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Montenegro: A decade of unresolved attacks on independent media

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On 12 February, yet another vehicle belonging to the Montenegrin newspaper Vijesti was set on fire, the latest in a series of attacks on the newspaper's vehicles since 2011.

On 26 December 2013, an explosive device detonated outside Vijesti's offices, shattering windows and damaging the facade; fortunately none of the 16 staff were injured. The perpetrator was recorded on security cameras, yet no one has been found responsible. In November 2013, security cameras also recorded people throwing stones and rocks at the newspaper's office entrance. The office was also attacked during the Podgorica Pride in October 2013.

Attacks are not confined to Vijesti: in early January 2014, Lidija Nikčević, correspondent for daily newspaper Dan, was attacked by masked men with a baseball bat as she was leaving her office in Niksić. In August 2013, an explosive device was detonated in front of Tufik Softić's home in Berane; the journalist writes for both Vijesti and the weekly journal, Monitor.

These are only a few of the most recent attacks on the lives and property of independent journalists and media in Montenegro, which date back to the 2004 murder of Duško Jovanović, editor and publisher of independent daily, Dan. Few perpetrators have been brought to justice: in July 2012, Podgorica Basic Court sentenced Ivan Bušković to nine months imprisonment for an attack in March 2012 on Vijesti reporter Olivera Lakić, but further investigations continue into who was behind the attack.

Amnesty International deplores the lack of effective investigations, which continues to threaten the freedom of independent media in Montenegro. The organization again calls on the authorities, including the recently established Commission for monitoring investigations into attacks on journalists, to take prompt and effective action to address a decade of virtual impunity for attacks on independent media and journalists.

Following his visit to Montenegro in June 2013, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression urged Montenegro to set up a mechanism to resolve and prevent cases of attacks against reporters and media outlets, stating that: "The impunity of well-known cases of violence against journalists is unacceptable."

In November 2013 the Ministry of Interior, under pressure from the European Commission, established an 11-member commission for monitoring investigations into attacks on journalists, which first met on 6 February. It includes six representatives from the State Prosecutor's Office, Police Administration and Agency for National Security, four journalists – including the Assistant Chief Editor of Dan, who chairs the Commission – and a representative of civil society.

Reporters without Borders' list on media freedoms ranked Montenegro 113th in the world in 2013.

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