

MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY DURING THE COVERAGE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS – A CASE STUDY OF THE ABDUCTION AND EXECUTION OF THE CROATIAN CITIZEN TOMISLAV SALOPEK

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ABSTRACT:

The authors provide an overview of the relations between terrorist atrocities and media coverage of the said atrocities through the analysis of media content present on Croatian Internet portals and national television in the case of terrorist abduction of a Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek. The study was conducted via a qualitative discursive analysis. The authors focus on both identifying elements and reasons of the media coverage of that case as well as on their impact on the public. Also, the authors try to emphasise the historically important difference in interpretation of the definition of terrorism, especially in today's context of advanced media technology and the phenomenon of live reporting on the events. For the purpose of understanding the impact terrorist activities have on government policy and especially on the psychological state of the public and the victims' families, the authors pay particular attention to the ethical and legal standards when reporting on acts of terrorism.

KEY WORDS:

CNN effect, ethics, media coverage, media reporting, public, terrorism, Tomislav Salopek

1 Introduction

The Republic of Croatia was faced with terrorist attacks twice in its recent history (since its declaration of independence in 1990 until today). For the first time in 1995, when a police station was attacked in Rijeka and for the second time in 2015, when a Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek was kidnapped in Egypt. It is the latter case that will be the topic of this study. Terrorism today is more present than ever; the reasons why can be found, among other things, in the media coverage of it. It is evident that the terrorists use the media to spread

their message, but also to spread fear and panic amongst the public. Terrorists reach their goal through the desire of the media to be the first to publish the news about an attack or a kidnapping and then to get that one extra detail, all so as to acquire one more viewer, listener or reader. The desire for exclusive stories on terrorist groups, victims and victims' families certainly contributes to the aim of the terrorists – to be visible globally. Thanks to modern technology, the media have the opportunity to report live on events – without having to wait for the official reports of the relevant institutions, without using relevant sources of information. All that matters is to be on air 'here and now'.

The ethical aspects in such reporting are mostly forgotten. This study will analyse the media content in the Republic of Croatia during the hostage crisis and execution of the Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek who was kidnapped and later executed in Egypt. Given the fact that the case of Tomislav Salopek is the first case of terrorism towards the Republic of Croatia and its citizens since 1995, we try to see how the Croatian media dealt with the ethical challenges of a modern society in the context of having to report on the terrorist kidnapping. We also want to point out that, in the clash with ethical and legal standards, the desire for an exclusive story, which is one of the factors of journalistic and editorial decisions on the publication of news, shall prevail. The responsibility for the published photograph and its political and socioeconomic consequences as well as the psychological effect it has on the public but, above all, on the family of the victim, was ignored in this case. So the question here is how to limit, if not stop altogether, the media reports on terrorism that encourage fear and panic, and at the same time, unfortunately, provide an audience.

2 Terrorism – History and Definition

The recent terrorist attacks in Paris, November 2015, and in Brussels, March 2016, as well as the attacks in London in 2005 and in Madrid in 2004, are an undeniable proof that the EU member states have become the primary targets of terrorist groups. Today, it is impossible to carry out a terrorist act and not to be covered by the media for doing so.¹

In the very beginning, terror was considered violence of the ruling class over its subordinates, and the answer to that terror was terrorism, the fight against the state and all that it represents and contains.² Nowadays, the term "terrorism" has a number of definitions. One of them is a "premeditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets implemented by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence the public".³ Hoffman defines terrorism as a violent act, undertaken especially to attract attention, in order to convey a message through the created public attention.⁴ The word "terrorism" appeared for the first time in a political speech in France during the Jacobin regime and it referred to a case of state terrorism.⁵ There are numerous historical studies of some other cases of state terrorism, particularly in the period of Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union.⁶

When it comes to a definition of terrorism in the Western countries or in terms of the international community, the political activist Noam Chomsky points out that the best way to define it is to say "terrorism is that which is being done against us, no matter who is doing it".⁷ He believes that terrorism is best defined as the intentional use of violence or threat of violence. Defined in this way, terrorism aims to fulfil two goals. First, a terrorist directly attacks one person or group in order to affect another person or group to do something they otherwise would not do. The secondary (but nevertheless directly attacked) targets are innocent people. In armed conflicts, according to the understanding that prevails in the theory of just warfare, this group includes everybody except the members of the armed forces and security services, those who supply them with arms and ammunition and political officials directly involved in the conflict. In the context of political conflicts

without the elements of war, innocent people are defined similarly. We consider everybody to be innocent except government officials, members of the police force or the security service. Harmon defines terrorism as "the deliberate and systematic killing, mutilation and endangerment of the innocent in order to terrify them so as to achieve a particular political purpose".⁸

Terrorism is neither a form of guerrilla warfare, nor is it a political or ideological movement, says Vukadinović.⁹ It is rather a method by which particular groups with certain political, philosophical or religious beliefs act in order to destabilise a country or a region and in order to promote their religious, extremist, radical Marxist, racial or fascist beliefs.¹⁰ Most existing definitions can be subsumed under a common denominator; in other words, terrorism can be defined as the use of unlawful violence or threat of violence against civilians to achieve political, religious, ideological or other objectives.¹¹ Bilandžić, however, believes that the academic, professional, political and wider society has not reached an agreement in respect to the universally accepted generic definition regarding the term "terrorism".¹² Many authors define another variety of terrorism called "suicide terrorism", which is neither characterised by religious beliefs, nor as the transgression of the poor: it is not limited to the Middle East and can be found in other global 'hot spots' as well: "The World's leading terrorists are suicide Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a group that is recruiting members from the Hindu Tamil peoples of Sri Lanka and whose ideology is based on Marxism. Between 1980 and 2001, out of 186 suicide attacks in as many as 75 cases the group responsible were the Tigers."¹³

Gayraud and Senate, on the other hand, separate the 'old' terrorism from the modern terrorism, noting that there is no difference between them in the column bundles, but rather in the nature of the act itself. A modern terrorist act is an act that wants to impose a change by force; it is an offensive act which is directed more towards the state than towards a particular person who is but a symbol of the hatred felt for the state authorities.¹⁴ According to Pettiford and Harding, no matter how it is defined, terrorism must be the result of a deliberate strategy for us to be able to characterise it as such.¹⁵

3 Terrorism and the Republic of Croatia

On 20th October 1995 in Rijeka, a seaside city in western Croatia, the Egyptian terrorist organisation Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya set car bombs and tried to destroy the police station using a car-bomb and having it hit into the wall of the building. Twenty-seven people in the police station as well as two passers-by in the street were wounded, while the only fatally injured victim of the attack was the suicide attacker responsible for the said terrorist act.¹⁶ The direct motive for the attack was that Croatia had extradited the leader of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya to the US.¹⁷ In fact, in the last days of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian Defence Council captured an Islamic terrorist Talaat Fouad Qasim. Qasim, the said important member of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, was first transferred to Croatia, and then – with the help of the CIA – to Egypt. It was due to that move that Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya made the decision of organising a terrorist attack in Croatia.

The police investigation after the explosion concluded to impound the car which contained 70 kilograms of highly explosive TNT. The police also found a part of a Canadian passport together with the remains of the attacker in the smithereens of the car. The following day, the representatives of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya claimed responsibility for the attack in Rijeka stating the extradition of Qasim as the direct reason for the act.

1 JAZIĆ, A.: Teroristička propaganda i uloga medija. In *Medunarodni problemi*, 2010, Vol. 62, No. 1, p. 113.

2 KALINIĆ, P.: *Teror i terorizam*. Zagreb : Naklada jesenski i Turk, 2003, p. 11.

3 KEGLEY, C., WITTKOPF, E.: *Svetska politika*. Beograd : Centar za studije Jugoistočne Evrope, 2004, p. 622.

4 HOFFMAN, B.: *Unutrašnji terorizam*. Beograd : Narodna knjiga i Alfa, 2000, p. 118.

5 PRIMORAC, I.: Državni terorizam i protuterorizam. In *Politička misao*, 2003, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 60.

6 PRIMORAC, I.: Državni terorizam i protuterorizam. In *Politička misao*, 2003, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 60.

7 CHOMSKY, N.: *Kontrola medija, Spektakularna dostignuća propagande*. Novi Sad : Rubikon, 2009, p. 70.

8 HARMON, C.: *Terorizam danas*. Zagreb : Golden marketing, 2002, p. 19.

9 VUKADINOVIĆ, R.: *Medunarodni politički odnosi*. Zagreb : Politička kultura, 2004, p. 205.

10 VUKADINOVIĆ, R.: *Medunarodni politički odnosi*. Zagreb : Politička kultura, 2004, p. 205.

11 PEDIĆ, Ž.: Neprofitni sektor i rizik od financiranja terorizma. In *Ekonomska misao i praksa*, 2010, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 142.

12 BILANDŽIĆ, M.: Terorizam u teorijama i teorijskim perspektivama. In *Društvena istraživanja*, 2011, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 837.

13 For more information, see: PAPE, R. A.: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism. In *American Political Science Review*, 2003, Vol. 97, No. 3, p. 343-361.

14 GAYRAUD, J., SENAT, D.: *Terorizam*. Zagreb : Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 2008, p. 20-21.

15 PETTIFORD, L., HARDING, D.: *Terorizam, novi svjetski rat*. Zagreb : Mozaik knjiga, 2005, p. 16.

16 *Rijeka – islamski teroristički napad automobilom-bombom*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<http://narod.hr/kultura/20-listopada-1995-rijeka-islamski-teroristički-napad-automobilom-bombom/>>.

17 KLASAN, V.: Utjecaj proliferacije oružja za masovno uništavanje na sigurnost Europske unije. In *National Security and the Future*, 2012, Vol. 13, No. 1-2, p. 129.

Due to errors conducted by the assailant, the suicide terrorist attack resulted in only one casualty – the suicide bomber himself. Fortunately, an earlier inspection of the site by the attackers had not been very thorough – the police station is, in fact, located on higher ground and there are steps between the parking lot and the station that were, in the end, hit by the car bomb.

As a result of these errors, the police station did not collapse; however, the explosion still wounded 29 people, including the two passers-by on the street, while the shockwave from the explosion directed the car bomb backwards, i.e. towards the parking lot where it created a large crater in the ground, destroying parked cars and building facades. The Republic of Croatia has since not been the target of terrorist attacks in this form. However, the Croatian Security Agency (SOA), in its report for the year 2015, pointed out that the Republic of Croatia, as a member of the EU and NATO, carries a potential risk of terrorist threats, especially in terms of the global increase in the threats from terrorist organisations like ISIL, Al Qaeda, Al Shabab and others. The degree of the terrorist threat from the Islamist groups from within Croatia is still low though, as was reported by the Secret Service. The number of supporters of radical interpretations of Islam in the Republic of Croatia is small; we talk about just a few dozen people and most of them are not supporters of the terrorist methods of action.¹⁸

4 The Relationship between Terrorism and the Media

The media do not create terrorism, but certain actions of the media can facilitate the achievement of the strategic goals of terrorist groups.¹⁹ The negative effects of involvement of the media in covering terrorist activities are: giving an example to others who want to recreate an action similar or identical to that one promoted by the media and also endangering the implementation of anti-terrorist actions.²⁰ In general, there are different interpretations of the manner, in which an appropriate reporting of terrorist acts should be done. Jurišić talks about three different political reactions on terrorism.²¹ The first is the politics of *laissez-faire*. It means that no special measures in terms of media coverage of terrorism should be undertaken. Obvious disadvantages of such an approach, according to Jurišić, are that it encourages attacks which put lives at risk and also pose a risk to property. The other political option lies in different forms of media censorship based on media legislation. However, Jurišić says that approach allows terrorist groups to destroy one of the essential foundations of a democratic society as censorship in any form is in favour of the enemies of democracy. The third option of media policy is the so-called voluntary restraint. It is the attempt to avoid the danger of exploitation and manipulation. According to Jurišić, many major media organisations in the world undertake a deliberate, meticulous approach in reporting on terrorism, trying to avoid any actions that would provide a platform for terrorists. Derenčinović states that for terrorism itself victims are nameless.²² These are not people with names, but rather just the means by which they communicate their message.

Unlike other crimes that tend to remain 'silent', terrorism seeks an audience for its confirmation; it is an act of violence directed towards making a psychological impact on the audience. Schmid and de Graaf maintain that terrorism is a management strategy adopted by various groups whose members otherwise feel excluded from public political discourse.²³ For them, terrorism is theatre, violence for the sake of effect. Terrorism can be a significant tool of communication only if it is transmitted to the audience through the mass media.²⁴ To accomplish their reprehensible objectives, the terrorists must gain access to the media, and the inherent curiosity the general public has

for their activities helps them to do so, says McNair. Such works are usually spectacular, explosive and often include extremely dramatic elements which provide the press with a dramatic visual material. In terms of insufficiency of official information, which is characteristic for the reports occurring during a short time period immediately after the terrorist act, the media – often very uncritically and carelessly – resort to the terrorist sources that are the only ones available, thus becoming multipliers of terrorist ideologies and political agendas. In this way, the terrorist structures manage to impose their own agenda on the media agenda, even in case of very powerful global media, and not only that; they also manage to impose a framework for the News.²⁵ Numerous authors also note that informing the public on terrorist acts, especially on kidnappings and hostage crises, can attract a lot of attention of the public, and therefore ensure readership, viewership and profit to the owners of media companies,²⁶ all thanks to the dramatic effect such news has – of course, the biggest revenue in the media market belongs to the one who first publishes the key information. 'Terrorist news' and 'threats' are best-selling products.²⁷ However, Zelizer and Allen argue that journalists and their editors around the world, especially in the USA, have changed the approach they had on reporting on the acts of terrorism. Changes in journalistic culture, they say, are visible not only in the possibilities of a more humane approach in reporting on crisis situations, but also in the debates which prefer security and in the recognition of the need to preserve the physical and psychological health of the reporter.²⁸

Wievorka defines the 'special' relationships between the media and the terrorists as well. The first one is the complete indifference, where terrorists do not want to frighten anyone except the victims. A terrorist relies on some channel or medium of communication in order to convey a threat. The second is the relative indifference. Here are terrorists indifferent to the publication on the front page because communication channels, which they can use to present opinions and attitudes, already exist. The third is a media-oriented strategy where the media push to action. The fourth is the attitude of absolute break (forcing the media), a position in which terrorists see the media organisations, editors, journalists and commentators as the enemies that need to be punished and destroyed.²⁹ Some authors claim that in no way should the grounds of terrorist atrocities be trivialised and reduced to a mere desire for publicity. So Pickard claims that labelling the perpetrators of terrorism as those who seek publicity for its sake alone is a simplification of the problem, because this ignores their very significant efforts to achieve direct coverage in the news, in order to present their goals in a way that benefits them and to eliminate the connection between their group and certain actions that lead to significant negative public response to their objectives.³⁰

4.1 CNN Effect

Ever since the turn of the 20th century into the new millennium communication technology has been expanding rapidly; it is progressing faster than the political response to terrorist atrocities. Media coverage of events via satellite television and social networks is not geographically or time limited; the events are transmitted live, here and now. Thus, the audience has the opportunity to keep track of terrorist attacks and following police actions, i.e. searching for and arresting the perpetrators, from the comfort of their homes. In this regard the media reports have an impact on the policies and decisions of the Government. Covering the events around the world through the media has begun to affect international policy. Semati calls the phenomenon the "CNN effect",³¹ a way of transforming international relations into television.³²

This news-making procedure is characterised by monitoring events in real time with the accompanying analyses and comments of experts and parties involved. This is instant news that leaves no time for partici-

18 Javno izvješće 2015. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<https://www.soa.hr/UserFiles/File/pdf/Javno-izvjescje-2015.pdf>>.

19 JAZIĆ, A.: Teroristička propaganda i uloga medija. In *Medunarodni problemi*, 2010, Vol. 62, No. 1, p. 119.

20 JAZIĆ, A.: Teroristička propaganda i uloga medija. In *Medunarodni problemi*, 2010, Vol. 62, No. 1, p. 119.

21 JURISIĆ, J., ŠAPIT, M.: Utjecaj terorizma na ulogu i djelovanje medija. In *Politička misao*, 2005, Vol. 42, No. 4, p. 122-123.

22 DERENČINOVIĆ, D.: Novi antiterorizam na razmeđu depolitizacije i dejuridizacije. In *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu*, 2002, Vol. 7, No. 3-4, p. 3.

23 SCHMID, A., DE GRAAF, J.: *Violence as Communication*. London: Sage, 1982, p. 217.

24 McNAIR, B.: *Uvod u političku komunikaciju*. Zagreb: Biblioteka Politička misao, 2003, p. 170.

25 KURTIĆ, N., ĐUKIĆ, M.: Komparativna analiza izvještavanja o terorističkom napadu u Norveškoj na hrvatskim i internet portalima Velike Britanije. In *Medianali*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 14, p. 5.

26 PEREŠIN, A.: Mass Media and Terrorism. In *Medijska istraživanja*, 2007, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 7.

27 CYGANOV, V.: *Media-terorizam: Terorizam i sredstva masovnoj informaciji*. Kijev: Nika-Centr, 2004, p. 27.

28 ZELIZER, B., STUART, A.: *Journalism after September 11*. London: Routledge, 2002, p. 74.

29 WIEVORKA, M.: *The Making of Terrorism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 43-45.

30 McNAIR, B.: *Uvod u političku komunikaciju* Zagreb: Biblioteka Politička misao, 2003, p. 173.

31 SEMATI, M.: Imagine the Terror. In *Television & New Media*, 2002, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 214.

32 SEMATI, M.: Imagine the Terror. In *Television & New Media*, 2002, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 214.

pants to prepare for the participation in the show, to choose the right words to express their opinions and to gather as much information as possible about the event. In this way, the CNN effect is pressuring diplomatic representatives and politicians.³³ Livingston identifies three different aspects of this type of making news, seeing it as an entirely American phenomenon; firstly, the media simultaneously or alternately function as sources agenda-setting; secondly, they may be seen as an obstacle to achieve goals but, thirdly, at the same time they can influence a faster decision-making process.³⁴ It is not surprising that competing with a large number of other types of news, the terrorists are opting for drastic measures to gain media attention. Hoffman jokingly interprets a dialogue between terrorists where one is telling the other, “Do not shoot, Abdul, we are not in prime time!”³⁵

One must certainly list the terrorist attack on the United States on 11th September 2001 among the best examples. The whole world was able to watch the attacks and the collapse of the two buildings of the World Trade Centre live on television. Given the fact that terrorism entails spreading the panic and fear, it was almost impossible not to transfer this hysteria to the media coverage. However, media coverage of the terrorist attacks is not always equal in intensity. Perišin, for example, in addition to proximity, meaning and personal involvement, defines eleven other informative factors, which influence the editorial discretion related to the publication of news. Among other factors, one can also find relevance (i.e. the public interest), the impact of the possible news which is implied by the importance of the event, the number of the participants, as well as tension, conflict or controversy, oddity and visualisation. All these factors are the key criteria when a decision on whether to report the news on terrorism or not needs to be made.³⁶

4.2 Journalism and Editorial Ethics in Context of Crisis Reporting

In order to comprehensively understand ethics in journalism, it is necessary to perceive the importance of a person, a human being who in a democratic and pluralistic society has a lot of rights, but also obligations. Human rights include the right to privacy, dignity and integrity of the person. Unfortunately, in times of crises, in certain emergency situations, such as incidents, those rights are often neglected, disrespected or only partially honoured.³⁷

All Croatian media and journalists are obliged to respect (and work according to) the media legislation.³⁸ Its general principles, stated in Article 3, Paragraph 3 of the cited normative act, claim that “the freedom of the press in a democratic society is allowed to be limited only if it is necessary and only to the extent to ensure the protection of the interests of national security, the territorial integrity or the well-being or morals, the reputation or rights of others, etc.”³⁹ The Legal Act on Electronic Media contains a similar statement – Article 26, Paragraph 1 states: “Audio-visual or radio programmes are not allowed to emit media broadcasts that offend human dignity.”⁴⁰ It is undisputed that publishing information on acts of terrorism favours terrorist

33 LORIMER, R.: *Masovne komunikacije*. Beograd: Clio, 1998, p. 293.

34 LIVINGSTON, S.: *Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention*. Massachusetts: The Joan Shorestein Centre, Press-Politics-Public Policy, Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 1997, p. 2.

35 HOFFMAN, B.: *Unutrašnji terorizam*. Beograd: Alfa, 2003, p. 127.

36 PERIŠIN, T.: Televizijske vijesti – urednički odabir između politike, gledatelja i komercijalnih interesa. In *Politička misao*, 2008, Vol. 45, No. 2, p. 153-174.

37 BAROVIĆ, V.: Objektivnost, novinarska etika i izvještavanje u kriznim situacijama. In *Medijske studije*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 3-4, p. 119.

38 *Law on Media NN 81/13 30. April 2004*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<https://www.zakon.hr/z/38/Zakon-o-medijima>>.

39 *Law on Media NN 81/13 30. April 2004*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<https://www.zakon.hr/z/38/Zakon-o-medijima>>.

40 *The Electronic Media Act, NN 136/13 1. July 2013*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<https://www.zakon.hr/z/196/Zakon-o-elektroni%C4%8Dkim-medijima>>.

propaganda spreads fear and therefore enables the achievement of most terrorist aims.⁴¹ The Code of Honour of Croatian Journalists states that “special attention, prudence and responsibility are required while reporting on suicides, accidents, personal tragedies, illnesses, deaths and acts of violence. A journalist should avoid interviewing and showing people directly or indirectly affected by such events, except in the case of exceptional public interest. However, in such cases the journalist is also obliged to take into account the honour, reputation and dignity of the person being reported on”.⁴²

Furthermore, out of the three national TV stations only one, *HRT*, publicly announced the Code of Ethics for Journalists. Article 26 of the Code states: “While reporting on terrorist acts and kidnappings, it is imperative to protect people’s lives and support the unobstructed or necessary actions of relevant state bodies, which have absolute priority over all other ethical and professional principles.”⁴³ In addition, the Code of Ethics of American Professional Journalists explicitly states that, when seeking or using interviews or photographs, journalists should show understanding towards people who have experienced tragedy or grief.⁴⁴ Do the media have the right to publish details of a kidnapping, photographs or videos of the kidnapping, a snapshot of the place of residence of the kidnapped person or even detailed information on the members of her/his family? Journalistic ethics is best shown in relation to reporting on people in a particular crisis or involved in an incident; every consumer of information will easily notice if the journalist behaves ethically towards people in this situation. Moreover, each consumer will easily perceive whether the privacy and protection of the victim is preserved, whether the face of the kidnapped person is visible in the published video or photograph, or whether the dignity of the victim is preserved.⁴⁵

4.3 The Impact of Broadcast Terrorist Content on the Public

In which ways may the publication of such content affect the public, especially families of the victims? Day believes that editors of news programmes on television must be more sensitive to visual effects due to the fact that those images are an inseparable part of every TV report.⁴⁶ Images that accompany news do not always show the true meaning of the story, but they create a strong impression nevertheless, says Day. Given the fact that photographs have a strong psychological impact, it is not surprising that the images portraying a human tragedy evoke strong reactions among the general public and even in the professional community.⁴⁷ Derenčinović states that a higher priority should be given to the educational impact of media messages demonstrating the dangers and harmful effects of terrorism on the fundamental values of human beings and the entire community.⁴⁸ After the news on the death of Tomislav Salopek became public, the media attention was no longer focused on the case itself, but rather on its most sensational aspects. That is why journalists should be more careful not to abuse the situation and they should respect the privacy of those who find themselves in such unfortunate circumstances.⁴⁹

Understandably, sometimes it is necessary to gather information by interviewing the parties involved in such unfortunate events. The media should strive to serve in the public interest, which means that their audiences need to get the information they need and all the facts. On the other hand, the obligation of the

41 JAZIĆ, A.: Teroristička propaganda i uloga medija. In *Međunarodni problemi*, 2010, Vol. 62, No. 1, p. 120.

42 *Code of Ethics of HND*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<http://www.hnd.hr/dokumenti>>.

43 *Code of Ethics for Journalists*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.hrt.hr/fileadmin/video/Eticki_kodeks_za_novinare_i_kreativno_osoblje_HRT_a.pdf>.

44 *Code of Ethics of the American Professional Journalists*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>>.

45 BAROVIĆ, V.: Objektivnost, novinarska etika i izvještavanje u kriznim situacijama. In *Medijske studije*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 3-4, p. 119.

46 DAY, L. A.: *Etika u medijima, primeri i kontroverze*. Beograd: Medija centar, 2004, p. 371.

47 DAY, L. A.: *Etika u medijima, primeri i kontroverze*. Beograd: Medija centar, 2004, p. 371.

48 DERENČINOVIĆ, D.: Novi antiterorizam na razmeđu depolitizacije i dejuridizacije. In *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu*, 2002, Vol. 7, No. 3-4, p. 4.

49 DAY, L. A.: *Etika u medijima, primeri i kontroverze*. Beograd: Medija centar, 2004, p. 177.

journalists, especially in a crisis situation, should be to protect all readers, viewers and listeners from stress, inconvenience and trauma caused by pictures of dead and/or severely wounded people. All those who publish such content should be reminded that media content is also consumed by minors and can leave a deep mark on their psyche, as well as it is watched by people with heart illnesses and other serious health problems – news full of violence and brutality may have a negative impact on their health as well.⁵⁰ In fact, without the media, the terrorist rhetoric would have an impact only on those who were directly exposed to terrorist violence or only on people in the immediate vicinity of violent terrorist acts.⁵¹

5 Methodology and Goals of the Analysis

The intention of this short analysis is to determine whether the eleven leading Croatian Internet portals⁵² and three national television broadcasters (the public broadcaster *HRT – Croatian National Television* and *Nova TV* and *RTL*, two nationwide commercial TV stations) decided to broadcast the photograph of the imprisoned Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek in Egypt in July 2015, and if so, to reflect on the ways the photograph was processed. The period of our investigation is limited to the time period from 22nd July 2015 to 15th August 2015. Thus, the main objective of our study is to determine the manner, in which the aforementioned news portals on the Internet and three main television broadcasters in Croatia processed their coverage of the Salopek case. Furthermore, our intention is, along with theorising on a concept of terrorism and terrorist propaganda, to attempt to establish a connection between the public coverage of acts of terrorism in the media and their impact on the public.

The results of the content analysis of Salopek's case and its media coverage are shown in the following section of the study. Our intention is to determine whether the aforementioned media published information on the victim's place of residence or any photographs and/or videos of the kidnapped man and, by doing so, undermined his dignity and family life and directly contributed to the terrorist propaganda. The study was conducted with use of qualitative discursive analysis. The analysis therefore includes general categories such as attachments, addresses, photos, protection of the family's identity.

6 The Case of Tomislav Salopek

The Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek, 31, was kidnapped in the capital of Egypt, Cairo, on 22nd July 2015.⁵³ Tomislav Salopek was working in Egypt as a manager for the French Company General Geoscience. The first news on the kidnapping of Tomislav Salopek was announced by the French Agency *France Presse* on 24th July 2015. He was kidnapped on his way to work.⁵⁴ The terrorists published the footage of the kidnapped Croatian on 5th August 2015, demanding the release of thousands of Muslim women and offering Salopek's release in return. The Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs issued a public statement, in which, among other things, appealed to the media for their understanding and asked them to verify information before making it public, so as to avoid further unnecessary complications which would have escalated that already difficult situation.⁵⁵ After the official news release about the kidnapping of a Croatian citizen in Cairo and after terrorists' communication activities resulting in posting a picture of the captured Croatian citizen online, followed by a video, the media contents in question were published by most of the leading Croatian Internet

portals⁵⁶ in the time period from 22nd July to 15th August 2015. The photo of the captured Tomislav Salopek was released in the following order: on *net.hr*,⁵⁷ which published the video of Salopek with a warning announcing 'disturbing content' in the title, on *telegram.hr*,⁵⁸ *dnevnik.hr*,⁵⁹ *24sata.hr*,⁶⁰ *vecernji.hr*,⁶¹ *jutarnji.hr*,⁶² *glas-slavonije.hr*,⁶³ *novilist.hr*,⁶⁴ *slobodnadalmacija.hr*,⁶⁵ *indeks.hr*⁶⁶ and *vijesti.rtl.hr*.⁶⁷ Only a day after the photo of Salopek was published by most of the Croatian media, Internet news portals and television stations, *tportal.hr* published a statement by Dragana Prodanović Haines, the widow of David Haines,⁶⁸ who had been kidnapped and murdered prior to the events described in this analysis. She appealed to the media not to publish the footage and photos of Tomislav Salopek in order to protect his family from such terrible scenes: "The man has two daughters; they should be protected from these images and videos. The family needs peace and strength to go through this ordeal because, although I'd like everything to end well and see the man return to his family, I fear the outcome."⁶⁹

Nevertheless, *RTL*, the already mentioned commercial TV station, published footage of the family's home as well as of the family members, shot through the fence, in its central news programme, *RTL Today* (in Croatian *RTL Danas*) on 7th August 2015, during the report about Tomislav Salopek's fate.⁷⁰ A day later, on 8th August 2015, *HRT*, the Croatian public TV service, published footage of Tomislav Salopek's hometown as well as footage of people praying in the local church, together with an audio statement of the town's mayor who appealed to the media not to "go and shoot videos around the house".⁷¹ On 10th August 2015, *Nova TV* broadcasted a news report in which they showed a photograph of the kidnapped Tomislav Salopek kneeling on the sand and a masked man standing behind him with a knife in his left hand.⁷² The fifth day after the publication of this photograph, Croatian Journalists' Association released an announcement. More specifically, they issued a warning about the unprofessional and irresponsible media coverage on the fate of the Croatian citizen

50 BAROVIĆ, V.: Objektivnost, novinarska etika i izvještavanje u kriznim situacijama. In *Medijske studije*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 3-4, p. 125.
 51 PEREŠIN, A.: Paradigma „novoga“ terorizma informacijskog doba. In *Politička misao*, 2007, Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 97.
 52 *Gemius*. [online]. [2016-02-29]. Available at: <http://www.audience.com.hr>.
 53 *Announcement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia*. [online.] [2015-06-24]. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/mediji/priopcenja/24429.html>.
 54 *Announcement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia*. [online.] [2015-06-24]. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/mediji/priopcenja/24429.html>.
 55 *Announcement of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia*. [online.] [2015-06-24]. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/mediji/priopcenja/24429.html>.

56 *Gemius*. [online]. [2016-02-29]. Available at: <http://www.audience.com.hr>.
 57 *Uznemirujuća snimka: Islamska Država prijeti da će ubiti hrvatskog taoca za (manje od) 48 sati!* [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://net.hr/danas/svijet/islamska-drzava-prijeti-da-ce-ubiti-hrvatskog-taoca-u-iducih-nekoliko-sati>.
 58 OKIĆ, R.: *Ja sam Tomislav Salopek...* [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/isis-prijeti-da-ce-smaknuti-hrvata-u-iducih-48-sati>.
 59 *To je unaprijed planirani manevar, to je njihova poruka*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/moktar-awad-strucnjak-za-dzihadiste-o-prijetnji-otetom-hrvatu-to-je-bio-unaprijed-planirani-manevar-to-je-njihova-poruka---395577.html?icn=article&ici=related_middle-column>.
 60 *Hrvatska koristi sve što može da spasi Tomislava Salopeka*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.24sata.hr/news/hrvatska-koristi-sve-sto-moze-da-spasi-tomislava-salopeka-432075>.
 61 *Britanski mediji sumnjaju da uz Salopeka na snimci stoji Jihadi John*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.vecernji.hr/svijet/britanski-mediji-sumnjaju-da-uz-salopeka-na-snimci-stoji-jihadi-john-1018058>.
 62 *Neizvjesna sudbina otetog Hrvata...* [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/neizvjesna-sudbina-otetog-hrvata--svim-mehanizmima-nastojimo-osloboditi-tomislava-salopeka--situacija-je-osjetljiva-/1396715>.
 63 SLAVONIJE, G.: *Islamska država tvrdi da je ubila Tomislava Salopeka*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.glas-slavonije.hr/277119/1/Islamska-drzava-objavila-da-je-ubila-Tomislava-Salopeka>.
 64 *Islamska država tvrdi da je pogubila Tomislava Salopeka zbog sudjelovanja Hrvatske u ratu protiv IS*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.novilist.hr/Vijesti/Hrvatska/Islamska-drzava-tvrdi-da-je-pogubila-Tomislava-Salopeka-zbog-sudjelovanja-Hrvatske-u-ratu-protiv-IS>.
 65 *Ubili smo Tomislava Salopeka jer Hrvatska ratuje protiv Islamske države*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/novosti/hrvatska/clanak/id/282862/is-ubili-smo-tomislava-salopeka-jer-hrvatska-ratuje-protiv-islamske-drzave>.
 66 *Egipatske sigurnosne službe tvrde da su ubile čovjeka koji stoji iza otmice Tomislava Salopeka*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/egipatske-sigurnosne-sluzbe-tvrde-da-su-ubile-čovjeka-koji-stoji-iza-otmice-tomislava-salopeka/837727.aspx>.
 67 MARKOV, S.: *Tko je terorist koji na snimci stoji iza Tomislava Salopeka i prijeti mu nožem*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.vijesti.rtl.hr/novosti/svijet/1713396/tko-je-terorist-koji-na-snimci-stoji-iza-tomislava-salopeka-i-prijeti-mu-nozem>.
 68 *David Haines was an English humanitarian captured and murdered by ISIS in 2014. Murdered ISIS hostage David Haines brother is haunted by face*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/murdered-isis-hostage-david-haines-brother-is-haunted-by-face-10014604.html>.
 69 BARKOVIĆ, N.: *Salopekove kćeri treba zaštititi od strašnih slika njihova oca*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://m.tportal.hr/vijesti/391794/Salopekove-kceri-treba-zastititi-od-strasnih-slika-svog-oca.html>.
 70 LUKIĆ, I.: *Sravična neizvjesnost se nastavlja, novih informacija o Tomislavu Salopeku još nema*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://www.vijesti.rtl.hr/novosti/hrvatska/1712390/sravicna-neizvjesnost-se-nastavlja-novih-informacija-o-tomislavu-salopeku-jos-uvijek-nema>.
 71 FARKAŠ, B. et al.: *Neizvjesna sudbina Tomislava Salopeka*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://vijesti.rtl.hr/294378/teroristi-is-a-prijeti-pogubljenjem-otetog-hrvata>.
 72 *Pronadeni su neki dokazi, tragovi, lociramo Tomislava*. [online]. [2016-03-20]. Available at: <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/glasnogovornik-ministarstva-vanjskih-poslova-egipta-ahmed-abu-zaid-o-slucaju-tomislava-salopeka---395909.html>.

Tomislav Salopek, stating that “abduction and threat of murder certainly are important pieces of news, but it is unacceptable to speculate about the destiny of the kidnapped Salopek based on unverifiable data, references to unreliable sources and even speculations without any objective foundation. In this way the basic rules of the journalistic profession are violated in a sensationalistic manner. Also, it shows the complete lack of empathy for the situation of Tomislav Salopek and his family, which is in direct contrast to the simultaneously published, pathetic media statements filled with alleged concern for the fate of the kidnapped man”.⁷³ In other words, the Croatian Journalists’ Association appealed to the media to stop using the tragedy of the Salopek family only to increase the number of clicks and the number of readers or listeners.

7 Conclusion

In the modern world countries and international organisations have not found an adequate response to terrorism yet. The media face the same problem. Social and political frameworks, as well as legislative formats of media coverage and reporting on terrorist acts are not developing fast enough and thus they are neither able to keep up with the fast-growing technology and other advancements in media production, nor they are capable of keeping track of arms, equipment, as well as training procedures of terrorist groups, organisations and individuals. Unfortunately, the terrorists always seem to be one step ahead; the world has witnessed countless examples of that fact. This conclusion becomes evident if we analyse the media content of Croatian Internet news portals and TV broadcasters in the context of the abduction and execution of Tomislav Salopek in Cairo on 22nd July 2015. They showed signs of disorientation and irresponsibility, violating the media legislation of the Republic of Croatia as well as all the principles of journalistic ethics. All of the eleven Internet portals, whose contents were studied for the purpose of this analysis, eventually published the photograph of the captured Salopek kneeling on the sand and begging for his life, while a masked terrorist with a knife in his left hand was standing next to him. Two news portals even published a video footage.

The article clearly underlines the importance of the cited excerpts of Croatian legal acts dealing with media legislation, where it is stated that media freedom related to reporting is clearly defined and limited in case of encroachment on human dignity, human rights and the rights of the victim of terrorism’s family. Guidelines from the Code of Honour proposed the Croatian Journalists’ Association have also been highlighted. Interested authors, lawyers, political scientists and sociologists have also agreed to the fact that publishing details on the acts of terrorism only contributes to spreading fear among the public, limits social movements and sometimes even interferes with anti-terrorist actions, rescue operations, negotiations, etc.

As is shown by our short analysis of the content of the related media reports by *RTL*, *HRT* and *Nova TV*, it is undeniable and evident that these TV stations crossed and maybe even ignored the legal and ethical framework of reporting in crisis situations. The published photograph or video material not only insulted the dignity of the kidnapped man, but also dispersed the already existing great fear among the public, especially among the members of his family, friends and colleagues. No one asked them whether they agreed with the publication of photos and video footage.

Furthermore, by visiting the place of residence of the victim, by recording and publishing footage of his family house and neighbours, the media not only violated the right to privacy, but also knowingly exposed personal information about Salopek and his family. In this way, they upset both the public and the family in question even more. The news on the abduction of a Croatian citizen – and afterwards on his execution – was sufficiently severe and disturbing by itself; it was neither necessary, nor appropriate and moral to additionally engage in the case by going in front of his family’s house. It was no longer about news; it was just about adding fuel to the fire and extending and complicating the already severe situation Croatian nation have so little experience dealing with.

73 *Announcement of HND-a*. [online]. [2015-08-10]. Available at: <<http://www.hnd.hr/pozivamo-na-prestanak-senzacionalistikog-izvjestavanja-o-sudbini-otetog-tomislava-salopeka>>.

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