

MAPPING MEDIA FREEDOM

MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY - JUNE 2025



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**MEDIA FREEDOM
RAPID RESPONSE**

The Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) tracks, monitors and reacts 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 an alliance led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) including ARTICLE 19 Europe, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), International Press Institute (IPI) and CCI/Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBC Transeuropa). The project commenced in 2020 and is funded by the European Commission. www.mfrr.eu



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The data for this report was compiled by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), and the International Press Institute (IPI), as part of the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) project, which tracks, monitors and reacts 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.

Past reports can be accessed on the [Mapping Media Freedom](#) website. The alerts for this report can be accessed through the [Alert Explorer](#) database, which is the largest public database monitoring media freedom in Europe. The database is continuously updated with alerts on press freedom violations documented by the MFRR partner organisations.

ABBREVIATIONS

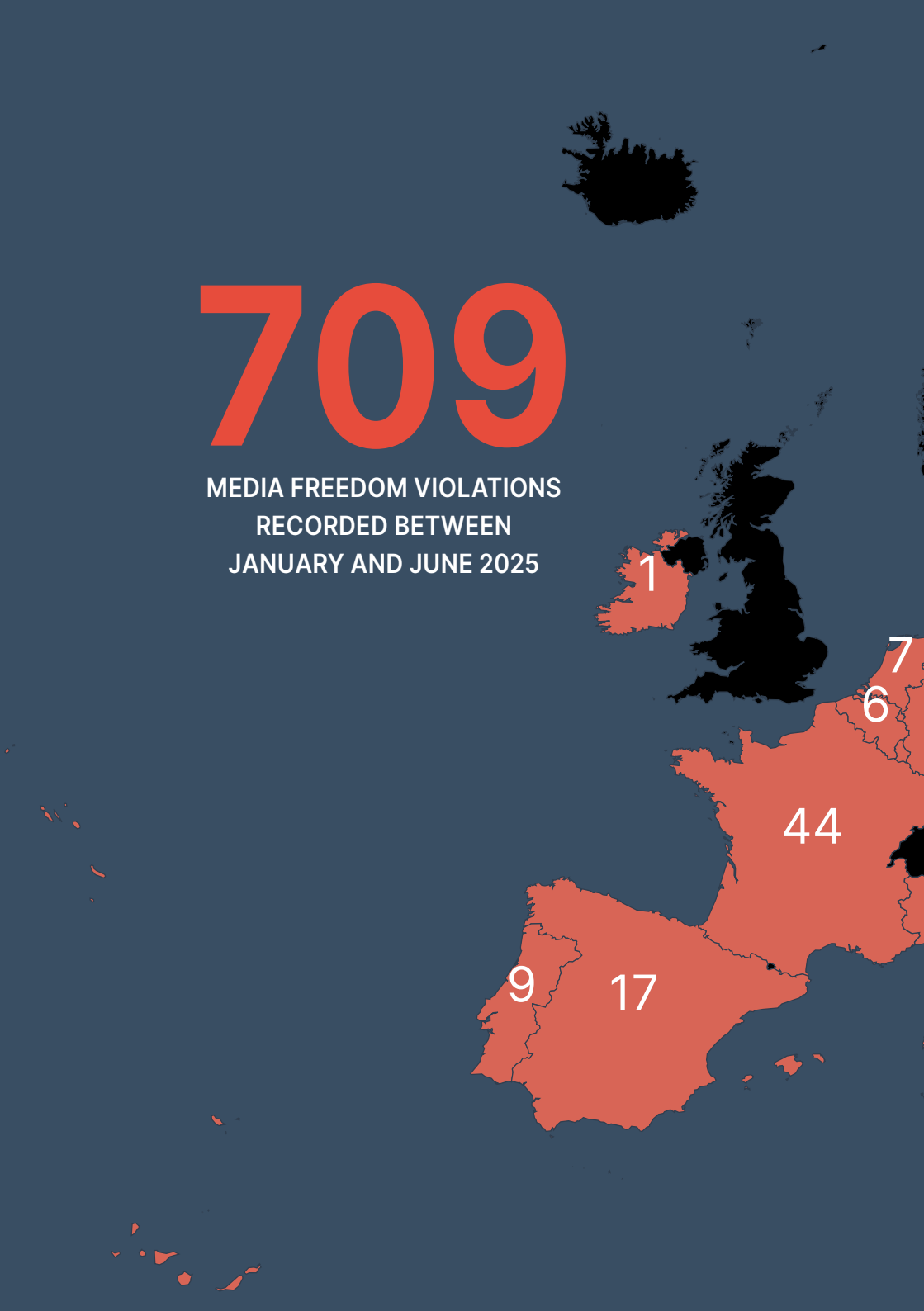
- BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
- DDoS – Distributed Denial of Service
- EU – European Union
- FARA – U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act
- GD – Georgian Dream party
- MapMF – Mapping Media Freedom
- MFRR – Media Freedom Rapid Response
- NGOs – Non-governmental organisations
- SPO – Sovereign Protection Office
- USAID – US Agency for International Development

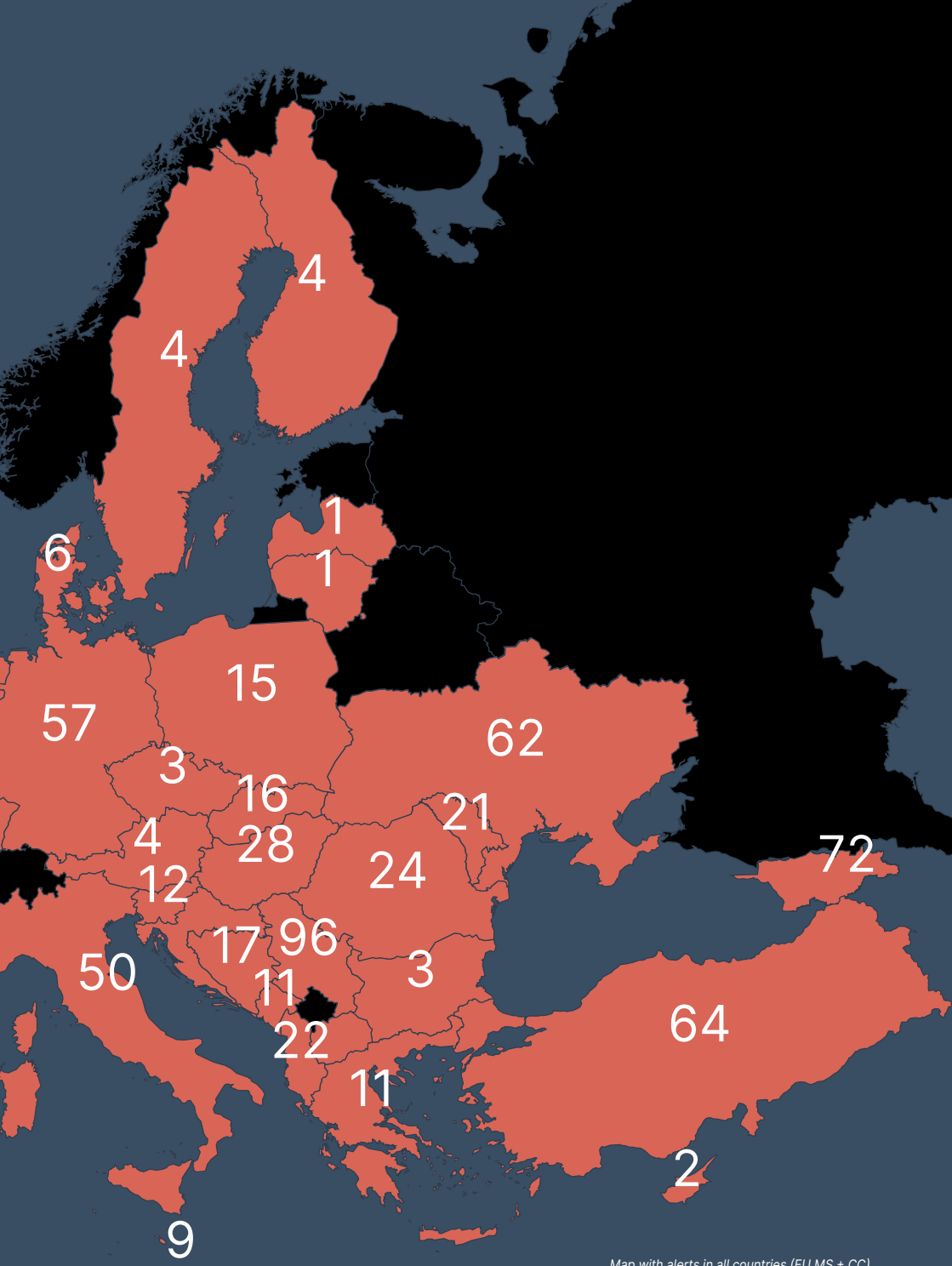
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Between 1 January to 30 June 2025, the [Mapping Media Freedom](#) (MapMF) database documented [709 press freedom violations](#) in 35 European countries. In total, 1249 media-related persons or entities were targeted.
- The **diverse nature of attacks** reflects an increasingly hostile environment for journalists and media freedom, ranging from physical assaults, verbal attacks such as death threats and smear campaigns, arrests, lawsuits, and laws restricting press freedom.
- Though private individuals remained the main perpetrators (22%), they were closely followed by **government and public officials**, who were responsible for a worrying 21% of all incidents recorded.
- For **EU Member States**, a total of [342 press freedom violations](#) affected 584 media-related persons or entities. The report offers a specific analysis of the media freedom picture in two EU countries: Hungary and Romania.
- For **EU candidate countries**, a total of [367 press freedom violations](#) affected 665 media-related persons or entities. The report specifically analyses the situation in the following EU candidate countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Turkey, and Ukraine.
- In **Serbia**, a total of [96 press freedom violations](#) were recorded that affected 199 media-related persons or entities. Amidst ongoing anti-government protests and a violent state response, journalists faced an unprecedented number of attacks, including smear campaigns by the government, attacks during protest reporting, editorial pressure and unjust dismissals.
- **Foreign agent laws** and disinformation narratives about foreign media funding have become a significant [threat to independent media](#) in Europe. Media outlets and workers in Georgia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Slovakia faced accusations of foreign funding, or were targeted by laws compromising media freedom.

709

MEDIA FREEDOM VIOLATIONS
RECORDED BETWEEN
JANUARY AND JUNE 2025





INTRODUCTION

In the first six months of 2025, the [Mapping Media Freedom](#) (MapMF) database documented [709 press freedom violations](#) in 35 European countries. In total, 1249 media-related persons or entities were targeted by a diverse range of attacks, including verbal assaults, physical attacks, legal pressure, or interference and obstruction aimed at intimidating and silencing watchdog reporting in Europe.

This report is structured in three parts: a general overview of issues and trends based on press freedom violations recorded during the reporting period, two thematic chapters highlighting the emergency situation in Serbia and the phenomenon of foreign agent laws and foreign funding narratives, and chapters on developments in selected EU and candidate countries. For this six months report, the state of press freedom was analysed for two EU countries — Hungary and Romania — and four candidate countries — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Analysis of the data for the first six months of 2025 shows that journalists continue to be targeted with a broad range of attacks. Media workers faced physical assaults, verbal attacks and attacks against their equipment. At the same time, newsrooms and journalists were targeted with lawsuits, faced detention and arrests, as well as surveillance threats, hacking, and interference in editorial independence.

While private individuals remained the most frequent perpetrators of these violations (22%), they were closely followed by government and public officials, who were responsible for a worrying share of 21% of all recorded cases.

One of two thematic chapters focuses on [Serbia](#), where journalists and media workers operated under severe pressure for the first six months of 2025. Since the fatal collapse of the Novi Sad railway station in November 2024 and the nation-wide protests following in its wake, independent Serbian media were extensively targeted by government officials and law enforcement over their reporting.

The second thematic chapter observes that [foreign agent laws](#) became one of the major legislative threats to undermine European press freedom and media pluralism. Media outlets and workers in Georgia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Slovakia faced accusations of foreign funding, or were targeted by laws compromising media freedom. Beyond legislative attacks, 'foreign agent' narratives were also used to verbally discredit and stigmatise, framing media as a threat to national sovereignty.

In EU candidate countries, [367 press freedom violations](#) affected 665 media-related persons or entities. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Turkey, and Ukraine stand in as examples for

countries that faced vastly different challenges in regard to press freedom right on the EU's doorstep. For example, journalists in Ukraine continued to operate under existential conditions of war, while media workers and outlets in Georgia grappled with increasingly authoritarian crack down by the re-elected Georgian Dream party.

For all 27 EU Member States, MapMF registered a total of 342 press freedom violations that affected 584 media workers, entities or related persons underscoring the ongoing challenges EU faces in protecting media freedom within the bloc. Developments in Hungary and Romania in particular offered a reminder of the persistent threats facing independent journalism and backsliding on democratic values within the EU's borders.

MEDIA FREEDOM ISSUES AND TRENDS



Students and citizens stage a 22-hour protest outside the RTS headquarters in Belgrade.
Spasa Dakic/SIPA/2503111220

For the first six months of 2025, MapMF documented 709 [press freedom violations](#) (alerts) against 1249 media-related persons or entities. Nearly half of these cases or 342 attacks were recorded in EU Member States, while 367 press freedom violations were documented in EU candidate countries. Not only the number of violations but also the diverse nature of attacks reflect an increasingly hostile environment for journalists and media operating in Europe.

In order to identify the main issues and trends, it is important to understand which types of attacks media workers faced, who the perpetrators were, and in which contexts the incidents happened. This chapter provides quantitative insights on these questions and sheds light on existing and emerging media freedom issues, based on hundreds of documented cases.

Verbal assaults

Media workers faced a constantly increasing number of [verbal assaults](#). A total of 287 verbal attacks were recorded during the reporting period, making up 40.5% of all incidents, and affecting 517 media-related persons or entities. Such verbal assaults included discrediting, insults, or harassment, but the majority of cases were intimidation and threatening (151 alerts) — including an alarming number of 40 media-related persons or entities that received [death threats](#) in 23 incidents. Verbal assaults were mainly perpetrated by private individuals (34.1%), government and public officials (28.9%), or unidentified attackers (15.7%) especially for online harassment. In total, 43.2% of all verbal attacks took place online, while the remainder took place in contexts like public places, on TV, at protests, events, press conferences, at public authorities, or at parliament.

Physical assaults

MapMF documented 98 [physical attacks](#) in the first half of 2025, affecting 183 entities and media-related persons. Nearly every seventh attack in the first six months of 2025 was a physical assault (13.8%). Nearly one third of physical attacks (31 alerts) resulted in [injuries](#), harming 73 media workers. Most physical attacks were perpetrated by private individuals (52.0%). However, 28 physical attacks perpetrated by police and six physical attacks by government officials were especially concerning. Most physical attacks took place during protests and in public places, but were also recorded at events or public authorities.

Attacks against property

In 88 cases, a total of 177 media workers or entities faced an attack on their [property](#). Property attacks covered damages or attacks against equipment (34 alerts), and other media-related property like publishing houses, cars, or personal belongings (26), but also attacks on media infrastructure such as [hacking and Distributed-Denial-of-Service \(DDoS\)](#) attacks (15), [surveillance, including spyware](#) (10), and police raids (9). Amongst the perpetrators of attacks on property were private individuals (39.8%), unknown perpetrators (22.7%), and police and state security (19.3%).

Legal incidents

[Legal incidents](#) were especially concerning and made up a quarter of all documented incidents (26.4%), with 187 recorded attacks and 337 targeted media-related persons or entities. MapMF recorded 22 [legislative initiatives](#) across 12 countries. Ten of these were related to foreign agent laws. MapMF noticed a drastic rise in the past regarding this topic, including legislative initiatives related to foreign agent laws, but also of media workers that were verbally discredited as foreign agents, as foreign funded or under foreign influence (see 'Foreign Agent' thematic chapter). Legal incidents also involved 59 [arrests or detentions](#) affecting 120 journalists, mainly in Turkey (38 alerts). Further legal issues journalists and media workers faced included defamation cases, legal threats and warnings, criminal charges, investigations, fines, and convictions.

Interference

[Interference](#) was a further frequent issue media workers faced. In every fourth incident (24.1%) media workers experienced interference into their work, translating to 171 alerts and 304 targeted media-related persons or entities.

One aspect of interference covered [blocked journalistic activity](#) (120 alerts). This included cases where media workers were forced to delete footage from their phones or devices, were obstructed from doing their work at reporting locations, or while accessing information and distributing journalistic content. Beside private individuals (21.7%), journalistic activity was blocked by state-related entities like government and public officials (20.0%), judiciary (12.5%), police and state security (10.8%), or public authorities (10.0%).

Media workers that experienced [interference with content](#) (23 alerts) was another concerning aspect. The majority of recorded perpetrators were employers, publishers or colleagues (56.5%), but MapMF also recorded some cases perpetrated by state-related entities.

A third aspect covered [administrative or financial interference](#) (29 alerts), in cases where journalists were unjustly dismissed, media outlets had to close, funding was cut, or licenses were withdrawn. MapMF noted a rise of administrative or financial interference — with as many cases recorded in the first six months of 2025 as in the whole of 2024 — and a worrying number of journalists being dismissed. Some of the reasons cited for the dismissals were assumed political motivations to silence journalists, and editorial pressure.

The fourth aspect recorded under interference were spoofing attacks¹ (8 alerts). Technical developments, including the rise of artificial intelligence, have made it increasingly easy

¹ MapMF considers spoofing to be any form of impersonation or identity disguise targeting a given media worker or media outlet by falsifying data with the intention or effect of deceiving or manipulating. These involve altered photo, voice, or video material including artificial intelligence (AI) generated deep fakes, as well as fake websites and articles that appear to be published by legitimate news outlets or media professionals. These attacks are mainly carried out for propaganda purposes, to damage reputation, as well as to promote commercial products with fraudulent advertising.

for attackers to fake the identity of media workers or media companies by creating fake websites or deep fake videos, turning spoofing attacks into an increasingly worrying issue.

Perpetrators

Overall, private individuals remained the main perpetrators of attacks with 157 incidents (22.1%), targeting 260 media-related persons or entities. They were closely followed by [government and public officials](#) whose share continuously increased over the past years and reached an alarming level of 20.6% in the first half of 2025 — translating to 146 incidents with 181 targeted media-related persons or entities. It paints a worrying picture when government and public officials are responsible for every fifth incident. It also should be noted that this share was even higher in EU Member States with 23.1%.

[Police and state security](#) perpetrated every eighth incident (12.6%) resulting in a total of 89 attacks targeting 207 media-related persons or entities. Further frequent perpetrators involved the judiciary (10.0%), while another 10.4% of perpetrators could not be identified, especially in the context of digital attacks.

Context of incidents

Regarding the context and location where media freedom violations were most regularly documented, the highest share of incidents happened [online](#) (23.1%), covering mainly online harassment but also cases like hacking, DDoS attacks, or surveillance. The second most common location of press freedom violations were during their reporting on protests and demonstrations (13.5%), followed by incidents at court (11.7%) and in general public places or streets (9.7%).

Who was attacked

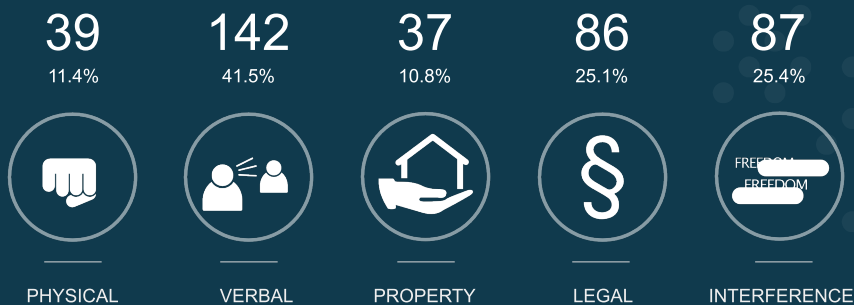
While the bulk of media freedom violations affected journalists, reporters and other individual media workers themselves (496 alerts), media outlets were also the target in 209 documented violations. This was followed by family members of media actors (11), associations such as trade unions or NGOs fighting for press freedom (9), journalists' sources (2), and media security personnel (1). Furthermore, MapMF recorded 53 cases which involved incidents not directed against individual media-related persons or entities, but against media freedom and independent journalism in general, such as laws restricting press freedom, media blocked from reporting locations, or smear campaigns targeting 'the media' as a whole.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

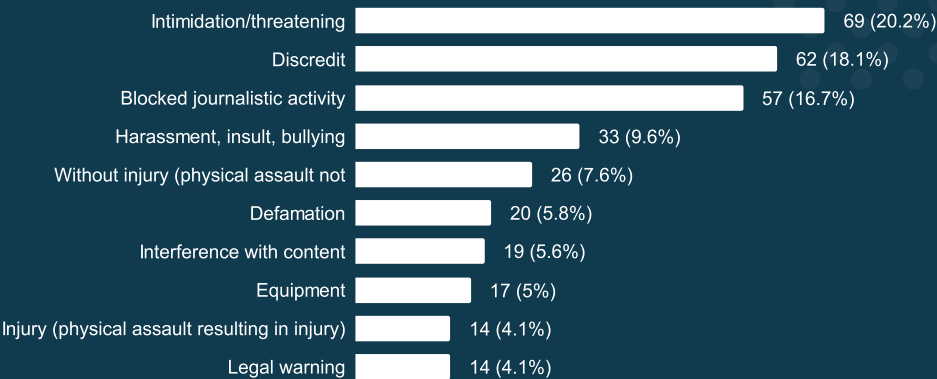
While EU Member States and candidate countries share certain media freedom issues, there are also differences between the two groups. The following chapters shine two separate spotlights on EU Member States and EU candidate countries. Nevertheless, it should be noted that also within these groups some issues might be more prevalent in certain countries than others and should be assessed on a case by case basis. The individual situation for some selected countries is additionally analysed in the country chapters below. Furthermore, statistics and further insights on overall issues or certain countries can be retrieved through the [MapMF Alert Explorer](#).

In the first six months of 2025, MapMF documented 342 press freedom violations in European Union Member States against 584 media-related persons or entities. The following charts show a breakdown of the statistics regarding types of attacks, types of perpetrators, and contexts of the violations.

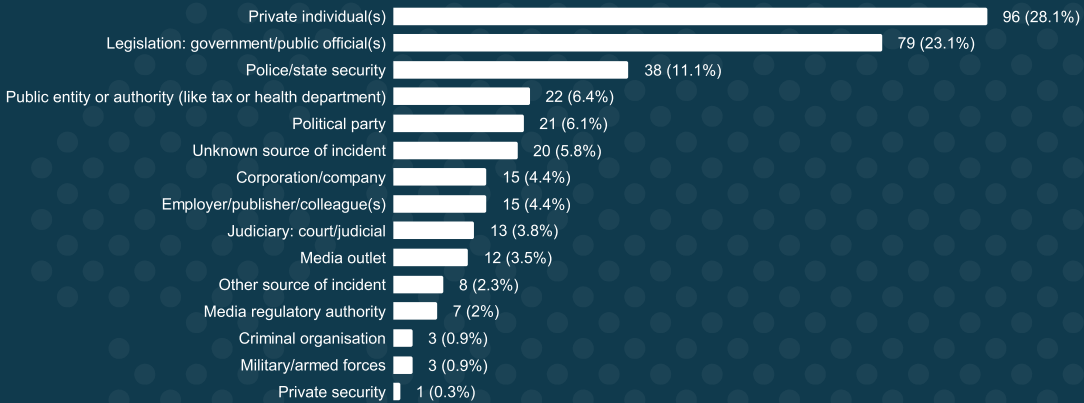
Main types of attacks in EU Member States



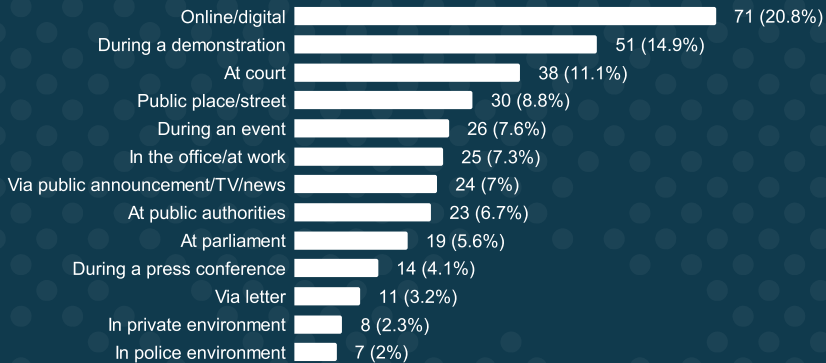
Top 10 detailed types of attacks in EU Member States



Sources of attacks in EU Member States



Context of attacks in EU Member States



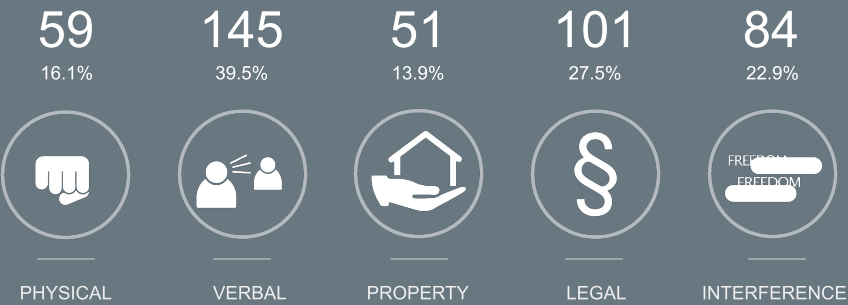
Source: mappingmediafreedom.org

The data comprises documented Mapping Media Freedom alerts between 01/01/2025 and 30/06/2025 for European Union Member States, based on the documentation status of 04/09/2025. One incident or alert can include multiple types of attacks (e.g. a journalist is insulted and physically attacked at the same time), or affect more than one journalist or media actor at the same time. In particular, legal incidents where journalists or outlets receive multiple related or similar legal threats are currently recorded as one alert. As a consequence, the sum of all attacks recorded for a given country or within a certain type of attack can round up to more than 100%.

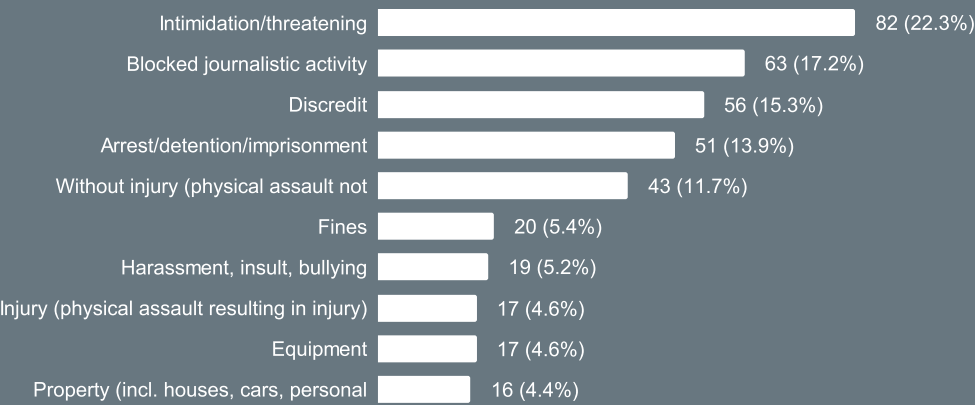
SPOTLIGHT ON CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

In the first six months of 2025, MapMF documented 367 press freedom violations in European Union candidate countries against 665 media-related persons or entities. The following charts show a breakdown of the statistics regarding types of attacks, types of perpetrators, and contexts of the violations.

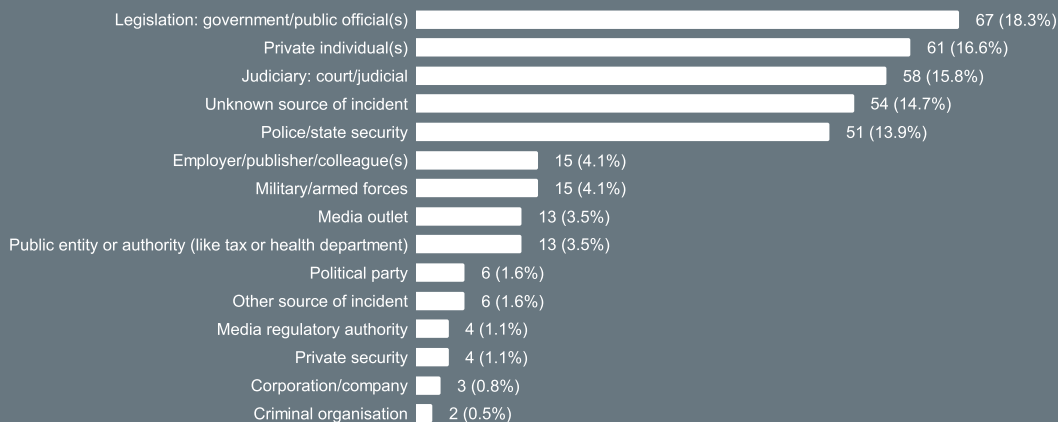
Main types of attacks in candidate countries



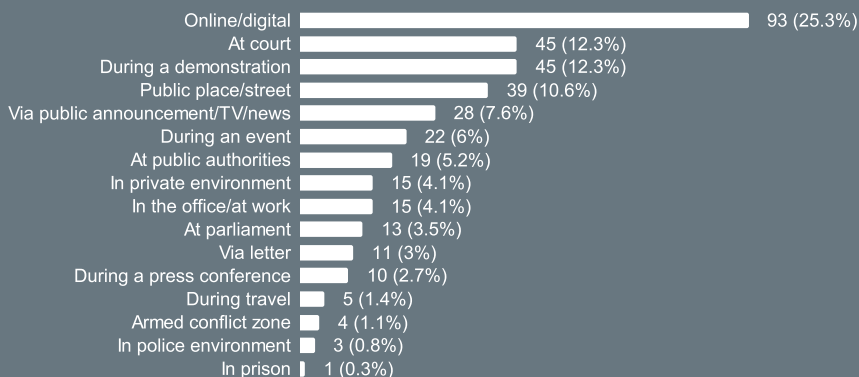
Top 10 detailed types of attacks in candidate countries



Sources of attacks in candidate countries



Contexts of attacks in candidate countries



Source: mspfsm.mappingfreedom.org

The data comprises documented Mapping Media Freedom alerts between 01/01/2025 and 30/06/2025 for European Union candidate countries, based on the documentation status of 04/09/2025. One incident or alert can include multiple types of attacks (e.g. a journalist is insulted and physically attacked at the same time), or affect more than one journalist or media actor at the same time. In particular, legal incidents where journalists or outlets receive multiple related or similar legal threats are currently recorded as one alert. As a consequence, the sum of all attacks recorded for a given country or within a certain type of attack can round up to more than 100%.

Thematic Analysis



Photographer covers protest in Novi Sad after train station canopy collapse.
picture alliance / NurPhoto | Maxim Konankov

MEDIA FREEDOM IN SERBIA, A SITUATION OF EMERGENCY

The MFRR has been gravely concerned about the safety of journalists and media professionals in Serbia, who have been reporting under immense political pressure, faced with physical violence, censorship, smear campaigns, abusive lawsuits, and daily death threats.

For the first six months of 2025, the MapMF database documented a total of 96 cases of [press freedom violations](#) against 199 media-related persons or entities. These represent unprecedented figures compared to 84 cases recorded for the full year of 2024 and 49 cases for the full year of 2023. Violations included 19 cases of [physical assaults](#), 19 attacks on [property](#) (e.g. camera equipment), 57 cases of [verbal abuse](#) (e.g. threats/intimidation, cyber harassment, and smear campaigns), 25 incidents related to [interference](#), and eight [legal cases](#).

The coverage of the student-led protests over the fatal collapse of the canopy of the Novi Sad railway station on 1 November 2024 which killed 16, has particularly heightened pressure for media workers, including from state representatives and law enforcement.

Alarmed by the number of attacks, the MFRR conducted a mission to Serbia in April to stand in solidarity with journalists and to [assess](#) the media freedom landscape in this situation

of emergency. The situation has significantly worsened since, despite recommendations issued to the media, national authorities and the EU.

Verbal attacks by [government officials](#) persisted as a significant concern. At least 25 journalists and media entities were impacted during 14 incidents, including attacks by President Aleksandar Vučić and officials from the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). In a recent statement from late June 2025, Vučić labelled reporting by [media outlets N1 and Nova S](#) as "pure terrorism". Shortly after, N1 was targeted with [six online death threats](#) and one [letter](#) sent to the newsroom that made [reference to the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack](#), which killed 12 media workers at the French satirical magazine in 2015. This shows the dangerous effect such statements by public figures can have on the work of independent media in Serbia.

Despite strong criticism from the student movement over its reporting and long-term political capture, the public broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) also faced political pressure from President Vučić and other leading officials over coverage they claimed fuelled the protests. For example, the president alleged the broadcaster "[played a special role in the colored revolution](#)" (e.g. student-led protests), [called RTS journalists "imbeciles"](#) and claimed the outlet's [protest coverage is similar to a "witch hunt"](#). Other media outlets, such as KRIK, were also [targeted](#) for their critical reporting.

Claims made by Vučić and other state representatives are regularly disseminated in pro-government tabloids, further increasing hostility against the journalists. The MFRR observed with concern that a smear campaign was [launched](#) by the newly formed pro-government Association of Journalists of Serbia (ANS) against the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS). This incident raised concerns about the eventual weaponisation of organisations to undermine media representatives' tireless efforts to support journalists.

Furthermore, the MFRR is alarmed by increasingly violent repression by law enforcement, who have shifted from inaction to direct confrontation with the journalists covering the protests. In total, 12 incidents perpetrated by [police or state security](#) were recorded within the first six months of 2025, affecting at least 30 journalists and media workers. Among the attacks, nine journalists were [subjected to physical attacks](#). During the large protest of 28 June, which was defined by disproportionate use of force by law enforcement against protesters, [numerous journalists](#) were injured by the police, who used batons, riot shields, and tear gas. As most incidents are not investigated, the majority of perpetrators were never brought to justice.

Illegal [surveillance](#) of journalists remained an alarming concern. There was a potential surveillance case where a suspicious [drone](#) was spotted in a Glas Zaječara journalists' private yard. In February 2025, the pro-government tabloid Informer used private camera footage to [make false claims](#) about the activity of university students and journalist Dinko Gruhonjić. Although Gruhonjić and Ana Lalic have [faced](#) relentless smear campaigns and death threats

since March 2024 due to manipulative videos portraying them as political opponents, it was the first time that students were targeted with surveillance tools, endangering their safety.

Since January, political pressure has increasingly seeped into newsrooms. The [dismissal of journalists](#) and media workers at various publications and outlets, including [Euronews Serbia](#), ELLE Serbia, Večernje Novosti and Politika raised significant concern due to reported threats, censorship, and warnings related to their professional defense or support for protests.

The situation at public broadcaster RTS [continued](#) to be a matter of concern, as entrenched political control and interference undermined free and pluralistic coverage. At the same time, a small group of temporary workers who signed an open letter advocating for more objective reporting had their contracts revoked, while permanent employees pushing for greater editorial freedom faced harassment and threats of dismissals from management without prior notice.

Amid concerns about political capture, the recent [unlawful](#) election process of the new members of the Council of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM), Serbia's most important media regulator, represented a major setback to EU-mandated reforms to ensure media pluralism and independent public service broadcasting in Serbia.

Following recent leadership changes within United Group — one of the largest independent media conglomerates in southeastern Europe — uncertainty has emerged regarding the future of N1 and Nova, both part of United Media and two of the most important independent media outlets in Serbia. Amid speculations of potential sales, both channels were recently removed from the EON SAT (Total TV) satellite television service, which was acquired by Telekom Srbija, a company partially owned by the Serbian state.

In addition, a [leaked recording](#) suggested [political interference](#) in the operations of the United Group's media outlets in Serbia, including N1 and Nova S. In the audio, CEO of Telekom Srbija, Vladimir Lučić, and Stan Miller, the newly CEO appointed of United Group, discussed Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić's demand for the dismissal of United Media's Executive Director, Aleksandra Subotić, who has tirelessly fought to safeguard the media group's editorial independence.

Since November 2024, media workers in Serbia have been operating under unprecedented pressure and repression from the government. These attacks are irreconcilable with EU standards. The situation has continued to deteriorate since the MFRF's solidarity mission, making it clear that warnings and recommendations are no longer sufficient to remedy this emergency situation.



Unsplash / Wesley Tingey

FROM TRANSPARENCY TO CONTROL: HOW 'FOREIGN AGENT' NARRATIVES THREATEN PRESS FREEDOM IN EUROPE

In recent years, various forms of foreign agent laws have been introduced in EU Member States and candidate countries, posing a serious threat to press freedom and independent reporting. At the same time, political parties and public officials have weaponised the issue of foreign interference to unjustifiably stigmatise and discredit independent media who receive foreign funds and EU grants as "foreign agents" serving external interests. This label undermines credibility, fuels public distrust, and often justifies censorship, surveillance, and restrictions on funding. While authorities defend such measures in the name of "transparency" or "national security", their real effect is to weaken independent media and limit the public's access to reliable information.

The foreign agent narrative also exposes journalists to smear campaigns, harassment, and physical attacks, particularly in polarised political climates. Critical outlets [are delegitimised as "dollar media" or "Soros media"](#), accused of being controlled by foreign powers such as the US, Brussels, or American-Hungarian billionaire philanthropist George Soros. These attacks are especially damaging in countries where independent outlets have already been systematically drained of state funding and rely on international grants to survive.

Between January and June 2025, MapMF [recorded a total of 45 press freedom violations](#) related to foreign agent laws and accusations of foreign funding or foreign influence, targeting 63 media-related persons or entities. This covers 25 cases in EU Member States (14 in Hungary, three in Slovakia, two in Poland, and one each in Bulgaria, France, Lithuania, Malta, Romania and Slovenia), and 20 cases in candidate countries (eight in Georgia, five in Moldova, three in BiH, two in Serbia, and two in Ukraine).

[Verbal attacks](#), such as discrediting comments and smear campaigns, were the most common (64.4%) type of violation, followed by [legal incidents](#) (31.1%). More than half of all the incidents (55.6%) were perpetrated by [government and public officials](#).

In early 2025, President Donald Trump's administration began dismantling the US Agency for International Development (USAID), a key donor for media and press freedom groups worldwide. This shift not only left many outlets more vulnerable financially but also gave hostile governments fresh ammunition to portray foreign-funded journalism as illegitimate. During the monitoring period, MapMF [recorded 15 press freedom violations](#) related to USAID funding.

Across Europe, governments and political actors increasingly turned to rhetoric and legislation targeting civil society and media over alleged foreign influence. Between January and June 2025, MapMF [recorded ten cases of legislative initiatives](#) related to foreign agent laws, including Georgia (4 alerts), Hungary (3), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Bulgaria (1), and Slovakia (1).

In Bulgaria, opposition parties [escalated attacks on independent NGOs and media outlets](#), calling for parliamentary commissions to investigate organisations linked to Soros and other foreign donors. Delian Peevski, leader of opposition party DPS – A New Beginning, went further, vowing to send information to the US government on organisations and media allegedly spreading propaganda with foreign funds.

Similar trends emerged in neighbouring countries through restrictive laws. On 27 February, Republika Srpska's parliament in Bosnia and Herzegovina [adopted a "Foreign Agent Law"](#) obliging NGOs engaged in "political activity" with foreign funding to register on a special list, submit regular reports, and face possible bans or criminal charges for non-compliance. Since many of Republika Srpska's media outlets are registered as NGOs, press freedom groups warned the law could be weaponised against independent journalism (see 'Bosnia and Herzegovina' country chapter).

In Slovakia, parliament [passed a fast-tracked transparency law](#) in April requiring NGOs to disclose donors contributing over €5,000, list governing body members, and submit annual financial reports. Critics noted the law's vague definitions and broad powers for the registry authorities, likening it to Hungarian and Russian 'foreign agent' laws, despite the

government's decision to drop explicitly stigmatising labels such as 'foreign agents' and 'lobbyists' from the bill after public pushback.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party, who [repeatedly used accusations of foreign influence and funding](#) (9 alerts), first announced plans in February for a new legislation to protect the country's sovereignty and to [uncover foreign funding given to Hungarian media](#). This was followed by the proposition of a law to ban foreign media funding in March, which led to the introduction of the [“On the Transparency of Public Life” bill](#) in May.

The law would grant the Sovereignty Protection Office — a controversial body [established in 2023](#) — sweeping powers to blacklist any foreign-funded entity deemed to threaten Hungary's sovereignty. Although the bill did not explicitly name media, its broad scope, targeting any entity influencing public opinion, effectively included independent media and NGOs. The bill's vague provisions, citing threats to “Christian culture” or “constitutional identity”, risked arbitrary enforcement and financial ruin for independent outlets. Domestic protests and international criticism led Fidesz to delay a vote, but the initiative underscored the government's escalating hostility towards independent media (see ‘Hungary’ country chapter).

Georgia provided perhaps the most alarming example. Already in May 2024, Parliament [adopted the “Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence”](#), requiring foreign-funded media and civil society groups to register as “organisations pursuing the interests of foreign powers”, empowering the Ministry of Justice to conduct intrusive investigations, and allowing fines against organisations and even individuals for non-compliance. Despite mass protests, international condemnation, and a presidential veto, the law passed.

By early 2025, the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party [escalated its campaign](#), introducing an “exact copy” of the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to replace the existing foreign agent law, while also drafting a “media law” to restrict foreign funding and to impose state-defined standards of “objectivity” and “ethics”. Simultaneously, GD and its allied party People's Power [proposed sweeping amendments](#) to the Law on Broadcasting to ban nearly all foreign funding to broadcasters, tighten controls on journalists (including restrictions related to sources), and extend these rules to online platforms.

On 1 April, parliament adopted both the word-for-word FARA translation and the broadcasting amendments, followed days later by GD's introduction of [new amendments to the Law on Grants](#), requiring foreign donors to obtain prior government approval before issuing grants. These measures — presented by GD as aligning with “British” or “American” models — were criticised as repressive tools to suppress dissent, undermine press freedom, and curb the influence of foreign-supported civil society (see ‘Georgia’ country chapter).

In addition to the numerous verbal attacks and legislative initiatives, recorded incidents related to foreign agents laws, or accusations of foreign influence also covered other types of

violations. These included cases such as [cancellations of external funding grants](#), the [denial of entry](#) of a foreign reporter into Georgia, [an investigation](#) by the Hungarian intelligence agency, and the Slovakian PM requesting Elon Musk [to provide information](#) on journalists funded by USAID.

Together, these cases illustrate how ‘foreign agent’ narratives and laws are increasingly used in Europe to stigmatise independent media, restrict funding, and legitimise state interference — eroding press freedom under the guise of protecting sovereignty.

COUNTRY REPORTS

EU Member States

Hungary

The marked deterioration of press freedom persisted in Hungary during the first six months of 2025. The Fidesz government and leading politicians continued to smear the independent media receiving some form of [foreign funding or grants](#) as acting in the interests of foreign states and trying to discredit their work. These discreditation campaigns [included attacks](#) by the highly controversial Sovereignty Protection Office (SPO), which is headed by a government ally. In May, draft legislation [was presented for a foreign funding law](#), drawing widespread domestic and international criticism, leading Fidesz to shelve the bill temporarily.

In total, MapMF recorded 28 [press freedom violations](#) in Hungary, targeting 45 media-related persons or entities. While other EU countries saw a higher number of individual alerts during the monitoring period, the severity of the cases in Hungary — top of an already severe press freedom environment — warranted special attention. The most common perpetrators were [government and public officials](#) (57.1%), followed by [public entities and authorities](#) (21.4%). [Verbal attacks](#) were the most frequent type of violation (46.4%), usually perpetrated by [government](#) and [opposition](#) politicians (61.5%), or [public authorities](#) (38.5%).

MapMF documented an alarming number of 14 violations related to [foreign agent laws and accusations of foreign influence and funding](#) — representing half of all documented cases. This underscores the level to which the Orbán government has weaponised the issue of foreign funding to further stigmatised and pressure independent and watchdog media.

On 15 March, during a national day rally, Orbán [described critical journalists](#) and NGOs as “bugs” to be eradicated, accusing them of serving the EU and a “liberal American empire”. The speech, [criticised for its dehumanising language](#), followed his 22 February State of the Nation address, in which he [promised tighter controls](#) on media financing.

These attacks were preceded by a [coordinated smear campaign](#) against investigative outlet Direkt36. Starting on 4 February, pro-government media and Fidesz officials falsely linked the outlet’s documentary on the Orbán family’s business empire to foreign intelligence operations, including the Ukrainian secret service.

In March, a Hungarian intelligence agency [was reportedly tasked](#) with compiling a report on foreign funded media in Hungary. On 13 May, a Fidesz MP then [introduced a draft for the “On the Transparency of Public Life” bill](#), which would give the SPO sweeping powers to blacklist, financially sanction, and potentially shut down foreign-funded media and NGOs. Sanctions include bans on receiving EU grants, fines of up to 25 times the funding amount,

asset declarations, and ineligibility for 1% tax donations. The SPO would also gain authority to conduct newsroom searches and access financial records. Although the bill does not mention media directly, its broad criteria target any entity “influencing public life”. Following public backlash, the government postponed the vote until after the summer.

During the monitoring period, the SPO significantly [escalated its campaigns](#) against independent media, using its broad powers under the controversial Sovereignty Protection Act to stigmatise foreign-funded outlets. From May onwards, the SPO expanded its activities into full-scale smear campaigns against media outlets and individual journalists. It [released social media videos](#) accusing several independent outlets of taking billions in “foreign money” to mislead the public, and in June [directly targeted](#) Valasz Online co-founder Szabolcs Vörös and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) after Vörös published an interview with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky critical of the Hungarian government.

These incidents were examples of the SPO’s blatant abuse of its mandate to attack and stigmatise independent journalists and NGOs critical of the government. The EU Commission has [launched infringement proceedings](#) against Hungary over the Protection of National Sovereignty Act and the establishment of the SPO for their violation of EU law.

Beyond cases related to foreign agent laws and accusations of foreign influence and funding, the media in Hungary was subjected to further worrying incidents. On 26 February and 23 April, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in defamation cases against [Klubrádió](#) and [Hírklikk](#), ordering both outlets to issue corrections and pay legal costs or fines for reporting on critical comments made by Spar Austria CEO Hans Reisch. The Court ruled that the outlets could only report Reisch’s statements if they could prove their truthfulness in a Hungarian court.

Meanwhile, on 7 May, the Budapest Chief Prosecutor’s Office sought a two-and-a-half-year [prison sentence and professional bans](#) for Zoltán Varga, owner of the Central Media Group, alleging financial misconduct in a 2015 real estate deal, charges his lawyers denounced as politically motivated. Varga, whose company operates the independent news portal 24.hu, [has faced](#) repeated threats, surveillance, and pressure to sell his outlet, leading press freedom groups to warn that the legal actions form part of a broader strategy to intimidate and silence Hungary’s remaining independent media.

Romania

In Romania, MapMF recorded 24 [press freedom violations](#) related to 46 media-related persons or entities during the reporting period, amid political turmoil after the controversial presidential elections. The first round of the elections was annulled in January, after evidence of foreign interference by Russia emerged, triggering far-right protests and smear campaigns against independent media.



Voters cast ballots in Deva, Transylvania, during Romania's presidential runoff.
picture alliance / SIPA | Jean-Christian Tirat

[Verbal attacks](#) (45.8%) were the most common type of violation during the monitoring period, followed by [legal incidents](#) (29.2%) and [interference](#) (29.2%). In half of the recorded cases (50.0%), the perpetrators [were private individuals](#).

More than half of the recorded violations (14 alerts) were [related to the presidential elections](#), as the Romanian far-right politicians and their supporters were a dominant source of attacks against news outlets and reporters. Altogether, MapMF documented 11 cases involving [far-right actors](#), threatening and harassing journalists or obstructing their work. These incidents took place [during demonstrations](#) (54.5%) and [online](#) (45.5%).

Between 10 and 12 January, extreme-right groups and figures, including Călin Georgescu — winner of the first round of the presidential elections — took to the streets to protest the cancellation of the vote. The results of the first election were invalidated by the Constitutional Court after it [found clear evidence](#) of significant Russian misinformation and election interference. During that weekend of protests, MapMF [documented four press freedom violations](#), including harassment of TV crews and physical attacks on journalists.

The Constitutional Court ruled that new elections would be held in May. Meanwhile, the [Election Committee declared](#) Georgescu ineligible to run for a second time. After Georgescu's exclusion, George Simion, founder and chairperson of right-wing party Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), became the far-right frontrunner in the election. In the days leading up to the second round of the new presidential election, Simion targeted independent media outlets in an escalating smear campaign. On 11 May, Simion [first verbally attacked](#) G4Media,

HotNews and other independent media outlets critical of him, accusing them of having bias and “double standards”. The next day, on 12 May, Simion [published a secretly recorded discussion](#) with Digi24 journalists on Facebook, in an attempt to discredit and humiliate them.

During the monitoring period, most of the recorded violations (29.2%) [took place online](#). In March, American businessperson Elon Musk inserted himself in the Romanian media sphere by [amplifying a disinformation campaign](#) against human rights and press freedom NGO ActiveWatch.

The previous month, investigative outlet Context.ro and several other Romanian news outlets [were hit by a coordinated wave of false copyright claims](#) targeting articles about Romanian businessperson Jurgen Faff and his company Fly Lili. The perpetrators copied articles, republished them on blogging platforms with backdated timestamps, and then flagged the original articles with copyright infringement to have them de-indexed from Google search results. When asked about his involvement, Faff threatened legal action, and on 19 March he and Fly Lili [sued Context.ro](#), seeking to block the outlet from publishing further articles about him.

MapMF recorded seven cases of [intimidation and threatening](#). The most alarming one happened in April, when three current or former PressOne staff members [received serious death threats](#) online after publishing a series of investigations about a neo-Nazi group.

Journalist Victor Ilie revealed in mid-March that he [was under surveillance](#) for two months in 2023 by the National Anti-corruption Directorate (DNA). He was investigating the grain trade from Ukraine through Romania as an undercover reporter with the RISE Project and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. Ilie was followed by DNA operatives, his phone was wiretapped, and he was surveilled together with other journalists, including his partner, and while meeting sources. All this was done after the agency had identified him as an investigative journalist.

Additionally, on 14 May, law enforcement officers [raided the home](#) of photojournalist Andrei Pungovschi to obtain images he had taken from a far-right commemoration event. Later in May, the Romanian Constitutional Court [ruled unconstitutional](#) the legal provisions requiring public officials to provide open access to their asset declarations and to publish declarations of assets and interests.

Candidate Countries

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the first six months of 2025, the MapMF database [documented 17 press freedom violations](#) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, matching the documented number of attacks for the entirety of 2024. The number of affected media-related persons or entities rose from 21 in 2024 to 33 between January and June 2025.

Verbal attacks (76.5%) were the most common type of violation during the monitoring period, followed by interference (29.4%) and physical attacks (17.6%). Nearly half of the incidents (8 alerts) were perpetrated by [government and public officials](#).

Government and public officials, notably Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik, continued to [verbally attack critical voices](#). Independent media were particularly targeted, with those suspected of receiving USAID foreign-funded support defamed as “criminals”.

The recent [adoption of the so-called “foreign agent law”](#) in Republika Srpska may serve as a tool of further pressure against government critics. Under this law, many independent media outlets who are registered as NGOs will be subjected to a 'special registry' for 'foreign agents', and might have to face additional administrative burdens including a dangerous ban from political work.

Another concerning development was rhetoric used by the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Government [aiming to discredit](#) the BH Journalists' Association (BHJA) and to undermine support for the independent Istina media portal amid political pressure.

Other cases of verbal abuse involved [intimidation and severe threats](#), mainly perpetrated by private individuals. [Three death threats](#) were recorded, including one against Nataša Miljanović Zubac. The journalist, who has faced at least eight criminal acts since the arson attack on her car in 2022, was reportedly [threatened with decapitation](#). In addition to threats to her life, Zubac recently [faced criminal charges](#) following her investigation into potential criminal activities within the police force. One of her confiscated phones was used without due process, [endangering her sources](#).

TV Journalist Dino Durmić and his child were also targeted online over a report on an international police operation, with [explicit death threats](#) made by one of the suspects. A further case documented an audio recording in which the former editor-in-chief of the newspaper Dnevni avaz, Evelin Trako, could be heard making [death threats](#) against journalist Semir Šabić and his family.

[Interference with journalistic work](#) was the second most common form of violation, with a total of five incidents. In February, journalists from BNTV, RTL, and Al Jazeera Balkans were

forcibly [obstructed](#) by Branislav Okuka, advisor to President Dodik, at the Republika Srpska's National Assembly. In March, Dodik, dissatisfied with critical questions, instructed a security guard to [prohibit an Oslobođenje journalist from entering](#) the Republika Srpska Palace. At another conference, Dodik publicly addressed an RTV correspondent in a [humiliating](#) way. Additionally, a last-minute and non-transparent change to accreditation measures [excluded](#) journalists from a Doboј City assembly meeting. Other cases of obstruction were perpetrated by private individuals. One incident [involved](#) an ethnically motivated attack against a Croatian-language RTVHB media crew and was particularly disturbing.

Among the three [physical attacks](#) documented, a particularly severe case involved journalists from the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ), who were [injured](#) by a group of individuals, and their equipment was damaged while taking political footage in Brčko.

Finally, a recent worrying development concerns the sudden closure of Sarajevo-based Al Jazeera Balkans in July 2025, which was forced to hold operations due to economic concerns after 14 years of continuous broadcasting. The closure will likely have a significant impact on media pluralism in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the entire region.

The increase in attacks on media workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first six months of 2025 is a matter of deep concern for the MFRR. In particular, legislative efforts to stigmatise and silence critical voices in the country pose a serious threat to press freedom.

Georgia

From January to June 2025, MapMF recorded 72 [alerts](#) involving 107 media-related persons or entities, reflecting the escalating crackdown by the Georgian Dream government on media freedom. Alarmingly, most of the recorded violations (50%, 36 alerts) were [legal incidents](#), including 17 fines against 36 media professionals, 7 cases of arrests and detention, as well as restrictive legislative acts that suppress media freedom. Most of the recorded violations were perpetrated by the country's [judiciary branch](#) (24), followed by [government/public officials](#) (20), and [police and state security forces](#) (14).

Interference in journalistic activities was one of the major concerns. MapMF recorded [23 cases of interference](#), including 13 cases of blocked access to events. Additionally, journalists were still subjected to physical assaults. During the reporting period, MapMF recorded [eight cases of physical attacks](#), against 19 media workers.

Impunity for crimes against journalists [remained](#) widespread, with investigations often insufficient and perpetrators not held accountable, particularly those from the police. As MFRR partners [warned](#), Georgia continued to move closer to becoming a fully consolidated authoritarian regime, as the ruling Georgian Dream party intensified its efforts to erode media freedom and silence independent voices during the reporting period.



Thousands protest outside Georgian Public Broadcasting, demanding release of political prisoners and journalist Mzia Amaglobeli. picture alliance / NurPhoto | Jerome Gilles

Founder and director of two of the most prominent independent media outlets, Mzia Amaglobeli, has been unjustly held in pre-trial detention since her [arrest](#) in January during which time her health and eyesight have dangerously deteriorated. Amaglobeli was charged under the criminal code for attacking a police officer — a charge widely regarded as excessive and politically motivated — which might result in a sentence of up to seven years in prison. At a hearing on 14 July, Amaglobeli testified about the [humiliating and dehumanizing treatment](#) she endured during her arrest on 11 and 12 January. Since her arrest, Amaglobeli and her media organisations have faced [smear campaigns](#), [degrading treatment](#), and [economic retaliation](#). MFRR partners have continuously [called](#) for Amaglobeli's immediate and unconditional release. In August, Amaglobeli was [sentenced](#) to two years in prison, with nearly seven months already served.

During the reporting period, the Georgian Dream party has introduced and adopted several [repressive pieces of legislation](#), including the new [Foreign Agents Registration Act](#) (FARA), as well as amendments to the [Law on Grants](#), the [Law of Broadcasting](#), the [Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression](#), and the [Organic Law on Common Courts](#).

On 1 April 2025, the GD party adopted a "Foreign Agent Law", entitled the "[Foreign Agents Registration Act](#)", which could impose fines of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment of up to five years for non-compliance. Meanwhile, according to the law on Grants, adopted on April 16, foreign donors are [required](#) to obtain prior approval from the Georgian state before disbursing grants to newsrooms or NGOs.

The [amendments](#) to the [Law of Broadcasting](#), which went into force on 1 June, expanded the powers of the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) to regulate factual accuracy, fairness, and privacy — previously overseen through self-regulation. The GNCC is now able to issue penalties of up to 3% of annual revenue or revoke a broadcaster's license for breaching the new rules. These changes empower the GNCC to act as the government's censor to silence critical media outlets. Using the new amendments to the law on broadcasting, the authorities have already [filed](#) complaints against Formula TV and TV Pirveli with GNCC.

On 26 June, the Georgian Dream government adopted amendments to the [Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression](#) in the third reading. The amendments redefined defamation as “a statement containing a substantially false fact and one that damages a person's reputation”, omitting the clause that such a statement must “inflict harm” to be considered defamatory. The amendments shift the burden of proof from the plaintiff to the defendant or the person accused, who must now justify why the statement was not defamatory. The legislative changes would also allow the government to retroactively prosecute people over statements made up to 100 days before the bill's enactment.

On the same day, Parliament adopted amendments to the [Organic Law on Common Courts](#) that significantly restrict journalists' ability to report from court premises. These amendments prohibit reporting inside court buildings, including courtrooms, hallways and courtyards. They also abolished previous rules that allowed recording in courthouse corridors and protected against the confiscation of journalists' devices.

In the first six months of 2025, 36 journalists [faced fines](#), most of them for “blocking the road” while reporting, and six journalists [for expressing criticism](#) of GD politicians on social media.

The lack of independence of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) remains a serious concern. The GPB has long functioned as an instrument of the ruling GD party, undermining efforts by journalists to report free from political control. In recent months, the situation has worsened. The GD controlled GPB management [dismissed journalists Vasil Ivanov Chikovani and Nino Zautashvili](#) after they spoke out about political interference at the broadcaster, and subsequently cancelled the talk show hosted by Zautashvili. For the same reason, the GPB later [fired](#) five other journalists.

Since January, the GD regime has continued to use a wide range of tools at its disposal including restrictive laws, unlawful imprisonment, economic persecution, arbitrary fines and smear campaigns to further suffocate the space for independent quality journalism in the country.

Turkey

Journalists and media in Turkey were under immense pressure from state authorities in the aftermath of the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) presidential candidate and mayor of Istanbul, which was followed by large-scale protests across the country. İmamoğlu, who was seen as the main political opponent to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the upcoming elections, was taken into custody on 19 March on charges including corruption and alleged ties to terrorism, a move which many critics view as politically motivated.

Between January and June 2025, MapMF recorded a total of [64 press freedom violations](#) in Turkey involving 157 media-related persons or entities. [Courts and judicial entities](#) were the most common (48.4%) perpetrators of violations, followed by [police and state security](#) (32.8%).

Arrest, detention and imprisonment [were related](#) to over half (59.4%) of the recorded cases. As of July 2025, 17 journalists [were imprisoned](#) in Turkey. Further [legal incidents](#) included [investigations](#), [dawn raids](#) and [criminal charges](#), usually related to charges such as “insulting the president”, “membership in a terrorist organisation”, “spreading terrorist propaganda” or “violating the law on meetings and demonstrations”. During the monitoring period, courts [handed down convictions](#) to at least 15 journalists, including imprisonment and suspended sentences. MapMF recorded eight incidents of [physical violence](#) against a total of 22 media workers, and police were the perpetrators in all the cases.

During the monitoring period, MapMF recorded a total of 19 [violations against journalists and media](#) reporting on İmamoğlu's arrest and the nationwide wave of protests defying a government ban on public gatherings, with hundreds of thousands demonstrating in major cities. Journalists were repeatedly [detained and physically assaulted](#) by police while covering the İmamoğlu protests.

On 21 March, at least nine journalists [were physically assaulted](#) by police in Istanbul's Sarıyer district while covering protests against the arrest of İmamoğlu. Despite identifying themselves as press, reporters were indiscriminately targeted, alongside protesters, with pepper spray, rubber bullets, tear gas and batons, and suffered a variety of injuries.

Two days later, police [physically assaulted and injured](#) at least four journalists covering the protests. BirGün reporter Ebru Çelik was pepper-sprayed at close range, kicked while on the ground, stripped of her gas mask and sprayed in the face, leaving visible injuries. Deniz Güngör, also from BirGün, was pepper-sprayed, shot with rubber bullets, and kicked while repeatedly telling police she was a journalist.

After İmamoğlu was taken into custody, authorities [imposed restrictions](#) on all major social media platforms in anticipation of public outrage over the planned and highly contentious detention of the country's opposition leader.

Government-controlled media regulator RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) continued its crackdown on dissenting voices, [targeting several news outlets](#) with hefty fines and threatening to revoke their broadcasting licences. On 19 March, RTÜK chairperson [threatened to revoke broadcast licences](#) of TV channels if they failed to rely solely on official statements and information from the authorities and prohibited any statements or commentators discussing calls for public protests in relation to the arrest of İmamoğlu.

Ukraine

In the first six months of 2025, Ukrainian media continued to face similar threats as they did in previous years, following the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. MapMF recorded a total of [62 press freedom violations](#) targeting 77 media-related persons or entities. While levels of [physical violence](#) against journalists remained largely similar in comparison to 2024 with eleven recorded attacks (17.7%), the intensity of [verbal attacks](#) increased over the past six months (38.7%), while there were comparatively less cases of [legal persecution](#) (4.8%).

No Ukrainian media workers lost their lives in connection to their work throughout the reporting period. In 2024, one such death [was recorded](#) on Ukrainian territory, in addition to the death of Ukrainian journalist Victoria Roshchyna, who [died in Russian captivity](#).

Between January and June 2025, the Mapping Media Freedom database recorded eleven [physical attacks](#) on journalists, including five attacks in which media workers [were wounded](#). Interestingly, only six of the eleven attacks were related to military activity (in all six cases, Russian forces were responsible). Moreover, only one of the four cases in which journalists were wounded in Ukraine took place in an armed conflict zone. The remaining incidents were connected to attacks by domestic perpetrators.

While there have recently been slightly fewer cases of journalists coming under Russian fire while on assignment than there have been in previous years, Russian [attacks on media infrastructure](#), including media offices, have remained at a stable and concerning level with seven recorded incidents.

These cases were mainly concentrated on frontline territories, as well as in Kyiv, which has become the target of more frequent Russian strikes over the past year. While drone and missile strikes usually took place at night, that is, outside of working hours, and did not lead to any injuries or deaths among Ukrainian media workers, they have in several instances led to temporary suspensions in broadcasts and have incurred additional costs on outlets which lost valuable equipment. Overall, the continued risk of strikes on media offices remains a

major security issue for journalists across Ukraine, especially among those who need to access their offices to conduct their work, such as media workers producing TV broadcasts.

In addition, verbal attacks on journalists in Ukraine have notably risen, with nearly as many violations recorded in the [first six months of 2025](#) (24 alerts), as throughout [2024 in total](#) (26). Some of these attacks were linked to a wave of emails with bomb threats, which [were sent](#) to a number of Ukrainian media outlets in the first months of this year.

Other attacks were related to campaigns of online intimidation and threatening. A notable case of this type involved journalist Olena Mudra from Ukraine's Zakarpattya region, who [was targeted](#) in a series of publications containing false accusations and deep fake videos, including with the use of AI.

Lastly, while media freedom violations [linked to legal incidents](#) have become less frequent than [in 2024](#), this was partly due to the higher number of arrests of Ukrainian media workers which [were carried out](#) in that year by Russian occupying authorities. While arrests might have continued over the past months, no such arrests were reported to MapMF, leading to a lower number of legal cases. It should be noted that only a handful of the journalists held in custody by Russian occupying authorities [have been released to date](#). As a result, the continued detention of [close to 30 Ukrainian journalists](#) in Russian captivity remains a major concern, especially following the tragic death of Victoria Roshchyna in 2024.

CONCLUSION

In the first six months of 2025, [709 attacks on press freedom](#) provide evidence for continued pressure on journalists and media in Europe. The data demonstrates that press freedom is particularly challenged in key areas such as legislation and government policy.

The MFRR notes with great concern that European leaders utilise their public reach and executive power to threaten, discredit and silence journalists. The rise of foreign agent laws threatens to legalise attacks on independent reporting, specifically in countries where media pluralism is already in decline. As political tensions have sparked protests throughout EU Member States and candidate countries, journalists reporting on these issues have been physically and verbally attacked by protesters and state security. The digital realm remains the primary site for attacks against journalists, and must be more closely monitored by states to combat digital threats like hacking, DDoS and spyware attacks.

The MFRR remains committed to documenting and analysing these violations through the Mapping Media Freedom database. The project will continue to monitor developments, produce reports, and provide insights into the state of press and media freedom in the coming year.

DISCLAIMER

The respective alerts for this monitoring report can be viewed directly on the [Mapping Media Freedom](#) database. This report includes all incidents from 1 January until 30 June 2025. If cases are reported and published after the publication of this report, they will still appear on the database, as well as under the individual links provided throughout the report to give an up-to-date view at any time.

One incident or alert can include multiple types of attacks (e.g. a journalist is insulted and physically attacked at the same time), or affect more than one journalist or media actor at the same time. In particular, legal incidents where journalists or outlets receive multiple related or similar legal threats are currently recorded as one alert. As a consequence, the sum of all attacks recorded for a given country or within a certain type of attack can round up to more than 100%.



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