

Reporters Without Borders

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Europe/Ex-USSR - Russia

Brutal attacks

Two journalists physically attacked in separate incidents in Novosibirsk

23 April 2013

[Читать по-русски / Read in Russian](#)

Reporters Without Borders is deeply concerned about the violent attacks on two journalists — **Andrei Chelnokov** (Андрей Челноков) and **Boris Komarov** (Борис Комаров) — that took place within the space of a week earlier this month in Novosibirsk, the capital of the Siberian Federal District.

The police are investigating the attacks in an attempt to determine the motives.

“The police must conduct thorough and transparent investigations into these shocking attacks on journalists, and should not rule out the possibility that they were linked to the victims’ work, especially as this currently seems the most likely explanation,” Reporters Without Borders said. “The impunity enjoyed by those who attack news providers must end.”

The organization added: “These attacks are symptomatic of a disturbing decline in freedom of information in Russia, which is also reflected in the persistent impunity for such attacks, prosecutions of journalists on trumped-up charges and the spate of repressive laws that have been adopted in the past few months.”

The first of this month’s victims was Chelnokov, 48, who heads the Union of Novosibirsk Journalists and edits several newspapers, including [Sibir: Moment Istini](#) (Siberia: Moment of Truth) and Novosibirskij Journalist (The Novosibirsk Journalist).

He was returning home from a conference on journalism on 1 April when an unidentified assailant struck him on the head with a blunt object, causing him to lose consciousness. He was found by means of his mobile phone’s geolocation after he had been missing for 10 days because he had been suffering memory loss. His nose and several ribs were also broken.

The police learned of the incident from media reports because Chelnokov did not want to file a complaint. He thought it was pointless because he had no clear memory of what happened. On 19 April, the police [registered the attack](#) as “causing minor harm to the health of another person” under article 115 of the criminal code, which [carries](#) a maximum sentence of two years in prison.

Chelnokov told the [Glasnost Defence Foundation](#), an NGO that defends media freedom, that he had received threats in connection with his reporting.

Komarov, 53, is the president of [Uniton-Media](#), a company that owns several news media. [He was badly beaten](#) in an attack by two masked individuals on 8 April in the parking lot of the building where his office is located, and had to be hospitalized with concussion and a broken jaw.

The attack is being investigated as a case of “hooliganism” under [article 213 of the criminal code](#), which carries a maximum sentence of seven years in prison.

Sergey Glushkov, the head of internal affairs ministry in Novosibirsk, has promised to follow the investigation personally, [saying](#) he was “in agreement with the journalistic community that it was a crime that threatened society.”

Komarov was previously attacked in 2011, when he sustained a leg injury. No one ever arrested for the earlier attack.

According to the Glasnost Defence Foundation, there have been [at least 19 physical attacks](#) on journalists and media assistants since the start of the year in Russia, which is ranked 148th out of 179 countries in [the 2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

Reporters Without Borders recently launched a "[Sochi 2014](#)" campaign that shows the Olympic rings logo turned into a bloody knuckleduster in order to draw attention to the impunity enjoyed by those who attack and murder journalists in Russia.

Photo by : Alexey Sazonov / AFP
