



Resolution 2532 (2024)¹

Guaranteeing media freedom and the safety of journalists: an obligation of member States

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly stands firmly for the defence of the right to freedom of expression and recalls that media freedom and the safety of journalists are cornerstones of true democracy. According to Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5, “the Convention”), member States of the Council of Europe have a positive obligation to establish a sound legal framework for media pluralism and for journalists and other media actors to work safely. However, this result is far from being reached.
2. Since the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists was established in 2015, the number of alerts posted every year has grown constantly, and it has more than doubled in eight years, rising from 108 in 2015 to 289 in 2022. Moreover, the number of countries concerned by alerts has increased, while the percentage of alerts considered as “resolved” has significantly decreased, to less than 5% in 2023.
3. Unfortunately, State authorities and political forces in power are in many cases at the origin of threats to media freedom and the safety of journalists, and the Assembly deeply regrets that, almost ten years after the creation of the platform, its initial goals of improving the protection of media professionals and fostering the adoption of adequate laws and practices have not been fulfilled. However, the Assembly welcomes the recently introduced changes to the platform, for example by mentioning what type of action is expected from member States in response to the alerts, and what circumstances might lead to alerts being considered as resolved.
4. Worrying signals also relate to a lack of proper execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (“the Court”), including the lack of action to remedy violations in relevant specific cases and solve systemic problems. Council of Europe member States must honour their obligations under the Convention as determined by the case law of the Court; this is not negotiable.
5. The negative economic and social consequences – in all sectors and at all layers of society – of the Covid-19 pandemic and then the war of aggression against Ukraine have also led to the deterioration of the media environment and journalists’ working conditions. Governmental control over information has been strengthened in various countries and reactions to critical opinions have toughened. Social distress and tensions triggered by these successive crises have also resulted in public demonstrations during which, tragically, journalists and their technical collaborators have been victims of violence, committed both by demonstrators and by the police. The war in Ukraine has raised new and grave concerns: journalists reporting on the biggest conflict in Europe since the Second World War are putting their safety and their lives at risk.
6. Year after year, the Assembly’s reports and resolutions identify drawbacks in the media ecosystems of European States and urge the relevant authorities to correct them. Surveys and analysis from partner organisations, as well as statistical data on threats to media operators and journalists, point to negative

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 January 2024 (6th sitting) (see [Doc. 15891](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Mogens Jensen). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 January 2024 (6th sitting). See also [Recommendation 2268 \(2024\)](#).



trends: numerous criminal acts against journalists including murders; legal harassment and smear campaigns; threats to women journalists; and “media capture”, among others. Moreover, at the end of November 2023, 68 journalists and media professionals were detained in Europe.

7. The Assembly expresses its strong concern over these multiple attacks to media freedom and the numerous cases of impunity, especially in relation to murders of journalists, some of which remain unresolved for more than a decade. It insists on the duty of State authorities to investigate each and every crime against journalists and bring to justice the instigators, perpetrators and accomplices.

8. There is a pressing need to enforce the high standards for media freedom which the Council of Europe has established, to ensure the effective protection of journalists and to uphold in all member States a favourable and safe environment for media independence and pluralism. All political forces should work together in promoting a change of culture in dealing with this issue: media freedom is a public good and a key asset of incommensurable value for parties in the majority and the opposition.

9. The Assembly warmly welcomes the recognition by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, who met during the 4th Summit in Reykjavik on 16 and 17 May 2023 of the “Council of Europe’s prominent role in international standard-setting on freedom of expression and related issues such as media freedom”, and their commitment to “continue [their] collective efforts for the safety of journalists and other media actors”. The Assembly also commends the launch, on 5 October 2023 in Riga, of the Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists, which provides the momentum for acting more effectively all together.

10. Therefore, the Assembly calls on member States to fully endorse and take an active part in this campaign. Within this framework, member States should:

10.1. develop holistic national strategies and coherent action plans, also based on Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors, ensure the involvement of national parliaments in their design and follow-up, and allocate adequate resources for their implementation;

10.2. review legislation which can be abused or misused to unduly restrict media freedom, threaten journalists and seek to silence them; in this respect, decriminalisation of defamation and the introduction of adequate countermeasures to strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) – including those foreseen in [Resolution 2531 \(2024\)](#) “Countering strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs): an imperative for a democratic society” – are key steps to be taken urgently;

10.3. analyse the political, legal and economic conditions which lead to media capture, and take adequate measures to counter this phenomenon and safeguard independent media;

10.4. improve the legislative and regulatory framework against political interference and the undue concentration of media ownership; this requires, in particular, enhanced rules on transparency of formal and beneficial media ownership and control, in line with the requirements set forth by Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership and Assembly [Resolution 2065 \(2015\)](#) “Increasing transparency of media ownership”;

10.5. support genuine public service media, securing their viability and editorial independence, according to the basic standards set by the “Guiding principles for public service media governance” appended to Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on public service media governance, and Assembly [Resolution 2179 \(2017\)](#) “Political influence over independent media and journalists”;

10.6. ensure that financing schemes for private media outlets are based on fair and objective criteria and operated in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner; public support schemes for private media should be intended to reinforce pluralism and ensure access to quality information in all regions of Europe, also paying attention to non-commercial media outlets and media which are the expression of local perspectives, or of cultural diversity;

10.7. monitor the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights on Article 10 of the Convention, to ensure their full and timely implementation by the concerned authorities;

10.8. establish early warning and rapid response mechanisms, based on good practice, to deal effectively with serious alerts seeking to avoid threats to media freedom and the safety of journalists, or at least to remedy them rapidly; to this aim, reinforce dialogue and co-operation between media professionals, the police and the judiciary;

10.9. strengthen the operational capacity of the police and judiciary to investigate and effectively prosecute the perpetrators and instigators of unlawful acts against journalists;

10.10. adopt a gender-specific approach to countering gender-based violence, which should be regarded as an aggravating circumstance in crimes; introduce specific protective measures against harassment and threats to women journalists, especially online, and ensure that the criminal justice system is well equipped to investigate all cases of sexist violence and prosecute all those responsible;

10.11. implement adequate measures to protect journalists during public demonstrations and other public events, where they are most at risk, including awareness raising and tailored training programmes for police forces.

11. While there are serious threats to media freedom and the safety of journalists in most member States, the alerts on the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and reports from media freedom watchdogs show that these problems are more acute in some member States than others. The Assembly is concerned, in particular, by the high level of harassment targeting journalists in Azerbaijan, the expanding phenomenon of media capture in Hungary, Poland and Serbia, and the alarming number of journalists detained in Türkiye. The Assembly urges these countries to participate in the Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists and to implement, within this framework, adequate measures to remedy these issues.

12. The Assembly recalls its [Resolution 2317 \(2020\)](#) of 28 January 2020 entitled “Threats to media freedom and journalists’ security in Europe” and reiterates its call for the prompt release of Julian Assange.

13. The Assembly is aware of the difficult situation faced by the media and journalists in Ukraine, who suffer from attacks and the destruction of infrastructure, and urges member States to provide targeted support to Ukrainian media and assistance to journalists from Ukraine, but also to exiled journalists from the Russian Federation and Belarus, in their work.

14. The Assembly calls on all member States to engage with the partners of the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and to establish effective response mechanisms to the alerts, followed by actions and measures intended to redress violations of media freedom and avoid their repetition in the future. A constructive approach can be taken through dialogue between representatives of the member States and partner organisations of the platform, as was the case in 2022 in Albania, Hungary and Kosovo².

15. Finally, the Assembly reiterates its full and strong commitment to the enforcement of Council of Europe standards concerning the right to freedom of expression, media freedom and the safety of journalists. It considers that the Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists is a unique opportunity to raise awareness among parliamentarians and strengthen the role of parliaments in upholding media freedom. The Assembly would like a significant parliamentary and interparliamentary dimension to feature in this campaign. Therefore, it strongly encourages national parliaments to play an active role and, in particular, to foster the required legislative reforms and take initiatives to raise public awareness of the need to safeguard media freedom and the safety of journalists. The Assembly is ready to contribute directly to the success of the campaign and resolves to stay closely involved in the process.

2. (All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.