

UPF Slovakia Panel Exposes Anti-Religious Bias in Media

Barbara Grabner
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Bratislava, Slovakia – To recognize Human Rights Day, UPF-Slovakia held a panel discussion on December 10, 2025, at the Bratislava Peace Embassy. The event was titled "Media and Religious Freedom: Do they protect, ignore, or endanger religious minorities and new religions?"

After welcoming the audience, UPF-Slovakia president **Mr. Miloš Klas** quoted the Italian journalist Mario Respinti: "Words, images, and headlines shape public opinion. Such framing can either uphold dignity or legitimize prejudice. When it comes to religious freedom, the media has become part of the problem. Instead of acting as guardians of democracy, they often behave as its prosecutors and judges, or even as priests of orthodoxy."



Mr. Klas was followed by **Mr. Jan Figel**, a renowned politician and current president of the Forum of Religious Freedom Europe (FOREF). Mr. Figel explained the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 – which affirms freedom of thought, conscience and religion – in great detail, saying that although people are aware of the UN Human Rights Charter, few know its contents and obligations. Where there are rights, there are also responsibilities, he pointed out; the two cannot be separated. He said it is scandalous that 250 million Christians are under persecution worldwide, yet the media pays very little

attention.

"A single negative press or television report can destroy a reputation, faith, career, or project. Lawsuits for defamation rarely restore the reputation of the defamed," said the next speaker, journalist **Ms. Barbara Grabner**. Drawing on her experiences, she gave a presentation about media impact, highlighting the enormous shaming power of the media. "People understand events and circumstances based on images created by the media. Journalists often use stereotypes to make them understand complex issues. However, stereotypes produce prejudice and stigmatization," she said.



Mr. Patrik Daniška, chairman of the Institute for Human Rights and Family Policy, is the organizer of many large rallies promoting family values, but his work has been hampered by biased reporting. He explained some of the popular tricks employed by the media to belittle his work: presenting the marches as Christian events of no interest to the general public; attempting to link his issues with those of political extremists; biased headlines and fabricated contents; and unfair accounts of the number of participants.

Ms. Renáta Ocilková, chairwoman of the Slovak Society for the Family, is a well-known lecturer on families and relationships. Currently her focus is on human rights and transgender issues, seen from a Christian perspective. She too has experienced how images and headlines influence public perception of her work. Media reports are often biased because her work contradicts the dominant LGBT narrative.



Next, **Mr. Pavel Mudra** of the Church of Scientology explained how the church produces attractive booklets, audiovisuals and lessons to improve knowledge and understanding of the individual articles of the Human Rights Charter, especially among youth. Because general media does not help these efforts, the group focuses on the use of social media, he said.

The concluding highlight was the awarding of the title of Ambassador of Peace to **Dr. Stefan Detvai**, former president of the Lawyers Association in Slovakia, who demonstrated impressive courage in defending members of the Unification Church against communist authorities fifty years ago. Dr. Detvai gave an inspiring testimony about his involvement at that time.

After a brief question-and-answer session, the participants chatted as they enjoyed refreshments.