

28 June 2021

Germany: ECPMF highly concerned by police attack on media workers at Düsseldorf protest

The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), as part of the Media Freedom Rapid Response, is highly concerned about reported attacks on journalists by the police during a protest in Düsseldorf on 26 June 2021. We welcome that State Minister for Internal Affairs for Nordrhein-Westfalen, Herbert Reul, [has promised](#) a comprehensive investigation into the matter. We urge him to ensure that this is conducted swiftly and independently. It must lead to accountability for the police officers involved and the development and implementation of appropriate safeguards so that repetition of such attacks is avoided in the future.

On Saturday 26 June, [thousands of protesters gathered](#) in Düsseldorf in opposition to a controversial [proposed regional law on public gatherings](#). It was marked by a large and aggressive display of power from the police. They targeted not only the protesters but also members of the press: [at least two media workers were attacked](#) by police officers, including a photographer of the Deutschen Pressagentur (dpa), who was repeatedly hit with a baton.

Journalists and media workers perform a critical societal function when they cover protests: they inform about the gathering itself and the public interest issues that gave rise to it and report on the authorities' handling of the demonstration as part of their watchdog role. As such, they are entitled to protection and should not face reprisals nor be unduly limited in exercising these functions. This is why in our [Press Freedom Police Codex](#), the first principle is that any violence by police staff against journalists is unacceptable. Furthermore, the Codex also sets out that police should protect journalists and media workers from any illegal interference, especially at demonstrations; that harm by the police must be condemned, investigated and made public by independent investigators; and, that police officers should be trained and regularly updated on journalists' rights.

The attacks on media workers reported at the protest in Düsseldorf show the need for a renewed commitment, in word and deed, to collaboration between the media sector and authorities responsible for law enforcement to improve journalists' safety at protests, which are the most dangerous environment for media workers in Germany. As we recommended previously in the [Feindbild study](#), this must include developing and implementing new principles of conduct. Moreover, there is an evident need for more training and capacity-building of police officers in general and of riot police units in particular.

Signed:

European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)

This statement has been written by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom as part of 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.

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