

OHR and OSCE condemn threats against journalists in Livno

The Office of the High Representative and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina express their deepest concern over an abusive leaflet that was distributed throughout Livno last week, insulting both the persons and the work of the editor-in-chief of the independent radio station 'Studio N', Frano Mioc, and one of its journalists, Zeljka Mihaljevic.

The pamphlet accuses the two journalists of being "miserable mercenaries" acting solely out of financial interest, "spitting and vomiting on everything that represents Croat legal authority in Livno."

The offensive pamphlet represents a continuation of the threats directed to obstruct the establishment of free and independent media in Canton 10. 'Studio N' is the only independent radio station in the Livno area, and is widely respected among journalists and citizens for its fair, balanced and accurate reporting. It has been the object of politically motivated pressures in the past, including the brutal beating of Mrs Mihaljevic's husband in March 1999 by unknown assailants. Like other media in politically hard-line areas, it must often stand alone against serious and persistent forms of intimidation and threat.

Free journalistic inquiry is one of the most important elements in the process of democratization of society, and this attempt of intimidation is an open attack by those political operatives that still call for the rule of fear, violence and secrecy.

In order for BiH to enter the European Community, it must show that it is committed to the protection of human rights, including journalists' rights. Those who deprive journalists

or citizens of the freedom of expression – whether acting as individuals or on behalf of political or governmental authorities – deprive BiH of its future as a democratic and prosperous nation.

The OHR and the OSCE Mission to BiH call upon the political leaders of Livno – the HDZ – to join us in condemning such acts to demonstrate their commitment to justice and reconciliation.

We also urge the Canton 10 authorities to undertake the necessary investigations to determine the origin of the leaflet.