

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/macedonia-call-for-imprisoned-journalist-s-01-06-2013,44701.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Macedonia

Free him !

Call for imprisoned journalist's immediate and unconditional release

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Reporters Without Borders is appalled to learn that **Tomislav Kezarovski**, a journalist based in the central town Skopje, was arrested by special forces on 28 May and is now serving a 30-day prison sentence on a spurious charge of revealing a protected witness's identity in 2008.

Nowadays a journalist for the *Nova Makedonija* newspaper, Kezarovski named the witness in a 2008 article for the *Reporter 92* newspaper about a murder in Orese, a village near Veles. The witness confessed in court in February of this year that he gave false evidence against the accused killers. He also testified that he did not have protected witness status until 2010.

"We call for Kezarovski's immediate and unconditional release because he has been jailed on spurious grounds," Reporters Without Borders said. "His arrest and conviction clearly had another purpose, which the authorities urgently need to clarify.

"Experience has shown that journalists are often arrested in an abusive manner in Macedonia in order to force them to provide information on unrelated matters and to reveal their sources. We remind the Macedonian government and judicial authorities that article 16 of the constitution guarantees the protection of sources.

"Detaining a journalist for exercising this legitimate right is not only illegal but also totally incompatible with the European standards that the government claims to respect. We urge the courts to quickly overturn this conviction. Kezarovski should be with his family, not in prison."

"The way the authorities treated Kezarovski could not have been more disproportionate. He committed no crime. Summoning him to a court hearing would have been more than sufficient. Having him arrested by special forces and paraded in public in handcuffs is just the latest example of the government's harassment of journalists. It is an outrageous case of intimidation, one that is indicative of the appalling environment for journalists and their extremely difficult relations with the authorities.

"We are very worried by the constant decline in freedom of information in Macedonia, which is now ranked 116th out of 179 countries in our 2013 press freedom index. Imprisoning a journalist for investigative reporting that was clearly in the public interest will not improve this situation.

"If the Macedonian government really wants to join the European Union, significant concrete actions are urgently needed to ensure that the bases of investigative journalism are finally respected. In its public consultation on media pluralism, scheduled to end on 14 June, the European Union has stressed the importance it attaches to media freedom, now one of the main criteria for evaluating candidates for EU membership."

Reporters Without Borders added: "We urge the EU delegation in Skopje to draw the Macedonian government's attention to these requirements and to publicly call for Kezarovski's immediate release."
