

High Representative and Steering Board Ambassadors warn against intimidation of the press

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the PIC Steering Board Ambassadors strongly condemn what appears to be an attempt by Federation Government authorities to use state instruments to intimidate a free press.

They worry that a current Government tax inspection of the Dnevni Avaz newspaper — now critical of the Government and which has uncovered a series of corruption scandals — could be aimed at intimidating the daily which has a wide circulation among Bosniaks.

Fundamental features of any free and open society include: (1) freedom of the press, (2) respect for the rule of law, and (3) full due process under that law.

We call on those authorities to take the following steps:

1. Immediately unblock all bank accounts of those organizations being targeted;
2. Immediately institute procedures that are transparent and equitable toward those being investigated;
3. If the authorities have abused their positions to pursue blatantly political ends, strong action should be taken, including possible criminal prosecution and removal;
4. Pledge to conduct such actions in a way which does not harm media freedom.

The International Community will continue to monitor the situation closely and will take appropriate action if necessary.