

THE MEDIAS AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBANIA – THE REALITIES AND THE CHALLENGES

ABSTRACT

The protection of human rights as an indicator of the economic and social development of mankind constitutes one of the fundamental axes of the object of the domestic law of the states and of the current international law. Included and explicitly mentioned in almost all paragraphs of the preamble to the UN Charter, as an objective and purpose of its activity, in addition to ensuring international peace and security, and widely addressed in the Charter provisions, it represents an obligation and at the same time an important trend, which contributes to the affirmation of the individual with the quality of its subject and its transformation into a “citizen of the world”.

KEYWORDS: *human rights, Albania, media, law*

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The expression “human rights” in the doctrine of the law means the rights of the individual to be protected by the state, against the intrusion of that self, but also against the violations that may come from individuals or other subjects of the law. They have been known to him because of his existence as a human being. Human rights are permanent, unconditioned by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, educational, cultural and material level,

age, etc. In principle, as a general rule, they cannot and should not be limited by the state, except in cases provided for by the law. There are “born” and “inalienable” (Woyke, 1994) rights, an expression of a sense of collective and solidarity and are conditioned by the active political commitment of individuals and their communities. For the philosophy of human rights, the special attention has always been given to the moral and legal character, as individual rights of each, which must be respected and realized at any time and in every country.

Among them, there are the freedom of belief and conscience, thought, press, information and teaching, freedom of speech and expression (Woyke, 1994), etc., which are aspirations as early as the man himself, at least from the time when he felt politics, “political animals”, political or social beings – part of politically organized human society, as Aristotle says (Aristoteli, 2003). They were originally treated in embryonic forms by the principles of natural law and following the norms of positive law. Their circle was expanded so were the opportunities for protection by the respective institutions. Without their existence and protection in conformity with the concepts and standards of any age of development, the essence of the quality of human life would be impaired. They have therefore attracted the attention of sociologists, philosophers, politologists, law specialists, and so on.

Human rights can only be guaranteed in the conditions of the rule of law, the normal functioning of the principle of separation of powers, the free, direct and secret elections, etc. Their violation, which usually occurs in dictatorial states, eavesdrops the political climate, creating such circumstances in which human rights, order and social peace are questioned (Helmut, 1988).

To guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms, states around the world, and especially in post-war Europe, undertook a series of reforms. Among them, of special importance were those in the sphere of freedom of thought, expression and information, as well as the efficient use of media organs. The aim was to create the conditions that international peace and security, cooperation for economic, social and cultural progress, contribute to the growth of the material and spiritual well-being of peoples and all humanity, and to the implementation of the normal standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The economic, political and social turbulences of the 70s of the last century, driven by the expansion of the globalization phenomenon of exchanges, the increase of unemployment, the growth of migratory flows, the spread of urban ghettoization, returning to the agenda discussions on the review of the policies, objectives and ways to be followed for establishing a fair relationship between human rights and media freedom, the legal conscience of the media's ability to act within the limits set by relevant legal acts.

Their status, rights and obligations are subject to the treatment of the norms of the law, which are "obliged" to deal with freedom of expression, practiced practically through printed media, audiovisual, social networking, portals etc.

Respect for freedom of expression contributes to the abuses of the state not to pass without investigation and without punishing the causes. Media activity helps to uncover truths, inform the public, and put the responsibility of officials, statesmen, politicians, and any other responsible person.

Given this general principle assessment, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) considers journalists as public watchdogs and asks them to disseminate real information and ideas through various means such as television, newspapers, online media and other means of information. In this way they help the public to participate in decision-making and the development of democracy.

In a democratic society, the media should promote understanding, cooperation and tolerance as well as facilitate the exchange of information of a political, economic, social, cultural, etc. character.

In order to establish a balance between the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on one hand and the activity and status of the media, on the other hand, state institutions, non-governmental organizations and international organizations whose activity interferes with the above issues should consider the important axiom that free press and freedom of expression are fundamental indicators for a democratic society. The European Union, in the article 49 of the Lisbon Treaty, has defined as a *conditio sine qua non* for states seeking to join it.

HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE MEDIA

Among the enjoyment of human rights and media activity there is a mutual link and interaction. Every human being is interested in maximizing the fundamental rights and freedoms. The media, through the realization of normal functions, contribute to the consolidation of a general climate for the necessity of their respect, for action only in the positive direction, in that of productive and constructive cooperation. Meanwhile, respect for human rights affects the expansion of the media network, regulating the activity and guaranteeing the limits within which they are allowed to operate.

An encouraging factor is the development and legal-institutional regulation of the activity of all types of media, written, audiovisual, online, portals etc. This implies, in the first instance, the adoption of appropriate legislation and its correct implementation. In this regard, humanity has generally scored precious achievements. Without going deep into history let's mention the principles and norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)¹. The article 19 states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression, which includes the right to create and intervene without interference and seek, to receive and disseminate information and ideas through any kind of media, regardless of frontiers. Another important act is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – 1966 (ICCPR), in which Albania became a party on 4 October 1991. It relies on some of the fundamental principles and definitions of the UDHR, which has reproduced and detailed further. Freedom of expression and the media are also protected by the regional human rights systems, among which the European Convention on Human Rights, where Albania adhered on 2 October 1996, the American Convention on Human Rights and African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, etc. This system of acts has defined the basic lines that should serve the states to sanction and guarantee through their legislation the implementation of all aspects of freedom of expression.

They, based on the country's progressive experiences and the best achievements of the world community, have enshrined that freedom of expression and media freedom often appear as a prerequisite for the implementation of other rights and freedoms. They anticipate that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom of thought,

freedom to share information and ideas without the intervention of public authorities and regardless of the boundaries.

Sometimes it happens that citizens are denied the right to objective, factual, balanced and trusted information, free from prejudices and propaganda. The democracy and the efficiency of the institutions are undermined or impaired, and the pluralist media context, which serves to promote dialogue and tolerance without which there can be no democratic society, is undermined. Objective, transparent and critical observation of political processes by the media encourages their transparency, serves as a pressure on states to improve governance and guarantees that governments adhere to policies that benefit the society or its majority, without given them the opportunity to become expressive and carriers of the narrow interests of the ruling political forces or of certain oligarchic groups.

This is because, at least few news related to the state and politics or important ventures, derive from press releases or press conference papers, declarations or official correspondence, etc. Those who process this media “raw material” belong to a specialized bureaucratic group for selecting “prefabricated” news from institution or business officials who appear as the first performers of the events. The form and content of the information, usually formulated by specialists specifically tasked with processing and publishing the information product of state institutions, politics, economics, courts, governments, political parties, parliament, sports teams etc, distributed by the press, affect the processing of predetermined opinions. This way, the objectivity of the news can be affected. The autonomy of journalists and information producers is also relativized by control and economic influence, because, as is well-known, the media are owned by policy-makers and government-specific interests. Here is also why it is commonly observed that almost every media body, such as written, audio-visual or online portals, always finds a block of news, events, commentaries, curiosities, etc. almost identically. All what we said above would suffice to conclude that, as Stuart Hall says, the media do not always create the news autonomously, but get ready from official and institutional sources, which are considered the first producers of events (Start, 2007). Media is thus transformed into processors and their secondary customers, which makes the credibility and the value of the news to be relativized at times.

As a rule, freedom of expression protects acceptable information and ideas or those that are considered non-offensive, which does not mean that it does not even consider those parts that disturb or shake governments. Otherwise, it would not serve to improve governance. It is the duty of media bodies to collect and disseminate information, data and ideas on political, economic, social and other issues, where public interest appears, as is the public's right to be recognized.

A number of special institutions of national and international character have been created to implement the commitments sanctioned by the above acts, on issues related to the right of expression and the media bodies. The activity of competent bodies tasked with guaranteeing freedom of expression is an integral part of the functioning of a pluralistic democracy. In the European continent, the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Committee on Social Rights, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on National Minorities, the European Commissioner for Human Rights Human Rights, Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, High Commissioner for National Minorities, Representative for Freedom of the Media, European Union, European Court of Justice, European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia, European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, etc.

Their core tasks focus on two directions, in providing appropriate legal and institutional conditions for the exercise of the freedom of media activities and the right of expression, including the protection of the rights of journalists and media bodies from state or structures of state intervention and on the other hand the protection of the rights of individuals and their communities from abuses that may come from overcoming the legal boundaries of media activities. In October 2018, when investigative journalist Viktoria Marinova was killed in Bulgaria, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Zhurova, in a speech delivered in Vienna, said that the EU should "support an approach European media, on quality and smart regulation ". She demanded that the work of the media be monitored more widely and not merely by following the laws of the market (Weiss, 2018).

ALBANIAN LEGISLATION AND THE MEDIA

At the time of the communist regime, Albanian legislation made a nearly formal determination of human rights. In practice, numerous violations were found. Only after its overthrow were created conditions for their sanctioning and for guaranteeing practical implementation. The normative regulation of the right of expression and freedom of the media, the Albanian legislation is based on the definitions of relevant international legal acts where generally it is foreseen that everyone has the right to freedom of expression.

During the 30 years of the transition period from the monist to the democratic regime, Albania has made impressive steps on issues related to the creation and the guarantee of the atmosphere of media freedom. It is considered a positive stimulus, so that no one is prohibited from expressing, in writing or orally, his or her opinion, even if different from the opinions of the governing bodies, on a development, an event, an official or a ruler. Because, as a former US Congressman said, “we do not have the freedom of speech to talk about the weather,” but “that we can say some very controversial things” (Weiss, 2018).

Albania, a country aspiring to join the EU, has long been involved in a serious political, legal and institutional commitment to align its human rights legislation with community standards as well as the legal and institutional regulation of media activity online. This is based on the constitution of the country and the improvements that are made from time to time in legislation to adapt to the Brussels directives. The article 22 and 23 of the Albanian Constitution provide that freedom of expression, freedom of press, radio and television and the right to information are guaranteed². The Constitution also stipulates that the rights sanctioned in the international treaties in which Albania is a party take precedence over any Albanian law or practice that does not conform to them. Freedom of expression in the Constitution is regulated in detail by some provisions. Article 10 deals with freedom of expression in public life, the article 20 with freedom of expression for minorities, the article 22 with freedom of expression and freedom of press, radio and television, etc.

The above provisions, together with international legal acts, form the general context in which Albania as a democratic country seeks to create the right conditions where the media and journalists can freely exercise their

mission without fear of being able to face the violence and the former political pressure. Therefore, the status and the activity they carry out are regulated by specific normative acts. Among them should be mentioned the Press Law³, adopted in 1993, which was criticized for the oppressive character and was revised in 1997 by being reduced to just two sentences: “The press is free. Freedom of the press is protected by law⁴. „The activity of audio-visual media is regulated by Law no. 97/2013, dated 4.03.2013, on Audio-Visual Media in the Republic of Albania. Other laws and acts adopted on the basis and for their implementation regulate specific aspects of concretizing freedom of expression in the media. Such are the Code of Ethics of the Albanian Media (2006), the Law on the Right to Information (2014), the Law on Audiovisual and Electronic Media in the Republic of Albania, etc.

Albania, in spite of this normative system in the field of media and human rights, still has the means to achieve sanctioning and implementation of the most advanced standards. For example, there is room for a clearer legal framework to improve the levels of journalism and to orient media owners and leaders to witness more professionalism, prudent behavior, and particularly independence from political forces, media tycoons, and criminal groups.

In Albania, as in other countries, there are cases when, under various pretexts, citizens are denied the right to real and trustworthy information, which discourages democracy and reduces the efficiency of the institutions.

Freedom of expression cannot be an absolute right, its subjects should strictly respect the requirements provided by national and international legislation. Journalists, employees or media directors must carry out their activity in accordance with ethical principles, respecting the quality and objectivity without compromising the reputation and the privacy rights of others.

Freedom of expression is indeed a fundamental right and at the same time a powerful instrument in the fight against injustice, violations, and so on, especially corruption and abuses, but it does not justify its return to an instrument that violates the freedom and rights of others, nor even an institution that avoids or violates the principles on which it operates. Regarding the foregoing, European Commission President Jean Claude

Junker, severely attacked by the British press, said “freedom of the press has its own borders”⁵.

Despite the efforts to respect the standards and improve the level of freedom of expression and the media, which as they said, have not been missing, in the daily Albanian reality continue to notice violations and shortcomings. Among them are those that, at times, essentially violate the general legal-institutional framework. In a study conducted in the first months of this year, the Reporters Without Borders Organization, supported by the US Embassy in Albania and the Research and Alternative Development Institute (IDRA), shows that there are many deficiencies⁶. Almost half of journalists have no qualifications in journalism. They get paid a bit, some, 17 to 31% of them do not have employment contracts, half of the respondents claimed to have received orders from the media owner for the news, 65 percent believe journalists are verbally or psychologically abused, while 19 percent claim to be “completely abused”, 78% claim that some journalists are involved in corrupt practices such as receiving money or other benefits to create certain news. Journalists describe politics as the main obstacle to freedom of speech and most say they depend directly on the political direction of the media they work on⁷.

The state of media freedom in the Albanian reality is not considered good. Its indicator, according to Freedom House’s recent estimates, dropped from 3.75 points in 2009 to 4.25 points in 2016 and is currently deteriorating further⁸. In one of its recent reports, many of the laws are in line with European standards, but usually lack the structural skills to implement them⁹.

These conclusions, even more extreme, have reached a group of representatives of the 7 international media organizations in mid-June 2019. In its statements, it states that “public administration, including the prime minister’s office and the mayor of Tirana, are not transparent in their interaction with the media and restricting the access of critical journalists. The recently proposed media legislation, including a draconian regulatory scheme for Albanian and foreign media, is not in line with international human rights standards. We are concerned that Albania, a member state of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and democratic candidate country for the European Union, is not respecting its

obligations to guarantee and protect the freedom of expression and freedom of the press as required by Albanian law and international instruments, including the European Convention on Human Rights ... the delegation was informed that Prime Minister Edi Rama consistently refers to them as “bins.” Similarly, opposition leader Lulzim Basha refers to the media as “catching and buying”. Such a language denigrates journalists and makes them look a legitimate target for aggression in the eyes of the public, increasing the risk of threats or violence against them¹⁰”.

The US Department of State in the Human Rights Report for 2018 comes to the desperate conclusion that in Albanian politics, business and crime have captured the media¹¹.

Due to the *lack* of professionalism, non-compliance with the basic requirements of legislative, domestic and international legal acts, some media bodies with interventions beyond the legal boundaries of people’s lives seriously undermine them and cause them to create situations that sometimes have taken extreme proportions.

Such a case happened at the beginning of this year (2019) and was a very serious event, confirmed at a high school in a city near the capital of the country. A 13-year-old girl was abused by 9 boys, aged 13 to 17, in the same school. The event became public and almost all the media wrote about it. A serious situation was created for the battered and traumatized child from a physical and psycho-nervous point of view, but also for the group of perpetrators who were also juveniles. One of the reasons that the situation was amplified was the unlawful, anti-media interference of the media, which, to spread “interesting” news that make up specialists of the “super-league” field – scoop, committed another rape, now public, again criminal, that injured the personality of young person. It drew the attention of the general public, but it seems to have no consequences for the media, because, as in other countries, the media have now become almost untouchable corporations.

A few months ago, almost the same drama happened, with an orphan girl. She was in love affairs with a businessman’s son and at the same time a politician, complaining to the police for mistreatment and rape by her boyfriend. The news flowed from the police, became the subject of commentary on the media, audio-visual media, online portals, etc. She was called to the

television studio to speak on the issue. The traumatization from neuro-psychic and physical rape on one hand, and, as it was said at that time, the pressure exerted by her former boyfriend and relatives made her go out again through the media and deny everything she had previously asserted. There was thus an unpleasant spectacle and totally unprofitable. The dignity of a young girl was compromised, merely to advertise and encourage the consumption of a media product at the expense of an unprotected, orphaned person.

We gave these two examples because they speculate about criminal speculation with the illicit media freedom and the damages caused by the trend of media noise.

Damages with political, economic, social and other consequences cause not only the overruns of ethical, moral and professional relatives, but also the so-called fake news. They are distributed by almost all kinds of media, including on-line portals, which are massively spread, have become a “media epidemic”. Already some of their journalists tend to fictional facts, plagiarism, news provided by dubious sources.

Fake news is a speculative challenge to media freedom and their development under normal conditions, because with falsities or fraud that scatters violate the dignity of individuals or other subjects, they deceive the lives of ordinary people, hit the credibility of “news”, hinder and compromise the work of journalists. It is required that the right to information, free speech, free expression and expression on the one hand, and private life of individuals and the national security of the state, on the other hand, should not deny each other but contribute to the positive advancement of the issue. It is imperative that the two parts of this binomial do not turn into vicious circuit, but provide balanced solutions.

Violation of the right to information is also the circulation of Fake News for practical benefits from certain political forces through public media institutions. False news is propagated, colored with propaganda political doses, talked about untrue events etc. This has recently occurred with the spread of “media news”, originating from a so-called “digital citizen”. In most cases it is about news of lies, slander and deformities, distributed by a former politician and former statesman as a diversion to the ruling political forces.

Portal owners, implicated in ambitions for unjustified economic and financial gains, oblige journalists employed in their businesses that sometimes distribute news releases. They inject ideas, intentions, principles, slogans, and policies that disagree with politics, mentality, traditions, and domestic habits. They do not even agree with the national interests or with the policies and aspirations of Albania's integration into the international Euro-Atlantic structures.

A fraction of the hundreds of online media websites¹², have non-transparent ownership, vague funding sources, circulate news without quality, copy and spread invented releases. There are among them that go beyond the legal boundaries that violate or affect the dignity of people who spread distorted data on the activity of various state institutions to press or intimidate to maintain favorable attitudes towards them (owners or managers of media bodies).

Given the desire to put them under control or to discipline their activity, in order to respect international standards and not to violate media freedom, freedom of expression, but also the dignity and freedom of others, efforts have been made to formalize the procedures for opening online portals and regulating their activity. In this case, a lively controversy has exploded in the political, social, moral and legal plan, in order to find solutions to ensure a balance between online portals being tolerated and encouraged but not being able to compromise fundamental human rights and freedoms. In this case, the law and the legislative, executive and judicial institutions have an important role to discipline their activity, to set up filters to clean or disinfect, to prevent their conversion into "kill" weapons life, personality, human dignity, under the fictitious okelion of freedom of expression, speech and press, etc.

In the last years in Albania, when the left coalition came to power with the Socialist Party in the lead, it was noticed that the news for the government's activity and the SP politics had as primary information source exactly that sigel. It was a TV channel that was designed to advertise the activities, speeches, meetings etc of Edi Rames, the SP Speaker and the Prime Minister of the country, carrying the acronym ERTV, which means Edi Rama (Prime Minister of Albania) TV¹³.

In these fragile realities, in the name of the fight against abuses, by the end of last year, by the middle of 2019, the Albanian government undertook

the initiative to introduce some restrictions on the law no.97 / 2013 “On audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania “, as amended” and “Some additions and amendments to Law no. 9918, dated 19.5.2008 “On electronic communications in the Republic of Albania” as amended “. They aimed to create a licensing, control, finishing, and closing down of websites in cases of abuses. Restrictions foresee that the Electronic Communications Authority (AKEP), an independent institution, should register all online media and have the right to take measures so that “entrepreneurs ... enforce obligations relating to protection national interests, public security ... and other applicable laws. Each online page should show contact details and location address. If it does not meet the obligations it may be endangered to be closed¹⁴.

The bill was firmly opposed by several media representatives, portals and human rights organizations¹⁵ who claimed to constitute unnecessary restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom and provided extensive space to the authorities to threaten the media in internet with disproportionate and closed fines.

The Albanian state authorities, in defense of their position, referred to Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which does not prevent States from requiring broadcasting, television or cinematographic broadcasting enterprises to be licensed. It provides that the exercise of their activity may be subject to formalities, conditions, restrictions or sanctions. In a democratic society they serve to create additional safeguards for national security, territorial integrity, public security, order protection and crime prevention, protection of health or morals, protection of dignity or the rights of others, prohibition of the spread of confidential data, securing the authority and impartiality of the judiciary, etc. It also mentions the Declaration on Internet Freedom of Information, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 23 May 2003, which stipulates that freedom of communication on the Internet should not violate human dignity, human rights and fundamental others. Therefore, according to them, the state may provide for reasonable legal restrictions against hate speech, violence and intolerance. The obligation not to leave media freedom to free flow in its daily degradation is the duty of the whole society¹⁶.

These are issues that are not always clear and therefore do not leave enough opportunity to judge objectively about attitudes that can be held. Because the boundaries of allegations of violations by the media or state organs are easily overcome, a cause for which there are few cases when journalists are threatened with defamation by politics, business or crime for their writings denouncing violations or illegal acts. In recent years, when these cases have been added, journalists and various media workers are involved in a move to decriminalize defamation. The aim is to avoid punitive consequences with the justification that the rise of charges violates the spirit of freedom and discourages their engagement.

They complain not only about allegations of libel but also about violence and threats. The aforementioned DASH Human Rights Report for 2018 mentions that in Albania “there have been numerous reports of violence and threats to journalists, as well as pressure on them for the sake of political and economic interests. In April, the Albanian Journalists Union expressed concern that during the first four months of the year 14 journalists were sued by judges and politicians. While in September (2018), the Union announced that 12 journalists had sought asylum in EU countries due to threats taken in Albania during work as journalists.” (DASH, 2019).

HANDLING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS

In order to ensure the right of expression and discipline of media freedom, special structures have been established and functioning in Albania. Such are the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP), etc.

Along with the use of the entire legal-normative arsenal, the local ones with which the above organs operate, would also positively influence the institutionalization of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Albania is a party to a number of not few institutions and international legal instruments dealing specifically with these issues.

Human rights, especially the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, are closely linked to the normal functioning of democracy and the principle of the separation of powers. Their respect also conditions democracy, i.e. the freedom of the people to formulate laws and control the

three powers. The link between human rights, the separation of powers and democracy is a condition for humanity, justice, freedom and dignity for every individual. The collapse of one of them could also cause the fall of two other elements (Kriele, 1980, p.42), could jeopardize the domestic order of states, because human rights are being violated and international peace and security are questioned (Frenz, 1988, p.21).

The aforementioned phenomena, in Albania, as a Balkan country, sometimes have pronounced hues in comparison with other countries. There are other motifs that are added to those of general character. It is about historical legacies, custom traditions, past or regional mentalities, specifics of cultural and educational formation, etc. They aggravate situations and increase the responsibilities of relevant state authorities, as well as intellectual, academic, civil society and public opinion in general, to find the fastest and best solutions. Events of this nature are also present in other countries, particularly in some of the countries of southeast Europe, which emerged from the communist system some 30 years ago (Weiss, 2018).

Activities to ensure freedom of expression and media freedom are also conditions that it must fulfill during the process of joining the EU. Brussels has made it clear to Albania that media freedom and speech as well as the guarantee of freedom of expression are important to the democratic standards required by it, as well as guaranteeing the right to free and fair trial, the right to ownership, the right to free and fair representation. Freedom of expression and media pluralism represent important values for the EU, which should be respected rigorously by the candidate countries, as is Albania. It is because the EU rightly considers power information, and media freedom as an irreplaceable factor to keep the economic and social development of society at a peek pace. Therefore, it has set as an imperative necessity for all actors, parliament, government, judiciary, media associations, journalists etc. to work together seriously to realize the right changes that can genuinely guarantee the freedom of media in Albania.

Despite the many difficulties currently faced by Albanian society, efforts are being made for encouraging results in the field of human rights and media freedom, which are expected to be further developed in the future, to provide Albanians with their country deserved in the European community.

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- ¹¹ The report states, among other things, that: There are reports that the government, business, and criminal groups have influenced the media in inappropriate ways. Media owners freely use the media to win favors and promote their interests in relation to political parties. Most private television owners use broadcasting programs to influence government decisions related to their other businesses. Political pressure, corruption, and lack of funding limited independent media and said journalists practiced self-censorship in order not to cause problems to their owners who use the media to benefit economically and politically. This phenomenon is also due to the fact that most journalists work without contracts and are insecure for the workplace. Precisely these financial and insecurity caused some journalists to rely more on

external sources of income by questioning their integrity. The economic crisis and the bad management model in the Albanian media have negatively affected the finances and the quality of content in the media ... *DASH: Politics, business and crime have caught the media in Albania – Exit.al*, March 14, 2019

¹² Currently there are over 800 officialized portals in Albania, but there are also many unregistered

¹³ This was also one of the conclusions presented in the Report of 7 Global Organizations in June 2019 entitled “Monitoring / Press freedom in Albania, deteriorating”. It says: “More and more, the prime minister uses ERTV, his online TV channel, as his personal communication portal with the public. During electoral campaigns such as the one currently happening, journalists are banned from covering campaign events and instead provided the materials they are prepared to use. The practice of imposing a government-controlled video source and other media content restricts journalists’ access to information and the ability to give the public an independent perspective on the actions of those in power. *Panorama Newspaper*, 21 June 2019

¹⁴ Following the preparations for the passage of the law in parliament, in early July 2019, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania approved the project for the formalization and regulation of online media activities, known as the “*anti-libel package*”. In this project it is foreseen that “each portal is obliged to ensure that the publications appear in a real, impartial and objective manner. Portals should take measures for not using publications for criminal purposes. Also, publications should not violate the dignity and fundamental human rights. In case of violation of any of the points provided by this package, the owners of the portals will be fined until the portal closes. „Media organizations inside and outside the country have asked Prime Minister Rama not to pursue this legal initiative, but the government has apparently decided to do so. Despite objections, the government approves the draft: How to Punish “Defamation” Online Media, Day, July 3, 2019..

¹⁵ *Albanian human rights organizations urge the government to withdraw online media laws, Tirana on December 27, 2018*

¹⁶ *Censura e medias, Liria e medias, Liria e Shtypit, – Rama: Media e pabesueshme, shkel dinjitetin e njerëzve nga mëngjesi në darkë*, in *Durreslajm.al*, 09-11-2017

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