

Prime Minister Mr. Milo
Djukanovic

Minister of Internal Affairs and
Public Administration Mr. Ivan
Brajović

Stockholm June 30, 2010

Dear Prime Minister Mr. Djukanovic,

On behalf of Civil Rights Defenders I would like to express my deep concern about the latest police interrogations of human rights defenders in Montenegro, which I believe represent pressure against those who express critical opinions about the fight against corruption and organised crime in Montenegro.

On June 25 the police in connection to a video posted anonymously on You Tube earlier that month interrogated the Deputy Executive Director of the organisation MANS, Mr. Veselin Bajceta, and the journalist of TV "Vijesti" and weekly "Monitor", Mr. Petar Komnenic. The video revealed facts and pictures that connect specific persons to serious acts of organised crime and corruption. MANS has repeatedly requested the Intelligence Agency and the Prosecution to investigate whether the video is genuine. After a period of time the Prosecution and the Police decided to conduct investigation on who posted the video at You Tube, instead of investigating whether the facts revealed were true. In reference to that investigation the two civil society activists were brought in to the police station for interrogation, although apparently there was no legal basis for this action.

The same day the daily "Pobjeda" publishes allegations by the Director of the Police, Veselin Veljović, that some media and NGOs are "improvising, misrepresenting and manufacturing facts about organized crime and police actions". Similar statements have been made on several occasions before by Mr. Veljović, who has accused NGOs for acting as foreign spies as well as stating that the management of the Police "registered some NGOs to be working against interests of the state and its citizens".

Civil Rights Defenders assess that the interrogation and the statements published in media by the Director of the Police is aimed at putting pressure on Mr. Bajceta and Mr. Komnenic due to their human rights work. Such actions contribute to an atmosphere of persecution and failure to react creates a hostile atmosphere in which human rights defenders can be attacked without consequences.

Freedom of expression and unobstructed work of human rights defenders and organisations are some of the basic preconditions for any democratic society. The failure to protect these rights and freedoms in a proper way is in clear breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, to which Montenegro is a state party. It is also in contradiction with the Montenegrin constitution.

I kindly urge you to exercise your authority and to use all mechanisms available to ensure that Mr. Bajceta and Mr. Komnenic, as well as other human rights defenders in Montenegro are able to continue their important work without interference from the Montenegrin government and its authorities.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Hårdh
Executive Director