

29 August 2014, Prizren

## **REACTION STATEMENT**

### **Muja to stop threats to journalists**

The mayor of Prizren, Ramadan Muja, continues to use disciplinary and threatening language towards journalists regarding the manner of reporting on municipal issues. He misused the public debate on the municipal budget to raise accusations against journalists by alleging they are distorting his words.

Throughout this week, the mayor has held public hearings on the budget in certain areas of the municipality. Reporting of the media about discussions that have taken place in debates in Gjonaj, Reçane and Korishë villages have unlikely pleased mayor Muja, as the citizens have brought forth too many discontents in these debates. In the concluding debate in the Assembly Hall of the Municipality of Prizren, while responding to a question of a citizen, although at first he stated for not wanting to use confrontational vocabulary, he continued his speech with allegation that journalists usually are misrepresenting his words.

Transparency Forum publicly denounces the aggravating vocabulary of mayor Muja upon members of the press. Such vocabulary is an evidence of his efforts to exert pressure on journalists, who, in some other instances, were threatened by the mayor just because of doing their job and their refusal to succumb to any dictate of the government. This is not the only time mayor Muja does so. Moreover, such conduct of mayor Muja has occurred during the public debate with citizens, an event he misused to school journalists to report according to his whims.

Freedom of expression and editorial independence of the media are sacred principles of democracy. Transparency Forum therefore calls upon mayor Muja to refrain from the threatening vocabulary towards the journalists. At the same time, we urge mayor Muja to publicly apologize to journalists of Prizren. Above all, Transparency Forum instructs mayor Muja that, in case there are complaints about the work of journalists, to use respective institutional mechanisms regulating the field of media in Kosovo or to the judicial mechanisms. Efforts to present the journalists as ‘evil’ before the citizens in a debate on the municipal budget, is unacceptable and contravenes the principles of democratic governance and hurting further transparency.

Transparency Forum is an informal body consisting of civil society activists and journalists of Prizren, active in the field of democratic governance and its mission is to synchronize actions of these stakeholders for raising the level of transparency and accountability of Prizren local government.

On behalf of Transparency Forum,  
Elmedina Baxhaku, EC Ma Ndryshe (Transparency Forum Secretariat)  
Saraqët 5, 10000 Prizren  
[elmedina.baxhaku@ecmandryshe.org](mailto:elmedina.baxhaku@ecmandryshe.org)  
029 222 771