

# WE ARE THE MEDIA

VOLUME 2

CITIZENS PARTICIPATE, OBSERVE AND REPORT



#CivicLenses





National Endowment  
for Democracy

*Supporting freedom around the world*

# WE ARE THE MEDIA

VOLUME 2

CITIZENS PARTICIPATE, OBSERVE AND REPORT

## CIVIC LENSES

PROJECT FOR TRANSPARENT  
AND ACCOUNTABLE POLITICAL PROCESSES

SUPPORTED BY:  
THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

IMPLEMENTED BY:  
CIVIL - CENTER FOR FREEDOM

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## WE ARE THE MEDIA volume 2

citizens participate, observe and report

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**A CITIZEN JOURNALIST:  
UNCHAINED BY  
INFLUENCES AND  
PRESSURE, BRINGING  
FACTS AND TRUTH TO  
LIGHT**

да се биде видео активист...



Самодоверба

- Идентитет

- Контакти/деликатни ситуации

- Родова рамнотежа

# A CITIZEN JOURNALIST: UNCHAINED BY INFLUENCES AND PRESSURE, BRINGING FACTS TO LIGHT

**XHABIR DERALLA**

**C**ivic Lenses is a project for transparent and accountable political processes through support and popularization of citizen journalism, awareness-raising, civic education and activism of citizens towards human rights, freedom of expression, democracy, and free elections. This is a project that provides training and opportunities for citizens to participate, observe and report on events that are important to them, their local communities and processes at local and national level. This project has grown into an important tool for citizens to remind authorities and officials of their obligation to be transparent and accountable.

Two very successful years of implementation of the Civic Lenses project are behind CIVIL. Hundreds of active citizens from various walks of life and all communities in the country (over 500 of them so far), have been trained in citizen journalism, human rights, media literacy, monitoring and reporting skills. We have incorporated methodologies and approaches tested within the Civic Lenses Project in other projects of CIVIL, as well.

Citizen journalists around the world have enormous power. Thanks to the accessible technology and the Internet, they have the opportunity to expose violations and abuses by power holders, and contribute to the strengthening of freedom of expression. If some time ago we had to wait for corrupt media and editors to publish alarming stories on violation of human rights, usually without any success, now we can do this ourselves, with the help of our smart phones and social networks. These days, citizen journalists are recording short video stories with visibility that easily exceed the circulation of newspapers or the audience of popular TV stations.

Cooperation of CSOs with citizens is extremely important. CSOs and citizens need

Citizen journalists contribute towards creation of free and independent media, and participate towards transparent and accountable political processes in delicate times for the democratization processes in the country.

to become one. As always, CIVIL relies on that cooperation in order to arrive to information and stories on what is really happening in society. Even though CIVIL had only 300 observers at the parliamentary elections, the responses from around the country and the contributions of citizen journalists have made CIVIL's mission much greater and impactful. CIVIL's elections observation, just as the human rights monitoring, is a joint mission of the organization's crew and the many active citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious or political affiliation or social status of the sources.

The CIVIL crew is also proud to confirm that the organization reflects Macedonia on all grounds of diversity, and enjoys enormous trust and support from citizens throughout the country. CIVILians are making all efforts to justify that trust, every day. In these stressful times for the country and the region, when accuracy of information is highly needed, information and stories are at hand, precisely because of the courage and commitment of the citizen journalists.

Citizen journalism is defined and explained to all CIVIL election observers; 300 observers were accredited by the State Election Commission for the early parliamentary elections in 2016. They were encouraged to use these skills during their work as observers. We have encouraged many organizations across the country to follow CIVIL's successful example, and to advise their members to take part in the training seminars and other activities within the project. Some certainly have.

Some media in the country, including traditional ones, have finally comprehended the value of citizen journalism and activism as both source and resource, and have included them in their programming in various ways, including those similar to ours.

Citizen journalism has breached the boundaries set by political and financial power structures, and has opened a new era in the information dissemination across the media and society universes.



**This project, as is the case with other projects of CIVIL, represents the efforts of the organization to successfully intervene where many others fail. One of the reasons for the success of our projects is the genuine and sincere commitment of the organization's crew, working as one, to create and uphold a civic oriented media resource for development of a democratic society where politicians and officials are demanded to be responsible and accountable.**



Citizen Journalism Awards are always well attended.

Violation of human rights and freedoms are not invisible anymore; they may easily and promptly become known to public, through contributions of citizen journalists.

Apart from gaining new skills or developing new ones, participants in the Civic Lenses Project also get the opportunity to improve their knowledge on human rights, elections and political culture, and have the opportunity to work in the field, together with CIVIL's highly experienced team. Some of them get incorporated in CIVIL's team, while many remain active supporters and members of observation teams across the country, or join other organizations to pass on the unique CIVIL experience.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT:** Citizen journalists contribute towards creating free and independent media, and push towards transparent and accountable political processes in delicate times for the country. Since CIVIL has introduced citizen journalism in the observation of human rights and of elections, the public has been alerted, and so have violators. Violation of human rights and freedoms are not invisible anymore; they can easily and instantly become known to the public, through contributions of citizen journalists.

Censorship and self-censorship have become worthless tools of those who want to control information and public opinion. Citizen journalism has breached the boundaries set by political and financial power structures, and has opened a new era in the information dissemination across the media and society universes. If an editor of a media decides to conceal information brought by a journalist, the same information created by an activist may go viral in seconds. Moreover, traditional media suffer from many hindrances. They are slower than citizen journalists. This comes out of the genuine call of media to provide high quality and relevance of the media content. But, tardiness is most often a consequence of the robust procedures and

Censorship and self-censorship have become worthless tools of those who want to control information and public opinion.



pressure. An activist (citizen journalist) with a smart phone in hand is a lone warrior in the Internet jungle, unchained by influences and pressure, bringing facts and truth to light.

CIVIL has recognized the momentum and has offered one more important strength to the whole story. Citizen journalists, activists and whistleblowers have a safe

Citizen journalists, activists and whistleblowers have got a safe space for their contributions, making sure that their stories are supported and processed by a professional crew and, importantly, protect their identity.

space for their contributions, making sure that their stories are supported and processed by a professional crew and, most importantly, their identity is also protected. Anonymity is particularly important for those who may face retributions by employers or belligerent individuals and groups in the community.

In times when institutions are still unstable and the rule of law is weak, contributions of citizens who are aware and active, represent a precious asset for the society, and pave the way towards creating conditions for citizen participation in decision making processes and development of democracy as a whole. For citizen participation does not begin with a legislative measure, but with genuine effort to introduce it as a consistent and longstanding policy and practice!





Nationalist protests in Skopje, 2017

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

**T**he Republic of Macedonia suffered from a long-standing devastating political crisis. The political crisis was interrupted with a number of security challenges, interethnic and inter-religious tensions and incidents, political violence, as well as with shrinking social and economic situation in the country. The country suffered from state capture, particularly enhanced since 2008. Elections in December, 2016 have brought a change of government that has been completed five months later, after a long string of events and violence that could have additionally deteriorated the overall situation in the country.

The very process of formation of the new government was accompanied with a fierce campaign by the opposition, rise of nationalism, and a violent attack on the parliament building on April 27, where an attempt on the life of several MPs was made, including the lives of the political leaders of now ruling social-democrats and of the Alliance for Albanians.

Challenges are not over. During the first half of 2017, one can still see that political and financial power centers are still holding the country captive in many ways,

particularly at local level. This could and should be expected. The state and all of its institutions, the entire economy, as well as the society and the media have been treated as private property of a narrow circle of people. This behaviour of power centers is extremely difficult to root out. Tremendous efforts and time have to be invested to heal the country from a widespread political corruption and make institutions efficient, citizen oriented, transparent and accountable.



Security camera captured the brutal attack on the leader of the Alliance for Albanians; sent to CIVIL by a whistleblower

The legacy of the Macedonian young democracy is rather grim. Police, inspections and judiciary used to be the main tools for intimidation and pressure. Those institutions were the first lines of defense for the high political, business and media strongmen. Nowadays, many of them are suspected of serious crimes, abuse of power, wiretapping enormous number of citizens, corruption and electoral fraud, investigated by the Special Public Prosecutor.

The state capture has led to serious and continuous human rights violations and discrimination. Hate speech and public stigma against human rights activists and independent intellectuals was widespread and is still present in the public discourse. Now, just days after the new government was introduced, there is an increasing trend of hate speech against supporters of the previous

government, which is now posing new challenges to the fragile political process in the country.

By shutting down or severely corrupting media, and by imprisoning journalists, the party that has led the previous government has severely hit the freedom of expres-

Police, inspections and judiciary used to be the main tools for intimidation and pressure. Those institutions were the first lines of defense for the high political, business and media strongmen.



sion. Abuse of power, structural violence and electoral frauds became obvious and evidenced features of the country. Frequent pre-term election processes, filled with serious irregularities and electoral frauds that are under investigation of the Special Public Prosecutor, have additionally deteriorated the situation. Political corruption, structural violence and discriminatory policies and practices were wide-spread and it is not likely that they will easily disappear after the change of power.

In the past several years, CIVIL has recorded an increased number of cases of pressure and attacks on journalists, human rights activists and those who are not in the same line with the main political centers of power. This all has led to a severe deterioration of human rights situation in the country and affected the everyday life of citizens.



Shrinking of civic space continued, leaving no possibilities for citizen participation, civic engagement, and freedom of expression that are guaranteed by the country's Constitution and by the international standards.

Shrinking of civic space continued, leaving no possibilities for citizen participation, civic engagement, and freedom of expression that are guaranteed by the country's Constitution and by the international standards. Civil society and media situation in the country is in disastrous shape, leaving deep divisions between citizens in general, which is generated by the conduct of the media that are vastly under control of the formerly ruling parties and their business associates.

A smaller number of media outlets were under significant influence of the opposition parties, running the risk to become uncritical apologists of the new government. In such case, the space for free and independent information to be disseminated in public will remain rather narrow. Information has been traded for propaganda from either side of the belligerent political options in the country. Stigmatization and public discrediting is a daily routine in the media and social networks. This is a clear illustration on how deeply divided the society is, due to the longstanding wrongdoings of the ruling parties, and a very poor capacities of the rest of the political and societal structures to rebuild democracy and rule of law in the country.

All in all, it is very hard to find both civic activities and media contents in the country that are entirely free from political interference. Civil society and media have a decreasing opportunities to provide objective information and to serve as a civic education resource for constructive exchange and dialogue in the society. The society is in a need for real citizen society oriented, entirely open, objective and free civic and media platforms to contribute to overcoming the long-standing turmoil in the country.

# GOOD QUESTIONS AND EVEN BETTER ANSWERS

## Q&A

**W**hat is citizen journalism? Why citizen journalism? What are the achievements from citizen journalism? How citizen journalism can contribute to transparent and accountable political processes? How are you going to achieve accuracy and fill in the gaps and shortages of citizen journalism? How do you cope with self-censorship and fear from negative repercussions from activism and citizen journalism? How come citizen journalism has developed so quickly and is so widespread? What are the risks from citizen journalism?

These and many other questions are often posed to our teams in the field, at seminars and workshops, or via messenger or e-mail... Those are excellent questions, challenging our work and making us double-check the quality of our work every day. Let us start from the beginning...

## What is citizen journalism?

There are numerous definitions of citizen journalism. We, at CIVIL, have an ongoing and lively discussion on how to define citizen journalism. Though we keep it open for further discussion, for the purposes of the training seminars and workshops, we adopted the following definition:

Citizen journalism is an alternative, activism-based form of reporting, as a civic response to the shortcomings of the traditional media space. It is based on journalistic practices, but uses alternative sources and forms of expression, and draws its legitimacy from personal or group experiences and viewpoints of eyewitnesses or participants to events and processes.

Citizen journalism is guided by motives and ideals that derive from the civic demands for democracy and freedom of expression. It is journalism in the hands of citizens who have an active role in the process of information gathering, analysis and dissemination of news, information and opinion.

### Why citizen journalism?

First of all, because we can and we want to change the ways traditional media are treating news and the audience. Citizen journalists do not earn their living from their activities in area of information. They want to improve society! Therefore, they seek for space to express themselves and inform the public about events from their vantage point. In most cases, citizen journalists are the closest to the events and even part of the events. Although this may pose some problems with accuracy and objectivity, citizen journalists' contributions across the world are the first contact with the reality of events.

### What are the achievements from citizen journalism?

They bring fastest news from the face of the place. Citizen journalists' produce direct, uncensored, independent contents, news, information and opinion.



## How citizen journalism can contribute to transparent and accountable political processes?

People very often want to know what the link is between citizen journalism and political processes, particularly in the area of transparency and accountability. Here is how.

Citizen journalists are everywhere. They are witnesses or part of procedures or actions of the authorities, institutions, political parties and officials on daily basis. Citizen journalists are aware that they can record and publicize various situations, and officials are aware that their actions and behavior can be reported publicly. Therefore, they are motivated to provide better public services and be more transparent on their conduct of duties.

After two years of implementation of the Civic Lenses project, we can proudly state that authorities nowadays are more aware – not only about the fact that their acts may be observed, recorded and publicized, but also of the violations themselves. Or, in other words, some habits and practices that were considered as “normal” in the past, now are understood and seen as violations. Using official cars for private or political party activities, for example. Using office phones for partisan mobilization. Mobilizing subordinates for partisan events. All this and many other actions are now subject to observation and public exposure due to the citizen journalists.

How are you going to achieve accuracy and fill in the gaps and shortages of citizen journalism?

It is true that most of the media theorists and academics tend to deny the qualities and values of citizen journalism, particularly criticizing it for the lack of objectivity, accuracy, use of sources of information, quality, lack of professionalism, etc. Well, before disputing this attitude with questions on accuracy and other shortcomings of traditional media outlets and professional journalists, we can list a selection of advantages that are at hand of the citizen journalists. One of the most obvious fact is that citizen journalists are faster than traditional media. Furthermore, they do not depend on, often, complicated procedures of publicizing. Citizen journalists have their smart phone with the camera and they can record and publicize video content from the events (almost) simultaneously, as events take place. Most importantly, citizen journalists reporting is based on ideals and needs to improve the society. They do not depend on power centers, neither need to withdraw their contributions due to favor or fear.

How do you cope with the fear from negative repercussions from activism and citizen journalism?

This is a question of very high importance to us, at CIVIL. Indeed, we carefully process every bit of information that arrives to our inbox. We are aware that some authors of video footages do not want to reveal their identity. We also take care not to reveal the identity of the sources, particularly if that may lead to disclosure of the identity of the citizen journalists. We provide the possibility to be anonymous, and take care of our sources. If some material is sensitive, citizen journalists may feel uneasy to post it through their online profiles. Our project provides them with the possibility to process the material, conceal their identity, verify the story, and publicize it on the organization's media platform. And, all that without pressure from any power center that might be an obstacle to commercial media outlets. This also multiplies the impact and influence of each contribution by citizen journalists.

**How come citizen journalism has developed so quickly and is so widespread?**

This is easy. The impressive development of the Internet, which has taken gigantic steps in a very short period of time, provided conditions for swift development of citizen journalism. Parallel to that, social networks have given actual and concrete environment for uninterrupted and uncensored dissemination of media contents and messages. In short, development of communications and technologies (affordable mobile phones, computers, and sophisticated software) has enabled development of citizen journalism.

**What are the risks from citizen journalism?**

Citizen journalists are vulnerable, because of the lack of training and situational awareness, which often poses a risk for their lives. While documenting and reporting on unrests, natural disasters or other events, they often neglect their personal safety. This is one of the areas that need to be improved, and we pay attention to this at our seminars and workshops with citizens who are interested in citizen journalism and activism.

## QUOTES AREA



Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press,  
and that cannot be limited without being lost.

**Thomas Jefferson**



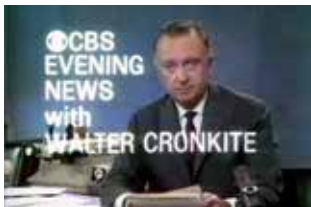
Whoever controls the media, controls the mind.

**Jim Morrison**



Freedom of the Press, if it means anything at all,  
means the freedom to criticize and oppose.

**George Orwell**



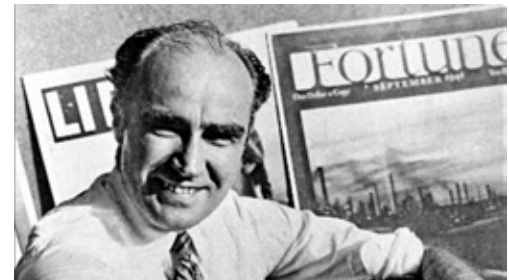
Freedom of the press is not just important to de-  
mocracy, it is democracy.

**Walter Cronkite**



With technology and social media  
and citizen journalism, every rock  
that used to go unturned is now  
being flipped, lit and put on TV.

**Elzie Lee Granderson**



Publishing is a business, but journal-  
ism never was and is not essentially  
a business. Nor is it a profession.

**Henry Robinson Luce**

# CITIZEN JOURNALISTS DO MAKE CHANGE!

## IMPACT

**C**itizen journalists whose contributions were publicized by CIVIL have stirred up huge attention in the Macedonian public on numerous occasions. Parallel to that, stories of citizen journalists have triggered swift reaction by some of the institutions in an attempt to solve issues raised by citizen journalists. There are numerous examples in which institutions reacted to citizen journalists' contributions to CIVIL in the areas of public procurement, social justice, politics, police work, etc. Citizen journalists do make change!

When a citizen journalist have submitted video and photo of construction workers who worked during a heat wave in Skopje, the authorities reacted. Over 80 companies were issued a fine by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, out of which 64 construction companies and 13 agricultural companies. This has significantly contributed to some aspects of workers' rights in the summer of 2017. By only one video contribution of a citizen journalist.



Construction workers working during a heat wave, summer, 2017



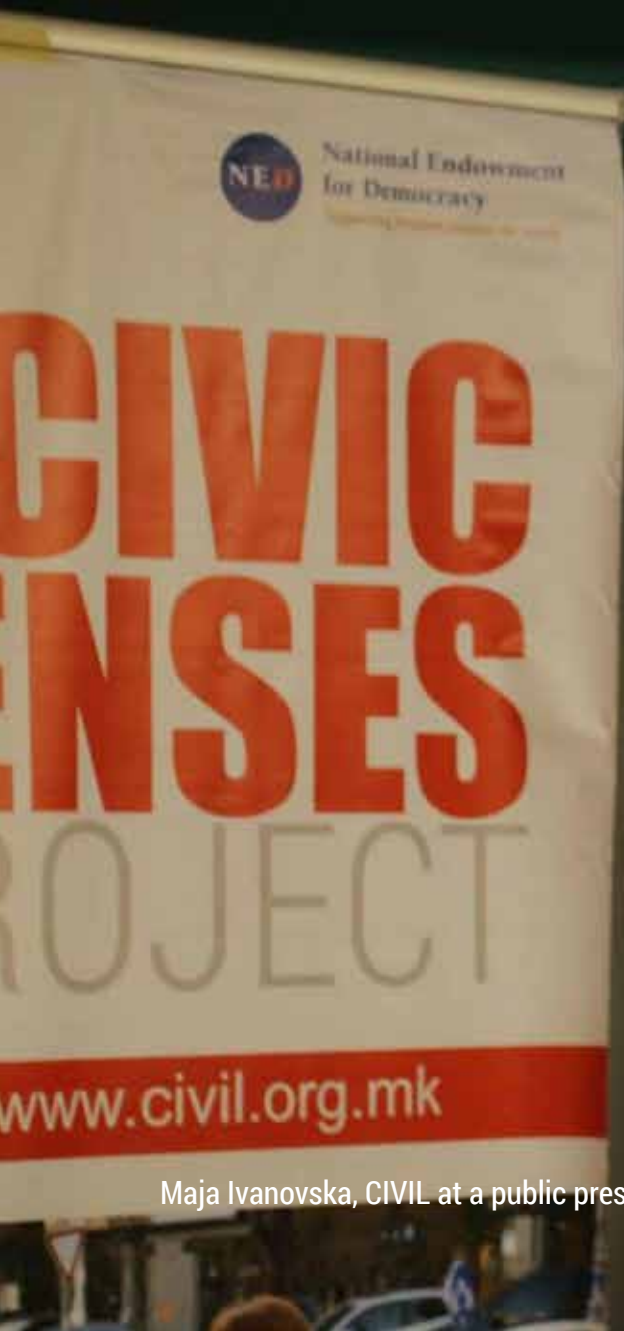
Citizen journalist arrested; photographed by a citizen journalist, July, 2017

During the elections, citizen journalists have reported on numerous irregularities, violation of voters' rights, vote buying, violation of the electoral silence, abuse of minors, and many other issues within the tense electoral processes that the country is continuously experiencing. Citizen journalists' reports have contributed to seven out of eight arrests of suspects on vote buying during the early parliamentary elections in December, 2016. This included directors of public enterprises and a mayor.

When a citizen journalist took video of an unlawful arrest in ill-treatment of protesters in Skopje, end of July, the Ministry of Interior reacted right away. Four police officers were sanctioned for abuse of their power.

The sports hall in the town of Krushevo was neglected by the authorities until a citizen journalist have made a series of photographs of this public venue. After photographs were posted on our Civic Lenses website, municipal authorities started renovation works right away.

"Two-year old beggar boy is a victim of the system" is a title of an article based on a citizen journalist's contribution published end of 2015. The child was returned to his mother after the text was published, upon an intervention by social service.



Maja Ivanovska, CIVIL at a public presentation with outstanding media attention



Stray dogs dumped at the waste disposal facility in Ohrid, 2017



Children religious indoctrination in a kindergarten, 2017

Photos and video from an unregistered kindergarten in Skopje, which was conducting religious indoctrination of children, not only caused fierce reactions on the social networks, but also influenced the ministries of labor and social policy, education and of the interior. The work of the kindergarten was halted immediately, whereas the Ministry of Interior started an investigation if there are more entities like this.

Citizen journalists have raised the public attention to the waste disposal facilities in Ohrid and Struga, which was mismanaged and represented a source of pollution and posed a danger of spreading diseases. Stray dogs and cats were dumped in the midst of these facilities. Some of them were killed in the traffic, trying to escape these facilities. After the citizen journalists' contributions were published, the director of the communal hygiene enterprise in Ohrid has resigned, whilst municipal authorities promised to improve the situation with the waste disposal in these towns.

And the list of examples goes on. Every day, citizen journalists post their findings on social networks draw the attention of institutions and authorities, stir public debate, and contribute to changes in the society.

Carry on!



CIVIL

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VIDEOIM TIPIA VIDEOIM  
TIRIAT DRE LIRIKIJI  
HUMAN RIGHTS ANTI-FREEDOMS

NIJ N TIRIJI  
PADE INTOLERANCE  
PEACE ANTILANCE

ISHTORIJA NA MIJETO  
KONTROLI I ANTI  
HIS CONTROL

Info stand, Skopje, 2017



It's rainy... Doesn't matter, let's set an info stand, let people learn about citizen journalism.

# CIVIC LENSES ACTION

**T**he Civic Lenses Project has reached a tremendous number of people exceeding all our expectations.

CIVIL has continued providing support and training to citizens interested in citizen journalism. We held more seminars and workshops than planned, with more participants than planned. We held seven regional seminars in Bitola, Veles, Strumica, Struga, Shtip, and Skopje, with 177 participants in total.

Interested citizens who didn't make it to the seminars were provided the opportunity to attend one-day long workshops. We held six workshops for 6-10 participants in Veles, Bitola, Tetovo, Shtip, Gostivar, and Kavadarci, attended by total 51 persons.

In addition to the lectures and workshops conducted by CIVIL's team (Xhabir Deralila, Sinisa Stankovic, Maja Ivanovska, Biljana Jordanovska, Dehran Muratov, Ermin Klimenta, Monika Taleska, Petrit Saracini, Marija Tegovska and several others), awarded citizen journalist and activists from different parts of the country, coming from different communities, also held presentations, sharing their personal experiences with citizen journalism. Highly esteemed experts, such as Dr. Sasho Ordanos-

# CIVIL LENSES PROJECT

[www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk)

Biljana Jordanovska, CIVIL, Citizen Journalism seminar in Veles

Training program of seminars and workshops included introduction to the basics of the electoral system, human rights and freedoms, video activism, citizen journalism, news writing and practical field work.

ki, a communications expert and political analyst, as well as Aleksandar Novakoski, legal expert, and Petrit Saracini, media expert, as well as renowned professional journalists and camera operators have provided their expert support to enrich the training program of CIVIL.

Training program of seminars and workshops included introduction to the basics of the electoral system, human rights and freedoms, video activism, citizen journalism, news writing and practical field work. Furthermore, we extensively discussed values and ethics at seminars and workshops, drawing lines between sensationalism and accurate, non-partisan, professional and ethical reporting.

You guess, it was not always easy to maintain objectivity in a country where protesters demanding justice and human rights were faced with heavily armored and militarized police force. Still, citizen journalists and activists trained through the project, were told to strictly follow principles of neutrality, to only present facts, and refrain from comments on what they report about. Otherwise, biased contents is automatically declined from publishing on the media platform of CIVIL.

Within the framework of the projects on early parliamentary elections monitoring, CIVIL has trained 300 observers. All of them were briefly introduced to the Civic Lenses Project and the ways of citizen journalism. In other words, this project has become part of CIVIL's broader set of techniques and methodologies.

Citizen journalists' contributions were thoroughly reviewed by CIVIL's project team, in a process during which, unfortunately, many of them were not taken into consideration, as they did not meet the project criteria. We are not strict when it comes to quality of recording, but certainly are when we speak of contents and messages.



Public presentation in the Skopje Old Town, 2017



Citizen Journalism seminar in Bitola

All the materials that fulfilled the project criteria and entered the competition, passed the procedure for consistency and verification of facts, most of which were checked on the field by a team of CIVIL. Selected materials were reviewed in detail by a three-member commission, which passed a decision on the five winning contributions within awarding cycles of two months. Most of the awarded contributions by citizen journalists, were influential and have prompted positive and supportive reactions by the public and the institutions.

Most of the successful videos and reports were published on CIVIL's media platform, including the news portals [www.civilmedia.mk](http://www.civilmedia.mk) (in Macedonian language), [www.drejt.mk](http://www.drejt.mk) (in Albanian language), and on the project website [www.clp.mk](http://www.clp.mk) (CLP stands for Civic Lenses Project, which is in three languages: Macedonian, Albanian, and English).

The project team and supporters of CIVIL have been very active online, mainly through the Facebook pages of CIVIL.MK and CITIZEN.JOURNALISTS.MK, but also on Twitter and other online channels. Each event (seminars, awards ceremonies, public calls, etc.) was preceded by creation of specific FB event, an e-banner, and other online contents. All approved video contents are uploaded on CIVIL's YouTube channel CIVIL.MACEDONIA, or Soundcloud audio channel



Citizen Journalism Awards events



Preparing for public presentation in Bitola



Citizen Journalism seminar in Veles

CIVILRADIOMK. Recently, a new website is launched, to only publish video and audio contents, which is a new media outlet that will boost visibility of citizen journalists' contributions: [www.rtvcivil.mk](http://www.rtvcivil.mk).

All this was created to provide conditions and safe space for citizen journalists, but also for professionals, and enable them to exercise freedom of expression and media freedoms in the country.

Another, very important achievement of the project is the fact that many other media in the country continuously quote or republish media contents and information related to the project. National TV stations, newspapers, internet media regularly attend award ceremonies of CIVIL or just share our media contents on their channels.

Finally, CIVIL has provided trainings, awards, and safe space, but citizen journalists provided a creative drive to the professional staff of CIVIL in return. Many stories that are published are actually based on citizen journalists' tips and information. Researches and investigative reports are often inspired by citizen journalists' activities in the field. We cannot be everywhere, no matter how mobile we are. It is the active citizens with a smart phone in their hands that provide the impulse for socially responsible media professionals.

PROJECT

[www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk)



Engaging lectures by Dr. Sasho Ordanoski



Why not just call journalism “journalism” – a word the citizens, amateurs, networks, distributors and professionals can understand? Journalism can be “practiced” in all sorts of ways, and by virtually anyone. You don’t even have to be a citizen or a professional; you could be a foreigner, or even an alien from outer space. But I do agree with your overall beat: journalism is not some exclusive club; it’s something that takes many forms, including all the ones you describe.

**Max Kalehoff**

## QUOTES AREA



I acknowledge the problems but welcome the development of the ‘amateur journalist,’ akin to the ‘gentleman scientist’ of the 18th century, which did so much to advance knowledge. I believe journalism is undergoing its ‘reformational moment.’ By that I mean that the Internet is affecting journalism just as the printing press affected the Church – people are bypassing the sacrosanct authority of the journalist in the same way as Luther asserted that individuals could have a direct relationship with God without the intermediary of the priest. The Internet has disintermediated middlemen in other industries, why should journalism be immune?

**Kenneth Neil Cukier**



HTAP ЗА СЛОБОДА ■ QENDER PËR LIRI ■ CENTER FOR FREEDOM

**ЧОВЕКОВИ ПРАВА И СЛОБОДИ  
TË DREJTAT DHE LIRITË E NJERIUT  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

**МИР И ТОЛЕРАНЦИЈА  
PAQE DHE TOLERANCË  
PEACE AND TOLERANCE**

**КОНТРОЛА НА ОРУЖЈЕТО  
KONTROLL I ARMËVE  
ARMS CONTROL**



At the presentation of project outputs...



# A BRIEF GUIDE FOR CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

**K**ee yourself aware of the situation, wherever you go. Just as you are always aware that you may take a funny photo or video of yourself or your friends, you may also think of how to capture events or situations that may contribute to a positive change.

Some basic rules need to be adopted and remembered. This is a short guide for citizen journalists and all that are interested in making photos and videos. Even most experienced professionals make mistakes. Here we will try to list the most important rules and mistakes, that you need to keep in mind at all times. So, let's skip further introductions and start right away.

When you want to take a photo or a video:

Enter the situation. For us, a good photography or a video is not the technical perfection; it is the subject and the context. And nothing else. Absolutely clear photos or videos do not necessarily mean they are always the best.

However, try to avoid the mess in the frame. Throw everything that is not part of your message out of the frame. Get closer or zoom in as needed, or as much as the performance of the device allows it. And, do not forget: **stay safe!**



## **Know your camera**

It is important to know what you can do with your device, and what its limitations are. Take your time to learn about performances of your camera (phone) and how you can use it for your activities as a citizen journalist.



## **Hold your camera/phone steady**

A steady hand is important, but never give up. You can also buy a small mobile tripod or a selfie stick. You can also use something else to keep your phone steady: a wall, a table, a fence... Stand still, take breath and start taking your video. It is important to get the information, rather than to have a perfect quality shot.



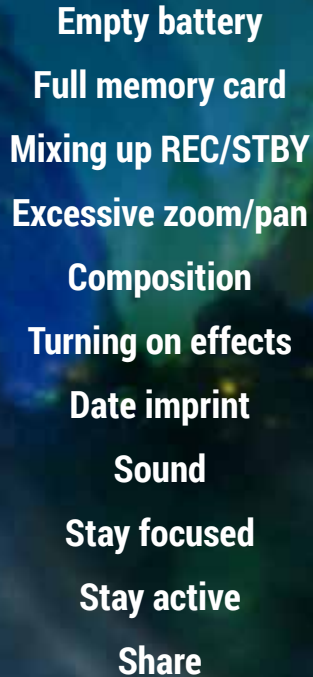
## **Use the natural light**

Avoid using flash. The flash can ruin the details and accuracy that may be important for your story. Moreover, the flash may attract attention that you don't need for the purpose of your activity. But, use your flash if you have a counter light.



## **The rule of thirds**

The rule of thirds help you frame your shot correctly. You need to imagine your shot as split up into thirds, so you have nine identical segments. Keep important objects while taking your video or photography along these lines or close to the intersections of the lines. Breaking the rule may also bring interesting results.



- Empty battery
- Full memory card
- Mixing up REC/STBY
- Excessive zoom/pan
- Composition
- Turning on effects
- Date imprint
- Sound
- Stay focused
- Stay active
- Share

## 11 TIPS THAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER

### **Empty battery**

Make sure your battery is always charged. Charge your battery at the end of the day and start your day with freshly charged batteries. Power banks are handy. But, they also need to be charged.

### **Full memory card**

If possible, empty your memory card every day. You may need to consider to have your material sorted out on daily basis or as often as possible. A reserve memory card is recommended.

### **Mixing up the REC and STBY buttons**

Huh! Well, yes, it's the same button. That's how it may happen that you are recording when you do not want to record and stopping when you want to record. That's really a slip-up. Take care to always have the right button pressed for the right purpose. Don't shoot your shoes, you need to take a video of the event.

### **Excessive zoom/pan**

Every camera has limitations, particularly those of the mobile phones. Don't use the zoom, especially when shooting from a distance. It may result in a blurry image. Same is with the panning. Excessive panning may ruin the footage, even if it's made with a professional camera.



**STAY  
FOCUSED**

**STAY  
ACTIVE**

**SHARE**

### **Composition**

There's a lot to say about composition, but for this occasion, for starters, it should be enough to remember not to let too much space above or under the object. Use the Rule of the Thirds. When you are recording an event, it's best to keep the objects in the middle of the frame, or in and around the second third. Make sure it is clear what happens.

### **Turning on effects**

Don't turn any effect on. This may ruin both the quality and the accuracy of what you are documenting.

### **Date imprint**

Shooting with a date imprint on the image/frame is entirely unnecessary. Each digital feature has its metadata, including date and time of creation.

### **Sound**

When you are shooting outside, the wind may ruin the sound of your recording. Try to protect your microphone with your body.

### **Stay focused**

You might miss the action because you were shooting something else. You need to stay focused on what you want to document. When you are out there, events will not wait for you. Seconds matter very often. Be there with both your body and mind.

### Stay active

Be active. When you are out, be alerted to take a video or photo of what happens around you. And, once you are shooting with your camera, don't turn it off immediately after the action is over. Sometimes, you are very happy with your shot and turn your camera off right after the event took place. It may be a mistake. Let your camera active at least for a couple of more seconds. And, think of taking a few more shots around.

### Share

Don't forget to distribute the material. If you forget to share what you have documented, it's the same as if you have never done it. You should share your footage as soon as it is ready. If you ever had some doubts before, now it's easy: you have the Civic Lenses Project at your disposal.



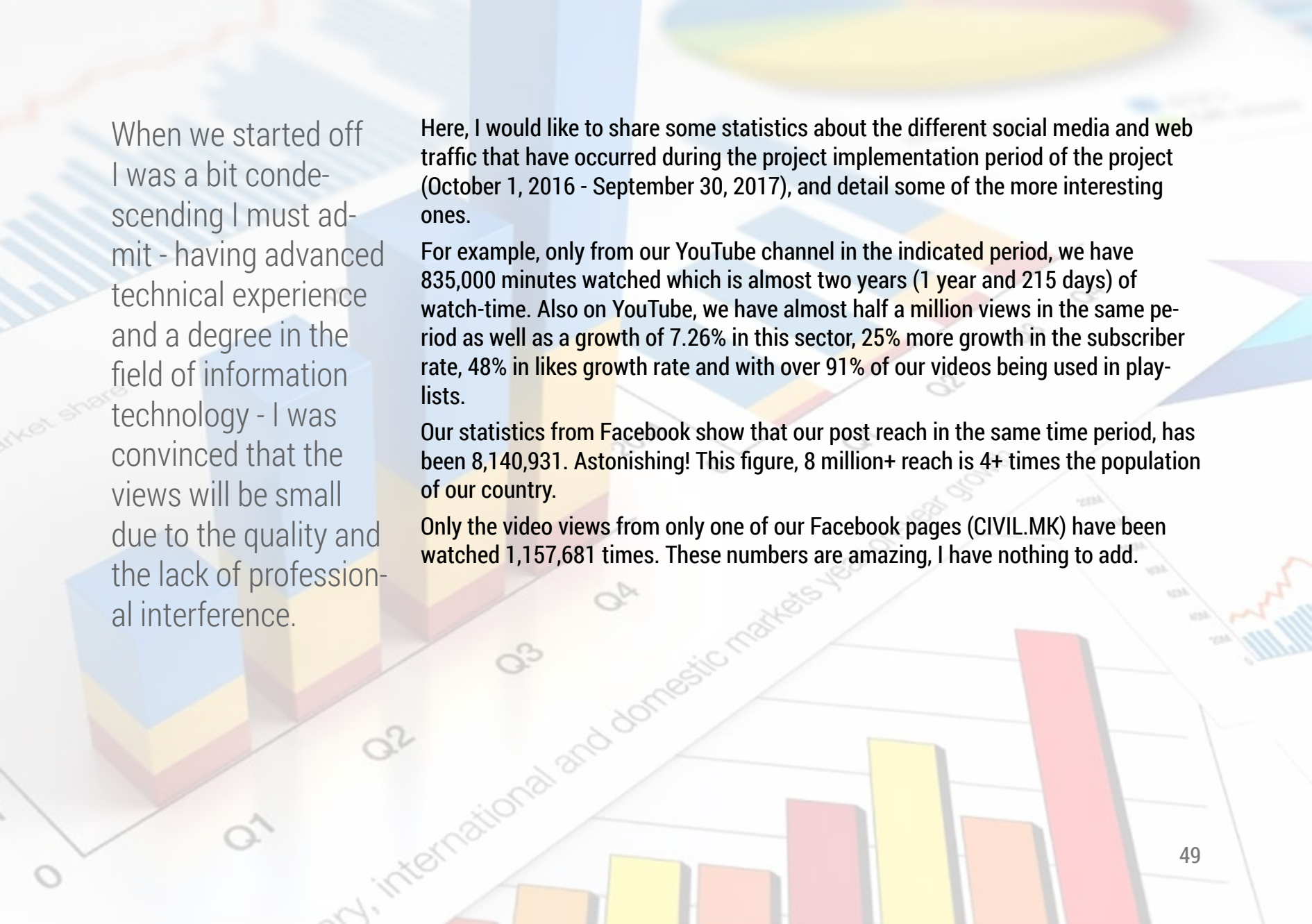
# A GLANCE INTO CIVIL'S INTERNAL STATISTICS

**T**he project Citizen Journalist has become one of the most viral and successful projects in the country, with a lot of support from the community we have garnered huge amounts of materials and information about the society.

Personally I had my doubts about the receptivity of the video and photo material in the mass general public's eye but I have been amazed by the response, it has been overwhelming and humbling to see such blurry photos and videos being virally shared and commented even some appearing in the evening news cycles by the TV stations in the country that report nationwide.

When we started off I was a bit condescending I must admit - having advanced technical experience and a degree in the field of information technology - I was convinced that the views will be small due to the quality and the lack of professional interference. But, these videos and photos were interesting, properly documented, up-to-date, and most importantly - they were made by everyday citizens, and it worked! All that made me re-evaluate my work ethics, learning a lot along the road with this project, and it has been an awesome experience.

**ERMIN KLIMENTA**



When we started off I was a bit condescending I must admit - having advanced technical experience and a degree in the field of information technology - I was convinced that the views will be small due to the quality and the lack of professional interference.

Here, I would like to share some statistics about the different social media and web traffic that have occurred during the project implementation period of the project (October 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017), and detail some of the more interesting ones.

For example, only from our YouTube channel in the indicated period, we have 835,000 minutes watched which is almost two years (1 year and 215 days) of watch-time. Also on YouTube, we have almost half a million views in the same period as well as a growth of 7.26% in this sector, 25% more growth in the subscriber rate, 48% in likes growth rate and with over 91% of our videos being used in playlists.

Our statistics from Facebook show that our post reach in the same time period, has been 8,140,931. Astonishing! This figure, 8 million+ reach is 4+ times the population of our country.

Only the video views from only one of our Facebook pages (CIVIL.MK) have been watched 1,157,681 times. These numbers are amazing, I have nothing to add.



Dehran Muratov, CIVIL, always ready for action.





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