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27 April 2018

Threats to media freedom and journalists' security in Europe

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Lord George FOULKES and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

In a democratic society, journalists and the media should be free to investigate, report and publish without fear of interference or arbitrary treatment by national authorities. However, in too many European countries, restrictive legislation, arbitrary reprisals, ownership control and misuse of power endanger media freedom. Journalists are threatened, harassed and arbitrarily deprived of their liberty. They often work in an atmosphere of intimidation and fear, which may lead to self-censorship.

Threats to media freedom and journalists' security are particularly obvious regarding the investigative journalism dealing with affairs of corruption or misuse of power. Journalists are increasingly being physically attacked, tortured and even killed. The recent horrible murders of Daphne Caruana Galizia and Ján Kuciak, two investigative journalists from Malta and Slovak Republic respectively, are clear indicators of the unacceptable dangerous conditions in which journalists scrutinising and criticising those in power often work. According to the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, 22 journalists have been murdered since 2015 and 128 are currently in detention.

This entire situation is extremely worrying and constitutes a serious blow to freedom of information, which is a fundamental prerequisite for a democratic society. When the public is not timely, accurately and thoroughly informed on issues of general interest, it can be easily manipulated and dominated. Moreover, the murder of journalists investigating corruption and abuse constitute a serious threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of member States.

Faced with this emergency situation, the Parliamentary Assembly resolves to continue monitoring the situation in the member States and calls once again on governments to fulfil their positive duty to protect journalists' security and freedom of the media. The Assembly also calls on member States to support by all available means the above-mentioned Platform and promptly react to alerts.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

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SCHÄFER Axel, Germany, SOC
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WHITFIELD Martin, United Kingdom, SOC

1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC: European Conservatives Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group