# [GR] Appropriate Manner of Broadcasting on Disorder during Demonstrations

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In December 2008, the manner in which demonstrations and accompanying disorder are broadcast by the media came under scrutiny in Greece. In particular, the *Ethniko Symvoulio Radiotileorasis* (National Council for Radio and Television - ESR) issued two recommendations concerning the appropriate manner of reporting on disorder during demonstrations, while the *Symvoulio tis Epikratias* (Administrative Court of Justice) issued two decisions on the right of a journalist to decide as to the suitable amount of time that should be dedicated to the broadcast of demonstrations as such and the amount of time that should be devoted to the ensuing disorder.

During the last month of 2008, the Greek media were principally occupied with reporting on the demonstrations that took place in many Greek cities after the shooting of a Greek schoolboy by a police officer. The ESR, acting within its competences, issued two recommendations concerning the appropriate approach to the presentation of information on these events.

The first recommendation, issued on 12 December 2008, required that the media avoid broadcasting scenes of extreme violence in a way that could be interpreted as encouragement to demonstrations of extreme antisocial behaviour. As a complement to this, the second recommendation, issued on 16 December 2008, extended a further request, enjoining the media to accompany any video material depicting disorder from previous days with the label "archive material", in order to prevent confusion among the public and the creation of the impression that the transmitted scenes are taking place in the present.

These recommendations were issued at the same time that the Administrative Court of Justice gave further clarifications on the way in which information about demonstrations and ensuing disorder should be presented in two related decisions. Both decisions refer to the way two Greek channels (MEGA Channel and ANTENNA) broadcast the demonstrations that took place in Greece in 2003 in opposition to the then forthcoming war in Iraq. At the time, the ESR had imposed fines on both television channels, on the grounds that they dedicated more time to reporting on the disorder during the demonstrations than to reporting on the demonstrations as such. The Administrative Court of Justice, after an appeal by the above-mentioned channels, invalidated the decision of the Council.

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In particular, according to the ruling, the devotion of more time to the broadcasting of the disorder itself did not breach the principle of objectivity or constitute an ethics violation. In accordance with the freedom of press, as guaranteed by the Constitution, journalists have the right to evaluate pieces of news as more or less significant and to choose what should be considered sufficiently important to report upon, as well as how much time should be devoted to each incident.

Furthermore, the ESR is indeed competent to have control over whether the Media failed to broadcast an incident generally considered as important, as this would be equivalent to hiding the truth and attempting to manipulate public opinion. On the contrary, according to the Court, prioritization and evaluation are not subject to sanctions by the Council, as they do not form a violation of the objective broadcast of news.

### *Υπόδειξεις Αριθμ. 4/12.12.2008 και 5/12.12.2008*

*Recommendations No. 4 and 5 of 12 December 2008*

### *Symvoulio tis Epikratias - Αποφάσεις Αριθμ. 3620/2008 and 3621/2008*

*Decisions of the Administrative Court of Justice Nr. 3620/2008 and 3621/2008*

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