



TO:

Prime Minister, **Zdravko Krivokapić**

Deputy Prime Minister, **Dritan Abazović**

Minister of Interior, **Sergej Sekulović**

Head of Cabinet, **Ivana Đ. Kovačević**

Director-General for Strategic and Development Affairs, **Safet Korac**

Director-General for Supervision, **Danilo Ćupić**

Director of Police, **Vesko Damjanović**

Acting Director, National Security Agency (ANB), **Dejan Vukšić**

CC:

Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency, **Věra Jourová**

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, **Dunja Mijatović**

Head of the Montenegro Unit of the European Commission DG NEAR, **Thomas**

**Hagleitner**

22 January 2021

Dear Prime Minister, Zdravko Krivokapić,

**The Media Freedom Rapid Response calls for urgent police protection for Olivera Lakić following assassination threats made against her**

We, the undersigned partners in the [Media Freedom Rapid Response \(MFRR\)](#), are highly concerned about the continued [assassination threats](#) against journalist Olivera Lakić. We urge you to follow up on verbal commitments and immediately provide Lakić and her family with adequate police protection. These new assassination plots must also be swiftly and thoroughly investigated to ensure that both the perpetrators and those ultimately responsible for ordering Lakić's death are brought to justice.

Olivera Lakić is an investigative journalist who covers organised crime and corruption. On 25 December 2020, the [special state prosecutor](#) announced two suspects' arrest for planning her assassination, with other suspects who are already in prison. They are part of the same criminal organisation suspected of a [previous assassination attempt](#) on Lakić in 2018 when she was wounded in the leg. In May 2020, it had also emerged that there had been an attempt to recruit an assassin in Spuz prison. According to the special prosecutor, the suspects aim to prevent Lakić from investigating criminal organisations in Montenegro and their ties with other such groups in the broader Balkan region.

While we welcome the timely action taken to prevent the most recent murder plot, the slowness in affording the threatened journalist police protection also illustrates flaws in authorities' handling of such serious threats. These challenges were outlined in the [recent report of a virtual MFRR mission](#) in September 2020, which concluded that Montenegro has a significant impunity problem in relation to attacks on and threats against journalists and media workers. This is fostered by flawed and inadequate

investigations that have implicitly signalled support for these crimes. Whether rooted in a lack of political will or professional capacity of the police and prosecutors, investigations are too slow and only rarely result in the perpetrators and masterminds of attacks on journalists being brought to justice. Indeed, the 2018 assassination attempt on Lakić is one of these unresolved cases: although individuals were arrested, no charges have so far been brought.

We join the Commission for Monitoring Investigations of Attacks on Journalists and reiterate our urgent call for Olivera Lakić and her family to be protected as the investigation continues to ensure their lives are not in jeopardy due to Lakić's vital work. This cannot and should not be delayed. Furthermore, we consider this latest threat to Olivera Lakić demonstrates once again the urgency of tackling impunity for attacks on and threats against journalists and media workers and creating a safe working environment, which will be a crucial element of your government's commitment to the EU accession process.

The partners in the Media Freedom Rapid Response stand ready to support your efforts in addressing impunity and creating a safe working environment for journalists and would be keen to organise a meeting on this topic at a time of your convenience.

Sincerely,

Signed:

ARTICLE 19

European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)

European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

International Press Institute (IPI)

Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT)

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**This letter has been written by the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR)**, which tracks, monitors and responds to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries. This project provides legal and practical support, public advocacy and information to protect journalists and media workers. The MFRR is organised by a consortium led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) including ARTICLE 19, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the Institute for Applied Informatics at the University of Leipzig (InfAI), International Press Institute (IPI) and CCI/Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT). The project is co-funded by the European Commission.

 **MEDIA FREEDOM  
RAPID RESPONSE**

