

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/latvia-investigative-journalist-badly-30-03-2012,42219.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Latvia

Narrow escape

Investigative journalist badly injured in targeted attack

30 March 2012

Reporters Without Borders is horrified by an attack on investigative journalist [Leonids Jakobsons](#) yesterday in Riga, in which he was badly beaten and sustained gunpowder burns from shots that were fired at him.

"We firmly condemn this targeted attack on Jakobsons, which was clearly linked to the highly sensitive subjects of his investigative reporting, and we hope he recovers quickly," Reporters Without Borders said.

"With fellow journalist **Grigorijs Nemcovs'** [murder two years ago](#) still unsolved, it is vital that the police do everything possible to quickly identify both the perpetrators and instigators of this murder attempt or else there is danger that a climate of intimidation and self-censorship will take hold."

Jakobsons was attacked in the stairwell of his apartment building as he returned home after work. After firing shots at him at close range, his two assailants beat him and kicked him. Badly wounded, he was rushed to Paula Stradiņa University Hospital where doctors said "his condition is stable and his life is no longer in danger." Jakobsons sustained facial burns from gunpowder explosions, but no bullet wounds.

His 9-year-old son, who was with him at the time, was not injured. The police said the two assailants quickly fled the scene and have not yet been identified.

The founder and editor of the news website *Kompromat* (www.kompromat.lv), Jakobsons won the National Journalism Prize in 2009 in the "Defence of Media Freedom" category. *Kompromat* has been attracting more and more readers because of its coverage of corruption and organized crime.

Last December, Jakobsons was [detained for 48 hours](#) and then released without being charged after posting an alleged exchange of emails between the Russian embassy and Riga mayor Nils Usakovs that suggested that the embassy secretly funded the mayor's election campaign.

After yesterday's murder attempt, Usakovs quickly voiced support for Jakobsons and denied any involvement in the shooting. "I have an alibi :)", he wrote in a Tweet.

Neither the instigators nor perpetrators of the April 2010 murder of Nemcovs, the publisher of the regional newspaper *Million*, have so far been identified. But those who murdered **Gundars Matiss**, a reporter for the regional daily *Kurzemes Vards* in the western city of Liepaja in 2001, were tried and convicted. Matiss was beaten to death after covering trafficking in illegal alcohol.

Latvia is ranked 50th out of 179 countries in [the latest Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), after falling 37 places in the past two years.

(Picture: the stairwell of Jakobsons' apartment building, after the attack. Credit: Edijs Palens/LETA)
