

14

Jun
2019
▲ Lvl. 1

No state
reply yet

Slovak Republic

Alert created on: 14 Jun 2019

Mass Surveillance Operation on Slovak Journalists

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Unknown

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: IPI, AEJ

Slovak media in April revealed the existence of a massive surveillance operation on journalists conducted between March 2017 and February 2018 by a former intelligence agent, Peter Tóth, on behalf of Marian Kočner, the disgraced businessman charged with ordering the murders of Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová. The leading Slovak daily SME today published reports that a small, organised group worked with Tóth to gather information to be used by Kočner apparently to discredit journalists, including those working for SME, Aktuality.sk, Trend and Denník N. The group closely monitored the targets' personal lives and daily activities, going so far as to monitor journalists as they picked up their children from kindergarden. SME also said members of the group sat in a parked car every day in front of the newspaper's office to follow one of its journalists, Adam Valček. Media also reported that the surveillance team obtained extensive access to official police databases, collecting private data on journalists ranging from vehicle license plates to tax information. According to reports, information about Kuciak obtained through the surveillance operation was used by the individuals suspected of carrying out the double murder in February 2018.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

🔗 Article by IPI: "IPI urges Slovakia to investigate surveillance of journalists"

08

Apr
2019
▲ Lvl. 2

No state
reply yet

Slovak Republic

Alert created on: 08 Apr 2019

Former PM Robert Fico Launches a New Attack on Media

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ, AEJ, RSF

Robert Fico, former Prime Minister and chairman of the governing SMER party, launched new verbal attacks on journalists and the media in Slovakia. On 21 March 2019, at a press conference, Mr Fico accused the media of leading an open war against his party and promised to use "all legal and legitimate means to fight the media, until the situation returns to normal". He continued pressing the journalists saying to those, who attended the briefing: "I have no respect for you, I do not fear you at all", insisting that the media publish "absurdities" and linking this to the initiative to amend the Press Code, which would grant politicians the right of reply to content they do not like. The day before, at another press conference, he stated that the party set up a legal team, which will monitor the behavior of journalists and file criminal complaints against them, calling Slovak media as "the biggest threat to democracy".

27

Mar
2019
▲ Lvl. 2

Slovak Republic

Alert created on: 06 Feb 2019

Slovakia Seeks to Introduce Right of Reply for Politicians

No state
reply yet

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: IPI, AEJ

Lawmakers in Slovakia are considering a bill that would legally mandate a right of reply for politicians and public officials who claim their honour or reputation has been damaged in media reports. The measure was introduced by members of the country's ruling Smer party after former Prime Minister Robert Fico said at a rally in December that measure should be introduced to end "media terror and lynching". Slovakia's current Press Act provides a right of reply but contains a clause excluding public officials and high-ranking politicians from having recourse to it. The current bill would terminate that exception and require media outlets to publish a reply by individuals, including public officials and political leaders, who claim their rights to dignity, honour or privacy were violated by "factual statements" in "periodical press or news agency items". Media that fail to publish a reply can be ordered to pay damages up to nearly 5,000 euros. The country's ruling parties are also toying with the idea of extending the right of reply to opinion pieces and establishing a state media council despite the fact that Slovakia already has a media council consisting of lawyers, former journalists and other professionals. Slovakia's Press Act already contains a right of correction that all individuals, including politicians and public officials, can use.

The bill has been condemned by the Slovak Press Publishers' Association and comes as media continue to unearth details about the murder of investigative journalist Ján Kucikak and his fiancée,

Martina Kušnírová, on 21 February 2018, the reverberations of which led to the resignations of Fico and other Smer officials last year. Journalists have recently published details about the communication of top politicians with Alena Z., an alleged middlewoman in the murder, and revealed that a high-ranking police official may have given an order to screen Kuciak through police databases.

FOLLOW-UPS

OSCE 27 Mar 2019 | OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media publishes legal review of amendments on the right of reply to the Slovak Press Statute, urges further changes.

 [Statement by Harlem Désir](#)

OSCE 11 Feb 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative calls for repeal of Slovak Press Act amendments on right of reply.

 [Statement by Harlem Désir](#)