[BA] Political Pressure on FTV BiH

IRIS 2003-7:1/38

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Early in June, the House of Representatives of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation parliament (the lower house), endorsed a draft on amendments to the Law on public service Federal Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FTV BiH), forbidding direct TV broadcast of sessions of both houses of the BiH Federation parliament. The decision of the House of Peoples (the upper house) is expected to take place during 2003.

As the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA), the regulatory authority responsible for the broadcasting and telecommunications sector, announced that it would not interfere in this case, the Ombudsman Institution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a Special Report calling for respect for the Council of Europe's Recommendation No. R (96)10 on the guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting and requested the upper house deputies to reject the bill. Reacting to an official complaint by the Editor-in-Chief of the FTV BiH, the Federal Ombudsmen firmly stressed that the government bodies (both executive and legislative) are not and must not be places where editorial policy of any media should be discussed, particularly not in regard to public service broadcasting. These conclusions have been derived from the core spirit of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, from the position of the Council of Europe, and from the position of the European Court of Human Rights. In accordance with European standards, the governments should entirely enable public broadcasters to perform their public function independently, funded by public resources.

In the context of the fact that starting from 1 July 2003 and according to a decision by the High Representative on the liquidation of BiH RTV (formerly RTV Sarajevo), the FTV BiH transmission capacity will be reduced to only one general channel, concerns have arisen that the parliamentary decision might negatively affect the FTV programming.

Special Report of 6 May 2003 on Disruption of Independence of FTV BiH by Endorsing a Bill on Amendments to the Law on Federation of BiH RTV

http://www.bihfedomb.org/eng/reports/special/federaltv.htm

Press release of the Communications Regulatory Agency of May 2003

http://www.cra.ba/

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Decision on the Liquidation Procedure to be Applied in the Winding-Up of the Public Enterprise Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina

http://www.ohr.int/decisions/mediadec/default.asp?content_id=8362

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