

## ETHICS AND JOURNALISM IN ALBANIA

In Albania, the journalists interviewed in the framework of this survey conveyed an almost unified picture of the ethical problems that journalism faces in the country. Interference from editors, and especially owners, subservience to their economic and political interests, unsatisfactory material situation, exploitation of media power for economic and political gains and an urgent pressure for self-censorship constitute the main problematic aspects and trends identified by journalists. On the other hand, when combined with professional lack of experience or carelessness from journalists themselves, insufficient consideration for human rights in hunt of sensationalism, and journalists' vulnerability vis-à-vis material gains, the ethical situation of journalism in Albania, in spite of the slow improvements, seems that is a long way from achieving a satisfactory standard.

In the course of this survey the interviewees included representatives from the main thirty media outlets in the country. Due to the specific nature of Albanian media landscape, these interviews only focused on the capital-based media outlets, given the relatively insignificant influence of media outside Tirana. The selected collocutors were mainly editors and reporters covering political, social and economic affairs. The daily newspapers that were represented in the survey were: Shekulli, Korrieri, Panorama, Gazeta Shqiptare, Tema, Koha Jone, Metropol, Albania, Ballkan, Biznes, and Sot. In addition, the main weekly magazines were part of research: Klan, Spekter, and Monitor. Regarding radio outlets, participants came from: Radio Tirana, Top Albania Radio, +2 radio, Radio Rash, and Radio Alsat. Journalists and editors from television stations came from the following media: TVSH, TVA, TV Klan, Top Channel TV, Vizion + TV, TV Koha, News 24 TV, Telenorba Shqiptare, Shijak TV, and Alsat TV. One journalist from Albanian Telegraphic Agency was included, as well.<sup>1</sup>

The responses to the in depth interviews show that the majority of journalists that cover political events, individuals or government institutions are under a number of constraints other than those imposed by ethics and professionalism. These constraints range from 'advice' by the editors or the owners of the media on how to cover a specific issue, to clear directives on how to cover positively or negatively certain government institutions, politicians or events. Many of them report specific cases when they were ordered by the owner of the media or their editor to stop writing about a specific political issue without much justification or

---

<sup>1</sup> It must be mentioned that a trend noticed during the interviews was the brief responses of journalists and the relatively weak willingness to answer at length and with specific examples to each question. However, given the timing of the research, this was hardly a surprise: research coincided with the general elections campaign. These elections were deemed extremely important and received the most in-depth media coverage to date; hence journalists were under increasing time pressure.

reasoning. In many responses journalists also claim that in some occasions certain pieces are not published since they affect specific business or political interests. The end result of political, business and other constraints seems to be a journalist who submits to the policies of the paper, begins to internalize and naturalize the pressures under which he or she works, developing thus what a few respondents branded as 'self-censorship' or the process through which journalists try to second guess what the owner of the media wants to hear and what is closer to their liking and interests. While this makes the life of the journalists easier, it does not bode well for objective and/or accurate coverage of political events.

It is important at this point to explore how the journalists describe the interference in their work, which is the source of a long-term process that results into self-censorship. By far the majority of the interviewed journalists say that the political and economic directives by the owners or the editors of the media influence the kind of coverage they produce. These instructions range from direct orders on what to publish or not, to indirect pressure on how to cover specific issues. They aim to produce coverage that best promotes the immediate interests of the owners, or sympathetic coverage of government institutions, politicians or other individuals who can than in turn promote these interests. According to one journalist this is a phenomenon that "more or less happens in all the Albanian media, including the one I work in. I would say that the instructions pertaining to economic issues influence my work the most although there are cases when such instructions relate to political matters. This happens due to the fact that the media is owned by entrepreneurs whose interests are often connected to those of the government".

Another journalist reports that "I know of cases when reports which might harm the investments or the interests of the people who support the media group have not been published at all." This declaration is supported by other responses in which journalists provide specific examples when their work was not published so as not to alienate certain institutions which would in turn safeguard the interests of the media owner.

While in some cases certain articles have not been published due to economic or political instructions that tend to safeguard the interests of the media ownership, in other cases journalists have been asked to write articles or produce coverage that would directly promote such interests. Thus, one journalist says that on two or three occasions she had to write articles according to the orders of the owner. "Personally I never liked it and when I had to write according to the instructions of the owner, I did not put my name at the end of the article."

These influences show that the owners often use their media to promote their immediate interests. This becomes even more obvious during electoral campaigns when media owners support not only specific parties but also individual politicians. Thus, a journalist reports that during an electoral campaign

she “was asked to write a positive article for a certain political candidate that was running for office and I had to do it. This also happens in other media outlets. The independence of media in Albania is relative and there are such examples.” In a similar fashion other journalists report of having been asked to produce positive coverage of business activities that either belong to the media owners or support it. These are clear cases in which the media outlet is used directly for certain very specific ends.

However, many journalists claim that the influence of the media ownership has become increasingly sophisticated and is no longer as obvious and direct as it used to be in previous years. Nowadays in many media outlets the influence appears to be more indirect and mostly in the form of advice and suggestions on how a certain event should be covered rather than actual pressure and orders on what and how should be written. Thus, according to journalist “political and economic directives influence coverage in Albania media in a more covert way nowadays. It has become increasingly rare for the media owner or the editor in chief to shape coverage directly or to censure it.” A number of other journalists also shared the same view arguing that the influence now is exerted in a more indirect manner.

All the responses as well as the above examples indicate that there is a direct influence of the owners into the coverage of the media, which in turn has a direct impact in limiting the editorial independence of the media. A phenomenon that also appears in the response of an editor-in-chief, who claims that “as the editor in chief I am the one who gives out instructions to the journalists. I must say that 80 % of the instructions are mine and they reflect my ideas on how the coverage should appear, whereas some 20% of the instructions result from the influence of the owners.” Although these percentages might not be completely accurate they do indicate that the media ownership exerts a direct and day-to-day influence on the media coverage, rather than provide a long term policy orientation for the outlet, curtailing thus editorial independence.

However, it is important to mention that not all instructions given to journalists aim to promote specific political and/or business interests. Often they are simply part of the editorial policy of the media outlet. Many journalists call this the ‘approach’ of the media and feel that the journalists that work for the paper should accept and embrace such approach as part of the editorial policy of the paper. It remains unclear though what is understood by these terms and to what extent the approach of a given media is determined by its editorial policy based on the principles and values that a given media stands for and to what extent editorial policy is just another word for covert approaches that simply aim to uphold and enhance the business interests of the media owners. The fact remains that on many occasions the journalists have expressed their disagreements with some of the stands of the media where they work. In almost all the cases they say that their views were not taken into consideration, and the policy was decided by the owner himself.

Besides influences and instructions that come from the media ownership and at times editors there are also influences and pressures that come from groups outside of the media, although their influence can be and is only exhorted through the media ownership.

“There are such cases both in the media where I work as well as in other media outlets. In most case such interventions come from the political scene although at times they do also come from businesses, most of the time not directly but in an indirect manner, asking for a favor which will be paid back in the future.” A number of examples have been given by journalists when after intervention from state institutions or individuals they were asked either to stop writing about a specific issue or not to cover it at all. In most cases the journalists report that the interested parties contact the media owners or directors who than make sure that the journalists will comply with their requests. In one such case one investigative journalist who had been writing about pension funds and some challenges that citizens were facing with regard to the pension scheme, was asked to stop writing about it without much explanation as to why, especially since the coverage had to do with the interests of many citizens. In other cases journalists had been asked to cover a specific issue in a positive light. In all these cases, which seem to be mostly interventions by political actors to stop the publication of a certain article or coverage, the interested parties ‘ask for a favor’ by the media, which they will repay later on.

Such intervention is facilitated by the tight connection between media and business on the one hand and politicians on the other. At times it is difficult to draw the line between them there, since a media owner can be a politician as well as a businessmen at the same time. However, even when the distinction is clear, close personal connections do exist. In many cases media owners and directors have close personal connections with political and public individuals which makes it easier for ‘media favors’ to happen. Thus, according to one journalist “on delicate matters the media owners do exert a certain pressure. This is also due to the Albanian environment where personal connections are very important and very many.”

The close connection between media on the one hand and politicians on the other does not only occur at the media ownership level. Many journalists, especially senior ones do report of close ties and friendships with high ranking politicians or government ministers. The Albanian media and political scene after all is very small which makes it very easy for those participating in it to know each other intimately. A senior journalist reported that “I have friends who are ministers or politicians and I have had informal conversations with them outside of my working hours, through which I might have influenced them as individuals, although probably not the parties they represent.” Other responses indicate the same; many journalists especially those who are more senior and famous have close and direct ties with politicians. This is also reflected by the fact that some

journalists reported that they have mediated between politicians in some delicate cases. Other journalists, more junior ones who did not have such experience themselves, knew of such cases.

Of course such close ties between media on the one hand and politics on the other might have a number of serious ramifications regarding the quality and accuracy of media coverage of political events. In combination with other factors, such as business or political interests, it might explain why certain media provide positive coverage for certain politicians and not for others. At the same time it might also explain why once such friendships or informal ties and media attacks tend to be so personal and not issue-driven. In fact, as many journalists report, quite often media articles and reports attack directly individuals rather than issues. These attacks tend to be particularly acrimonious and personal in the Albanian press.

The ties between media and politics seem to be strengthened also through necessity and work, besides friendship. Many journalists seem to also be involved in providing advice and consultancy for public institutions, at least informally. One of the interviewed journalists reports that he has “informally consulted public institutions. Such cases are known to happen due to close ties between the media environment on the one hand and the political scene and public institutions on the other.” In one extreme case a journalist was at the same time working as a spokesman for a Government Ministry and as a journalist at an independent private national TV station. He said that he used his position in the ministry in order to collect and publish information. In fact most of the interviewed journalists complained that quite often the same person would work as a spokesman in a public institution and as a journalist in a given media outlet, taking thus unfair advantage of his/her position. It is difficult to determine how frequent such cases are, however they do exist.

At this point it is interesting to explore the consequences of the complex interplay between media ownership interests on the one hand and politics on the other, upon the journalists, as reflected in their answers. This interplay produces an editorial policy, or lack thereof, which often might run against the beliefs of the journalists themselves. In fact as they report, in some cases they do not agree with the political stand of their media. Yet, according to one of the interviewed journalists “in general the ordinary journalists comply with the political and ideological approach of the media in which they work. This happens primarily so that they can preserve their job, but also due to a kind of self censorship they develop.” Some say that the way in which they overcome the discrepancy between what they believe and the stand of their media is by trying to report objectively and in an unbiased fashion. Many others respond that they try to adopt themselves to the editorial policy of the media where they work. As one journalist put it “if a journalist does not find an environment compatible with his beliefs he/she should ideally change his job and move into another media, yet in reality this is not easy and often one is obliged to make a compromise.” This is

understandable if one takes into consideration that most journalists report that they can hardly make ends meet through journalism alone. Most of them reported that they could not afford their living through journalism alone and without the support of their family. Thus, for many of them, especially those more junior, keeping the job is very important, which easily forces them into compromises and not stand up for what they believe in.

It is at the intersection of the above factors that the phenomenon of self-censorship begins to appear. Influences and instructions from inside the media outlet, outside pressures and favors from political institutions or individuals combined with a financial dependency in an uncertain job market explains why and how self-censorship develops. Self-censorship is a very useful instrument that makes the life of the journalist much easier in face of numerous political and/or business interests. The most telling case was that of a young female journalist who reported that she had been asked indirectly by the media ownership to promote the latter's interests through her writing in the media. She said that "I myself am not free from a kind of self-censorship and perhaps unintentionally in my writing cover favorably those political currents or individuals that might be connected to our owner." This is a very telling and insightful confession. In the Albanian media all the employees are generally very well-informed regarding the political and business interests of the media owners, and this in itself might suffice to affect their coverage, especially among young and insecure journalists. The above example is also telling because it is provided by someone who has become aware of the phenomenon of self-censorship. Other journalists who might be affected by the same syndrome might not even be aware of their self-censorship or reluctant to admit it. Therefore, it is not unlikely that such phenomenon is understated and even more far-reaching than it might presently seem.

One of the first and most immediate consequences of self-censorship is that it makes it very difficult to assess media coverage with regard to political developments. This is not to say that self-censorship does not distort or limit media coverage of political events, but simply that it is difficult to determine to what extent this is the case. As one of the interviewed journalists noted that "more than an absence of freedom to express one's opinion, the problem in Albanian media is that there exists a kind of self-censorship that makes it difficult for the journalist to express his/her opinions." In the same fashion another journalist says that "one of the reasons why journalists might not be free to express their opinions is due to a certain self-censorship".

Another very problematic consequence of the self-censorship syndrome is the creation of a vicious circle of unprofessionalism. Given the current *modus operandi* of the Albanian media, self-censorship is an asset rather than a liability, for both media owners and government and political institutions. Self-censorship is most likely to happen among young, newly recruited and not senior journalists with professional integrity. In fact as the journalists confirm in their interview

answers, senior journalists with a reputation in the media have much more possibility to voice their opinions and are less likely to be pressured by media internal or external factors, such as politicians, or government institutions. Therefore, in a setting where media's role as an instrument of providing accurate information is subjected to that of upholding the owner's interests, professional journalists with integrity are more of a threat rather than an asset, unlike young, insecure ones who can be more easily used to various ends, which by journalistic standards could qualify as unethical, such as writing articles with no or under a different name.

This could explain problematic and unprofessional approaches to reporting. Given the incentives media responds to, high levels of professionalism and ethics do not provide an immediate goal. Thus, there was hardly a case amongst the interviewees in which journalists wrote a retraction after they had received and published incorrect information by their sources. According to one journalist "there are many cases when incorrect information is published in the papers, but they are rarely, if ever, retracted." Another journalist after admitting that he had published inaccurate information said that he "did not publish a retraction, since the information was inaccurate rather than wrong. I informed the public on the matter through indirect means." It is unclear what the journalist exactly meant here, but one can safely conclude that he did not clearly inform the reader on the 'inaccurate information that was not wrong'. In a similar fashion another journalist said that when he publishes inaccurate information he "does not produce a retraction to refute it, but through journalistic means tries to correct the information to the extent he can". Here again it is unclear why a retraction is not published in order to refute incorrect information and thus inform the reader. It is clear, as confirmed by almost every interviewee, that cases when corrections or retractions happen are very rare in the Albanian media. In other words, not only are professionalism levels low in this respect, but given the manner in which Albanian media operates, there seem to be few incentives to change this situation. As it was mentioned earlier, media's role as a source of information has been subjected to a certain extent to its role as a means that upholds and promotes certain narrow interests. A scenario in which self-censorship on part of journalists becomes more valuable than professionalism.

As the above analyses and information indicates, journalists who deal with political coverage are under a series of constraints in their reporting and analyses. However, the above analyses should be approached cautiously since the situation changes very much from media outlet to media outlet, and any effort to generalize is bound to misrepresent a part of the media scene. There were many journalists who did not feel pressured or used by the ownership or editorship of their media, especially those belonging to the areas not related to political coverage. Therefore, from the above analyses it would be mistaken to conclude that there is no freedom of media in Albania. The above analyses and the answers to the in-depth interviews with the journalists simply show the constraints under which media coverage of political events takes place. There is

freedom even within these constraints, especially given the numerous and growing number of outlets which provide an opportunity for diversity given the various viewpoints they present, as well as a challenge to credibility given how far apart these viewpoints are at times.

When asked about the use of anonymous or unconfirmed sources in their work, most journalists distanced themselves from this practice but promptly indicated that it happens to other media. Some journalists indicated that the epidemic of “unconfirmed sources” or “there is talk that” appears especially in cases of government crisis and potential changes in the cabinet. The difficulty in this case lies especially with the politicians’ unwillingness to pronounce themselves. Another reason for the phenomenon of unconfirmed sources was the pace of work, which pressured journalists towards deadline and not towards ethical considerations. Yet, other journalists related this to the lack of experience in journalism: “Years ago I used to publish articles that contained ‘unconfirmed sources,’ since I lacked the work experience and the necessary pool of contacts.” Albanian journalism enjoys the vitality of young reporters as well as suffers their lack of experience: journalism students starting to work in the media since their first year at school is a widespread phenomenon that enriches their financial resources and experience while keeping the owners’ costs lower.

Another question asked to journalists was whether they remembered a case when it was clear that the interviewee was lying. Almost indiscriminately the cases brought were those of politicians’ interviews, especially during elections’ campaigns. “This happens more in interviews with political leaders, as they try to avoid the questions all the time.” However, TV journalists seemed to be more affected in this regard, given the dominance of TV coverage of political debates. Only a few of them said that they had insisted in their questions or had compiled the report by adding other sources of information. “When I sensed that they were avoiding the question I have insisted to the point of annoyance until I received an answer. This was particularly the case with high government officials.” Again, experience seems to be another factor to consider, since more experienced journalists seem to be more insistent in pursuing truth in their interviews, or at least an answer for their questions.

On the other hand, experience does not seem to particularly influence publication/broadcasting of stories that affect people personally. As expected, almost all persons interviewed indicated that they frequently witnessed such stories in their media outlets. These statements demonstrated a curious trend though: it seemed that people most affected in the stories that appear in the media are more often than not public figures, almost indiscriminately high-rank politicians. “There have been no cases of non-public figures being intentionally assaulted in the media. It is usually persons that head public institutions that are the focus of these stories.” For instance, along the same lines, many interviewees indicated as specific cases to this question the “teasing” articles that focused on Prime Minister’s wife. Although some of the journalists seemed to justify this



trend to a certain extent in view of the public status of these figures and the public's rights to know, many yet seemed to disapprove the tendency of these stories, which sometimes were rather discriminatory.

The methods sometimes used to report on some persons or institutions were considered as shameful or dishonest by the participants in the survey. Almost indiscriminately the example mentioned here was that of a satirical, very popular, yet controversial TV show called "Fiks Fare." The program is a mix of humour and investigative journalism, sometimes claiming to make practical improvements in citizen's lives. However, candid cameras and other similar tricks are among the main tools used, which places a big question mark on the ethical principles applied, or lack thereof. Examples mentioned were that of a secret taping of an Albanian ambassador, another taping of a high official charged with sexual harassment, etc. There have even been cases of firing or suspending some of the persons affected, which indicated the importance in pondering the ethical issues implied in each case. Journalists were split between the ethical questions regarding this problem and the public's right to know, given the relatively positive final impact of the show. If we go beyond the specific case mentioned here, the trend between the lines seems to be that of journalists who do not have big ethical problems in intruding in personal lives of both public and non-public figures.

What renders the ethical situation in these cases more serious is the rarity of retractions published in the media in this regard. Most journalists said that retractions were extremely rare, both in their media and in other ones. There were some who further explained the situation by saying that in most cases retractions were corrections of misspellings or some insignificant factual errors; retractions addressing the actual meaning of the information were harder to find.

The situation seems to improve when it comes to the treatment of minors. Most journalists said that their media did not publish the identities of minors, except some few cases when it was essential for the story that the identity was revealed. When it comes to victims, though, their opinion was not so lenient: there were frequent cases when gory images or undue revelation of identity of the victims or persons affected were mentioned by the interviewees. Another aspect mentioned was that of hasty qualifications of convicting persons that are waiting for the court verdict. Journalists seemed to be undecided on whether print media or television deserved the greater blame. The only safe conclusion was that radio was not mentioned at all, mainly due to the technical nature of this medium.

In general the journalists agreed that there's ample room for improvement in this regard, namely in covering of courts, pre-detainees, victims, minors, etc. The combination of dilettantism, sensational headlines, and hasty and careless reporting is an obstacle that Albanian journalists have to overcome as soon as possible. "With regard to protection of privacy or human rights Albanian media lags behind in a significant way."

It seems that the situation is significantly better when it comes to distributing personal data on people or in using as sources of information persons with physical or mental disorders. Similarly, when reporting on crime, many journalists report that the cases of mentioning religious and sexual affiliations are extremely rare at the moment, although the situation in the past has been diverse. On the other hand, reporting seems to be particularly sensitive to nationality, which is always included. In fact, at a time when reporting on organized crime has become a daily task for journalists in Albania, and having in mind the increasingly transnational nature of this reporting, this finding is not surprising. It also does not come as a surprise that minorities' affiliations are used, often in a pejorative connotation. Roma involvement, for example, was never failed to mention, although often it was not relevant for the news.

With regard to quotes or memories of criminals, many journalists regarded this as a non-problematic issue, as this was not a pervasive phenomenon. Moreover, most insisted that even if quoted, this was just for the sake of balance, not with any other implications. Only one of them said that eventually the image had improved after interviews were published. Print media seemed to suffer more from this phenomenon; sensationalism was to blame in this aspect, too. On a more positive note, reporters almost always preserved the confidentiality of their sources, and their newsrooms allied with them in this regard.

Overall, it can be concluded that there is undeniable, albeit slow, progress in journalism with regard to greater respect for human rights in several aspects. However, the road to high ethical standards of Albanian journalism is hampered by undue influence of media owners and the interplay of economic and political interests in the media area. This complex situation, combined with the lack of working contracts for journalists and the absence of a trade union, leads to the pervasive phenomenon of self-censorship among the journalism community. This phenomenon grows even stronger having in mind the lack of code of ethics and self-regulatory mechanisms within this community, as well as the weak and fragmented profile of journalism associations in the country. As a sum, the ethical standards of journalism in the country, and eventually media's public mission, are significantly compromised by other interests, seemingly more powerful than serving the public and preserving professional integrity.

### ***Selection of the most representative and characteristic answers***

*Do political, economic or some other directives of your editor or owner of your media affect the method you are going to use to treat some topic? Do you know of some cases in your or other media?*

1. More or less all over the Albanian media there is such a phenomenon, including the media where I work. In my method the impact is mostly through economic directives/instructions, although there are cases of political ones. This is due to the fact that the media is mostly in the hands of entrepreneurs and it happens that their interests coincide with those of the government.
2. Yes, there have been 2 -3 cases. I refer mostly to my previous experience when I worked in a daily paper. Personally I never liked the intervention, and when I had to write according to the instructions of the owner I did not put my name as the author. There was a case when I wrote a story about the roads of the municipality, which the owner said had to be changed and we did change it.
3. I am the editor in chief and thus I am the person who gives instructions to the journalists. I must say that 80 % of the instructions are mine and they reflect my ideas on how the coverage should appear, whereas some 20% of the instructions result from the influence of the owners.
4. I think political and economic directives by the owner or the editor influence the way a certain topic is approached.
5. Not directly, but there is an editorial policy, if this could constitute political and economic directives. There might be cases when the owner or the editor intervenes directly.
6. Of course, there is an influence. It is a fact that in Albania no media is independent, in fact all the written and electronic media are dependent on specific interest groups. They act in order to safeguard these interests. Unfortunately, very unfortunately, at this time we cannot avoid this phenomenon. I know of instances when articles were not published because they harmed the interests or the investments of those persons that were supporters of the media group.
7. In my earlier experience as a journalist in a daily paper I did have such experiences. Once it involved some reports on the municipality and others on the Office for the Registration of Property Titles. In fact, the latter was censored and was never published. In this case the media was used by the owner.
8. Yes, for example there have been cases when we have been told not to speak about the Albanian Energy Corporation (KESH).
9. Yes. There have been guidelines by the owner or the director of the television, on issues such as corruption, governance and the Prime Minister.
10. There have been a few such cases when the editor-in-chief has told me that the conditions are not ripe yet to write on a certain topic.
11. Such things in Albania no longer happen openly. In very rare cases the owner or editor-in-chief intervene directly on the topic to be covered or to

stop a certain report. There are however cases when well-known journalists have opposed the political interests of the owner.

12. When I started off as a journalist, yes, now not anymore. Of course there is certain pressure by the owners on delicate issues. This is also partly due to the Albanian environment where personal connections are many and matter a great deal.
13. Of course there are such interferences, often they tend to be indirect. In my case it has happened that in my TV program there was the intervention of a spokesman of a public institution, as well as the public official himself who contacted my editor in chief. In these cases the reactions are diverse, and sometimes quite strong.
14. Yes, they do influence my work, especially economic interests.

*What do you do if your political and ideological preferences do not agree with those prevailing in your media? Do you know of such cases in your or some other media?*

1. Personally, and journalists in general preserve the approach and ideology of the media where they work. Primarily because they want to save their job, but it is also some kind of self-censorship. My ideological and political preferences I can perform during the voting process.
2. I comply with what is dominant in the media where I work.
3. I professionally report only the facts.
4. I comply with the editorial policy, since I have decided to work in a newspaper that is independent.
5. I usually try to make a compromise and combine my beliefs with the editorial policy of the newspaper.
6. I try to adopt to the policy that the media I work in has. There are very few exceptions in the Albanian media when analysts can have their independent thoughts and run even counter to the editorial policy of the newspaper.
7. I adopt to the dominating policy in the media where I work.

*Do you know of any case that someone on the side – from a political party, from the government, from the non-government sector or from the business field – intervened that some data are published or not published or that someone*

*intervened after the text publishing he is not satisfied with? What was such reaction like? Do you know of any such cases in other media?*

1. There are such cases, both in mine and other media. The intervention is mostly from politics and businesses, directly or indirectly, as a favor that they will repay at some future time.
2. Yes, I wrote for some 6 months on the pension scheme and the Institute of Social Security, until at some point the director told me to stop writing although I had collected a lot of interesting material that should have been published. The director did not give me any explanation as to why we should not write anymore about the Institute of Social Security.
3. Yes, there have been such cases, especially ones involving the Municipality, or when officials were involved.
4. I have had many such interventions. Investigative journalism is an area which begs for such interventions and there are often collusions with individuals or state institutions, at times even court cases.
5. Yes, and it happens very often. They call the director before and after the TV program. It is mostly officials or government people.
6. Yes there are such cases. There are interventions, especially by politicians and representatives of government, who are not happy with what we write. Reactions range from clarifications with the editor to court cases.
7. There are such cases. It happens indirectly. There have been cases when public officials and NGO directors have intervened in order to have certain coverage. There is also dissatisfaction with some of the coverage we provide.
8. There have been cases when political parties or other actors have intervened in order to avoid the publication of a given piece. In this case they ask for a favor that they will repay.
9. Yes, my most recent case was that of an accident that happened with the Tirana telepheric. I was asked, through the intervention of someone, not to write about the accident.

*Have all protagonists in your media had the same opportunities that their attitudes are available to the public? Do you know of any such cases in other media?*

1. Generally yes. Althou it does happen that not all the journalists are free to express their opinion, also due to a certain self-censorship.

2. I think yes. I think in the media there is more a certain self-censorship rather than the absence of the opportunity to voice one's opinion.
3. I think yes. There are also some cases when the journalist does not have the opportunity to voice his/her opinions. Naturally he should in this case find another job, however in practice this is not easy so one is obliged to make compromises.
4. No, not so far.

*Have your sources given wrong information, especially those relating to an individual? Did you write a correction because of that, a denial or launch the true facts in some other way? Do you know of such cases in your or other media?*

1. Of course. There are such cases, but it is important to consult many sources before writing anything. This is how I do it. I have never launched a retraction and they are very rare in Albanian media.
2. Yes, it has happened. I have not made a correction or a retraction. There are many such cases but very rarely there are retractions.
3. Yes, it has happened. I wrote a retraction when I learned the truth.
4. Yes it has happened. I did not write a retraction, because it was a matter of inaccurate information rather than wrong information. I informed the reader through indirect means.
5. I have never done a direct retraction, but I try to inform the readers regarding the truth through journalistic means.

*Have you received any present, been to a paid visit (lunches, journeys, usual advertising matter of small value, signs of small appreciation)? Did it effect your reporting? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?*

1. Yes, I have been invited to trips abroad, which have been sponsored. However, these have not had an impact in me professionally, or in my articles.
2. No, I haven't. Even to other journalists I tell not to get involved in any of these matters.
3. Yes, I have received such presents. It is more than normal they have affected my reporting. Not in a radical way, but yes, they have influenced. I believe it happens in all media outlets.
4. Yes, I was invited in London by the British Council and after this trip I reported on it. Naturally, it was not advertisement, but it had elements of promotion in it.

*Do you remember some interview or some statement published in your media that have not been justified by their public importance and the principle of being interesting, but presented a form of hidden advertising? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?*

1. Yes, there are such articles time after time. In our publication there is a page presented as article, but in fact it's pre-paid.
2. Yes, there were many cases that were not especially relevant, but it was in our interest to render the information public.
3. I myself do not have such an experience. However, there are cases of articles written by order of the chief. Especially when it comes to businesses that support the newspaper. The articles might contain true and correct information, but the initial aim was to launch a business.

*Do you remember any example of infringement of personal rights in case it is written about the imprisoned, persons at court, etc.? Has it happened for the reasons of sensation, for revenge or for some other reason?*

1. Yes, there were cases when persons that were under investigation were labelled criminals without waiting for the court ruling. Even the People's advocate has reacted against this trend.
2. Yes, there have been such cases, for example with regard to maltreatment in pre-detention cells.
3. No, but I can add the cases of using names and photos of persons that have been arrested and information comes from police only, but the Court has not yet given a ruling on them.
4. in Albania there is still a diletantism in crime reporting and court reporting. Often, journalists, driven by sensation, not only report names, but also views of persons under investigation, without waiting for the court ruling. In the aspect of respect for privacy or human rights Albanian media is lagging behind.

*Are religious, national, sexual or some other (minority) affiliations mentioned if reporting on crime?*

1. These are mentioned if they are part of the news, but there are no elements of attitude or positioning in them. For example, in cases when religion itself is an issue, then it is declared.
2. Religious, ethnic, sexual affiliations are not reported, but if the citizen is foreign, the nationality is revealed. In cases when crime is related to sexual problems/abuses, then this information is reported.
3. Televisions are more careful in this respect; this is a feature more pervasive in print media I think.