

THE PRESS COUNCIL in BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

has organized conference

"MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE

Be Critical Towards Accusations, Hate Speech and Prejudices"

Mostar, Friday, 7th December, 2012

The Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina has successfully organized conference 'Mutual Understanding and Tolerance - Be Critical Towards Accusations, Hate Speech and Prejudices'. The meeting gathered respectable academics, representatives of religious, minority and LGBT communities as well as representatives of NGO sector, journalist and editors. This specific conference is part of the Council of Europe's project 'Promoting professionalism and Tolerance in the Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina', in regard to marking of the International Human Rights Day.

"Human rights in BiH are in catastrophic condition, worse than ones in Belarus", is something that could be heard during the conference. At the same time the conference emphasized the importance of such events was emphasized with an aim to resolve and overcome problems.

“It is very important to speak openly about these problems and, as we mentioned in the title, it is very important to be critical of prejudices, hate speech, discrimination, intolerance, violation of human rights, because situation is getting worse. Hate speech has become integral part of media and has become regular part of communication”, assessed **Ms Ljiljana Zurovac**, Executive Director of The Press Council in BiH.

Ms. Mary-Ann Hennessey, Head of the Council of Europe’s Office in Sarajevo emphasized that discrimination is expressed in each segments and levels of BiH society and authorities.

“One group of citizens in the Constitution of BiH is marked as the Others, which means that the society itself does not accept basic equality among citizens. This is not a problem only in ‘Sejdic-Finci’ case because ethnicity is not the only thing that defines human beings. We mean a lot more, we are men or women, gay or straight, religious or not, and none of these is recognized or protected by the system”, said Ms. Mary-Ann Hennessey.

The conference also discussed about understanding among religious communities in BH, respecting rights of minorities and LGBT communities, hate speech in media, and also about how to raise professional standards of reporting on minority, discriminated groups through the Press Code of BiH and online media.

“Hate speech is spreading in new shapes now, I would say, in masked ones, which then become news of the day, and media outlets are reaching such bombastic statements in race for circulation, rating and number of clicks on the Internet, and that is why we have what we have now”, said journalist and editor Faruk Kajtaz.

The conference also pointed at marginalized issues of minor groups, not only in the Constitutions and laws but also in general relations of society with them, as well as at huge gap between the human rights guaranteed by law and the real situation in obeying those rights.

“The Constitution does not even guarantee the equality to the constituent peoples, depending in which part of country person lives. In one moment we are majority, and as soon as we cross the border, we are minority”, said Ms. Senada Sabitovic Karic of the FBiH Ministry of Refugees and Displaced Persons..

Among the others, the conference was also addressed by Professor of Banja Luka Faculty of Philosophy and Chair of the Complaints Commission of the Press Council in BiH Miodrag Zivanovic, Ph.D., Psychologist and member of the Complaints Commission Nada Ler-Sofronic, Ph.D, Ms. Svetlana Broz of NGO Gariwo, Nazif Garib of Mostar Mufti Office, Abbot of convent of Zitomisici, archimandrite Danilo Pavlovic, friar Ivo Markovic of Saint Ante Church from Sarajevo and Mr. Pavle Kaunitz of Jewish community Sarajevo and other guests.