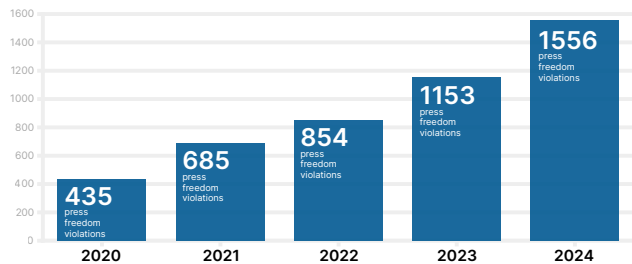


# PRESS FREEDOM FACT SHEET

## MORE THAN 5000 PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS IN EUROPE SINCE 2020

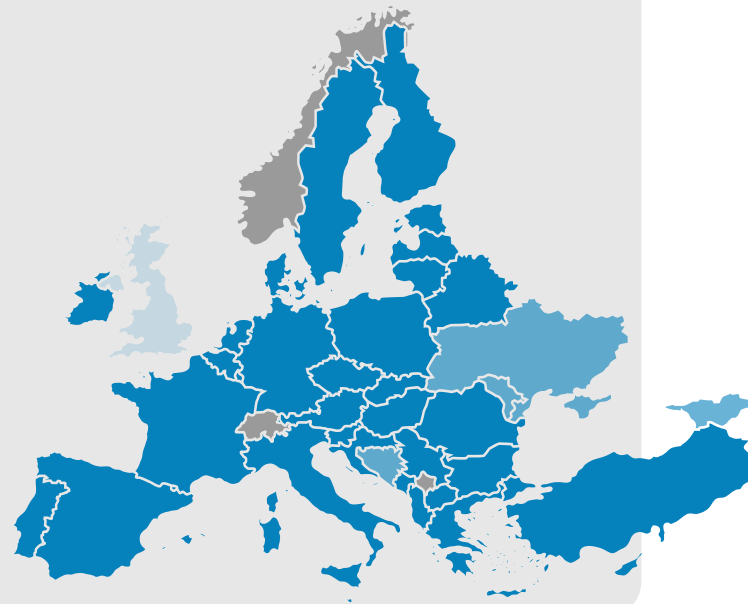
In 2025, the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) project turned five years old, and [more than 5,000 press freedom violations](#) have been recorded on Mapping Media Freedom (MapMF) within the project since January 2020. During that time, we expanded our networks, added more countries – and monitored more cases each year.



>5000 PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS

>8500 MEDIA RELATED PERSONS OR ENTITIES

1 JANUARY 2020 - 31 MARCH 2025



### TYPES OF ATTACKS

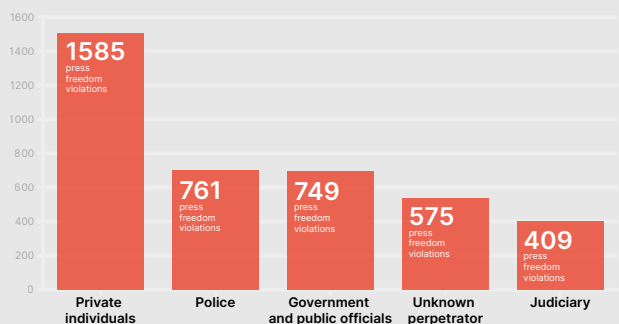
1049 PHYSICAL ATTACKS	1687*
1855 VERBAL ATTACKS	2990
823 ATTACKS TO PROPERTY	1478
1170 LEGAL INCIDENTS	1905
1093 CASES OF INTERFERENCE	2187

Involving

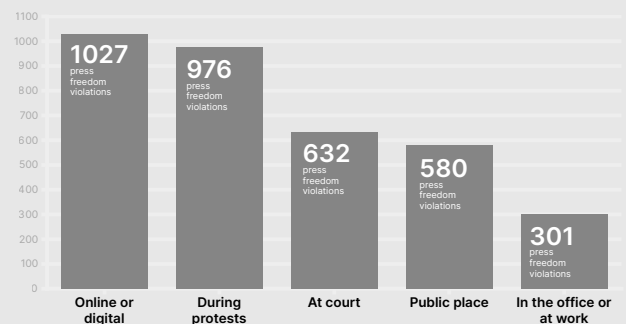
- 22 media workers being **killed**, including 12 in Ukraine
- 1051 x **threats**, including death threats
- 694 x **blocked journalistic activity**
- 594 x **harassment, insults, and bullying**
- 373 x **injuries**
- 350 x **arrest, detention, or imprisonment**

\* targeted media-related persons or entities

### PERPETRATORS - TOP 5



### CONTEXTS - TOP 5



MEDIA FREEDOM  
RAPID RESPONSE

# TRENDS

The monitoring of more than five years reveals the following peaking, rising, or emerging issues media workers in Europe face.

## TYPES

- [Blocked journalistic activity](#)
- [Online harassment](#)
- [Hacking/DDoS attacks](#)
- [Spoofing](#)

## PERPETRATORS

- [Government, public officials, or political parties](#)
- [Employer, publishers, or colleagues](#)

## CONTEXT

- [Online attacks](#)
- [During events](#) (like sport or political events)

## SPECIFIC TOPICS: Incidents related to

- [Foreign agent laws](#)
- [Environmental reporting](#)
- Peak 2020-2022: [COVID-19](#)
- Peak in 2024: [Elections](#)

## ONLINE HARASSMENT 688 | 1055

[Online harassment](#) is a major part of violations happening in the digital environment with 688 recorded incidents and 1055 attacked media-related persons or entities. In the EU, the recorded incidents have risen from 28 incidents in 2020 to 138 in 2024 (from 9.7% to 14.5%). Numerous incidents involve death threats.

## HACKING AND DDOS ATTACKS 154 | 336

[Hacking and DDoS attacks](#) have become a worrying topic over the past years. 66 incidents have been recorded alone in [Ukraine](#), with numerous perpetrated by Russian sources or hacker groups. However, most of the time the exact identity of attackers remains unknown or unconfirmed. Also in the EU, hacking and DDoS attacks are on the rise. In 2020, only one case was recorded in the EU, while MFRR recorded 29 incidents for 2023 and 17 in 2024.

The [Monitoring Report 2023](#) dedicated a thematic chapter to the topic of hacking and DDoS attacks.

## SPOOFING (incl. deepfakes and propaganda) 77 | 144

Spoofing attacks against media workers have increased over the past years. In total, MapMF has documented 77 incidents of [spoofing](#). In the EU, 53 attacks were recorded – and 31 in 2024 alone. Spoofing cases involved altered photo, voice, or video material including artificial intelligence (AI) generated deepfakes, as well as fake websites and articles that appear to be published by legitimate news outlets or media professionals. These attacks were mainly carried out for propaganda purposes, to damage reputation, as well as to promote commercial products with fraudulent advertising.

The [Monitoring Report 2024](#) dedicated a chapter to the topic of spoofing.

## FOREIGN AGENT LAWS 51 | 77

In 2024, the MFRR added a category to track the worrying developments in connection to [Foreign Agent Laws](#). These laws put severe pressure on independent media outlets and civil society organisations under the guise of exposing or fighting ‘foreign influence’. Consequences include investigations into funding of media outlets, disproportionate monetary fines, or the forced dissolution of targeted organisations. Laws of this kind have been introduced in Georgia, Slovakia, and Hungary. In Turkey, discussions on a similar law are ongoing.

The [2024 mid term Monitoring Report](#) dedicated a chapter to anti-media laws covering also foreign agent laws.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING 141 | 264

As natural disasters and extreme weather conditions increase as a result of climate change, journalists [reporting on environmental and climate issues](#) across Europe are facing a variety of threats and obstruction due to their work. Journalists were arbitrarily arrested by police or attacked by protesters when reporting on environmental demonstrations. Covering heated environmental issues – such as waste management, mining, or pollution – increased the risk for legal threats or defamation by private companies or politicians. The MFRR also recorded multiple instances of farmers' protests that blocked access to media premises or hindered the distribution of newspapers.

The [Monitoring Report 2024](#) dedicated a chapter to this topic.

### More Information

All documented press freedom violations (alerts) can be found on [mappingmediafreedom.org](https://mappingmediafreedom.org). Here you can find the [Alert Explorer](#) which also presents statistics visualised as charts for any individual filtering. The [About page](#) offers more information about MapMF, the methodology and on data interpretation. Press freedom violations can be submitted through the [ReportIt form](#) and are verified by monitoring experts before publication. The alerts analysed in this Fact Sheet have been recorded under the [Media Freedom Rapid Response \(MFRR\)](#) project.

### Disclaimer

The numbers presented in this Fact Sheet cover all press freedom violations that happened between 01 January 2020 and 31 March 2025 based on the documentation status of 14 April 2025 and that were covered under the MFRR mandate at that time. The links provided in the Fact Sheet show the latest status of all violations recorded under MFRR since 2020. The MFRR project started in March 2020 and recorded alerts retrospectively back to January 2020.

MFRR currently monitors all 27 EU Member states and all 9 candidate countries. In 2020, MFRR started with monitoring the former 28 Member States and 5 candidate countries. Following Brexit, the monitoring of the UK was stopped after the end of the MFRR-II project in April 2022. In addition, MFRR took over the monitoring of new candidate countries: Ukraine from 02/2022, Moldova from 06/2022, Bosnia & Herzegovina from 12/2022, and Georgia from 12/2023.

Due to the evolution of monitored countries and for comparability reasons, the topics of the trend analysis were identified by considering only the continuously monitored countries and the current EU Member States from 2020 to 2024. Additionally, a potential bias resulting from increased monitoring activity over the years was normalised by calculating the percentage shares of each topic within all alerts of the respective year during the identification of trending topics. As the identified topics are also present in the countries that were added to the monitoring mandate at a later point, the Fact Sheet includes the total number of incidents recorded for each topic for all monitored countries until 31 March 2024.