Azerbaijani journalist Arzu Geybulla has been the target of an online harassment campaign following the publication of an opinion article about her on the online portal AzLogos, a platform managed by Azerbaijanis living abroad. The article alleges that the journalist disrespected the martyrs of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, accusing her of deliberately mocking the minute of silence in memory of fallen soldiers in the war, on 4th December, at noon. The article makes claim that Arzu Geybulla "hates Azerbaijan and its people". It also claims Arzu Geybulla circulated "fabrications" with her alleged "Armenian colleagues" at a live event about the involvement of "Syrian fighters" on the side of the Azerbaijani armed forces. As soon as the story made rounds online, Arzu Geybulla started getting online attacks and threats on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Dozens of messages threatening her to "pay the price" for her "disrespect" and "treason", shaming her, calling her names and insulting her. The journalist immediately locked her Instagram account, before deactivating it. Arzu Geybulla was also targeted by a series of tweets from the editor in chief of AzLogos website, Alekper Aliyev. The journalist faced the first wave of online harassment shortly after the first ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia was signed, on 10 October. In an interview with online news website Ahval, Arzu Geybulla spoke about the state of peace journalism, with a journalist from Armenia. During the interview, while answering the question about the presence of "Syrian fighters" at the side of the Azerbaijani armed forces, Arzu Geybulla said, the reports of their presence, was "a blow to Azerbaijan’s image, especially as it has invested heavily in its military powers". The journalist was then the object of an outburst of threats and insults on social networks.
Ukraine

Arson Attack on Alternatyva.org Editorial Office

SOURCE OF THREAT: Unknown
CATEGORY: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

On the night of 21 October 2020, an arson was committed against the editorial office of the regional media Alternatyva.org in the Odesa Oblast. The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) reported the incident, referring to information from Roman Varshanidze, editor-in-chief of the publication. The journalist said that according to witnesses, two unknown persons broke a window and threw a bottle with a Molotov cocktail into the editorial office. The furniture and floor were burnt as a result, but the editorial office and equipment were saved by the neighbours, who were able to extinguish the flames before the firefighters arrived.

This is the second attack on Alternatyva.org in a week. On 17 October, Roman Varshanidze was beaten while filming by three unknown persons, leaving him with bruises and a concussion.

STATE REPLIES

Reply from the Government of Ukraine

Official position of Ukraine
On 1 December 2020, journalists from the Croatian news portal Zadarski.hr were threatened by an unknown man who entered the editorial office in Zadar and said he would kill and “slaughter” the journalists over a report about a wedding held in violation of COVID-19 rules. The incident occurred at around midday when two men stormed into the offices of Zadarski.hr and its parent newspaper, Slobodna Dalmacija, and one began shouting and harassing their staff, according to the editor. The pair had reportedly been angered with a news story published recently Zadarski.hr, which was also published by Slobodna Dalmacija. The article had reported about a wedding in Slivnica Gornja which allegedly took place in violation of the government's COVID-19 measures restricting any wedding ceremonies. One man disputed the number of people at the wedding but did not deny it took place. He also called the journalists “vultures” and threatened to “kill and slaughter journalists like kittens.” After that, both men left the editorial office. Death threats were also reportedly sent online to the journalist who wrote the article. The incident was immediately reported to the police, who arrived shortly after to take statements. Later that afternoon, a man was detained by Zadar Police Department in connection with the threats. A criminal investigation was undertaken against a 50-year-old man on suspicion of “threatening” and also spreading and transmitting a contagious disease. The man was suspected of organizing the wedding celebration on Saturday November 28. After the report was completed, a criminal report was handed over to the custody supervisor of the Zadar Police Administration.
On 5 November 2020, photojournalist Borut Živulovič was hospitalised after suffering a blow to the head while covering protests in Ljubljana. Živulovič works as a freelancer for Reuters and a photographer for the agency Bobo. The Slovenian Journalists’ Association (DNS) said that the attack had been carried out by an unknown perpetrator and occurred when Živulovič had been "physically confronted" at the rally, which according to media outlets was attended by around 500 protesters from different groups speaking out against the government and its COVID-19 measures. Several other media outlets reported that their news crews had been aggressively pushed and faced obstruction, threats and intimidation from protesters as they reported on clashes. Vladimir Vodušek, a well-known journalist, host and founder of Topnewsa.si and Top TV was also assaulted by a man who kicked a camera stand out of his hand from behind and then threw him to the ground, causing a minor injury to his leg. Video footage of the incident was later posted on social media. Photojournalist Voranc Vogel was also struck in the shoulder by an object thrown at police, but was not injured.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- EFJ statement: “Slovenian Interior Minister blames media for violent protests”
- STA report: “Violent protesters clash with police”
- ZNP statement: "ZNP obsoja sinočnje napade na novinarje na nasilnem protestu v Ljubljani"
- IPI Statement: "Photojournalist Borut Živulovič hospitalised covering violent protests in Slovenia"
- DNS statement: "Najostreje obsojamo nasilje nad reporterji na izgredih"

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**STATE REPLIES**

- 02 Dec 2020 | NEW Reply from the Slovenian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the Council of Europe
On 15 September 2020, a uniformed police officer informed Mojca Šetinc Pašek, a reporter and editor at the public broadcaster RTV Slovenia, and Miša Molk, a host on the network, that a criminal complaint had been filed against them. The complaint alleged that Pašek and Molk had organised a 15 July 2020 demonstration that violated Slovenia’s COVID-19 restrictions. The officer said a preliminary investigation was underway, and took brief statements from each journalist, Pašek said. The officer did not disclose who had filed the complaint. The protest, held in the Republic Square in Ljubljana, saw several hundred journalists and media workers demonstrate against policy changes proposed by Prime Minister Janez Janša that critics say might harm RTV Slovenia’s budget and editorial independence. Pašek told CPJ that she and Molk participated in the demonstration but did not organise it.

The organisers of the rally could face criminal charges under the Public Gatherings Act, a misdemeanor listed under Article 50 of Slovenia’s Minor Offenses Act, according to a police statement. If charged and convicted, the accused could face a maximum fine of €400. “Although the procedure was not illegal and the officer’s behaviour was correct, I find the procedure absurd and an attempt to intimidate journalists,” Pašek told CPJ. She said that RTV Slovenia’s legal department is assessing the situation, and the two journalists will file a criminal complaint for alleged false accusation. CPJ emailed questions to the police in Ljubljana but did not receive any reply.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **CPJ Alert: “Police question 2 Slovenian journalists at public broadcaster RTV”**

### STATE REPLIES

- **02 Dec 2020 | NEW** Report from the Slovenian authorities
  - **Letter from the Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the Council of Europe**
Several Journalists Wounded during "March for Freedoms" in Paris

During a police charge against violent protesters at Place de la Bastille in Paris on 28 November 2020, photographer Ameer Al Halbi was wounded in the face by a police baton deliberately aimed at him. While covering the "March for Freedoms" against the draft law on "global security", Ameer Al Halbi was equipped with his camera and was part of a tight-knit group of photographers and journalists at the time of the charge, hence identifiable as a journalist. Due to his multiple facial injuries, Ameer Al Halbi had to be taken to hospital. A freelance photographer, he collaborates with Polka Magazine and Agence France Presse for which he covered the siege of Aleppo. He left Syria at the end of 2016 to take refuge in France in February 2017. Ameer Al Halbi won in 2017 the 2nd prize of the World Press Photo in the "Spot News" category. During the same demonstration, seven other journalists, clearly identified as such, were injured or attacked by the police, according to French journalists' unions: Rémy Buisine (Brut) was bludgeoned; the photojournalist Tulype was also bludgeoned and his camera destroyed; Palice Jokowski was hit on the ground; the photographer Hannah Nelson (Taranis News) was hit by a detonating grenade; photographer Bsaz, also the target of a detonating grenade, suffers bruising; photographer Asling Giuliani was hit on the ground and suffers bruising and pain in her back and knee; photographer Tay Calenda received a severe blow to the cheekbone during a police charge.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Statement by the EFJ: "France: syndicats de journalistes et employeurs dénoncent les violences policières"

Article published by France Info : "Loi "sécurité globale" : l'AFP demande une enquête après des violences contre un photographe syrien"

Tweet by Christophe Deloire

FREELANCERS

Key information :
On the evening of 23 November 2020, at least two journalists were assaulted by police officers while covering the heavy-handed evacuation of a migrant camp in Paris.

Journalist Remy Buisine, working for online news media 'Brut', reported being assaulted several times by police. He said he was first "caught in the throat", then "violently thrown there" as well as beaten on the ground, as documented by video.

Photographer Florent Bardos for press agency Abaca Press was taking photos of the evacuation when a police officer hit him with baton, leaving him with a light injury. He reported on Twitter: "A bit stunned I step back, take off my cap and run my hand through my hair, it is covered in blood."

Media reported the use of tear gas and violence to dismantle the camp by police officers. French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin described the images as "shocking" and said he had demanded a report on the police operation.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- News article by Libération: "Place de la République, les images de la honte"
- News article by The Guardian: "Anger grows over use of 'brutal force' by French police dismantling refugee camp"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- Tweet by the Commissioner for Human Rights: "The images of the police operation carried out last night at Place de la République in Paris are shocking"
On 17 November 2020, Angelika Pitoń, a journalist with the leading Polish daily Gazeta Wyborcza was presented with two separate charges by police. The charges stem from her coverage of a protest as part of the nationwide Women’s March in the southern town of Zakopane on November 6. According to police, the journalist used "indecent" words towards them and was not wearing a mask, as per Covid-19 regulations. According to Polish law, using indecent words in public is punishable by imprisonment, a fine of 1.5k PLN (€335) or a reprobation, while not wearing a mask – by an up to 500 PLN (€112) fine or a reprobation. “The charges are absurd”, Pitoń later said. According to the journalist, she and her colleague Monika Waluś were conducting interviews about the march when the police arrived. “We stood in a circle of five and had masks on our faces. We talked about the scale of violence in Podhale [the region where Zakopane is]”. The police approached them and asked both journalists and their interlocutors for their IDs. Both Pitoń and Waluś explained that they were journalists and presented their press IDs. Pitoń said that the officers in Zakopane intervened because of an alleged violation of social distancing rules, yet her charges presented refer to not wearing a mask. The charges were presented to Pitoń 11 days later when she was summoned to a police station in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska for questioning. She said that when she asked for clarification about which officer she had allegedly addressed with indecent words, the questioner officer responded that he did not know. Previously, police had also visited her family house, where she no longer resides. In an interview, Pitoń, who is based in Kraków, said she considered the police’s actions an attempt to pressure and intimidate her and denounced the charges as “absurd”. She said she had nose and mouth covered during the interviews. Her employer Gazeta Wyborcza has condemned the charges.
In the night of 17 and 18 November 2020, two journalists were prevented from carrying out their work, detained and held incommunicado. They had covered protests in Paris against the bill "on global security", a new bill currently debated in the French Parliament (subject of a separate alert on the Platform – https://go.coe.int/b3upK).

Tangi Kermarrec, a journalist with France 3, was going home at 21:00 when he witnessed clashes between demonstrators and law-enforcement authorities. He took out his mobile phone, his press card and started filming the scene. Police officers approached him and asked him to stop filming. He asserted his right to film by showing his press card, which caused the police officers to move away. A few minutes later a police commander ordered him to stop filming. Kermarrec refused, saying that being a journalist, he has the right to film with his mobile phone. The commander then made him sit on the ground. The journalist was taken to the 17th district police station for questioning and held incommunicado until midday on 18 November. No charges were brought against him.

Hannah Nelson, a photographer for Taranis News, was covering the same protest as the police was trying to disperse the crowd when she got arrested for participation in a gathering after summoning and the concealment of her face (wearing a gas mask). She was held incommunicado and released on 18 November at around 15:00.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Huffington Post news article: ""Sécurité globale": des journalistes placés en garde à vue en marge de la manifestation"
- Statement by Syndicat national des journalistes (SNJ): "Un journaliste de France 3 placé en garde à vue pour un reportage sur une manifestation"
- France 3 news article: "Un journaliste de France 3 Paris Île-de-France interpellé mardi soir"

**Estonia**

n° 147/2020  
Alert created on: 24 Nov 2020

**Estonian Justice Minister to Look into Journalists' Practices Following Revelations**

SOURCE OF THREAT  
State

CATEGORY  
Harassment and intimidation of journalists
During a press conference on Thursday, 19 November 2020, Estonian Minister of Justice Raivo Aeg announced that he asked the prosecutor's office to look into whether journalists from the daily tabloid Öhtuleht have acted unlawfully when investigating the Minister of Education and Science, Mailis Reps.

Öhtuleht journalists were investigating the Ministry's use of public funds and personnel when they revealed that the Minister's driver and ministerial car was used for personal purposes, ie. taking Reps' six children to school. The investigation, backed by photographs, led to the resignation of the Minister.

The prosecutors shall analyse and assess whether this is a case of unauthorised surveillance, as the Minister's children appeared in the photos with their faces obscured. This would carry 1-3 years of imprisonment.

The Estonian Association of Journalists reacted: "Minister Raivo Aeg sending a text message to Prosecutor General Andres Parmas requesting for journalists' activities to be investigated on the basis of section 137 of the Penal Code – the section on unauthorized surveillance – is unprecedented and inevitably calls to mind the occupation-era 'telephone [tapping] law', albeit at a more technologically advanced level," the association said in its statement.

In the evening of 23 October 2020, a group of protesters attacked and chased Paolo Fratter, a reporter for Italian news channel Sky TG 24, and his camera operator, Fabio Giulianelli, while covering an anti-lockdown demonstration in Naples, Italy.
they were covering a demonstration against the COVID-19 lockdown in Naples. Fratter was broadcasting live when demonstrators surrounded him and Giulianelli, shouted at them, shoved Fratter, and threw bottles as they fled the scene, according to Fratter and a video of their broadcast. A protester threw a stone that hit Giulianelli in the leg, but neither journalist was seriously injured in the attack, Fratter said. Sky TG 24’s legal team is investigating the issue. Protests against the pandemic lockdown policies broke out in Naples and the surrounding Campania region in mid-October. CPJ e-mailed questions to the press department of the municipal police in Naples, but did not receive any reply.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Video of the assault, published by SKY TG24.
- CPJ Alert: "Italian TV crew covering anti-lockdown demonstration attacked and chased in Naples"

**STATE REPLIES**

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**La Nazione Photojournalist Tommaso Germogli Hospitalised with Head Trauma after Attack**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**
- Non-state

**CATEGORY**
- Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

On 31 October 2020, Italian photojournalist Tommaso Germogli was diagnosed with a head trauma after being attacked while reporting from a local street market in Florence. The attack took place as Germogli and other journalist of the regional newspaper La Nazione were reporting from a market in the municipality of Scandicci on the adherence to the government’s to COVID-19 regulations about social distancing and the wearing of protective masks. According to the newspaper, Germogli was punched by a vendor at the market who was selling fruit and vegetables. The assault happened after Germogli had shown the person his journalist ID card.
colleague at La Nazione said the exact motive of the attack was still unclear, adding that Germogli had been taking photographs at the time and that the incident had been witnessed by several people. The photojournalist, 26, was taken to hospital and diagnosed with a head trauma. He was released from hospital days later. The Carabinieri were alerted and a criminal complaint was filed by Germogli. The Carabinieri have opened an investigation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- La Nazione report: “Il fotoreporter Tommaso Germogli preso a pugni al mercato”

STATE REPLIES

- 24 Nov 2020 | NEW Response from the Italian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the Council of Europe (in French)

Italy n° 183/2020 Alert created on: 30 Oct 2020

Italian Journalist Mimmo Rubio Threatened over Coverage of COVID-19 Protests and Organised Crime

SOURCE OF THREAT Non-state
CATEGORY Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

Partners: CPJ, RPT, RSF

On 19 October 2020, a group of about 20 people driving scooters and demonstrating against the COVID-19 lockdown in Arzano, in southern Italy, staged a protest at journalist Mimmo Rubio’s home and a nearby government building, shouting threats and insults at the journalist and yelling for him to leave the city, which forced Rubio to barricade himself in his home, according to news reports.

Rubio works as a freelance journalist who manages Arzano News, a Facebook page covering local issues, including organised crime and protests against COVID-19 containment measures. Senator Sandro Rutolo told Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana (FNSI), an independent
trade group, that he suspected the threats were linked to local organised crime. According to a report by Ossigeno, an organisation that tracks violence against journalists, Rubio is worried about his safety and that of his mother, who lives with him, and he was assigned special police protection on 22 October. Rubio confirmed the reports to CPJ but declined to comment further.

Previously, on 16 October, Rubio had been surrounded, threatened, and insulted by a group of anti-lockdown protesters while covering a demonstration, according to a report by Sindacato Unitario Giornalisti della Campania (SUGC), a regional trade group. Before that, he had received dozens of threatening letters including envelopes containing bullets from local organised crime groups, and in 2018 people had exploded fireworks outside his home. CPJ e-mailed the municipal police in Arzano for comment but did not receive any reply.
On Tuesday 17 November 2020, photographer Guillaume Fauveau was reporting in Bayonne for Mediabask.eus, taking photos from police checks of "attestation de déplacement" - a document required for any citizen to move around during the lockdown in France. Two officers asked him for his press card, he showed it and was able to continue taking photos.

When he took photos of police officers from behind, two of them asked him to stop and leave the place. Fauveau told: "They said that I was not allowed and that they didn't want to appear on pictures and that I would better not publish the photos." A police officer then took a photo of his press card. Another said that it is "because of people like him, who take photos of police officers" that "they die afterwards" and threatened to file a complaint against him.

Fauveau, supported by his media outlet, notified the police of this incident.

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On 11 November 2020, TV N1 journalist Zaklina Tatalovic received direct and indirect threats sent to her inbox on Instagram. One message stated "you will be beaten", others consisted of indirect threats and insults. These are not the first threats sent to Zaklina Tatalovic. Previously, she was threatened both on social media, in tabloids and on TV. Just two days before this incident, the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (IJAS) issued a public statement condemning the attack and the sexist insults directed against the journalist on a prime time talk show hosted on a nationally broadcast television station.
On 12 October 2020, two cars belonging to journalists Claudio Brambilla and Luisa Biella were destroyed in a suspected arson attack. Claudio Brambilla is the editor and director of the local online news outlet Merateonline and his partner, Luisa Biella, is a journalist at the newspaper. The publication reported that the fire was likely started from a “malicious origin”. Brambilla said he thought it was “beyond any doubt” that the fire had been started on purpose but had no idea who was behind the attack. The outlet publishes investigative stories and is critical of local officials. However, Brambilla said he could not be sure the alleged attack was due to the newspaper’s reporting. Merateonline has been the target of intimidation from unknown individuals before. The fire began at around 8pm and Brambilla saw the blaze from the window shortly after. Fire fighters attended the scene and battled to extinguish the blaze. Brambilla had been visiting his partner’s house in in Sartirana Lomellina, a village in the Pavia province of Lombardy. Their vehicles, a Porsche Macan and a Dodge Nitro, were completely destroyed. The cars had been parked side by side in a street near Biella’s property. Brambilla’s vehicle caught on fire first and it the spread to the other car. The carabinieri of the local Merate Station attended the scene. Investigations are being coordinated by the Lecco Public Prosecutor's Office. The Lombard Association of Journalists expressed solidarity with its colleagues and called on the authorities to work to identify those responsible.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Editorial by Meratonline: “Merate: serve un’inchiesta rapida perché accertare la natura del fatto è essenziale”
- Statement from the Lombardy Association of Journalists (ALG): "Merate: a fuoco le auto di due giornalisti. La solidarietà della Lombarda"
Journalist Henrik Evertsson and camera operator Linus Andersson are being prosecuted by Swedish authorities for violating the burial site of the MS Estonia. They produced a series of documentary ("Estonia: the discovery that changes everything") which investigates the sinking of the cruise ferry the 'MS Estonia'. The ship had sunk in 1994, killing 852 people, and contains the remains of hundreds of corpses. The series was broadcast on 28 September 2020.

The film team used a remotely-operated camera attached to an underwater vehicle, thereby finding evidence of a four-metre hole which contradicts the official explanation of the disaster. Neither the team nor the camera went inside the wreck.

The trial is due to begin in Gothenburg in January 2021, Evertsson and Andersson are facing a two-year prison sentence. The Swedish authorities also tried to confiscate the film, but without success.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ alert:** "Swedish authorities charge documentary filmmakers Henrik Evertsson and Linus Andersson for MS Estonia film"
- **New York Times article:** "Documentary Casts Doubt on Official Finding in 1994 Ferry Disaster"
- **The Nordic unions statement:** "Granskande journalistik om Estonia är inget brott"
- **RSF statement:** "Sweden: Right to information must prevail in trial for filming ferry wreck"
- **EFJ statement:** "Sweden: two journalists prosecuted for investigating the sinking of ‘MS Estonia’ "

**SOURCE OF THREAT → State**

**CATEGORY → Harassment and intimidation of journalists**

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**PARTNER:** EFJ/IFJ, CPJ, ECPMF, RSF

Sweden
n° 188/2020
Alert created on: 20 Oct 2020

Two Journalists Prosecuted for Investigative Documentary on 'MS Estonia'

State replied 

Lvl. 2

13 Nov 2020

Sweden

State replied

Lvl. 2

13 Nov 2020

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the Council of Europe

Response from the Italian authorities
On 11 November 2020, a court in Nizhny Novgorod is scheduled to announce the verdict and sentence in the trial of Aleksandr Pichugin, editor in chief of the commentary and politics website "Reportyor-NN" and administrator of the political commentary and satire Telegram channel “Sorokin Khvost,” according to news reports.

Pichugin is charged with “public dissemination of knowingly false information that poses a threat to the life and safety of citizens,” and on 9 November prosecutors requested a suspended sentence of two years and six months. If he receives such a sentence, Pichugin would be required to stay at home every night, stay away from public events, and report regularly to a police station.

The charges stem from a 12 April 2020 article Pichugin published on “Sorokin Khvost,” where he has over 1,300 subscribers. The post described a purported message by the Federal Security Service (FSB) calling the church’s Palm Sunday services “a planned activity … with the aim to infect people with a deadly disease,” and potentially infected people “suicide bombers,” according to reports. Pichugin told CPJ that the post was intended to be satirical and expressed his anger over the Russian Orthodox Church’s failure to comply with COVID-19 restrictions and protect congregants from contracting the disease. He published the post after he and other local bloggers met with the governor of Nizhny Novgorod, who asked them to use their platforms to encourage the population to comply with COVID-19 restrictions, the journalist said.

Pichugin was arrested by FSB agents on 16 April and his laptop and mobile phone were seized, according to news reports. He was released the following morning pending investigation, and authorities returned his devices about one month later, after examining them.

During his trial, expert witnesses testified that Pichugin’s post did not contain disinformation and was a metaphor, according to news reports. His lawyer argued that the case would discourage
journalists from discussing sensitive topics. When CPJ called Yulya Slyarova, a representative of the Investigative Committee of Nizhny Novgorod, someone answered but did not speak or respond to questions.

**UPDATES**

**NEW** 13 Nov 2020: On 11 November 2020, the Bogorodsk city court found Pichugin guilty and ordered him to pay a fine of 300,000 rubles (€3,300). His lawyer said the ruling will be appealed.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement of the Russian Journalists’ and Media Workers’ Union (JMWU)
- CPJ alert: "Russian journalist Aleksandr Pichugin awaiting verdict, sentencing in false news trial"

**Poland**  
**n° 141/2020**  
**Alert created on: 12 Nov 2020**

**Polish Photojournalists Beaten by Riot Police**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**: State  
**CATEGORY**: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

**NO STATE REPLY YET**  
**PARTNER: IPI, Article 19, AEJ, CPJ, EFJ/IFJ, RSF**

On 11 November 2020, several journalists and photojournalists were injured by police officers as they covered protests during the Independence March organised by far right and nationalist groups in Warsaw. Among those injured were Tomasz Gutry, a 74-year-old photojournalist of the weekly Tygodnik Solidarność, who was shot in the face with a rubber bullet from a distance of several meters. It is unclear if he was the target. He was treated for his injuries at hospital and underwent surgery. The majority of the injuries by media workers were sustained amidst heavy clashes between riot police and nationalist protesters near the Warszawa Stadion railway station. Video footage shows police using their truncheons to beat media workers despite them either wearing PRESS signs or being clearly identifiable as journalists. One such incident involved Renata Kim, a journalist from weekly news magazine Newsweek Polska, who was hit in the kidney twice with a police baton even though she was wearing a bright vest with the inscription PRESS. During the same incident, video footage shows Przemysław Stefaniak being hit over the head with a baton after he and a group of other photojournalists tried to flee after being pinned on
a flight of stairs by a crowd of police officers preparing for an advance. The same footage appears to show one officer throwing a stun grenade at nearby journalists. Another photojournalist for Newsweek Polska, Adam Tuchliński, was also reportedly hit on the back and the legs with a baton. Dominik Łowicki, a reporter for Gazeta Wyborcza, was also hit on the back of his legs with a truncheons and pepper sprayed by police. His employer reported that just before the police officer hit him, Łowicki had held up his hands and shouted “media”.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by the Chief of the Warsaw Police
- Letter from the Office of the Ombudsman to the Chief of the Warsaw Police
- Report by Gazeta Wyborcza: "74-letni fotoreporter postrzelony przez policję na Marszu Niepodległości. "To nie miało prawa się zdarzyć, gdzie dymisje?"
- Report from Newsweek: "Byłam na Marszu Niepodległości. Organizatorzy musieli słyszeć pogórówki wobec policji, ale nie reagowali"
- Facebook video of the clashes
- Statement by the Association of Regional Newspapers: “Stowarzyszenie Gazet Lokalnych wzywa do dymisji osób, które wydały polecenie ataku na dziennikarzy”
- Statement by the Association of Polish Journalists (SDP): “Protest CMWP SDP przeciwko atakom na dziennikarzy poczas marszlu niepodległości”
- Statement by the Society of Journalists (TD) published by Gazeta Wyborcza: “Towarzystwo Dziennikarskie apeluje o ochronę dziennikarzy”
- Statement by the Office of the Ombudsman: "RPO pyta o przemoc policji wobec dziennikarzy w Święto Niepodległości"
- CPJ Alert: "Polish riot police attack journalists covering demonstrations"

**Armenia**

**n° 140/2020**

Alert created on: 12 Nov 2020

**Demonstrators Attack RFE/RL Office in Yerevan, Assault Journalists**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  →  **Unknown**

**CATEGORY**  →  **Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists**
On 10 November 2020, at about 4 a.m. a group of approximately 40 people attempted to break into the Yerevan office of Azatutyun, the Armenian service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), according to news reports. Executive producer Artak Hambardzumyan told CPJ that the group first shouted at the Azatutyun offices, calling its employees “Turks” and traitors, and demanding that its journalists leave the country. Dozens of men then entered the building and went to the second floor where the broadcaster is located, and then kicked and punched the office door, unsuccessfully trying to break in and “take Azatutyun’s server” to prevent them from reporting. When Hambardzumyan began filming the group with his phone, one unidentified man punched him, and another hit and shoved camera operator Sevak Mesropyan. Neither was injured, and the group left after Azatutyun employees called the police. The police did not arrive the day of the attack, but officers from the National Security Service visited the office on 11 November and are investigating the case.

“Armenian authorities should conduct a swift and thorough investigation into the attack on Azatutyun’s journalists and the broadcaster’s office, hold the perpetrators to account, and ensure journalists’ safety,” said Gulnoza Said, CPJ’s Europe and Central Asia program coordinator. “Journalists must be able to cover news in Armenia freely, without fear that they will face mob justice.”

Hambardzumyan told CPJ that the attack took place amid unrest that erupted throughout Yerevan among people opposed to a peace agreement Armenia signed with Azerbaijan relating to the situation in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. Azatutyun had covered both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. The journalist told CPJ that the attackers did not want Azatutyun to cover the unrest that was happening in Yerevan, because they thought the outlet was too supportive of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who signed the peace deal. CPJ emailed the Armenian National Security Service requesting comment, but did not receive a response.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- RSF Twitter thread with videos of the attacks
- CPJ Alert: "Demonstrators attack RFE/RL office in Armenia, assault 2 journalists"
On 17 August 2020, at about 1 a.m., in the town of Brovary, near Kyiv, unknown persons burned a car used by journalists working for the investigative programme “Schemes”, according to news reports and “Schemes” chief editor Natalie Sedletska. Property of Boris Mazur, a driver employed by the programme, the car was parked by the apartment building where Mazur lives and was empty at the time of the attack, Sedletska said. Mazur discovered the attack when the fire brigade arrived to extinguish the flames. Experts from the State Emergency Service also arrived at the scene and conducted a preliminary investigation, which concluded that the fire was a result of “a third-party ignition source,” according to news reports.

Later on that day, the police released a statement announcing a criminal investigation into “intentional destruction or damage of property”, without naming any suspects.

Sedletska told CPJ that she suspects the car burning was retaliation for the outlet’s journalistic work, but said she did not know who could be behind the incident. “Schemes”s investigative reporter Mykhailo Tkach recently published a series of investigations about high-ranking Ukrainian officials allegedly breaking quarantine rules, and an investigation into how Ukrainian authorities, including members of the presidential administration, allegedly violated road rules while using fake license plates. In July 2020, Tkach had received warnings from his sources that his work upset “high-ranking officials” and that they planned to surveil him, according to Sedletska.CPJ emailed Ukraine’s national police in Kyiv for comment, but did not receive any response.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ alert**: "Ukrainian investigative program ‘Schemes’ targeted with car burning, alleged surveillance"

**STATE REPLIES**

- **12 Nov 2020 | NEW** Reply from the Government of Ukraine
  - **Official position of Ukraine**
On 11 July 2020, Roman Skrypin, a local journalist, posted on Facebook – where he has more than 130,000 followers – a photo of Katerina Sergatskova, chief editor of the news site Zaborona, along with her son, her son’s name, and a picture purporting to be her home.

The posts were later deleted. Before they were, commenters sent threats of death and violence against her, and accusations that she supported the Russia Federation. The photo of the journalist and her son was not deleted.

On 13 July, Sergatskova left her home in Kyiv and went into hiding, saying she feared for her life and the lives of her husband and two children, according to news reports.

Her lawyer filed a complaint with the Kyiv police. The police’s refusal to open an investigation prompted him to file a complaint with the central branch of the Ministry of Interior.

Since 2 July 2020, Zaborona has published several investigative reports about right-wing activists in Ukraine and their alleged ties with Ukrainian media.

In his 11 July Facebook post, Skrypin wrote that Sergatskova should “go away” and “raise your son in Volgograd”, Russia Federation. In other posts, Skrypin alleged that Sergatskova, who is originally from the Russia Federation, was a Russian spy. Skrypin said that he found the photos of Sergatskova from a publicly available source.

Sergatskova, who received Ukrainian citizenship in 2015, has worked in Ukraine for over 10 years, and reported from a conflict zone in the country’s east.

CPJ emailed Ukraine’s National Police in Kyiv for comment, but did not immediately receive any reply.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ alert**: "Ukrainian journalist Katerina Sergatskova in hiding amid threats, doxing"
On 10 October 2020, Saverio Tommasi, a journalist with the news website Fanpage.it, was insulted and threatened by anti-face mask protesters as he was reporting from a demonstration in Rome. Video footage shows protesters, the majority of whom were not wearing masks, shouting at Tommasi as he walked through the crowd outside Basilica di San Giovanni. He was sworn at, targeted with death threats, and a man screamed at him: “You piece of s***, you’ll die shot”. The crowd then chanted “fool” and “clown” at him. An interviewee tried to angrily take the microphone out of his hand and another man tried to forcefully remove him from the area. Tommasi was eventually escorted away by the police.

According to his employer, the demonstration was attended by members of the No Mask group, who refuse to wear protective face masks during the Covid-19 pandemic, and anti-vaccine and anti-5G protesters. They had gathered to protest against the mandatory use of face masks and a new rule that puts the wearing of face masks outdoors mandatory under a fine of up to €1,000. The National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) condemned the threats and said it would report the incident to the Ministry of the Interior’s observatory on threatened journalists. It was joined by the Unified Union of Journalists of Campania.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **Statement by Articolo 21 (in Italian):** "Solidarieta al collega di Fanpage Saverio Tommasi"
- **Statement by the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) (in Italian):** "Giornalista accerchiato dai negazionisti a Roma: Fnsi e Sugc: 'identificare e denunciare gli aggressori'"
- **Video footage published by Fanpage.it**
Gérald Darmanin, the French Minister of the Interior, requested and obtained the hearing as a suspect, on 6 November 2020, of journalist Willy Le Devin, deputy head of the Investigation Department of the daily newspaper 'Libération', by the National Investigation Division of the General Inspectorate of the National Police (IGPN). The journalist is accused of "concealment of a violation of professional secrecy", following the publication on the 'Libération' website on 17 October of an article on the attack in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, in which a note from the Yvelines territorial intelligence service (RT) was cited, describing precisely the events that took place at the Bois-d'Aulne high school in Conflans in the days leading up to the assassination of Samuel Paty. The editorial director of 'Libération', Dov Alfon, believes that "the primary purpose of the investigation initiated by Gérald Darmanin is to identify the source or sources of 'Libération' ", in violation of the secrecy of journalistic sources.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **Tweet by journalist Willy Le Devin**
- **Article by the managing editor of 'Libération': "Journaliste de «Libé» mis en cause par l'IGPN : une atteinte à la liberté de la presse"**

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**Poland**

**Alert created on: 30 Oct 2020**

**n° 131/2020**

**Gazeta Wyborcza Journalists Magda Kozioł and Joanna Urbańska-Jaworska Assaulted by**
At around 8.30 p.m. on 28 October 2020, Gazeta Wyborcza journalist Magda Kozioł was hit in the stomach and thrown to the ground as she tried to film a group of 30 black-clad men during a woman’s march in Wrocław. She was treated in hospital for minor injuries, according to Piotr Stasiński, Gazeta Wyborcza deputy editor. During the same incident, Gazeta Wyborcza reporter Joanna Urbańska-Jaworska was dragged and thrown to the ground by another masked man, who knocked the camera out of her hands. The situation was filmed by a reporter from Radio GRA and both incidents were reported to the police. Gazeta Wyborcza reported on 29 October that a man suspected of carrying out the attack on Kozioł was detained by the police and had belonged to a football hooligan group. “We stand in protest against the barbaric attack and guarantee that we will do everything to ensure that the perpetrators responsible for the assault face justice,” Gazeta Wyborcza said in a statement. The two journalists had been covering the women’s march and had noticed the presence of masked men who had joined as part of counter demonstrations.

NEW 09 Nov 2020: On 30 October 2020, the District Prosecutor’s Office in Wrocław filed a motion before the Wrocław Criminal Court for the arrest of the man suspected of assaulting Joanna Urbańska-Jaworska. On 31 October, the District Prosecutor’s Office withdrew the motion, on the ground that the court might not approve the arrest. Gazeta Wyborcza reported that this occurred after an intervention from the National Prosecutor’s Office. In a statement, Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of Gazeta Wyborcza, condemned the decision, warning that it encouraged further physical violence against journalists.

- Article published by Gazeta Wyborcza: "Prokuratura Krajowa nakazała wypuścić bandytę, który zaatakował dziennikarkę "Wyborczej". - To polityczne przyzwolenie na bicie protestujących kobiet"
- Article published by Gazeta Wyborcza: "Władza zachęca do bicia dziennikarzy. Oświadczenie redakcji "Gazety Wyborczej" "

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Association of Polish Journalists statement: "Protest centrum monitoringu wolności prasy sdp preciwko atakowi na reporterki „Gazety wyborczej”.
- IPI Statement: "As violence escalates in Poland, journalists come under attack".
### Explosives Detonate in Front of Albanian Journalist Elidon Ndreka’s House

**Albania**  
**n° 133/2020**  
**Alert created on: 05 Nov 2020**

**No state reply yet**

**Source of Threat**: Unknown  
**Category**: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

On 30 October 2020, at around 00:30, explosives detonated at the entrance of News24 journalist Elidon Ndreka’s home in Lezha. The explosion caused material damage to the apartment door, but didn’t injure the journalists or his family, who were present at home. According to media reports, police opened an investigation and is examining that CCTV footage, that shows a person getting out of a car, placing the bomb and quickly leaving the site. Ndreka declared: “The only clue may be the work I do. But I do not know who to point the finger at. I have full confidence that it will be uncovered based on evidence and by security cameras whose footage was seized by police”. The Association of Professional Journalists of Albania condemned the attack.

### TF1 and Journalist Liseron Boudoul Targeted by Hate Campaign

**France**  
**n° 185/2020**  
**Alert created on: 03 Nov 2020**

**No state reply yet**

**Source of Threat**: Non-state  
**Category**: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

TF1 and Journalist Liseron Boudoul targeted by hate campaign.
French TV channel TF1 and correspondent Liseron Boudoul received dozens of insulting messages on social media after broadcasting a report on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh on 22 October 2020.

The report showed daily life on the Azerbaijani side of the front line. Shortly after its broadcast on the evening news bulletin, Boudoul faced a flow of hate speech and insults which lasted for several days. One comment referred to her as a 'genocidal whore'. She also received a message on WhatsApp from a person who had managed to get her personal phone number.

TF1 was also harassed with e-mails, phone calls and messages on social media. One Facebook comment said: 'It's possible that with a few beheadings of senior TF1 staff, they will think better and more clearly.'

On 23 October, 300 members of the Armenian community demonstrated outside TF1’s headquarters in Paris in protest against what they regarded as the TV channel’s biased coverage. The channel decided to remove the report from its website.

**ADDIONAL INFORMATION**

- Mapping Media Freedom alert: "France: TF1 and journalist Liseron Boudoul targeted by hate campaign for their coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict"
- RSF statement: "TV journalist hounded in France over Nagorno-Karabakh report"

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**No state reply yet**

**Alert created on: 27 May 2020**

**n° 61/2020**

**Source of threat:** Non-state

**Category:** Harassment and intimidation of journalists

On 22 May 2020, Vanja Stokić, editor-in-chief of the E-trafika news portal received a message on her Facebook profile stating that the sender would "decapitate" not only migrants, but also "all you soul caregivers who welcome them."

Stokić received the message after having published a photograph depicting her with two migrants.
on her profile, as she was covering a story on migration. She tried to report the threats to the Banja Luka police straight away, but was told to come back on 25 May 2020 - three days after the threats were made. Stokić said the same person repeated the threats and even left his phone number so she could pass it to the police.

"The policewoman on duty asked me why I came literally 'just for that'. Then she called the inspector and told me to come on Monday, then I would be received by an inspector who does not normally deal with that, but that the case will be forwarded to someone. I don't feel safe, I'm afraid, and they would wait two days to take my statement", says Stokić.

Additional threats and harassment messages were sent to Stokić and her friends. After a strong public reaction, the perpetrator was finally detained on 24 May 2020. He was released after questioning by the police and a report was filed with the prosecutor's office.

SafeJournalists.net partner, BH Journalists, strongly condemned the conduct of police officers and called for a swift investigation into this case.

**UPDATES**

**NEW** 02 Nov 2020: On 18 October 2020, Vanja Stokić's appeal against the prosecution's decision to drop all proceedings against a man who threatened to "behead" her was rejected.

22 Jul 2020: On 14 July 2020, Tatjana Ninković, a prosecutor in Republika Srpska, dismissed all charges against the author of the threats on the grounds that "the threats were made against an unspecified person" and therefore constituted neither a crime against public safety nor inciting hatred. Vanja Stokić’s lawyer has filed an appeal against the decision.

RSF statement: "Bosnia: Death threat against a journalist goes unpunished"

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists' safety statement: "BiH: Police to act promptly when journalists are threatened"

Vecernji news article: "Novinarka policiji prijavila prijetnje smrću, odgovorili su joj da dođe za tri dana"
On 14 September 2020, police in Sofia summoned Martin Georgiev, a crime reporter at the local daily Sega, for questioning after he e-mailed the Ministry of Interior for comment on alleged police brutality amid recent anti-government protests. On 2 September, riot police had beaten and pepper sprayed demonstrators and reporters, as CPJ documented at the time. In his request for comment, Georgiev sent questions about alleged police brutality, photos from social media and news stories depicting officers’ use of pepper spray and brass knuckles, and questions about the legality of police actions. At the police station, officers told Georgiev that they treated his request for comment as a criminal complaint, and questioned him about the protests and asked him to provide an official statement. When Georgiev refused to speak without a lawyer present, the officers released him after about half an hour. “As a crime reporter, I usually send hundreds of questions every year to the police and the Ministry of the Interior,” Georgiev told CPJ. “I see this questioning as a warning that journalists are not supposed to ask certain questions to the police.” In a statement, the Association of European Journalists (AEJ) in Bulgaria said that, instead of answering the reporter’s request, the questioning was “an attempt at intimidation and repression, which probably aims to make the media not interested in such illegal actions of the police.” A Ministry of the Interior spokesperson said that police treated Georgiev’s questions as a complaint and summoned him because his e-mail included photos of police officers committing “possible violations”. CPJ e-mailed the Ministry of Interior for comment, but did not receive any reply.

NEW 30 Oct 2020: On 22 October 2020, police again summoned Georgiev for questioning over his journalistic work, an act Sega editor-in-chief Teodora Peeva described as intimidation. At the police station on 26 October, Georgiev was told he was summoned in connection with a complaint lodged by a guard working for the National Security Service, stating that someone had published information from the public registry about his properties, from which he had received threats online. The same guard had previously been involved in a scandal when he had been photographed throwing the national flag on the floor during an incident at the residence of the leader of the DPS political party, which is a crime in Bulgaria. Teodora told CPJ that Sega was one of many outlets that had reported on the incident and published the photo of the guard throwing the flag but Sega never published the name of the guard on their website or Facebook page. Georgiev did not post
anything about the guard on his Facebook page either. As part of standard research, Sega had looked up the name of the guard in the public register, which any citizen of Bulgaria can do, but nothing was published. A prosecutor then decided to check the names of everyone who had looked in the public register, which requires users to leave their name, and Georgiev was one of three people who did so. Teodora said there was no basis under the law for such a summons. “As [Georgiev] is only 23 years old and has not had a lot of experience with such situations, they try to scare him”, she said, adding that he had been told at the questioning that the request had come from a prosecutor.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ Alert:** "Bulgarian reporter Martin Georgiev summoned for questioning over request for comment on police brutality"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- **NEW** 27 Oct 2020: CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls for “a comprehensive response” to counter SLAPPs effectively.

- **Human Rights Comment:** “Time to take action against SLAPPs”

**Hungary**

**Police Question Journalists over an Article**

**SOURCE OF THREAT** → State  
**CATEGORY** → Harassment and intimidation of journalists

**NO STATE REPLY YET**

On 26 October 2020, the business crime unit of the Fejér County police, summoned Gabriella Horn, a reporter for the investigative news outlet Átlátszó, to appear for questioning. The move followed a summons for questioning to Balázs Gulyás, a reporter for the independent news website Magyar Hang, on 22 October 2020. Magyar Hang and Átlátszó said that the summonses followed their publication on 8 May and 15 May, respectively, of reports on two military-grade armoured vehicles parked on the estates of a company owned by Lőrinc Mészáros in the town of Bicske, on the basis of drone footage.
Mészáros is a former gas pipe-fitter and a friend of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán who successfully went into business. Horn and Gulyás said they were summoned as witnesses in a criminal probe into suspected illicit data collection by unknown perpetrators — a criminal offense punishable with a maximum prison sentence of three years, according to section 422 of the Hungarian criminal code. According to Horn, the questioning — where she appeared without a lawyer — ended with signed testimony in which police asked why she wrote her article, why she thought it was newsworthy, who her sources were, who made the drone footage, and who authorised the publication of the article. In the testimony, Horn told police that she “wanted to verify information swirling in the press about armoured vehicles stationing on the estate and find out how dangerous the vehicles are, as she thought this fact might be of interest for the public. This was confirmed by the high number of visitors the article attracted.” Horn refused to answer questions about her sources but named the cameraman who made the footage and the editor-in-chief of Átlátszó, who authorised publication. Gulyás said that police told him the investigation followed a criminal complaint filed by a company owned by Mészáros refused to answer any questions concerning his sources, on who made the recording and who authorised the article, and included a paragraph in his testimony protesting the interrogation as judicial harassment and an attack on press freedom. Balázs Tóth, Átlátszó’s lawyer, said the police investigation is unfounded as the journalists did not use drone recording to invade privacy but to verify information of public interest.

In reply questions from CPJ, Lieutenant Colonel Tamás Henyecz of the business crime unit of the Fejér County police stated that his investigation proceeded under a particular law regulating criminal procedures. On 5 May 2020, before the publication of the article, the communication department of Mészáros Group wrote to Magyar Hang to state that its use of assets was legal and had been reported to the authorities. Quoting section 2(48) of the Hungarian civil code, the e-mail requested Magyar Hang to ask for approval prior to producing and using video or audio recording, adding: “in the absence thereof, its disclosure constitutes an infringement.”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ Alert: “Hungarian police question journalists for ‘illicit data collection’ after use of drone footage”**

**Malta**

**Malta Economy Minister Issues four Libel Suits and Warrants Against Blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
**State**

**CATEGORY**  
**Harassment and intimidation of journalists**
Malta Independent journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia is having her bank accounts frozen with precautionary warrants for 47,460 EUR after a court upheld on 8 February 2017 a request by Maltese Economy Minister Chris Cardona and his consultant Joe Gerada to issue garnishee orders alongside four libel suits they have filed against her.

The journalist is sued for publishing on her blog an article reporting that both men visited a brothel in Velbert (Germany) while on government business. Cardona has denied the allegation.

According to media reports, the effect of the precautionary warrants on her assets means her bank accounts will remain frozen until the case is concluded and that could take many years.

In a statement published on her blog, Daphne Caruana Galizia denounced an attempt to gag the press. The Institute of Maltese Journalists called on the minister to reconsider his action, highlighting the exaggerated nature of the legal action.

NEW 26 Oct 2020: Three years after Caruana Galizia’s assassination, her prosecution for criminal defamation in five cases was discontinued, but 25 civil lawsuits for libel remain pending before domestic courts, according to the eCourts case management system for Malta: 1 case brought in 1999 by Mario Vella, then Professor at the University of Malta, now Governor of the Central Bank of Malta; 1 case filed in 2014 by Konrad Mizzi, former Minister for Tourism and Sai Liang Mizzi, former Consul General at Shanghai; 1 case brought in 2016 by Lindsey Gambin, former Communications Coordinator to the Minister for Tourism; 19 cases filed in 2017 by Solvio Delbono, owner of the real estate investment company DB Group; 2 cases brought in 2017 by Konrad Mizzi; 1 case filed in 2017 by Joseph Muscat, former Prime Minister; 4 cases brought in 2017 by Chris Cardona, former Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, and Joe Gerada, consultant. From 1 April 2019 to 20 October 2020, a total of 160 court hearings were scheduled in libel cases against Caruana Galizia, out of which 87 were adjourned.

10 Dec 2019: On 6 December 2019, Keith Schembri withdrew the two libel suits he had filed against Daphne Caruana Galizia over her articles about his Panama company. Businessman Yorgen Fenech, who was charged over his role in the murder Caruana Galizia, stated in court that Schembri had kept him regularly updated about the state of the investigation. The libel suit filed against Caruana Galizia by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat
over her story that his wife owns the Panama company Egrant was adjourned at his request until March 2020.

13 Sep 2018: 34 libel proceedings remained open against Caruana Galizia after her assassination on 16 October 2017 and are pending before the domestic courts. Among them, one case brought by Malta's Prime Minister Joseph Muscat; two cases brought by Minister for Tourism Konrad Mizzi; two cases brought by the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff Keith Schembri; one case brought by former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank Alfred Mifsud; one case brought by the head of Malta's 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting task force Phyllis Muscat; and 19 cases brought by businessman Silvio Debono.

RSF statement: "Ten years after launch of blog, murdered Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia faces posthumous barrage of libel lawsuits"

16 May 2018: A new revised Media and Defamation Bill enacted on 13 May 2018 decriminalises defamation. In addition to abolishing criminal libel, the Act removes references to offending “public morals or decency”, prevents plaintiffs from filing garnishee orders against journalists and only allows applicants to file one libel suit per story.

31 Mar 2017: On 11 March 2017 Silvio Debono, owner of real estate investment company DB Group, filed 19 libel cases against journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. Galizia published a number of articles about Debono cutting a deal with Malta's government to take over a large tract of public land in a high value coastal area on which he plans to build a Hard Rock Hotel and two towers of flats for sale. In her statement, Daphne Caruana Galizia said that the libel suits are all about the same subject, "taking advantage of the fact that the law allows them to sue for each comment, article or blog post even if the subject matter and the author are the same." “The cases will drag through the courts, it will cost me around €8,000 merely to file my responses, and anybody else would have been intimidated into submission," she added.

Blog entry by Daphne Caruana Galizia: "My statement sent to the media in response to that released by Silvio Debono's outfit"

Article published by the Times of Malta: "Daphne Caruana Galizia slapped with 19 libel cases from db Group"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CPJ statement: "Court freezes Maltese blogger's bank accounts on libel accusations"

Report published on the Mapping Media Freedom platform: "Malta: Four libel suits and warrant for assets freeze filed against blogger"
Response from the Maltese authorities

Reply from the Government of Malta

CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls for “a comprehensive response” to counter SLAPPs effectively.

Letter from Dunja Mijatović addressed to the Prime Minister of Malta

Reply of the authorities of Malta to the Commissioner’s letter

OSCE representative welcomes decriminalization of defamation in Malta, urges dismissal of civil defamation lawsuits against Caruana Galizia’s heirs
OSCE Representative for Media Freedom urges authorities in Malta to protect independent journalists and free expression

Statement by Harlem Désir

Daphne Caruana Galizia

Independent Journalist and Blogger, known for her reporting on corruption and the political situation in Malta. Her blog "Running Commentary" was one of the most visited websites in the country.

Warsaw Publishing House Broken into and Vandalised

On 7 July 2020, unknown perpetrators broke into the headquarters of Maxmedia Publishing House in Warsaw, stole equipment and vandalised the walls. MaxMedia houses the “Fakty” Social Dialogue Magazine, VIP Magazine, Investment Market, and The Ambassador publications. The assailants broke the equipment, destroyed the server room, smashed furniture, and stole external hard drives from laptops and computers. A section of the wall at the reception was spray painted with a swastika. The message “Fakty TVN out” was painted nearby. It is believed that the perpetrators mistakenly targeted the office, believing it to be that of the major Polish television networks TVN, whose flagship news programme is called Fakty. The small "Fakty" Social Dialogue Magazine run by Maxmedia focuses on issues including economy, politics and social affairs, and has no link to TVN. The attack on the editorial office took place amidst a climate of hostility and verbal attacks on the media by politicians during the recent presidential election.

Poland

STATE replied

Lvl. 2 Alert created on: 15 Jul 2020

POLAND

Warsaw Publishing House Broken into and Vandalised

SOURCE OF THREAT  ➤  Unknown

CATEGORY  ➤  Harassment and intimidation of journalists

PARTNER: Article 19, IPI

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Between 1 May and 26 June 2020, US-based law firm Lambert Worldwide and UK-based law firm Atkins Thomson sent letters to Times of Malta, MaltaToday, Malta Independent, Lovin Malta and The Shift News in relation to their reporting and journalistic enquiries on a wind farm deal in Montenegro and alleged connections between British-Azerbaijani entrepreneur Turab Musayev and Maltese business owner Yorgen Fenech, who is charged with complicity in the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

On 1 May 2020, Lambert Worldwide sent a “courtesy request” to Malta Today in relation to an article published on its website mentioning Mr. Musayev. It demanded that the media outlet remove the article or undertake actions such as “de-indexing the article, or perhaps, removing our client’s name from the article.” It further stated concern about the contents of the article and asserted that their client had suffered personally and professionally from its publication. However, the letter confirmed that “they are not permitted to reveal any details at this time,” and stated that “this letter does not constitute a notice of intent to take legal actions.”

On 29 May 2020, Times of Malta started to receive similar letters, after its journalist had sent questions to Mr. Musayev. Atkins Thomson wrote that: “not for the first time, we are concerned
that you are in possession of confidential material and documentation, probably gathered illegally, and that you may unlawfully misuse the same.” The letter further stated that the lawyers will take all necessary steps to prevent defamation of their client. On 5 June 2020, Atkins Thomson contacted Times of Malta again, writing: “the fact that you still ask so many questions of our client proved beyond doubt that your research and information is wholly inadequate for your predetermined purposes,” and requesting Times of Malta to reveal its journalistic sources.

On 24 June 2020, Atkins Thomson sent another letter, contesting an opinion piece and news article published on Lovin Malta, and claiming that the articles were causing harm in London, where Mr. Musayev moved to in 2007 with his family. The lawyers requested Lovin Malta to withdraw the articles from its website and social media platforms, publish a retraction and apology, remove references to Mr. Musayev on Google and social media platforms, pay substantial compensation for the harm caused, and pay their client’s legal costs. On 26 June 2020, Atkins Thomson sent similar letters to Malta Today, Malta Independent and The Shift News, stating: “we have written to a number of publications and are taking legal action against others. We are currently considering your article. We will take all necessary action to protect and/or restore our client’s reputation if you publish any material that is defamatory of him.”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **ECPMF report:** "Malta: five media outlets threatened by lawyers of British-Azeri business owner"
- **Article published by The Shift:** "SLAPP threat from Azerbaijani – British national Turab Musayev"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- **27 Oct 2020 | NEW** CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls for “a comprehensive response” to counter SLAPPs effectively.
  - **Human Rights Comment:** “Time to take action against SLAPPs”

**Serbia**

**Serbian Journalist Jeton Ismaili’s Family Threatened during Break-In**

- **SOURCE OF THREAT**: Unknown
- **CATEGORY**: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
At about 2 p.m. on 13 August 2020, in Veliki Trnovac, southern Serbia, two men broke into journalist Jeton Ismaili’s house and, finding only his wife and their three children home, shouted insults and death threats referring to the journalist and his family, and then fled, according to news reports and Ismaili, an editor for the Albanian-language news website FOLonline. The journalist’s family reported the attack to police, who arrived shortly thereafter and helped Ismaili’s wife, who suffered psychological trauma in the incident, according to SafeJournalists, a regional site that tracks attacks on journalists.

On 18 August, authorities filed criminal charges against a 76-year-old man and his 38-year-old son in connection with the attack, but did not release their names, according to SafeJournalists.

Ismaili told local news outlet Bujanovacke, where he also works as a contributor, that he assumed the attack was retaliation for an 7 August article he wrote about two COVID-19 related deaths and several infections within a local family, which did not mention the family by name.

CPJ emailed the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, which oversees the police, for comment, but did not receive any reply.
On 7 July 2020, numerous actions against journalists and media workers were documented during anti-government protests that broke out in front of the Serbian National Assembly in Belgrade. Plain clothes officers tried to stop an N1 TV crew from recording police beating a protester in the park. Jelena Zorić, a reporter for N1, said that two police officers tried to push the crew away to stop them from recording the incident. Zorić was also teargassed as she reported live from the scene that night.

Milica Božinović, a journalist for the Nova.rs news portal, was hit on the buttocks by a riot police officer. Despite repeatedly identifying herself as a journalist, officers had demanded she leave the scene where a man had been injured and was calling out for help. One officer hit her as she refused to fully leave. The incident was live streamed by the journalist on the outlet’s Facebook channel.

Thousands of persons took to the streets to protest the way COVID-19 pandemic is being dealt with by the Government of Serbia. The unrest broke out after President Aleksandar Vučić announced that a weekend curfew would be re-imposed in order to curb a rise in COVID-19 infections. Clashes erupted later in the night and police fired tear gas to disperse the protesters.

On 8 July, during protests that broke out for the second night, more journalists and media workers were threatened and attacked. Beta news agency journalist Zikica Stevanović was injured while reporting. Despite him showing his journalist’s ID and saying that he was on duty, police officers started beating him with batons. Stevanović was taken to hospital with injuries and cuts to his head and eyes. Cameramen for the same agency, Luka Pređa and Relja Pekić, were also slightly injured. Nova.rs journalist Marko Radonjić, who was reporting from the protest in Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra, was also beaten by the police despite having told them several times that he was a journalist on assignment. In addition, he was attacked verbally and threatened with arrest. Nova.rs journalists Milica Božinović and Natasa Latkovic were also attacked by police after identifying themselves as journalists. The police hit Božinović on the fingers with a baton, knocking her phone out of her hand.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- News article Tanjug: "Napadnuta dva snimatelja Tanjuga, pesnica u stomak, obaranje"
- Statement by Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia NUNS : "Pesnica u stomak: Napadnuta dva snimatelja Tanjuga ispred Skupštine"
- EFJ statement: "Serbia: violent attacks against journalists during two consecutive nights of protests"
- IPI statement: "Numerous journalists beaten and attacked covering Serbia protests"
On 8 July 2020, several journalists and media workers were attacked during anti-governments protests that broke out for the second night in Serbia. In Novi Sad, at around 7.30pm, protesters gathered in front of the building of the Radio-Television of Vojvodina (RTV) and broke the glass entrance door. In a separate incident, a RTS crew was attacked and the cameraman, Lazar Vukadinović was injured. The RTS team was covering the protest when some protesters saw the RTS microphone and attacked the crew. The camera was broken. In Nis, a journalist working for the Public Service Media Radio and Television (RTS) was insulted and attacked by protesters. The journalist and his cameraman, Ivan Stambolić was trying to join the RTS program live in Voždova Street, not far from the city center, when a group of protesters surrounded and insulted them. The demonstrators sprayed water at their camera and also ripped out the microphone and...
camera’s cables. The RTS journalist reported that Stambolić was hit in the head by a bottle or a can thrown by one of the protesters. Journalists from the Juzni Vesti newsroom, who were also reporting on the demonstrations, came to help the two RTS journalists.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- IPI statement: "Numerous journalists beaten and attacked covering Serbia protests"
- EFJ statement: "Serbia: violent attacks against journalists during two consecutive nights of protests"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 26 Oct 2020 | NEW Reply of the Serbian authorities (Ministry of the Interior)
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Serbia to the Council of Europe

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On 21 June 2020, journalist Sasa Mikic was physically attacked while reporting from a polling station during the parliamentary election in Serbia. The attack happened at around 4 p.m. while Mikic, who normally works as a sports journalist, was on assignment at polling stations in Kikinda, a city in the autonomous province of Vojvodina. Mikic works at Dečiji Internet Radio, where he has been involved in training journalists, and is a long-time former employee at the public broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia. After presenting a journalistic ID and being admitted, Mikic had tried to speak to the president of the polling board about the turnout and other election matters. When he could not speak to the president, who was on the phone, he left. According to the journalist, as he was leaving he was approached by a group of unidentified individuals who threw something at him and started pushing him out of the building. Outside, a group of three men attacked Mikic from behind. The journalist said that two men held him down while a third hit him in the face. Police were called to the scene and Mikic was given medical assistance. He suffered cuts to is lower lip and other minor injuries. The attack was reported to
the Serbian authorities. Mikic went to a police station to submit a statement. He said he was unable to identify the attackers and did not understand why he had been assaulted. He said he had the correct IDs, accreditations and permission to report from inside the polling station. The Association of Journalists of Serbia, the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, and the SafeJournalists Network, a regional monitoring platform, condemned the attack.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- International Press Institute (IPI) statement: "IPI condemns beating of journalist and threats of violence during Serbian election"
- SafeJournalists Network statement: "Serbian journalist Mikic beaten up on election day"
- Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS) statement: "УНС: Полиција да пронађе нападаче на Сашу Микића"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 26 Oct 2020 | NEW Reply of the Serbian authorities (Ministry of the Interior)

The French daily Le Monde reported that two of its correspondents sustained injuries in the shelling attack in the town of Khojavend/Martuni in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia held Azerbaijan responsible for the shelling. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan criticised the Armenian government for facilitating journalists’ travel into the area, saying it put them at risk. The statement also denied that the Azerbaijani military had targeted members of the press.

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shelling. Journalists with the French news agency Agence France Press were also at the scene, but were not injured. One Le Monde reporter, Allan Kaval, underwent surgery in a hospital in Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, and was stable after having been in critical condition, according to Hermine Virabyan, the French journalists’ fixer.

Rafael Charles Yaghobzadeh, a photojournalist from Le Monde, underwent surgery in Martuni and is also in stable condition. According to Ms Virabyan, the journalists were standing next to a car marked “Press” at the time of the shelling.

Two Armenian journalists, Sevak Vardumyan, a correspondent for the broadcaster 24 News, and Aram Grigoryan, a camera operator for the broadcaster Armenia TV, were also injured in the shelling. The Russian broadcaster Dozhd reported that Dmitriy Yelovskiy, a correspondent for the network, was in a vehicle near the Le Monde journalists when the shelling occurred, and stated that he did not sustain any injuries. CPJ e-mailed the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministries for comment, but did not receive any responses.

NEW 23 Oct 2020: On 19 October 2020, Hasanov Anar, journalist for Azerbaijan state channel Aztvresmi, has been slightly injured after a shelling in Aghdam region in Nagorno-Karabakh.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- RSF statement: "Call for probe into origin of shelling that injured reporters in Nagorno-Karabakh"
- AEJ statement: "AEJ condemns armed attacks against journalists in Nagorno Karabakh"
- CPJ Alert: "At least 4 journalists injured covering Nagorno-Karabakh conflict"
On 8 October, 2020, Yuriy Kotenok, editor-in-chief of the Russian news website Segodnia.ru, and Levon Arzanov, a correspondent from the Russian state-run news website Ofitsery Rossii, were injured by shelling in Shusha/Shushi, a city in Nagorno-Karabakh. The two journalists were reporting within a cathedral that had been damaged in a previous shelling attack, when another bomb dropped on the building, severely injuring Kotenok and moderately injuring Arzanov.

Anna Naghdalyan, spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia stated that Azerbaijani armed forces had targeted the cathedral with multiple rockets. The Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan wrote that the country’s army “does not target the historical/cultural/religious buildings” and that the Armenian government’s claim was “unfounded.” CPJ emailed the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ministries of Foreign Affairs for comment on the journalists’ injuries, but did not immediately receive any responses.

Kotenok, who also runs the Telegram channel Voenkor Kotenok, was gravely injured in the chest and limbs and taken to a hospital for surgery in Stepanakert. Arzanov sustained “moderate, non-life threatening injuries”, according to reports. Ofitsery Rossii editor-in-chief Roman Shkurlatov told Russian business news portal Rbc.ru that the journalist has shrapnel wounds and might be shell-shocked. CPJ could not determine whether the journalists were wearing press insignia or whether their presence would have been visible during the attack.

On 14 October 2020, a reporter and camera operator for N1 Croatia were subjected to threats and serious insults as they tried to record an interview with a disease specialist in Zagreb.

The threats were made as N1 journalist Matea Dominikovic and cameraman Ivan Teskera were preparing to interview Professor Alemka Markotić, Director of the Clinic for Infectious Diseases,
on COVID-19. As they were filming in an open green area, a young couple with a dog approached them and started shouting aggressively at them for not wearing protective masks. N1 later stressed that the interview was conducted in line with all current health measures about social distancing, and that all individuals were adequately spaced apart in an outdoor environment.

After first making sarcastic comments about the lack of masks, the couple - who were described by Dominikovic as “visibly drunk” at the time – returned and began shouting derogatory insults as the crew was about to deliver the live broadcast. The cameraman repeatedly asked the couple, neither of whom wore masks, to calm down and move back. However, they continued to disrupt the broadcast for another minute. They left the scene after Professor Markotić threatened to call the police.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by SafeJournalists: "SafeJournalists: Croatian N1 TV crew threatened"
- Video of the incident broadcast by N1

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**United Kingdom n° 124/2020**

**Journalist Patricia Devlin Subject to Threats and Intimidation Despite Police Complaint**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**

- Unknown

**CATEGORY**

- Harassment and intimidation of journalists

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**NO STATE REPLY YET**

In recent months, journalist Patricia Devlin, who reports on organised crime and paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland for the Sunday World, has faced mounting abuse and threats. Since January 2019, Devlin’s personal details - including her e-mail address and social media profiles - have appeared in online forums, where people have been encouraged to troll her. In April 2019, an anonymous Twitter profile posted that she had a “target on her back.” Devlin filed a formal complaint to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) after receiving a message via Facebook on 28 October 2019 telling her: “Don’t go near your granny’s… Trisha! - you will watch your new-born get raped”. A location near her grandmother’s home was included in the message. The PSNI launched an investigation, but Devlin was told that the individual she suspected could not be approached until there was more evidence. The PSNI told her in early January 2020 that the necessary evidence was now available.

However, as of October 2020, no suspect has been brought to justice, and Devlin has continued
to receive threats and was served two formal notifications from the PSNI that her safety is at risk. She was among the Sunday Life and Sunday World journalists who were warned in May 2020 of imminent threats from loyalist paramilitaries, including of physical attacks and planned car bomb attacks (Platform alert No. 52/2020).

Due to what she feels has been the PSNI's failure to adequately investigate the serious threat to her, her family and press freedom, Devlin filed a complaint to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in mid-October 2020.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Article published by Sunday World "The Nazi thug who threatened to rape my baby has still not been arrested."
- BBC Podcast (23 minutes) "Woman's Hour - Women in business and three tier lockdown"

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**Russian Federation** n° 123/2020

Alert created on: 21 Oct 2020

**Journalist Sergey Plotnikov Abducted, Questioned, Beaten, then Released in Russia’s Far East**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  Unknown

**CATEGORY**  Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

**NO STATE REPLY YET**

On 15 October 2020, at about 8 p.m., seven unidentified masked men abducted journalist Sergey Plotnikov on the street near his home in Khabarovsk, drove him to a forest outside the city, beat him up and threatened to kill him, and then abandoned him, according to news reports. Plotnikov works for RusNews, an independent YouTube-based outlet that has covered recent protests, and which has about 97,000 followers. Protests have been ongoing in the Russian Federation's far east since 9 July, when the region's former governor, Sergey Furgal, was arrested for his alleged involvement in murders in the early 2000s.

In the morning of 16 October, Plotnikov filed a complaint to the Khabarovsk Investigative Committee, which opened an investigation into his abduction. Plotnikov said the men forced him into a minibus, placed him face down on the floor, handcuffed him, and made him unlock his phone. They searched the phone's contents. They also questioned him about the recent protests, asking him for information about the organisers and leaders, and demanding that he provide them with information about any future protests. Plotnikov said he maintained that he did not have any inside information regarding the
protests and only covered them as a journalist. During the drive out of the city, the men hit and kicked him, giving Plotnikov numerous bruises on his body and abrasions on his head, arms, and body. When they arrived in the forest, the men took Plotnikov out of the vehicle and one shot a gun near his right foot, saying that “next time it would be your head.” The kidnappers took him to a cemetery, returned his phone, took off the handcuffs, and left. Plotnikov then contacted his friends and family.

On 16 and 18 October, Plotnikov received anonymous messages via Telegram from someone who claimed to be among the men who had kidnapped him. The messages insulted the journalist, and said that “things would get worse later” and that he should “look over his shoulder when walking.”

Plotnikov reported the threats to the Investigative Committee and asked to be provided with police protection, as he feared for his life; but no protection has been provided as of today. CPJ emailed the Khabarovsk Investigative Committee for comment, but did not receive any response.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- CPJ alert: "Journalist Sergey Plotnikov abducted, beaten, then released in Russia’s far east"

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**Russian Federation**

**Koza Press Editor-in-Chief Irina Slavina Dies After Self-Immolation**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**: Unknown

**CATEGORY**: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

**Alert created on**: 07 Oct 2020

**No state reply yet**

On 2 October 2020, Irina Slavina (47), journalist and editor-in-chief of Koza Press online news, died after setting herself on fire outside the police headquarters in Nizhny Novgorod, a day after a police raid on her flat. She leaves behind a husband and a daughter. Before her death, she posted on Facebook: “Blame the Russian Federation for my death”.

A day before, she had reported how police raided her flat in search of material related to Open Russia, an organisation founded by the exiled oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky. During the search, her and her family’s laptops, cell phones, flash drives, and notes were confiscated. She was also questioned as a witness in a criminal case against a local businessman, Mikhail Iosilevich, for his alleged involvement with Open Russia.

Irina Slavina had been repeatedly prosecuted and fined by the Nizhny Novgorod District Court: 20,000 rubles (€220) for attending an undeclared peaceful march in memory of opposition
politician Boris Nemtsov; 70,000 rubles (€760) for “disrespect of the public” over a Facebook post about the unveiling of a Stalin memorial in Shakhunya; 5,000 rubles (€55) for participating in the Free People forum, an event organised by Open Russia. In the latter case, the court rejected that Irina Slavina had attained the event in her capacity as a journalist, and found her involvement in Open Russia established as she had posted the event on her Facebook page. In 2020, Slavina was fined 65,000 rubles (€710) for “deliberately spreading fake news about COVID-19” over an article exposing how the manager of a Soviet martial arts academy had contact with persons, despite carrying the virus.

In a 2 October 2020 statement, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Nizhny Novgorod Region confirmed Slavina’s death, a preliminary investigation on site and a posthumous psychiatric and psychological examination. The Investigative Committee also denied reports according to which her death was connected to the raid on her flat, stating that “she was a witness and neither a suspect, nor an accused in the criminal investigation.”

The Russian Union of Journalists have called for a comprehensive and objective investigation into the tragedy. The Journalists’ and Media Workers’ Union requested an investigation into the responsibilities of those who incited Slavina to commit suicide.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ Alert:** “Russian journalist Irina Slavina dies of self-immolation after harassment by authorities”
- **RSF thread on Twitter** asking the Russian authorities to shed light on the pressures that led to her suicide.
- **Statement by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Nizhny Novgorod Region:** “В Н. Новгороде следователи СК выясняют обстоятельства гибели женщины”
- **Statement by the Russian Union of Journalists:** “Главный редактор интернет-издания KozaPress совершила суицид у здания МВД в Нижнем Новгороде”
- **Statement by Human Rights Watch:** “Russian journalist commits suicide after years of harassment”

**Georgia**  
n° 115/2020  
Alert created on: 07 Oct 2020

**At Least 5 Journalists Attacked, Beaten in Run-Up to Parliamentary Elections**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
Unknown

**CATEGORY**  
attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
On the evening of 29 September 2020, in Marneuli, unknown assailants attacked a reporting crew for the pro-opposition TV broadcaster Mtavari Channel as police looked on without helping, according to news reports. Assailants also attacked a cameraman for public TV broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi.

Both Mtavari Channel and Pirveli Arkhi had sent film crews to Marneuli to investigate physical altercations between local representatives of the ruling party Georgian Dream and the opposition party United National Movement. According to Mtavari Channel director and lawyer Tamta Muradashvili, the Mtavari Channel crew had just finished filming ongoing clashes outside of the Georgian Dream office when a group of five or six people approached the journalists and began to beat them. The attackers punched correspondent Jeikhun Muhamedali and slammed his head against a tree, causing him to lose consciousness. He was hospitalised and later discharged, though his arm is in a cast and he suffers from stomach pain. Correspondent Bacho Turashvili, cameraman Lasha Gureshidze, and his assistant Nika Darchia were also attacked, and Gureshidze’s equipment was broken. Correspondent Jeikhun Muhamedali was attacked later while reporting.

Pirveli Arkhi correspondent Rusudan Loladze told CPJ that she and cameraman Zaza Baramidze were on their way to report on clashes in the same area. While she stayed in the car, Baramidze got out and began to film the fighting when several people attacked him, breaking his camera. It is unclear if Baramidze was attacked by the same people who carried out the attack on the Mtavari Channel crew. The journalists from both TV companies filed complaints with the police, but so far, no arrests have been made. CPJ contacted Georgia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, which oversees the police, and Marneuli city hall for comment but did not receive a response.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

一门 CPJ Alert: "At least 5 journalists attacked, beaten in southern Georgia in run-up to parliamentary elections"
On 24 September 2020, three unidentified men attacked Abdullah Bozkurt, a Turkish journalist living in exile, in the street outside his home in Stockholm. One of the men pulled Bozkurt to the ground, and then all three kicked him for several minutes before fleeing the scene, according to the journalist. Bozkurt suffered scrapes and bruises to his face, arms, and legs, and was treated at a local hospital and then released. He filed a report to police following the attack. The police opened an investigation and found witnesses to the incident.

Bozkurt told CPJ that he believes the attackers were the same three unidentified men who, the day before the attack, stood in the street outside his home and shouted for him to come outside because they “wanted to talk.” He had refused to meet them, and instead filmed a video of the men, which he turned over to police following the attack.

Nordic Monitor, a news website that covers Turkish politics where Bozkurt works as executive director, publishes articles critical of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish diplomats and intelligence agents. Bozkurt stated that he regularly received threats on social media over his coverage of Turkey, including threats to his and his family’s safety, but said that they mainly came from people living in Turkey. He had not received specific threats relating to the attack in Sweden. Bozkurt is under a Turkish arrest warrant for his alleged membership in Gülen movement, which the Turkish government considers to be a terrorist group as well as responsible for the failed 2016 coup attempt. Bozkurt was granted asylum in Sweden in 2016. The Turkish authorities shuttered the pro-Gülen daily newspaper Zaman, where he worked, and the Muhabir news agency, which he co-founded.

In an email to CPJ, a Swedish police representative said that an investigation into the attack was ongoing, and that details could not be released until charges were filed against the suspected perpetrators.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ Alert**: "Exiled Turkish journalist Abdullah Bozkurt attacked in Stockholm"
The National Anti-terrorist Prosecutor’s Office opened an investigation into attempted murder in relation to a terrorist enterprise after a knife attack occurred on 25 September 2020 in the morning, close to Charlie Hebdo’s former newsroom. Two media workers working for the audiovisual production company ‘Premières Lignes’, who were smoking outside the building right in front of the fresco in homage of the cartoonists, were severely injured and taken to hospital. Their lives are not at risk. A suspect was arrested shortly after the attack. The motives for the attack are still unclear. The attack took place in the context of new threats against Charlie Hebdo by terrorist organisations. The trial of the 2015 massacres has opened in Paris on 2 September.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **CPJ Statement:** "CPJ condemns knife attack near former Charlie Hebdo office in Paris"
- **EFJ statement:** "EFJ condemns attack near former Charlie Hebdo office in Paris"
- **News article published by Libération:** "Attaque devant les ex-locaux de «Charlie» : deux suspects interpellés, le parquet antiterroriste saisi"
- **News article The Guardian:** "Two injured in knife attack outside Charlie Hebdo's former offices in Paris"

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**Italy**

n° 98/2020  
Alert created on: 26 Aug 2020

### Online Threats Against the President of Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana

**SOURCE OF THREAT** ◄ Non-state  
**CATEGORY** ► Harassment and intimidation of journalists

Since 18 August 2020, the president of Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana (FNSI), Beppe Giulietti, has been harassed and intimidated on social networks. The campaign is fueled by online accounts that advocate extreme right-wing theses. Recently Giulietti had defended the journalists who demonstrated that an alleged report in the newspaper “Libero” on 7 August, according to which migrants had killed and eaten dogs belonging to a resident of Lampedusa, was not based on any proven facts. The journalists who exposed this false news, including Angela Caponnetto of Rai News 24 and Nello Scavo of the newspaper “Avvenire”, were also subjected to threats and insults on social networks. MP Walter Verini, Coordinator of the Italian
Committee of the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission for the Protection of Threatened Journalists, announced on 20 August that he will organise a hearing to follow up on the testimonies of threatened journalists and the FNSI.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **EFJ statement:** "Threats against the president of Italian journalists"
- **Reaction from the Italian Minister of the Interior:** "Insulti e minacce a Giulietti. Vicemministro Mauri: “Vergogna”. Centinaia i messaggi di solidarietà"
- **News report in daily newspaper "Il Fatto Quotidiano":** Minacce dall’estrema destra al presidente del sindacato giornalisti Beppe Giulietti: “Attacchi perché ha difeso chi parla di migranti"
- **Statement from the NGO Articolo 21:** "Minacce squadriste in rete contro il Presidente della Fnsi, Giulietti. Confermate da Verini le audizioni in Commissione Antimafia"

### STATE REPLIES

- **24 Sep 2020 | Reply from the Italian authorities (Ministry of Interior)**
  - Note from the Ministry of the Interior to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

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**France**

**n° 107/2020**

**Alert created on:** 18 Sep 2020

**Lvl. 2**

**No state reply yet**

### Source of Threat

- **State**

### Category

- **Harassment and intimidation of journalists**

**No State Reply Yet**

Several journalists were obstructed in the exercise of their profession by the police on 12 September 2020, when Yellow Vests resumed their demonstrations in several French cities. In Paris, journalist Adrien Adcazz, who was filming a police intervention in a market for the online media HQ, was arrested and held in police custody for 22 hours. He was accused in particular of having concealed his face, even though wearing a mask was mandatory, following the COVID-19 pandemic protection measures. The prosecutor dismissed all charges against the journalist (concealment of face, grouping with the intent of committing violent acts, refusal to comply with a dispersal order). Journalist Julien Moreau, who was covering the demonstration for Radio Bip,
was also arrested on his way to the scene. He was held in police custody for more than 15 hours. The police destroyed his protective equipment. Other journalists, including a team from Taranis News, were arrested, obstructed, or subjected to police violence. Taha Bouhafs filed a complaint after reporting on Twitter that he had been punched in the face by a police officer. French journalists' unions intervened on behalf of these journalists.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Article referring to those violations published on EFJ's website: "UNESCO sounds the alarm on surge in attacks against journalists covering protests"
- Article published by "Reporterre": "Des journalistes empêchés de travailler pendant la manifestation des Gilets jaunes"
- Facebook post by Adrien Adcazz describing his custody conditions
- Press statement by journalist Julien Moreau
- Statement posted on Twitter by Journalists Union SNJ-CGT
- Statement by Radio Bip following the arrest of Julien Moreau

**FREELANCERS**

**Key information:**

Julien Moreau

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**Spain**

n° 106/2020  

Alert created on: 15 Sep 2020

**Sexist Graffiti Painted on the façade of «Pikara Magazine» headquarters**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  

Non-state

**CATEGORY**  

Harassment and intimidation of journalists

**NO STATE REPLY YET**

The editorial staff of the feminist online website «Pikara Magazine» found, on 14 September 2020, the façade of the magazine's headquarters in Bilbao covered with sexist, defamatory and threatening graffiti. This is the fourth time this year that the editorial staff has recorded such damage. The media filed a complaint, pointing out that the first graffiti were signed by an extreme
right-wing group. The Basque College of Journalists (CVP-KEE) and the Basque Association of Journalists (AVP-KEE) have condemned the new damages.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article by the Madrid Press Association: "Los periodistas vascos condenan el nuevo ataque contra la sede de Pikara Magazine"

Article published by "Pikara Magazine": «Ok, Charos». Nuevas pintadas en la nueva normalidad

On 17 June 2020, journalist Elvis Hila of the Report.TV news channel was obstructed and then briefly detained by local police as he was reporting on the demolition of what authorities say are illegally constructed buildings in Lezha, northern Albania. Hila was among a group of journalists documenting the demolitions supervised by the National Inspectorate of Protection of Territory (IKMT) on a local beach. At around 5pm, as he was filming a dispute between one of the property owners and the authorities, Hila was approached by the chief of Lezha Police, who asked for his ID. Despite clearly stating he was a journalist, the officer took the phone from his hands, shouting: “What journalist are you?” He was then arrested. Video footage shows him being led away by two police officers and detained inside a police vehicle, where he was held for 10 minutes. He was released after protests from other journalists at the scene. In a statement, Hila said: “My colleagues filmed the whole scene and asked for justification of my removal but no explanation was given.” According to the SafeJournalists Network, neither the Ministry of Interior nor the State Police commented on the incident or later explained why Hila had been detained. The journalist lodged a complaint and said he plans to seek legal recourse. The Internal Affairs and Complaints Service of the State Police has launched an investigation and took testimony from the journalist and police officers present at the scene. The Union of Albanian Journalists condemned “repeated cases of violence, blackmail and police threats against journalists and on-duty reporters” and said measures should be implemented to ensure such incidents do not happen again.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Albania n° 171/2020 Alert created on: 23 Jun 2020

Journalist Elvis Hila Obstructed and Detained by Police in Albania

SOURCE OF THREAT State

CATEGORY Harassment and intimidation of journalists

PARTNER: IPI, ECPMF, EFJ/IFJ, RSF

On 17 June 2020, journalist Elvis Hila of the Report.TV news channel was obstructed and then briefly detained by local police as he was reporting on the demolition of what authorities say are illegally constructed buildings in Lezha, northern Albania. Hila was among a group of journalists documenting the demolitions supervised by the National Inspectorate of Protection of Territory (IKMT) on a local beach. At around 5pm, as he was filming a dispute between one of the property owners and the authorities, Hila was approached by the chief of Lezha Police, who asked for his ID. Despite clearly stating he was a journalist, the officer took the phone from his hands, shouting: “What journalist are you?” He was then arrested. Video footage shows him being led away by two police officers and detained inside a police vehicle, where he was held for 10 minutes. He was released after protests from other journalists at the scene. In a statement, Hila said: “My colleagues filmed the whole scene and asked for justification of my removal but no explanation was given.” According to the SafeJournalists Network, neither the Ministry of Interior nor the State Police commented on the incident or later explained why Hila had been detained. The journalist lodged a complaint and said he plans to seek legal recourse. The Internal Affairs and Complaints Service of the State Police has launched an investigation and took testimony from the journalist and police officers present at the scene. The Union of Albanian Journalists condemned “repeated cases of violence, blackmail and police threats against journalists and on-duty reporters” and said measures should be implemented to ensure such incidents do not happen again.
On 5 August 2020, at the conference of the ruling GERB party in Sofia, an unidentified man attacked journalist Polina Paunova, a correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), according to a video of the incident recorded by RFE/RL and Alternativata TV correspondent Genka Shikerova and posted on Facebook.

In the video, a masked man is seen approaching Paunova, manhandling her, grabbing her phone, and throwing it into the sky.

Shortly afterward, a man wearing a sticker from the party conference called Paunova “garbage,” and said that she was not wanted, according to her employer.

Paunova and Shikerova, both told CPJ that people in the crowd threatened them and made clear that they were not welcome. Shikerova said that she felt helpless as no one standing around intervened.

Paunova filed a complaint with police. Shikerova told CPJ she was called by the police and gave witness testimony in the case.

Paunova said that she would not be deterred from doing her job.
CPJ e-mailed questions to the press department of the GERB party and to the Ministry of the Interior, which oversees the police, but did not receive any reply.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

⚠ CPJ alert: "Bulgarian journalist attacked while covering ruling party conference"

04 Sep 2020
Lvl. 1
No state reply yet

Bulgaria
n° 101/2020
Alert created on: 04 Sep 2020

Bulgarian Freelance Journalist Dimitar Kenarov Beaten and Detained by Police while Covering Protest

SOURCE OF THREAT ➔ State
CATEGORY 🔄 Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

On the night of 2 September 2020, freelancer journalist Dimitar Kenarov was arrested and allegedly kicked in the head by police officers during anti-corruption protests in Sofia, Bulgaria. The incident took place during a culmination of anti-government and anti-corruption protests in Bulgaria which escalated on 2 September. That night Kenarov was in the front line of the protests with other colleagues taking pictures when he was pushed by officers to a nearby wall. Although he had a camera and a PRESS sign clearly visible on his mask, he said he was detained and dragged across the square to the stairs of the new Parliament building. “While reporting on the protests in Sofia today I was grabbed by the police, thrown on the ground and brutally kicked in the head,” he wrote on his Twitter profile, posting a picture with bruises on his face. He wrote on Facebook that during his detention he was ignored by the police, but kicked by at least two uniformed men, mostly in the head and face. In addition to injuries to his head and face, Kenarov’s camera was taken away, broken, and left on the ground while he was handcuffed and detained. During his detention, Kenarov said he showed his journalist card several times and explained to every law enforcement officer he had access to that he was a journalist. One of the officers took his card to show it to his supervisor. However, the card was returned and Kenarov remained in handcuffs. In the early hours of 3 September, he was moved to a police van, where, according to his account, he stayed for almost an hour, as all district police departments were full. Later he was transported to the Fifth Police Department in Sofia, where he was handed a warning report and released. Throughout his detention, Kenarov was not served with a detention order and was denied access to a lawyer.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PARTNER: IPI, AEJ, CPJ, EFJ/IFJ, RPT
04 Sep 2020 | "Bulgaria must investigate police violence against journalists" says CoE Commissioner for Human Rights

FOLLOW-UPS

04 Sep 2020 | "Bulgaria must investigate police violence against journalists" says CoE Commissioner for Human Rights

STATEMENT BY DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ

FREELANCERS

Key information:

Dimitar Kenarov

Russian Federation n° 146/2019 Alert created on: 08 Dec 2019

Blogger Yegor Zhukov Gets a Three-Year Suspended Sentence

SOURCE OF THREAT ➔ State

CATEGORY ➔ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

On 6 December 2019, the Kuntsevo District Court in western Moscow gave a popular YouTube blogger and political science student Yegor Zhukov a three-year suspended sentence and barred him from managing websites for two years on charges of calling for extremism online.
Zhukov was arrested on 2 August 2019 and initially charged with mass unrest in connection with anti-government protests that took place in Moscow in summer 2019. The case was later closed because of a lack of evidence that riots took place. However, the prosecutors reclassified the case against him and accused Zhukov of inciting extremism and calling to depose the government by violent means on his YouTube channel. In September 2019, Zhukov was released under house arrest.

On 4 December 2019, the prosecutors asked the judge to sentence Zhukov to four years in prison. Zhukov pleaded not guilty, saying that he has never called for the use of violence. Zhukov's case is one of the few where the government backed away from harsh punishment of its critics due to a public outcry. The case was highly publicised and Zhukov's YouTube channel continued to draw attention with hundreds of thousands of views on his latest videos.

After the verdict, Zhukov told his supporters, speaking from the courthouse's porch: “I am glad that I am free, but still what happened was absolutely unjust”. Moreover, Russia's financial monitoring agency included the blogger in its list of terrorists and extremists, blocking his bank accounts.

03 Sep 2020: On 30 August 2020, Yegor Zhukov has been hospitalized after two unknown attackers beat him near his Moscow home. He has been working for the Ekho Moskvy station since he was banned by the state from having his own video channel online. According to Ekho Moskvy's editor-in-chief, Zhukov filed a complaint with police. Moscow police said on 31 August that a probe was launched into the attack.

Article by Deutsche Welle: "Russia's opposition blogger Yegor Zhukov severely injured in Moscow 'attack'"

20 May 2020: Yegor Zhukov has filed a complaint against his conviction with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), asking the Court to recognize violations of Article 6 (right to a fair trial), 10 (freedom of expression), and 18 (limitation on use of restrictions on rights) in combination with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The complaint filed with the ECHR argues that Zhukov's criminal prosecution and sentence were politically motivated and that he was punished for legitimate statements criticizing the government.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article published by The Moscow Times.

Article published on NYTimes.com.
Several journalists and press photographers were insulted and harassed by demonstrators participating in the demonstration against the Covid-19 pandemic protection measures on Saturday, 1 August 2020, in Berlin. A team from public television station ZDF had to interrupt its reporting under pressure from the demonstrators, as shown in the footage shot by journalist Dunja Hayali. On 3 August, the German Federation of Journalists (DJV) called on the authorities to take measures to ensure the protection of journalists covering demonstrations. The German journalists' union (dju in ver.di) denounced the inaction of the local police in Berlin.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Case report by Committee to Protect Journalists: "Demonstrators attack, obstruct journalists covering protests against COVID-19 lockdown in Germany"
- Statement by dju in ver.di: "Anti-Corona-Demo: ver.di zieht eine negative Bilanz"
- DJV statement: "Demos: Sicherheit verbessern"
- Dunja Hayali's footage (on Instagram)
Several Attacks on Local Journalists and Journalists’ Associations

NO STATE REPLY YET

Local journalists and journalists' associations have been recently subject of attacks in Antalya, Nevşehir and Bursa.

On 19 August 2020, Şaban Önen, the publisher of Karacabey Yörem newspaper in the city of Bursa, was assaulted in the municipality’s truck garage by two business owners – one of whom is reportedly a relative of Karacabey Mayor Ali Özkan of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) – and two other unidentified persons. Önen was taken to hospital for treatment. According to local media, the reason for the attack were reports on the mayor published by Karacabey Yörem. In an interview, Önen said he knew the assailters before and filed a complaint.

Another attack on local journalists took place on 25 August in Nevşehir, Central Anatolia. A vehicle belonging to the Nevşehir Journalists Association was set on fire on by several people. Two suspects identified by the security footage were detained by the police. A criminal investigation was opened. Journalists’ Federation of Turkey (TGF) Secretary General and Nevşehir Journalists Association Chair Bayram Ekici strongly condemned the attack.

On the same day, unknown individuals opened fire from a vehicle on the home of Yakup Kocabaş, the Gazipaşa correspondent for Dim Media, a local newspaper based in the Antalya province. Windows were shattered in the attack and, while Kocabaş was not at home, his spouse and children survived. Kocabaş said in an interview that the attack might be related to his journalistic work, as Dim Media reports on people who engage in illegal activities. He emphasized that he will not back down despite all this pressure. Police have started an investigation.

IPI Deputy Director Scott Griffen said in a statement: “What remains of independent local journalism in Turkey is already under tremendous political and financial pressure, and these recent attacks only add to a climate of intimidation. Local journalists are particularly vulnerable to
retaliation from local powerful figures dissatisfied with the journalists’ work. Law enforcement authorities must diligently investigate all such attacks on journalists and hold all those responsible to account, including the masterminds.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Gazete Duvar article: "Ses Kocaeli gazetesine silahlı saldıri"
- Bianet article: "Journalists attacked in Antalya and Nevşehir"
- Bianet article: "Local journalist attacked in Bursa"
- IPI Statement: "Series of attacks on local journalists in Turkey"

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**Slovenia**

**Prime Minister Janez Janša Denigrates Journalists**

State replied

SOURCE OF THREAT ➔ State

CATEGORY ➔ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

**PARTNER:** EFJ/IFJ, Article 19, IPI

On 11 May 2020, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša, published a statement on the government's official website, in which he blames the journalists in general: "The professional group in western civilisation that first declared itself the seventh power, then the fourth (unelected) branch of power and finally the moral judge of political correctness, is increasingly difficult to recognise today as a force for good, for they are neither." Turning specifically to Slovenian media, Janša singles out the public broadcaster RTV Slovenija, referred to as a "media killer". He accuses the country's two main television channels to feed "an atmosphere of intolerance and hatred (...) created by a narrow circle of female editors with familial and capital ties to the pillars of the deep state".

The Slovenian Association of Journalists (DNS) issued a statement condemning such "an upgrade of systematic and increasingly deliberate attacks on the media and journalists".

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by DNS (in Slovenian): "Basen – nova zvrst diskreditacije novinarjev"
- Report from the Slovenian Press Agency: "Prime minister makes the case for confrontation with the media"
- Statement by the Prime Minister (in Slovenian): "Vojna z mediji"
Following the denunciation of irregularities in the management of the Romanian public television station TVR by the Romanian journalists’ union FAIR-Mediasind, TVR’s management has instructed the law firm Zamfirescu Racoti & Partners to take legal action for defamation against the union and against the journalists of the daily newspaper "Libertatea". The union said TVR had allocated a public budget of 50,742 euros to the law firm to bring these legal actions. FAIR-Mediasind issued a statement on 28 July accusing the director of the TV station, Doina Gradea, of attempting to intimidate and harass the journalists' union.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Mediasind statement about the management of TVR: "Membri ai CA au solicitat Parlamentului revocarea șefei TVR deoarece “instituția nu-și mai îndeplinește misiunea publică”!

- Statement from the journalists' union Mediasind: "Administrația Gradea angajează, pe bani publici, o casă de avocatură pentru a se război cu MediaSind TVR și cu jurnaliștii de la cotidianul Libertatea!"

**STATE REPLIES**

- **24 Sep 2020 | Reply from the Romanian authorities**

  - Information provided by the Romanian authorities
On 2 August 2020, Uroš Urbanija, the Acting Director of the Government Communication Office (UKOM) in Slovenia tweeted urging citizens to report and denounce any media or journalists in Slovenia who “obviously and shamelessly use manipulations” in their work to purposefully mislead people. The social media post suggested Twitter users should report such content by using the hashtag #stopmanipulations. Urbanija also urged the same action against judges in the country. He tweeted: "The Slovenian public must demand the same criteria for all media and the judiciary. And at the same time to reveal and publicly publish every media, every journalist, every judge who obviously and shamelessly uses manipulations. #stopmanipulations Only then will we get good media". Several media have criticised the post as an attempt to attack government critics and undermine public trust in the media. The comment also sparked concerns about an increase in pressure and online harassment against Slovenian journalists. It is the latest in a number of tweets by officials in the new SDS-led government over the last six months which have raised concerns over press freedom in the country. Urbanija later said he only meant that such reporting or comments by journalists should only be publicly addressed, analysed and discussed. In the days after his tweet, Urbanija used the hashtag on a number of occasions to denounce critical media and also retweeted articles or tweets from commentators and media outlets which accused the public broadcaster RTVS and other media of being "manipulators". Similar language was also used by other high-ranking Slovenian officials such as Božo Predalič, Secretary General of the Government, who claimed on Twitter that POP TV were “manipulators".
On 5 June 2020, RTV Zenica journalist Sinan Gluhić was hit in the neck and face on his way to work by a politician of the Party of Democratic Activity (A-SDA), Sulejman Spahić, who also threatened the journalist to death. The attack was preceded by days of verbal threats and insults to Gluhić via telephone and social networks, especially Facebook. These incidents are believed to be connected to Gluhić’s posts on social media, on 31 May, about the delayed construction work on a local road.

The incident was reported to police and recorded, as well as threats Gluhić received in the previous period. A report has been submitted to the local prosecutor’s office in Zenica. Spahić has been charged with endangering public safety.

The Bosnian journalists’ association and the High Representative on Freedom of the Media for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) condemned the attacks and called for a swift investigation.
On 10 June 2020, Bojana Pavlović took photos of Danilo Vucic, son of Aleksandar Vucic, President of Serbia, sitting in a café with Aleksandar Vidojevic, who is currently on trial for participating in the demolition of a nightclub. As reported by the KRIK investigative journalism centre, Vidojevic has been allegedly identified by the police as a member of the Kavaci organised crime group. As Pavlović was leaving, three men stopped her stating they were police officer. She produced a journalist ID card, explaining that she was on duty, but was told to wait for the police patrol as she was likely to be detained.

The men requested her to delete the footage, which she did. She had already sent the photos to KRIK. Two men approached them, one of whom forcefully took her mobile phone out of her hands. The police didn’t react. Pavlović said that at one point she was surrounded by five men and she’d asked them to move away as she felt endangered and unsafe. Vidojevic, accompanied by another person, approached the group and the police left, leaving her alone with the four men. Vidojevic instructed the man to return the mobile phone, he did so and they left.
On 22 July 2020, a man called Svetlana Anokhina and threatened to kill her. Anokhina, a Dagestani journalist, is the chief editor of Daptar.ru, an independent site dedicated to women’s issues in the Caucasus. Anokhina believes that the threat may have been in response to her journalistic work.

She said that the timing of the call made her believe that it may have been about one specific article she edited on a controversial case. The article, published on Daptar.ru the day before the threat was made, alleged that Chechen and federal-level authorities failed to investigate the alleged murder of a Chechen woman by her husband.

On the day of its publication, Anokhina shared and discussed the story on her Facebook page, which counts more than 6,000 followers. Anokhina said a man called her on her mobile phone multiple times between 6-7 p.m. on 22 July, though the first three or four calls were dropped due to a poor connection. Anokhina said that on the next call, the man confirmed he was speaking to her. After that call dropped, Anokhina said she recorded the subsequent phone call on her phone. In the recording, the man said he was “given orders to take care of these feminists,” and that his relative was the “boss” at the Soviet district police station of the Dagestani capital.
Makhachkala. He is then heard introducing himself and saying that he will kill Anokhina. After hanging up, Anokhina said she looked up the phone number, and found that it was registered to a different name. Looking up that name, she found an Instagram account with photos featuring location tags in Dagestan and the neighboring republic of Chechnya. Anokhina said she sent this information to the number that called her, via messaging app. She said a man called back and denied that he was the man who initially called her and that he had threatened her life.

Anokhina previously received threats over her journalistic work. On 14 July 2020, she criticised Magomed Kurbandibirov, deputy imam of the Grand Mosque of Makhachkala, in posts on Facebook and Instagram after Kurbandibirov made statements in support of female circumcision in an interview with a Russian journalist. After that, Anokhina said she received several anonymous messages on her social media accounts insulting her and demanding her to “shut up”.

In 2018, she received tens of anonymous messages on social media from people threatening to “find her” and “put her into the ground” after she criticised Eldar Iraziev, an entertainer and blogger formerly based in Dagestan, who had condemned an upcoming anime festival as “immoral”. According to Anokhina the 22 July 2020 phone call was the first time she received a direct death threat on the phone. “I am worried, because sooner or later these threats could be implemented,” she told CPJ. She said that the Instagram photos tagged in Chechnya made her concerned that the threat had a potential connection to the republic. “Any reasonable person would feel concerned when Chechnya is involved” Anokhina said.

Anokhina filed a complaint about the threatening call on the website of Dagestan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs. Gayana Garieva, head of the ministry's Department of Information and Public Relations, stated that the ministry received Anokhina’s complaint and is investigating the matter.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Svetlana Anokhina’s interview with Meduza : " ‘Threats are a familiar thing for me’ Dagestani journalist Svetlana Anokhina on covering women’s issues in Russia’s North Caucasus "
- CPJ Alert: "Journalist from Dagestan, Russia Threatened with Death in a Phone Call"

**Alert**

**Russian Federation**  
**n° 87/2020**  
**Alert created on: 27 Jul 2020**

**Russian Journalist Dmitriy Nizovtsev Beaten by Unidentified Men**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
Unknown

**CATEGORY**  
Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
On 23 July 2020, three unidentified men attacked Dmitriy Nizovtsev, a correspondent for Shtab Navalnogo, a YouTube-based news outlet owned by opposition leader Aleksey Navalny, near the journalist’s house in the eastern city of Khabarovsk. Nizovtsev tweeted that the men hit him with their hands and then kicked him in the face when he fell to the ground, and he tweeted a photo of his bruised face. He wrote that he had been taken to the hospital and diagnosed with a facial bone fracture and that he planned to file a complaint with police. The assault took place after Nizovtsev livestreamed protests in Khabarovsk on Shtab Navalnogo earlier today. Nizovtsev wrote on Twitter that he called the police after the attack, but said they did not arrive.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ Alert:** "Russian journalist Dmitriy Nizovtsev beaten by unidentified men"

On 23 July 2020, journalist Miroslava Byrns received a threatening message following the publication of an article, with the threats of "you will see what will happen to you". These threats were received on her personal Facebook account after she published a news story about a wedding organised in the town of Tetovo with about 200 people at a moment where gatherings are forbidden by law due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The journalist is working for the daily Sloboden Pechat. She received a 24-hour police protection after having reported the threats to the police. Both the journalists’ union (SSNM) and association (ZNM) in North Macedonia condemned the threats.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **SSNM statement:** "Осуда за нападите врз новинарката Бурнс, крајно време е нападите врз новинарите да се третираат по службена должност"
- **ZNM statement:** "Strong condemnation of the threats against journalist Miroslava Byrns"
Belgian journalist Florence Hainaut has been the target of an online harassment campaign following the publication on 18 July 2020 of an opinion piece about wearing of the Islamic headscarf on the website of "Le Soir" newspaper. Dozens of insulting and defamatory comments targeting the journalist were posted on the social networks Facebook and Twitter. The Facebook profile Laplume Kalam, the collective page of an organisation that brands itself "The Observatory of Fundamentalisms in Brussels", posted messages accusing the journalist of "having links with political Islam or anti-democratic fundamentalist movements" and of having fallen "into the arms of the Muslim Brotherhood". Florence Hainaut is considering legal action. She has consulted the Fem&L.A.W. collective for advice and guidance on this matter.

Additional Information:

- Article by Florence Hainaut explaining the 'numerical raid' she was subjected to: "La fabrique du raid"
- Screenshots of the defamatory messages published on Florence Hainaut's Facebook account
- Article by Florence Hainaut: "Cachez ce foulard..."

Freelancers:

Key information:

Florence Hainaut
"Gazeta Wyborcza" photojournalist Wojciech Jakub Atys is being taken to court for breaking quarantine measures. On 29 March 2020, the journalist took photos of a protest by two activists in front of the house of Law and Justice party leader Jarosław Kaczyński. According to police officers, the journalist broke the rules of movement during the COVID-19 pandemic by not maintaining the required distance of 1.5 meters between persons and participating with protester and other journalists in a gathering of 9 persons. In addition to the "Gazeta Wyborcza" photojournalist and the protesters, crews from public broadcaster TVP and press agency PAP were also present, and the police checked the identity papers of all journalists. Atys claimed that he did not take part in the gathering, that everyone kept the required distance and that his role was solely to report on the event as a journalist. In a letter dated 23 April 2020, the "Gazeta Wyborcza" editors informed the commander of the Warsaw Żoliborz police station that Atys did not participate in the gathering, but was carrying out journalistic activities at the request of his editorial board management.
On 26 May 2020, Nikola Vučić, journalist at N1 television in Bosnia and Herzegovina, received death threats via social media after posting a comment on his Twitter account. Details of his life were also published in different media.

Reacting to the news on the self-declared “corona-free zone” in West Herzegovina Canton, Nikola Vučić, sarcastically asked on his Twitter account “if the ‘fascism-free zone’ would be declared soon”. The comment was followed by threats and calls for violence against him, including statements that Vučić, should end up “in Neretva river or put on a stake. He was labelled as “halal Serb”, and received numerous other insulting messages against him and his family. Vučić, has since closed his Twitter account while some media reported details of his life that bear no public interest.

BH Journalists Association condemned the threats of violence, hate speech and harassment of Vučić, and his family members. BHJA explicitly emphasised that calls for violence and death threats are criminal offences and that disagreement with one’s comment must by no means be an excuse for such behaviour. It calls on the BiH authorities to act and protect Vučić, from further abuse and threats, and to investigate all incidents and sanction the perpetrators.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists’ safety statement: "Threats against the lives and limbs of journalists, Nikola Vučić"
- Radio Televizija BN news article: "Novinar Nikola Vučić na meti brutalnih napada"
- BH Novinari statement: "Condemnation of threats against Nikola Vučić, N1 TV journalist, for posting on Twitter"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 21 Jul 2020 | Reply from the Bosnian authorities
  - Information provided by the Bosnian authorities

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**Romania**

n° 66/2020

Alert created on: 08 Jun 2020

Lvl. 2

Lawsuits Filed against the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism
The Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism (CRJI), which set up the investigative online magazine The Black Sea (www.theblacksea.eu), faces accruing fines and two protracted lawsuits, relating to stories published by the online magazine between 2016 and 2018. Back then, the investigative magazine took part in the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC) network’s “Football Leaks” project, producing a series of stories on the global football industry, which led to a number of criminal investigations and prosecutions worldwide, for crimes of money laundering, fraud and tax evasion.

Among these investigations there were reports of alleged political and criminal connections of one family – the Kazakh-Turkish Arif family, owners of a network of companies known collectively as Doyen, accused of being connected to a number of football deals. According to CRJI, Doyen and the Arif family were invited by the EIC network to respond to allegations before they were printed, but refused.

Two years after these reports were published, the Arifs and the Malta-based Doyen Sports Investment Limited filed two civil lawsuits against CRJI relating to the stories published by The Black Sea, claiming defamation on the basis of leaked or stolen company and personal documents. The first suit was filed in December 2018 and the second in November 2019. Both are pending.

The lawsuits were preceded by an 'emergency' gag order, filed in December 2018, which demanded the removal of all stories that mentioned the Arif family and the Doyen company. According to CRJI, neither they nor The Black Sea was informed of the gag order application at the time. It was granted by a Romanian judge in January 2019.

In July 2019, the judge imposed a fine on CRJI of RON 1000 (€200) for each day the stories remain online, so far accruing fines of over RON 300,000 (more than €60,000). The stories have not been removed and can be read here: https://theblacksea.eu/stories/?dossier=Football%20Leaks

According to CRJI, The Black Sea stories are the only ones resulting in lawsuits from the Arif family and Doyen, despite many of EIC network's partners publishing similar, and sometimes identical versions of the stories.

**UPDATES**

**02 Jul 2020:** On 23 June 2020, a Bucharest court ordered the Romanian Centre to pay a “definitive and enforceable” fine of 329,000 RON (€67,000) for not having removed the stories. The first hearing for the lawsuits was due to take place on 24 June 2020 in
Bucharest, but at the request of the Arif family, it has been postponed until the end of July. This is the eighth time that the would-be first hearing has been postponed. Two postponements have been due to the coronavirus pandemic and a judges strike, and six have been at the request of the Arif family or due to their procedural requests.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Information regarding the status of the second lawsuit filed against the CRJI available on the Ministry of Justice website
- Information regarding the status of the first lawsuit filed against the CRJI available on the Ministry of Justice website
- The Football leaks stories published on The Black Sea website
- Article published by Malta Today: "'Football Leaks' firm Doyen fined €23,000 by MFSA"
- The Football leaks investigation published on The Black Sea website

**STATE REPLIES**

- 16 Jul 2020 | Reply from the Romanian authorities
  - Information provided by the Romanian authorities

**FOLLOW-UPS**

  - Human Rights Comment: “Time to take action against SLAPPs”
A British journalist working in Albania for the web portal exit.al has been the target of a smear campaign following a statement given to Russia Today on 23 February 2019 related to the protests hitting the country.

Alice Taylor recently wrote about vote rigging, violence at protests and the government's links to organised crime and money laundering. Asked to comment about the state of corruption in Albania and the current developments in the country, Alice Taylor said to Russia Today that allegations of corruption can easily be documented with evidence showing links between the current government, organised crime, money laundering and drug trafficking. In her statement, she also questioned the fairness of the 2017 elections which confirmed Edi Rama as Prime Minister for a second term.

The next day, dozens of local portals started publishing photos accusing her to be linked to and paid by Russia, or that her portal is linked to the opposition party. Her partner was also targeted on social media platforms.

The journalist also informed that her residence permit was refused on 6 March after being approved some weeks before.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Article on JavaNews.al: "Investigimi/ Gazetarja që flet për Shqipërinë në televizionin rus, gruaja e truprojës së Bashës!"
- Article on Lexo.al: "Faktet/ Gruaja e shoqëruesit të Bashës flet keq për Shqipërinë në mediat ruse dhe shkruan për portalin e këshilltarit të kryedemokratit"
- Video report on Russia Today

**STATE REPLIES**

- 16 Jul 2020 | Response from the Albanian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Albania to the Council of Europe
On 7 January 2020, Kastriot Reçi, the owner of "Media plus-tv" was assassinated in Rrëshen (Mirditë), Albania. On the same day, the police issued a statement stating that "today at 11:05, in Rrëshen Mirditë, K.R was killed with a firearm in unclear circumstances. A team of investigators is working to identify the authors of this crime."

The ECPMF notes that, in their statement, the police did not mention the fact that the person who was assassinated is the owner of local media company. The ECPMF requests an immediate, thorough and independent investigation and that the perpetrators of this crime should be brought to justice.

Additional Information

Report published on exit.al news site: "Vritet pronari i një televizioni në Rrëshen"

State Replies

16 Jul 2020 | Response from the Albanian authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Albania to the Council of Europe

Prime Minister Pressures Online Portals and Information Channels

The Albanian Media Council (AMC), an NGO comprised of journalists and media professionals, has accused Prime Minister Edi Rama of exploiting the emergency situation caused by the earthquake of 26 November 2019 and illegally shutting down online media by allegedly ordering
the AKEP (Electronic and Postal Communications Authority) to block online news portals, including joqalbania.com. On 1 December 2019, the AMC posted a "Declaration of Concern About the Government Attitude Towards Media", stating that the authorities "cannot prohibit citizens or portals from denouncing the mismanagement of the situation (where it exists) and, furthermore, cannot block an entire portal for a single publication." According to Reporter.Al, Prime Minister Rama has "repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the media" when faced with difficult questions on the government's ability to effectively manage the aftermath of the earthquake. According to journalist Gjergj Erebara, Prime Minister Rama has used social media platforms on a number of occasions to put pressure on online portals, threatening closure. He tweeted on 28 November 2019: "This is the final warning for portals and information channels that under the conditions and within the legal framework of an Emergency Situation, I will be obliged to forcibly intervene with their closure to end this dramatic phase, if they continue with fake news that spread panic!" Another video message was shared on Facebook on 3 December 2019 where Prime Minister Rama addressed the general public, asking them to avoid watching the news on television and implored not to follow the online portals stating that the "so-called sources of information" create a "foul-smell of gloom and insecurity and confusion". While the AMC appeals to the media to show restraint in reporting unverified news, it also calls for the Government "not to copycat the notorious Erdogan case that used the post-coup situation to attack, arrest, shut down and hit critical media; to silence independent opinions; and to install the dictatorship of thought."

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Prime Minister Edi Rama Facebook post
- Article published by Reporter.al : "Tentativa e Ramës për cenzurë dështon ndërsa kryeministri akuzon mediat se kanë “nxirë situatën”" ["Rama's censorship bid fails as Prime Minister accuses media of 'worsening the situation'"]
- Albanian Media Council statement: "Declaration of Concern About the Government Attitude Towards Media"
- Prime Minister Edi Rama Twitter Feed

## STATE REPLIES

- 16 Jul 2020 | Response of the Albanian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Albania to the Council of Europe
MIA Brussels Correspondent Tanja Milevska Receives Death and Rape Threats

SOURCE OF THREAT  Unknown
CATEGORY  Harassment and intimidation of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

Tanja Milevska, a Brussels correspondent for the North Macedonia news agency MIA, is facing online harassment, including threats of physical and sexual violence.

Since 11 July 2020, when she asked on Twitter whether Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the European People’s Party (EPP) in the European Parliament would recognise the 2019 constitutional change of the country’s official name into “North Macedonia”, Milevska has received dozens of verbal abuses, hate speech, death and rape threats on social networks. Following these messages, trolls and active political figures have been fuelling threats for the past four days in the context of Macedonian parliamentary elections, to be held on 15 July.

Milevska reported the threats to the police both in Belgium and North Macedonia.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- MIA news article: "Journalists’ associations condemn threats against MIA correspondent"
- EFJ statement: "EFJ condemns death and rape threats against Brussels-based journalist Tanja Milevska"

Slovak Republic  n° 73/2020  Alert created on: 26 Jun 2020

Slovak Investigative Journalist Peter Sabo Finds Bullet in His Mailbox

SOURCE OF THREAT  Unknown
CATEGORY  Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

PARTNER: IPI, Article 19, AEJ, EFJ/IFJ

On 25 June 2020, Peter Sabo, an investigative journalist with the Slovakian news website Aktuality.sk, found a pistol bullet in the mailbox of his Bratislava apartment. Aktuality is the media that investigative reporter Ján Kuciak worked for when he was shot and killed alongside his fiancée Martina Kušnírová in 2018. The editor-in-chief of Aktuality, Peter Bárdy, said he believes
the cartridge was meant to intimidate Sabo and was likely related to his work investigating “sensitive topics”. Recently he had covered drug crime, the completion of a power plant, and cases involving the former Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic, Gábor Gál. No other message or sign was left in the mailbox. This was the first threat issued against Sabo.

The journalist reported the incident to a local police station. The Minister of the Interior, Roman Mikulec, and Police President Milan Lučansk were also informed. An investigation has been opened and measures were taken to protect Sabo’s safety.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Editorial by Peter Bárdy on Aktuality.sk (in Slovakian): "Investigatívnmu reportérovi Aktuality.sk nechali v schránke náboj, ale nezastavia nás"

- Statement by International Press Institute (IPI) on behalf of Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR): "Slovak journalist continuing investigative work of Ján Kuciak receives bullet in mailbox"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 15 Jul 2020 | Reply of the Slovak authorities
  - Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the Council of Europe

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Threats and Insults against Journalists in Faktor.ba Newsroom**

**SOURCE OF THREAT** ▶ Non-state

**CATEGORY** ▶ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

On 14 April 2020, in Sarajevo, journalists and employees from Faktor.ba, a news web portal, were insulted by two women who entered the building without permission.

Faktor.ba journalists and editors were targeted for publishing an article about a car being set on fire and a shooting in the city of Vraca (Sarajevo).
In addition, the man mentioned in the article later called the editorial office asking for the removal of the article in question and threatened to come to the Faktor.ba newsroom with his lawyer.

The BH Journalists Association and the Free Media Help Line severely condemned these attacks and called for an urgent investigation by all relevant institutions from local and national authorities.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by the Association of Journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH Novinari): "BH novinari: Osuda upada u redakciju Faktora i prijetnji upućenih novinarima ovog portala"
- Faktor.ba news article: "BH novinari o upadu u Faktor: Napadi na novinare, medije i slobodu izražavanja ne smiju se tolerisati"

**STATE REPLIES**

- **09 Jul 2020** | Response from the authorities of Bosnia Herzegovina
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bosnia Herzegovina to the Council of Europe

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- **16 Apr 2020** | OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media denounces the threats and insults against Faktorba journalists.
  - Tweet by Harlem Désir

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**Slovenia**

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<th>n° 165/2020</th>
<th>Alert created on: 22 Jun 2020</th>
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**Reporter Eugenija Carl Receives Threatening Letter with White Powder**

**SOURCE OF THREAT** | Unknown
**CATEGORY** | Harassment and intimidation of journalists
On 1 June 2020, journalist Eugenija Carl, a reporter for public broadcaster RTV Slovenia, received an envelope mailed to her work address in the city of Koper, which contained a threatening letter and white powder, she wrote in a Facebook post and told CPJ. The anonymous letter called Carl insulting names and said that it hoped for her death, she told CPJ. She said that the powder gave her an allergic reaction, irritating her eyes and making her cough. Police and firefighters quarantined the TV station for several hours before determining that the substance was an irritant but was not life-threatening, her employer reported.

Carl said the letter referenced a defamation suit she and a colleague had filed against Prime Minister Janez Janša, who had referred to them as “retired prostitutes” in a 2016 tweet, according to news reports. On 21 May, Carl and her colleague won the lawsuit, and Janša was required to pay compensation of €6,000, according to those reports.

Carl told CPJ that she has previously received threats, insults, and harassment on social media by Janša’s supporters. She said that she and her colleague had received two similar letters with white powder in 2018.

On 3 March, Janša was reelected to his third term as Prime Minister. CPJ emailed questions to the Prime Minister’s office and the press department of the Ministry of the Interior, which oversees the police, and but did not receive any replies.
Russian journalist David Frenkel from Mediazona was hospitalised with a broken shoulder on 30 June 2020 after he had been assaulted by a police officer and an election observer at a polling station in St Petersburg. The journalist came to the polling station to investigate earlier reports that a member of the election committee had been unlawfully barred access to voting numbers. Frenkel stated the police officer pushed him out of the polling station, twisted his arm, and hit him. The election observer then stepped on his injured arm and broke it. The election observer, who is an ex-town councillor from “United Russia”, denied that the attack took place and said that the journalist fell and broke his arm himself.

Mediazona later quoted St. Petersburg police as saying that their officers didn’t injure Frenkel and that the officers had removed him from the polling place "in a lawful manner."

The spokesperson of the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Peskov, and the Commissioner for Human Rights in Russia Tatyana Moskalkova called for an investigation on the attack on journalist.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Dmitry Peskov comments on the incident with journalist Frenkel
- Attack on journalist David Frenkel: Chronology of events from Mediazona (in Russian)

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- 02 Jul 2020 | CoE Commissioner for Human Rights considers that "the excessive use of force by the Russian police against journalist David Frenkel is an unacceptable interference with press freedom"
  - Tweet by Dunja Mijatović

**Italy**

- n° 164/2020
- Alert created on: 10 Jun 2020

**Journalists Attacked and Labelled as "Terrorists" during Far Right Protests in Rome**

- SOURCE OF THREAT: Non-state
- CATEGORY: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
On 6 June 2020, a protest organised in Rome by extreme far right movements turned violent. The protesters were demonstrating their discontent about the measures adopted by the Italian government to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. The confrontations started while a protester was being interviewed by some journalist crews, which sparked discontent from a group of the demonstrators. The brawl then extended against the journalists who were covering the rally and against the police. The protesters were chanting slogans comparing journalists to “terrorists” and launched rocks, bottles and firecrackers against the crews; a video-maker was injured after the pole of a flag hit him on the head.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- La Repubblica's article: "Ultrà e Forza Nuova a Roma, scontri al Circo Massimo: cariche contro polizia e giornalisti"
- BBC report: "Coronavirus: Far-right Rome protest turns briefly violent"

### STATE REPLIES

- 02 Jul 2020 | Reply from the Italian authorities (Ministry of Interior)
  - Note from the Ministry of the Interior to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

### Austria

#### Austria

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<th>Alert created on: 02 Jul 2020</th>
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**Journalist Nurettin Civandag Assaulted in Vienna after Filming Pro-Kurdish Demonstration**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**: Non-state

**CATEGORY**: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

On 27 June 2020, journalist Nurettin Civandag, editor-in-chief of Viyana TV, was hospitalised after being assaulted on the street by several people in the Austrian capital Vienna. Police spokesman Patrick Maierhofer stated that the assault occurred on Pernerstorfergasse at around 11 p.m., was carried out by “several unknown perpetrators”, and that Civandag was taken to hospital with bruises to his head and injuries to his teeth. According to the spokesman, Civandag
told police his attackers were suspected Turkish youths. Because the act could be "politically motivated", the police informed the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counter-Terrorism (LVT), who took over the investigation. The assault happened the day after Civandag had filmed an attack by ultranationalist Turkish groups on another group who had been commemorating the 1993 Sivas massacre in Turkey. That incident was one of several outbreaks of violence between Turkish and Kurdish groups in the city in the last week. Civandag's footage of the attack was published and shared widely online. Civandag said that, on 27 June, he had covered pro-Kurdish rallies that were supported by left-wing activists and was meeting a friend later that night when someone called his name on the street. Moments later, he was attacked by an unknown number of people who beat him, until passers-by stepped in to help. He believes it may have been in retaliation for the footage he had captured the day before, from which he said several people had been identified by police. It is not yet clear which group the suspects belong to. Police have not confirmed any further details. Civandag said he believes his attackers were members of ultranationalist Turkish groups.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Der Standard report: "Kurdischer Journalist nach Demo in Wien angegriffen und verletzt"

Wien ORF report: "Journalist in Favoriten verletzt"

On 11 September 2019, journalist Tezehan Miralamli was outside Yasamal district court, where the case of opposition leader Ruslan Amirli was being heard. According to reports and to the video footage, several journalists were resisting police's attempts to remove them from outside the court when one police officer pushed Miralamli to the ground. Miralamli is a journalist with opposition newspaper Azadliq.

On 19 June 2020, Tezehan Miralamli was convicted of hooliganism (article 221.1 of the criminal code) by a Baku court for allegedly hitting a blogger on 26 February. He was been sentenced to wear an electronic bracelet and stay at home every night from
11 p.m. to 7 a.m. for the next 12 months. He says his placing under constant police surveillance will obstruct his reporting by preventing him from covering night-time events or events outside Baku.

Bulgarian Media Owner Ivo Prokopiev under Threat of Imprisonment for Expressing 'Opinion'

Press freedom organisations have voiced grave concern about the trial in Bulgaria's Specialised Criminal Court of media owner Ivo Prokopiev, after prosecutors announced at a 20 June 2020 hearing that they were calling for him to be sentenced to prison for between three and ten years in connection with his alleged role in the public sale of shares in an electricity distribution company in 2011. The charge brought against Prokopiev was that he had expressed his opinion in public about the privatisation as a representative of national employers in a consultative body set up to deliberate the terms of the sale. His defence lawyer, Daniela Dokovska, asserted that every member of that public body had the right to express their opinion without facing legal consequences. On 28 June, the Court found Prokopiev not guilty; but the prosecution has been allowed to appeal, so the threat of imprisonment has not yet been removed.

At the trial three defence witnesses were reportedly barred from giving evidence and the case was fast-tracked at short notice. Media watchdog organisations have warned that procedural violations in the conduct of the trial raised doubts about the independence of the judicial process, and that a conviction would have a significant chilling effect on the already severely threatened environment for free and independent media in Bulgaria.

Prokopiev publishes Capital Weekly and Dnevnik.bg, which are considered to be professional news outlets in an environment that is largely dominated by state-affiliated media.

Statement by the Association of European Journalists (AEJ): "AEJ expresses urgent concerns about threat of prison term against Bulgarian media owner for voicing 'opinions'"
László Toroczkai, leader of the Hungarian far-right political party Our Home Movement, and the ruling Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) have announced that they will sue cartoonist Gábor Pápai for alleged blasphemy. Pápai had published a cartoon in the opposition daily Népszava on 28 April 2020, representing Cecília Müller (Chief Medical Officer at the National Centre for Public Health and member of the Government's "Coronavirus Task Force") at a press conference during which she faces Jesus crucified and says: "...His underlying condition caused dependence". The sentence refers to previous statements by Cecília Müller who allegedly stated on several occasions that Covid-19 deceased were "predisposed" to die due to pre-existing pathologies. The cartoonist told Cartooning for Peace that he has been facing a campaign of threats and intimidation since the announcement of the lawsuits.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Cartooning For Peace Press Release: "Alert Hungaria: Gabor Papai"
- News report in Hungary Today: "KDNP to Launch Lawsuit for “Blasphemic” Caricature"
- Threats from László Toroczkai, published on his own blog (in Hungarian)
- Gábor Pápai's explanations on his Facebook profile (in Hungarian)

**STATE REPLIES**

- 25 Jun 2020 | Reaction from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
On 6 December 2019, EUobserver published an article titled “Blood from stone: What did British PR firm do for Malta?” According to the investigation, Chelgate, a British public relations firm, had assisted the government of Malta in a UK inquiry into “fake news”. Maltese authorities had also hired Chelgate to defend the image of former Prime Minister Joseph Muscat in EU capitals during the investigation into the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. Chelgate had hired a private intelligence firm in Luxembourg, Sandstone SA, to compile a report on Caruana Galizia's killing. Excerpts from Sandstone’s research into the matter, obtained by EUobserver, contained accusations that the President of the Russian Federation and the President of Azerbaijan had conspired to murder Caruana Galizia, using a Chechen assassin. Chelgate had also briefed European media about Caruana Galizia, promoting conspiracy theories about her.

On 10 December 2019, Sandstone sent a letter to EUobserver, requesting that journalistic sources and documentation be made public and the article be “corrected”. EUobserver offered a right of reply and were open to amending the article, but Sandstone didn’t agree on the suggested changes. Under threat of legal action, Sandstone requested proof in relation to the content of the article, alternatively the article to be taken down.

A week later, a press release was distributed on behalf of Sandstone SA, stating that the article was now the subject of legal proceedings in Luxembourg, where Sandstone is based. According to an article from the daily d’Lëtzebuerger Land, Sandstone filed a criminal complaint against EUobserver with the Luxembourg public prosecutor on 18 December 2019. On 7 May 2020, the
public prosecutor rejected the case on the ground that it should be filed before civil courts. Around 12 May 2020, Sandstone’s lawyer, Laurent Ries, said to d’Lëtzebuerger Land’s journalists that his client now intended to sue EUobserver in Belgium.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Press release disseminated on Pressat: "Sandstone Luxembourg presses Criminal Charges against EUobserver"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- Article from EUobserver: "Blood from stone: What did British PR firm do for Malta?"

**United Kingdom**  
**n° 52/2020**  
**Alert created on: 11 May 2020**

**Loyalist Threats against Journalists in Northern Ireland**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
Unknown

**CATEGORY**  
Harassment and intimidation of journalists

**PARTNER:** ECPMF, EFJ/IFJ, Index

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has warned that threats from Loyalist paramilitaries have been made to an undisclosed number of journalists at the Belfast editorial offices of the Sunday Life and Sunday World newspapers. They include threats of imminent physical attacks and planned car bomb attacks. Both newspapers are owned by Independent News and Media (INM). The warnings came in the early hours of 8 May 2020. The PSNI is taking the threat seriously and officers have been in contact with the journalists concerned. It is understood the threats emanate from a breakaway Loyalist group, the South East Antrim Ulster Defence Association (UDA). The PSNI has confirmed they are “in receipt” of information that indicates a planned and co-ordinated campaign of intimidation.

The National Union of Journalists of Great Britain and Ireland has condemned the threats as "a vile attempt at intimidation".
On 2 May 2020, police in the town of Silistra, in northeastern Bulgaria, pulled over Dimiter Petzov, a freelance investigative journalist, and searched his car. Petzov told the broadcaster Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that the officers performed an “imitation of a search” and within one minute found a bag containing heroin, amphetamines, marijuana, and ecstasy, which Petzov
said he had never seen before.

On 13 May, prosecutors in Silistra charged Petzov with drug possession, and a local court ordered him not to leave town without authorities’ permission, according to regional news website Balkan Insight. If convicted, he could face a prison sentence of up to five years, according to the Bulgarian criminal code.

The journalist stated that his arrest came after he submitted a freedom of information request on 28 April to the regional directorate of the Ministry of Interior in Silistra, seeking to reveal the identity of an anonymous donor who provided food and drinks to police officers guarding checkpoints in the city. He said he suspected that the arrest was an attempt to intimidate him.

On 11 May, the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, which oversees the police, ordered an investigation into the circumstances of Petzov’s arrest.

Petzov publishes his reporting in regional outlets including the Silistra-News website, where he recently covered local politics and alleged government corruption in the town. He also writes reports and files freedom of information requests relating to local government issues for the Anti-Corruption Fund, an independent nongovernmental group.

In February, he reported to authorities that the local coordinator for the ruling GERB party threatened to “crush” him, but authorities refused to initiate proceedings against the coordinator.

CPJ emailed the press office of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior for comment, but did not receive any reply.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**CPJ Alert:** "Bulgarian investigative journalist arrested for drug possession days after filing information request"

### FREELancers

**Key information:**

Dimiter Petzov

### United Kingdom

**n° 162/2020**

**Alert created on:** 17 Jun 2020

**Media Workers Threatened and Assaulted at Violent Far-right Rally in London**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  ➔ Non-state

**CATEGORY**  ➔ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
Journalists were attacked and threatened while covering a far-right rally in London on 13 June 2020. Under the “Britain First” banner, a large group of people staged a counter-demonstration against the “Black Lives Matter” march in Parliament Square, right in front of the House of Commons. Throughout the rally, journalists and media workers were threatened and attacked. An Italian journalist and photographer, Corrado Amitrano, had his nose broken and was verbally attacked before police brought him to safety. He was treated for his injuries at St Thomas’s hospital. Another photographer was hit as protestors hurled barricades at the police, and three reporters had their mobile phones knocked out of their hand whilst they were filming. Some media outlets advised staff covering the protests not to engage or seek interviews with demonstrators because of the fear of more acts of violence. The National Union of Journalists, which counts Corrado amongst its members, issued a statement condemning the violence and called for those responsible to be identified and prosecuted.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- BBC news report: "London protests: Demonstrators clash with police"
- National Union of Journalists' statement: "NUJ condemns attacks on journalists"

**France**  
Alert created on: 15 Jun 2020  
n° 179/2020  
Lvl. 2  
No state reply yet

**Subject to repeated intimidation, journalist Inès Léraud faces new defamation charges**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
Non-state

**CATEGORY**  
Harassment and intimidation of journalists

French freelance journalist Inès Léraud is being prosecuted for defamation by business tycoon Jean Chéritel, CEO of the Chéritel group, following the publication, in March 2019, of her investigation entitled: “Hidden work, label fraud: the multiple abuses of a Breton agro-industrial group”. The trial is due to take place on the 20th and 21st of January 2021.

Léraud’s investigation was published in BastaMag on 26 March 2019 and shed light on the alleged illegal practices of the Chéritel group, an important fruit and vegetable wholesaler in the
Brittany region. She denounced, for example, the workers’ working conditions and the CEO’s attempts at silencing critical voices.

Chéritel has been condemned several times by the courts and has prosecuted for defamation a regional newspaper, the daily Le Télégramme, in 2015, about the alleged illegal employment of Bulgarian workers by the group. The case is under appeal.

It is not the first time Léraud has been sued for defamation because of her work on the agri-food industry in Brittany. At the end of 2019, Christian Buson, a Breton agri-food business owner, launched a lawsuit against Léraud after she published an investigation in the form of a graphic novel, entitled “Green seaweed - the forbidden story” about the proliferation of seaweeds in Brittany. These seaweeds, which are toxic and have caused the death of several people and animals, proliferated notably because of the pesticides that the agri-food industry uses and discharges into the sea. The case was dropped a few days before the trial, which was scheduled on the 7th of January 2020.

In addition, in June 2019, Inès Léraud’s project to translate her book into the Breton language was abandoned by the regional publishing house, which was allegedly under pressure to keep its regional subsidies from the Brittany Regional Council. More recently, the weekly French newspaper Le Canard Enchaîné revealed in March 2020, that Inès Léraud’s planned appearance at the Book Fair in Quintin, a city in Brittany, was cancelled after an elected representative of the municipality intervened.

Inès Léraud is supported by a number of journalists’ organisations which qualified the legal actions against the journalist as SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) with the objective to intimidate and silence her. In May 2020, more than 240 journalists and organisations co-signed an open letter to denounce the attempts by agri-food industrialists and some politicians to muzzle the press. Another column published in the daily newspaper Libération voiced its support for the journalist and denounced these intimidatory actions as attacks on the freedom of information.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Op-ed published in Libération: "Défendons la liberté d’informer sur le secteur agro-alimentaire"
- France 3 régions Bretagne news article: "Inès Léraud attaquée en justice pour avoir enquêté sur l’agroalimentaire breton : l’affaire devient politique"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

27 Oct 2020 | NEW CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls for “a comprehensive response” to counter SLAPPs effectively.
On 1 May 2020, a crew of seven media workers from German public service broadcaster ZDF was severely assaulted in Berlin.

The crew included a journalist, a cameraman, a camera assistant, three security guards, and comedian and cabaret artist Abdelkarim. According to reports, the team was heading back to their vehicles after shooting the satirical programme "heute-show" near protests against COVID-19 confinement rules when they were violently attacked by a group of around 15 hooded individuals. All media workers except Abdelkarim were severely injured and sent to hospital. They left hospital in the evening.

Four men and two women were arrested on that evening in connection with the attack. On 2 May 2020, the suspects were brought before a magistrate, who released them. According to a statement by the spokesperson for the Berlin Attorney-General, pressing grounds of suspicion or grounds for detention were insufficient, though the arrested persons had ties with left-motivated criminality. According to a spokesperson for the Federal Police, who quoted witness reports, the attackers arrived on the scene in a car and with bikes, and had planned the assault. The State Protection Office, that investigates politically motivated crimes, took over the investigation on 2 May 2020.

The chairman of the German Association of Journalists, Frank Überall, ZDF's programme
director and several media outlets and freedom of expression organisations condemned the attack.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement from the German Union of Journalists: "dju in ver.di verurteilt Angriff auf Team der ZDF „Heute-Show“"
- Statement from the German Association of Journalists (DJV): "ZDF-Team: Angriff auf die Pressefreiheit"
- ZDF's statement: "Team der ZDF-„heute-show“ in Berlin angegriffen"
- Report published on the ZDF's website: "Angriff auf heute-show-Team: "Mit Totschlägern auf das Team los""

**STATE REPLEIES**

- 15 Jun 2020 | Reply by the German authorities
  - Letter by the Permanent Representation of Germany to the Council of Europe (in German and English)

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**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**BN TV Correspondent Attacked by Two Masked Persons in Banja Luka**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**: Unknown

**CATEGORY**: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

**NO STATE REPLY YET**

On 26 August 2018, two masked persons attacked BN TV correspondent, Vladimir Kovačević, in front of the building where he lives, in Banja Luka.

Kovačević was going home after reporting about the latest protest organised in Banja Luka by the group “Justice for David”, calling on the authorities to uncover the truth about the murder of a young student from Baanja Lulla. According to the journalist, the two unknown perpetrators were waiting for him and beat him up with metal rods. The journalist was seriously injured and was taken to the hospital in the evening.
The attack was reported to the police and an investigation has been launched.

11 Jun 2019: One of the assailants, Marko Čolić, has been charged with attempted murder and is currently on trial. Police are still looking for the second suspect, Nedeljko Dukić, and an international arrest warrant has been issued.

Article published on BN TV website (in Bosnian): "Svjedoci o napadu na novinara BN TV"

11 Jun 2020: In July 2019, the first instance court had sentenced Marko Colic to four years on charges of attempted murder on journalist Vladimir Kovacevic. On 9 March 2020, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Srpska increased the sentence to 5 years in prison. The second suspect, Nedeljko Dukić, who surrendered to the police in November 2019, is being prosecuted. His trial started on 5 June 2020.

Report by the Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists’ safety: "Increased sentence to Marko Colic for attempting to murder BN television journalist"

Article published on the news portal Nezavisne: "Kovačević na suđenju Dukiću: Tukli su me i kad sam pao"

11 Sep 2018: On 10 September 2018, police arrested a suspect over the attack on Vladimir Kovačević.

Article published by Balkan Insight: "Republika Sprska police arrests suspect in-attack on journalist"
Dragan Bursac, a columnist for regional private broadcaster Al Jazeera Balkans (AJB), received a series of death threats via Facebook after publishing on 8 July 2017 a piece in which he condemned the gathering in the city of Banja Luka in support of Ratko Mladic. The piece, entitled: "Is Banja Luka Celebrating Srebrenica Genocide?", refers to Ratko Mladic, a former Bosnian Serb military leader accused of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

As a result of numerous threats on social media, Bursac had to flee Banja Luka and, as regional broadcaster N1 reported, he is currently living in an undisclosed location in Bosnia. In the comment section of Bursac’s piece, which was published on AJB’s Facebook page, an unknown person nicknamed “Caruga Stanisavljevic” wrote that “a penalty shot has been issued” and that the journalist “should be careful”. The incident was reported to the police.
In a written reaction published on their website, the BH Journalists Association strongly condemned the threats, urging the police to conduct an efficient investigation.

**11 Jun 2020:** Taking into consideration the outcome of the criminal proceeding against the author of the threats, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it is no longer an active threat to media freedom.

**11 Jun 2020:** In September 2019, the Banja Luka Basic Court ruled that A.B. committed the criminal offense of “Endangering security” under Article 150 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska and imposed a fine of 600 BAM, which the accused was obliged to pay within five months after the verdict becomes final. The accused was also obliged to pay the costs of the proceedings in the amount of 150 BAM within 30 days after the verdict becomes final.

- Article published by BH Novinari: "BH Journalists: Threatening journalists online is a criminal offense"

**13 Oct 2017:** On 7 August 2017 Dragan Bursac was again the victim of death threats on social media. The police arrested a suspect and criminal charges were filed against him. On 13 October 2017 the preliminary hearing for this second case of threats began.

- EFJ statement: "Bosnia and Herzegovina: journalist Dragan Bursać receives death threats"
- Report from the Western Balkans Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety: "Journalist associations from the region welcome the arrest of a person who threatened journalist Dragan Bursac"

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Report on Mapping Media Freedom: "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Al Jazeera columnist flees following death threats"
On 1 March 2020, a group of protesters at the port of Thermi, on the island of Lesbos, attempted to block refugees traveling into the country from Turkey, and attacked journalists who were covering the refugees' arrival, according to social media posts and news reports.

The protesters kicked and beat freelance photojournalist Michael Trammer, and threw his cameras into the water, the journalist tweeted. Trammer told CPJ via messaging app that he went to a local emergency room after the attack with injuries to his head, where he received stitches and an x-ray and was released.

The protesters kicked and beat freelance photographer Raphael Knipping, and hit him with his camera tripod, he wrote on Twitter. He wrote that Trammer was more seriously injured and that he was “ok.”

Protesters threw sticks at Der Spiegel reporter Giorgos Christides and chased his car while he was attempting to report on the refugees’ arrival, he wrote on Twitter, adding that the assailants built roadblocks to obstruct reporters and human rights workers. Julian Busch, a freelance photojournalist, posted a video on Twitter showing local residents throwing sticks at the car that he and freelance journalist Franziska Grillmeier were driving.

Trammer said he did not see any Greek police officers at the scene. Christides tweeted that police were “watching or non existent.”

CPJ emailed the press department of the Greek national police for comment but did not immediately receive a reply.

**UPDATES**

**05 Mar 2020:** On 2 March, journalist Quentin Warlop and his cameraman -working for the Belgian public broadcaster RTBF- were threatened and pushed by the protesters, while the journalists were live during a duplex with the TV5 Monde news broadcast.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **CPJ alert:** "Anti-refugee protesters attack journalists in Greece"
On 5 June 2020, journalist Metin Uca was sentenced to 14 months and 17 days in prison for “insulting a public officer in duty” in a tweet he posted about an election result forecast. The charges against him followed complaints by the state-owned Anadolu News Agency (AA) director Şenol Kazancı and deputy director Mustafa Özkaya, who are classified as “public officers”. They said the journalist had accused the government-controlled outlet of alleged election fraud. Uca had tweeted raising concerns about AA’s highly accurate forecast of the presidential and national elections results on the day of the vote, 24 June 2018. AA executives Kazancı and Özkaya filed a criminal complaint against Uca for “insult”. In its ruling, the court said that Uca’s comments had overstepped freedom of expression. The court also said that sharing his views on a public social media platform was a reason for increase in the penalty.

State-run AA, founded in 1920, is under direct editorial control of the AKP government. The government also exerts powerful control over the country’s judicial system and courts.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

News article on BirGün: "Metin Uca’ya hapis cezası verildi"
Journalist Jeremy Audouard Intimidated by Brussels Police while Filming an Arrest

Belgium  n° 65/2020

Journalist Jeremy Audouard was pushed and intimidated by a hooded officer of the Brussels police (PolBru) while filming an arrest on the fringes of the "Black Lives Matter" demonstration in Ixelles, in rue du Prince Royal, on 7 June 2020 at around 8.30 pm. The policeman tried several times to prevent the journalist, who was showing his press card, from filming the violent arrest of a protester lying on the ground by six policemen. On Monday, the Professional Journalists' Association filed a complaint against the policeman and reminded the Brussels police that journalists have the right to take and broadcast pictures of policemen intervening in a public space.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Reaction of the Professional Journalists' Association on its Twitter account
- Video of the violent arrest of a demonstrator by six police officers on Barbara Vangeel's Twitter account
- Video of the police intimidation on Jeremy Audouard's Twitter account

Spain  n° 161/2020

Alert created on: 05 Jun 2020
Spanish Journalist Physically Assaulted while Reporting on Protests in Madrid

On 23 May 2020, a photojournalist from the Spanish newspaper “La Razón” was physically assaulted by two unknown individuals while reporting on the Vox party protests in Madrid against the Spanish government’s actions to contain the pandemic. The aggressors, who were shouting slogans against the press, pushed the journalist from behind while he was filming the protest. After the impact, strong enough to tear his shirt, the individuals also threw the journalist’s camera on the floor.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Article from La Sexta: "Un grupo de manifestantes agrede a un periodista mientras informaba de la protesta de Vox en Madrid"
- Article from La Razón: "La Razón condena la agresión a uno de sus reporteros gráficos durante la manifestación de Vox"

Ukraine

Journalist Oleksandr Vlashchenko Assaulted by Unknown Assailant

Ukrainian journalist Oleksandr Vlashchenko was assaulted on 30 November 2019, in the port city of Mykolayiv. Oleksandr Vlashchenko, who works for the web site Novosti N, was on his way home when an unknown assailant sprayed liquid in his eyes and then hit him several times in the face and on the head. He managed to reach his family who immediately called an ambulance and alerted the police. Vlashchenko had to be hospitalized and was diagnosed with concussion and injuries to his lower lip. He claimed the attack may have been motivated by his work. According to the editorial board of Novosti N, it is not the first time that Vlashchenko had been targeted for his journalistic work. In 2014, a group of unknown people had kidnapped him and threatened to kill him if he did not delete footage shot on the premises of the Mykolaiv Regional
Council. Despite the police being provided with detailed information about the attacker, including photographs, no one has been arrested.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- RFERL news article: "Ukrainian Journalist Attacked For Third Time In Seven Years"
- EFJ statement: "Ukraine: Journalist attacked by unknown assailant"
- NSJU statement: "«Через розприсаний газ почав задихатися, якби не дружина й «швидка», то міг би вже й не жити», – Олександр Влащенко"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 05 Jun 2020 | Reply from the Government of Ukraine
  - [Official position of Ukraine](#)

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**United Kingdom**

n° 159/2020 Alert created on: 03 Jun 2020

**Journalist Amy Fenton Put under Police Protection due to Threats following Coverage of a Criminal Case**

**SOURCE OF THREAT** Non-state

**CATEGORY** Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

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**NO STATE REPLY YET**

Amy Fenton is a journalist and chief reporter for The Mail in Barrow-in-Furness, a town in northwestern England. On 23 May 2020, The Mail published Fenton’s report about a young woman from the town who had been charged with lying about having been abused. The woman who was charged had reportedly alleged that she suffered for years at the hands of a gang of Asian men in towns across the north of England.

Fenton began receiving threats via social media and Whatsapp following the publication of her report. Some of those who threatened her, accused her of being “in” the rumoured Asian gang, although local police said that their year-long investigation found no evidence of the gang’s existence. In the last week of May, Fenton said she received “in excess of 100 death threats and threats of unlawful violence”, as well as “countless more”, which were reported to the police.
On the night of Sunday 24 May, Fenton was contacted by police and told that they believed there was a credible risk to her life, as well as that of her five-year-old child. The police had made the call after having assessed the dozens of threats Fenton had received in the previous days. Fenton and her daughter immediately left their home that night and have since been staying in a secret location, while under police protection.

This is not the first time that Fenton has received serious threats as a result of her reporting. In February, a man was jailed for 20 weeks for making a rape threat against Fenton after she covered a court case in which he was convicted of threatening to blow up a hospital.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- The Guardian report: "Barrow journalist hounded out of Cumbria for reporting court case"
- Report published on news portal PressGazette: "Local journalist 'put under police protection' after repeated threats"
- Report published on the news portal Prolific North: "NUJ demands end to threats against Newsquest's Cumbria reporter"

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**Italy**

*Alert created on: 12 Mar 2020*

**Journalist Gennaro Del Giudice Threatened by Mafia Group**

On 6 March 2020, Gennaro Del Giudice, editorial director of the online newsletter Cronaca Flegrea, was threatened while reporting on a shooting in Naples, Italy. Following his arrest and being handcuffed, a suspected member of the Camorra mafia said to the journalist that the raid on his home two years ago was commissioned by the group. “I’m watching what you’re writing. We keep you under control”, he added. Cronaca Flegrea has previously been targeted by the Camorra mafia because of its publications and investigations.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- FNSI statement : "Pozzuoli, cronista minacciato da un pregiudicato. Fnsi e Sugc al fianco del collega"
In the early hours of 22 April 2020, the car belonging to Fabio Buonofiglio, director of online Italian news platform AltrePagine.it, was set on fire near his house in the province of Corigliano. Buonofiglio, who has previously faced threats due to his work as a reporter, has for years published investigative stories about the operations of the 'Ndrangheta' organised crime group in the Calabria region. The fire broke out around 0.45 a.m. and required the fire brigade to extinguish the blaze. The car was completely destroyed. The fire also spread to a neighbour’s car parked close by and caused significant damage. Police have opened an investigation and are trying to identify suspects. The case is being treated as an act of intimidation. The Italian National Press Federation (FNSI) condemned the attack.

**Additional Information**

- Report published by La Gazetta del Sud (in Italian): "Intimidazione a Corigliano Rossano, incendiata l'auto di un giornalista"
- Statement by the Union of Italian Journalists (FNSI) (in Italian): "Cosenza, incendiata l'auto del direttore di AltrePagine.it. Sindacato e Odg Calabria al fianco del collega"
On Sunday 17 May 2020, in Montpellier, commissioned by Agence France Presse to cover the identity rally organised by the extreme right-wing group "Ligue du Midi", journalist Ysis Percq was targeted by activists while doing her job. The demonstration had been banned by the prefecture. Her phone was also stolen and she was threatened and physically intimidated. All the videos of the demonstration she recorded were erased. The journalist filed a complaint and was able to recover her phone after the perpetrator was arrested. The Montpellier public prosecutor's office announced the opening of an investigation. Several journalists' organisations have condemned the attack against the journalist and the passivity of the police towards the militants of the "Ligue du Midi".

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Joint statement by journalists' organisations: "Menaces et intimidations envers la journaliste Ysis Percq par des militants de la Ligue du Midi : stop à la banalisation de l'extrême droite"
- France 3 report: "Montpellier : nouvelles violences de la Ligue du Midi lors d'une manifestation interdite"
- France Bleu report: "Manifestations à Montpellier : la police plus souple avec la Ligue du Midi qu'avec les gilets jaunes ?"
Smear Campaign Against Four Sport Journalists

Around 10,000 posters have been stuck in the streets of Athens, Greece's capital, in the early hours of the 6 May 2020. The posters display the photos of journalists, their names and words such as “slanderers”, “shameful for 10 Euros”, “impostors”. Some of the posters are still visible today.

Three of the journalists are members of Journalists’ Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (JUADN) and one is member of the Journalists’ Union of Macedonia and Thrace Daily Newspapers (ESIEMTH). According to JUADN, the journalists are targeted for their articles, reports and comments on Greek football.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Statement from EFJ/IFJ: "Greece: EFJ/IFJ condemn smear campaign against four sport journalists"
- ESIEMTH press release (in Greek): "Η ΕΣΗΕΜ-Θ καταδικάζει τη στοχοποίηση αθλητικών συντακτών"
- JUADN press release (in Greek): "Καταδικάζουμε τη στοχοποίηση με αφίσες αθλητικών συντακτών"

STATE REPLIES

27 May 2020 | Response from the Greek authorities (Ministry of Justice)
- Letter from the Permanent Representation of Greece to the Council of Europe
On 3 March 2020, journalists and editors from Slidstvo.info, a Ukrainian member of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), learnt their platform was being investigated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs as part of a criminal espionage probe. The basis for the investigation are Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent by the outlet in December 2019 to 14 current and former Ukrainian politicians, state agencies and officials, asking for details about the meetings between United States and Ukrainian officials. Among those contacted was Oleksandr Dubinsky, a Member of the Parliament of Ukraine from the ruling Servant of the People party, who at a press conference in January 2020 alleged the FOI request was proof that Slidstvo journalists were involved in illegally spying on former United States Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch. After Dubinsky filed a criminal complaint against Slidstvo for violation of privacy, last week the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced it had accepted his material as part of an ongoing, wider police probe into alleged United States surveillance of its own embassy officials in Kiev. Slidstvo editor-in-chief said the probe was baseless and threatened source protection by opening the door to police raids and the seizure of journalistic materials. The editor said the Ministry of Internal Affairs may have included the FOI requests into the probe in retaliation for Slidstvo’s recent investigations into alleged bribery and misconduct within the Ukrainian police force in the handling of several high profile crimes, including the 2016 killing of journalist Pavel Sheremet. Slidstvo.info covers politics, crime and state bodies in Ukraine, for which it was awarded the Investigative Reporters and Editors Medal in 2017.

13 May 2020: On 13 May 2020, Slidstvo.info editor-in-chief Anna Babinets, who is also the regional editor of the OCCRP, was summoned for questioning by Ukraine’s national police as part of the pre-trial criminal investigation. The summons came more than two months after Slidstvo.info learnt their platform was being investigated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs as part of a criminal espionage probe.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) statement: "OCCRP Condemns Planned Interrogation of our Editor in Ukraine"
- CPJ's Alert: "Ukrainian investigative outlet Slidstvo.Info faces potential investigation for its reporting"
- IPI statement: "Ukraine investigative news platform hit with criminal probe"
On 18 May 2020, the Turkish Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soylu openly denigrated journalist Müyesser Yıldız, a columnist for Oda TV, on Twitter and accused her of having “terrorist” sympathies. The accusations stem from comments Yıldız made on Facebook about Soylu’s statement on an outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) military camp in the city of Kars that was taken over by Turkish forces. Yıldız had commented that news coming from the region about new casualties suggested the camp was not completely demolished. In his Tweet, Soylu replied: “Only you and the PKK would be sorry about this news... My sorrow is not about your affection for the PKK, but your collaboration with those shavettes who wear a so-called state shirt.” The PKK is considered a terrorist organisation in Turkey. In a statement made after Soylu’s targeting, Yıldız explained that she assumes that this comment was meant to denigrate her alleged contacts and information sources in the Turkish security forces. The journalist also said that she fears for her physical well-being as, after Soylu's criticism, she has been targeted by a troll campaign.
Cartoonist Mahmoud Abbas Threatened with Death

STATE REPLIES

Information provided by the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the Council of Europe

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Statement from EFJ: "Sweden: Cartoonist threatened with death after publishing cartoon"

Article from the Middle East Eye: "Cartoon sparks bitter row over Saudi support for Palestinian cause"

May 2020

State replied

PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ

On 20 April 2020, the cartoonist of Palestinian origin Mahmoud Abbas, based in Sweden, published a cartoon about the collapse of oil prices as the COVID-19 strongly impacted the oil industry.

The cartoon shows a person in a Gulf Arab dress running away from rolling barrels of oil. The caption says "Drop in oil prices". The cartoon quickly went viral on Twitter in Saudi Arabia as the character was identified by the audience as crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman.

The next day, Mahmoud Abbas received thousands of tweets and comments on social networks, including insults, hate speech and death threats towards him and his family. Some referred to him as a "terrorist". Personal information about his family and his location in Sweden was also shared.

A complaint was filed to the Swedish police.
On 8 April 2020, it was reported that officers from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had contacted a Northern Ireland journalist who works for "The Irish News" to inform them of a suspected plot to physically attack them in their own home.

The editor of "The Irish News" condemned the attempt to intimidate the journalist and said he was satisfied that it is being treated very seriously by police. He said that "The Irish News" staff would not be deterred from carrying out their journalistic duties.

This is the second recorded incident that threatens the safety of Northern Ireland journalists this year, following attempts to intimidate Leona O'Neill in February.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Article from "The Irish News": "Paramilitary threat against Irish News journalist 'appalling'"
- NUJ campaign against threats to journalists: "Northern Ireland unites against threats to journalists"

STATE REPLIES

18 May 2020 | Reply from the United Kingdom authorities

- Letter from the Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe
Lyra McKee, a leading young journalist, was murdered on 18 April 2019 in the Creggan area of Derry in Northern Ireland. Violent unrest had broken out when police carried out searches in the area. During the disturbances a man reportedly fired shots towards police officers, fatally wounding 29-year old Ms McKee who was standing near a police vehicle. The murder is being investigated as a terrorist incident.

**11 Feb 2020:** On 11 February 2020, four people have been arrested in Derry in connection with the murder of the journalist Lyra McKee.

**07 Jun 2019:** On 6 June 2019, the PSNI carried out further home searches, seizing items for examination. A man aged 46 was arrested and subsequently released without charge.

Article from The Irish Times: Man arrested in connection with murder of Lyra McKee released

**10 May 2019:** On 9 May 2019, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) carried out home searches under the Terrorism Act and arrested four men aged 15, 18, 38 and 51, saying the riots in the Creggan area were “orchestrated”. The teenagers were released without charges. On 11 May 2019, Christopher Gillen and Paul McIntyre went on trial in the Magistrates’ Court on charges of riot, petrol bomb offences and the arson of a hijacked vehicle. Both were denied bail.

Article published by The Guardian: "Lyra McKee death: four males arrested"

**24 Apr 2019:** On 23 April 2019, in a statement issued to the Irish News, an organisation called “New IRA” admitted that journalist McKee had been killed by one of its “volunteers” “while standing beside enemy forces”.

Article published by the BBC: "Lyra McKee: 'New IRA' admits killing of journalist"
Sajid Hussain Baloch, editor-in-chief of the online news magazine Balochistan Times, has been found dead near the Swedish city of Uppsala. His body was recovered from the river Fyris on 23 April 2020.

Police launched an investigation into his death. The 39-year-old journalist had fled Pakistan in 2012 after receiving death threats, and has been living in Sweden since 2017 where he had been granted political asylum. At the time of disappearance, he was preparing to welcome his wife and children to join him in Sweden, and had just collected the keys to a new apartment. He was last seen boarding a train on 2 March 2020. The alarm was raised by Ulrika Hyllert, chair of the Journalistförbundet journalists’ association.

According to a police spokesperson, the initial autopsy was inconclusive, but foul play could not be ruled out, and there were four possible lines of investigation: crime, illness, accident, or suicide. Press freedom organisations remain vigilant with regard to this case, since the Balochistan Times covers the troubled province of Baluchistan, south-west Pakistan, and...
Hussain Baloch had reported on forced disappearances and organised crime in his native country.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Report from Mapping Media Freedom: "Mystery of missing journalist found dead in Sweden"
- Article from BBC: "Sajid Hussain: Swedish police find body of missing Pakistani journalist"

**STATE REPLIES**

18 May 2020 | Reply from the Swedish authorities

- Information provided by the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the Council of Europe

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On 5 May 2020, the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK) published a new investigative story entitled “Gangsters and Hooligans: Key Players in the Balkan Cocaine Wars”, focusing on the rivalry between two crime groups from Montenegro. The investigation reveals short profiles and past history of key clans' leaders and their connections to the police and politicians in the region. In particular, the son of Serbian President Vučić, Danilo Vučić, is mentioned for his acquaintance with a key member of a football hooligan group connected to one of the clans.

Following the publication of the investigation, Serbian political leaders and media accused journalists of lying, discrediting authorities and targeting the President’s son on behalf of the opposition. The daily Kurir qualified the investigation as “the most heinous attack aimed at criminalising and satanising the President’s son.” Maja Gojković, president of Serbia’s parliament, also released a statement condemning the story as politically motivated. Nebojša Stefanović, Minister of the Interior, told local media that KRIK had placed “a target on the forehead of Danilo
Vučić, directly endangering his life."

KRIK journalists have received different kinds of threats as a result of the smear campaign.

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) condemned “the behavior of the highest state officials and calls on them to stop attacking and pressuring journalists and spinning and diverting public attention from important discoveries on some secondary topics.”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- NUNS statement: "NUNS: Podrška koleginicama i kolegama u KRIK –u"
- N1 TV article: "KRIK under fire over picture of Serbian President’s son"
- KRIK article: "KRIK Investigation Sparks Uproar Among Serbian Officials"

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**Poland**

**n° 181/2020**

Polish Clothing Company LLP Files Lawsuit against two Polish Journalists for Newsweek Poland Article

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY 📧 Harassment and intimidation of journalists

Polish Clothing Company LLP Files Lawsuit against two Polish Journalists for Newsweek Poland Article

On 22 March 2020, Polish journalists Wojciech Cieśla and Julia Dauksza published a story in Newsweek Poland reporting that the clothing company LPP had sent several hundred thousand protective masks to their contractors in China to supply the factories sewing LPP clothes. LLP claim that this was to help the areas most affected by Covid-19. In the article, which was published online, Cieśla and Dauksza reported on how LPP’s actions had deprived ordinary people in Poland of access to masks during the Covid-19 crisis.

After publication, LPP declined the right to reply to the article but released a statement on the same day declaring the content to be untrue and misleading to the public. The statement was published in full on the Newsweek website. Cieśla and Dauksza’s response to LLP’s statement was published on the site at the same time.

On 14 April, LLP released a press statement announcing that it had filed a lawsuit District Court in Gdańsk for the protection of personal rights against the publisher of the Newsweek weekly - Ringier Axel Springer Polska, editor-in-chief of newsweek.pl - Aleksandra Karasińska and
authors of the publication - Wojciech Cieśla and Julia Dauksza. The statement says that "this is the result of the editorial team disseminating false statements and suggestions regarding actions taken by LPP related to the purchase of protective masks for people affected by the Covid-19 epidemic in China at the turn of January and February 2020." According to the press release, LLP are seeking damages of 3 million Polish złoty or nearly one million Euro.

Neither Newsweek nor Cieśla and Dauksza have been directly informed of the lawsuit and have no information about the lawsuit other than what is contained in LLP’s press release.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Article published by Newsweek Poland: "Właściciel Reserved wykupił z rynku maski, w których walczy się z koronawirusem"
- Article published by Newsweek Poland: "Oświadczenie LPP odnośnie artykułu w Newsweek.pl"
- Article published by Newsweek Poland: "Odpowiedź autorów: LPP mija się z prawdą"
- LLP company statement: "LPP złożyło pozew o ochronę dóbr osobistych"

### STATE REPLIES

- 12 May 2020 | Reply from the Polish authorities (Ministry of Justice)
  - Letter from the Permanent representation of Poland to the Council of Europe

### FOLLOW-UPS

- 27 Oct 2020 | NEW CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls for “a comprehensive response” to counter SLAPPs effectively.
  - Human Rights Comment: “Time to take action against SLAPPs”

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**Ukraine**

n° 37/2020

Alert created on: 31 Mar 2020

**Journalist Tetiana Sivokon Attacked while Reporting on Sale of Protective Masks**
On 24 March 2020, while shooting a story in the Khmelnitsky region about the sale of protective masks, TV channel NewsOne journalist Tetiana Sivokon was physically attacked by a shop owner.

Ukraine is experiencing shortage of protective masks during the COVID-19 pandemic. While preparing a report on this topic, NewsOne TV crew was informed by locals that the owner of a drug store had several large boxes with such masks.

Sivokon explained: “We went to this shop, saw the announcement that masks are in stock. I politely introduced myself and asked if I could buy masks. Seeing the camera, the owner began to pull the masks pack from my hands. He said that masks are not for sale, that they are for employees only”.

“After I informed that I had called the police, the man walked around and attacked me from behind, started to wring my hand and twist my fingers to snatch the masks from my hands. He also damaged a microphone”, she added.

Doctors diagnosed the journalist with severely ligament damage and put a cast on her hand. The National Police of Ukraine recorded the injury and started an investigation into the incident.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- NewsOne report
- EFJ statement: "COVID-19: Ukrainian journalist attacked while investigating sale of protective masks"
- National Union of Journalists of Ukraine statement

STATE REPLIES

- 11 May 2020 | Reply from the Government of Ukraine
  - Official position of Ukraine

Slovenia n° 44/2016 Alert created on: 24 Mar 2016
On 21 March 2016, the former Prime Minister of Slovenia and current leader of the main opposition party (SDS), Janez Jansa, insulted on his personal Twitter account a journalist and an editor from TV Slovenija (TVS), the Slovenian public broadcaster. They had broadcasted a story on the increase of hate speech against refugees and migrants in the country, including within SDS. On 21 March, at 7:43 pm, Janez Jansa posted a tweet naming the two journalists and comparing them to “disused prostitutes for 30 and 35 euros”. The Slovene Association of Journalists (DNS) and TVS journalists strongly condemned this public attack.

11 May 2020: In a session held in February 2020, but communicated only in May 2020, the Supreme Court of Slovenia overturned the defamation ruling in the case of Janša vs Mojca Šetinc Pašek, a journalist and editor with TV Slovenija. The Court ruled that Janez Janša’s (who, in the meantime has become Prime Minister of Slovenia) tweet falls under the category of “highly protected political expression” and that freedom of political expression prevails. The Supreme Court dismissed the journalist’s claim for damages and ordered her to reimburse Janez Janša’s costs in the proceedings within 15 days. The journalist has announced she will take her case to the Constitutional Court, with the support of the Slovenian Journalists’ organisations. Given this ruling and the implications it may have on media freedom in Slovenia, the partner organisations decided to re-open this case on the Platform.

28 Nov 2018: On 23 November 2018, the court of Celje sentenced Janez Jansa to a three-month suspended jail sentence for insulting two female journalists. It also ruled that the politician must pay the costs of the proceedings stemming from the 2016 incident. Jansa’s lawyer has said he will appeal the ruling.

AP dispatch: "Slovenia right-wing politician gets 3-month suspended jail"

13 Sep 2016: On 1st April 2016, an urgent session was held by the Committee on Culture of the Slovenian National Assembly. It condemned verbal attacks as a form of political pressure on journalists and the media and proposed to the President of the National Assembly to adopt a Code of Ethics for the Members of the Parliament "with a view to rejecting verbal abuse and other forms of offensive behaviour". On 13 September 2016, the partner organisations of the Platform declared this case to be "resolved", concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
OSCE representative welcomes conviction of senior politician in Slovenia for Tweet calling two journalists "prostitutes" in relation to their reporting in 2016. The 3-month prison sentence suspended for 1 year of probation is a strong sign that such abuse should not be tolerated.

Tweet by Harlem Désir

On 15 April 2020, the Radio and Television High Council (RTÜK) issued broadcast bans against Fox TV over anchor Fatih Portakal’s critical comments while reporting the state’s COVID-19
policies. RTÜK cited Portakal’s comments while reporting the news on 30 March, 31 March and 1 April on the issues of blocking opposition mayors’ donation campaigns, the politicisation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and economic issues. Fox TV was also fined 3% of its advertisement revenue. According to RTÜK regulations, if Fox TV is fined again on the same violations, RTÜK can cancel its license to broadcast completely. RTÜK additionally fined Fox TV for another day-time programme for allegedly spreading “fake news” while reporting citizens’ struggle to get bread during lockdown. Other lawsuits were launched simultaneously following President Erdoğan's criminal complaint over a tweet Portakal posted on the government’s COVID-19 donation campaign. Also, an indictment was submitted upon complaint of the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK) for defying the law on banking, requesting Portakal's imprisonment for up to three years.

**FOLLOW-UPS**

11 May 2020 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative worried about media bans imposed by Turkey’s Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK)

Statement by Harlem Désir

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**Turkey**

n° 50/2020

Alert created on: 10 May 2020

Criminal Complaint Filed against Journalist Ragıp Zarakolu

No state reply yet

SOURCE OF THREAT ➔ State

CATEGORY ➔ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

A statement released by the Turkish Presidential Communications Directorate announced that "a criminal complaint has been filed by Communications Director Fahrettin Altun against Ragıp Zarakolu and Artı Media (Artı TV and Artı Gerçek) due to the article entitled 'There is no escape from ill fortune', which contains a threat of coup and capital punishment by putting the pictures of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and late Prime Minister Adnan Menderes side by side." The complaint submitted to the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office by Altun's attorney has requested that a public case be brought against Zarakolu and Artı Media on the ground that they allegedly publicly committed an offense against the Constitutional order of the Republic of Turkey and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Accused of "being pro-coup", Ragıp Zarakolu, who lives in Sweden since 2013, has responded to the allegations in a written statement, noting that the content of the article is against coups, rather than being pro-coup as alleged: "It is simply inexplicable that the article is misinterpreted to such an extent. It is understood that the Presidential spokespersons did not read the article adequately."
On 3 May 2020, in the Scottish capital Edinburgh, a jogger has yelled insults at STV reporter Laura Alderman, throwing water over her and her camera equipment. Alderman was filming on the street alongside the zoo, which is deserted by visitors during the COVID-19 lockdown. Her editor Steven Ladurantaye condemned the attack in the STV blog, saying no key worker deserves “vigilante justice” during lockdown. All journalists in Scotland are recognised as key workers and allowed to break curfews in order to do their job. Police are investigating the incident.

**United Kingdom**

**Alert created on: 07 May 2020**

**Jogger Insults a TV Journalist and Throws Water over Her**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  Non-state

**CATEGORY**  Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

**Additional Information**

- Article from STV: "Editor’s note: no one deserves vigilante justice in lockdown"
- Article from The Scottish Sun: "STV reporter soaked with water by raging Edinburgh jogger for ‘taking up too much pavement’"
- Article from Edinburgh Evening News: "STV reporter deliberately soaked by passing jogger and threatened to be slapped"
Carlo Verdelli, Chief Editor of 'La Repubblica', has been put under police protection after receiving death threats from Nazi groups.

The measure was ordered by the Ministry of the Interior on 12 March 2020, following several threats including a death threat coming from a so-called "Nazi silent cell".

In a statement, the Board of the Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana (FNSI), an affiliate of both the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) FNSI said that: “The police protection of Carlo Verdelli illustrates the Italians' problem with Nazi fascism. We urge the Italian authorities to identify and prosecute the representatives of these groups who keep acting undisturbed in the wake of principles and ideals extraneous to the Constitution of the Republic and the democratic order".

29 Apr 2020: On 17 April 2020, the journalist Carlo Verdelli received another death threat from an anonymous account on Twitter, which published a post with the announcement of death of Verdelli, set for 23 April 2020, and defined him as a "hater". The police is investigating into this incident. On 23 April, the same date set which the threats he received said he would be killed, Verdelli was dismissed from his role of editor-in-chief by the management of La Repubblica’s editorial group. This decision was condemned by the founder of La Repubblica Eugenio Scalfari. Journalists of La Repubblica went on strike in protest of the decision on 24 April.

09 Apr 2020: On 7 April 2020, Carlo Verdelli was victim of an additional death threat. The Wikipedia page of his profile was hacked, the date of his death was added to 23 April 2020.
and the text of his biography was modified to the past tense to indicate his death. The page was then shared on an active Twitter page that promotes hate speech. According to some sources, the cyber-attack might emanate from a neo-Nazi group.

La Repubblica article: 'Con Repubblica le istituzioni e i partiti: "Minacce indegne di un Paese civile"'

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

La Repubblica press release: "Carlo Verdelli sotto scorta, il premier Conte: "Solidarietà e vicinanza"

FNSI Union statement: "Carlo Verdelli sotto scorta. Fnsi: «Perseguire i gruppi nazifascisti»"

IFJ statement: "Italy: Chief Editor under police protection after receiving death threats from Neo-Nazi group"

STATE REPLIES

Reply from the Italian authorities

Communication of the Italian Ministry of Interior

Bulgaria n° 29/2020 Alert created on: 19 Mar 2020

Bulgarian Newspaper Editor Slavi Angelov Severely Beaten in Attack by Masked Men in Central Sofia

SOURCE OF THREAT Unknown

CATEGORY Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

PARTNER: AEJ, EFJ/IFJ, IPI, RSF

The editor in chief of the weekly newspaper “168 Hours”, Slavi Angelov, was severely beaten by two masked men who attacked him using metal bars outside his apartment building in central Sofia on the evening of Tuesday 17 March 2020. A third man was seen filming the assault on a mobile phone. Angelov is said to be in stable condition and receiving treatment in a nearby
hospital. His injuries are not thought to be life-threatening. Local media quoted the journalist as saying that he had seen men wearing masks in the area but had not suspected an attack because many people now wear masks as a protection against the Covid-19 virus. Angelov’s laptop and other possessions that he was carrying were not stolen. A senior official of Bulgaria’s Interior Ministry said on 18 March that a police investigation is being conducted on the assumption that the attack was related to his professional work. Angelov has reported and written extensively about the underworld of organised crime. AEJ Bulgaria said in a statement that the attack has again highlighted the risks of violent attack faced by all Bulgarian journalists. It called on the authorities to conduct a swift and effective investigation to ensure that all the perpetrators and instigators of this attack are brought to justice and duly punished.

24 Apr 2020: On 23 April 2020, arrests were made in a special operation that took place in Sofia in connection with the investigation over assault of Slavi Angelov. The operation was carried out by the Sofia Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior under the supervision of the Special Prosecutor’s Office. The next day charges were brought against three persons.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AEJ-Bulgaria statement: "Виновните за нападението над журналиста Слави Ангелов трябва да бъдат разкрити и наказани"

AEJ-Bulgaria statement : "Brutal Assault on Bulgarian Journalist Slavi Angelov: Perpetrators Must be Identified and Punished"

Article published by Balkan Insight : "Bulgarian Investigative Journalist Attacked by Masked Men"

Article published by the Sofia Globe: "Masked men assault Bulgarian media Editor-in-Chief in central Sofia"

STATE REPLIES

17 Apr 2020 | Reply from the Bulgarian authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe

FOLLOW-UPS
Chechen President Threatens Journalist Elena Milashina with Death

On 13 April 2020, the President of the Republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, directed death threats at Novaya Gazeta’s journalist Elena Milashina. Kadyrov expressed these threats in relation to the publication in Novaya Gazeta of an article criticising human rights violations in Chechnya under the pretext of combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a speech held on 13 April, Kadyrov accused Milashina of writing “nonsense” and blamed the Federal Security Service for not silencing her, according to a transcript of his remarks published by Novaya Gazeta. Kadyrov also commented on the article in his Telegram account, as well as posting a video on Instagram accusing Novaya Gazeta and its journalist of being a puppet of the West. In the video, he states, among other things: "I've had enough! If you [the security services] want us to commit a crime and become a criminal, tell us! One of us will assume responsibility (...) He will spend some time in prison but will at some point be released. Don't try to make us criminals, murderers...".

The speech was in response to Milashina’s 12 April report that quarantined Chechens had stopped reporting coronavirus symptoms for fear of being labeled “terrorists.” The General Prosecutor’s Office ordered on 15 April Novaya Gazeta to remove the article. The article has now been removed from the newspaper’s website. The General Prosecutor has not yet justified the claim that the article contains "fake news".

It is not the first time Elena Milashina receives threats. On 6 February 2020, Elena Milashina and lawyer Marina Dubrovina were attacked and beaten by an organized mob in a hotel in Chechnya's capital Grozny. Investigation into this attack has been halted after technical evidence...
including CCTV information had "disappeared". No one has so far been held responsible for the attack.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- EFJ Statement: "Russia: Chechen president threatens journalist Elena Milashina with death"
- Joint letter from Amnesty International and the Norwegian Union of Journalists (in Norwegian)
- RSF statement: "Russia censors Novaya Gazeta at Chechen leader’s behest"
- Statement by the Russian Journalists' and Media Workers' Union: "Statement by JMWU about the attacks on Novaya gazeta and Elena Milashina"
- Moscow PEN Centre statement: "Statement about the attacks on Novaya gazeta and Elena Milashina"
- CPJ statement: "Chechen leader threatens journalist Elena Milashina over COVID-19 reporting"
- News report in Novaya Gazeta: Рамзан Кадыров — о «Новой газете». Без комментариев

FOLLOW-UPS

24 Apr 2020 | PACE rapporteurs call on Russian authorities to protect journalist Elena Milashina as a matter of urgency.

- Statement by Stefan Schennach, General Rapporteur on media freedom and the protection of journalists, and Frank Schwabe, rapporteur on “the continuing need to restore human rights and the rule of law in the North Caucasus”

Malta

Malta n° 42/2020 Alert created on: 16 Apr 2020

Croatian Businessman Requests The Shift to Deposit €300,000 in Damages

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY ▶ Harassment and intimidation of journalists
On 17 March 2020, Kristijan Curavić, the executive director of the NGO Ocean Alliance, demanded that the online news portal The Shift deposits €300,000 into a bank account in compensation for damages he claims to have suffered as a result of articles exposing an alleged scam. The Shift had published a series of articles on a "White Flag" scheme, under which Ocean Alliance issued a "white flag" designation to a number of swimming areas in Malta that it certified as being litter-free. According to a letter sent on behalf of Ocean Alliance by a law firm located in Zagreb, Croatia, 15 articles contain insulting and untrue allegations. The letter provides the bank details into which the money should be deposited within 15 days. It also requests a public apology and correction of "all false allegations". The Shift refuted all claims made in the letter and replied saying documentary evidence was available to support its reports.

News article published by The Shift : "Croatian behind White Flag scheme wants The Shift to pay him €300,000"

CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls for “a comprehensive response” to counter SLAPPs effectively.

Human Rights Comment: “Time to take action against SLAPPs”

On 19 December 2019, in L'viv region, the premises of the regional newspaper “Holos Sambirshchyny” ("Voice of Sambirschyny") were burned following a fire that occurred overnight. When arriving to work, the staff saw broken doors and dense smoke. Most of the equipment and furnitures are destroyed. A safe, which contained statutory editorial documents was declared lost and found further away - locked with the documents inside.
The Ukrainian National Union of Journalists expressed solidarity with their colleagues and appealed to the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Police to ensure an effective operational investigation of the case. The circumstances and causes of the fire are now being investigated by the police. The Police opened criminal proceedings under Part 3 of Art. 185 (theft) and Part 2 of Art. 194 (intentional destruction or damage to property) of the Criminal Code. The maximum sentence provided for in articles is between three and ten years’ imprisonment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Statement of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (in Ukrainian)

STATE REPLIES

15 Apr 2020 | Reply from the Government of Ukraine

Official position of Ukraine

Russian Federation n° 147/2020

Russia: Government Official Threatens Italian Journalist over Coronavirus Reports

SOURCE OF THREAT State

CATEGORY Harassment and intimidation of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

On 2 April 2020, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Defence, General Igor Konashenkov, threatened the Italian journalist Jacopo Iacoboni, who has been investigating Russian support to tackle the coronavirus in the Italian region of Lombardia. In a series of articles published in the national newspaper La Stampa, Iacoboni cast doubts over whether Russian military presence in the city of Bergamo was solely for medical assistance, arguing that Russia’s assistance was really an intelligence and propaganda operation. In response to this article, Konashenkov posted on Facebook that Iacoboni and the newspaper La Stampa were triggering “Russia-phobia” and disseminating fake news, and threatening the journalist that: "Qui fodit foveam, incidet in eam: he who digs a pit, will fall into it".

PARTNER: Article 19, AEJ

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
On 7 April 2020, Serbian news website Direktno.rs received a threatening email, which stated: “you should all be killed and destroyed”, signed by a certain “Srdjan Petrovic” although there is no indication about who this person is. The sender may have sent the email from abroad, according to the police. This email was sent after Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić mentioned one of Direktno.rs’ publications and showed their website during a TV program. The publication was a letter written by Emir Asceric, former assistant of Novi Pazar Mayor, criticising the president’s visit to the town at a time of pandemic. Igor Velimirovic, Direktno.rs editor, reported the threat to the police, which launched an investigation. According to him, the PM public comments may have provoked the threat. The Serbian journalists’ associations NUNS and UNS have condemned the threat.

Additional Information

- Statement from the Western Balkan’s Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety: "Regional Platform: Serbia’s officials to refrain from targeting media"
- Danas news article: "Pretnja smrću redakciji portala Direktno.rs, policija traži vlasnika imejla"
- N1 news article: "WB platform for media freedom condemns threats to Serbia's Direktно.rs website"
Slovenian investigative journalist Blaž Zgaga has been the target of a smear and hate campaign since 15 March 2020. The journalist has received several death threats from far-right groups. The harassment originates from a retweet by the government of a claim that the journalist is a "psychiatric patient who escaped quarantine" via the @KrizniStabRS account. The retweet also mentioned that three other "psychiatric patients", including intellectual and poet Slavoj Zizek, were wanted as well.

The retweet was deleted from the @KrizniStabRS account a few hours later. However, Nova24TV, a Hungarian government-funded media outlet whose editor-in-chief, Aleš Hojs, was recently appointed Slovenia's Interior Minister, relayed its content. Nova24TV accused Blaž Zgaga, among others things, of questioning the measures taken by the government to respond to the health emergency and to inform the population about news related to COVID-19. These measures include the creation of a "crisis cell of the Republic of Slovenia" and the Twitter account @KrizniStabRS, where the retweet in question was posted. Previously, Blaž Zgaga had approached the authorities to ask for more information about the management of this "crisis cell".

An investigative journalist, Zgaga initiated many investigations which revealed corruption cases in the Balkans in the 2000s. His investigation into the Slovenian defence ministry's purchase of arms from a Finnish company led to the resignation of many public figures in Slovenia, including former prime minister and current head of government Janez Janša. Janša was convicted of corruption in 2014 and sentenced to two years in prison.
On 26 February 2020, an unidentified person broke into Chechen blogger Tumso Abdurakhmanov’s apartment while he was asleep and beat him with a hammer, according to news reports and a report by Vayfond, a Sweden-based Chechen human rights group. Abdurakhmanov woke up and fought the assailant, and was able to stop the attack and call police, according to the same reports and the blogger’s brother, Muhammad Abdurakhmanov, who spoke to the independent regional news website Kavkazsky Uzel (Caucasian Knot).

Abdurakhmanov posted a video following the attack, which has been taken down from YouTube but was reposted on Kavkazsky Uzel, where he questioned the assailant, who said he had come from Moscow at the orders of “Abdurakhman from [Chechen capital] Grozny,” and added that “they have my mother.”

The blogger’s neighbor, who spoke to the BBC’s Russian service, said that Abdurakhmanov had a severe headache from a hammer blow, but did not look seriously injured. He was brought to a local hospital in an ambulance, the neighbor, who was not identified by name, told the BBC.

Abdurakhmanov is blogger whose two YouTube channels have more than 330,000 subscribers. He frequently posts criticism of Chechen authorities and of Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Russian-administered republic.

Abdurakhmanov has lived in exile since fleeing Chechnya in 2015, following threats from a Chechen official linked to Kadyrov, according to news reports. After Georgia refused his asylum claim, Abdurakhmanov moved to Poland, where his request for asylum was denied in 2018, according to news reports.

Both Vayfond and the blogger’s brother called the assault an assassination attempt.

On 30 January, the body of Imran Aliev, another Chechen blogger, was found in a hotel room in Lille, in northern France, with stab wounds in the throat and chest. CPJ was not able to determine whether Aliev’s death was tied to his reporting. Abdurakhmanov said in a video that he believed he was the real target in the attack that killed Aliev.
A home-made pipe bomb exploded at the entrance of the offices of Cypriot news agency MC Digital Media in the early hours of Wednesday 4 March 2020. The network hosts local online news outlet Cyprustimes.com and other online sport, finance and show business titles. The outside of the building in the southern Cypriot port city of Limassol suffered extensive damage from the blast, which police said was caused by high power explosives. According to local media reports, the bomb went off at 2.10 am on Wednesday morning. No injuries were reported and police are currently investigating to establish whether the motive for the attack was related to news coverage.
Slovak authorities brought criminal defamation charges against a newspaper opinion writer accused of offending religious believers. The opinion writer, Michal Havran, is accused of defaming the faith of Catholic believers through a 2018 article in which he mocked and sharply criticized a Catholic priest, Marian Kuffa, a well-known public figure who is known for his radical social views and links to the far-right People’s Party – Our Slovakia (L’SNS). The article, which strongly criticized the priest’s social and political influence, was published in the leading Slovak daily SME. Police investigators concluded that Havran’s article called for the suppression of religious people’s freedom of expression and “defames the expressions of their faith”, and charged him with defamation on account of religious belief under Article 423 of the Slovak Criminal Code. The charges carry a potential sentence of one to three years in prison. Havran is further charged with slander, which also carries a possible jail sentence in Slovakia.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- CPJ alert: "Slovak authorities file criminal defamation charges against columnist Michal Havran"
- IPI Statement: "Slovak opinion writer charged with ‘defaming’ religious believers"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 10 Mar 2020 | Reply from the Slovak authorities
  - Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the Council of Europe
On 1 March 2020, police detained three Turkish journalists, employees of Sputnik Türkiye in Ankara and the outlet’s chief Turkey editor in Istanbul, Mahir Boztepe. The arrests occurred after a group of protesters in Ankara attempted to break into the employees' homes there; when the employees contacted the police to file a criminal complaint, police detained them and also ordered Boztepe’s detention in Istanbul. The four Sputnik staffers were released the following day with no charges brought against them. When police arrested Boztepe, officers also searched Sputnik’s Istanbul office and copied journalists’ hard drives. According to the Turkish NGO Media and Law Studies Association, the police justified the detentions by citing article 302 of Turkish Criminal Code, a measure aimed at countering threats to the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. Turkish media reports suggest that these events followed the publication on the Sputnik agency’s website of an article entitled “The stolen province: why Turkey was given a corner of Syria by France 80 years ago”, about the southeastern Turkish city of Hatay.
On 22 February 2020, Raquel Guillán, a journalist of Radio Television Canarias (RTVC) was reporting live on the weather effects in Lanzarote when a man approached her and kissed her cheek. Raquel Guillán continued with the coverage despite what happened. On 23 February, the journalist reported the case to the police.

**28 Feb 2020:** On 28 February 2020, given the judgment by the Arrecife court on 25 February 2020, as reflected in the reply from the Spanish authorities, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

**27 Feb 2020:** The perpetrator reportedly dropped his wallet while trying to escape. This made his identification possible, but as the journalist withheld his wallet, he pushed her and pulled her hair.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **EFJ statement:** "Spain: Journalist assaulted while reporting live on TV"

**STATE REPLIES**

- **27 Feb 2020 | Reply from the Spanish authorities**

  - **Letter from the Permanent Representation of Spain to the Council of Europe**
The District Prosecutor of Gdańsk has reportedly opened a criminal investigation against journalist Katarzyna Wlodkowska under Article 241 of the Polish Criminal Code on the basis of articles she published alleging “unauthorised distribution of messages from a public trial before they were disclosed in court proceedings.” The offence carries a fine or a maximum prison term of two years.

The case concerns a series of articles by Wlodkowska, published in January 2020 in Duzy Format magazine and Gazeta Wyborcza, the main independent Polish daily. The articles probed the ongoing investigation of the murder of the mayor of Gdańsk, Pawel Adamowicz and the motives of the accused. The reports were based on anonymous interviews, including with sources close to the accused and law enforcement. The journalist claimed that the accused carefully planned and premeditated the assassination but that the prosecutor’s office had failed to fully investigate the motive for the killing. The article also highlighted deficiencies in the murder investigation and possible failures of the prison service and the police.

On 5 February 2020, the local news portal Gdanska Strefa Prestizu published a reply from a spokesperson of the District Prosecutor in Gdańsk to a request for comment on Wlodkowska’s allegations, confirming that the prosecutor’s office was opening an investigation into the unauthorised distribution of messages from a public trial. The response was followed by a link to an earlier reply from the Regional Prosecutor to Wlodkowska’s articles, in which the Regional Prosecutor had denied her findings, stating that the investigation had been conducted by experienced prosecutors in a correct, efficient and substantive manner, in accordance with applicable regulations, respecting the rights of all parties.

Wlodkowska, who has not been notified in person that she is being under investigation, asked the District Prosecutor in her capacity as journalist what specific materials were being investigated. Over the phone, she was informed that several publications, not only by Wlodkowska, were subject of the investigation, without any further details. It remains unclear if other journalists than Wlodkowska are also under investigation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article in Gazeta Wyborcza about the opening of the investigation against the journalist: "Prokuratura straszy dziennikarkę "Wyborczej" za tekst o zabójcy Pawła Adamowicza"
On 19 January 2020, Thomas Jacobi, a correspondent of the French La Croix and German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, was attacked by far-right protesters in Athens.

He was hit for over four minutes and was bleeding in the face, until police appeared. According to the journalist, he was attacked because the protesters recognized him. It was the second assault on Mr Jacobi, almost a year since members of the Golden Dawn party attacked him, along with two other journalists, also in Athens. The journalist filed a lawsuit.

The Greek government condemned the attack and promised swift investigation.
Lauren Moss, BBC's South East political editor, was attacked by a member of the public just before going live on air on 19 February 2020. The news reporter posted on Twitter that she was preparing to broadcast from Brighton (England) when a man threw a cup of hot chocolate over her and used abusive language against the BBC. Lauren Moss and the cameraman were not hurt in the incident, but she said she was "shaken up and it could have been worse". The BBC confirmed that it reported the case to the Sussex Police, who said they are looking into the incident.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Express news article: "BBC reporter ‘hit with hot chocolate’ just before going on-air - police probe launched"
- EFJ statement: "UK: BBC news reporter attacked moments before going live on air"
NO STATE REPLY YET

Russian investigative journalist Yelena Milashina of the independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta and her lawyer, Marina Dubrovina, were attacked in the Chechen capital Grozny. On Thursday, 6 February 2020, the pair, who were in Grozny to attend the trial of a local blogger, were assaulted by unknown assailants at the entrance of their hotel. The attackers continued to punch and kick them as they moved inside the hotel lobby. In a statement, Milashina stated she believes she was targeted because of her profession. In spring 2017, the award-winning journalist exposed the arrest, torture and murder of gay men in Chechnya. Milashina noted that she had been threatened by Chechen authorities because of her reporting in the past. Several Novaya Gazeta journalists have previously been targeted in the Russian Federation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- CPJ alert: "Russian journalist Elena Milashina attacked in Chechnya"
- IPI Statement: "IPI urges investigation in attack on Russian journalist in Chechnya"

FOLLOW-UPS

18 Feb 2020 | PACE Rapporteur on media freedom and the safety of journalists calls on Russian authorities to urgently investigate attack on journalist and lawyer in Chechnya.

- Statement by Stefan Schennach

11 Feb 2020 | CoE Human Rights Commissioner declared that the Russian authorities must ensure the safety and security of Elena Milashina and Marina Dubrovina and carry out a prompt, independent and effective investigation and punish those responsible for organising and committing this offence.

- Statement by Dunja Mijatović published on Facebook

11 Feb 2020 | Attack against journalist and lawyer in Grozny, Russia, extremely concerning, OSCE Media Freedom Representative urges full and
Two students from the Higher School of Journalism (ESJ) were arrested by the police on 12 December 2019 during a demonstration against the pension reform in Lille. One was arrested in the late afternoon on Place de Béthune while photographing the arrest of several demonstrators. With a camera in his hand and safety glasses on his nose, he was thrown to the ground by several police officers, despite objections from his comrades. During a rally in front of the Lille police headquarters, where a group of people chanted "informing is not a crime", a second journalism student, who was about to take a picture, was dragged by arm by a police officer and then taken to the police premises by two officers.

The ESJ denounced the arrest of its students: "The evidence in our possession leads us to believe that they were arrested for taking pictures of police officers in action. The freedom to take pictures during demonstrations is a right. We defend this right for professional journalists and for future journalists. Attempts to restrict this right through intimidation or legislative amendments are not acceptable. We strongly condemn them. "Several journalists' unions, including the SNJ and the SNJ-CGT, also condemned the arrest of the students.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by the Conference of Journalism Schools (CEJ).
- Article published by the daily "La Voix du Nord": "Réforme des retraites: deux étudiants de l'ESJ de Lille interpellés"
- Article published by L'Express: "Deux étudiants journalistes interpellés à Lille alors qu'ils couvraient les manifestations"
- Statement by the ESJ students
- Article published by the Huffington Post: "Deux étudiants de l'ESJ Lille interpellés en marge de la manif contre les retraites"
On 7 December 2019, the Independent Union of Police Commissioners (Syndicat Indépendant des Commissaires de Police - SICP) posted a message on the social network Twitter naming five French journalists (David Dufresne, Taha Bouhafs, Gaspard Glanz, "The General" and Alexis Poulin) as "the main actors" in the "fight against National Police" in France. The listed journalists are labelled with insulting terms ("impostor", "liar", "harasser", "usurper", "hateful"). SICP accuses these journalists of "fuelling this hatred" and "enjoying this climate", after the door of an anti-crime brigade (BAC) officer's home was covered with slogans hostile to the police. Several representatives of the profession, including the European Federation of Journalists, denounced the intimidating and defamatory nature of the police union's message, which was widely shared on Twitter.
Mikhail Ignatyev, the head of the Russian republic of Chuvashia, during the Russia’s Press Day celebration on 18 January 2020, said that journalists who "criticize from morning to night" should be "wiped out" (the word he used was "mochit," a Russian underworld slang term notoriously used by the Russian President with reference to Chechen militants in 1999). Ignatyev accused critical journalists of causing "street protests" and of preventing the authorities from "seeing to the improvement of green spaces and public spaces and opening new industries."

Later Ignatyev stated that he had always had "correct relations with journalists who criticize objectively and compose their articles correctly" and apologised "as a kind-hearted person" to those he might have "upset" by his use of the term "wipe out," adding that he was referring to "people who claim to be journalists but have just one aim – to discredit the authorities by all means possible."

Reporters Without Borders called for his resignation for violating the Chuvash Republic’s constitution, which says its president must ‘protect the citizen’s freedom and human rights.

OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media Harlem Desir also denounced the statement, saying that "such a declaration from a public official is unacceptable and may endanger journalists’ safety."

**03 Feb 2020:** On 3 February 2020, following the dismissal of Mikhail Ignatyev, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
03 Feb 2020: On 29 January 2020, President Putin dismissed Mikhail Ignatyev from office, a day after the governor was expelled from the United Russia party. The presidential decree cites "the loss of confidence" of the head of state as the motive for the dismissal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**: RSF statement : "Russian republic's leader says critical journalists should be “wiped out”"**

FOLLOW-UPS

24 Jan 2020 | For the OSCE Representative for Media Freedom "such a declaration from a public official is unacceptable and may endanger journalists’ safety."

Tweet by Harlem Désir

North Macedonia n° 7/2020

**Threats and Insults against Female Journalists Meri Jordanovska and Iskra Koroveshovska**

SOURCE OF THREAT ➤ Non-state

CATEGORY ➤ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

Journalists Meri Jordanovska, editor at A1on.mk, and Iskra Koroveshovska, editor at TV Alfa, received threats and insults online. The messages were sent during the second week of January 2020. They threatened Jordanovska to “create a funeral for her”, calling her "Sorospija" - which can be translated as "Soros whore" - and used other gender discrimination speech towards her. Iskra Koroveshovska reported she received similar threats and insults. The messages were sent by Emil Jakimovski, a former employee at the Central Registry. According to media reports, he was fired as soon as the journalists alerted about the threats.

The Association of Journalists of Macedonia called on the Ministry of Interior and the Public
Prosecutor’s Office to immediately start an investigation and take all possible measures to quickly sanction these threats.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement from the Association of Journalists of Macedonia: "AJM: Punishment for the person who threatened the journalist Meri Jordanovska"
- Statement from The Western Balkan’s Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety: "Regional platform: We condemn threats and insults on female journalists in North Macedonia"

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**Serbia**

**n° 140/2019**  
Alert created on: 28 Nov 2019

**Journalist Miodrag Sovilj Targeted by Smear Campaign after Interviewing President Vučić**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**: Non-state  
**CATEGORY**: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

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Serbian journalist Miodrag Sovilj has been the target of a storm of criticism by media and officials close to the government. The reason for this backlash was the hospitalisation of Serbia’s President Aleksandar Vučić for health reasons hours after he publicly confronted him with allegations of government corruption.

President Vučić was opening a children’s park on 15 November in Belgrade when N1 reporter questioned him over the alleged role of Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic’s father in the suspect purchase of state-produced arms. An exchange of several minutes took place filmed by a camera. The journalist repeatedly asked the President whether he knows the document on his mobile phone - supposed to be the proof demonstrating the conflict of interest - while President Vučić asks him several times to read out the whole document, affirming he is not aware of the document’s existence and can’t read it. In the end, Vučić gave an evasive response and asked the anti-corruption agency to investigate.

Following this exchange, Miodrag Sovilj faced intimidation, threats and smear campaign. He was accused by officials and media of “provoking the President”, of being rude, offensive and disrespectful, having a “shameful behaviour” that led to the deterioration of Vučić’s health - an insinuation that was denied by the President himself afterwards. Photos of the journalist were taken from his student MySpace account and published to portray him as an alcoholic and drug addict.
During the G20 summit that took place in Hamburg on 7 and 8 July 2017, at least 32 journalists were stripped of their press accreditation. Among them, 9 journalists were deprived of the accreditation that they had initially been granted, and 23 journalists were placed on a no-access list for the G20 press centre.

On 7 July, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) confirmed on Twitter that, in accordance with the Federal Press Office, it had decided to reserve the right to withdraw in some cases accreditation from journalists. According to the Government Spokesperson Steffen Seibert, this decision was justified by “security reasons”. A photographer for the daily newspaper Weser Kurier had his press accreditation revoked “without any explanation”, the newspaper reported. Another photographer working for the same outlet was also stripped of his accreditation after taking pictures of the protests in Hamburg and “has not received any response as to the reason why, despite inquiring about it”, according to the same newspaper. The two main German
Furthermore, in the context of the summit, numerous journalists have been victims of police violence while covering the protests taking place in the city. Freelance journalist Flo Smith, who was on the scene on 7 July, has reported that he and his colleagues were insulted by police officers and hit with tear gas, despite the fact that they were identifiable by their cameras and press cards. Newspaper Taz reported a dialogue between a police officer and a journalist during which the journalist was subjected to threats and insults. Other journalists also reported being victim of attacks by protesters.

**UPDATES**

*02 Dec 2019:* On 20 November 2019, the Administrative Court at Berlin ruled in two cases (VG 27 K 516.17, 519.17) that the withdrawal of accreditation by the Federal Press Office had been unlawful, as such withdrawals were based on inaccurate facts and the legal provisions for such withdrawal were not met.

*Statement by the Berlin Administrative Court*

*20 Nov 2019:* On 17 November 2019, media reported that the Internal Investigation Service had identified 156 cases of misbehavior by policemen, which it had filed with the Hamburg Prosecutor’s Office. 103 of these cases had been closed by the Prosecutor’s Office for lack of evidence supporting criminal behaviour. One indictment against a policeman was issued on charges of physical assault against a plainclothes colleague.

*Article from Die Zeit (in German): “G20-Gipfel: Beweislage unklar”*

*22 Jul 2019:* In the summer of 2018, the Hamburg Public Prosecutor's Office had opened 138 preliminary investigations, mostly for assault in the exercise of public authority, and the Internal Investigation Service at the Hamburg Administration of the Interior had 152 administrative investigations under way.

*Article published by the Huffington Post (in French): G20: « A Hambourg, la presse n’est plus en sécurité »*

*16 Aug 2017:* On 11 August 2017, eight journalists filed suit against the Federal Press Office before the Administrative Court at Berlin, to find that the deprivation of their accreditation was illegal.

*Statement from the German Journalists Union dju in ver.di (in German): G20-Akkreditierung: dju unterstützt Klagen*

*24 Jul 2017:* On 18 July 2017, the President of the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) replied to a letter sent by Deutscher Journalisten Verband, explaining the accreditation practice.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Journalist Flo Smith on being attacked in Hamburg (in French)
- Dialogue between a police officer and a journalist reported by Taz newspaper (in German)
- Statement by the EFJ: "Press accreditations stripped and violence against journalists at G20 protests in Hamburg"
- Press release by the German Journalists Union dju in ver.di (in German)
- Press release by the German Journalist Association DJV (in German)

STATE REPLIES

- 06 Sep 2017 | Response by the German Federal Government
  - Letter from the Federal Government to the Council of Europe

FREELANCERS

Key information:

Flo Smith

A freelance journalist who was covering protests taking place in Hamburg on 7 July.
Late at night on 27 December, Mehman Huseynov, a blogger and journalist, was detained by a police squad in Baku a few minutes after he held a solo protest in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs demanding the release of rapper Parviz Guluzade. Huseynov was severely beaten in the car by several police officers, and then left in a wasteland on the outskirts of the city. Just after the attack, Huseynov recorded a video in which he spoke about how he was beaten by six policemen, who "were very cruel, beat him, humiliated him, accused him of organizing the rally and threatened to do worse the next time." On 28 December, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media called on the authorities to conduct a swift and thorough investigation into this matter, and bring those responsible to justice.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Article in JAMnews: "Azerbaijani blogger says he was brutally beaten by police after rally for arrested rapper"
- Turan news report: "Blogger Mehman Huseynov Abducted and Beaten by Police"
- Video recorded just after the attack (on YouTube): "Mehman Hüseynov döyüldü - Onu zorlamaq istəyiblər?"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- Tweet from the OSCE media freedom representative

**FREELANCERS**

Key information:
Mehman Huseynov
PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ

Private-owned TV station N1 received a letter on 4 February 2019 threatening to kill the N1 journalists and their families and to blow up the office. It said: “Do you have families? You’re killing our children and grandchildren, and are unaware that if the destruction happens, your building will be the first to be blown up, and you may lose your dearest. That’s why we, the veterans, warn you not to play with anyone’s destiny because your fate is in our hands.”

The letter was signed "Belgrade Veterans of the 1999 war” (a Serbian war veteran association), but the representative denied any involvement. The Prosecutor’s Office arrested a 70-year-old man from the town of Nova Pazova and ordered a 30-day detention. The death threats were issued after N1 journalists were labelled "anti-Serbs" and "traitors" by ruling party MPs for their reports about Kosovo.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, given the judgment by the Belgrade 3rd Criminal Court, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be "resolved", concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

08 Feb 2019: On 7 February 2019, the Belgrade 3rd Criminal Court found S.Č., 70, guilty of endangering security, and sentenced him to 30 days in prison.

Article from Radio Televizija Srbije (in Serbian): “Pritvor osumnjičenom za pretnje televiziji N1 i Jeremiću”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Statement by the Committee to Protect Journalists
- Statement by the Western Balkan’s Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety

STATE REPLIES

02 Apr 2019 | Reply from the Serbian authorities

Letter from the Serbian Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe
On 29 March 2019, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Harlem Désir denounced threats against journalists of the N1 news channel in Serbia. In a letter sent on 27 March 2019 to the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, the OSCE Representative expressed his concern about the threats and pressure against the N1 news channel.

Statement by Harlem Désir

Stevan Dojčinović, an investigative journalist and editor-in-chief of KRIK (Crime and Corruption Reporting Network), working for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), was the target of several attacks, over the last months, in Serbian pro-governmental media, including the tabloid Informer. Dojčinović has been accused of collaborating with foreign secret services and there have been attempts to smear his reputation by publishing rumours about him cooperating with drug dealers and criminals. Civil Rights Defenders has condemned the attacks. “Particularly disturbing is the fact that the campaign was initiated by the act of current journalistic research and not an actual published story, which indicates that someone monitors the work of KRIK. This is an intolerable situation and must immediately stop”, said Goran Miletic, Programme Director for the Western Balkans at Civil Rights Defenders. The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) also condemned the "lynch campaign conducted by Informer against the portal Krik.rs", and urged the Ministry of the Interior to investigate whether the information that Informer holds was received from the state authorities.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, given the judgment by the Belgrade Court of Appeal, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
11 Mar 2019: After being called "fake journalist", "Western spy", "mafia associate", "sadomasochist" and "terrorist", Stevan Dojčinović sued “Informer” and its editor Dragan Vucicevic. In May 2018, the Belgrade High Court ruled in his favour and fined “Informer” with RSD 130,000 (about € 1,105) for having violated his honour and reputation and RSD 20,000 (about € 170) for having violated his right to privacy. The judgment was upheld on appeal.

Article from “Krik” (in Serbian): “Potvrđena presuda „Informeru“ zbog neistina o uredniku KRIK-a”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement from the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN): “Attacks on Dojčinović and KRIK Must End”
- Statement published by Civil Rights Defenders: “Smear Campaigns Must Stop against Investigative Journalists in Serbia”
- Statement from the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) (in Serbian)
- Article published on the website of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: “Serbian Newspaper Attacks OCCRP Partner”
- Article published on Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso: “Serbia: control the media with the help of the media “
- Article published on Balkan Insight: “Serbian Tabloid Calls Independent Media ‘Foreign Mercenaries’”
- Article published on Balkan Insight: “Serbian Tabloid Accused of Risking Journalist’s Life”
- Article published on Balkan Insight: “Serbia’s Tabloid Attack Dog Serves Powerful Masters”

**STATE REPLIES**

21 Nov 2016 | Reply from the Republic of Serbia provided by the Ministry of the Interior

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Serbia to the Council of Europe
Serbian journalist Danilo Masojevic and cameraman Vladeta Urosevic, both working for Prva TV, a Serbian commercial channel, were attacked on 17 April 2018 in Leskovac, Southern Serbia where they travelled to interview the mayor of Leskovac. They parked their vehicle in a side street when a man approached them to tell them it was not a parking spot. He verbally attacked them and blocked their vehicle with his car. When Urosevic and Masojevic proceeded to take the camera and other equipment out of their vehicle, the man physically assaulted Urosevic. The perpetrator was arrested by the police. According to Prva TV, the man was later identified as the owner of the building where the interview with the mayor was scheduled to take place. Urosevic was taken to the hospital and later release.

In a statement, the Western Balkan’s regional platform for advocating media freedom and journalists’ safety condemned the attack but welcome the swift reaction by the Serbian police that arrested the suspect shortly after the attack.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, given the judgment issued by the Leskovac criminal court, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

18 Jun 2018: On 13 June 2018, the Leskovac Criminal Court convicted M.J., 39, of criminal intimidation and sentenced him to six months in prison.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- News article published by b92: "Man assaults TV crew during parking spot dispute"
- Statement by the Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists’ safety: "Serbia’s police swift reaction is a positive sign"

STATE REPLIES

- 25 Apr 2019 | Reply from the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Serbia to the Council of Europe

19 Dec 2019 | France
n° 56/2018
Alert created on: 25 Jun 2018

Police Failure to Respond to the Serious Threats a Journalist Received Online

Julie Hainaut, a French Lyon-based freelancer who writes for Le Petit Bulletin, a newspaper about Lyon culture, found herself at the centre of an exceptionally violent online media storm last September after reporting that the owners of a bar had spoken approvingly about the colonial era. She received numerous insults and very serious threats, her home address was published online, and people waited for her in front of her home on two different occasions. She lodged 4 separate complaints to the police since then, but has received no feedback or follow-up to these complaints, even though it would be very simple to identify people or websites involved in these threats. The public prosecutor, when asked, was not aware of her case.
19 Dec 2019: On 17 December 2019, the Lyon criminal court sentenced an Internet user, who had disseminated an article insulting journalist Julie Hainaut, to a six-month suspended prison term. The court also ordered him to pay Hainaut €5,000 in damages and €2,000 in legal costs.

28 Nov 2019: On 19 November 2019, Sylvain C. appeared before the Lyon criminal court on charges of “public insults of a racial nature” over his sharing of a violent article from the “DémocratieParticipative.biz” website targeting Julie Hainaut. The indictment requested one year of imprisonment. The judgment is due on 17 December 2019.

Article from "Le Monde" (in French): "Julie Hainaut, harcelée sur Internet par des néonazis, attend toujours justice"

19 Nov 2018: On 18 October 2018, the Paris Public Prosecutor summoned telecommunications operators before the Paris court of first instance with a view to block the website “DemocratieParticipative.biz” that publishes hateful and violent content.

Article from "Le Monde" (in French): "La justice tente de bloquer l'un des principaux sites de la fachosphère"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article published by Rue89Lyon: "Le cyberharcèlement est aussi violent qu’un coup de poing"

Article published by Liberation: "Cyberharcèlement envers une journaliste : le SNJ dénonce l'inactivité du gouvernement"

STATE REPLIES

18 Jul 2018 | Reply of the French authorities

Letter from the French Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe

FOLLOW-UPS

19 Dec 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative welcomes the 6-month suspended sentence and the €5,000 fine handed down to a man
On 14 September 2019, News Letter journalist Sam McBride published an analysis on the possibility of devolution returning to Northern Ireland by 21 October 2019 - the date on which abortion will be decriminalised unless devolution is restored - and concluded that was unlikely. In a 750-word post on his Facebook page, Ian Paisley MP responded to the piece by attacking McBride in a personal capacity, displaying a series of untrue allegations about the journalist, including allegations relating to his character and his schooling. Paisley accused McBride of trying to destroy the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and used several offensive terms to describe the journalist. A DUP Councillor subsequently widened the attack to refer to McBride's parents.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, in view of the apology issued by Ian Paisley, which the journalist accepted, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
14 Oct 2019: On 21 September 2019, by a message posted on his Facebook page, MP Ian Paisley issued an apology to Sam McBride, and had the earlier post containing the attack removed. McBride accepted the withdrawal of the accusations and considered the matter closed.

Article from News Letter: “Ian Paisley apologises for personal attack on Sam McBride”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article published by News Letter: "NUJ condemns MP’s attack on News Letter journalist Sam McBride".

19 Dec 2019

Italy

n° 33/2018

Alert created on: 27 Apr 2018

Journalist Daniele Lupo slapped by former Minister

State replied

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY ▶ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

PARTNER: RSF, EFJ/IFJ

Journalist Daniele Lupo was assaulted on 19 April 2018 in Rome. The journalist was slapped by former minister Mario Landolfi who was being asked a question about state payments allocated to former members of parliament, including the former minister.

UPDATES

05 Jun 2018: Mario Landolfi, former Italian minister of Communications, apologised during a TV broadcast for having slapped the journalist.

Statement by Ossigeno per l’informazione : "Rome: What do you think? Former minister responds with a blow"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Video of the assault.
On 6 December 2017 in the afternoon, the Italian far-right party Forza Nuova attacked the headquarters of left-wing newspaper La Repubblica and declared "war" against its publisher. Around twelve Forza Nuova supporters threw flares at the office of Repubblica, its publisher L'Espresso Group and the weekly magazine of the same name. They carried a banner which said "Boycott L'Espresso and Repubblica". Nobody was reported injured.

The attack came after the paper and publisher had expressed support for a proposed legislation to accelerate citizenship for immigrants' children born in Italy. As a response, Forza Nuova stated on its Facebook page that it was "declaring war" on La Repubblica and L'Espresso, accusing them of "carrying out a genocide of the Italian people" by supporting the citizenship legislation.

Interior Minister Minnitti visited La Repubblica on the same day in a show of solidarity and called the attack unacceptable.

The Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana (FNSI) has also publicly condemned the threats, calling on journalists to continue their work despite fascist groups' reaction, and urging an urgent response from the government and authorities, condemning fascist attacks and threats to journalists.
Italian journalist, writer and anti-fascist activist Enrico Nascimbeni was attacked by two men armed with a knife on 1st August 2018, in front of his apartment’s door in Milan. The attackers clearly intended to hurt him in the face. The journalist, however, was hit in the arm, while trying to protect himself. One of the two men allegedly shouted "communist scum" before leaving. The victim, who had already received several threats by email and on social networks, has stated that he lodged a complaint.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- **RAI report**: "MILANO Colpito giornalista, "Violenza neofascista"
- **Statement by the FNSI (Union of Italian journalists)**: "Aggredito a Milano lo scrittore e giornalista Enrico Nascimbeni. La solidarietà di Fnsi e Alg"

**STATE REPLIES**

- **19 Dec 2019 | Reply from the Italian authorities (information provided by the Ministry of Interior)**
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the Council of Europe (in Italian and English)
Paolo Borrometi, a journalist known for investigative reporting of organised crime in Sicily, had documents and his computer hard-drive stolen when his residence in Rome was broken into in his absence by unknown intruders in the summer of this year. Information about the break-in was announced on August 20 by the president of the Sicilian region, where the journalist is well known as the editor of an online publication LaSpia and for his original reports in other media outlets. It is the latest in a series of acts of intimidation against Borrometi, who lives under police protection. He said no valuables had been taken in the break-in, only materials related to his anti-mafia reporting activities. Paolo Borrometi was forced to leave Sicily after receiving death threats in his home region, as well as being beaten up by hooded attackers in 2014 and having the front door of his family’s apartment in Modica, in Ragusa province, set on fire in the same year. The press freedom organisation Ossigeno per l’Informazione reported that a suspect in that arson attack is currently on trial in Sicily. Mr Borrometi is one of about 20 journalists in Italy now under police protection because of threats related to their investigations into mafia crimes.
On 16 November 2019, Nadège Picard, a journalist for Info line agency, was injured by police fire in Toulouse. At the time she was photographing a tear gas canister on the ground during demonstrations commemorating the anniversary of the "Yellow Vests" protests. Wearing a helmet bearing a "Press" badge and an armband with the same mention, the journalist was clearly identified and had shown her press card to a police officer shortly before the events. While no potential danger warranted intervention, she was hit simultaneously by a shot from a riot gun (LDB) and a shot from a grenade launcher. The medical report found a hematoma measuring 32 centimetres by 21 centimetres with two impacts on the thigh. The journalist referred the matter to the General Inspectorate of the National Police (IGPN) and the Defender of Rights.

Within a year, the National Union of Journalists (SNJ) has reported nearly 200 cases of journalists molested, injured, intimidated and prevented from working by police, gendarmes or magistrates.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by the National Union of Journalists (SNJ): "Police violence and press freedom violations: the Minister of the Interior must be held accountable".
- Statement by the National Union of Journalists - Ile de France district: "Les journalistes doivent pouvoir exercer leur métier en toute sérénité"
- Tweet by Nadège Picard sharing her medical report
- Tweet by Nadège Picard displaying a picture from the hematoma caused by police shots
Mr. Höcke, AfD’s lead candidate in the state of Thuringia, walked out of an interview with journalist David Gebhard of the German state broadcaster (ZDF), threatening the journalist with ‘massive consequences’.

The politician had sat for an interview aired on 15 September 2019, in which he was asked about a comparison between his rhetoric and that of Adolf Hitler. During the interview, Mr. Höcke’s aide reportedly interrupted, asking the interview to be restarted on the grounds that the questions "had strongly emotionally affected" the politician. When his request was turned down, Mr. Höcke walked out, telling the journalist that he "may yet become a politically interesting person in this country".

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, given that no complaint was filed by journalist David Gebhard or his employer, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
On 31 January 2017, the accreditation requests submitted by Mediapart, an online information website, and le Quotidien news show, broadcast by the television channel TMC, on the occasion of the "Presidential Congress" of Marine Le Pen, which were held in Lyon on 4 and 5 February 2017, were turned down by the Front National. The Front National regularly refuses access to its events to these two media, accusing them of "militant" coverage.

The Quotidien team was also prevented from doing its job on 1 February 2017, while Marine Le Pen was heading to the Salon des Entrepreneurs in Paris. The journalists were violently sidelined by security officers. The journalist Paul Larrouturou, who was accredited, had just asked a question to Marine Le Pen about accusations regarding fictitious jobs in the European Parliament targeting her party.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, given that Paul Larrouturou, Mediapart or Quotidien did not follow-up on the case with the competent authorities, the partner organisations to
the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding that it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Video of a "Quotidien"'s journalist sidelined violently during a visit of Marine Le Pen published on Franceinfo website

STATE REPLIES

- 07 Feb 2018 | Reply of the French authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe (in French only)

FOLLOW-UPS

- 06 Feb 2017 | OSCE Freedom of Media Representative calls the violent expulsion of journalist from public event unacceptable
  - Statement by Dunja Mijatović

Turkey  n° 133/2019  Alert created on: 24 Oct 2019

Seven Journalists Accused of Targeting a Deputy Commander-General

SOURCE OF THREAT  State

CATEGORY  Harassment and intimidation of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

Ömer Çelik, Çağdaş Kaplan, Hamza Gündüz, Selman Çiçek, A. Vahap Taş, İnan Kızılkaya, and Kemal Sancılı, all journalists and executives of the now-shuttered Dicle News Agency (DİHA) and daily Özgür Gündem, are being prosecuted under charges of “targeting a participant in anti-terror operations” for an article titled “Name of the siege: Flag 12, Person in charge: Musa Çitil” that
was published in February 2016.

Musa Çitil, then Gendarmerie Commander of the Diyarbakır Province and now Deputy Commander-General, is the complainant in the case. Each defendant faces between one and three years of imprisonment.

Kemal Sancılı, publisher of the now-closed daily Özgür Gündem, has remained in pre-trial detention since 3 January 2017. Though released in October 2017, he was detained again on 11 May 2018. Ömer Çelik, Çağdaş Kaplan and İnan Kızılkaya were also detained and face charges for their journalistic work at DİHA.

At the first hearing in trial on 3 October 2018, the defendants argued that informing the public and sharing news articles is not a crime, it’s a journalist’s job. They also stressed that Musa Çitil was a well-known figure in the region at the time and hence the allegation that he was “targeted” is baseless. The trial is currently pending.

**UPDATES**

18 Dec 2019: During the final hearing on 18 December 2019, all seven journalists were acquitted of the charges.

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**Armenia**

**n° 123/2019**

**Alert created on: 14 Oct 2019**

**Attack on Online Portal Hayeli.am**

**SRC OF THREAT ▶️ Non-state**

**CATEGORY 🔍 Harassment and intimidation of journalists**

A group of four government supporters attacked the offices of the online portal Hayeli.am, highly critical of the Armenian authorities, on 5 October 2019. They threw eggs and posted offensive posters at the entrance of the offices of the publication in Yerevan, the capital of the country.

The four suspects are all known as ardent supporters of Armenian Prime Minister and were protesting against a headline published by the news website the previous week, considered pro-Azerbaijani: “Aliyev’s belated but ‘strong’ response to Pashinian”. The article was about Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s public reaction to a statement on Nagorno-Karabakh made by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian.
“They are lucky because their door is closed. We want to put all this stuff into their office”, said one of the perpetrators, and another one demanded that the media outlet should be closed.

The police launched an investigation into obstruction of the professional and legal work of journalists, which is a criminal offence in Armenia. The four men were interrogated and released with a signature bond imposed as a measure of restraint.

The attack was condemned by all political parties represented in the Armenian parliament and by some members of the government.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

EFJ press release: "Armenia: Journalists’ union denounced attack on online portal Hayeli.am"

STATE REPLIES

17 Dec 2019 | Reply from the Armenian Republic authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Armenia to the Council of Europe

Armenia

Violence Against Reporters During 11 Days of Protests in Armenia

Alert created on: 03 May 2018

State replied

SOURCE OF THREAT ▸ State

CATEGORY ▶ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

PARTNER: RSF, AEJ

Between 13 and 23 of April 2018, during the protests in Yerevan that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, several journalists were deliberately targeted by police. Alina Sargsyan, a reporter for the CivilNet.am news website, was hit by a police officer while she filmed police arresting demonstrators. Azatutyun TV producer Anatoly Egiazaryan was beaten by several policemen while filming a demonstration being dispersed.

Police damaged the cameras of the Factor.am reporter Vrezh Margaryan’s and Radio Azatutyun reporter Nayra Bulgadaryan, to prevent them from filming.
Tatul Hakobyan reporter for CivilNet.am was violently arrested while filming the attempted arrest of the protest movement's main leader, Nikol Pashinyan. Public radio reporter Liana Egiazaryan was injured by a stun grenade in similar circumstances. Ani Keshishyan of 168.am and Factor.am cameraman Hovhannes Sargsyan were injured by non-lethal weapons.

Ani Grigoryan of CivilNet.am, Arus Hakobiyan of Radio Azatutyun, Tehmine Yenokyan of Lragir.am and Artak Hulyan of Shant TV were attacked by plainclothes policemen.

On 19 April, Tirayr Muradyan, a reporter for the Sut.am news website, was badly beaten by plainclothes police officers. The next day, the police bundled him into a car to prevent him from covering a demonstration on a motorway near Yerevan.

Factor.am editor-in-chief Arevik Sahakyan, his cameraman, Gevorg Martirosyan and public radio reporter Vruyr Tadevosyan were beaten up by unidentified individuals in different parts of the capital. In some cases, policemen looked on without making any attempt to intervene.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Article published on Hetq: "Armenia's Human Rights Defender Says the Work of Reporters Must be Fully Safeguarded"

**STATE REPLIES**

17 Dec 2019 | Reply from the Armenian Republic authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Armenia to the Council of Europe (in French)

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**Serbia**

Death threats against journalist Tatjana Vojtehovski and her daughter

Alert created on: 28 Dec 2018

- **Source of Threat**: Unknown
- **Category**: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

Following her coverage of anti-violence protests in Belgrade, Serbian journalist Tatjana Vojtehovski and her daughter have been targeted by death threats on Twitter, on 27 December 2018. The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) reported the incidents to the...
authorities and Tatjana Vojtehovski submitted three criminal charges to the "High Tech Crime Division" of the Serbian police. Strongly condemning the anti-media rhetoric employed by Serbian government officials, several journalists' organisations from Serbia (including UNS and NUNS), Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, and Macedonia called on the competent authorities in Serbia to immediately take all legal measures against individuals who threatened Tatjana Vojtehovski and her daughter and all necessary measures to protect them. The Serbian ministry of Interior announced that the police, in cooperation with the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade, launched an investigation on this case.

**16 Dec 2019**: On 16 December 2019, given the judgment by the Belgrade Court of Appeal, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be "resolved", concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

**14 Jan 2019**: In May 2018, the Belgrade Court of Appeal sentenced a Serbian citizen, Branko Tomic, to eight months of house arrest after he pleaded guilty to making death threats against Vojtehovski and her daughter on Twitter.

🔗 Article from “BalkanInsight”: “Women journalists in the Balkans face online abuse on a daily basis”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

🔗 Mapping Media Freedom report: "Serbia: Journalist Tatjana Vojtehovski receives death and rape threats after voicing support for anti-government protests"

🔗 Statement from the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS): "UNS: Kazniti odgovorne za pretnje Žaklini Cvetković Mladenović i Tatjani Vojtehovski"

🔗 Statement from the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia: "Nadležni organi da zaštite novinarku Tatjanu Vojtehovski"

🔗 N1 news report: "MUP: Nakon pretnji Vojtehovski na Twitteru, pokrenuta istraga"

**STATE REPLIES**

🔗 23 Jan 2019 | Reply from the Serbian authorities (information from the Ministry of the Interior)
On 25 July 2019, Mikhail Romanov, a correspondent with the weekly “Yakutsk Vecherniy”, was found guilty by the City Court of Yakutsk in the Sakha Republic, Russian Federation, on charges of “abuse of freedom of information by publishing fake news that poses a threat to the public”, and fined 30,000 rubles (€408.15), according to news reports. Romanov intends to appeal the sentence.

It is the first time authorities charged a journalist under the provision in the administrative code that pertains to “fake news”, according to the Russian Union of Journalists, a local press freedom group. The charges stemmed from an April 2019 article by Romanov detailing claims that Federal Security Service agents had tortured academic and activist Anton Ammosov, in which Romanov referenced “Big Brother” from George Orwell's dystopian novel “1984”, according to “The Moscow Times”. The Court ruled that Romanov's article was “fake news” under section 9, paragraph 13.15 of the Administrative Code, “Kommersant” reported.

16 Dec 2019: A Vladivostok appeals court has cancelled the 30,000-ruble fine against Mikhail Romanov.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Article published by Kommersant : "Журналиста обвинили в воздействии на подсознание"
- Article published by the Moscow Times : "Russian Journalist Found Guilty Over 'Mind-Controlling' Orwell Reference"
Belgian journalist Patrick Lefèbvre, a contributor to the daily "La Dernière Heure", was arbitrarily arrested in Charleroi on the night of 24 to 25 November 2018. While filming clashes following a demonstration, police arrested him on a public road. Patrick Lefèbvre was wearing an orange jacket bearing the mention "Press". His press card was clearly visible. "While I was filming the police assault, the reporter testified, they asked me to stand in front of them, on the side of the demonstrators. A policeman grabbed me from behind and claimed that I was a fake journalist in order to make a judicial arrest. I was locked in a cell without my shoes and without my belt until 7 am. I was then released without explanation and without even a hearing. Only one senior officer apologized'. On 29 November, the Belgian Association of Professional Journalists (AJP) sent a letter of protest to Prime Minister Charles Michel and Interior Minister Jan Jambon.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, given that no complaint by journalist Patrick Lefebvre or his employer is being reported, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be "resolved", concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.

15 Apr 2019: On 29 November 2018, Patrick Lefebvre stated he would file a complaint with the Standing Committee on Police Service Control (Comité P).
Armin Wolf, a prominent anchor on the Austrian public broadcaster’s main evening news programme ZiB2, received a series of verbal attacks during and following an interview with a representative of Austria’s right-wing FPÖ party, which currently governs the country at the federal level in coalition with the centre-right People’s Party (ÖVP). In the interview, Wolf pressed the representative, MEP Harald Vilimsky, on recent scandals involving extremist statements by party members, including a poem on migration in which the FPÖ vice mayor of the town of Braunau compared people to rats. During the interview, after Wolf drew parallels between a poster by a youth wing of the party and Nazi-era imagery, Vilimsky warned Wolf that his line of questioning “will not remain without consequences” and accused the anchor of deliberately seeking to damage the party. Vilimsky later said he would fire Wolf were he ORF’s director. In the days that followed, FPÖ officials have repeatedly attacked Wolf, with one official, a Vienna city councilwoman, comparing Wolf to a judge on the Nazi-era People’s Court (Volksgerichtshof), which sentenced thousands of political opponents to death following show trials. In an interview on Sunday, the FPÖ-nominated chair of ORF’s board, Norbert Steger, said that if he were Wolf, “I would take a sabbatical, travel around the world on the taxpayers’ dime and reinvent myself”, leading observers to fear an attempt to remove Wolf. Wolf was named Austria’s journalist of the year in 2018.

16 Dec 2019: On 16 December 2019, in view of the statement by Gernot Blümel, Federal Minister of European Union, Art, Culture and Media, that “politics should not interfere in the employment of journalists, regardless of how questions or interviews are assessed”, the partner organisations to the Platform declared this case to be “resolved”, concluding it was no longer an active threat to media freedom.
On 12 May 2019, Harald Vilimsky said in an interview with ORF that, in the interview at stake, he had reacted emotionally as he found the line of questioning manipulative and unfair. Also, he hadn’t threatened Wolf himself, but had suggested the ORF to exercise its responsibility over Wolf’s behaviour.

Video of the interview with ORF (in German)

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

EFJ statement: "Austria: FPÖ politician threatens ORF journalist after critical interview"

Statement by the ORF Editorial Board : "ORF-Redakteursrat protestiert gegen Einschüchterungs-Versuche"

Statement by the Chancellery Minister for the EU, Art, Culture and Media : « Blümel: Politik hat sich nicht in Beschäftigungsverhältnisse von Journalisten einzumischen »

Article published by Der Kurier (in German): "Armin Wolf erklärt, wie es zum “Stürmer”-Vergleich kam"

Article published by Deutsche Welle: “Austria: Far-right politician threatens TV moderator”

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**STATE REPLIES**

14 Aug 2019 | Reply from the Austrian authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Austria to the Council of Europe
On 29 August 2019, in Chernihiv, in northern Ukraine, two unidentified individuals kicked and punched journalist and blogger Igor Stakh near his home and then fled the scene, according to local news reports and a statement by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, an independent trade group.

Stakh was brought to a local hospital where he received stitches for a wound on his chin, was treated for a concussion, and was released, according to those reports.

Stakh told the union that he witnessed the attackers leave in a car and noted the car’s license plate number, but said that local police told him that the license plate information was not important, according to the union statement.

The union and its affiliate in Chernihiv said in their statement that the attack was likely connected to Stakh’s reporting on local corruption, which he publishes on his Facebook page and YouTube channel.

**ADDITINAL INFORMATION**

- National Union of Journalists of Ukraine statement: "У Чернігові до струсу мозку побили відомого місцевого блогера та журналіста"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 16 Dec 2019 | Reply from the Ukrainian authorities
  - Official position of Ukraine

**FREELANCERS**

**Key information:**

Igor Stakh

A journalist and blogger based in Chernihiv in Northern Ukraine. He reports primarily on local corruption which he publishes on his Facebook page and YouTube channel.
On 3 June 2019, a journalist working for the public broadcaster France 3 Normandie was attacked while filming in front of the mosque As-salam in Petit-Couronne, a city near Rouen. The cameraman was alone taking background footage of the mosque for a report on the imam who was facing trial the same day, when suddenly a man, followed by a group of around 20 men, asked him to stop filming. The journalist was hit, thrown on the ground and had his camera broken. He was then locked up in the compound of the mosque, until the police intervened. The journalist was in shock, slightly injured and given five days of medical leave.

One of the alleged assailants was arrested on 3 June and taken into custody. He was then charged with violent robbery in a group on 5 June and set under judicial supervision. According to media report, it would be the president of the association that manages the mosque.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Statement by CGT, CFDT Médias and SNJ of France 3 Normandie-Rouen (in French): "Agression d’un journaliste en Normandie : la presse de plus en plus malmenée"
- Article by RSF: "TV cameraman attacked while filming outside mosque in northern France"
- Article by France 3 Normandie (in French): "Agression d’un journaliste de France 3 Normandie près de Rouen, un homme mis en examen"

**STATE REPLEYS**

- 16 Dec 2019 | Reply from the French authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe (in French)
Bellingcat journalists Michael Colborne and Oleksiy Kuzmenko have been harassed online, including with death threats, in connection with their reporting on far-right groups in Ukraine.

Mid-August 2019, a threatening video appeared on a far-right Telegram channel that promotes the Christchurch shooter's manifesto. The video featured the photographs of Michael Colborne, Oleksiy Kuzmenko and fellow journalists Dmitry Gordon and Valerie Kipnis, being shot one by one with a firearm. It was posted with the following message: “This video is kind of an instruction manual on how to deal with our enemies.” Michael Colborne's photograph showed him as he was beaten up while covering an anti-LGBT rally in Kyiv last November.

Early September, Oleksiy Kuzmenko received an anonymous e-mail containing a link to the video and death threats after he tweeted about a far-right festival held in Kyiv by the Azov movement. He received other insults and threats by various far-right groups.

**STATE REPLIES**

16 Dec 2019 | Reply from the Ukrainian authorities

- **Official position of Ukraine**

**FREELANCERS**

**Key information:**

Michael Colborne

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**Turkey**

n° 55/2019

Alert created on: 20 May 2019

Journalist İdris Özyol Severely Beaten Up

**SOURCE OF THREAT** | **Unknown**

**CATEGORY** | **Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists**
On 15 May 2019, Turkish journalist İdris Özyol was assaulted by unidentified men outside his newspaper’s building, Akdeniz’dede Yeni Yüzyıl, in Antalya, southwest Turkey. He was hospitalised due to injuries to his head, hands and chest. According to reports, Özyol previously received threats from a local politician, in retaliation to his journalistic work. In a letter addressed to the Turkish President, 20 international media freedom organisations urged him to openly condemn the attacks on journalists and to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

On 2 December 2019, Idris Özyol was found unconscious in the street in Antalya and rushed to hospital where he was diagnosed with a brain haemorrhage.

OSCE 11 Dec 2019 | Worried about reports that journalist İdris Özyol was found unconscious on the street, OSCE Media Freedom Representative hopes that the investigation will determine the cause of the accident.

OSCE 17 May 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative deplores physical attacks on journalists in Turkey, urges authorities to swiftly bring all responsible to justice.

Joint letter to President Erdoğan: "International groups condemn attacks against journalists"

Joint letter by 20 media freedom organisations: ‘Turkey: International organisations condemn recent attacks against journalists'
On Saturday 8 December, many journalists covering the "Yellow Vest" protests in France were victims of police violence. About fifteen photographers and reporters were wounded by targeted flashball shots, grenades and stray bullets, even though they were clearly identifiable by their press armbands or holding a camera or a video camera. Two photographers from the daily newspaper "Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France" were "hit by flashguns on the Champs-Elysées in Paris, one on the nape of the neck and one on the knee", reports the newspaper. A journalist from the A2PRL audio news agency also reported that a police officer shot at her, while journalists from Explicite were targeted by flashguns. "The Sunday Journal" reported that one of his photographers was "hit twice by riot police in a scuffle between police and yellow vests" on the Champs-Elysees. According to AFP, one of their photographers in Le Puy-en-Velay was "lightly hit on the arm by a shot from a tear gas canister as he advanced completely on his own towards a police cordon". Several photographers working for the daily newspaper "Libération" have told similar stories and a Reuters news agency reporter was targeted in Bordeaux. From 8 am onwards the police removed and confiscated journalists’ protective equipment (helmets, goggles and gas masks) even though they had their press cards. These confiscations were sometimes carried out under the threat of being placed in police custody. French journalists’ unions have called on journalists to report incidents to the police disciplinary body, the Inspection générale de la Police nationale (IGPN). On Monday, they asked to be received urgently by the President of the Republic.

10 Dec 2019: On 5 December 2019, on the first day of strike against the pension reform, 25 journalists were subjected to police violence in several cities. In Bordeaux, freelance photographer Astrid Lag sustained a calf injury, and freelance photographer Lois Mugen was beaten. In Nantes, a "France Bleu" journalist was shot with rubber balls, and a colleague from the daily newspaper "Ouest France" was hit by a tear gas canister. In Paris, Mustafa Calcin, reporter for the Turkish agency "Anadolu", lost 90% of his vision after being injured in the face. Radio/web journalist Taha Bouhafs and his colleague of "Le Media" Serge Faubert were wounded by grenades. Journalist Gaspard Glanz was injured in the legs and his equipment was partially destroyed. Clearly identifiable by their work tools, the following video reporters were subjected to police violence: Tiphaine Blot, Yann L., Julien Lormier, Gaspard Charpentier, Corentin Fohlen, Martin Nodin, Patrice Nice, Emilie Royer, Tomas Status, Valentine Zeler, Romain Boyer, Medi Donk, Sylvain Forêt, Nicolas de Poulpiquet and the photographer Bsaz.

Twitter thread by the "Reporters en colère" collective
On 20 November 2019, a riot police (CRS) officer, filmed throwing a cobble towards protesters during a protest on 1 May 2019, went on trial in the Paris Criminal Court. The prosecution requested a three-month suspended prison sentence on charges of "willful violence by a person holding public authority who did not lead to incapacity", punishable up to 3 years in prison and a €45,000 fine.

On 16 November 2019, during demonstrations commemorating the anniversary of the "Yellow Vests" protests, in Paris, the full face mask worn by photographer Julien Moreau was smashed by a grenade fragment or a rubber bullet, and RT France journalist Lucas Léger was hit in the head by a paving stone. On 19 November 2019, in Besançon, a Radio Bip/Média 25 reporter was summoned by the police and threatened with prosecution under the law aimed at strengthening and guaranteeing the maintenance of public order during demonstrations (known as "anti-hooligans" law), on the grounds that he wore a gas mask.

On 7 November 2019, the Paris prosecutor announced that two police officers were referred to criminal court for alleged violence during "yellow vests" protests. A total of 212 investigations had been entrusted to the IGPN, of which 146 were closed, 54 were closed without prosecution and 18 were under judicial investigation. According to the Ministry of Justice, 372 complaints against the police were registered throughout France, of which 109 were closed without prosecution and 29 were under judicial investigation.

On 18 June 2019, RSF sent a note to Christophe Castaner, Minister of the Interior, containing 10 recommendations.

On 3 May 2019, Christophe Deloire, Secretary-General of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), said after a meeting with the President of the Republic that he had pledged that "action will be taken in the face of police violence against the press at Yellow Vests protests". The Presidential Office confirmed, without giving further details, that Emmanuel Macron had assured during this interview "that he was following this very closely and that he would follow the file also in the near future". Journalist David Dufresne was awarded the
Grand Prix des Assises des Journalisme at Tours for documenting 102 cases of assaults on journalists out of 795 allegations of "police violence" since the beginning of the "Yellow Vests" movement.

03 May 2019: On 2 May 2019, in response to the persistence of incidents linked to the management of "Yellow Vests" demonstrations by the police, which continue to cause injuries among journalists covering the events, the SNJ, the SNJ-CGT and the CFDT-Journalists unions requested to be received by the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic to inform them about the profession's disapprobation, to call for clarification of these incidents and to obtain the implementation of measures necessary to contain them.

02 May 2019: On 1 May 2019, more than 350 media, journalists, photographers, freelancers signed an open letter denouncing the police violence suffered by the profession since the start of the "yellow vests" movement.

19 Apr 2019: On 18 April 2019, at the presentation of Reporters Without Borders’ 2019 World Press Freedom Index, journalist David Dufresne presented his work on police violence against journalists during the yellow vest demonstrations. He recorded 62 cases of police violence against journalists.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Letter from the UN Working Group on arbitrary detention/UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression/UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association/UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (in French)
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<th>Articles and Reports</th>
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<td>Mapping Media Freedom report: &quot;France: Journalists assaulted by police during Gilets Jaunes protests&quot;</td>
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<td>Tweet by A2PRL journalist Boris Kharlamoff (in French)</td>
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<td>Article by &quot;Journal du Dimanche&quot; (in French): &quot;Gilets jaunes : un photographe du JDD blessé sur les Champs-Elysées&quot;</td>
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<td>Tweets by &quot;Explicite&quot; journalist Paul Conge (in French)</td>
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<td>Video produced by the collective 'Reporters en colère'</td>
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<td>CPJ report: &quot;Police, 'yellow vest' protesters both target journalists in France, Belgium&quot;</td>
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**STATE REPLIES**

23 Jan 2019 | Reply from the French authorities

- Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe

**FOLLOW-UPS**

26 Feb 2019 | The Commissioner for Human Rights sends a Memorandum to the French Government

- Maintaining order and freedom of assembly in the context of the "yellow vests" movement in France

**FREELANCERS**
Belgian Journalists Nicolas Lahaut and Adrien Heylen Fined and Detained by the Police

On Saturday 7 September 2019, on the Champs Elysées, at the Arc de Triomphe, in Paris (France), Belgian journalists Nicolas Lahaut and Adrien Heylen were arrested by the French police while covering a 'Yellow Vests' demonstration for the Belgian political magazine "Wilfried". The police immobilised the two journalists and several demonstrators for more than two hours. Nicolas Lahaut and Adrien Heylen showed their press cards to the police, who nevertheless refused to release them and imposed on them a fine of 135 euros for "participation in a prohibited demonstration".

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article published by RTBF: "Journalistes belges verbalisés lors d'une manif de Gilets jaunes : 'Les policiers nous ont gardés plus de 2 heures' ."

Facebook post by journalist Nicolas Lahaut

STATE REPLIES

04 Dec 2019 | Reply from the French authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe
In Grenoble, the premises of public service radio station France Bleu Isère were partially destroyed following a fire that occurred around 2:30 am on the night of 27 January 2019. According to the investigation’s initial findings, the fire is most likely a deliberate criminal act. Two fire starts were identified; the door of the service entrance was forced. No injuries were reported, but material damage is significant: the entire ground floor of the building was damaged and the editorial offices destroyed. The first floor premises were spared thanks to the rapid intervention of firefighters. Editor-in-chief Leopold Strajnic said there had been no threat against the radio. The editorial team was able to resume work on 28 January in the afternoon, on the premises of France 3 television in Grenoble.

29 Nov 2019: On 26 November 2019, the police invested squats and a shared flat in the Grenoble metropolitan area as part of the investigation into several arson attacks in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The gendarmerie conducted a similar operation in Roybon.

30 Jan 2019: Responsibility for the arson attack that destroyed the premises of France Bleu Isère, on the night of 27 January, was claimed in a message published on 29 January on an anti-capitalist anarcho-libertarian website.

Article published on the website of France Bleu Isère : "Incendie à France Bleu Isère : l'acte revendiqué sur un site anarcho-libertaire"
A smear anti-Semitic campaign followed an Index journalist’s report of the opening ceremony of the Puskas Arena, the new FC DAC football stadium in Budapest on 15 November 2019. Index reporter Gábor Miklósi wrote in his report that he refused to stand when the unofficial anthem of FC DAC, "Without You", was sung by the whole crowd. The song has become very popular in Hungarian right-wing and far-right circles. As Gábor Miklósi explained, he gets up only for the Hungarian national anthem. On Wednesday 20 November, László Toroczkai, president of "Our Country Movement" (far right) organised a press conference in front of the Index Office, to blame Gábor Miklósi for his so-called "anti-Hungarian" behavior. In the wake of the party’s intervention, Hungarian public service television conducted an 8.5-minute interview with Toroczkai on the subject in its morning show. Gábor Miklósi and another Index reporter, Andras Dezso, have been
targeted for a week in the pro-governmental media and in far-right media. On 23 and 24 November, anti-semitic street posters depicting the two Index journalists popped up in Budapest. The posters showed the portraits of the two journalists in front of an Israeli flag with the mentions: “We, too, came from across the border!”; “Constant squabbling, latent anti-Hungarian, treason”. The action was strongly condemned by the National Association of Hungarian Journalists (MÚOSZ) and the US and Israeli embassies in Budapest.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Statement from the National Association of Hungarian Journalists (MÚOSZ): "A MÚOSZ az újságírókat megbélyegző gyűlöletplakátokról"
- Tweet from the US Embassy in Budapest
- 444.hu news report: "Ezeket a plakátokat tették ki Budapesten az Index újságíróiról"
- News report from the National Association of Hungarian Journalists (MÚOSZ): "Antiszemita plakátokon támadják az Index újságíróit"
- Tweet from the Israeli Embassy in Budapest
- Tweet from journalist Szabolcs Panyi showing the street posters
- 444.hu news report: "Valami végleg eltört a Nélküled miatt: a közmédia 8 perces interjút készített Toroczkai Lászlóval a „magyargyűlől” Indexről"
- 444.hu news report: "Toroczkai feljelenti az Indexet, mert szerinte a magyar nép ellen uszítanak"
- Hungarian Spectrum blog analysis of the far-right smear campaign: ""We are of the same blood,"", the prelude to virulent anti-semitic comments"

United Kingdom  
Journalist Owen Jones Attacked by Four Men

- No state reply yet
- SOURCE OF THREAT: Non-state
- CATEGORY: Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
- Alert created on: 20 Aug 2019

Guardian journalist Owen Jones had been socialising with friends at a bar near King's Cross in London on the night of Saturday 17 August 2019. After leaving the bar at about 2am, a group of men approached him and his friends and began hitting Jones in the head from behind. According to reports, Jones fell to the ground after being kicked in the back by one of the men. The other
attackers proceeded to kick him in the back and head. When his friends tried to intervene, they were also assaulted. London's Metropolitan police are investigating and reviewing CCTV footage of the attack but have so far made no arrests.

Jones said that in the last year he has repeatedly been the subject of abuse (including homophobic abuse), threats, and attempts to use physical violence. He said that he has also been the target of an increasing volume of death threats, with photos of him being posted online alongside threatening messages.

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18 Nov 2019: On 6 November 2019, due to its serious nature, the case against three men accused of the assault of Owen Jones was transferred to Crown Court. It will be heard in Snaresbrook Crown Court on 4 December 2019.

Article from The Guardian: “Three charged over Owen Jones assault face crown court date”

30 Aug 2019: According to London Metropolitan police, three men aged 29, 34 and 39 were arrested in connection with the assault on Owen Jones on suspicion of violent disorder and assault occasioning actual bodily harm. Scotland Yard said they had been released on bail until late September and that a file had been passed to the Crown Prosecution Service.

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Croatia
n° 144/2018 Alert created on: 21 Dec 2018

Journalist Ivan Žada Subjected to Threats

SOURCE OF THREAT: Non-state
CATEGORY: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

During October 2018, Croatian journalist Ivan Žada has been the target of threats on two occasions by Ivan Đakić, son of Josip Đakić, a Member of Parliament from Croatia's ruling conservative HDZ party, allegedly because of the journalist's writings about the MP. The threat was first made verbally in public in a café bar in the town of Virovitica, where Ivan Đakić declared that he planned to hire a hitman to physically assault Žada. The second threat was made on Đakić's Facebook wall. In several posts, Ivan Đakić accused the journalist of "writting nonsense, filthy and stupid things" about his father and that he was ready “to stay in prison for life if needed"
for him. He also warned the journalist “to think it over”. Ivan Žada reported the threats and the County State Attorney started an investigation.

**UPDATES**

13 Nov 2019: On 6 November 2019, the Virovitica Municipal Court sentenced Ivan Zhada to a four-month suspended prison sentence with one year of probation for recording a telephone conversation with MP Josip Đakić and posting some of the conversation as a transcript on Facebook and on the Index.hr website.

Article from “Jutarnji Vijesti” (in Croatian): “Novinar Žada uvjetno osuđen zbog neovlaštenog snimanja i objavljivanja razgovora s Josipom Đakićem”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

News article on Index.hr: "Novinar: Prijetio mi je sin HDZ-ovca Đakića, a onda mi je njegov otac psovaao"

Statement from HND: "Otac i sin Đakić prijetili i psovali novinara"

**STATE REPLIES**

14 Jan 2019 | Response from the Croatian authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Croatia to the Council of Europe

**Spain**

Twelve journalists clearly identified as such were the target of police violence on 14 October 2019 in Catalonia, while covering the protests, following the conviction of nine pro-independence leaders to jail terms for secession attempt, in 2017. Most of these assaults were perpetrated by
Police officers, either by the "Mossos d'Esquadra", which are under the authority of the Catalan autonomous government, or by the National Police, which is under the authority of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior. The twelve journalists attacked were Elise Gazengel (digital media Contexto), Pol Pareja (eldiario.es), Jordi Mumbrú (daily "Ara"), Eudald Martínez (radio RAC 1), Albert Salamé and Oriol Izquierdo (Vilaweb.cat), Joan Giralt, Freddy Davies and Núria Gebellí ("La Directa" magazine), Pau Venteo (Catalunya Radio), Victor Asensio (Elprat TV), and a photo-reporter who prefers to remain anonymous. Eudald Martínez is the only victim who was not attacked by police officers: he was hit by a stone thrown by protesters. Most of the incidents occurred around Barcelona's-El Prat airport.

The Federation of Journalists' Trade Unions (FESP), the Union of Journalists of Catalonia (SPC) and the FSC-CCOO journalists' group demand that an investigation be opened and that the responsibility for the attacks be established. They sent their petition to the Catalan Interior Minister, Miquel Buch, and to the Spanish Interior Minister, Fernando Grande-Marlaska.

23 Oct 2019: The number rises further to 59. On 17 October, extreme-right protesters also assaulted a Cuatro TV-crew. On 18 October, in Ronda de San Pere, police shot rubber at identified journalists, injuring an ACN journalist. Two Televisión Española (TVE) teams were assaulted. In Barcelona, a Context journalist suffered an asthma attack, caused by tear gas. El Mundo journalist Quico Sallés said he was hit in the leg by rubber shots before being beaten by five policemen. Photojournalist Juan Carlos Mohr claimed policemen hit him and the camera. Journalist Fermín Grodira reported he was insulted, pushed and beaten by policemen. Catalunya Ràdio journalist Arnau Maymó said he was hit by policemen who told him "You don’t know who we are". El Nacional photojournalist Sergi Alcázar was beaten by a policeman. El Mon director Salvador Cot reported he was hit by National Police Force officers while taking photographs. Freelance journalist Guillem Andrés was beaten by policemen despite identifying himself as a journalist. Photojournalist Emili Puig was hit in the face by rubber bullet despite identifying himself. Cadena SER journalist Albert Prat reported she was hit on the legs despite identifying herself. An Euskal Telebista cameraman was taken to hospital, after policemen ignored his calls for help, for treatment of injuries caused by rubber bullet. AP journalists Emilio Morenati and Bernat Arnangué were hit by rubber shots. Vilaweb photojournalist Albert Salamé was injured in bright daylight. Photographer Paco Freire reported policemen assaulted him, hit and broke the camera, despite identifying himself and no protesters being at the scene. In Girona, Diari de Girona photojournalist David Aparicio was wounded by a rubber bullet, despite wearing a press vest. On 19 October, a TV3 cameraman was beaten by a protester in Barcelona. According to Mèdia.cat, the number of injured journalists is 65, but some remain to be identified.

Statement by the Catalonia journalists union: "El balanç de periodistes agredits a Catalunya la darrera setmana és de 66"
The number of journalists who were victims of violence while covering demonstrations rises to 37. On 15 October, in Tarragona, a protester pulled Canal Reus editor Ariadna Escoda's hair. In Lleida, Catalan News Agency (ACN) journalist Laura Cortés was wounded in the leg. In Barcelona, eldiario.es photojournalist Sònia Calvó, freelance photojournalist Xavi Hurtado, El Món journalist Quico Sallés, three photographers who requested anonymity and a French reporter were hit by policemen. Photographer Mireia Comas was hit on her head by a bottle. Two journalists underwent medical treatment from tear gas. In Sabadell, an ACN editor was injured by thrown stones. On 16 October, La Directa journalist Sira Esclasans was hit by a rubber bullet. Ara photographer Cristina Calderer was injured by a thrown stone. An editor of the newspaper, Xavi Tedó, was reportedly beaten by policemen. Fotomovimento photographer Bru Aguiló said policemen broke his camera and hit him on the knee. Two La Mosca TV workers were hit by policemen and a third by a rubber bullet. Telemadrid reported attacks on two cameramen. In Girona, an ACN editor was hit by objects thrown at policemen. On 17 October, Telecinco TV crew members were attacked by extreme-right protesters, who broke the camera and insulted them. While staying in a group of identified journalists, El Periódico journalist Carles Márquez was hit by a rubber bullet shot from a police van.

 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article published on Media.Cat: "Almenys onze periodistes lesionats durant les càrregues en les protestes per la sentència"

Tweet by SPC union

Tweet du journaliste Eudald Martinez

Statement by FSC-CCOO union: "Media docena de periodistas heridos en las protestas de la sentencia del 'procés'"

Statement by SPC Union: "Doce periodistas agredidos en las movilizaciones de ayer en Catalunya"

 STATE REPLIES

08 Nov 2019 | Response from the Spanish authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Spain to the Council of Europe

21 Oct 2019 | Response from the Spanish authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Spain
### FOLLOW-UPS

<table>
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| 25 Oct 2019   | OSCE Representative for Media Freedom concerned by attacks against journalists during demonstrations in Spain, calls for protection of journalists covering protests.  
    ☑️ Statement by Harlem Désir                                                |
| 22 Oct 2019   | Worried about a context of growing insecurity for journalists reporting on the situation in Catalonia in recent months, with attacks against journalists on the rise, CoE Human Rights Commissioner calls Spanish authorities to investigate all reported cases of attacks against journalists, and to take measures to guarantee the safety of all journalists during demonstrations.  
    ☑️ Statement by Dunja Mijatović                                               |

### Turkey

**Medyascope.tv Correspondent Mehmet Çakmakçı Faces Terrorism-related Charges**

**Alert created on:** 24 Oct 2019  
**State replied**

**STATE OF THREAT:** State  
**CATEGORY:** Harassment and intimidation of journalists

Mehmet Çakmakçı, a correspondent for Medyascope tv, is facing charges of "membership of a terrorist organisation". The indictment against him quote his interviews, phone calls with sources and photos taken on duty as criminal evidence. Çakmakçı was arrested in Diyarbakır on 4 July 2018 in relation to these charges. On 18 October 2018, he was released from pre-trial detention on probation, and his trial is currently pending.

### Italy

**Ukrainian Journalist Detained and her Equipment Seized by Rome Police**

**Alert created on:** 23 Jan 2018  
**State replied**

**STATE OF THREAT:** State

Ukrainian journalist was detained and her equipment was seized by Rome police.
On 25 December 2017 Ukrainian journalist Anastasia Tovt, who works for online newspaper Strana.ua, was detained by the Roman police, subjected to a full-body search and then escorted to the airport. Her two phones and a laptop were also seized by the police. As of 23 January 2018 the equipment still has not been returned.

Tovt was on an editorial assignment to film a performance by feminist group Femen. The arrest happened during the performance, when activist Alisa Vinogradova stole the doll representing baby Jesus from the Vatican’s nativity scene. Vinogradova was arrested for injury to a public official, religious offenses, attempted theft and obscene acts in a public place. Tovt was also detained by the Roman police, allegedly as accessory to Vinogradova.

According to Tovt, several other foreign journalists also filmed the incident. Tovt believes her equipment was seized due to the footage she had filmed during an interview with Vinogradova the day before the performance. This is also why, she believes, she was detained by the police for 12 hours and subjected to a full-body search. The police reportedly didn’t take her press credentials into account. Tovt says no translation of documents was provided, and her rights to a phone call and to speak to a lawyer were denied.

After 12 hours of detention, Tovt was escorted back to the airport by the Roman police.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Article published by Strana.ua (in Russian)
- Video published by Strana.ua
- Report on the incident published by Strana.ua (in Russian)
- First report on the incident published by Strana.ua (in Russian)

STATE REPLIES

- 21 Oct 2019 | Reply from the Italian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the Council of Europe
A court in Istanbul ordered on August 16, 2016 the closure of Özgür Gündem newspaper for spreading alleged "propaganda on behalf of the outlawed terrorist organisation". Shortly after the announcement of the newspaper’s closure by authorities, police raided its office in Istanbul’s Beyoğlu district. During the police raid, the newspaper’s editor-in-chief Zana Kaya, journalists Günay Aksoy, Kemal Bozkurt, Reyhan Hacıoğlu, Önder Elaldı, Ender Önder, Sinan Balık, Fırat Yeşilçınar, İnan Kızılkaya, Özgür Paksoy, Zeki Erden, Elif Aydoğmuş, Bilir Kaya, Ersin Çaksu, Mesut Kaynar, Sevdiye Gürbüz, Amine Demirkiran, Bayram Balci, Burcu Özkaya, Yılmaz Bozkurt, Gülüm Karataş, Gökhan Çetin, Hüseyin Gündüz and Aslı Erdoğan were taken in custody by the authorities. Media freedom organisations condemned the violence of the detentions.

Following the closure of Özgür Gündem, the authorities raided the next day (17 August) the house of Ragıp Zarakolu, a journalist, writer and editor known for his publishing work on minority rights in Turkey. The writer was not home but his books about Armenian, Pontus and Assyrian genocides have been confiscated by the authorities. Houses of journalists Eren Keskin and Filiz Koçali have also been raided by the police for similar purpose.

The total number of staff members detained has risen to 24, P24 reported on 16 August.

18 Oct 2019: On 11 October 2019, Kemal Sancılı, the former publisher of daily Özgür Gündem, was released after completing a 3-year sentence he was given in a previous case. The court overseeing the Özgür Gündem trial had ruled on 10 April 2019 to release Sancılı pending trial but he remained behind bars due to a previous conviction from a case against Demokratik Ulus — a pro-Kurdish weekly that used to be published by the company that also published Özgür Gündem.

08 Mar 2018: On 6 March 2018, the 23rd High criminal court of Istanbul lifted the arrest warrant against Özgür Gündem advisory board member Ragıp Zarakolu on grounds that the court had been notified of his address of residence in Sweden where he now lives in exile. The trial was adjourned to 4th June.

31 Oct 2017: On the fifth hearing in the main trial of Özgür Gündem daily held on 31 October 2017, the Court decided to release the managing Editor İnan Kızılkaya pending trial. The Court also placed him under an international travel ban. The next hearing will be on 6 March 2018.
On 7 September 2017, Aslı Erdoğan was given back her passport, after the travel ban imposed on her was lifted in June 2017.

Eren Keskin, former editor-in-chief of the Özgür Gündem daily, was released on 25 August 2016 after being referred to a court by prosecutors. She was then placed under a travel ban.

On 29 December 2016, Aslı Erdoğan was released and a travel ban was imposed on her pending trial. The hearing is set for 22 June 2017. Zana Kaya was also released.

On 10 November 2016, a prosecutor in Istanbul asked for life sentences for nine journalists and executives from Özgür Gündem. All nine defendants in the case, author Aslı Erdoğan, linguist Necmiye Alpay, journalists Ragıp Zarakolu, Bilge Contepe, Filiz Koçali, editor-in-chief Bilir Kaya, the holder of the newspaper’s publication rights, Kemal Sancılı, the paper’s Responsible Managing Editor İnan Kızılkaya and lawyer and former co-editor-in-chief Eren Keskin, are charged with “membership in a terrorist organisation,” “damaging the unity of the state,” “conducting propaganda for a terrorist organisation” and “establishing an organisation for the purpose of committing crime.”

On 23 August 2016, Özgür Gündem daily’s Editor-in-Chief Zana Kaya and Chief Editor İnan Kızılkaya were arrested on charge of being a member of an illegal organization. Kaya and Kızılkaya who denied the accusations have filed complaints against the police officers for having beaten them during their six-day detention.

23 staff members of Özgür Gündem Daily have been released, according to EFJ. Journalist Aslı Erdoğan is the only one to be kept in detention to date.

P24 update: "Journalists in state of emergency - 10"
EFJ: Kurdish daily shut down and journalists houses raided in Turkey
News on Index' web site: "Turkey: Court orders closure of independent newspaper"
CPJ: Turkish newspaper closed, journalists detained in police raid

OSCE Media Freedom Representative says sentencing journalists to
prison greatly damages media freedom in Turkey following Özgür Gündem trial.

**Statement by Harlem Désir**

15 Feb 2017 | Human Rights Commissioner: Urgent measures are needed to restore freedom of expression in Turkey

**Visit Memorandum on freedom of expression and media freedom in Turkey**

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**Slovak Republic**

n° 124/2019

Alert created on: 15 Oct 2019

**Smear Campaign Against Slovak Journalists**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  Non-state

**CATEGORY**  Harassment and intimidation of journalists

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**NO STATE REPLY YET**  

Former Police President of Slovakia Tibor Gašpar has initiated a hate-filled communication campaign aimed at the editor-in-chief of Aktuality.sk Peter Bardy, journalist Monika Tódová from Dennik N and Jana Šimíčková from the weekly Plus 7. He is targeting journalists who have been covering the assassination of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kusnirova and alleged that Gašpar was involved.

The Slovak police are currently investigating the role of Gašpar on suspicion of unlawfully gathering information on journalists, including Ján Kuciak, who was murdered with his fiancée in February 2018. The police extracted information, including addresses and family connections, from this alleged surveillance operation.

On 6 September 2019, Gašpar published a Facebook post after Peter Bárdy and Martin Turček from Aktuality.sk suggested that his Facebook profile and web page were managed not by himself, but by PR professionals. Although Aktuality.sk provided evidence, Gašpar accused them in his Facebook status of “the biggest lies”, of a bias against him, and of replacing journalistic ethics by “targeted propaganda”. In his more recent Facebook status published on 12 September 2019, Gašpar suggests there is a conspiracy against him being led by George Soros's Open Society Foundation and including Slovakia’s “liberal media”. He accused Aktuality.sk of being “an instrument of propaganda”.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**IPI statement: "Slovak news website targeted in smear campaign"**
On 13 July 2019, two unidentified persons targeted the office of the private TV channel '112 Ukraine' on Dehtiarivska street 21G, in Kyiv, using a grenade launcher. The attack happened at 3:27 a.m. and was recorded by three CCTV cameras installed outside the media building. The incident caused damage to the facade and nearby parked cars. Nobody was injured. At 3:40 a.m. local residents alerted the police who immediately started inspecting the area. A spent tube used to fire a rocket-propelled grenade was found. The press service of the national police qualified the incident as a "terrorist act". The Security Service of Ukraine has started an investigation. Channel 112 had received a warning earlier this week after the TV had planned to broadcast the public premiere of the documentary "Revealing Ukraine". Some employees of '112 Ukraine' received messages with threats. The documentary was considered as "anti-Ukrainian narratives of Kremlin propaganda" by the Ministry of Information Policy. Channel 112 cancelled the broadcasting in order to avoid possible legal consequences and requested police protection, but the police didn't follow-up on the request, neither before the attack or after, according to the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine. '112 Ukraine' now strengthened its protection on its own.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- "112 Ukraine' News Article: "112 Ukraine TV channel in Kyiv came under fire of grenade launchers"
- Statement by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (in Ukrainian): "НСЖУ про атаку на "112 Україна": Безкарність провокує нові напади"
On 7 June 2019, Vadim Makaryuk, a cameraman for the 24th channel and Visti.News portal, was attacked with tear gas and beaten up by unidentified men, while filming a business-related dispute in the Barabashov marketplace in Kharkiv. The assailants took away the journalist's camera and the memory card. Makaryuk spent more than a week in intensive care. He was still in hospital as of 9 July. Doctors diagnosed a hemorrhagic stroke and disrupted motor functions of the right arm and right leg as a result of the injuries. The police has opened criminal proceedings, under the charges of "obstruction of journalistic activities", "threat or violence against a journalist" and "hooliganism with the use of a weapon". Three suspects were placed under house arrest.
On 30 July 2019, about a dozen men dressed in T-shirts with the inscription "Tradition and Order" broke into the press center of the Ukrinform news agency in Kyiv during a press conference of parliamentary candidates. They damaged the door to the press-hall and damaged the equipment and furniture. They pushed and hit Ukrinform staff members. They also threw eggs at, and poured water on, an independent candidate from the town of Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine, Andrey Aksyonov, accusing him of being close to the Kremlin authorities. The other candidate, Serhiy Korshukov, from the European Solidarity party, was not attacked. The two candidates had been speaking about alleged vote-rigging in the recent parliamentary elections. Two media workers of Ukrinform’s technical department and the head of the press center were injured. The whole event was broadcast live on the Ukrinform Youtube channel. Two attackers were taken to the police department for a questioning. Kiev police started a criminal investigation into the incident. The organisation "Tradition and Order" is classified as "radical nationalist" by Human Rights Watch. It is known for its attacks on Ukrainian Roma, LGBT persons and human rights activists.
On 23 May 2019, a group of riot police officers beat La Repubblica Reporter Stefano Origone with batons and kicked him while the journalist was covering clashes among demonstrators near a rally staged by far-right party CasaPound in Genoa, according to a video of the incident published by his employer, Italian daily La Repubblica, and as Origone recounted in a report published in the paper. Police officers beat Origone while he curled in the fetal position, breaking two of his fingers and one of his ribs, according to his report in La Repubblica. He shouted that he was a journalist, but police only stopped beating him when one officer recognised him, Origone wrote.

In his report, Origone wrote that he remained hospitalised in Genoa with heavy bruising and head trauma.
Riot police began beating demonstrators after CasaPound supporters and opponents clashed near the party's rally, according to news reports.

"The journalist, Origone, was in the piazza to do his job in a peaceful manner as a reporter. I don't know how he could have been mistaken for a rioter," said Genoa's chief prosecutor, Francesco Cozzi, according to German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle. Italian prosecutors have opened an investigation into Origone's beating, according to the broadcaster. In an interview published by La Repubblica, Genoa Police Superintendent Vincenzo Ciarambino apologised for the officers' attack on the journalist.

A journalist of Radiosarajevo.ba was attacked and several journalists were threatened by a group of fans of the Football Club Sarajevo on the evening of 27 September 2019 in the capital. The incident happened after the Radio Sarajevo portal and other media reported about a football fan who was condemned to five years in prison in Belarus for drug possession. After breaking into the newsroom, a group of supporters of the football team came to the Radio Sarajevo editorial office where a radio reporter was taken hostage for more than two hours, under threat of killing him and his family, and asked to remove the article from the website. He was then forced to call other editorial boards of portals and newspapers in Bosnia and Herzegovina asking them to delete the same article. The newsroom had received threats over the phone beforehand. That evening, two suspects were arrested and released with a ban on access to media outlets and journalists within 100 meters. Dozens of journalists gathered in Sarajevo on 30 September to demand an end to violence against journalists, urging the authorities to ensure their safety.
CoE Human Rights Commissioner welcomes the prompt reaction of the authorities in #Bosnia and Herzegovina who condemned the attacks against some Radio Sarajevo’s journalists and reportedly arrested the perpetrators.

OSCE Media Freedom Representative condemns attack on Radiosarajevo.ba, calls for better protection of journalists.

Alert published by the Western Balkan’s Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety: "Threats against the lives and limbs of journalists, Radio Sarajevo, Sarajevo"

EFJ statement: "Bosnia and Herzegovina: harsh sanctions requested against Radio Sarajevo assailants"
Police Prevent Photographer Alexandros Stamatiou from Covering the Evacuation of Migrants

Freelance press photographer Alexandros Stamatiou was briefly arrested by police on 23 September 2019 while covering the evacuation of migrants who had found refuge in an abandoned school in Athens' Exarchia district. An official of the daily newspaper "Efsyn" confirmed to the police that Alexandros Stamatiou was covering the event for the newspaper. Nevertheless, the police arrested the journalist, who was handcuffed, evacuated and charged with disturbing public order.

Key information:
Alexandros Stamatiou

A freelance photographer who was arrested while covering the evacuation of migrants from an abandoned school.
Gordan Duhaček, a reporter for Index.hr, was arrested by Zagreb police at the airport when he was about to take an official flight on Monday 16 September 2019. Duhaček was eventually released and found guilty of insulting the police in two posts on his Twitter feed and was charged with a symbolic fine of 100 euros for one of the posts. The journalist denounces that he was sprayed with tear gas on the floor and that he was told in a police car that this was happening to him because he was resisting the system. Duhaček wrote on Twitter in 2018: "Not everyone will resist the system. ACAB!" (All Cops Are Bastards), in which he commented on an incident of excessive police violence at a Zadar night club. The second tweet was a satirical cover of the patriotic song "Vilo Velebit", in which he used the word 'shit' several times, in reference to news reports that Plitvice Lakes, one of the country's main tourist attractions and best known natural parks, regularly discharges local sewage into a nearby lake. The verdict of this last post will be delivered on Thursday. Duhaček has been prosecuted on the basis of an article of the Law on Offences against Public Order and Peace, a fact that represents a threat for the freedom of expression the country.
The arrest and fine of Croatian journalist Gordan Duhacek for his posts on Twitter amount to pure intimidation of the press, says CoE Commissioner.

The Macedonian investigative journalist Tomislav Kezarovski was arrested in May 2013 for allegedly revealing the identity of a protected witness in an article published in 2008 in the magazine “Reporter 92”. Kezarovski's article allegedly revealed the identity of a protected witness, who later admitted to having testified against the defendants under duress. The witness had however not yet been given protection at the time the article was written and in 2013 admitted having given a false statement under pressure from the police. Kezarovski was sentenced in October 2013 to four and a half years in prison. Following international protests he was held under house arrest and returned home on 1 November 2013 after 172 days in detention. On 16 January 2015, the Skopje Court of Appeal reduced Kezarovski’s to two years but upheld his conviction. The EFJ and the IFJ sent a joint letter to Macedonian Prime Minister, Mr. Nicola Gruevski, demanding the review of Kezarovski’s trial process.

18 Sep 2019: On 17 September 2019, the Skopje Court of First Instance ruled that the action brought by Kezarovski to review his conviction was time-barred.

- Statement by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM): "AJM Reacts to decision on Kezarovski"
- Article published by Balkan Insight: "North Macedonia Journalist “Denied Chance’ to Prove Innocence"
Russian Federation  n° 106/2019  

**Russian Police Raid Home of Journalist Aleksandr Nikishin**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
State

**CATEGORY**  
Harassment and intimidation of journalists

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**NO STATE REPLY YET**

On 12 September 2019, police in Saratov, in southwestern Russia, interrogated Aleksandr Nikishin, who hosts a talk show at the independent news website Svobondyye Novosti, for two and a half hours after raiding his apartment and confiscating cellphones, a hard drive, and a credit card, according to the journalist and Svobondyye Novosti editor-in-chief Mariya Aleksashina, who both spoke to CPJ over the phone, and news reports. The journalist said that the police did not file any charges against him, and said they have not returned the items they confiscated. Police spent five hours in Nikishin’s apartment and then interrogated him at the local office of the Investigative Committee, Aleksashina told CPJ. Nikishin told CPJ he was released from police custody after signing a non-disclosure agreement about the nature and content of the questions. Nikishin said his case was supervised by the the central office of the Investigative Commitee in Moscow. The officer on duty at that office told CPJ via phone that he could not comment on the case, saying an investigation was underway. Valeriya Pavelko, who heads Svobondyye Novosti's video department, which often features Nikishin’s program, told CPJ via phone that the news outlet had no affiliation with any political party and was “absolutely independent.”

Russian authorities have recently raided dozens of homes and offices of activists alleged to be affiliated with Navalny and his Russia of the Future political party, according to news reports.
Several Journalists Targeted while Covering Demonstrations

On 11 September 2019, unidentified people intimidated and attacked journalists from TVE and Antena 3 TV channels in front of the Catalan Parliament during a demonstration. The attack happened during the afternoon and the evening and was aired by both TV channels (during and after the incidents). Nobody needed medical care. The attackers threw objects, water and damaged materials of TVE’s team, as well as intimidated both reporting teams from the two TV stations, screaming, shouting and whistling out and on camera. During the last years, the tension in the political debate between Catalonia and Spain has moved to the streets and journalists are suffering the consequences. One of the pro-independence demonstrations -which congregated 300 people- became the scene of violence and altercations to members of the police and some journalists who were reporting on the event.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Statement of the European Federation of Journalists: "Spain: several journalists targeted while reporting demonstrations"
- Statement of the Spanish union FSC-CC.OO: "Firme condena a la agresión sufrida por un equipo de TVE en la Diada"

Journalist Levent Uysal Wounded in Shooting Attack

On 29 August 2019, at around 1 a.m., journalist Levent Uysal was approached by two people on a motorbike who had been waiting outside his home. They were both wearing helmets and pretended to ask for directions. They shot at the journalist six times, hitting him in the leg. Levent Uysal was hospitalised after the attack. He has said that he believed he was targeted as a result of his work.
Levent Uysal was the owner of Yenigün, a recently closed local newspaper, in the northwestern city of Balıkesir. Uysal told Deutsche Welle that despite the attack and the economic issues he has faced, he would continue his journalistic work by broadcasting via the internet.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, strongly condemned the shooting of Levent Uysal, expressing concern about the multiplication of violent incidents against journalists in Turkey. “This is the sixth grave attack since May this year in Turkey. More needs to be done to ensure that this deeply concerning trend is urgently reversed and that journalists are ensured a safe environment to work in”.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- RSF statement: "Journalist wounded in shooting attack in northwestern Turkey"
- Article published by Deutsche Welle: "Gazeteci Uysal: Haberlerim nedeniyle saldırıya uğradım"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- OSCE Media Freedom Representative strongly condemns shooting of journalist in Turkey, calls for thorough investigation
  - Statement by Harlem Désir

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**Serbia**, n° 112/2018  
Alert created on: 15 Oct 2018

**Journalist Zeljko Matorcevic Physically Attacked**

**SOURCE OF THREAT** → Unknown  
**CATEGORY**  → Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

Zeljko Matorcevic was attacked on 9 October 2018 by an unidentified young man who first followed him, then suddenly hit him at the head, and when Matorcevic fell to the ground, continued to hit him. Matorcevic suffered serious body injuries: his cheekbone was broken and in the following days he would undergo a surgical procedure. Matorcevic is editor-in-chief of Žig Info portal.
02 Sep 2019: The Public Prosecutor's Office dismissed the complaint against J.P., who was suspected of having attacked Željko Matorčević on 9 October 2018, finding no grounds for suspecting that J.P. had committed the criminal offense of physical assault, or any other criminal offense prosecuted ex officio.

Article from N1 Info (in Serbian): “Odbačena prijava protiv osumnjičenog za prebijanje urednika portala Žig info”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mapping Media Freedom report: "Serbia: Editor-in-chief of local news website sustains serious injuries in physical assault by unknown perpetrator"

Statement by the Western Balkan's Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety: 'Police to find perpetrator on our colleague Matorcevic'

STATE REPLIES

09 Nov 2018 | Reply from the Serbian authorities

Letter from the Serbian Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe

FOLLOW-UPS

OSCE 15 Oct 2018 | OSCE Representative strongly condemns physical attack against Željko Matorčević.

Tweet by Harlem Désir

Serbia

n° 101/2019

Journalists Physically and Verbally Attacked at Marakana Stadium

Alert created on: 30 Aug 2019

No state reply yet

SOURCE OF THREAT  ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY  ▶ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
On 28 August 2019, a TV N1 crew and TV channel Federalna correspondent Dejan Kozul were attacked while reporting ahead of the football Champions League game between Red Star and Young Boys in Belgrade, Serbia.

N1 journalists were shooting a news report about a war tank that Red Star fans had parked outside the Marakana stadium. While recording interviews, a group of persons yelled "spies", "thieves", "American mercenaries" at the journalists, and tried to break their camera and microphone. The same day, Federalna correspondent Dejan Kozul was about to shoot on the same topic, when a group of men questioned him about his work and citizenship, to which he replied he was making a report for the Sarajevo TV station.

In addition, the daily Danas was denied accreditation by the Red Star club management.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- News report by N1 TV: "Regional journalists’ network condemns attacks at Red Star stadium"
- Statement by the Western Balkans’ Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists’ safety: "Enable safety reporting to journalists on sport events"

**FOLLOW-UPS**

- OSCE 30 Aug 2019 | OSCE representative for Media Freedom condemned physical attacks & threats against N1 and Federalna TV journalists by football fans and called on the Serbian authorities to condemn these attacks and prosecute the perpetrators.
  - Tweet by Harlem Désir
A report published on 30 July 2019 by the International Press Institute (IPI) in cooperation with the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) concludes that Turkey systematically uses criminal prosecution to target journalists and other persons who expressed criticism of the authorities and fails to guarantee their rights in court. This report aims to collect data on media freedom/freedom of expression cases with a view to documenting more accurately journalists’ trials.

The July 2019 Turkey Free Expression Trial Monitoring Report analyses the extent to which Turkish courts protect the fundamental rights of journalists and other persons who exercise their freedom of expression. It is based on data collected by MLSA covering 86 hearings held between 20 February and 31 May 2019, the majority of which involved journalists. The report found that 70% of the 492 defendants involved in the hearings were charged with terrorism-related offences. Yet despite the gravity of the charges, indictments cite insufficient and untenable evidence: In 81% of the cases monitored, the evidence (published articles, photographs or social media posts, etc.) related directly to the defendants’ professional occupation. Although the evidence did not support the charges, 40 defendants were held in pre-trial detention, 26 of them for longer than 12 months.

Moreover, the data on court proceedings show breaches of the right to a fair trial: In 20% of the cases the presiding judge, and in 33% of the cases a member of the judicial panel, changed during the proceedings; 47% of judicial deliberations did not take place in private, but were held in open court with prosecutors, defendants and the audience present; 52% of the hearings were adversely affected by material conditions in the courtroom.

The July 2019 Turkey Free Expression Trial Monitoring Report is part of comprehensive trial monitoring across Turkey that began in June 2018. The first report under the programme, published in January 2019, concluded that Turkish courts systematically ignored domestic and international standards set for securing the right to a fair trial. The July 2019 Report concludes that the Turkish judicial system, including courts at various instances, continues to violate fundamental rights to liberty, freedom of expression and fair trial guaranteed in the Turkish Constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights and related case-law.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- IPI - The July 2019 Turkey Free Expression Trial Monitoring Report
On 4 October 2017, a car belonging to Zornitsa Akmanova, a reporter for the TV programme 'Lords of the Air', was set on fire in the central Bulgarian town Karlovo. The 'Lords of the Air' programme sets out to expose and confront cases of fraud and other dishonest business practices. On the following day, the owner of a local car garage, Plamen Dimitrov, was arrested in connection with the attack on Ms Akmanova’s car. Just a few hours before the arson, the local authorities had closed down Mr Dimitrov's garage business. Police intervention was prompted by high-profile TV reports by Ms Akmanova alleging Mr Dimitrov's involvement in a number of acts of fraud against clients. Ms Akmanova has stated that she had previously received several threats warning her to stop reporting on Mr Dimitrov’s activities.

On 9 October, Mr Dimitrov was released on bail after being charged on a single count of fraud against a client. No charges have been brought in connection with the burning of Ms Akmanova’s car or the threats she has received. Bulgarian media report that following a number of previous claims made by local people against Mr Dimitrov, three local prosecutors have dropped the investigations on account of his reported relationship with a senior official in the Karlovo municipality. Subsequently those cases were re-directed to the regional prosecutors in Plovdiv, Bulgaria’s second largest city, but prosecutors there have also declined to carry out investigations against the garage owner.

The destruction of Zornitsa Akmanova’s car follows threats and acts of violence against other journalists working for ‘Lords of the Air’. In the recent past another reporter for the programme, Eva Veselinova, was physically assaulted while filming an investigation into alleged fraudulent practices at a construction company. A third reporter, Dimitar Varbanov, received threats related to his investigations of the activities of a local businessman.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- EU Scoop report : ‘Bulgarian reporter’s car set on fire’

**STATE REPLIES**

- 27 Aug 2019 | Response from the Bulgarian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe
On 10 May 2018, investigative journalist Hristo Geshov was attacked and assaulted outside his home in the town of Cherven Bryag in northwestern Bulgaria, desant.net reports.

“I attribute this attack entirely to my investigative reporting and to the warnings I sent to the authorities about the management of finances by the Cherven Bryag municipal government,” Geshov wrote in a Facebook post a few hours after being punched in the stomach and back by an unidentified assailant. “Despite the pain and many bruises, I am sure that I will not abandon my work, and the attack against me is a sign that I am right,” he added.

Geshov writes for the regional investigative reporting website Za Istinata, works with the journalistic online platform “About the Truth” and hosts a programme called “On Target” that is available on YouTube.

He began being harassed after a series of articles about municipal government irregularities in Cherven Bryag in which he claimed, inter alia, that three municipal councillors were using European Union funds to renovate their homes.

Reporters Without Borders condemns the attack. “This attack is indicative of the degree to which investigative reporters are now being targeted by groups that want to silence them and impose terror,” said Pauline Adès-Mével, the head of RSF’s EU-Balkans desk. “We hail the swift reaction of the police and medical services, but the Bulgarian authorities must also provide physical protection to journalists who, like Hristo Geshov, are the targets of threats of this kind.”

On 14 May 2019, according to the statement of Hristo Geshov, the journalist was abducted by three unidentified individuals, who drove him in their car all night, until his

**PARTNER:** Index, AEJ, CPJ, EFJ/IFJ, RSF
A report on the illegal water supply was removed from the Zov News website. On 14 May 2019, Zov News and Bivol announced that Geshov had disappeared. Maria Dimitrova, an editor-in-chief of Zov News, said that Geshov's mother and sister had contacted her earlier that day saying they were unable to establish contact with the reporter. Dimitrova stated that she received a phone call early on 15 May from a man who did not identify himself, who asked that she remove the article and the video of Geshov's investigation on the alleged illegal water supply and sewage system in exchange for Geshov's release. On 15 May 2019 she removed the article from Zov News and the video from YouTube. Geshov has testified about the incident to the Bulgarian national police. CPJ could not independently verify the journalist's account of his abduction.

Article by CPJ: "Bulgarian reporter Hristo Geshov says he was briefly abducted; news outlets attack him"

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Report published on Mapping media freedom platform: "Bulgarian journalist: 'I attribute this attack entirely to my investigative reporting'"
- RSF: Bulgarian investigative reporter attacked in provincial town

**STATE REPLIES**

- 27 Aug 2019 | Response from the Bulgarian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe
- 05 Dec 2018 | Reply from the Bulgarian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe

**Bulgaria: Journalists Injured by Police During Protest**

State replied

SOURCE OF THREAT ➤ State
On 12 April 2019, at least two journalists were injured while covering clashes between police and protesters in Gabrovo, a town in central Bulgaria, according to local media reports. Veselin Tsvetanov, a reporter, and Daniel Stefanov, a cameraman, who both work for Bulgarian internet broadcaster Radio 999, reported that they had been hit by the police while they covered a demonstration, according to those media reports. Stefanov told Radio 999's affiliated TV station, TV 999, that that he was hit by a police baton above his left eye and required four stitches, according to a transcript of the interview by Bulgarian news website dir.bg. Tsvetanov was also hit on the head but did not require medical attention, according to Stefanov. CPJ emailed questions to the press center of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, but did not immediately receive a response. The Gabrovo police chief resigned on 12 April after Prime Minister Boyko Borissov criticised the police for mishandling the protests, according to the Bulgarian News Agency, the country's public news agency.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Information published by CPJ: "Journalists injured by police during protest in Bulgaria"

**STATE REPLIES**

- 27 Aug 2019 | Response from the Bulgarian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe

**Bulgaria**

n° 83/2019  
Alert created on: 22 Jul 2019

**Reporters Atanas Tchobanov and Asen Yordanov Subjected to Judicial Probe**

- **SOURCE OF THREAT**: State
- **CATEGORY**: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

In June 2019, the Bulgarian Prosecution Office opened an investigation on journalists Atanas Tchobanov and Asen Yordanov, who work for the independent news website Bivol. The timing and subject of the investigation suggest that it might come as a retaliatory measure in response
to their reporting in March 2019 on a real estate scandal involving government officials, including Prosecutor-General Sotir Tzatsarov. Tchobanov and Yordanov are being accused of being themselves involved in a real-estate scandal. The investigation started after a report was published by the anti-corruption NGO BOETS. However, BOETS denied issuing such a report, and claimed it was falsified. Following the accusations against them, Tchobanov and Yordanov published documents that disproved these accusations. When they requested more details about the investigation and its justifications, the journalists received no response, even after Reporters Without Borders had filed similar requests. Reporter Without Borders is concerned that this investigation might be a measure of intimidation to deter journalists from reporting on the scandal the two journalists revealed.

09 Aug 2019: On 2 August 2019, as part of its investigation into the largest data breach in the country’s history, Bulgaria’s Special Prosecutor’s Office issued a European Investigative Order (EIO) to France, where Atanas Tchobanov has a permanent address.

27 Aug 2019 | Response from the Bulgarian authorities

Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe

Alert created on: 26 Jan 2016

Bulgaria

Journalist Stoyan Tonchev Brutally Attacked

State replied

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY 🔵 Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ, AEJ, CPJ, Index, RSF

Stoyan Tonchev, a reporter for the news portal 'Hello Bulgaria', was assaulted and beaten with baseball bats on 14 January 2016 in his hometown Pomorie. The journalist, who was a candidate during the last local elections in Bulgaria, was left with serious head and skull injuries and is still under medical care. The assailants allegedly asked Tonchev if he was going to continue to write articles after this attack. The following day, the Bulgarian minister of Interior Affairs issued a statement announcing that two people had been detained in relation with this assault. The investigation is still in progress. Welcoming the swift reaction by the authorities Dunja Mijatović,
the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, said: “I urge the authorities to thoroughly investigate the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice. There must be no impunity for attacks against journalists.”

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Press release by CPJ: "Bulgarian journalist bludgeoned"
- Statement by AEJ in Bulgarian
- Statement by AEJ: "AEJ Bulgaria condemns the brutal beating of Stoyan Tonchev"
- Article published on NovaNews website (in Bulgarian)
- Article published on the Bulgarian Times website (in Bulgarian)

### STATE REPLIES

- 27 Aug 2019 | Response from the Bulgarian authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe
- 27 Jun 2018 | Reply from the Government of Bulgaria
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe

### FOLLOW-UPS

- 26 Jan 2016 | OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media condemns violent attack on journalist in Bulgaria, urges investigation
  - Statement by Dunja Mijatović

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**Italy**  
n° 89/2019  
Alert created on: 01 Aug 2019

**Italian Interior Minister's Security Escort Officer Threatens a Journalist**

**SOURCE OF THREAT**  
State

**CATEGORY**  
Harassment and intimidation of journalists
On 30 July 2019, on the beach of Milano Marittima, Emilia Romagna, two officers of the official escort of the Italian Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, tried to prevent freelance journalist Valerio Lo Muzio from filming a national police jet ski that had taken on board the Minister's son for a sea ride. One of the two officers intimidated and threatened the journalist, preventing him from approaching the scene. When questioned by the daily newspaper "La Repubblica" about the incident, the Ravenna Police Directorate explained that it had opened "an investigation into the possible misuse of administrative resources". The president of the Italian Order of Journalists, Carlo Verna, asked Minister Salvini to apologise to the threatened journalist. The president of the Italian Federation of Journalists (FNSI), Beppe Giulietti, has requested the formal identification of the agent who intimidated and threatened the journalist.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- "La Repubblica" news report: "Figlio di Salvini sulla moto d'acqua della Polizia: 'Da Salvini ancora nessuna scusa per l'intimidazione al giornalista' "
- Video of the incident on "La Repubblica" website: "Il figlio di Salvini al mare sulla moto d'acqua della polizia. E gli agenti vietano le riprese"

**STATE REPLIES**

- **22 Aug 2019** | Reply from the Italian authorities (Ministry of Interior)
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Italy to the Council of Europe (in Italian)

**FREELANCEERS**

**Key information**:

Valerio Lo Muzio

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**Serbia**

n° 82/2019

Alert created on: 19 Jul 2019

**N1 TV Reporter in Kosovo Zana Cimili**

**Received Death Threats**

**SOURCE OF THREAT** → Unknown
On 4 July 2019, Zana Cimili, a correspondent for TV Channel N1 in Kosovo*, received death threats on social network, including against her daughter. The anonymous person said he had "a life desire to kill an Albanian, even an Albanian child," and he hoped "for a new war in Kosovo during which the Albanians will feel Serbian rage." On 6 July 2019, a Serbian national was arrested by Serbia’s police regarding this case, over “spreading of religious and national hatred and imperil safety”, N1 reported. A court placed the suspect under house arrest and banned him from using the Internet.

*All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation’s Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

**UPDATES**

26 Jul 2019: On 24 July 2019, the Special Prosecutor on High-Technology Crime filed an indictment with the Belgrade High Court against Nenad Vujatov, 33, on suspicion of threatening TV N1 journalist Zani Cimili via social media. A four-year prison sentence was requested.

Article from “Danas” (in Serbian): “TV N1: Optužnica protiv Nenada Vujatova zbog pretnji novinarki Zani Cimili”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Statement by the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) (in Serbian): "Osumnjičenom da je pretio novinarki N1 određen kućni pritvor"

Article from N1 News: "Serbia's police arrest man suspected of threatening N1 reporter"

**STATE REPLIES**

20 Aug 2019 | Reply from the Serbian authorities (Ministry of the Interior)

Letter from the Permanent Mission of Serbia to the Council of Europe
After a critical comment on the German right wing party "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD), investigative journalist Georg Restle became victim of online harassment culminating in a death threat received by letter. On 11 July 2019, Restle had described the AfD as the "parliamentary arm of a right-wing extremist movement" in a commentary at the news broadcast "Tagesthemen". He was referring to the "Identitäre Bewegung", an organisation recently classified as a "right-wing extremist movement" by the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution. In the statement, he demands the AfD to be classified as right-wing extremist, too. As a reaction to the commentary, Restle faced harsh criticism on social media and from the AfD itself. Party leader Jörg Meuthen called Restle an "enemy of democracy" and freedom of expression during a speech in Cottbus. His employer, the public service broadcaster "Westdeutscher Rundfunk" (WDR) has filed a criminal complaint.

19 Aug 2019: According to the WDR, the e-mail against Restle seems to originate from a sender who also threatened Henriette Reker, Mayor of Cologne, and Andreas Hollstein, Mayor of Altena. Investigations into 200 similar threats with right wing content, for which a man from Schleswig-Holstein is being suspected and was ordered pre-trial detention in April 2019, have been centralised in Berlin.

Article from Berliner Zeitung (in German): “Generalstaatsanwaltschaft ermittelt im Fall Georg Restle”
The journalist Nadia Daam is being subjected to a hate campaign on the internet following the broadcast of her programme on Europe 1 radio, on 1 November 2017. She denounced the sabotage by members of the platform Jeuxvideo.com’s forum “Blabla 18-25” of a telephone line "anti-relou" (anti-bullies/harassers), which was opened to help female victims of street harassment. Nadia Daam described the forum as "a non-recyclable rubbish bin".

Since then, the journalist has been the victim of attacks on her electronic accounts, received insults of a pornographic nature, death threats, threats of rape, and hate speech on social networks. According to Europe 1, an individual also tried to break into her home in the middle of the night.

Europe 1 announced that it has filed a complaint at a police station in the 8th arrondissement of Paris for "threat of crime against persons".

**11 Jun 2019:** On 21 March 2019, the Rennes criminal court found a philosophy student guilty of threats of crime and sentenced him to five months in prison suspended and €2,500 in damages. Three other persons identified by the investigation remain to be tried.

**Article from Le Monde (in French):** "Prison avec sursis pour un étudiant qui avait harcelé la journaliste Nadia Daam"
crime threats and death threats and sentenced to six months of suspended prison, 180 hours of community service, an obligation to find a job or training, and €5,000 in damages.

On 3 July 2018, the Paris Criminal Court found two men guilty of crime threats and sentenced each to six months of suspended prison and €2,000 euros in damages.

Article from Libération (in French): "Menaces sur Nadia Daam: la bassesse à la barre"

Article from Le Monde (in French): "Deux hommes condamnés à de la prison avec sursis pour avoir menacé la journaliste Nadia Daam"

Report published on Mapping Media Freedom platform: "France: Journalist victim of harassment campaign"

Campaign of support: "Soutien à notre chroniqueuse Nadia Daam, harcelée et menacée"

Nadia Daam's chronicle on Europe 1

Letter from the French authorities to the Council of Europe
On 27 July 2019, Moscow police violently dispersed thousands of protesters who had taken to the streets in support of free and fair elections. Police used batons and fists to beat those who attended the protests; at least five journalists were reportedly injured in the crackdown. Evgeny Feldman, a photographer for Meduza, suffered a broken nose after a policeman hit and damaged his camera. Cameraman Alexandr Soloukhin also suffered a broken nose as a result of police violence. Balaram Usov, editor of the student magazine DOKHA, was hospitalised for his injuries; he was reported to have suffered a hand injury after being pushed against a door and a head injury after being struck in the head by a police baton. Photographer Valery Tenevoy was reportedly detained at the protest before being taken to a police van where he was beaten. Reporter Elena Sheveleva of RBC was also reported to have been assaulted while covering the protests. Ilya Azar, a reporter with Novaya Gazeta, was detained at the protest despite presenting his press card to the police.

Police also targeted journalists who were reporting on the protests from their newsrooms. Police detained broadcast host, Vladimir Milov, after they broke into the studio of the Navalny Live channel, and Editor-in-chief, Aleksandra Perepelova, was presented with a summons for questioning after they broke into the TV channel “Rain”. Perepelova was summoned as a witness for under article 141 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (“obstructing the work of election commissions”).

06 Aug 2019: On 3 August 2019, police arrested and detained more than 600 protesters and at least 14 reporting journalists, after about 1,500 people took to the streets of Moscow to protest the disqualification of several opposition candidates from local elections. Vladimir Romensky, a reporter with the broadcaster “Dozhd”, was arrested at Pushkin Square when he gave a branded microphone to his colleague, he said. Policemen searched his backpack and found his accreditation and editorial assignment. He was taken to a police van, released shortly afterwards, then arrested again and driven to a police station. Elena Vanina, a reporter with the business newspaper “Vedomosti”, was also arrested at Pushkin Square. She was driven to a police station. Nikita Pavlyuk-Pavlyuchenko, a reporter with “Snob Media”, was arrested at the protests, despite repeated attempts to show his accreditation documents. “Mediazona” reporter Anastasia Yasnitskaya said she was also briefly detained despite showing a press-card. Among other detainees were Dutch journalist Joos Bosman, “MBH-Media” reporters Alexandra Semenova and Alexey Stepanov, and “Baza” reporter Petr Koronaev. According to the Russia Union of Journalists, Kirill Ataniyazov, Natalia Panferova, Arkady Dubnov, Anton Belitsky were also arrested, while the Journalists and Media Workers Union reported that Dmitry Dyomushkin of White News, and Aleksei Mashchenko were detained. All fourteen were released without charge.
The CoE Commissioner for Human Rights recommends that the Russian authorities ensure that human rights are respected in the context of policing of assemblies.

OSCE Representative expresses concern about obstruction to journalists’ activities at Moscow demonstration, calls for respect of media’s role during public events.

The Turkish Journalists’ Union (TGS), an IFJ/EFJ affiliate is taking legal action against the Foundation for Political Economic and Social Research (SETA), a pro-government organisation which published a report containing information on journalists working for Turkish language services of international broadcasters, including the BBC and Deutsche Welle. According to media reports, TGS accused SETA of blacklisting journalists working for these media outlets, following the report entitled “Turkey extensions of international media organisations” on media coverage of major events in Turkey such as the 2016 failed coup. It detailed past employment and social media postings of journalists working for these media organisations. TGS added that it is joined in the lawsuit by journalists mentioned in the report. In the meantime, SETA claimed the report only focused on information about professional activities of those named therein.

Partners: EFJ/IFJ, AEJ, Index, IPI, RSF
In July 2019, the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) filed a petition for an inquiry into the SETA report, demanding that the authors of the report be punished for “inciting the public to hatred and hostility,” “open incitement to commit a crime,” “unlawfully recording personal data,” and violating the “right to peace of mind”. According to the Ankara Chief Prosecutor’s Office's response sent on 1st August 2019 to MLSA, the suspects’ actions fell under “the right to spread one’s opinions”. The prosecutor’s office also noted that the report lacked expressions that incited people to resort to violence against the journalists listed in it. It argued that as the information about the individual journalists named in the report was collected from online resources, it did neither violate the ban on recording personal data.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Joint NGO statement: "Turkish think-tank report escalates harassment of journalists"**

**Greece**

**Weekly Athens Voice Attacked by Anarchist Group**

On 4 July 2019, the Greek weekly newspaper Athens Voice’s offices were attacked by the Rouvinokas anarchist group in the Greek capital. According to media reports, around 15 assailants used steel bars to smash furniture and equipment and threw black paint on the offices’ walls. None of the journalists was reported injured. The Rouvinokas anarchist group claimed responsibility for the attack on the internet, saying it occurred following a controversial social media comment that appeared on the newspaper’s online edition regarding the death of an Armenian woman who died of injuries after trying to evade a possible inspection of her residence and work permit. Five years ago, an arson attack had extensively damaged Athens Voice offices.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Journalists’ Union of Athens Daily Newspapers Statement (in Greek) : "Η ΕΣΗΕΑ καταδικάζει την επίθεση στα γραφεία της εφημερίδας «Athens Voice»"**
On 16, 17, 18 June 2015, French journalists Pierre Haski, founder of the information website Rue89, Denis Sieffert, Director of the weekly magazine Politis, and Daniel Schneidermann, founder of the website Arrêt sur Images, were victims of a harassment campaign targeting their private lives. In all three cases, a hacker took control of their private telephone lines and made telephone calls to the police requesting their intervention at the homes of the targeted journalists on the basis of wholly fabricated personal dramatic incidents. According to the targeted journalists, the alleged perpetrator of those actions is the Zionist Franco-Israeli hacker Grégory Chelli, alias Ulcan, who lives in Ashdod, in Israel. A judicial inquiry is already underway concerning Ulcan who is suspected of having caused the premature death of Rue89 journalist Benoît Le Corre’s father, in August 2014. The father of Benoît Le Corre died as a result of a heart attack shortly after receiving a phone call informing him about the death of his son. The Paris Prosecutor’s office opened a preliminary inquiry into the attacks on Mr. Haski, Mr Sieffert and Mr Schneidermann. The IFJ and the EFJ call on authorities to open judicial proceedings against and to bring to an end the impunity apparently enjoyed by the perpetrator or perpetrators of those harassment operations.

22 Jul 2019: On 17 June 2019, the investigating judge at the Paris Court put Grégory Chelli on trial before the Court of Assize for “willful violence with premeditation resulting in
unintended death”, “false” and “slanderous denunciations”, “repeated malicious phone calls”, “identity theft”, and “death threats”.

Article from "Le Figaro" (in French): "Le hacker franco-israélien Ulcan risque les assises"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- National Union of Journalists press release (Syndicat national des journalistes) : 'Des journalistes pris pour cibles : le SNJ interpelle les autorités françaises'
- IFJ statement : 'Journalists targeted : The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) supports the call from its French affiliates'

STATE REPLIES

- 07 Feb 2018 | Reply of the French authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe (in French only)

RELEVANT COE INSTRUMENTS

- 28 Jun 2018 | Factsheet on Harassment and Intimidation of Journalists
  - Overview of the ECHR case law and other relevant Council of Europe resources related to Harassment and Intimidation of journalists

DISCLAIMER
This section presents a non-exhaustive selection of CoE instruments and ECHR case-law. This information is not a legal assessment of the alert and should not be treated or used as such.

Greece 

Greece 

Greece

15 Jul 2019

State replied

Greece 

Greek CNN Reporter Mina Karamitrou's Car Destroyed by Bomb

SOURCE OF THREAT ➤ Unknown

CATEGORY ➤ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
On 14 May 2019 at about 2:30 a.m., flammable liquid placed under Mina Karamitrou's car exploded, while the car was parked outside the journalist's home in the northern Athens suburb of Papagou, according to local news reports. The car was destroyed but no one was injured, according to the reports. Karamitrou is a police reporter for CNN's Greek edition, according to her author page on the network’s website. She also works for private broadcaster OPEN TV. Police have opened an investigation into the bombing, according to Greek news website Skai. CNN Greece condemned the attack in a statement, calling it "an attack on the entire journalistic world." Greek government spokesperson Dimitris Tzanakopoulos condemned the attack on Twitter, describing it as a "targeting" of freedom of the press, and saying that the perpetrators should be held to account. The Journalists’ Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers condemned the attack stating "violence, threats and blackmail will not force colleagues to shut their mouths".

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Time Magazine news report: "Here Are the 10 'Most Urgent' Threats to Press Freedom Around the World"
- Statement by the Journalists’ Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (ESIEA) (in Greek)

STATE REPLIES

- 15 Jul 2019 | Reply from the Greek Authorities
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Greece to the Council of Europe

Austria

Kyrgyzstani News Website 24.kg Facing Damages in Austrian Courts

Alert created on: 12 Jul 2019

- Lvl. 2
- No state reply yet

SOURCE OF THREAT: State
CATEGORY: Harassment and intimidation of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

In April 2019, an Austrian court sentenced the Kyrgyzstani news website 24.kg to pay T&F Trade and Finance GmbH, a company quoted in an article on the breakdown of a business partnership in Kyrgyzstan, €40,000 in damages. T&F had argued that 24.kg’s qualification in the article of ‘pseudo investors’ was defamatory, but instead of pursuing legal action in Kyrgyzstan, T&F had
relied on Article 1330 of the Austrian Civil Code to bring a civil law suit in Austria, where it is registered.

When publishing the article, the journalists acted in good faith, based on the evidence they had received, a spokesperson for 24.kg said. T&F’s version of events was subsequently published as well. Barbora Bukovska, Senior Director for Law and Policy at ARTICLE 19, denounced a case of ‘libel tourism”, a practice where wealthy plaintiffs use defamation laws in other jurisdictions to silence those who try to hold them to account elsewhere. She expressed concern that 24.kg is unlikely to get a fair trial in Austria on matters located in Kyrgyzstan and that the Austrian courts are being used to silence investigative journalism in Kyrgyzstan.

24.kg were without representation for the appeal hearing on 11 July 2019 at Vienna Commercial Court.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Article by 24.kg (in Russian): « Как кыргызстанцы превратились в австрийских псевдоинвесторов »
- Article 19 Statement: “ARTICLE 19 urges Austrian court to halt ‘libel tourism’ case

RELEVANT COE INSTRUMENTS


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Romania
n° 70/2019 Alert created on: 14 Jun 2019

Romanian Investigative Journalist Diana Oncioiu Receives Anonymous Death Threat

SOURCE OF THREAT: Unknown
CATEGORY: Harassment and intimidation of journalists
On 11 June 2019, an unidentified man using an anonymous phone number called Diana Oncioiu, an investigative reporter at independent news websites Dela0 and Sa Fie Lumina, and threatened to kill her if she continued to write about the Romanian Orthodox Church, according to the reporter.

Oncioiu filed a criminal complaint with the Bucharest police after receiving the call. In an interview with the Romanian edition of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, a U.S. Congress-funded media outlet, Oncioiu said that the threat was likely related to her ongoing investigative work into allegations of pedophilia and other abuses at a theological seminary in Huși, a town in Eastern Romania.

Sa Fie Lumina confirmed that a threat had been made against one of its reporters and vowed to continue its investigative work into alleged sexual abuse at the seminary. Speaking with Romanian news website HotNews, Vasile Bănescu, a spokesperson for the Romanian Orthodox Church, rejected any association with the threats and said he hoped the perpetrator would be identified.

**STATE REPLIES**

11 Jul 2019 | Response from the Romanian authorities

- Information provided by the Romanian authorities