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SUICIDE AND PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE SPANISH PRESS: ANALYSIS FROM THE CONSTITUTIONAL JURISPRUDENCE ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

SUICIDIO E INTERÉS PÚBLICO EN LA PRENSA ESPAÑOLA: ANÁLISIS DESDE LA JURISPRUDENCIA CONSTITUCIONAL SOBRE LIBERTAD DE INFORMACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Every year, more than 700,000 people commit suicide worldwide, and in Spain, it has been the leading cause of external death since 2008. Although it is a public health problem, the press follows the general rule of not reporting on suicide for fear of generating a contagion or "Werther effect," reflecting society's silence on self-induced death. This constitutes a form of self-censorship against the freedom of information enshrined in Article 20.1.d) of the Spanish Constitution, which is only broken in specific and/or extreme cases, contributing to a distorted projection of suicide. **Objective:** The Spanish Constitutional Court points to public interest as a necessary requirement for news in the event of a potential conflict with other rights that limit the right to information. This article confronts suicide with this notion, analyzing whether press publications about suicide meet this legal public interest, not always equivalent to journalistic interest, making them legitimate in the face of the limits of freedom of information and the rule of silence. **Methodology:** The jurisprudence of the Spanish Constitutional Court regarding the public interest in information has been thoroughly reviewed, and this legal argument has been compared with a self-produced database of news about suicide published between 2013 and 2022. **Results:** Without expressly mentioning suicide, but not excluding it, the Constitutional Court does recognize the relevance of other matters that, by analogy, allow us to infer the general interest of self-induced death. Geographic bias, the notoriety of the person, or the potential impact on society, but never the satisfaction of others' curiosity, determine its public relevance, arguable against the limits of freedom of information. **Discussion and conclusions:** Despite its abstract public interest, an examination of constitutional jurisprudence shows how well-founded each piece of information on suicide must be, especially when the protagonist is an anonymous citizen, to comply with the constitutional limit on freedom of information. Self-censorship has hindered the possibility of this public health problem being legitimately debated in public opinion.

Keywords: suicide; press; Spanish Constitution; public interest; freedom of information; Constitutional Court.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. A public health problem

Suicide is a lethal self-injurious act performed with obvious intent to die (Turecki & Brent, 2016) preceded by other behaviors arranged in an ascending gradation-ideation, planning, and attempt (O'Connor *et al.*, 2011, p. 9), with a variety of triggers, including mental health disorders (Turecki *et al.*, 2019; World Health Organization, 2023a). Although the true extent of suicide is considered to be underestimated, the World Health Organization (2021) estimates that more than 700,000 people worldwide attempt suicide each year, more than the deaths from malaria, lung cancer, HIV/AIDS, or homicide alone. Suicide has become a major public health problem that, beyond each individual tragedy, has an impact on many people -six on average- (Shneidman, 1972) including friends, family and the community itself, with significant economic and emotional costs (Margaret *et al.*, 2009). It stands out as one of the leading causes of

years of life lost (Ayuso-Mateos *et al.*, 2011). It occurs at any age, but in the 15-29 years age group it is the fourth leading cause of death worldwide, immediately after traffic accidents, tuberculosis and interpersonal violence (WHO, 2021). It is a global and cross-cutting phenomenon, which transcends socioeconomic circumstances and can affect people of any age and gender.

In Spain, despite being slightly below the world and European average, the National Institute of Statistics (2024) has been reporting suicide since 2008 as the leading cause of external death ahead of traffic accidents, and only in the preliminary advance of 2023 has it been surpassed by accidental falls. In the 2023 preview, even though this same indicator shows a year-on-year decrease of 6.5 percent, in the consolidated data for 2022 the symbolic limit of 4,000 deaths per year was exceeded¹ corresponding to an average of 11 suicides per day. The data further indicate an upward trend, with a rate above 8 suicides per 100,000 population. In the 15-29 age group in 2022, there were 341 deaths resulting from suicide², placing it since 2019 above even traffic accidents as a cause of external death in young people. In addition, attempts among adolescents have increased considerably in the last five years. This is indicated, for example, by the most recent monographic report of the ANAR Foundation's Study and Research Center (2022) according to which there has been a 25-fold increase during a decade with regard to the number of suicide attempts that have been registered in its telephone helpline service.

1.2. Media silencing vs. responsible visibility

The usual response of the media in our country for decades, despite the severity and significance given the above figures, has adhered to the generic rule of not reporting on suicides, with few exceptions. This is done so as not to incite other vulnerable people to reproduce this behavior, always from the conviction that some news about suicide can ignite the contagion or generate what is known as the Werther effect (Phillips, 1974).

It is customary to break this silence only in specific, exceptional and often extreme cases (such as those shown in the examples below), which has placed suicide in a marginal position, a result that is inconsistent with its importance as a public health issue.

Crowd shocked at the public suicide of a Briviescan man

(...) in the presence of dozens of people, he took out a small caliber gun and shot himself in the head.

(*Diario de Burgos*, Nov. 23, 2015)

He stabs his wife to death and then commits suicide in his apartment in Terrassa

¹ With a total of 4,227 deaths.

² A figure that is repeated in the provisional advance for 2023.

(*La Vanguardia*, January 21, 2015)

The actress Verónica Forqué was found dead in her home in Madrid.

The interpreter was 66 years old and, according to the first investigations, she committed suicide.

(*El País*, December 13, 2021)

On the other hand, although the World Health Organization (2014) has directly pointed out the media as agents responsible for the increase in deaths by self-harm, precisely because of the risk of imitation or the Werther effect which certain news reports can cause, at the same time it considers them to be necessary preventive factors. In this sense, WHO gives the media a determining role in destroying the stigma and in obtaining political involvement in prevention with recurrent and appropriate references to suicide as a matter of public interest (WHO, 2012). For years, this institution has been calling for a committed visibility based on several apparently simple rules: avoid detailed descriptions, moderate the terms used, avoid glorifications or exaltations or yellowish views, and provide public service information on assistance and how to access it (WHO, 2014; 2023b).

In addition, some professionals in the field of mental health (Pérez, 2017; Noriega, 2019) are calling for measures to educate the population in the belief that this would allow early action to be taken in the face of suicide, and that the media is a powerful instrument for raising awareness. This is an attitude that is in line with what is known in the literature as the Papageno effect (Niederkrötenhaller et al., 2010), which recognizes the potential of the media to educate the population in the detection and prevention of suicide when reporting in a responsible manner. See this news item as a sample:

Preventing possible suicides: what are the signs to watch out for?

In Spain, ten people commit suicide every day, one every two and a half hours.

To prevent it, it is essential to be aware of various signs, from sudden changes in behavior to possible anticipatory phrases.

(*El Diario*, January 26, 2020)

1.3. Self-censorship vs. public interest and limits to freedom of information

From a legal perspective, the repeated omission in the press of this fragment of reality that is suicide can be understood as a form of self-censorship. In other words, a voluntary and conscious waiver by the press of part of the scope for exercising the freedom to freely communicate truthful information contained in Article 20.1.d) of the Spanish Constitution (hereinafter SC). It also affects the ability of citizens to freely receive this content, and the option for society to know and understand the reality of self-induced death and its connections with other hidden community problems.

In contrast, when exceptionally it is decided to publish news about suicide, it opens

the possibility of conflict with other rights and legal assets that limit the right to information and that are specifically included in Article 20.4 SC: all those recognized in Title I of the Magna Carta, but especially the right to honor, privacy, self-image and the protection of youth and childhood along with others incorporated by accession to international treaties such as safety, public health and morality.

In this sense, the Constitutional Court's rulings, the highest interpreter of the Magna Carta, points to the relevance or public interest of the information as a necessary requirement -together with truthfulness- and as a legitimizing framework for the news in the face of a possible collision with the aforementioned limits. Thus, the Constitutional Court's Decision (hereinafter CCD) 107/1988 of June 8 states in its Legal Basis 2 (hereinafter LB) that the value of the freedom of public communication is the same as that of the public interest:

can only be protected when the freedoms are exercised in connection with matters that are of general interest because of the matters to which they refer and because of the persons involved in them and contribute, consequently, to the formation of public opinion, thus reaching their maximum level of justifying effectiveness.

The legal concept of public interest is indissolubly connected to the concept of free public opinion, the latter being understood as the space in which the free flow of ideas on which our society debates at each historical moment is generated and guaranteed, or also as the framework of what can be said collectively (Callejo Gallego, 2009, pp. 111-134). Such is the importance of public opinion -in the construction of which the media are decisive- that it has become a legal institution through the interpretation of the Magna Carta that the Constitutional Court has been establishing in the course of its jurisprudential work³. It is in this virtual and conceptual framework where issues such as suicide can emerge to be taken into consideration by the community - as it seems to be happening right now - or, on the contrary, disappear under the unforgiving shadow of taboo and remain dormant - as it has been happening regularly until well into the twenty-first century.

Therefore, one can think of the public interest as an attribute needed for certain matters that occur in our common reality, as in the case of suicide, to be legitimately included in the flow of free communication, or as the quality that certain issues addressed in the press, radio or television must have if their informative treatment is to survive a legal conflict with any of the limits of the right to information, especially the rights to privacy, honor and one's own image.

It should be clarified that these fundamental rights that limit freedom of information are given to the person, are based on his dignity, and can be exercised when the individual is alive. But the very personal rights, although more limited after death, leave a trail of nuanced effectiveness. As relevant abstract assets, it is not so much the honor, privacy or image of the deceased, but a kind of protection of the community memory of the deceased (Urias, 2009, pp. 172-190) with a different scope depending

³ See, for example, Constitutional Court Ruling 105/1990 of June 6.

on the law involved, and with a disparate casuistic application by the courts.

The right to the image, due to its "endowable" content, is easier to transfer and claim by the heirs; and the right to privacy can be exercised because it has not only a personal but also a family aspect that transcends individual activity (Urías, 2009, pp. 172-180; Carreras Serra, 2008, pp. 14-20). The Constitutional Court refers to this matter in Decision 190/1996 of November 25, 1996, LB 2:

(...) in accordance with art. 20.4 SC and within the framework of the principles and values that inform our Fundamental Rule, Organic Law 1/1982, of May 5, 1982, on the Civil Protection of the Right to Honor, Privacy and Self-Image, establishes that the memory of a deceased person may limit the right to the provision of truthful information.

With specific reference to family privacy, Constitutional Court Decision 231/1988 of December 2, 1988, refers in its Legal Basis 3 that "this privacy is not only the right of the person who is directly affected, but, because of its moral repercussions, it is also a right of his or her family members".

However, it should also be borne in mind that suicide is not all about life or death, but that there is a wide gray area in which we find suicide attempts and a whole spectrum of people affected by these behaviors -whether they have ended in death or not-. It is also in this diffuse area that the interest of information and, therefore, the inquiry of journalists under the protection of freedom of information can also penetrate, and cases of tension can arise between freedom of information and other fundamental rights. This happens, for example, in a suicide attempt that becomes news due to the high profile of its protagonist, or because it has taken place in a public setting or in exceptional circumstances.

In such cases, for the survivors of the attempt, each of these very personal rights continues to operate with all its effectiveness and development. But if the result is death, behind the deceased there are usually surviving family members and relatives for whom a high degree of publicity also entails emotional costs and social tolls that are difficult to bear.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to confront suicide with the legal concept of public interest as a requirement of freedom of information. The aim is to find out, on the one hand, whether the subject of self-inflicted death fits within the jurisprudential assumptions of public relevance; and, on the other hand, whether this allows, in general terms, the treatment of suicide in the press to be protected by the right to information.

The intention is to clarify whether the news about self-injury is in line with the legal framework of public interest when the rule of silence and/or self-censorship is broken and the report is published. Suicide reporting must fit within this framework in order to obtain the legal protection of freedom of information. Therefore, this article examines whether the press can and should respond to the what, who, when, where,

how and why about suicide within the exercise of freedom of information, that is, whether news about suicide can be protected by the right to information when confronted with the limits of that right, which is an institutional guarantee of free public opinion. Basically, there is a doubt about the value of suicide as a topic of public relevance, over and above the limits of freedom of information and the risk of disseminating this behavior.

The legitimacy of self-inflicted death as a matter that is protected by the right to information depends on the quality of this connection, and also on whether the exercise of this right in relation to suicide prevails in a judicial conflict in the face of a hypothetical intrusion into the rights of personality, privacy, honor and self-image or the protection of youth and childhood. There are dichotomies in the balance, such as the possible damage to fundamental rights of the environment of the person with suicidal behavior versus the benefit of knowledge and information provided to the public; or the risk of contagion versus the preventive potential.

This article develops a general doctrinal and theoretical approach to the relationship between suicide and the public interest, and a casuistic and practical breakdown of this same issue will be discussed in subsequent articles.

3. METHODOLOGY

For this work more than fifty Constitutional Court decisions from 1981 to date have been reviewed, searching for legal arguments on the public interest to guide us by analogy on the relevance or otherwise of the publication of news about suicide in the context of freedom of information, and what this implies for society as a whole. From this jurisprudence, the features of public interest have been extracted as a conceptual tool to analyze whether or not suicide is a topic of public interest and relevance. Also, what is the balance of rights, limits and legal assets that are at stake when a suicide is reported or it is decided to silence the event. The aim is not to imitate the highly qualified and thorough work of the Constitutional Court, but to force an analogical application of those postulates of its doctrine that could be applied to a news item on suicide with any of the limits to freedom of information.

At the same time, a database of news items on suicide has been compiled with 2,781 entries collected over 9 years (between 2013 and 2022, both inclusive) that come from newspapers of national, regional and provincial scope regardless of editorial line. Two formulas have been used in the compilation work: on the one hand, a random active monitoring in national digital newspapers; and on the other hand, an automated search during this period with the Google Alerts tool. This database has served as a reference framework on the reality of journalistic practice in the Spanish press in relation to suicide. It mainly categorized news items on self-injury related to situations of economic crisis, with the intervention of security forces and bodies, in public spaces, linked to crimes, of celebrities, of minors or as a public health problem.

From the confrontation between the legal argumentation found and the database with news about suicide, the results emerge, that is to say, the jurisprudence on public interest and freedom of information is the magnifying glass with which the set of

information about suicide collected has been analyzed.

In addition, there has been a brief review of the scientific literature on the possible public interest of suicide from a journalistic perspective, as opposed to the public interest from a legal perspective, which, as described below, do not always coincide or are not always equivalent.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The public interest of suicide from the perspective of journalistic communication

Before addressing the legal notion of public interest and its connection with suicide, it is worthwhile to dwell briefly on the journalistic counterpart of this term from its points of contact with self-inflicted death, since both notions are linked by an imprecise mirror relationship. Among the approaches to the concept Mac Quail (1998, pp. 48-70) mentions three schools: one that makes the public interest depend on the will or majority of the people (preponderance theory); another linked to an absolute parameter of values referring to matters such as defense, law or order, independent of the intention of the citizenry (common interest theory); and a third realist school in which the public interest is a pragmatic consequence of certain decision-making methods detached from an ethical background (absolute normative principle). Suicide, a priori, due to its socioeconomic transversality, does not leave any sector of the population indifferent and, due to its relationship with life and death, meets the requirements to fit into any of these theories.

However, opting for the theory of preponderance or majority could lead, this author believes, to justifying certain populist information, "giving the public what it wants", replacing the concept of public interest with that of "interest of the audience"⁴.¹ It could also result in certain issues being published according to the opinion polls, now easily quantifiable through visits and the recording of reading time on the Internet. Seen from that perspective, there would be a risk of returning to morbid practices in the reporting of suicides such as those that were common in the Anglo-Saxon sphere at the beginning of the 20th century, or those that can still be found in the media of other countries. As for appealing to an absolute normative principle, Mac Quail (1998, pp. 48-70) warns of the risk of an authoritarian or paternalistic drift in the scales of values, making it difficult to accommodate the public interest in that theory. This raises the question of whether the systematic silencing of suicide in public opinion that has been seen so far may have derived precisely from an overprotective attitude towards a society that is supposedly vulnerable and sensitive to contagion.

Directly related to the journalistic concept of public interest there are the criteria of relevance. Factors such as proximity, topicality, magnitude and timeliness weigh when it comes to giving greater significance and relevance to a news item (Mac Quail, 1998, pp. 294-305). On the flip side there are what is superficial and trivial, justifying the

⁴ Below the Constitutional Court will show how, in our legal system, the Constitutional Court draws a clear line of separation between one concept and another.

sensationalist approach, and from whose influence, logically, the subject of suicide is never safe. In this yellow line, this author points out, the supposed human interest, personalization and entertainment are usually used, exaggerating the importance of individual actions in the course of events and reducing, as a consequence, the capacity of citizens to act in the face of real problems (Mac Quail, 1998, pp. 315-330). This statement could very well be predicated with respect to the publication of news of individual suicides, as opposed to proposals for more documented and contrasted reports that approach the phenomenon of suicide trying to collect and disentangle its complexity for the public.

Beam et al. (2018) point out that questions remain unanswered about what to include and what to leave out of the news, what part should be released to the public and which of the available facts and data should remain private. In other words, which plots of the suicide are of public interest and which are not. Among the reasons that, for these authors, make a suicide newsworthy and worthy of publication - unlike other deaths from unnatural causes such as homicides, accidents, natural disasters or catastrophes which, by default, are always newsworthy - include the fact that it was carried out by a famous person, or by a young person, that it has unusual circumstances, or that it is produced by unusual methods.

Jamieson et al. (2003) add to these factors that the lethal self-injury occurred in a public space causing a disruption of daily routines in communal life, that it involved a publicly known person, that it attracted the attention of the security forces, that it accompanied a homicide (the undoubted interest of the homicide drags the suicide into its newsworthiness), that it affected a community, or that it served as a vehicle to draw attention to a larger social problem. Let us not forget the distortion in the functioning of traditional media in the current scenario that Facebook, Twitter and other social networks bring, and the pressure added to that newsworthiness when suicide gains a prominence in those new media that cannot be ignored by the traditional media (Beam et al., 2018), which often cannot look the other way and is dragged to report for the sake of not being left behind by the public.

It is common for the journalistic interest defined by these elements to be detrimental to other suicides that are quantitatively more important in the statistical computation, but which are clearly underrepresented in the media. This appears in the studies carried out in the Australian context (Pirkis et al., 2007), which showed an overrepresentation of suicides of elderly people as opposed to suicides of young people -which was later reversed, perhaps due to concern about the growing number of youth suicides-, also of women as opposed to men, and of those suicides in which more violent and dramatic methods are used, offering a vision that deviates from the statistical reality and that barely represents 1% of real suicides, and contributing to the reinforcement of biased stereotypes. And this distortion seems to be common in the media representation of suicide, although in recent years a more generic and white line of information has been gaining ground.

Meanwhile Ward (2009) argues that the news value of suicide is as much as that of other deaths, and that journalists have an obligation to keep an open record of these facts so that society can discuss them openly beyond rumor and speculation. In

addition, they should inquire into the economic and social causes of these suicides when they suggest a pattern, because that is when the leap occurs from it being personal to it being social. The Everymind report (2020)⁵ states that although suicide is comparatively an infrequent cause of death, large and expansive is its impact on a community, so both suicide, its ramifications, and its prevention are legitimate matters of public concern. It should be noted that the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) itself recognizes that there are occasions when suicide should be reported because of its newsworthiness.

However, Mac Quail (1998, pp. 55-70) understands that the concept of public interest will always be elastic, so that there may be the paradox of appealing to the same concept both for those in favor of sensationalist coverage or coverage that violates privacy, as well as those who oppose this type of information. The implications of this reasoning are evident with respect to information on suicide, since sensationalism can be forced, justified by the need to make visible or show the reality of self-injury in all its crudeness to the audience, but it is also possible to redirect what is published towards a path of reflection that uses objective data and involves the participation of health professionals for the sake of prevention.

4.2. The public interest in suicide reporting from a legal standpoint

Since the 1980s, the Constitutional Court has reiterated on several occasions (CCD 171/1990 of November 30 LB5, CCD 240/1992 of December 21 LB3, and other rulings) that for the right to information to acquire preponderance -but not hierarchical superiority- in an alleged collision with some of the rights that limit it and thus validate the legal legitimacy of that journalistic action, it is required that such information be truthful and that it be of public interest -or, as constitutional jurisprudence also states, "public relevance", "general interest", "community relevance", "social relevance", "public transcendence" and "social transcendence" -. As already mentioned when defining the objectives, it is worth asking how this requirement fits in with self-inflicted death: is the suicide of an anonymous citizen a matter of public interest? Is the suicide of an actor or that of a politician or public official a matter of public interest? What can be said in these cases about the special legal protection?

It is important to note that in the legal precedents generated by the Constitutional Court there is no conflict between freedom of information and the rights and legal assets that limit it, which has led it to rule on the public interest of suicide. This does not prevent this scenario from arising at any time, especially when nothing guarantees or ensures that in the future a cautious or measured tone will be maintained in general terms in the press, such as the one that characterizes most of the news collected in the database of this research. Even less so in a scenario of media competitiveness in which spectacularity could be put ahead of ethics, illegitimately breaking the virtual space of other rights.

On the other hand, constitutional jurisprudence does not contain a closed definition of

⁵ Developed under the sponsorship of the Australian government to serve as a guide to responsible reporting on suicide for journalists in that country.

the matters that should be considered to be of public interest. When exegeting the Magna Carta, this option seems to have been disregarded because of the risk that, if taken to an extreme, it could end up becoming a form of censorship. Therefore, in a game of closed self-referentiality, the Constitutional Court does not offer a material or conceptual definition of public interest, nor does it systematically list the requirements necessary to be able to raise an issue to the rank of public relevance, nor does it refer to an external source. However, throughout its long doctrine, it is possible to infer matters or aspects of reality that are expressly included, as opposed to others that, at least in the way they are dealt with, have been denied the attribute of public interest.

Among those that are listed as matters of public interest⁶: coup d'état, terrorism, anomalous or corrupt functioning of the Administration of Justice, illegal management of public funds, airplane crashes, investigation of facts of criminal relevance by the Security Forces (including homicide crimes), corruption in the corporate Administration, conflict between the neighbors of a town and the nudist public of a nearby beach, public demonstrations by public officials, corruption of civil servants, influence peddling by politicians and public officials, sexual harassment and abuse of minors, conflicts between the media, the functioning of the public health service, destruction of a protected natural area, drug trafficking and money laundering operations, marriages of convenience between nationals and foreigners, sexual assaults, eviction from homes, disappearance of persons, xenophobic behavior, or the prison system.

On the contrary, among the matters that are expressly excluded from the category of public interest the following can be found: the detailed sufferings of an injured bullfighter outside the bullring, the individualized diagnosis of an infectious-contagious disease such as AIDS or of other diseases that are kept in the most intimate sphere, extramarital relations, the naked image of people in their private sphere, affective relations, the identification of victims of crimes against sexual freedom, and paternal filiation. As it can be seen, it is not so much a matter of exclusions of the subjects themselves, but of vetoes on some aspects of greater thematic realities, and most of them are angles close to the most intimate redoubt of people's lives, something that makes one think irremediably of the privacy of death and, of course, also of self-inflicted death.

However, without systematic eagerness, the Constitutional Court has been offering clues about the public interest throughout its doctrinal work. In Decision 62/1982 of October 15, 1982, Legal Basis 5, when the clear segregation between freedom of expression and freedom of information was still less mature, it states that:

(...) it includes not only information that is considered inoffensive or indifferent, or that is welcomed, but also information that may disturb the State or part of the population, since this is the result of pluralism, tolerance and the spirit of openness without which there is no democratic society.

In this regard, information on self-injury, especially those involving children -which are

⁶ To save space, all of the decisions consulted for this list are included in the references section.

quite abundant in the analyzed database-, undoubtedly carry with them a certain amount of concern that can disturb and alarm the public, as in these examples:

Isabel Flórez Director of the Balearic Institute of Mental Health for Children and Adolescents: "We have seen fifty suicide attempts in children since August".

"Hospital admissions for self-harm attempts and eating disorders have grown by 70% up to September" - "The most frequent cases are the ingestion of pills and in most cases they are girls".

(*Diario de Mallorca*, October 10, 2021)

Prosecutor charges two girls for Carla's suicide

The teenager committed suicide at the age of 14 in Gijón after suffering bullying at school during a school year.

The persecution that ended her life could constitute a crime against moral integrity.

"They called her cross-eyed, a dyke and poured water from the toilet over her"

(*El Mundo*, September 25, 2014)

For its part, Decision 159/1986 of December 16, 1986, in its Legal Basis 5, indicates that "in order for the citizens to be able to freely form their opinions and participate responsibly in public affairs, they must also be broadly informed so that they can weigh diverse and even opposing opinions". This "breadth" envisaged by the Court can cover an open and indefinite number of matters, and among them, for example, to include self-inflicted death. In a similar tone, the Court expresses itself in Decision 173/1995 of November 21, 1995, Legal Basis 2, where the right to information is justified:

(...) in view of the social relevance of what is communicated and received in order to contribute to the formation of public opinion (...) only those societies that are able to receive accurate information and diverse opinions on the most important aspects of community life are able to exercise their rights and fulfill their duties as citizens (...).

In this regard, it is necessary to evaluate to what extent a phenomenon that in Spain generates an average of 11 deaths per day can be relevant for the community as a whole or become an important aspect of community life. In fact, the news database on which this research is based shows a growing media attention over time to self-induced death as a collective and community public health problem that requires a reaction. This interest is reflected in news stories in which, by addressing the issue through statistics, or with the complicity of survivors' organizations, and doing so through a responsible approach, the risk of conflict with the right to privacy or the protection of children is reduced. See some examples:

Two areas of Asturias and Andalusia triple the Spanish suicide rate

The average suicide rate in these areas exceeded 25 in 2020, when the average

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rate in Spain is less than eight suicides per 100,000 inhabitants (7.7).
(*Heraldo*, November 28, 2021)

Action protocol of two hospitals in Lleida to prevent suicides

One percent of the emergencies attended by the Arnau de Vilanova are related to self-injurious behaviors.

(*La Vanguardia*, April 04, 2013)

Peer support groups for suicide survivors, a "light in the darkness"

Bereaved family members find a healing space in meetings with other bereaved people to share emotions and experiences. This support network is becoming more and more extensive in Spain.

(*El Mundo*, July 17, 2021)

"I didn't want to die, I wanted to stop suffering"

María de Quesada tried to end her life at the age of 15. Dolors Lopez's only daughter committed suicide 10 years ago. Both share their story to help others

(*El País*, November 14, 2021)

On the other hand, news of suicides of famous or publicly known people are also abundant in the compilation prepared for this study. Here are some examples:

Miss United States 2019's heartbreaking message before her suicide

The one-time Miss United States 2019, Cheslie Kryst, died today when she threw herself from the window of her apartment in Manhattan.

(*La Razón*, January 31, 2022)

Police confirm the suicide of actor Robin Williams

The autopsy concludes that the interpreter did not suffer violence before the death by asphyxia.

(*El País*, August 12, 2014)

Former goalkeeper Arnau dies after falling to the tracks of a train

Currently sporting director of Oviedo, the former Barça and Málaga goalkeeper died on Friday night at 46 years old.

(*Ideal*, May 23, 2021)

In this regard, in Decision 107/1988, Legal Basis 2, the prevailing status of freedom of information as opposed to the right to honor is thus delimited:

(...) when the freedoms are exercised in connection with matters that are of general interest because of the matters to which they refer and because of the persons involved in them and contribute, consequently, to the development of public opinion, reaching then its maximum level of justifying effectiveness against the right to honor, which is weakened, proportionally, as an external limit to the freedoms of expression and information, insofar as their holders are public persons, exercise public functions or are involved in matters of public relevance, and are therefore compelled to bear a certain risk that their subjective rights of personality may be affected by opinions or information of general interest, since this is required by political pluralism, tolerance and the spirit of openness, without which there is no democratic society.

It should be noted the importance that this resolution gives as informative material to the conduct of persons of public notoriety, without, a priori, this implying the exclusion of public knowledge of possible suicidal conduct. However, it should be emphasized that in the same Decision and Legal Basis it is stated that:

(...) the justifying effectiveness of such freedoms loses its *raison d'être* in the event that they are exercised in relation to private conduct lacking public interest and whose public dissemination and prosecution are therefore unnecessary to develop free public opinion.

Thus, in the same resolution there is a recognition of the interest of the conducts of public persons, but also a clear expression of a restriction towards strictly private conducts. Subsequent decisions insist on this greater exposure of public personalities and on the value of their acts as a matter of general interest (among others, Decision 219/1992 in its Legal Basis 3, Decision 320/1994 of November 28 in its Legal Basis 3, or Decision 76/1995 of May 22 in its Legal Basis 6). However, it is worth mentioning Decision 173/1995 of November 21, 1995, whose Legal Basis 2 recalls:

(...) the criterion to be used in verifying the public relevance of the information varies according to the public or private status of the person involved in the event that is the object of the information or the degree of public projection that this person has given, on a regular basis, to his own person. This is because celebrities or those engaged in activities that pursue public notoriety voluntarily accept the risk that their subjective rights of personality may be affected by adverse criticism, opinions or revelations. The right to information related to them, therefore reaches its maximum level of legitimizing effectiveness, insofar as their life and conduct participate in the general interest with a greater intensity than that of those private persons who, without public vocation or projection, are circumstantially involved in matters of public importance, to whom it is necessary, therefore, to recognize a superior scope of privacy, which prevents granting general importance to facts or conduct that would have it if they were referred to celebrities.

These limitations, which are repeated incessantly in subsequent rulings, limit a space of indeterminacy as to whether or not it is appropriate to report the suicide of a well-known person in society in the pages of the newspapers. But at the same time, they introduce a reasonable doubt about the general relevance of going into the details of the self-inflicted death of an anonymous person.

Here there are examples of cases in which the self-inflicted death of an anonymous citizen unfolds its effects in the public and common space, and sometimes ends up causing disturbances in the collective daily life, or requiring the intervention of law enforcement agencies, firefighters or health personnel of a given location:

Woman commits suicide on the highway in Mallorca and causes a serious accident

The deceased woman threw herself to the road from a bridge in Lluçmajor.

(...) As a consequence of the accident, there are kilometers of traffic jams in the area.

(*El Periódico*, January 27, 2020)

A suicide attempt in 'Saavedra' causes the eviction of 40 residents of Badajoz

A 38-year-old woman left the butane gas on and locked herself in a room in her home. Police officers kicked down the door of the apartment where she remained, after the neighbors were unable to do so.

(*El Periódico de Extremadura*, July 25, 2015)

A 19 year old girl dies after falling from a fifth floor in Murcia

(...) The facts have taken place in Ronda Norte, near the cafeteria Piccadilly Coffee, about half past nine in the morning, when the young woman has fallen from the balcony of a block of apartments.

(*La Opinión de Murcia*, March 10, 2022)

Scare in Las Fuentes by a suicide attempt with butane

As a precaution, traffic was cut off and bars and adjacent businesses were evacuated.

The attempted suicide with two butane gas cylinders of a 65 year old man, who had been living for a month inside a van in Fray Luis Urbano street in Zaragoza, generated significant concern among the neighbors in the area.

(*El Periódico de Aragón*, October 14, 2016)

In this sense, another important parameter in the legal delimitation of public interest is the geographic scope of a news item. This is reflected in Decision 15/1993 of January 18, 1993, Legal Basis 2, where it is specified that an event that is relevant only at the local level can also "be of interest to public opinion". It is evident that the impact of a

suicide can be greater at the municipal or provincial level, and lesser if its impact is scaled upwards, so that it can be of interest to the media with a closer reach, and not to those with a wider reach, unless there are circumstances that confer it a national or, on occasions, even universal interest, as in the examples of famous people, or of minors involved in situations of school bullying. A similar key is expressed in Decision 76/1995 of May 22, 1995, Legal Basis 6, where it is insisted that:

(...) the general interest of the information or its public relevance (...) is given precisely by the fact that the text at issue is published by a newspaper of provincial or regional scope (...) it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that opinions or information without news or newsworthy scope at national level can have it in a smaller spatial scope just as the opposite proposition is also reasonable, that a trivial or innocuous fact or value judgment does not become journalistically attractive by the mere adjective circumstance of being published in the media with the widest coverage or territorial print run.

Thus, public interest may be geographically biased, so that what is important at the provincial or regional level may not be important at the national level, and lethal autolysis would also be determined by this bias.

Another criterion for ascription to the public interest, included in Decision 178/1993 of May 31, 1993, is "the public nature of the source". This is what the Constitutional Court decided when ruling on an appeal for protection against a background of the leak to the media of the identification of the perpetrators of a homicide by the Civil Guard. The Decision emphasizes that "the competent public authority in the matter itself understood that the facts that were the object of the news item were of interest, when broadcasting it. This, in principle, allows legitimizing the conduct of the media that disseminate this information considered relevant by a public body". If what this resolution does is to transfer to a public authority or body the possibility of determining what may be of public interest, it should be remembered that both various political forces with parliamentary representation, and the Government itself, as well as numerous regional authorities, have in recent years deployed activities of varying importance for the prevention of suicide. Therefore, in this sense, the attention that this matter deserves for certain State institutions is unquestionable. And, as can be seen in the following example, it is not uncommon for the Security Forces and Organizations to communicate to the press those interventions in which they have managed to stop suicide attempts:

National Police avoids the suicide of a man in Puente de los Vados

He was found inside his vehicle, thanks to a call from a citizen to the 091 room, after having placed a hose from the exhaust pipe to the inside

(*Ideal*, February 26, 2013)

Indeed, in some of the cases of news reports on self-injurious behavior occurring in public spaces, family privacy can be compromised. But also in less exposed cases that end up transcending, such as those related to situations of economic crisis or threats of eviction, and whose media coverage has served to push political initiatives to

mitigate these situations. For example, in this news item, which was accompanied by a photograph with a posed portrait of the deceased:

"Splendor and suicide of Alicia in the city "without evictions", according to Carmena

Alicia was many people before she was suicidal. She was the woman born in Madrid, only child, from a wealthy family who had everything. She was the dance lover who dazzled with her vitality on the dance floor. The mother who loved her son so much that she hid from him what she was suffering (...).

(...) On Monday, November 26, at 11 a.m., when a judicial commission, accompanied by the Municipal Police, knocked on her door to expel her from her home, at number 1 Ramiro II Street, fifth floor, she decided to throw herself out of the window.

(El Mundo, December 2, 2018)

News items with similar content were collected during the period under investigation and in these stories suicide was an secondary circumstance compared to the possibility of highlighting the problem of housing and economic precariousness to public opinion. However, if there is anything that can have an impact on family intimacy, it is the death of any of its members, and that includes violent and unplanned deaths such as suicide. The breakdown in the pages of a newspaper about the causes, the last moments of a person's life, or the method used to commit death can be interpreted as an intrusion into the privacy not only of the deceased but also of the entire family.

Thus, again in a confrontation with the right to honor and privacy, the Constitutional Court decided in Decision 171/1990 of November 12, 1990, Legal Basis 5, that the preferential value of freedom of information is not absolute:

(...) since, if it is recognized as a guarantee of public opinion, it can only legitimize intrusions into other fundamental rights that are consistent with that purpose, that is, that are relevant to the development of public opinion on matters of general interest, lacking such legitimizing effect, when the freedoms of expression and information are exercised in an excessive and disproportionate manner, exceeding the purpose for which the Constitution grants them its preferential protection.

This is yet another legal reason for journalistic reports on suicide to find a solid justification for their publication, since they refer to the externalization of an intimate moment of someone's life and death. Here are other examples in which the tension between the informative interest and the rights of the personality is evident:

Angelina and Manel's five days on the run before committing suicide: from asking for financial help to throwing themselves off a platform in Ourense

The story of Angelina and Manel has no known precedents in Ourense. Mother and son, aged 70 and 27, threw themselves from a pedestrian walkway to the N-120 road, in a double suicide that keeps authorities, investigators and

neighbors disturbed and that, according to the first investigations, may have been the end of a desperate escape from a family context of violence.

(*El Mundo*, August 8, 2019)

He dies after falling from the fourth floor

A 48-year-old man died this morning after plunging to the void from a fourth floor, at the intersection of Libertad and Cardenal Monescillo streets. In principle, the National Police is investigating the incident as a possible suicide. Two health workers who were passing by the place tried to save his life with CPR maneuvers without success because he practically died on the spot.

(*Tribuna de Ciudad Real*, February 9, 2022)

In the latter case, although no names are given, the photographs show the health workers and the judicial authority next to the corpse at the exact place of the fall, making it possible to identify the protagonist of the self-inflicted suicide. The risk of individualizing and identifying in excess and for free the protagonists of the events is latent, as well as the risk of entering into details that may intrude into the privacy, honor or self-image of these people with suicidal behavior, or of disturbing their family environment or close personal circle, or of ending up reporting circumstances that, because they are unnecessary, escape the attribute of relevance or public interest.

In this regard, although it is more plausible that a possible conflict related to the right to privacy may arise in reports of suicide, the door cannot be closed to the possibility that someone may consider the publication of a news item about this event to be an injury to his or her honor or that of a family member (in the case of survivors of a suicide attempt with repercussions in the public sphere, for example). In fact, it is impossible to ignore the perception of dishonor that a suicide in the family has entailed until early on -and that, in an unconfessed manner, it often continues to entail- and the weight of guilt, the silence before society, the concealment of the event itself in the family and in the social and work circle, when the suicide of a child, sibling or parent occurs (Pérez-Collados, 2020; Ferré-Grau et al., 2011). The feeling, if this transcends to the public sphere, even in local media, in many cases can be close to shame and -although it may be called by another name- also to dishonor.

However, the doctrine of the Constitutional Court also states in CCD 20/1992 of February 14, 1992 LB 3 that the "community relevance, and not the mere satisfaction of the curiosity of others, often misguided and unduly encouraged, is the only thing that can justify the requirement to assume those disturbances or inconveniences caused by the dissemination of a certain news". This exclusion of the curiosity of others as a legitimizing force of journalistic activity also appears in Decision 115/2000 of May 5, 2000, in which Legal Ground 9 indicates that public relevance is present "if the facts or circumstances are likely to affect the citizens as a whole, which has an unquestionable constitutional value, and is different from the simple satisfaction of human curiosity in the lives of others". And again in Decision 83/2002 of April 22, 2002, Legal Basis 1, the Court emphasizes that what "does not affect the citizens as a whole or the economic or political life of the country, apart from mere curiosity", has no

transcendence for the community. Examples are shown here with emphasis on what is spectacular:

He prevents his wife's suicide by holding her by the hair

Her husband's hands cling to that hair with all his might, though the woman resists. She fights to fall.

(*La Razón*, February 07, 2017)

A teacher, hero in China after preventing a student's suicide

The man grabbed the minor when she was about to throw herself from the top of a building.

(*El Periódico*, September 16, 2017)

Three citizens prevent a suicide on the viaduct of Segovia

A priest, a seminarian and a propaganda distributor manage to change the mind of a man who was about to throw himself off the top of a building

(*ABC*, May 10, 2013)

The Decision of the Constitutional Court 7/2014 of January 27, 2014 in its Legal Basis 4, outlines that the curiosity fed by a magazine "by attributing a news value to the publication of the images under controversy, should not be confused with a public interest worthy of constitutional protection" and that "it is not possible to indiscriminately identify public interest with the interest of the public, or of sectors of the public eager for curiosity" since this curiosity "far from justifying a reduction of the right to privacy, is the one that must be protected by the constitutionally protected sphere of personal privacy". Although the Decision judges facts related to the dissemination of the affective relationships of two people of public notoriety, these arguments could also be transferred to situations of self-injury treated with a sensationalist approach. Therefore, the doctrine separates the value of simple curiosity from the true public interest, and establishes precisions that can only be settled by analyzing in detail each case and news of suicide, in the event that it reaches the courts of justice. In any case, the doctrine anticipates a delicate balance between curiosity and true public relevance to which suicide as a subject must also be subjected.

On the other hand, although the Constitutional Court even hints at equating public relevance with "newsworthiness" (for example, in CCD 15/1993 of January 18, 1993, LB2), in subsequent decisions the Court seems to contradict itself, and is ready to put a distance between what legally has public relevance and what journalistically can be considered newsworthy, opening the gap between the legal and journalistic concepts of public interest. Thus, in Decision 134/1999 of July 15, 1999, Legal Basis 8, it states that:

(...) the public relevance of a certain information should not be confused with the newsworthiness it may have, because it is not the media who are called by the Spanish Constitution to determine what is or is not of public relevance, nor

can this be confused with the diffuse object of a non-existent right to satisfy the curiosity of others.

The same Decision also states that “information has public relevance because it serves the general interest in information, and does so by referring to a public matter. This Decision represents a crucial turning point in the qualification of public interest, since it removes its recognition and determination from the will of the media themselves.

Similarly, the Court states in Decision 25/2019 of February 25, Legal Basis 9, in allusion to a conflict over a television report made with the hidden camera technique. There it states:

(...) the general interest of a debate in general should not be confused, in fact, with the public relevance of the specific information disclosed; nor should the curiosity fed by the media, by attributing a news value to the publication of the disputed images, be confused with a public interest worthy of constitutional protection.

Two news items are offered here that show the difference between the abstract debate on suicide from a public health perspective -precisely those most present in the research database- versus the actual facts of a specific case. The former, almost always safe from tensions with the limits of freedom of information, and the latter, often necessary because of their public interest, but much more exposed to conflicts:

Suicide breaks records in Spain with more than 4,000 deaths in 2021: 11 cases per day and rising

The first six months of the year registered a 5.1% year-on-year increase in suicides, a figure that was already on the rise last year.

(*El Español*, December 19, 2022)

Saray's suicide attempt: a leap into the void in the face of bullying and silence

The parents of the 10-year-old girl who threw herself from the balcony in Zaragoza denounce the passivity of her school in the face of bullying. “No ‘bullying’ or anything like that,” said the tutor.

(*El País*, September 18, 2022)

In any case, it seems reasonable to think that the legal concept takes precedence over the journalistic concept of public interest in a hypothetical conflict between rights, and that what the Constitutional Court is doing is reserving the power to generate its own criteria on what is newsworthy, different from that given to it by the mass media sector. As far as suicide is concerned, the dividing line is important because there is nothing to prevent the imposition in the future of a tabloid press line that, as happens in other countries, defends as “newsworthy” a suicide in lurid and gruesome circumstances -but not very representative of the underlying reality reflected in the statistics- as opposed to a well-documented and contrasted report, for example, on the evolution of suicide rates in young people that really is of “public interest”.

By way of closing, Decision 19/2014 of February 10 in its Legal Basis 7 synthesizes well the doctrine of the Constitutional Court on the requirement of public interest, emphasizing that it exists “when the information that is communicated is relevant to the community, which justifies the requirement that disturbances or inconveniences caused by the dissemination of a particular news item be assumed” offering constitutional protection to “newsworthy” facts that deal with “aspects connected to the public projection of the person to whom it refers, or to the characteristics of the event in which that person has been involved” without this coinciding with ‘that which may arouse or awaken, merely, the curiosity of others, or that which in the opinion of one of the said media may be newsworthy at a given moment’. Only when this concurrence of factors occurs ‘is it possible to affirm that the information under consideration is especially protected because it is susceptible of being included within the space that a free press must be assured in a democratic system’.

It is useful to conclude the argumentation the Decision 24/2019 of February 25, Legal Basis 5, when it determines that:

(...) the Constitution only protects the dissemination of newsworthy facts, in the sense that it is necessary to verify, beforehand, the social interest of the information, either because of the public nature of the person to whom it refers or because of the fact in itself in which that person has been involved. And only after verifying the concurrence of these circumstances is it possible to affirm that the information under consideration is specially protected because it is susceptible of being included within the space that a free press must be ensured in a democratic system.

Therefore, it places outside the protection of freedom of information “the disclosure of data that, affecting privacy, are entirely unrelated to what is newsworthy, exceed what may have informative relevance or can be described as irrelevant, free or unnecessary”. As far as suicide is concerned, the borderline appears to be unstable and requires a further detailed analysis by subtypes or categories, which deserves further development.

5. CONCLUSIONS

After having applied by analogy the legal precedents on freedom of information, it is concluded that suicide as a whole does deserve to be classified as a matter of public relevance and interest. Without expressly mentioning suicide, the Constitutional Court recognizes the relevance of other matters that, indirectly, allow inferring the general interest of self-inflicted death; at the same time, it points out the illegitimacy of other journalistic approaches that could be similar to the yellowish way in which some suicides are dealt with in the press.

According to the doctrine of the Constitutional Court, the public interest can be predicated not only on information that causes indifference, but also on information that may disturb the State or part of the population, as a consequence of the spirit of openness without which there is no democratic society. In turn, the citizen must be widely informed of all kinds of matters, since only those societies that can receive

truthful information on the most important aspects of community life are able to exercise their rights and duties as citizens. Since suicide is a phenomenon that in Spain generates an average of 11 deaths per day, potentially affecting all citizens, whose socioeconomic transversality does not leave any sector of the population indifferent, it must necessarily be relevant for the whole community and can be so at the local or national level. But it is also relevant both for the subject matter, when it happens to anonymous citizens, and for the person, when it is the cause of death of a person of public renown. This idea fits in with the calls for visibility for prevention and awareness called for by the World Health Organization and other players in the social and health fields.

On the other hand, following the same analogical application of constitutional jurisprudence, what is newsworthy from a legal point of view will not always correspond to what is newsworthy from a journalistic point of view. The difference between the legitimacy of responsible and sensationalist approaches lies in this distinction. What is considered to be of public interest from the perspective of the Spanish legal system and what is understood as matters or contents with informative value and public interest from the point of view of journalism are sometimes parallel concepts that converge or diverge at certain points along the way, but which in any case are not equivalent. Consequently, that which at a given juncture may be newsworthy will not necessarily have the protection of legal protection as understood from the constitutional legal perspective.

It should be recalled that in the changing panorama of suicide treatment that is currently taking place, there is always room for improvement -and that seems to be the current direction-, but also for a drift towards gruesomeness, spectacle and sensationalism, which ends up exaggerating the importance of individual actions without improving the level of true knowledge of citizens, that which would allow them to act in the face of the real problem. In fact, the exercise of freedom of information in the coverage of suicide would not be easy in court if it were aimed only at the simple satisfaction of the curiosity of others, since the Constitutional Court has made it clear that one thing is the public interest and another the interest of the public or sectors of the public avid for morbid curiosity.

It should be noted that the database on which this research is based reveals a steady increase in the number of news items on suicide over the last decade, with a special focus on the approach *per se* from a responsible public health approach, and not as a secondary issue. However, doubts remain about the ambiguous value of suicide as a newsworthy event: It can be argued that it is not newsworthy when it happens in private, behind closed doors, and the person involved has no public renown - and even so, the circumstances surrounding this self-injury can make this statement nuanced - but it is newsworthy when the figures are discussed as a whole, a suicide is addressed in a public space - even if it is a virtual space - or of a public person, or with circumstances that transcend the individuality of the person involved.

Moreover, generic and detailed rules of acceptance or exclusion of the qualification of public interest cannot be closed. In this case, casuistry matters a lot, taking into account the nature and nuances of each case, in the sense that facts that are denied the qualification of public interest, when the Constitutional Court describes them as

unnecessary or free, can nevertheless adopt a major weight in another news item. In the case of suicide, these nuances could be so important as to facilitate or, on the contrary, prevent its protection on the basis of freedom of information, since it is not the same to offer lurid details of the death of a person after throwing him/herself off a viaduct, as to report that an aggressor in a case of gender violence has taken his/her own life after committing the crime, or to offer statistical information on the evolution of suicide rates in Spain. In some cases, suicide would be an additional issue, but in others it would be the main topic, and the treatment and tone of the information itself can contribute to legitimize or delegitimize the news in legal terms.

In addition, this review of the doctrine of the Constitutional Court on the concept of public interest reminds everyone how justified a report on suicide must be, especially when the protagonist is an anonymous citizen, in order to pass the test of adequacy to the constitutional limit of freedom of information. Therefore, although the public interest of suicide can be defended both in the abstract and in general terms, when dealing with isolated and individualized suicides, the specificity and expression of each journalistic account, with all its variety of styles, tones and approaches - the casuistry, therefore - is decisive to verify the legitimate or illegitimate status that, either as the main subject or as an incidental matter, it holds within the right to information. The casuistic and practical descent, once the informative interest of suicide in generic terms has been established, is beyond the scope of this article and will be the subject of further research proposals.

On the other hand, the possibility of conflict with the limits of the law, especially family privacy or those of children and adolescents, will be recurrently present when reporting on suicides. The boundary between what is free or intrusive and what is essential or necessary in a news item on self-injury moves in each particular case, and requires a conscious effort on the part of the information professional to prioritize the public interest while minimizing harm. The risk of illegitimate intrusion is amplified when dealing with suicides of anonymous persons individualized by their exceptional circumstances. It is also mitigated when dealing with suicide in general terms and in terms of statistical incidence. Although in the set of news items collected the approach of responsible and non-sensationalist public service predominates, in any case, the doctrinal and jurisprudential guidelines that balance the tension between freedom of information and other rights can be an illuminating beacon when dealing with suicide reporting within a framework of general interest and public relevance. In other words, it is a horizon that transcends the legal to the ethical towards which to guide the development of journalistic work regardless of whether the subject, the "who" of the news, is a public or private person, is alive or dead, has survived the self-injury attempt or not.

Finally, having established the public relevance of suicide, it is worth asking whether the customary strategy of silence has deprived the community of useful information on suicide itself in terms of prevention (causes, signs, help devices, etc.); whether it has prevented an open debate of greater political scope on the problem; or whether it has denied public knowledge of other realities linked to self-inflicted death whose dissemination may be relevant for collective decision making. These include problems such as impoverishment, evictions, increased psychosocial risks in the workplace,

school bullying, addictions, growing deterioration of mental health and other emerging issues yet to be known, but indicative of cracks in the social system. In any case, the self-censorship that has prevailed until recently -and which is beginning to show slight signs of a setback- has also prevented for some time the problem of self-induced death from becoming part of the story of the present, and from entering legitimately into the heart of free public opinion, so important for the functioning of a democratic society, in which citizens can freely express their opinions and participate responsibly in public affairs.

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