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# Assaults on Journalists in Europe

an investigation of the period 2000-2016

**Series: Democracy Under Pressure**

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Media Governance and Industries Research Lab  
*University of Vienna*

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& INDUSTRIES RESEARCH  
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Series: Democracy Under Pressure

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## Executive Summary

The period between 2000-2016 has seen a clear increase in the assaults against journalists. Our study identified over 1000 cases of assault. 2016 was the worst year for European journalism.

The majority of assaults was perpetuated by police forces through arrest and while on police action.

Of those journalists assaulted, 302 died. The majority of killings of journalists is found in Russia. The majority of assaults takes place in Turkey. The first position of killings is held by Russia - 155 deaths (press freedom status: not free), the second is Ukraine – 27 deaths (press freedom status: partly free), the third place is Turkey – 19 deaths (press freedom status: not free) and almost the same result as in Turkey can be seen in France (4th position) - 14 deaths (press freedom status: free).

The majority of journalists assaulted work for the print press: 52 % of all cases or 539.

Arrests are the method most often used to intimidate journalists and other police actions are frequent among actions against journalists. 222 journalists were arrested in this time period. Combined, they indicate that there is a very high likelihood that assaults are initiated by the state/police systems.

Overall, the data show that no country in Europe is free from cases of assault. The political developments in Turkey have led to a rapid deterioration in the status of the free press; Russia also remains a problematic case.

- a. The human cost of journalism at the service of citizens and common interest is at an all/time high in Europe.
- b. The conditions underpinning the profession have changed in fundamental ways, making assault, violence, intimidation and even death real and no longer exceptional cases.
- c. The assumption that Europe remains a relatively safe democratic space for journalists can be easily challenged.



# 1 PRESS FREEDOM IN EUROPE 2000 - 2016

## 1.1 Introduction

*“When you get to learn about the stories of assaulted journalists, you become conscious of the importance of giving high priority to the safety of media workers and the need to bring the perpetrators to justice.”*

- Mogens Blicher Bjerregård, EFJ President, 2016

Freedom of the press remains the cornerstone of democratic societies and the political claim for democratisation in autocratic regimes. Yet, even in mature democracies with robust laws and long traditions in practising uninhibited investigative and critical journalism, the challenges regarding journalists' safety are not diminishing. As a profession, journalism is increasingly at risk, with journalists and media workers becoming specific targets of attacks through threats, assaults or even death. A close examination of recent events in Europe shows that even in mature democracies, press freedom and the safety of journalists are not guaranteed.

The events that have most shaken Europe in its recent history include the attack on Charlie Hebdo's editorial department in Paris on 7 January 2015 and the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016. These are the pivotal events in recent years that raised the numbers of assaults on journalists significantly, either in the form of killings or arrests, to the point that **it is now urgent to acknowledge the fundamental shift in the ways in which information is uncovered, generated, produced and disseminated:**

- d. The human cost of journalism at the service of citizens and common interest is at an all/time high in Europe.**
- e. The conditions underpinning the profession have changed in fundamental ways, making assault, violence, intimidation and even death real and no longer exceptional cases.**
- f. The assumption that Europe remains a relatively safe democratic space for journalists can be easily challenged .**

This report provides a mapping of assaults across European countries including Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. This report explores assaults of any kind and deaths of journalists across Europe and generates insights into political and governmental practices. Taking into account the current developing conditions of journalist imprisonments in Turkey, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the absence of independent news organisations have an enormous impact for democracy in our societies.

## 1.2 Methodology

The report identifies and **records over 1,000 cases of assaults on journalists and media workers who were threatened, assaulted or killed in Europe, between 2000 - 2016**. The research is based on a variety of sources of information, including available national and other databases, annual reports by professional journalist organisations, annual reports of official organisations, press agency archives and media archives.

It is clear that the recent events in Turkey have had an immense impact on the numbers, in particular in 2016. Turkey, with a high number of arrests, and Russia, with high numbers of killings, are the two most dangerous countries, placing European journalism under great strain.

Although this is currently the most comprehensive database on the subject, it must be noted that it cannot be considered exhaustive: it contains information harvested from sources in German, English, Bulgarian, Russian and Turkish. A broader spectrum of sources in other national languages might have yielded more results.

The time span of 2000-2016 shows that assaults on journalists continue and are rising. For instance, in Turkey, in 2017, several journalists were re-arrested only hours after their release. Others have been penalised with three life prison terms for their columns. Many foreign journalists have been detained or deported.

## 2 Europe

### 2.1 Key Findings

- ➔ 2016 was the worst year for European journalism. As the report will show, a significant number of the cases causing the increase in the past few years had to do with the occurrences in Turkey and Russia.

Assaults & Deaths Total 2000 -2016

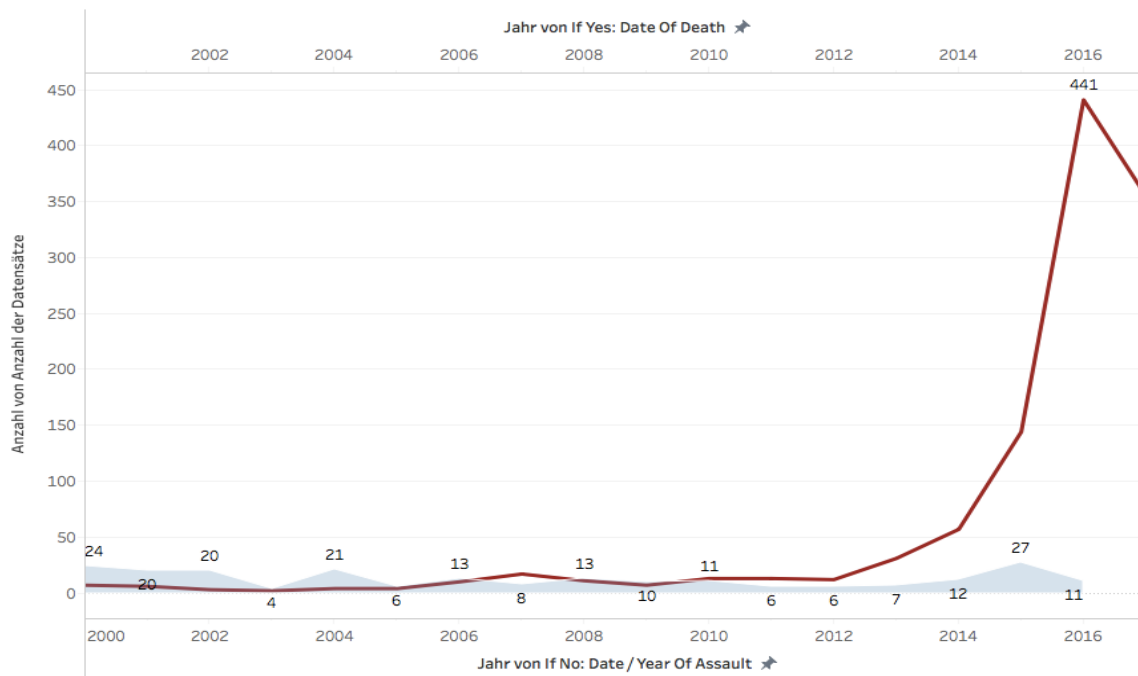


Image 1: Timeline of Assaults & Deaths, Total 2000 - 2016

The red line shows the assaults on journalists that took place between 2000 and 2016 in Europe, including Turkey and Russia. The blue filled line at the bottom represents killings in the same time span. Here, it is important to note that these two lines cannot simply be added. In many cases, journalists were victims of assaults and died at a later point.



- A closer look at the total number of assaults that took place against journalists between 2000 and 2016 shows the following figure:

Total Number of Assaults 2000 - 2016

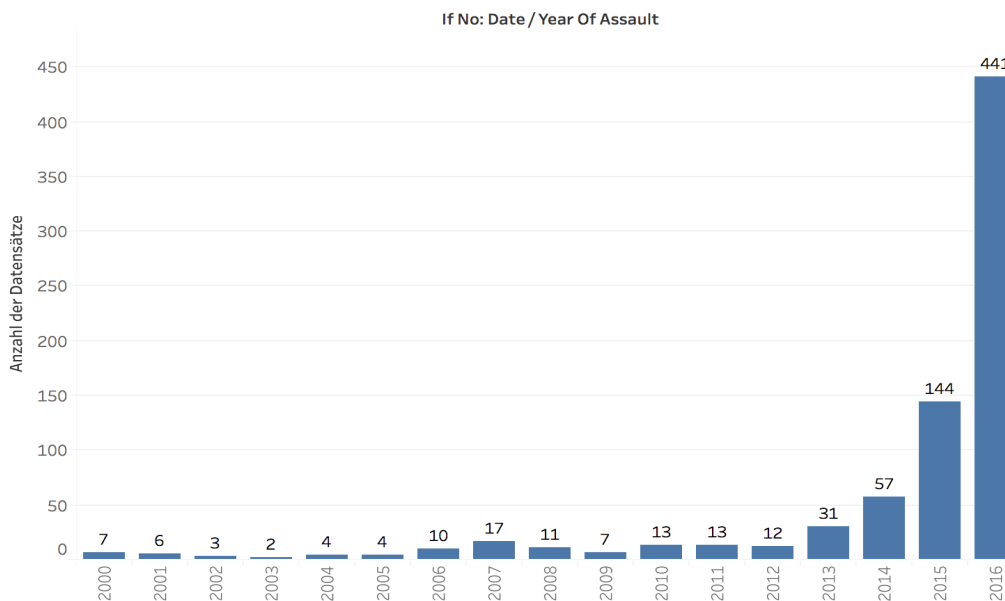


Image 2: Timeline of Assaults total 2000 - 2016

- The number of assaults in all European countries, excluding Turkey and Russia, shows an increasing trend, between 2000 and 2016:

Assaults Europe 2000 - 2016

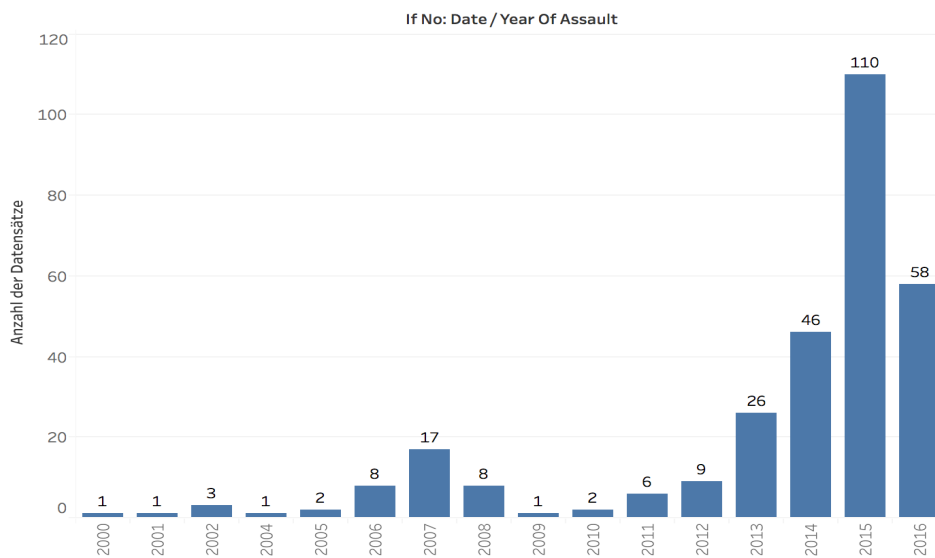


Image 3: Timeline of Assaults in Europe (excluding Turkey and Russia) 2000 - 2016

There is a clear trend towards increase of assaults overall in both graphs. In this period, we recorded 815 assaults on journalists (image 2); 320 of them took place in countries other than Russia and Turkey. In 2015, the Charlie Hebdo attack was the deadliest.

➤ 302 journalists were killed. The majority of killings took place in Russia and Turkey.

Total Number of Deaths 2000 - 2016

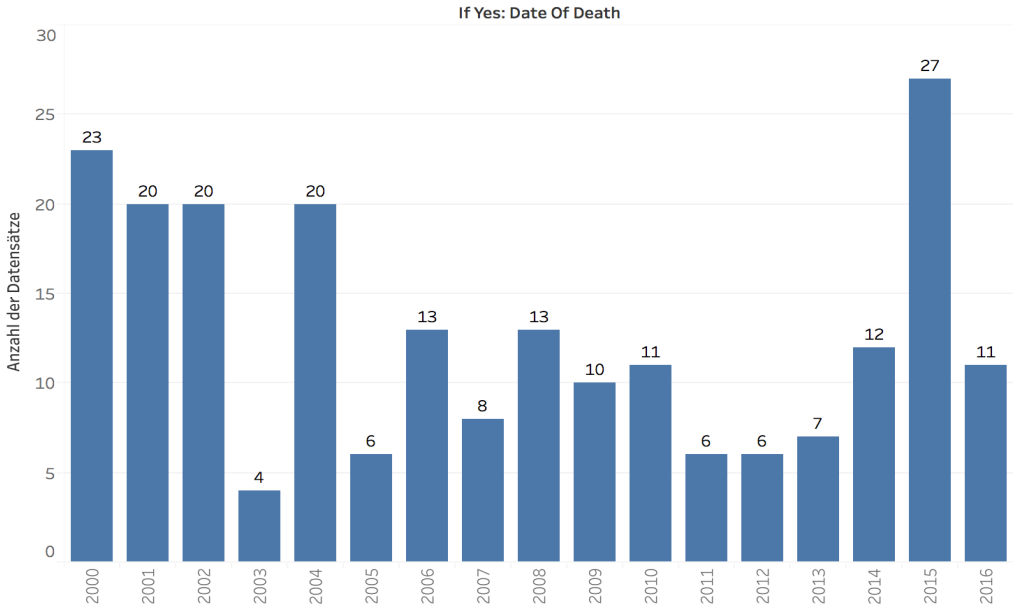


Image 4: Timeline of Deaths total 2000 - 2016

Deaths Europe 2000 - 2016

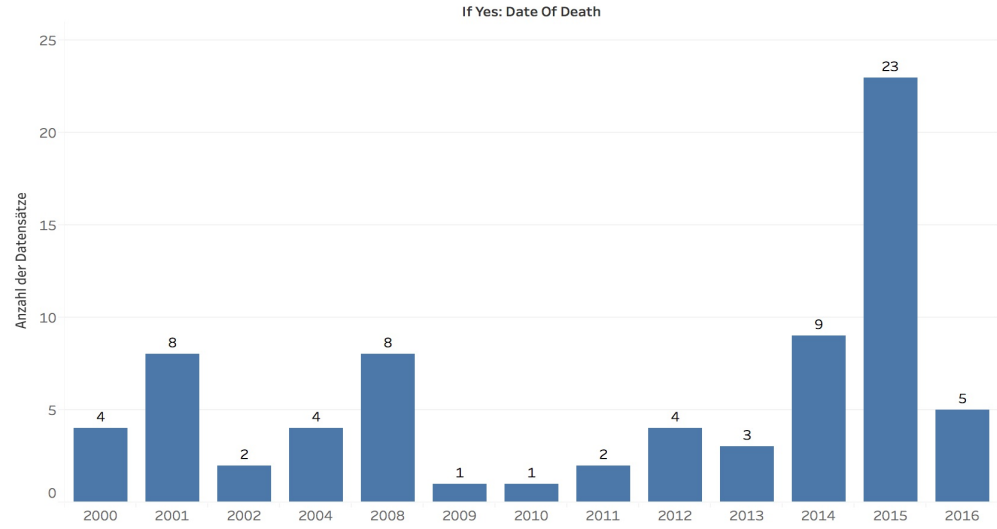


Image 5: Timeline of Deaths in Europe (excluding Turkey and Russia) 2000 - 2016

➤ The map of deadly cities where most journalists died in the past 16 years looks like this:

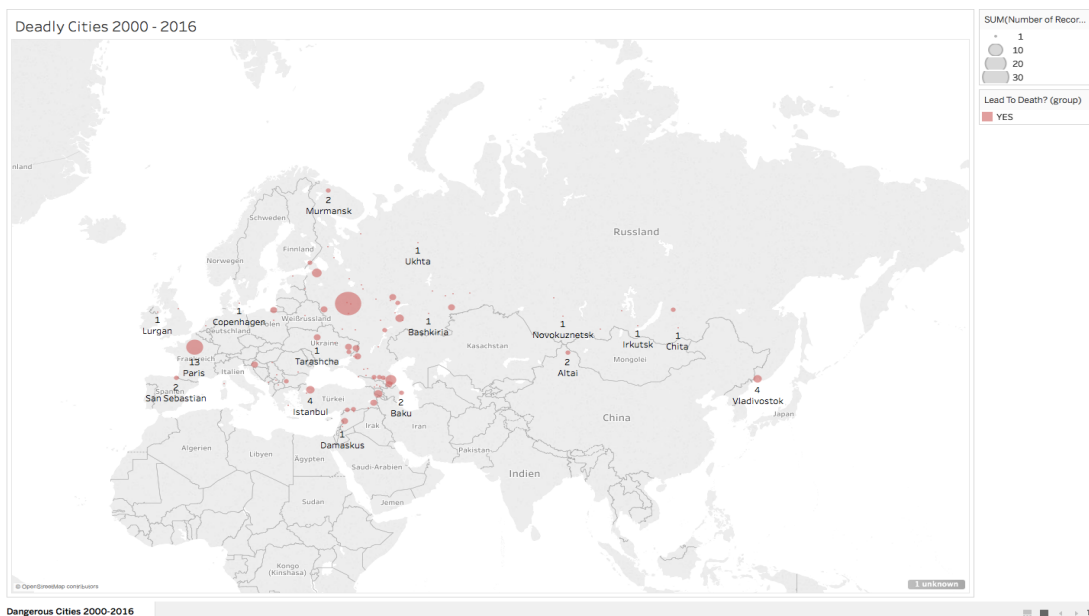


Image 6: Deaths in European Cities 2000 - 2016

Moscow is by far the deadliest city of the past 16 years with 30 killings of journalists. Paris is second with 13 dead journalists.

➤ The most dangerous country is Turkey, which makes up approximately 45% of our data. It is followed by Russia (17%) and Azerbaijan (5%).

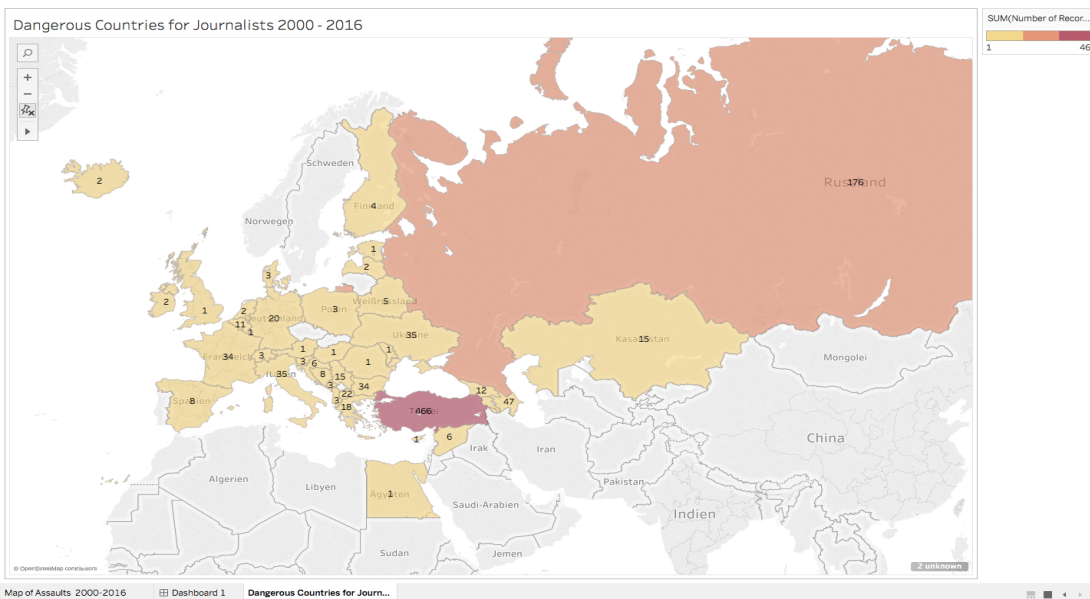


Image 7: Map of assaults & deaths - dangerous countries in Europe 2000-2016

The press freedom status in those countries is “not free” - violence and repression against journalists by the government, authorities or police are common. Perpetrators overall enjoy impunity.

➡ Image 8 shows the toll of deaths reaching 302 cases of journalists and media workers.

The first position is held by Russia - 155 deaths (press freedom status: not free), the second is Ukraine – 27 deaths (press freedom status: partly free), the third place is Turkey – 19 deaths (press freedom status: not free) and almost the same result as in Turkey can be seen in France (4th position) - 14 deaths (press freedom status: free).



Image 8: Total number of deaths per country 2000-2016

➤ For only assaults (excluding deaths) Turkey (56%) occupies the position with the highest number.

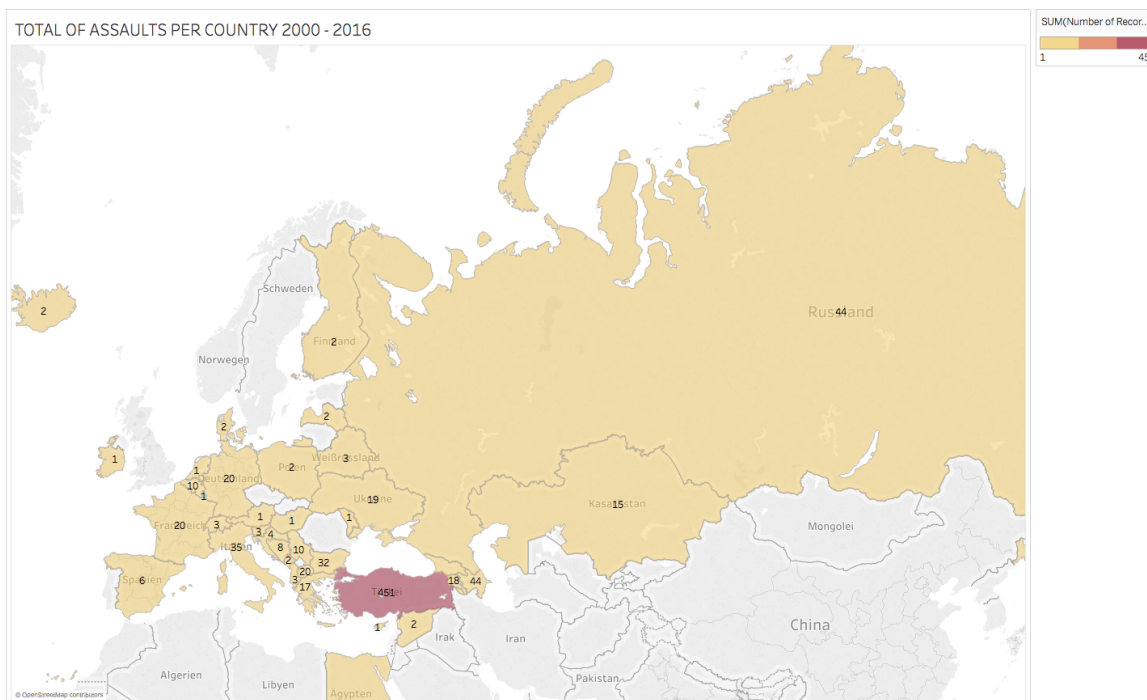


Image 9: Total number of assaults per country 2000-2016

➤ The different types of media (2000-2016) where assaulted journalists worked.

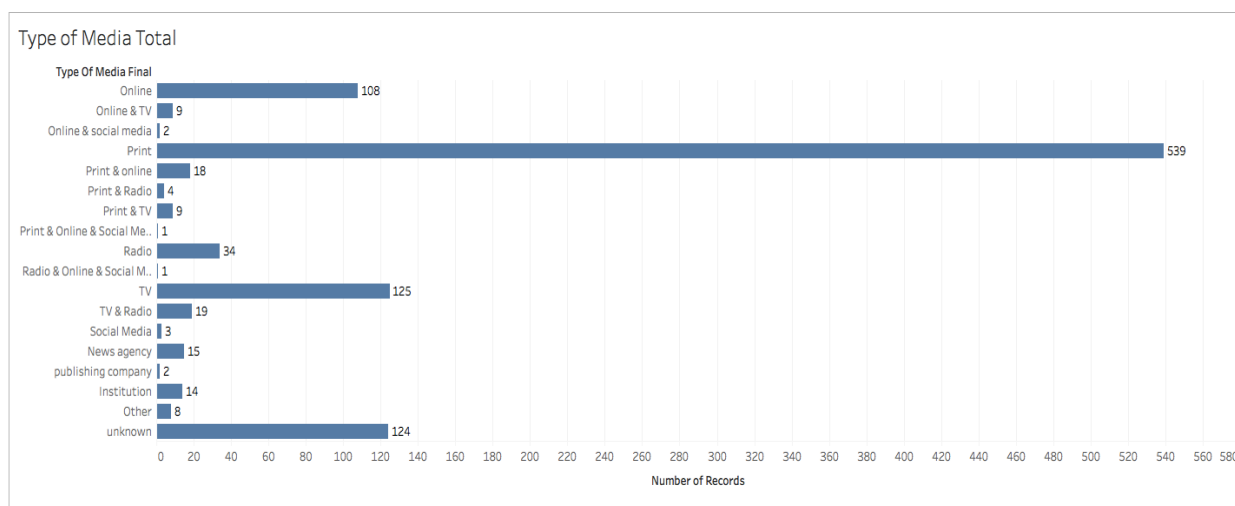


Image 10: Type of media total 2000-2016

The majority of journalists assaulted work for the print press: 52 % of all cases or 539.

➔ A detailed view of the different types of assaults (images 11 and 12) .

Arrests are the method most often used to intimidate journalists and other police actions are frequent among actions against journalists. Combined, they indicate that there is a very high likelihood that assaults are initiated by the state/police systems.

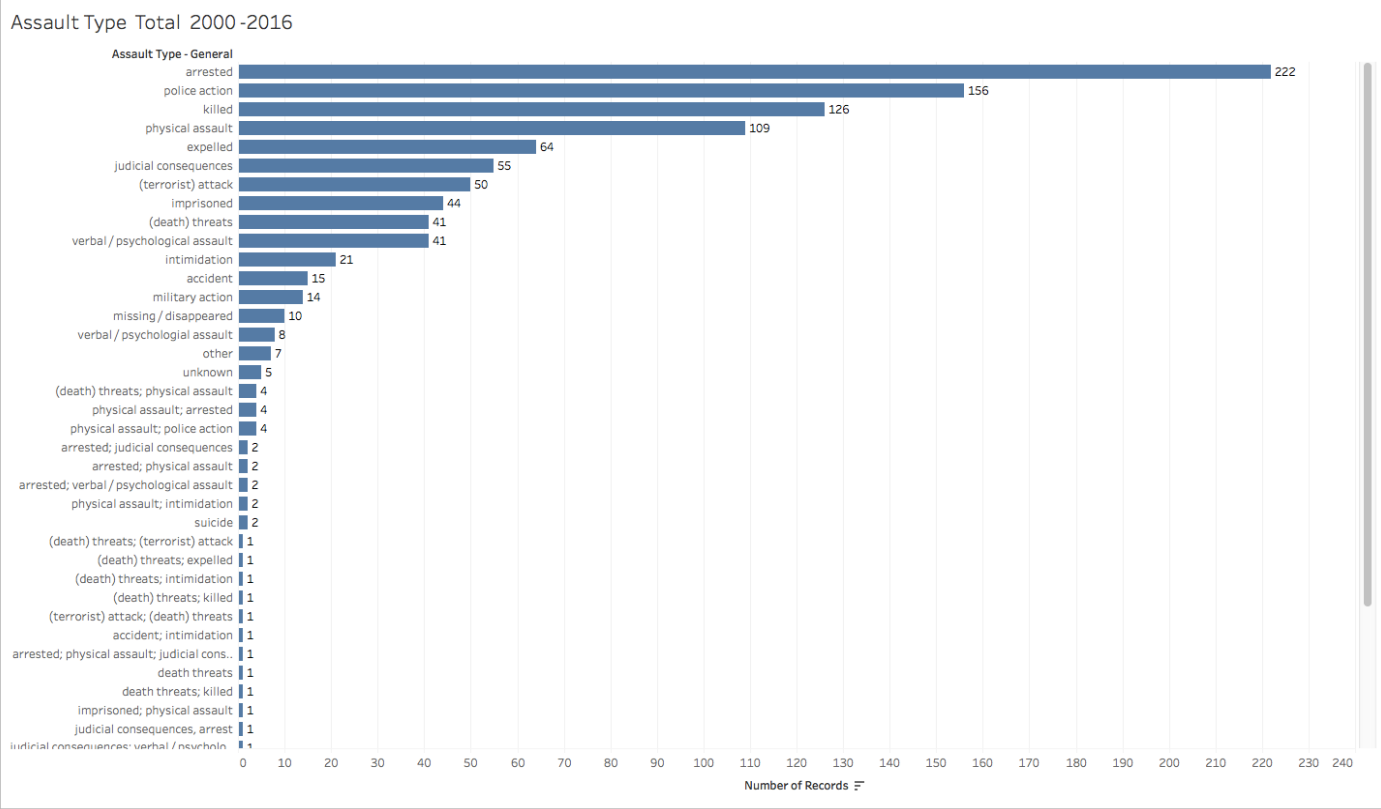


Image 11: Assault type total 2000-2016

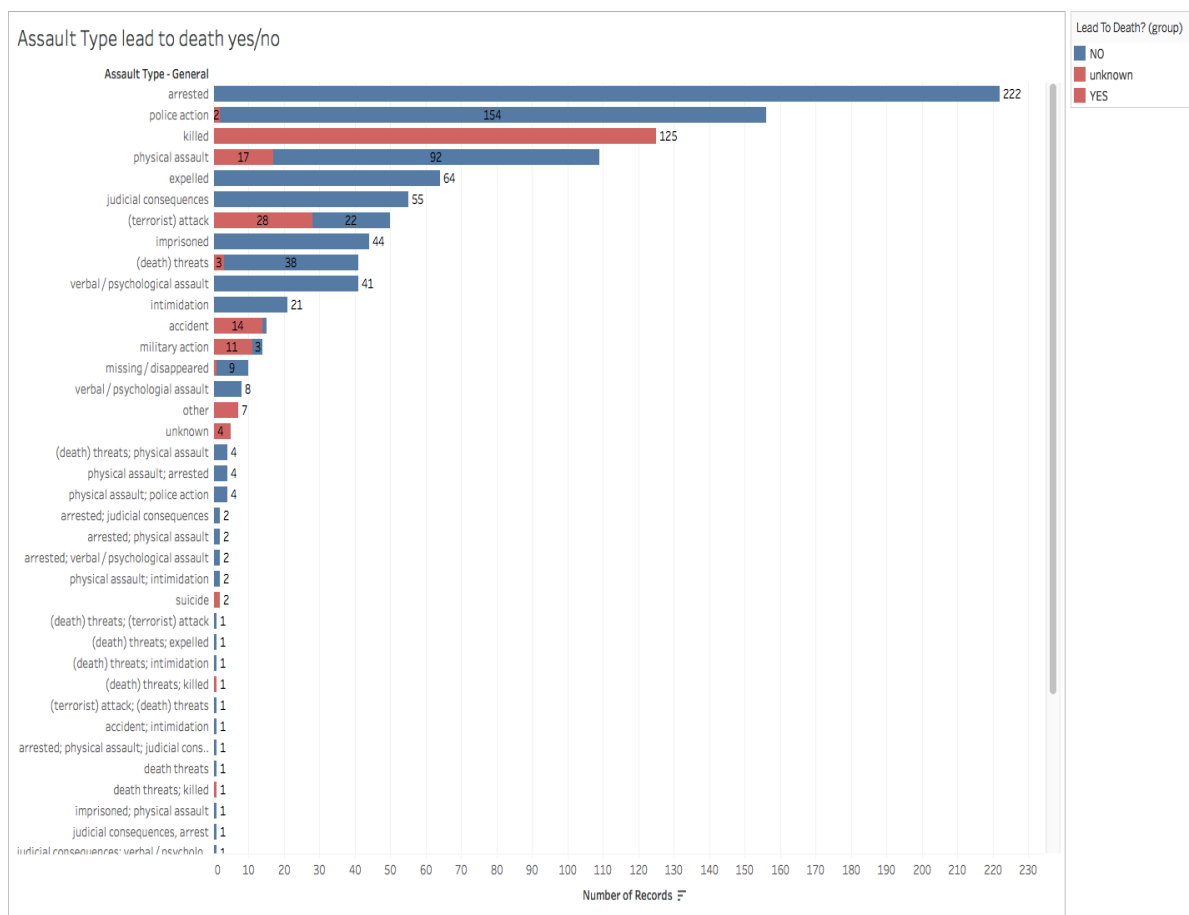


Image 12: Assault types that led to deaths

Terrorist attacks and military actions are directly connected to the risks faced by journalists in order to fulfill their professional tasks (e.g. correspondents in conflict zones). Physical attacks are evidence for that, in 17 out of the total 109 cases (15.5 %).

### Arrests per Country

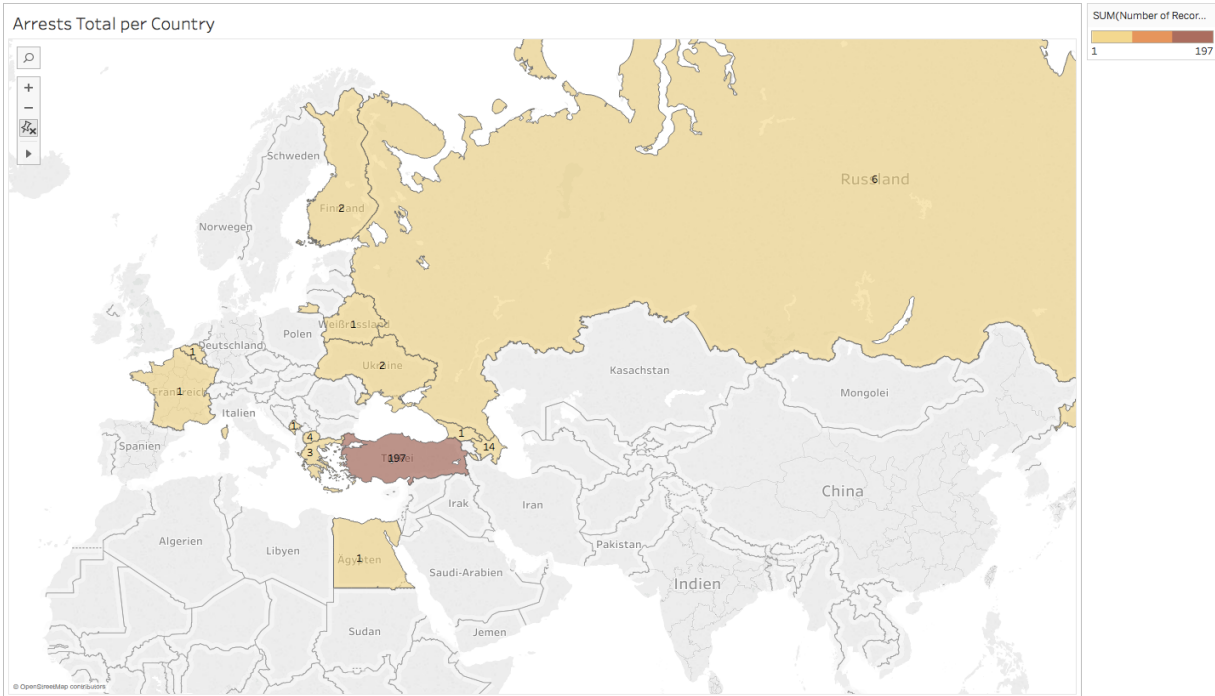


Image 13: Arrests per country 2000-2016

The map illustrates the number of arrested journalists (2000-2016) in Europe. The number of arrested journalists in Turkey increased (197 cases). In Turkey, media freedom was already under siege in early 2016, with authorities arresting, harassing, and expelling journalists and shutting down or taking over news outlets. The unprecedented rate of press freedom violations spurred the Commission for the Protection of Journalists to launch a special diary, “Turkey Crackdown Chronicle,” in March of the same year. The pace of arrests exploded after a failed attempt on July 15, 2016 to oust President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In the wake of the attempted coup — which the government blamed on an alleged terrorist organisation led by exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen —the government granted itself emergency powers and, in a two-month period, detained, at least briefly, more than 100 journalists and closed down at least 100 news outlets.

Turkish authorities have also subjected Kurdish journalists to a fresh round of arrests and trials, in addition to shutting down pro-Kurdish news outlets. CPJ examined the cases of another 67 journalists imprisoned in Turkey in late 2016 but was unable to confirm a direct link to their work. In many cases, court documents have been sealed, and in others, CPJ could not identify or



contact lawyers for the accused—or the lawyers were unwilling to discuss their clients with CPJ, a reflection of the tense atmosphere in Turkey. More than 125,000 people, including public workers such as police officers, soldiers, teachers, civil servants, academicians, even doctors, have been dismissed or suspended and about 40,000 others have been arrested since the coup attempt, according to international news reports.”<sup>1</sup>

In the second place of the countries with the highest number of arrested journalists in Europe is Azerbaijan (14 cases). Most of the arrests took place in the period of 2013 - 2014. The press status in Azerbaijan remains “not free”, according to Freedom House reports (2013-2015), which describe the media situation in the country:

“Conditions for freedom of expression in Azerbaijan continued to deteriorate in 2013, as authorities imprisoned journalists and bloggers who expressed dissenting opinions and placed further limits on access to information during the year. Violence against journalists has not abated, and the media are harassed with impunity. The period surrounding the presidential election in October 2013 provided another demonstration of the regime’s intolerance for diverse opinions in the media and general disrespect for freedoms of information and expression.”<sup>2</sup>

“Following several years of decline, Azerbaijan’s media environment deteriorated more sharply in 2014 as the government pursued a harsh campaign to silence criticism and dissent. The authorities used spurious charges and investigations to shut down media organizations and detain several prominent journalists, bloggers, and freedom of expression advocates. Violence against journalists continued throughout the year, and impunity for attacks remained the norm.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Beiser, E. (2016). “Turkey’s crackdown propels number of journalists in jail worldwide to record high“, electronic document, <https://cpj.org/reports/2016/12/journalists-jailed-record-high-turkey-crackdown.php>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>2</sup> Freedom House (2014). “Azerbaijan report 2013“, electronic document, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/azerbaijan>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House (2015). “Azerbaijan report 2014“, electronic document, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/azerbaijan>, accessed on 15.1.2017

## 3 EU Candidate<sup>4</sup>: Turkey

### 3.1 Overview

RSF declares that Turkey is the biggest jail of the world for journalists (RSF, 2016)<sup>5</sup>. Turkey has had longstanding problems regarding media freedom. However, in 2016, the situation deteriorated. The report covers the period of 2000-2016, most of that period falls within AKP (the Turkish acronym of the ruling party) rule.

At the very first stages of AKP rule, Erdogan struggled to gain power by eliminating his rivals in the military, justice and of course media. The biggest media oligarchs seemed to be in confrontation with Erdogan. There were also a few independent organisations critical of Erdogan.

During this phase, Zaman, the biggest newspaper and the press hand of Gulen, who is a Muslim cleric living in self-exile in the US, collaborated with Erdogan by supporting his policies towards democratisation and the EU accession process for a long time. After the eruption of the news about a corruption case against AKP and Erdogan, who claimed it was just another example of a coup against him, it seemed that their partnership ended (Dogan, 2016).<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, year by year, Erdogan achieved control over the media by using the state's fiscal instruments like tax penalties, state advertising or by directly taking over the mother company of a media organisation. For instance, Cukurova Holding had been holding the ownership of a media company (Aksam newspaper, Gunes newspaper, Show Tv, Digiturk). In 2013, it was taken over by the TMSF (Turkish acronym of the Savings Deposit and Insurance Fund), a state agency established to save public losses of financial institutions. Then, it was sold to a businessman, a close ally of Erdogan. This procedure was repeated many times before and after this incident. Furthermore, the biggest media company, Dogan Holding, was punished with a massive tax penalty, approximately USD 4,5 billion at that time. Dogan had to sell Milliyet and Vatan to compensate for the government's will (Dogan, 2016).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'We are in a situation of uncertainty regarding Turkey's position as EU candidate: In law Turkey is still a candidate, in fact, it is not' MEP Graf Lambsdorff, <http://www.euronews.com/2017/04/10/turkey-is-no-longer-an-eu-candidate-mep-says>

<sup>5</sup> RSF (2016). "Worldwide round-up of journalists, who are detained, held hostage or missing 2016", electronic document, [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/rsf\\_2016-en\\_0.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/rsf_2016-en_0.pdf), accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>6</sup> Dogan, Y. (2016). "Turkey's war on the press free is bigger than Zaman", electronic document, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/turkeys-war-free-press-bigger-zaman-1548234>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

Fiscal instruments have never been alone to blame for constructing pro-Erdogan media. So, the justice mechanism has also been involved. As Dogan (2016) reported:

“This time, the government seized the management of Gulenist media through the rulings of a largely obedient judiciary. Pro-government trustees were appointed to run the Koza Ipek Holding’s Bugun and Millet dailies and the Kanalturk and Bugun television channels, and the Feza Media Group’s Zaman, Today’s Zaman and Meydan dailies, the Cihan News Agency, the Aksiyon magazine and other publications”.<sup>8</sup>

Any journalist who harshly criticises Erdogan is confronted with judicial cases, at a minimum for “insulting” the president or at the utmost level being charged with terrorist activities. For instance, the prominent journalist from Cumhuriyet newspaper Ahmet Sik has experienced such allegations more than once. He is now again, for the second time, under arrest due to allegations of making propaganda on behalf of terror organizations.

Human Rights Watch's 'Silencing Turkey's Media' report shows the ways the AKP has been assaulting Turkish media:

"Government-led efforts to silence media criticism and scrutiny of government policy in Turkey involved five main trends: the prosecution and jailing of journalists; takeover of media companies—including the daily Zaman newspaper—by appointing government-approved trustees and seizing assets and the closing down of media; removal of critical television stations from the main state-owned satellite distribution platform and their closure; physical attacks and threats against journalists; and government pressure on media to fire critical journalists and cancel their press accreditation (and passports). Blocking of news websites critical to the government also increased. Turkey made the highest number of requests to Twitter of any country to censor individual accounts"(HRW, 2016).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dogan, Z. (2016). “Turkey witnesses 'unprecedented onslaught on critical media”, electronic document, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/turkey-akp-unprecedented-measures-curb-critical-media.html>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>9</sup> Hrw.org. “Turkey: Silencing the media”, electronic document, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/15/turkey-silencing-media>, accessed on 15.1.2017

### 3.2 The Worst Year for Turkish Journalism: 2016

On July 15, the deadly coup attempt of military caused deaths of more than two hundred people including civilians and security officers from military and police. The details of this troublesome incident have not been clarified, yet. However, Erdogan, at the very first moment of the incident, appeared on TV and blamed Gulen for trying to dissolve him and his political party from the government. Gulen rejected the allegations by Erdogan.

After declaring emergency rule, the government passed decrees without parliamentary approval. Those decrees cannot be appealed, so their status is above all regulations even the constitution itself. The decrees provided grounds to dismiss civil servants without a reason but just suspicion; confiscation of cash, bank deposits and properties of targeted people; extending the detention period up to 30 days; denying detainees from access to a lawyer and many other limitations, even basic human rights (HRW, 2016).<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the purge, nearly 125,000 civil servants were dismissed, 100,000 people detained and more than 40,000 people arrested. Yet, this huge number consists of judges and prosecutors, academics, teachers, doctors, civil servants, business and ordinary people and, of course journalists. The number of journalists detained and arrested has been continuously rising. By the end of 2016, the number of arrested journalists had reached 146.<sup>11</sup> By adding missing cases after detention, arrested journalists are most likely to be over 150. Overall, media institutions that have been shut down by governmental decrees of the emergency rule nears 200.

"Presenting no evidence of criminal wrongdoing, authorities detained many reporters and columnists employed by media outlets allegedly linked to Gulen. Among those jailed pending investigations were veteran journalists and commentators who have been prominent government critics such as Nazli Ilıcak (1944), Sahin Alpay (1944), Ahmet Altan (1950) and Mehmet Altan (1953)" (HRW, 2016).<sup>12</sup>

It is hard to know whether they were successful, but the Altan brothers were arrested for giving subliminal messages through TV. This report lacks information with respect to judicial consequences of "insult" cases driven by president Erdogan. As reported, "prosecutors have

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Plattform24.org (2016). "Olağanüstü Hâl'de Gazeteciler - 48", electronic document, <http://plattform24.org/guncel/1945/olaganustu-h-l-de-gazeteciler----48>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>12</sup> HRW, *ibid.*

opened nearly 2,000 cases of alleged insults to the president since Erdoğan took office in 2014”.<sup>13</sup> When thinking of other assault types like arrests and detainments or physical abuses, appearing at the courts for the insulting cases seems like a minimal problem. However, even before the coup attempt, the atmosphere of journalism was stifling enough. Even a visually impaired journalist, Cuneyt Arat, who faced trial for insulting Erdogan, has now been sentenced to home arrest for “praising members of the Gulen movement and disseminating propaganda for the movement”. He says: “I am deeply hurt because I am probably one of the few, if not the only, visually handicapped people under house arrest in Turkey and in the world.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition, many cases of revoking press licenses, and dismissal from jobs have been eclipsed by the overwhelming number of assaults within a limited time period. All the other assault types not mentioned here should also be taken into account when considering the hurdles journalists face in Turkey. This report also does not touch upon restrictions on the Internet. The life expectancy for critical website is low. The government Internet watchdog, TIB, can easily issue ban critical websites. Social media is also under the strict control of the government. Last year, the government targeted more than 10,000 social media users and 1,656 people were arrested, according to official figures.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Turkey is the number one country regarding demands for the suspension of Twitter accounts.<sup>16</sup>

David Kaye, The UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, quotes a letter to him from writer Asli Erdogan: “As far as I know, I am the first writer in 21st century to be tried with a ‘life sentence’ and I will not tell you how I feel. We, all the victims of this Mid-Eastern version of dictatorship, desperately need the help of international organizations that protect basic human rights and values such as ‘freedom of thought and speech.’” (Kaye, 2016)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> TheGuardian.com (2016). “Turkish journalist Can Dündar jailed after surviving gun attack”, electronic document, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/06/turkish-journalist-can-dundar-escapes-attempted-shooting-outside-court>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>14</sup> Turkishminute.com (2016). “Visually impaired journalist under house arrest: I will never retreat”, electronic document, <https://www.turkishminute.com/2016/11/03/visually-impaired-journalist-house-arrest-will-never-retreat/>, accessed on 15.1.2017

<sup>15</sup> Bigstory.ap.org (2016). “Turkey arrests 1,656 social media users since summer”, electronic document, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ed3e585528e144f2b8fceb5b450eb97/turkey-arrests-1656-social-media-users-summer>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>16</sup> Transparency.twitter.com (2016). “Removal requests include worldwide legal requests we have received from governments and other authorized reporters to remove or withhold content on Twitter.”, electronic document, <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/removal-requests.html>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>17</sup> Kaye, D. (2016). “Commentary: The high price of Turkey’s ‘witch-burning’ crackdown”, electronic document, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-crackdown-commentary-idUSKBN13O20Q>, accessed on 16.1.2017

### 3.3 Key Findings

#### ➤ Assault type

Our data indicate the number of arrested journalists as 190. Although the numbers of different press agencies and their reports may vary, it is documented that Turkey is the biggest jailer of journalists in the world (RSF, 2016)<sup>18</sup>, with more than 150 journalists arrested.

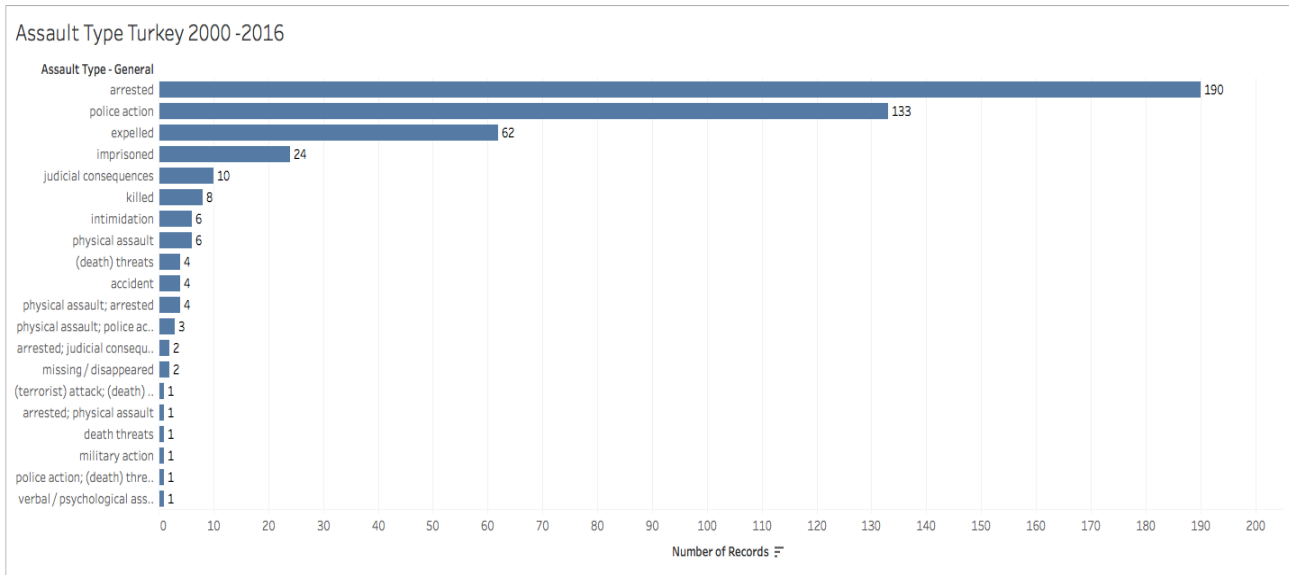


Image 14: Assault type Turkey 2000-2016

The Turkish government has targeted many veteran journalists. The oldest journalists are Nazli Ilicak (born 1944) and Sahin Alpay (born 1944). Some of the journalists have serious health problems, like 65-year-old Ali Bulac, Hasim Soylemez who had undergone brain surgery before he was arrested and Emre Soncan who has a kidney disease (Peace Islands Institute, 2016).<sup>19</sup> As an assault type, police action implies mostly detained journalists (129) who were released after a detention period of up to 30 days. It is difficult to establish what happened to certain journalists after they were released from detention: whether they were detained again or remained free. The number of journalists detained for up to 30 days and then released is four, as reported by P24.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> RSF, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> ohchr.org (2016). "Committee against torture concludes fifty-seventh session", electronic document, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=19964&LangID=E>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>20</sup> Plattform24.org (2016). "Olağanüstü Hâl'de Gazeteciler - 50", electronic document, <http://platform24.org/guncel/1969/olaganustu-h-l-de-gazeteciler---50>, accessed on 16.1.2017

On the other hand, there are also arrest or detention warrants for many journalists whose situation is generally unknown. Some of them are known to have left the country and live in exile for now. For example, SCF declares itself “a non-profit organization (...) set up by a group of journalists who have been forced to live in self-exile in Sweden against the backdrop of a massive crackdown on press freedom in Turkey”.<sup>21</sup> According to numbers provided by SCF, the number of journalists for whom detention warrants have been issued is 92.

In some cases of missing journalists, police have detained their relatives. Hacer Korucu, the wife of Bulent Korucu, the editor-in-chief of Yarina Bakis newspaper, was arrested instead of her husband. The brother of Bulent Kenes, the former editor-in-chief of Todays Zaman newspaper, was also arrested in the same way. These unfortunate examples signal the ways in which the judicial system is abused to target dissident journalists.

One of the missing journalists, Arzu Yildiz, had been sentenced to prison and ‘restriction of motherhood’<sup>22</sup> for simply reporting on a controversial case about prosecutors who were imprisoned because they stopped vehicles allegedly transporting weapons and other military equipment in the name of MIT, the Turkish intelligence agency, before an arrest warrant was issued after the so-called coup attempt. Two prominent journalists, Can Dunder and Erdem Gul, who reported on the same news, spent three months in prison. They were accused of “obtaining and revealing state secrets “for espionage purposes” and seeking to “violently” overthrow the Turkish government, as well as aiding an “armed terrorist organization”.<sup>23</sup> Currently, Can Dunder lives in exile, too.

Journalists have also been physically or verbally assaulted by police officers. Many cases involving torture or ill treatment inside prisons are unknown since the Turkish government does not allow any information to leak out from the prisons. Worst of all for a journalist, they are not allowed to write or read inside (CPJ, 2016).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Stockholmcf.org (2016). “Freedom of the press in Turkey: far worst than you think”, electronic document, [http://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FREEDOM-OF-THE-PRESS-IN-TURKEY\\_report-1.pdf](http://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FREEDOM-OF-THE-PRESS-IN-TURKEY_report-1.pdf), accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>22</sup> TheGuardian.com (2016). “Turkish journalist sued by state stripped of legal rights over her children”, electronic document, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/18/turkish-journalist-arzu-yildiz-sued-by-state-stripped-of-legal-rights-over-her-children>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>23</sup> TheGuardian.com (2016). “Turkish journalists released from jail after court rules press freedom violated”, electronic document, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/26/turkish-journalists-released-jail-court-rules-press-freedom-violated-dundar>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>24</sup> Ögret, Ö. (2016). “Turkey Crackdown Chronicle: Week of December 4”, electronic document, <https://cpj.org/blog/2016/12/turkey-crackdown-chronicle-week-of-december-4.php>, accessed on 16.1.2017

One of the female journalists arrested, Aysenur Parildak, was also subjected to sexual harassment, as she noted in a letter from prison (TurkeyPurge, 2016).<sup>25</sup>

### ➤ Assaults Timeline

The following graph indicates that journalists are being blamed for the coup attempt, together with more than 40,000 other people who have been arrested, under the Erdogan justice system, even though the leaders of the coup attempt have not yet been identified. The Turkish Parliamentary Commission assigned to establish the details of the coup attempt has wrapped up its work with little outcome (Hurriyet Daily News, 2017).<sup>26</sup>

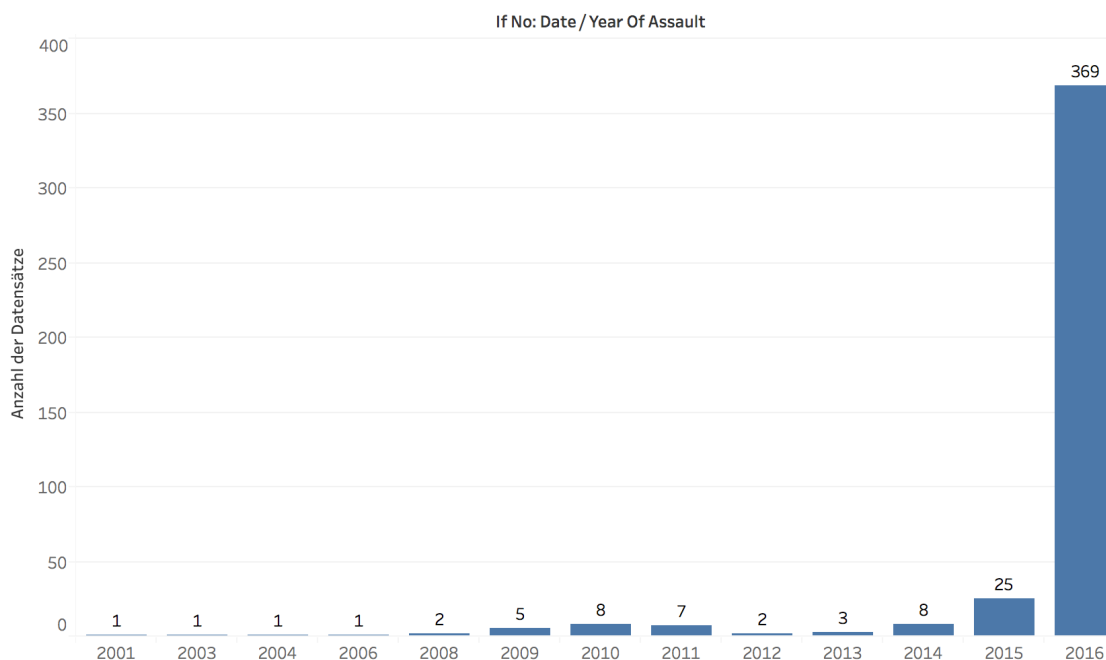


Image 15: Assaults Timeline Turkey 2000-2016

<sup>25</sup> Turkeypurge.com (2016). "Journalist says subjected to violence, sexual harassment in prison", electronic document, <http://turkeypurge.com/journalist-says-subjected-to-violence-sexual-harassment-in-prison>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>26</sup> Hurriyetaailynews.com (2016). "Turkey's coup commission wraps up work with little outcome", electronic document, <http://www.hurriyetaailynews.com/turkeys-coup-commission-wraps-up-work-with-little-outcome.aspx?pageID=238&nID=108125&NewsCatID=338>, accessed on 16.1.2017



## ➤ Targeting of Media Organisations

Around 150 journalists, half of whom have been arrested, have been assaulted, detained, arrested or forced into exile due to their so-called 'ties' to Gulen Movement, which is called FETO by the Turkish government so as to imply that it is a terrorist organisation in spite of a lack of legal evidence. The ex-popsinger Atilla Tas was also arrested on the same charges, simply because he tweeted satirically, to criticise the government.<sup>27</sup> He said from Silivri Prison: "My online crime was to criticise the government."<sup>28</sup>

Another journalist arrested was Gokce Firat, known as the leader of the Turkish Left and National Party. His criticism went beyond politics because he argued that Erdogan's diploma could be a fake.<sup>29</sup> The most absurd evidence leading to the arrest of people is their having one-dollar bills in their wallets or homes.<sup>30</sup>

Around 140 media members working on Kurdish minority issues have been targeted, 45 of them arrested. Refik Tekin, an IMC TV cameraman, was shot in the leg and then beaten by the security forces while reporting on clashes in the southeastern region of Turkey (Bianet, 2016).<sup>31</sup>

After the coup attempt, the government closed down by decree 175 media outlets, most of them again linked to the Gulen movement or Kurdish media. For instance, one of the media outlets closed, Zaman, the top-selling newspaper at the time, was known for its ties with the Gulen Movement.

After 15 July, there remained a few media organisations taking a critical position against Erdogan. Cumhuriyet newspaper, famous for its flag-bearer position on secularist values, was one of them. Nevertheless, government-backed Justice representatives arrested its editor-in-chief, as well as nine writers, including prominent columnist and executive board member of the International Press Institute (IPI), Kadri Gursel<sup>32</sup>, caricaturist Musa Kart<sup>33</sup> and board members

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<sup>27</sup> Voiceproject.org (2016). "Free Atilla Taş", electronic document  
<http://voiceproject.org/takeaction/free-atilla-tas/>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>28</sup> Turkeypurge.com (2016). "My only crime was to criticize gov't, writes Atilla Taş from prison", electronic document,  
<http://turkeypurge.com/my-only-crime-was-to-criticize-govt-writes-atilla-tas-from-prison>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>29</sup> Al-monitor.com (2016). "Is Erdogan's university diploma forged?", electronic document,  
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<sup>30</sup> Snell, L. (2016). "An American in Turkey's Prisons. In for a Crime? No, in for a Dollar", electronic document,  
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/11/26/an-american-in-turkey-s-prisons-in-for-a-crime-no-in-for-a-dollar.html>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>31</sup> Bianet.org (2016). "Police Judge, Rule on Journalist Refik Tekin", electronic document,  
<http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/171483-police-judge-rule-on-journalist-refik-tekin>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>32</sup> IPI.media (2016). "IPI Board demands release of Kadri Gürsel, Cumhuriyet journalists", electronic document,

from the newspaper, for allegedly supporting the coup against the government (Guardian, 2016).<sup>34</sup>

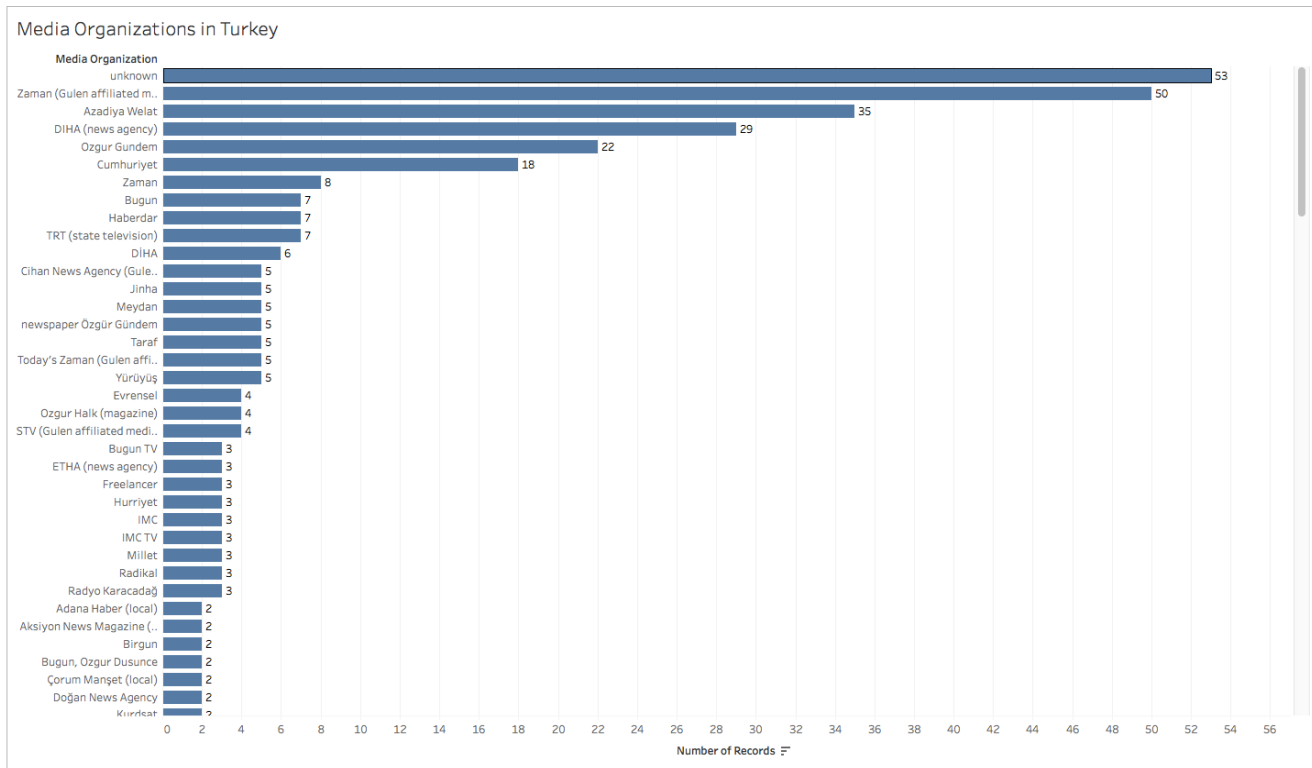


Image 16: Media Organizations and assaults in Turkey 2000-2016

<http://ipi.media/ipi-board-demands-release-of-kadri-gursel-cumhuriyet-journalists/>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>33</sup> Cartoonistsrights.org (2016). "MUSA KART & COLLEAGUES TO STAND TRIAL", electronic document, <http://cartoonistsrights.org/musa-kart-colleagues-to-stand-trial/>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>34</sup> TheGuardian.com (2016). "Turkey detains editor and staff at opposition Cumhuriyet newspaper", electronic document, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/31/turkey-detains-editor-and-staff-at-opposition-cumhuriyet-newspaper>, accessed on 16.1.2017

## Foreign Journalists Targeted

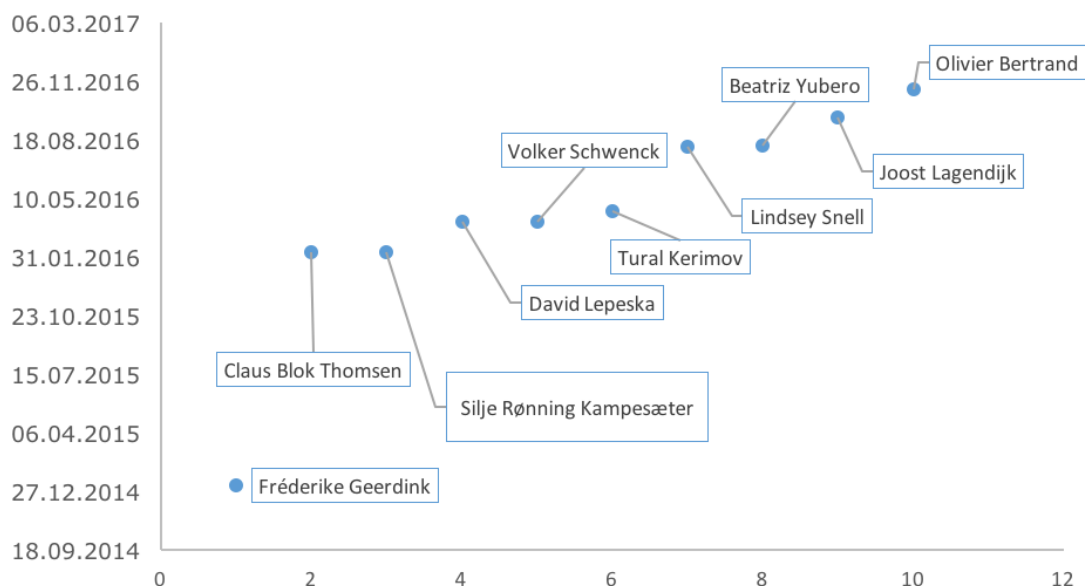


Image 17: Deported Journalists, Turkey

With possible unknown cases included, the actual numbers would be higher than those shown (WSJ, 2017).<sup>35</sup> They indicate that the Turkish government is very afraid of foreign correspondents, since the free flow of information from Turkey is currently under the strict control of the government.

Turkish officials use the methods of deportation or refused entry very often. Lindsey Snell, a female correspondent escaped from ISIL but was arrested in Turkey before deported for two months for allegedly “violating a military zone” (CPJ, 2016).<sup>36</sup>

Beatriz Yubero, a Spanish student S enrolled in a PhD program in Communications at Ankara University, was deported “allegedly for tweeting statements critical of the Turkish president”.<sup>37</sup>

The most recent case of deportation (April 2017) was Italian journalist Gabriele Del Grande who was detained while researching a book in Turkey, and was held for two weeks before being

<sup>35</sup> Nissenbaum, D. (2016). “Detained in Turkey: A Journal Reporter’s Story”, electronic document, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/detained-in-turkey-a-journal-reporters-story-1483721224>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>36</sup> CPJ.org (2016). “US journalist Lindsey Snell released from Turkish prison”, electronic document, <https://cpj.org/2016/10/us-journalist-lindsey-snell-released-from-turkish-.php>, accessed on 16.1.2017

<sup>37</sup> Herman, M. (2016). “Hassles mount for journalists in Turkey after failed coup”, electronic document, [http://www.cjr.org/watchdog/turkey\\_journalism\\_coup\\_crackdown.php](http://www.cjr.org/watchdog/turkey_journalism_coup_crackdown.php), accessed on 16.1.2017

deported.<sup>38</sup> “ I was the victim of institutional violence and I believe what happened to me was illegal,” he told reporters after arriving at the Italian airport of Bologna.

This shows the repressions against journalists are far-reaching and an international status does not necessary give immediate protection.

## 4 Russia

### 4.1 Overview

As a Freedom House Report on Russia suggests, “the main national news agenda is firmly controlled by the Kremlin.”<sup>39</sup> Exercising a journalistic profession in Russia is hard, at times nearly impossible and always linked to danger, assault and in some cases even death. In 2016, physical intimidation and non-fatal assaults were still common practice.

#### ➤ Highest homicide rate in Europe

The predominance of Russian cases among journalist killings in our study can be explained in the first instance by the country’s crime rate, which is the highest, overall, among European countries.

Moscow takes first place in the number of murders in the national homicide ranking (Global Study on Homicide, p. 151), which is again consistent with our journalist killings graphs.

#### ➤ General political background

The research period (2000-2016) is characterised by the permanent leadership of the only political power – the United Russia Party, created after the presidential election in 2000. Vladimir Putin was president from 2000-2008 and was re-elected in 2012. Even in the interim he was considered the leader of the country by the world community. There are more and more allegations of a crackdown on journalism, and self-censorship is increasingly reported by journalists themselves, especially after the statement of President Medvedev in 2010: “We do not need ‘glasnost’, we need freedom of speech.”

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<sup>38</sup><http://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-turkey-reporter-idUSKBN17Q0X2?il=0>

<sup>39</sup> Freedom House (2016). “Annual report about press freedom in Russia”, electronic document, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/russia>, accessed on 18.1.2016

## ➤ Glasnost

The concept 'Glasnost' (roughly translated as 'publicity') received official status on 27 January 1987, after being voiced by CPSU Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev during the plenum of the Party Central Committee. Gorbachev criticised his predecessors, and especially Leonid Brezhnev's "stagnation period", and underlined that the country needed openness and democracy. Soon the term went beyond the initial framework and became the synonym for the removal of taboos regarding public information. In the view of many, the era of 'Glasnost' ended with Vladimir Putin's presidency. Since 2000, independent TV stations and newspapers have closed, and more and more journalists have reported the appearance of self-censorship practices in editorial offices.

Some political analysts suggest that Glasnost II began with the development of the Russian Internet and independent blogging. The impact of the Internet and blogging as a new force could be clearly seen during the most turbulent domestic political period for the leading Russian party—the so-called Snow Revolution, 2011-2013.

## ➤ Snow Revolution (2011-2013)

The peaceful protest movement began in 2011 as a counterforce against the 2011 Russian legislative election results. The premises for the social movement were claims by prominent political activists and independent journalists that the election was flawed. In December 2011, the most large-scale protest in Moscow since the 1990s took place, led by famous writers, journalists, opposition members, bloggers and human rights activists. On 8 June, 2012, a law was enacted imposing severe penalties on protesters involved in unauthorised demonstrations. The homes of prominent activists were repetitively raided and searched, and several scandalous arrests of opposition members took place.

Surprisingly, the events of 2011-2013 had no significant impact on our journalist assaults data – there was no increase in these years. On the contrary, there was a tangible decline in death rates (although quite in line with the overall decline of crime rates in Russia). Like in Turkey, political and social instability inside the country, coupled with the rise of social movements, often led by educated layers of society and thus media workers – has led to retaliatory measures from the government. However, in Russia it has been more the case of selective and repetitive

actions against a few leaders of the Russian opposition and it has not led to massive journalist arrest waves.

### ➔ **New media legislation**

The basis of the journalistic occupation makes up the Media Law (27.12.1991 № 2124-1), which has remained almost unchanged since 1991. The fundamental principles are stated in the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) which includes freedom of expression, creativity, ideological pluralism, and the right to privacy, and which prohibits inhumane propaganda and censorship. Obstruction of the lawful professional activities of journalists is forbidden according to Russian criminal law – and considered a crime under Article 144 of the Criminal Code.

This is applicable to all acts of interference with journalistic work in the form of forced dissemination or denial of the right to disseminate information. In addition, journalistic activity in Russia is nominally regulated by the majority of media law documents of international organisations of which Russia is a member.

An important document of recent years is the Federal Law "on information, information technologies and information protection" (27.07.2006) – a normative document legally describing the concepts and definitions in the field of information technology and defining the principles of legal regulation of relations in the sphere of information, information technology and data protection, as well as regulating the relations in the implementation of the right to seek, receive, transmit, produce and disseminate information in the application of information technology.

Recent events in Russia, including the Snow Revolution, resulted in "the law on bloggers" (5.05.2014) - a Russian Federal Law requiring authors of Internet resources (websites, blogs, etc.) with an audience of more than 3,000 people a day to be officially registered with Roskomnadzor and imposing a number of restrictions on the content of such resources. During the first year, 640 users were registered.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of political pressure in 2015 and with the current media regulation in the country, where the state either directly or indirectly influences the five major national television networks with governmental editorial policies, coverage of meaningful topics like corruption, human rights

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<sup>40</sup> Tass.ru (2015). "Закон о блогерах год спустя: Роскомнадзор зарегистрировал 640 пользователей", electronic document, <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/2157598>, accessed on 18.1.2017

or foreign policy is rather avoided, “with the understanding that the government has the means to close [media outlets down] at any time.”<sup>41</sup>

According to a Freedom House report, “the state also controls more than 60 percent of the country’s estimated 45,000 regional and local newspapers and other periodicals.”<sup>42</sup> Critical coverage and independent reporting are often punished with license revocation or contract cancellation, leaving media agencies no other choice than to change their coverage topics, or operate on other channels or even from other countries, in order to shake off the authorities.<sup>43</sup>

Print mediajournalists are at particular risk. With the exception of regional print media (for e.g. regional Caucasus media, whose journalists are threatened mainly because of general instability in the region), Novaya Gazetaremains the most dangerous news outlet to work for, for journalists in Russia.

### ➔ **Novaya Gazeta**

Novaya Gazeta is a Russian weekly political newspaper, one of the few independent media organisations in Russia, most famous for its investigative journalism, which has in some instances led to court cases. A total of 76% of its shares belong to the journalistic team, 14% to businessman Alexander Lebedev, and 10% to former Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Its journalists have been honoured with international awards, including the Knight International Journalism Award, from the ICFJ, the Free Press of Eastern Europe award (Gerd Bucerius - Förderpreis Freie Presse Osteuropas) etc.

Some of the paper’s reporting has sparked legal proceedings on charges of publishing false informationor defamation. But the newspaper is most famous for the scandalous killings of its prominent media workers.

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<sup>41</sup> Freedom House, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Freedom House, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Freedom House, *ibid.*

## 4.2 Key Findings

### ➤ Assaults in Russia

Of the 44 journalists targeted, three were arrested, one was arrested and physically assaulted, two received death threats, 14 were physically assaulted, three were punished with judicial consequences for allegedly inciting hatred or participating in a gay pride rally, five disappeared (death not officially confirmed), and three were verbally/psychologically assaulted.

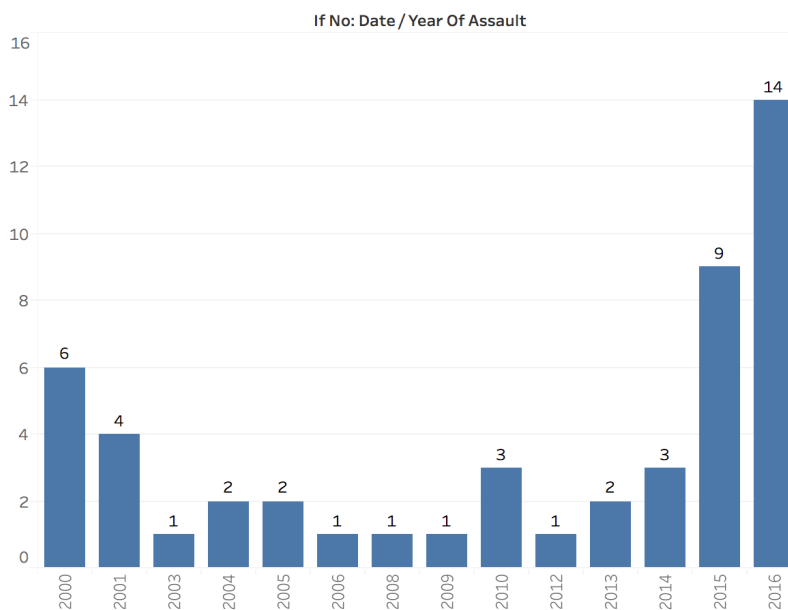


Image 18: Assaults Timeline Russia 2000-2016

### ➤ Number of Deaths in Russia

Our data indicates that seven journalists were beaten to death, 31 (23,8%) were shot, 19 (14,6%) were stabbed to death, and two were involved in car accidents, four were kidnapped and killed. Stabbing to death and shooting appear to be the most common practices of targeting journalists in Russia. With regard to locations for the deaths, it is noteworthy that 30 deaths - 23% of the total number recorded - occurred in Moscow.



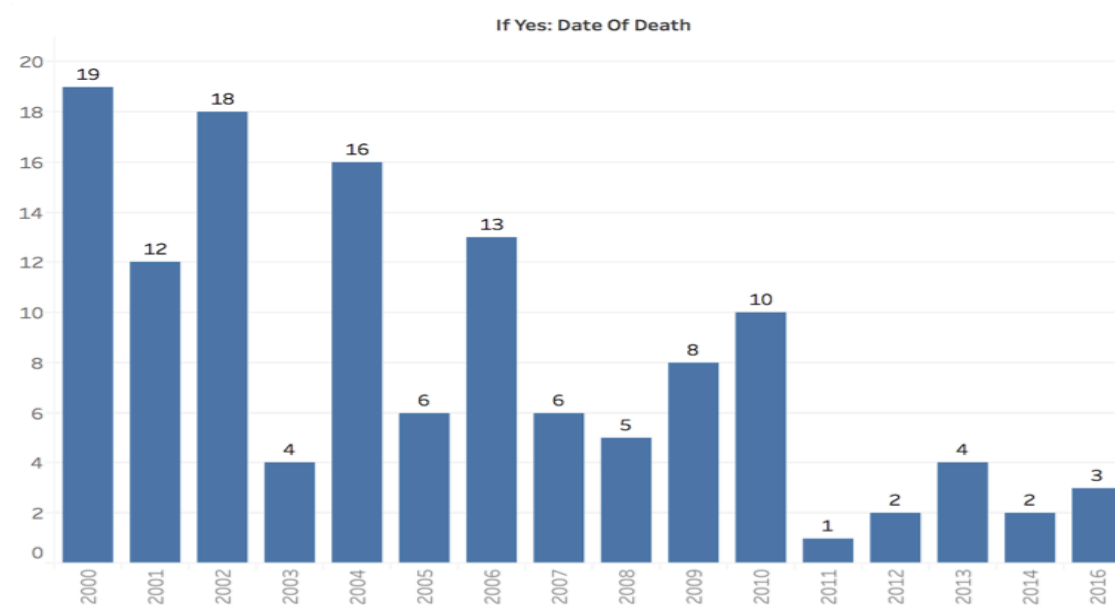


Image 19: Total Number of Deaths Russia 2000-2016

### ➤ Assault Type

The following graph (Image 32) shows that out of the total number of records (174 cases), being killed is the most common type of assault and makes up 74,7% of the total number of documented records. Physical assaults roughly make up 13,7% (24 records), followed by (terrorist) attacks (nine records), imprisonment (five records) and disappearances (five records).

The table above shows each category separately, as it was named in our database. Fore.g., if a person was killed after receiving death threats, it is listed in a separate category called “(death) threats; killed” and is not taken into account in the category “killed”. This being said, the real number of killings amounts to 130 records and not 93 records.

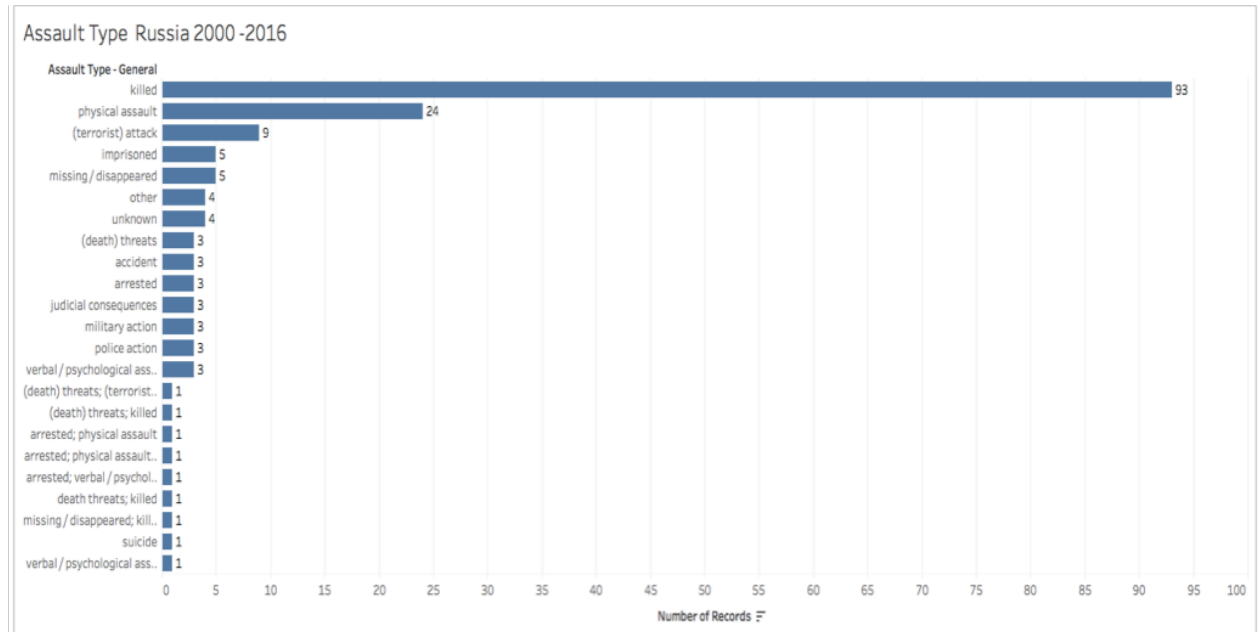


Image 20: Assault Type Russia 2000-2016

## 5 Conclusions

- More than 1,000 journalists and media workers were the victims of assaults or even died in the past 16 years in Europe because of their job.
  
- The most dangerous countries in Europe are Turkey, Russia and Azerbaijan.
  
- The research does not and cannot portray an exact picture of the total number of assaults and deaths in Europe. It is unknown how many cases there are still 'out there' that have simply not been reported.
  
- Apart from the concrete numbers and findings presented above, one important, more abstract conclusion has to be considered as well: The cases of Turkey and Russia in particular showed that political systems and journalism (and more concretely press freedom and the safety of journalists) are interconnected.
  
- A stable democracy exists mostly because of a free press. Free, critical and safe journalism, in turn, is only possible in democracies with a fair judicial system. This general assumption can be made when looking at the big picture of the study.

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