

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/macedonia-outraged-columnist-threatened-his-22-05-2015,47928.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Macedonia - Sochi 2014

Intimidation

Outspoken columnist threatened, his car torched

22 May 2015

Reporters Without Borders condemns recent intimidation attempts targeting Branko Trickovski, a columnist for the opposition newspaper *Sloboden Pecat*, and calls on the authorities to protect him.

The former editor of the newspapers *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Globus*, *Trickovski* received death threats and his car was set on fire on 13 May after he posted comments on Facebook about the events in Kumanovo at the start of the month in which eight policemen died.

"We condemn this attack on Branko Trickovski," Reporters Without Borders said. "His comments may have shocked but they do not justify the death threats he has received or the torching of his car. If some people think they have been defamed, we remind them that the only way to obtain reparation is to file a lawsuit."

"We urge the authorities to investigate this attack thoroughly in order to arrest those responsible. We also ask them to provide this journalist and his family with protection."

Xhabir Memedi Deralie, the head of the Macedonian human rights NGO Civil, said: "This is the latest of many attacks on journalists. We condemn this act of cowardice and we offer our full support to our colleague Branko Trickovski."

The attack has come at time of extreme political tension between Prime Minister **Nikola Gruevski** and the opposition, with both sides holding violent demonstrations in the past few days in the capital, Skopje.

The tension dates back to February, when opposition leader Zoran Zaev produced audio recordings indicating that the government had illegally [eavesdropped](#) on thousands of people and had put pressure on journalists, judges and others.

Freedom of information has been declining for the past five years in Macedonia. In recent days, foreign journalists were arrested and held for several hours after going to Kumanovo to cover demonstrations.

The number of independent Macedonian media outlets has also fallen steadily as a result of exorbitant damages awards or closure orders issued without reference to a court.

Macedonia is ranked 117th out of 180 countries in the [2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#). This is the lowest position of any country in the European Union and Balkans.
