

To the respected Members of the Council of Europe,

We are writing to bring to your attention the illegal activities and intimidation tactics being employed by the new management at the public broadcaster RTV Slovenia against specific journalists. This management was appointed based on new amendments to the RTV law, endorsed by the coalition led by the current Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, Robert Golob.

It is noteworthy that the current RTV management has been involved in harassment, persecution, bullying, and intimidation, using unlawful methods since the beginning of its mandate. Following the replacement of all key directors and editors appointed by the government of Robert Golob, the persecution extended to individual hosts and journalists, particularly in the news program of the 1st channel of TV Slovenia. Despite their unquestionable journalistic competence, these hosts were removed from leading specific shows under the pretext that the new acting editor-in-chief, Polona Fijavž, was forming her own team. Subsequently, they experienced covert harassment and underground demonization within the editorial team. This occurred in September 2023, marking a genuine personnel stampede, where individuals who did not align with the extreme left and the current authorities, or did not protest vehemently during the past right-wing government, were removed from their positions on public television.

In the pursuit of depoliticization, which, paradoxically, amounts to complete politicization, several key figures were removed, including the general director of RTV, director of TV, responsible editor of the news program, editor of internal politics, editor of foreign politics, editor of the daily news program, editor of the web portal, and hosts of daily news programs. The situation reached a point where one of the dismissed hosts had to seek urgent medical help due to the events and pressures (as reported in detail here: <https://www.slovenskenovice.si/bulvar/domaci-traci/drama-sredi-ljubljane-valentina-plaskan-se-je-zgrudila/>). Another host, who was subsequently replaced, also sought medical help a month before being removed (as reported here: <https://www.slovenskenovice.si/novice/slovenija/na-rtv-slovenija-se-nadaljujejo-kadrovske-zamenjave-razresili-se-nejca-krevsa/>). Additionally, programs critical of the current government were discontinued.

The personnel upheaval persisted with the public support and involvement of the Prime Minister. During an interview on October 25, 2023, on the show "Odmevi," Prime Minister Robert Golob conveyed to the host Tanja Starič: "We have all committed on RTV that we will cleanse it from Janšism, and I know that you know exactly what that means." (Prime Minister Robert Golob in "Odmevi," October 25, 2023; the transcript is available at: <https://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/golob-o-domnevem-vplivu-na-datum-aretacije-ruskih-vohunov-to-je-se-ena-od-halucinacij/686148>).

The management of RTV Slovenia issued directives to the employees of the "Panorama" show, which was not included in the program-production and financial plan for 2024, instructing them to work remotely from January 3 to January 31, 2024. Their entry into the building was prohibited (as reported here: <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/novinarji-ukinjene-panorame-ne-morejo-v-stavbo-rtv-sluzbene-kartice-ne-delujejo/> and <https://spletnicasopis.eu/2024/01/04/odgovornega-urednika-tvs-gerica-se-drugic-poslali-na-isto-cakanje/> and <https://www.zurnal24.si/slovenija/odgovornega-urednika-na-rtv-slovenija-poslali-na-cakanje-417142>).

It should be noted that the initially issued orders to the employees were unlawful, leading to the preparation of new ones. These employees, including the responsible editor, were placed on leave to work from home. It is publicly known that RTV Slovenia continues to hire new personnel, and it is evident that only "Panorama" journalists were placed on leave, despite the discontinuation of other shows with the new year. Furthermore, the RTV management prevented the editor and journalists of "Panorama" from entering the RTV Slovenia building. In this context, Marko Milenković, a journalist at TV Slovenia, expressed on the X network: "I worked at RTV for 1.5 years. In addition to the Economy section on Panorama, I had to do so many things that HR warned me not to do so much... With the new year, there is suddenly no more work for me; I was sent on leave to work at home.

Today, I can't even go to my work place to get my things."

(https://x.com/marko_mile/status/1742853539817230362?s=46&t=K9WiEGCGfTVyqTojLLFo-g)

The management of RTV Slovenia, along with the board, is also targeting foreign correspondents with various maneuvers, unjustifiably terminating previously agreed employment contracts, as evident from public posts by those involved (<https://www.slovenskenovice.si/bulvar/domaci-traci/te-novinarke-rtv-slovenija-ne-boste-vec-videli-in-slisali-gre-za-mascevanje/>, December 28, 2023). In response to the termination of the cooperation agreement, Nina Kojima, RTVSLO correspondent from London, stated on the X network: "No money at RTV? Ksenija Horvat, my colleagues from RTV told me in the last few hours that your partner Janez Lombergar, besides receiving a pension, also receives a substantial fee, as he apparently actively helps you with purges? You won't answer my email; maybe you'll answer here?" (<https://twitter.com/NinaKojimaUK/status/1741078102636195914>, 30.12.2023)

We believe that all the mentioned actions seriously violate media freedom and media pluralism in the Slovenian space. The personnel purges at the public broadcaster RTV Slovenia, funded by all taxpayers, are a consequence of the revengeful actions of the new management against journalists who arrived or advanced during the previous administration. The new management cannot accuse these journalists and editors of poor performance or incompetence, as they include individuals with long-standing journalistic and professional careers, as well as experts in the Slovenian media landscape.

Respected members of the Council of Europe,

we are convinced that the European Council (European journalists' associations) should respond to the events in Slovenia and demand answers from the Slovenian authorities. We urge you to support journalists and editors who are publicly harassed and bullied at RTV Slovenia, some to the extent of seeking medical help. It is crucial to protect journalists and editors in carrying out their profession without political pressure, threats, and illegal actions by their employer. Slovenia is facing serious challenges regarding the erosion of media freedom and democracy.

Respecting journalists' freedom is crucial for the proper functioning of a modern democratic society. Public broadcasting is particularly significant as a primary platform for citizens to acquire information and shape their opinions. In a democracy, it is vital for journalists to operate independently, free from political interference, as this is the only way to ensure objective reporting and represent diverse perspectives within society. Safeguarding the independence of journalists in public broadcasting is essential to prevent political influence on media content, guaranteeing that citizens receive high-quality, balanced, and diverse information. Therefore, it is imperative to prevent the dismissal of journalists for political reasons, as this is the sole means of preserving the integrity of the journalistic profession and reinforcing the foundations of a free and open society.

With respect,

Dr. Milan Zver

Member of the European Parliament

Dr. Matevž Tomšič

President of the Association of Journalists and Publicists

Jože Biščak

President of the Slovenian Association of Patriotic Journalists

Attachment: Relevant media reports

- <https://www.slovenskenovice.si/bulvar/domaci-traci/drama-sredi-ljubljane-valentina-plaskan-se-je-zgrudila/>
- <https://www.slovenskenovice.si/novice/slovenija/izpoved-umaknjene-voditeljice-valentine-plaskan-njena-resnica-o-dogajanju-na-rtv-slovenija/>
- <https://nova24tv.si/izpostavljeno/rajko-geric-zadeve-na-rtv-je-v-svoje-roke-vzela-trda-levica/>
- <https://www.slovenskenovice.si/novice/slovenija/na-rtv-slovenija-se-nadaljujejo-kadrovske-zamenjave-razresili-se-nejca-krevsa/>
- <https://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/golob-o-domnevnem-vplivu-na-datum-aretacije-ruskih-vohunov-to-je-se-ena-od-halucinacij/686148>
- https://twitter.com/Marko_mile/status/1742853539817230362 , 4.1.2024
- <https://www.slovenskenovice.si/bulvar/domaci-traci/te-novinarke-rtv-slovenija-ne-boste-vec-videli-in-slisali-gre-za-mascevanje/>
- <https://twitter.com/NinaKojimaUK/status/1741078102636195914> , 30.12.2023
- <https://nova24tv.si/slovenija/mediji/na-rtv-slovenija-se-dogajajo-stalinisticne-cistke-novinarjem-ne-pustijo-niti-do-svojih-osebnih-stvari/>
- https://www.domovina.je/depolitizirani-petnajsterici-onemogocen-vstop-na-rtv-stalinisticne-metode-zoper-dolocene-novinarje-se-stopnjujejo-pravi-odgovorni-urednik?open_comments=1
- <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/novinarji-ukinjene-panorame-ne-morejo-v-stavbo-rtv-sluzbene-kartice-ne-delujejo/>
- <https://spletnicasopis.eu/2024/01/04/odgovornega-urednika-tvs-gerica-se-drugic-poslali-na-isto-cakanje/>
- <https://www.zurnal24.si/slovenija/odgovornega-urednika-na-rtv-slovenija-poslali-na-cakanje-417142>