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COMMISSION FOR INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS MUST BE FORMED

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) is urging Prosecutor's Office to focus on the issue of the responsibility of journalist who, during the 90s, zealously promoted hate speech, which had a significant influence on the form and engagement of Montenegro in the war events at the territory of former SFRY in this period.

CCE believes that, in addition to ongoing court cases related to the processing of war crimes, for the sake of genuine process of facing with past, the work of journalists who were through their reporting encouraging those crimes should be examine. The fact that many of them still hold key positions in the media sector and that they never have been taken responsible for the consequences of their "reporting" is devastating.

A few apologies on the highest political levels were useful but insufficient answers to the victims, and this process requires specific measures which are including investigation of the role of journalists.

At that time certain media had monopolistic position. Journalists who built their careers on inquiring prisoners, fabrication of the news or pre-ordered articles and pieces were aware of that but put their work and their media in service of the war machinery and consequently they have to be take responsibility for that. Through their work, instead of providing objective news coverage, they supported war campaigns, national intolerance, creating a social climate and atmosphere of self endangerment. Their media addresses were in conflict with the journalistic and professional ethics, as well as with the principles of objectivity. The epilogue of such reports we had directly in the war areas, but also on a long-term basis because significant part of Montenegro, which relied on these media as a primary source of information, was kept in the dark. The consequences of that we see today through the slow path of the process of facing with the past.

CGO considers that the institutions of Montenegro should form a commission that will deal with the analysis of the work of journalists during the 90s marked with war. This has been already done in some neighboring countries by opening investigations against the journalists who were suspected for advocating for war and war crimes and there is no reason why Montenegro wouldn't do the same.

Freedom of thought and words are necessary conditions of democratic development and media can make a valuable contribution in democratization of society when they base their on facts. Montenegro is and will be for some time far from a functional democratic society, and cleaning of the media sector from those who carry this burden of the past would certainly accelerate the process of democratization.

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