

SEEMO/IPI condemns death threats against Serbian TV journalist Brankica Stankovic and her team

Vienna, 9 December 2009 Brankica Stankovic and her team of investigative reporters, who work for the B92 TV programme, "Insajder" ("Insider"), have received several death threats after the latest edition of the programme was broadcast on 3 December 2009. The threats came just after SEEMO concluded a three-day Press Freedom Mission to Serbia from 1-3 December 2009, during which Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacic told the SEEMO delegation that he was committed to protecting journalists from both verbal and physical aggression.

The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), strongly condemns the serious and repeated threats made against Brankica Stankovic and her team, who have now been threatened with death for their reporting on the activities of the leaders of extremist soccer fan clubs.

Brankica Stankovic is the winner of the "Dr. Erhard Busek SEEMO Award for Better Understanding 2008." Her outstanding journalism work has contributed toward better understanding and the removal of barriers between nations in South Eastern Europe. In the course of her work, she has introduced new and improved standards of professionalism to Serbian journalism and has addressed in her TV programme important issues that have been either concealed or sidelined by Serbian authorities. "Insider" has attracted much attention and, as a consequence, the authorities have often resorted to launching investigations, pressing charges and issuing warrants against members of the programme's team. Even political leaders have felt it necessary to comment on allegations made in her programme.

SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic said, *"SEEMO welcomes promises made by Serbian President Boris Tadic and Interior Minister Ivica Dacic that Serbia will do everything possible to protect its journalists. Nevertheless, we call on the state authorities to take extra precautions and measures to protect the Serbian media, in particular investigative journalists who play a crucial role in a democratic society."*

Vujovic continued, *"SEEMO also urges the authorities to thoroughly investigate the serious threats made against Brankica Stankovic and her team of reporters, in particular those threats made via the Internet, which have the potential to reach an enormous audience worldwide. It is extremely important that the authorities do everything in their power to bring to justice the people behind these threats."*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) is a regional media organisation, and a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, new media and news agencies from South East and Central Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI). SEEMO is active, according to the geographical position in Europe, in: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Republic of Macedonia / FYROM, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.

SEEMO publications are: SEEMO South East and Central Europe Media Handbook (annual publication since 2003, latest edition published in 2008), deScripto Magazine (quarterly publication), Investigative Reporting Handbook and Media and Minorities in SEE.