

24

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▲ Lvl. 1

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France

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## Repeated Attacks on Journalists by the 'Yellow Vest' Protestors

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ Non-state

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists

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

The French journalists unions SNJ, SNJ-CGT and CFDT Journalistes denounce the multiplication of attacks on journalists during the "Yellow Vest" protests in several French cities. Since 17 November 2018, the insults or threats by some "yellow vests" against journalists have become commonplace during demonstrations and on social networks. Several journalists were also victims of physical assaults. TV news outlets had to take special measures to protect their reporters. On Saturday, 24 November, uninhibited violence was unleashed against several television crews who were covering the demonstrations. In Besançon, on 17 November, journalists from the BIP community radio were subjected to racist insults. One of them was hit in the face. Suffering from a broken bone, he filed a complaint. In Montpellier, on 18 November, several television reporters were attacked by dozens of protesters. Protesters spat in the face of a freelance journalist who collaborates with several television channels, including BFM TV. In Toulouse, on 24 November, the BFM TV and CNews teams were called "collaborators", and were also the target of spitting and threats. These journalists escaped an attempted lynching, on the Capitol Square, conducted by a hundred people, without the intervention of police. In Béziers, on 24 November, journalists from the regional public channel France 3 Occitanie were severely assaulted. A group of about 300 'yellow vests' also attacked the office of newspaper Midi Libre. A journalist was beaten and the door handle of the local newspaper agency was broken when protesters attempted to break into the premises. Five journalists from CNEWS and BFMTV lodged complaints on grounds of "aggravated violence", "death threats" and "attempted gang assault" following protests held on 24 and 25 November.

### UPDATES

**NEW**

**24 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. On 3 May 2019, Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said after a meeting with the President of the Republic that the latter committed to ensure that "actions would be taken to address police violence against the press during the yellow vest demonstrations". The Presidency of the Republic confirmed, without giving any further details, that Emmanuel Macron had stated during this meeting "that he was following this very closely". Journalist David Dufresne has documented 102 cases of attacks on journalists, out of a total of 795 allegations of "police violence" since the beginning of the "Yellow Vests" movement. On 19 May 2019, 229 investigations had been opened by the IGPN or IGGN into suspected police violence, some 60 of which were processed without any sanctions being imposed. Less than 20 reports were received from journalists. While more than 2,000 demonstrators have been convicted since the beginning of the "Yellow Vests" movement, none of the reports regarding violence against journalists led to sanctions.

**NEW** **19 Apr 2019:** On the occasion of the presentation of Reporters Without Borders' 2019 World Press Freedom Index on 18 April, 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.

👉 **Article by Telerama (in French) : "Gilets jaunes : 62 signalements de violences policières contre les journalistes, selon David Dufresne"**

**15 Jan 2019:** On 12 January 2019, several journalists were heckled or assaulted while covering "yellow vests" demonstrations in France. On the night of Friday 11 to Saturday 12 January, about thirty "yellow vests" blocked the Valenciennes storage house of the regional daily newspaper "La Voix du Nord", preventing the distribution of 20,000 newspapers on Saturday morning. About fifty "yellow vests", some hooded, blocked the printing center of the regional newspaper "Yonne Républicaine" in Auxerre. They gathered in front of the printing center shortly before midnight, preventing the delivery trucks from leaving. The blockade hindered distribution of some editions of "Le Journal du Center" and "La République du Centre" regional dailies. Near Angouleme, the regional daily "La Charente libre" could be published only thanks to police protection. About 70 "yellow vests" had gathered in front of the newspaper headquarters. They tried to block the distribution of the daily newspaper, accused of being "a pack of hacks on the government's payroll". On Saturday in Rouen, a security guard who accompanied two journalists from the LCI news channel was beaten while on the ground. His nose got broken. A complaint was filed. In Paris, a team of LCI journalists was also attacked by some demonstrators and a journalist was thrown to the ground before the intervention of other protesters intervened to protect her. In Toulon, two video journalists working for the Agence France Presse (AFP) received threats while filming clashes before eventually taking shelter in a restaurant.

In Marseille, a video journalist from public TV channel France 3 and two photographers were insulted and prevented from working. In Toulouse, a journalist from the regional daily "La dépêche du Midi", insulted and threatened with rape by hooded "yellow vests", filed a complaint on Sunday 13 January. Sheltered in her car, she heard protesters shout "We'll get you out and rape you," reported on Twitter Lionel Laparade, one of the newspaper editors in chief. In Pau, a freelance journalist from the local media "C L'Info Pau", Franck Paillanave, was hit while reporting live. "Yellow vests" surrounded, showered him with insults, and then beat him. He said on Sunday that he would also file a complaint.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

-  [Joint statement co-signed by EFJ: "Non, la presse ne doit pas être un bouc émissaire!"](#)
-  [CPJ report: "Police, 'yellow vest' protesters both target journalists in France, Belgium"](#)
-  [Statement by the SNJ-CGT Union \(in French\): "Stop ! Les agressions de journalistes par des manifestants « gilets jaunes » doivent cesser"](#)
-  [Press statement by the SNJ Union \(in French\) : "Gilets jaunes : s'en prendre aux journalistes, c'est tourner le dos à la démocratie"](#)
-  [Op-ed co-signed by EFJ : "Non, la presse ne doit pas être un bouc émissaire!"](#)

## STATE REPLIES



15 Feb 2019 | Reply from the French authorities (in French)

-  [Letter from the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe](#)

## FOLLOW-UPS

 28 Nov 2018 | Recent attacks against journalists while covering protests are unacceptable. Journalists must be able to work, and inform the citizens on public demonstrations, safely.

-  [Tweet by Harlem Désir](#)

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