[UA] Media regulator call to limit cruelty in audiovisual media

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Andrei Richter
Comenius University (Bratislava)

On 13 January 2025, the Ukrainian media regulator – the National Council on Broadcasting – called on media actors to observe ethical and journalistic standards when covering the Russian-Ukrainian war. It recalled that, in early 2025, a number of Ukrainian media and media actors disseminated a video taken from the Russian propaganda channel on Telegram. It was a graphic depiction of hand-to-hand combat between between a Ukrainian soldier and a Russian storm trooper, as a result of which the Ukrainian died. In addition, local journalists published information about the identity of the soldier: his name and photos taken during his lifetime, without obtaining the consent of the relatives of the deceased.

The National Council stressed the importance of striving for and achieving a balance between truth, ethics and the public interest. It recommended avoiding distributing photos or videos with an excess of violence and cruelty. Bloody episodes of the execution of soldiers and prisoners, close-ups of bodily injuries may be humiliating for the victims, traumatise the audience, and inflict an additional emotional blow on the families of the deceased and/or harm the physical, mental or moral development of minors. Such content must first undergo an editorial examination (discussion) regarding its ethics and news value for the public. Graphic material must be accompanied with an editorial statement explaining the motives for its publication and the reasons for its public distribution. It is necessary to provide a warning about the sensitive nature of the audiovisual content prior to its dissemination.

The media regulator suggested replacing – whenever possible – photos or videos depicting violence and cruelty with a text description of the event using correct and accurate vocabulary and adhering to moral and ethical norms and standards of journalism. In particular, the correct vocabulary would refer to the enemy as: Russian servicemen, occupiers, invaders, storm troopers, enslavers, enemies of Ukraine, etc. But it is regrettable, said the appeal, that the Ukrainian media, following the example of the Russian Telegram channel, called the storm trooper only by his ethnonym, “Yakut”, although his ethnicity was completely irrelevant in this situation.

The National Council reiterated that, in accordance with Article 42 paragraph 1 of Ukraine's Media Law (see IRIS 2023-1:1/6), the dissemination of information that

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may harm the physical, mental or moral development of children and that contains information with an excessive focus on violence is restricted in media materials (except for movies).

The appeal concluded by saying: “No atrocities of the aggressor should overshadow humanity and professionalism in the work of the media. The cruelty and violence that war brings into our lives should not become the main topics of journalistic materials.”

Національна рада вкотре закликала медіа дотримуватись морально-етичних норм та журналістських стандартів у висвітленні російсько-української війни

https://webportal.nrada.gov.ua/natsionalna-rada-vkotre-zaklykala-media-dotrymuvatys-moralno-etychnyh-norm-ta-zhurnalistskyh-standartiv-u-vysvitlenni-rosijsko-ukrayinskoyi-vijny/

The National Council called on the media again to observe ethical and journalistic standards when covering the Russian-Ukrainian war

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