[DE] New media company code to improve protection of journalists from violence and threats

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A new code of conduct for media companies was unveiled on 22 April 2021. Drafted at the initiative of a number of organisations and associations, including Reporters Without Borders and the *Deutsche Journalisten-Verband* (German Journalists' Association – DJV), the code is designed to improve the protection of journalists from violence and other threats. It contains a list of measures, including essential mechanisms that media companies should put in place in order to deal with threats aimed at their employed or freelance journalists. All media companies involved in journalistic activities are invited to adopt the code.

The code was developed partly as a result of the latest surveys conducted by Reporters Without Borders and the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, which reflect a worrying increase in both physical attacks and verbal threats against journalists in Germany. The code proposes a series of measures that media companies are urged to take in order to create a safe environment for journalists.

The first such measure is the appointment of a contact person within the company for journalists who are targeted. This person's role is to provide information about available support, such as psychological or legal assistance, and to act as a mediator (e.g. by cooperating with the public prosecution office or other authorities). If a journalist is threatened, targeted with hate messages or attacked in relation to a report, the media company should, in particular, provide external psychological and legal support – including for the journalist's family members – and pay for any personal protection or house move that proves necessary. Training and workshops on how to deal with hate messages and threats should also be regularly offered, while employees and freelance journalists should be kept informed of the support available.

Companies should also create their own in-house contact point to which journalists can forward the hate mail that they receive, without having to deal with the legal or psychological consequences it creates. Messages sent to this central e-mail address should be regularly checked by the in-house legal team and, if necessary, reported to the criminal prosecution authorities. Media professionals should also be accompanied by security staff while filming in potentially dangerous situations. Finally, efforts should be made to quickly block

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social media accounts from which hate messages are disseminated.

The code has already been adopted by large media companies including dpa, taz, Die Zeit and Zeit Online, Der Spiegel and Frankfurter Rundschau.

Kodex für Medienhäuser

https://www.djv.de/fileadmin/user_upload/INFOS/20210415_Schutz_Kodex_Massnahmenkatalog.pdf

Media company code of conduct

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