

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/macedonia-reporter-sentenced-to-four-and-a-21-10-2013,45353.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Macedonia

Reporter sentenced to four and a half years in prison

Harsh punishment

21 October 2013

Reporters Without Borders is shocked by [the four-and-a-half-year jail sentence that a court in Skopje passed today on the journalist Tomislav Kezarovski](#) on a charge of revealing a protected witness's identity in a murder case in 2008, although the witness recently testified that he gave false evidence against the accused killers.

Kezarovski pleaded not guilty and has appealed against today's conviction. He covered the case in 2008 for the magazine Reporter 92.

"The court passed an extremely harsh sentence," Reporters Without Borders said. "The deterrent impact of imposing a four-and-a-half-year jail term on a journalist in connection with two magazine articles could have a dramatic effect on freedom of information in Macedonia.

"Journalists will now have to work under the threat of severe prison sentences. Extending Kezarovski's pre-trial detention for nearly five months was already outrageous and now it has ended in the worst possible scenario, a totally disproportionate jail term.

"By prosecuting Kezarovski five years after these articles were published, the judicial authorities act with a zeal that was both incomprehensible and disturbing. Why did they seem so unconcerned in 2008? Why was Judge Dijana Gruevska as interested in Kezarovski's journalistic activities – to the point of asking him to name his sources – as she was in the crimes he was supposed to have committed?

"This case must be retried in order to dispel any impression of vengefulness on the part of a judiciary acting as both plaintiff and judge. We hope the appeal court will take account of the recent testimony by the witness named by Kezarovski. The witness testified in February that the police pressured him to make a false statement. Meanwhile, we reiterate [our call for Kezarovski's immediate release](#)."

Referring to the case, Kezarovski said that his articles "highlighted the problems in the judicial procedures and criticized the activities of the interior ministry and judicial system." He implied that he was being convicted for criticizing the judicial system rather than identifying a questionable witness.

It should also be noted that, at the time of his arrest, he was investigating the death of fellow journalist **Nikola Mladenov**, founder of the organisation *Fokus*.

Capping two disastrous years for freedom of information, today's sentence highlights the urgency of the situation in Macedonia, which is ranked 116th out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

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