

# THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS

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## *Abstract*

As a challenge and assurance of the most advanced universal standards for membership of a country such as the Republic of Macedonia in Euro-Atlantic structures, the primary importance is respecting and promotion of human rights, especially their promotion by the media because they have an extraordinary role and responsibility in creating an image of human rights, because through the media it is possible to realize certain fundamental human rights, the right to freedom and expression. This right includes freedom of thought without interference, also the freedom of search, receive and notify information and ideas through any medium, regardless of the boundaries. So, the media play a central role in the promotion and protection of human rights because they are presented as the so-called fourth power in addition to the powers of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, therefore the media with their daily activity should promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This paper is addressed to issues of promotion and protection of human rights through the media, to identify their contribution and their achievement in a short time, also for the problems in terms of ensuring more effective human rights, which provides the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

A special attention has been paid to freedom of thought and expression - including "the freedom to receive and share information and ideas for any media and regardless of the boundaries" (Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 ) - which is one of the fundamental political and civil rights that fully complies with all human rights instruments. Keywords: Human Rights, Media, Republic of Macedonia, Promotion, Protection.

## **1 Media Activities in the field of Human Rights**

The importance of media rules for the so-called "fourth power", in addition to legislative, executive and judiciary powers, also requires special attention and responsibility from both journalists and media owners so that human rights violations are not violated and other rights, exercising their powers and rights.

Where and in what way are media involved in the promotion and protection of human rights?

What is their function?

In general perspective, it can be said that the Media play the role of representation between the state and the citizens, are positioned in the space between the state and the individual. In

the mean time, if the state has an obligation to secure human rights, then it is the individuals who have to seek those rights. The same, individuals should be directed to the relevant national bodies or to those created by regional and international instruments. Not always people have the necessary knowledge and the ability to complain about their rights violations. It can be said that the media in this regard have played and play an educational role with a general sense of awareness to individuals about their rights, their responsibilities and their ability to seek correction of violations in forums that exist for this purpose.

The important contribution that the Media has given and still gives to improve the system of promotion and protection of human rights is widely recognized by governments themselves, field experts and the United Nations. Creating a specific mandate of human rights defenders is not only a necessary acknowledgment of the contribution of the Media, and their need for protection, but also the fact that many human rights activists working and working with Media different and independent are excited and frightened about their work in the field of human rights protection.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.1 Medias as protection of Human Rights**

Everyone has the right to express his opinion freely. This right includes the freedom to preserve opinions without interference and to seek and receive information and ideas through the media without any distinction and restriction.<sup>2</sup>

It is a fact that even though many countries have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which contains to article 19 (on freedom of expression, opinion and information), it has in itself not become a reality. A free and independent medium is the key pillar of a functioning democracy that helps in disseminating information and free thinking. But developed and developing countries, as is the case with Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and other neighboring countries have problems of different nature with the media. In many countries, journalists face censorship threats, beatings, arrests, and even murders in reporting issues that may be contradictory or are not in the interests of the rulers.

Are the human rights more important than other forms of information that journalists have to report? Certainly not, but in fact this question should be raised in another aspect. When the media deals with human rights issues, the question of reporting is raised and how should it be done with regard to traditional reporting standards?

Most journalists, if asked about this, simply will not find a consensus to answer this question. However, it is true that in Macedonia even the largest media have started to give more attention (though insufficient) to human rights issues, but the reasons behind that can be complex. Coverage is also added due to the fact that political leaders outside the campaigns and during campaigns more refer to human rights issues than before, both in their formal speeches and in their political rhetoric.

Over the last few years, it is apparent that journalists of print and electronic media note that there is more value in the human rights issue than it had been years before.

Media has become interested not only for human rights violations but also for institutional apparatus designed to promote and protect human rights. In parallel, a large number of non-profit organizations have been created and formed as part of civil society in certain areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Zyberi G., “E drejta ndërkombëtare e të drejtave të njeriut”, f. 268 dhe 269 –Tiranë, 2011, translated from albanian.

<sup>2</sup> Deklarata Universale për të Drejtat e Njeriut-19, translated from albanian.

Particularly, human rights organizations that monitor violence against these rights lobby for reforms in this area and feed the press free media with information from this subject.

But even though we acknowledge that journalists have expanded their reporting on human rights issues in new areas, the fact remains again that many issues in this area remain almost unreported. What the media reports on human rights it's still a matter to be discussed in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, the media are targeting lobbying by the government, private companies, lobbying NGOs, etc. Media more reflects than creating political influence, but of course it does not take responsibility for journalists. Many journalists and media organizations use human rights organizations as their first source of information. The problem for NGOs is to keep big television networks, especially for the issues they want to broadcast. This makes imperative the best coordination between media staff and human rights organizations.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Freedom of expression**

The freedom of speech and expression of thought represents the fundamental human right, which has a crucial role in the realization and protection of other rights. The ability to express and exchange information is valuable indicators of democratic capacity and the institutional position of democracy in societies. In a large number of scientific works, devoted to this right, John Stjurart Mil's opinion is quoted, which states: "Freedom of expression protects us from corrupt power and tyranny. This freedom is one of the basic guarantees for open and pluralistic society.

Freedom of thought is an absolute citizen right, which means that no one can jeopardize or restrict man's thinking, whereas freedom of expression is treated as a political right which may be subject to restrictions or limitations certain, which should be interpreted strictly and in accordance with established objective legal objectives.<sup>3</sup>

Against the fact that the Constitution of the R. of Macedonia guarantees the freedom of expression and the press which is foreseen in Article 16<sup>4</sup> have been numerous accusations by the International Organization such as the International Media Monitoring Organization (Reporters Without Borders) and many members of the media community, including the Journalists Association in Macedonia, often have accusing the Government of failing to respect the freedom of speech and the press. In a series of reports to the media it was stated that Almost all the national television stations have synchronized reports in favor of the ruling party, they have also synchronized reports that have fueled national, religious or ethnic hatred, knowing that by law such a thing is forbidden and sanctions are foreseen for persons who violate these laws.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Etemi A. Mekanizmat juridiko-nacionale për mbrojtjen e të drejtave të njeriut në Republikën e Maqedonisë-fq-72-74-Maqedoni, Punim Masteri-2016, translated from albanian.

<sup>2</sup> Konferencë kombëtare, "Roli aktiv i organizatave jofitimprurëse në mbrojtjen e të drejtave dhe lirive të njeriut, përmes instrumenteve kushtetuese e ligjore", f. 113-120 - Organizuar nga Qendra për Nisma Ligjore Qytetare dhe Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë - Tiranë, 28 Qershor 2011, translated from albanian.

<sup>3</sup> d-r Elena Mihajlova, d-r Jasna Bačovska, m-r Tome Shekerxhiev- liria e shprehjes dhe gjuha e urrejtjes-shkup -2013. Marrur nga <http://bezomrazno.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/al-brosura.pdf>, translated from albanian.

<sup>4</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>5</sup> Raport për të drejtat e njeriut në maqedoni për vitin 2016. Marrur nga- [https://mk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/249/2017/04/hrr2016\\_macedonia\\_alb.pdf](https://mk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/249/2017/04/hrr2016_macedonia_alb.pdf)

### 3. Realations between Media and Policy

Since the degree of democracy that a country is measured by free media, then it is difficult to say that Macedonia is de facto and de jure a democratic state.

She faces many problems of different kinds, in terms of media outlets in the country. In Macedonia there are two media infrastructures: the public - where the media are directed or controlled by the executive power or the parliament, and the private one where the media are controlled by private persons, but in the case of Macedonia these private persons are simultaneously also public as they have posts public-political and these people have used their media to control a particular society.

This is an undeniable fact that the media in the country are not independent (this is evidenced by various domestic and international studies), and that is one of the reasons why the country's democratization processes lagged behind This is because of a strong and unique link between media and politics, ie politicians possess and direct public opinion.

All this connection with the Media is understood as a business and not as an instrument to inform the public, it is apparent (clear) if we see the large number of media in the country where all these media survive in a crowded media market without problem.

The question is: How do all these media survive in this space so small? The answer is that they survive by the government, except they survive, they also realize big profits. All this leads to the objective reporting and information, freedom and professionalism of a journalist and freedom of expression to suffer. This is also apparent from the assessment made by various organizations that deal with the freedom of the media in the world, where Macedonia is rated with weaker and weaker grades.<sup>1</sup> (Look table no. 1).

year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
place	51	49	43	45	36	42	34	68	94	116	123	172	162

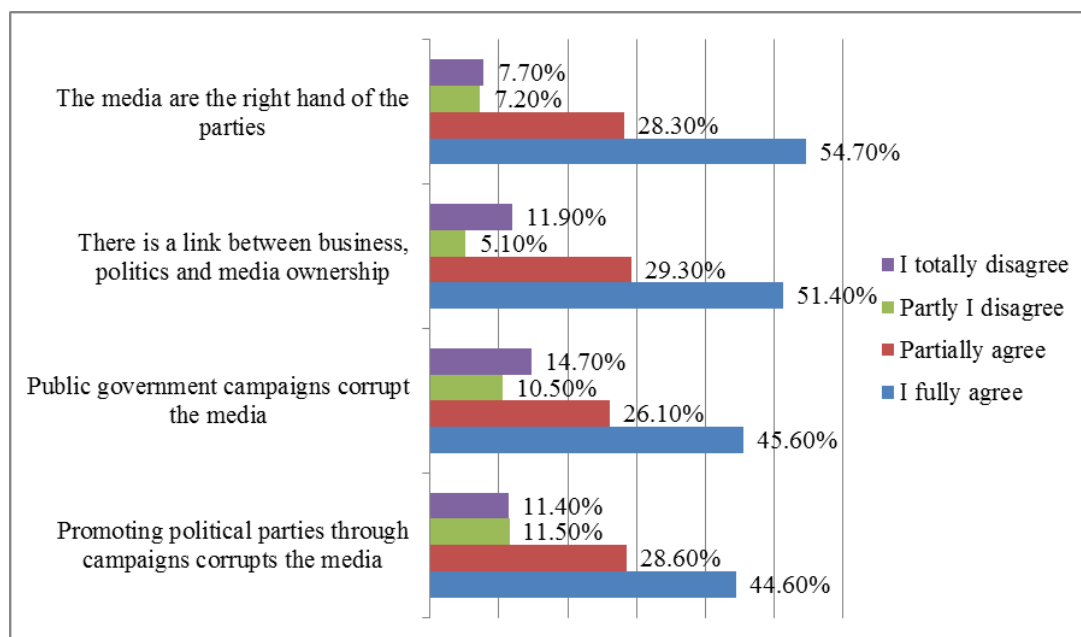
Macedonia's Country of Media Freedom-2003-2016 (Burim-www.Irex.org)

In the chart below we can see the opinion of a group of citizens dealing with the connection between media and political power centers where we can conclude that most of the citizens of Macedonia agree with the statement that the media in Macedonia are corrupt and established mainly for the realization of political party goals. An exceptionally large percentage of citizens agreed with the statement that the media are the right party of the parties and that there is a link between business, politics and the media.

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<sup>1</sup> Kurtish.A. punim shkencor i prezentuar në Tetov në Koferecencen e III Ndërkombëtare në USHT, translated from albanian.

### *The relations between the media and the centers of political power*



### **Conclusion - Recommendations**

Human rights are an act of a certain degree of civilization development. The fruit of the new meaning of the world and life. The respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms is of particular importance for the existence of a free and democratic Media, and a lasting legal order. Ensuring and promoting human rights requires higher standards of protection, since in many cases the media and state authorities that violate human rights are all necessary:

1. The respect of truth and law, in order for the public to be informed by the media, but also for the state to guarantee the principle of freedom of expression and opinion;
2. Frequent media campaigns by the government to improve poor information about citizens' rights and motivate citizens to present them when their rights are violated;
3. The penal sanctions against those media who use hate speech;
4. Inclusion of the media such as those written in electronic form in the process of creating policies in the area of promotion and protection of human rights.

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