Press Code

Preamble

This Code, drawn from existing European standards of journalistic practice, is intended as the foundation of system of self-regulation that shall be considered morally binding on reporters, editors and the owners and publishers of newspapers and periodicals. Journalists and editors shall respect generally accepted ethical principles and protect the professional integrity of journalism. In addition to this Code, laws and other regulations constitute the framework in which print media operate in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This Code includes the basic principles of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Independent Union of Professional Journalists of BiH, the Association of Journalists of BiH, the Independent Union of Journalists of Republika Srpska, the Association of Journalists of Republika Srpska and the Syndicate of Professional Journalists of Federation BiH and adhered to by the Association of Croat Journalists in BiH.

Article 1
General Provisions

Journalists and their publications have an obligation to the public to maintain high ethical standards at all times and under all circumstances. It is the duty of journalists and publishers to respect the needs of citizens for useful, timely and relevant information and to defend the principles of freedom of information and the right of fair comment and critical journalism.

The press in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall observe generally accepted community standards of civility and respect for the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The press is to protect the rights of the individual while at the same time upholding the right to know which is in the public interest. This Code is to be interpreted in light of both these considerations.

Article 2
Editorial Responsibility

It is the highest responsibility of reporters and editors to ensure in all their work a respect for factual truth and the right of the public to know the truth. Journalists shall at all times perform their work in a spirit of fairness, honesty and civility in gathering and reporting information and presenting opinion

Plagiarism, falsification, deliberate suppression of important fact and acceptance of bribes or favours to influence the work of a reporter or editor are the profession’s gravest moral offences.

Article 3
Incitement

The press shall at all times be aware of the danger that arises when media, deliberately or by inadvertence, encourages discrimination and intolerance. Mindful of this danger, the press shall do its utmost not to incite or inflame hatred or inequality on grounds of ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation or any physical or mental illness or disability.

The press shall under no circumstances incite criminal acts or violence.

Article 4
Discrimination

Newspapers and periodicals must avoid prejudicial or insulting references to a person’s ethnic group, nationality, race,

religion, gender or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.

References to a person’s ethnic group, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or physical or mental illness or disability shall be made only when directly relevant to the event being reported.

Article 5
Accuracy and Fair Reporting

Newspapers and periodicals shall take the utmost care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted material, whether in the form of pictures, texts or other materials. Pictures and documents must not be falsified or used in a misleading fashion, nor should publications suppress or withhold any essential information, the knowledge of which would materially affect the general reader’s understanding and interpretation of a published report.

Journalists and their publications have a professional obligation to promptly correct any published information that is found to be inaccurate. The apology and/or correction shall be published with due prominence.

A newspaper or periodical shall always report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been party.

Journalists shall report only on the basis of facts, the origin of which is known to the journalist.

In reporting and commenting on a controversy, newspapers and periodicals shall make an effort to hear and represent all sides of the conflict. If one side in a controversy refuses to make itself available to the journalist, the publication may legitimately note this refusal in its reporting.

Article 6
Comment, Conjecture and Fact

Newspapers and periodicals, while free to express their own views, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.

Article 7
Opportunity to Reply

A right of reply shall be extended to relevant persons if the publication concerned determines that fairness and impartiality merit such a step.There shall, if at all possible, be an opportunity for immediate response in the same edition of the publication as that containing the accusation.

Article 8
Misrepresentation

Journalists shall use only fair means to obtain news, documents or photographs. Misrepresenting one’s identity or intentions, or otherwise to use subterfuge to obtain information for publication, is unethical except in the most extreme circumstances, and in lawful form, when publication of information so obtained clearly would serve the public interest.

Journalists and photographers shall not obtain information or pictures through intimidation or harassment.

Article 9
Privacy

The press shall avoid intrusions and enquiries into an individual’s private life, unless such intrusions or enquiries are necessary due to the public interest.

Treatment of stories involving personal tragedy shall be handled sensitively, and the affected individuals shall be approached with sympathy and discretion.

Article 10
Persons Charged with Criminal Offences

Newspapers and periodicals shall not treat any individual as a criminal prior to a court sentence to that effect. Newspapers and periodicals have a duty not to prejudge the guilt of an accused person and to publish the dismissal of charges against, or the acquittal of, anyone about whom they had previously reported that charges had been filed or that a trial had commenced.

Article 11
Protection of Children and Minors

Journalists should not interview or photograph children under the age of 15 on matters involving the child's family in the absence of or without the consent of a parent or other adult responsible for the child.

Newspapers and periodicals must exercise caution and responsibility in identifying children under the age of 15 who are victims in criminal cases. Newspapers and periodicals must not, under any circumstances, identify children under the age of 15 who are involved in criminal cases as witnesses or defendants.

Article 12
Advertising and Sponsorship

Commercial and political advertisements and sponsored material (articles or supplements) must be distinguished from editorial content and clearly identified as what they are.

Sponsored material shall indicate prominently and clearly the source of sponsorship.

Article 13
Confidentiality of Sources

Whenever possible, journalists should rely on open, identified

sources of information. These are to be preferred to anonymous sources, whose honesty and accuracy cannot be gauged by the public.

Journalists and their publications, however, have an obligation to protect the identity of those who provide information in confidence, whether or not they explicitly request confidentiality.

Article 14
Copyright and Author's Rights

Publications may make reasonable brief use, with limited quotations, of material from another publication or holder of copyright without express permission to do so, so long as appropriate credit is give to the source.

Substantial use or reproduction of material protected by copyright requires specific permission from the holder of copyright, unless such permission is stated in the material.

Article 15
The Public Interest

Public interest in the meaning of this Code is to be defined as action and information intended to assist the public in making their own judgements and decisions about issues and events, including efforts to detect or expose crime or serious misdemeanour, and to prevent the public from being misled by some statement or action of an individual or organisation.

Article 16
Complaints

Every issue of each publication shall contain in an appropriate place the name, address, telephone, and if available, fax number and internet/e-mail address of the responsible publisher and editor to whom complaints can be addressed.

Editors and publishers shall ensure that all relevant staff is informed about this Code. Editors and publishers shall further ensure that the provisions of this Code are fully observed.

Complainants claiming violations of this Code shall address themselves to the publisher or editor responsible for the publication concerned.

This Code was adopted at a meeting in Sarajevo on 29 April 1999.

Independent Union of Professional Journalists	Association of Journalists of Republika Srpska
Association of Journalists of BiH	Syndicate of Professional Journalists of Federation BiH
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Office of the High Representative