

## VII CONCLUSION

The period covered by this Report was, on one hand, marked by the decisions of the Appellate Court in Belgrade, which has obviously taken the position that repeated attacks on journalists have shown that the hitherto penalties against the attackers – typically at the legally prescribed minimum or in some cases below it – have proven to be unable to realize the purpose of punishment. Such punishment will not deter the attackers and make them change their behavior or encourage others to refrain from accepting such behavior. At the same time, lax penalties are not an adequate social condemnation of the evil committed by the perpetrators. If the two decisions of the Appellate Court we have described in this Report are the harbinger of a different policy to be embraced by the Serbian courts in legal proceedings against the attackers of journalists, then the media and journalists can hope for a more energetic prosecution and punishing of the aforementioned attacks. On the other hand, concurrently with the verdicts of the Appellate Court in Belgrade, which are evidence of a growing awareness of the importance of freedom of expression in society – involving freedom of collecting, researching, communication and dissemination of ideas, information and opinions – we are witnessing a growing number of cases where journalists and the media are exposed to pressure due to their adherence to journalist codes of ethics and professional standards. Unfortunately, in an increasing number of cases, journalists and the media are bowing to such pressure. In the wake of the elections in Serbia, which are expected in the spring of next year, such pressures will probably grow. It is now up to journalists' and media associations and organizations to recognize the pressures and warn the public thereof and finally to support the threatened media and journalists, thus contributing to the protection of freedom of expression and preserving professional standards in Serbia.