

Title	Attacks on the Press 2010 - Europe and Central Asia Developments
Publisher	Committee to Protect Journalists
Country	Spain France Greece Croatia Hungary Italy Netherlands Serbia Tajikistan
Publication Date	15 February 2011
Cite as	Committee to Protect Journalists, <i>Attacks on the Press 2010 - Europe and Central Asia Developments</i> , 15 February 2011, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d5b95d1c.html [accessed 24 May 2011]

Attacks on the Press 2010 - Europe and Central Asia Developments

CROATIA

In November, the Municipal Court in Zagreb convicted six men in the 2008 car bombing that killed Ivo Pukanic, owner and editorial director of the Zagreb-based political weekly *Nacional*, and Niko Franjic, the paper's marketing director. Zeljko Milovanovic, suspected of activating the bomb under Pukanic's car, was sentenced in absentia to 40 years in jail. Five accomplices were imprisoned for terms of 15 to 33 years, news reports said. Milovanovic, arrested in Serbia in 2009, was standing trial in Belgrade in late year along with two other accomplices. Serbia was trying the suspects because it has no extradition agreement with Croatia. Authorities said organized crime figures had targeted Pukanic to prevent his paper from publishing a series of articles exposing tobacco smuggling in the Balkans.

FRANCE

Augustin Scalbert, a journalist for the news website *Rue89*, was indicted in June on charges of stealing a 2008 video from the public television channel France 3. The video, which was posted on *Rue89* along with an article by Scalbert, showed French President Nicolas Sarkozy prior to an on-camera interview with France 3. On the recording, the president was seen rebuking two France 3 staffers and suggesting to the news director a question he wanted asked during the interview. A number of video-sharing sites picked up the video, triggering a sharp reaction from Élysée Palace. Scalbert faced up to five years in prison or a fine of up to 375,000 euros (US\$458,000). The case was pending in late year.

In September, *Le Monde* filed a lawsuit accusing the president's office of unlawfully using the intelligence services to identify a confidential source used in the paper's coverage of a political finance scandal. *Le Monde* had been on the forefront of press coverage of allegations that Liliane Bettencourt, heiress to the L'Oréal cosmetics empire, had financed the ruling Union for a Popular Movement in exchange for tax breaks. The espionage allegations followed a sensitive debate on protection of news sources in France. In January, after years of campaigning by media, parliament adopted a measure allowing news media to protect confidential sources.

France 3 television journalists Hervé Ghesquière and Stéphane Taponier, their translator, Mohammed Reza, and the group's unidentified driver were being held in late year by kidnappers in Afghanistan. The four were abducted in December 2009. The case was fraught with tension between French journalists and authorities. The Sarkozy administration initially expressed irritation at the abducted reporters' perceived imprudence; a French general raised the issue of how much a rescue operation would cost. The media themselves were slow to publicize the case. France 3 managers did not

name the journalists until April, arguing that secrecy would better guarantee the captives' safety. By October, though, journalists had mobilized large-scale public campaigns seeking their colleagues' release, while France 3 and Radio France Internationale hosted a two-and-a-half-hour live program in which celebrities took turns expressing sympathy for the hostages.

GREECE

On July 19, two men wearing police or security uniforms shot and killed Sokratis Giolias, director of the private Athens-based radio station Thema 98.9 and contributor to the popular news website *Troktiko*. The killers lured Giolias, 37, from his apartment in the Ilioupolis suburb of Athens at around 5 a.m., claiming his car was being stolen, and then shot him more than a dozen times, according to international press reports. Forensic experts collected 16 bullet casings from the murder scene that Athens police said matched handguns used by the radical Sect of Revolutionaries, which formed during widespread rioting in 2008, The Associated Press reported. The BBC, quoting Giolias' colleagues, said the reporter was working on a corruption-related story, the details of which were not clear. No arrests were reported by late year.

HUNGARY

Just days before Hungary assumed the 2011 European Union presidency, parliament passed a measure banning news coverage that is "unbalanced," that is "not of public interest," and that focuses on "immoral" topics such as violence, sex, drugs, and alcohol. The restrictions are to be enforced by the government-controlled Media Council, which could levy fines up to 200 million forints (US\$950,000) against broadcasters, 25 million forints (US\$119,000) against daily newspapers and news websites, and 10 million forints (US\$48,000) against weekly and monthly publications. "From now on the press will be under constant pressure," Zoltan Kovacs, editor of the weekly *ES*, told *The Irish Times*. *ES* was among a number of publications that published blank covers in December to protest the repressive regulations. The measure was fast-tracked through parliament to avoid standard legislative consultation.

ITALY

Amid a widespread media outcry, the Italian parliament in July postponed action on a controversial wiretapping bill. Backed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the bill would have sharply limited police use of wiretaps and journalists' publication of the contents of wiretaps. Presented by sponsors as a way to protect privacy, the legislation was denounced by critics as an attempt to protect the prime minister and his allies from scrutiny. The bill would have limited police wiretaps to two months for most criminal investigations and would also have forbidden the publication of information from leaked phone-tapping before the start of a criminal trial, a process that could take years.

KOSOVO

On two occasions, assailants in the city of Zvecan threw explosive devices into a courtyard outside the home of Caslav Milisavljevic, an editor for Radio Kosovska Mitrovica, the Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organization reported. The attacks occurred early on the mornings of July 20 and September 27, damaging parked cars but causing no injuries, the Belgrade-based independent news website *B92* reported. No arrests were reported by late year. Speaking to reporters in July, Milisavljevic said he did not know what had provoked the attack.

NETHERLANDS

In a September ruling, the European Court of Human Rights placed significant restrictions on police searches of media premises, marking a victory for press freedom across the continent. CPJ joined with 18 other media organizations in a supporting brief. In its decision in *Sanoma Uitgevers v. the Netherlands*, the European Court held that

police cannot search media premises or seize journalistic materials unless they can show it is necessary in the investigation of a serious crime and have obtained a judicial warrant. The case stemmed from a 2002 episode in which authorities seized photos of an illegal street race from the magazine *AutoWeek*. Police had claimed the photos could potentially identify someone wanted in another crime.

SPAIN

In June, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of Spanish editor José Luis Gutiérrez in a 1995 case involving the now-deceased Moroccan king, Hassan II. The matter stemmed from a report in Gutiérrez's newspaper, *Diario 16*, detailing the confiscation of a truck loaded with hashish. A company belonging to the Moroccan royal family owned the truck. The Moroccan royal family won a defamation verdict against Gutiérrez in a Spanish court in 1997, but the European Court held that "the information in question was a matter of general interest. The Spanish public had the right to be informed about drug trafficking in which the Moroccan royal family appeared to be involved, a matter that had moreover been the subject of an investigation before the Spanish criminal courts." CPJ had filed a brief in support of Gutiérrez.

TAJIKISTAN

In January, three Tajik judges filed a defamation complaint against the independent weeklies *Farazh*, *Ozodagon*, and *Asia-Plus*, according to news reports. The complaint sought 5.5 million somoni (about US\$1.2 million) in damages against each. Umed Babakhanov, *Asia-Plus*' chief editor, told CPJ that the newspapers had covered a press conference at which a local lawyer condemned the recent convictions of his clients. The papers reported comments by the lawyer, Solekhdzhon Dzhurayev, who said his defendants' rights were violated and that the verdict was unfair, Babakhanov said. The case was pending in late year.

In September, Tajik authorities blocked domestic access to several independent news websites and pressured local printing houses to withhold services to critical newspapers, according to the news website *Ferghana* and the Dushanbe-based National Association of Independent Mass Media in Tajikistan. The wave of repression followed a series of critical reports about the Defense Ministry, which were published by the Dushanbe-based newspapers *Farazh*, *Ozodagon*, *Nigokh*, *Millat*, and *Paykon*, and news websites *Asia-Plus*, *Avesta*, *Tjknews*, *Centrasia*, and *Ferghana*. The outlets accused the ministry of botching a September counterinsurgency operation against a militant group in eastern Tajikistan. At least 28 soldiers were killed during the operation, according to local press reports. Defense Minister Sherali Khairulloyev accused the outlets of assisting terrorists, local and international press reported. Government obstruction continued in late year.

Authorities in the northern Sodg region arrested Makhmadyusuf Ismoilov, a reporter for the Dushanbe-based weekly *Nuri Zindag*, in November. Regional news outlets first reported the arrest in December. The Dushanbe-based National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan said Ismoilov was charged with criminal defamation and insult through the media, charges that could bring up to two and a half years in prison. The journalist had criticized the regional government, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary for alleged management policy-making failures. Ismoilov was being held in late year at a detention facility in Khujand.

Copyright notice: © Committee to Protect Journalists. All rights reserved. Articles may be reproduced only with permission from CPJ.