



PRESS RELEASE

Statement by Media Freedom Representative Ribeiro & Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH Aggeler on threats to media by President of Republika Srpska Dodik

VIENNA/SARAJEVO, 16 August 2023 - OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, and Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Brian Aggeler are alarmed by the recent repeated, open and direct threats as well as accusations made by *Republika Srpska* (RS) President Milorad Dodik towards N1, Capital, BN, and Buka media outlets.

President Dodik's stated intention to file lawsuits against these media organizations for allegedly destabilizing RS and undermining his position in power, along with his claims of their allegedly receiving international funds for this purpose, are clearly aimed at suppressing and targeting journalists, silencing dissent and independent voices. This is particularly concerning given the recent move by Republika Srpska National Assembly that on 20 July [re-criminalised defamation in RS](#).

"Such extreme and inflammatory statements, in particular when made by political leaders, have the potential to create an atmosphere of hostility and even incite violence," said Ambassador Aggeler. "Past instances of similar rhetoric have led to attacks on journalists and human rights advocates by groups of hooligans with woefully insufficient reactions from law enforcement authorities failing to find and prosecute perpetrators, and protect citizens from violence," he added.

"I denounce the accusations against N1, Capital, Buka, and BN television journalists," Ribeiro said. The representative recalled the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council decision on the Safety of Journalists, adopted by consensus of all OSCE participating states, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this decision, they "urge political leaders, public officials, and authorities to refrain from intimidating, threatening, or condoning – and to unequivocally condemn – violence against journalists. This is in order to reduce the risks or threats that journalists may face and avoid undermining trust in the credibility of journalists, as well as respect for the importance of independent journalism."

The OSCE strongly condemns any form of violence or harassment against journalists and emphasizes the importance of safeguarding their safety and rights, including their physical safety, security of their premises and homes, and strategic lawsuits launched by public officials.

"We expect that the authorities within RS will uphold their responsibilities and ensure the protection of all RS citizens, including journalists, from the potential consequences of such inflammatory speech. A free and independent media is a cornerstone of any democratic society, and the OSCE underscores the importance of fostering an environment in which journalists and media organizations can operate

without fear of retribution,” Ribeiro and Aggeler concluded.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

<https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/549784>

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