

C@ucAsia

international coalition of gender journalists

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GENDER



photo by Diana Petriashvili, Georgia

On May 28 - June 1 Moscow hosted the 26th World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists
the photo was taken there

EDITORIAL

crisis of security, crisis of freedom and crisis of work - this is the definition of main problems of the world journalism, as listed by one of the speakers. I would like to add one more crisis: the crisis of gender common sense.

Among the participants of this interesting forum, there was CaucAsia, the network of gender journalists - and we would like to thank the organizers for this possibility. We were invited in order to contribute new ideas to the IFJ gender program. We did our best to prepare for our mission - we brought plenty of books, magazines, posters films, thoughts and feelings. We did our best to contribute it all, but it was not contributed! The contrary stream was too hard. There were beauties as a live

advertisement, completely male presidiums, suggestive items in the cultural program... If there would be some special gender discrimination measuring equipment, it would off-scale read at that forum. Just as dosimeters in Chernobyl. C@ucAsia writers conscientiously participated in the activities. In the below texts there are the details as seen by our authors. In this editorial note I am simply asking the question I can't get rid of: HOW is it possible that terrible gender insensibility adjusts to the Gender program of IFJ?

What is the effectiveness of this program? How serious are the program's intentions? What will be the output of its perspectives? And does it make sense the creation of 'gender ghettos' as "additional activities" (seminars, presentations) of the Congress, without balancing its agenda?

Ruta PELS
Estonia

where's the logic?

MIXTURE OF LAUGH AND TEARS



photo by Ruta Pels

it should not be mixed

This American girl finished her first grade recently. For having good grades, her grandmother and grandfather, who is the director of a prestigious New York institute, took her to Russia, to the country of her historic background. Her first impressions were: a lot of unknown people who came together to the world congress of journalists and half naked girls dancing in front of them.

When asked a question if she likes the show, this innocent kid drops her eyes and nods. But there seems to be something that embarrasses the girl - maybe undressed bodies of the dancers, or men with photo-cameras surrounding the long-legged show girls. The girl's grandfather also runs around the stage trying to make good pictures of publicly displayed women's bodies. The congress organizers

seemed to do their best to create interesting and meaty cultural program. Opening, closing and 'Journalists Village' presenting concerts were quite diverse: they included Orthodox choir, opera, gipsy songs and amateur performances. The guests of Moscow could enjoy any genres of Russian art. There were also plenty of pleasures for one's eyes. Only some of Muslim men felt a bit confused from the

beginning of naked girls show, but they finally managed to overcome their embarrassment and even took pictures - in order to report on the Moscow Congress to their national journalists' unions.

All this sharply contradicted the general mood of the congress, which was opened with the discussion of the conflict between the Russian Journalists' Union and the country's authorities, which tends to remove the Union from the building it has been occupying for 27 years already. This Russian merry-making did not match at all the process of laying flowers in the gallery of murdered journalists, and the

debates on journalists' security, which is especially lacking in Russia. And it is completely strange to think about the well-planned revealing sexism on the background of gender-sensitive journalists' unions presentations and two stands on the fight against sexism.

The Congress program also mixed it all together - laugh and tears, comedies and tragedies. It irritated serious participants who came to discuss problems and to share experience, but the majority of journalists had fun both attending serious discussions and participating in the cultural program.



Nightmare of the Congress. The girls have the same poses as at our anti-sexist t-shirts. Stop sexism in the media - the t-shirts say. But even if all the Congress participants would wear these t-shirts, the girls would remain undressed and disgraced.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

Diana PETRIASHVILI

Georgia

feeling sad

SEXISM GETTING HARDER

and IFJ gender program does not intervene in it

...I kept feeling sad all the time in Moscow. I realized that I should not have reasons for feeling sad, but I still did. I could not understand the logic of some events, statements and actions that took place at the World Congress of IFJ.

BOMBS FOR THE MEDIA

From one hand, CaucAsia was invited to participate in the Congress in order to support the fight for equality, and to contribute to the promotion of gender issues in IFJ. But from the other hand, it turned out that nobody actually heard us. Or - almost nobody.

At the final dinner that closed the Congress, the compere smiled significantly: "Here is the surprise for you, dear delegates," he said, "we will now show you a real JOURNALISTS carnival."

And girls of dance show Bomba entered the stage. Girls wore spangled bikini and feathery hats. I looked at the faces of sexism fighters from CaucAsia and saw that the surprise turned out well. That was something we really could not expect. And we never understood why the carnival was dubbed as 'JOURNALISTS'? Are they journalists, these dance show girls?



photos by Diana Petriashvili



NEWSPAPER'S FACE, LEGS AND HAIR

The CaucAsia members were thoroughly preparing for the participation in the Stop-Sexsim campaign, side-event of the Congress. We discussed and argued a lot about doing our job in the most effective way, so that it would influence as many sexists of the media field, as possible.

Two steps away (on the left) from our anti-sexist stand, there was an advertisement of Moskovskaya Pravda newspaper. This newspaper was advertised by a young woman. This woman wore short skirt and high heels, she was sitting with her legs crossed and would not say anything.

It turned out that the girl was a model; Pravda employed her to advertise its product. The newspaper's request was that the girl would wear mini-skirt, high heels, flowing hair and smile.

SEXISM AGENCY

Two steps away (on the right) there was an exhibition of photographs made by different authors. This work stuck to my memory the most. I guess, the author of the photo believes it is quite funny - image of two half naked women supporting the sign board of rental agency. As I remember, the title of this photo was 'Women for Rent.' Unfortunately, there were a lot of alike sexist photographs at the exhibition. And I don't know why the organizers let these pictures to the important international event. Neither I know why the IFJ gender activists did not contribute to the selection process of the photos.



photos by Diana Petriashvili



ANNA: FOR WHAT?!

From one hand, I understood the difficulties Moscow organizers faced while achieving holding of the Congress in Russia, the country that was included in number of 'bad' lists, considering freedom of speech, journalists' murders, and xenophobia. From the beginning, I even felt sorry for the organizers who, as it seemed to me, had to force their way through the total biliousness.

But from the other hand, I failed to understand the reason to read the letter of Ramzan Kadyrov directly before laying a flower on murdered Anna Politkovskaya's portrait..

Why was it all so impossible to avoid that letter?

The organizers complained about the authorities ignoring the Congress. I think it would be a good idea if the Congress would ignore the authorities as well. But instead of it, it had voiced the authority who is known for being very non-loyal towards free media.

Tamara HOVNATANYAN
Armenia

profession of risk

DON'T SHOOT AT JOURNALIST

for only
saying the truth



photo by Umida Akhmedova, Uzbekistan

During all days of the Congress work, there were bunches of fresh flowers in the gallery of murdered journalists. I visited the gallery and looked at the displayed photos. All the faces were young and open, it felt like there are so many of them, who got killed. "What have I, a mean woman, done?" the caption on Anna Politkovskaya photo said. In the opposite corner, there was another big portrait of another murdered journalist, Artem Borovik: "This is my country, and I will not keep silence." It was impossible to stay in the gallery for long.

The discussion on the impunity for journalists' murders took place at the very first special session of the Congress. The session appeared even before the official opening of the event. Dmitry Muratov, the editor of Novaya Gazeta newspaper was the first who highlighted the schedule. "I feel like I have to warm up the audience for a rock-concert," he said. Other participants had also complained about the discussion being left out of the main program of the Congress. At the next day, some Congress participants said that the open discussion of the murdered journalists' problem frightened off Russian authorities, who were planned to be participating in the event. That was the reason why the Congress was ignored by Sergey Mironov, the chairman of the Council of Federation, by Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, by ex-president Mikhail Gorbachev, all of whom confirmed their participation previously.

Journalists also highlighted that none of Russian TV companies, except for one, reported about the Congress, while there were at least ten cameras at the opening. To be fair enough, we should note, however, that the Congress received quite a warm letter signed by the Russian vice-prime minister Dmitry Medvedev, which was acknowledging the merits of Russian journalists. Although, participants could feel definite tensions between the journalists

and the authorities. One of the reason behind the tense relations is the fact that just on the threshold of the Congress, Russian Journalists Union, the co-organizer of the event, was requested to leave the building it occupied for 27 years.

The first session made great impression on all of the participants. "We will never get used to the murders of our colleagues, and we are especially mad because murderers can always remain unpunished," Christopher Warren, the president of the International Federation of Journalists said in his opening address. After nine-years-old presidency in organization that unites some half-million journalists from 150 countries, Warren had resigned, Jim Boumelha was elected as the new president of IFJ. According to Warren, today's journalism faces three obvious crisis - the crisis of security, crisis of freedom of press and crisis of work. This last appears in the relations between journalists and employers, and in worsening of journalists' working conditions. However, despite of this topic's importance, it was not continued at the further speeches.

There are thousands of journalists killed in the world throughout recent ten years. 168 media workers were killed last year, as many as 80 journalists were killed during 4 months of 2007, Rodney Pinder, the director of International News Safety Institute said sharing the statistics. "A journalist can be killed easily, cheaply, and without a risk," he added.

When delivering his report, Alexey Simonov, the president of Galsnost Defence Fund, blamed the law-enforcement agencies in ineffective work in investigating crimes against journalists. According to the Foundation's statistics, there are 220 murdered journalists and 1500 journalists who became victims of violence since 1992. Simonov emphasized, that the number of those journalists who died in military operations zones and in car accidents is very

insignificant, while the majority died after being injured with "knives, bats, shots." Simonov also quoted the position of the law-enforcement bodies regarding journalists: "Journalists are the most scandalous part of the society. Journalists tend to hard drinking and adultery; they are peculiar to too high self-appraisal and to non-traditional sexual orientation. They do not respect the authority, believing that they are the authority themselves. They tend to be opposing and being categorical in their evaluations. They accompany all social conflicts and it is very difficult to distinguish them from conflicting sides, as there is neither time, nor possibility for this. They are haughty, they have unhealthy curiosity they believe is a professional merit."

"We are not the angels," Simonov replied this collective definition of journalists, "but I have never heard of a country, where angels are the only who gets murdered. In the case of any 'domestic' crime, you have a question on whether it was an accident, or a contract murder. And, as a rule, you never get reply to that question. But even if there is, it all that simple: an accident," Simonov said and went on, "It was just an 'accident' like that when Igor Domnikov of Novaya Gazeta died from fatal blow with a hammer in 2000. Only five years later it was discovered that the 'accident' was a planned beating contracted by the heroes of Igor's article. That severe beating was the reason of the journalist's death. Investigation discovered both the executors and the intermediaries of this crime. But the contractors were never judged "

According to Simonov, the crimes against journalists in Russia are worse investigated than other crimes. Throughout past three years only 11 crimes were solved out of 90; while in total, 80% of crimes were solved in Russia. "Law-enforcement bodies lack people, money, equipment, professionalism, honesty and other components necessary for working," Simonov concluded. Novaya Gazeta newspaper editor Dmitri Simonov focused his speech on the problem of professional solidarity and corporate ethics. He noted the situation when some journalists, when covering the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, mentioned her second US citizenship. Muratov

called on creation of a special bureau aimed at investigating journalist's murders. "This bureau should conclude contracts with Interpol, it should be the structure analogous to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which worked at searching for the Nazi criminals," Muratov stressed.

Julia Kalinina of Moskovskiy Komsomolets highlighted the necessity of amending the Russian Criminal Code so that it would equate a murder of a journalist with that of an authority. Authorities and police are more protected than journalists, which is not fair, Kalinina believes, as journalists also serve the society.

Igor Yakovenko, the general secretary of the Russian Journalists' Union stated that the problem should be solved at the UN level. He believes that the UN should have a special program focused on journalists' death-rate. "The number of murdered journalists increases by 1.5 every year. This is the problem of not only journalists, this is the problem of mankind. Because of this the people become less informed and less protected, he said. There is a special program on the fight against poverty, against epidemics, against children's mortality. There should be an analogous program against journalists' murders."



we are not angels, that's true. But any journalist has a right for safe working.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

Vafa SALEH
Azerbaijan

welcome!

DON'T LET, DON'T HELP, DON'T SMILE!

small observations
at big forum

After seeing the activeness of Georgian colleagues of GenderMediaCaucasus Association, I thought that gender would be especially discussed at the Congress. I assumed that that will be the time when the international media society finally turns its face to the problems of women. But unfortunately, women's issues were not touched at all in the main hall of the discussions. Even women reporting to the large international audiences, spoke on behalf of some agamic journalists, and did not say anything about their professional problems. There were many discussions on arrests of journalists, on murders, on politics. During all five days, the attention of the Congress was focused on these topics only. They are of course important. But there are other very important topics as well! I paid attention to the journalists from Iraq. It is widely known that the world powers study their own interests and impose their policy on this country. These powers favor Iraq's separation into small territories, and promote creation of Kurd Autonomy. There were 6-7 delegates from Iraq, and all of them represented Iraqi Kurds. It is very hard to imagine that Iraqi journalists refused from participation in this forum! Besides this, we know that Iraq is a multi-national state, so why did Russia invited Kurdish journalists only?

Even before the Congress had started, at the stage of correspondence, there were certain signals of alarm: "This is Moscow, you must solve your problems yourself." That was a reply I got after asking organizers about the details of the journey and placement in Moscow. Before this, our network used to meet in Tbilisi mostly, at the international conferences. It was a real contrast! Tbilisi cares about every participant, and organizes everything very clearly. But Moscow



photo by Ulmida Akhmedova

says - "you must solve your problems yourself." But I did not expect that there will be so many problems to solve in Moscow! Coldness and indifference to participants is the most unpleasant. It felt that the organizers were requested not to let anything, not to help anyone, and not to smile. It seemed that someone convinced them that all guests are enemies. One of participants from Cyprus complained when talking to me: "Why are they so rude to the participants? I will never come again to Moscow."



this is Russian word for "oops." We felt like saying "oops" all the time.

photo by Diana Petriashvili



Alla PYATIBRATOVA

Kyrgyzstan

three episodes

THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE

...the second day of the Congress. We sit at our 'gender-booth' in the 'Journalists' Village' and wait for our presentation to begin.

luckily, there is always someone who listens to what you say.
photo by Diana Petriashvili

We need to concentrate, to think on how to present our countries. But it is pretty hard to concentrate in the environment like this. It is noisy, bustling crowd. Everybody moves, goes to different 'booths' and collects newspapers, magazines, leaflets, calendars and books.

The stage is occupied. Our presentation is scheduled for later. We leave the 'booth' and go to see other participants. There is plenty of print production everywhere; there are many long-legged girls advertising Moscow newspapers.

People come to our booth and take anti-sexist t-shirts and magazines. And soon there are plenty of people wearing the t-shirt saying "Stop Sexism in the Media." That makes me feel definite commonality: all of these people seem to be ready to say "stop" to the sexism.

Finally, we are at the stage. Gala tells the audience about the CaucAsia coalition. The

member countries stand in the line to continue the presentation, they are: Armenia, Tajikistan, Estonia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan. "Speak loudly," Gala warns us. And I yell in the microphone; I find one face looking at me, and I talk to this one face. Other people talk to each other, have drinks, laugh, and pass by. It is so noisy that it is very hard to be audible. But suddenly someone stops in front of the stage, and begins listening to me. At last, I want to believe that he listens

Later I realized that the conditions for holding this presentation were the same as in our regular everyday work. This is the modern model of a journalist's working environment. Today's journalist oftentimes has to scream in order to be heard and to bring the people's attention to the problems he addresses. And we can only hope that there is always someone in the crowd who stops and begins listening to what you say.

MEMORY

The Gallery of Murdered Journalists - this is one of the strongest impressions I got at the Congress. We had to take one flower each to enter the gallery. For a moment people stood motionless at the entrance - there were too many portraits on the wall. It was very unexpectedly to us, despite we knew the numbers - over 250 murdered journalists in Russia during recent 15 years.

There were so many young faces. Some of them were shot like Anna Politkovskaya and Paul Khlebnikov, others were beaten to death, some became victims of plane crash, like Artem Borovik. All of them were doing their job. The world that kills people for doing their job is really sick!..

POWER

Quite a strange fact - Russian authorities ignored the international congress of journalists, and did not even issue an official welcome speech. Igor Yakovenko, Russian Journalists Union Secretary General shared his opinion at the press conference:

"We expected both Sergey Mironov and Dmitry Medvedev... But their press secretaries said both were too busy... Later we found out that the authorities received an unofficial order not to participate in the Congress. Moscow won the tender on hosting the Congress, and [authorities] should be proud of this. But our government demonstrated its attitude towards journalists and I think it's a shame for my country."



the presidiums of the Congress were completely male. Women's role seemed to be dancing, singing, and asking questions.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

view from Turkmenistan

DON'T FORGET US!

there are
INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS
in Turkmenistan

and they want to be known
and remembered
by the professional community

Beginning with the late 1990-es, Turkmen journalists stopped participating in the events taking place outside of their home country. If they go to foreign seminars, trainings, conferences and congresses, they do not unveil their real name. The reason behind it is the risk of repressions, which can be firing from work or criminal prosecution. There is a special article in the Turkmen Criminal Code, and any critics can be viewed as slander. Just an example: Turkmen journalist Sona Chuli-Kuli was not let to participate in the international media forum in Almaty, wehere she was invited as an expert. Chuli-Kuli was sentenced to constant residence in one place.

Nevertheless, Turkmenistan participated in the 26th International Congress of the IFJ. The country was represented by independent journalist Altyn Akhmedova (name is changed). This is what the journalist said about her participation:

"I did not participate in the events with this many colleagues from different countries for so long time! Everything seems very interesting to me now - beginning with the general atmosphere of the congress and meetings with certain people. The first day of the work was unforgettable; that was when we spoke about difficult and dangerous conditions of journalists' work. By the end of the first day, there was the opening of the photo gallery of murdered journalists, and all the Congress participants visited it. All of them had to take a flower to lay it under the portrait of murdered journalist. There were many flowers at the portraits of Anna Politkovskaya, Vlad Listyev, Dmitry Kholodov... I layed my flower to Artem Borovik's portrait. Artem's father, famous old Russian journalist Genrih Borovik had also visited the gallery. I saw him standing at his son's portrait...

I recalled the names of killed Turkmen journalists. Unfortunately, there are many of them. I knew N. Sosnina, a brave and uncompromised journalist of Turkmenskaya Iskra newspaper (it is now called Neutral Turkmenistan). This woman disappeared without a trace at the territory of her country some fifteen years ago, and was never found; but her colleagues remember about her, and I hope that she will appear in the lists of those journalists who are remembered and honored, because she is among those who did a lot for the development of Turkmenistan's journalism.

Another great impression was the coalition of gender journalists, CaucAsia. This is the group of journalists working in the countries of Caucasus and Central Asia, who publish their own information-analytical electronic magazine C@ucAsia. There were a lot of visitors at the Coalition's stand, and the film created by one of its members, Uzbek photojournalist Umida Akhmedova made great impression on many participants. Unfortunately, people

lack information about the countries of Central Asia in post-Soviet era. I am very familiar with the wedding traditions shown in Umida's film. Some of these traditions are analogpous to those we have in Turkmenistan, and there are many of those that disgrace women.

At the Congress I had the feeling of being safe. I did not have that feeling for a long time, fot ten years, at least.

Turkmen journalists are very vulnerable, they are constantly checked for being loyal enough to the authorities. Those journalists, who are not loyal, are being included into the 'black list,' and are not

let abroad. There is no conception of an independent journalist, these journalists are considered to be unemployed. This is why I want to say to my colleagues of all the countries of the world: there are independent journalists in Turkmenistan and they want to be known and remembered by the professional community. I really hope that I will keep having the feeling of safety after I come home, I hope that the feeling of comradeship will be the real support that could help me to wait till better time for Turkmen journalism.



we do have Turkmen journalists in CaucAsia. But we will not show their faces and will not name them.

photo by Diana Petriashvili

Umida AKHMEDOVA
Uzbekistan

media openness

WHO INFLAMES DISCORD?

those
who don't extinguish it

Just recently, I saw a short news report in the internet: "Bodies of three Tajik citizens found in the vicinities of Moscow." According to the report, these three people were beat to death with a crow-bar. I am now crying, while writing this to you. I am imagining these regular guys who came to Moscow from Tajik villages.

The Congress spoke a lot about TOLERANCE. A really liked the speech of journalist from Adygea, she spoke about Russian media sources being infected with phobia towards even those people who reside in the Russian Caucasus.

I had different feelings at the Congress...

There were many interesting, smart and brave journalists; but at the same time there was that stupid chauvinism in the air...

Two young girls came up to Volodya Khanas and reproached him: why do you consort with these Muslims?"

Who, do you think, the Muslims are? These are me and Vafa, Volodya was talking with us at that moment. Three of us had a lot of fun, after Volodya replied the girls, but I still have a question: pardon me, but these girls were somehow connected to journalism, as they were attending the WORLD CONGRESS OF JOURNALISTS! And if they are journalists, I guess they would not really protest against those dirty murderers who kill 'the Muslims.'

Now, after reading about three young Tajiks who got killed in Moscow, I feel scared. I am scared for both Tajiks and Russians.

Dear editor! I wanted to write something else, but I can't! I am sure that Russian medias should also be responsible for inflaming international conflicts.



during the Congress, our Tajik colleague Rano Bobojanova wore beautiful national dresses. It turns out that she was really at risk?!

photo by Diana Petriashvili

Tamara BALAVADZE

Georgia

details

DIARY OF NONOPERATING EVENTS



photo by Ulmida Akhmedova

May 27

As the result of incredibly hard efforts I finally got the Russian visa.

The first great impression was the amazement of Russian border guards as they saw my Georgian passport. They asked me questions like: "so, why did you come to Russia?" And I had to repeat many times, that I am actually the participant of the world congress. The third border guard turned out to be quite a smart lady, she put all necessary stamps and let me go.

It was abnormally hot in Moscow, but that was the last day when we could be accredited for the Congress. I was not in any of the lists. Luckily, there were plenty of people with the same problem, and some of them were my friends, like Rano Bobojanova from Tajikistan, whom I know for many years already, as she is the member of CaucAsia coalition and comes to Tbilisi to our annual gender conferences.

The personnel in charge for registrations quite puzzled me. These were elderly obese and grumbling ladies. My emotions reached the very climax when they refused to register me in Moscow, and sent me to the Georgian embassy.

May 28

It was the first day of the Congress work. All the participants of our group from Uzbekistan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan had name tags, which said that all of them were from Russia (quite a strange misprint, if we think about it!).

I was impressed with the Dagestan's stand - at one of its shelves there was a Georgian brand of cognac.

In contrast to other South Caucasus states, Armenia was very active. It introduced a huge stand on the activities of Moscow International press-club Russia-Armenia.

For the first time we met our CaucasAsian colleague from Turkmenistan. Such a good news! We were happy to collect all the books introduced at the presentations, but Altyn from Turkmenistan was not sure that she'd be allowed to bring them to Turkmenistan.

I was also impressed with the stand of Russkaya Gazeta newspaper, that was every morning introducing the new cake baked in the form and design of real newspaper. At the first day, there was the portrait of the foreign affairs minister on the tort.

The beginning of the congress was recorded by

18 (!!!) Russian TV channels. But only one of them had actually showed the event. Russian government was openly blamed in the murders of journalists (299 journalists in 13 years only in). None of the officials visited the opening ceremony. Democracy seems to going through hard times in Russia.

Aidan White, IFJ secretary general was very loyal when talking about democracy and journalism in Georgia and Armenia, when comparing it to the persecution of journalists in Belarus and Azerbaijan.

The audience was shocked about the speech of one Azerbaijani journalist, who said that she was the one, who 'imprisoned' Ayatollah Fatullaev, the editor of opposition Realniy Azerbaijan newspaper.

Another participant from Azerbaijan, our CaucasAsian colleague lost her lunch card. Strict doormen were not letting her in. Tamara from Armenia was the most actively struggling for Vafa's lunch. GenderMediaCaucasus Association seems to be a peacekeeping organization!

May 30

On the third day of the Congress work I managed to try Russkaya Gazeta cake. That time it had the portrait of Putin on it.



these are our colleagues, who do not need an explanation on what the sexism is.

photo by Umida Akhmedova

Editors:

Galina PETRIASHVILI (editor-in-chief), Georgia
(+99599 90 11 24, galapet@ip.osgf.ge)
Tsitsino JULUKHIDZE (Georgian version editor), Georgia
(+99599 92 32 67, cicoju@rambler.ru)
Diana PETRIASHVILI (English version editor), Georgia
(+99599 76 26 21, dianapetriashvili@yahoo.com)

The edition was prepared by:

Ruta PELS, Estonia
Vafa SALEKH, Azerb
Diana PETRIASHVILI, Georgia
Tamara HOVNATANYAN, Armenia
Alla PIATIBRATOVA, Kyrgyzstan
Altyn AKHMEDOVA, Turkmenistan
Umida AKHMEDOVA, Uzbekistan
Tamara BALAVADZE, Georgia

Photo:

Umida AKHMEDOVA, Uzbekistan
Diana PETRIASHVILI, Georgia
Ruta PELS, Estonia

Design:

GMC design-group, Georgia

Translation:

Diana PETRIASHVILI - Georgia (**GMC**)

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GenderMediaCaucasus

JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION



www.gmc.ge

<http://spaces.msn.com/GMC-Georgia>

17 Ioris Str. TBILISI, 0103, Republic of Georgia
Tel./fax (995 32) 77 60 18; mob. (995 99) 90 11 24
e-mail galapet@ip.osgf.ge