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“Everybody is talking about the laws [on media freedom] but these laws need to be implemented,” said Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, addressing a conference in Belgrade organised [by Newsweek Serbia](#). As a guest at the panel moderated by the Media Diversity Institute (MDI), Mijatovic warned that there is a need to “speak loud and clear about the problems with media freedom”.

More than 20 speakers from around the world as well as some 200 attendees from Serbia itself agreed that the “situation in journalism in the Western Balkans is worrying”. The main problems include governmental and financial pressures, as well as lack of trust in journalism and journalists. Mijatovic added that the situation in the Balkans is worse because of many unresolved murders and physical attacks against journalists. Equally critical about the situation in journalism in the Balkans was Aidan White, Director of the Ethical Journalism Network.

“We have serious problems in journalism – we do not know who the owners of the press are, there is a corruption, there is a lack of professionalism. As journalists we need to prioritise public interest above personal or political interests of the owners“, said White.

Both, Mijatovic and White, spoke at the panel Press Freedom: Where are the Boundaries, moderated by MDI Executive Director, Milica Pesic. Panelists discussed that apart from limits imposed by the authorities, which media fight rightly and on daily basis, there is a need for other kind of limits. Those limits are to be imposed by journalists themselves when thinking of the public interest and the quality of their profession.

Responding to Pesic's question about the legitimacy of publishing [the photo of Syrian dead toddler](#) which on the day of the conference made media across the globe change the way they report on refugee crises, Ross Schneiderman, Newsweek US Senior Editor, said: "context is crucial here. If publishing that kind of photo does make sense, if it carries a message, then the photo should be published. To publish it for the sake of sensationalism is not the right criterium".

"For most of the media across Europe and North America, the migration story this week moved from being a political game of numbers to a compelling drama in which empathy and compassion dominated the headlines", said Aidan White.

One of the speakers at the conference was Kristinn Hrafnsson, spokesperson of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. He pleaded for solidarity among journalists. "The War against whistleblowers is getting tougher, so, the unity of journalists is crucial if we want to fight back," warned Hrafnsson.