

FEINDBILD JOURNALIST₇



Professional
Peril Nearby

EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR PRESS & MEDIA
FREEDOM

ECPMF



**MEDIA FREEDOM
RAPID RESPONSE**

Key results for 2022

Demonstrations – the most dangerous place to work: 80 percent of all cases occurred at protests (45 out of 56 cases), of which 60 percent (27 out of 45 cases) were COVID-related protests.

Trend stopped: The spread of attacks to the western German states has been halted (for now).

Focus on Saxony: With eleven cases, Saxony is once again the federal state in which the most attacks take place.

Local assaults: Three times as many local journalists were assaulted in 2022 than in 2021.

Record month January 2022: 23 cases in just one month (41 percent of the total); there have never been more verified cases.

Overall view 2015-2022: ECPMF documented 321 cases.

Index

Key results for 2022	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Looking back on 2022/23	3
3. Querdenken on the retreat.....	9
4. Local journalism: When proximity becomes a security problem.....	13
5. State countermeasures – what are policy-makers and the police doing?.....	19
6. Recommendations for action	24
7. Conclusion	25
Bibliography	26
About the authors.....	31
Study design	32

1. Introduction

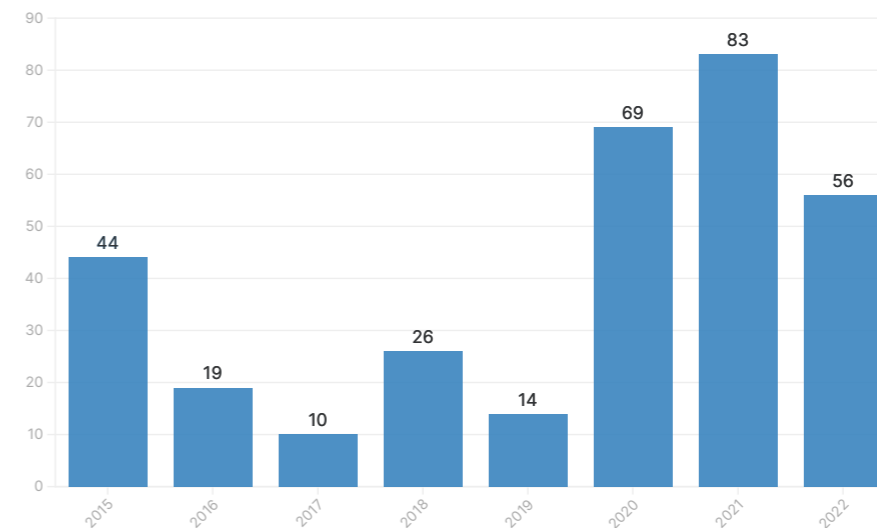
The trend has been broken – after two successive negative records, the number of attacks on media workers fell again in 2022. However, the findings of this seventh “Feindbild Journalist” study cannot be read as an indication of an easing of the security situation. If we were to compare the 56 violent attacks verified for the past year with the pre-pandemic level of 14 attacks in 2019, one thing becomes clear: journalists in Germany live dangerously. Their risk of being attacked simply because of their profession has increased drastically since 2020.

Demonstrations remain the most dangerous workplace for journalists. In 2022, 80 percent of all attacks occurred within this context. The fact that this proportion, as well as the number of cases, is now somewhat in decline, can mainly be attributed to the progressive dissolution of the Querdenken network.

Despite the many offers of support and countermeasures, journalists withdrew from reporting in 2022 because of hostility; quite a few reported physical and psychological injuries during case research. Eight years after the first “lying press” invectives in the public sphere, permanent confrontation with hate and agitation has drained many media professionals.

2. Looking back on 2022/23

56 physical attacks on media workers were verified in 2022. After two successive negative records in 2020 and 2021 – the years of the pandemic – the number of known assaults is now once again in decline. In 2020, 69 violent assaults on members of the press were registered, while in 2021, 83 assaults were recorded, the highest figure since case records began. Despite the decrease in 2022, the number of recorded cases is still significantly higher than before the pandemic. In 2019, 14 violent attacks on media workers were recorded, a quarter of the assaults recorded in 2022.



Graphic: Number of attacks per year 2015-2022 – Source: ECPMF

Demonstrations continue to be the most dangerous working environment for journalists in Germany: 80 percent of assaults occurred at demonstrations, some 45 out of 56 assaults. 27 cases took place at pandemic-related protests. Thus, in 2022, almost half of all assaults were related to COVID demonstrations (48 percent). Violent attacks on journalists were also recorded at a press conference promoting the coronavirus booster jab (3), at events such as a city festival and a football match (7), and during a shooting at a railway crossing (1).

The distribution of case numbers over the course of the year is striking. The year began with a negative record of 23 cases in January alone. Since ECPMF began recording cases, never have more cases been counted in a single month. This is about 41 percent of the total cases verified in 2022. As the year progressed, the number of pandemic-related protests decreased significantly, along with the number of physical assaults on members of the press.

Political classification of cases¹

In 2022, out of a total of 56 assaults, 26 incidents were attributed to the right-wing spectrum (46.4 percent) and four to the left (7.1 percent). The other 26 assaults could not be clearly assigned politically (46.4 percent). For comparison, in 2021, 60.2 percent of the verified cases could not be clearly categorised politically.

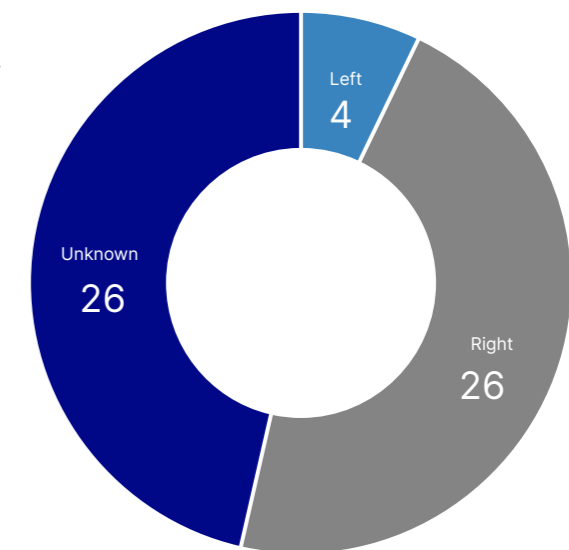
19 of the total 26 assaults that could not be clearly categorised politically occurred during COVID-related protests (17 of them in Q1). Three further assaults were recorded in other demonstration settings: an anti-transgender demonstration on 25 September 2022 in Berlin, a Monday demonstration – without reference to the pandemic – in Heiligenstadt on 3 October 2022, and a “peace” demonstration in Berlin on 17 December 2022. In addition, there were four violent assaults outside of protests. At one funeral, one football match, one filming and one market festival, press representatives with no political affiliations were attacked.

The high proportion of cases with no political agenda is mainly due to the context of the crime. As in the previous two years, a large proportion of violent attacks were registered at Querdenken demonstrations. The outrage movement has clearly become more radicalised and is now influenced by right-wing activists in many places or has adopted their demands. Despite this right-wing openness of Querdenken, it is not possible to make a general assessment of the position of its supporters in a particular political spectrum because of the prevailing political

¹ 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. For further explanations, see the annex “Notes on the study design”

heterogeneity. As long as there are no indications of a political motivation for the crime, no conclusions can be drawn solely from participation in Querdenken protests. The fact that the proportion of politically unattributable attacks at protests is now decreasing again is due to the fact that the political orientation of the individual demonstrations as well as the individual participants could be more clearly determined in 2022. This allows for a classification in a growing number of cases. This is done, for example, through the clearly politically determinable demonstration references, the identification of perpetrators known to the scene or clear symbols.

As before, media professionals are placed under the greatest threat by far from the right-wing political spectrum. In 2022, almost half of the verified attacks were carried out by perpetrators from this side of the spectrum. Until the pandemic, right-wing extremist attacks had accounted for about three quarters of all attacks. Eight of the 26 assaults categorised as right-wing motivated occurred at protests against the state’s coronavirus restrictions, seven of them in the first quarter. Three right-wing assaults occurred at a single COVID-related press conference in Munich. At the event, a known right-wing extremist attacked media workers three times.



Graphic: Political affiliation 2022 – Source: ECPMF

A further eleven attacks attributed to the right-wing spectrum took place at right-wing demonstrations, for example of the AfD or “Freies Thüringen”. Four assaults also took place within the context of events where the perpetrators were politically right-wing: two AfD politicians and two right-wing extremists who could be clearly identified by the journalists present based on their appearance.

Four cases could be classified as politically left-wing motivated.² One incident occurred at a counter-demonstration of Antifa and three incidents within the context of pro-Palestine demonstrations, which in Berlin have clear links to the radical left-wing spectrum. “The organisers of these demonstrations belong to the anti-imperialist radical left-wing and are organised in groups such as Migrantifa and the Samidoun group – a fringe organisation of the pan-Arab Palestinian organisation Pflp, which pursues the destruction of Israel by terrorist and military means and is listed as a terrorist organisation in Europe and the USA. The pro-

² One supplement should be noted: After the editorial deadline, the Saxon State Ministry of the Interior sent the ECPMF seven further assaults on media workers in the federal state, which are registered as cases of politically motivated crime (PMC) in the sub-thematic area against media workers. According to the assessment of the Saxony police, five of the seven cases are left-wing motivated offences. However, since the cases could not yet be verified, these cases are not part of this year’s study – but will be subject to verification for the coming study.

tests are supported by important politicians of DIE LINKE in Neukölln and parts of Linksjugend Solid,” said Jörg Reichel, executive director of the German Journalists’ Union (dju) in ver.di Berlin-Brandenburg. Since the beginning of the study, the share of politically left-wing assaults has been between 0 and 33 percent – and thus significantly lower than that of right-wing motivated acts. Their share averaged 76 percent between the years 2015 and 2019. From 2020 onwards, this proportion fell, as many attacks could not be clearly attributed due to the heterogeneity of the supporters of Querdenken and similar protests.

Perpetrator gender: majority male

The findings of this study are in line with the results of previous years: the majority of assailants are male.³ In 2022, men were the aggressors in 41 cases out of 56 assaults (73.2 percent), while women were the perpetrators in eight cases (14.3 percent). In a total of seven assaults, the gender of the perpetrators could not be identified (12.5 percent). With regard to the gender distribution of the perpetrators, the percentage distribution of the perpetrators is almost exactly the same as in the previous year. In 2021, 61 out of 83 violent assaults were committed by men alone (73.5 percent). However, the percentage of female perpetrators has increased compared to 2021; last year, women were the aggressors in five incidents (6 percent). In three cases, both women and men were involved in 2021 (3.6 percent). The percentage of unattributable persons remained about the same at 16.9 percent (2021: 14 attacks).

Demonstrations: The most dangerous place to work

Covering protests remains the most dangerous working environment for members of the press in Germany. In 2022, 80 percent of violent attacks occurred within the context of demonstrations. Compared to previous years, this proportion has decreased. In 2021, it was 95 percent, and 84 percent the year before. This decline is probably due to the progressive marginalisation of Querdenken and similar pandemic-driven outrage movements, as a result of which fewer gatherings took place with an overall lower mobilisation effect (more in-depth analysis on this in chapter 3).

Around the turn of the year 2021/2022, the newly emerged unannounced protest formats – or what have come to be referred to simply as “walks” – put media workers in threatening situations. Since these spontaneous protests were not authorised by the authorities and thus could not be secured by the police to the same extent, the threat levels for media workers there was very high. December 2021 represents the peak of this development. Of a total of 19 attacks at demon-

³ The study design only allows for a limited number of well-founded statements on the perpetrators, as they are not contacted and, as a rule, only a limited amount of reliable data is available through media reporting or from the investigating authorities and the judiciary. In many cases, however, it is at least possible to make statements about the gender and often also the political views of the attackers.

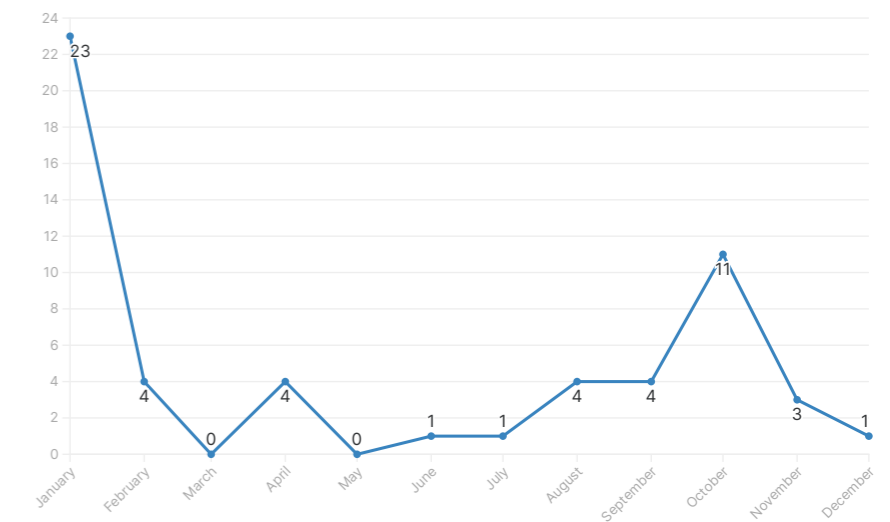
strations, 14 occurred at unannounced protests (73.7 percent). In January 2022, this development initially continued: 15 of 23 assaults at demonstrations could be attributed to supposedly spontaneous, unannounced “walks” (65 percent). As the year progressed, however, this phenomenon declined sharply. There were three more assaults at protests unauthorised by authorities.⁴

Distribution of attacks over the course of the year

The connection between pandemic-related protests and assaults on journalists is clearly reflected in the number of cases in 2022: most attacks occurred right at the beginning of the year. 27 assaults were verified in January (23) and February (4) 2022 alone. This is 48 percent of the recorded cases. Of these, 24 assaults occurred around pandemic-related “walks” or demonstrations. The attacks recorded in January and February during protests against the coronavirus restrictions are no longer limited to specific regions in Germany, but occurred in a total of ten federal states.⁵ Equally striking is that in January and February 2022, about 42 percent of assaults at demonstrations against the coronavirus restrictions took place in rural areas: Ten out of 24 violent assaults occurred in cities or towns with up to 100,000 inhabitants.

After this peak, the number of verified cases decreased rapidly. Consequently, no cases were recorded in March 2022. The reason for this is primarily the decline in so-called walks from the Querdenken milieu. However, this trend reversal is also related to the relaxation of the coronavirus restrictions⁶ as well as the shift in public interest from the pandemic to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

With the decrease in protests against the coronavirus restrictions, there is also a clear decrease in assaults on media workers. A total of 14 assaults on journalists were recorded between April and September 2022. Seven of them occurred within the context of demonstrations, three of them within the con-



Graphic: Development of number of attacks in the course of 2022 – Source: ECPMF

⁴ Two occurred in February 2022 and were also Covid-related. Another attack took place in October 2022 during an unauthorised Monday protest in Würzen.

⁵ The assaults occurred in Brandenburg (2), Berlin (2), Baden-Württemberg (4), Bavaria (3), Lower Saxony (1), North Rhine-Westphalia (1), Saarland (1), Saxony (5), Saxony-Anhalt (3) and Thuringia (2) within the context of pandemic-related protests.

⁶ Decision on the video conference of the Federal Chancellor with the heads of government of the federal states on 16 February 2022, retrieved from <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/2005140/762f13d7a372659e5967400b587b6e02/2022-02-16-mpk-beschluss-data.pdf?download=1>

text of pandemic-related protests. The four other assaults occurred in Berlin during a pro-Palestine protest (3) and an anti-transgender demonstration (1).⁷

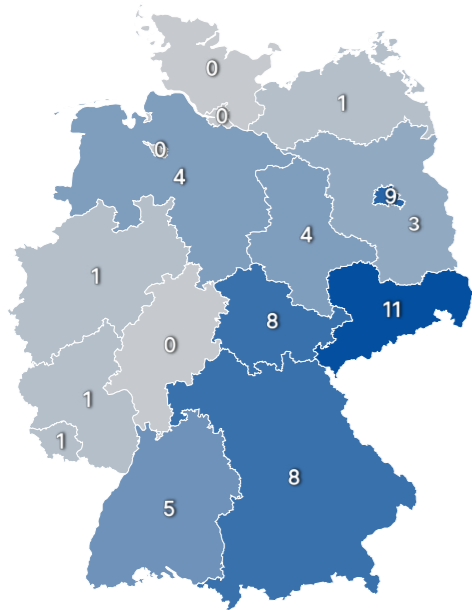
In October 2022, the number of cases increased again. Eight out of eleven recorded assaults took place within the context of a demonstration. At the protests, the dispute with the state's coronavirus measures mostly still played a role. But the issue was just one of many, along with the energy crisis and the Russian war of aggression, that were used to mobilise demonstrations. The increase in demonstrations with large numbers of participants and the accompanying fears of increased attacks on journalists, which had been predicted in the summer as a "hot autumn", did not materialise. In November 2022, there were three assaults on media workers, and one in December. These assaults all occurred within the context of demonstrations.

The federal states in comparison

Saxony is once again the front-runner in terms of assaults on media workers. A total of eleven assault incidents were verified here.⁸ For comparison, in the previous year, there were 23. In a comparison of the federal states, Saxony recorded the most attacks in five out of seven "Feindbild Journalist" studies. Attacks on members of the press in 2022 in Saxony were more frequent at the beginning and at the end of the year. In the first quarter, for example, five cases were recorded within the context of pandemic-related protests. In the fourth quarter, there were four assaults on media representatives, all within the context of demonstrations.

In Berlin, nine cases were recorded in 2022. Bavaria and Thuringia each recorded eight assaults on journalists. Baden-Württemberg recorded five physical assaults on press representatives and Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt four each. Three assaults were recorded in Brandenburg. Rhineland-Palatinate, North Rhine-Westphalia, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Saarland each count one physical assault on media workers, while no cases were recorded in Hessen, Bremen, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein in 2022.

In Berlin, the pattern of previous years remains evident: the majority of the nine attacks which occurred there were in the vicinity of larger political gatherings. The pro-Palestine demonstration on 23 April 2022 stood out with three attacks, as did the AfD demonstration on 8 October 2022 under the slogan "Our country first" with two attacks on media workers.



Graphic: Attacks per Federal State in 2022 – Source: ECPMF

⁷ The other seven incidents occurred at a press conference (3), events (3) and during a report (1).

⁸ After the editorial deadline, the Saxon State Ministry of the Interior sent the ECPMF information on seven further assaults on media workers in Saxony. However, these could no longer be comprehensively verified and are therefore not part of this year's study (see also footnote 2).

In Bavaria, there was a concentration of anti-press assaults in rural areas at the beginning of the year. In the first and second quarters, three of the four assaults occurred in a non-urban setting, while all four attacks took place at pandemic-related protests. In the third and fourth quarters, four assaults also occurred – all away from demonstrations. These took place at a press conference in Munich (3) and in the vicinity of a football match in Bayreuth (1).

In Thuringia, an increase in incidents can be observed towards the end of the year. While in the first quarter two assaults were verified at pandemic-related protests, in the fourth quarter there were five assaults, four of them at demonstrations and one at the federal congress of the AfD youth organisation Junge Alternative.

In Baden-Württemberg, the situation is the opposite. Five assaults were recorded in the first quarter, otherwise no further cases were verified in this federal state. In the south-west, assaults against media workers were registered in 2021, especially within the context of Querdenken gatherings, but hardly any took place from spring 2022 onwards.

This representation makes it clear how differently anti-press assaults developed over the year in each region. Particularly in the last quarter of 2022, there was an increased incidence of physical assaults on media representatives in Thuringia and Saxony. The trend whereby violence was increasingly spreading to western Germany indicated at the beginning of the year did not continue in the course of the year. Rather, the distribution of cases points towards a trend reversal (back) towards eastern Germany.

3. Querdenken on the retreat

The significant decline in recorded attacks is mainly due to the increasing marginalisation of the Querdenken network. While 75 percent of all attacks were registered within the context of pandemic-related protests in the previous year, this share dropped to 48 percent in 2022. Just under half of the verified attacks occurred in January and February, when hundreds of the often unannounced gatherings took place each week. There were numerous attacks and threats against media workers. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the end of February, the number of gatherings and participation in them decreased sharply.

Over the course of the year, Querdenken was able to mobilise fewer and fewer people. Some regional Querdenken groups have been trying since the summer⁹ to bring their supporters onto the streets with outrage over a plethora of topics – for example, against rising energy prices, against German involvement in the Ukraine conflict or against US foreign policy. So far, however, the initiatives have not been able to achieve the mobilisation effects of 2020 and 2021. A look

⁹ Peace movement of the conspiracy ideologues, retrieved from: <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/kontraste/protteste-ramstein-101.html>

at the movement's region of origin, Stuttgart, exemplifies this. At that time, more than 10,000 people went to the gatherings there.¹⁰ About 1,000 protesters turned up for a Querdenken demonstration in the Baden-Württemberg capital in mid-March 2023, demanding the release of the group's imprisoned founder, Michael Ballweg.¹¹ One day before, the Querdenken group had called for a demonstration in Stuttgart under the banner "Politics and media hand in hand – this harms our country". The flyer insinuated that the press and politics had conspired as warmongers: "We say NO to your wars and war propaganda".¹²

The claim that there is a conspiracy of press and politics continues to be an elementary building block of the movement. It serves both to open up new protest milieus – as recently attempted with the peace movement – and as an ideological clasp to hold the politically and socially heterogeneous movement together. The permanently stoked hatred of the press is not without effect. Protest researcher Simon Teune recognises an "erosion of the inhibition threshold among many citizens to demonstrate together with the extreme right". However, this is not a novelty, but a development that had already begun with the Monday vigils against the Ukraine war in 2014 and the parallel emergence of Pegida: "Already at the Monday vigils, demonstrators with a leftist self-image, right-wing cadres, conspiracy believers and esoteric figures who wanted to bring about world peace through meditation mixed together. With the Querdenken protests, the libertarian attitude practised at the time, that all are welcome in protest if only they share a common message, has now spread more widely."¹³

Conspiracy narratives as generators of hate

The pandemic-related protests of Querdenken and other initiatives have thus contributed towards the spread of "lying press" accusations into formerly middle-class milieus. Sociological studies confirm the findings of recent years that press-rejecting attitudes are now entrenched among part of the population. According to the Motra Monitor of 2021, more than 20 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that politics and the media are in cahoots.¹⁴ This is in line with the results of other surveys, which find a population share of between

10 Germany's biggest coronavirus party, retrieved from: <https://taz.de/Verquerer-Protestmix-in-Stuttgart/!5684107/>; Significant drivers of infection, retrieved from: <https://taz.de/Querdenken-De-mo-in-Stuttgart/!5764060/>

11 Hundreds demonstrate for the release of Michael Ballweg, retrieved from: <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/stuttgart/demonstration-fuer-freilassung-von-michael-ballweg-querdenker-100.html>

12 Politics and media hand in hand – this harms our country, retrieved from: <https://app.querdenken-711.de/events-calendar/View/79c5378d-2454-4ded-8353-bec1eb062b37/11-03-2023>

13 Teune, Simon (2022): The Querdenken protests as a challenge for movement research, retrieved from: <https://protestinstitut.eu/die-querdenken-proteste-als-herausforderung-fuer-die-bewegungs-forschung/>

14 Kemmesies, Uwe et al. (2022): MOTRA-Monitor 2021 – Zusammenfassung: Radikalisierung im Schatten der Corona-Pandemie, S. 24

eleven percent ("convinced by conspiracy narratives") and 30 percent ("conspiracy narratives probably true") conspiracy believers.¹⁵

This great receptivity to conspiracy narratives is a consequence of the increasing alienation of many people from established democratic institutions. According to sociologist Hartmut Rosa, it can be explained by the rapidly accelerating processes of social change. Thus, "the political institutions and structures of public life are no longer perceived as 'jointly created'". Globalisation, liberalisation or digitalisation are experienced as processes that one faces as a "powerless victim", according to the Jena-based scientist's findings published in 2015.¹⁶ Corresponding to Rosa's analysis, the Berlin protest researcher Simon Teune also recognises that outrage movements appeal to people who see themselves in a victim role with the help of conspiracy narratives. This would be just as true for the participants in the Pegida rallies in the summer of 2015 as it was recently for the Querdenken supporters: "At the Monday vigils, for example, it was war-mongering elites in politics, business and the media who did not want to allow any criticism. Even then, the protests were announced in a form that particularly appealed to conspiracy believers and promoted anti-Semitic interpretations. And even then, the protesters saw their own victim role confirmed in the criticism from outside, such as the reference to neo-Nazis and conspiracy narratives."¹⁷

Querdenker as victims of the media?

Just as with Pegida, many participants in Querdenken protests see themselves defamed by the press coverage.¹⁸ This makes them feel confirmed in their role as victims and their rejection of journalists. Current analyses cannot confirm this perception of a one-sided negative media portrayal. Especially in the initial phase, reports on the heterogeneous composition of the movement were quite differentiated.¹⁹ However, a media analysis found that coronavirus sceptics were rarely mentioned in the media (1.6%) during the first phase of the pandemic until spring 2021, compared to politicians (47%) and scientists (19%).²⁰ In addition, Simon Teune points out that the media portrayal might be perceived in a distorted way, especially among Querdenken sympathisers in West Germany. While right-wing extremist cadres "took the initiative in the eastern German states as organisers and

15 Roose, Jochen (2020): Sie sind überall. Eine repräsentative Umfrage zu Verschwörungstheorien.

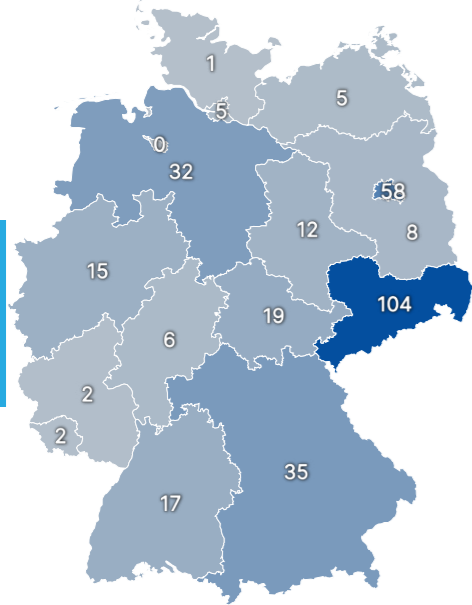
16 Zitiert nach: Vorländer, Hans; Herold, Maik; Schäler, Steven (2016): PEGIDA. Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung, S. 129

17 Teune, Simon (2022): Die Querdenken-Protteste als Herausforderung für die Bewegungsforschung, abgerufen unter: <https://protestinstitut.eu/die-querdenken-proteste-als-herausforderung-fuer-die-bewegungs-forschung/>

18 Frei, Nadine; Nachtwey, Oliver (2021): Quellen des „Querdenkertums“. Eine politische Soziologie der Corona-Protteste in Baden-Württemberg, S. 12

19 Hunger, Sophia; Völker, Teresa; Saldivia Gonzatti, Daniel (2021): Der Verlust der Vielfalt: Die Corona-Protteste in Deutschland werden durch eine radikale Minderheit geprägt, S. 2

20 Maurer, Marcus; Reinemann, Carsten; Kruschinski, Simon (2021): Einseitig, unkritisch, regierungsnah? Eine empirische Studie zur Qualität der journalistischen Berichterstattung über die Corona-Pandemie, S. 27



Graphic: Attacks per Federal State 2015-2022 – Source: ECPMF

stewards”, in Berlin and the western states they acted more as participants and reporters, says the protest researcher. “In this respect, it is quite understandable that protest participants in the latter places were snubbed by the media focus on the participation of neo-Nazis and Reich citizens and saw their interpretation of a conspiracy of political and journalistic elites confirmed by the reporting.”²¹

Regardless of the regionally different compositions of the supporters, the movement underwent a rapidly progressing radicalisation process, which became visible in numerous outbreaks of violence in the meeting environment. This process began almost immediately after the founding of the movement in the spring of 2020 and was unanimously recognised by academics and security authorities, even though the extent of the radicalisation varied from region to region.²² A further characteristic of this radicalisation was the increasing turning away of supporters from positions of the political centre and towards radical right-wing attitudes.²³ The radicalisation was also reflected in the almost continuous increase in the number of attacks against media workers, but also against police officers, until the beginning of 2022.²⁴

The analysis of attacks on the press during the rise and fall of the Querdenken movement confirms a finding of the “Feindbild Journalist” studies that was previously also observed with Pegida: the case numbers of attacks are directly related to the development of populist outrage movements and their current mobilisation capacity.²⁵ For both Pegida and the Querdenken protests, registered assaults increased rapidly during the establishment of these movements (2014/2015 for Pegida, 2020/21 for Querdenken) and continued to decrease in the course of their marginalisation (2017 for Pegida, 2022 for Querdenken).

The extent to which Querdenken actors were able to influence protests in connection with the conflict in Ukraine – and whether they were also responsible for endangering media workers – could not be clearly measured at the time this study was published. It is true that during the Munich Security Conference in February, two journalists were attacked during protests. However, these gatherings are very heterogeneous, both in terms of their objectives and in the composition of their supporters, and do not allow for a general assessment. Jörg Reichel, regional director of the German Journalists’ Union (dju) in ver.di Berlin-Brandenburg,

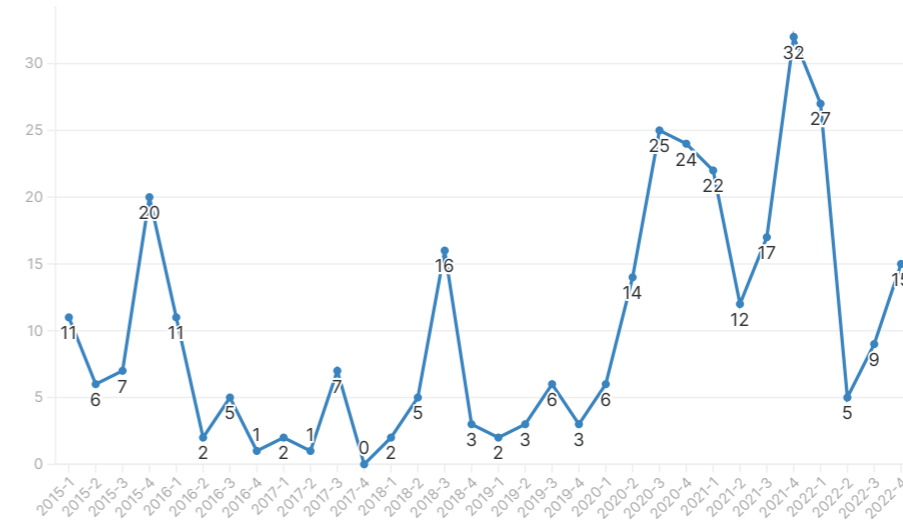
21 Teune, Simon (2022): The Querdenken protests as a challenge for movement research, retrieved from: <https://protestinstitut.eu/die-querdenken-proteste-als-herausforderung-fuer-die-bewegungsforchung/>

22 Hoffmann, Martin; Knoll, Roberta (2021): Feindbild Journalist VI: Hass vor der Haustür, S. 14 ff.

23 Frei, Nadine; Nachtwey, Oliver (2021): Sources of “Lateralism”. A political sociology of the coronavirus protests in Baden-Württemberg, p. 7.

24 Attacks on police officers, breach of the peace, arson: More than 2000 offences at coronavirus demos in Berlin, retrieved from: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/angriffe-auf-polizisten-land-friedensbruch-brandstiftung-mehr-als-2000-straftaten-bei-corona-demos-in-berlin-355372.html>

25 vgl. Hoffmann, Martin; Betche Pauline (2021): Feindbild Journalist V: Alliert im Pressehass; Hoffmann, Martin; Knoll, Roberta (2021): Feindbild Journalist VI: Hass vor der Haustür



Graphic: Assaults on journalists per quarter 2015-2022 – Source: ECPMF

analyses: “At the beginning of 2023, a slight increase in physical assaults can be observed again in the environment of pro-Putin and ‘peace demonstrations’. The participants are partly composed of the old spectrum of the coronavirus protests.” According to Reichel, the protest milieu of these demonstrations is still fundamentally hostile to the press, which can be seen in the signs and reactions to journalists. However, the threshold for assault was not crossed during the demonstration in Berlin at the end of February.

4. Local journalism: When proximity becomes a security problem²⁶

Local journalists are characterised by their closeness – their closeness to the readership and their closeness to the issues of the region. But during the coronavirus pandemic, the new, unannounced protest formats of the Querdenken movement created a new threat, especially in rural areas. Proximity increasingly became a problem for media workers in the local area. This was the assessment of Florian Tempel, a reporter for the Süddeutsche’s local section in Erding: “We had the more violent attacks during local reporting. Our colleagues in Munich are also exposed to attacks through naming in Telegram chats and an increased number of malicious letters. Nevertheless, when reporting locally you are closer and you have a proximity relationship, which increases the unpleasantness of threats and insults.”

In January 2022, local journalists were attacked in seven out of a total of 23 verified cases. This is about 30 percent of all assaults recorded in this period. All

26 For the purposes of the study and in order to achieve the greatest possible comparability, a narrow definition of local journalism and press is applied. A local employment relationship or a (continuous) assignment by a local editorial office for a freelancer determines the characteristic of local press. Those who report as correspondents or reporters for national media, as specialist journalists, or as social media bloggers are accordingly not included in the definition (cf. study design annex).

seven incidents occurred within the context of unregistered demonstrations. At the end of February, with the start of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, the number of unannounced spontaneous demonstrations and, probably in direct connection, the number of verified attacks initially decreased sharply – both locally and in urban centres. A total of twelve physical attacks on local media workers were verified in 2022.²⁷ Compared to 2021, with four physical attacks on local journalists, this represents a threefold increase. For 2023, no physical attacks on local press representatives had been recorded by the editorial deadline at the end of February.

However, the increasing hostility against journalists is not only visible in the number of recorded assaults; it also manifests itself in the form of direct threats or online hatred. Local media workers are public persons who can be identified at any time. Andrea Schawe, former deputy local editor of the Sächsische Zeitung in Freital, comments: “When reporting locally, journalists have the problem that people know who they are, where their editorial office is and what they look like. As soon as they go out on the street to do their job or in their free time, they are immediately in contact with their readership.” A retreat into anonymity is therefore not possible for press representatives in the local area.

In order to be able to depict the threat to media professionals in the local area more precisely, ECPMF, together with the German Association of Digital Publishers and Newspaper Publishers (BDZV), has launched a long-term monitoring project called “Feindbild Journalist – Monitoring Local Journalism”. In addition to assaults, the monitoring records threats, both online and offline, cyber attacks, intimidation attempts, for example through doxxing, and legal disputes. Affected local journalists can document their cases in an online questionnaire on the website lokaljournalismus.ecpmf.eu. The long-term analysis is intended to research specific forms of threats and the effects of hostility on local journalists and to develop recommendations for action. The goals also include raising awareness among federal interior ministries and police authorities of the need to support and protect staff in local newsrooms.

“We know where you live”

“Journalists are targets. Unknown people mess up the front of my home by throwing dirt and eggs. [...] Those who are angry with the press are editors across the street. Spitting in your face would be less cowardly.” This was the tweet by Hubert Jakob Denk, editor of the local magazine Bürgerblick from Passau on 28 February 2023.²⁸ This incident once again clearly shows the problem of press

²⁷ The other assaults on local journalists took place at a demonstration against the coronavirus restrictions in Fürstfeldbruck on 4 April 2022, a market festival in Bad Lobenstein on 20 August 2022, a documentation of the Dynamo Dresden fan train in Bayreuth on 1 October 2022, an AfD event in Hönnow on 10 October 2022 and a large “Ami go home” demonstration in Leipzig on 26 November 2022.

²⁸ Tweet by Hubert Jakob Denk, retrieved from <https://twitter.com/mediendenk/status/1630595650403422210>

representatives in the local area: their place of residence, their workplace and their person are known. In conversation with ECPMF, Denk himself had already reported incidents before this tweet in which unknown persons had loosened the screws on his Vespa, attacked his fence or set fire to Bürgerblick magazines in the entrance to his house. The attackers could not be identified.

The fact that “anger about the press” can have concrete effects in the local area is also shown by a case in a small town in southern Thuringia. Since autumn 2021, demonstrations or “walks” have repeatedly taken place there due to the coronavirus restrictions. A frequent stop was made by these gatherings in front of the editorial building of a local newspaper. The participants chanted “lying press” and “we know where you live”. An employee of the local newspaper²⁹ described to ECPMF that as the situation progressed it became “increasingly disgusting”. According to the report, the participants started banging on the windows and spitting. They also held flares in front of the windows. The incidents eventually culminated in a laser point attack on 10 January 2022, when a journalist from the local newspaper was hit in the eye by a laser beam in his office. The journalist was later told by participants in the demonstration that they knew which journalists worked behind which window. Nevertheless, he summarised: “I don’t assume that the attacks were directed at me as a person, but mainly against the media and the press in general.”

New threat posed by coronavirus

These specific attacks since autumn 2021 were something completely new for the local journalist from Thuringia: “In the past, it was particularly the national media that bore the brunt of the attacks, but now attacks are directed towards the local media too.” Alexander Roth, deputy head of the online editorial department at the Waiblingen newspaper publishing house, reports something similar. After his publications on what were then still referred to as the “mask refusers”, severe threats were directed at him online: “That’s when I noticed: This is something new. I had already dealt with Reichsbürger and suchlike before that. There, people didn’t communicate in such an open and blatant way.” The protests against state measures that accompanied the coronavirus pandemic were perceived by many local media professionals as drivers of anti-press threats.

Some Saxon local journalists had already faced hostility before the coronavirus pandemic: “From conversations with the Sächsische Zeitung, I know that they already had a very difficult time working with Pegida. When colleagues wanted to report on Pegida, they were recognised and attacked even in private”, reports Peter Hagen, journalist at the Ostthüringer Zeitung (OTZ). Andrea Schawe, former deputy local editor of the Sächsische Zeitung in Freital, also sees a change in local journalistic work in the Free State, starting with Pegida: “Pegida made

²⁹ Some of the journalists interviewed by the ECPMF asked that neither the names of those affected nor the newspaper be mentioned, out of concern for their safety.

us realise in the editorial office that you can also write against your readers. We had to assess this situation as an editorial team and clarify the question of how to proceed with it.” If there is agreement as an editorial team that the protests against refugee homes are not okay, you have to become aware of a position as a newspaper and publish it, he said. That is why the local newspapers “especially in Saxony are already much further ahead with the process than other local editorial offices, that have only been confronted with this hatred and resistance since the beginning of the pandemic”, says Andrea Schawe.

Threats – online and offline

Being connected to the place and the people, as well as the resulting local prominence, are indispensable for local journalists: people know who to contact with an interesting story. Conversely, they also know where to turn if they want to vent their anger at the press and media. This leads to threats, especially online, but also in real life. The case of Alexander Roth shows how the combination of both spheres can lead to aggravating threats.

The deputy head of the online editorial department at the newspaper publisher Waiblingen accompanied a demonstration of the lateral thinker scene in Stuttgart on 5 October 2022 and was recognised there by participants. They told the speakers at the rally that Roth was present. “Afterwards, two out of three speeches were at least half about me being there,” Alexander Roth told ECPMF. “I was facing a crowd of 80 people who started chanting ‘lying press’ and shouting ‘shame on you’. It was no longer normal reporting; it was a very intimidating situation.”³⁰

After the demonstration, further intimidation attempts followed via Telegram. Heinrich Fiechtner – former AfD member of the state parliament and well-known player in the Stuttgart lateral thinker scene – posted an article about Roth on his Telegram channel – together with a photo of the journalist. In his post, Fiechtner called Roth a “typical fraud and professional liar” and a “lying green-brown sausage”.³¹ Such insults have become routine for Roth when reporting from these gatherings. In an interview with ECPMF, he said that his reporting of Querdenken demonstrations usually involves insults, threats or marking of enemies.³²

Peter Hagen’s case also shows how threats transmitted offline and online can work together. At a market festival in Bad Lobenstein, the then incumbent mayor Thomas Weigelt pushed him so hard that the local journalist of the Ostthüringer Zeitung fell to the ground, injuring himself and damaging his camera. “It was

30 “I became an enemy nationwide” – interview with Alexander Roth, retrieved from <https://lokaljournalismus.ecpmf.eu/interview-alexander-roth/>

31 “I became an enemy nationwide” – interview with Alexander Roth, retrieved from <https://lokaljournalismus.ecpmf.eu/interview-alexander-roth/>

32 “I became an enemy nationwide” – interview with Alexander Roth, retrieved from <https://lokaljournalismus.ecpmf.eu/interview-alexander-roth/>

clear to me that this was not an attack on Hagen’s person, but that he wanted to prevent me from asking my question. This was an attack on the freedom of the press”, Hagen said in an interview with ECPMF. On that day, the journalist wanted to find out why Heinrich XIII, Prince of Reuß, who was later arrested as the alleged leader of a Reichsbürger conspiracy, was invited to a reception with the mayor.

After the attack, the local journalist filed a complaint for property damage and bodily harm. Online, many criticised this attack and demanded the resignation of the mayor, including the district administrator Thomas Fügmann (CDU)³³ and Astrid Rothe-Beinlich, parliamentary group leader of the Thuringian parliamentary group of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.³⁴ However, some users also showed solidarity with the mayor online. What followed was a shitstorm against press representative Hagen, especially on the Facebook page “HalloOberland”. The information shared there about the incident and its developments was used by some users to insult and publicly defame Hagen. Among them are comments like “The poor victim. My sympathy is limited. The guy should get a kick in the teeth more like”, “Finally, the provocative writer has been shown where to go” and “The country needs more mayors like this, one who doesn’t let anyone tell him to shut up, keep up the good work and hopefully the citizens will stand behind him and put an end to this mendacious and loud-mouthed behaviour! Mr Weigelt, keep it up!!!”³⁵ With legal support from his employer, the journalist has now filed criminal charges against the authors of the most defamatory Facebook entries.

They are directed against at least ten people. Hagen comments: “Here, we are defending ourselves and saying this is not the way to do it.”

Florian Tempel, editor of Süddeutsche’s local Erding section, makes it clear that online comments have a different threat potential in a local context than they do in a supra-regional context. Tempel and a press representative of the Erdinger Anzeiger were insulted in February 2022 in the Telegram chat “Erdinger Freiheitsforum” as “system hacks”, “inciters of the people”, “anti-democratic fascists and corrupt accomplices to genocide”. The perpetrator was quickly identified and sentenced to a fine of 6000 euros back in October 2022.³⁶ At the same time, Florian Tempel also knew from the beginning who was hiding behind the insults: “You can identify the people who make these threats and know where you last saw them. The more real the person, the more real the threat.”

The conviction of the perpetrator was an important step for Tempel. It made it clear to him that the justice system would not tolerate such threats: “I was initially

33 Tweet by Peter Cissek, retrieved from <https://twitter.com/pnandsoknews/status/1561131417060376584/photo/1>

34 Tweet by Astrid Rothe-Beinlich, retrieved from https://twitter.com/Astrid_RB/status/1561231157752172545

35 The ECPMF has screenshots of these comments. The comments were left in their original state and thus the spelling was not corrected.

36 “Freedom of expression is not a licence”, retrieved from <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/erding/erding-telegram-chat-erdinger-freiheitsforum-beleidigung-lokaljournalisten-montagsproteste-1.5672191?reduced=true>

of the mindset that pressing charges would lead to nothing, but in fact exactly the opposite was proven. This must motivate us journalists in similar cases not to just settle the matter with ourselves, but to report it to the police.”

Fewer human and financial resources

Local journalism has come under pressure from many sides in recent years – this was confirmed by all local journalists with whom ECPMF had an exchange. Last but not least, there is a lack of young journalists. Andrea Schawe from the Sächsische Zeitung reported: “We have a very acute problem with young journalists, especially in the local media, but also in general. In the past, it was a competition to get a place at a regional newspaper. Now we can’t fill some of the positions.” In addition, there are severe budget cuts, which make working conditions more difficult. This is how OTZ reporter Peter Hagen describes the changes in his own editorial office: “For example, we used to be a newsroom in Bad Lobenstein with five full-time editors and a secretary, and now I sit here alone in my home office. I no longer have anyone who can stand in for me at short notice when I have appointments.”

The tight staffing and financial situation also affects the security situation at the premises. For example, it is more difficult to send out several reporters for potentially threatening events such as demonstrations, who could protect each other in threatening situations. Otto Lapp, deputy editor-in-chief of the Nordbayerischer Kurier, describes the situation after one of his staff members was attacked at a Dynamo Dresden game: “Normally, there are four staff members on duty for such coverage. Now a fifth would have to take part for protection – in a team of 13. That can’t be right either.”

Dealing with threatening situations

ECPMF analysis shows that local journalists in Germany are now exposed to a variety of press-related threats. However, very few media professionals are able or willing to discuss their work situation in their own paper. Alexander Roth from the Waiblingen newspaper publishing house, for example, said: “You always have to reflect that the news and its relevance is the only criterion, and not my personal concern.” That is why Roth uses Twitter to draw attention to incidents whose relevance he considers too low for his own publication in the newspaper.

Florian Tempel, local editor of the Süddeutsche in Erding, on the other hand, does not fully agree with his newspaper’s principle “We do not report on ourselves”. “Should we, of all people, not report to our readers how the editors and reporters of their newspaper are attacked? If you are attacked as a journalist, it is not a private matter: the press is being attacked.” Because there was a public court case, in the end a colleague did report the threat against him in his own paper.

The threatening situation in local journalism influences the interviewed local press representatives in different ways. For example, a local journalist from a small town in southern Thuringia summarises: “The job description has absolutely changed and I now long for the end. Five years ago, early retirement would not have been an option for me; today, I would accept this offer immediately.” Peter Hagen from Bad Lobenstein, on the other hand, speaking to ECPMF, said: “For young volunteers, rural areas are not the dream. For me, it is still the most beautiful profession you can imagine, because of the diversity.”

5. State countermeasures – What are policy-makers and the police doing?

An assessment of the security situation of journalists in Germany – a survey by ECPMF

The sensitivity of security authorities to the threats faced by media professionals seems to be slowly increasing. This has been illustrated by the fact that the Berlin Office for the Protection of the Constitution devoted its lead chapter to this topic in its 2021 Annual Report from May last year, in which it also noted³⁷ a new peak in the number of attacks recorded, and that in the meantime veritable media protection concepts have been developed in some federal states. The police recording of attacks against media workers in the statistics for Politically Motivated Crime (PMC) also appears to be increasingly comprehensive – subject to a detailed examination. For example, the PMC statistics of the Criminal Police Reporting Service for 2022 show a record of 320 crimes against journalists recorded by the police, while ECPMF shows a decrease in verified cases for this period. The two statistics are not comparable, as ECPMF only records assaults.³⁸ However, in previous years they had at least shown similar trends in the development of threats.

In 2022, the criminal police reporting service recorded 320 offences “against the media” in the area of politically motivated crime, including 46 violent offences. In the previous year, the BKA had recorded 54 fewer offences and 16 fewer violent offences.³⁹ Despite this negative peak value in the BKA’s statistics, the dangerous situation of journalists is largely perceived as not very critical in the interior ministries of the federal states, according to an ECPMF survey.⁴⁰ No increased threat

37 Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Berlin: Report 2021, retrieved from: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/verfassungsschutzberichte/>

38 Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs: Minor question by Dr Petra Sitte and others and the parliamentary group DIE LINKE. Attacks on members of the media: Printed matter from the Bundestag 20/5734, retrieved from <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/059/2005934.pdf>

39 Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs: Minor question by Dr Petra Sitte and others and the parliamentary group DIE LINKE. Attacks on members of the media: Printed matter from the Bundestag 20/5734, retrieved from <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/059/2005934.pdf>

40 The European Centre for Freedom of the Press and the Media surveyed the interior ministries of the federal states on various topics, including the number of cases of criminal offences against media workers, assessment of the security situation, police countermeasures, prosecution of hate speech, etc., as part of the “Feindbild Journalist” study. 14 interior ministries submitted responses.

to media workers in 2022 was perceived in the federal states of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein. In Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Schleswig-Holstein, this risk assessment was justified by the low numbers of registered crimes. Brandenburg also reported that attacks on journalists were “only ascertainable in individual cases” and that criminal offences were mostly related to expressions of displeasure, threats and insults.

Bavaria described the situation in its own state as follows: “According to our findings, the security situation for journalists in Bavaria can be described as very good. No-go areas or other restrictions on reporting are not known in Bavaria.” This feedback from Bavaria is not fully comprehensible in light of the results of the ECPMF survey: it is the western German state with the highest number of registered assaults, with 35 since 2015, and this is also true when looking at 2022, with eight assaults. Higher numbers of assaults (5 in 2022) were also recorded for Baden-Württemberg for this period, suggesting a clearly increased threat – while the threat assessments of Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein are also mirrored by ECPMF’s figures.

More critical assessments of the security situation for media professionals were provided by the interior ministries of the central German states of Saxony-Anhalt and Saxony. Saxony-Anhalt described that in assessing the security situation, the social environment in 2022, “marked by significant changes in connection with the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine”, was not comparable with that of previous years. This also had a direct impact on journalistic activities. Saxony also reported: “Between 2018 and 2021, the annual occurrence was in the lower double-digit range. In 2022, the number of cases increased threefold.”⁴¹ These more differentiated descriptions of the problem allude to a growing awareness of the problem in the two states’ interior ministries.

The question of whether media workers reporting on political rallies were at a higher risk of being threatened or physically assaulted than in other public work situations was answered in the negative by almost all the federal states⁴² or they did not provide any information.⁴³ An increased potential for danger did not emerge on the basis of the data available. Or the number of cases registered by them was too low to be able to draw concrete or valid conclusions, as was the response from the federal states. This contradicts a consistent finding of the “Feindbild Journalist” studies: In the past three years, between 80 percent and

North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse were unable to provide information to the ECPMF.

41 Bavaria, Thuringia and Saarland could not provide any concrete information due to a lack of data. Berlin did not provide the ECPMF with an answer to this question.

42 Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein denied an increased risk for press representatives at political meetings.

43 Bavaria, Thuringia and Saarland could not provide any concrete information due to a lack of data. Berlin did not provide the ECPMF with an answer to this question.

95 percent of attacks were registered at meetings and demonstrations or in their environs.

Saxony differed in its answer. Even if attacks on journalists were more frequent at larger gatherings, no direct factual connection between political gatherings and an increased risk could be established. “The respective risk depends on the context in question, i.e. the situation from which the media professionals are reporting. The more heated and tense the context, the greater the danger. The extent to which dangerous situations escalate at open-air gatherings also depends on the behaviour of the participants in individual cases”, writes the press office of the Saxon Ministry of the Interior. In addition, investigative reporters are exposed to a significantly higher risk of attacks during their journalistic work. The Ministry of the Interior of Rhineland-Palatinate perceives media workers as a particularly threatened professional group at gatherings. Mainz reported: “Particularly the confrontation with right-wing extremism as well as the state’s countermeasures against the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to generate a high level of emotionalisation among the participants in the assembly. Within this context, journalists as well as police officers may come into the focus of violent individuals.”

Media protection concepts

At the beginning of 2022, the Saxon State Ministry of the Interior issued “Uniform Principles for the Protection of Media Workers in Police Operations in Saxony (Media Protection Concept)”. The media protection concept is based on practical operational experience and describes framework regulations for the protection of media professionals as well as for police prosecution, the Saxon Ministry of the Interior told ECPMF. Depending on the respective danger prognosis, the concept provides for the establishment of mobile assembly points in addition to additional personnel to look after media workers. Media protection teams are also to be kept on standby “depending on the situation”. Part of the media protection concept is the plan to qualify a “Tactical Operations Facilitator” (TEM)⁴⁴ in every police platoon. As a multiplier, the TEM trains colleagues internally on the specific requirements for dealing with media professionals. In addition, they are to provide support during operations in “challenging communication situations” between officers and media representatives. Ideally, this would prevent conflicts. According to Dresden, this is to make the work of the police and the media as smooth as possible.

Bremen and Thuringia⁴⁵ said they use a concept similar to Saxony’s. The press office of the Ministry of the Interior of Saxony-Anhalt stated: “The establishment of a complementary media protection concept is conceivable for the future”. In

44 Since 2018, the Saxon riot police have qualified about 40 tactical mission moderators in five training weeks.

45 The Thuringia press office reported that this media protection concept has been applied since 2017.

the Ministry of the Interior of Schleswig-Holstein, a concrete implementation of such protection concepts is not currently planned, but is being discussed, press spokesperson Jana Reuter told ECPMF.

Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, on the other hand, stated that they were not planning to implement a media protection concept based on the Saxon model. The current measures in the federal states were sufficient and many of the protection measures anchored in the Saxon media concept had already been comprehensively taken into account.⁴⁶

Saxony takes a pioneering role in the comparison of the federal states with the already ongoing implementation of its media concept. In addition to practical protection, especially at gatherings, the establishment of tactical moderators can sensitise the forces to the special needs of media workers and contribute towards increased confidence when dealing with journalists.

Protection measures, further education and training

In most of the federal states, police authorities and interior ministries have worked with journalists' associations in recent years to identify measures to better protect media professionals in their work.

Eleven of the 14 federal states (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia) stated that in 2022 they had offered further education and training for junior officers, officers of the task forces and press offices of the police authorities. These mainly or partially included aspects of freedom of the press, raising awareness of possible dangers for press representatives, dealing with media professionals or the rights of journalists. According to its own information, Rhineland-Palatinate conducts five-day training courses in the "basic module on press and public relations work", which teaches the legal basics of working with media representatives. This course also includes a lecture on "The media's right to information from law enforcement agencies".

Lower Saxony, on the other hand, indicated to ECPMF that following discussions with the German Journalists' Association (DJV), the Lower Saxony Police Academy had created a video podcast entitled "Freedom of the press and the police" in 2022. The video podcast is intended to inform all employees of the Lower Saxony police force about the importance of press freedom for a democratic constitutional state and the implications for police work. In addition, a discussion forum was organised together with the managing director of the DJV with a focus on the targeted sensitisation of young executives. "Different impulse lectures provided

⁴⁶ Lower Saxony stated that it was unable to make a statement and draw comparisons to media protection concepts of other federal states.

the basis for a lively, mutual exchange with the aim of creating understanding for the mutual interests and approaches", explained a Lower Saxony spokesperson.

In Bavaria, a joint working project of the Bavarian State Chancellery, the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, Medien.Bayern GmbH and the Bavarian Journalists' Association is to be carried out in 2023 on the topic of "Security of journalists". This would serve "the mutual exchange between the police and those working in the media" and should address challenges and show examples of best practice.

Demonstration coverage

All 14 states participating in the survey stated that securing press relations was an important part of preparing for an event, as long as time allowed. For example, at large events and demonstrations, so-called "safe spaces", "media protection areas" or "media safety points" with dedicated contact persons are set up by the police according to location and need, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia elaborate. In addition, the press office of the state of Lower Saxony wrote that "conflict managers", among others, were deployed at gatherings that were predicted to potentially result in a conflict.

13 out of 14 federal states⁴⁷ surveyed reported that they comprehensively evaluate generally accessible internet platforms and messenger services such as Telegram, Facebook and Twitter with regard to anti-press threats before public political events in order to prepare threat assessments. For example, Baden-Württemberg reported that if "danger-aggravating moments for individuals, in particular media workers[...] are recognised in danger analyses", these are taken into account accordingly in the police operational concept and criminal offences are consistently prosecuted. The other press offices of the interior ministries responded similarly.

⁴⁷ Only Schleswig-Holstein reported back that it did not do this.

6. Recommendations for action⁴⁸

I. Renew mutual agreement between police and media

The new version of the principles of conduct between the police and the media should be put into a resolution form by the Conference of Ministers of the Interior, in consultation with the Press Council, at the earliest possible date. Following their resolution, the updated guidelines should be implemented in the everyday work of both professional groups. On the basis of the guidelines, any progress and problems in the relationship between the two professional groups should be discussed by a complementary body.

II. More training for police officers

The police authorities of the Länder 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 groups 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. Monitoring on a KPMD-PMK basis

The recording of crimes against the media should be developed into a monitoring instrument on the basis of the BKA statistics on politically motivated crime (Criminal Police Reporting Service – Politically Motivated Crime). 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 Länder in order to establish comparability.

IV. 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. It is recommended to sign the protection code, which sets binding standards for the protection of one's own employees.

⁴⁸ Since they are still relevant, some recommendations for action from the last study were adopted.

V. Publishers: Dialogues with readers and addressing their own threats

To counter rejection and scepticism towards the press, journalists should explain their work and the processes and conditions involved. This is especially true in the local context, where press representatives and readers are characterised by their close relationship. Formats such as "open days" or reader dialogues are suitable for this. In addition, journalists should have the opportunity to address threatening situations in their own media in order to create a greater public understanding of the vulnerability of journalists.

7. Conclusion

Attacks, threats and "lying press" insults have long since become the "abnormal-normal" state of affairs for journalists. This is shown by the findings of this study. The number of verified violent attacks is three times higher than in the pre-pandemic year 2019, and media professionals were also confronted with countless threats and defamation in the past year, on the street and online.

In the meantime, media professionals, citizens, associations and media houses have learned to react to hostility, as have the police, politicians and the judiciary. The learning curves vary in steepness. While the police, at least in some federal states, are noticeably and visibly working on improving the protection of media workers, the judiciary, in particular, still needs to invest more resources in order to bring press-hostile criminals to justice more often.

Effective countermeasures are still bitterly needed. Even if a driver of violence, the Querdenken network, seems to be losing its influence, the diagnosis of previous "Feindbild Journalist" still applies: hatred of the press is firmly rooted in the minds of a minority. It is unlikely that anti-press attacks will disappear completely. Depending on the mobilisation effect of existing and upcoming protest movements, it is more likely that the attacks will permanently restrict freedom of the press in Germany. However, the good news is that media professionals are increasingly able to arm themselves against the physical excesses of press hatred.

Bibliography

Scientific sources

- Frei, Nadine; Nachtwey, Oliver** (2021): Quellen des „Querdenkertums“. Eine politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste in Baden-Württemberg, Basel
- Hoffmann, Martin; Betsche, Pauline** (2021): Feindbild Journalist V: Alliiert im Pressehass. Eine Studie des Europäischen Zentrums für Presse- und Medienfreiheit, Leipzig. Abgerufen unter: <https://www.ecpmf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Feindbild-Journalist-5-Alliiert-im-Pressehass.pdf>
- Hoffmann, Martin; Knoll, Roberta** (2022): Feindbild Journalist VI: Hass vor der Haustür. Eine Studie des Europäischen Zentrums für Presse- und Medienfreiheit, Leipzig. Abgerufen unter: <https://www.ecpmf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Feindbild-Journalist-2021.pdf>
- Hunger, Sophia; Völker, Teresa; Saldivia Gonzatti, Daniel** (2021): Der Verlust der Vielfalt: Die Corona-Proteste in Deutschland werden durch eine radikale Minderheit geprägt. In: WZB Mitteilungen 172. Abgerufen unter: <https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/artikel/2021/f-23998.pdf>
- Kemmesies, Uwe; Wetzels, Peter; Austin, Beatrix; Büscher, Christian; Dessecker, Axel; Grande, Edgar; Richter, Thomas; Rieger, Diana** (2022): MOTRA-Monitor 2021 - Zusammenfassung: Radikalisierung im Schatten der Corona-Pandemie, in: Motra-Monitor 2021. Wiesbaden, S. 16-39. Abgerufen unter: <https://www.motra.info/motra-monitor-2021/>
- Maurer, Marcus; Reinemann, Carsten; Kruschinski, Simon** (2021): Einseitig, unkritisch, regierungsnah? Eine empirische Studie zur Qualität der journalistischen Berichterstattung über die Corona-Pandemie, Hamburg. Abgerufen unter: <https://rudolf-augstein-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Studie-einseitig-unkritisch-regierungsnah-reinemann-rudolf-augstein-stiftung.pdf>
- Roose, Jochen** (2020): Sie sind überall. Eine repräsentative Umfrage zu Verschwörungstheorien, Berlin. Abgerufen unter: <https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/7995358/Eine+repr%C3%A4sentative+Umfrage+zu+Verschw%C3%B6rungstheorien.pdf/0f422364-9ff1-b058-9b02-617e15f8bbd8?version=1.0&t=1599144843148>
- Teune, Simon** (2022): Die Querdenken-Proteste als Herausforderung für die Bewegungsforschung. Abgerufen unter: <https://protestinstitut.eu/die-querdenken-proteste-als-herausforderung-fuer-die-bewegungsforschung/>
- Vorländer, Hans; Herold, Maik; Schäler, Steven** (2016): PEGIDA. Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung. Wiesbaden

Online sources

- BDZV** (2022): Branchenbeitrag 2022: Zur wirtschaftlichen Lage der deutschen Zeitungen, abgerufen unter https://www.bdzv.de/fileadmin/content/7_Alle_Themen/Marktdaten/2022/Branchenbeitrag_2022/BZDV_Branchenbeitrag2022_v2.pdf
- Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat** (2023): Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Petra Sitte u.a. und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. Angriffe auf Medienschaffende: BT-Drucksache 20/5734, abgerufen unter: <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/059/2005934.pdf>
- Bundesregierung** (2022): Beschluss der Videoschaltkonferenz des Bundeskanzlers mit den Regierungschefinnen und Regierungschefs der Länder am 16. Februar 2022, abgerufen unter <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/2005140/762f13d7a372659e5967400b-587b6e02/2022-02-16-mpk-beschluss-data.pdf?download=1>
- dju in ver.di** (2022): dju in ver.di zum Urteil im Fretterode-Prozess: Schlag ins Gesicht investigativer Journalismus, abgerufen unter <https://dju.verdi.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/++co++e3484004-34f8-11ed-b879-001a4a16012a>
- dju in ver.di NRW** (2023): Pressemitteilung: dju in ver.di NRW zieht eine negative Bilanz der Pressefreiheit bei der Räumung von Lützerath <https://dju.verdi.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/++co++ddf0cf54-94e3-11ed-bb07-001a4a160116>
- DJV** (2022) Pressemitteilung: Nach Drohungen: Konzerte von Kontra K boykottieren, abgerufen unter <https://www.djv.de/startseite/profil/der-djv/pressebereich-download/pressemitteilungen/detail/news-konzerte-von-kontra-k-boykottieren>
- DJV** (n.d.): Wie Medienhäuser Journalisten schützen können, abgerufen unter: <https://www.djv.de/startseite/info/themen-wissen/schutzkodex-journalistinnen-vor-gewalt-und-bedrohungen-schuetzen>
- ECPMF** (2022): Launch of Pressprotect - Resources to support journalist safety in Europe, abgerufen unter <https://www.ecpmf.eu/launch-of-pressprotect-resources-to-support-journalist-safety-in-europe/>
- Freiheitsversammlung München** (2023): Protest wegen Skandalurteil am 07.01.2023, abgerufen unter <http://freiheitsversammlung-muenchen.de/2023/01/04/protest-wegen-skandalurteil/>
- Leuchtturm ARD** (n.d.): Über Uns,, abgerufen unter <https://leuchtturmard.de/ueber-uns>

- Pohl, Annkathrin** (2023): "Ich wurde überregional zum Feindbild" - Interview mit Alexander Roth, abgerufen unter <https://lokaljournalismus.ecpmf.eu/interview-alexander-roth/>
- Polizei Aachen** (2023): Pressemitteilung der Polizei Aachen: Räumung des Weilers Lützerath abgeschlossen - Nachbereitung beginnt, abgerufen unter <https://www.presseportal.de/blaulicht/pm/11559/5425601>
- PwC** (2022): German Entertainment & Media Outlook 2022-2026: Fakten, Prognosen und Trends für 13 Segmente der Entertainment- und Medienbranche in Deutschland, abgerufen unter <https://www.pwc.de/de/technologie-medien-und-telekommunikation/german-entertainment-and-media-outlook-2022-2026.html>
- Querdenken-711** (2023): Politik und Medien Hand in Hand – Das schadet unserem Land, zuletzt abgerufen unter: <https://app.querdenken-711.de/events-calendar/View/79c5378d-2454-4ded-8353-bec1eb062b37/11-03-2023>
- Rutkowski, Robert** (2020): Mehr als nur eine Drohung!, abgerufen unter <https://robert-rutkowski.de/mehr-als-nur-eine-drohung/>
- Rutkowski, Robert** (2022): Zwei Hausbesuche und zwei Verfüigungen, abgerufen unter <https://robert-rutkowski.de/zwei-hausbesuche-und-eine-verfuegung/>
- Staatstheater Hannover** (2023): Statement: Staatsoper Hannover trennt sich im gegenseitigen Einvernehmen und mit sofortiger Wirkung von Ballettdirektor Marco Goecke, abgerufen unter https://staatstheater-hannover.de/de_DE/statement-marco-goecke
- Statista Research Department** (2023): Entwicklung der verkauften Auflage der Tageszeitungen in Deutschland in ausgewählten Jahren von 1991 bis 2022, abgerufen unter <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/72084/umfrage/verkaufte-auflage-von-tageszeitungen-in-deutschland/>
- Verfassungsschutz Berlin** (2021): Bericht 2021, abgerufen unter: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/verfassungsschutzberichte/>

Tweets

- Cissek, Peter** (21.08.2022): Tweet, abgerufen unter <https://twitter.com/pnandsoknews/status/1561131417060376584/photo/1>
- Denk, Hubert Jakob** (28.02.2023): Tweet, abgerufen unter <https://twitter.com/mediendenk/status/1630595650403422210>

- Roth, Alexander** (06.10.2022): Tweet, abgerufen unter <https://twitter.com/00schneemann/status/1578137694634676225>
- Rothe-Beinlich, Astrid** (21.08.2022): Tweet, abgerufen unter https://twitter.com/Astrid_RB/status/1561231157752172545

Press sources

- Barkey, Sophie** (14.05.2022): Nach Verbot von Pro-Palästina-Demo: Hunderte Beamten in Berlin im Einsatz, abgerufen unter <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/nach-verbot-von-pro-palaestina-demo-hunderte-beamte-in-berlin-im-einsatz-li.227846>
- von Castell, Frederik** (13.08.2022): Wie man Journalismus und Misstrauen gleichzeitig fördert, abgerufen unter <https://uebermedien.de/75145/wie-man-journalismus-und-misstrauen-gleichzeitig-foerdert/>
- Duwe, Silvio** (07.07.2022): Friedensbewegung der Verschwörungsideologen, abgerufen unter: <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/kontraste/protteste-ramstein-101.html>
- Flade, Florian** (02.01.2023): Anklage wegen Angriffs auf ZDF-Team, abgerufen unter <https://www.tagesschau.de/investigativ/ndr-wdr/anklage-angriff-zdf-team-101.html>
- Gerdsmeier, Luisa** (30.09.2022): "Querdenken" schlägt dich, Polizei schaut weg und das Gericht interessiert es nicht, abgerufen unter <https://www.bell-tower.news/gewalt-gegen-journalistinnen-querdenken-schlaegt-dich-polizei-schaut-weg-und-das-gericht-interessiert-es-nicht-139671/>
- Haamann, Florian J.** (01.12.2022): Kritiker von Corona-Maßnahmen wegen Nötigung verurteilt, abgerufen unter <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/fuerstenfeldbruck/fuerstenfeldbruck-corona-demo-noetigung-urteil-pressefreiheit-1.5706917>
- Hennen, Claudia** (12.11.2015): "Ich bin kein Einzelfall", abgerufen unter <https://taz.de/Bedrohter-Journalist-ueber-Rechte/!5250866/>
- Jansen, Frank** (10.01.2022): Angriffe auf Polizisten, Landfriedensbruch, Brandstiftung: Mehr als 2000 Straftaten bei Corona-Demos in Berlin, abgerufen unter: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/angriffe-auf-polizisten-landfriedensbruch-brandstiftung-mehr-als-2000-straftaten-bei-corona-demos-in-berlin-355372.html>
- Klaus, Fabian** (15.09.2022): Milde Strafen für Rechtsextremisten im Fretterode-Prozess: "Vertrauen in Rechtsstaat bis in Grundmauern erschüttert", abgerufen unter <https://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/regionen/>

[muehlhausen/fretterode-prozess-milde-straefen-fuer-rechtsextremisten-nach-brutalem-angriff-auf-journalisten-id236436465.html](https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/thueringen/nord-thueringen/eichsfeld/fretterode-prozess-urteil-journalisten-heise-100.html)

MDR Thüringen (15.09.2022): Fretterode-Prozess: Angeklagte zu Bewährung und Sozialstunden verurteilt, abgerufen unter <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/thueringen/nord-thueringen/eichsfeld/fretterode-prozess-urteil-journalisten-heise-100.html>

Müller, Annika (16.12.2022): Kontra K schickt "Warnung" an Presse und unterbricht Konzert wegen Schlägerei, abgerufen unter <https://www.ksta.de/kultur-medien/koeln-kontra-k-schickt-keine-warnung-an-presse-2-379261>

Pfeifer, Henning; Simon Emmerlich; BR24 Redaktion (24.08.2022): Angriff auf BR-Reporter am Rande von Corona-Presskonferenz, abgerufen unter: <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/angriff-auf-br-reporter-am-rande-von-corona-pressekonferenz,TFPBcQ>

Radio Dresden (12.12.2022): Tödliches Geiseldrama in Dresden: Was war das Motiv?, abgerufen unter: <https://www.radiodresden.de/beitrag/bewaffneter-ueberfall-im-ammonhof-751142/>

Raupach, Corinna (22.09.2022): Urteil nach Angriff auf SÜDKURIER-Reporter, abgerufen unter <https://www.suedkurier.de/region/bodenseekreis/friedrichshafen/urteil-nach-angriff-auf-suedkurier-reporter;art372474,11298557>

Schredle, Minh (03.04.2021): Signifikante Infektionstreiber, abgerufen unter <https://taz.de/Querdenken-Demo-in-Stuttgart!/5764060/>

Sterz, Christoph (31.05.2019): Neue Impulse für den Lokaljournalismus, abgerufen unter <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/medi-en-im-umbruch-neue-impulse-fuer-den-lokaljournalismus-100.html>

Stieber, Benno (10.05.2020): Deutschlands größte Corona-Party, abgerufen unter: <https://taz.de/Verquerer-Protestmix-in-Stuttgart!/5684107/>

SWR (12.03.2023): Hunderte demonstrieren für Freilassung von Michael Ballweg, abgerufen unter <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/stuttgart/demonstration-fuer-freilassung-von-michael-ballweg-querdenker-100.html>

Wiedemann, Jan (15.02.2023): Kritikerin Hüster nach Attacke durch Goecke: "War in Schockstarre", abgerufen unter <https://www.ndr.de/kultur/buehne/Kritikerin-Huester-nach-Attacke-durch-Goecke-War-in-Schockstarre,huester100.html>

Wilhelm, Gerhard (10.10.2022): "Meinungsfreiheit ist kein Freibrief", abgerufen unter <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/erding/erding-telegram-chat-erdinger-freiheitsforum-beleidigung-lokaljournalisten-montagsproteste-1.5672191?reduced=true>

About the authors

Martin Hoffmann, M.A.

Studied cultural studies at the European University in Frankfurt/Oder and in Iasi, Romania and journalism at the University of Leipzig. He has been working as a freelancer for ECPMF since 2015 and designed the "Feindbild Journalist" study series, among other things. He is doing his PhD at the European Institute for Journalism and Communication Research (EIJR) and works at MDR in the "Eastern Europe and Documentaries" editorial department.

Annkathrin Pohl, M.A.

Studied FrancoMedia and History at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg and European Studies at Leipzig University. During her studies, she was able to gain practical experience, e.g. at ARTE G.E.I.E. in text and picture editing as well as in PR at the Institut Pierre Werner in Luxembourg. Since October 2022, she has been working as a research assistant in the joint project of the ECPMF and BDZV "Feindbild Journalist" - Monitoring Local Journalism.

Jessica Jana Dutz, B.A.

Is currently completing the European Studies M.A. programme at Leipzig University. Previously, she gained practical experience at the German-Czech Chamber of Commerce in the Communication and Public Affairs Department and worked at the online marketing agency eVisions Advertising s.r.o. in Prague as a project manager and PR specialist. For ECPMF, Jessica worked as an intern in the Communications and Press team since October 2022. Since January, she has been working as a research assistant and is co-author of the "Feindbild Journalist" study.

Collaboration

Review: Dr Lutz Kinkel
Statistics: Antje Schlaf
Graphics: Olga Komarova
Layout: Andreas Lamm

Suggested Citation:

Hoffmann, Martin; Pohl, Annkathrin; Dutz, Jessica Jana (2023): Feindbild Journalist 7: Professional peril nearby. A study by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Leipzig.

Link to case list

<https://bit.ly/3JWxnkH>

Study design

Critical reflection on case recording

ECPMF has developed a catalogue of criteria for case recording in order to achieve comparability for the recording period. However, the study cannot claim to be complete, as a large dark field must be assumed. This is likely due to various circumstances: journalists act as gatekeepers on their own behalf when they are affected, they decide whether to publish an attack and thus use their media reach to bring the issue into the public discourse. This decision can be influenced by various motives. For those affected, for example, the desire for anonymity, the wish to be able to work undisturbed by possible follow-up hostilities or the goal of not wanting to put their own professional role at the centre of the reporting stand against media coverage and publication. An ECPMF survey on reporting behaviour from 2017 (Feindbild Journalist II) indicates that a relevant proportion of journalists are not interested in reporting the hostilities to the police – or making the cases public – for the reasons mentioned above. If there are no witness statements, videos or other evidence, so many cases could remain in the dark.

It must be weighted that a large proportion of the attacks repeatedly hit the same media workers. This means that for the first time, less than ten journalists accounted for more than half of the verified attacks. This fact should be taken into account when classifying the development of cases in comparison to previous years.

In addition, there is the possibility that a distortion in the geographical distribution of cases has arisen through mechanisms of media reporting, to the detriment of Saxony. As the state of origin of the Pegida movement with a disproportionate share of political meetings and meeting participants nationwide, it attracted a great deal of media interest, especially in 2015, but also in the following years. As a result, a large number of media personnel attended the demonstrations in the Free State, while others reported less. This resulted in many opportunities for confrontation between press opponents and journalists. ECPMF has attempted to level out any distortions with a comparably comprehensive case research for all regions.

For the current study, data from the ECPMF partner project MappingMediaFreedom.org was integrated into the survey for the first time. Cases already recorded there were analysed again according to our own research design. This additional source may have illuminated a part of the dark field that had not yet been the focus of research in previous studies. The European monitoring platform "Mapping Media Freedom" is run under the leadership of ECPMF together with the International Press Institute (IPI) and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). Additional information: <https://www.mappingmediafreedom.org/>

Confirmation criteria

Confirmation always refers to explicit evidence. Cases where there is no explicit evidence in the form of, for example, pictures, videos or a legally binding conviction, are only taken into account and assessed as verified under the conditions defined below. For this to be the case, however, an attack must also have been described without contradiction by other media, witnesses or actors, and the persons affected must be credible. Since the documentation behaviour seems to have changed as a result of the numerous attacks and the sensitisation of many journalists, more evidence has become accessible over the years.

1. Criteria for recording cases

The ECPMF archive collects all reported assaults on journalists and other media workers in Germany that have been published or brought directly to the attention of ECPMF. In order to be as complete as possible, an offence is recorded if it is or could be politically related and/or a journalist is attacked for carrying out his or her work. This relatively broad definition makes it possible to record offences regardless of their event context (for example, only in the context of populist demonstrations). This is to avoid distortions by concentrating on a certain political milieu or a certain category of events. A connection with ideology-driven motives – such as "lying press" accusations – results from the description of the individual event.

A further prerequisite is that the journalists, media workers/creators or technicians were attacked during the exercise of their profession or in connection with it – for example as a result of research or publication. Situations in which, for example, assailants attack journalists and are stopped in time by the police are not recorded. Persecutions or harassment in which no physical violence is used are also excluded.

Possible assaults by police officers on members of the media are not recorded. This is due to the special role of the police: they can secure and restrict journalistic work. In extreme cases, the police are also entitled to use force. If assaults by police officers were recorded, the recording of assaults would be distorted, especially with regard to assembly contexts. ECPMF cannot provide a forensic or legal assessment of possible cases of police violence. The demarcation thus serves to make the recording comprehensible and does not constitute an assessment of the phenomenon of "police violence". Nevertheless, ECPMF recognises police violence against members of the press as a problem – see for example: <https://policecodex.eu/>.

2. Claim to completeness

The list attempts to cover all known cases, but does not claim to register all relevant cases in the period under review. This cannot be achieved in practice, as not

all cases are brought to public attention by the media or associations, reported to the authorities or otherwise made known. All sources can be traced transparently in the list. If you have more detailed or differing information on individual incidents or if you have become aware of other incidents, please inform us at info@ecpmf.eu. This information will be included after verification and the list will be continuously updated.

3. Who is a journalist?

The list includes attacks on journalists who have fallen victim to them during or as a direct consequence of their work. Since "journalist" is not a protected term in Germany, ideas and definitions vary widely. A criterion such as full-time activity as a journalist, as provided by the DJV in its admission guidelines, does not work for the present survey. However, the journalistic activity of a person can be verified through administrative aspects such as membership in a journalists' association or the possession of a national press card. The youth press card also serves as a possible proof.⁴⁹ Since ECPMF is concerned with the constitution of an image of the enemy, which comes to light above all when persons hostile to the press suspect a journalist, these aspects alone are not the only decisive factor, but rather the assumed function and thus the surface on which journalists are attacked.

Nevertheless, there is a need for qualification: a journalist is whoever reports with the aim of publishing information for a publicly accessible and regularly publishing medium that operates according to the rules of the Press Code, or whoever provides assistance with this reporting, for example as a technician, commentator, or blogger, provided they meet these criteria of balanced reporting linked to standards of craftsmanship. These standards are characterised by the separation of opinion and commentary, the naming of sources for intersubjective verifiability and the presentation of pluralistic opinions. Personal perspectives must be presented as such; assessments and evaluations must be named as such.

In contrast, according to this definition, a journalist is not considered to be a journalist if they place personal assessments of events or the substantiation of certain political goals in the foreground of the publishing activity, e.g., by presenting opinions as facts, giving false sources or repeatedly spreading false information against his or her better knowledge.

4. When is an assault political?

All recorded assaults are examined for a possible political context and an assumed ideological motive of the perpetrators. This classification makes it possi-

⁴⁹ This is recognized by dju in ver.di as well as DJV and is issued to members of the youth press associations and/or their member associations after the journalistic publications have been checked.

ble to assign them to the phenomenon of "hostility towards the press", which is the focus of the series of investigations.

In principle, every action can be political. However, since the reason for the recording is the "Lying press" accusations, the recorded attacks are in an explicitly political context. This consists primarily of targeted political actions. 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.

A brief explanation of how the study deals with the categorisation of political opinion and the concept of extremism: an unambiguous and selective categorisation of politically motivated attitudes and actions, for example, as right-wing/right-wing populist/right-wing extremist/right-wing radical or left-wing/left-wing extremist/left-wing radical is not useful, as discussions in political science make clear. The equation of the two political milieus by locating them as politically opposite poles, between which the so-called "social centre" would lie, cannot be held stringently either. A detailed critique of the extremism model as well as the approach of the dichotomy of constitutional state and "extremism" has already been made by numerous authors (cf. for example Butterwegge 2011; Feustel 2011; Leggewie/Meier 1995).

However, since a large part of the attacks are politically motivated, practical and at the same time unambiguous and thus comparable terms must be found. For this purpose, the differentiation into "right-wing" and "left-wing" seems helpful from the current perspective, which, however, should not be subject to an incremental logic.

The corresponding categorisation depends on who is attacking. If, for example, a right-wing demonstration takes place and a participant attacks a journalist from within this assembly, and further indications speak for a politically motivated act, this act is recorded as "right-wing" motivated. These additional indications include, for example, the fact that a person is known through party affiliation, tattoos or symbols typical of the scene on clothing or flags. Further indicators can be statements by the perpetrators or the course of the crime. If the political affiliation is not clearly possible, but cannot be ruled out either, the case is noted as "unknown" or "other".

5. What is categorised according to which criteria?

The following overview refers to the case table in which all attacks are recorded.

(A) Date

The date on which the attack was committed applies according to the pattern YYYY. MM.DD.

(B) City/Place

The city or place in which or at which the attack occurred is listed. If the location of the attack is the internet, this is noted in addition to the location of the attacked person.

(C) Urban area

The place where the attack took place is counted as an urban area with more than 100,000 inhabitants (Y). If the place has less than 100,000 inhabitants, it is classified as a rural area (N).

(D) State

BB = Brandenburg

BE = Berlin

BW = Baden-Württemberg

BY = Bavaria HB = Bremen

HE = Hesse

HH = Hamburg

MV = Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

NI = Lower Saxony

NW = North Rhine-Westphalia

RP = Rhineland-Palatinate

SH = Schleswig-Holstein

SL = Saarland

SN = Sachsen

ST = Saxony-Anhalt

TH = Thuringia

(E) Medium

Indication of the medium for which the person concerned works.

TV = Television

RADIO = Radio

ONLINE = Online

PRINT = Print

OTHER = Other

AGENCY = News agency

U = Unknown

(F) Camera

A case is rated as "Yes" (Y) if a cameraman or photographer was attacked, a camera was visible and in use. A case is rated as "No" (N) if no camera was in use. A case is rated as "Mobile" (M) if the person concerned documented with a mobile phone.

A case is rated as "Unknown" (U) if there is no evidence for the use of a camera.

(G) Camera as target of the attack (against camera)

The violence was also or explicitly directed against the camera (Y). This is the case if a camera was damaged, a camera (including mobile phone cameras used for journalistic purposes) was pushed away, it is clear from the course of events that statements were directed against the use of cameras and an attack therefore took place, or the reporting media people worked for a TV station. If this is not the case, it is rated as "No" (N), or in the case of unclear facts with "Unknown" (U).

(H) Gender of the person concerned

Male = M

Female = F

Non-binary (Divers) = D

Unknown = U

(I) Gender of offender

Male = M

Female = F

Non-binary (Divers) = D

Unknown = U

(J) NEW: Place/Context of incident.

During a demonstration = attack occurs during a demonstration or in the context of a demonstration

During a press conference = attack occurs in the context of a press conference

During an event = attack occurs during coverage or in the context of an event. Events include concerts, soccer matches, public festivals, but also events of political parties.

Public place = attack occurs away from demonstrations, press conferences or events in the public sphere

(K) Scene

ASSEMBLY SCENE (AS) = Assault takes place directly in or out of the assembly area.

ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT (AE) = Attack occurred outside an assembly, i.e., before, after or locally outside (e.g. ambushing on the way home; attack on parked car or similar) of assemblies.

UNKNOWN (U) = It is not possible to trace where the attack took place.

OTHER = Attack took place away from gatherings in public space.

EDITORIAL OFFICE = Attack occurred at/near editorial building, car, outside broadcast van, etc.

PRIVATE = attack occurs in the private sphere, such as also in one's own car/house or similar

Definition of "assembly": An assembly or gathering is categorised as those gatherings that unite anonymous participants in public without prior notification around a political idea. In contrast, conferences or party congresses are not considered to be an "assembly scene", as participants register by name and dealings with the press are formalised, for example through accreditation.

(L) Registered assembly

If it can be determined whether the assembly at which the attack took place was officially registered, this is noted as "Yes" (Y).

If the assembly is not registered, but

- was organised elsewhere
- or was initially authorised and then officially terminated (e.g., by the police) and continued anyway
- or was authorised as a fixed rally and then moved illegally as a procession, "No" (N) is noted.

(It is not always possible to determine whether an assembly is authorised or whether the assembly was (still) authorised at the time of the assault).

(M) Incident

Brief description: Who/What/When/How?

Every single attack by one or more perpetrators is recorded. This can also be directed against more than one person. If a person commits several attacks in an assembly context, they will be listed individually.

(N) Number of victims

Since several people can be affected by an attack, the number of victims has also been recorded since 2017. The persons affected who were directly exposed to an assault are counted. If, for example, a camera team consisting of several people is attacked and a blow is only directed at the reporter, this is counted as an attack on one person. Only the minimum number of verified victims is recorded.

(O) Number of injured persons

The number of injured persons within an assault incident is recorded here. This includes visible injuries, medically certified injuries and injuries that lead to a physical impairment for the person affected. Psychological (consequential) damage is not included.

(P) Violence

The "violence" category includes physical attacks on media workers. This includes hitting the body or property carried on the body (e.g. cameras), kicking, pushing or shoving (obstructing journalistic work by restricting the view is not assault), holding, physical violence with the use of weapons (if a blow is struck with a tool (e.g. flagpole), this is considered the use of weapons), spitting at, robbery of property carried on the body. Physical assaults that cannot be clearly attributed are classified as "other" because the type of physical impact is not known or does not fit into any of the existing categories. Assault with extreme loudness on the ear, as well as targeted attacks with objects, are classified as assault.

Attempting to physically attack someone (e.g., if the victim can avoid a blow) is not considered assault.

1. Hitting = HIT
2. Kicking = KICK
3. Pushing/pushing = PUSH
4. Holding on = HOLD
5. Using weapons or other objects = WEAPON

6. Spitting on = SPIT
7. Robbery = ROB
8. Other = OTHER
9. Unknown = U

(Q) Material damage

1. Yes = Y
2. No = N
3. Unknown = U
4. No material damage = NONE

(R) Political motivation (right wing/left wing/other)

1. Right = RIGHT
2. Left = LEFT
3. Other = U

(S) Coronavirus context

An event is considered to be "pandemic-related" if it involves political action formats that explicitly refer to the coronavirus pandemic. The prerequisite for this is that the content of the event is directed against the state's coronavirus protection measures and that it is also fundamentally critical of the political reaction to the crisis situation. The mere fact that the content of the pandemic is discussed is not sufficient for it to be considered a coronavirus-related meeting.

Indications of this are, for example, the motto of a registered demonstration, the speakers and their political contexts, as well as posters and banners carried at a political event. In terms of content, these play down the danger of the Sars-Cov2 virus, deny the existence of a pandemic situation or attract attention with conspiracy myths about a supposedly controlled contamination through compulsory vaccination. What is relevant is the sweeping criticism of state measures to contain the pandemic in order to be counted as a crime context "with a pandemic connection".

Political attribution of pandemic-related attacks on gatherings

ECPMF checks all known cases for a political reference. Criteria for the assignment to the category "left-wing", "right-wing" or "unknown/other" result from the context of the crime. For this purpose, the perpetrator and the respective demonstration context are first analysed – as far as possible on the basis of the available information.

If the perpetrators can be assigned to a political spectrum through their clothing, typical scene symbols, verbal statements or other characteristics, or if there are corresponding assessments by security authorities that sufficiently justify an assumption of a political location, the case in question is classified as right-wing or left-wing.

If physical attacks occur at or in the vicinity of demonstrations and the perpetrators can be clearly attributed to them as participants, the content-related orientation of the assembly is a criterion to be taken into account in the classification. A pandemic-related meeting was classified as right-wing, for example,

a) if it was organised by right-wing extremist leaders or politicians, such as Attila Hildmann, and/or if statements were made that were clearly right-wing extremist (e.g., denial of the Holocaust), or if those responsible for the demonstration (organisers, meeting leaders, stewards, etc.) were clearly right-wing, e.g., through party affiliation,

b) was classified as right-wing in the PMK statistics or sources based on them, such as Kleine Anfragen. If the assembly at which an attack took place could not be clearly assigned on the basis of the sources and there were no indications for the political assignability of the participant, the case was categorised as "unknown/other".

Y = The crime occurred at a pandemic-related event.

N = The offence occurred at a non-pandemic event.

U = Unknown/other

(T) Type of journalist

If possible, the exact profession of the person concerned is specified here. This includes "journalist", "camera operator", "sound operator", "photographer" and "social media blogger". It is not always possible to differentiate exactly which area the people concerned belong to, as sometimes several areas are covered. The term "social media blogger" covers a number of media professionals who report in a documentary manner and do this through photographic or video accompaniment. One feature of their activity is "live ticking" on Twitter or other platform media about the event happenings. In some cases, they also publish texts and video contributions on these platforms. Sometimes they also work as freelance journalists for other media.

(U) Employment relationship

As far as can be seen, it is noted here whether the person concerned is a permanently employed media worker or a freelancer. Otherwise, an unknown is noted.

(V) Local journalist

For the purposes of the study and to achieve the greatest possible comparability, a narrow definition of local journalism and local press is applied. A local employment relationship or a (continuous) assignment by a local editorial office for a freelancer determines the characteristic "local journalist". Ultimately, the work assignment in the local is decisive. This can be self-set or through affiliation with an editorial team (Y). Those who report as correspondents or reporters for national media, as specialist journalists or as social media bloggers are accordingly not covered by the definition (N).

(W) (W, X, Y) Sources

Public sources are listed by ECPMF in the linked case list. They can also be requested from info@ecpmf.eu if the links provided no longer work. This does not apply to sources that have been sent to ECPMF directly with a request for confidentiality. These are marked with the source "ECPMF" in the case recording as feedback from affected persons to be anonymised or otherwise confidential information.

*(Z) *Gida context*

Y = The offence occurred at an event associated with the Pegida movement (or its offshoots).

N = The crime did not take place at an event associated with the Pegida movement (or its offshoots).

U = Unclear

(AA) Confirmation

An incident is recorded as confirmed if either a) there is a "letter of confession" from the attacker(s), or b) there is evidence of an incident, e.g., a video recording, and/or c) there is confirmation from the security authorities that there were attacks on journalists and/or d) there is other evidence (e.g. witness statements).

Confirmed = Y

Not confirmed = N

Also recorded is why a case is considered confirmed.

Changes in case recording between 2015 and 2022

In the tabulated case statistics for 2015 and 2016, in addition to violent assaults, cases were recorded where there was no assault. These were serious threats, damage to property or attacks on editorial buildings in which no persons were physically harmed. In the "violence" column, these were noted as "NONE". Accordingly, these cases do not appear in the tabulation of physical assaults, but

were still included in the published tables for the sake of transparency. There were 17 such cases in 2015 and three in 2016. Since 2017, ECPMF has only recorded physical attacks. The number of known threats had increased too drastically. As a result, exclusive threats are no longer included in the overall list. Furthermore, the recording of threats in the case of physical attacks is particularly difficult to classify, as practically every attack also carries a threat. The specified threat criteria (clear threat of an act) were subsequently reviewed for the years 2015 to 2018 and corrected where necessary.

Furthermore, the two additional columns for recording violence ("V2" and "V3") were dissolved into one for clarity.

The following additional and more precise characteristics were subsequently added: Number of victims of an attack ("number of victims", from 2017), the gender of the attackers ("sex of offender", from 2020 retroactively for all years), whether the violence was also or explicitly directed against the camera carried ("against camera", also from 2020 retroactively for all years), "*Gida context" and "COVID-19 context". For 2021, the following characteristics were added: urban area, registered assembly, number of injured persons, type of journalist, employment status and local journalist.

In the 2022 case record, a new category was introduced: "(J) Place/Context of incident." This category simplifies the classification of the context in which an attack occurred. Furthermore, the category "Divers (non-binary) = D" was added under "gender of person concerned" and "gender of offender". Another recent addition was made to the definition of local journalism. When evaluating whether a media professional is a local journalist, the assignment by a local editorial office is now taken into account as a criterion.

A study by the European Center for Press and Media Freedom
in cooperation with the German Association of Digital Publishers and Newspaper
Publishers as part of the Media Freedom Rapid Response



part of the



European Centre for Press & Media Freedom | Article 19 | European Federation of Journalists | Free Press Unlimited
Institute of Applied Informatics | International Press Institute | Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa

Europäischen Zentrums für Presse- und Medienfreiheit

Menckestraße 27
04155 Leipzig
Germany

phone: 49 (0) 172 / 367 499 0

email: info@ecpmf.eu

web: www.ecpmf.eu

Publication date: 22.03.2023

© ECPMF – MFRR 2023

Titelfoto: picture alliance / Jörg Carstensen



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Supported by:

