en

News | 02.11.2019

Protecting Journalists is Protecting Democracy

EU needs to step up ambition so that the #TruthNeverDies

You might not be a great writer, and personally, you may not feel like you need to make your voice heard. But surely you believe that journalists who want to speak up, to expose the truth and to publish information in the interest of the people should be free to do so. Without fear, without repression, without violence.

The UN highlights each year, on 2 November, the need to end impunity for crimes against journalists, because journalists are in the front line when it comes to holding the powerful to account, which is why they are often violently silenced. This year, the UN is reminding us that **each year one journalist gets a Pulitzer prize, but one hundred get shot.**

Press freedom across the world - including in Europe - is in crisis. Mexico is the world's deadliest country for journalists and although the government has set up a Federal Protection Mechanism, there have been at least 30 murders of journalists with zero convictions to date. But violence against journalists also happens here in the EU - in Malta, Daphne Caruana Galizia was murdered in broad daylight outside her home with a car bomb, Jan Kuciak and his fiancée were shot in their homes in Slovakia, Viktoria Marinova was raped and murdered in Bulgaria.

But more 'subtle' attacks are also at work in Europe and abroad - commercial pressures to sell as much news as possible, oligarchs and politicians buying up media outlets, political interference in public broadcasters, physical attacks of journalists, ridiculous legal charges, online harassment, smear campaigns, you name it. Female journalists have an even tougher time, receiving gender-based threats online and suffering brutal levels of harassment.

Although statistically armed groups are most often the ones targeting journalists with complete impunity, actually it is unchecked corruption, ineffective institutions, and a lack of political will to pursue robust investigations which are to blame for the fact that globally, only nine out of ten cases of journalist murders are successfully prosecuted.

Every unsolved crime against a journalist sends a signal to others that it is not safe to speak out, which fundamentally threatens democracy and undermines everyone's fundamental rights.

So what can be done by the EU to prevent impunity for crimes against journalists?

- The **EU and Member States** should act - including through sanctions - to pressure governments to

ensure that crimes against journalists are properly investigated. EU delegation offices in third countries need to step up to defend journalists under attack and implement the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline.

- The new **European Commissioner for Values and Transparency** should make journalist protection a priority: condemning attacks by EU populist politicians, providing funding for preventive protection in response to threats, and giving Europol more resources to monitor and support Member State investigations into crimes against journalists. Protection mechanisms for journalists should be part of the upcoming Commission monitoring on Rule of Law.
- The European Commissioner should come up with an action plan building on the EU's political and economic powers to defend media freedom as a whole within the European Union. This includes legislating at the EU level to prevent the strategic use of law suits to silence journalists and providing funding for journalist's legal defence. It also means using the EU's powers to prevent concentration of media ownership into the hands of a few oligarchs or politicians, and providing funding through independent bodies for investigative journalists. Read all our demands on media freedom in the EU here.
- The **European Parliament** should set up a specific cross-party intergroup on Media Freedom and Independence to monitor the safety of journalists in the Member States and push for EU action to protect journalists and ensure media freedom. The Civil Liberties Committee Working Group on Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights should specifically monitor journalist protection mechanisms as part of its work on the rule of law. Continued follow-up should be given by MEPs to crimes against journalists to end the culture of impunity in Europe and beyond.

What can you as a citizen do?

1. Support the #KeepTruthAlive campaign on social media and share UNESCO's map of cases of crimes against journalists: https://keeptruthalive.co/map.html
2. Sign and share this Petition on Protection of Journalists in Europe: https://www.tilt.green/time_to_protect_our_journalists_eng
3. Sign and share this petition calling for the EU to take stronger action to defend media freedom
4. Watch the upcoming European Parliament plenary debate on Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, triggered by the Greens/EFA Group on 13th November 2019

For more information:

- Read the Committee to Protect Journalist's 2019 Global Impunity Index
- Read the UNESCO World trends Report on freedom of Expression
- Read the Greens/EFA Demands on Media Freedom
- Read the report on Funding Models for Investigative Journalism commissioned by the Greens/EFA Group

Recommended

Press release

Leonardo1982



Parliament puts far-right party on notice

07.07.2026

Study

©abraham osorio



REFORMING FRONTEX | A HUMAN RIGHTS - BASED REVIEW

01.07.2026

Press release

Nikolaus Riss



[MEPs denied proper inspection of detention center in G…]

29.06.2026

Press release

KinoMasterskaya



[Returns Regulation sets Europe on shameful path]

02.06.2026

Contact person



Pam Bartlett Quintanilla

Team leader - Outreach and campaigns

Please share

- E-Mail