

## Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia

Established on March 26, 1994 as a non-party and professional organization. Major objectives: free journalism and media pluralism; promotion of professional and ethic standards; protection of journalists' (media professionals') rights and interests, trade union and legal protection included; promotion of mutual cooperation between journalists and journalist organizations at home and abroad.

The Association was set up by a large group of professional journalists, primarily those left jobless because of political purges and repression by Serbian authorities.

At the end of 1999, the Association numbers 1,100 members. Most are freelancers.

In cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists, the Association provides legal assistance to journalists free of charge, in the cases of the regime's repression and in the domains of labor and professional rights. A Solidarity Fund has been established to financially assist the members in need.

Around 70 percent of the IJAS membership have academic degrees and longstanding experience in journalism. Actually, the IJAS is a large labor exchange for the best journalists out of work. Therefore, the IJAS launched the Journalist Workshop Project aimed at educating journalists, from beginners to editors, and drawing a clear distinction between professionalism and propaganda. Together with Press Now, in 1997-98 the Association organized three courses that included around 100 journalists. The IJAS Workshop also cooperates with the Westminster Foundation, which provided a radio editing equipment, and the European Union, which gave TV equipment.

The IJAS intends to strengthen ties with journalists in Serbia, which will be based on professionalism and independence. Over past years, the Association has tried to protect individuals and media from the regime's repression, either by providing legal assistance or animating domestic and foreign publics.

Commensurate with its power, the Association has been attempting to influence media related legislation.

After the extremely restrictive Serbian Public Information Law was passed in October 1988, the Association convened an extraordinary assembly and initiated the law's annulment with the constitutional courts of Serbia and Yugoslavia.

The IJAS funds are based on donations and partially on membership fees.

As of 1994, the IJAS is a member of the International Federation of Journalists, Brussels.

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