

To:  
Speaker of the Parliament of Albania, Gramoz Ruçi

CC:  
European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi  
Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović

Sent electronically

11 June 2021

**Subject: Concerns over new restrictions for journalists and media workers in access to Parliament**

Dear Mr Gramoz Ruçi,

We, the undersigned partners in the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), are concerned about recently approved restrictions for journalists and media workers reporting from the Albanian Parliament.

On 2 June 2021, the Bureau of the Assembly of Albania published an amended regulation for the Accreditation, Accommodation and Orientation of Mass Media in the Parliament. The rules, adopted without consultation with journalists and media workers' associations and unions, civil society or other pertinent stakeholders, will come into effect in September 2021.

Compared with the rules currently in force, we are concerned these new restrictions to freedom of movement will negatively affect the ability of journalists and media workers to report and decrease the level of transparency of the Parliament:

1. Accredited journalists from private media will only be able to report from a designated newsroom and will not be able to follow and report directly from the rooms where plenary or committee meetings take place or freely move around the building, as is currently the case. However, journalists from public broadcaster RTSH and public news agency ATSH will continue to have access.
2. Access to video broadcasts during the meetings will be provided to the media by the Parliament itself.

These measures will restrict the access of journalists to lawmakers, limiting opportunities to ask critical questions and meaningfully engage. Concerns have been raised also that

the control by parliamentary staff over the video feeds could give rise to censorship or manipulation. Moreover, the distinction between journalists working for private media and those working for the public broadcaster will create a dual system of access that is arbitrary and unfair.

In light of these concerns, we respectfully ask you to withdraw these new rules and maintain the current high standards of access for journalists and media workers. Any new changes should be introduced only after consultation with journalists' associations and unions and civil society stakeholders. Equal, fair and unhindered coverage of parliamentary proceedings is a hallmark of a strong democracy. We urge the Albanian National Assembly to adhere to these principles.

Signed:

ARTICLE 19

European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)

European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

International Press Institute (IPI)

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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**

