TAJIK JOURNALISTS DO NOT WANT TO BE IMPOSED AN ETHIC PROFESSIONAL CODE

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Reproach of lack of professionalism of Tajik journalists is frequently heard. In order to improve the situation, great expectations are laid on the Ethical Code of Journalists currently in a process of elaboration.

In the opinion of local experts the Code, first of all, should include minimum standards for the journalists professional activities. So a journalist should be exact and impartial while distributing information; he should protect the freedom of speech, struggle against any form of attempts to prevent its development, respect the honour and dignity of a person, and take care of the journalists trade's prestige. During the first years of independence, just after the USSR collapsed, articles began to appear on newspaper pages sowing seeds of national and religious discord. The newspapers published threats and settled off old disputes. Journalists became instruments in the hands of confrontational political groups.

VIOLENCE IN THE PRESS

Mr. Yuri Kazakov, an expert of the Russian National Institute of Press, thinks that with the creation of mass media and the competition it brought among publications the newspapers started publishing articles injuring the human consciousness. Pictures of decapitated corpses, faces of victims distorted by pain, as well as victims of various kinds of violence were widely published. The lack of journalistic skills displayed by the authors of the articles, especially on criminal subjects, was obvious. The style of the articles supposedly intended as prevention of the law violations was more like pornography. In addition, journalists of respectable republican publications started publicly sorting out their relationships on the newspaper pages. It was quite a new phenomenon in Tajikistan.

JOURNALISTS' OPINION

The idea of an ethical code creation in Tajikistan is not new. As far as two years ago the Union of Journalists of Tajikistan attempted to elaborate the Code. "It was rather an equivalent of the Hungarian Code of Journalists, the two codes were like a younger and an older brother," said Mr. Nuriddin Karshiboev, Chairman of the National Association of Independent Mass Media of Tajikistan (NANSMIT). The Code was published for discussion. However, no further actions have been undertaken. Today, journalists treat the problem more seriously. A working group has been created that includes representatives of the associations of journalists, together with experts and lawyers to elaborate the draft Code. The NANSMIT holds seminars to discuss the draft code. All recommendations and proposals arriving from various newspapers and journalists are taken into account.

What do journalists want to see in the new ethical Code? The opinions converge into one: the Code should correspond to the mentality of Tajik journalists. So, the Chairman of the Association of Journalists of Tajikistan "The Social Partnership," Mr. Kironshoh Sharifzoda, believes the Ethical Code should account for traditions, with the moral and ethical values of the East. In the opinion of the Deputy Chief Editor of the republican newspaper *Djumkhuriat*, Mr. Dododjon Ruziev, the Code should not publish any reprints from the foreign press that are not in line with national traditions. According to the Dushanbe Media-Centre experts, the draft should include a protective clause against the intrusion into privacy, as well as clauses forbidding abuses in the publications advertising activity. After completion the draft Ethical Code will be published for wider discussion. After that, as the Chairman of the Union of Journalists of Tajikistan, Mr. Khaet Davlatov, announced, a forum of journalists of the country will be convoked to adopt the Code. It will be a joint action of the Union and the NANSMIT, with representatives of all regions of the republic invited together with the official and the independent press.

JOURNALISTS RESPONSIBLE

Mr. Khironshoh Sharifzoda thinks that both the associations of journalists and individual journalists should participate in the elaboration of the Code. However, a *Narodnaya Gazeta* correspondent, Mr. Vladimir Galaktionov was

rather emotional and resolute: "If the Code will be sent from above," he said, "I shall never even open it. The opinions of ordinary journalists should be taken into consideration!" An employee of the state agency *Khovar*, who wished to remain anonymous, was sure that "it won't be easy for official press workers to withstand the demands of their authorities. They will execute any instructions of the management rather than follow the Code from fear of losing their jobs. Hence, the Code is useless." However, an independent journalist, Mr. Abdufattokh Vohidov, is optimistic: "Here, in the East, the ethical standards are traditionally paid much attention. I'm sure such a document should work and journalists should follow its provisions. It will promote and enhance the level of journalism." Professor Ibrohim Usmonov, Chairman of the Committee for International Affairs, Public Associations and Information of the Lower Chamber of the Tajik Parliament (Madjlisi Oli), agrees with him. He believes the new Code will become an internal regulator of the journalists trade. Mr. Nuriddin Karshiboev is sure that: "We, journalists, should understand that nobody will make our journalism better, except for the journalists themselves. Therefore, the elaboration and the observance of the ethical Code are an important step in the improvement of Tajik journalism quality. We shall take this step."