

Human Rights On Media

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On December 6, 1992, a large crowd of Hindu Kar Sevaks (means ‘volunteers’) entirely destroyed the 16th-century Babri Masjid mosque in Ajodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in the Northern India, in an attempt to reclaim the land known as Ram Janmabhoomi (the supposed birthplace of the Hindu God Rama). This demolition, then led to several clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities in Northern India, causing the death of more than 2.000 people. Thus, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 16 December, 1966 by the United Nations, as well as, its provisions about the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion were strictly infringed.

Actually, the situation was not as simple as it was estimated; the subsequent occurrences displayed a great support to all those violations. Media kept silence and did not spread any news about the incidents, being under the pressure of Indian government. The media showed its absence again, when humanity needed them; it seems, the Muslim community in Ajodhya, perhaps, would have to be grateful to the press for not being a main weapon against them.

An overall view of the problem

Today in this rapidly globalised world, public and social media have penetrated through the lives of individuals so deeply that sometimes it is possible and much easier to get access to the news which ‘violates’ one’s personality and dignity by simply pressing a single button. The term of “violation” is not coincidentally used, because the media, while broadcasting the news about a particular incident of violation against a man, causes the second and harder violation unconsciously. Some confidential in-

formation is being published in order to raise the rate of press. What are the main mental or moral reasons of this complicated issue? To find a valid answer, we will have to descend the steps downward the core of the problem.

The main sources

One of the sources of the problem is that human rights have completely been idealized, because it covers the nature of law, morality and political philosophy. Media, in this case seems weak, because it originates from the facts, concerns ‘what happened’, ‘when it happened’ and ‘who did it’, regardless aforementioned philosophical nature of rights. It should be agreed that the conception of human rights for the philosophers of the Renaissance in Western Europe, namely John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire, on the one side, and for the news reporters who sit at their desks and type whatever they want, on the other side, are different, mainly because the first side was thinking, realizing what human rights meant. If professional information portals, as a part of media are judged, there are still problems which need to be surmounted. Therefore, the gist of the problem is a certain purpose of any media. The reasons why media shows superficial attitude towards human rights should be analyzed next.

Firstly, the majority of the news is considered as “the stories which people are interested in”. Today the news which consists of violations against human rights is an “entertainment object”. The greater interest is shown by the people, the more commercial aims of media are reached – presentation is always easier for them in comparison with a good content. The object of the violation that is entitled to

respect their human rights remains humble in this regard, media is careless about their problems. Media is careless and strictly calm at many times in the way it had a poor tone when Graham Staines, along with his two sons were burnt to death by a gang while sleeping at his station wagon in Keonjhar district, Odisha, India on 22 January, 1999 due to his religious views. Surely, this case is also unfamiliar to most of society, because the media did not spread the details and became satisfied by covering up the crime. These cases also prove that the interest of the oligarchy is still a power to overwhelm human rights. We do not talk merely about the violations in India or about any religious views as a main object; concept and condition might be different.

Secondly, today's news lacks good information. The articles which encompass legal approach are not approved; it is a pity, people tend to read military and political news rather than social and economic ones.

Finally, a legal approach to the problem has to be analyzed more deeply, because human rights are a matter of law. Regarding the judgement of European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Jersild v. Denmark* - the applicant was judged for his article which described the racist attitudes of members of a group of young people in Denmark, associated with several humiliations against their dignity. Interestingly enough, the European Court of Human Rights showed an attitude likewise supporting media because any news is a main tool for media. But the Court also stressed that media must not abuse their proxy and freedom of thought spontaneously which can lead to violations against human rights. In other words, while publishing any criminal and civil news which encompass information about victims and one's property respectively, media, in general, has to have enough intelligence to be able to predict results. Legal norms put an obligation of not being infringed on media too, even firstly on them. Because any press organization plays a role of 'bridge' between the incidents and people that they function as a body of filtration in this regard. It means you can easily get valid information about the number of victims after a horrible natural disaster in Haiti, for example, from reliable information agencies, such as CNN International or BBC. In the same way, it would simply be nonsense

to claim that you violated human rights while reading an article about raped person, including several photos on an irresponsible website, because the rights had been violated before by the writer, therefore you are one of the next innocent victims.

Inside the media

The relationship between reporter and editor is also crucial. Reporters and editors are both involved in deciding what stories are identified and selected and how they are covered. An experienced editor is an impetus when selecting news of high quality, correcting the mistakes, especially being sensible about the legal issues, human rights, avoiding any kind of infringements. Today the news about human rights is commonly presented in a very simplified way by journalists. Such simplification is associated with eliminations of some important aspects of the incidents, crimes and geographical confinements in the certain area in which the news can be efficient.

To the global context

Human rights institute is a global matter and it needs each violation to be globalised around the globe. Hypothetically, when a shepherd in fabulous plateaus of New Zealand is a victim of a violation and his basic human rights are violated, the case has to be solved not only in the restricted land of New Zealand or Oceania, but in the world. The world has to be informed about any violation against human rights, because a violation is always against humanity too. Incidentally, the advancement of the latest technologies creates great opportunities to spread global news. Another tremendous problem is that media also tends to report the same stories in a uniform way (which is called 'herd mentality'), thus it reduces critical thinking. In many cases, media seems regardless to such necessary and global news, even sometimes, you cannot encounter key historical, social or economical aspects of the incident when you scan the news, because they are not thoroughly analyzed or have already been omitted as a result of some exterior pressure. In another example, the armed members of Taliban in Afghanistan treat the corpses of victims inhumanly, even by burning them. The reason why they are doing this is to get an attention of the media which is also conducted to their polit-



“Laws made by common consent must not be trampled on by individuals”

-THOMAS JEFFERSON

ical goals. They, actually, reach their goal, but what about the media in this case? What is the current success rate of media in cases of reflecting violations against sacred human rights? If they are successful, how much is it important for the humanity to get informed? This is a matter of another dispute.

Today there has been another tendency that a number of news agencies, particularly those which belong to government, try to open up the violations against human rights and claim that they happen abroad. Supposedly, this country is quite far off such violations, that is a wrong strategy of the press in a certain country. Definitely, it is not. If human rights exist everywhere, a violation might happen every day in any circumstance, no country has been insured from the infringements.

In conclusion, human rights and media are different but mutually conducted phenomena which need this relationship for their existence and protection. Media, firstly, have to assist other plenipotentiary bodies to raise the awareness about human rights in the society, using various effective methods, secondly they have to be carried out by professionals of this realm, being fully operative when they are reflecting the incidents like a mirror, especially they have to do it with human rights sensibly and finally, they do not have to put their blame on someone else for their mistakes and they have to intensify legal approach in every news, especially related with holy rules of human rights law.

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