

FEIND BILD JOURNALIST⁵

JOURNALIST AS ENEMY STEREOTYPE



Germany: Allied
in press hatred

EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR PRESS & MEDIA
FREEDOM

ECPMF



MEDIA FREEDOM
RAPID RESPONSE

Key findings of the study

1. **Negative record:** Sixty-nine physical attacks on journalists were recorded in 2020. This is the highest number since our records began in 2015.
2. **Most dangerous workplace:** Seventy-one percent of attacks took place at pandemic-related demonstrations.
3. **Geography of violence:** Berlin was the geographical focus with 23 assaults. Saxony remained a hotspot with 19 attacks.
4. **A politically diverse range of different perpetrators:** Thirty-three cases cannot be clearly assessed politically, 31 acts were assigned to the right-wing spectrum.
5. **Continuing trend:** From the beginning of the year until mid-March 2021, the ECPMF registered 8 assaults.
6. **Overall view 2015-2020:** The ECPMF examined and documented 182 cases.

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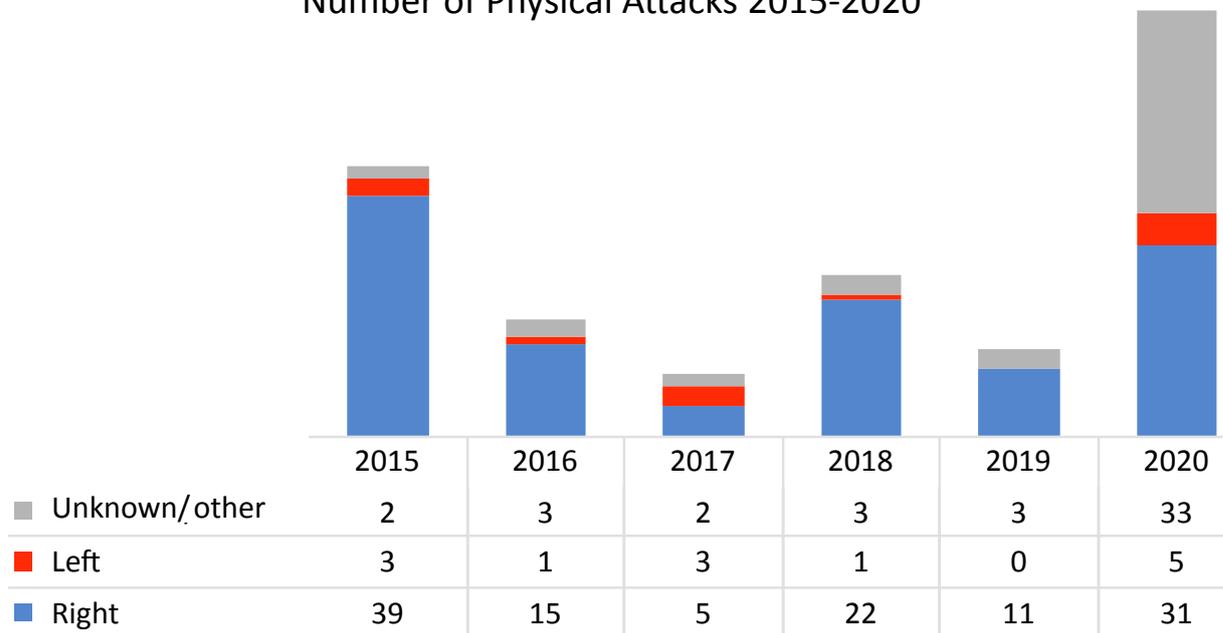
Introduction

The security situation for journalists in Germany has once again worsened. The main reason for the many acts of violence are pandemic-related protests, as the evaluation of the new category "action with reference to the pandemic" shows in the ECPMF case recording shows. In 2020, very different groupings gathered on the streets under the banner of the "Querdenken"-movement. The supporters demonstrated unity in two respects: They reject the government's policy for containing the coronavirus pandemic – and they portray journalists as the enemy. Many media professionals have been confronted with hatred in full force this year.

1 The difficult year 2020 in numbers

This study documents 69 physical attacks on journalists in Germany in 2020. On average, press representatives were physically attacked on almost every fifth day. This is the highest figure recorded by the ECPMF since the survey began in 2015. Compared to the previous year (2019: 14 attacks), the number has increased almost fivefold.

Number of Physical Attacks 2015-2020

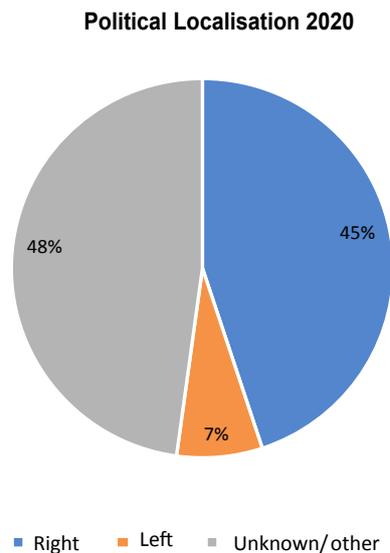


Source: ECPMF

1 "Thinking out of the box"

Most cases are politically ambiguous

Thirty-one of the 69 cases registered in 2020 have a clearly right-wing crime context. In contrast, five cases can be attributed to the left-wing spectrum, three of which occurred at the linksunten.indymedia demonstration in Leipzig on 25 January 2020.



Source: ECPMF

Thirty-three attacks could not be clearly located politically. This unusually high proportion is mainly due to the imprecise political positioning of many pandemic-related demonstrations and their supporters².

However, ten cases were also registered that had no connection to the pandemic and for which no clear political classification was possible. Specifically, these were, for example, an assault during filming in a pedestrian zone and an attack by drunken youths. In such cases, the political reference is not clear, but it cannot be ruled out either.

Of all the cases assigned to the right-wing spectrum, most (26 out of 31) took place at pandemic-related demonstrations. Thus, only a very small proportion of all right-wing cases occurred in situations that had nothing to do with coronavirus-related protests. On the other hand, only one case was reported that was classified as politically left-wing and had a pandemic connection.

Seventy-one percent of all attacks at pandemic-related demos

What is new is the overwhelming representation of "Querdenken"- and other pandemic-related gatherings. Of all registered attacks, 71 percent (49 out of 69) took place at such rallies.

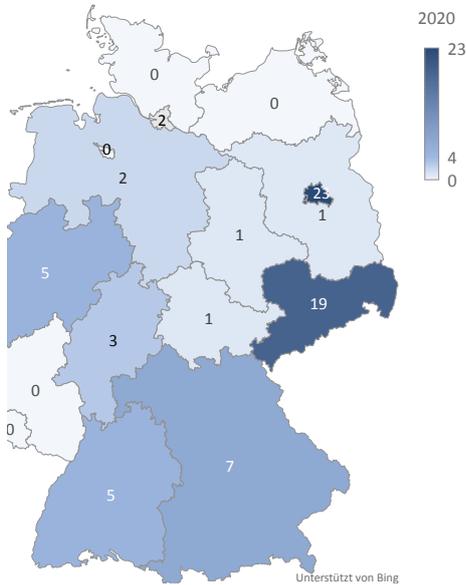
As in previous years, demonstrations continue to be the most frequent setting for attacks. Fifty-eight out of 69 assaults took place at or in the context of rallies. This corresponds to 84 percent.

Geographical distribution: Berlin overtakes Saxony

For the first time since the survey began, the highest number of assaults on journalists occurred in Berlin (23). This is followed by Saxony with 19 and Bavaria with 7 cases. In the years 2015 to 2019, attacks did take place again and again in Berlin.

² According to ECPMF criteria, a case can be assigned to the right-wing spectrum, for example, if the offence is committed by participants of clearly right-wing demonstrations (e.g. AfD, Pegida, NPD, Die Rechte, etc.), the perpetrators wear symbols typical of the scene, e.g. through clothing or tattoos, make clearly right-wing extremist statements or can be identified by party or scene affiliation (e.g. in the neo-Nazi hooligan milieu). If the political affiliation is not clearly possible, but cannot be ruled out either, the case is noted as "unknown"/"other". The categories "right-wing" and "left-wing" serve as auxiliary constructions to make the public everyday assessment of the political spectrum comprehensible in a shortened form. Accordingly, the recording of attacks in these categories is done for the purpose of an in-depth analysis of attack patterns. The "extremism theory" (colloquially known as the "horseshoe theory") is not considered plausible by the authors.

Physical Attacks (by federal states) 2020



Source: ECPMF

However, such a drastic increase has not yet been recorded in any other federal state.

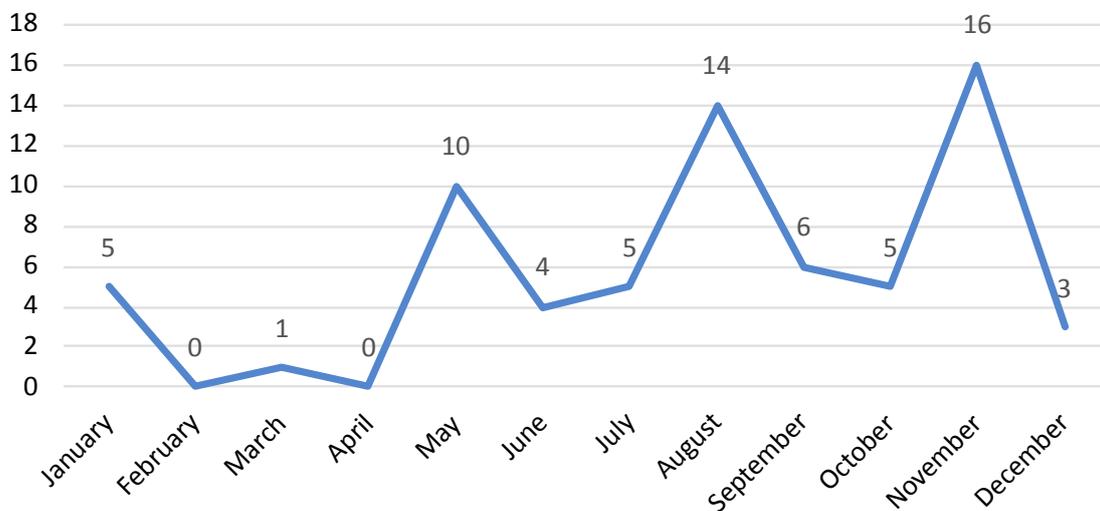
With 19 cases, Saxony remains a hotspot for physical attacks against journalists. Compared to the record year 2015, when 25 of the 44 attacks occurred in the "Free State of Saxony", the absolute number of assaults has decreased, but the level remains comparatively high. Between 2015 and 2019, a disproportionately high number of attacks (51 out of 113) were registered in Saxony. However, the events of the past year make it clear that anti-press attacks are not an exclusively region-specific phenomenon.

Development over the course of the year: Press hatred escalates in the pandemic

The year 2020 was marked by physical attacks on journalists, which occurred mainly in the wake of the new protest movement against the coronavirus measures. Forty-nine out of 69 attacks took place at or around pandemic-related demonstrations. As the year progressed, the attacks increased and the movement became more radicalised.

The remaining 20 attacks occurred at right-wing and left-wing demonstrations or in everyday journalistic situations such as filming. This number roughly corresponds to the mean value (22.6) from 2015 to 2019 of the case numbers collected by the ECPMF. In other words: If all attacks on pandemic-related gatherings were factored out, 2020 would be an average year - in line with the finding that attacks on the

Development of Physical Attacks over the Course of the Year 2020



Source: ECPMF

press must be perceived as a new normal in recent years. However, this calculation should be understood as an illustrative hypothesis, as it is uncertain whether a different protest phenomenon would have developed without the pandemic situation.

2 A politically diverse range of different perpetrators

From the data collected by the ECPMF for individual offences, it is hardly possible to extract information on the motivation, spur to action or individual biographies of the perpetrators. This would require a qualitative, sociological analysis.

Nevertheless, from the descriptions of the crimes, numerous statements by the journalists involved and video footage viewed, it is possible to identify some types of perpetrators. The perpetrators of anti-press attacks are predominantly male, right-wing and often direct their aggression towards the camera. In 43 out of 69 cases, men were the (co-)perpetrators; in ten attacks, women were involved. In 20 cases, the gender of the perpetrators is not known.³ Thus, assaults against the press continue to be a male-dominated phenomenon.

In addition, the perpetrators are mainly recruited from conspiracy-based ideological and extreme right-wings spheres. Due to ideological overlaps, they can often neither be clearly separated from each other in their actions nor in their thinking. In ten cases, the perpetrators were obviously right-wing extremists and could be identified as such by their clothing, regalia or verbal statements. In the remaining 21 right-wing cases, the assignment to the political spectrum resulted from a corresponding assessment by security authorities, for example if they had categorised the offences or the demonstration itself as "right-wing extremist". Another reason for the classification was when those responsible for the demonstration (organisers, speakers, leaders, stewards, etc.) were clearly right-wing, for example because of their party affiliation.

Cameras as targets of aggression

When a camera was carried by the journalists concerned (60 out of 69 cases), in almost half of the cases (29 out of 60), the attack was (also) directly directed against the camera. Often the camera is perceived as a provocation and the attack is directly directed against it. Such attacks are often accompanied by verbal threats ("Take the camera away!"). However, to a similar extent (22 out of 60 cases), the violence was explicitly not directed against the camera. This indicates that in many attacks it was not only the filming and taking of pictures that was the problem, but that belonging to the journalistic profession (also) motivated the violence. It should be noted that carrying a camera is a sign of identification for journalists and thus increases the risk of being attacked.

³ Since in some cases several persons attacked, these figures are not congruent with the absolute number of cases

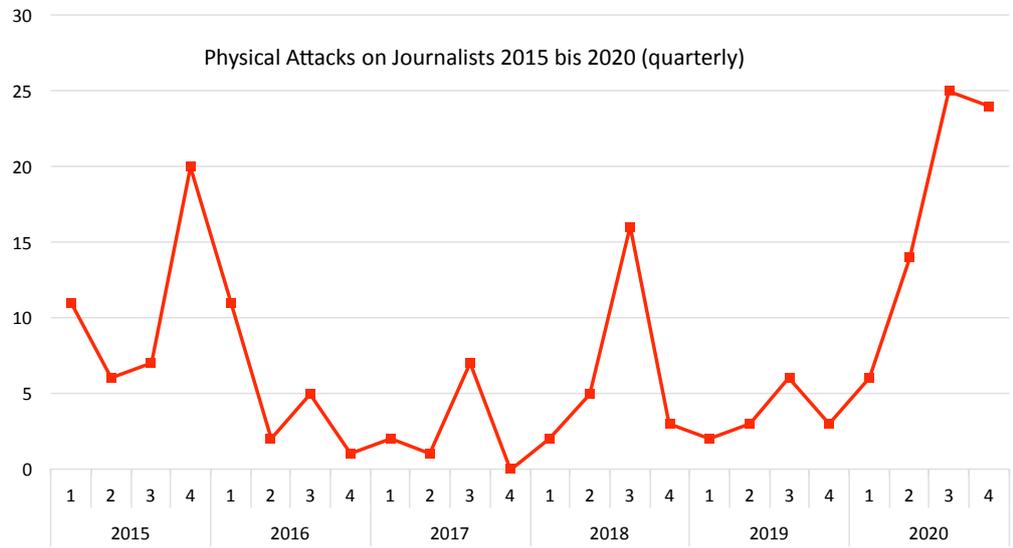
The threat situation becomes more incalculable

It is now much less easy for journalists to recognise whether someone is potentially violent by looking at their appearance and clothing. In addition to the aggressive, paramilitary type of attacker, for years there have been people who initially appear to pose no threat and who break out of their harmless facade without any warning. Neither their style of dress nor their behaviour reveal their potential for violence. In the meantime, both types of perpetrators have come to dominate the cases we register.

At the same time, it can be assumed that supporters of the extreme right in particular know exactly who their enemies are. In particular, freelance and specialist journalists are targeted and attacked. In some cases, neo-Nazis directly address journalists by name and threaten them.

3 Overview: Attacks on journalists 2015 to 2020

After six years of systematic monitoring, the results are depressing: 182 physical attacks on journalists were recorded by the ECPMF from 2015 to 2020. Since Pegida, the AfD and other right-wing actors have fixed the "lying press" slander in many people's minds since 2015, reporters have been confronted with hate more frequently and more directly.

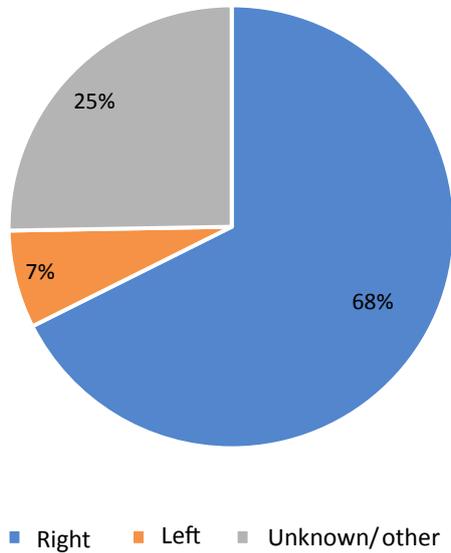


Source: ECPMF

In 2020, this development continues, at least at first glance. Twenty-eight attacks attributed to the right-wing camp occurred at or in the vicinity of gatherings. In 2015, there were 37.

The absolute number of right-wing assaults remains high at 31 cases. This is the second highest value after the record year 2015 (39 right-wing attacks). In total, 123

Political Localization 2015 - 2020



Source: ECPMF

of 182 cases between 2015 and 2020 came from the right-wing spectrum. This corresponds to 68 percent.

Left-wing attacks, on the other hand, only make up a small proportion of all recorded offences: Only 13 of 182 cases can be attributed to the left-wing spectrum. This corresponds to 7 percent of the attacks. All of these left-wing attacks took place at or around demonstrations.

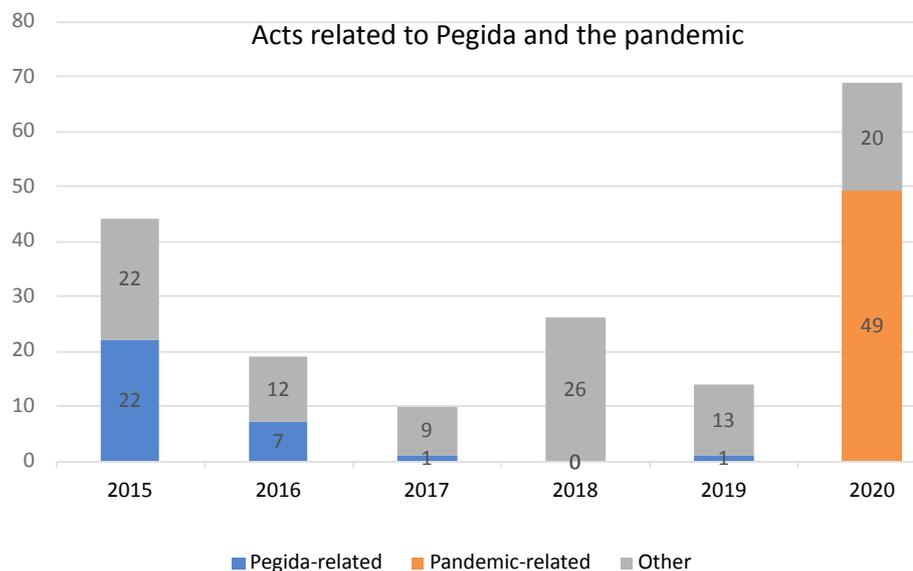
Acts related to Pegida and the pandemic

While certain crime characteristics recurred – targeting against the camera, often male perpetrators, demonstrations as crime scenes – many 2020 cases show a characteristic that was not previously observed with this frequency: 33 attacks could not be clearly assigned to a political camp. In the years between 2015 and 2019, on the other hand, this only applied to a total of 13 cases.

The high number of politically ambiguous cases is due to the often unclear political position of the coronavirus-related protests.

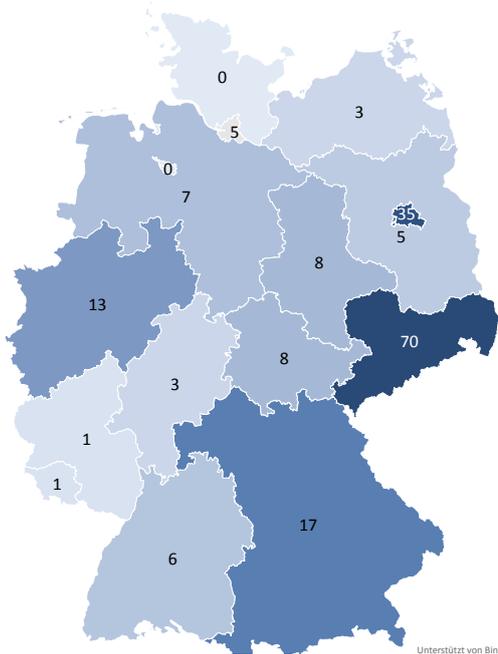
This distinguishes the past year from 2015: At that time, almost all attacks (20 out of 22) that occurred in the vicinity of Pegida gatherings were located in the right-wing camp. In light of the Islamophobic and racist orientation of the movement, this classification is understandable and clear. The situation is different for pandemic-related protests. Of all the cases that were not clearly assigned to any political spectrum (33), the majority (22) took place at coronavirus-related gatherings.

However, this does not explain the remaining eleven cases, which in themselves already represent a quadrupling of the number of politically non-located attacks.



Source: ECPMF

Physical Attacks (by federal state) 2015-2020



Source: ECPMF

These are attacks, for example, during filming, which have no connection to an assembly.

Number of attacks by federal state

Saxony was and still is a hotspot for of anti-press attacks. Over the entire monitoring period, the Free State is the federal state with the most attacks. A total of 70 out of 182 cases were recorded there. This is followed by Berlin (35) and Bavaria (17). Schleswig-Holstein and Bremen are the only federal states in which not a single assault on journalists has been reported since 2015.

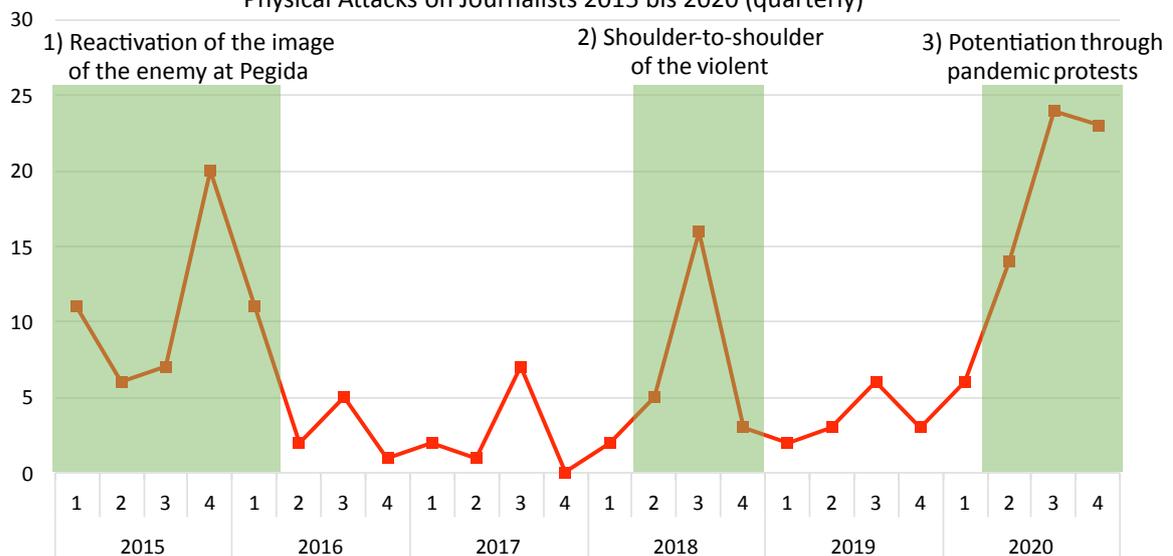
If we look away from the analysis of the individual federal states and look at the specific locations of the events, a more differentiated picture emerges: The attacks took place in almost all regions, although some cities and districts are particularly frequently represented. Most attacks occurred in Berlin (35) and the three largest cities in Saxony: Leipzig (22), Dresden (20) and Chemnitz (12).

From Pegida to "Querdenken": Phases of anti-press aggression

In retrospect since 2014/2015, three phases can be distinguished in which physical press hatred changed from an exceptional case to a permanent threat in the everyday work of journalists.

Escalation phase 1: Reactivation of the image of the enemy at Pegida: The revival of the historical "lying press" narrative in public discourse from 2014 onwards can be seen as the initial spark that ignited an increasingly violent hatred of the press. Mass demonstrations by Pegida, increased public appearances by the AfD and open-

Physical Attacks on Journalists 2015 bis 2020 (quarterly)



Source: ECPMF

ly outward hostility from the extreme right occurred in parallel with a significant increase in physical attacks. After Pegida's loss of supporters and partial self-destruction, there followed about two years in which the number of attacks declined. However, this was initially due to a decrease in demonstrations and the reporting on them. This also resulted in a decrease in opportunities for confrontation, while the "lying press" narrative had established itself in the thinking of a broader part of the population. Thus, this decline in numbers did not last.

Escalation phase 2: Shoulder-to-shoulder with the forces of the violence: In autumn 2018, when the AfD, Pegida and the organised far right joined forces at the demonstrations in Chemnitz, violence against journalists escalated to an unprecedented extent: Nine media workers were attacked in just one day. On 1 September 2018, it became clear how quickly the potential for aggression between the press and those who hate the press, which had been fuelled by the history of press hatred, can lead to tangible violence. This shattered the illusion that, with the marginalisation of Pegida, the potential for violence would once again become a marginal phenomenon confined to far-right circles as it was before 2015. The decline in the number of attacks in 2019 masked a finding that went hand in hand with a radicalisation of groupings previously described as bourgeois: Press hatred has now manifested itself as the new normal.

Escalation phase 3: Proliferation through pandemic protests: With the onset of the pandemic, lockdown-induced demonstrations and subsequently the number of attacks declined sharply. But this trend lasted only briefly until May 2020, when pandemic-related gatherings began to become a firmly-installed protest format. Most recently, the accumulation of attacks in different cities and federal states revealed the anti-press potential of this movement.

In the following months, the number of attacks rose to an unprecedented level. In addition to the already well known and press-hostile clientele of "angry citizens", racists, neo-Nazis, the disillusioned and critics of the system, a new clientele appeared on the scene in the form of conspiracy believers, anti-vaccinationists and esotericists. What unites them is the rejection of free and independent journalistic work, which they are prepared to prevent – even by force.

4 Conclusion

There have never been more physical attacks in the Federal Republic of Germany than in 2020. The increase is mainly due to the pandemic-related demonstrations. Since spring 2020, they have been driving a broad alliance of conspiracy believers, "Reich Citizens"⁴, neo-Nazis and esotericists onto Germany's streets. The rejection of a free, pluralistic press unites this heterogeneous mass and at the same time links it to the ideology of the extreme right and the thought patterns of the conspiracy scene. Open expressions of sympathy and "tolerance" unmasked the supposedly peaceful protests as a movement that was ultimately open to the right, partly radical and ready to use violence. In light of the advanced radicalisation of the "Querdenken"-movement and its strong potential for aggression, it cannot be assumed at present that the danger to journalists at pandemic-related gatherings will decrease.

This finding continues a development that began to become a dangerous normality in the everyday work of journalists in 2015: Journalists were spat upon, punched, kicked and had their cameras snatched out of their hands. With the loss of political support for Pegida and the decline in right-wing populist rallies, the attacks initially decreased. However, the public hatred of the press that was sown there has since become part of the ideological inventory, especially among right-wing open-minded and indignant radicals. This leads to a continuity of anti-press violence: It erupts abruptly whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The record number of physical attacks against journalists is therefore not a symptom of a "new quality of hostility towards the press", but rather it reflects the potential for violence of a minority of the population.

Due to the increasingly heterogeneous appearance of the attackers, journalists are more and more confronted suddenly and without warning with hatred towards them as representatives of the alleged "lying press". They constantly have to expect threatening situations, and sometimes have to withdraw from their place of work or abort shoots because their safety can no longer be ensured. If courageous colleagues or police officers do not intervene in time, their physical safety is at stake. If media professionals are prevented from doing their work by violence and threats on such a massive scale as in 2020, blind spots in reporting will be the result – freedom of the press in Germany remains at risk.

⁴ "Full-blooded German citizens" in the definition of the Nazi era.

5 Recommendations to police, politics and media

I Renew mutual agreement between police and media

The Conference of Interior Ministers should discuss the draft for a new version of the principles of conduct between the police and the media presented by the Press Council in November 2020 at the earliest opportunity. If the complementary objective is recognised as desirable, this should be recorded in a binding resolution. Subsequently, the updated guidelines should be implemented in the everyday work of both professional groups. A complementary committee should regularly discuss and evaluate any progress and problems with the guidelines for the relationship between the two professional groups.

II More training for police officers

The police forces of the Länder⁵ and the Federal Police should intensify the training and further education of their forces. Dialogue formats that go beyond the mere imparting of knowledge and sensitise people to the needs and perspectives of the other professional group are particularly suitable for strengthening police and journalistic confidence. Riot police units in particular should be well trained. They are most often confronted with journalists in their main field of activity political gatherings.

III Concealing journalists' addresses during investigations and court proceedings

The personal data of journalists must be better protected in investigations and court proceedings. When journalists who have been affected by violence file a complaint with the police, this must not be allowed to further endanger them. Police officers should check on request whether there are interests worthy of protection in the case of attacks on media workers. The investigating authorities could then automatically arrange for the concealment of addresses, so that the personal address of the person concerned cannot be found in the file which would be accessible to the lawyers of the accused in court proceedings.

IV Simplified concealment of information in the public register

It must be made easier for journalists to have their information concealed in the civil register. The "Law to combat right-wing extremism and hate crime", which has already been passed but has not yet come into force, includes the possibility for certain occupational groups to remove these personal details in a simplified way. After the law comes into force, journalists should be considered as a professional group with interests that are worthy of protection similar to those of local politicians,

⁵ Federal regions of Germany

for example, and should be able to initiate such anonymisation without the strict requirement for documentation of a pre-existing dangerous situation.

V Monitoring on a KPMD-PMK⁶ basis

The recording of offences against the media should be expanded into a monitoring instrument on the basis of the KPMD-PMK statistics of the Federal Criminal Police Office. In addition to the status of investigations and convictions for each registered offence, the results should be published regularly, ideally annually, in a separate situation report. The recording criteria for offences against the media should be made transparent and standardised between the Länder⁷ in order to establish comparability.

VI Media companies: Adhere to protective measures and support

Media companies must protect their employees, both permanent and freelance. This includes, where necessary, the provision of security personnel, training with seminars on de-escalation and self-protection, as well as financial and legal support in dealing with physical and psychological attacks. The practice, already established in many editorial offices, of drawing up risk assessments together with media professionals even before the planned journalistic work is done, must be further expanded.

⁶ Office for investigating politically-motivated crimes.

⁷ Federal regions of Germany

About the authors

Pauline Bettle, M.A.

Studied political science at the University of Leipzig. She has been a freelancer for ECPMF since 2016 and co-author of the "Feindbild" study series since 2017. She works as a freelancer for MDR.

Martin Hoffmann, M.A.

Studied cultural studies at the European University Frankfurt/Oder and journalism at the University of Leipzig. He has been working as a freelancer for the ECPMF since 2015 and designed the "Feindbild" study series, among other things. He is doing his doctorate at the European Institute for Journalism and Communication Research and works as an editor at ZDF Television.

ANNEX

Link to the German long version of the study: It contains, among other things, in-depth analyses of the "Querdenken"-movement and ideological patterns of its hostility to the press, as well as the study design: <https://www.ecpmf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Feindbild-Journalist-5-Alliiert-im-Presehass.pdf>

Link to the complete case list (German):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AUs_vXXrC8F1wC-BmTJd8akMeAtqQnjF/view

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Europäischen Zentrums für Presse- und Medienfreiheit

Menckestraße 27
04155 Leipzig
Germany

phone: +49 (0) 341 200 403 17

fax: +49 (0) 341 562 96 63

email: martin.hoffmann@ecpmf.eu – info@ecpmf.eu

web: www.ecpmf.eu

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Cover photo: Anja Cord via www.imago-images.de – 09.08.2020 Dortmund The organisation 231 Dortmund called for an anti-corona demonstration in the centre of Dortmund. Observed by a large police contingent, numerous demonstrators gathered on Hansaplatz.



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