



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Conclusions of the Conference on the Freedom of the Media

**8 May
Sarajevo**

On May 8, a conference on media freedom was held on the premises of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina under the auspices of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The conference gathered media executives, journalists, political representatives, media analysts, and members of the international community in a discussion of the deteriorating state of media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina and particularly of the upsurge in verbal and physical abuse against journalists, threats to the independence of the Communications Regulatory Agency, and obstacles to reforming the country's public service broadcasting system.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, emphasized that reform of public broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina – that is, the creation of an integrated system with public broadcasters overseen by a single corporation and striving for balance and objectivity in reporting – was of the utmost importance. OSCE Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Douglas Davidson, observed that the Communications Regulatory Agency and the Council of Ministers needed to resolve their disagreement over the appointment of the Agency's director, so that the Agency could continue doing the admirable work that it had been doing. Both remarked upon the importance of establishing a single, shared news-gathering and reporting operation for the public broadcasting service.

Media representatives expressed concern about the increase in violence against journalists and identified three reasons for such attacks: political coercion, pressure by nationalist lobbies, and financial bullying, usually by owners and management of news agencies. These types of intimidation, they said, occurred because there was a lack of respect for the rule of law, because some journalists made deals with political parties, and because the international community did not adequately monitor or respond to threats to, and violations of, freedom of the media. To remedy the current situation, in which it has become very easy to attack a journalist, the conference participants agreed that it was necessary that journalists show solidarity and professionalism in their work and learn more about their rights; that parliamentarians learn more about media and adopt already-existing documents such as the Council of Europe's declarations on free debate, investigative journalism, and reporting in crisis situations; and that the international community show more interest in protecting the independence of news agencies and freedom of expression.



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Media executives from two public broadcasters, Federation Television and Bosnia-Herzegovina Radio Television, noted that political representatives now constantly seek to exert pressure on the financial, managerial, and editorial policies of these two institutions. They also decried the lack of a single corporation to set standards for all of the country's public broadcasters. Executives from the third public broadcaster, Radio Television Republika Srpska, stated that their work was independent of political influences and that reform of the public broadcasting system, including the creation of the corporation, required a thorough auditing of the work done by each of the country's public broadcasters.