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Bosnia and Herzegovina Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and the Journalists' Safety Index 2025

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About the Project

The journalists' associations from the Western Balkan countries, supported by the European Commission¹, have established the platform SafeJournalists.net to jointly monitor media legislation and practice in their countries and engage in advancing the legal and institutional environment in which journalists and other media professionals work. Every year, based on a carefully designed methodology², the SafeJournalists.net partners conduct advocacy research which provides journalists' associations with evidence-based, reliable, and relevant data on the main problems and obstacles in the implementation of the EU standards in the field of media freedom, journalists' freedom, and safety in the Western Balkans. The results of the advocacy research give substance to partners' activities, providing them with new evidence and examples that refine and strengthen their advocacy positions.

The first qualitative research tool – Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety – was initially developed in 2016 and has been gradually improved over the years. It consists of three groups of indicators: (A) Legal Protection, (B) Journalists' Position in the Newsroom, and (C) Journalists' Safety. Based on this monitoring tool, a total of seven assessments have been published, with the most recent covering the year 2023.

The quantitative research tool – the Journalists' Safety Index – was developed in 2020 and tested in 2021. It is designed to “measure” the changes in the environment that have direct or indirect impact

1 In December 2022, the European Commission approved a new three-year cycle of the SafeJournalists.net Project, which is a continuation of the previous two phases: the project Western Balkan's Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety (January 2016 – December 2018) and SafeJournalists.net (February 2020 – March 2023). The main objective of the Project is to empower and strengthen the role of the national journalists' associations, members of the SafeJournalists.net Platform, to become effective and accountable independent actors in advocating and creating relevant media policies in their countries: the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (IJAS), the Association of BH Journalists (BHJ), the Croatian Journalists' Association (CJA), the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK), the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (TUMM). The Project is funded under the EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021–2023 (IPA III).

2 The advocacy research is designed and coordinated by Snežana Trpevska and Igor Micevski, research fellows of the Research Institute on Social Development (RESIS), North Macedonia (www.resis.mk).

on how safe journalists and other media actors feel when practising their profession. It is composed of four groups of indicators: (1) Legal and Organisational Environment, (2) Due Prevention, (3) Due Process, and (4) Actual Safety. Based on this tool, a total of three research cycles were implemented: 2020 (pilot year), 2021 and 2022.

Starting from 2023, SafeJournalists.net combines the two (qualitative and quantitative) research tools into one single advocacy research project – Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index. The platform monitors the situation in seven countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The entire research process is divided into two phases: in the first phase, data is collected for all qualitative indicators – both for media freedoms and for the safety of journalists, while in the second phase, the qualitative indicators for the safety of journalists are converted into quantitative ones and the procedure of scoring and calculation of the Journalists' Safety Index is carried out.

A number of different research methods were applied to collect and analyse data related to each specific qualitative indicator:

- Review of studies, analyses, research reports, policy documents, strategies, and other documents;
- Qualitative analysis of legal documents;
- Download and analysis of information published on the websites of public institutions and other organisations and authorities;
- Finding and analysing press releases, announcements, and other information issued by professional organisations;
- Secondary data collected by journalists' associations;
- In-depth interviews with experts, journalists, policy makers, etc.;
- Focus groups with journalists; and
- Polls with journalists (in some countries).

At the national level, advocacy research is conducted by national researchers who collect data and compile narrative reports, which are then reviewed by local media and legal experts and the lead researcher. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Association of BH Journalists nominated Maja Radević as the national researcher and Borka Rudić as the media expert.

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS OF THE LEVEL OF MEDIA FREEDOM AND SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

The following table presents all qualitative indicators for the level of media freedom and safety of journalists, divided into three areas. These qualitative indicators are presented in descriptive or narrative form. Part of the indicators that are used in the conceptual framework for the Journalists' Safety Index are highlighted in red.

Overview of all qualitative indicators (Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety)

A. Legal safeguards and their implementation	B. Journalists' position in the newsrooms	C. Journalists' safety
A.1 Basic guarantees for media and journalists' freedom and their application in practice	B.1 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	C.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures
A.2 Independence and efficiency of the regulatory authority	B.2 Editorial independence in the private media	C.2 Journalists and other media actors have access to special protection or safety mechanisms
A.3 Independence and autonomy of the public service media	B.3 Editorial independence in the public service broadcasters	C.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment or violence
A.4 Financial support to quality journalism and media content of public interest	B.4 Editorial independence in the not-for-profit media sector	C.4 Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established
A.5 State advertising in the private media sector	B.5 Freedom of journalists in the news production process	C.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue
A.6 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	B.6 Working position of women journalists	C.6 Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists
A.7 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely		C.7 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)
A.8 Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities		C.8 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment
A.9 Journalists are free to pursuit their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations		C.9 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently
A.10 Right to access official documents and information		C.10 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity
		C.11 Non-physical threats and harassments
		C.12 Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists
		C.13 Actual attacks
		C.14 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations

JOURNALISTS' SAFETY INDEX

Taking into consideration the standards and recommendations established by the Council of Europe and other international organisations, the concept of "journalists' safety"³ was operationalised by considering the following four dimensions:

- I. **Legal and Organisational Environment** – the existence and implementation of legal safeguards relevant for the safety of journalists.
- II. **Due Prevention** – the existence and implementation of a range of preventative measures that have direct effects on journalists' protection and safety.
- III. **Due Process** – the behaviour of state institutions and public officials towards journalists and the efficiency of the criminal and civil justice system concerning the investigations of threats and acts of violence against journalists.
- IV. **Actual Safety** – incidents and instances of various forms of threats and acts of violence against journalists and media.

The table below presents the four dimensions and indicators that make up the theoretical model of the "journalists' safety" concept. Data for all these indicators were collected in the first phase of the research, and in the second phase, based on the collected research evidence, nine members of the Advisory Panel from each of the countries⁴ assessed the situation and assigned scores for each of the 19 indicators:

Overview of indicators related to the Journalists' Safety Index

I. Legal and Organisational Environment	II. Due Prevention	III. Due Process	IV. Actual Safety
1.1 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	2.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures	3.1 Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists	4.1 Non-physical threats and harassments
1.2 Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities	2.2 Journalists and other media actors have access to special protection or safety mechanisms	3.2 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently	4.2 Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists
1.3 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely	2.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms	3.3 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment	4.3 Actual attacks
1.4 Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations	2.4 Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media	3.4 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently	4.4 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations

3 Researchers from the RESIS Institute (www.resis.mk), Snežana Trpevska, Igor Micevski and Ljubinka Popovska Toseva developed the conceptual and methodological framework for the Index and the model for its aggregation, weighting and calculation.

4 The members of the Advisory Panel in Bosnia and Herzegovina were: Rubina Čengić, Hasan Gabela, Ljiljana Smiljanić, Vera Soldo, Milan Kovač, Velida Kulenović, Tanja Topić, Fuad Kovačević, and Mirsad Arnautović.

I. Legal and Organisational Environment	II. Due Prevention	III. Due Process	IV. Actual Safety
1.5 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	2.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue	3.5 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity	

Note: Whenever a gender-specific term is used in this report, it shall be understood to refer to both genders unless explicitly stated otherwise. This approach is adopted solely to improve the readability of the text and is not intended to be discriminatory or sexist.

BD	Brčko District
BHRT	Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BIRN BiH	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIN	Centre for Investigative Reporting
CoE	Council of Europe
CRA	Communications Regulatory Agency
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FH	Freedom House
FMHL	Free Media Help Line
FUP	Federation Police Administration
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union

HJPC	High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina
KD	Criminal Offence
KZ	Criminal Code
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Persons
MUP	Ministry of Interior
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCOM	Press Council and Online Media
RS	Republika Srpska
RSE	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
RSNA	National Assembly of Republika Srpska
RTRS	Radio Television of Republika Srpska
RTV	Radio and Television
SDA	Party of Democratic Action
SIPA	State Investigation and Protection Agency
SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation
SNSD	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
TI	Transparency International
UO	Management Board
UN	United Nations
ZKP	Criminal Procedure Code
ZOK	Law on Communications
ZOO	Law on Obligations
ZOSPI	Law on Freedom of Access to Information
ZOZK	Law on Protection against Defamation

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina faced deep political polarisation, institutional blockages, and a deepening crisis of public trust in democratic institutions throughout 2025. The country's complex constitutional setup, established under the Dayton Peace Agreement, provides for a multi-layered system of governance with divided competences between the state, entity, cantonal, and local levels, further complicating decision-making processes and the implementation of reforms. The most severe political and institutional crisis since the end of the war followed the criminal proceedings against the President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina for failing to comply with the decisions of the High Representative, Christian Schmidt⁵. The response of the authorities of Republika Srpska to Dodik's conviction to one year in prison included open challenging of the legitimacy of state institutions and announcing transfer of competences from the state to the entity⁶. The situation was further destabilised by the decisions and public statements of Republika Srpska officials following the issuance of arrest warrants and the initiation of judicial proceedings against the highest-ranking entity officials, which deepened the political crisis and raised concerns within the international community regarding the preservation of the constitutional order and stability of the country. Public discourse was dominated by narratives about possible secession of Republika Srpska, while state institutions faced serious challenges in exercising their competences and preserving their institutional authority.

In such a political and institutional environment, issues of freedom of expression, media independence, and the safety of journalists remained particularly sensitive. Although the constitutions and legislation at the state and entity levels formally guarantee freedom of expression and the right of access to information as fundamental democratic rights, the fragmented legal framework, inconsistent implementation of legislation, and strong political influence on the institutions seriously

5 Detektor.ba, [Potvrđena presuda: Milorad Dodik osuđen na godinu dana, Miloš Lukić oslobođen](#), 01.08.2025.

6 Detektor.ba, [Narodna skupština usvojila zakone o zabrani rada državnih pravosudnih institucija u Republici Srpskoj](#), 27.02.2025.

limit their effective protection in practice. According to the U.S. Department of State report, instead of improvements in the media environment and stronger institutional protection, there has been an increase in political pressure on journalists and media, attempts to restrict freedom of expression, and a further deterioration of the economic position of independent media⁷.

The overall environment for media freedom and journalists' safety continued to deteriorate. Bosnia and Herzegovina dropped to 86th place in the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, the lowest ranking to date⁸. Journalists and media outlets were exposed to frequent political pressure, verbal attacks, SLAPP lawsuits, online harassment, and various forms of institutional intimidation. Particular concern was caused by legislative initiatives that media professionals and experts assessed as attempts to introduce new mechanisms of control over the media and to restrict public space for critical reporting⁹. Instead of reforms aligned with European standards and recommendations of international organisations, political developments during the year further deepened distrust in the willingness of institutions to protect media freedom.

The media sector was also seriously affected by growing financial instability and the closure of important media projects and newsrooms. The suspension of USAID support affected numerous independent and investigative media outlets with hundreds of media professionals having lost their jobs¹⁰. At the same time, the long-standing financial and political crisis of BHRT brought the national public broadcaster to the brink of survival, seriously undermining the sustainability of the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹¹. Journalists and media professionals generally work under conditions of deep professional and economic insecurity. Fixed-term employment contracts, low salaries, political and economic pressure, and the lack of effective institutional protection contribute to self-censorship and the weakening of professional standards.

Public trust in the media independence continues to decline, while political influence over editorial policies is recognised as one of the key challenges facing the media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹². Despite these circumstances, journalists and media professionals continued to report on corruption, abuse of power, and other issues of public interest. However, the slow pace of judicial proceedings, weak institutional protection, and growing political polarisation create an environment in which free and professional journalism is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Overall, media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained seriously undermined in 2025 by a combination of threats, attacks, and political pressure, institutional inefficiency,

7 State Department: [Povećan broj pritisaka na novinare i medijske radnike u BiH](#), 15.08.2025.

8 Vecernji.ba, [BiH sve niže na listi slobode medija, u dvije godine sa 64. pala na 86. mjesto](#), 08.06.2025.

9 Slobodno.org, [Medijske slobode i sigurnost novinara i dalje ugrožene, izborna godina dodatni izazov](#), 23.04.2026.

10 Media.ba, [Obustava američke pomoći pogađa nezavisne redakcije u BiH](#), 05.02.2025.

11 Analiziraj.ba, [Ko plaća, a ko odlučuje: Kriza BHRT-a razotkriva slom sistema javnog informisanja u BiH](#), 30.01.2026.

12 BH Novinari and FES, research [Sloboda medija u BiH iz perspektive građana/ki](#), April 2026.

and economic insecurity. Without urgent reforms, stronger protection of journalists, and the establishment of sustainable support mechanisms for independent and public service media, the space for free, professional, and critical journalism will continue to shrink, to the detriment of democracy, the public interest, and citizens' right to accurate and impartial information.



Media freedom and journalists' safety in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Indicators

A. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

— A.1 BASIC GUARANTEES FOR MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS' FREEDOM AND THEIR APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

The constitutional and legal framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina guarantees freedom of expression and access to information at all levels of government, while the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights are formally incorporated into domestic legislation and take precedence. However, the country's complex constitutional setup, the multi-layered division of competences, and the inconsistent implementation of legislation leave considerable room for the uneven application of these guarantees across the country. The rights exist on paper, but their practical exercise varies between the entities, cantons, and municipalities.

Substantive reforms aimed at harmonising legislation governing the work of the media have still not been implemented. The legislative package that would consolidate the rules governing the public broadcasting system and transparency of media ownership has not been adopted yet. The absence of a unified approach at the state level, particularly regarding the regulation of the Internet and social media, and the poor implementation of transparency requirements concerning public funding of the media remain among the key weaknesses of the system in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹³.

Several legislative amendments and new acts adopted in 2025 were assessed to contribute to deterioration of the framework governing the media and freedom of expression. The 2025 Law on the Special Register and Publicity of the Work of Non-Governmental Organisations

13 European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025. [Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025 - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#), November 2025.

in Republika Srpska, also known as the “foreign agents law”, required registration and additional reporting by organisations receiving funding from abroad. The Law was annulled in May by a decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after numerous domestic and international organisations warned that it threatened human rights, departed from international standards, and constituted a form of stigmatisation of NGOs cooperating with foreign donors, including journalists’ associations¹⁴.

A draft Law on Information was announced in Una-Sana Canton, designating the inspectorate of the Cantonal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport as the “regulator” of hate speech and authorising it to impose misdemeanour fines on media outlets. The media community assessed this as an attempt to introduce institutional censorship. An attempt was also made to amend the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a manner that would have prohibited the publication of documents, photographs, video recordings, and other content without consent of the person concerned. Following extensive criticism from journalists’ associations and NGOs, the proposal was withdrawn from parliamentary procedure¹⁵. In Brčko District, a new Law on Freedom of Access to Information was adopted after the Government of Brčko District organised a public debate on the Draft Law and accepted all comments submitted by the Association of BH Journalists and other non-governmental organisations¹⁶.

Freedom of expression in the online sphere and the prevention of online hate speech continue to rely primarily on the criminal codes of the entities and Brčko District. Important amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entered into force in August 2025, introducing a new approach to combating gender-based, domestic, and digital violence and aligning domestic legislation with the acquis. One of the key changes was the introduction of the term “information and communication technologies”, recognising the Internet, social media, mobile phones, computers, and similar technologies for the first time as potential instruments for the commission of criminal offences. This means that, from the perspective of criminal law, criminal offences committed using digital media have been criminalised.¹⁷ Based on these amendments to the Criminal Code, the arrest of Amir Pašić Fačo, the owner of a TikTok channel, attracted significant public attention in October 2025. The Sarajevo Canton Prosecutor’s Office filed an indictment against him for psychological violence and endangering the safety of several female journalists and political officials¹⁸. Part of the public believed that Pašić’s arrest and prosecution constituted a restriction of freedom of expression on the Internet. On the other hand, media experts and representatives of non-governmental organisations

14 Media.ba, [Ustavni sud BiH neustavnim proglasio “zakon o stranim agentima”](#), 30.05.2025.

15 Lejla Turčilo, [OD ZAŠTITE DO CENZURE: Kako se regulativa koristi za kontrolu medija – Analiziraj.ba](#), 10.02.2025.

16 [Zakon o slobodi pristupa informacijama u Brčko Distriktu BiH](#), Official Gazette 38/2025.

17 „Advokat Senad Bilić o Krivičnom zakonu FBiH: Izmjene zakona FBiH prošle nezapaženo: Rodno i digitalno nasilje više nije nekažnjivo”, Akta.ba, 24.10.2025.

18 Detektor.ba, [„Podignuta optužnica protiv Amira Pašića zbog psihičkog nasilja”](#), 13.01.2026.

emphasised that freedom of expression is not an unlimited right and that its abuse may give rise to criminal liability¹⁹.

In October, the Ministry of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced the adoption of a Law on Electronic Media, which would establish a unified legal framework for audiovisual media services in Bosnia and Herzegovina aligned with European standards. The Preliminary Draft Law provides that every holder of a licence or authorisation issued by the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) would be required to publish an imprint. It also defines programme content and the obligations of media service providers, including broadcasters' responsibility and the prohibition of content that incites hatred, violence, or discrimination²⁰. The Preliminary Draft Law on Electronic Communications, which regulates signal transmission, networks, spectrum, interconnection, and users' rights, is also in the final stage of development. Although it was announced that both preliminary draft laws would be submitted for public consultation by the end of 2025, this did not occur.

Self-regulation among online portals has shown some progress compared to previous years. Of the total number of complaints submitted to the Press Council and Online Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least 60 percent were resolved through self-regulation. The most frequent complaints submitted by citizens concerned requests for the publication of corrections and hate speech. Most online media outlets lack sufficiently developed mechanisms and capacities for moderating hate speech in readers' comments. Nevertheless, progress is visible in terms of editorial responsibility and the introduction of new software for preventing hate speech and combating digital violence²¹.

According to the Reporters Without Borders report for 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina ranked 86th in the World Press Freedom Index, a drop of five places from the previous year. According to RSF, the general political environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not conducive to media freedom, but significant differences exist across the country because of the entities' different political structures. The media environment is therefore more favourable in Sarajevo and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina than in Republika Srpska.²²

— A.2 INDEPENDENCE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The appointment procedure and competences of the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) are regulated by the Law on Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina²³. Although the CRA is legally defined as an independent institution and political actors and institutions are expressly prohibited from interfering with the Agency's decision-making

19 Sevima Sali Terzić, Council of Europe expert, interviewed by Maja Radević, 20.11.2025.

20 Fena.ba, [Fotografisanje na javnim mjestima: Impresum obavezan](#), 28.10.2025.

21 Maida Bahtić Kestendžić, project coordinator at the BiH Press Council, interviewed by Maja Radević, 20.11.2025.

22 [Ponovni pad BiH na Svjetskom indeksu slobode medija - Detektor](#), 06.05.2025.

23 [Zakon o komunikacijama](#).

in individual cases, in practice this body has been criticised for giving in to political influence and bias for years.

The CRA is governed through its Council and Director General, with the Council acting as a second-instance or appellate body reviewing the Director's decisions. The CRA Council consists of seven members proposed by the Council of Ministers on the basis of a list of candidates established by the CRA and appointed by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The role of the Council is to address strategic issues and adopt codes and rules governing the CRA's areas of work, while decisions are adopted by consensus. In exceptional cases, where consensus cannot be reached, a decision may be adopted by a simple majority, provided that at least four members are present and vote²⁴.

The existing procedures for appointing the CRA's management do not ensure adequate pluralistic representation of relevant stakeholders, nor do they fully protect the process from political influence. Civil society organisations have repeatedly pointed to the need to amend these procedures in order to strengthen public confidence in the CRA as an impartial and independent regulatory authority. The European Commission Report states that the CRA still lacks full political and financial independence. The appointment procedure for the CRA's governing body requires reform in order to reduce political influence over the Agency's work and decisions²⁵.

Broadcasting licences are awarded through a public call issued by the CRA, which also specifies the participation requirements. The process may be considered fair and neutral, given that no complaints from applicants have been recorded. Legal entities applying for licences must be registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina to perform activities in the field of telecommunications and must not have any outstanding financial liabilities towards the CRA.²⁶

The CRA Director General Draško Milinović, a former member of the SNSD and former Director General of RTRS, was criticised in the media and by part of the public in 2025 following the publication of data on the ethnic composition of the Agency's employees and alleged disproportionate representation in favour of Serbs²⁷. One case that attracted considerable attention concerned an RTRS programme segment on apartments purchased by Bosniaks in East Sarajevo, on the territory of Republika Srpska. Following public pressure, the CRA initiated proceedings against RTRS, which are still pending²⁸.

The "Roadmap for Chapter 10 – Information Society and Media", prepared as part of Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration process by the Media Resource Centre and the Association of BH Journalists, emphasised that political

24 Rak.ba, [Organisational structure](#).

25 European Commission, 2025 Bosnia and Herzegovina Report. [Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025 - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#).

26 [Primjer javnog poziva](#).

27 NAP.ba, „[Kako SNSD-ov Milinović zapošljava u RAK-u](#)“, 19.02.2025.

28 Federalna.ba, [Zbog priloga o Bošnjacima u Istočnom Sarajevu: RAK pokrenuo postupak protiv RTRS-a](#), 19.12.2025.

interference in the work of regulatory bodies and the non-transparent financing of media outlets constitute particular problems. It also provided concrete recommendations for aligning domestic legislation and practices with EU standards²⁹.

— A.3 INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of the Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHRT), Radio-Television of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RTVFBiH), Radio-Television of Republika Srpska (RTRS), and the Public Broadcasting Services Corporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁰. The Corporation, which is intended to exercise joint competences for all three public service broadcasters³¹, has still not been established in practice.

Public service broadcasters are financed through the broadcasting licence fee, advertising and other revenues, own activities, and public budgets³². The European Commission Report emphasises that Bosnia and Herzegovina should revise the financing model for local public broadcasters in order to reduce the risk of political pressure and influence. Without stable, independent, and adequately financed public service media, the country cannot fulfil key obligations concerning media pluralism, digital transformation, and democratic accountability³³.

Growing financial instability and persistent attempts to exercise political control over the entity-level and state-level public broadcasters remain an acute problem. During the year, the authorities made no progress in securing long-term financial sustainability of BHRT, which faced the most serious crisis since its establishment due to lack of a stable financing system and a long-standing dispute with the entity-level broadcaster RTRS. In December 2025, BHRT's total debt for taxes and employee contributions alone amounted to BAM 54 million, while RTRS's debt to BHRT resulting from its refusal to transfer funds collected through the distribution of the broadcasting licence fee exceeded BAM 100 million³⁴. Political blockages, primarily originating from representatives of the Republika Srpska authorities, and the refusal to finance BHRT from the state budget directly endangered the livelihood of more than 700 employees of the broadcaster. High Representative Christian Schmidt warned that the situation at BHRT posed a threat to institutional stability and called on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to urgently resolve the financing issue of the state-level public broadcaster. At the same time, however, he did not respond to numerous requests

29 BHJA, [Roadmap for digital transformation and strengthening media independence presented](#), 22.10.2025.

30 Article 3 of the Law on the Public Broadcasting System of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Article 9 of the Law on the Public Broadcasting Service of Republika Srpska; Article 3 of the Law on the Public Broadcasting Service of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

31 Article 6 of the Law on the Public Broadcasting System of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

32 Article 38 of the Law on the Public Broadcasting Service of Republika Srpska; Article 29 of the Statute of Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RTVFBiH); Articles 25 and 26 of the Statute of the Public Broadcasting Service of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RTVFBiH).

33 European Commission, [Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025](#), SWD(2025) 751 final, Brussels, 4 November 2025.

34 BH Journalists: [We Demand Urgent Measures from the BiH Presidency, Parliament and Council of Ministers to Save BHRT!](#), 17.11.2025.

from BHRT employees and journalists' associations to use his powers to impose a permanent solution for BHRT³⁵.

Influence over public broadcasters is also exercised through politically controlled management boards and management appointments.

In June 2025, Bakir Hadžiomerović, a former member of the ruling Social Democratic Party and that party's candidate for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014, was appointed Director General of RTVFBiH³⁶. Hadžiomerović's appointment raised serious doubts about the transparency of the entire procedure when the Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and President of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nermin Nikšić, stated even before the vacancy announcement was published that he had invited Hadžiomerović to apply and that he would personally influence the process to ensure the appointment of this candidate³⁷. The Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime of the Prosecutor's Office of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated an investigation into Hadžiomerović's appointment as Director General of FTV³⁸. In April, the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina also appointed a new RTVFBiH Management Board after 12 years. This process also received extensive criticism from public and journalists' associations arguing that the entire process had been politicised, non-transparent, and contrary to the provisions of the Law on the Public Service Broadcaster RTVFBiH³⁹.

In Republika Srpska, the public broadcaster RTRS remains under full control of the governing coalition led by Milorad Dodik's SNSD. The authorities continue to use the public broadcaster as a political propaganda tool, while Russian influence and the denial of Bosnia and Herzegovina's European path remain dominant features of RTRS reporting⁴⁰.

— A.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO QUALITY JOURNALISM AND MEDIA CONTENT OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Bosnia and Herzegovina still has no specific mechanisms for subsidising print media. Although the public sector allocates tens of millions of BAM annually to media outlets and media content, the public has no clear insight into either the amounts or the procedures for awarding these funds. The criteria are poorly defined or not defined at all, creating room for non-transparency and abuse. The Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024–2028, adopted in June 2024, provides for the continuous publication of data on public financing of the media through regular budgetary processes⁴¹.

35 BHRT.ba, [Politika stopirala finansije, BHRT u najtežoj krizi do sada](#), 21.11.2025.

36 Media.ba, [Bakir Hadžiomerović novi direktor Federalne TV](#), 30.06.2025.

37 Klix.ba, [Nikšić u aprilu: Zamolio sam Hadžiomerovića da se prijavi za direktora FTV-a; UO u junu - Hadžiomerović je direktor](#), 30.06.2025.

38 Faktor.ba, [U POSKOK-u provjeravaju navode o mogućem pogodovanju pri izboru direktora RTVFBiH](#), 20.01.2026.

39 Federalna.ba, [BH novinari Parlamentu FBiH: Vratiti u zakonske okvire izbor članova Upravnog odbora RTVFBiH](#), 12.04.2025.

40 European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025, SWD(2025) 751 final, Brussels, 4 November 2025.

41 Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024–2028 and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy, Measure 1.5.2.

Also, there are no special funds for encouraging the production of pluralistic media content. Public media outlets are primarily financed from public budgets, while their own revenues are declining, further threatening their editorial independence. Independent media outlets increasingly rely on international projects and a limited number of advertisers who do not interfere with editorial policy. Funds are awarded to media outlets at all administrative levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina through different procedures and for different purposes, including regular co-financing, short-term projects, and individual forms of financial assistance.

Regarding national minorities, CRA analyses indicate that they are poorly represented in television and radio programmes. There are no media outlets operating in national minority languages, nor are there financial mechanisms for developing such content. Although public service broadcasters have a legal obligation to promote the needs of national minorities, programme quotas are minimal and generally limited to one hour per week. Existing programmes are mostly not produced in minority languages, while local media outlets cover these issues only partially, depending on the local context.⁴²

The termination of media support programmes of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Bosnia and Herzegovina left dozens of male and female journalists without permanent employment or occasional engagements. Numerous independent media outlets that had relied on funding from the United States for years were brought to the brink of survival. Owners were forced to dismiss numerous journalists and associates, while the salaries of those who retained their jobs were minimized.⁴³ The withdrawal of USAID support also affected civil society organisations and media associations. The Association of BH Journalists had received USAID and USAID-supported media project funding for free legal assistance and the development of a Strategy for Establishing a Sustainable Fund for the Defence of Journalists. However, these activities were suspended when the project was approaching its end. This jeopardised the legal defence of journalists in court proceedings, mostly involving SLAPP lawsuits, as well as criminal investigations for defamation in Republika Srpska.⁴⁴

During 2025, three important international newsrooms in Bosnia and Herzegovina were closed or faced the threat of closure. Al Jazeera Balkans and Voice of America ceased operations, while Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty faced an extremely uncertain future. The closure of Al Jazeera Balkans alone, headquartered in Sarajevo, left more than 200 media professionals without employment. Journalists and media associations warned that the closure and weakening of these media outlets constituted a serious blow to media pluralism and media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.⁴⁵ At the same time, the media community is increasingly concerned over the rising influence

42 Portal Newipe, Slađan Tomić, [PITAMO: Ima li medijskog prostora za nacionalne manjine u BiH](#), 26.08.2022.

43 Media.ba, [Ozbiljne posljedice ukidanja američke podrške medijima u BiH](#), 07.05.2025.

44 Borka Rudić, BHJA Secretary General, interviewed by Maja Radević.

45 DW.com, [Gašenje Al Jazeera Balkans uzdrmalo medijsku scenu regije](#), 13.07.2025.

of the Serbian authorities on the media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina through certain private media outlets.⁴⁶ The closure of numerous important media outlets and the withdrawal of USAID support for independent media have also created additional space for the expansion of Russian and Chinese influence in the media landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁷

— A.5 STATE ADVERTISING IN THE PRIVATE MEDIA SECTOR

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains unique in the region in not having adopted a state-level Law on Advertising, creating a legal vacuum in the regulation of state advertising in private media. Unlike the legal frameworks of neighbouring countries, which contain clear rules concerning transparency and criteria for the distribution of public advertising funds, no such law exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and no formal system for monitoring these processes has been established to date.

At the entity and lower levels of government, legislation governing prohibited advertising exists, but it does not concern media advertising and is exclusively focused on commercial practices. In practice, advertising is regulated through a combination of different laws, rules, and professional codes that are not mutually coordinated and do not systematically cover public advertising in the media. These include the Law on Consumer Protection, the Law on Public Procurement, the Law on the Public Broadcasting System of Bosnia and Herzegovina, CRA broadcasting rules, the Press and Online Media Code, and various sector-specific regulations. These norms partially address advertising or promotion but do not regulate transparent and consistent distribution of public funds to private media. The Law on Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which lays down that advertising by broadcasters should be regulated in accordance with “best European practice”, has failed to produce genuine transparency in practice.⁴⁸

The latest estimates and research indicate that government institutions at different levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina spend between BAM 60 and 70 million annually on financing public and private media outlets, including advertising, the publication of public calls and tenders, and the engagement of media outlets to promote the work of local authorities. The exact amount cannot be determined because of the lack of standardised reporting and transparency.⁴⁹ According to available data, approximately BAM 1.5 million is spent annually on publishing advertisements, public calls, and vacancy announcements, while an additional amount exceeding BAM 5 million is spent on engaging media outlets to report on the work of municipal authorities, produce event chronicles, or participate in other forms of promotion. Total media financing from cantonal and municipal budgets in the Federation

46 Slobodna-bosna.ba, [BEOGRADSKA MREŽA CENZURE U SARAJEVU: Kako mediji pod Vučićevom kontrolom prekrajaju historijske činjenice o genocidu i agresiji na BiH](#), 30.07.2025.

47 Detektor.ba, [Gašenje medija u BiH otvara prostor za širenje ruskih i kineskih uticaja](#), 19.08.2025.

48 Law on Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Regulatory Principles of Broadcasting and Telecommunications, Article 4(1)(e).

49 Media.ba, [Bez zakona i kontrole: Kako budžeti oblikuju medijsku scenu u BiH](#), 06.02.2026.

of Bosnia and Herzegovina during 2025 is estimated at approximately BAM 9.63 million, while the Government of Republika Srpska directly allocates more than BAM 11.6 million to media outlets such as RTRS and the SRNA news agency. Significant budgetary allocations are also made at lower levels of government. In 2025, the Government of Tuzla Canton allocated approximately BAM 200,000 in subsidies to local media, the Government of Una-Sana Canton also allocated BAM 200,000, while the Government of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton allocated as much as BAM 420,000.⁵⁰

Institutions do not regularly publish detailed data on the amount of public funding they allocate, particularly to private media outlets. It is particularly problematic that the Law on Public Procurement exempts contracts for the acquisition, development, and production or co-production of radio and television programmes. This means that a significant proportion of budgetary funds is awarded without any obligation to publish public calls or a meaningful oversight, creating room for political clientelism.⁵¹

In practice, budgetary funds are frequently directed towards media outlets loyal to executive authorities or affiliated with particular political party structures, rather than being awarded on the basis of objective criteria of quality and public interest. This situation is further aggravated by the lack of legislation governing transparency of media ownership and criteria for public advertising, which was repeatedly recommended by the European Commission in its reports on Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵²

— A.6 LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO DEFAMATION AND THEIR APPLICATION DO NOT CREATE A CHILLING EFFECT ON JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

The legal framework regulating defamation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains inconsistent and provides insufficient protection for the work of journalists. The recriminalisation of defamation in Republika Srpska in August 2023 significantly intensified pressure on media freedom and created an environment that many journalists describe as discouraging to free reporting.⁵³ Since the criminalisation of defamation entered into force, more than 218 reports have been filed against activists, citizens, opposition representatives, and journalists in the entity. Lawsuits against journalists and media outlets are most frequently initiated by politicians and public officials, the management of public enterprises, and owners of private companies. Approximately 300 defamation lawsuits⁵⁴ are currently pending in civil proceedings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with SLAPP lawsuits accounting for approximately one-third.⁵⁵

50 Ibid.

51 Hercegovina.info, [Vlada HNŽ financira portal iz Sarajeva, a Vlada HBŽ uvjetuje da se prati njihov rad](#), 09.05.2025.

52 European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025, SWD(2025) 751 final, Brussels, 4 November 2025.

53 Slobodnaevropa.org, [Novinari u BiH pod teretom tužbi i borbe za egzistenciju](#), 11.01.2026.

54 Data from the Free Media Help Line (FMHL).

55 Borka Rudić, BHJA Secretary General.

During 2025, courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina delivered several judgments in favour of journalists in cases initiated by journalists against politicians and public officials. The District Court in Banja Luka issued a final judgment finding that, in 2021, the then member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Milorad Dodik and the SRNA news agency had defamed a journalist and political analyst Tanja Topić. They were ordered to jointly and severally pay her BAM 3,000 in damages and to cover the costs of the civil proceedings. Although Milorad Dodik has not paid the amount awarded under the judgment yet, the court did not order enforcement even six months later.⁵⁶

After a five-year legal battle, journalist Arijana Saračević-Helać won a case initiated against her for defamation by lawyer Kadrija Kolić.⁵⁷ The Municipal Court in Sarajevo issued a first-instance judgment finding that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and President of the People and Justice party, Elmedin Konaković, had defamed journalist Avdo Avdić.⁵⁸ The Cantonal Court in Mostar rejected the appeal filed by Rade Bošnjak, the former Director of the Health Insurance Institute of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, in a case against journalist Kristina Perić and the Hercegovina.info portal. This confirmed that the published articles did not contain defamation, despite the claimant's request for substantial damages.⁵⁹ The case was supported by lawyers engaged through the Free Media Help Line. The Municipal Court in Travnik dismissed a SLAPP lawsuit against the Tačno.net portal. Over four years, the Free Media Help Line operating within the Association of BH Journalists allocated approximately BAM 80,000 for legal costs and support in SLAPP cases and other lawsuits against journalists and media outlets. Not a single court case was lost.⁶⁰

Despite these positive outcomes, the issue of legal provisions related to defamation and their application remains controversial and challenging, particularly in the context of extensive criticism of the judiciary, which is generally perceived by the public as politically dependent and corrupt. Legal experts deem the adoption of anti-SLAPP legislation necessary, in order to prevent the abuse of legal provisions related to defamation.⁶¹ The increasingly frequent practice of courts ordering media outlets, at the request of claimants, to delete articles and remove other media content is of particular concern.⁶² The exhaustion of newsrooms and journalists through litigation particularly threatens the survival of local independent media outlets, which lack sufficiently developed capacities and financial resources to withstand intense economic pressure.⁶³

56 Tanja Topić, journalist and independent political analyst, interview conducted by Maja Radević, 25 January 2026.

57 BH novinari, [Pravna pobjeda novinarki koja radi u interesu javnosti](#), 26.03.2025.

58 Istraga.ba, [Opet slagao: Općinski sud u Sarajevu presudio da je Elmedin Konaković na Face TV-u oklevetao urednika Istrage Avdu Avdića](#), 15.07.2025.

59 Hercegovina.info, [ODBAČENA ŽALBA RADE BOŠNJAKA PROTIV HERCEGOVINA.INFO Sud potvrdio da istraživačko novinarstvo nije kleveta](#), 02.04.2025.

60 Interview with Mirna Stanković Luković, Coordinator of the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), conducted by Maja Radević, 18 February 2026.

61 **Dejan Lučka**, *Kriminalizacija klevete u Republici Srpskoj – osvrt na proces i rješenja*, **BH Journalists Association, 2025**.

62 BH JOURNALISTS: [Court rulings ordering the removal of media content pose a serious threat to investigative journalism](#).

63 Kristina Spajić Perić, journalist and editor of Istina Media, interviewed by Maja Radević, 16 December 2025.

— A.7 OTHER LAWS ARE ENFORCED OBJECTIVELY AND ALLOW JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS TO WORK FREELY AND SAFELY

During 2025, several legislative amendments were proposed that media professionals and experts assessed as a serious setback in the field of freedom of expression and media. Although most of these proposals were withdrawn from legislative procedures or placed on hold, journalists' associations, civil society organisations, and media outlets expressed dissatisfaction with the attempts to introduce normative restrictions on media freedom and political debate on matters of public interest.

One of the most controversial examples was the Law on the Special Register and Publicity of the Work of Non-Governmental Organisations in Republika Srpska, the so-called "foreign agents law", which provided for enhanced monitoring of organisations receiving funding from abroad. In May 2025, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina rendered the Law invalid. In January 2026, the Constitutional Court of Republika Srpska confirmed the decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina terminating the Law's validity.⁶⁴

A new Law on Information was announced in Una-Sana Canton, designating the inspectorate of the Cantonal Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport as the "regulator" of hate speech authorised to impose misdemeanour fines on media outlets. The Law would require online portals to introduce self-regulation and appoint persons responsible for monitoring and removing comments containing hate speech without delay and no later than within 24 hours. Failure to comply would be subject to misdemeanour fines. This proposed arrangement provoked strong criticism from the media community, which assessed it as an attempt to introduce institutional censorship and interfere directly with media outlets' editorial autonomy. The Law is currently in the draft stage.⁶⁵

An attempt was also made to amend the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a manner that would have prohibited the publication of documents, photographs, video recordings, and other content without the consent of the person concerned. The professional community assessed this proposal as a serious threat to investigative journalism and citizens' right to information. It was withdrawn from parliamentary procedure following strong reactions from the media community, and the amendments were reformulated so as not to restrict the media work.⁶⁶

Although no cases involving threats to the rights and safety of journalists reporting from protests, nor any attempts to restrict their right to assembly were recorded in 2025, several cases were reported involving attempted work bans, administrative restrictions, and limitations on journalists'

64 Kucaljudskihprava.org, [Saopštenje povodom rješenja Ustavnog suda](#), 04.02.2026.

65 BH novinari, [Unsko-sanski kanton priprema novi zakon o informisanju](#), 08.01.2025.

66 Depo.ba, [Vlada FBiH izmijenila Krivični zakon: Bez uvođenja cenzure medijima i zabrane objavljivanja fotografija političara](#), 14.04.2025.

movement and freedom to report. One of the most extreme examples of restricting a journalist's freedom of movement and work was the decision of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia to ban prominent investigative journalist Avdo Avdić from entering the country. Despite requests from representatives of the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁶⁷ as well as numerous journalists' associations, international organisations, and officials, Croatian institutions provided no official explanation for the decision.⁶⁸

— A.8 THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTS' SOURCES IS GUARANTEED IN THE LEGISLATION AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

The confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed by the laws on protection against defamation and the criminal procedure codes at all levels of government, and is further defined by the Press and Online Media Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶⁹ The criminal procedure codes stipulate that journalists may not be examined as witnesses for the purpose of revealing their sources of information,⁷⁰ while the laws on protection against defamation explicitly guarantee journalists' right not to disclose the identity of their sources.⁷¹ This right also includes the right not to disclose any document, information, or fact that could lead to the identification of a source, including oral, written, audio, visual, or electronic material. Under the applicable legislation, the right to protect a confidential source is not restricted under any circumstances in proceedings conducted pursuant to the laws on protection against defamation. This issue is also regulated by the Guidelines for Cooperation between the Police and the Media, developed by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which clearly prohibit the use of coercion, pressure, or intimidation against journalists for the purpose of revealing sources of information.⁷²

Despite clear legal and professional guarantees, two serious attempts to violate the confidentiality of journalists' sources were recorded during 2025. In August, RTRS journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac was detained by members of the Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the order of the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her home was searched and her journalistic equipment seized on suspicion of the criminal offence of "disclosure of an official secret". Following her questioning, the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina motioned for the imposition of restrictive measures, but the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected the motion due to lack of reasonable suspicion that the journalist had committed the criminal offence.⁷³

67 Klix.ba, [Konaković pisao Ambasadi Hrvatske: "Koji su razlozi zabrane ulaska u Hrvatsku istaknutom novinaru Avdi Avdiću?"](#), 12.11.2025.

68 SafeJournalists: [We Demand Explanation from Croatian Authorities over Entry Ban on BiH Journalist Avdo Avdić](#), 13.11.2025.

69 [Kodeks za štampu i online medije BiH](#), Article 13.

70 Article 82 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Article 147 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republika Srpska; Article 96 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Article 82 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

71 Article 9 of the Defamation Protection Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Article 10 of the Defamation Protection Law of the Republika Srpska; Article 9 of the Defamation Protection Law of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Article 9 of the Defamation Protection Law of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

72 [Guidelines for cooperation between Police and Media](#), point 5.

73 Detektor.ba, [Sud BiH odbio odrediti mjere zabrane novinarki Nataši Miljanović Zubac](#), 20.08.2025.

In October, Acting Director of the Federation Police Administration Vahidin Munjić sent a public letter to Hayat Television requesting that it “review its editorial policy” following the publication of private correspondence between him and other persons that could potentially contain incriminating material. Journalists’ associations assessed this action as an attempt at intimidation and inappropriate pressure on the media, intended to discourage the use of confidential and anonymous sources of information.⁷⁴

— A.9 JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PURSUE THEIR PROFESSION AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR ASSOCIATIONS

No significant changes were recorded concerning journalists’ trade union organisation and professional association. Female and male journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not required to obtain work permits or licences, nor were any attempts to introduce such requirements during the year. Their right to organise in trade unions and professional associations is guaranteed by a range of laws, primarily labour legislation. No national-level journalists’ trade union was established in 2025, despite the continued deterioration of labour rights in the media sector.

Journalists identify disunity within the journalistic community itself and political influence over media owners and management as the key reasons for the absence of an umbrella trade union. They also state that they are under significant pressure because of their work and lack both the time and a clear idea of how to organise in practice. Attempts to form a trade union, particularly in private media outlets, are often perceived by owners as a “hostile act”.⁷⁵

Although no pressure was recorded from the authorities, media owners, or others in positions of power compelling journalists to join particular associations, the increasing fragmentation of journalists along entity and political lines is concerning. The premises of the Journalists’ Club in Banja Luka, a local branch of the umbrella Association of BH Journalists, were closed in December 2025 because of the lack of interest among members in working to protect media freedom and journalists’ safety, as well as the lack of financial resources to cover operating costs. Some journalists from Republika Srpska consider the existing Association of Journalists of Republika Srpska ineffective and passive in representing and advancing the rights of journalists and media professionals. They announced the establishment of a Forum of Journalists and Media Professionals in Republika Srpska, which, according to its initiators, would bring together media professionals “regardless of their editorial policies and mutual differences”.⁷⁶

74 BH Journalists: [FUP must not target the media for using secret sources of information](#), 28.10.2025.

75 Interview.ba, [ČEKANJE DUGO TRI DEZENIJE: Zašto novinarki i novinari u BiH nikada nisu dočekali sindikat?](#), 14.07.2025.

76 Nezavisne.com, [Osniva se Forum novinara u Banjaluci](#), 24.01.2026.

Most journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina are members of one of the existing journalists' associations, while fewer are members of media workers' trade unions operating within public broadcasters, where trade union organisation is the most prevalent. Among the associations, the Association of BH Journalists remains the largest, with more than 700 members. Journalists turn to it most frequently for assistance in cases involving attacks, threats, defamation lawsuits, and violations of labour rights.⁷⁷

— A.10 RIGHT TO ACCESS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina rely on statutory rules governing access to information and official documents of public importance, regulated by the laws on freedom of access to information at the state and entity levels.⁷⁸

Although the new Law on Freedom of Access to Information at the level of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been in force for two years, serious problems persist in its implementation. Access to information of public interest has been significantly restricted because the Law contains a long list of exemptions or possible limitations concerning access to information held by the institutions. Furthermore, although it contains misdemeanour provisions, the Law does not prescribe fines when responsible persons fail to resolve requests within the prescribed deadlines, fail to issue decisions on requests in the prescribed form, or to deliver decisions of the second-instance authority to appellants.⁷⁹

The Central Information Portal provided for by the Law has not been established yet. In October 2024, a new composition of the Appeals Council within the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina was appointed to act as a second-instance authority in appeals concerning access to information. The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which monitors the implementation of freedom of access to information legislation, receives approximately 250 complaints annually concerning access to information and issues approximately 100 recommendations. Citizens' complaints mostly concern the application of the entity-level laws on freedom of access to information, while only a small number of complaints are filed under the Law applicable to the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most frequently identified problems in practice include failures to issue decisions on requests for access to information within statutory deadlines, failures by second-instance authorities to act upon objections, access denials without a clear legal basis, and inadequate establishment of exemptions and application of the public interest test.⁸⁰

77 More than 60% of journalists are members of a journalists' association, while around 18% belong to a trade union operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Media Freedom Indicators for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023.

78 [Law on Freedom of Access to Information at the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 61/23, 5 September 2023); [Law on Freedom of Access to Information in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (Official Gazette of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nos. 32/01 and 48/11); and [Law on Freedom of Access to Information of the Republika Srpska](#) (Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska, No. 20/2001).

79 Inforadar.ba, [Zakon o slobodi pristupa informacijama: Institucije i dalje kriju informacije od javnog značaja](#) | InfoRadat, 13.05.2025.

80 [Annual Report on results of the activities of the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH for 2024](#), Banja Luka, March 2025.

Following a legal vacuum created by the exclusive application of the laws on freedom of access to information at the entity level and at the level of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Assembly of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Law on Freedom of Access to Information in Brčko District in November 2025.⁸¹ The Government of Brčko District stands out as a positive example of an open and inclusive approach towards the media community. Following criticism from the non-governmental sector, they organised a public debate on the Draft Law on Freedom of Access to Information and ultimately adopted the Law, accepting the proposals and suggestions of the Association of BH Journalists and other non-governmental organisations.⁸² This model of cooperation demonstrates that the legislative framework can be improved through dialogue and active participation of media professionals and experts.

Journalists emphasise that the non-transparency and closed nature of institutions continue to force them to rely on unofficial sources of information, undermining the accuracy and objectivity of public information. One of the most significant, continuing problems is the non-transparency of a number of judicial institutions, which frequently provide brief and incomplete responses to media inquiries or ignore them entirely.⁸³ Regarding prosecutors' offices, media cooperation with cantonal and district prosecutors' offices is generally at a significantly higher level than cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁴

Numerous local media outlets face restrictions and bans on access to information concerning the work of city authorities. Local officials often interpret their requests for access to information as attempts to "undermine" the authorities. Legitimate journalistic inquiries regarding the spending and distribution of budgetary funds are met with threats, defamation lawsuits, and allegations that the outlets concerned are "mercenary" media publishing falsehoods for political reasons and on the instructions of third parties.⁸⁵

Journalists generally have access to parliament sessions at the state, entity, and cantonal levels, as well as to sessions of the Assembly of Brčko District. Citizens can follow these sessions live through television broadcasts or online platforms.⁸⁶ However, several attempts to deny access to press conferences and sessions of government representatives were recorded during 2025. Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik prohibited Oslobođenje correspondent Goran Dakić from attending press conferences at the Palace of Republika Srpska, after which the Association of BH Journalists publicly called on media outlets to boycott

81 The Law was published in the Official Gazette of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 38/2025, on 3 November 2025, and entered into force on the eighth day following its publication in the Official Gazette.

82 BH Journalists, [Održana javna rasprava o Nacrtu zakona o slobodi pristupa informacijama u Brčkom](#), 18.06.2025.

83 Sanela Karaica, journalist at Fokus portal. Interview by Maja Radević, 3 September 2025.

84 Meldiana Mulaosmanović, editor of the Faktor news portal. Interview by Maja Radević, 3 October 2025.

85 Mario Ćosić, journalist and co/owner of the Hercegovina.info news portal, Interview by Maja Radević, 16 December 2025.

86 For example, the [Parlametar](#) platform provides access to information and transcripts of sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dodik's public appearances.⁸⁷ Local media outlets in Dobož, Bileća, and Zenica faced administrative restrictions and bans on reporting from sessions of city bodies.⁸⁸

87 BH Journalists: ["We Call for a Media Boycott of Milorad Dodik,"](#) SafeJournalists, 12 March 2025.
88 [Other Threats Against Media Outlets and Media Organizations,](#) SafeJournalists, 19 March 2025.

B. JOURNALISTS' POSITION IN THE NEWSROOMS

— B.1 THE POSITIONS OF JOURNALISTS ARE STABLE AND PROTECTED AT THE WORKPLACE

Journalists' labour rights are frequently violated, particularly in private media outlets. Journalists feel unprotected and say that private media owners generally offer them short-term employment contracts for three or six months. As a result, they are unable to exercise their legally guaranteed labour rights and, in the event of dismissal, they are not entitled to severance pay. Dozens of journalists employed by private media outlets suddenly lost their jobs in 2025 and have found it difficult to secure new employment, while only a small number received the severance pay guaranteed by law. Numerous freelancers and media associates engaged under service contracts also had their contracts terminated. Due to the termination of USAID media support programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some media outlets were forced to dismiss more than half of their employees.⁸⁹

Journalists and media professionals aged 40 and over increasingly face age discrimination when seeking employment. Employers in the media sector seek younger employees who are willing to work for below-average salaries and on fixed-term contracts.⁹⁰ Local media outlets operate with minimal resources, while journalists report that they are underpaid, overburdened with work, and frequently exposed to pressure within newsrooms. Numerous journalists working in local media receive minimum salaries, often with delay, and irregular payment of social security contributions.⁹¹

The situation is no better in public service media and other publicly funded media outlets. Due to political blockages originating from Republika Srpska, the state-level public broadcaster BHRT was deprived of BAM 100 million and is therefore unable to meet its obligations towards journalists and other employees. BHRT's total debt arising solely from taxes and employee contributions reached BAM 54 million. Without an urgent solution and a sustainable financing model, BHRT faces the risk of closure and seizure of its assets, which could leave more than 700 employees jobless.⁹² Journalists employed by the entity-level public service broadcasters RTVFBiH and RTRS are also underpaid and work in very poor conditions with outdated equipment.

More than 67 percent of media professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina state that work-related stress forced them to seek psychological assistance, while approximately 40 percent of journalists use anxiolytics and other sedatives. Journalists are increasingly contacting the Free Media Help Line seeking not only legal assistance but also psychological support and other

89 Media.ba, [Ozbiljne posljedice ukidanja američke podrške medijima u BiH | MC_ONLINE](#), 07.05.2025.

90 Focus group with journalists from private media outlets, 18 January 2026.

91 Velida Kulenović and Amra Smriko, Journalists' Rights and Freedoms in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Local Context, Zenica, December 2025.

92 Federalna.ba, [Gasi li se BHRT u februaru? Parlamentarna komisija traži upotrebu bonskih ovlasti](#), 20.01.2026.

forms of medical assistance. Journalists identify job insecurity, low salaries, poor interpersonal relations at the workplace, and external pressure as the main causes of stress.⁹³

According to official data, the salaries of media professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina range from BAM 1,074 to BAM 2,808, while approximately 10 percent of journalists earn less than BAM 1,074.⁹⁴ The pay disparity between journalists and editors is substantial, with editors and media managers frequently earning three times more than journalists.⁹⁵

During 2025, four cases related to labour disputes and two cases of censorship were reported to the Free Media Help Line. The most common violations of rights were related to overtime work and the number of working hours, payment of contributions, entitlement to severance pay, and violations of rights through dismissal or disciplinary proceedings. Political pressure remains among the most frequent violations of journalists' rights. Ten new cases of political pressure were reported to the Free Media Help Line, while the SafeJournalists Network registered 16 cases of threats and verbal attacks by politicians and public officials against journalists and media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025.

Journalists identify the absence of a unified trade union of media professionals at the state level as one of the most pressing problems in terms of violations of labour rights.⁹⁶ Although there is interest in trade union organisation, fear of reactions from media owners, distrust in the possibility of achieving genuine change, and the low level of solidarity among journalists prevent such initiatives.⁹⁷

— B.2 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE PRIVATE MEDIA

The absence of legislation governing transparency of media ownership in Bosnia and Herzegovina also results in inadequate or non-existent mechanisms for protecting editorial independence in private media. In most cases, information on how these media outlets are financed is not publicly available, particularly regarding allocations from public budgets.

According to research conducted by the Press Council and Online Media, 488 news portals were registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025, of which only 40 percent were transparent, meaning that they had complete imprints showing who actually stood behind the media outlets. News websites are predominantly privately owned, while only 12 percent are public media outlets, mainly operating

93 BH Journalists Association, [Survey on Journalists' Mental Health: 40% Use Anti-Anxiety Medication](#), author: Srđan Puhalo, September 2025.

94 Salary data from the [Plata.ba](#) website.

95 N1, [Članovi UO RTVFBiH primaju tri hiljade KM dok su novinari na minimalcu](#), 03.06.2025.

96 Separate trade unions operate at the entity level and in Brčko District. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, journalists are represented by the Trade Union of Graphic, Publishing and Media Workers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while in Republika Srpska they are represented by the Trade Union of Media and Graphic Workers of Republika Srpska. Within the public broadcaster BHRT, two separate trade unions operate alongside the trade unions of the entity public broadcasters. The official number of journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina is unknown; according to unofficial estimates, approximately 3,000 journalists are currently employed in the country.

97 Uba.ba, [ČEKANJE DUGO TRI DECENIJE: Zašto novinarke i novinari u BiH nikada nisu dočekali sindikat? - Umbrella](#), 14.07.2025.

within traditional media organisations, such as the portals of public service broadcasters. Very few editors and owners of private media outlets have become aware of the need to comply with professional standards, and only approximately 8 percent of all registered portals are members of the Press Council and Online Media.⁹⁸

Most private media outlets have not adopted internal codes of ethics. Some editors state that the content they publish is subject to a form of control by media owners who are closely connected to political structures. Independent private media outlets, editors, and journalists are frequently exposed to considerable pressure from politicians and political parties when they report on them critically. These actors publicly accuse them of being someone's "mercenaries", agents of foreign intelligence services, or of working for their political opponents. Politicians and public officials increasingly resort to SLAPP lawsuits, which further exhaust private media outlets and undermine their independence.⁹⁹

In July 2025, the Municipal Court in Sarajevo ruled that Elmedin Konaković, President of the People and Justice party and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, had defamed Avdo Avdić, editor of the Istraga portal, by claiming in a television interview that Avdić had conspired with several members of the intelligence service to arrange his arrest.¹⁰⁰ SNSD President Milorad Dodik continues publicly singling out, insulting, and labelling editors of independent private media outlets in Republika Srpska. Editors and media owners state that constant targeting by powerful political figures creates a sense of fear and insecurity. Smaller media outlets are particularly vulnerable, as they find it difficult to resist self-censorship under such circumstances.¹⁰¹

According to data from the Media Freedom Rapid Response platform, the number of media outlets and journalists affected by political pressure more than doubled, reaching 45 in 2025, compared to 21 cases in 2024. This sends an alarming signal of increased pressure on critical reporting.¹⁰² New research shows that more than half of citizens believe that political structures control the media; 29.75 percent consider the media to be partially free, while only 18.99 percent believe that they are fully free and independent. As many as 62.54 percent of respondents do not trust any media outlet. Among those who nevertheless express a certain level of trust, 18.29 percent of respondents trust local portals, 9.14 percent have confidence in private television stations, and only 5.6 percent trust public service broadcasters.¹⁰³

At the same time, the distribution of public funds for advertising in private media remains non-transparent and

98 [Press and Online Media Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), Mapping of News Web Portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, November 2025.

99 Kristina Spajić Perić, journalist and editor-in-chief of Istina.media, interviewed by Maja Radević, 16 December 2025.

100 Istraga.ba, [Opet slagao: Općinski sud u Sarajevu presudio da je Elmedin Konaković na Face TV-u oklevetao urednika Istrage Avdu Avdića - Istraga.ba](#), 15.07.2025.

101 Media.ba, [Mediji u RS-u: Dodikove uvrede dokaz su da dobro radimo svoj posao | MC_ONLINE](#), 26.02.2025.

102 MFRR, [Mapping Media Freedom - Alert Explorer](#).

103 Analiziraj.ba, [Istraživanje pokazalo: Više od 60 posto građana u Hercegovini ne vjeruje nijednom mediju](#), 17.12.2025.

often discriminatory. Estimates indicate that a significant proportion of media advertising is channelled through public companies and entity-level structures, often to the benefit of media outlets close to the authorities. In its 2025 Report, the European Commission again emphasised the importance of establishing and defining clear criteria for the distribution of public advertising funds, as well as the importance of adopting legislation on transparency of media ownership.¹⁰⁴

— B.3 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The laws¹⁰⁵ and statutes¹⁰⁶ governing public service broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina prescribe their editorial autonomy, political neutrality, and accountability to the public. However, implementation of these provisions is frequently hindered by a combination of political pressure, a dysfunctional governance system, and financing problems. The system for collecting and distributing the broadcasting licence fee presents a particular challenge, as it directly affects the stability and independence of public service broadcasters. Financial dependence and institutional blockages create an environment in which editorial freedom becomes vulnerable to political and vested interests.

The most serious development during the previous year was the financial blockade and political decision that left BHRT without the funds planned in the state budget, bringing the state-level public broadcaster to the brink of collapse. Political blockages and the obstruction of systemic solutions concerning BHRT's financing model constitute direct pressure on the independence of the public broadcaster, threaten the livelihoods of more than 700 employees, and force management to undertake crisis interventions that may restrict the freedom of the newsroom.¹⁰⁷

In 2025, the case concerning the appointment of Bakir Hadžiomerović as Director General of Radio-Television of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina attracted the attention of the public and institutions. The Special Department for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime of the Prosecutor's Office of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina began examining allegations of possible favouritism in the appointment procedure following statements by the Federation Prime Minister Nermin Nikšić that he had personally invited Hadžiomerović to apply for the position and regarded him as the future Director General. Nikšić's statements, made before the completion of the selection procedure, prompted considerable debate regarding the legality and regularity of the appointment process, as well as the actual independence of the public broadcaster's governing structures.¹⁰⁸

104 [Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025 - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#), November 2025.

105 [Zakon o javnom radio-televizijskom sistemu Bosne i Hercegovine](#), [Zakon o javnom servisu radio-televizije Federacije BiH](#) and [Zakon o radio televiziji RS](#).

106 [Statut RTV BiH](#), [Statut RTRS](#) and [Statut BHTV](#).

107 BH Journalists: [We Demand Urgent Measures from the BiH Presidency, Parliament and Council of Ministers to Save BHRT!](#), 17.11.2025.

108 Faktor.ba, [U POSKOK-u provjeravaju navode o mogućem pogodovanju pri izboru direktora RTVFBiH](#), 20.01.2026.

Radio-Television of Republika Srpska has faced criticism for many years because of its strong political bias and close ties with the ruling political structures in the entity. Numerous analyses and civil society reports indicate that RTRS's editorial policy substantially reflects the interests of the ruling SNSD party and its leaders, contrary to the principles of public service broadcasting.¹⁰⁹ Further concern was sparked by a criminal complaint against RTRS regarding a news broadcast that featured elements of hate speech capable of inciting ethnic, religious, or racial intolerance. The case has been referred to the competent prosecutor's office for further action.¹¹⁰

BHRT remains the only public service broadcaster to have amended its Editorial Principles to include obligations concerning content management on official social media accounts. The amendments prohibit hate speech and the glorification of war crimes, including such conduct by employees on digital platforms. The other public service broadcasters have not introduced similar amendments to their internal regulations yet.¹¹¹

The European Commission's 2025 Report emphasised that Bosnia and Herzegovina should establish the Public Broadcasting Services Corporation, as required by law, and revise the financing model for local public broadcasters in order to reduce the risk of political pressure and influence.¹¹²

— B.4 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT MEDIA SECTOR

Not-for-profit and independent media constitute a relatively small and underdeveloped segment of the overall media landscape. There is no unified, legally binding regulatory framework that would ensure the consistent application of professional and editorial standards across all not-for-profit and independent media outlets. Consequently, there is no universally accepted or systematically applied model of editorial independence within this sector.¹¹³ An additional problem is that for years most of these media outlets have relied on short-term donor-funded projects without secure long-term revenues, making it difficult to ensure stable planning and the consistent application of professional standards.¹¹⁴

In 2025, the not-for-profit and independent media sector faced a deep structural crisis, while its sustainability was seriously undermined by dependence on foreign donors and the near-total lack of functional domestic financing mechanisms. The suspension of USAID support at the beginning of 2025 was a particularly severe blow. As a result, numerous newsrooms were brought to the brink of survival, some journalists and researchers lost their

109 balcanicaucaso.org, [BiH: političke blokade razaraju javni servis](#), 19.12.2025.

110 Detektor.ba, [Krivična prijava protiv RTRS-a ustupljena tužilaštvu u Istočnom Sarajevu](#), 06.01.2026.

111 mreza-mira.net, [Od tri javna servisa samo je BHRT revidirao svoje uređivačke principe](#), 16.10.2023.

112 European Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina Report 2025.

113 Media Freedom Rapid Response, [BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Media freedom in survival mode](#).

114 Media.ba, [Donatorska podrška ključna za opstanak nezavisnih medija u BiH](#), 15.10.2020.

jobs, and certain media outlets were forced to reduce the scope of their work or suspend their activities entirely.¹¹⁵

The most common problems faced by not-for-profit and independent media include financial instability, the suspension or reduction of donor support, job insecurity, and continuous pressure through public discrediting and stigmatisation. Accusations that certain media outlets and journalists are “agents of foreign influence” have become increasingly common in public discourse, particularly following the withdrawal of international donors, further discouraging critical reporting. Unstable financing prevents newsrooms from ensuring regular salaries and long-term contracts, resulting in staff departures, declining content quality, and, in some cases, the closure of media outlets. At the same time, alternative sources of financing are virtually non-existent, as local authorities, institutions, and the market rarely provide sustainable support to not-for-profit media.¹¹⁶

Precarious working conditions and irregular salaries are causing experienced journalists to leave the profession, while young journalists increasingly abandon journalism or seek employment in other sectors. This further reduces the number of critical voices in the public sphere and weakens media pluralism. Due to their unstable financial structure, not-for-profit media outlets are becoming more vulnerable to political and commercial pressure. Without urgent revenue diversification, they risk developing a new form of reliance that could further compromise their independence.¹¹⁷

Alongside financial pressure, there were also attempts to impose normative restrictions on media freedom. Proposed amendments to criminal legislation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina were of particular concern, which included provisions that would have prohibited the publication of documents, photographs, and audiovisual materials without the consent of the persons concerned. Although the proposal was formally withdrawn, its substance represented a serious attempt to introduce censorship and self-censorship and to restrict space for investigative journalism.¹¹⁸

— B.5 FREEDOM OF JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWS PRODUCTION PROCESS

Most journalists believe that their freedom to create stories and news content is limited by the economic interests of media owners and management, as well as by increasingly aggressive attempts to exercise political control over journalists, media outlets, and published content. Economic and political dependence are deeply intertwined and determine editorial policies of certain media outlets. More than one-quarter of reported cases

115 Media.ba, [Ozbiljne posljedice ukidanja američke podrške medijima u BiH | MC_ONLINE](#), 07.05.2025.

116 InfoRadar.ba, [UŠUTKIVANJE MEDIJA: 'Vlastima odgovara da nezavisni mediji ne postoje' | InfoRadar](#), 31.03.2025.

117 N1info.ba, [Bez slobodnih medija nema ni evropskog puta: EU izdvaja sedam miliona eura za BiH, ali novinari i dalje pod pritiscima](#), 23.09.2025.

118 Lejla Turčilo, [OD ZAŠTITE DO CENZURE: Kako se regulativa koristi za kontrolu medija – Analiziraj.ba](#), 10.02.2025.

involving violations of journalists' freedoms and attempted censorship originate from editors and other superiors.¹¹⁹

Regarding censorship and self-censorship, the distinction between public and private media is blurring. Journalists often chalk self-censorship up to economic survival and job insecurity. They state that they are often required to write "commissioned" articles and avoid particular interlocutors or entire topics that wouldn't sit well with their editors or media owners.¹²⁰

The suspension of donor support for independent media has not only jeopardised their survival in the market but has also made them more vulnerable to attempts at political control, both from within Bosnia and Herzegovina and by external actors. Political influence over media content is particularly visible in reporting on topics concerning the wars of the 1990s, war crimes, and judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. During reporting on the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, certain media outlets belonging to regional networks avoided using the word "genocide" and instead referred to the "suffering" or "crime" against Bosniaks.¹²¹

Journalists' freedom to select topics independently and shape media content varies significantly between newsrooms. According to the research, the consensus among most citizens and journalists is that truly independent outlets are virtually non-existent in the current media landscape. Online media are most frequently perceived as the least susceptible to such influence. Newsrooms operating with support from foreign donors and projects are often regarded as more autonomous than those financed from public budgets.¹²²

Public opinion research indicates widespread public distrust regarding the independence of journalistic work. More than 80 percent of citizens believe that the work of certain journalists is politically biased. This view is held by 74 percent of respondents in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while in Republika Srpska the percentage reaches 96.4 percent, representing a significant increase from 2024. According to citizens, politicians and political parties exert the greatest influence over the work of journalists and media outlets, a view expressed by 63.5 percent of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, four percentage points more than in the previous year.

This perception is further reflected in views concerning violations of media freedom: more than two-thirds of citizens, or 71.5 percent, believe that political actors are the main source of pressure and violations of journalists' rights. By contrast, 11.2 percent of respondents attribute responsibility to media owners and editors, while 15.1 percent believe that the Office of the High Representative and the international community also undermine journalists' rights and media freedom.

119 Velida Kulenović and Amra Smriko, "Prava i slobode novinara u Bosni i Hercegovini: Lokalni kontekst", December 2025.

120 Interview.ba, PAZI ŠTA PRIČAŠ I ŠTA PIŠEŠ: Autocenzura - granica slobode izražavanja - Interview.ba, 04.07.2025.

121 Slobodna Bosna, BEOGRADSKA MREŽA CENZURE U SARAJEVU: Kako mediji pod Vučićevom kontrolom prekrajaju historijske činjenice o genocidu i agresiji na BiH | Slobodna Bosna, author: Maja Radević, 30.07.2025.

122 OSCE [Assessment of Media Sector Needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

Inter-entity differences are stark. The share of citizens who believe politicians infringe upon journalists' rights and press freedom is approximately 30 percentage points higher in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina than in Republika Srpska. Conversely, as many as 46.1 percent of residents of Republika Srpska regard the Office of the High Representative and the international community as significant actors in violating the rights and freedoms of the media and journalists.¹²³

In addition to political pressure, the lack of internal protection mechanisms within newsrooms presents an additional challenge. Most media outlets do not have internal regulations protecting employees' rights and safety, leaving journalists without institutional protection. Journalists emphasise that by accepting an engagement in a particular newsroom, they are also effectively accepting its editorial policy, without any real mechanisms for preserving their professional integrity. Due to livelihood concerns, cases of censorship are rarely reported. When they are, journalists generally insist on anonymity in order to avoid the risk of losing their jobs.¹²⁴ Two cases of censorship were reported to the Free Media Help Line in 2025, one of which concerned Radio-Television of Una-Sana Canton.

— B.6 WORKING POSITION OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS

The working position and salaries of women journalists generally do not differ from those of their male colleagues. However, traditional social expectations and family responsibilities related to childcare, pregnancy, maternity leave, and similar obligations often make the position of women journalists within newsrooms more difficult. Employers, particularly in private media outlets, frequently show little understanding in this regard, and the statutory rights of women journalists are often violated. Some women journalists report that they were dismissed or that their employment contracts were not renewed while they were on sick leave or maternity leave.¹²⁵

Women journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina are exposed to various forms of violence on a daily basis, ranging from verbal attacks and online threats to physical attacks, often with a strong gender-based component. They experience violence both in the field and within newsrooms, where they frequently do not receive adequate protection following attacks. From the beginning of 2021 to the end of 2024, 31 attacks directly targeting women journalists were recorded, while 21 attacks targeted groups of journalists. The actual number of attacks is, however, considerably higher, as most women journalists do not report them because of distrust in the system and fear of being perceived as victims.

The general perception among women journalists is that they are more exposed to violence than their male colleagues and that such violence frequently contains gender-based elements. Research shows that one in five women journalists

123 BH Journalists and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, [Medijske slobode u BiH 2025](#), April 2025.

124 Mirna Stanković Luković, Coordinator of the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), interviewed by Maja Radević, 18 February 2026.

125 Focus group with women journalists, moderated by Maja Radević, 17 January 2026.

in Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced gender-based discrimination in her newsroom. Women journalists are, however, more frequently exposed to violence while working in the field than within newsrooms. They feel most threatened by politicians and other persons in positions of power, as well as by individuals involved in criminal activities whose interests could be threatened by investigative journalism.¹²⁶

Most newsrooms in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have formal incident response protocols, particularly gender-based attacks against women journalists. Women journalists consider support within the newsroom even more important for overcoming threats and violence than the existing legal framework. In cases involving violations of labour rights, workplace mobbing, and attacks, most often they first contact the Free Media Help Line operating within the Association of BH Journalists.

Gender-based violence against women journalists most commonly takes the form of abusive comments about their physical appearance and private and family life, as well as attempts to discredit them professionally solely because they are women. Such attacks are particularly present in the digital sphere, where misogynistic statements by politicians and other public officials are frequent.¹²⁷

Positive developments have been recorded in the prosecution of gender-based and online violence against women journalists. In November 2025, the Basic Court in Banja Luka delivered a first-instance judgment against the Mayor of the Municipality of Šipovo, Milan Kovač, for direct discrimination against journalists Alena Beširević and Harun Dinarević. Among other findings, the Court established that Kovač had harassed journalist Beširević on sexual and gender grounds and concluded that his speech contained “all the elements of harassment, which is a form of discrimination, because he violated the dignity of the claimants by attempting to intimidate, degrade, humiliate and offend them using extremely vulgar language”. This was the first judgment delivered in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a criminal proceeding for gender-based violence against journalists.¹²⁸

During 2025, the SafeJournalists Network registered eight cases of threats and attacks against women journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, five involving individual women journalists and three involving groups. It is particularly concerning that half of the reported cases explicitly contained elements of gender-based violence. One of the cases that attracted a lot of public attention was the arrest of Amir Pašić Faćo from Sarajevo. In January 2026, the Sarajevo Canton Prosecutor's Office indicted him of psychological violence on social media and violating the dignity of journalists Rabija Arifović and Dalija Hasanbegović-Konaković, the Secretary General of the Association of BH Journalists,

126 BH Journalists Association, [Bosnia and Herzegovina - Women Journalists' Safety](#), by Lajla Zaimović Kurtović, November 2025.

127 [BH Journalists: Female journalists in Sarajevo increasingly victims of verbal violence by politicians](#), 14 April 2022.

128 BH Journalists, [The first verdict for the discrimination of journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a victory against the political powers](#), 29 November 2025.

Borka Rudić, and the Deputy Minister for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Duška Jurišić.¹²⁹

In the indictment, the Prosecutor's Office cited numerous offensive sexual references directed at the women concerned, hate speech, and offences on personal, gender, and religious grounds. Pašić was arrested immediately after the case was reported and has remained in detention since.¹³⁰

129 Detektor.ba, [Podignuta optužnica protiv Amira Pašića zbog psihičkog nasilja](#), 13.01.2026.

130 Klix.ba, [Amiru Pašiću Faći produžen pritvor, ostaje iza rešetaka do marta](#), 20.01.2026.

C. JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

— C.1 JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Bosnia and Herzegovina still has no specific legal or institutional mechanism that would ensure comprehensive and systematic protection of journalists from violence, threats, and hate speech. Although initiatives to introduce criminal-law protection for journalists have been present for several years, they were not integrated into legislation.

The appointment of contact persons for cooperation with journalists and journalists' associations on safety matters in prosecutors' offices and police agencies has facilitated access to information about cases involving journalists as injured parties. Their responsibilities include monitoring reported cases, assigning cases to competent prosecutors, monitoring ex officio proceedings, and improving communication between institutions, journalists, and civil society organisations. Although journalists generally find contact persons useful, a significant number of cases remain unreported due to lack of confidence in the judiciary. For example, in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, not a single case involving a journalist as the injured party was recorded over a two-year period, even though the contact person at the Cantonal Prosecutor's Office received several calls concerning threats against media professionals and instructed them to report those threats.¹³¹ A larger number of cases was recorded in other cantons, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District. Between January 2024 and December 2025, the Prosecutor's Office of Brčko District obtained three convictions against persons who had attacked journalists, while orders not to conduct an investigation were issued in four cases.¹³² During 2025, the District Public Prosecutor's Office in Trebinje received four reports concerning the criminal offence of endangering safety under Article 150 of the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska. Two cases were completed, while two remain pending.¹³³

The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina established a dedicated section on its website concerning journalists' safety, containing a list and contact details of all contact points in the police and judiciary. This also includes data from the Case Management System in cases in which journalists are the injured parties, which is updated annually.¹³⁴ Other institutions still lack a unified, publicly accessible database tracking the number, type, and status of reported attacks and threats against journalists, nor are there any plans to establish such a system at the state level. Data are provided only in response to individual requests, limiting transparency and preventing comprehensive monitoring of trends.

131 Data provided by Jurica Knezović, contact point at the Cantonal Prosecutor's Office of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton.

132 Data provided by the Brčko District Prosecutor's Office.

133 Data provided by the Trebinje District Public Prosecutor's Office.

134 [Judiciary Portal of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

Following a threat or attack, journalists most frequently turn to the Free Media Help Line,¹³⁵ which operates within the Association of BH Journalists. The FMHL provides legal assistance and counselling in cases involving threats to safety, as well as on a broader range of issues, including labour disputes, mobbing, censorship, and court proceedings against journalists. Attacks are also reported through the regional SafeJournalists platform,¹³⁶ which focuses on journalists' safety. In addition, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina established a coordination working group for the safety of journalists, which operates in cooperation with the Council of Europe.¹³⁷

Data collected through regional and domestic mechanisms indicate that journalists remain continuously exposed to various forms of pressure, threats, and attacks. Although fewer cases were reported in 2025 than in previous years, this trend does not necessarily indicate an improvement in the safety environment. It also partly reflects journalists' distrust in institutions and the limited effectiveness of existing protection mechanisms. Of 35 safety incidents recorded by the FMHL and the SafeJournalists Network in 2025, only five cases were investigated and resolved in favour of journalists.¹³⁸ Regarding the overall number of cases, including SLAPPs, defamation lawsuits, discrimination, and mobbing in addition to threats and attacks, the situation was somewhat better: a total of 11 cases were resolved in favour of journalists in 2025.¹³⁹

Although there are examples of effective action by the police and prosecutors' offices in prosecuting attacks against journalists, these remain the exception rather than the rule. Proceedings from the initial reporting of an attack to a prosecutorial decision take several years on average, highlighting a clear lack of efficiency in the criminal justice response. Cases classified as misdemeanours against public peace and order are resolved quickly and generally result in fines.

— C.2 JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS WHOSE LIVES OR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY ARE AT REAL AND IMMEDIATE RISK HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIAL PROTECTION OR SAFETY MECHANISMS

Bosnia and Herzegovina has no specifically regulated or standardised protection mechanisms for journalists and other media professionals whose safety is at risk. Police protection is granted on an ad hoc basis, following an assessment by the competent police agencies and prosecutors' offices and in accordance with general legislation governing internal affairs and the protection of persons at risk.

135 [BH Journalists Help Line](#).

136 [Safejournalists Incidents](#).

137 [Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo](#).

138 Federalna.ba, [Rudić: Moraju se tražiti nove strategije za opstanak novinarstva kao javnog dobra](#), 30.12.2025.

139 Data from Free Media Help Line.

Laws on internal affairs provide that police protection measures may be imposed where a person at risk reports threats, after which the police notify the competent prosecutor's office. Based on available information and a risk assessment, the prosecutor's office decides on the type and scope of police measures to be undertaken to protect the life and safety of the person at risk. These measures are not tailored specifically to the unique risks faced by journalists.

In December 2024, an international investigation established that a suspect in several serious criminal offences had planned the murder of Avdo Avdić, a journalist and editor of the Istraga.ba portal. Following the suspect's arrest in Slovenia, Avdić was granted police protection, serving as an example of a relatively swift institutional response to a serious and specific threat to a journalist's life.¹⁴⁰ The police protection continued during 2025, following security agencies' risk assessments.

However, the case of Trebinje-based journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac demonstrates that access to special safety measures is inconsistent in practice and depends on individual assessments by the competent institutions. She was subjected to continuous and serious threats, including an incident where a vehicle was set on fire right outside her family home. Despite repeated warnings and requests from organisations protecting journalists' rights, the competent authorities in Republika Srpska did not provide her with adequate police protection, which points to serious deficiencies in the risk assessment system.¹⁴¹

New cases recorded during 2025 also indicate the limited reach of existing protection mechanisms. After a person who had physically attacked journalist Avdo Avdić was released from detention and subjected to minimal restrictive measures, the issue of proportionality of the institutional response and the actual importance attached to journalists' safety was raised again. Such cases further contribute to a sense of insecurity among media professionals and deepen distrust in the institutions.¹⁴²

According to data from the Free Media Help Line, a total of 41 cases involving violations of journalists' rights and media freedom were recorded during 2025, including threats, attacks, and institutional pressure. These data confirm that journalists remain exposed to high safety risks, while existing protection mechanisms are fragmented, inconsistent, and largely dependent on the discretionary assessments of competent institutions.¹⁴³

Following Bosnia and Herzegovina's acquisition of EU candidate status, journalists also gained additional access to international support mechanisms, including initiatives such as the Media Freedom Rapid Response,¹⁴⁴ which provides

140 Klix.ba, [BH novinari traže od SIPA-e i OSA-e da zaštite Avdu Avdića](#), 06.12.2024.

141 Klix.ba, [Jurišić: Svako ograničenje kretanja novinarkе Nataše Miljanović Zubac može je učiniti ranjivom](#), 14.08.2025.

142 Federalna.ba, [Abdulaziz Musa pušten na slobodu, Avdić s pravom pita – ko je sljedeći?](#), 21.08.2025.

143 Mirna Stanković Luković, Coordinator of the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), interviewed by Maja Radević, 18 February 2026.

144 [Media Freedom Rapid Response](#).

practical and emergency assistance in cases involving serious threats to journalists' safety and professional rights.

— C.3 FEMALE JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL MEASURES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACED WITH GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND VIOLENCE

In previous years, Bosnia and Herzegovina made some progress in aligning its legislation with obligations arising from the Istanbul Convention. However, this progress remains insufficient to ensure systematic and effective protection of women journalists from gender-based violence, harassment, and threats linked to their professional work. Although new criminal offences have been introduced and certain legal frameworks improved at the entity level, these mechanisms are not specifically adapted to the particular risks faced by women in journalism.

Judicial practice continues to demonstrate limited application of key laws that could provide additional protection to women, including women journalists, such as the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. The institutional response in cases of gender-based violence against women journalists often remains fragmented, while the gender dimension of threats and harassment is often either not recognised or downplayed.

In 2025, the new Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and Violence against Women entered into force in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was adopted with the aim of better aligning entity-level legislation with the Istanbul Convention. The Law provides for expanded protection measures for victims of violence, strengthens police powers, and specifies the obligations of institutions involved in preventing and prosecuting violence.¹⁴⁵ While the Law does not explicitly reference women journalists as a professional group, its legal framework could offer further protection for female journalists facing gender-based violence outside the family home.

Women in the media, particularly journalists, remain exposed to a high level of gender-based threats, verbal violence, and online harassment. One in five women journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced some form of gender-based discrimination within a newsroom, with attacks most frequently occurring during fieldwork or reporting on politically and socially sensitive topics. The general perception among women journalists is that they are more exposed to violence than their male colleagues and that such violence frequently contains gender-based elements. The threats most often come from politicians, public office-holders, and criminal figures women journalists report on.¹⁴⁶

145 [Zakon o zaštiti od nasilja u porodici i nasilja nad ženama](#).

146 Research „Bosnia and Herzegovina – Women Journalists' Safety – 2024“, author Lajla Zaimović Kurtović, BH Journalists, November 2025.

A total of eight cases of threats and attacks against women journalists were registered in 2025, including five individual and three group cases. Explicit elements of gender-based violence were identified in half of the reported incidents, including sexualised threats, gender-based humiliation, and misogynistic hate speech.¹⁴⁷

Limited but significant progress was recorded in judicial practice. In November 2025, the Basic Court in Banja Luka delivered a first-instance judgment against the Mayor of the Municipality of Šipovo for direct discrimination against two journalists. The Court established that the female journalist was subjected to gender-based discrimination, while the male journalist was discriminated on grounds of presumed sexual orientation. This judgment is an important indication that gender-based discrimination is recognised in the context of women journalists' work.¹⁴⁸

An example of an effective response by the competent authorities was also recorded in a case involving serious online threats directed against women in the public sphere. Following repeated threats and online attacks against journalists Rabija Arifović and Dalija Hasanbegović-Konaković, Secretary General of the Association of BH Journalists Borka Rudić, and former journalist and Deputy Minister for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina Duška Jurišić, the competent prosecutor's office classified the conduct as psychological violence and threat to safety. In this case, the suspect Amir Pašić was arrested and the court ordered his detention for several months.¹⁴⁹ Although this is an individual case, it represents an important precedent in recognising the seriousness of online threats and gender-based violence against women journalists and other women in the public sphere.

At the same time, examples of inadequate or excessive institutional action against women journalists were also recorded during 2025. RTRS public service journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac was subjected to criminal investigation, including a search of her home and seizure of equipment, on suspicion of disclosing an official secret. The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected the prosecutor's proposal to impose restrictive measures, concluding that there was no reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence had been committed. This highlighted the need for greater caution in proceedings against women journalists in sensitive investigations that may have a chilling effect on media freedom.¹⁵⁰

A large number of cases of gender-based violence against women journalists remain unreported due to, among other things, distrust in the institutions, fear of further victimisation, lack of support within newsrooms, and the perception that threats and insults are an "integral part" of journalistic work.

147 Mirna Stanković Luković, Coordinator of the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), interviewed by Maja Radević, 18 February 2026.

148 Detektor.ba, [Prva presuda za diskriminaciju novinara u BiH kao pobjeda protiv političkih moćnika](#), 28.11.2025.

149 Radiosarajevo.ba, [Na prijedlog Tužilaštva KS: Produžen pritvor za još dva mjeseca Amiru Pašiću Faći](#), 21.11.2025.

150 Detektor.ba, [Sud BiH odbio odrediti mjere zabrane novinarki Nataši Miljanović Zubac](#), 20.08.2025.

Most media organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina still lack internal protocols for responding to gender-based attacks and clear support mechanisms for women journalists.¹⁵¹

Support for women journalists is primarily available through civil society organisations. Through the Free Media Help Line, the Association of BH Journalists provides free legal and psychological assistance to women journalists exposed to threats, harassment, or violence. In addition, the association 'Vaša prava' provides free legal assistance to journalists in cases involving violations of their professional and human rights. While these mechanisms are important, they remain insufficient given the lack of systematic institutional solutions.

— C.4 THE PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

Throughout 2025, institutions failed to establish a routine practice of publicly condemning threats, attacks, and pressure directed at journalists and media outlet. State institutions, political parties, and public office-holders rarely respond in a principled and consistent manner, while sporadic condemnations are generally selective and politically motivated. As a rule, they concern cases when attacked journalists or media outlets are perceived as being close to particular political structures, while attacks against critical and investigative media outlets and journalists are often ignored or downplayed.

Political actors and institutions condemned only two cases of attacks on journalists in 2025: a physical attack on journalist Avdo Avdić¹⁵² and the case of psychological violence and online threats directed at journalist Rabija Arifović.¹⁵³

According to SafeJournalists Network data, 16 cases of threats and verbal attacks of politicians and public officials directed at journalists and media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina were registered in 2025. The most common forms of attacks included public discrediting, accusations of political bias, targeting through social media, and aggressive rhetoric during public appearances. In most cases, these attacks resulted in no institutional or political sanctions, further reinforcing the culture of impunity.¹⁵⁴

President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin Konaković were among the politicians who most frequently engaged in public confrontations with journalists and media outlets. Politicians' statements and social media posts, often accompanied by unfounded accusations and the labelling of journalists and media outlets, are conducive

151 Research „Bosnia and Herzegovina – Women Journalists' Safety – 2024“, author Lajla Zaimović Kurtović, BH Journalists, November 2025.

152 Istraga.ba, [Predstavnicima stranaka, brojni bh. zvaničnici i kolege izrazili podršku Avdi Avdiću: Pozvali na hitno sankcionisanje napadača](#), 19.08.2025.

153 Stav.ba, [Podrška Rabiji Arifović od političara, kolega novinara, njenih profesora, akademske zajednice...](#), 21.10.2025.

154 Federalna.ba, [Rudić: Sankcije za političare koji napadaju novinare, ali i urednike koji vrše redakcijsko nasilje](#), 03.07.2025.

to a hostile environment for media professionals and further fuel public distrust in independent journalism.

Unlike in previous years, certain positive developments were recorded in sanctioning politicians who verbally attacked journalists and undermined their professional integrity. In repeated proceedings, the District Court in Banja Luka delivered a final judgment finding that Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik and the SRNA news agency had defamed political analyst and journalist Tanja Topić and ordered them to pay her BAM 3,000 in damages jointly and severally.¹⁵⁵ The Cantonal Court in Sarajevo delivered a final judgment in favour of journalist Arijana Saračević-Helać in defamation proceedings initiated by lawyer and businessman Kadrija Kolić.¹⁵⁶ The Municipal Court in Sarajevo delivered a first-instance judgment finding that Minister Elmedin Konaković had defamed journalist and editor Avdo Avdić during a television interview.¹⁵⁷

Public opinion survey conducted in 2025 indicates a deep crisis of trust in the media and political systems. More than 80 percent of citizens believe that the work of certain journalists is politically motivated, while 71.5 percent identify politicians and political parties as the principal violators of journalists' rights and media freedom. Perceptions differ between the entities: in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a significantly larger proportion of citizens view politicians as the principal source of pressure on the media, while in Republika Srpska almost half of respondents identify the Office of the High Representative and the international community as important actors in violations of media freedom.¹⁵⁸

Despite the frequency of attacks and clearly negative trends, support for journalists from the broader civil society sector also remains limited and fragmented. Responses by organisations, institutions, and the public are generally individualised, lacking a long-term effect or systematic pressure on decision-makers to change existing practices.

— C.5 POLICE AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO JOURNALISTS' PROTECTION ISSUE

Police authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are generally familiar with basic human rights standards and the role of journalists in a democratic society. Moderate progress was achieved in 2025 regarding how the police handle threats and attacks against journalists, particularly in terms of receiving reports and the initial response.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, significant shortcomings remain in understanding of the specific risks faced by journalists, especially in the context of political pressure, online threats, and gender-based violence.

155 Media.ba, [Milorad Dodik i SRNA krivi za klevetu u tužbi Tanje Topić | MC ONLINE](#), 01.08.2025.

156 BH Journalists, [Pravna pobjeda novinarka koja radi u interesu javnosti - BH novinari](#), 26.03.2025.

157 Istraga.ba, [Opet slagao: Općinski sud u Sarajevu presudio da je Elmedin Konaković na Face TV-u oklevetao urednika Istrage Avdu Avdića](#), 15.07.2025.

158 BH Journalists and FES, [Medijske slobode u BiH 2025](#), April 2025.

159 Fena, [Moraju se tražiti nove strategije za opstanak novinarstva kao javnog dobra](#), 30.12.2025.

Representatives of police agencies generally demonstrate openness to cooperation with journalists' associations and organisations dealing with journalists' safety. However, they emphasise that they have no influence over how prosecutors' offices and courts legally classify individual cases. According to journalists, the police respond promptly and appropriately in most reported cases, while the principal problems concerning the effectiveness of journalists' protection mostly arise during prosecutorial and judicial proceedings.

Journalists' level of trust in the institutions remains low. During 2025, only approximately 25 percent of registered cases involving threats and attacks against journalists were reported to the police and judiciary. This points to a widespread perception that institutional protection is ineffective or that reporting of an incident may result in further victimisation. These findings further emphasise the need to strengthen institutional sensitivity and trust between the police and the media community.¹⁶⁰

Some progress was achieved through the establishment of 13 contact points within police agencies. Their role is to improve communication with journalists and journalists' associations and to facilitate effective ex officio investigations into all safety threats and attacks against journalists. However, there are still no clear indicators of how effective they were, while practice remains inconsistent and largely dependent on individual engagement of police officers and managers. Contact persons have assumed responsibility for recording reports, prioritising action, and communicating with journalists and their associations, but they have no formal authority to conduct investigations or adopt procedural decisions.¹⁶¹

At the request of the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of the Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina detained journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac in August, following the search of her home and vehicle on suspicion of the criminal offence of "disclosure of classified information" under Article 164 of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The journalist later stated that the police officers had treated her properly and acted within the scope of their authority.¹⁶²

An example of inappropriate pressure on the media by a senior police official was also recorded, causing concerns within the media community. Acting Director of the Federation Police Administration Vahidin Munjić sent a letter to the editorial office of Hayat Television requesting a "review of its editorial policy". He claimed that the television station and its editor Avdo Avdić had published "unlawfully disclosed evidence from an investigation by the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina" and violated the presumption of innocence. The Association of BH Journalists assessed Munjić's

160 Mirna Stanković Luković, Coordinator of the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), interviewed by Maja Radević, 18 February 2026.

161 Hercegovina.info, [Zaštita novinara u Hercegovini: Haris Čevra i Mila Čavar policijske su kontakt točke u slučaju napada](#), 10.12.2025.

162 Klix.ba, [Novinarka iz Trebinja Nataša Miljanović Zubac privedena zbog sumnje na odavanje tajnih podataka](#), 07.08.2025.

letter as direct pressure on media freedom and freedom of expression, as well as interference with editorial autonomy.¹⁶³

— C.6 SPECIALISED UNITS/OFFICERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH EXPERTISE FOR INVESTIGATING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Despite increased institutional openness and the willingness of representatives of the police and prosecutors' offices to participate in training and debates concerning media freedom, journalists continue to express considerable dissatisfaction with the speed and effectiveness of investigations into attacks. This is particularly true for cases of digital violence, which have reached alarming proportions. A sharp increase in threats made via social media has been recorded, including explicit death threats, targeting of journalists through coordinated online campaigns, and prolonged harassment with serious consequences for journalists' psychological safety and professional work.¹⁶⁴

Cases involving restrictions on freedom of movement and institutional insensitivity for safety risks facing women journalists, such as publicly documented threats and pressure against journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac, have demonstrated the lack of a gender-sensitive approach and risk assessment by police and judicial authorities. Despite reporting every attack and continuously requesting police protection, Miljanović Zubac was never granted any. ¹⁶⁵

Although the Federation Police Administration and the Ministry of the Interior of Republika Srpska have specialised cybercrime units, their capacities remain insufficient to respond to increasingly sophisticated forms of digital violence. These capacities are even weaker at cantonal and local levels, resulting in a fragmented approach and inconsistent practice. Investigations are further complicated when threats originate from anonymous profiles or platforms whose servers are located outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the mutual legal assistance process is slow or ineffective.

Positive examples have been recorded in Sarajevo Canton, where a prosecutor specially trained in handling high-tech crimes is active. Certain police inspectors at the entity level also maintain direct communication with social media platforms, enabling the removal of the most dangerous content. However, these mechanisms have not been established systematically and largely depend on individual initiatives and expertise of individual practitioners.

No progress was made in 2025 in introducing specific criminal-law provisions in order to treat attacks on journalists as offences against persons performing work of public interest. Consequently, attacks on journalists are often classified

163 BH Journalists: [FUP must not target the media for using secret sources of information](#), 28.10.2025.

164 BH Journalists, [Online prijetnje bez sankcija: Stručnjaci traže bolju zaštitu novinara i novinarki u BiH](#), 19.05.2025.

165 RSE, [Umjesto zaštite, lisice novinarki koja piše o korupciji](#), 13.08.2025.

as minor offences against public peace and order, thereby systematically downplaying the importance of journalists' safety.

Prosecutorial practice in 2025 indicates that a large number of reports resulted in orders not to conduct or to discontinue investigations, frequently without detailed and comprehensible reasoning. This approach is particularly evident in cases involving online threats and hate speech, where high evidentiary standards and limitations in the existing legal framework create additional obstacles to effective prosecution.

Through the Media Justice Group, the Association of BH Journalists continues to provide legal and expert support to journalists exposed to threats and violence, monitor the work of institutions, and advocate for systemic reforms. The activities of the Media Justice Group in 2025 further confirmed that, without continuous pressure and oversight, institutional mechanisms for protecting journalists remain fragmented, slow, and insufficiently effective.¹⁶⁶

— C.7 INVESTIGATIONS OF SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT EFFICIENTLY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY AND PROMPTLY)

Although police responses and investigations in cases of physical attacks on journalists are generally carried out promptly, the overall effectiveness and deterrent effect of investigations and sanctions remain seriously limited when it comes to the judiciary. The prevailing practice of classifying attacks as minor bodily injuries or minor offences against public peace and order, accompanied by lenient sanctions and a rare use of detention, points to a systemic failure to recognise attacks on journalists as offences against the public interest and democratic order. Such an approach not only fails to provide journalists with adequate protection, but also contributes to the normalisation of violence against media professionals.¹⁶⁷

Examples from 2025 clearly illustrate the limitations of the institutional response. In one of the most prominent cases, the physical attack on investigative journalist Avdo Avdić resulting in a lenient judicial response that provoked strong backlash within the journalistic community and raised concerns over whether the sanction was proportional to the seriousness of the attack. resulting in a lenient judicial response that provoked strong backlash within the journalistic community and raised concerns over whether the sanction was proportional to the seriousness of the attack. The public perception that physical threats to journalists' safety are reduced in court practice to symbolic fines further undermined confidence in the judicial system and discouraged journalists from reporting violence.¹⁶⁸

166 Muhamed Tulumović, President of the Municipal Court in Tuzla and member of the Media Justice Group (MJG), interviewed by Maja Radević, 30 August 2025.

167 [SafeJournalists and EFJ: We Strongly Condemn Physical Attacks on Journalists in Republika Srpska](#), 09.02.2026.

168 Avaz.ba, [Avdo Avdić za "Avaz" nakon što je Musa, koji ga je napao, pušten na slobodu: Život novinara vrijedi oko 500 KM!](#), 21.08.2025.

Even when there is an evident connection between a physical attack and journalistic work, more stringent criminal classifications and sanctions with a genuine preventive effect are lacking. Doubts are especially severe when perpetrators have links to political networks or local power centers, leading to the perception that investigations are selective, sluggish, and lack thoroughness. Although judicial institutions formally process most of the reported cases, the legal classification of the offence and the sanctions imposed rarely correspond to the severity of the attacks or their impact on media freedom.

Four cases of physical attacks against journalists and media professionals were reported during 2025, representing an increase from the previous year. A large number of incidents occurred during fieldwork, including attempts to prevent filming, intimidation, and deliberate damaging of journalistic equipment.

One of the most serious cases was recorded in Brčko, where journalists from the Centre for Investigative Reporting were physically attacked and sustained minor bodily injuries while filming a report.¹⁶⁹ In Sarajevo, the editor of the Istraga.ba portal was attacked from behind and punched in the head.¹⁷⁰ A journalist from the Direkt portal and a BN Television correspondent were physically attacked and prevented from filming while on assignment in Bileća,¹⁷¹ and an RTV Herceg-Bosna crew was subjected to physical and verbal attacks while filming in Mostar.¹⁷²

Institutional responses to these incidents were inconsistent. In some cases, the police responded efficiently, detained the attackers, and filed criminal reports. In other cases, suspects were released shortly after being detained, subject only to measures restricting their movement or contact, while the investigations remain incomplete. Court proceedings in cases involving attacks against journalists often last for months or even years. The prolonged duration of proceedings, combined with lenient sanctions, further discourages journalists from reporting attacks and contributes to the normalisation of violence against media professionals.

The failure to reform criminal laws and clearly categorise attacks on journalists as a distinct criminal offence further worsens legal uncertainty. . Consequently, prosecutors' offices and courts continue to apply general criminal-law provisions, most frequently those concerning endangering safety or inflicting minor bodily injuries. In cases involving hate speech and incitement to violence, investigations are often discontinued on the grounds that "there are no elements of a criminal offence".

169 CIN.ba, [Novinari CIN-a napadnuti u Brčkom](#), 28.02.2025.

170 NAP.ba, [Sin Sanina Muse fizički napao novinara Avdu Avdića](#), 19.08.2025.

171 Safejournalists.net, [Aktualni napadi na novinare: Nikolija Bjelica Škrivan \(Direkt\) i Bojan Nosović \(BNTV\), Bileća](#), 11.04.2025.

172 Safejournalists.net, [Aktualni napadi na novinare, Novinari Radiotelevizije Herceg-Bosne, Mostar](#), 22.04.2025.

— C.8 JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE EFFICIENTLY PROTECTED FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

Online threats, harassment, and other forms of digital violence against journalists and media professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina reached a concerning level during 2025, both in terms of intensity and organisation. Although certain normative and operational improvements were recorded, the institutional response to digital violence remains inconsistent, frequently slow, and insufficiently effective, particularly in cases where perpetrators are politically exposed persons or organised networks operating on social media platforms.

The Criminal Code of Republika Srpska recognises the use of information and communication technologies as a means of committing the criminal offence of publicly provoking and inciting violence and hatred, while similar provisions were introduced into the Criminal Code of Brčko District through amendments adopted in 2024. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, did not have a clear normative basis for prosecuting digital violence for a long time. The amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which entered into force in August 2025, represent an important step forward because, for the first time, they explicitly recognise digital violence and the use of information and communication technologies as means of committing criminal offences. These amendments created a legal basis for prosecuting online threats, harassment, psychological violence, and other forms of digital attacks against journalists.¹⁷³

On the basis of these legislative amendments, an important positive example of an effective institutional response was recorded in 2025. In a case involving endangering safety, prolonged harassment, and psychological violence against women journalists through social media, the suspected perpetrator from Sarajevo, Amir Pašić Fačo, was arrested through a swift and coordinated operation by the police, prosecutor's office, and court, and was remanded in custody. Within the journalistic community, this case was recognised as a precedent and as evidence that an effective institutional response is possible when there is a clear legal basis and a willingness to act.¹⁷⁴

Despite this positive example, a large number of online threats, hate speech, and coordinated harassment campaigns against journalists remained unprosecuted in 2025. Competent prosecutors' offices most frequently dismiss criminal reports due to lack of elements of a criminal offence, particularly when threats are made via social media, anonymous accounts, or bot networks.¹⁷⁵ A particular problem is the lack of institutional response when online violence is used by politicians, public office-holders, or actors close to them. Such cases, including prolonged public targeting

173 Paragraf.ba, [KRIVIČNI ZAKON FBiH: Rodno i digitalno nasilje više nije nekažnjivo](#), 28.10.2025.

174 [SafeJournalists: Psychological violence and safety threats to women journalists in BiH must be punished](#), 24.10.2025.

175 Detektor.ba, [Intenzivan porast digitalnog nasilja prema novinarima u BiH](#), 04.12.2025.

and discrediting of journalists via social media, rarely result in investigations, further reinforcing the perception of a selective law enforcement and impunity for digital violence.

Court proceedings in cases involving online violence are lengthy and uncertain. The proceedings against Jasmin Mulahusić, who was indicted by the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 2024, which was confirmed in May of the same year, for online violence and the dissemination of ethnic and religious hatred against many people, including male and female journalists, were not concluded during 2025. The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina has refused to provide information on the current status of Mulahusić's case.¹⁷⁶

A sharp increase in sophisticated forms of digital violence was recorded during 2025, including coordinated hate campaigns, the use of bot networks, hacking, fake profiles, and orchestrated attempts to discredit journalists. The increase in misogynistic comments, threats of sexual violence, and public-shaming campaigns targeting women journalists are particularly worrying. This demonstrates a clear gendered nature of digital violence and increases the vulnerability of female media professionals.¹⁷⁷ According to competent institutions, their capacity to address these challenges remains limited. Although specialised cybercrime units exist, the number of trained personnel and the available technical resources are not sufficient to respond to all threats in the digital sphere.¹⁷⁸

— C.9 INVESTIGATIONS OF ALL TYPES OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT TRANSPARENTLY

The transparency of investigations into attacks and violence against journalists showed limited but measurable progress during 2025 compared to previous periods, primarily owing to the establishment of a system of contact points within prosecutors' offices and police agencies. This mechanism provided journalists and media organisations with a clearer institutional channel for obtaining information on the status of reported cases and communication with the competent institutions.

In practice, contact points were used on several occasions as intermediaries between injured journalists and the prosecutors or police officers handling their cases, particularly during periods when investigations had stalled or journalists had received no responses to earlier enquiries. According to data from the Association of BH Journalists, journalists contacted designated contact persons in a significant number of cases during 2025 in order to obtain basic information about their cases. Although contact points do not decide on the course of investigations, their role in facilitating

176 Detektor.ba, [Dok čeka početak suđenja zbog vrijeđanja, Mulahusiću nova meta postala žrtva femicida](#), 11.03.2025.

177 Research „Bosnia and Herzegovina – Women Journalists' Safety – 2024“, author Lajla Zaimović Kurtović, BH Journalists, November 2025.

178 Etrafika.net, [Nevidljivi udarci u virtuelnom prostoru](#), 24.12.2025.

communication was assessed as one of the few functional mechanisms for increasing the transparency level.¹⁷⁹

A Working Group for Monitoring and Reporting on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Access to Information was established within the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It includes representatives of the authorities from the state and entity levels and Brčko District, media and journalists' associations, and independent institutions. The Working Group is also responsible for journalists' safety and is directly linked to the Council of Europe Committee on the Safety of Journalists.¹⁸⁰

Despite these developments, journalists and editors continue reporting serious problems in accessing court and prosecutorial files. Judicial institutions do not demonstrate a consistent practice of openness towards the public in cases that directly affect media freedom and the public's right to be informed. According to journalists specialising in judicial reporting, including editors of investigative newsrooms, implementation of the HJPC Communication Strategy remained limited and inconsistent during 2025.

Although some progress was made in formal communication and the appointment of spokespersons, the key problems—selective transparency, the failure to publish indictments, and the lack of proactive public information—were not systematically resolved.¹⁸¹ An additional challenge is that the Communication Strategy is not legally binding and has no dedicated budget for implementation, which significantly reduces its actual impact.

— C.10 QUALITY STATISTICS COLLECTION SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED BY STATE AUTHORITIES TO STEM IMPUNITY

Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks a unified, comprehensive, and publicly accessible system maintained by state institutions for collecting statistical data on attacks on journalists and other media actors. No separate records are maintained to disaggregate attacks by gender, ethnicity, or other relevant socio-demographic criteria. This prevents a deeper analysis of patterns of violence and, in particular, hinders a comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence against women journalists.

A positive development has been recorded regarding compliance with HJPC's recommendations requiring prosecutors to ensure that separate records are maintained on the number and type of cases of attacks on journalists.¹⁸² The HJPC began publishing annual tables containing consolidated data collected from prosecutors' offices on cases involving journalists as injured parties.

179 Borka Rudić, Secretary General of the BH Journalists Association.

180 [Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice, Sastanak Koordinacijske radne grupe za praćenje i izvještavanje o slobodi izražavanja i slobodi pristupa informacijama u Bosni i Hercegovini](#), 12.12.2025.

181 Faruk Durmišević, journalist at N1, interviewed by Maja Radević, 26 November 2025.

182 Recommendation of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HJPC BiH), No. 13-09-5-1690-1/2023 of 28 April 2023, adopted following the Conference on the Safety of Journalists held on 4–5 April 2023.

According to data for 2025, a total of 25 cases were recorded. Of this number, 10 cases were pending, nine were reported as completed, and six were archived. Indictments were filed in four cases, decisions not to conduct an investigation were adopted in two cases, while two cases were joined with other proceedings. Broken down by offense type, the majority of cases—six in total—involved endangering safety, followed by three cases of minor bodily injury and one recorded instance of psychological violence. The total number of recorded cases was lower than in 2024, when prosecutors' offices handled 36 cases, in 19 of which a decision was made not to conduct, or to discontinue, an investigation. Mirroring the trends from 2025, the largest number of cases in 2024 pertained to endangering the safety of male and female journalists (13 cases), followed by three cases classified as minor bodily injuries.¹⁸³ These data clearly indicate a high rate of dismissed reports and a low prosecution rate, directly contributing to the problem of impunity.

In the absence of comprehensive and transparent state statistics, civil society organisations continue to maintain the most detailed records on attacks against journalists and other forms of violations of media rights and freedoms. Through the Free Media Help Line, the Association of BH Journalists records threats, physical attacks, online harassment, pressure, labour disputes, and other forms of violations of journalists' rights. During 2025, the FMHL recorded a total of 41 cases involving violations of journalists' rights and media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

According to data from the SafeJournalists Network database, a total of 35 cases of attacks and threats directed against journalists and media outlets from Bosnia and Herzegovina were recorded in 2025.¹⁸⁴ The databases maintained by the Association of BH Journalists and the SafeJournalists Network constitute key sources of information for domestic and international institutions, including the European Union, the U.S. Department of State, Reporters Without Borders, and other relevant organisations monitoring media freedom.¹⁸⁵

— C.11 NON-PHYSICAL THREATS AND HARASSMENTS

A total of 35 cases involving attacks against journalists, media outlets, and media professionals were registered in the SafeJournalists database in 2025. Of these, 16 concerned threats and harassment not directly related to physical safety, marking an increase of seven cases over the 2024 figures. Among incidents not involving direct threats to physical safety, a concerning trend is visible in the arbitrary harassment of journalists and media outlets by institutions, as well as pronounced political pressure and public targeting of numerous journalists and media organisations.

183 [Judiciary Portal in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

184 [Safejournalists.net, Database of Cases from Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

185 State Department: [Povećan broj pritisaka na novinare i medijske radnike u BiH](#), 15.08.2025.

Kakanj Police Station initiated misdemeanour proceedings against journalist Džana Omerović Zec after she posted on Facebook criticising the organisation of the “Kakanj Days” event and the manner in which public funds were spent. In Zvornik, the owner of the Drina Media portal, Nedeljko Bosiočić, was summoned for police questioning following a defamation complaint filed against him by the Head of the Municipal Police Department.

During 2025, certain senior political officials continued publicly discrediting media outlets. Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik and Bosnia and Herzegovina Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmedin Konaković stood out for their frequent verbal attacks on journalists and newsrooms, often making unsubstantiated allegations. Such conduct further contributes to an atmosphere of pressure, while incidents involving the abuse and harassment of journalists by public office-holders generally pass without sanctions or any institutional response.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
Non-physical threats and harassment This may include: – surveillance or monitoring; – harassment by telephone; – arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment; – aggressive statements by public officials; – other forms of pressure that jeopardise journalists’ safety in the performance of their work. These types of threats do not include workplace mobbing or harassment.	16	– On 19 February 2025, Dragan Bursać, a journalist who worked for Al Jazeera Balkans and Radio Sarajevo, received online threats from an unknown person accusing Bursać of describing one people as genocidal and inviting him to meet at a specified location. The threats were sent through a messaging application. – At a rally in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik verbally attacked and insulted the editors and owners of the Capital and Buka portals and BN Television, accusing them of spending USAID funds in order to “destroy Republika Srpska and Milorad Dodik”. Dodik called the heads of these media outlets “evildoers” and stated that “the people should put them on trial”. – Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik verbally attacked Đorđe Vujatović, the Banja Luka correspondent of Federal Television (FTV). At a press conference, Dodik questioned the journalist about private matters, including the amount of his salary, and stated that he would immediately receive “higher salary” if he left FTV. The Republika Srpska President also said that journalists working for media outlets from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted a “hostile structure that should be expelled” and that they had “acted with hostility towards Republika Srpska”. – Milorad Dodik verbally attacked journalist Goran Dakić, the Banja Luka correspondent of the Sarajevo-based newspaper Oslobođenje. At a press conference, Dodik prevented Dakić from asking a question and later instructed security staff to prohibit him from entering the Palace of Republika Srpska again. – At a press conference held in Banja Luka on 12 March, Milorad Dodik verbally attacked CIN journalist Milena Mitrović. Dodik described her journalistic question as “politically instructed”, called the journalist a “supporter” and “impatient”, and attempted to portray her as unfamiliar with legal procedures. – Centre, threatened Adis Šušnjar, editor of the Inforadar portal by telephone, following the publication of articles concerning the misuse of public funds at the healthcare institution. Okanović accused Šušnjar of causing her personal harm, asked who was behind the published articles, and ultimately told the editor that she would “know how to obtain justice once the entire case is over”.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
		– Evresa Okanović, Director of the Velika Kladuša Health Jasmin Garagić, editor of LuPortal, published an audio recording in which Neven Tunjić, Director of the Lukavac Public Institution Centre for Culture, made misogynistic insults against female employees of the institution. Following the publication of the article and the recording, Tunjić requested and secured a published correction. Nevertheless, he filed a SLAPP lawsuit against the editor in an attempt to intimidate the media outlet and prevent further reporting. Garagić received legal support in this case from the Free Media Help Line. – Kakanj Police Station submitted a request to initiate misdemeanour proceedings against journalist Džana Omerović Zec because she had criticised the organisers of the “Kakanj Days” event and spending of public funds on Facebook. – Nedeljko Bosiočić, owner of the Drina Media portal from Zvornik, was questioned by the police after the Head of the Municipal Police Department filed a defamation complaint against him. Editor Bosiočić considers this to be pressure on the local media aimed at preventing reporting on public companies and politicians in Zvornik. – Novo Sarajevo Mayor Benjamina Karić unlawfully published her private correspondence with journalist Almedin Šišić, editor of the Valter portal, and in doing so revealed the identity of Šišić’s minor daughter, publicly violating her rights as a child, dignity, and privacy. – Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmedin Konaković published a video clip in which he spoke to Evelin Trako, Editor-in-Chief of Dnevni avaz, in an inappropriate and manipulative manner. Konaković also published video statements and insulting comments on social media targeting journalists and editors from the Istraga, Slobodna Bosna, and Politički portals and Hayat Television, abusing his public office to exert political pressure and commit online violence against the media outlets and journalists concerned.
		– Avdo Avdić, a journalist and editor of the Istraga.ba portal, was banned entry to the Republic of Croatia. At the Gradiška border crossing, the Croatian Border Police served him with an official entry-ban decision stating that his name was included in the national register of persons under the entry ban. The Croatian Ministry of Interior provided no further explanation, designating Avdić as a “threat to public order and internal security”. – Mostar Mayor Mario Kordić publicly accused Mario Ćosić, a journalist and co-owner of the Hercegovina.info portal, of deliberately attempting to “destabilise” the city administration and create “legal uncertainty and chaos”, claiming that the journalist was encouraging an “atmosphere of lynch” against City Administration officials. Kordić had previously made unfounded and serious accusations against members of the Hercegovina.info newsroom, including allegations that they had extorted investors. – The Cantonal Court in Široki Brijeg delivered a judgment ordering the Centre for Investigative Reporting to remove two articles from its portal, after the journalists had already been fined for defamation and ordered to publish the introduction and operative part of the judgment. The judgment resulted from a SLAPP lawsuit filed against CIN journalists by a company from Herzegovina. The Association of BH Journalists publicly responded and drew attention to the concerning practice of courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina ordering media outlets to remove articles.

— C.12 THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES AND PHYSICAL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

During 2025, three cases involving threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists were recorded, one fewer than in the previous year. Two reported cases concerned threats directed at journalists via social media, and one case involved death threats and threats to safety made by

an editor of a media outlet against a journalist employed by the same outlet during a telephone conversation. In all three cases, the targeted journalists were men. All cases were reported to the police and the competent prosecutors' offices, and the investigations are ongoing.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
Threats to the life and physical safety of journalists This may include: – calls for the killing of journalists, their friends, family members, or sources; – calls for physical attacks against journalists, their friends, family members, or sources. Threats may be: – direct or conveyed through third parties; – sent electronically or through direct communication; – implicit or explicit.	3	– Dino Durmić, a journalist at FTV's Tuzla technical centre, reported on an international SIPA police operation in Živinice and Banovići. Based on official information and sources, he identified Melisa Butković as one of the suspects. The report included footage of her flower shop and a photograph from her public Facebook profile, which was broadcast in FTV's central news programme. After being released, Butković published a series of insults and threats against the journalist on social media, including his photograph and messages concerning a lawsuit. Numerous threats of violence against Durmić were recorded in the comments under her post, including statements that he "has the perfect head for a sniper" and that he should be "slapped and beaten", among others. – Dnevni avaz editor Evelin Trako openly threatened journalist Semir Šabić, who worked for the same media outlet, by telephone. In an audio recording submitted to the Association of BH Journalists, vulgar swear words and insults directed at Šabić and members of his family can clearly be heard, as well as humiliating and dehumanising labels directed at the journalist and explicit death threats made by Trako against Šabić. – Fatmir Alispahić, editor and journalist of the television magazine Defter hefte, received a series of threatening and insulting messages from Azur Konkić through the programme's Facebook page. Some of the messages stated: "I'll kick you at the tekke", "You'll hear that you were kicked around in Tuzla", "It will only get worse for you", "I'll kick every one of you", and "He is going to be beaten". The threats continued in person when Konkić intercepted Alispahić and his wife and threatened to beat him and his son, which the journalist partially recorded on camera. The case was reported to the police, and the investigation is being conducted by the Tuzla Canton Prosecutor's Office.

— C.13 ACTUAL ATTACKS

During 2025, five cases of actual attacks on journalists and media workers were reported, two more than in 2024. The arrest of Trebinje-based journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac on suspicion of disclosing official secrets, together with the search of her home, prompted strong reactions from the media community and international organisations. The order issued by the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina to detain Miljanović Zubac was widely perceived as an attempt to exert institutional pressure and intimidate investigative journalists.

CIN journalists were attacked while filming in Brčko and sustained minor physical injuries. In Sarajevo, a man approached Istraga.ba editor Avdo Avdić from behind, struck him forcefully and threatened to "break his legs" because of an article he had published about the attacker's father. A journalist from the Direkt portal and a BN Television correspondent were attacked while reporting in Bileća, and a crew from RTV Herceg-Bosna was physically and verbally assaulted during filming in Mostar. In some cases, the authorities responded effectively by arresting the perpetrators and filing indictments, while in others suspects were released immediately after the arrest, subject only to restraining measures pending the investigation. This was widely

perceived within the media community as a negative message regarding impunity of physical attacks against journalists.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
Actual attacks This may include actual physical or psychological injury, kidnapping, invasion of home/office, seizure of equipment, arbitrary detention, attempted murder, etc.	5	– A CIN reporting team was attacked in Brčko outside the “Bogičević” shopping centre while filming material for an investigative story about Zoran Kokanović, a politician and member of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska. Three individuals ran out of the shopping centre and attempted to prevent the filming. Cameraman Dženat Dreković sustained minor physical injuries, while journalist Renata Radić-Dragić was referred for further medical examinations due to stress. Police investigators and the Brčko Prosecutor’s Office responded promptly and undertook the legally prescribed investigative measures against responsible persons. – Journalists Nikolija Bjelica Škrivan (Direkt portal) and Bojan Nosović (BN Television) were verbally assaulted while attempting to cover a meeting between residents of the village of Bijela Rudina, municipal officials and a potential investor planning to build a so-called cancer centre near their homes. The journalists were invited by local residents opposing the project. Although the mayor initially allowed them to film and conduct interviews after the meeting, a security guard forcibly removed them from the hall while insulting them. Only after the mayor intervened were they allowed to continue filming. At the end of the meeting, investor Marko Manigoda refused to give a statement, threatened to damage the journalist’s mobile phone and physically obstructed the cameraman’s work by placing his hand over the camera. – While filming near the Old Bridge in Mostar, an RTV Herceg-Bosna crew was prevented from recording, and the cameraman was assaulted by the owner of a souvenir shop, who openly threatened the crew, motivated by political and ethnic hostility. The journalists were told that they were “provoking” simply by using the name “Herceg-Bosna”. The incident escalated into attempts to forcibly prevent filming and threats to destroy their equipment. RTV Herceg-Bosna reported the incident to the Mostar Police Administration and informed the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Prosecutor’s Office, including the designated contact person responsible for journalists’ safety. – RTRS journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac was arrested in Trebinje following a search of her family home, initiated because of her reporting on alleged criminal offences within police structures. During the search, her work equipment was seized, and she was suspected of “disclosing official secrets”. Following her arrest, she was transferred to the premises of the Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo and questioned by the Prosecutor’s Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina before release. The prosecutor requested that the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina impose restrictive measures, but the Court concluded that there were no reasonable grounds to suspect that the journalist had committed a criminal offence. – In Sarajevo, Abdulaziz Musa approached Istraga.ba editor Avdo Avdić from behind, struck him forcefully on the head and threatened to “break his legs” because of articles Avdić had written about his father, Sanin Musa. Immediately after the attack, Avdić began recording the assailant with his mobile phone, while the attacker continued verbally abusing him, asking, “Was that enough for you?” and “Do you want more?”, referring to the blows. At the same time, hateful messages began spreading on social media, branding Avdić a “traitor”. One Facebook post explicitly stated: “Avdo should be killed, because traitors only deserve to be shot—no mercy for traitors.” After pleading guilty before the Municipal Court in Sarajevo of the physical assault on Avdić, Abdulaziz Musa was released from detention subject to a restraining order prohibiting him from approaching Avdić. The investigation is ongoing.

— C.14 THREATS AND ATTACKS ON MEDIA OUTLETS AND JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

Numerous media organisations and associations remain under continuous political and administrative pressure and are exposed to verbal attacks and serious threats, often without adequate institutional protection or judicial outcomes. According to data from the SafeJournalists Network, 11 attacks and threats targeting media outlets and journalists' organisations were recorded in 2025, one fewer than in the previous year.

Most reported cases involved political pressure, public verbal attacks, and attempts to influence the editorial policies of both public and private media. Several portals were targets of aggressive campaigns by public figures on social media for weeks. Local media outlets in Dobož, Bileća, and Zenica faced administrative restrictions, including bans on reporting on sessions of government bodies. Hacker attacks and threats against public service broadcasters were also recorded. The appointment process for the RTVFBiH management was marred by heavy political influence, while the greatest risk stemmed from the financial vulnerability of the state-level public broadcaster BHRT due to political blockages and the withholding of planned budgetary funds.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
Threats and attacks against media and journalists' associations Threats may include harassment by telephone, arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment, aggressive statements by public officials, and other forms of pressure (articles, threatening messages, etc.). Actual attacks include invasion of offices, seizure or destruction of equipment, damage to vehicles, etc.	12	– The Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for parliamentary consideration. Among other things, the amendments provided for fines or prison sentences for publishing photographs, recordings, and documents without prior consent of the persons concerned. Following public reactions from the Association of BH Journalists and other non-governmental organisations concerning the potential negative impact of the amendments on media freedom, the proposal was withdrawn from parliamentary procedure. – In an official statement, the Government of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton attacked the editorial team of the Mostar-based Istina Media portal, accusing them of publishing inaccurate information about the allocation of public budget funds to a number of media outlets in the canton. In its response, the Government described Istina Media as “unprofessional and manipulative” and claimed that the outlet was “breaking apart the governing coalition in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton”. – The Government of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton harshly attacked the Association of BH Journalists for defending the Istina Media portal, which had published a list of media outlets in the canton that had received grants from the Cantonal Government through a non-transparent process and without clear criteria. In its statement, the Government claimed that the Association of BH Journalists had called its own credibility into question and “undermined its trustworthiness” by defending the media outlet and its right to criticise the work of public authorities. – At a press conference in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik announced police investigations against recipients of USAID grants and other forms of United States assistance, using serious defamatory allegations, coarse language, and a threatening tone. Dodik particularly targeted the Srpska.info portal and BN Television, accusing them without evidence of work in the interests of foreign donors and against the President of Republika Srpska and his family. He also made unfounded claims about the work of Nezavisne novine, asserting that the newspaper had been “edited and printed at the U.S. Embassy” in Sarajevo, and also targeting the Klix portal and the public service broadcaster BHRT. – Milorad Dodik’s adviser Branislav Okuka physically and verbally attacked journalists of BN Television, Al Jazeera Balkans, and RTL. The incident occurred during Dodik’s address to the media in the building of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska. Okuka verbally attacked the journalists, pulled them by their sleeves, and aggressively invaded their personal space, preventing them from performing their journalistic duties. The following day, Okuka issued an apology to the media through his account on the X platform. – The Dobož City Assembly imposed special accreditation measures for journalists and media outlets covering Assembly sessions and allowed only the chosen media outlets to film inside the Assembly chambers. A BN Television crew was not permitted to record the session, while RTV Dobož, which is owned by the City, was allowed inside. – Media outlets from Zenica decided to boycott the ceremonial session of the Zenica City Council, protesting against the lack of transparency of the local authorities and the absolute ban on all Zenica-based media outlets from covering Council sessions. Since the local elections in October 2024, the Zenica City Council had held five regular sessions and one constitutive session. Journalists and media outlets were denied entry. The ban did not apply to RTV Zenica, which was founded by the Zenica City Council. – The Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina voted to appoint four members of the RTVFBiH Management Board contrary to the provisions of the applicable Law on the Public Service Broadcaster RTVFBiH, particularly Articles 24, 25, and 65. The entire process was reduced to political objectives, while the statutory obligation to select the best candidates in a “fair, open, and transparent” manner was disregarded. There was no debate in the House of Representatives concerning the professional competence and experience of the selected candidates, their political independence and understanding of the public broadcasting mission, or guarantees that they would manage the public media outlet responsibly and in the public interest rather than in accordance with politically preferred positions.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
		– In April, the Sarajevo-based Istraga portal was the target of a major cyberattack originating from more than 20 countries, with the most extensive one coordinated from the Netherlands. Portal editor Avdo Avdić reported the incident to the competent police authority, the Ministry of Interior of Sarajevo Canton. Readers were unable to access the portal for two days. The Radiosarajevo.ba portal was subjected to weeks of verbal attacks by Sanin Musa, leader of the religious movement “Faith. People. State” and President of the Bosnian People’s Party, and by his social media followers. The attacks were triggered by a commentary published by the outlet’s analytical team concerning an Islamic religious ceremony that Musa planned to hold in Široki Brijeg, a town with predominantly Croat Catholic population. – Following the adoption of the Draft State Budget, the state-level public service broadcaster BHRT was left without BAM 22 million previously planned for the settlement of its debt to the European Broadcasting Union. BHRT’s total debt arising from employee taxes and contributions reached BAM 54 million, while RTRS’s debt to BHRT, exceeding BAM 100 million, remains the principal cause of the financial blockade. Without an urgent solution and a sustainable financing model, BHRT risks the seizure of its assets, which would leave more than 700 employees jobless. On 27 November, BHRT employees organised a major protest outside the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the European Federation of Journalists called on the European Commission to exert additional pressure on domestic institutions to accelerate the adoption of legislative solutions ensuring the long-term sustainability of BHRT and other public media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Conclusions and Recommendations

AREA A

Bosnia and Herzegovina made no significant progress in 2025 in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for the protection of media freedom and independent journalism. Political influence over regulatory bodies, non-transparent media financing mechanisms, and the lack of systemic reforms further weakened public confidence in the independence of the media system.

Long-standing political blockages, controversial appointments, and the perception of political bias continue to undermine the credibility of the Communications Regulatory Agency, while the public broadcasting system remains deeply politically fragmented and institutionally weakened. The lack of a systemic solution to BHRT's prolonged financial crisis, political influence on the governing structures of the entity-level broadcasters, and the failure to establish a functional Public Broadcasting Services Corporation demonstrate that political elites continue to regard public service media as instruments of political control rather than a public good.

Legislation ensuring the transparent regulation of state advertising and the distribution of budget allocations to media organisations remains absent. This legal vacuum enables the politically motivated distribution of public funds, strengthens clientelistic relationships, and facilitates the economic discrimination of critical and independent media outlets.

The non-transparency of media ownership is an additional problem, particularly in the online sector, where a large number of portals operate without clear information concerning ownership structures, financing, and editorial responsibility. This situation facilitates the spread of disinformation, political propaganda, and concealed centres of influence, while simultaneously obstructing the development of professional and accountable journalism.

Without urgent reforms of the regulatory framework, transparent media financing, and the depoliticisation of public broadcasting, the space for free and professional journalism will continue to shrink, while the public interest will remain subordinate to political and economic centres of power.

AREA B

Journalists and media professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina work in the environment of pronounced professional and economic insecurity, accompanied by increasing political and economic pressures that directly affect editorial independence and the quality of journalism.

Media outlets and journalists who critically report on the work of the authorities are exposed to public discrediting, verbal attacks, and labelling. Politicians and public office-holders increasingly use rhetoric portraying independent media outlets and journalists as “mercenaries” or foreign agents, thereby further fuelling distrust in professional journalism and legitimising pressure on critical media.

At the same time, the growing number of SLAPP lawsuits and other forms of legal pressure poses a serious threat to the financial sustainability and professional independence of media outlets, while journalists frequently resort to self-censorship, fearing for their livelihoods.

The lack of internal regulations and employee protection mechanisms across a large number of newsrooms presents a particular challenge. Journalists generally lack effective instruments for protection against censorship, political pressure, or unethical demands of media owners and management. Fear of losing employment and unstable forms of engagement further discourage reporting of violations of professional and labour rights.

AREA C

Data from the Free Media Help Line and the SafeJournalists Network confirm a continued increase in threats, political pressure, and various forms of harassment directed against journalists and media professionals, while institutional protection mechanisms continue to demonstrate significant weaknesses and inconsistent implementation.

The number of cases involving threats and harassment not directly connected to physical violence is increasing, but such cases nevertheless have a strong intimidating effect and restrict freedom of expression. Increasingly frequent institutional pressure, police questioning, public targeting, and political campaigns against journalists create an environment in which critical and investigative journalism is becoming progressively more dangerous.

Although some progress was recorded in the work of police agencies regarding the receipt of reports and initial responses to attacks on journalists, the key problems

in prosecutorial and judicial processing are still present. The low proportion of prosecuted cases and the high number of discontinued investigations further deepen the problem of impunity and convey the message that attacks against journalists often go unpunished.

Institutional mechanisms remain poorly adapted to the specific risks faced by women in journalism, despite a documented rise in gender-based violence and online harassment against them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure full transparency of media ownership, including online media and portals, through the establishment of a publicly accessible and regularly updated register of media owners.
- Adopt a legal framework transparently regulating the distribution of public funds and state advertising in the media, with clearly defined criteria preventing political discrimination and the preferential treatment of politically favoured media outlets.
- Ensure a long-term sustainable, transparent, and politically independent financing model for public service broadcasters, particularly the state-level broadcaster BHRT, in accordance with European public broadcasting standards.
- Strengthen the institutional and financial independence of the Communications Regulatory Agency through transparent procedures for appointing its management and safeguards against political influence.
- Establish effective legal mechanisms protecting journalists from SLAPP lawsuits and other forms of abuse of the judicial system intended to intimidate and financially exhaust media outlets and journalists.
- Ensure faster and more effective action by the police, prosecutors' offices, and courts in cases involving threats, attacks, and online violence against journalists, accompanied by regular specialised training for police officers and judicial office-holders on the protection of freedom of expression and journalists' safety.
- Develop a publicly accessible database within judicial institutions covering threats, attacks, and other forms of pressure against journalists and media professionals, in order to enable systematic monitoring of trends and more effective institutional responses.
- Ensure greater independence of journalists and newsrooms from media owners and governing structures through the adoption of internal regulations, editorial statutes, and specific provisions in employment contracts guaranteeing the professional autonomy of journalists and editors.

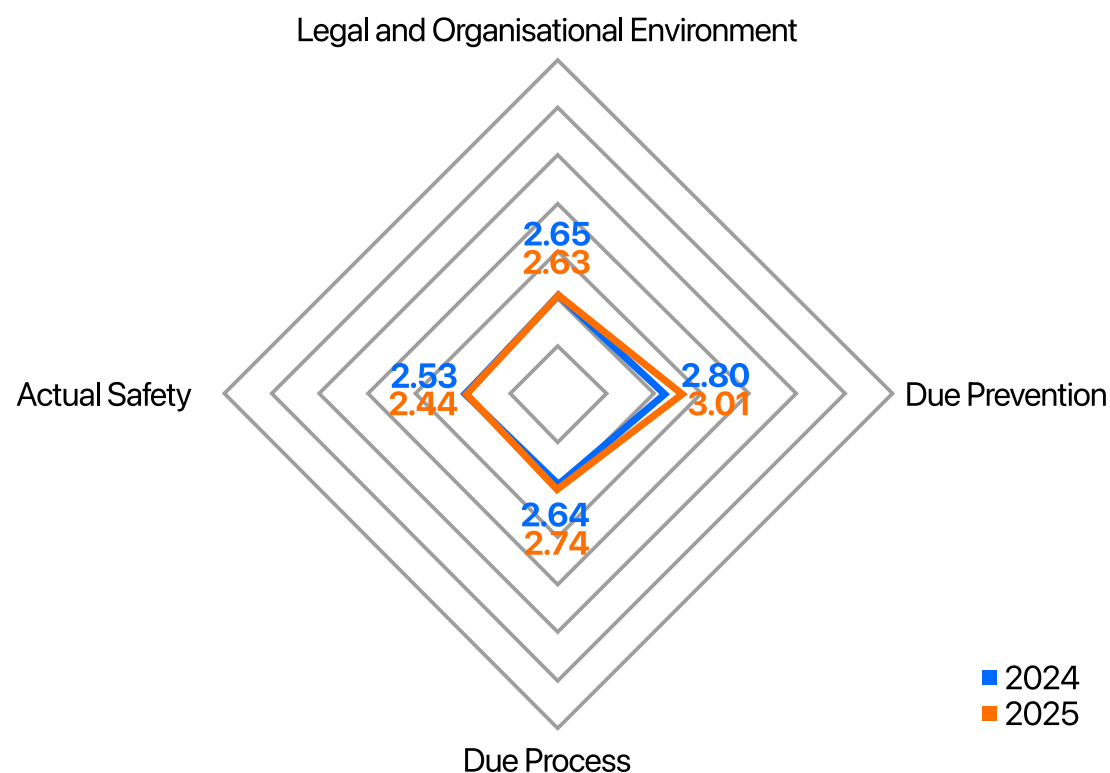
- Establish effective internal mechanisms protecting journalists from political and economic pressure, including procedures for reporting censorship, discrimination, and unethical demands within newsrooms.
- Develop specific mechanisms for protecting women journalists from gender-based online violence, threats, and harassment, including specialised institutional response protocols and support for victims of digital violence.
- Strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms in the media sector and promote the consistent application of professional and ethical standards in journalism, particularly in online media.
- Provide systematic support to local, independent, and investigative media outlets through transparent media funds free from political influence on editorial policy.
- Improve the implementation of freedom of access to information legislation by introducing more effective sanctions against institutions that unjustifiably deny access to information of public interest.
- Align the legislative framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina with European standards and European Union recommendations concerning media freedom, the protection of journalists, and media pluralism, including implementation of the provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA).

IV

Journalists' Safety Index, Bosnia and Herzegovina – 2024

This section of the report provides a graphic presentation of the Journalists' Safety Index for 2025 in comparison with the previous year, 2024. A brief explanation of the key changes that occurred in 2025 is provided for each of the four dimensions and all 19 indicators. A more detailed explanation of the data and changes relating to each individual Index indicator can be found in the narrative section of the report – Chapter II: Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Indicators.

Indicators of Journalists Safety Index	Narrative report
I Legal and Organisational Environment	
Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	A.6
Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities	A.8
Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely	A.7
Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations	A.9
Job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	B.1
II Due Prevention	
Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures	C.1
Journalists and other media actors (whose lives or physical integrity are at real and immediate risk) have access to special protection or safety mechanisms	C.2
Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment or violence	C.3
Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established	C.4
Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue	C.5
III Due Process	
Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists	C.6
Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)	C.7
Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment	C.8
Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently	C.9
Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity	C.10
IV. Actual Safety	
Non-physical threats and harassments	C.11
Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists	C.12
Actual attacks	C.13
Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations	C.14

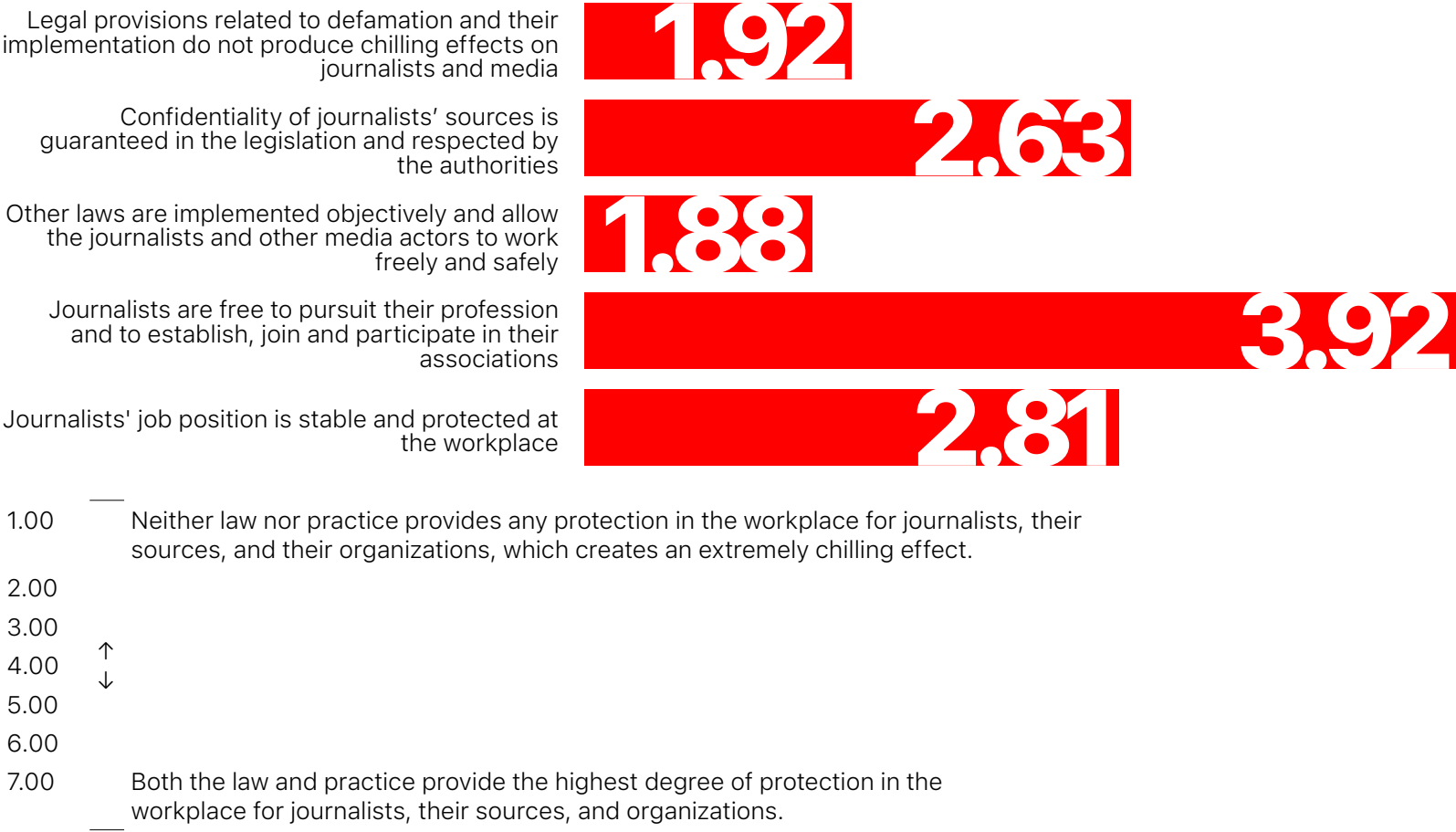


	2024	2025		Key developments in each dimension
Legal and Organisational Environment	2.65	2.63	↓	During 2025, working and professional conditions for journalists deteriorated further, particularly in private media, where short-term contracts, dismissals and unpaid severance payments remained widespread. The termination of USAID-funded media support programmes resulted in mass layoffs and increased insecurity across the media sector. Political blockades further endangered the survival of the state public broadcaster BHRT and jobs of hundreds of media workers. Although some restrictive legislation (such as the RS "foreign agents" law) was repealed or withdrawn, authorities continued introducing new censorship initiatives at the cantonal and entity levels. The criminalisation of defamation in Republika Srpska and the large number of cases filed against journalists continue to have a chilling effect and encourage self-censorship. Positive examples of institutional cooperation with journalists remain rare and isolated.
Due Prevention	2.80	3.01	↑	Limited institutional progress was achieved through the appointment of police and prosecutorial contact points for journalists. However, trust in the system remains low, as reflected in the limited number of reported threats. Public condemnation of attacks against journalists remains extremely rare, while politicians themselves frequently engage in verbal attacks and public discrediting of the media. Women journalists continue to face gender-based violence, and most newsrooms still lack internal protection protocols. Special protection measures for threatened journalists are applied inconsistently and without clear criteria, resulting in unequal protection. Online threats and hate speech are increasing, while preventive and sanctioning mechanisms remain weak. Prevention continues to rely largely on civil society organisations rather than proactive state action.
Due Process	2.64	2.74	↑	The establishment of police and prosecutorial contact points improved communication and somewhat increased the transparency of investigations, but fundamental shortcomings in efficiency persist. Most reports of threats and attacks are dismissed or investigations are discontinued, often without adequate explanation. Physical attacks are generally classified as minor criminal offences and result in sanctions that lack a deterrent effect. Although digital violence was recognised for the first time in the Federation of BiH criminal legislation, most online threats remain unpunished, particularly when committed by political actors. Court proceedings remain slow, while access to judicial documentation continues to be restricted. Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks a specific criminal-law framework recognising attacks against journalists and media workers.

	2024	2025		Key developments in each dimension
Actual Safety	2.53	2.44	↓	The number of attacks, threats and harassment directed at journalists and media outlets remained high throughout 2025. Cases included physical attacks during field reporting, death threats, institutional intimidation and police questioning of journalists about their professional work. Media outlets and journalists' associations continued to face political pressure, administrative restrictions and cyberattacks. Institutional responses remained inconsistent—swift in some cases, merely symbolic in others, with few meaningful consequences for perpetrators. Political leaders continued publicly targeting journalists without facing sanctions. The overall climate of impunity continues to seriously undermine the physical and professional safety of journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Journalists' Safety Index	2.61	2.61	—	



Legal and Organisational Environment



INDICATOR 1.1

— DEFAMATION LAWS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION DO NOT HAVE A CHILLING EFFECT ON JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

2024: 1.76 / 2025: 1.92

Defamation laws provide protection for journalists only in certain parts of the country, while in Republika Srpska journalists continue to experience significant pressure as a result of the re-criminalisation of defamation introduced in August 2023. During 2025, courts delivered several judgments in favour of journalists in defamation cases. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Law on Civil Initiative, which contains anti-SLAPP provisions and was adopted in draft form in June 2024, has still not entered into force. In Republika Srpska, journalists report that the criminalisation of defamation has a chilling effect and encourages self-censorship, particularly in smaller local media outlets. By the end of October 2025, more than 218 criminal complaints for defamation had been filed in Republika Srpska, including 38 against journalists, all of which remained under investigation. With legal support provided by the Free Media Help Line (FMHL), the Municipal Court in Travnik dismissed a SLAPP lawsuit against the news portal Tačno.net. Over the past four years, BH Journalists and the FMHL have allocated approximately BAM 80,000 to cover legal costs and provide support in SLAPP and other lawsuits against journalists and media outlets. Not a single one of these cases was lost in court.

INDICATOR 1.2

— THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTS' SOURCES IS GUARANTEED BY LAW AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

2024: 2.72 / 2025: 2.63

Although the confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed under legislation at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, two serious attempts to force journalists to reveal their sources were recorded in 2025. In August, RTRS journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac was detained by officers of the Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina upon the order of the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her home was searched, and her equipment and electronic devices were seized on suspicion of the criminal offence of "disclosing official secrets." In October, the Acting Director of the Federation Police Administration (FUP), Vahidin Munjić, publicly addressed a letter to Hayat Television requesting that it "reconsider its editorial policy" after the broadcaster published private correspondence between Munjić and other individuals that could potentially incriminate him.

INDICATOR 1.3

— OTHER LAWS ARE APPLIED OBJECTIVELY AND ALLOW JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA WORKERS TO WORK FREELY AND SAFELY

2024: 1.96 / 2025: 1.88

During 2025, several legislative initiatives were introduced that drew widespread criticism for further restricting media freedom and freedom of expression. Following strong opposition from journalists' associations, civil society organisations and the media, most of these proposals were withdrawn from the legislative process. The Law on the Special Register and Transparency of the Work of Non-Governmental Organisations in Republika Srpska, commonly referred to as the "foreign agents law," was annulled by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in May. In Una-Sana Canton, a draft Law on Public Information was announced that would designate public authorities as the "regulator" of hate speech and empower them to impose misdemeanour sanctions on media outlets. An attempt was also made to amend the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a way to prohibit the publication of documents, photographs, videos and other materials without the consent of the person concerned; however, the proposal was subsequently withdrawn from parliamentary procedure. A positive example of cooperation with the journalism community was provided by the Government of Brčko District, which organised public consultations on the new Draft Law on Freedom of Access to Information and accepted all comments submitted by BH Journalists and other civil society organisations.

INDICATOR 1.4

— JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PRACTISE THEIR PROFESSION AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

2024: 3.97 / 2025: 3.92

There are no institutional barriers or restrictions preventing journalists from joining professional associations or trade unions. However, despite the ongoing erosion of labour rights in the media sector, efforts to form a state-level journalists' trade union failed to materialise in 2025. Journalists cite divisions within the journalism community and political influence on media owners and managers as the main reasons behind it. Attempts to establish trade unions, particularly in private media, are often perceived by media owners as a "hostile act." Announced in 2025, the draft Law on Electronic Media introduces a requirement for all CRA license holders to maintain a publicly accessible imprint. Five serious cases of attempts to obstruct or prevent journalists from carrying out their work were recorded during the year.

INDICATOR 1.5

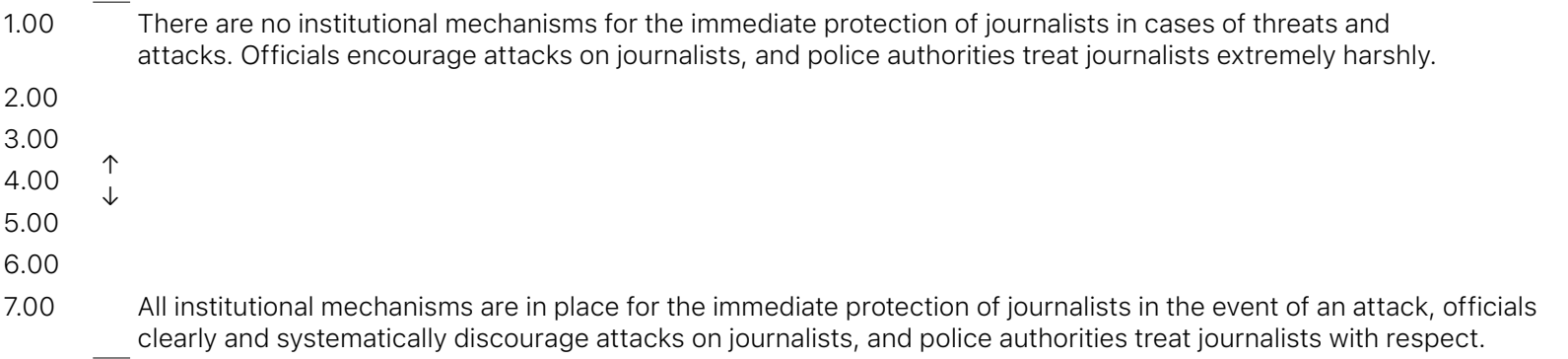
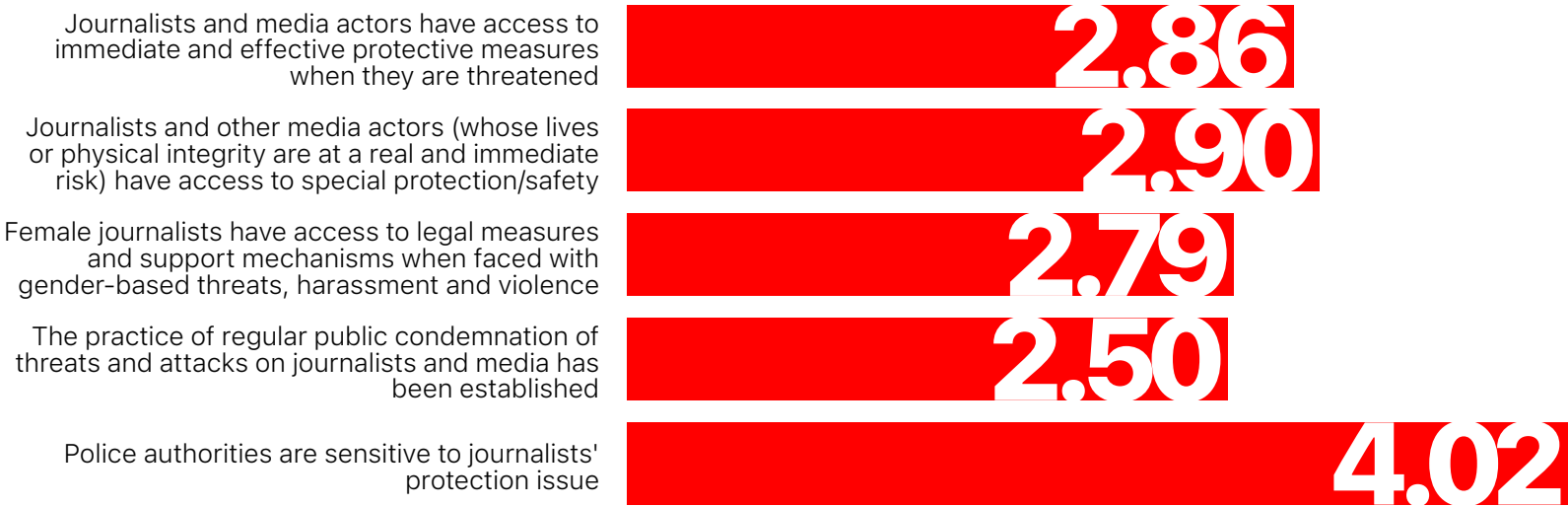
— JOURNALISTS' EMPLOYMENT STATUS IS STABLE
AND PROTECTED

2024: 2.85 / 2025: 2.81

Journalists' labour rights continue to be frequently violated, particularly in the private media sector, while a deteriorating economic situation left hundreds of journalists and media workers unemployed during 2025. Journalists report feeling insecure, noting that media owners predominantly offer short-term employment contracts. Following the termination of USAID-funded media support programmes, many independent media outlets were forced to lay off more than half of their staff. Years of political blockades originating from Republika Srpska have pushed the state public broadcaster BHRT to the brink of collapse, threatening the jobs of more than 700 journalists and media workers. Salaries of media workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina range from BAM 1,074 to BAM 2,808, with approximately 10% of journalists earning less than BAM 1,074 per month. The disparity between journalists' and editors' salaries remains considerable, with editors and media managers often earning up to three times more than journalists. During 2025, the Free Media Help Line recorded four new labour disputes and two cases pertaining to censorship.



Due Prevention



INDICATOR 2.1

— IN THE EVENT OF THREATS, JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO DIRECT AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTION MEASURES

2024: 2.85 / 2025: 2.86

Although some progress has been made in the prosecution of threats, journalists and media workers who are subjected to threats, attacks and other violations of their rights and security still do not have access to direct and effective protection measures. Following online threats and attacks against journalists Rabija Arifović and Dalija Hasanbegović-Konaković, BH Journalists' Secretary General Borka Rudić, and former journalist and Deputy Minister for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina Duška Jurišić, which were classified by the prosecutor as psychological violence and endangering safety, the perpetrator, Amir Pašić was arrested and placed in pre-trial detention. During 2025, the Free Media Help Line (FMHL) recorded a total of 41 violations of journalists' rights and media freedoms, 11 fewer than in 2024. The regional SafeJournalists platform recorded 35 security incidents and threats against journalists and media outlets in 2025, six more than in the previous year.

INDICATOR 2.2

— JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA WORKERS WHOSE LIVES OR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY ARE UNDER AN ACTUAL AND IMMEDIATE THREAT HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS

2024: 2.92 / 2025: 2.90

Journalists' access to special security measures and police protection depends on individual risk assessments conducted by police agencies and prosecutor's offices applying unclear and inconsistent criteria. Despite repeated requests from public officials and organisations advocating for journalists' rights, the Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska failed to provide adequate protection to Trebinje-based journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac, who has been subjected to serious threats for the past three years, including an incident when her vehicle was set on fire outside her home. In contrast, Sarajevo-based investigative journalist Avdo Avdić has been under continuous police protection after intelligence revealed that organised crime figures had plotted his assassination.

INDICATOR 2.3

— WOMEN JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL MEASURES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACING GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

2024: 2.52 / 2025: 2.79

Effective mechanisms for reporting and sanctioning gender-based violence against women journalists are still lacking, which highlights the need for continuous training of public

officials, members of the judiciary and police officers. One in five women journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced gender discrimination within the newsroom, and they are most frequently exposed to violence while reporting in the field. They identify politicians, public officials and organised crime figures as the main sources of threats. Most newsrooms in Bosnia and Herzegovina still lack internal protocols for responding to gender-based attacks against women journalists. Some progress has been made in prosecuting verbal abuse and defamation targeting women journalists, although court proceedings often take years before reaching a conclusion. During 2025, eight cases of threats and attacks against women journalists were recorded—five individual cases and three group incidents. Half of the reported cases contained explicit elements of gender-based violence.

INDICATOR 2.4

— THERE IS AN ESTABLISHED PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

2024: 2.50 / 2025: 2.50

Institutions or political parties have no regular practice of condemning attacks against journalists and other media professionals. On the contrary, politicians and public officials frequently target and discredit journalists and media outlets that critically report on their work, with public statements that often fuel hate speech against journalists. Attacks against journalists were only condemned twice during 2025. More than 80% of citizens believe that the work of some journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina is politically motivated, while more than two-thirds of respondents (71.5%) identify politicians and political parties as the main offenders of journalists' rights and media freedoms. During 2025, the SafeJournalists network recorded 16 cases of threats and verbal attacks on journalists and media outlets by politicians and public officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

INDICATOR 2.5

— POLICE AUTHORITIES ARE RESPONSIVE TO ISSUES CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS

2024: 3.22 / 2025: 4.02

Police authorities respond promptly to reports of attacks on journalists and remain open to cooperation with journalists' associations and other organisations working on journalists' safety and protection. Journalists report that police officers generally demonstrate an appropriate level of sensitivity when handling such cases, and identify the inefficiency of the judiciary as the main obstacle to effective protection. Only 25% of recorded cases of threats against journalists were reported to the police and judicial authorities, indicating that many journalists still lack confidence in public institutions. Progress has been made through the appointment of 13 contact points within police agencies, aimed at improving communication and providing information on the status of investigations into threats and attacks against journalists and

media outlets in order to facilitate more effective prosecution. Police representatives emphasise that they have no influence over how the judiciary ultimately qualifies individual cases. One case of direct pressure on the media by a senior police official was recorded, involving the Acting Director of the Federation Police Administration (FUP), Vahidin Munjić.



Due Process

Specialised investigation units and/or officers are equipped with relevant expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists



Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)



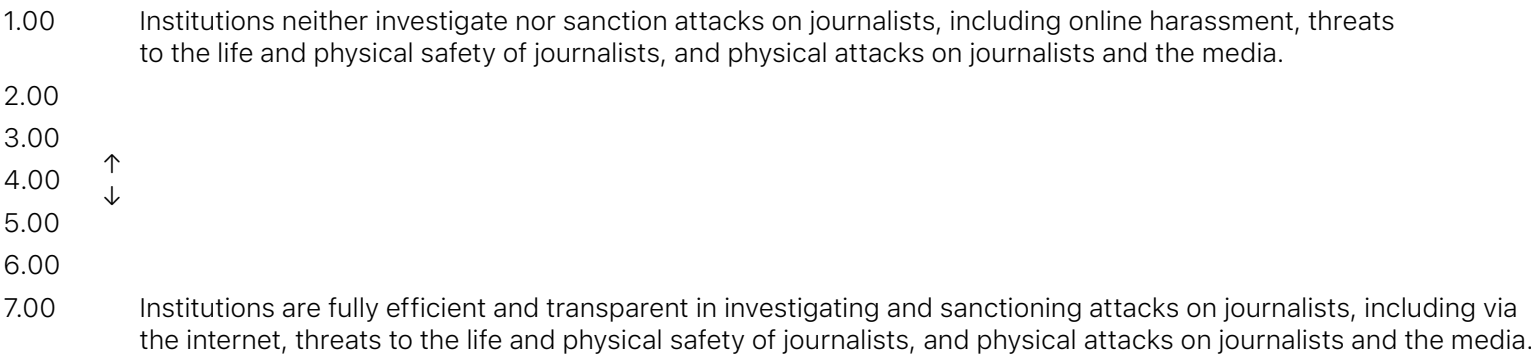
Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment



Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently



Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity



INDICATOR 3.1

— SPECIALISED INVESTIGATIVE UNITS AND/OR OFFICERS HAVE SUFFICIENT EXPERTISE TO INVESTIGATE ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

2024: 2.84/ 2025: 2.91

The establishment of 33 contact points for journalists' safety within police agencies and prosecutor's offices, responsible for prioritising investigations and recording attacks against journalists, has contributed to improved communication, better understanding of the specific nature of journalistic work, and greater awareness of the security challenges facing media professionals among prosecutors and police officers. Representatives of these institutions regularly participate in training sessions and events on media freedom and journalists' safety organised by international organisations and civil society, primarily BH Journalists. Nevertheless, journalists remain dissatisfied with the speed and effectiveness of investigations, particularly in cases involving online violence, as well as physical attacks and verbal threats. In the vast majority of cases, prosecutor's offices discontinue investigations or decide not to initiate proceedings without providing clear reasoning. A notable positive example was recorded in Brčko District, where the police and prosecutor's office secured three final convictions in 2025 against individuals who physically attacked journalists and camera operators.

INDICATOR 3.2

— INVESTIGATIONS INTO SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA WORKERS ARE CONDUCTED EFFECTIVELY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY AND PROMPTLY)

2024: 2.67 / 2025: 2.73

Although investigations into physical attacks are generally conducted relatively promptly and efficiently, the sanctions imposed on perpetrators are often too lenient to have a deterrent effect. In most cases, physical on against journalists and media workers are classified as minor bodily injury or even as public order offences, while pre-trial detention is rarely ordered during the investigation. In some cases, temporary restraining measures are imposed, but sanctions are typically limited to fines or suspended sentences. Journalists believe that such court practice conveys a message that targeting journalists for their work is effectively tolerated and that overly lenient penalties encourage future attacks. Legal uncertainty is further compounded by the continued failure to adopt amendments to the Criminal Code that would recognise attacks on journalists as a distinct criminal offence. Court proceedings relating to physical attacks against journalists remain slow and often take months. During 2025, there was an increase in incidents of attacks on journalists while reporting in the field, attempts to prevent filming, and damaging journalistic equipment.

INDICATOR 3.3

— JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA WORKERS ARE EFFECTIVELY PROTECTED AGAINST DIFFERENT FORMS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

2024: 2.26 / 2025: 2.35

A large number of online threats and harassment targeting journalists remain unprosecuted, particularly when the perpetrators are politicians, public officials, or individuals spreading hate speech on social media. Some legislative progress was made in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Enacted in August 2025, amendments to the Federation Criminal Code formally recognised digital violence via information and communication technologies as a distinct method of committing criminal offences for the first time.. The case involving threats to the safety of women journalists, online harassment and psychological violence on social media, in which the suspect, Amir Pašić from Sarajevo, was swiftly arrested and placed in pre-trial detention is a positive example of effective institutional action. Meanwhile, criminal proceedings against Jasmin Mulahusić, initiated in 2024 for online violence and incitement of ethnic and religious hatred against several journalists, were still pending at the end of 2025. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in online threats, coordinated hate campaigns, bot networks, hacking attacks and other forms of digital violence aimed at intimidating and discrediting journalists, accompanied by a growing number of misogynistic comments and coordinated online harassment campaigns targeting women journalists.

INDICATOR 3.4

— INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALL FORMS OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA WORKERS ARE CONDUCTED TRANSPARENTLY

2024: 2.93 / 2025: 2.98

The appointment of contact points within prosecutor's offices and police agencies has contributed to greater transparency of investigations and enabled journalists to obtain more effective access to information about their cases. Improved communication between the judiciary and the media, as well as the enhanced efficiency in protecting journalists' safety, has also been supported through the Media Justice Group established by BH Journalists, which brings together journalists, representatives of the judiciary and the self-regulatory body (the Press and Online Media Council). Nevertheless, transparency within the judiciary, particularly the courts, generally remains poor. Public access to indictments is limited, whereas obtaining court records remains slow and time-consuming. Although mutual trust has improved to some extent, representatives of the judiciary often portray legitimate media criticism of their work as an attack on judicial independence.

INDICATOR 3.5

— STATE AUTHORITIES HAVE ESTABLISHED EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS FOR COLLECTING STATISTICAL DATA AIMED AT COMBATING IMPUNITY

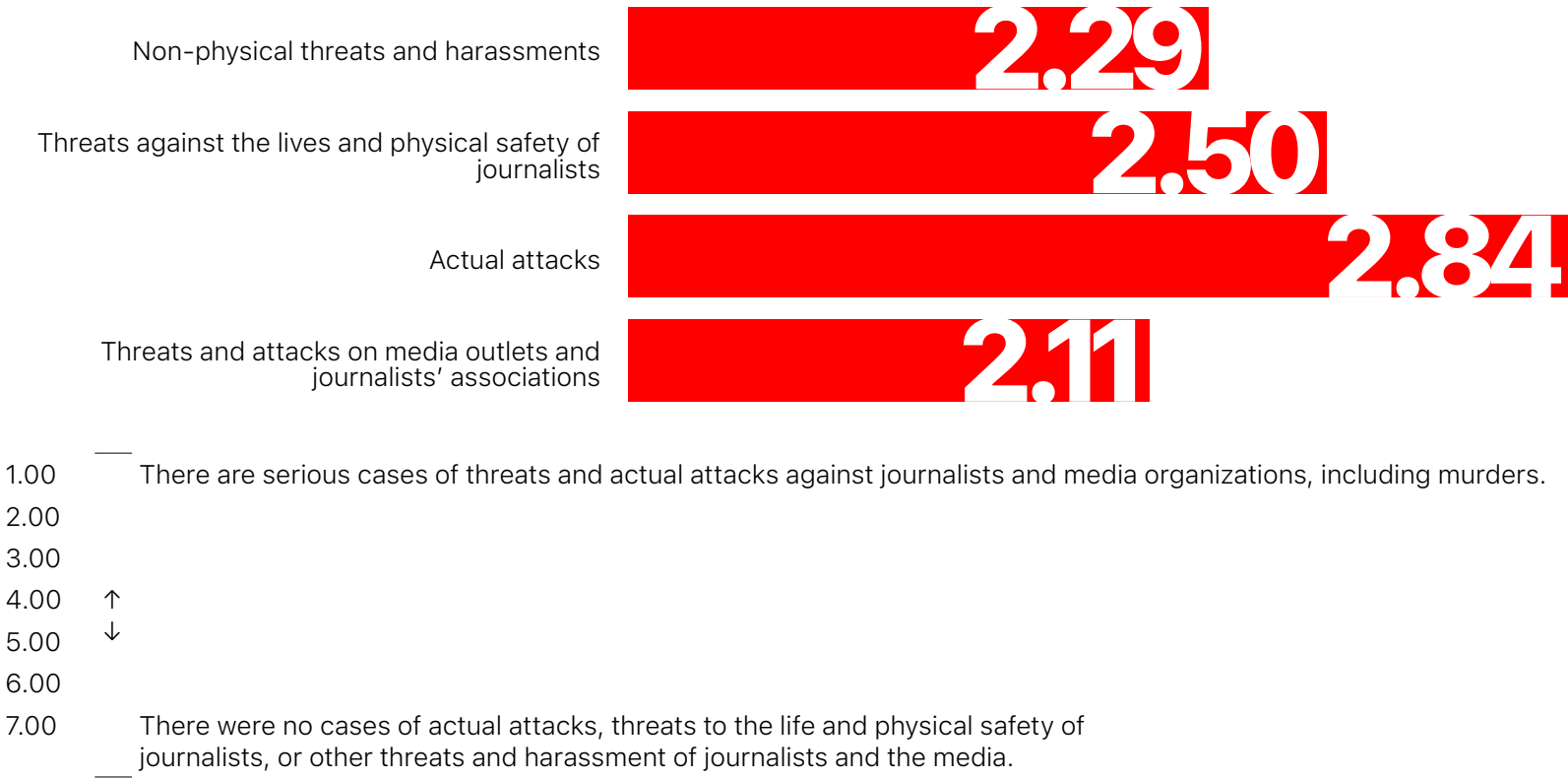
2024: 2.51 / 2025: 2.72

Some progress has been made in keeping statistical records of attacks on journalists and media workers within judicial institutions, although other state institutions do not maintain comparable databases. At the end of the year, the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HJPC) published a table containing 2024 data from prosecutor's offices on cases involving journalists as injured parties. Of 36 recorded cases, 19 resulted in decisions not to initiate or to discontinue investigations, or in the dismissal of complaints, while indictments were filed in four cases. Thirteen cases concerned threats to journalists' safety, alongside three cases involving minor bodily injuries. Most prosecutor's offices comply with HJPC's guidelines requiring them to maintain separate records on the number and types of attacks against journalists. BH Journalists and the Free Media Help Line (FMHL) also document other violations of media rights and freedoms, including labour disputes, discrimination and workplace harassment. Attacks on journalists are additionally recorded in the SafeJournalists database, which registered a total of 35 attacks and threats against journalists and media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina during 2025.



IV

Actual Safety



INDICATOR 4.1

— THREATS AND HARASSMENT NOT RELATED TO PHYSICAL SAFETY

2024: 2.29 / 2025: 2.29

Among the total of 35 attacks against journalists and media outlets recorded in the SafeJournalists database in 2025, numerous cases involved arbitrary harassment by public institutions, as well as the detention and questioning of journalists. The arrest of Trebinje-based journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac on suspicion of disclosing official secrets and the search of her home was widely condemned by the media community and international organisations as an attempt by the authorities to intimidate investigative journalists and obstruct their work. Police in Kakanj initiated misdemeanour proceedings against journalist Džana Omerović Zec after she posted on Facebook criticising the organisers of the “Kakanjski dani” event and the use of public funds. Nedeljko Bosiočić, owner of the Drina Media portal in Zvornik, was questioned by the police following a defamation complaint filed by the head of the municipal police department. During 2025, Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmedin Konaković were among the politicians who most frequently targeted journalists and media outlets with public verbal assaults and leveled groundless accusations against their work. Incidents involving verbal attacks and harassment of journalists by public officials continue and mostly go unpunished.

INDICATOR 4.2

— THREATS TO JOURNALISTS’ LIVES AND PHYSICAL SAFETY

2024: 2.59 / 2025: 2.50

Three cases of threats to journalists’ lives and physical safety were recorded during 2025. Two involved threats made via social media, while the third case concerned death threats and threats to personal safety made by the editor of a media outlet against a journalist employed by the same outlet during a telephone conversation. All three cases were reported to the police and the competent prosecutor’s offices, and investigations are underway.

INDICATOR 4.3

— ACTUAL ATTACKS

2024: 2.98 / 2025: 2.84

During 2025, four cases of actual attacks against journalists and media workers were reported, one more than in the previous year. CIN journalists were attacked while filming in Brčko and sustained minor bodily injuries. In Sarajevo, the editor of the Istraga.ba portal was attacked from behind by a man who struck him forcefully and threatened to “break his legs” because of an article he had published about the attacker’s father. A journalist from the Direkt portal and a

reporter from BN Television were assaulted while reporting in Bileća, while an RTV Herceg-Bosna crew was subjected to both physical and verbal attacks while filming in Mostar. In some cases, the authorities responded effectively by arresting the perpetrators and filing indictments. In others, however, suspects were released immediately following their arrest, with only restraining orders imposed pending investigation. The media community criticised such decisions for signalling tolerance of physical violence against journalists.

INDICATOR 4.4

— THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST MEDIA OUTLETS AND JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

2024: 2.25 / 2025: 2.11

Media outlets and journalists' associations continued to face political and administrative pressure, verbal attacks, and serious threats to their work and sustainability, often lacking effective institutional protection or judicial redress. In 2025, the SafeJournalists database recorded 12 threats and attacks targeting media outlets and media organisations, the same as in the previous year. The reported incidents included numerous cases of political pressure, verbal attacks by politicians, and attempts to influence the editorial policies of both public and private media. Several news portals were subjected to weeks-long aggressive campaigns by public figures on social media following their reporting on a religious event. Local media in Dobož, Bileća and Zenica faced administrative restrictions, such as being barred from reporting on local government sessions. Several cyberattacks were also recorded, along with threats directed at public broadcasters.

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