

Journalists appeal in TVN's defence

Almost one hundred journalists, including six editors-in-chief from Gazeta Wyborcza, Newsweek, Polityka, OKO.press, Rzeczpospolita and Press, signed an open letter in defence of TVN.

In the appeal, journalists explain that neutralizing TVN and subordinating it to the state is to be one of the last stages of taking control over the last institutions that keep an eye on the government and defend democratic values such as transparency, tolerance and equality before the law.

"If the government silences an inconvenient station, the rest of the free media face similar future. This fight cannot be lost. It would be a defeat for democratic Poland," signatories of the letter point out.

Warsaw, 28 July 2021

Journalists' appeal in defence of TVN

We, journalists of the Polish media, are protesting against the actions of the government of the United Right which strike at the independence of the TVN station. We declare that we will not allow the freedom of media be destroyed in our country, and we call on the world public opinion to intervene.

TVN is the largest nationwide television in Poland that is independent of the government. The Law and Justice party and its coalition partners, in power since 2015, have repeatedly attacked TVN for reports about the abuse of power and for reports that defended democracy in Poland. Public and pro-government media have stigmatized TVN journalists and conducted a propaganda campaign against the station.

In recent months, the Law and Justice government has moved from words to action. The government has not renewed TVN's broadcasting licence, and it is pushing through an act in the Sejm that is to force the station owner to sell its shares to a company friendly with the government. This is despite numerous warnings and appeals, also coming from abroad, to stop attacks on the station.

By its sixth year of rule, the government, in violation of democratic standards, has already successfully taken over public media, bribed or simply bought out some of the private media and has intimidated journalists with lawsuits. It has also attacked the still independent judiciary.

The government of the United Right disregards the rights and fundamental democratic values of the European Union. Wherever it can, the government tramples manifestations of independence underfoot. Neutralizing TVN and subordinating it to the state is to be one of the last stages of taking control over the last institutions that keep an eye on the government and defend democratic values such as transparency, tolerance and equality before the law. 32 years after the communism fell in Poland, history has come full circle. The ruling party has raised its hand to strike the media, which must remain free for the democracy to work. We cannot agree to this.

We do not agree to live in a world where truth has no voice. This would violate the very basis of the ethics of our profession and journalistic vocation.

If the government silences an inconvenient station, the rest of the free media face similar future. This fight cannot be lost. It would be a defeat for democratic Poland.