

11 October 2004



## **COMPLIANCE WITH MEDIA ELECTION RULES:**

### **STATUS REPORT**

The Office of Temporary Media Commissioner today issues the following situation report on compliance with the Central Elections Commission's media election rules:

1. With the election campaign period now two-thirds complete, it appears that most broadcast media are complying with media election rules to the best of their ability.
2. However, news coverage of the election campaign by print media has shown disturbing trends. In general, the compliance of print media with Section 3.1 of the election rules – which requires that, “All media shall ensure that all certified political entities receive fair and equitable news coverage during the electoral campaign” – is poor. We urge newspapers to take the necessary steps to broaden their coverage of competing political entities.
3. Monitoring of Kosovo's seven daily newspapers by the TMC as well as independent monitoring shows that:
  - In varying degrees, all newspapers are narrowly focused on the largest parties, to the exclusion of many or most small parties and independent candidates. Although some newspapers are providing broader editorial coverage than others, no print media have yet provided the people of Kosovo with a clear and comprehensive view of the full range of political choices available in this crucial election.

- Parties representing ethnic minorities in Kosovo received essentially no news coverage in print media during the first half of the campaign period.
  - The number of Certified Political Entities ignored by Kosovo's seven daily newspapers between 22 September and 6 October ranged from a low of 15 to a high of 24 of the 32 entities then registered.
  - Two newspapers, both of which are closely aligned with one political party, have thus far demonstrated grossly imbalanced coverage concentrating on that party and its allies to the near total exclusion of coverage of all other parties. TMC is formally warning both newspapers today that they currently stand in violation of Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of CEC Rule 10/20004.
  - “Fair and equitable” coverage as required by Electoral Rule 2004/10 does not imply a requirement to devote equal space to coverage of all Certified Political Entities. This wording is intended to allow for professional news judgment, public interest and the general political line of newspapers that choose to align themselves with a particular party or parties.
  - “Fair and equitable” coverage does, however, require print media to provide a sufficient minimum of fair and factual coverage of all political entities so as to permit readers to understand the full range of political choices available to voters, without discrimination.
4. As of 11 October, the Election Complaints and Appeals Commission has relayed four formal complaints to the TMC. One was withdrawn by the complainant, one was dismissed, and two are under investigation.
  5. As of 11 October, the TMC issued ten warnings to media organizations of violations of media election rules, noting that any further violation may result in sanctions.

Robert Gillette  
Temporary Media Commissioner