



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

JIM BOUMELHA
President

AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

To:

H.E. Boris Tadic, President of Serbia

H.E. Vojislav Kostunica, Prime Minister of Serbia

Brussels, 5 March 2008

Dear Sir,

The European Federation of Journalists, the European group of the International Federation of Journalists, has been informed about serious and repeated death threats against journalists of Radio and Television station B92 and in particular against its executive officer, Mr. Veran Matic.

The mass demonstrations and unrest in Serbia since Kosovo's declaration of independence on 17 February 2008 have led to attacks on independent media. In particular, a crowd of several hundred demonstrators marching on a building housing the independent media outlet B92, trapping employees inside. Heavy police cordons had to be deployed to protect our colleagues and B92's CEO invited the Minister of Defence, Mr. Sutanovac to the station for protection as well.

We are deeply concerned by these developments and by some extremist reaction against reporters working at B92. For example, a video of an attack on two B92 reporters was posted on YouTube (despite all B92's complaints and requests for removal, it is still available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOuaZGUgdNw>). B92 also received several bomb threats and has had to be evacuated. There have been anonymous threats directed towards Mr. Matic and the B92 organisation.

Some politicians describe vandalism towards various institutions as a "democratic right" and also warned that it would be "natural" that B92 and certain political parties face destruction. These are untenable and intolerable comments that amount to incitement to violence against independent journalists.

It is a terrible irony that in the past, B92's professionalism and political independence has achieved universal recognition and has helped provide the bedrock of the modern democracy enjoyed by Serbian citizens. Today its independence has become a target of intolerant politicians and other extremists. This is precisely the moment, in the name of democracy for all in Serbia, to speak out against the attacks on B92 and all other media and journalists committed to professional news reporting, and to defend it from undue political pressure.

We can verify the validity of the complaints. We have received copies of messages of death threats, including email or IP addresses. The threats are also public knowledge as several programmes on B92 have been disrupted by people using verbal and sometimes physical violence.

B92 has filed a complaint with the prosecutor's office regarding attacks against its office and its staff and it has been informed that police have started an investigation. We hope that the prosecutor's office will soon give B92 and the public an official update on the investigation and bring formal charges against the perpetrators.

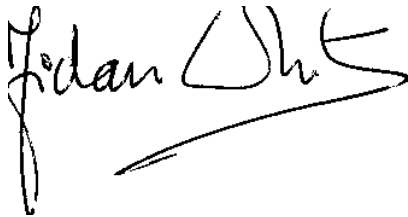
We have also been informed that B92 has been told that regular police units cannot protect staff inside of the broadcaster's offices and that it must provide its own security protection for the building. We are shocked that officials have refused to ensure the safety of media workers at B92 who are Serbian civilians and who have the same right to protection that all other citizens have.

The affiliates of the IFJ in Serbia (UNS, NUNS and the Journalists' Union) share these concerns. They have organised safety seminars and have approached representatives of the government to guarantee better protection for journalists across the country.

We call on you to take urgent action to defend independent journalism and press freedom in Serbia by responding to the dangerous and sinister nature of the attacks on B92. All complaints should be taken seriously and subject to proper investigation with charges brought against people responsible for violations of the law.

We also urge you to do everything in your power to provide order and safety to the people and property in Belgrade, at the same time respecting human and civil rights, in particular for those journalists and media workers who are threatened because of their work.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

Copy:

H.E. Dragan Jovic, Minister of Interior

H.E. Bozidar Djeli, Vice President of Serbian Government

Mr. Milorad Veljovic, Chief of Police

Mr. Slobodan Radovanovi, Acting State Prosecutor