

Albanian publication bans – prosecutors must take account of right to information



Headquarters of the special anti-corruption prosecutor's office.

ORGANISATION:  RSF_en

Albanian prosecutors have banned the media from covering issues of public interest, including threats to state institutions and an organised crime case. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) urges the authorities to avoid disproportionate measures and deplores the fact that journalists have been threatened with imprisonment for violating these bans.

State security and the confidentiality of judicial investigations are legitimate reasons for restricting press freedom, but the authorities must take proportionate measures in order not to curb this fundamental right arbitrarily. No journalist should be threatened with prison sentences if they are covering subjects of public interest such as threats to state institutions and organised crime in accordance with media ethics. We call on Albania's prosecutors and courts to take account of the right to information.

Pavol Szalai
Head of RSF's European Union and Balkans desk

On 19 September, the Tirana prosecutor's office issued an order [banning](#) the Albanian media from publishing any information coming from the leak of "sensitive" government documents following a [cyberattack](#) perpetrated probably by Iranian hackers. They include information about an alleged plan to murder Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti and suspicions about a possible terrorist attack on the Albanian embassy in Greece.

The Tirana prosecutor's office told RSF that the ban aims to protect personal data, classified state security information and the confidentiality of judicial investigations, and "is not intended to hinder the activity of the media." However, the prosecutor's office did not say how long the ban will remain in effect. Furthermore, the ban does not distinguish between documents of different kinds while journalists who violate it will be exposed to criminal prosecution.

Another recent publication ban was issued by the special anti-corruption prosecutor's office on 14 June against **Elton Qyno**, an *Ora News* reporter investigating organised crime in Albania, after he reported in several articles that both his own sources and the official investigation pointed to the involvement of senior officials and politicians in the affairs of suspected gangster Nurdin Dumani.

When contacted by RSF about the ban, the special prosecutor said: "The purpose of this order is not to imprison the journalist, but to preserve investigative secrecy as well as to prevent serious events that may be caused by the publication of these statements [given by the justice collaborators in the framework of criminal proceedings] and reprisals by rival groups." In response to this order banning him from covering the Dumani case until the criminal investigation is completed, Qyno has filed a challenge to the order with Albania's special tribunal. The penalties for journalists who violate the ban are extremely high. According to Albania's [penal code](#), they can be sentenced to up to six years in prison.

Albania is ranked 103rd out of 180 countries in RSF's 2022 [World Press Freedom Index](#), the lowest ranking in the Western Balkans.

EUROPE - CENTRAL ASIA

Albania

103 / 180

Score : 56.41

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