



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović**

Journalists' safety, media freedom and pluralism in times of conflict

Welcoming remarks

June 15 2015

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you today to the magnificent city of Vienna, and the Hofburg. I was told that there are 300 people present which is a record for the OSCE and it shows the interest in and a need to engage in a discussion about our topic.

I would like to thank the governments of Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland for their contributions that made this conference possible.

The conference can be followed online live. The hashtag for the conference is (#journosafeOSCE).

As you will see from the packet of information before you, my Office has put forth an ambitious agenda – a plan to address the Number One issue facing media today – their own survival.

When we talk about survival and the media, we usually are talking figuratively. We ask questions about whether real journalism can survive the newsroom cutbacks that unavoidably occur when revenues sink – as they have been for traditional media in recent years.

But we now need to think literally about survival because, as all of you know, over the past 25 years “open season” has been declared on media. They have become targets of assassins’ bullets and corrupt government authorities’ anger and they also have become the recipients of the general public’s contempt as the bearer of bad news. Nowhere is that more true than in places of armed conflict.

There is a toxic brew awaiting journalists who venture out to report on issues of real public interest these days – and they are subject to every kind of punishment just for doing their jobs. When this brew mixes with armed conflict, the results are dangerous for journalists and the public alike.

Let me begin with what I, as the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, can do in this regard.

The participating States of the OSCE agreed, in 1991, to “adopt, where appropriate, all feasible measures to protect journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions,

particularly in cases of armed conflict, and will co-operate to that effect. These measures will include tracing missing journalists, finding out about their fate, providing appropriate assistance and facilitating their return to their families.”

I believe we can build on the somewhat modest goals of the 1991 declaration.

Let me explain.

Miklos Harasti, one of my predecessors in this office, often referred to killing as censorship by murder. It has become commonplace these days – at least when it happens one at a time – so commonplace that the public barely notices when a reporter is killed on the job. It used to be big news. Now it is almost nothing more than agate – that small type in the back of the newspaper where weddings and births and traffic citations are announced.

When journalists’ lives becomes so cheap – undervalued – it is easy to start thinking that their role in society is more of being irritants than pillars of free expression and robust debate that serves to build and maintain liberal democracies. And nowhere is it more likely to happen than in places of armed conflict.

That is where my Office comes in. That is why we have organized this conference.

This conference stems from the work that has been done over the past year by journalists involved in the crisis in and around Ukraine. Starting a little over a year ago, my Office has brought together journalists six times from the Russian Union of Journalists, the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine to discuss the issues that have arisen since the conflict started

These on-the-ground journalists discussed many of the issues that we will examine over the next two days, including ways to improve journalists’ professional standards, the scourge of propaganda and the safety of those working in Ukraine. I appreciate the professionalism, courage and wisdom exhibited by these people in their discussions on these difficult topics and I encourage you to consider the side event on the issues they face that they have organized that will take place tomorrow afternoon from 2:30 to 5 p.m.

I’d also like to take this time to thank the nongovernmental organizations that have been involved in these journalists meetings, including the European Federation of Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists, the International Press Institute and Reporters without Borders.

During these next two days we will address head-on many of the issues journalists face when they report from conflict zones.

And that we will do. Obviously, the issues that have arisen from the conflict in and around Ukraine consume our attention these days. Death, disappearances, assaults, kidnapping, intimidation, threats and simple seizures of property are commonplace.

Deaths in conflict zones do not have to be commonplace. There are ways to report more safely. Those methods will be explored here.

Conflicts give rise to other issues that affect journalists and their safety. Conflicts necessarily bring in governmental authorities as major players in what and how events are reported. That is why we have a session dedicated to professional ethics – how do journalists respond to the

countless interests tugging at them – their employers, their governments and even their colleagues?

The role of regulation – and here we mean broadcast regulation – is critical to create an environment that allows for the free flow of information. Licensing, content regulation balance, defamation, incitement to violence, threats to public order and national security issues are on the table.

And we will address the issue of propaganda, because the uncontrolled use and proliferation of false scenarios, backed in many cases by unlimited government resources, is so commonplace today that it may be the norm, not the exception.

When I addressed the Permanent Council last November, I said that propaganda is yet another ugly scar on the face of modern journalism. I said that it is not my responsibility as the Representative to teach anyone how to write and report. But I can ask questions – the tough questions that we should all be asking ourselves and one another.

I call on governmental authorities, wherever they own media outlets directly or by proxy, to stop corrupting the profession, to stop spreading propaganda, to stop presenting a world through the media that is as Orwellian as the era we lived through and came to an end 25 years ago. In the absence of real, critical journalism, democracy suffers and deliberate disinformation becomes the standard.

Ending the use of propaganda is enshrined in the basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the agreement that, in essence, gave birth to this organization.

In it, the signatories “agreed to promote, by all means which each of them considers appropriate, a climate of confidence and respect among peoples consonant with their duty to refrain from propaganda for wars of aggression or for any threat or use of force inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations and with the Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States, against another participating State.”

In the end, propaganda may be the biggest threat of all, because as I have said many times, there is no democracy without good journalism. While the physical safety of journalists continues to be the main focus of my Office since it was established in 1997, I believe we must be concerned about the entire environment affecting free media and free expression. That is why we are taking this holistic approach the reporting in times of conflict.

Recognizing the problems inherent in conflict reporting is only a small part of the battle.

We must develop clear-cut, easily understandable and transferrable solutions to the common problems. That is our goal at this meeting – to give the media the tools and the support necessary so they can do their jobs without fear of losing their lives.

Are our options limited? I don't think so. Within the OSCE region there are many members of the media who have reported in conflict areas. I am eager to hear their contributions to these discussions.

Let's take this opportunity to share what we have learned and what we need to know to make reporting a profession that is seen as a pillar for building democracies and peace.

Allow me to introduce this morning's speakers.

Ivan Šimonović:

Ivan Šimonović assumed his functions as Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights on 17 July 2010, heading OHCHR's New York Office.

Before joining the United Nations, from 2008 he held the position of Minister of Justice of Croatia. Previously Mr. Šimonović was Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, where he served as Senior Vice-President and President of the Economic and Social Council from 2001 to 2003.

A Croatian national, Mr. Šimonović worked as a professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Zagreb, where he served as Head of the Legal Theory Department, Vice-Dean and Vice-Rector for international cooperation. He has experience and has published extensively in the fields of international relations, law, human rights, and development of national institutions. In an expert capacity, he has been a member of the Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy through Law (i.e. the Venice Commission) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as well as the Agent of the Republic of Croatia before the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Mr. Šimonović has a graduate degree in law, a master's degree in public administration and politics, and a Ph.D. from the University of Zagreb and was a visiting scholar at the Universities of Graz and Yale. Mr. Šimonović was born in 1959 in Zagreb, Croatia. He is married with two children.

Roy Gutman:

Roy Gutman is the Europe Bureau Chief for McClatchy Newspapers, based in Istanbul. Previously, he served as McClatchy's Baghdad Bureau Chief and, before that, as Foreign Editor. He was employed by the Reuters news agency, serving in Bonn, Vienna, Belgrade, London and Washington.

At Reuters, he acted as Bureau Chief for Europe, State Department Correspondent, and Chief Capitol Hill Reporter. While Bureau Chief for Europe, from late 1989 to 1994, he reported on the downfall of the Polish, East German, and Czechoslovak regimes, the opening of the Berlin Wall, the unification of Germany, the first democratic elections in the former Eastern Bloc, and the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Gutman's honours include the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting, for his coverage of the 1993 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the George Polk Award for foreign reporting; the Selden Ring Award for investigative reporting; and a special Human Rights in Media Award from the International League for Human Rights. Mr. Gutman is the chairman of the Crimes of War Project, an attempt to bring together reporters and legal scholars to increase awareness of the laws of war.

His pocket guide to war crimes, *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know*, co-edited with David Rieff, was published by W.W. Norton in 1999 with a second edition in 2007. In 1988, Simon & Schuster published his *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua 1981-1987*. Macmillan published *A Witness to Genocide* in 1993, and the U.S. Institute of Peace published *How We Missed the Story: Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan* in 2008.

Mr. Gutman graduated from Haverford College with a major in History. He holds a MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics.