



Udruženje/udruga “BH novinari”, Kralja Tvrtka 5/5, 71000
Sarajevo Telefoni: 033 223 818, 033 217 302
E-mail: bhnovinari@bhnovinari.ba, WEB: www.bhnovinari.ba



LINIJA ZA POMOĆ NOVINARIMA / FREE MEDIA HELP LINE

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION - IOM
Fra Andela Zvizdovića street, number 1
71000 Sarajevo
Borna i Hercegovina

Date: 16.1.2026.

Place: Sarajevo

Reference number: 01 -2/26

Subject: *Request for public clarification on the obstruction of a BIRN journalist Selma Melez to carrying out her professional assignment*

Dear Sir/ Madam,

The BH Journalists Association (BHJA) is addressing you regarding a complaint submitted to us by Selma Melez, a journalist from the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN BiH), concerning the obstruction of her professional work and the denial of access to interview three migrants from Sudan, who are currently accommodated in Sarajevo.

These individuals suffered severe health consequences during their passage through BiH, along the route Bihać – Tuzla – Sarajevo, including frostbite injuries that resulted in the amputation of their limbs. Reporting about their case is undoubtedly of high public interest, both due to the seriousness of their injuries and the humanitarian dimension, as well as questions raised regarding institutional responsibility and the treatment of migrants in BiH.

According to the journalist’s complaint submitted to the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), while attempting to obtain permission and access to speak with the migrants, she was repeatedly referred from one institution to another – from IOM, through private facility

for elderly persons where the migrants are accommodated, and to the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of the Ministry of Security of BiH. Ultimately, the journalist was informed that the accommodation facility was acting upon instructions from IOM and that all journalists were explicitly prohibited from entering or speaking with the migrants without IOM's approval, which was not granted to her.

We would like to remind you that no organization, including international and humanitarian organizations, has the right to prevent journalists from carrying out their professional duties, especially when it concerns adult individuals who are medically stable and capable of independently deciding whether they wish to speak to the media. Denying access to journalists in this case represents a serious violation of the right to freedom of expression and the right to information, as guaranteed by domestic legislation and international human rights conventions.

We are particularly concerned by the fact that journalists are being prevented from having direct contact with individuals who have survived extremely inhumane conditions, which further raises concerns about a lack of transparency and the conduct of certain institutions and organizations involved in the care of migrants.

BHJA hereby demand that the IOM immediately issue a formal statement regarding this case, as well as provide a clear and substantiated explanation of the legal basis and specific authorities under which journalists are being denied access to adult migrants accommodated in a facility that falls outside the jurisdiction of the BiH Service for Foreigners' Affairs. Furthermore, acting in the public interest, BH Journalists expect the IOM to immediately ensure that BIRN journalist Selma Melez is granted direct, in-person access to three migrants of Sudanese origin for the purpose of conducting interviews and informing the public about this case from the perspective of the migrants themselves, who are victims of an ineffective domestic and international system for the protection of people on the move.

The BHJA will continue to closely monitor this case and, should the practice of obstructing journalists' work persist, we will be compelled to inform relevant domestic and international institutions responsible for the protection of media freedom and human rights.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the BH Journalists Association:

Borka Rudić, Secretary General