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Zagreb, 22/01/2015

**Statement no. 2/2015
on the summary dismissal of Karolina Vidović Krišto and the responsibility of the
Director in Chief Goran Radman for the situation at HRT**

The executive committee of the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (EC CHCHR) joins the initiative of the Member of the Croatian Parliament Branko Hrga to include in the agenda of the 16th Session of Parliament a vote on the dismissal of Goran Radman from his position as Director in Chief of HRT.

The EC CHCHR recalls once more that it has on several occasions pointed out the poor quality, unacceptable and unreasonable solutions in the current Act on Croatian Radio and Television.

In Statement no. 7/2012 on HRT the CHC warned that the authorities, by installing a new model of management of HRT were "supporting" HRT. Rather than that institution becoming stronger as a public information service for citizens, by introducing direct elections for the Director in Chief in Parliament, HRT became a service of the governing political structure. This, the 11th Act on HRT, is known in journalistic circles, ironically as Lex Lukashenko.

The consequences of adopting this Act are even more serious, since by it the civil society and the values it represents in contemporary democratic societies, have been suspended at HRT.

In Statement no. 9/2013 on the situation in HRT and the "Radman case", we pointed out that bringing Mr. Radman to the head of HRT was a project of President Josipović, whereby HRT was placed in the function of his political concept of "red Croatia." We were all able to witness the power of the manipulation force of that concept by following the recently ended election campaign.

The CHC in its statement then expressed its reservations regarding the election of Radman, warning that the very fact that in a multi-party democratic society a person has been elected to the position of Director in Chief of HRT, who in the 1990's held a high ranking function in the communist party system, and as such was appointed as the head of what was then Zagreb Television, represents a form of negation of the historical truth about the totalitarian communist regime of that time" (web: www.hho.hr)

The truth of this statement is also shown by Radman's statement of 12 January 2013, when he, presenting his "revolutionary programme" revealed its content, announcing, "a return to the future and a return of the level of enthusiasm which reigned (on Zagreb Television) in the 70's". For those with poor memories, those were the bleak years of post-Karadjordjević repression and purges in the media, especially the informative television programme, but also in other media, known as the 20-year period of "Croatian silence".

All this tells us that Karolina Vidović Krišto was right when she alleged that the Code of Ethics for journalists and creative staff and the General Rules were in violation of the Constitution of the RC and international standards of human rights, which also include the right to freedom of speech, opinion and religion.

In an internal e-mail debate, which took place at her initiative within HRT, about the Code of Ethics and the General Rules, she expressed her opinion and the reasons why she did not agree with those documents. On that occasion she also expressed

the opinion that Mr. Radman should not hold the function of Director in Chief of HRT, explaining her opinion in the following arguments:

"In view of the fact that the Director in Chief of HRT (Mr. Radman) acquired his experience and concept of a state, but also the national media in a regime which was condemned as totalitarian, both by the Parliament of the RC and by the European Union, of which the RC is a member, in fact this cannot be held against him. In fact, it is understandable that he is in fact not able to understand democracy, democratic mores, the freedom of man and human rights, because the former totalitarian SFRY, in which he was the head of the then RTV Zagreb, amongst other things, was not a signatory of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I believe that this should be understood and not condemned at all, because in a totalitarian regime it simply is not possible to learn or understand human freedoms and rights. However, it is up to us, in line with the current democratic mores, human rights which are imperative and contained in all agreements and charters with the EU, to help the Director in Chief to free himself from this but also all other public functions, which he, for the understandable reasons explained above, is not able to discharge."

It sounds shocking but it is true that on 5 January 2015 the Director in Chief of HRT Goran Radman summarily dismissed Karolina Vidović Krišto with the explanation that she had insulted and demeaned him, because in her message she links "the name of the Director in Chief with the former totalitarian SFRY and his management of what was then RTV Zagreb." O tempora, o mores! (Oh what times, oh what customs!)

The dismissal was preceded by an internal debate conducted due to the fact that the then editor of the Informative Media Service, Špoljar, on 30 August 2014, banned Vidović Krišto from appearing on a programme of Croatian Catholic Radio entitled "Why I Believe". He alleged, pursuant to Article 3, point 3.5 of the General Rules of HRT and Article 15 of the Code of Ethics of HRT that employees, journalists and creative staff of HRT must not express "political, world-view, economic, religious or any other affiliation or tendency which could objectively create an impression of their lack of independence or objectivity" and that pursuant to Article 47 of the Code of Ethics of HRT, "Journalists and creative staff must be aware of the fact that everything they do, write or send to the public will be deemed to be an act of HRT."

Radman was included in the debate from the beginning, along with about 20 journalists and other employees of HRT, and all they, except Radman, believe that this Code of Ethics is unacceptable and that it is in violation of Articles 14, 16, 17, 20, 38 and 40 of the Constitution of the RC. One of them wrote: "Therefore, not only our religious convictions, but everything we do in public, all our free-time activities presented in the public, are deemed to be acts of HRT, although they are not presented in the name of HRT but in our own name. Indeed, this gives the impression that we are someone's property." All those present agreed that these positions taken in the Code of Ethics and the General Rules are a violation of fundamental human rights and the Constitution of the RC, and that in fact, "they deprive journalists of elements of their creativity and character."

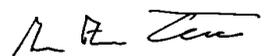
Radman's decision to punish the employee Vidović Krišto for expressing her opinion, or a verbal offence, committed in an internal debate, was opposed by the coordinating body of all the HRT unions, seeking the withdrawal of the summary dismissal by the Director in Chief.

The statement by the branch of the HND (the Croatian Journalists' Association) at HRT should be pointed out in particular, which was signed by Elizabeta Gojan, and which states: "The HND HRT demands that the employer immediately withdraw the decision to terminate, return Karolina Vidović Krišto to her position, and if he still believes some form of sanction is necessary, that this should be a lesser, reasonable penalty, such as a caution."

We wonder what that "lesser and reasonable penalty" is, for a thought crime, since under international standards, the Croatian Constitution and laws, it is not permitted to punish someone for their opinion. We are taken by surprise by this attitude and these arguments expressed by the HND of HRT, and we point out that at the time of an obvious violation of the human rights of a journalist, the head of the HND remains silent.

In line with the above, the CHC has appointed the attorney Neven Zelić, a member of the Executive Committee of the CHC, to represent Mrs. Vidović Krišto in the further proceedings, *pro bono*.

We expect the Croatian Parliament to accept the initiative for a debate on the responsibility of the Director in Chief of HRT, Mr. Radman, and propose that the Croatian Parliament should call him and Mrs. Vidović Krišto to a discussion before the Committee for Human Rights, Information, Informatization and the Media. Representatives of the CHC would be glad to attend that discussion.



Ivan Zvonimir Čičak
President