

## 2004 - MOBBING VICTIM JOURNALISTS



### **Victim journalists of Mobbing. A covert reality.**

By Marina Parés Soliva. 2004.

In Catalan in the original. Translated by Marina Parés.



#### COMMUNICATION FOR THE DAY: INFORMATION, POWER AND ETHICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

21 May 2004 Barcelona Forum 2004- Dialogue: Information, Power and Ethics in the 21st Century. Organized by the College of Journalists and the International Press Center, at 10h-11.30h at the Forum Convention Center. Communication: "Mobbing Victim Journalists: A Covert Reality"

It is difficult to think that the journalist of journalism imbued with all the media power that society recognizes him may be the victim of psychological violence in his workplace, as well as a multitude of workers from other fields (two million Spanish citizens according to the report of the Barometry Cisneros of Professor Iñaki Piñuel of the University of Alcalá de Henares).

This difficulty, on the part of the ordinary citizen, of recognizing the journalist as one more worker and therefore susceptible to psychological violence in the exercise of his profession leads to defencelessness. The situation of helplessness is aggravated by the professional himself who does not want to accept his situation so it implies recognition of loss of the research of the media power. It would involve a self-awareness of a situation that does not want to be perceived.

From almost all areas of study of the phenomenon of psychological harassment at work (or mobbing) by experts and scholars of the subject there is a difficulty on the part of the mobbing victim of recognizing what they are doing to him; at least during the early stages, and the journalism professional would not react otherwise.

That is why we must understand the refusal to perceive the violence received as a finding that there is at the beginning of a process of exclusion from work, through the exercise of psychological violence, against a person, either from the organization or from a group of this organization.

After this first phase of denial and since the exercise of violence if not stopped has exponential growth, violent and destabilizing attacks against this journalist are on the rise.

There is a custom of using organizational mechanisms to cover up the exercise of violence, either by not recognizing overtime, or by paying below that to others, not accepting their work or criticizing them or changing the content without warning or already more seriously taking over the authorship of the article. I'm sure a lot of journalism professionals can recognize the property.

Continuing the increased exercise of the violent, the victim is stigmatized and held responsible for what is happening to him, through the attribution mechanism. The attributional mechanism is a cultural reaction of the human being to the violence we witness. It is a defensive act that numbs our conscience so that we do not have to intervene and that makes us involuntary collaborators of the violent. When we see a father beating his son, we think that "something this child will have done," when we witness a boss insult and mock a worker, we think, "What have he done to get him treated like that?"

Without the attributional mechanism of making the victim responsible for the evil he receives, we would be forced to intervene, to defend him and therefore to face someone who has more power. It's much more comfortable to turn a blind eye and make the victim guilty.

The assaulted professional is receiving increasingly violent psychological assaults and at the same time is held accountable and therefore worthy of punishment.

If you don't lose the shame of recognizing that you're being a victim and facing it, your professional and personal evolution has very bad prospects.

Based on psychiatric studies, it has been found that 2 out of 5 suicides were in the process of psychological harassment at work. We are facing a serious situation; much more destructive than it may seem, given that the exercise of violence is subtle and insidious.

There are no studies on this, but I think it is necessary to start opening fronts of reflection in the face of fatal work accidents in all areas of work and within this section we must include the journalists killed in the exercise of their profession. We have all known, thanks to the courageous article of the journalist Francisco Medina, that the last journalists killed in the exercise of their profession as war correspondents, did not have a clear contractual relationship with the company for which they worked.

There are three points that are always present in a process of psychological harassment at work (or mobbing) regardless of the professional concerned or the area in which the business function is performed. These points are: the motivation, persistence and attitude of the environment.

The motivation that triggers a process of harassment is closely related to an attitude of a certain rebellion on the part of the worker. Rebellion is the way to show a questioning of authority. The manifestations can be diverse, as diverse are the situations lived. In the field of information, it is often linked to the exercise of freedom of expression. In this respect we must understand the attitude of a certain rebellion as a clear manifestation of resistance to submit to authority.

Submission to authority, as such, is in itself uncritical and obedient; and contrary to a way of being democratic.

Persistence is coupled with violent actions that aim to be exemplary, that is, they function as a punishment towards the journalist who has dared to question authority. The exemplary side is so directed towards the worker himself, but there is greater interest in the environment. The real interest is that the other journalists "learn" what can happen to them if they are overly vindictive.

The attitude of the environment is therefore very important, so much so that examples of situations have been expressed where, precisely, a solidarity attitude of the colleagues to stand and therefore has prevented the evolution towards harassment.

When we witness the exercise of violence in front of us, in an automatic way comes the defensive mechanism of attribution to the victim of what is happening to him. If we can change the phrase "what happens to him" to the phrase "what they are doing to him" surely our stance on small violent and destabilizing acts will be different. Because there is one thing that we must not forget, when we are in front of the mobbing, the stalker will always use dishonest language and mechanisms.

He will always try to have his actions interpreted as "with good intention", indicating that the person-victim is to blame for his situation and will try, in all ways, to achieve our collaboration on his path of destruction. And we can find ourselves: spreading rumours, helping to stigmatize a previously successful partner, boosting his sense of guilt by holding him accountable for his situation. And ultimately silenced our conscience, covering up the exercise of violence aimed at marginalizing a human being and turning him away from the exercise of his profession. In short, we will have helped make mobbing invisible.

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## FÒRUM DIÀLEGS

Barcelona  
19 / 05 / 2004 - 21 / 05 / 2004



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Poder i ètica en el segle XXI

### Información.

Poder y ética en el siglo XXI

### Information.

Power and Ethics in the 21st Century

## divendres 21 de maig

10.00 – 11.30

### Reformes laborals

#### Propuesta de Ley de Derechos Laborales de los Periodistas.

Enric Bastardes. Foro de Organizaciones de Periodistas (FOP)

#### Estatut del Periodista professional.

Ma. Goretti Palau. FOP

#### Periodistes víctimes de Mobbing: Una realitat encoberta.

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