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Female journalists in BiH: Professional occupation as “justification” for assaults, attacks, insults, offences, swearing, threats and “sexism”



“Second hand women”, “sluts”, “freaks”, “whores” and “bitches” were just some of many terms used by social media users, anonymous commentators in web sites, but also used by state officials and highly ranked politicians, used daily to „venerate“ and “treat” female journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is almost impossible to make a list of all terms used in this case, including verbal assaults, physical attacks etc. that female journalists have been exposed to since the end of the war until present time and all because of one simple reason –they have chosen to become professional journalists.

BiH female journalists mostly do not recognize violence or assaults as far as gender – based violence is concerned and this is what represents a concerning factor in this specific chain. Their most common reaction is “let go of it”, or “just ignore it”, or “block the person who had been insulting and offending you on your face book profile, including the person who had been threatening you”, or “do not reply with an offence to a politician who had been offending you – because he is “popular and well – known” official who is very powerful and influential figure in our country and you are nothing but “mere” and local female journalist” Etc. There is a limited number of female journalists that decide to speak out publically about these issues and that decide to resist and confront, including those that decide to report the threats, insults and offences to official institutions. Assaults, attacks, threats or other shapes and forms of violation of rights of female journalists have certainly been manifested in different way in comparison with those directed against their male colleagues. Assaults, attacks, offences, insults and threats against female journalists are shaped with brutality, insults aimed to discredit personal look of a female journalist, “digging” through female journalist personal life and past including her family members, hate speech and commonly, long-term and specifically aimed directionality against particular female journalist often through online violence and organized “battues” on social media sources as well.

In May last year, when the association of BiH Journalists organized their first conference regarding the position and protection of female journalists, the initiative for establishing the Female Journalists Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina emerged consequently as a result and necessity re-



Events

4. December 2019
The LGBTQ community lives in fear of discrimination and violence

3. December 2019
Working together to create a safer environment for women

30. November 2019
The media should be in the service of protecting women's human rights

22. November 2019
All journalists in Zenica must have access to City Council sessions

22. November 2019
Political pressures, censorship and economic insecurity are common for most journalists in BiH

21. November 2019
Public Discussion in Bihac: Protecting Vulnerable Groups through Media Content is the Task of Journalists

18. November 2019
Delegation of Taiwan visits BH Journalists Association

Media on media

5. December 2019
Saudi Arabia takes over G20 transfer, and the arrests of journalists continue

3. December 2019
Putin signs a law aimed at bloggers and journalists

29. November 2019
Workplace tragedy: A journalist was killed by her husband because she did not want to leave her job

28. November 2019
Willingness of the Prosecution of ZDK to Prevent Threats to Journalists

Vacancies

Forma.Com d.o.o. is searching for a Portal Editor in Chief.
Application deadline: 14/12/2019.

Futurist Hub d.o.o. is seeking two skilled English writers to work on ebooks and long trend reports for our clients. We provide articles, white papers, ebooks, and other content for the tech industry in Europe, with a focus on sectors such as construction, retail, and finance.
Application deadline: 18/12/2019.

quired to strengthen and reinforce the solidarity within journalism as professional occupation, but also a necessity to develop mechanisms that would enable and provide more efficient fight required to develop and sustain dignified work and professional integrity of female media professionals. This would not relate only to attacks and assaults against female journalists while they perform their professional journalism duties and tasks, but also, it would relate to ways that could be used to advance the respect of women's rights in general, including the ensuring of more representative women being engaged as editors and/or managers in the field of media in BiH

It is important to outline here that Female Journalists Network is open for all women working in media industry including, editors, camerawoman, montage – woman, graphic designer, designers, photo reporters as some kind of “safety house” for all journalists and female media professionals that would, based on solidarity and efficiency protect their rights, dignified and paid work and advocating equal access to leading positions in media field. According to survey and research by Association of BiH Journalists, women take up less to 30% of managing positions in media in BiH. Media houses with solid and appropriate working conditions, including regular wages and respecting women rights, are in reality exception rather than regular and standard occurrence. Many young female journalists in their beginning face sexism at work, however due to their lack of experience and the fact that they have limited knowledge about their rights, do not have a clue how to confront these problems. Even 83.7% of the examinees believe that mobbing over female journalists is partially or fully represented in media in BiH¹.

Maja Radević, E-bulletin editor

¹Amer Džihana, „Žene i mediji - zaposlenice i upravljačke strukture“

(“Women and Media – Staff and Managing Charts”), Sarajevo, April 2018.

Zarfa Hrnjić Kuduzović, Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, Amela Delić, “Položaj novinarki u BiH - interdisciplinarna studija

“The Position of Female Journalists in BiH – Interdisciplinary Study”



If we don't help ourselves, the whole effort will be for nothing!

By: Amina Čorbo Zećo

Vast number of assaults and attacks on journalists supported by political officials, policemen, members of football firms remain unpunished, which additionally encourages other potential assaulters and attackers to "take the justice into their own hands" without hesitation.

Journalists are aware of their positions in our society, but the slap in the face they got from the members of the Federal parliament when these refused to accept the recommendation and proposals to reconsider the amendments of the Criminal Law of the Federation of BiH in order to find the legal model that would protect the journalists in our country is still echoing! In fact, why the Federal MP's would do something like that, when it is actually the politicians that make majority of assaulters and attackers with their assaults and attacks, pressures that they impose against journalists. This is exactly how we got into the "kadija te tuzi, kadija ti sudi" (op.a. "kadija sues you – kadija judges you").

Local powerful figures and lack of courage

It does appear strange that members of the parliament did not pass the laws that would oblige the journalists to seek permission from those they write about, fearing from powerful figures, because "no low ranked writer" is allowed and entitled to write about corruption, nepotism and all bad moves by the ruling official authorities that make the society uncontrollably slip into the endless abyss.

An average powerful figure usually thinks that "the people voted for them, they selected them, fair enough they did a bit of stealing, what makes you think you could now write about us and our moves – we represent the governing authority, we have the power now and we don't have to answer to anyone at all! Political elite are not concerned about the fact that democracy cannot exist and function without professional journalism.

Pulitzer said ages ago and professional journalists follow his words:" Journalism must always "oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy with the poor, always remain devoted to the public welfare, never be satisfied with merely printing news, always be drastically independent, never be afraid to attack wrong, whether by predatory plutocracy or predatory poverty."

And this is precisely why I make no distinction between male and female gender in this sense – an assault or attack on any journalist is an attack on journalism, regardless whether the honest victim is male or female journalist, since the courage is equal in either case. Being a journalist today does represent courage anywhere in the world, and this honorable professional occupation is particularly outlined and burdened in Bosnia and Herzegovina because journalists are left on their own and have to fight by themselves against politicians, the system, unsatisfactory consumers, lethargically biased public, PR officers (it is usually one journalist Vs eight PR's) where they often tend to push a corporative story Etc.

Special dimension remains within editing offices. We lack courage and the fact from the very beginning of this text support this thesis, that is, the fact that the Federal parliament refused to discuss the issue of greater protection of journalists. Our colleague who had been following the work of Parliament called me restlessly asking me whether he should leave the Parliament and should we, as media house, boycott the work of Parliament? It took some time until I replied though I decided that he should stay, because he, as an individual, could not have changed anything while others lacked strength and power to follow his steps.

"An assault or attack on any journalist is an attack on journalism, regardless whether the honest victim is male or female journalist, since the courage is equal in either case"

Protect independent media

Even now, as I write this down, I am thinking whether we should have brought a different decision, just like in the story when the ant was putting the fire down, just to make a clear distinction whose side we are on!

This is the key – as soon as we realize that a journalist can impose an idea to an editor; that editor can evoke the core of journalism to an entrepreneur and when all media in the state stand with proudly and with honor in order to protect professional occupation of journalism, valuing it even more, perhaps then we shall have no fear from brutality and humiliation.

We must, since this is our duty and obligation, to build, develop and establish diverse and truly independent press so real and professional journalists may apply critics within the scope of work they cherish and which is necessary for democracy functionality, otherwise we will be trapped in the dark and remain there.

In order to achieve that, we must help ourselves in the first place and then help the others. Until then, everything else would remain pointless.



“Countless insults and offences imposed by Milorad Dodik who had, during the press conference, in front of my colleagues and entire public audience replied to me with the following words: „I don’t give a fuck”! Bakir Izetbegovic said in public that “I should be cooking and ironing during late hours, instead of “following” and investigating their work””

Female workers without trading hours

By: Arijana Saračević Helac

A month has passed by and I can still hear the voices from the Sarajevo performance and female journalists’ exhibition echoing in my ears. These voices witnessed all horrors that professional female journalists had been facing. They had to endure horrors from their bosses, political party representatives, real, actual and anonymous owners of social media profiles, all the way to real and plain criminals and mafia too. We have been “hopeless, stupid, we have had menstruation and hormonal disorders, we have been tagged as whores, ugly housewives”, Etc. All of us “were” (at least once) women described as ones above, that is, us, female journalists. In fact, most of us have been devoted to our professional occupation, knowledge, love and the truth. On one hand, we are just one of many entities in our society without rights; while on the other hand we clean, wash, cook and most of the time we do this while others sleep. We are literally exhausted, but at the same time ready to work again.

Offences and insults by Dodik and Bakir

I have been working as female TV journalist for over 30 years. My whole professional period I have been working with the same enthusiasm; same motifs and goals required for my stories. I have never taken a single sick leave day off and I am not sure whether that should be considered positive and affirmative. I did not take seriously all my bronchitis and fevers (high body temperatures) seriously thinking that my stories would as a result vanish or fade away. I have had my ups and downs, still I would clean my knees, stand up again and simply carry on. Female journalists are easily recognized, people simply like them or don’t like them; at least they have heard about them and very few people realize that our motifs reflect public interests, including law – based and law – obeying society and state where laws apply equally to everyone.

I recall a dialogue that had taken place during the war, when a respectable member of parliament asked ever lusty and ardor Raska Denjalic (female journalist), why she would always decide to go on the field work at the same time as her husband? They had a five years old daughter and it would have been unfair should she had lost both her parents at the same time. This picture later actually “moved” to my home and I believe, moved to homes of many of my female colleagues. We have been female workers without regular trading hours; women that have courage, not

Free Media Help Line

Actual cases:

1. Radio Sarajevo-portal: -Fans of the Sarajevo Football Club raided the premises of Radio Sarajevo portal and, under the threat of death of their families, asked journalists and editors to delete the publication of the text that one of the fans of this club in Belarus was sentenced to 5 years in prison for cocaine. The Board of Directors of the BH Journalists Association has sent a press release characterizing this attack as a brutal violation of the right to freedom of expression and endangering the lives of journalists and editors of Radio Sarajevo.

2. Nikolija Bjelica, Editor of the Dirket Portal, Trebinje: -Journalists of the Direct and Trebinje Portal have been denied the source of information by the Mayor of Trebinje and all companies under the patronage of the city. The coordinator of the Assistance Line for Journalists gave legal advice to Nikola Bjelica and sent a letter to the Mayor of Trebinje, as well as to the Rudnik and the Gacko power plant.

3. Vahidin Durić, Editor-in-Chief of Bisce.ba Portal: - After the transfer of the text from the Bihac Fb site and the biscani are and are doing what they are, the editor-in-chief of Bisce.ba is invited to an informative interview with the police. The coordinator of the Free Media Help Line for Journalists gave legal advice to the journalist and sent a letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Bihac Police Department to provide us with the reasons for bringing the journalists. PD Bihac submitted a reply to our inquiry.

4. Magazine "Žurnal": - A person known in criminal circles Mirza Gacanin recorded a threatening message and sent it to the staff of the "Žurnal" magazine. The Board of Directors of the BH Journalists Association issued a press release inviting KSF and SIP-a MIA to investigate the case through international programs and cooperation.

5. Ismet Becar, Radio BIR: - On the facebook page of the Green Berets KS, a picture of the editor of Radio BIR was posted and he was openly threatened. The Free MediaHelp Lxine for journalists sent a letter to FMUP and MUP KS. Police authorities are working on the case.

applying any common sense, with tendency to leave their babies home alone; to leave their ill mothers and at the same time, to focus completely and utterly on our work.

In patriarchal society, such as our own, female journalists were "low-ranked" in comparison with their male colleagues. Our society was unable to comprehend that professional journalism is neither trade nor occupation that is for sale. This is what the majority thinks, and it is our task to prove them wrong by working hard and by being utterly devoted to our professional occupation. I am a mother of two grown boys and both of them were growing alongside horrors I had to go through and experienced personally. Most of the time I had to go to work in late night hours and I would always return to kiss them both while they were sleeping.

I also spent most of the time on wheels (car), including weekends where I had to work and have montage for my stories and reports completed before broadcasting. I used to be followed, frightened, scared, verbally massacred and neither of these reflected to my stores as, as far as I have been concerned, they mattered only. Along with journalism, this also has been my personal choice.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to count the number of direct assaults by the governing official authorities or religious organizations directed against me while I was performing my duties. Countless insults and offences imposed by Milorad Dodik who had, during the press conference, in front of my colleagues and entire public audience replied to me with the following words: „I don't give a fuck"! I do want to emphasize this, since this was the very first insult and offence directed to a female journalist with no one reacting and responding to it.

No long after this case, I received similar replies by the same politician. I had similar experience during the SDA and HDZ sessions. For instance, Bakir Izetbegovic said in public that "I should be cooking and ironing during late hours, instead of "following" and investigating their work". Also, I even experienced a physical assault by certain member of Brcko District parliament, namely Mr. Sakovic, who was beating me and my cameraman in front of local official authorities and highly ranked OHR representatives, including Mr. Gregorian as well.

Violence against us often emerged in forms of devaluing, degrading, humiliating, sexually – based insults and offence and sick disturbing, interrupting, harassing and even direct death threats and these mostly occur on social media sources and often from real profiles whose owners are apparently "high morale family orientated men" or merely political party plumes or aigrettes, often including woman as well.

After being invited as a guest during the "Interview 20", hosted by Sanela Prasovic, we both begun "targets" insulted and offended by Dzenan Selimbegovic, highly ranked state presidency official and former counselor of Bakir Izetbegovic, Bosniak member of the Presidency. It was a horrible, weekly – lasting crime conducted against us with the message of the people with the same opinion claiming that "we should have been impaled", just because we told the truth that during 2 May 1992, the integrity of BiH was saved in RTVBiH studio, instead of being saved in Presidency of BiH building or some military bases. Selimbegovic's excess was a genuine case of current political elite ruling in our country which clearly displayed irresponsibility, arrogance, haughtiness, primitivism, ignorance, lack of knowledge, non-professionalism and puppets.

Always with firm and personal attitude and dignity

I have managed to hide most assaults on me from the public eyes and even from my own family simply because I did not want to disturb their normal lives and I often failed to succeed in this, including the last case that got the entire community involved. I reckon that we should talk about these things and must encourage our female journalists' colleagues, in order not to have these anomalies accepted as common and usual occurrences in our society.

During the “We are FEMALE journalists” exhibition, held at the Collegium Artisticum premises, 20 of us gave support and couraged ourselves to speak openly about who we were and what we had been experiencing in the past. Unfortunately, 35 of them changed their minds because they feared that they might lose their jobs and get sacked. I believe today they are less frightened.

My investigative stories often presented me with problems and caused the damage to my personal property, including the threats directed to my family and my sons too to that extent that even the kidnapping of my boys was at certain point of time planned. My dignity was violated countless times with the purpose of creating degradation and humiliation of my status in our society. What I considered important was the fact that I never had any doubts whether I should have continued with my work in different way, even when they threatened to kill me and when they threatened to kidnap my kids, ruin my career, humiliate my friends Etc.

We, as professional journalists do not do business with criminals, mafia and politicians; we work on our own and have our own stands, views and attitudes and we do this in our editing offices, in front of our superiors, bosses and all the way to entire society we live in. This is the only way to encourage female journalists and women from other fields and branches that have been mobbed, sacked from work; women that earn less than their male colleagues. After all, this is our mission.



The policy of punishing of those who assault and attack female journalists must exhilarate and vivify

By: Biljana Radulović

The secret of freedom is courage (Pericles).

The freedom of expression in our system requires courage, as well as accepting eventual consequences that may derive when one follows one's views, opinions, beliefs and attitudes and loves his professional occupation. In regular societies, freedom of expression and liberty of professional occupation should pervade without consequences.

When a female journalist quotes something or when she expresses her views or opinion about something, she instantly instigates and launch an avalanche of condemnations in an underdeveloped society which oscillates from condemning, insults, offences, humiliation, threats, typical hate speech to even physical extermination. Also, she may face the risk to be legally sued based on defamation charges or accept to be fined with high amount of values to the damaged party, including the costs that she may have to pay in order to cover all court expenses.

How is violence manifested?

All these forms and shapes of violence over female journalists may be divided into hate speech, based on gender inequality or misogyny or economy-based violence. Both of these are aimed to create fear with an executive goal which is termination of work for good.

Hate speech is manifested verbally, personally (directly) and indirectly as internet violence, through comments posted on different web sites and these often appear as pre-orchestrated comments that were pre-ordered and most probably paid for until they reached the limits of expulsion. Economy violence is manifested by pressing defamation charges where, in most cases, there is no thorough description of the defamation itself; instead, only the title is outlined, including the Law Article number and the entire Article contents (based on the Law) altogether labelled as defamation and along with this, it often contains highly marked value of the dispute case. Perpetrators and assaulters are often those that use their positions for sexism – based humiliation and pressing legal charges for

defamation occurrence (indirect way) and there are direct ways that are not as visible as the previous ones, however they do appear and service their original purpose through hate speech comments posted on web site Etc.

Basically, both violence forms in all their shapes; sexual allusion, humiliation of female journalist as a woman and her professional occupation, frightening, mocking her physical appearance, her look, personal and family life Etc., have double features: creating a victim out of female journalist and spreading and sharing hate throughout like-minded network of persons in order to, throughout this specific network, justify the view and create support for even more brutal assault on victim, but also to create even more notable feeling of frailty with the victim itself.

Lack of reactions and support

When some inappropriate statement is released that may devalue female journalist, the reaction usually fails. Lack of reaction of wider social community is indeed concerning. Female journalists under such circumstances and in such situations usually get support by journalists' association only and these usually condemn the assault / attack.

If a perpetrator happened to be a public figure, not only a figure with political background, but the figure coming from any other field, there is no condemning coming from local community that she/he belongs to; instead there are eventual individual condemnations.

When Sergej Trifunovic, a regional actor from Serbia, recently publicly addressed an insulting and offensive comments directed against female journalists in Serbia, these female journalists were supported by journalists' associations, officials dealing with gender equality issues and female networks deriving from a non – governmental organizations. Actor and film associations once again failed to condemn this case.

Words like "I am not your type of a man", "get out of the building", "when I look at you I realize why you are always in a bad mood", "your appearance is your people reflection" Etc. until present day have not been condemned by political party that perpetrator belongs to, neither has any institution dared to condemn this, including gender centers. In this way, the entire society of dead individuals becomes an accomplice.

It is doubtful whether there is an adequate reaction by any organization that fights for women's rights or their reactions are not evident or not released in public.

It is simple to assume the reactions and situations where a female journalist could find herself in after these kind of assaults or orchestrated battues in terms of posted comments or even press releases by those who should have replied to her question in the first place, or those that were concerned with her article, text, video or audio recording material. The assault itself, regardless to which shape it emerges, produces psychological violence within female journalist, including institutional violence once it is clear that she is powerless. It also creates economic violence, because any institution addressing requires costs, expenses and wastes certain time. The protection kind of journalist determines the type of an assault.

How to protect yourself?

In case of any type of violence over a female journalist, we should immediately seek protection from journalist associations, but also insist on wider support – starting from organizations that deal with women's rights and other civil sector institutions, and requests to the perpetrator / demanding a public apology, insist that a political party from which the perpetrator originally comes from condemn such behavior and conduct, announce that the condemning was required, that there is or is not a reaction, provide general public with all details regarding the case.

“When some inappropriate statement is released that may devalue female journalist, the reaction usually fails. Lack of reaction of wider social community is indeed concerning. Female journalists under such circumstances and in such situations usually get support by journalists' association only and these usually condemn the assault / attack”

One could require, through professional associations, both psychological and legal aid so the female journalist would gain more confidence and power in order to have better chances in her fight for her own protection, because during the case itself, she may face yet another stigmatization, this time by the institutions.

As far as all misogyny – based comments, which in fact represent the most typical kind of hate speech, tailored to evoke disturbance and stress within the assaulted person, including the creation of fear, the charges should be pressed based on discrimination, but would also include charges pressed against the perpetrator for criminal actions.

Regardless to the fact that any of the above outlined processes may instigate another violence experience, final effect must not be disregarded and forgotten; no matter how symbolic the fine and punishment may be, that is, minimal punishment or fine or even if it appears humiliating and diminishing fine as far as the assaulted person is concerned.

The policy of fines, sanctions and punishment must exhilarate and vivify and that the perpetrators began to think that they eventually may be punished for written content or released statement, including actions or deeds that may have disturbed the harmony and peace within others, both in terms of psychological or physical integrity.

In systems, such as our own, it is advisable that this kind of subjects are monitored in order to receive quality – based indicators regarding the work of judiciary institutions, as far as the word on cases that concern female journalists is concerned, but also to form and establish the fund that would finance legal aid in these cases.

Man becomes free by his decision, resistance and dislike (Meša Selimović)



Sexual harassment is a type of pressure but female journalists remain silent about it

By: Nermina Omerbegović

When you enter the world of journalism, you have some sort of romantic expectations. You believe you would become the voice of the unheard; you believe that you will meet some interesting people, you dream of traveling around etc. What you do not expect is the fact that you shall be estimated and your work shall be evaluated not in accordance with your reports and articles/texts that you write or post; instead you shall be marked and your work assessed according to your outer look, gender, years etc., that is, if you are a female journalist you will need double or even triple effort to prove yourself good, so you could finally be considered and treated as professional journalist. You won't expect, just because you are a female journalist, to build walls around you in order to protect yourself, thus at the same time, remaining calm, lucid and focused.

Primitive people in the world of culture

While being suggested to write about the nature of problems that female journalists encounter and face in BiH media field, including to what extent they are being obstructed to do their job, how often they get attacked physically and assaulted in many other ways, wondering about various and countless situations in regard with the above mentioned, I soon realized that sexual harassment, direct or indirect, does represent rather serious problem in the field of BiH journalism. In the texts, so far, my workmates and female colleagues have mostly been writing about problems within editing offices, including those of political background and problems concerning eventual pressures imposed by their superiors, including managers, owners and entrepreneurs. However, I do believe that many of them did experience these kind of pressures, inside and outside editing offices as well. Regardless how minor it seems, sexual

harassment is indeed a serious type of pressure imposed against female journalists, especially because we tend not to talk about it. Sometimes, we manage to identify and recognize it, sometimes we feel ashamed to talk about it and sometimes we do not want to be left without the source of information, thus pushing the dust under the carpet.

This particular time I shall focus on few cases only based on my personal experience, because while being engaged with several editing offices (including the post of a PR in certain media house), I had the opportunity to see how collocutors estimate and consider male journalists, comparing to those of female journalists. I spent the longest period of my professional journalist career in editing offices covering cultural affairs and cultural life. Some would say that artists – painters, writers, actors, and movie and film directors should be adorned by gentle conduct towards any women. Indeed, there have been beautiful collocutors in all fields and branches. However, there are others who think that their names should grant them with more reputation in communities than they actually deserve and more than the names of others.



Nada Salom, a female editor at “Oslobodjenje” (a local newspaper) instructed me to do an interview with the president of local art association that at the time, happened to be celebrating their anniversary that year. I called this person and arranged an appointment.

He suggested that we met at the place of his choice. Photographer was unavailable at the time, so I went there by myself not even thinking about any problems that may arise. As I sat down, having a cup of coffee and preparing my voice recorder, I explained to my collocutor what I was intending to cover during this interview. While I was completely relaxed and while sitting comfortably in my chair, this “reputable artist”, suddenly stood up from his chair and sat down on my knees!!

I did manage to get away from this, rather embarrassing situation. He then started to apologize and even gave me his work at the end which I, being totally angry and frustrated, threw in the nearby rubbish bin. I called my chief-in-editor and wanted to tell what had happened, but I felt embarrassed. I felt as I had done something wrong. I looked at myself and realized I had commodious t-shirt and trousers, which was nothing provocative. At the end I did not say anything to my superior except that the interview was not done. I said I could not have done and asked if she could appoint someone else to do it. She replied that I should do it whenever I get available time. And then, after couple of days, I again called this “reputable artist” and he said that he was not feeling well; apparently he was lying in his bed at home. I must admit that I was slightly enjoying

“Sexual harassment is indeed a serious type of pressure imposed against female journalists, especially because we tend not to talk about it. Sometimes, we manage to identify and recognize it, sometimes we feel ashamed to talk about it and sometimes we do not want to be left without the source of information, thus pushing the dust under the carpet”

while I was sitting above his head and listening his helpless voice.

At one moment, there was an idea of filming a movie about Sarajevo during the siege (1992-1995) that was to be directed by Veljko Bulajic. I was once again, suggested to go for an interview where I would be appointed as the PR of this project. I went there, talked to organizers and got this job.

However, I only managed to stay there for a week since I heard that the movie was never to be filmed. During this period, I managed to arrange couple of TV interviews, publish and post few articles/texts in newspapers and arrange few interviews on local radio stations. Still, the organizer informed me that they were expecting more from me, since they had decided to appoint me, apart from other competences, due to my appearance and outer look! I was also suggested that I should have invited certain editors and propose them to go out with me...

My next task was to have an interview with the local culture institution director. I called him and arranged a meeting at Kamerni Teatar (local theater) premises. After my introduction at the table where were sitting, he decided that he would not to do this interview. I was confused and asked him why he wouldn't want to have an interview with me and he told me that I could not have possibly conduct a successful interview, because I looked too good to be a professional female journalist. After that, he moved from our table and sat down with the people we both knew and they of course happened to be men. He went back to our table and decided to accept the interview with me. They might have explained him that I was not that stupid after all.

During the interview with this “popular”, rather than reputable artist, after being asked to reply whether the fact that he had been indicted for plagiarism (signing) of work by other artist was true, he suddenly twisted my arm, grabbed my voice recorder and pulled the tape out.

He then said that he would call the director of my media house and tell him that this interview will not be released and published. While I was leaving I told him that I did not need the tape because I had a very good memory and that were other collocutors as well. Without any drama, while he was behind me, I decided to run away stepping over two steps on the stairs. This interview was of course posted and published, which was courtesy of Svjetlana Salom who had fought hard for its release, although the original content was notably reduced by the editor-in-chief.

Do not feel embarrassed and ashamed to report harassing

This is just a tiny part of many similar cases. My problems emerged because these were the people I simply had to cooperate with, so after all, I was left with no choice but to act as pure professional, because these people were my only sources of information and once you're left without sources, you're left with no information.

I remember that Hamza Baksic, a wonderful man and great journalist once wrote and published the book titled “I, journalist” where he, above many other things, was treating problems that female journalists may face due to their outer look, appearance or the way they dress. I disagreed with that theory, because I always asked myself and wondered why anyone would judge my competences and professionalism just because of the way I would dress. I believe that in time, I somehow managed to overcome these obstacles. My message to younger female colleagues is to avoid these kind of disturbing situations as much as they possibly can, and if they encounter these kind of situations, they should not feel embarrassed and ashamed to report harassing. Perhaps, editors and media entrepreneurs would then have more understanding for these problems and accordingly show more tolerance.

P.S. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely intentional and deliberate. There were no names used in this text, because some characters passed away in the meantime, and because some persons, designated and described in this text were probably not

the only persons that had treated female journalists in ways outlined above. Therefore I would thus allow others to identify and recognize themselves and accordingly rectify their actions.



Protection of female journalists from discrimination form the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH point of view

By: Edin Ibrahimefendić

Discrimination, in its wider sense marks any different action without justified reason, it stand for favoring someone or outlines the expulsion of any individuals or group, based on real or assumed foundation. Forbidding of discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina is, on top of everything else, guaranteed by the Constitution of BiH, including a set of laws whose provisions prohibit discriminatory practices.

Discrimination forbiddance – in its original shape – in Bosnia and Herzegovina has additionally been regulated with passing of the Law against the Discrimination in 2009, including amendments passed in 2016 accordingly. The law defines that all proceedings, such as discrimination encouraging, disturbing, sexual harassment and mobbing, as well as special forms and shapes of discrimination practices.

Consequences of mobbing and disturbance

Law on prohibition of discrimination outlines an important role by the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman in Bosnia and Herzegovina allowing it to conduct all investigations based on complaints and ex officio (official appointing) based on information that it gathers alone and also, enables the Institution to, after conducting the investigation, release and forward recommendations and opinions, with a possibility of, under certain circumstances, instigate and launch criminal proceedings.

The Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman in Bosnia and Herzegovina officiate the above outlined role in all spheres of life, regardless whether discrimination appears in public or in private sector.

If we talk about female journalists' rights and their protection from discrimination, we must take into account that mobbing, in its natural form, may emerge at work, while other forms of discriminations may appear under various circumstances and in different segments of life.

Adversity of such occurrences, due to media's natural role, surely have wider social significance.

Victims of mobbing are often forced to quit their jobs or accept new jobs in their companies, which in case of female journalists, may result in cessation of their entire engagement in their editing offices or even worse, may result in decreased contribution to the work of media house they work for. The emerging of mobbing in media editing offices may additionally make an impact on gender misbalance by alienating or marginalizing women at work; it may also make an impact on editing policy through the selection of topics, issues and stories, as well as reporting ways and finally it may make an impact on the creation of media narrative.

If female journalists have, for instance, been disturbed and sexually harassed, which is quite often today (particularly in terms of comments posted on social media sources) they are often, due to lack of reactions by governing officials and support by the local community and society, forced to endure these kind of pressures. Long-term exposure to various pressures shall, apart from making significant contribution in jeopardizing victim's health, result in withdrawal from certain positions in media

field including the emerging of auto censure. Having said this and regardless to how focused we are to individual cases, we must take whole picture into consideration. Unless wider community and public, or just some part of the entire society is convinced that it is possible to disturb someone or sexually harass female journalists following their work, we may individually expect that disturbing or sexual harassment shall be equally bespeak to other women in public life.

The Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman in Bosnia and Herzegovina has in recent period outlined and pointed out to official authorities in BiH that it is required to set up and define legal framework required to prevent disturbing and sexual harassment and accordingly to be more active in order to impose appropriate fines and sanctions consequently.

Legal Framework and Possibilities

The question of mobbing has legally been defined by the Law as the form of non-contact harassment at work which comprehend the repetition of harassment aimed to humiliate the victim and with the purpose of degrading work conditions or professional status of the person being employed. Therefore, few years back, this question had been treated as crucial in the work industry, particularly in the media field for numerous reasons: from the structural media change to the fact that most media lack in bringing in ideas of classical eight – hour work and as an increase of competition that resulted in an decrease of media incomes and pressures imposed in order to reduce costs and expenses by (naturally) reducing staff's salaries and wages.

These processes produced significant pressures within media houses including the violation of rights of media staff, as well as worsening of their inter – human relationships. These anomalies additionally resulted in even greater exposure of vertical (superior based line) to horizontal (equal based line - workmates) occurrences. As oppose to mobbing for which we lack in evidence and proofs that we would use to undoubtedly conclude that female journalists have been exposed to this particular discrimination shapes and forms more notably than their male colleagues, the fact that female journalists have been exposed to other forms and shapes of harassment in comparison with their male colleagues is therefore unquestionable. During several analysis (for instance analysis implemented by the OSCE regarding media liberties) outlined that female journalists have been exposed to various harassments forms three time more than their colleagues.

Legal framework provides media staff to address the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH regardless to their statuses in media houses they work for, that is, regardless whether they work for public broadcasting service or commercial media house. Nevertheless, current practice in reality outlined the fact that female journalists working at public broadcasting service mostly use this opportunity to address the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH.

In a number of official complaints, after the investigation has been completed, no arguments and facts were detected in order to identify the occurrence of mobbing but rather indicated the violation of human relationships within the company. The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH has, despite the above listed, been pointing out the necessity of eliminating of negative occurrences and eventual mediation as far as the problem of mobbing is concerned in media field in BiH.

In cases where, after the full investigation the official authorities detected mobbing situation and harassment, they proposed certain recommendations to all those held responsible that these immoral and illegal deeds were to be eliminated, including the degrading of working conditions and professional statuses of female journalists (for instance continuous offending and insulting as a result of alleged mistakes during the meetings of editing collegium).

Actual cases discovered the emerging of unprofessional, disturbing and

“Victims of mobbing are often forced to quit their jobs or accept new jobs in their companies, which in case of female journalists, may result in cessation of their entire engagement in their editing offices or even worse, may result in decreased contribution to the work of media house they work for”

humiliating conducts in work environments that undoubtedly led to degradation and jeopardizing of health conditions (including both physical and physical) of female journalists as victims.

Due to specific nature of proceedings, also due to existing fear of taking any responsibility whatsoever, it was common that those responsible, after receiving specific recommendations, decided to terminate all communication with the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH. Still, in further communication with complaint submitters, we managed to receive information that mobbing perpetrators in most cases changed their way of conduct which additionally resulted in an improvement of their behavior and accordingly, the improvement of female journalists' statuses within their media houses. Regardless to the fact that a number of recommendations has actually partially implemented or has not been implemented at all, we may conclude that the existing and required mechanisms and tools do provide certain degree of protection for people that have been exposed to discrimination. Furthermore, certain measures are required in order to make the mechanisms and required tolls more efficient as far as the segment of the protection of legal entities that seek help and address The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH is concerned.

Private Sector Restrained

The recommendations provided by the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH are not legally binding comparing to court decisions, in terms of their execution scope, however their purpose is to point out the violation of rights and the urge of cessation of such actions. For these reasons they should not be taken into less consideration that court decisions respectively.

Persons that have been victims of discrimination at any level or form are always left with the possibility to file in a complaint officially to the nearest court in terms of getting protection from discrimination where they can also use the recommendations provided by the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH as argument or proof.

Biggest challenge of all in the forthcoming period, as far as the increased level of the protection of female journalists from any type of discrimination is concerned, as well as the protection of other media staff, is how to instigate and encourage all staff working in private sector to address and seek legal aid from the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH once they encounter problems that require the protection of their fundamental rights.

In order to reduce the disturbance or harassment in most efficient way that female journalists have been exposed to, it is required and rather necessary to, apart from the engagement the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH, have regulatory bodies, the police and prosecutors offices involved as well.

(The Author is special adviser – solicitor the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman in BiH)



Solidarity for and from all of us

By: Vanja Stokić

Frankly, assaults and attacks have always been happening and shall continue to occur in future. Regardless to what you do, people will always assault you because they simply may not like the way you do your work, the way speak or how you look. When journalists get assaulted or attacked, the surrounding public often respond and react surprisingly with: „Why?“, or “What did she/he do wrong?” or even “What did she/he do to provoke them?” One of the most legitimate answers to these set of questions would be „She/he was just doing her/his work”. An open exhibition covering the issue of assaults on female journalists, showing their portraits, including short stories regarding incidents was held in Sarajevo. It was devastating that some female colleagues lacked courage to even speak out their full names and show their faces to audience, because they feared that by releasing and exposing their identities they would face yet another repression.

However, there were those with courage including **Milanka Babić Kovačević, Štefica Galić, Arijana Saračević Helać, and Milkica Milojević** Etc. By listening to their stories regarding the assaults and attacks and continual pressures, one could only show respect to them and admire their strength, power and sustainability in terms of prevailing as far as their will and determination to continue working as professional female journalists in the same way, where the pen always beats the sword, regardless to eventual consequences they may face.

“They are convinced that someone is backing me up and supporting me, because they cannot realize and understand that I can prevail without anyone backing me up”, claimed one them.

“When they assault and attack one of us, the only right reaction and response by the journalists’ community is solidarity. Be there for your colleague and workmate, regardless to how little the assault or attack may seem to you. Make sure your report about it, occupy the assaulter or attacker and insist on answers you demand”

Do not forget our colleagues and workmates

Assaulters and attackers do not see the difference between male or female gender. Naturally, it is much easier to assault and attack women, because of the stereotype and prejudice that woman are generally easier to scare and frighten. I was personally obstructed and disturbed by the male police officer while doing my work, especially when all of my male colleagues left the field area and when they left me on my own. On the other hand, stories about assaults must not exclude our fellow male journalists that have also been imposed with pressure on daily basis.

Ajdin Kamber was recently physically pushed away and thrown out of the USK government building by the security officer, policeman and cantonal prime minister himself because they were all scared of Ajdin’s questions he wanted to raise. **Vladimir Kovačević** was lucky to be alive when he luckily survived a murder attempt, but unfortunately he witnessed that his attacker was sentenced to four years in prison only. “Zurnal” editing office staff received an envelope with grenade shrapnel in it as warning and threat.

Solidarity above anything else

When they assault and attack one of us, the only right reaction and response by the journalists’ community is solidarity. Be there for your colleague and workmate, regardless to how little the assault or attack may seem to you. Make sure your report about it, occupy the assaulter or attacker and insist on answers you demand. If your colleague is assaulted and attacked because of certain topic or issue, make sure you cover that issue and continue writing and reporting about it. Join your forces and “drive the assaulter or attacker crazy”. Show him that our number grow every single day and that every man matters to us and that nobody can

stop us. Share information that they tried to hide.

Why report?

This must not happen and this why we must report assaults and attacks and because reporting is a reaction and absence of reaction is approval. This must be neglected and because it is not about yourselves only, because tomorrow, assaulters or attackers could assault, attack or threaten another journalist who may not be as strong as yourself and the victim might break down, give up his/her work and decide to quit journalism.

Whom and where to report?

Report to anyone, including your editing office and editor-in-chief, the police, free media help line, the Human Rights Ombudsman Etc. Write the text or make a video report about it for your media house and spread the word and share it through social media sources. Tell it to your friends in details or summarize it Just to do not neglect it and be silent about it.

Voices of female journalists

Performance and photo exhibition titled “**We are Female journalists**” was organized on October 31st in City Gallery, at *Collegium Artisticum* premises in Sarajevo, organized by the Association of BiH Journalists. The idea of this specific exhibition emerged some ten years ago when one of our female colleague journalists began her battle against mobbing and she was then told that the person whom she had accused for mobbing was in fact an “intellectual, a family orientated, well educated person and reputable community member” and that he, could have not possibly been a person that would enforce mobbing against any person or under any circumstances, claimed **Borka Rudic**, a female general secretary of the Association of BiH Journalists.

“The female journalists gathered here because they have all been victims of most brutal threats and assaults. Eleven photos only represent a silhouette where we marked names of media houses that these women had been working for, however, they were scared to show up their faces due to repression they have been imposed with in their media houses and were also frightened due to the fact that they could face the consequences should they express their opinion in public regarding the violence”, outlined Mrs. Rudic during the opening session of photo exhibition.

The purpose of photo exhibition, among many other things, was to highlight the violence against female journalists including both, professional based violence and gender based violence which unfortunately has not yet been recognized as such in our society. This particular photo exhibition will soon take place in Mostar and Banja Luka.

We shall bring some real and actual experience - based cases regarding female journalists that dared to speak in public, thus covering various forms and shapes of violence and assaults they had been facing, including miscellaneous problems they have encountered on daily bases during their professional working time.



Adisa Imamović

She was not allowed and was physically assaulted and obstructed while trying to have access to information. Perpetrator was insulting, offending, making fun of her and finally forcing her out from the venue. She faced pointing her name out through social media sources, she was receiving private threatening messages, but also had to cope with public announcements encouraging violence against her and boycotting of all her work. Swearing “*Turkish bastard*”, and later calling her “*chetnik whore*”. She has never intended to reply to insults, offences or to even decide to respond to such vulgar conduct. Her arguments under such circumstances, regardless to how effective they were, were obviously insufficient. The only thing she has been hoping for was public recognition, thus verifying that everything journalists do was in their own interest in the first place.



Solidarnost je iznimno važna jer nerijetko na terenu ovisimo jedna o drugoj, s obzirom na to da je reporterski posao zahtjevan, ponekad opasan, a rade ga većinom žene.

Adisa Imamović
Reporterka N1 televizije
Sarajevo

Leila Kurbegović

“Use your own had, look through your own eyes and listen through your own ears”, has been my personal moto for years in doing my noble work, such as professional journalism. Although we live in times when “looking through one’s own eyes”, is not recommended; instead, it is wiser to use someone else’s’ eyes and listen what others instruct you to do as your head should not be used at all. I, on the other hand, chose the path of truth, objectiveness and professionalism, because I suppose this is because I did decide to become a journalist.

My personal fight is indeed fight against censure in all its shapes and forms and fight for professional journalism requiring that any story should be released in its original and genuine form that is, it must be objective and supported by facts. One such story was obviously disliked by some people so they decided to ban it, but they cannot ban me from speaking, writing and thinking.

Vildana Selimbegović

In an attempt to reply to rather difficult question regarding the issue of who has been assaulting my professional journalism engagement, I usually remain speechless, however, in a vast line of potential perpetrators, I somehow reckon that local radicals take special position here, including Islamic radical *Wahhabi (Salaft)* radicals followed by other associated fascists. Nevertheless, I still believe that certain assaulting position belongs to thieves and criminals close to local governing authority officials. Some call them politicians.

Martina Mlinarević

Throughout fifteen years of professional engagement in media, most of the time I have attempted and tried to stay focused on social and political affairs and issues in our country, writing from the perspective of an ordinary citizen from West Herzegovina, trying thus to make the particular region (a place where I have been living) a better place for living, healthier and quality based environment. However, every single article or text I had written, posted or shared was followed by numerous insults and offences, particularly when these texts or articles concerned “holy” issues that have been tailoring real life in this particular region; namely HDZ (Croat Democratic Party) and the Church. What these two entities found most frightening was the fact that I somehow managed to become and sustain as media source working on my own, with an increasing number of followers and public, so their criminal actions could thus be shared and released furthermore and further out. Recently, I have been very engaged in the field of consciousness in regard with taboos, stereotypes and prejudices concerning the issue of breast cancer, since I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017. Since then, I had to undergo 4 medical surgeries, 25 screenings and oral chemotherapies, but the most frightening was the fact that I was most brutally targeted by some people who had managed to orchestrate public lynch against me during these most difficult times for me, since my health condition was severely jeopardized.

Apart from being removed from countless libraries, literature festivals, the pathology and brutal stigma that I have been going through particularly on social media sources was completely illogical because the content of comments posted on social media channels instigated my decline where commentators actually wished that I went through even more difficult period, suffering as much I possibly could. I faced comments such as:

“I hope cancer would tear you apart completely”, “Hopefully cancer would return and finish the undone”, “We wish your child gets cancer too”, “Your hand should be tied so we could wreck your body”, “Condolences to your family because you already are a dead woman”, “If this were 1992, green grass would be all over your body”, “Speaking and writing against Croats could make you lose another breast too” Etc. All these comments were posted by people with clearly visible profile full names. I reported all these threats to Federal Police Administration, however, until present day they have done absolutely nothing about this. Being a journalist in BiH, particularly being a female journalist in BiH can indeed be treated as Sisyphus work.

Željka Mihaljević

I experienced my first embarrassment when they declared me as “unsuitable” female journalist (due to her ethnic background – mixed marriage between my parents). This later included banning me from performing professional work and with the establishing of Radio „Studio N“ in the town of Livno with her two colleagues, I was once again a target by ruling establishment that found newly formed radio station disturbing. *En-*

forced pressure culminated and reached its peak when her husband was brutally attacked and beaten and most severe assault occurred when they decided to distribute flyers against her and her colleagues (as radio station co – founders) where they had been labelled as “enemies of the actual government, enemies of the entire Croat people, described as foreign mercenaries” that spit on every single thing that represented any form of Croat values in the town of Livno”

Dragica Vukalo

After decades of editing and reporting work experience, by the will of mean people from the governing structures of the RTRS Supervisory Board, I was banned to perform professional journalism duties and work as female journalist, so I was sacked from the position of Daily News program and degraded to the position of technical secretary in the Department of Transmission and Program Broadcasting. My colleagues and workmates remained completely inferior to mobbing methods used against me, including the officials with the Judiciary institutions in the RS and BiH since I had been participating in a decade long court process.

I have therefore considered judiciary officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina as most responsible party because they failed to obey the Labor Law of the RS and Law against Discrimination in BiH, since these laws clearly and precisely defined the term of discrimination.

Milanka Kovačević



Povezati novinarke i
time im omogućiti da se
međusobno pomažu i
podržavaju jeste način
da se amortizuje sve
ono što ih stavlja u
neravnopravnu poziciju.

MILANKA KOVAČEVIĆ
DIREKT PORTAL
GACKO

I reckon that there have not been many positions that would push you into the fire, unless you work as female journalist in small community. Female journalist would, at the very beginning, have to face powerful men and there is no difference whether you encounter local official authorities, local and public company manager or plain criminals. *They would certainly not hesitate to let you know that they cannot stand any critics directed against them and that they would make this battle personal, which means they would do their utmost to disable you from working. However, what they often neglect is the resistance they consequently have to face.*

Reporting them to police officials and publically releasing their threats are the tools and mechanisms that may certainly help in such cases.

Elma Kazagić

Assaults by the members of Ravna Gora Chetnik movement, threats directed by radical Salafi (Wāhhabi) members, encouraging my arresting as editor, assaults against my teams as a result of their investigative reporting work Etc. All of these are nothing comparing to pressure imposed by the extended hands of politics, miserably short – term mandates and other long lists of criminal actions and deeds. They consider themselves invisible and we do know who they actually are. They consider themselves wise, however, they certainly are not.

They are convinced that they would last “until the Judgement Day”, but they won’t. Therefore, I believe that the only correct and appropriate recipe is: „SUSTAIN!” Do not let the politics that found you obstructive wipe you out and erase you! Fight using your knowledge! I certainly did. This is how you shall make them appreciate your work and I trust this is the right way and as far as the fight against them is concerned, definitely the best way too.



Milkica Milojević

I just answered the editing office phone, presented myself and politely and kindly asked the person on the other side to lower down his voice and to stop shouting at me. *This was followed by a countless number of insults, offences including swearing and threats where the male person on the other side of the phone threatened that he would find out where I lived and kill all my family members, including my kids. My colleagues told me that that was “nothing” serious, because it “was happening on daily basis” and that this was “the job” we had chosen to do. I do not want to live in*

a community that considers “normal” all those terrible threats directed for any reason whatsoever, especially threatening to kill kids as well. No, this is not normal and it must not happen any day. I would not let this degrade professional journalism, so I decided to report these threats to local police officials. Court proceeding is under way.

Štefica Galić

Due to her engagement, she had often been targeted by various groups, including *hate spreaders* and dealers, the police, court officials, right-wing followers (she was physically attacked in 2012 and the number of verbal assaults she had encountered was indeed countless). Her message was to those believing that the use of force, including *physical attacks, insults and offences, would change the opinion of people thinking differently, would not make any difference, because she has never believed in the use of force and violence*. She has never given up the principles founded on human values nor had she accepted to segregations and threats directed by nationalists., insisting at the same time on the value of confronting the truth regarding the past, trying this to make her contribution in creating peace and improving human relationships between people in general.

Impressum

BH Journalists Association

Kralja Tvrtka 5/5, Sarajevo, BiH

Tel: +387 33 223 818;

Fax: + 387 33 255 600

E-mail: bhnovinari@bhnovinari.ba;

Web: www.bhnovinari.ba

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