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Slovak Republic

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## Slovak Columnist Charged with Criminal Defamation for Criticism of Priest



SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY  ▶ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

**PARTNER: IPI, CPJ**

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



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-  **Statement of the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the Council of Europe**

