

6 October 2015

# Europe's journalists subjected to increasing levels of harassment

Journalists and media workers in Turkey, Hungary and the Balkans are facing increased hostility as they do their jobs, according to a survey of the verified incidents reported to Index on Censorship's [Mapping Media Freedom](#) project.

Since May 2014, Index on Censorship's [Mapping Media Freedom](#) project has been documenting media violations throughout the European Union, including candidate and neighbouring countries. The project is an interactive platform that allows the reporting, mapping and monitoring of threats to media freedom. Mapping Media Freedom is run in partnership with the European Federation of Journalists and Reporters Without Borders, and is partially funded by the European Commission. The over 1,000 violations that have been recorded so far have exposed the dangers faced by journalists across the continent. The project expanded in September to cover Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, in reaction to new draconian measures and violence in the region. New partner affiliations have also been formed in order to increase support for media workers, including with Media Legal Defence Initiative, Human Right House Kiev and European Youth Press.



Between 1 May and 30 September 2015, 285 violations of media freedom have been recorded and verified. More than a third of the incidents – 108 cases – included harassment against journalists.

Cases include that of [Saša Leković](#), the president of the Croatian Association of Journalists, who received a parcel containing a death threat, as well as a number of threats on social media. And in Italy, founders of local news site [Infonodo.org](#) were threatened by the former Mayor of Seregno, Giacinto Mariani. While standing in front of the town's city hall, Mariani told camera crews: "These people must die."

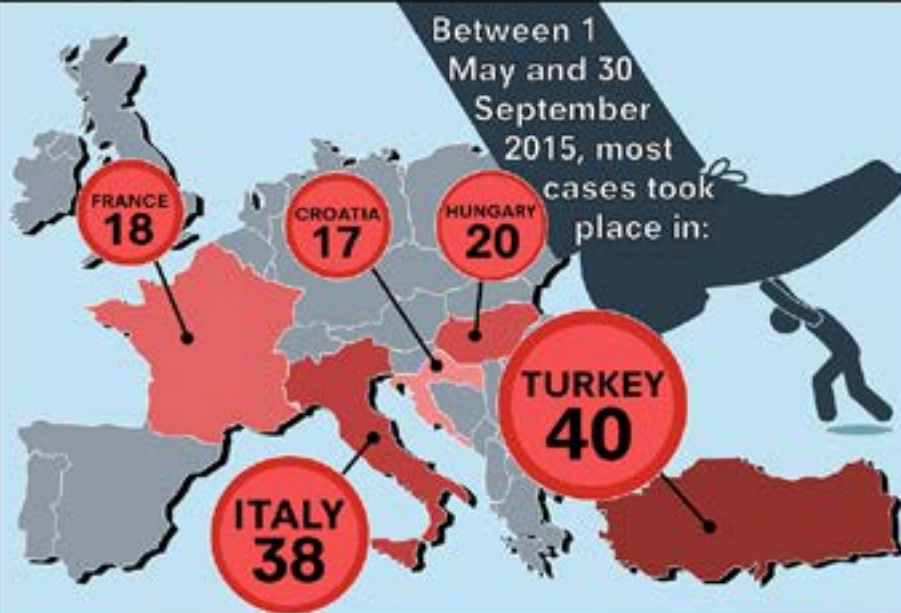
As we noted in our [May 2015 report](#), Turkey is, again, the country that has received the most reports of media violations. In the run up to the country's general elections in November, press freedom continues to deteriorate, with multiple cases reported of media organisations being raided and journalists being detained, imprisoned or deported. The map has also indicated an increase in violence against journalists, particularly within Turkey, Hungary and the Balkans.

The five countries with the most verified reports are: Turkey (40), Italy (38), Hungary (20), France (18) and Croatia (17). The successor nations to the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Slovenia) had a combined total of 55 out of 285 incidents that have been verified by regional correspondents.

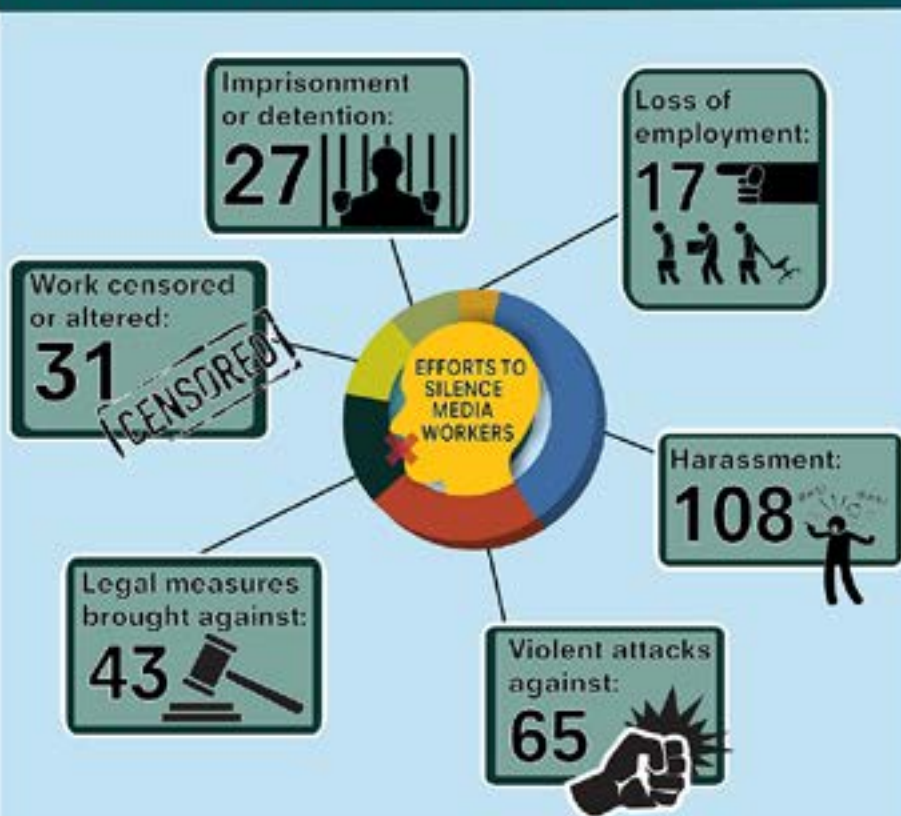
Hannah Machlin, Index on Censorship's project officer for the Mapping Media Freedom project says: "Independent media outlets in the region, particularly in Russia, have become increasingly under threat for multiple reasons, from restrictive government policies to 'soft-censorship' techniques, such as the withdrawal of advertising contracts. Expanding the project will further our understanding of these threats through specific case studies and enable us to support media outlets under pressure."



## Mapping Media Freedom has been documenting violations against the media in Europe



Mapping Media Freedom has recorded more than 1,000 violations since the project began in 2014. Over the past five months, threats to media freedom have included:



**Xindex**  
the voice of free expression

**EFJ**  
European Federation of Journalists

**REPORTERS SANS FRONTIÈRES**

Co-funded by the



To find out more about who is on Compass's mapping project, visit [www.mapping-media.eu](http://www.mapping-media.eu)

# Countries with the most reports

These are the five countries with the most incidents reported to [mappingmediafreedom.org](http://mappingmediafreedom.org) between May and 30 September 2015. The project includes all European Union member states, candidates for entry and neighbouring countries, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Cases cited are the most recent verified reports for that country.



## Turkey [40 reports](#)

Turkish police raided the offices of [Koza-Ipek Holding](#), which owns five independent media outlets: dailies Bugun and Millet, TV stations Bugun TV and Kanalturk and news website BGNNews



## Italy [38 reports](#)

Journalist [Gennaro Teddesco's](#) car was set on fire in the town of San Giovanni Rotondo. Teddesco and others have recently been targeted for their investigations into local business practices and criminal behaviour



## Hungary [20 reports](#)

A [camera crew for Serbian public television](#) was beaten by Hungarian police at the Serbian border while covering a violent clash between security forces and refugees trying to cross into Hungary



## France [18 reports](#)

An investigative documentary on French President François Hollande and former President Nicolas Sarkozy was cancelled 15 days before it was due to air on broadcaster [Canal+](#)



## Croatia [17 reports](#)

Two armed assailants burst into the office of weekly newspaper [Hrvatski Tjednik](#), injuring the graphic designer, damaging the offices and stealing several thousand kuna

## Case studies

Across Europe, censorship and media violations take different forms depending on the country. These two reports are expanded from incidents that were logged to the map. Read more in-depth reporting.

### Turkey

#### Vice news journalists detained on terror charges



When [three journalists working for Vice News](#) were arrested on terror charges in Turkey at the end of August, Index joined other organisations to launch an emergency campaign calling for the release of the reporters, while putting them in touch with free expression lawyers in Turkey. We wrote to the UK Foreign Office the following day to demand the British government step up pressure on Turkish authorities over the arrest of the journalists. The two British journalists remained behind bars for 11 days, but their Iraqi colleague Mohammed Rasool is still being detained pending trial. Rasool worked as a fixer for the two other journalists; he acted as a translator, a local guide and helped arrange the story. The role of a [fixer is vital](#) not only to sourcing information on a granular level, but also for helping ensure the safety of the foreign journalists.

Rasool has been charged with “knowingly and willingly helping an organised criminal group without being part of the hierarchical structure of the group”, a provision increasingly being invoked against journalists, especially Kurds and those associated with the political left in Turkey. The prosecution authorities have indicated that they wish to examine the contents of an allegedly encrypted file on Rasool’s computer before making this decision.

Rasool denies having any incriminating encrypted material on his computer. We are currently working with VICE, Turkish lawyers and other organisations to secure his release.

Russia/Россия

## Editor-in-chief fired after interview with opposition figure



Editor-in-chief of Kommersant website, [Andrey Konyakhin](#), was fired after a public interview with prominent opposition figure, Aleksei Navalny. On 4 September 2015, the interview was broadcasted through Kommersant-FM radio, and the transcript was published on the website. In an interview with RBC news portal, several Kommersant journalists claim it's possible the interview is the reason for Konyakhin's dismissal, noting large edits were made to the text after the original went live. The interview was dedicated to the opposition's electoral campaign for the 13 September regional elections, and to an opposition rally scheduled for 20 September. Over the course of the interview, Navalny also claimed that president Vladimir Putin was involved with the crash of flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine.

“Navalny saying such notions in a live broadcast is not that important, but the fact it was shared on the website, caused the scandal within the publishing house”, a source from Kommersant stressed.

There is no official explanation for the dismissal so far. Konyakhin has also not commented on the incident.

[mappingmediafreedom.org](http://mappingmediafreedom.org)

is a project of [Index on Censorship](#)  
co-funded by

