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Editorial

Key problems that journalists are faced with nowadays and recommendations for their solving have been emphasized through several workshops covering the issue of labor rights of journalist, union organizing and protection of free speech. Several workshops were organized in many Bosnian cities by the Association of BiH Journalists and financed by the Embassy of Kingdom of Norway as well.

Poor social status has become a constant and as a problem is increasing and also becoming an obstacle in terms of quality reporting and sustaining the standards of journalism as professional trade. Loyalty, censorship and auto censorship have become constituent parts of most media houses, particularly local media houses that are financially dependent on budget grants provided by their founders. Violation of labor rights of journalists have now days become a common occurrence. Illegal work, misuses of short – term contracts, unpaid overtime, weekend work, low wages / salaries, cash in hands are altogether raw examples of pressures and violations of journalists' rights.

During these workshops, journalists have, with good and justified reason, accused labor inspections and lack of legal and systematic protection of journalists. However, they also admitted the role of their own responsibility for such situation. Disunity amongst journalists, lack of knowledge about their legal rights, accepting censorship and lack of willingness to fight for their own rights represented the reasons that resulted in the existing relationship of governing officials towards journalism as professional trade. In most cities and towns, journalists were resentfully stating that it was ironic that reports were made about other professional trade, under rain and snow and that other fields managed to acquire all privileges that journalists could only dream of, while their own problems are simply put aside.

Still, affirmative samples of fights for labor rights bring the hope and possibility of restoring dignity to journalism as professional trade alive. Although, most journalists avoid Union organizing in media not willing to create conflict with their employers, all polls and analysis taken amongst journalists, proved that the situation was much better in media houses where Unions operate functionally. Finally, it is crucial, as claimed by one of the lecturers during the workshop, personal desire of each individual person was to preserve his or her own dignity and acquire labor rights. This e- bulletin edition shall cover the issue of journalists' rights and Union protection by the following persons: **Mariana Šarčević**, president of the Media and Graphics Union in RS, **Amer Toskić**, president of Graphics, Publishers and Media Workers Union in BiH, **Andrijana Pisarević** president of the Press RS Union Organization, **Amra Butković**, TV SA Journalist and **Mirsada Čaluk**, freelance journalist from Kakanj.

Adis Šušnjar, BH Journalists Association

Events

15 Dec 2015

Measuring results of clinetelism Index in media in South East Europe

Sarajevo Media Center hosted the conference for journalists and presented the Measuring results of clinetelism Index in media in South East Europe. Results of clinetelism Index in media in South East Europe (MCI) were simultaneously presented in six countries where experimental survey had been conducted. These countries included Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania, and results were present precisely at 10 a.m.

[Details](#)

Confident And Secured Jobs As Pre-Condition For Media Liberties

By: *Mariana Šarčević*

According to Union data (statistics), labor rights and pursuant to labor itself, are violated to the large extent in companies where staff / employees work with no union organization in comparison with companies where unions operate. Considering that 60% of media workers / staff in BiH work are not members of any union, it is easy to conclude to that labor rights violation appear in at least the above mentioned percentage (60%). Media staff should utilize more legal possibilities and fight their own way of fighting for rights they are entitled to.

According to Media and Graphics Union of the Republic of Spoke outlined that violations of labor rights include the following: working with no contract with an employer, misuse of contracts regarding temporary contracts, very low salaries / wages, irregular payment of salaries / wages, partial payment based on "cash in hands" basis, not paying for legal contributions including retirements and health care funds, not paying for daily hot meal allowances, not paying for annual bonuses, including holiday money, transportation costs not being covered, including similar additional bonuses, not paying for any overtime work and holiday period etc. In reality it means that anyone not having legally valid employment contract may get sacked in no time even by receiving a mobile phone text message on Sunday evening with no particular reason and instead of receiving a well

Events

11 Dec 2015

Assaults / attacks against journalists must not be tolerated

Participants at the debate on non – punishing and punishing of assaults / attacks against journalists in BiH emphasized that it would be necessary to demand once again that any assault / attack against journalists was to be officially treated as assault / attack committed against 1 public officials. The conclusion, at the end of this debate confirmed that in making public aware and sensible regarding this issue, more solidarity amongst journalists may be required. Journalists should make more reports about cases where their colleagues have been assaulted/attacked and remain assertive and persistent in terms of demanding and requesting legal aid and protection. Amendments should also be initiated with the purpose of having journalists legally treated as public officials, including the establishing of Fund for Journalists' Protection and Legal Aid; more excessive engagement by the Ombudsmen Institution in BiH, including the Agency for Equality in order to provide journalists with better protection and security.

[Details](#)

8 Dec 2015

Journalists' problems to be publically exposed

Journalists of Zenica – Dobojo Canton invited her colleagues to finally start reporting on labor rights, to show more solidarity and courage in preserving dignity for themselves and journalism as professional trade. During the workshop on labor rights of journalists and union organizing, held in Zenica, journalists emphasized numerous problems they have been facing though they accepted and took responsibility for the situation they have been in recently. They all agreed there have been not enough solidarity among themselves and no will in order to solve their present problems during daily reports and while pointing out the violations of labor rights in other trades as well.

[Details](#)

3 Dec 2015

Journalists in Birac region demand better work conditions with reporters being in worst situation

“Journalism profession in Birac region, as well as in the rest of the country has been degraded and journalists fight to preserve and survive”, claimed journalists in Srebrenica during the workshop on labor rights and union based aid and protection of journalists. Srebrenica journalists stated that low wages / salaries, occasional payments and illegal work outlined crucial problems of journalists working in smaller areas with reporter being particularly in very bad situation. The situation may be changed, they all agreed, if journalists finally begin reporting about their own problems and show more courage and be more active in demanding better working conditions associated and aided by union officials and journalists' associations.

[Details](#)

30 Nov 2015

Legal practice, regarding the implementation of the Law on Protection against Defamation, seems to instigate and encourage auto censorship

Media and journalists, including freedom of speech, suffer most harm, due to obvious disadvantages, in terms of the implementation of the Law on Protection against Defamation. Court practice, on the other hand, encourage auto censorship. These were just some of many problems emphasized at the Conference on the implementation of the Law on Protection against Defamation, held in Banjaluka.

[Details](#)

earned salary he / she had worked for, work on “pro bono” or even, after having a long time service in particular company, he / she may be retired; or even instead of having transportation costs covered or daily hot meal allowance, he / she may become a sponsor of that company by financing and funding same travel costs or daily hot meal in his / her own office.

Not to mention the number of vacant journalists' or similar media staff posts / job vacancies are buried among unpaid overtime. If we add more problems, to these list of the above mentioned problems, including the problem of stress, and other pressures that media staff (employees) have been exposed to due to their work, it consequently becomes visible that the sharp side of media pencil has become blunt in editing office already, media employees are at least deprived of rights.

On the other hand, the protection of rights of any employee in media field, including other media staff as well, is ensured through Union organization. Liberty of Union organizing in BiH is ensured through many international conventions signed and verified by BiH, and also, through constitutions and legal provisions in BiH. By becoming a Union member, workers above anything else, have the opportunity to take active part in drafting legal solutions that are directly related to workers' rights at work; follow their implementation and take legal actions through Union fight, guaranteed by laws in order to acquire those rights. Any employee being a member of the Union is entitle to legal aid free of charge, including material aid and united with his workmates, he / she appear much stronger in negotiations with his / her employee in regard with working conditions. Precondition of any Union operation is getting fully familiar with all rights workers / employees are entitled to, including rules of Union operations and functioning of the Union itself, and the Union actually represents the only organization that may provide workers / employees with this kind of education. Taking into consideration the percentage of media staff and media workers, joint into Union organization, it is quite clear that people working in media filed do not seem to make use of union joining advantages.

Some reasons, why in fact, media staff is not sufficiently protected, often include fear from their employers, based on identical legal provisions which guarantee workers to demonstrate the liberty and freedom of choice in terms of organizing into Unions. Employers are disallowed, pursuant to any fundament to have any influence over Union organization, including its members, or to have any influence on Union operations, including sacking / firing employees / workers as a result of their organizing into Unions.

Also, employers themselves, and sometimes even media staff seem to forget that satisfied worker is always much more motivate, encouraged and thus more efficient in his / her own work. Additionally, most developed countries and economically stable counties record high percentage of Union forming, not the other way around. More reasons for limited percentage of Union organizing lay in division amongst the employees in media filed, personalization of the Union itself and insufficient mutual trust resulting in workers joining the Union in order to acquire personal, but also mutual and joint interests.

Unfortunately, we could say that “seventh force „seems to be scared from

Detail from the workshops on labor rights and trade union protection of journalists, Banja Luka, 26 Nov 2015



Events

27 Nov 2015

Individual interests disallow union establishing

“Journalists from Tuzla Canton are not organized through Union and are unaware of their rights and accordingly, often encounter violation of human rights and their employers misuse them on cheap labor basis”, participants claimed during the workshop on the protection of labor rights and union organization, held in Tuzla,

Workshop participants agreed that Tuzla journalists are unfamiliar with their rights and avoid organizing and establishing union in order to avoid conflicts with their employers or local governing officials that provide them with budget grants.

Edina Fazlic, president of the RTV Tuzla Canton Union stated that union organizing is best way to fight for rights and many journalists seem to avoid this Union organization.

Details

26 Nov 2015

Should journalists fail to respect themselves they cannot expect the public to respect them in return

“If journalists do not respect themselves they cannot expect the public to respect them”, a female speaker claimed, during the introductory speech at the workshop held in Banjaluka. The workshop covered the issues on journalists’ rights and joining into unions.

Marina Saracevic, union president of the media and graphic workers in RS emphasized during the introductory speech, that journalists may manage to handle misuses in capitalists system, only by displaying mutual solidarity and respect for each other.

Most often violations of labor rights included illegal, unregistered and unrecorded work, extra time work, holiday work, incomplete annual holiday leave, very low salaries / wages, cash in hands etc. They agreed that it would be necessary to intensify reports in public on problems that journalists often face.

Details

22 Nov 2015

Anniversary of 20 years of peace in BiH marked in Banjaluka Journalists’ Club

Banjaluka Journalists’ Club held a debate titled: “Dayton – Headline”. All journalists that had been reporting from Banjaluka twenty years ago about the Peace Agreement participated in this debate.

Anton Kasipovic, vice president of the RS government and minister of justice took part here, since he had been a long term journalist and editor of “Glas Srpske”, as well as Milkica Milojevic, Branislav Bozic and Slobodan Pešević.

Details

itself and feels unable for fight for their own jobs and better working conditions at work.

Having in mind problems that workers / employees in media field are faced with at their work places, legal possibilities at their disposal, including why they refuse to join Unions, it becomes clear that the fight for better working conditions is in hands of those working in media houses. No Union is almighty, but it may be the only source that provides legal means of fight for the workers / employees for better position in companies they are engaged with. Samples of “Dita” Tuzla factory to Tobacco Factory in Banjaluka or Prnjavor and Srbac Radio Station, confirm that the success in every collective negotiation, every strike or legal charges pressed by the workers, can be guaranteed only if workers remain and sustain united. If workers / employees in media field take no actions in terms of organizing, situation could go from bad to worse and this means the creation of complete slavery system in a relationship between the employer and employee.

This could also result in a complete crush of a public reputation of the profession including professional standards as well. Media community, reflected through its workers engaged in media field, must be aware that good salaries / wages and generally speaking, more stable jobs represent precondition of every freedom in all aspects of the word freedom. The question is, is it willing to do that?

Labor – Legal Position of Journalists

By: Amer Toskić

Workshops held and organized by the Association of BiH Journalists in cities and towns throughout BiH outlined basic causes of poor and unsatisfactory labor – legal position of journalist and also brief awareness regarding these issues. Workers / employees do not seem interested about these issues; pessimism prevails towards activities of Unions, including membership, inadequate awareness regarding labor rights, insufficient time for active part in Union activities, material and financial dependence, political party biasness and lack of courage.

Unaccepting and pessimism represents lack of power but also serves as an excuse for not making enough effort to introduce certain changes, considering that fear of financial dependence, fear of losing job and other means of marketing is ever present amongst journalists.

Lack of education and awareness regarding facts that concern professional journalism as trade in particular is absurd, since journalists make daily reports on violation of labor rights of other trades and occupations, and almost make no reports about their own problems about the same issue. Unfortunately, Union is still considered, by majority, as “winter groceries” provider, instead of being considered as mechanism that may assist in negotiation processes and demanding labor rights, including better working conditions.

Journalists also make their position disastrous because they remain silent and do not want to learn about their own rights and accordingly fight for them. Journalists work overtime; their wages / salaries are often late and are often subject to mobbing and bullying, including political pressures. The fact is that journalists are not organized through Unions and without this kind of organizing there is very little they can achieve. The only way to im-

Detail from the workshops on labor rights and trade union protection of journalists, Srebrenica, 26 Nov 2015



Events

18 Nov 2015

Two days training held for female and male editors as part of the “Promotion of dialogue through media content” project

Two days workshop gathered 17 journalists and editors from both private and public media houses, including journalist agencies and online media houses from around BiH.

This training was aimed to develop communication platform (communication space) for continuous information exchange between media and civil society organizations, including the creation of media contents which shall promote coexistence, trust and stable peace, as well as significant inclusion of young and vulnerable groups into public dialogue regarding the future of BiH.

[Details](#)

Press Releases

3 Dec 2015

Protests held against verbal assault on BN TV crew in Milici

Board of Directors of Association of BiH Journalists and Free Media Help Line directed most acrid protest to Gojko Vasic, director of the Police of Republic of Srpska and Dragan Lukac, Minister of Interior Affairs of Republic of Srpska since both parties failed to take legal measures (defined by the law) and provide journalists from Bijeljina to perform their work under safe and secure conditions, during the shooting of TV report on SNSD public rally held on 3 December in Milici. BiH journalist are now mostly concerned about the fact that assaults that journalists had been exposed to in Milici, keep occurring continuously and this usually happened when journalists tend to publically outline critics addressed against the current situation in this small town, including current affairs in Boksit Mine Field.

This included critics addressed against business operations taken by Rajko Dukic, mine manager and also SNSD highly ranked official.

[Details](#)

could work under regular conditions, actually if employers could fulfill their duties and respect journalists' rights. It seems that journalists' knowledge is very limited in terms of their labor rights although their professional trade should comprehend knowledge about many fields and this can be marked as yet another great issue and problem most media staff are faced with.

The reality proves that most of our colleagues have no adequate contracts including regular monthly wages / salaries pursuant to their educational level and most of them work with no legal document records. They are often engaged on a short term basis (contracts). Some of them are engaged without contracts hoping that one day they will get a regular job - although they have no clue how to get that job either.

There are very few journalists that, for instance, have all duties and levies paid for 10 years of their service with no debt lefts and there are number of those getting entire wage / salary amounts paid directly to their bank accounts, instead of getting cash in an envelope. Anything is possible these days including fictional travel reports being filled in, overtime not being recorded, cash grants unpaid, including company daily meals also unpaid etc. Yes, this payment is an obligation for all workers but obviously not for journalists. Many journalists have been working over a decade

pose certain changes is to have all journalists and other media staffs join Unions in their own media houses or individually join the Union of Graphics, Journalists and Media Staff, also including membership with journalists clubs and Association of BiH Journalists. Joint efforts by Unions and professional organizations are the only way to make some progress.

Workers and journalists shall definitely have less protection as soon as the law on labor in FBiH is passed and this is why all journalists that have not yet joined the Unions could find themselves in an awkward position. There have been lots of cases of violations of labor rights with some verdicts being passed to the benefit of journalists. The point is to seek courage and fight for your own rights.

At present we live rotten variety of capitalism where workers, including journalists as well, are used excessively and paid very little by their employers. Today, it is required to demand and request rights and possess knowledge in order to implement this knowledge.

Lack of time available for active contribution in Union organizations or Union organizing is often mentioned nowadays. This must be neither excuse nor reason accepted, because the above mentioned activities in terms of Unions are limited by time. Due to this kind of relationship financial instability may occur before one could join the Union and take active part in it and that is how one could make it clear to his / her employer about his / her opinion, attitude and shall also point out that employers do respect their own work, skills and knowledge. Should one decide to favor political party or parties, one must be aware of the fact that all journalists lasted in their own profession just as long as their political party interests consumed them.

Continuous and permanent fear from repression of any kind may result in quicker failure and decline, instead of creating courageous and journalists with high level of self – esteem and self – confidence.

This is yet another attempt in line aimed to raise awareness among media staff and instigate them to finally take destiny into their own hands with joined forces through Union organizing as this may be the only way to make achievement, associated by other, both professional and legal institutions, achieve restoring their dignity and gain respect they well deserve.

Journalists are workers too

By: *Andrijana Pisarević*

The biggest problem that journalists face is that they seem to be forgetting that they are, above other things, workers too and that editing offices they go to on daily basis, actually represent their work place. They need to realize that writing, reporting and field work are indeed hard and exhausting work they must encounter, it's not just journalists' enthusiasm, in fact it is job that one could only do because he/she loves and truly enjoys doing it, rather than doing it in order to make a living out of it. All of this could be considered as passion and love to journalism trade if only journalists



Media on Media

10 Dec 2015

Slavko Matanovic relieved from his duties of the Minister of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Members of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed the replacement of the Minister of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina Slavko Matanovic and Deputy Minister of Defense of BiH Emir Suljagic, with 22 votes in favor, 10 against and 8 abstentions, with sufficient entity majority.

[Details](#)

3 Dec 2015

Bill on Amendments on the Law on Free Access to Information defined

Government of the Federation of BiH defined Bill on Amendments on the Law on Free Access to Information defined and forwarded it to regular parliament procedure.

According to the Government's statement, the purpose of these amendments was to reach full unity of legal solutions as constituent part of this law, including simpler, quicker and more efficient acquiring of rights for access to information.

[Details](#)

2 Dec 2015

Nezavisne novine: Kovac appointed new director of CRA?

Predrag Kovac, municipality mayor of Istocna Ilidza, long term SDS politician and former vice president of SDS political party is most probably going to be appointed new director of the Communication Regulatory Agency in BiH (origin. RAK) as soon as all necessary and legal requests conditions are fulfilled, claim Nezavisne novine source.

[Details](#)

20 Nov 2015

Press release by Press Council of BiH

Press Council of BiH releases a statement demanding urgent actions taken by the official authorities of BiH to prevent public hate being spread, agitating rhetoric and hate speech on internet platforms.

[Details](#)

19 Nov 2015

Teve.ba: Digital signal testing – coming soon

Digitalization in BiH: By informing the members of the Commission for Traffic and Communication of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH House of Representatives, regarding the digitalization process in BiH, Slavko Matanovic, mentioned that the problem with shift from ground to digital broadcasting of TV program, was lack of corporation of public RTV services that would eventually manage and supervise the digital network.

He reminded that forming the corporation of public RTV services was defined by the law. Matanovic estimated that one of the solutions would be forming a substitute managing mechanism, that is, operator that should be fully and legally licensed and authorized by the Communication Regulatory Agency in BiH (origin. RAK), thus operating with entire digital system.

[Details](#)

without a single day being recorded in their employment labor record book and official inspectors do not recognize their names and faces they seen on TV and fail to identify and outline this occurrence as illegal work. No one seems to have audacity to report their employers to official and authorized inspections for having illegal workers (journalists), including contract breakings by any employer.

We realize these problems only when we get in financial troubles, including health problems as well. When we face health problems we realize that we cannot go to see our doctor because our employers had not been paying for health insurance for years. When female journalists become mothers and cannot have maternity leave or even get sacked for being pregnant and giving birth to their baby. We particularly seem to wake when we need to solve our problems with housing and we have no chance to take a bank loan in our thirties since we had not been engaged legally.

Unfortunately, this picture represents almost every editing office in BiH and journalists mostly seem to ignore it, although they are asked to identify these problems, describe them thus getting full attention from their colleagues and public. These problems are never discussed openly; they are never solved as if they do not relate to workers or people as a matter of fact. Although we manage to twist brown coins in our pockets we seem to be proud with our so called star statuses and even more with our ignorance of legal issues and a necessity to get educated and join our forces through clubs, associations and most importantly – unions. Actually, many people find union ridiculous and even consider it a system puppet. The rumor has it that unions are hopeless and that unions protect education and public sector employees, metal industry, textile industry and health department employee. Journalists find unions unnecessary since many of them are convinced that apparent public celebrity statutes are sufficient enough to provide them with decent living. And while education sector employees appear happy since they shall receive travel money as their new year's presents out of nowhere (and they shall receive this legally anyway), journalists seem to be dreaming about their regular wages / salaries in envelopes, tax – free and with no records whatsoever. Has any media employee ever gotten any bonuses, holiday reimbursements, daily hot meal money or travel money? Perhaps you should ask journalists about this; they won't even know that all these indemnities are not reserved for public sector staff only.

And this exactly what employers are looking for. They pay "peanuts" to journalists and suffocate them with lots of work; they keep telling them that unions are nothing but a bunch of senseless people reflecting an overall situation in the country. They tell them about economic crisis and God knows what; making thus most of their profits through their employers that humbly fulfill everything they have been asked to do. If journalists could only consider themselves as workers perhaps they would know that changes can be made and would realize that they should not compete with each other. Media houses they are engaged with are completions, but journalists are not and shall not be; at least not when it comes to defending labor rights and fight for decent life and revival of professional journalism trade dignity.

Journalists, including education sector staff, metal industry workers and health department staff should be aware that they do represent a significant force when they stand together in front of their employers. Without this force there can be no stable journalism, web sites, TV, radio etc, since employers are easy to discover, but also easy to replace and this is the key in order to solve this problem. We must change our consciousness so our trade could have its dignity restored; to fight and negotiate with our employers. We shall restore dignity to our trade and gain public respect only when we show respect for ourselves and this is not an easy task to do. However with right approach, courage and solid knowledge of labor rights, union could attain more than any individual with



Job Vacancies

FACE TV announces job vacancy posts for several positions

Open positions include: video actualize engineer, graphic actualize engineer, editor, cameraman, sound engineer and program editor.

Deadline for application is **24 Dec 2015**

[Details](#)

Buka.com seek associates

Buka.com, a local web site seeks two associates for their editing office. Their duties shall include cooperation, correspondence and writing articles covering the issues of social and political reality in their own neighborhoods. Buka.com editing office is located in Banjaluka so candidates (that may live close by) that are willing to perform journalism duties on daily basis are encouraged to apply.

Deadline for application is **till vacancies are filled** according to planned number of new associates in this company.

[Details](#)

Sony World Photography Awards

World Photographic Organization announced a contest competition for ninth executive Sony World Photography Awards. Some categories open for competition include nature themes, lifestyle, art, culture, portrait, sport, architecture.

Deadline for application is **12 January 2016**.

[Details](#)

Open call for film submission for BELDOCS 2016

International Documentary Film Festival BELDOCS invites authors, producers and distributors to submit feature documentary for the ninth edition of the Festival which will be held in May 2016. Submission deadline is **1 February 2016**.

[Details](#)

Unfortunately, this purchasing officer may be the person “with recommendations” and pursuant to this, he or she may acquire famous “8+8+8”. Media worker, while choosing this kind of job, had never thought about this, but is she or he now discriminated against consequently? He or she definitely is in public sector, since he / she may not have weekends off and even if he / she do get paid, that amount is a misery, in terms of proper weekend payments elsewhere. She / he may not have right for additional days off for Labor Day holidays or New Year holidays. She / he may get additional days off for extreme working condi-

celebrity status that twist brow coins in his pockets.

No employer shall be happy with union being established in his company and he / she shouldn't be. He / she may be upset for a while and threats and blackmailing may follow, including notice and wages reducing, but he / she would eventually have to adapt and accept employees as his / her business partners. Why? This would happen when one establish a union, employer cannot change salary amount without previous negotiations and because lawyers shall support employees, press charges against employers and should it be necessary, negotiate on employee's behalf. Employees shall quickly find themselves in a negotiating position with their employer and demand end request; change weights on a scale and request conditions to their own benefit. Employees shall be entitled to hold strikes, since only union would be authorized to organize and announce strikes. Only when employers realize that we can learn to protect ourselves and that the company does indeed depend on our works; employees shall realize that the power is in their hands. Employers and entrepreneurs cunningly misuse lack of knowledge and fear among employees. What is to be frightened of when employers depend of employees work and when they owe employees not the other way around?

Alarm Bells Ringing for the Organization of Journalists

What is the legal and labor status like for journalist and other media staff?

By: *Amra Butković*

Low salaries, no legal (social, superannuation and health care) contributions paid by the employees, contributions paid for minimum registered salaries, annual holiday bonuses out of the question, extra working hours not being paid, weekend work obligatory and still unpaid. Work under extraordinary conditions employers usually treat with “simulative” sentences: “If you're not willing to do this, there are plenty of unemployed who are”. On the other hand, fighting and combat through flooded areas, fire sites, assembly and parliamentary halls with majority parties usually extending constitutional sessions for hours making it look like a marathon, strikes lasting for several days, unsecured and unprotected journalists' crews experience all of the above mentioned as regular and standard part of their job description, since these represent “the beauty of being a journalist”. Rubina Cengic, a female journalist also agrees about this.

CAUTION JOURNALISTS!

Has the time for Union establishing for all media staff finally come? Alarm bells for some kind of organizing have already been ringing. However, we should take into consideration yet another eventual trap that those “producing goods” in media houses fell into. Namely, media workers and those calculating our salaries / wages (no matter how low they may be), legal department staff and associated departments, however whose rights are more respected in media houses – those that produce / manufacture (journalists, cameraman, editors, sound assistants etc) or for instance, a purchasing officer that may be in charge with office supplies?





tions, if their employers like them. Private sector is not even to taken into serious consideration regarding this issue. Media worker working in private sector literally rely on mercy by their employer, with very limited number of exceptions. My only comfort is that private sector entrepreneurs display equal treatment for both, journalists and office clerks, including purchasing officers.

“Frankly speaking, Unions do exist in large media houses, including public broadcasters, while in small editing offices, journalists do not even take into serious consideration Union forming, am I am afraid that most media owners / entrepreneurs are unprepared to accept the idea of having their own employees organized in such way. It would be interesting to hear someone from media houses with large number of employees, such as “Avaz”, N1 or Aljazeera, to have their say about Union organization establishing as these information would at least be

broadcasted publically”, stated Cengic.

Union is the only body that may do something regarding the improvement of legal and labor status of media staff, but the question is which Union may be capable of doing something like this, Sinisa Vukelic, a local journalists wanders and also adds that Union must be respectable, massive and be led and managed by strong leaders and managers., that may fight and acquire rights for journalists accordingly. Present Union officials, Vukelic reckons, seem weak since, for instance, there are two Unions in public service broadcasters with a single purpose – so the Unions could get closer to Management Board officials. This is why the Unions have no strength necessary. “The fact is that media ownership went through certain changes. Private entrepreneurs, in quite words, are not benevolent about Union forming. There is however, bright side in Republic of Srpska, regarding this issue; there is first Union in private media sector. “Press”, local daily paper did come up with particular results. Unions are formed and established when the situation is quiet calm and reliable in order to react, reply and respond should its action become necessary when things go wrong”, concluded Vukelic.

Serbia and Croatia with Journalists’ Unions; Montengero with Media Union

The situation is not much better in neighboring countries either, however, from our point of view, it seems that they show more dignity in fight for their rights and are consequently more respected and their combat more appreciated generally speaking. I refuse to accept the fact that our colleagues being “temporarily engaged” in BiH are more valued than people that had gained their experience, however, regarding this issue, a female bank officer managed to “calm me down” this summer. If she were to be believed, she claimed that most of her clients were journalists. “You should see the wages of those coming from Serbia and Croatia?”

I went out being ashamed to think about my own salary and thinking about salaries that most of my colleagues receive and who attempt to create something out of impossible. Therefore, good luck to all of us as luck may be our only savior!

Speaking About Our Problems As Well

By: Mirsada Čaluk

Accepting journalism as my life time job I have many time come across famous proverb:

“If it wasn’t broadcasted in media - it had never happened”. Through almost a decade of doing this work at local media levels, I became bound to this particular proverb since at the end it was me that also began using it.

From day to day, from year to year, journalists’ fight for public interest never ended or at least it had never should have ended. In an environment that we are surrounded with, there have been lots of different people. Some of them who managed to joined governing parties made some benefit out of this, while on the other hand, those who decided to remain non-allied, apparently due to their personal beliefs of operating independently in media and remaining objective have been going through difficult times and hence we could say they have been burdening within slavery system they are engaged with.

Their work is marked with violation of fundamental human rights including regular payments and the amount of wages / salaries they receive, pension, retirement and health care fund contributions, duration of holidays, overtime payment and working on holidays, stimulation payments and bonuses, hot meal money, transportation costs etc. and other associated reimbursements for workers. Eternal fight with editors – in - chief that in most cases have no journalism education at all additional problem is also

Upcoming Events

- **Workshop** on protection of labor rights of journalists in Bihac
- **Opening of the Journalists Club** in Mostar
- **Media Circle** project research

Still, unsatisfied journalists and other media staff grumble through editing offices and offices seek anyone to blame and refuse to admit that they are partially responsible for the state they are in. However, no Law or sub – legal act strictly defines who is entitled to become a journalist and this enables any employer with countless number during the employment.

If we take this aspect into consideration that the situation is rather alarming. Instead of fighting for their legal rights, we encounter groups of people, so called journalists that work overtime in order to get full time jobs in their own branch or employees that, according to their educational level, are considered not - qualified for certain vacant job positions, so why would they resent about anything when they consider those job positions as their personal career success. In all this mess, those with degrees in journalism consider local media mere passing point on their careers. They too murmur and but their superiors do not seem to notice their opposing and at the end, they almost always find themselves in a standard lifetime groove based on “something is better than nothing” philosophy.

Anyway, I discovered that this problem concerns me as well. After being informed by my employer that there would be no money but the work would have to be done, we found out that “we employees would soon be registered in an Unemployment Department if we want to”, I decided to register with the Unemployment Department, thus being able to work on part time basis on some journalists’ projects. My agony began with the Unemployment Department check in. I was engaged for eight years and eight months in local private TV house as journalist, reporter, TV host, IP editor and I discovered that my employer paid contributions for my retirement, pension and health care fund only for three (3) months. My former company showed absolutely no interest to pay for all of the above mentioned contributions in order to be entitled to receive the unemployment social security funds.

I was left with no choice but to sue my former company and demand my labor rights that had, speaking of the subject, been violated almost the entire time while being engaged with this local TV house. BAM 370.00 of monthly earnings, with no money for hot daily meals, no money for transportation costs, holiday money, overtime, weekend time, holiday time, no holiday leave allowed with working time starting at 8:30 a.m. until “you’re done with everything” (which meant till 7 p.m. most of the time) and often even longer than this period, field work on distant territories and following the work of Municipal Council meeting sessions, Cantonal Assembly meeting sessions with no daily allowances (per diem) either, finding my own style and struggling with make- up prior to TV show commencement etc.

Solution: Engage lawyer and press legal charges

Small community, private local media house, entrepreneur and leading people with exceptional social, political and particularly religious influence, supported by the team of layers engaged specially for my case on one hand and I, as common journalist, along with a single lawyer and hope that justice will prevail, on the other hand.

Two years of fear followed, including regrets I often sensed, listening of different stories, I was often ignored by former friends, people I used to know and people that have been in any way associated with any kind of business with this TV house. Labor dispute commenced in October 2012 and terminated in October 2014. Verdict brought favored my case and this is when blackmailing began instigated by my former employer through another person who would call me a “sponsored girl”, who threatening me at the same time that they would close down all company’s accounts if unless I accept their invitation for a “cup of coffee” so we could “work things out”.

Pressured buy my lawyer, the amounts have been paid, pursuant to the decision by the Municipal Court in Kakanj, bearing in mind that payments for contributions (retirement, pension and health care service funds) were executed without specific details of the receiver, also not specifying particular period they had been paid for and without submission of requested M – 4 form . Enforcement proceedings are still under way.

In the meantime, my intentions to find new job became a utopia since I was convinced and pretty much certain that my former employer obstructed my new job with any company in Kakanj, with different kinds of pressure imposed my eventual new employers.

My former workmates also take special part in my case. Affirmative and positive solution of my case sort of gave them some hope that there is a light on the end of the tunnel, but influence and threats by their employers and superiors disallows them even to be spotted in my company.

From remaining four media houses in Kakanj, radio, newspapers and two web sites, including two freelance journalists, not one had the audacity to mention my case.



Free Media Help Line

Current Cases:

Zeljka Domazet – Dzevad Nekić, Deputy Chief Auditor of the Audit Office of the Institutions of BiH verbally assaulted Zeljka Domazet, a female journalist working for “Glas Srpske”, in early morning hours on 13 October 2015. Mr. Nekić directed severe insults against our colleague and threatened her with court charges. Association of BiH Journalists and Free Media Help Line issued a press release and sent an official notice to official police authorities.

Nezavisne.Com web site – Nezavisne.com web site was targeted by hacker attack with the purpose of disabling journalists of this web site to spread and distribute information through this web site. Association of BiH Journalists and Free Media Help Line issued a press release and addressed the Administration Office of Police Criminal Department demanding an investigation.

BN TV – During the recording of public rally organized by SNSD, held on 2 December 2015 in Milici, the BN TV crew were verbally assaulted by SNSD followers and members, threatening the TV crew staff that they will be disabled and deprived of recording the rally. Association of BiH Journalists and Free Media Help Line issued a press release. They also sent an official notice to Gojko Vasić, director of the Police of republic of Srpska and Dragan Lukac, Minister of Internal Affairs.

Brave workmates would phone me, enquire about my case, and pay respect to, as they claim, my courage to face local powerful people.

Their fear was to some extent justified, since the unemployment rate is increasing and the market competition has become tougher and in order to murmur and oppose against your own employer does not seem desirable at least.

Little local community, we all know each other and most people are related one way or another and political influence on media houses all together creates poor, scary, frightened, obeying, unmotivated and auto censorship based journalists, unprepared to fight for their rights including professional rights as well. Public solidarity, looking from working environment perspective, due to their fear, has omitted as well, although most of them have been working more than 15 years and is still waiting for pension, retirement and health care service funds to be paid on their behalf. MZ case and charges I had pressed against my former employer has to certain amount “improved their working status”, in terms of salary/wages increase to BAM 410.00. They even got a microwave so they can cook their own food and the check in system for staff has also been installed. This is sad indeed!!!

I shall recall the old proverb “If it wasn’t broadcasted in media - it had never happened”. I have never actually wanted to speak in public, even during the moments when the verdict was passed to my favor. I refused to post in local media houses in Kakanj, since my victory in this labor dispute was the victory of all journalists. It proved that journalists are powerful and they can give some space to this issue and make it appear visible and obvious in public as well.

Court decision was not adequately followed by media in our local community, which would reinforce it and make it more serious in terms of employers and his / her relationship towards the employees. However it did point out, to certain extent, that journalists were interested in battle for their fight.

Fear caused by pressure imposed by the superiors or poor financial state in community cannot be justified and be the reason for not taking any action required. An individual finds it difficult to fight for his / her own rights because it requires better solidarity level amongst journalists. Their Union organization would surely contribute in changes of journalists’ attitudes and better obedience of the legal provisions by the employer.

Smaller communities, at first sight, seem thankless for such organizing but if supported by colleagues from larger centers this can be overcome.

In my case the support provided by the Association of BiH Journalists was limitless and gave me strength and faith that I may succeed in the battle for my rights. It was their support that made me expose my story in public and I hereby confirm that it is essential to talk and discuss about our problems in order to have economic and social protection thus not being biased and operate as independent journalists fighting for public interest.

Impressum

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