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Europe/Ex-USSR - Kosovo

Alarming threats

Authorities urged to protect Kosovar reporter threatened by Muslim radicals

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A specialist in Islamism, he has been accused of apostasy and threatened with beheading

Reporters Without Borders is extremely concerned about Visar Duriqi, a Kosovar journalist specializing in political Islam, and calls on Kosovo's interior ministry to provide him with protection. He has received many death threats, including threats of beheading, since a radical group accused him of apostasy.

The fact that Duriqi has received more than ten threats should alert the authorities to the urgency of his situation. In his reporting, he has repeatedly drawn attention to the existence of extremist groups in Kosovo. This increases the concern for his safety.

RWB therefore urges to the authorities to protect Duriqi as a precautionary measure until those responsible for the threats have been brought to justice.

"Duriqi's plight is extremely worrying and the threats should be taken seriously," Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said.

"The government must provide him with police protection, and we have written to interior minister Bajram Rexhepi to request this. At the same time, an investigation must be carried out to identify those responsible for this unacceptable behaviour and the courts must deal firmly with them."

Duriqi's coverage of Islamic issues and religious extremism has been a source of annoyance in radical circles. He has described how young Muslim are being indoctrinated and persuaded to go to Syria to join jihadi groups, and he has shed light on the terrorist intentions of certain members of the radical Muslim community.

The fact that the police have carried out major operations designed to dismantle jihadi networks operating in Kosovo tends to confirm the accuracy of his reporting on the way the radical Islamist groups are functioning and evolving.

When the Muslim Youth Forum accused Duriqi of apostasy in a communiqué posted on its website on 15 August, it was deploying the full force of its moral authority against him.

The strategy is not new. Apostasy is punishable by death in some Muslim countries and Kosovar Muslims who accept a radical interpretation of the Koran agree that death is an appropriate fate for apostates. The MYF communiqué unleashed a wave of hatred against Duriqi in the radical Muslim community.

"I received many threats, mainly via Facebook, after the communiqué was published," Duriqi told Reporters Without Borders. *"The MYF statement is a death sentence. I am being threatened with beheading. I hope the police will investigate this quickly. I do not feel safe at the moment."*

Kosovo is ranked 80th out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
