

MFRR partners to carry out **media freedom mission** to Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Partner organisations of the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), including Free Press Unlimited, will travel to Banja Luka and Sarajevo from 22 to 25 October 2023 to assess the current state of play for media freedom in the country and start a dialogue with the authorities, less than a year after the European Union decided to grant Bosnia and Herzegovina candidate status.

The delegation will consist of representatives of the MFRR partners, including ARTICLE 19 Europe, the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT). A representative of the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) will also join the mission, as well as our local partner, the journalists' association BH Novinari.

During the visit, the delegation will meet media professionals, officials, international organisations, civil society organisations and lawyers. The mission will focus on the worrying legislations discussed or adopted recently: in Republika Srpska, one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regarding the recriminalisation of defamation; the draft law on Public Order and Peace in the Sarajevo Canton; and the law on Freedom of Access to Information in the Federation. The safety of journalists, the verbal attacks from public officials and the lack of investigation into some cases will also be addressed with the authorities.

On 25 October, the delegation will hold a press conference in Sarajevo to present preliminary findings and recommendations. A detailed mission report will be published later in autumn.

Free Press Unlimited's Albana Shala: "I am honored to be part of this mission on behalf of Free Press Unlimited, recognizing that media freedom and journalists' safety are at stake in Bosnia Herzegovina, and dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders should aim at improving the situation."

This mission is coordinated by the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), a Europe-wide mechanism which tracks, monitors and responds to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and candidate countries.

For more information about the mission, please contact Albana Shala (shala@freepressunlimited.org).

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