadline to the suit filed by Vićentijević for compensation for emotional pain.<sup>152</sup>

- 17 May** – According to a statement of a journalist on the paper *Bečejski mozaik*, the director of the Agricultural Industrial Complex, Bečej Dragan Satarić, as well as union representatives and workers of PIK Bečej, verbally assaulted the journalist of this media house while she was reporting on the leasing of state-owned land. The journalist, who wants to remain anonymous, claims she was told: “We know who you work for”, “It will end up badly if you keep reporting on this”, and such like. The journalist added that this was not the first verbal assault of this kind and similar things had happened on several occasions in the spring and summer of 2008.<sup>153</sup>
- 20 May** – Several journalists and photographers who had gathered in the Sonja Marinković primary school in order to cover disciplinary procedures against eight pupils who had abused another pupil and filmed it all and posted it on YouTube, were thrown out on the street. After they had introduced themselves as journalists to the director and waited in front of the room where the disciplinary procedure was held, the mother of one of the pupils started insulting them, which resulted in journalists being thrown out of the building. The pupils were also insulting the journalists throughout, some of them proposing “to gather, wait for them, beat up the journalists and set them on fire”.<sup>154</sup>
- 21 May**– According to daily *Kurir*, Srđan Đoković, father of the famous tennis player Novak Đoković, stormed into the booth of RTS where reporter Nebojša Višković was commenting on the semi-final match between Đoković and Spanish player Rafael Nadal. According to *Kurir*, feeling dissatisfied with Višković’s commentary on the match, Srđan Đoković told him: “What kind of comments are that? Why are you only praising Nadal? Novak is a Serb, aren’t we all patriots?”. *Kurir* also reported that Višković

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152 *Editor of Pečat Punished*, Blic, 04 October 2008, p. 2, author P.V.

153 Written statement by journalist of *Bečejski mozaik*. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

154 *We’ll Beat up Journalist and Set Him on Fire*, Gradanski list, 19 May 2008, <http://www.gradjanski.rs/navigacija.php?vest=22535&naslovna=1> .

was called after the match by Goran Đoković, Novak's uncle, and told "to watch out because anything could happen to him".<sup>155</sup>

**23 May** – A text entitled "Savo the Monkey vs Aleksandar Vučić" was published in one of the issues of the Belgrade daily *Pravda*, reporting on one of the rallies in front of the Belgrade City Assembly and saying negative things about Savo Milosevic, footballer and former player of the Serbian national selection. Afterwards, according to a journalist from *Pravda*, Milošević called the paper and threatened them thus: "I will bring my people and I will settle my scores with you and destroy your paper."<sup>156</sup>

**25 May** – At 11.40am, persons unknown called Kikinda's VK radio and said a bomb had been planted in the radio's offices. The tip happened while the television station was broadcasting a documentary containing speeches of Serbia's late prime minister, Zoran Đinđić. Employees were immediately evacuated from the building, while police searched the premises and established that the call was false. Borjana Bosančić, audio and video organiser of VK, said: "A middle-aged male voice asked if this was VK. When I said it was, he said that a bomb had been planted and hung up. At that moment I was alone in the office, so I immediately called Zoran Milešević and then warned the colleagues from the television and called the police. In the meantime, two colleagues came to the office, but the police told us to leave the building."<sup>157</sup>

**26 May** – A cameraman of VK television, Zoran Tornjanski, was banned from entering the local assembly in Kikinda when he wanted to report on the scheduled signing of the coalition agreement between the Serbian Radical party, the Democratic Party of Serbia and the Socialist Party of Serbia. Tornjanski was soon joined by another journalist of this media house, Dejan Stepanov. When they asked "Why can't VK television report from this event?", the guard standing at the entrance told them "he was only doing his job". The letter that this media house sent to local and international

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155 *Srdan Scolds Viško*, Kurir, 22 May 2008, <http://www.kurir-info.rs/clanak/kurir-22-05-2008/srdan-izribao-viska> .

156 *Savo Milošević Called Monkey Threatens Journalists*, Pravda, 24 May 2008.

157 *False Bomb Alarm at Local Television*, Blic, 26 May 2008, <http://www.blic.co.yu/vojvodina.php?id=43107> .

institutions for the protection of human rights and the journalistic profession said: “This is the second such case within 48 hours, because our reporter was not allowed to enter the building on Sunday as well, when we wanted to learn the data about a voter turn-out from the president of the municipal election committee. Our media was not even invited to today’s event, although other media houses and reporters were.”<sup>158</sup>

## [ Jun ]

- 03 June** – An unknown person called the daily *Glas javnosti* in Vlajkovićeve street in Belgrade at around 10.30am and said a bomb had been planted in the building and that the message should be relayed to any people concerned. All employees immediately left the offices. The special police searched afterwards with dogs but found nothing.<sup>159</sup>
- 04 June** – The commission of the municipal council in Svilajnac issued an order to stop the broadcast of TV Resava and then changed the locks on the offices that this television was sharing with the oldest local paper in Serbia, *Resavski poštonoša*.<sup>160</sup>
- 10 June** – Threats to a journalist from the daily *Dnevnik* from Novi Sad, Željko Balaban, appeared on the site of the neo-Nazi organisation, Stormfront. As a journalist, Balaban has been dealing with the human rights of the lesbian, gay and transgender community for a long time. One of the forum members on this site said: “Journalists are now calling fascists everyone who is against sexual deviants and it’s treated as a normal thing here. This doesn’t make any sense and I wonder whether the gentleman in question is gay himself. Well, Mr Balaban, if you are gay, then you know where to go; if you are not, call me to talk because I am very interested to learn how you can write like that. Someone must be paying you because every normal person runs like hell from faggots. To everyone who wants to break

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158 *Kikinda Coalition Only for Selected Media*, Blic, 28 May 2008, <http://www.blic.co.yu/vojvodina.php?id=43392> .

159 *False Alarm in Glas offices*, B92, 04 June 2008, <http://www.vesti.rs/izvor/Lazna-dojava-u-redakciji-Glasa.html> .

160 Journalists’ Association of Serbia report.

up any faggot gathering I recommend old eggs and tomato as methods of persuasion.”<sup>161</sup>

**13 June** – Nebojša Ivanov, director of the weekly *Bratstvo*, according to the editorship of this media house, introduced censorship after ordering the acting editor-in-chief, Momir Todorov, not to allow the publication of an article entitled “Financial gathering of National Council”, by the editor, Kiril Georgiev. In 2007, the National Council of Bulgarians took over from the government the founding rights to *Bratstvo*, which had existed for 49 years. The NUNS issued a statement saying that “they would aid journalists and editors of *Bratstvo* every way they could in the fight against the autocracy of their director who, as a lawyer, should know that censorship in Serbia is banned by law and that the editorial policy of the paper does not come under his jurisdiction.”<sup>162</sup>

**15 June** – Novi Sad police received a phone call that a bomb had been planted in the offices of RTV Panonija, which would explode at 8.30pm. Police immediately informed the media house about it. After a special police unit arrived at the scene and searched the premises, it was established that the tip had been false.<sup>163</sup>

**15 June** – Around 11pm, Radio Television Serbia, which in Serbia has the status of a public service, received a telephone call from an unknown male who told them that “a bomb has been planted in your offices”. At the time, there were 36 employees in the building. A special police unit arrived on the scene and after a detailed search found that it was a false tip.<sup>164</sup>

**17 June** – Luka Mičeta, director of the news agency TANJUG, tendered his unconditional resignation, citing “great pressure on this agency by the state”, which had culminated when police had attempted to throw the employees from the offices of TANJUG press centre onto the street in Knez Mihajlo-

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161 *Speaking out from Rat Tunnels*, Dnevnik, 11 June 2008, p. 6, author: N. Jakovljević.

162 Independent Association of Serbian Journalists: Censorship Condemned in *Bratstvo*, BETA, 13 June 2008.

163 *Tip on Bomb in RTV Panonija*, Danas, 16 June 2008, p. 25.

164 *False Bomb Alarm at RTS*, Večernje novosti, 16 June 2008, p. 15.

va. Mičeta claims that TANJUG had had those offices for 30 years and that Nino Brajović, president of the Association of Serbian and Montenegrin Journalists, wanted to usurp them.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, Brajović said that TANJUG had not paid any rent to this association for years, though the offices had been leased to them for a symbolic price of 1.3 euros per square metre, at the same time as they were leasing their office in Obilićev venac for a commercial price. He said that according to the current situation, the Association of Serbian and Montenegrin Journalists was financing the work of TANJUG, which was inadmissible.<sup>166</sup> A Commercial Court in Belgrade fined TANJUG and general manager Luka Mičeta in July 550,000 dinars for preventing court executors from moving them out of their offices.<sup>167</sup>

**19 June** – While shooting a piece on a plot of land over which Petar Petrović had launched an ownership suit in Novi Pazar, two persons threatened journalist Ivana Milić and cameraman of TV Jedinstvo Edis Klimenta. Milić said about the incident: “We were filming the land owned by Petar Petrović which someone else had used to build a house there. When we arrived at the downtown with Petrović, we were approached by two men who told us they were going to slit our throats if we broadcast our footage. Petrović had received the land in 2000 but his property was usurped. The Supreme Court confirmed his ownership, but he could not protect his property. I wanted to investigate the case as a journalist, but received serious threats.” On the same afternoon, Novi Pazar police identified and apprehended two persons who threatened the journalist crew.<sup>168</sup>

## [ July ]

**04 July** – After public airing of the incident which occurred on 17 June in the church of the Holy Trinity in Dušanovci, when a priest attacked a journalist of Dečja televizija who was recording the incident, the Žiča Bishop

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165 *My Masochism Ends Here*, Pravda, 18 June 2008, p. 6, author: N.S.

166 *Moving out of MPC Tanjug prevented again*, B92, 17 June 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=06&dd=17&nav\\_id=304186](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=06&dd=17&nav_id=304186).

167 Statement by Association dated 17 July 2008, “Fines for TANJUG and Former General Manager”.

168 *Threats to Journalist Crew of TV Jedinstvo*, Blic, 20 June 2008, p. 2, author: E.H.

Brizostom sent a letter to all church authorities, church municipalities and monastery heads in which he banned Dečja televizija from shooting churches and monasteries on the territory of Žiča diocese. Miodrag Gavrić, founder of Dečja televizija, said about the letter: “The ban is explicit, sent out with a seal and personal signature from Bishop Brizostom. However, it is obvious from the letter that we alone were banned from shooting, although RTS, Avala and some other televisions aired the footage independently from us. This means it is a selective action and someone wants to close us down.”<sup>169</sup>

**18 July** – Owner of TV Aldi from Preševo, Isuf Memeti, said that people from RTV Preševo, led by editor Ardita Behlulji, turned off the transmitter of TV Aldi located in Reljanski rit cutting off their signal. Television Preševo, which is still not privatised, did not get a broadcast frequency, while TV Aldi is the only television station with a permit to broadcast programmes in the territory of Preševo municipality and has all the manpower and technical conditions to do so.<sup>170</sup>

**14 July** – Fourteen journalists of the defunct paper *Kurir* sport organised a performance entitled “Hanging the Journalists” in front of the premises of the daily *Kurir* in Vrljkovićeve Street in Belgrade, protesting against unpaid salaries. The journalists said the performance was their response to the owner of *Kurir* Rajo Rodić and his threat that the “only thing he can donate to them is money to buy a rope for hanging.”<sup>171</sup>

**16 July** – Boban Jovanović, assistant director for the programme of RTV Bor, received a death threat by phone when an unknown male voice told him: “Leave Bor by yourself lest you leave it horizontally.” Before that, Jovanović had publicly spoken up about the bad financial situation in this media house and said the recently appointed director, Jovan Mitrović, should be removed from his position because he had signed, according to Jovanović, a damaging contract for RTV Bor. He also discussed such subjects as suspicious privatisations and problems in state-owned companies.

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<sup>169</sup> *They Want to Shut Us Down*, Glas javnosti, 05 July 2008, p. 32, author: B. Kuljanin.

<sup>170</sup> *Licensed RTV Aldi's Transmitter Turned off*, Danas, 19 July 2008.

<sup>171</sup> *Protest*, Večernje novosti, 15 July 2008, p. 7.

About the incident itself Jovanović says: “This is not the first time I am threatened because of the job I do. We have tackled some topics which were forbidden and someone obviously did not like it. Despite that, I will do my job with even more quality and professionalism, but I expect the public to condemn such behaviour.” Journalist Boban Jovanović worked in Jagodina on the Klackalica (Seesaw) show with Milan Pantić, journalist who was murdered and whose killers still have not been found.<sup>172</sup>

**20 July** – On the programme on local television in Bor, Saša Mirković, manager and president of the Board of Directors of public company Štampa, Radio i Film, accused mayor Branislav Rankić of doing his job poorly. Mirković claims that after the show he received threatening SMS from the mayor’s official number, saying: “You cretin, you have lost your mind, you will beg me to forgive you the things you were saying about me”, “You cretin, do you have a comment, or you will suck me off on Monday”, and “You communist shit, go back to Belgrade”. In a statement given after the incident Mirković said: “I fear for my life. These are very serious threats and I took them very seriously. I want to thank the police and inspectors who immediately accepted my criminal suit. During the show, I was called by Marković’s wife, who also threatened me the whole time. Her husband threatened to beat me up as soon as he saw me in town. I cannot understand that in a democratic system in Serbia one cannot express his political views. Because of all this, I am not capable of working either in RTV Bor or in the municipal management. I appeal to all the good-willed people in every party to condemn this and protect the media.”<sup>173</sup>

**23 July** – The daily newspaper *Pravda* received threats in an email from a traceable address. The message said: “Fuck off, you Radicals. Something must be done about you people. I am not hiding, here’s the number of my cell phone, 063 214 69h, call me so that I and my friends can kick your ass. We have prepared all the cold weapons and firearms. Your paper is not worthy of a septic tank.” The paper reported the case to the cabinet of Serbian President Boris Tadić.<sup>174</sup>

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172 OSCE report.

173 *Intrigues and Sex Affairs*, Glas javnosti, 21 July 2008, p. 23, author B. Filipović.

174 *Dangerous Threats from Hague Lobby*, Pravda, 24 July 2008, p. 2, author: E.P.

**24 July** – Tomislav Nikolić, the then vice-president of Serbian Radical Party, today president of the newly founded political party Serbian Progressive Party, threatened Radio Television Serbia twice in two days. At his party's press conference he criticised the work of RTS and called on them to "open up towards Serbian citizens, because at least half of the public service belongs to those citizens who do not celebrate the arrest of Karadžić". Then he added that otherwise the Radicals would do everything to stop RTS. Asked by one of the journalists what that meant, Nikolic said: "It won't be difficult, you all saw what happened to the Bastille."<sup>175</sup>

**26 July** – In a brief text the daily *Blic* claimed that on orders of senior officials of the local assembly in Aleksandrovac, the assembly's security prevented *Blic's* correspondent and journalists from the local television from attending the second session of the local assembly.<sup>176</sup>

## [ August ]

**18 August** – Policemen from Kruševac prevented journalist Dragan Ilić, correspondent of daily *Press*, from photographing a traffic accident which claimed the life of one motorcyclist, and then took him to the police station with an explanation that he was obstructing the investigation. Ilić claims he felt sick during the interrogation in the station, but that he was taken to hospital only several hours later because the policemen insisted that he take an alcohol test. About the incident Ilić says: "On Sunday around 8pm I received a tip that there was a serious traffic accident in Kruševac where one motorcyclist lost his life. I took my camera and immediately went to the scene. Thirty citizens and three traffic policemen were already there. I made one snapshot from a distance of around 30 metres, from the lawn of the nearby gas station. That is when Dejan Ivanović, one of the traffic policemen, spotted me. He immediately started yelling at me, saying I was obstructing the investigation and asked me to leave. I explained to him that I was on assignment and showed him my press card. He said: "I don't give a fuck who you are." I tried to explain that I was not obstructing anyone from 30 metres. They got into my face and one of them told me:

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175 RTS, *Radicals and Bastille*, B92, 25 July 2008.

176 *Disgrace in Aleksandrovac*, *Blic*, 27 July 2008, p. 4, author: B.N.

“You ask me to lose my job here, because when I kick you in the nuts, your eyes will pop out.” Until the patrol arrived, for the whole five minutes, Ivan Ivanović was threatening me that I would never forget him. The patrol arrived in several minutes with sirens and rotating lights as if they were arresting a dangerous criminal.”<sup>177</sup>

**18 August** – The management of the Bor media house Štampa, Radio i Film informed the public that Bor mayor Branislav Rankić had stormed their offices in a drunken state, insulting management and threatening some of them. It is said that Bor police was informed and the media house would file criminal charges against the mayor. Mayor Rankić also commented on the incident, denying everything, and saying that the only thing true about it was that he was in Radio Bor. He claims that he was completely sober, and drank a coffee there with journalists. He called the whole event a fabrication by the firm’s management aimed at compromising him as part of their campaign to remove him from his current position.<sup>178</sup>

**24 August** – The director of Radio Television Panon from Subotica, Ildiko Arpaši, received a threatening SMS on her official cell phone which said: “You Hungarian whore, we planted an explosive device which will go off at 2:23pm in the offices of your fucking radio, Military Post General Ratko Mladić, 1991, Knin.” Subotica police was immediately alerted about the threat, but found nothing at the scene.<sup>179</sup>

## [ September ]

**22 September** – Ljiljana Stupar, correspondent of BETA news agency from Zrenjanin, received threats from an unknown male who told her he had “some photographs of her daughter” which was why “she should not stick her nose where it did not belong”. She received similar threats the previous year, because of articles that she wrote in the local press about suspicious

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177 *Kruševac Policemen Harass Press Correspondent*, Press, 19 August 2008, p. 11, author: E.P.

178 *Attack on Journalists or Political Showdown*, Politika, 19 August 2008, p. A8, author: S. Todorović.

179 *Threats to RTV Panon Director Ildiko Arpaši*, Dnevnik, 25 August 2008, p. 8, author Z.R.

privatisations.<sup>180</sup> Three days later, the police found the person who threatened Stupar. Criminal charges were filed against Ljubiša K, aged 30, from Zrenjanin, for threatening personal safety.<sup>181</sup>

**25 September** – Milan Ivetić, a journalist on *Večernje novosti*, insulted and physically threatened Miomirka Mila Melank, journalist on *Kikindske* and *Dnevnik*. Everything happened in the Kikinda hotel Narvik where the Serbian Radical Party was holding a press conference. About the incident, Merlak said the following: “I took a photo of the promoted president of the local committee, Sonja Prekajski - Trumbetašev, next to whom Ivetić was sitting. He thought I was photographing him, and started cursing and insulting me. Although we haven’t communicated with one another for several years, especially after his last threats against me two years ago, Ivetić told me in a hysterical voice that he would “unscrew my head” if we by any chance published his picture in the paper. He added another nasty word or two, while I tried to explain that the person next to him was the object of my attention, and I left. The people around me, who had already started getting up, noticed that Ivetić was mad, so they started calming him down. Several minutes later, when I was packing my camera, Ivetić approached me threatening me once again. He cursed my parents, told me he taught me journalism and said that I was a bad student, that I was a pig and a mare and a series of other insults that I can’t remember right now. Journalists around me were stunned, and some of the Radicals were telling him to calm down.”<sup>182</sup>

## [ October ]

**01 October** – The president of the *Politika* journalists’ collective, Ljubodrag Stojadinović, was fired by the outgoing director of the publishing house, Srđan Janićijević. Stojadinović believes the sacking was revenge for his public appearances in which he had spoken of the poor state of this

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180 BETA Correspondent Receives Serious Threats, Blic, 23 September 2008, see <http://www.blic.co.yu/hronika.php?id=58044> .

181 Statement of BETA news agency, “Police Finds out Who Threatened BETA Correspondent” dated 25 September 2008. Filed in the OSCE documentation.

182 I’ll Unscrew Your Head, Dnevnik, 26 September 2008, p. 6, author: E.K.

media house. The NUNS issued a statement condemning the move and protesting against *Politika* management's retaliation against the paper's journalists. The statement added: "The Association thinks that this move was amoral and inadmissible, because it is revenge on the part of people forced to leave the helm of this company." The Association concluded that "Stojadinović did not damage his paper with his statements in which he was rightfully pointing out the problems and bad climate, which was primarily the responsibility of the outgoing management of *Politika*."<sup>183</sup>

**02 October** – Members of the 1389 movement and organisation *Obraz*, who were protesting daily against the arrest of the Hague suspect Radovan Karadžić, left a model of a swastika in front of the offices of BETA news agency. The official ideologies of these two organisations are that Jews, homosexuals and the Vatican "rule the world".<sup>184</sup>

**05 October** – A journalist from Požarevac, Igor Apostolović, received threats on Facebook because of an article he had written for the daily *Danas* entitled "Call the party for job", in which he dealt with jobs gained through party membership, focusing on local government in Požarevac where a SRS-SPS-DSS coalition holds power. About the incident, Apostolović said the following: "The said article raised a lot of dust, and culminated in threats arriving on Facebook from I K, a son of a member of the DSS, newly employed in the Centre for Culture. He recognised himself in my article, although I did not mention any names. Among the threats there were messages like: "Little man, when will you come to my place to burn your Madden 08? And my father would like to ask you some questions too", "The story was explicitly against my father, and if it's against him, it's against me too. We'll meet in the street", "Are you taking drugs, as they say?", "Do you know what I just told you? May God help you".<sup>185</sup>

**23 October** – Olja Bečković, journalist, editor and host of the show "Impression of the Week", broadcast on B92 television station, received a series of

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183 *Ljubodrag Stojadinović Sacked*, B92, 2 October 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=02&nav\\_id=321652](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=02&nav_id=321652).

184 *Swastikas*, *Danas*, 3 October 2008, p. 11.

185 *Facebook in the Police*, *Gazeta*, 6 October 2008, p. 9, author: Tanja Vasić

serious threats on Facebook amongst which were a death threat and the most vulgar insults. A statement from RTV B92 says that threats were the result of publishing some alleged correspondence in which someone falsely introduced as Olja Bečković insulted a 16-year-old girl who had formed a Facebook group against Serbian President Boris Tadić. B92 thinks that this Internet forgery was perpetrated in order to justify the subsequent witchhunt against Bečković.<sup>186</sup>

**24 October** – Hemofarm company banned two journalists of Television Panonija and Television TNT, Branislav Lazin and Stefan Cvetković, from reporting on the visit of Vojvodina's Prime Minister, Bojan Pajtić, to the company. When they arrived at the gate, the guard told them they could not go in. After he learnt of the incident, Pajtić said he would have walked off the scene in protest had he known about it, which was why he postponed his subsequent visit to Bela Crkva.<sup>187</sup>

## [ November ]

**04 November** – The owner of the local weekly *Vranjske*, Vukašin Obradović, received several anonymous death threats. In a statement to OSCE representatives, Obradović emphasised that he saw the threats and pressures he had been exposed to lately as a consequence of the work of *Vranjske* and his articles on criminal structures in Vranje.<sup>188</sup> One political party, after an article in which Obradović linked their political activity to the activities of the local underworld, filed a suit against Obradović in the local court, seeking several million dinars in compensation.<sup>189</sup> Soon after, Obradović started receiving advice from sources close to the underworld to watch out, as well as telephone calls in which unknown persons started threatening to “break his legs if he resumed writing about these topics”.<sup>190</sup> Obradović

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186 *Protest over Threats to Olja Bečković on Facebook*, Blic, 24 October 2008, <http://www.blic.co.yu/drustvo.php?id=62315> .

187 *Scandalous behaviour of Hemofarm*, Press, 25 October 2008, p. 8.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

saw the most serious threat as one sent via his underage daughter. Namely, in early November, persons unknown stopped Obradović's daughter when she was returning from school and told her: "Your father will be shot in 10 days."<sup>191</sup> After this, police in Vranje assigned protection to Obradović's family home and the offices of *Vranjske*.

**17 November** – According to statements of journalists on RTV Diskos from Aleksandrovac, the only one in the area with a broadcasting license from the government's Radio Broadcasting Agency, local municipal leaders attempted to tear down their transmitter. Three journalists of this media house, Goran Gašić, Vesna Dobrosavljević and Milorad Čoćić, claim that the incident represented pressure that followed from their unbiased reporting, and that Dobrila Vukojević, head of municipal management, Vojislav Pešterac, head of finance in the town assembly, and Milutin Radičević, director of the municipal utility company, had sent them letters in which they described employees of RTV Diskos as "hostile to municipal leaders, that they harboured pathological hate towards them and that they had ulterior motives". About the incident itself they said the municipal heads sent people and heavy machinery to Stanjevačka poljana, where their transmitter was, in order to tear it down, but then gave up, because cameras of RTV Diskos were recording the whole event.<sup>192</sup>

**26 November** – The NUNS publicly criticised TV Kuršumlija's editor, Slavko Savić, for his violent threats made against a BETA news agency and RTV B92 journalist, Ljiljana Danilović. According to the NUNS' press release, Savić threatened the journalist, saying he would use her like a baseball bat.<sup>193</sup>

**30 November** – In a written statement sent to OSCE, journalists of RTV Enigma from Prijepolje claim that they were threatened by telephone on

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191 Ibid.

192 *Municipal Officials Tried to Tear Down Transmitter*, Blic, 18 November 2008, see the web page: <http://www.mediacenter.org.yu/code/navigate.asp?id=6&eventId=44009>.

193 *NUNS Condemns Threats to B92 Journalist*, B92, 26 November 2008, see the web page: [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=26&nav\\_id=330744](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=11&dd=26&nav_id=330744).

at least five occasions this year for “reporting truthfully about the machinations of the Prijepolje mayor, Dragan Svičević”.<sup>194</sup>

## [ December ]

**9 December** – Dragan Marinković, journalist and presenter of the “Operation Triumph” reality show, broadcast on TV B92, publicly threatened *Puls* newspaper journalist Milica Crnogorac during one of this reality show episodes. Marinković said the following: “I’ll take advantage of this opportunity to say hello to Milica Crnogorac, a journalistic scribbler who thinks she’s entitled to spit insults at myself and my colleagues. Listen Milica, mind your own business or you’ll end up in the same place as that champion of Serbian journalism, Petar Luković”. After the incident, Crnogorac gave the following statement: “Only in Serbia could journalists be threatened both live and in a re-run of the episode the way Dragan Marinković did it in his show on TV B92 on both Saturday and Sunday. Marinković’s public and unambiguous open threats, which he read out from a paper that he had prepared in advance, testify to the seriousness of what has befallen me. Marinković sent a message to me in public, before an audience of several million viewers, that I would ‘fare the same as Petar Luković’. And what did happen to journalist Luković? Well, several years ago he was beaten up over an article.”<sup>195</sup>

**2 December** – *Press* daily carried news that the leader of the New Serbia political party and former minister for capital investments, Velimir Ilić, verbally abused this journalist when she tried to take his statement concerning an alleged traffic accident in which he had been involved. When asked if he would pay damages to the taxi driver, according to *Press*, Ilić started shouting, “What bloody damages are you talking about? My vehicle wasn’t damaged! I couldn’t care less about some moron! Yeah, we’ll swap our cars as compensation! I’ll give him a bloody jeep! Get off my back! I’ve had it up to here!”<sup>196</sup>

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194 Written statement by journalist of RTV Enigma. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

195 *Maca Threatens Puls Journalist*, 24 sata, 10 December 2008, p. 16, author: D. Farkaš.

196 *Velja Ilić Insulted Press journalist*, *Press*, 3 December 2008, p. 2, author: J. Velinović.

**8 December** – Aleksandrovač's mayor, Jugoslav Stajkovac, attacked a TV Diskos cameraman, Igor Mladenović, while he was trying to film a meeting of the municipal public utility labour union. Milanović gave the following statement about the incident: "Stajkovac came to the meeting of the municipal public utility labour union, and, in front of over one hundred workers, he barked out an order to me to switch off my camera and leave immediately. When I refused to do so, he pushed away the lenses with his right hand, and threatened to smash the camera if I continued filming. At that point Boško Pavlović, chairman of the public utility labour union, reacted and explained to Stajkovac that he had invited journalists. Stajkovac said in an angry voice that Pavlović should make up his mind, and then left the meeting".<sup>197</sup>

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197 Local Mayor Attacked Cameraman, Blic, 9 December 2008, <http://www.unsonline.org/sr-Latn-CS/content/vesti/2342/predsednik-op%C5%A1tine-napao-kamermana.xhtml>.

## C. COURT VERDICTS WHICH SENTENCED JOURNALISTS

### [ January ]

**24 January** – A Belgrade Second Municipal Court ruling sentenced Predrag Popović, editor-in-chief of *Pravda* and the newspaper's publisher, to pay a fine of 250,000 dinars and compensation for court expenses of 68,000 dinars for slandering Vladimir Popović. Under the threat of a new fine, the court banned the paper from violating the rights and personality of Popović in future. The suit was filed over a text entitled "Political twilight of Beba Popović and Čeda Jovanović – prison awaits them", published by *Pravda* on 20 June, 2007.<sup>198</sup>

### [ March ]

**08 March** – Kikinda municipal court sentenced Sonja Trumbetašev – Prekajski, editor-in-chief of *Kikindske novine* to a fine of 10,000 dinars. She was sued by Mila Melank from the Information Centre Kikinda, over a text entitled "Mila's Witchhunt", which, among other things, said that director Mila Melank, editor-in-chief Gordana Bulatović, and the paper's editor, Željko Bodrožić, were "conflicting personalities, in constant clash with their environment and law," and "in other times they would have be carrying chains, breaking rock and would certainly have ended up burning at the stake".<sup>199</sup>

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198 *Pravda to Pay Damages to Popović*, B92, 25 January 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=25&nav\\_id=282080](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=25&nav_id=282080) .

199 *Municipal Court Fines Editor of Former Municipal Newspaper*, Dnevnik, 08 March 2008, p. 38, author: E.K. <http://www.kikinda.cc/moduli.php?naziv=prilozi&file=clanak&sid=2796> .

## [ May ]

- 09 May** – Journalist of *Pečat* from Užice Uglješa Mrdić was sentenced by Užice district court to pay a fine of 30,000 dinars for slandering the dismissed head of OUP Priboj, Dragan Ješić. The Association of Serbian Journalists reports the statement by the staff of *Pečat* which says: “*Pečat* appeals to all state bodies and institutions, as well as to journalists’ associations in Serbia, to prevent dishonourable actions in the Serbian judiciary, and not to let journalists suffer only because they are doing their job professionally and come under attack from certain state officials who think their work must not subject to comment.”<sup>200</sup>
- 20 May** – Nevena Stojčević, former editor of the defunct daily *Internacional*, was ordered by Belgrade’s Fourth Municipal Court to pay a fine of 50,000 dinars for libel in articles that claimed that Veselin Šljivančanin and Dragoljub Milanović were arrested on the orders of Vladimir “Beba” Popović.<sup>201</sup>

## [ July ]

- 01 July** – Belgrade district court ordered journalist Dragan Stojković to pay 350,000 dinars in compensation to the vice-president of the Serbian Radical Party, Dragan Todorović, for causing the latter emotional pain plus 145,000 dinars in court expenses. Stojković inflicted emotional pain on Todorović in an article from September 2002, about the snatching of a television camera from the crew of TV Mreža in June 2000, for which Branislav Gavrilović, the then bodyguard of Dragan Todorović, was accused. Stojković had said in the text that Todorović “probably ordered the theft”.<sup>202</sup>

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200 *Journalist Mrdić Fined for Slander*, Glas javnosti, 07 June 2008, p. 10.

201 Popović Wins Case against Internacional, B92, 21 May 2008, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=05&dd=20&nav\\_id=299478](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=05&dd=20&nav_id=299478) .

202 *Todorović Awarded 350,000 for Mental Anguish*, Press, 2 July 2008, p. 4.

[ **October** ]

- 02 October** – Kragujevac district court ruled that the weekly *Svetlost*, in a text published in the letters column, damaged the honour, reputation and dignity of this court's judge, Simonida Miloradović.<sup>203</sup>
- 02 October** – Ilija Dimitrijević, editor-in-chief of the private weekly *Reč naroda*, from Požarevac, was sentenced by the municipal court in Požarevac to pay a fine of 20,000 dinars for criminal libel. If he did not pay within the legal deadline, the sentence would be changed to a prison sentence of 20 days. Besides, Dimitrijević would have to pay court expenses of 25,400 dinars. The process against Dimitrijević was held over the series of articles published in *Reč naroda* about Momčilo Veljković, coordinator of the Otpor movement and Mileta Veljković, a local journalist.<sup>204</sup>
- 29 October** – Sremska Mitrovica municipal court sentenced Hanibal Kovač, a journalist from Šabac, to pay the fine of 18,000 dinars for two insults, and the fine was replaced with a prison sentence of three months because there was no way to collect the money by force. At the time, Kovač was writing for the local papers about nepotism in Šabac's courts.<sup>205</sup>

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203 *Fined over Reader's Letter*, B92, 3 October 2008.

204 *Editor Fined for Slander*, Glas javnosti, 3 October 2008, p. 21, author: D. Novković.

205 *Sentenced in Proceedings He Was Not Aware of*, B92, 29 October 2008,  
[http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=29&nav\\_id=325886](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=10&dd=29&nav_id=325886).

## VI | Media rights and freedoms in Serbia

The OSCE conducted this part of the survey in conjunction with the Institute from Belgrade, based on a questionnaire distributed to 439 media outlets in Serbia. Out of this number, eligible replies were received from 306 media editors.

The principal objective of the survey, envisaged as the first phase of a systematic monitoring of violations of media freedoms and rights in Serbia in 2008, was to assess the true extent to which media freedoms and rights in Serbia in 2008 are threatened, i.e. to examine the spread, forms, intensity and factors exerting pressure on the media and inciting attacks on and threats to the media and journalists. The survey also entailed an assessment of perceptions of media editors and journalists who had been exposed to pressures, attacks or threats, as regards the reasons for the undermining of media freedoms and rights, the possible consequences of the said pressures and attacks, and measures for the better protection of media freedoms in future.

A particular objective of the survey was to assess, on the basis of insight into available data, the threats posed to media freedoms and rights in Serbia in two periods over the course of 2008 (until 17 February, i.e. the declaration of Kosovo independence, and afterwards, until the moment the survey was conducted), as well as in the whole year as a control time period. The aim was to see if the Kosovo crisis led to an escalation of threats to media freedoms and rights in Serbia, or if the scope of threats to media freedoms and rights was relatively constant.

In the survey, media freedom entails freedom of expression, freedom to gather, publish and disseminate information, freedom of information flow and

media openness to different opinions, freedom of editorial policy and media independence, right of access to information, right to monitor and criticise the government and public institutions, and other professional rights of journalists that do not undermine the rights and reputation of others, general security and public order. For the purpose of the survey, attacks on journalists and media entail any form of violation of media rights and freedoms involving the use of force, threats or various types of pressures motivated by the reporting of a particular media outlet or journalist, or the very fact that the person assaulted is a journalist.

## Survey method

The survey was conducted by polling two principal sets of respondents – editors-in-chief of media outlets in Serbia and media professionals who were exposed to physical assaults and threats in relation to their coverage of the Kosovo's declaration independence in February 2008.

Among the news media polled were news agencies, daily, weekly and other periodical newspapers and news magazines, and radio and TV stations based in Serbia with significant news production.

Media professionals who came under attack were journalists, photographers/reporters, cameramen and other members of journalistic crews in the field.

Two types of questionnaires were used in the survey. One was intended for media managers and served to gather general data about the media outlet in question, assessments of media freedoms and specific cases of violations of media freedoms and rights, while the other, shorter, questionnaire was intended for media professionals who had been targets of physical attacks or threats, and focused on the circumstances surrounding the attack in question.

## Sample

As there is no official register of media outlets in Serbia, the basic set of media outlets whose managers were to be polled was compiled on the basis of

available data on media outlets, their activities and contact information from several sources, above all, the media directories of professional associations, organisations and media themselves, more specifically: The Journalists' Association of Serbia, The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia, The Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina, ANEM, Lokal Press, Media Centre from Belgrade and Media Centre from Vranje, The Centre for Media Professionalisation, The Novi Sad Journalists' School, RTV B92, The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, the Republican Public Broadcasting Agency's list of radio and TV stations which were granted local, regional and national broadcast permits, as well as lists of media outlets on various web sites. By combining these data, a preliminary list of 652 newspapers, radio and TV stations, and RTV companies was compiled.

Internet media outlets were not registered as separate since media companies did not treat them as separate media. This was also due to the fact that there was not enough data on them and that their output was different from the standard news output of the media which were the focal point of the survey. Media outlets that were not relevant to this survey's objective were removed from the list: illustrated entertainment and specialised print media (children's, women's, computer publications, etc.), religious media, predominantly entertainment media outlets, and non-existent media, i.e. the media which had ceased to exist according to information obtained by researchers themselves (e.g., dailies *Nacional* and *Balkan*, the weeklies *Reporter* and *Evropa*, Radio Jat, Radio Kontakt, Radio Pingvin, Radio SKC, etc.).

The list compiled in such a manner was still not complete and credible for the purpose of the survey. Namely, in order to establish contact with the respondents, information pertaining to the names of media outlets, their headquarters, type, postal address, telephone number, email address and names of editors-in-chief were needed. The list at this stage lacked much of the necessary data and the existing information proved to be inaccurate or outdated in many cases. Also, it was not possible to distinguish between active and non-existing or still not operating radio and TV stations, i.e. it was not possible to see in the Public Broadcasting Agency's list of broadcasters with valid licenses which outlets were in the process of formation in order to become fully operational. At the same time, without specific checks, it was not possible to determine which radio and TV stations were still operating even though

they had been denied broadcasting licenses. These were also relevant media outlets as they were active when the survey was conducted.

An additional problem was how to make a distinction between the list of media outlets and the list of editors as the principal respondent target group. Namely, the survey relied on a definition according to which a separate radio or TV channel constituted a media outlet (e.g., Radio Beograd Channel 1 and Radio Beograd Channel 2 were treated as separate media outlets), hence the original intention in the survey was to include as respondents editors-in-chief of radio and TV channels that were a part of a radio and television broadcaster bearing the same name. Some radio and television broadcasters indeed have different editors for radio and TV programmes, whereas in some media companies the same person was the editor-in-chief of both radio and TV channels. In such cases, the media company was treated as one media outlet (RTV broadcaster) unlike those that were classified as either radio or TV media outlets.

Having vetted the existing data in the list mentioned above and after gathering new data, all those media outlets which were found to be no longer operational, which were not active as yet, which were found not to have relevant news output of their own or which were predominantly focused on commercial and entertainment programme, were excluded from the list. In the second round of the vetting process, media outlets from Kosovo were also excluded because their list was incomplete, basic data were missing, and the conclusion inferred was that their problems were different from the problems experienced by the majority of media outlets in Serbia. Their inclusion in the survey population would have painted a different picture overall concerning the subject matter of our survey.

The final list was reduced to 439 media outlets – 97 newspapers, 205 radio stations and 137 TV stations. If all RTV broadcasters had separate editors-in-chief for their respective radio and TV channels, the total target population would be 517 editors.

As part of the survey, 306 media editors were polled. Originally, 328 filled-in questionnaires were collected but 18 were eliminated as they had failed to meet the criteria for sample selection (media outlets without own news output, inadequate professional status of respondents, duplication of media outlets, etc.).

Due to the incompleteness of credible data on active news media outlets in Serbia, and discrepancies between the number of media outlets and the number of editors-in-chief, it was difficult to estimate the share in percentage points of those surveyed in the entire population. With respect to the final list of 439 media outlets, the sample included 69.7% of them. Out of 517 editors, 59.2% participated in the survey.

The sample was sufficiently representative in several aspects. If broken down by the type of media outlet, the sample consisted of 41.5% editors of radio stations, 22.2% editors of TV stations, 11.4% editors of RTV broadcasters, 13.1% editors of weekly newspapers, 6.2% editors of other periodical newspapers, 3.9% editors of daily papers and 1.3% editors of news agencies.

With respect to target audience, 49% were editors of local media outlets, 36.6% editors of regional media, and 13.1% national media editors. It is important to note that the classification of media outlets into local, regional and national media was based on the statements of editors-in-chief themselves vis-à-vis target groups for their media outlets.

Editors-in-chief participating in the survey represented media outlets from 93 cities and towns from all the regions in Serbia. Among them, 49.3% were editors of media from Central Serbia, 37.6%, editors of media outlets from Vojvodina, and 13.1% were editors of Belgrade media. Despite repeated efforts to include in the survey several big media outlets from Belgrade (*Politika*, *Večernje novosti*, *Kurir*, *Glas javnosti*, TV Pink, TV Fox, Radio Fokus and Radio S), this did not come to pass owing to the lack of cooperation on the part of their editors-in-chief. The sample had 96% media outlets from urban centres and 4% from rural areas.

With respect to the year in which they were established, the sample featured media outlets of different “ages” – 28.1% had been founded before 1990, 44.4% came into existence between 1990 and 2000, and 24.9% were media outlets founded since 2000.

The questionnaire was intended, above all, for editors-in-chief as representatives of media professionals who exercise their media freedoms and have professional interest in the media as such, as opposed to directors who are a part of managing structures. Deputy editors, i.e. assistants to editors-in-chief and news editors of electronic media were also included as representatives

of media management staff. The majority of respondents are indeed editors-in-chief – 49.7%, as well as editors-in-chief who are also directors of their media outlets – 14.4%, while 1.3% of those surveyed are persons who have aggregated the roles of owner, director and editor-in-chief. The sample also includes 5.6% deputy editors-in-chief, 4.6% news editors and 12.7% media outlet directors. There is no information about the positions of persons who filled in 11.4% of questionnaires. However, given that the questionnaires were addressed to editors-in-chief, a realistic assumption would be that they were filled in by editors themselves or their close associates.

Defining the second principal set of respondents – journalists or other media employees who were targeted in physical attacks or threats – was based on information gathered from several sources: media reports on attacks, data collected by professional associations and information provided by media editors. Having identified either individual journalists or media outlets whose journalists were physically or verbally assaulted, these were distributed specially designed questionnaires. Some victims were reluctant to fill in the questionnaire, citing the traumatic nature of experiences that they would rather not recall.

## Techniques and the course of survey

The complexity and sensitivity of the matter at hand and the specific target group that was the subject of the survey, as well as related difficulties in reaching respondents, entailed the use of several different survey techniques and several phases in the survey.

The process of gathering data in the first phase was carried out by email. Questionnaires were distributed in electronic form to available email addresses of media outlets with a note saying they were personally intended for the editors-in-chief, or were sent to their personal email addresses if available, with a note soliciting their participation in the survey and explaining the subject matter and objective of the survey, alongside the procedure for filling in the questionnaire and sending it back to the Institute's email address. Questionnaires and accompanying notes were distributed to about 350 different email addresses in several "waves" (at least three times to each address).

Due to incomplete and outdated available information (non-existent addresses, inaccurate addresses, invalid addresses, addresses not used anymore or rarely used, addresses used by marketing departments of media outlets instead of journalists, inaccurate information concerning the names of editors-in-chief, etc.), but also the low response rate of editors who received the questionnaire in electronic form (in response to the first “wave” of questionnaires that were sent out, only 54 replies were received), in the second phase the media were contacted by telephone. In telephone conversations with either media managers or members of newsroom staff, respondents were again asked to take part in the survey. In the process, data on media outlets and editors-in-chief were updated. They were asked if they would prefer to have the questionnaire sent to them by email or some other way, such as post or fax. The editors of media about which there were no data whatsoever except for a postal address received the questionnaire by post.

A large majority of potential respondents reacted positively in the course of the direct telephone conversations to the objective of the survey. Only three editors flatly refused to take part. Editors were offered a possibility of filling in the questionnaire anonymously, i.e. leaving the fields pertaining to the name of the media outlet and its headquarters blank, but only 16 editors (5%) opted to do so. Respondents, however, often complained that they were too busy or sought an extension of the deadline for returning the filled-in questionnaire. One should note that the survey was conducted during the campaigns for elections at several levels in Serbia, which increased the workload of editors-in-chief, and that there were two major holidays (several days for Easter and May Day). Following several telephone conversations, the number of respondents rose but was still insufficient to constitute a representative sample. Hence, the Institute launched the third phase of the survey – the engagement of field researchers who were to contact those media editors with whom no contact had been established due to lack of data as well as those media editors who had promised to participate in the survey but had failed to send in their answers. Field researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with these editors-in-chief or used printed questionnaires which they themselves filled in. Thus, the participation of exactly half of the editors (164) was ensured.

Data were gathered from 4 April until 19 May 2008.

Out of the collected filled-in questionnaires, 40% were received via email, 50% - thanks to the assistance of field researchers, 5% by fax, and the remaining 5% by post.

The contents of collected questionnaires were numbered, coded and entered into a statistics programme after which percentage analysis and contingency table analysis were carried out.

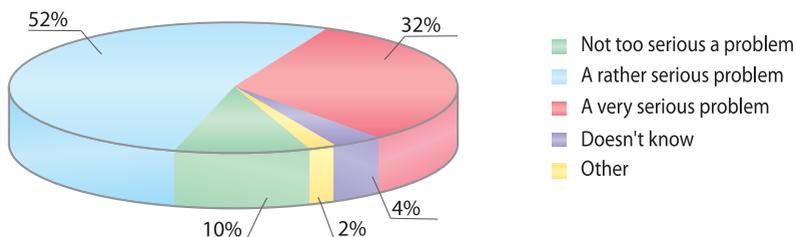
## A. . PERCEPTION OF GENERAL STATUS OF MEDIA RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

### General assessment of the state of media freedom

The majority of media managers describe the state of media rights and freedoms in Serbia today in negative terms. Eighty-five of 100 editors-in-chief believe that the high incidence of attacks on media is a very serious (32%) or fairly serious problem (53%) in Serbian society.

Only every tenth respondent is of the opinion that the existing pressures, threats and physical attacks are not a burden for society as a whole.

QUESTION: MEDIA FREEDOM AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM?



All editors agree that attacks on the media represent a serious social problem, regardless of the type of media outlet, target audience, regional headquarters or the date of establishment of a media outlet. More significant differences in assessments of the importance of this problem emerge solely in relation to practi-

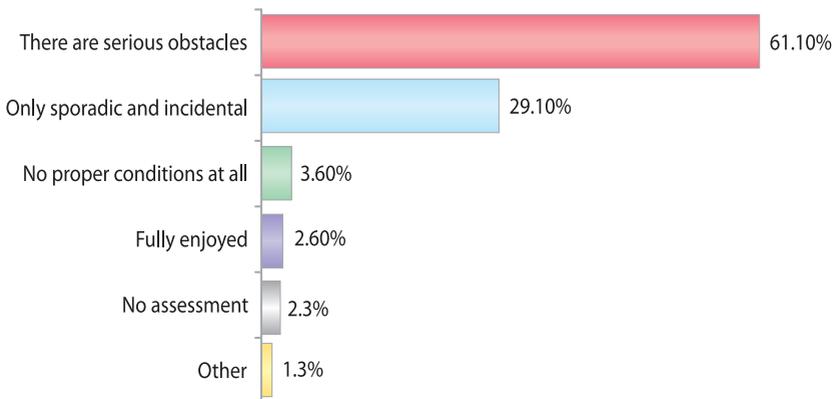
cal experience with attacks on media. Of editors who have experienced restrictions to professional freedoms, only 2.5% believe the degree of threat to media freedoms today is not a serious problem for society, while 18% of editors who have not had such an experience hold the same view. Ostvarivanje medijskih sloboda

### Enjoyment of media freedoms in practice

According to media editors, the main problem concerning media freedom comes down to its enjoyment in practice rather than legal and institutional guarantees for media freedoms and rights.

Two thirds of those surveyed (65%) describe the enjoyment of media freedoms and rights in practice in negative terms. The majority (61%) believe that there are serious obstacles in Serbia today to the enjoyment of media freedoms, while 4% are even more critical, saying that conditions are not in place to exercise media freedoms in practice.

QUESTION: ASSESSMENT OF PRACTICAL ENJOYMENT OF MEDIA FREEDOM



The former view is most widespread among print media editors (73%), particularly daily newspaper editors (92%), editors of media outlets founded before 1990 (66%), editors whose media outlets were targeted (75%) and among editors in northwest Serbia (77%) and the Kraljevo region (67%).

Few editors are of the opinion that media rights and freedoms are fully enjoyed in practice (3%). Others – over a quarter (29%) – say that only sporadic incidents threaten media freedoms in practice. This view is mostly shared by TV and RTV editors as opposed to editors of other types of media outlets (34%), national media editors (33%), those who have experienced specific pressures, threats or physical assaults (42%) and editors from South Serbia (35%).

## Media freedom legal regulations

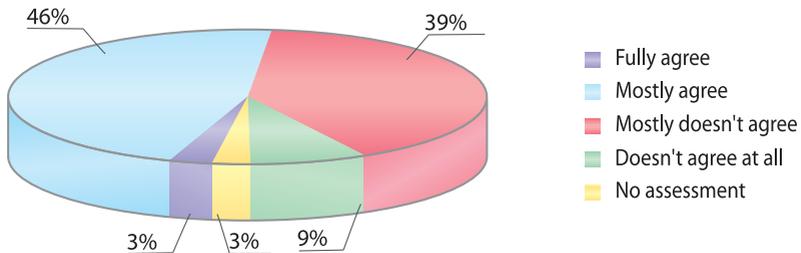
Editors-in-chief assess in different terms two fundamental assumptions – legal and institutional ones needed for enjoyment of media rights and freedoms in practice. While there is no a majority positive view among them in relation to either the former or the latter, they do believe, however, that legal regulations provide better guarantees for media freedoms than the existing institutions and mechanisms for the implementation of the law.

Editors' views on how appropriately the current laws regulate media freedoms and rights are almost totally divided. In the two opposite camps, those with moderate views are predominant. About one half of the respondents (49%) believe the laws are good (of whom 3% say the laws are very good), whereas the other half (48%) argue that laws are inadequate (of whom 9% say that the existing laws are very poor).

Editors of printed periodicals are more positive in their assessment of the laws' adequacy than the average (53%), editors of media outlets founded between 1990 and 2000 (55%), editors of media outlets which have not been exposed to attacks in the past year and a half (58%), and editors from eastern Serbia (58%), Šumadija and Pomoravlje – central Serbia (57%) and southwest Serbia

(56%). By contrast, media laws are seen as inappropriate mostly by editors of weekly papers (50%), national media outlets (50%), media founded after 2000 (54%), those who have been exposed to attacks (56%), as well as media editors from Belgrade, Vojvodina and South Serbia (52-53%).

QUESTION: DOES THE LAW IN SERBIA TODAY APPROPRIATELY REGULATE MEDIA FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS?

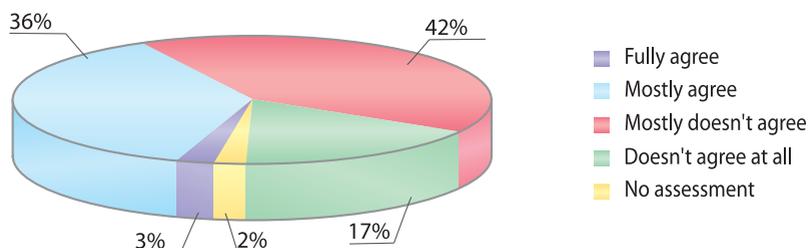


### Institutional guarantees of media freedoms

While half of the editors-in-chief believe the law regulates media freedoms and rights in an appropriate manner, an absolute majority say no adequate institutions and mechanisms are in place in Serbia today to implement the media laws (courts, various state organs, regulatory agencies, self-regulatory agencies, professional associations, etc.).

Namely, 59% of those surveyed hold a negative view of institutions and their procedures when it comes to the enforcement of the law. Among them, 17% have a distinctly negative view. Thirty-nine per cent of the editors-in-chief subscribe to the opinion that there are institutional guarantees for media freedoms, while 3% hold a very positive view of the current situation.

QUESTION: ARE THERE ADEQUATE INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS IN SERBIA TODAY TO IMPLEMENT MEDIA LAWS?



A critical stance towards the existence and work of the institutions supposed to protect media freedoms is held by editors of media that have experienced attacks lately (69%), weekly and periodical newspaper editors (68% each) and editors of RTV broadcasters (67%), national media outlets, media founded before 1990 (63% each) and editors from Belgrade (70%), Vojvodina (61%) and eastern Serbia (63%). By contrast, an above-average positive view is taken by editors of media outlets founded between 1990 and 2000 (55%), editors of radio and TV broadcasters (43% each), media which have not experienced attacks lately (49%), and, regionally, editors from Šumadija and Pomoravlje in central Serbia (65%).

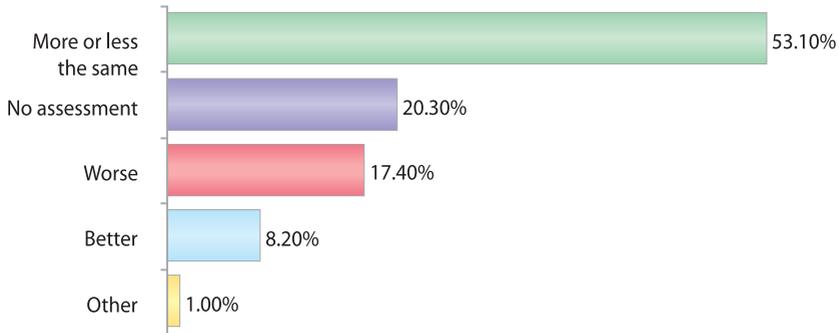
### Comparison with neighbouring countries

The majority of editors-in-chief (53%) believe that the state of media freedoms and rights is approximately the same in Serbia as it is in most neighbouring countries undergoing transition. Among those media editors who disagree, twice as many describe the situation in Serbia as worse than in neighbouring

countries (17%) as those who think the situation in Serbia with respect to media freedoms is better than elsewhere in the region (8%).

However, a significant number of editors, one-fifth of those polled, to be more precise, say they are not in a position to compare the situation in Serbia with other countries as they lack the necessary information on the state of media freedoms elsewhere.

QUESTION: HOW DO MEDIA FREEDOMS IN SERBIA COMPARE WITH  
NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES?



Similarities between Serbia and most neighbouring countries undergoing transition with respect to media freedoms are most often perceived by editors of weekly newspapers (58%) RTV broadcasters (57%), media outlets founded between 1990 and 2000 (61%) and media outlets based in southwest Serbia (69%) and Šumadija and Pomoravlje in central Serbia (64%). That the situation in Serbia is comparatively worse is a view mostly held by daily newspaper editors (42%), editors of media outlets founded before 1990 (23%), editors whose media outlets have been subject to attacks (24%) and media editors from Belgrade (25%) and Vojvodina (24%). Optimistic assessments are present above average among radio editors (12%), editors whose media outlets have not been targeted (14%) as well as editors of media outlets based in South Serbia (21%), Šumadija and Pomoravlje (14%).

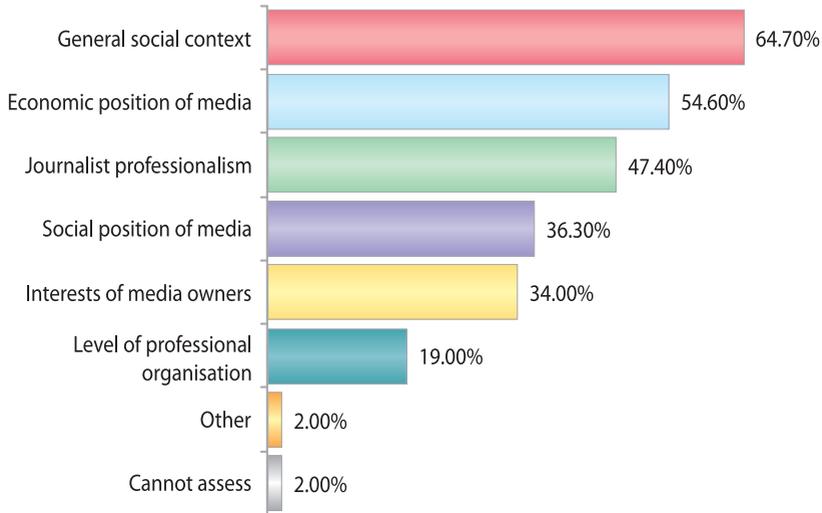
## B. PERCEPTION OF FACTORS RELATED TO MEDIA FREEDOMS, SOURCES AND MOST FREQUENT FORMS OF THREATS TO MEDIA FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS

### What the state of media freedoms depends on

In the opinion of the majority of media editors, factors from the outside rather than within the media system determine the current state of media freedoms and rights. Almost two-thirds of editors-in-chief (65%) hold the view that media freedoms mostly depend on general social context in which the media operate (the transition phase which society is undergoing, political relations, dominant values in society, etc.). Of those factors in the media sphere seen by editors-in-chief as crucial, the following stand out: economic capacity of the media (55%) and professionalism of journalists (47%), i.e., the level of education, compliance with professional and ethical norms, degree of self-censorship, etc. These two factors are seen as more important than the behaviour of media owners or the general position of the media in the society, which is regulated by laws but also influenced by the attitude of centres of power towards journalists. Editors believe that the degree of media freedom also depends on the level of professional organisation and solidarity but this element is rarely singled out as the most influential factor (19%).

The view that it is general social conditions that most influence media freedoms is less common among radio editors (61%) than editors of other media (73-75%), but it is somewhat more prevalent among editors of regional and local media (73-61%) than among editors of national media (55%). Media editors in central parts of Serbia are more inclined to this view (70-79%) than editors in other parts of the country (62-65%).

QUESTION: WHICH FACTORS DETERMINE THE STATE OF MEDIA FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS?



Daily newspaper editors attach the most importance to the economic position of media outlets vis-à-vis the achieved level of media freedoms (75% as opposed to 57% or less for editors of other types of media). More local media editors believe that the economic position of media outlets (57%) is important than regional and national media editors (42%) and editors from South Serbia and Kraljevo-Pomoravlje region (62-60% as opposed to 46-56% of editors from other regions, and 35% of editors from Šumadija).

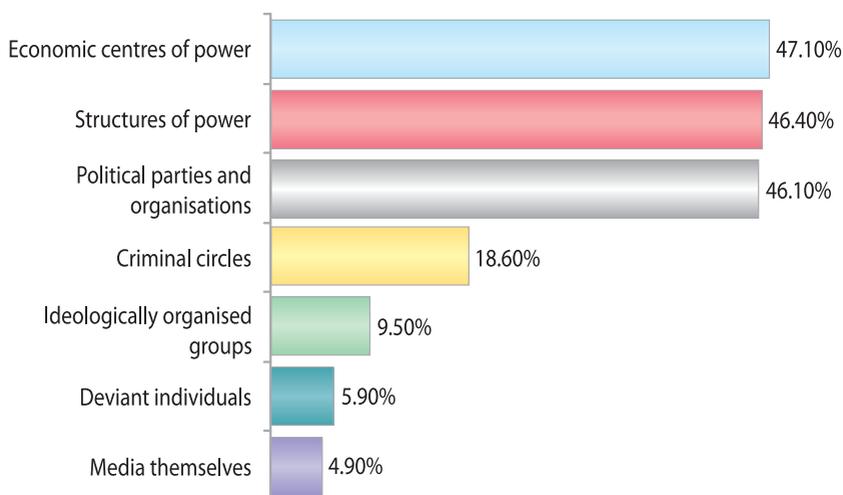
The impact of journalists' professionalism on media freedom is considered crucial, above all, by editors of news agencies and weekly magazines (60% as opposed to 42-45% of editors of other types of media). Journalists' professionalism is seen as more important by editors of national media outlets (57%) than local and regional media editors (48-42%), editors of media founded after 2001 (51% as opposed to 43% of editors of media founded between 1990 and 2000), and editors from Šumadija, South and southeastern Serbia (56-

57% as opposed to 45-50% of media editors from other parts of the country and 29% of editors from eastern Serbia).

## Who undermines media freedoms

With respect to the sources of encroachment upon media freedoms, editors-in-chief hold the view that the gravest violations come from the three following sources: economic centres of power, state structures and political parties and organisations. There are only slight discrepancies in the way that media editors have ranked the said three sources with respect to their impact on the work of journalists: 47% believe that the gravest violations of media freedoms stem from economic centres of power; 46% say they originate from state bodies and institutions; as many editors hold the view (46%) that political parties and organisations are to blame for the gravest violations of media freedoms.

QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF GRAVEST MEDIA FREEDOM VIOLATIONS?



There are certain differences in perception of the impact by economic and state power centres among the editors of media classified for the purposes of the survey according to relevant criteria. Editors of Belgrade media outlets (70%), print media (61%), and national media (65%) estimate more often than others that the gravest violations of media freedom come from wielders of economic power. The authorities are more often seen as the most important source of violation of media freedoms by local media editors (48%) than editors of regional (46%) and national media (40%). Media editors from eastern Serbia (71%) tend to hold this view more often than editors-in-chief in other regions (31%-57%). Those who have experienced violations of media freedoms and rights in the past two years (51%) are more inclined to see the government as the most important source of violation of media freedoms than those who have not had such experiences (40%).

The impact of other potential sources of violations of media freedoms, when contrasted to the three sources mentioned above, is seen by editors as less important. Nearly every fifth respondent (18.6%) cites criminal circles as perpetrators of gravest forms of violations of media freedoms, and for every tenth respondent, these are ideologically organised groups (9.5%). Even less significance is attached to deviant individuals (5.9%), while the least is attributed to actions of journalists themselves, although a considerable number of editors-in-chief believe that journalists often abuse the freedom of the press.

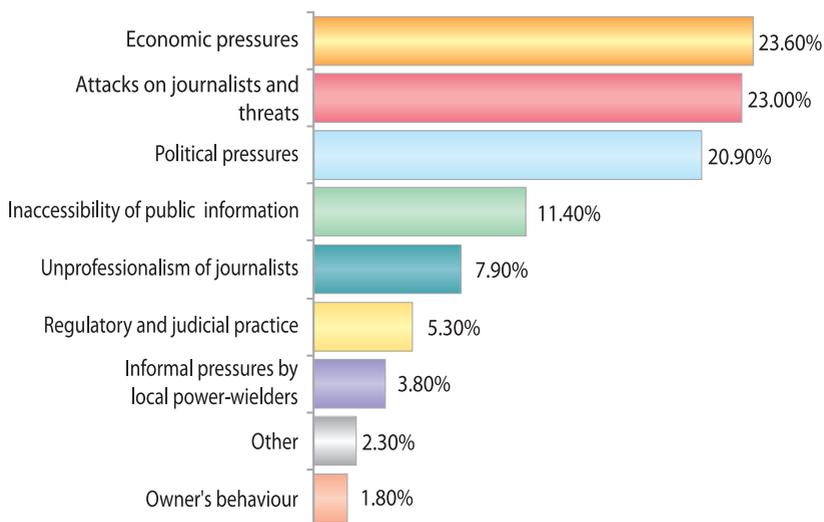
## Forms of media freedom violations

Media editors assess that three forms of violations of media freedoms are predominant in Serbia today: economic pressures, political pressures, and physical assaults and threats to journalists. These three forms of violations are cited most often by every third editor-in-chief who is familiar with the operations of other media outlets, apart from the one that he/she works for. The differences in assessments of the incidence of these violations are minor.

Economic pressure, i.e. economic insecurity and dependence, including also unfair competition, is most often cited as universal by 24% of media editors.

This is followed by physical assaults and threats to journalists (23%). It is significant that 153 out of 306 respondents say that their media outlets or journalists were targeted in attacks or threats in 2008, of whom 79 see the attacks and threats as a general characteristic of the media situation in Serbia. Political pressure (21%) ranks third, and this is associated by media editors with government officials (“arrogance of government officials”, “abuse of power”), often local government officials. This sort of violation of media freedoms mostly affects still unprivatised media outlets. Editors also highlight concealment and inaccessibility of information of public importance, secretiveness of state agencies vis-à-vis journalists, and the government’s lack of transparency (11%). This effectively points to the fact that the Free Access to Information of Public Importance Act is not being implemented, and is a significant and common obstacle to media freedoms.

QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE MOST FREQUENT FORMS OF THE VIOLATION OF MEDIA FREEDOM IN SERBIA?



As a frequent form of violation of media freedoms, editors also cite unprofessional conduct of journalists themselves (8%). Typically, these are failure to comply with the rules and ethical code of conduct, journalists' political activism as part of their professional work, and self-censorship.

Existing media regulations and judicial practice, i.e. inadequately regulated status of media outlets and journalists, conduct of regulatory agencies, administration and judicial bodies, unsolved murders and attempts on the lives of journalists, as well as charges brought against journalists, also stand out as sources of violations of media freedoms as perceived by media editors (5%).

## How to advance media freedom

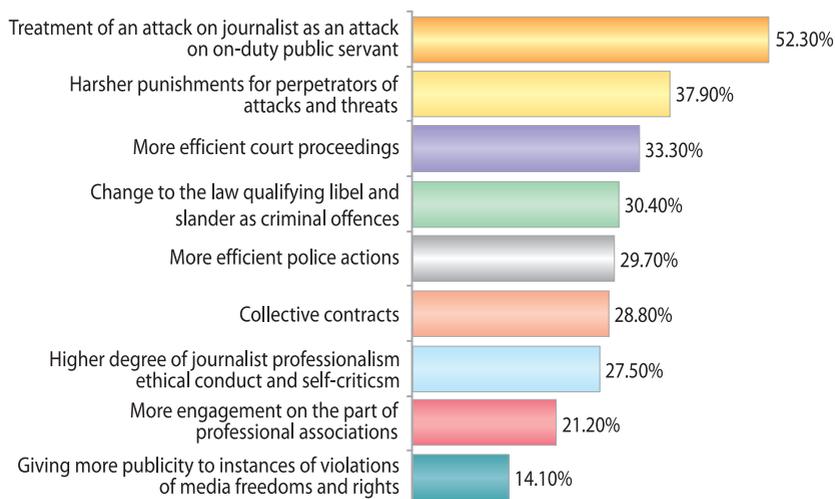
Editors-in-chief see the main reasons for the unfavourable state of media freedoms and rights in systemic factors, but also advocate a series of concrete actions and measures that could improve the situation in future. The majority of desirable measures pertains to the treatment of physical assaults and threats. The most desirable measure for the advancement of media rights and freedoms would be to treat attacks on journalists in the same manner as attacks on on-duty public servants (52%). This is followed by: harsher punishments for perpetrators of attacks and threats (38%), more efficient court proceedings against the perpetrators (33%); more effective police action to identify and track down perpetrators of physical and verbal violence against journalists (30%).

Treatment of an attack on a journalist as an attack on a public official is the most desirable measure in all the categories of media editors, and this is particularly emphasised by editors from northwest Serbia (77%) and South Serbia (71%). Belgrade media editors, in particular, stress the need for harsher punishments for perpetrators of attacks and threats (43%).

Nearly one-third of editors (30%) believe that media freedoms would be enhanced by amendments to the law that qualifies libel and slander as criminal offences, whereas slightly fewer editors (28%) see the solution primarily in a

higher degree of journalist professionalism, ethics and self-criticism. A considerable number of editors (29%) think media freedoms would be also enhanced by better protection of employees from arbitrary decisions of media outlet owners (e.g. by signing a collective contract).

QUESTION: WHAT CONCRETE STEPS WOULD ADVANCE MEDIA FREEDOM?



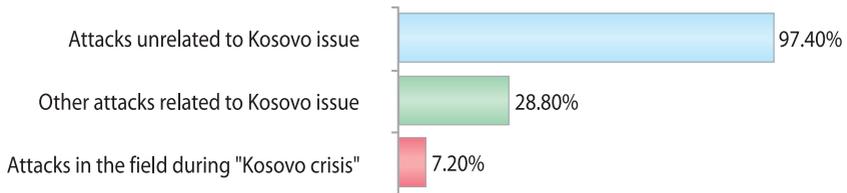
The answers provided by editors-in-chief show that the least is expected from giving more publicity to instances of violations of media freedoms (14%) and activities of professional journalist associations (21%). Some editors have described such a publicity as already significant, i.e. professional associations are already sufficiently focused on this issue.

### C. VIOLATION OF MEDIA FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS IN 2008

Out of 306 editors-in-chief participating in the survey, exactly half, i.e. 153 (50%) stated that their media outlets and journalists had been exposed to some sort of restriction to their media rights and freedoms in 2008.

Of 153 targeted media, 11 had been exposed to physical or verbal attacks during the week following the declaration of Kosovo's independence, 44 were exposed to various forms of attacks and pressures in relation to their Kosovo coverage, while 149 had the same experience but in relation to their reporting on other issues.

QUESTION: VIOLATIONS OF MEDIA FREEDOM IN 2008



In order to assess the proportions of threats to media freedom in relation to both reporting on the Kosovo crisis and unrelated coverage, instances of violations of media freedoms with respect to these two types of coverage were treated separately in the questionnaire.

## Media freedom violations in relation to Kosovo issue coverage

In the week marked by the dramatic events occurring in the wake of Kosovo's declaration of independence, a large number of physical attacks on reporters took place while they were carrying out their professional assignments. According to available data from media reports and statements given as part of the survey by editors-in-chief and media professionals who were attacked, at least 30 journalists, photographers/journalists, cameramen or members of their field crews (24 domestic and six foreign crews) from 12 domestic media outlets (BETA and FONET news agencies, newspapers *Večernje novosti*, *Alo!*, *Glas javnosti*, *Naša reč*, *Subotičke novine*, RTV broadcasters RTS, B92, Studio B, TV5-Niš and Radio KIM) and six foreign media outlets (Croatian RTL TV, TV Republika Srpska, Russian TV in English language, Russia Today, German ARD TV, Dutch daily NRC Handelsblad and Portuguese Radio TSF) were targeted in attacks.

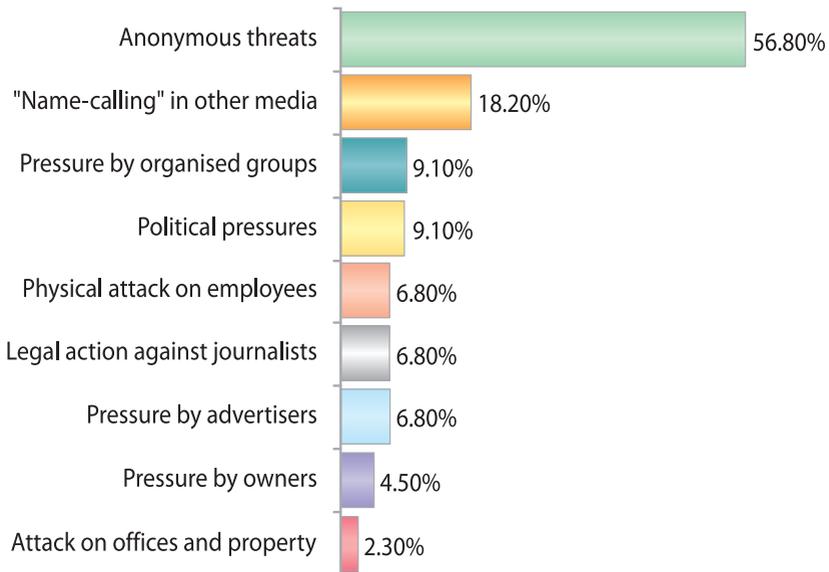
Also, during the first two weeks in the aftermath of Kosovo's declaration of independence, media professionals from seven media outlets – RTV B92, TV Fox, TV Panonija, TV 5 (Užice), Sremska TV, newspaper *Alo!* and Radio Bum 93 – were targeted in physical attacks and verbal violence.

Of 17 domestic media outlets whose reporters were exposed to physical assaults or attempted attacks and verbal threats, editors of 11 media outlets participated in the survey (4% of those polled) – BETA news agency, the newspapers *Alo!* and *Subotičke novine*, RTV B92, RTV Srbije, TV Studio B, TV5-Niš, TV Panonija, TV5-Užice, Sremska TV and Radio Bum 93.

Excluding attacks in the field and threats during the said dramatic week, 44 editors (14 of those surveyed) stated that their media outlets and journalists were targeted in other forms of violations of media freedoms related to the Kosovo issue in 2008. These were mostly anonymous, verbal threats or threats in writing, addressed to the media outlet or to journalists. Twenty-five editors cited such threats (57% of the said 44, i.e. 8% of those polled), while eight editors said that their media outlets had been exposed to “name-calling” in other media. Physical assaults on employees occurred in three instances and one attack occurred on the offices. Four media outlets were exposed to political pressures; to economic pressure – three media outlets; and two media experi-

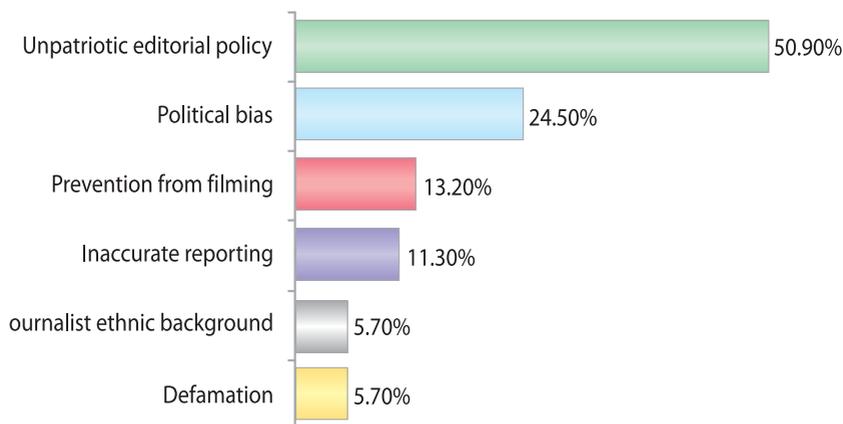
enced pressure on the part of media owners. Four media outlets were exposed to pressures exerted by organised groups, while charges were brought against three media outlets.

QUESTION: WHAT FORM DID VIOLATIONS OF MEDIA FREEDOMS IN 2008 TAKE IN RELATION TO COVERAGE OF KOSOVO ISSUE?



Attacks and threats with physical assaults occurred during violent protests against the declaration of Kosovo independence in Belgrade, Niš, Novi Sad, Subotica, Užice and at border crossings with Kosovo (Jarinje and Mutivode) in which various organised groups were involved (sports fans, army reservists, Kosovo municipalities' residents, secondary school students, etc.). In most cases, protesters were the perpetrators of attacks on reporters. In three cases, journalists were attacked and beaten by riot police. In two instances, the attacks took place in front of police officers who did nothing to protect reporters carrying out their professional assignments.

QUESTION: REASONS FOR ATTACKS ON MEDIA IN RELATION TO COVERAGE OF KOSOVO ISSUE?



According to statements by editors-in-chief, attacks, threats and pressures on journalists in relation to Kosovo coverage were most often accompanied by accusations of unpatriotic editorial policies. These were cited by 51% of editors who were exposed to some sort of attack in relation to their Kosovo coverage.

The next most often cited reason for attacks on the media, according to those polled, was politically biased editorial policy (24%). Thirteen per cent of editors said that preventing journalists from gathering data on participants in the events was the reason for attacks on those journalists.

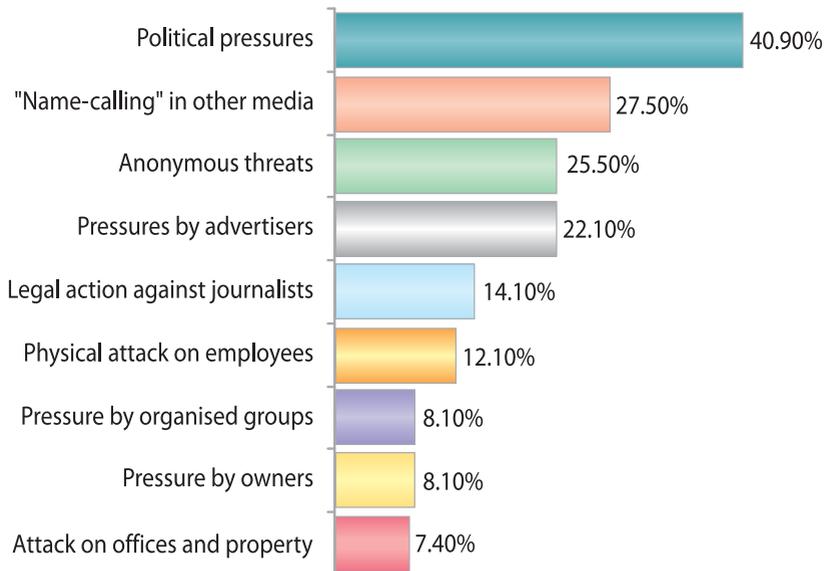
Other alleged reasons for attacks and pressures were less prominent: unprofessional/unethical reporting (11%) and violations of personal rights and interests (6%).

## Media freedom violations in relation to reporting on other issues (except Kosovo)

About half (49%) of the editors-in-chief, 149 to be precise, said they had been exposed to some form of restriction to their media freedom in the first quarter of 2008, which was unrelated to events in Kosovo and their reporting on those events.

As the most frequent forms of violations of media freedoms in this period, media editors listed political pressures (41%), then pressures and “name-calling” in other media (28%), anonymous threats (26%) and economic pressures exerted by advertisers and other economically powerful figures (22%).

QUESTION:WHAT FORMS DID VIOLATION OF MEDIA FREEDOMS, UNRELATED TO COVERAGE OF THE KOSOVO ISSUE, TAKE IN 2008?



Political pressures were dominant in all the media outlets which experienced attacks, irrespective of the type of media outlet (31% of print media editors,

38% of radio editors, 51% of TV editors, and 55% of RTV broadcaster editors). When the results are broken down by geographical coverage, the situation is as follows: 50% of local media editors, 34% of regional media editors and 33% of national media editors. If we look at regional aspect of this issue, political pressures are seen as most common by 58% of editors in eastern Serbia, 56% in northwest Serbia and 44% in Vojvodina.

Economic pressures are cited more often by editors of Belgrade-based media (38%) while anonymous threats are most frequently mentioned by editors from South Serbia (43%) and eastern Serbia (42%).

### Reasons for attacks on media outlets in relation to other issues (other than Kosovo)

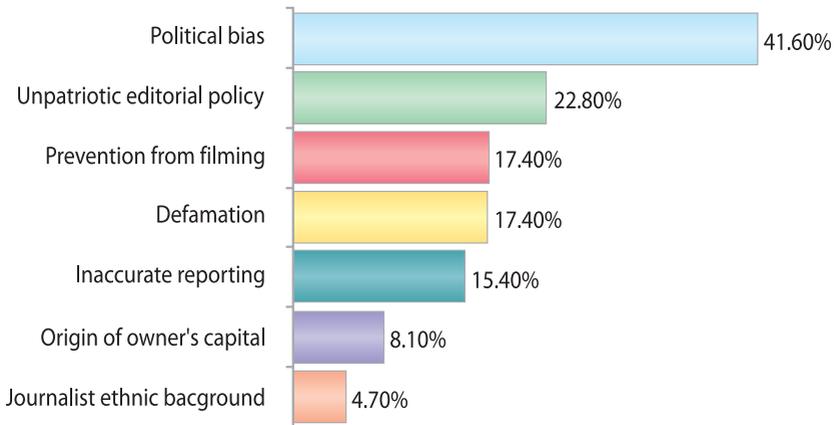
According to statements by editors-in-chief, in the first quarter of 2008, media outlets were most often targeted in attacks over alleged politically biased and unpatriotic editorial policies, even when their reporting was unrelated to the Kosovo issue. These two objections, say the polled editors-in-chief, were most often cited by perpetrators of attacks on media outlets. Forty-two per cent of those surveyed mentioned allegedly politically biased reporting as a reason for their attacks, while 23% specified unpatriotic editorial policy.

Prevention from gathering information about participants in the events which were covered by reporters was cited by 17% of editors-in-chief, while as many editors-in-chief said that the attackers had alleged violations of their personal rights and interests as the reason for their attack. False, unprofessional or unethical reporting was the reason for violations of media freedoms, according to 15% of those surveyed.

While there are some differences in the various groups of media outlets classified by relevant criteria, a politically biased editorial policy is the most often cited reason for an attack among the editors of all the media outlets. This is more prevalent among RTV broadcaster editors (60% as opposed to 43% of radio editors, 38% of TV editors, and 43% of print media editors) and editors

of local media (52%, as opposed to 42% of national media editors and 36% of regional media editors).

QUESTION: REASONS FOR ATTACKS ON MEDIA UNRELATED TO KOSOVO ISSUE?

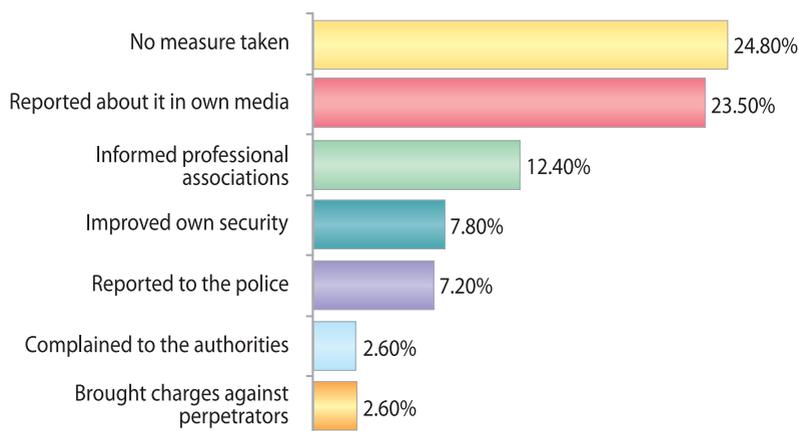


### Protective measures against media freedom and rights violations

Answers by editors-in-chief showed that they responded passively to violations of their media freedoms and rights. Most (25%) undertook no action in relation to the attacks, threats or pressures to which they were exposed in the course of 2008, irrespective of the motives for the attacks. The most frequent reaction was to inform their audiences about the incidents (24%).

As regards more proactive responses to incidents, most editors-in-chief chose to inform professional organisations and associations, mostly domestic ones, but at times, international organisations and associations (12%) as well. Eight per cent of the media outlets relied on their own devices and resources to improve collective and personal safety, while 3% of editors-in-chief turned to the authorities for protection. Another 7% reported the incidents to the police. Only 3% brought charges against (unknown or known) perpetrators.

## QUESTION: WHAT MEASURES WERE UNDERTAKEN TO PROTECT MEDIA FREEDOM?



Illustrations of the passive nature of the reaction of the media even to the gravest forms of violations of professional freedoms and rights come in statements given by journalists who were subjected to physical assaults over their reporting on Kosovo issues. According to them, the media outlets for which they worked mostly limited their reactions to publishing reports of the incidents. The exceptions are BETA news agency, Blic daily, and RTV B92.

**17 February 2008, Belgrade** – Attack of protesters on Studio B journalist crew

“The attackers have not been identified and no legal action was taken against them. Studio B gave considerable publicity to this incident”<sup>206</sup>

**17 February 2008, Belgrade** – Attack of protesters on *Večernje novosti* photographer/reporter

“The way *Večernje novosti* treated me is praiseworthy – they showed concern and understanding for their employee and they helped in any way they could. They reported on the attack in the paper, and the attack was condemned. My attackers have not been identified, but, by pure

<sup>206</sup> Excerpt from Marijana Mitrović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

chance, I was recently sent by *Revija 92*, which is published by the *Novosti* company, to take photos at a trial of one of the ‘heroes’ of the attack on the US embassy. He was bragging that the judge understood him, and that after a change of those in power, which he expected, he would be released immediately.”<sup>207</sup>

**17 February 2008, Belgrade** – Attack by protesters on Radio Televizija Srbije crew

“The attackers have not been identified and no legal action was taken against them. RTS reported on the attack in its media. Although it is always clear what we do and what media outlet we belong to, every reporting assignment in the field during sports derbies, concerts in the open and rallies is risky. In the majority of cases, attacks are non-selective; they are targeting all journalist crews, regardless of the company they work for, and our positions are risky due both to the proximity of attackers and the small number of physical security guards of our camera positions.”<sup>208</sup>

**17 February 2008, Belgrade** – Attack by protesters on *Studio B* journalist crew

“The attackers have not been identified and no legal action was taken against the perpetrators. *Studio B* sent male reporters to all subsequent events where similar incidents might occur.”<sup>209</sup>

**17 February 2008, Belgrade** – Attack by a policeman on an *Alo!* newspaper journalist

“The attackers have not been identified and no legal action was taken against the perpetrators. I and my paper did nothing else, except publishing an article about the attack.”<sup>210</sup>

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207Excerpt from Milutin Labudović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

208Excerpt from RTS field crew’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

209Excerpt from Milana Mrkalj’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

210 Excerpt from Bojan Radović’s written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

BETA news agency's editor-in-chief, Ivan Cvejić, and *Blic's* editor-in-chief, Veselin Simonović, sent an open protest letter to the head of police directorate, Milorad Veljović, in relation to the police's failure to provide protection to their correspondent from Leskovac, Milica Ivanović, at the Mutivode border checkpoint, where she was physically and verbally assaulted by protesters. After this, the organisers of the army reservists' protest at Mutivode checkpoint offered a public apology to the Leskovac-based journalist. Leskovac police department also apologised to the journalist for the behaviour of its officers, launched an investigation into the matter and offered to bring criminal charges against the two policemen in question. She refused, "fearing the consequences".

**25 February 2008, Mutivode checkpoint** – Attack by protesters on BETA news agency (and *Blic* daily) correspondent from Leskovac

"Following the public protest issued by the two media companies I work for, I received a public apology from the organisers of the protest. At the same time, Leskovac's police chief carried out an internal investigation and apologised to me. I refused their proposal to bring criminal charges against the policemen, fearing the consequences. At the next big protest organised by army reservists in Leskovac, I enjoyed protection provided by the police chief himself. With his colleagues, he personally protected myself and my colleague from *Večernje novosti* during the protest from possible attacks either by reservists or the police. When a policemen swung his baton at my female colleague from *Novosti*, the police chief himself prevented the blow".<sup>211</sup>

Apart from the significant publicity given to the attacks on its employees and other media professionals in its own media platforms, RTV B92 informed both local and international professional organisations and associations about the incidents, as well as the police about the threats that this company's editors and journalists had received, requested protection from the police, improved collective safety, and filed criminal charges against unknown persons who had threatened them.

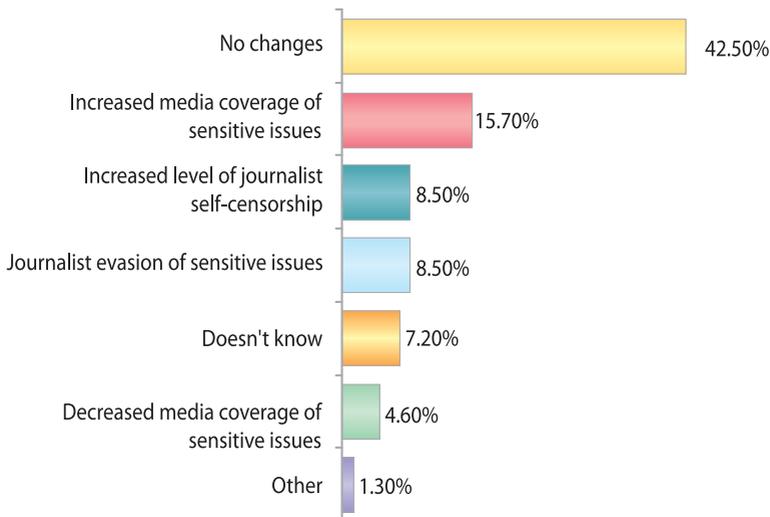
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<sup>211</sup>Excerpt from Milica Ivanović's written statement. The report is filed in the OSCE Media Department documentation.

## Consequences of attacks on media

The majority of editors-in-chief claim that the pressures, threats and attacks to which they were exposed have not led to any changes in either their media outlets' reporting or the behaviour of their journalists (65).

QUESTION: WHAT CHANGES TO REPORTING HAVE OCCURRED AFTER PRESSURES HAVE BEEN EXERTED?

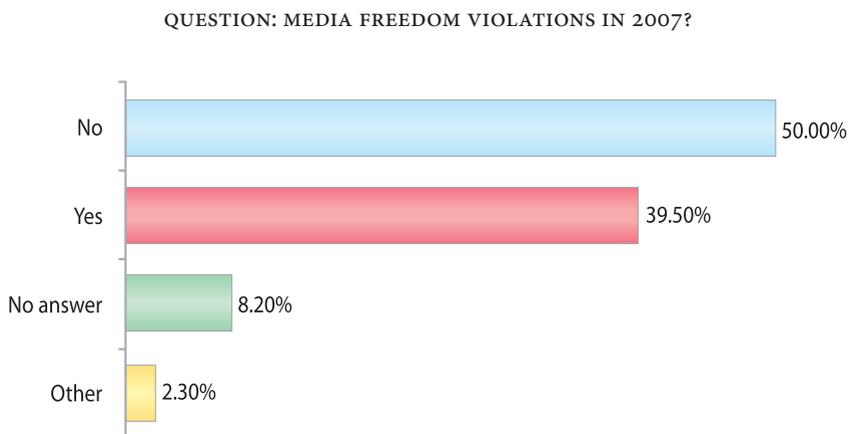


In some media outlets, however, according to editors-in-chief statements, changes that have occurred are contrary to what the perpetrators of the attacks wanted to achieve: 24 editors claim that their newsroom staff have become even more consistent in their coverage of the issues that were the cause of the attacks.

A slightly higher number of editors (33 in total) cite an opposite change in their media outlets' reporting. Namely, seven editors say their organisations are now reporting to a lesser degree on contentious issues or on certain individuals and organisations, while 26 have noticed a change in the behaviour of some journalists, be it that they now tend to avoid "sensitive" topics (13) or that there is a higher degree of self-censorship in their reporting (13).

#### D. MEDIA FREEDOM AND RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN 2007

Four out of ten editors-in-chief (39.5%), or 121 out of the total of 306, said that their media outlets were subjected to some form of violation of media freedoms and rights in 2007.



With respect to the type of media, according to the answers of those polled, violations of media freedoms occurred most often to print media, and the least – to radio broadcasters. These were cited by 67% of editors of daily newspaper, 65% of weekly editors and 58% periodical newspaper editors, as well as 26% of radio editors. Among RTV broadcaster editors, 46% said that they were exposed to violations of professional freedoms and rights, while 37% of TV editors claimed the same.

In 2007, the media freedoms of outlets with national coverage were more often violated (55%) than those of local (38%) and regional outlets (37%). Looking at the regions, attacks on media are cited more often than others by

editors from Šumadija and Pomoravlje (50%), southwest Serbia (47%) and eastern Serbia (46%), as opposed to northwest Serbia (23%) and South Serbia (29%), where the attacks were less common.

## Forms of media freedom violations in 2007

Editors-in-chief said that they were exposed to numerous and various forms of violations of media freedoms and rights in 2007. Of a total of 121 editors (39.5% of those surveyed) who said that they experienced some form of violation of their media freedom, 50 respondents (41%, or 16% of the sample) stated that they were subjected to political pressures; 35 editors (29%, or 11% of the entire sample) said that they received anonymous threats; and 30 editors (25%, or 10% of the entire sample) claimed that they had experienced economic pressures at the hands of advertisers or other economic power-wielders.

Also numerous were accusations and instances of “name-calling” in other media outlets. These were cited by 38 editors (31%, or 12% of the entire sample), while 24 editors said that charges were brought against their journalists (20%, i.e. 8% of the entire sample).

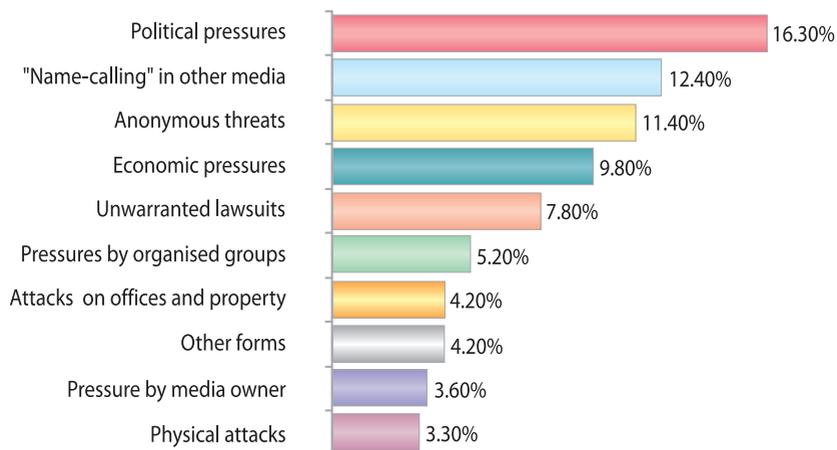
Other forms of violation of media freedoms and rights were less frequent. These included threats by organised groups (16 editors, i.e. 12% of those who experienced some form of attack), attacks on their offices or property (12 editors, i.e. 10%), pressures exerted by media owners (12, or 10%), and physical assaults on employees (nine editors, or 7%).

Political pressure was applied most often to RTV broadcasters (29% of all RTV media editors), periodicals (21%) and TV stations (20%), as well as media outlets from South Serbia, Šumadija and Pomoravlje in central Serbia (21% each), and Vojvodina (20%).

Periodicals (16%), media with national coverage (15%), youngest media – those founded after the changes of 5 October 2000 (15%), media from eastern

Serbia and Kraljevo region (17% each), Belgrade and South Serbia (15% each) were exposed to anonymous threats more than others

QUESTION: WHAT FORMS DID VIOLATIONS OF MEDIA FREEDOMS AND RIGHTS TAKE IN 2007?



Pressures by advertisers and economic power-wielders were reported more often than others by editors of periodicals (32%), editors of Belgrade-based media, daily newspapers, and media with broadest target audiences (25% each).

Legal actions against journalists were cited as attacks on professional freedom more often than others by editors of weeklies (28%), dailies (25%), and editors of media from Šumadija and Pomoravlje (21%).

## Comparison of the state of media freedoms in 2007 and 2008

Editors-in-chief were asked to compare their experiences in 2007 and 2008 with regard to the incidence of media freedom violation cases.

The question was answered by half of those surveyed (53%) since the other half claimed that they experienced no attacks in either 2007 or 2008. Of those who answered this question, 46% stated that the attacks on their media outlets were more frequent in 2007, while 18% said that they were more common in 2008 (7% added that the attacks occurred more often in the second part of the period under observation in 2008, i.e. after the declaration of Kosovo's independence). One-third of respondents who were exposed to attacks were unable to clearly specify if there were more attacks in 2007 than in 2008, or vice-versa. Some said they did not know the answer to this question (22%). Of the remaining 14%, some editors said that their most difficult period had been before 2007, and a significant number alleged that pressures always increased during election campaigns, but did not choose between one of the two options.

## VII | Brief overview of media legislation

The media scene in Serbia is regulated by the Public Information Act<sup>212</sup>, Public Broadcasting Act<sup>213</sup>, Free Access to Information of Public Importance Act<sup>214</sup>, Advertising Act<sup>215</sup>, Telecommunications Act<sup>216</sup> and Personal Data Protection Act.<sup>217</sup> A working group with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia is drafting a law on the prevention of media concentration and ownership transparency.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT.** This regulates the right to public information, which entails six different freedoms: 1. Freedom of expression, 2. Freedom to gather, investigate, publish and disseminate ideas, information and opinions, 3. Freedom to print and distribute (disseminate) newspapers and other media outlets, 4. Freedom to produce and broadcast radio and television pro-

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212Public Information Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 43./2003 and 61/2005), adopted on 23 April 2003; currently in effect – the version dated 26 July 2005.

213 Public Broadcast Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 42/2002, 97/2004, 76/2005, 79/2005 – another law, 62/2006, 85/2006 and 86/2006 – corr.), adopted on 27 July 2002; currently in effect – the version dated 11 October 2006.

214 Free Access to Information of Public Importance Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 120/2004 and 54/2007), adopted on 13 November 2004; currently in effect – the version dated 13 June 2007.

215Advertising Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 79/2005), adopted on 24 September 2005.

216Telecommunications Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 44/2003 and 36/2006), adopted on 2 May 2003; currently in effect – the version dated 5 May 2006.

217Personal Data Protection Act (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 97/2008), adopted on 23 October 2008.

grammes, 5. Freedom to receive ideas, information and opinions, and 6. the freedom to establish legal persons dealing with public information.<sup>218</sup>

This law stipulates, as one of its principles, that public information is free, in the interest of the public, and that it shall not be subjected to censorship.<sup>219</sup> The law prohibits restrictions to the freedom of public information, and cites in particular: any form of physical or other pressure, the abuse of state or private authority, the abuse of the rights, influence or control of media printing and distribution means.<sup>220</sup> To provide full protection, the law also stipulates the prohibition of any other actions apt to limit the free flow of ideas, information and opinions.<sup>221</sup>

Politicians often condemn and exert pressure on media outlets concerning articles related to them. In this respect, it is important to point out that this law restricts the right to protection of privacy of a state or political office-holder if the information is of public relevance in view of the fact that such a person holds a public office.<sup>222</sup>

**PUBLIC BROADCAST ACT.** This stipulates, above all, the conditions and procedures for conducting broadcasting activities.<sup>223</sup> In addition, the law establishes the Republican Broadcasting Agency and public broadcasting service institutions; stipulates the procedures for allocation of licences to broadcast radio and television programmes; and regulates other issues relevant to the public broadcasting sector.<sup>224</sup> Public broadcasting service institutions are Radio Television Serbia and Radio Television Vojvodina.

**FREE ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE ACT.** This pertains to the right of citizens to access to information of public importance

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218 See above under 190, article 1.

219 Ibid., article 2, paras. 1 and 2

220 Ibid., article 2, paras. 3 and 4.

221 Ibid., article 2, para. 3.

222 Ibid., article 9, para. 1.

223 See above under 191, article 1.

224 Ibid.

that is in the possession of state organs.<sup>225</sup> The law stipulates the formation of the institution of a Commissioner for Information of Public Importance who is to monitor state organs' compliance with their obligations under this law.<sup>226</sup> Discrimination against journalists and media outlets is prohibited, meaning that if several journalists have submitted the same request for information, the state organ in question must not give preferential treatment to any of the applicants by allowing only one or more applicants, as opposed to others, to enjoy the right to access to information.<sup>227</sup> Journalists are not under obligation to cover the costs of copying and delivery of the requested document.<sup>228</sup>

**ADVERTISING ACT.** This regulates the conditions and procedures for advertising, the rights and obligations of advertisers, producers and transmitters of advertisements as well as recipients of advertisements.<sup>229</sup> Transmitters of advertisements, according to the law, are a public media whose principal or additional contents consist of advertisements,<sup>230</sup> but the law allows other legal entities or entrepreneurs displaying advertisements in public, as well as organisers of cultural, entertainment, sports or other public events transmitting advertising messages to the audience, to assume the role of transmitters of advertisements.<sup>231</sup> Time limits for advertising are set in such a manner that commercial TV broadcasters are entitled to utilise up to 20% of the total programming time for advertising purposes, i.e. up to 12 minutes per hour of the broadcast programming content, whereas public service broadcasters are entitled to half that amount, i.e. up to 10% of the total programming and up to six minutes per hour.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT.** This regulates the conditions and procedures for conducting activities in the field of telecommunications and stipulates the

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225 See above under 192, article 1, para. 1.

226 *Ibid.*, article 1, para. 2 and article 35.

227 *Ibid.*, article 7.

228 *Ibid.*, article 17.

229 See above under 193, article 1

230 *Ibid.*, article 2, para. 1, item 6.

231 *Ibid.*, article 2, para. 1, item 7.

formation of the Republican Telecommunications Agency.<sup>232</sup> In addition, the law stipulates the powers and competencies for the regulation of relations in the field of telecommunications; the prevention of monopolistic conduct; the principles and procedures for allocation of operating licences; the tariffs for telecommunication services; the interconnection of telecommunication networks and operators; leased lines; the scope, content and improvement of universal services; rights and the obligations of telecommunication operators; radio communications; international telecommunications; and other issues of relevance to the functioning and development of telecommunications in Serbia.<sup>233</sup>

**PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT.** This regulates the conditions for the gathering and processing of personal data; the enjoyment and protection of the rights of persons whose personal data are gathered and processed; limitations on the protection of personal data; the procedure for the protection of personal data; the transfer of data out of the Republic of Serbia; and supervision over compliance with the law.<sup>234</sup> The Commissioner for Information of Public Importance is entrusted with personal data protection whereby the official title of the holder of this public office changes to “Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection”.<sup>235</sup> The passage of this law was marked by considerable differences in opinions between the proposer of the draft law and the civil sector, the representatives of the fourth branch of power and international organisations. The bone of contention was the power bestowed on state organs to deny the commissioner the possibility to protect data if, according to the state organ in question, this was necessary on account of state and public security. This practically meant that the organ under supervision would have the power to decide if there was to be any supervision at all, and if so, to what degree. The proposer of the bill subsequently amended this provision, stipulating that the state organ in question would have to seek the opinion of the Court of Cassation presiding judge prior to such an action. The Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and

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232 See above under 194, article 1.

233 Ibid.

234 See above under 195, article 1, para. 1.

235 Ibid., article 1, para. 3.

Personal Data Protection estimated that this was a better solution, but added that it was also based on the idea that someone might suspend and restrict the powers of a supervisory body, i.e. the Commissioner himself.<sup>236</sup> He went on to say that international standards prescribed full independence of supervisory organs as well as that such a provision existed in Serbia only, which was why, in his view, it was highly unlikely that Serbia would receive good marks for this piece of legislation on the part of European Union observers.<sup>237</sup>

We should also mention the **Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia**.<sup>238</sup> This qualifies libel and slander as criminal offences. Prior to the latest changes to this law in 2005, these offences entailed prison sentences of up to three years. Following the enactment of the amended law, the depenalisation but not decriminalisation of libel and slander was implemented in Serbia. This means that prison sentences for these offences were abolished, but still qualified as criminal rather than civil offences, as is the case in most democratic countries. In relation to this, the position of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is well known: full decriminalisation of libel and insult is the best possible and is only solution that fully complies with 21st-century media freedom standards. Libel and insult disputes should be dealt with exclusively by the civil courts.

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<sup>236</sup>Public statement by Commissioner for Information of Public Importance, dated 27 October 2008, see the web page: <http://www.poverenik.org.yu/saopstenja.asp> .

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup>Criminal Code (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 85/2005, 88/2005 – corr. and 107/2005 – corr.), adopted on 29 September 2005; came into effect on 1 January 2006.

## Media Freedom in Serbia in 2008

## VIII | Conclusions

- The conditions for the full autonomy of the media and for the enjoyment of media freedoms and rights, i.e. the rights that media and journalists exercise in the name of general public, do not yet exist in Serbia. The media system is characterised by a belated and incomplete transition, an accelerated pace of commercialisation in a cash-strapped and unregulated market, a drawn-out process of ownership transformation, weaknesses in legal regulations and law-enforcement institutions, the modest financial power of the media, a low level of professionalism and a large number of attacks on journalists. In a variety of ways, these all have an impact on the manner in which the media carries out its important social functions.
- According to available information, in 2008, there were 138 reported attacks on journalists in Serbia. Of this figure, 76 incidents were physical assaults on journalists and their property, while in 62 instances these were verbal attacks, pressures and various forms of thwarting a journalist's efforts to carry out his/her assignment. Eight court rulings against journalists were also recorded. Undoubtedly these figures pertaining to the number of attacks on journalists in the course of this year are not final. But these are the data which the OSCE managed to collect, using all available information that could be obtained.
- Out of 306 editors-in-chief participating in the survey, exactly half, i.e. 153 (50%) stated that their media outlets and journalists had been exposed to some sort of restriction to their media rights and freedoms during the course of 2008.
- Of the total number of those surveyed, 84.3% described the state of media rights and freedoms in Serbia in negative terms.

- According to editors-in-chief of Serbian media outlets, the main problem concerning media freedom comes down, above all, to its enjoyment in practice rather than to legal and institutional guarantees of media freedoms and rights.
- 43.9% of those polled are of the opinion that the laws regulating media sphere are good; 47.7% believe that the laws are inadequate, while the remaining 3% did not express a view on this issue. Also, 58.9% hold the view that there are no adequate media institutions in the country, 38.9% believe that there are, while the remaining 2.2% did not answer this question.
- As regards the comparison in the field of media freedoms between Serbia and neighbouring countries, 53.1% are of the opinion that the state of media freedoms is approximately the same, 17.4% believe that the situation in Serbia is worse than in other countries of the region, while 8.2% say the situation with media freedoms is better. Only 1% of those surveyed have not answered this question, whereas 20.3% have said that they are not in a position to compare the situation in Serbia with other countries as they lack the necessary information on the state of media freedoms elsewhere.
- Almost two-thirds of editors-in-chief hold the view that media freedoms mostly depend on general social context in which the media are operating (transition phase which the society is undergoing, political relations, dominant values in the society, etc.). Of the factors in the media sphere that are seen by editors-in-chief as crucial, the following stand out: economic capacity of the media and professionalism of journalists.
- With respect to the sources of encroachment on media freedoms, editors-in-chief hold the view that the gravest violations come from the three following sources: economic centres of power, state structures and political parties and organisations. Some editors-in-chief believe that criminal circles, ideologically organised groups, deviant individuals and media themselves are undermining media freedoms.
- As regards the violations of media rights and freedoms, editors-in-chief of Serbian media outlets believe that three forms of violations prevail over others: economic pressures (23.6%), attacks on journalists and threats (23%) and political pressures (20.9%). These are followed by concealment

and lack of access to information of public importance (11.4%); lack of professionalism on the part of journalists (7.9%); regulatory and judicial practice (5.3%); pressures exerted by the informal power-wielders (3.8%); owners' behaviour (1.8%) and other (2.3%).

- According to editors-in-chief in Serbia, the most desirable measure to advance media rights and freedoms would be to treat attacks on journalists in the same manner as attacks on on-duty public servants (52.3%). This is followed by: harsher punishments for perpetrators of attacks and threats (37.9%); more efficient court proceedings (33.3%); changes to the law qualifying libel and slander as criminal offences (30.4%); more effective police actions (29.7%); collective contracts (28.8%), and a higher degree of journalist professionalism, ethical conduct and self-criticism (27.5%). The answers provided by editors-in-chief show that least is expected from giving more publicity to instances of violations of media freedoms (14%) and activities of professional journalists' associations (21%)
- According to Serbian editors-in-chief, the media were most often targeted in the first quarter of 2008 with allegedly politically biased editorial policies (42%) and allegedly unpatriotic editorial policies (23%). Prevention of gathering information about participants in specific events was cited by 17% of editors-in-chief, while as many editors-in-chief say that the attackers alleged violations of their personal rights and interests as the reason for their attack. False, unprofessional or unethical reporting was the reason for violations of media freedoms according to 15% of those surveyed.
- Answers by editors-in-chief show that they responded passively to violations of their media freedoms and rights. Most (25%) had not undertaken any action in relation to the attacks, threats or pressures to which they were exposed in the course of 2008, irrespective of the motives for the attacks. The most frequent reaction was to inform their audiences about the incidents (24%). As regards more proactive responses to incidents, most editors-in-chief chose to inform professional organisations and associations, mostly domestic ones, and, at times, international organisations and associations as well (12%). Eight per cent of media outlets relied on their own devices and resources to improve collective and personal safety, while 3% of editors-in-chief had turned to the authorities for protection. Anoth-

er 7% reported the incidents to the police, while only 3% brought charges against the (unknown or known) perpetrators.

- The majority of editors-in-chief claim that the pressures, threats and attacks to which they have been exposed have not led to any changes in either the reporting of their media outlets or the behaviour of their journalists (65). In some media outlets, according to editors-in-chiefs' statements, changes that have occurred have been contrary to what the perpetrators of the attacks wanted to achieve. That is, 24 editors claim their newsroom staff have become even more consistent in their coverage of the issues that were the cause of the attacks. A slightly higher number of editors (33 in total) cite an opposite change in their media outlets' reporting. Namely, seven editors say their organisations are now reporting to a lesser degree on contentious issues or certain individuals and organisations, while 26 have noticed a change in the behaviour of some journalists, be it that they now tend to avoid "sensitive" topics (13) or that there is a higher degree of self-censorship in their reporting (13).

## IX | Recommendations

- Journalists who have been the victims of violations of media rights and freedoms in Serbia, as well as their media companies, should report each and every incident to the competent state organs, domestic and international journalist associations and international organisations. At the same time, in order to fulfil their mandates and meet their legal obligations, competent state organs must do everything in their power to investigate and prosecute cases concerning violations of media rights and freedoms, identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. The murders of Dada Vujasinović, Slavko Ćuruvija and Milan Pantić, as well as the attempt on the life of Dejan Anastasijević, must be solved. As long as the perpetrators of these grave crimes are not brought to justice, Serbia will not enjoy an acceptable level of media freedom.
- The privatisation of media outlets in Serbia should be continued and completed in its entirety. The media will be only relieved of interference and pressure on the part of political structures and economic centres of power to change their editorial policies if they are financially independent and not financed from the budget.
- In cooperation with international organisations and journalist associations, the government of the Republic of Serbia should focus its expertise and funds in 2009 on strengthening the institutions monitoring the implementation of media laws and journalists' associations (NUNS and UNS). For their part, NUNS and UNS should bring the process of forming the Press Council to completion.
- The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, as well as other ministries whose mandates may include the drafting of a media law or a piece of

legislation related to the media sphere, should bring the process of reform of media legislation to conclusion in 2009. This applies, above all, to the adoption of the Law on Media Concentration Prevention and Ownership Transparency, the Law on Electronic Media, amendments and addenda to the Broadcasting Law and the Law on Public Information, and others.

- In the meantime, the implementation of existing media laws should be improved. This relates to the Public Information Act, Free Access to Information Act, Public Broadcasting Act, Advertising Act, and Telecommunications Act.
  
- To solve the problem of media rights and freedoms in Serbia in a systemic manner, a strategy for the advancement of media freedoms, which sets out clear guidelines regarding the directions for the activities of all competent institutions, should be drafted. Representatives of all competent ministries, journalists' associations, non-governmental organisations, media industry, international organisations and independent media experts should take part in drafting the strategy.

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## Media Freedom in Serbia in 2008