[PT] High Authority for the Media Takes Stand on Reality Shows

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On 16 May 2001, following a highly controversial episode in a reality show, the Alta Autoridade para a Comunicação Social (the High Authority for the Media) decided to take a stand on the issue. On 15 May 2001, during prime time, the private terrestrial channel Sociedade Independente de Comunicação (SIC) broadcast an emotional row between a contestant in Bar da TV (a "Big Brother" type of programme) and her parents. Shocked by erotic behaviour in Bar da TV, the parents of a female contestant, Margarida, asked the production team to let them talk to their daughter. The live broadcast of a tearful and dramatic confrontation between Margarida, who wanted to stay in the programme, and her parents, who were determined to take her home, caused consternation in the country. Politicians from all parties, the media and citizens raised their objections to what was perceived as a gross violation of human privacy and dignity.

The day after the live broadcast, the High Authority issued a recommendation stating that SIC had infringed in a grave way ethical/legal parameters and fundamental rights and values. The High Authority recommended immediate compliance with the Television Law (Law 31-A/98 of 14 July). Six days after issuing the recommendation, the High Authority determined that both SIC (which broadcast Bar da TV) and the other terrestrial private channel, Televisão Independente de Comunicação (the broadcaster of "Big Brother"), should be fined. According to the High Authority, TVI should pay a financial penalty for broadcasting explicit sex before 10 pm. SIC, on the other hand, should be fined due to the infringement of article 21 number 1 and 2 of the Television Law. Number 1 says that it is not allowed any transmission that violates fundamental rights, liberties and guarantees, that infringes human dignity or incentivates the practice of crimes; number 2 states that broadcasts that might have a negative influence in the development of children and young people's personality or might have a negative influence in vulnerable audiences, namely due to the exhibition of shocking or violent images, should be precceded by a clear advertence, should have a permanent adequate symbol (small ball on the up right corner), and should only take place after 10 pm. Furthermore, the High Authority has asked the State Prosecutor to examine whether crimes were committed during the broadcast of the family row between Margarida and her parents, and to act accordingly.

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Comunicado da Alta Autoridade para a Comunicação Social de 16 de Maio de 2001 and Comunicado da Alta Autoridade para a Comunicação Social de 22 de Maio de 2001

Satement of the High Authority for the Media of 16 May 2001 and Statement of the High Authority for the Media of 22 May 2001

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