Missouri Law Review

Volume 79
Issue 4 Fall 2014

Article 7

Fall 2014

Press Freedom and Coverage in the U.S. and Kosovo: A Series of Comparisons and Recommendations

Ben Holden

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr

Part of the Law Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr/vol79/iss4/7

This Conference is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Missouri Law Review by an authorized editor of University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact bassettcw@missouri.edu.
Press Freedom and Coverage in the U.S. and Kosovo: A Series of Comparisons and Recommendations

Ben Holden*

ABSTRACT

The Republic of Kosovo was created from the southernmost section of the former Yugoslavia by American military intervention and subsequent worldwide humanitarian guidance between 1999 and 2008. The resulting nation (which Russia, China, and others do not recognize) was born with one of the most pro-speech and press-friendly constitutions in the world. This Article compares and contrasts four press freedoms in the U.S. and Kosovo: (1) censorship and liability for publication of “truthful” speech; (2) liability for media errors; (3) shield laws; and (4) transparency in courts and records. Where the law and social mores of Kosovo are silent, recommendations are made to adopt the actual or a modified version of the U.S. rule.

* Ben Holden teaches media law in the Department of Journalism at the University of Illinois College of Media and is a visiting faculty member at the National Judicial College. He was formerly an Associate Professor of Journalism and the director of the Reynolds National Center for Courts & Media at the University of Nevada, Reno (“UNR”). The Center is an affiliate of the National Judicial College on the UNR campus. Mr. Holden’s media consulting work includes assignments in the former Yugoslavia (Kosovo) on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the U.S. State Department to aid judges, journalists and public information officers in developing professional press coverage of the courts. He is the author of Basic Legal Handbook for Journalists in Kosovo. BEN HOLDEN, BASIC LEGAL HANDBOOK FOR JOURNALISTS IN KOSOVO (Kosovo Journalists Association 2014). Previously, he was executive editor of the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer. He spent his daily news-reporting career at The Wall Street Journal, where he covered race and urban affairs and was eventually National Utilities Correspondent.


3. This Article is dedicated to the memory of Anthony Lewis, who died March 25, 2013. Lewis wrote about the atrocities in Kosovo, rather than its press freedoms and constitution-based legal system, which did not exist when he retired from the New York Times in 2001.
Overview

The tension between the press and the judicial branch of government is inevitable in a modern, free-press democracy. This is as true in the 238-year-old United States of America as it is in the six-and-a-half year-old Republic of Kosovo. The constitution may craft broad avenues of rights for the media, or the legislature may grant certain privileges. But it is the courts that are charged with the interpretation of these rights and privileges, leaving these two vital institutions – the press and the judiciary – mutually dependent upon one another. As famed American journalist Edward R. Murrow said: “What truly distinguishes a free society from all others is an independent judiciary and a free press.”

So why did it take the United States Supreme Court over 165 years to expressly repudiate seditious libel, nearly 178 years to effectively bar prior restraints arising out of court coverage, and an additional four to find a First Amendment right to attend criminal trials? The clock is still ticking on the reporter shield law and the constitutional right to televise trials.

By contrast, the Republic of Kosovo – founded in 2008, nine years after then-President Bill Clinton bombed strongman Slobodan Milosevic’s Ser-
bian Army out of its occupation of the Kosovo Province – has carved out an aggressive media landscape that is nearly as press-friendly as the nation that gave it birth. But Kosovo’s pro-media laws and procedures work better in theory than in practice, according to a consensus of top Kosovo legal journalists and even a few candid judges. During the summer of 2013, the author was commissioned by an international nongovernmental organization (“INGO”) called the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to work on a two-month project aimed at improving frayed relations between judges and journalists in Kosovo. In meetings with journalists, judges, pub-

11. Kosovo’s initial legal structure – as well as its ongoing development and evolution – is a complex product of (1) its initial reliance on the United States for the military backing that brought the nation into being; (2) a series of substantial foreign investments from primarily Western nations and non-governmental agencies such as the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (“UNMIK”), the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (“OSCE”), the United States Agency for International Foreign Development (“USAID”), and the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (“EULEX”); and (3) internecine squabbles between the ousted power seat in Belgrade and the leadership in Kosovo’s Pristina capital on the one hand, and ethnic Serbs and ethnic Albanians on the other.

12. The author arrived in Kosovo on July 15, 2013, and departed the region August 17, 2013, having interviewed eighteen journalists, fifteen judges, six actual or prospective public information officers, many ordinary citizens, foreign INGO workers, and EULEX prosecutors and police. Interviewees included, but were not limited to, the following journalists, judges, and court public information officers: Vehbi Kajtazi, Legal Reporter, Koha Ditore (roughly translated as “Daily Times”); Fisnik Minci, Legal Reporter, Koha Ditore; Liridona Lluka-Gashi, Former President, Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo; Bulrush Marina, Editor-in-Chief, Bota Sot (roughly translated as “The World Today”); Art Avid, Legal Journalist, Kohavision; Evliana Berani, Lawyer, Media Professor, and Editor-in-Chief, Info Globi; Mufail Limani, Director, Radio-Television of Kosovo (“RTK”)(Kosovo’s main state-funded television station; it was taken over by the Serbian army during the occupation, then returned to Albanian control following the American liberation; it remains largely state-funded and thus has the reputation among competing journalists as a government puppet); Arsim Lani, Television Editor and Journalist, Klan Kosova; Nenad Mladenovic, Editor, RTV Puls; Selvije Bajrami, Print Journalist who has been covering the courts almost exclusively for more than eight years; Arben Ahmeti, Editor-in-Chief, Tribuna Shqiptare, Former Head of the Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo, Former Journalist, Koha Ditore; Isak Vorgucic, Director, Radio KIM, TV Centar; Margarita Kadriu, Editor-in-Chief, Kosova Sot (self-proclaimed leading circulation newspaper in Kosovo; there are no audited figures in the nation’s newspaper business); Flutura Kusari, Legal Advisor, Balkan Investigative Reporting
lic information officers, government officials and international non-governmental agencies, a clear theme emerged: Kosovo wants to “do democracy the right way” and is desperately seeking answers. This Article is written in the spirit of legal exploration and scholarship, in the hope that some shred of its observations might move Kosovo judges toward a more enlightened view of the press, which might in turn generate more accurate and professional media coverage of the courts. Together, these virtuous

Network ("BIRN") (a news outlet that to Americans would appear to be a cross between CBS Networks’ 60 Minutes and the National Enquirer); Ardita Zejnullahu, Executive Director, Association of Broadcasters in Kosovo; all members of the five-person Independent Media Commission, which is the rough equivalent of the Federal Communications Commission in the United States; Arbër Jashari, Public Information Officer, Kosovo Court of Appeals; Besiana Gashi, Public Information Officer, Basic Court of Vushtrri; Selvane Bukleta, Public Information Officer, Basic Court of Peja; Albena Bekteshi, Public Information Officer, Basic Court of Ferizaj; Lavdim Krasniqi, Executive Director, Kosovo Judicial Institute (the national equivalent of a government-run continuing legal education nonprofit); Enver Peci, President, Kosovo Judicial Counsel (agency that manages the nation’s court system); Fejzullah Hasani, President, Supreme Court of Kosovo; Salih Mekaj, President, District Court of Peja; Hamdi Ibrahimi, President, Basic Court of Pristina; Bashkim Hyseni, President, Basic Court of Ferizaj; Zyndi Haziri, President, Basic Court of Gjilan; Elmaze Syka, President, Basic Court of Peja; Vaton Durguti, President, Basic Court of Gjakova; Ymer Hoxha, President, Basic Court of Prizren; and Kada Bunjaku, President, Basic Court of Mitrovica.

At the end of the summer, the author sat for an hour-long courts-and-media debriefing with the United States Deputy Chief of Mission, Kelly Degnan. Degnan, functionally the deputy U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, requested the initial meeting based on her keen interest in courts-and-media issues in the Republic of Kosovo. She said she believes the relationship between the courts and the press is one of the key elements to the ongoing viability of the young nation. Interview with Kelly Degnan, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, in Pristina, Kosovo, (Aug. 13, 2013). On Saturday, November 30, 2013, the author was the chair of a panel on courts and media held as part of Kosovo’s Annual National Judicial Conference, attended by virtually every ranking working judge in the country, or about 200 jurists. Jill B. Stockton, UNR Professor’s Work Strengthens Kosovo’s Judiciary, NEV. MEDIA ALLIANCE (Dec. 20, 2013), http://nevadamediaalliance.org/2013/12/20/unr-professors-work-strengthens-kosovo-judiciary/. For three days on December 2, 3, and 4, 2013, as a consultant to the U.S. State Department, the author and public information officer-consultant Ron Keeover conducted training sessions for public information officers regarding managing the press in Kosovo. See id. These sessions were held at the Kosovo Judicial Institute, the main training body for judges in Kosovo. See id. Finally, on December 4, 2013, Keeover and the author met briefly with U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo Tracey Ann Jacobson at the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, the nation’s capital. See id. The “in-country” work was followed by a month of interviews, email conversations, note-sharing and follow-up aimed at producing the Basic Legal Handbook for Journalists in Kosovo (Kosovo Journalists Association 2014), scheduled for distribution in Albanian, Serbian and Turkish under a grant from the Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe ("OSCE") in early 2015. See id.
impulses might move a new nation incrementally toward a more perfect – and press-friendly – democratic union.13

This Article engages a limited number of areas of free-speech/open access inquiry. In fact, it raises just four questions for comparison and contrast between the 223-year-old Constitution and Bill of Rights of the United States of America and the six-and-a-half year-old Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. The issues examined are: 1) penalties for truthful reporting; 2) media mistakes; 3) shield laws; and 4) transparency. Because Kosovo law does not observe the concept of precedent, the law of the nation is determined by a detailed Constitution and the discretion of judges.14 Its criminal and civil15 codes sometimes resort to related, influential European courts, which have spawned some of the relevant principles of Kosovo law. In determining “what the law is” in this new nation, this Article relies occasionally upon interviews with working judges, journalists, government

13. As of January 1, 2013, the Law on Courts instituted a series of changes to the judiciary in Kosovo, which included revision of the court structure. REPUBLIC OF KOS., IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE NEW LAW ON CTS. 3 (2011), available at http://kgjk-ks.org/repository/docs/Plani-i-Implementimit-te-Ligjit-per-Gjykata_Anglish_416041.pdf. The Kosovo court system now contains seven Basic Courts, a Court of Appeals, and a Supreme Court. USAID NGA POPULLI AMERIKAN OD AMERICKOG NARODA & KOS. JUDICIAL COUNCIL, KOSOVO COURT STRUCTURE, available at http://kgjk-ks.org/repository/docs/KOVO- COURT-STRUCTURE_547880.pdf. The seven Basic Courts have jurisdiction over the regions of: Pristina, Ferizaj, Gjilan, Peja, Gjakova, Prizren and Mitrovica. Id. The Basic Courts have various departments, including a General Department and a Serious Crimes Department. Id. Basic Courts are the courts of first instance or “trial courts” where criminal proceedings are conducted. Id. The Criminal Procedure Code is the rulebook for the criminal court system, including jurisdiction and procedure (what are the proper procedural steps in a criminal prosecution). See generally JON SMIBERT, U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE, GUIDE TO THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE OF KOSOVO AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE OF KOSOVO 3 (2013), available at http://www.kgjk-ks.org/repository/docs/Udhezuesi-dhe-kodi-i-procedures_anglish_225215.pdf. The main participants to a criminal case in Kosovo are the Judge (or three-Judge Panel), the State Prosecutor, the Defendant, Defense Counsel, the Injured Party and the Victim Advocate. Id. at 3, 9. The Police have a large role at the investigative stage, but are not parties to the actual criminal case. See id. at 3-4.

Also, constitutional interpretation in Kosovo is a tricky matter. There is a constitutional court, but it has questionable authority because only “nations” can have constitutions and Russia and China (both OSCE members) do not recognize Kosovo. See Home, CONST. CT. OF KOS., http://gjk-ks.org/?cid=2,1 (last visited Nov. 25, 2014); U.S., European Powers Recognize Kosovo, NBC NEWS (Feb. 18, 2008, 6:26 PM), http://www.nbcnews.com/id/23219277/ns/world_news-europe/t/us-europe-ean-powers-recognize-kosovo/#.VDbrQst0zIV.


officials, the U.S. State Department and Kosovo-based INGO policymakers conducted by the author in the summer and early fall of 2013.

Beyond Sedition in America and Criminal Libel in Kosovo

John Adams was well known as a thin-skinned politician who bristled at criticism of his governance as well as criticism of him personally. Thus, in the years leading up to 1798, Adams became convinced that the only way to quell the criticism was to meet it head on – to essentially outlaw the criticism and jail his critics. His leadership in passage of the Sedition Act was so roundly criticized and repudiated by history, that his successor, Thomas Jefferson, freed those citizens jailed under the Act and repaid their fines by Act of Congress.

Despite never being successfully challenged in a U.S. court, jurists and scholars universally view the law as an abomination. In fact, the United States Supreme Court rejected the validity of the Act in the context of another case involving censorship of material that had the effect of criticizing government. The Pentagon Papers Court reflects the view that the Act, because it places penalties upon accurate or “truthful” speech, was inconsistent with freedom of the press and, therefore, the First Amendment to the U.S Constitution.

In Kosovo, the young nation’s moral speech equivalent of the Sedition Act was the existence of, and criminal prosecution for, crimes against “honor.” These crimes included the law against “insult” and criminal...
defamation. Close cousins of seditious libel, Kosovo levied criminal penalties for these “honor crimes” until the end of 2012. The eradication of these laws was a cause for great self-congratulation among Kosovars, who revere America and Americans, and who (at least in the legal community) understood that criminal penalties for words were not an American mode of legal redress.

But prosecution for leaking the name of a confidential witness is universally believed to be good policy among prosecutors and court public information officials in Kosovo; even some journalists take the view that the consequences of such a leak are so grave as to justify criminal action.

Background on Kosovo Court Challenges

Because there is no concept of binding precedent in Kosovo, every case stands on its own. Further, because government corruption – actual and perceived – is a major issue in the nation, many reporters and editors interviewed for this Article say they believe a significant percentage of judges in Kosovo are corrupt. They report the news through this lens. On the other hand, many judges interviewed for this piece say they believe most journalists who cover the courts lack the background and training to do a competent job of reporting on the judiciary. The two sides certainly seem to be speaking different languages.

23. See id. arts. 159, 198. Some journalists and other Kosovars, including government officials, believe some of the strong sentiment regarding honor may be a vestige of the centuries-old unwritten Albanian law known as the “Kanun,” a set of traditional Albanian laws that held, for example, that if a welcomed stranger were killed in the home of another, the host was honor bound to seek equal revenge on the perpetrator. See interviews cited supra note 12; Dan Bilefsky, In Albanian Feuds, Isolation Engulfs Families, N.Y. TIMES (July 10, 2008), http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/10/world/europe/10feuds.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. Prosecutors in Kosovo said sometimes law enforcement and even civil resolution of disputes is impeded by the deep-seated cultural norms left by the Kanun. See interviews cited supra note 12.


25. See interviews cited supra note 12. Note that the reporters, judges and public information officers shared stories and impressions of the judiciary generally on the condition that they not be individually identified, although they were willing to be noted as among those persons who spoke with the consultant to the Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe for purposes of improving relations between judges and journalists in Kosovo. See interviews cited supra note 12.

26. See supra note 14 and accompanying text.

27. See supra note 12.

28. See interviews cited supra note 12.

29. See interviews cited supra note 12.

30. Kosova Sot (roughly translated, “Kosovo Today”) publisher Margarita Kadriu told the author of this Article openly that she believes “several specific judges
Much of the law of the new Republic of Kosovo is imbedded in the nation’s Constitution, and there is heavy reliance on international and European courts for guidance. Because for many years the nation’s legal system was run by the United Nations (and its “major case” criminal system still contains parallel courts run by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, or EULEX), the nation has a little-developed history of jurisprudence and tradition in a Western legal sense. But below the level of war crimes, government corruption, and major murder cases, ordinary judges handle the cases. So judges, whom the press does not trust, have great discretion over everyday cases. And the press, whom the judges do not trust, have little guidance or training in covering the courts. In fact, many of the nation’s judges are widely perceived by the press to be corrupt and there have been a number of high-profile corruption cases involving various public officials.

Perhaps most challenging, however, is the concept of precedent and the manner in which judges instruct court reporters to create the written record in cases. Essentially, there is no precedent; the judge decides the law and there is one court of appeal. As to the written record, judges have little physical space and often work in cramped quarters. Some trials are held in judges’ offices. The courtroom in Metrovica, which was essentially commandeered by Serbian nationalists during the post-emancipation Serbian-Albanian conflict, was, throughout 2013 and part of 2014, illegally held by those persons. During this period the court in Metrovica sat instead at Vushtrri, to the south. Approximately fifteen judges, clerks and other court personnel shared a space that is about the size of an average conference room in an American law firm.
I. CENSORSHIP AND LIABILITY FOR DISCLOSURE OF “CONFIDENTIAL” MATERIAL

A. Censorship and Disclosure Sanctions for “Truthful” Publications: A Comparison of U.S. Case Law and Kosovo Law

1. Censorship

a. The United States and Censorship

Liability for truthful, non-commercial speech in America has evolved. Historically, speakers and critics of government labored under a speech-chilling protection standard which allowed injunctions and no-fault liability for seditious and group libel, as well as subsequent punishment for antigovernment speech that implied the vague and overbroad “clear and present danger.” Currently, speech is protected from prosecution for inciting violence unless it incites imminent lawless action where such action is likely to occur. Speech is protected from censorship except in the most limited cases of national security. The American concept of libel – a false and reputationally damaging statement communicated to a third party – requires, by definition, proof of falsity. Since 1964, civil liability for libel of public-
figure plaintiffs in America requires that the plaintiff prove the defendant knew the defamatory statements were false or that he or she was reckless in failing to determine the truth of the statements. Libel claims involving non-public figure plaintiffs need only prove that the defendant was at least negligent. The first potential area of “truthful speech” media liability involves censorship, a subject that has filled legal and journalistic tomes for centuries. Fortunately, in Kosovo, the nation’s anti-censorship protection is written right into the Constitution, and the judges seem to follow the law in this area, according to numerous interviews with people close to and within the court system.

The two leading American cases on censorship are *Near v. Minnesota* and *New York Times v. U.S.*, the so-called “Pentagon Papers Case.” Because *Near* is essentially incorporated into the Pentagon Papers case, the discussion and analysis here will be confined to *New York Times*. In *New York Times*, the U.S. government tried to censor or enjoin publication of a classified Vietnam War study by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, two leading American newspapers. The U.S. Supreme Court, the highest court in the land, said the Government failed to meet the burden of proof needed to justify censoring the material. The framework for the case was handed down in *Near*, a case involving a state law banning, or – in slang language – gagging, “malicious, scandalous and derogatory newspaper[s]” or other

sex with his mother in an outhouse were an obvious parody not to be taken seriously, which could therefore not be proven “true” for purposes of the *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* “actual malice” standard, which the Court looked to – rather than standard intentional infliction of emotional distress concepts – to decide the case under the First Amendment; *Time, Inc. v. Hill*, 385 U.S. 374, 387-88 (1967) (holding that a successful false light tort claim must meet the standard of *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* “actual malice,” that is, that the defendant knew the statements were false, or was reckless in failing to verify their truth); *see also Cox Broad. Corp. v. Cohn*, 420 U.S. 469, 496 (1975) (limiting and narrowing the tort of public disclosure of private facts to give the press greater First Amendment protection).


47. *See Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc.*, 418 U.S. 323, 347-49 (1974) (holding that the *New York Times* “actual malice” standard of knowing falsity or reckless disregard does not apply to non-public figures, but that the First Amendment compels a minimum standard of at least negligence for liability and actual malice for punitive damages).


49. *See interviews cited supra note 12.*


52. *Id. at 714.*

53. *Id.*
publications. The Near Court made clear that in the United States, censorship is only allowable where the government can meet a heavy burden of proving that it is protecting national security, such as blocking publication of ship transport dates or troop locations in wartime.

b. Kosovo and Censorship

On the issue of censorship, the nation of Kosovo got off on the right foot. The Constitution of the country has an anti-censorship provision written right into its plain language. Therefore, though journalists there have many complaints about judges’ rulings and behavior, express censorship does not appear to be among them.

Article 42 of the Constitution is captioned “Freedom of Media.” Subpart 2 of Article 42 reads: “Censorship is forbidden. No one shall prevent the dissemination of information or ideas through media, except if it is necessary to prevent encouragement or provocation of violence and hostility on grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity or religion.”

The exception language in Article 42.2 obviously contemplates scenarios that would justify censorship, particularly a fresh eruption of Serb nationalist violence – or oppression of the Serb minority by the Albanian majority. From interviews with judges, journalists, and public information officers, it appears clear that the primary exception to Article 42 is a violence/national security exception of the sort that the U.S. has incorporated as an exception to the First Amendment by way of such cases as Brandenburg v. Ohio and New York Times v. U.S. Thus, as long as the peace and power-sharing arrangement between Serbs and Albanians holds, and as long as the semi-autonomous northern areas in Metrovica are brought under control, it appears censorship will remain less of a problem than it was in the U.S. in a similar state of its infancy. Therefore, the nation of Kosovo needs no assistance from U.S. law on the matter of statutory protection of the press against censorship.

When interpreting and implementing Article 42, however, the analysis of Near and New York Times v. U.S. seems to provide needed guidance in a judicial paradigm that does not subscribe to the notion of precedent. For a judge on a case-by-case basis to decide whether to censor the press based on

54. Near, 283 U.S. at 703.
55. Id. at 716.
57. See interviews cited supra note 12.
59. Id. at art. 42.2.
60. See supra notes 43, 51-53 and accompanying text.
“provocation of violence and hostility on grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity or religion” allows too much discretion and cries out for a clear rule of law. Otherwise, the result in these very important cases will turn on which judge sits on the case – and where cross-ethnic issues and parties are part of the case, this could lead to the perception of biased decisions that erode public trust in the judiciary.

2. Liability for Publication of Stolen Material


The second potential area of “truthful speech” media liability involves the question of whether stolen material published by the press is (or should be) protected by the First Amendment. In Bartnicki v. Vopper, a pair of union representatives (one of whom was Bartnicki) had their cell phone conversation illegally intercepted and recorded during a heated collective bargaining dispute. A radio personality, Vopper, played the tape on his radio show in connection with a news story on the settlement. Bartnicki sued, claiming that Vopper knew or should have known the broadcast was the product of an illegally taped conversation. Bartnicki and another union leader sued for money damages under federal wiretapping laws, which prohibit intercepting cell phone calls and disclosure of material obtained by illegal interception. Vopper claimed the First Amendment protected him because he had no knowledge or participation in the theft and because its contents were a matter of public concern. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed, reasoning that the wiretapping statutes violated the First Amendment to the extent used to suppress information from a party who obtains it innocently or legally.

b. Kosovo and Liability for Innocent Publication of Stolen Material

Honor and duty have outsized meaning in Kosovo. The culture is, by American standards, laced with formality and overly solicitous salutations and greetings. Perhaps an attendant to this formality is the seemingly absolute rejection of dishonor in polite society. However, there appears to be an even greater disconnect between press values and those of ordinary

63. Id.
64. Id.
65. Id.
66. Id. at 516, 520.
67. Id. at 527-28.
citizens in Kosovo than in the U.S., where the gap appears sizeable. Thus, in interviews with reporters and editors at the two leading news organizations in Kosovo, the social or moral prohibition against communicating material dangerous to “national security” or even the names of confidential witnesses, was simply absent. Judges, court personnel, and Albanian members of international non-governmental organizations, on the other hand, felt adamantly that such disclosures were irresponsible and a breach of the public’s trust.68 However, based on numerous interviews with judges and journalists in Kosovo, it must be concluded that civil protection for printing stolen material where the journalists played no part in the theft will not be protected. And so, while the rule of Bartnicki may be a best practice, it is likely not the rule that will be followed in Kosovo.

3. Liability for Inadvertently Disclosed Confidential Material

a. Florida Star v. B.J.F.: Inadvertently Disclosed Confidential Material Is Protected by the First Amendment

The third potential area of “truthful speech” media liability involves whether inadvertently disclosed “confidential” material gives rise to press liability when voluntarily handed over by the government. Both the facts and holding of the Florida Star v. B.J.F. case are straightforward. B.J.F., a rape victim in Florida, had her name inadvertently left on written materials made available to the press by the police.69 The Florida Star published B.J.F.’s full name, in violation of a state law that made publication of a rape victim’s name a crime.70 The U.S. Supreme Court held that this state law provision violated the First Amendment.71 The general rule regarding publication of public records handed to the press by the government appears to be that the press is virtually insulated from liability.

b. Kosovo and Liability for Inadvertently Disclosed Confidential Material

Crimes like rape, sex trafficking, and child molestation, while officially covered by the criminal code, seem as likely to be managed quietly by the

68. See interviews cited supra note 12. It is ironic that a legal standard very close to the Bartnicki rule is imbedded in the Kosovo shield law. Law on the Protection of Journalism Sources, Law No. 04/L-137, art. 8 (2013) (Kos.), available at http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Law%20on%20the%20Protection%20of%20the%20Sources.pdf (“Journalists and other media professionals cannot be criminally prosecuted in the event that they take or use documents which are secured illegally by third parties, when they are exercising the right to remain silent about their sources of information.”).


70. Id. at 526.

71. Id.
families involved in Kosovo. And although the Kanun\textsuperscript{72} is not often cited as the basis, the social and cultural mores that underpin the practical solutions to disputes seem highly informed by the Kanun. The social stigma that attaches to the aforementioned crimes is great and thus a system that protected the media for publishing, for example, the name of a rape victim shared inadvertently by police, would create a sense of outrage among ordinary citizens. Therefore the rule of \textit{Florida Star} – protection for accurate publication of government records, even when they contain embarrassing facts about innocent victims – would not work in Kosovo. More likely, the opposite rule would attach and be enforced by Kosovo judges, given that no constitutional or statutory provision exists which directly controls such a fact pattern. In fact, because of the cultural backdrop of the Kanun, some Kosovar judges seem quite comfortable with a strict liability standard for harm caused by speech perceived to be “honor” violations.\textsuperscript{73}

4. Liability for Media Wrongdoing

\textit{a. Chaquita Banana v. Gannett: Settlement in Case of Media Wrongdoing}

The fourth and final potential area of “truthful speech” media liability involves the news organization’s exposure to libel, or perhaps even criminal prosecution, where the press participates in the theft. The \textit{Cincinnati Enquirer}, owned by the Gannett Co. Inc., paid $10 million and ran a “Page One” apology in 1998 for three days rather than go to court over a phone-hacking scandal in which the newspaper’s reporters participated in the theft of more than 2,000 voicemail messages from the international fruit shipping giant.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} As noted \textit{supra}, the Kanun is a centuries-old unwritten Albanian “law” or set of social, legal and societal guiding principles. \textit{See} discussion \textit{supra} note 23. Often Albanians resort to self-help rather than use of the legal system to resolve disputes. \textit{See} interviews cited \textit{supra} note 12.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{See} interviews cited \textit{supra} note 12.

b. Kosovo and Media Participation in Theft of News Material

The “rule” of *Chiquita Banana*, while not actually litigated, would likely never be adopted by news organizations such as the *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network* and the *Kosovo Sot* newspaper, the two broadest-reaching print and online news outlets in Kosovo. These news outlets are aggressive and have open contempt for many judges. On the other hand, for organizations such as *Radio Television of Kosovo*, the state-sponsored broadcast network, or *Koha Ditore*, the most Western newspaper, the *Chiquita* approach of repudiating theft (and subsequent financial responsibility to avoid litigation) may make sense.

The way media participation in theft of “newsworthy” material would play out, assuming the material were labeled an “official secret,” would be through the criminal law, rather than by exercise of a judge’s contempt power, as might occur in an American court. The Kosovo Law on Witness Protection, Law No. 04/L-015, reads as follows: “Main provisions for protection of data and records: The Committee, Directorate, governmental authorities, organizations, services as well as persons shall treat all documents and data regarding the implementation of the witness protection program as official secret.”

Jon Smibert, a lawyer and senior legal analyst with the U.S. State Department in Kosovo, says as a practical matter that the confidential witness law in Kosovo works like this:

There’s a history to the “confidential witness” disclosure and also to the idea of judicial contempt power. In many ways, judicial contempt is never asserted here, although there are some basis to do so in the new CPC [criminal procedure code] and criminal code. (Criminal Contempt under the new Criminal Code is not well understood, and is currently the subject of a squabble between the Supreme Court and the Chief State Prosecutor[.]) The Supreme Court said that everyone who failed to follow any legal court order (including a massive number of property decisions) should be prosecuted. This would literally be tens of thousands of people. The Prosecutor has said that this would be overreaching and has refused to do so, and we suggested that doing so would violate the European Convention on Human Rights (Protocol 4, Article 1 prohibits depriving one of liberty merely for failing to fulfill['] a contractual obligation.)

Thus, the only power is really in the Criminal Code’s prohibition against disclosing “official secrets.” Under the [C]riminal [C]ode before 2013, there was a vague criminal offen[s]e if someone disclosed an “official secret” – a category that was never well defined.

There had been attempts in 2007 to prosecute people (usually court staff or even judges) for disclosing the names of witnesses or other information from the court files, but it was generally held that “official secret” did not include sealed files in the court. This changed in 2011 with the Witness Protection Law. Further, in the new Criminal Code, Article 433 describes “official secret” as “information or documents proclaimed by law, other provisions, or by a decision by the competent authority issued on the basis of law to be an official secret and whose disclosure has caused or might cause detrimental consequences.” It then excludes two categories: any information of a grave violation of human rights or that may create a danger to the constitutional order of Kosovo, or any information or documents intended to conceal the perpetrator of a criminal offense for which punishment is greater than five years.

The 2011 Law on Witness Protection (04/L-015) makes all documents and the work of the Witness Protection committee an official secret, as well as the documents to implement witness protection. It then refers to the criminal offense for disclosure of official secrets in the Criminal Code. This was meant to clarify that the predecessor to the Criminal Code and the new Code both covered disclosure of a person who has been entered into witness protection.

The bottom line from Smibert is: 1) the judicial contempt power in Kosovo (which on its face appears applicable to journalists for printing the names of confidential witnesses) is greatly misunderstood and the subject of a courts versus prosecutors dispute; and 2) the 2011 Law on Witness Protection, and by extension, the identities of confidential witnesses, are official secrets and disclosure of these names – often the names of witnesses in war crimes trials – subjects journalists to criminal liability.

c. Possible Conflict Between Confidential Witness Statute and Shield Law in Kosovo

Kosovo’s Reporter Shield Law, Law No. 04/L-138 Article 9, is discussed at length below. It appears clear and unequivocal on its face, protecting reporters who refuse to reveal their sources. But what if that source is a government employee who is revealing the name of a “confidential witness”? In a case similar to Florida Star, wherein the government actually provided the material for the forbidden publication, what then? Although this issue has not been litigated to a written decision, it appears, based on interviews with Kosovar judges, prosecutors and journalists, that a Kosovo judge would enforce the confidential witness

76. E-mail from Jon Smibert, Resident Legal Advisor, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, to author (Apr. 16, 2014, 04:23 EDT) (on file with author).
provision against the media and might in fact attempt to compel disclosure through the Criminal Code.\textsuperscript{78}

\textbf{B. Kosovo Statutory Law Governing Disclosure Sanctions for “Truthful” Publications}

1. Confidential Witness Disclosure

In Kosovo, a nation that did not exist until 2008, there are remnants of the war of independence and, with it, old blood rivalries and feuds. Many of the soldiers from the Kosovo Liberation Army became politicians after emancipation, attempting to perfect the imperfect alchemy of war hero (or war criminal) to civil politician.\textsuperscript{79} It is considered a serious crime in Kosovo for the press to disclose the name of a confidential witness.\textsuperscript{80} Many prosecutors believe reporters should be prosecuted and jailed for this offense.\textsuperscript{81}

2. The Case of Commander Zogaj

One recent example of the dangers of protected witness disclosure in Kosovo involved former Kosovo Liberation Army Commander Agim Zogaj, who kept a meticulous diary of alleged war crimes and eventually agreed to testify against some of his former comrades under a witness protection arrangement with the EULEX law enforcement agency in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{82} Zogaj, shortly before the trial, was found dead in Germany, hanging from a tree.\textsuperscript{83} All charges against the accused were ultimately dismissed when the diary was found inadmissible.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{78} See interviews cited supra note 12.
\textsuperscript{80} See supra note 75 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{81} See interviews cited supra note 12.
\textsuperscript{83} Id.
\textsuperscript{84} Former Kosovo Rebel Leader Fatmir Limaj Faces Retrial, BBC NEWS (Nov. 20, 2012), http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20418824; Kosovo Court Acquits Ex-Rebel KLA Leader and Aides, BBC NEWS (May 2, 2012), http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17926150. Kosovo alleged war crimes during the Serb-Albanian ethnic conflict that underlay the struggle between the former Yugoslavia and Kosovo throughout much of the 1990s. Brunwasser, supra note 82. KLA Commander Agim Zogaj’s diary, and his planned testimony, became key elements of a scheduled war crimes trial of Serbian revolutionary turned politician Fatmir Limaj. Id. By 2011, long after the war, Limaj had become a leading political figure within the ruling party.
II. PRESS LIABILITY FOR ERRORS, PRINTED FALSEHOODS, AND BROKEN PROMISES

A. Public Figures

1. United States: Press Wins Unless You Knew It Was Wrong or You Were Reckless

Under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a mistake made in a defamation case involving a public figure or public official plaintiff – written libel or oral slander – cannot give rise to press liability unless the reporter knew that the statement was false when she made it, or recklessly failed to confirm its truth.\(^{85}\)

2. Compare Kosovo

This concept is known as the *New York Times v. Sullivan* “Actual Malice” Rule. This rule is the best-practice rule of law for a nation seeking to encourage government transparency and protection of an aggressive press. Therefore, the rule should be adopted in Kosovo and incorporated into its developing legal system. With the repeal of honor code provisions, eradicating libel as a criminal charge as of 2013, the developing law of libel would be best served by a standard that encourages investigative reporting and transparency, while still allowing redress for public figures where reporters behave recklessly or worse. Public confidence in the judiciary in Kosovo trails faith in institutions such as the police and general government bureaucrats.\(^{86}\)

B. Non-Public Figures

1. United States: Press Wins Unless You Were at Least Negligent

Rather than follow the rule of “actual malice” from *New York Times v. Sullivan*, the U.S. Supreme Court, in 1974 in *Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc.*, modified the defamation rules under the First Amendment to allow recovery

\(^{86}\) Shpresa Mulliqi, Nat’l Prof’l Awareness Officer, Org. for Sec. & Co-operation in Eur., Presentation at The Vushtrri Conference and Annual Kos. Police Training (July 17, 2013).
of actual damages by a non public figure plaintiff where the defendant was merely negligent.87

2. Compare Kosovo

Adoption of such a rule in Kosovo would not violate the nation’s regulatory scheme and would be culturally consistent with the notion that regular Kosovars deserve more protection of their privacy and have an implicit right to be left alone. Implementation of the Gertz’s “at least negligence” standard for private citizens would not apply to public figures and therefore would not prevent Kosovo journalists from continuing to aggressively report alleged corruption among public officials.

C. Matters of Public Concern

1. United States: No Punitive Damages Unless Actual Malice

When a non-public figure plaintiff sues over an issue that is a matter of public concern, the U.S. Supreme Court has held that punitive damages against the press or other protected speaker under the First Amendment are only recoverable where the plaintiff can prove knowing falsity of the statement or reckless disregard for the truth – the New York Times “actual malice standard.”88 That is, while First Amendment application allows a private person to recover actual damages upon proof of mere negligence, forcing a defendant to pay punitive damages requires the defendant to have published the false statement with knowledge of its falsity, or with reckless disregard for the truth. The rationale here is that while a private person deserves greater protection than public figures, there is another, competing public policy at play where the private person was wronged in connection with a public debate about an issue of great importance to the larger community. If the statement libeling a private person is not of public concern, U.S. courts may apply a negligence standard for punitive damages.89

2. Compare Kosovo

The dual rules of Sullivan and Gertz would function well in Kosovo and allow citizens who are aggrieved in completely private defamation disputes – private persons, matters not of public concern – to be awarded punitive damages based on mere media sloppiness where there are mistakes made in stories that are about, in essence, a subject that is “nobody’s business.”

---

88. Id. at 324, 349.
89. Id. at 350.
D. Right of Subject to Retraction/Correction

1. United States: No Right to Forced Corrections

So-called “right of reply” statutes were once common in America. Pat Tornillo was a candidate for the state legislature in Florida in the 1980s and he became the subject of two unflattering editorials in the Miami Herald newspaper.90 He sued to have his replies to these articles printed by the Herald, invoking a state law that gave political candidates the statutory right to reply to criticisms published in private (non-government) newspapers.91 The U.S. Supreme Court eventually took the case, Miami Herald Publishing Company v. Tornillo, and held that such “right of reply” statutes violate the U.S. Constitution.92 The rationale was that imposition of a right to reply on a non-government entity was an improper incursion into the editor’s function at a private news organization and a penalty for the newspaper based on its content choices.93

2. Compare Kosovo

The nation of Kosovo at this stage of its development has not only embraced a rule quite opposite the holding of Miami Herald – but the rule is part of the nation’s Constitution.94 Under Article 42.3 of the Kosovo Constitution, a citizen has the right to correct false information in the press. The section reads: “Everyone has the right to correct untrue, incomplete and inaccurate published information, if it violates her/his rights and interests in accordance with the law.”95

The functional enforcement of Article 42.3’s forced-correction provision96 is in the hands of the Kosovo Press Council, a voluntary

---

91. Id. at 243-44.
92. Id. at 244, 258.
93. Id. at 258.
95. Id. Note that the Kosovo Press Council Statute, adopted May 11, 2010, was adopted in furtherance of Article 42.3, giving the authority to the Press Council to hear public complaints against news organizations, “to order a print media to print its adjudications on a place indicated” – functionally to enforce the constitutional right to corrections, and to fine news organizations for various misdeeds, including serious reporting errors. KOS. PRESS COUNCIL, KOSOVO PRESS COUNCIL STATUTE 4-5 (2010), available at http://www.presscouncil-ks.org/repository/docs/Statute_PCK_English_FINAL.pdf.
96. This is true as to print publications; electronic media regulation in Kosovo is governed by the constitutionally created and sanctioned Independent Media Commission, which appears to have less well-developed processes for television and radio-
association of private print media in Kosovo, who have drafted and agreed to the “Kosovo Press Council Statute.” The Kosovo Press Council has the authority to levy fines on the press for improper behavior, such as disclosure of confidential witness names or libel, and has the authority to force the member newspapers “to print its adjudications on a place indicated by” the Council. Such a paradigm is anathema to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the cases limiting government control of the press.

This constitutional and administrative right of Kosovars has further been incorporated into the libel statute. It is the view of the author that the self-implementation of the Article 42.3 forced-correction provisions. See generally About the IMC, INDEP. MEDIA COMM’N, http://www.kpm-ks.org/?faqe=141&gjuha=3 (last visited Nov. 25, 2014) (explaining the role of the Independent Media Commission and its authority under Kosovo’s constitution and laws); Law on the Independent Media Commission, Law No. 04/L-044 (2012) (Kos.), available at http://www.kpm-ks.org/materiale/dokument/1335250709.2603.pdf (establishing the powers of the Independent Media Commission).

97. See KOS. PRESS COUNCIL, supra note 95.
98. Id. at 5.
100. Article 13 of the Kosovo Law Against Defamation and Insult is the mirror opposite of the holding in the Miami Herald case. See supra notes 90-93 and accompanying text. Its provisions essentially give an aggrieved party the statutory (on top of Section 42’s constitutional) right to a forced correction and in-publication rebuttal space. The law provides:

Article 13
Right of reply
13.1. Any person, irrespective of citizenship or residence, mentioned in a newspaper, a periodical, a radio and television broadcast, or in any other medium of a periodical nature, regarding whom or which facts have been made accessible to the public which the person claims to be inaccurate, may exercise the right of reply in order to correct the facts concerning that person.
13.2. At the request of the complainant, the medium in question shall be obliged to make public the reply which the complainant has submitted.
13.3. By way of exception, the publication of the reply may be refused or edited by the medium in the following cases:
   a) if the request for publication of the reply is not addressed to the medium within seven (7) days from the day on which the complainant became aware of the publication;
   b) if the length of the reply exceeds what is necessary to correct the information containing the facts claimed to be inaccurate;
   c) if the reply is not limited to a correction of the facts challenged;
   d) if it constitutes a punishable offence;
   e) if it is considered contrary to legally protected interests of a third party;
   f) if the individual concerned cannot show the existence of a legitimate interest.
13.4. Publication of the reply shall be without undue delay and shall be given the same prominence as was given to the information containing the facts claimed to be inaccurate.
legislators of Kosovo have considered this issue and – consistent with their current societal and cultural mores – find the newspaper to be a sort of public utility, which ordinary people should be able to access as a matter of right when they are wronged by the press.

E. Broken Promise Liability

1. United States: Right of Action Under Cohen

The fifth potential area of “truthful speech” media liability involves whether a reporter can be held liable for breaking a promise of confidentiality to a news source. In Cohen v. Cowles Media Company, Lori Sturdevant, a reporter at the Minneapolis Star Tribune, received news material from public relations executive Dan Cohen, which was damaging to a political opponent. She promised him anonymity in exchange for the material. Over Sturdevant’s objection, editor Joel Kramer decided that the better story involved Cohen, and (without Sturdevant’s byline) published a news article about “dirty tricks” – the sharing of politically damaging information about an opponent on the eve of an election. The story was published, and Cohen lost his job and was essentially professionally ruined as a result of the news article. Cohen sued for breach of contract, and the U.S. Supreme Court agreed that a broken promise by a news organization to a source supports an action for money damages on the theory of promissory estoppel. The trial included dramatic testimony by Cohen, who broke down on the witness stand, and by Sturdevant, who disagreed fundamentally with her editors’ decision to break her promise to Cohen and who had removed her byline from the story in protest.

2. Compare Kosovo

The nation of Kosovo has no statutory or constitutional corollary to the Cohen rule. Research and interviews with judges and journalists revealed no similar cases either. With no legal foundation upon which to build, one can

102. Id. at 665.
103. See id. at 665-66.
104. Id. at 666.
105. Id. at 665.
106. As a University of California-Berkeley (Boalt Hall) law student, the author worked as a summer associate at the Faegre & Benson law firm during the summers of 1987 and 1988. In that capacity, he played a very minor role as a researcher and law clerk working on the case with Faegre & Benson partner Jim Fitzmaurice, the main trial lawyer defending Cowles Media.
only speculate as to whether the Cohen fact pattern presents a wrong for which a remedy is required and lacking in Kosovo. The answer, in the author’s opinion, is no. In fact, it might be argued that the “Right of Reply” from Article 42 of the Constitution and Article 13 of the Kosovo Code (along with the major print media’s power to levy fines) provides sufficient redress, so long as the defendant is a member of the press or has the same means of publication at the time of the litigation as existed when the plaintiff was wronged. That is, if the “Right of Reply” statute puts the plaintiff back in the same position as before the wrong, wouldn’t he then be “doubly” compensated for his wrong if he is able to recover money damages in addition to a forced right of reply in the same medium on the same terms as the offending communication?

As if in answer to what might be perceived as an anti-media imbalance in this area, enter Kosovo, Article 6.2 of the current Civil Law Against Defamation and Insult. That statute provides:

In defamation and insult actions involving statements on matters of public concern, the defendant shall carry the burden of proving that he/she acted responsibly in publishing the impugned statements. A finding by the court that the defendant acted responsibly in publishing the impugned statements, unless the defendant knew that the impugned statement was false or acted in reckless disregard of its veracity, shall absolve the defendant of any liability.107

From the statute it seems that after a reporter meets his burden of proof that he “acted responsibly,” he is insulated from libel liability.108 This provision seems problematic for at least two reasons. First, there is the matter of undue discretion in the hands of the trial judge. What is “responsible” behavior and how will it be adjudicated in a nation that is so new, with judges who are so roundly anti-media? And second, the burden shift seems to be bad public policy. The statute already writes in the requirement that the matter be of “public concern,” which gives the trial judge an opportunity to protect a plaintiff who is merely the victim of press meddling. Thus, a reporter who makes an error, in order to avail himself of this protection, must first show that the communication was a matter of public concern (the statute is silent as to who has the burden here, but because the reporter has the general burden, he likely has the public concern burden as well) and then he must show that he acted responsibly.

As constructed, this statute appears unlikely to give much protection to aggressive journalists in a new nation who make honest mistakes about matters of public concern. A better framework would be to shift the burden to the plaintiff, both as to the public concern question and the responsibility

108. Id.
issue. Such a change would bring this law into line with the centuries-long learning of U.S. courts without stripping private Kosovo plaintiffs of their opportunity to seek redress for media overreaching.109

III. SHIELD LAWS

A. United States: No Shield Law Under the First Amendment

The Shield Law debate – whether there is immunity from contempt of court or similar prosecution for failing to reveal an anonymous news source – has raged in America for centuries.110 The U.S. Supreme Court in Branzburg v. Hayes held that there is no reporter’s shield law implied by the First Amendment, but, of course, the case left open the opportunity for states to pass such laws and forty of fifty American states have done so.111 As recently as 2013, the United States Senate considered a bill to allow reporters protection for sources that provide information to journalists on the condition of anonymity.112 News gatherers have long considered such protections vital to a free flow of information in a democracy, particularly where the subject of those stories is government misbehavior.113

B. Kosovo Shield Law: Lesson for America

In the case of the reporter shield law question, U.S. courts could learn from the young nation of Kosovo, which, by statute, decrees: “Journalists and other media professionals cannot be criminally prosecuted in the event that

109. See discussion supra note 100 (discussing Article 13 – Right of Reply).
110. See generally Branzburg v. Hayes, 408 U.S. 665, 686-91, 697-98 (1972) (finding that no such “virtually impenetrable constitutional shield” necessarily exists and describing the history of the “newsman’s privilege”).
113. See, e.g., Branzburg, 408 U.S. at 679-82; see also Chandler v. Florida, 449 U.S. 560, 573-75 (1981) (holding that there is not a “constitutional rule barring still photographic, radio, and television coverage in all cases and under all circumstances”); Tim Cushing, Sen. Feinstein During ‘Shield’ Law Debate: ‘Real’ Journalists Draw Salaries, TECHDIRT (Aug. 8, 2013, 3:58 PM), https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20130807/13153224102/sen-feinstein-during-shield-law-debate-real-journalists-draw-salaries.shtml (noting the problematic issue around the definition of what a “journalist” is). The problematic issues involving the definition of a “journalist” may be one of the main factors holding up passage of a potential shield law at the federal level.
they take or use documents which are secured illegally by third parties, when they are exercising the right to remain silent about their sources of information.”

The Kosovo Shield Law further provides: “In case of a breach of professional secrecy defined in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo, journalists and other media professionals cannot be criminally prosecuted under the charge of collaborating in crime when they are exercising their right to keep silent about their sources.”

The rationales for a shield law are many: encouragement of government whistleblowers, protection against retaliation from government, protection for private observers of senior management misbehavior, and general protection of the privacy of people who do not wish to become inadvertent public figures by thrusting themselves into the middle of a controversy.

One of the main rationales argued by opponents of shield laws is that nobody knows who the media really are and that certain types of speakers should be given less protection than working journalists. The best reply to this argument comes from a time when the U.S. was even younger than the nation of Kosovo: Publius, an anonymous speaker who helped build the rationale for passage of our Constitution, would have been denied shield law protection as a non-journalist. And the same would be true for Thomas Paine, who wrote *Common Sense* anonymously.

### IV. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO THE COURTS

#### A. Open Courts

1. United States: Open Courts

The U.S. Supreme Court held in *Richmond Newspapers, Inc. v. Virginia* that the press and the public have the right under the First Amendment to

---

114. Law on the Protection of Journalism Sources, Law No. 04/L-137, art. 8 (2013) (Kos.), *available at* http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Law%20on%20the%20protection%20of%20journalism%20sources.pdf.

115. *Id.* art. 9.


118. There were many anonymous reprints of the *Common Sense* pamphlet before Paine became widely known as the author of these influential, revolutionary essays. *See Common Sense, THOMAS PAINE SOC’Y*, http://www.thomaspainesociety.org/#/common-sense/c1bks (last visited Nov. 25, 2014).
attend criminal trials. The Court, however, left the door open to some limitations, such as when other overriding interests outweigh the public policy value of open courtrooms. This open door has, as a practical matter, justified closed military and terrorism trials. Subsequent American case law has found a similar right to attend most civil trials.

2. Kosovo: Open Courts – An Express Constitutional Right in Kosovo

The law requiring open trials in Kosovo is embedded in the nation’s Constitution. Article 31, Right to Fair and Impartial Trial, provides that:

1. Everyone shall be guaranteed equal protection of rights in the proceedings before courts, other state authorities and holders of public powers.

2. Everyone is entitled to a fair and impartial public hearing as to the determination of one’s rights and obligations or as to any criminal charges within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law.

3. Trials shall be open to the public except in limited circumstances in which the court determines that in the interest of justice the public or the media should be excluded because their presence would endanger public order, national security, the interests of minors or the privacy of parties in the process in accordance with law.

Further, trials in Kosovo are presumed open to the press and to the public under Article 22 of the Kosovo Constitution, which incorporates by reference Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

---

120. Id. at 580-81.
122. See, e.g., Westmoreland v. Columbia Broad. Sys., Inc., 752 F.2d 16, 23 (2d Cir. 1984) (citations omitted) (finding that the public and the press have a right to civil trials and discussing history of debate on the topic).
124. See On Contested Procedure, Law No. 03/L-006, ch. XXIV, art. 444 (2008) (Kos.), available at http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ljigjet/2008_03-L006_en.pdf. Members of the media should know that, under Article 446, closed hearings allow entry to only parties, their legal representatives and intermediaries, authorized official persons, scientists. Id. art. 446. Under Article 447.2, “[t]here is no special appeal regarding . . . the closed door hearing.” Id. art. 447.2.
There are, however, exceptions to the presumption of openness.126

a. Civil Trials Open in Kosovo

Further reinforcing the constitutional provision, Article 444 of the Code on Contested Procedure (a.k.a. Civil Procedure) provides that the main hearing is open to the public, which, of course, means by inference that it is open to the media.127 In order to close a courtroom to the press and the media, the court must state a “justifiable excuse” under Article 445.128 The issue of whether to close a courtroom is settled in a pre-trial hearing pursuant to Article 448.129 Permissible excuses for a judge’s decision to close a courtroom include: “a) an official secret should be kept or when it comes to the public order; b) if there are mentioned trade secrets, inventions, whose publications will cause interference in the interests protected by law; c) private details from the parties’ or other [involved persons’] lives are mentioned.”130

Under Article 446 of the Code on Contested Procedure, closed hearings allow entry only to parties, their legal representatives and intermediaries,
“authorized official persons,” and scientists. Under Article 447.2, “[t]here is no special appeal regarding . . . the closed door hearing.”

This is one of the recurrent problems under the Kosovo regulatory scheme: appeals are not as a matter of right. So even if the Constitution and/or Code are press-friendly, where no right of appeal exists, a judge who is anti-media or ill-informed can quite easily thwart the will of lawmakers and the best interests of the people to enjoy a transparent window into their system of justice.

b. Criminal Trials Open in Kosovo

Criminal trials in Kosovo are also presumed open to the media and the public. The public and press can only be excluded for one or more of six specific reasons under Article 294. These reasons include: “1.1. protecting official secrets; 1.2. maintaining the confidentiality of information which would be jeopardized by a public hearing; 1.3. maintaining law and order; 1.4. protecting the personal or family life of the accused, the injured party or of other participants in the proceedings; 1.5. protecting the interests of children; or 1.6. protecting injured parties, cooperative witnesses and [other witnesses covered by the Code].”

Further, criminal trials in Kosovo are required to have a written record of the proceedings under Article 315. Therefore, while the written opinions of the Richmond Newspapers and Nebraska Press cases may give guidance to Kosovo judges as to when they should make exceptions, the law of Kosovo on its face appears to fully contemplate open trials and to abhor both locked courtrooms and gag orders on the press.

c. Practical Impediments to Open Courts in Kosovo

Sometimes a judge will order a courtroom closed outright. But sometimes there are practical impediments to open trials, which do not involve legal rulings. For example, the European human rights community (whose tenets are incorporated into the Kosovo Constitution) recognizes that (1) “lack of publicity of hearings,” (2) “inaccessible venue[s],” (3) “insufficient courtroom space,” or (4) the application of “unreasonable

131. Id. at art. 446.1.
132. Id. at art. 447.2.
134. Id. at art. 294.
135. Id. at art. 315.
136. See id. at art. 301.
conditions of entry into the courtroom” can all have the same effect as a closed courtroom.\textsuperscript{137}

In Kosovo, hearings are sometimes held in small judges’ offices.\textsuperscript{138} And while this may be a temporary necessity, in order to comply with internationally accepted human rights standards on fair trials, the place of a hearing must be easily accessible to the public.\textsuperscript{139}

B. Open Records

1. United States: Open Records

In the United States, federal courts, individual state courts and the U.S. Freedom of Information Act provide for open court records.\textsuperscript{140}

2. Compare Kosovo

Article 41 of the Kosovo Constitution, Right of Access to Public Documents, provides that:

1. Every person enjoys the right of access to public documents.

2. Documents of public institutions and organs of state authorities are public, except for information that is limited by law due to privacy, business trade secrets or security classification.\textsuperscript{141}

In addition, Articles 41 and 42 (the anti-censorship provision) of the Kosovo Constitution address the rights of the public and, by inference, the rights of journalists, to obtain public documents, including court files.\textsuperscript{142} There are many exceptions to the availability of records, primarily: (1)

\textsuperscript{142} Id. at arts. 41-42.
privacy, (2) trade secrets, and (3) security classification. Decisions on when documents are not publicly available are in the hands of the trial judge.  

However, nowhere in the Kosovo legal landscape is the gap between theory and execution greater than in the realm of public records. Although public court records must be maintained under Article 315 of the Kosovo Code, and made available to parties under Article 41 of the Constitution, working journalists in Kosovo say it simply does not happen. Longtime journalist Selvije Bajrami, who has covered the courts for many years and currently serves as the court reporter for the Zeri Gazette, said in an interview that the way most journalists obtain copies of criminal filings is “by going for coffee with the defense lawyer.”

C. Gag Orders

1. United States: (Virtually) No Gag Orders on the Press

In Nebraska Press v. Stuart, a judge ordered members of the media not to publish truthful information they had gathered from a grisly murder involving six members of a single family. Both the defense lawyers and the prosecution asked the judge to enter a press gag order, which essentially censored the press. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately found, that while there may be limited circumstances justifying such orders, they are antithetical to the presumption of openness and transparency that undergird the First Amendment. Thus, after Nebraska Press – and based on subsequent case law, virtually every other case not involving juveniles or national security – the press has both the right to cover the trial under Richmond Newspapers, and the right to print whatever it sees fit under Nebraska Press.

2. Kosovo: (Theoretically) No Gag Orders

Gag orders appear to be covered by Article 42.2 of the Kosovo Constitution, discussed above. That section bans censorship except in limited cases, several of which are similar to the U.S. exceptions for national

146. Id.
147. See id. at 561-62.
148. See id.; see also supra notes 119-122 and accompanying text.
security and terrorism. But as a practical matter, interviews and research revealed no cases of Kosovo judges affirmatively ordering journalists not to report material gleaned from open-courtroom reporting. Instead, it appears, judges in the new nation are far more likely than American judges to exercise their authority under the various exceptions, such as the Article 445 civil “justifiable excuse” provision in the Civil Code and the Article 294 exceptions in the Criminal Code. No written record of some of these closures exists, according to journalists. The practical impact of these courtroom closures results in the functional equivalent of a gag order. And the unfettered discretion of judges, coupled with the lack of consistent appellate rights, reduces this otherwise laudatory free-speech provision to a hollow promise.

D. Cameras in the Courtroom

1. United States: Federal Courts Mostly Closed to Cameras; States Have Discretion

One of the main free-press notions most lacking in the U.S. courts is the right of the press to record and/or televise trials. In broad strokes, the law of cameras in America is bifurcated: cameras are banned in most all federal courts, and states can make up their own minds on criminal trials. Further, it is the state government that determines the law of video access to its criminal courts – not the prosecutor, nor the defendant, nor both in concert. Still, the overwhelming majority of American states have opted for at least limited video coverage. Authority for this discretion flows from Chandler v. Florida, a state law case in which the Supreme Court held that a criminal defendant has no Sixth Amendment claim when her trial is televised against her will. The clock is still ticking on the question of cameras in federal courtrooms, including the U.S. Supreme Court, where they remain banned.

150. See id.
151. See interviews cited supra note 12.
152. See interviews cited supra note 12.
2. Kosovo: Statutory Right Under Article 301.3

The infant nation Kosovo, with the aid of the international community, was created with mandated transparency as to cameras, among other press-friendly policies.\textsuperscript{157} Compare this with the U.S. view, captured by the oft-quoted story by longtime Supreme Court reporter Tony Mauro that former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Souter declared that America’s high court would allow cameras “over my dead body.”\textsuperscript{158} Kosovo takes the extreme opposite position. Article 301.3 of the Kosovo Code makes all criminal trials in Kosovo subject to audio and video recording by the media unless the judge, in a written, reasoned decision, rules that such recording shall not be allowed.\textsuperscript{159} Journalists who are denied access to courtrooms for recording purposes should review any administrative guidelines that have been published by the designated media committee of the Kosovo Supreme Court. Such regulations, which may be amended from time to time, generally follow the exceptions listed in Article 294.\textsuperscript{160}

\textit{Postscript}

Anthony Lewis, two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize, was both a critic and a champion of independent judiciaries and the free press.\textsuperscript{161} He cared passionately about each of the four over-arching concepts discussed here – 1) penalties for truthful reporting; 2) media mistakes; 3) shield laws; and 4) transparency. But he was not an apologist for the press, and particularly toward the end of his years came down “against” the media on such issues as shield laws and the extent to which the “Actual Malice” Rule ought to apply to non-government officials.\textsuperscript{162}

But Lewis was unwavering on his stance regarding the media’s responsibility to uncover and speak out against injustice. No better example can be found than his passionate June 22, 1999, column in support of U.S.

\textsuperscript{157} See supra notes 123-135 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{159} Criminal Procedure Code, Code No. 04/L-123, ch. XIX, art. 301.3 (2012) (Kos.), available at www.legislationline.org/documents/id/17771.
\textsuperscript{160} See id. at art. 294.
military involvement in Kosovo. Lewis could not have known then that America’s aid, which he so fervently supported, would not just end the tyranny and genocide of Milosevic, but that it would also set in motion a chain of events that would create Kosovo in June 2008, the world’s newest democracy, borne replete with a free press and an independent judiciary. Lewis wrote:

There can be no doubt, now, about the scale of Serbian atrocities in Kosovo. Western reporters and war-crimes investigators have begun to confirm what Kosovar Albanian refugees described.

NATO officers estimate that at least 10,000 ethnic Albanians were murdered; the figure could be much higher. Families were burned alive in their homes, children killed in front of their mothers.

The details are so terrible that, in our safe lives, we are inclined to turn away—to stop reading, to change the channel. But we must know what happened. For what the Serbs did in Kosovo confronts us again with the question of the human capacity for evil.

Were he still alive to see the full flower of Kosovo’s press and its democracy, Tony Lewis would surely waive off any connection between his words and America’s leadership following the Clinton Administration’s ten-week bombing campaign that led to the expulsion of strongman Slobodan Milosevic. Based on his writings, it is clear that he believed the press was not always right. But a fair reading of his work also supports the conclu-


164. Id.


sion that Lewis believed judicial transparency coupled with press accountability created a nation’s best chance for enduring democracy.