

OPEN LETTER TO EU INSTITUTIONS:

Freedom of the Press in Slovenia.

The Slovenian World Congress (SWC) is a non-partisan organization that attempts to unite Slovenians at home and abroad. Our mission is to maintain contact with Slovenians abroad and actively support the exchange of experiences in the field of democracy, economy, technical sciences, medicine and culture. The SWC is well acquainted with the political situation in Slovenia and with the situations in countries abroad where half a million of Slovenians live. This perspective allows the SWC to hold an objective view of political events in Slovenia and to compare and contrast it with others around the world.

In the light of our mission, we cannot remain passive in the face of the current biased media campaign that harm Slovenia's reputation at home and abroad. Some well-known and biased journalists are currently taking advantage of the fact that those outside the country can not afford to follow closely political events in Slovenia and could form a distorted view of what is really happening. Unfortunately, these false views about Slovenia have found their way to members of the EU Commission and to groups within the EU Parliament.

It is necessary to understand that the current dispute over the 'freedom of press' in Slovenia is primarily a consequence of a recent change of the government. Nowhere in Slovenia is it possible to find today anything that could be perceived as an attack on the freedom of our media by our current government. However, this is exactly what some opposition politicians and members of the mainstream media are attempting to demonstrate beyond Slovenia.

The SWC wants to prevent the EU from blindly accepting the opinions and statements of extremist journalists, who are sending and publishing their false articles and reports on the presumptive lack of journalistic freedom in Slovenia. We would like to point out the fact that during the tenure of this government, the only physical attacks on journalists, were carried out by demonstrators during the shutdown to prevent further spreading of the corona virus. Such measures have been put into place by all responsible governments around the globe to protect its citizens and not to prevent freedom of the press.

The Slovenian World Congress hopes to shed some light on the real situation with perspective of the media and democracy in Slovenia. After 10 years of government from center-left parties a new center-right government was formed. This new government is receiving much biased reporting from all media that have roots in center-left thinking.

Slovenians have witnessed overt media support for antigovernment demonstrations on several occasions. These malicious attacks have gone to the extreme of calling for the assassination of the Prime Minister. This type of barbarian media reports are not the Slovenian way nor do they represent the thinking of most Slovenians around the world.

These views are perpetuated by the two dominant TV companies who control most of the public's attention. Both are biased in news programs, including public TV. The Prime Minister had to go through lengthy negotiations to get a broadcast in order to communicate vital

information to our people regarding the current corona pandemic. This disregard for vital information, from the Prime Minister, is in direct contrast to the duty of public broadcasting. Their duty is to broadcast in an impartial and balanced manner without prejudice to whatever political party is in power.

The same applies to the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) that according to its statute is also obliged to report to the public in an unbiased view and truthful manner. Both public media houses have become a propaganda tool of the current opposition in Slovenia.

They condemn any criticism by the current government as an attack on journalistic freedom. This unfortunate action sends the wrong message to those outside the country.

The appropriate task of the media is to report on events objectively and impartially, to which they are bound by their professional codes. Therefore, it is unacceptable for false accusations to be leaked to foreign media stating that the current government in Slovenia is endangering journalists, freedom of speech, and introducing censorship. This is simply not true and can be verified by any EU citizen who understands the Slovenian language.

That is why the Prime Minister invited the EU institutions to come to Slovenia and verify the facts about the freedom of media. We, at the SWC, hope that this will happen as soon as possible and that the media boards of the EU will come and see the truth of our government's actions.

Finally, the Slovenian World Congress members trust that this public statement will clarify the actual versus perceived situation of freedom of the press in Slovenia as our international reputation is important to all people in Slovenia and around the world.



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