Parliamentary Assembly: Report adopted on attacks against journalists and media freedom

IRIS 2017-2:1/2

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On 8 December 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media adopted a Report on "Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe". The Report was prepared by Rapporteur Volodymyr Ariev, and details the operation of the Council of Europe's "Platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists", which became operational in April 2015. The Platform allows the compilation of alerts on serious concerns about media freedom and the safety of journalists in Council of Europe member States by certain Partner Organisations. Member States may then post reports on action taken in response to those alerts.

The Report states that since January 2015, 230 alerts in 32 member States have been reported on the Platform; 95 of those alerts have received official replies by the member State concerned and 23 cases have been resolved. According to the Report, "the numbers show how important it is that media freedom and the safety of journalists are a priority for the Council of Europe". Notably, the Report found that 16 journalists have "died violently" in member States since January 2015.

The Report then focuses on a number of individual member States, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, with details of fact-finding visits undertaken by the Rapporteur to Hungary and Turkey. The Report goes on to discuss the Platform alerts "which are particularly serious": the deaths of journalists; physical attacks against journalists; threats to journalists in conflict zones; police authorities targeting the media; and legislative action which threatens media freedom.

The Report then draws a number of conclusions, including the following: that in countries where there is a situation of military conflict, governments "have difficulty controlling the situation as regards media freedom"; that the "extraordinary situation" of the failed military coup d'état in Turkey "has seriously affected the media situation in Turkey"; that the "stricter security measures" adopted in Belgium, France and Turkey in response to "terrible acts of terrorism" must be proportionate, and "media freedom must be respected in order to allow the public to receive all information necessary in a democratic society"; and thata number of countries received alerts on their law and practice regarding national public service broadcasters, with "further assistance, and practical cooperation with those countries" necessary.

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Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, "Concern about the situation of the media and journalists in many European countries", 8 December 2016

http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=6446&lang=2&cat=21

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Report: Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe, 8 December 2016

http://website-pace.net/documents/10643/2031071/20161208-Attaquesjournalistes-EN.pdf/28220982-7162-4b8e-bbc1-5dd09119e8d4

Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists

https://www.coe.int/en/web/media-freedom

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