



General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 February 2015

English only

Human Rights Council

Twenty-eighth session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Institut international pour la paix, la justice et les droits de l'Homme- IIPJDH, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.


[16 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-03541 (E)



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Demand of the European Public Television as a Guarantor of Democracy

Public television in the European Union is suffering one of the worst crisis since World War II and this situation can have terrible consequences in what has for the most part been a largely democratic system.

The Global Network for Rights and Development (GNRD) denounces the increasing weakening of the freedom of speech in this area where rights were not violated this way before.

For the first time in the history of European democracies two broadcasting companies have been closed by the governments: in Greece and in the Valencian Community, in Spain. In the first case, the government closed the company without parliamentary consultation and in the second case, the government of the Valencian Community changed one of the fundamental laws of the constitution. In both cases, claims and demands of the politic opposition and of the population have been ignored. After the electoral Syriza's victory in Greece, the reopening of the public channel has been announced, but it has still not been carried out.

Both governments have tried to justify their unilateral decisions by arguing that the economic crisis has affected their national territories and they cannot afford to maintain all the public employees. The truth is that Greece has created a new channel financed with public funds and just a few journalists have been selected to work there, after firing thousands of professionals that had acquired their jobs by a state examination. This examination was supposed to be a guarantee to secure employment based on equal opportunities. The Valencian government has announced the same action; trying to get another television channel also financed by budgets from governmental institutions coordinated by the political party in power.

This situation means that eleven million Greeks and five million Valencians are the only EU populations that do not have recognized public television services in their own languages. This fact is a clear violation of the right to freedom of speech that is reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Both Greece and the Valencian Community have the same right as the rest of the European Union: to have a public broadcasting service and to protect against abuse of power.

The preservation of an independent public television is key to form a pluralistic media landscape in all societies, and for that goal the governments must provide enough resources and protective laws against political influence. It is very important to be aware that the public broadcasting policies define the level of democracy in our societies.

The closures of the EPT in Greece and RTVV in Valencia is not only a problem for the thousands of media workers who have become unemployed, but it is also a threat to the media pluralism in these countries.

This situation is happening at a moment where communication and dissemination of information through social media is expanding. This is creating closed social and cultural communities that create systems of exclusion: inside Facebook, for example, people only socialize with similar minded people. On the contrary, the public media service creates discourse for unifying societies, spreading the values of equality and justice.

Private media's aim is profits, no matter if they are economic or ideological. As they belong to individual owners, their interests are also individual, and even if it is possible to demand some type of compliance with certain laws, these are not always effective techniques to impose. As they have a business mentality, their perspective is focused on benefits. This, logically, ignores the crucial role that collective media plays in our society, which is

creating a common narrative, spreading values and ideas that contribute to social stability. For example, the concepts of social equality and justice, under the wing of current societies, which are very competitive, are not included in the DNA of all human beings. Economic, social and cultural events increase the creation of unacceptable behaviour, such as male chauvinism, racism, xenophobia or homophobia, among certain fields. The spread and promotion of an equal and fair society is not a training action that provides real financial benefits, but it is undoubtedly essential for the achievement of social justice; where the fight against inequality, the respect for the stranger, the love for all living beings, and the respect for nature, as the grassroots of the inalienable defense of human rights, are powerful. All this, which allows the sustainability of a democratic society, means that the private media cannot take a huge amount of values and ideologies automatically, therefore, now more than ever, in the background of a digital plurality of content dissemination, the defense of the public communication media is imperative. Those are the ones which have the ability to construct and cement social stability; to gather us all together for the compliance of certain common laws in order to live in peace and harmony. All the elements that are not measurable, or quantifiable are the ones that constitute the invisible but indispensable benefits for a 21st century society. It is important to remember all this, because the economic crisis, which is tearing apart some European Union countries, has managed to create a political and social atmosphere in which some sectors plead for the disappearance of the public media system by defending the idea that the investment in this field is a waste of money.

Elsewhere in Europe, the crisis and the following cuts in journalistic companies, both public and private, is promoting, among some journalists, self-censorship behaviour. In almost all countries, certain journalists are witnessing a deterioration in their labour rights and working conditions. In this way, the quality of European journalism is suffering the consequences, and this is resulting in a loss of confidence by the audience. If there is some political and social intention to save European democracies, an action must be taken to recover public mass media with healthy control institutions, in which selection criteria of posts are justified, not only by the responsibility criteria, but also authority and organization of the civil society criteria.

All the important professional institutions of journalists are compromised to safeguard public broadcasters.

The European Convention on Human Rights is very clear about the defence of the freedom of expression. Everyone has the right, which shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive impartial information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article is directly linked to political freedom and a solid public broadcasting system. There are values in our societies that must be preserved in order to keep the justice and order.

In Europe, public broadcasting systems have been essential in political projects in order to achieve social cohesion and cultural transmission. Public television broadcasters were a symbol in so many countries and they play a crucial role in the political process, like Spain's Transition. But in a paradoxical way, most of the public channels have suffered cuts since 2010. Besides the two censorships mentioned before, there are several European professionals in public television, which live their lives on announced plans by some governments, which try to reduce the number of employees. In countries such as Portugal, Spain and France, there are very strict financial constraints to elaborate plans in this field, and there are even plans of privatisation.

Without public media, there is no democracy. Let us regain our voices and reclaim the common voice. Greeks and Valencians seek to have their rights restored.