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Slovakia Seeks to Introduce Right of Reply for Politicians

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

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 Kuciak 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.

STATE REPLIES ▼



04 Jul 2019 | Reply from the Government of the Slovak Republic

➔ Letter from the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the Council of Europe

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