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## PRESS RELEASE

On 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January, an international conference on the role of media, journalists and propaganda during the so-called refugee crisis took place in Prague's conference centre Evropský dům. The conference was attended by approximately a hundred participants, consisting of professionals, politicians, journalists, students, pedagogues or state officials working with migrants.

The leading topic of the conference were the underlying reasons of massive anti-refugee propaganda in the country affected so little by the refugee crisis. The conference also touched upon the issues of hatred towards muslims or non-governmental organizations and the impact of such propaganda on public opinion.

Firstly, Tomáš Lindner from Respekt and Martin Biben from Hospodářské noviny presented examples of professional and unprofessional journalist work on refugee-related topics. Subsequently, similar initiatives from various European countries were introduced, among them initiatives from Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Poland or Lithuania. Together the participants elaborated on the possibility to change the media discourse and tried to discuss an effective tool for this purpose. Means and parameters of objective media coverage of refugees and the advantages or cooperation among the EU countries in the questions of migration and asylum were another major topic.

The conference was preceded by an introduction of the European report „*Pushed Back at the Door – Denial of Access to Asylum in Eastern EU Member States*“ on 25<sup>th</sup> January, which triggered a debate about unlawful factual denial of the right to seek asylum in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Bulgaria. The analysis was a result of research of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Czech Organization for Aid to Refugees, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and Slovenian Legal Information Center for NGOs. All organizations are members of ECRE, a European umbrella organization for refugees, which has been closely monitoring the events of the so-called refugee crisis.

Contact: JUDr. Martin Rozumek, director of OPU; tel: 731 170 885

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